

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received NOV 17 1983

date entered DEC 15 1983

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

1. Name

historic Richards Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number County Road 34 (Blanchard Road) not for publication

city, town Greenwood vic. X vicinity of congressional district

state Delaware code 10 county Sussex code 005

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name See attached owner's list

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sussex County Courthouse

street & number The Circle

city, town Georgetown state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Delaware Cultural Resource
title Survey (S-375, S-377, S-516) has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

city, town Dover state Delaware

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Richards Historic District is located in Northwest Fork Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware, northwest of Bridgeville and southwest of Greenwood on the north side of County Road 34 and along both sides of County Road 32, which runs through the district from northeast to southwest. The district consists of portions of three separate farms and except for trees, shrubs and ornamental plantings in the vicinity of the three groupings of farm buildings, the land it encompasses is under cultivation.

All the land in the district itself and adjacent to it for some distance in every direction was originally owned by the Richards family, which began assembling it in the late seventeenth century. All the structures in the district were built by members of the family and their relatives. The three principal structures are the houses known as Poplar Level, Locust Grove, and Middle Space (listed in the order of their construction). Each house has a grouping of barns, sheds and other agricultural buildings around it. Open fields separate each grouping. While the three houses are some distance apart (3,600 feet between Locust Grove, the farthest to the west, and Poplar Level to the east) the flat terrain and the open fields allow for an obvious visual link. With the exception of some minor changes in farm buildings and some changes in landscaping where trees have fallen or grown, it is the same link which has existed since the construction of Middle Space in 1868. The very name "Middle Space" is an acknowledgment of this link.

The earliest structure in the district is Poplar Level, the main section of which was built c. 1758 by John Richards. While this section of the house is basically unaltered, the two-story, two-bay frame sections to the east were remodelled and were raised from one to two stories in 1939. At the same time a porch was added to the south front elevation. A second porch was added to the east wall of the house in c. 1960. The outbuildings in the Poplar Level complex include structures ranging in age from 130 years to 30 years old, all used at present in the farming operations conducted on the land. They include twin barns, three machine sheds, a machine shop, a corn crib, a workshop, and two large poultry houses. The complex also includes a pig pen.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates see attached inventories **Builder/Architect** see attached inventories

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Richards Historic District is significant to the architectural and agricultural history of Sussex County, Delaware. The three houses in the district, constructed by various members of the Richards family of Sussex County's Northwest Fork Hundred between 1758 and 1868, are among the best surviving examples of their respective periods of the county's rural vernacular architecture. As such they are eligible for listing under Criterion C. Locust Grove, built in 1828, and the second of the three houses to be built, is of particular importance as one of the most sophisticated and best preserved early nineteenth century farmhouses in Sussex County. The agricultural structures attendant to each of the three principal structures, which range in age from early nineteenth to middle twentieth century, illustrate the evolution in farming in the area during a century and a half and make the district eligible under Criterion C. Finally, the district is significant as the site of a continuous occupation for more than two centuries by one of southern Delaware's most prominent families. In terms of the quality and diversity of the surviving structures and the relative lack of alterations both to the structures and the land, the Richards Historic District is unique in Sussex County.

A definite stylistic link exists between Poplar Level, the earliest of the Richards Houses, which was built by John Richards c. 1758, and Locust Grove, built by his grandson (also named John Richards) in 1828. While there are pronounced differences in detailing and materials (the older house is frame, the newer, brick) it is clear that the massing and floor plan of Poplar Level served as a model for Locust Grove. This relationship is extremely typical of the development of vernacular architecture in Sussex County, a relatively insular and provincial region to which change came slowly, at least until improved communications in the mid-nineteenth century. Though affluent farmers like the second John Richards could afford considerable quality in design and workmanship, they frequently imposed these elements on the old tried and true structural designs. After the mid-nineteenth century when railroads reached the area and residents were able to travel with greater ease, residential architecture grew increasingly varied, reflecting current fashions with little or no connection to earlier local styles. Middle Space, built in 1868 by John Emory Richards, great-great-grandson of John Richards of Poplar Level, is characteristic of this trend, incorporating elements of the Italianate and Eastlake styles.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 141.10 Acres

Quadrangle name Hickman, Del.-Md.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>7</u> <u>12</u> <u>10</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>4</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>6</u> <u>16</u> <u>10</u>
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D	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>12</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>9</u> <u>17</u> <u>10</u>
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E	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>
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F	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>9</u> <u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u>
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G	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
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H	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached sheet.

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title T. Catherine Adams, Technical Preservation Services

organization Maryland Historical Trust

date 1981, 1982

street & number 21 State Circle

telephone 301-269-2213

city or town Annapolis

state Maryland

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Wanda R. Griffith

title

date Nov. 7, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Melores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 12/15/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Richards Historic District Item number 4

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Richards Historic District Owners' List

1. Poplar Level Farm
Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. Workman
P.O. Box 134
Bridgeville, Delaware 19933
2. Locust Grove Farm
Miss Mary Richards Loockerman and
Mr. Lewis Richards Loockerman, c/o
Mary R. Loockerman
Route 2, Box 221
Greenwood, DE 19950
3. Middle Space Farm
Catherine Richards, David Richards and
Mary Friedel
c/o David Richards
R.D. 2
Greenwood, DE 19950

(Information obtained from Sussex County Property Tax Records on Feb. 25, 1983)

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About 2,500 feet northwest of Poplar Level Farm is Middle Space Farm, the most recent of the three farms to be developed. Middle Space house was built in 1868 by John Emory Richards, great-great-grandson of the builder of Poplar Level. It is a two-story "L"-shaped structure in the vernacular interpretation of Italianate architecture (with Eastlake touches) popular in mid-nineteenth century Sussex County. Middle Space Farm is a working dairy farm at the present time. Its agricultural outbuildings represent about a century of building construction. They include a large dairy barn (c. 1910 with a c. 1920 addition), a smaller barn or granary, a dairy office, a corn crib, a machinery repair shop and two machine sheds. The last three of these structures were built about 1950.

About 800 feet northwest of Middle Space Farm along County Road 34 is Locust Grove Farm, the second complex of buildings in order of chronology. The house on Locust Grove Farm was started in 1828 by John Richards, grandson of the builder of Poplar Level, and was under construction for a period of about seven years. The brick main core of the house is in a fine state of preservation and is built in a mixture of the Federal and Georgian styles. A two-story frame wing, built in 1914, replaced earlier frame wings which stood on the same location. To the north and northeast of the house is a complex of agricultural buildings, including a barn, corn crib, outhouse, woodshed and smokehouse. A more modern machine shed and well house are also part of the complex as is a small family cemetery. While the land making up Locust Grove Farm is still under cultivation, most of the agricultural buildings are no longer in use and are deteriorating.

In total, the district includes about 20 buildings. Three of these are the farmhouses, the principal structures of the district, while the remainder are outbuildings. Though there are other houses and buildings in the general vicinity, those making up the district are a cohesive unit in that all sit back at some remove from County Road 34 in a rough line. Moreover, they are the only large farm complexes in the immediate neighborhood and all are set off by landscaping and mature stands of trees in a largely treeless area.

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S-2987 .1 Middle Space Farm
Rd. 34, Blanchard Road
Greenwood, Delaware

Description and Property Location

Located northwest of Bridgeville and southwest of Greenwood, on the northwest corner of County Road 34 and County Road 32, Middle Space was begun in 1868 by John Emory Richards, great-grandson of the builder of Locust Grove. The eastern two-story, four-bay, horizontal clapboard-sided section of the house, including the kitchen wing, was constructed in 1868 at a cost of about \$2,000.00. The western two-story, two-bay, horizontal clapboarded-sided section was added in the 1870's. The plan of the house is in the shape of a "T." On all elevations and at each corner, continuous from first to second story, are pilasters, which appear to support the cornice and roof.

The south (front) elevation of the house is composed of a two-storied, two-bay, horizontal clapboard-sided gable end, adjoining a two-storied, four-bay, gable-roofed, horizontal clapboard-sided section. Two chimneys protrude through the asphalt-shingle-covered roof, one at either end of the central three bay section. In front of the third and fourth bays is located a one-story screened porch, which has existed since c. 1900, screened c. 1945. The foundation beneath the balloon-framed house is of brick. A crawl space exists beneath the main house, and a basement, constructed c. 1912, beneath the northernmost shed-roofed storage area; (prior to 1912 there existed in this location a summer kitchen). There are six-over-six, double-hung sash windows in each window opening on the south elevation, except the one located between the first and second bays on the attic level. At the attic level is a two-over-two, double-hung sash window. The main entrance, located on the south elevation, is in the third bay on the first floor. The door, Italianate in style, is divided into four panels. The transom above the door is divided into three colored panes of glass; these colors are red, white and blue.

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The east elevation of the house is composed of a two-storied, two-bay gable end and a two-story, two-bay gable-roofed section, which is recessed one bay behind a one-story, shed-roofed enclosed porch. The porch, which is the length of the two-story, two-bay section, was built c. 1900, enclosed with siding c. 1950. An entrance door of glass and wood is located in the enclosed porch. A chimney, flush with the gable, rises from the northern wall of the two-storied section. At the north end of the east elevation is a one-story, shed-roofed, frame, lean-to storage room, which replaced the summer kitchen c. 1912. In the two-story, two-bay, gable end of this elevation are six-over-six, double-hung sash windows on the first and second floors and three-paned windows at the attic level. In the recessed, two-storied, two-bay section are two six-over-six, double-hung sash windows on the second floor and four one-over-one, double-hung sash windows on the first floor. In the one-story, shed-roofed, frame, lean-to storage room are two one-over-one, double-hung sash windows.

On the north (rear) elevation, the gable end of the kitchen wing and the shed-roofed lean-to additions are most apparent. A doorway is located in the second bay on the first floor in the two-bay kitchen wing. On the second floor in this wing are six-over-six, double-hung sash windows. On the first floor, in this wing, in the first bay, is a two-over-two, double-hung sash window. All other windows on the north (rear) elevation are of the six-over-six, double-hung sash type, except those in the attic of the gable end. The two three-paned, attic level windows each resemble the configuration of the transom over the door on the south (front) elevation. Opposite the main entrance on the south (front) elevation is one located in the fifth bay on the north (rear) elevation.

On the west elevation is, from the north end: the c. 1912 one-story, shed-roofed lean-to storage area, containing one one-over-one, double-hung sash window; the c. 1868, two-storied, three-bay, gable-roofed kitchen wing, containing two six-over-six, double hung sash windows, a central doorway on the first floor, and two six-over-six double-hung sash windows on the second floor; and, finally, the two-storied, two-bay gable-roofed section of the 1870's, containing two six-over-six, double-hung sash windows on the first floor and two of the same configuration on the second floor.

Approaching the house through the porch on the south (front) elevation, one enters, through a door in the third bay, into the hall. On the opposite (north) wall is a very similar entrance which has no transom. There are unusual door enframements at each doorway in the 1868 section of the house (hall, sitting room, dining room, kitchen on the first floor, two bedrooms on the second floor). The frames are wider at the bottom than at the top of the doors. Original door hardware still exists. A two-run, open-stringer stair with left-hand rail is located on the east wall of the hall. A massive unpainted rail is supported by an equally large many-sided newel and turned balusters.

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A door to the left of the south (front) entrance leads into the parlor, which is a part of the 1870's addition to the house. There are two window openings located on both the south and the west walls and a fireplace (now closed) on the north (rear) wall.

To the right of the south (front) entrance, a door leads into the dining room. The chimney centered on the wall between the sitting room and the dining room contains a working fireplace in the sitting room and a closed one in the dining room. On the east wall of the sitting room, a door leads into the dining room. Doorways on the north walls of both the sitting room and the dining room lead north into the kitchen. The north wall of the kitchen is paneled. Within the paneled wall is a door opening to a winding staircase to the second floor and a fireplace with cooking crane. A door centered between two windows on the west wall of the kitchen opens directly to the grounds. A door centered between two openings on the east wall opens onto an enclosed porch, from which a door leads outside. A door on the north wall leads into the shed-roofed storage area. On the north wall of the storage area is a door leading outdoors.

Ascending the winding staircase in the kitchen, one enters a bedroom. From the second floor hall running east-west, doorways open into a bedroom and an attic staircase. Above the hall is a small bedroom and above the parlor is a larger bedroom.

Outbuildings north and east of the house represent about 100 years of building construction. Just north of the house is a one-story, gable-roofed, open-ended frame machine shed (c. 1950). North of that is a one-story, pyramidal-roofed, rusticated block dairy office (c. 1910). Northeast of the dairy office is a two-storied, L-shaped, gambrel-roofed crossed by gable-roofed frame barn, used to house dairy cows (c. 1910, altered c. 1920). North of the dairy office and northwest of the large barn is a row of outbuildings, extending east to west. The small barn (granary) is the oldest existing outbuilding on the property, although it was altered slightly in the early twentieth century. A frame shed-roofed corncrib is attached to the west wall of the small barn (granary). West of the small barn is a one-story frame and cinderblock gable-roofed machine shed (c. 1950) and west of that is a one-story frame and cinderblock gable-roofed machinery repair shop (c. 1950).

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S-2987 .1 Middle Space Farm
Rd. 34, Blanchard Road
Greenwood, Delaware

Significance

Middle Space is historically and architecturally significant to Sussex County and the State of Delaware. The property represents the latest in a trio of historically and architecturally important Richards houses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Northwest Fork Hundred, Sussex County. Erected in 1868 by John Emory Richards, a great-great-grandson of John Richards, builder of Poplar Level (c. 1758), Middle Space has been continuously owned by descendants of John Emory Richards since it was built. The house and its contents have been excellently preserved by its occupants, who are two grandchildren of J. E. Richards and the one hundred seventy-four-acre property still functions as a working farm.

Middle Space, architecturally, is in the Italianate and Queen Anne styles. The interior and exterior design of the house has not been altered since it was completed in the 1870's. The shed-roofed enclosures made on the rear of the house in the twentieth century changed little of the original fabric. Unusual for houses in the area of this period are the designs of the door enframements in the c. 1868 section of the house; that is, the sitting room, dining room and two bedrooms above them. Many pieces of Eastlake-styled furniture have descended from the first owners of Middle Space to the present owners, which contributes to the value of the total property.

Historically, the property is important for representing a single family's settlement and building over a period of time in one area of Delaware. The Richards family was well-established in Northwest Fork Hundred by the time Middle Space was constructed. The family had contributed and continues to contribute to the economy in farming, law, and government in the State of Delaware. John Emory Richards, builder of Middle Space, was discussed in McCarter's History of Delaware, published in 1881, and praised as an industrious and successful farmer.

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Constructed in 1868 by John E. Richards, the house and outbuildings were insured that year by the Kent County Mutual Insurance Company, Kent County, Delaware. The house was built at a cost of less than \$2,000.00 on land that John E. Richards purchased from his father's estate. After John Richards died in 1853 at Locust Grove, the property adjacent to Middle Space on County Road 34 and John E. Richards had married Elizabeth Warren Wright in 1857, John E. Richards and his wife lived at Locust Grove with Mrs. John Richards. John E. Richards fought in the War Between the States and upon return from the war, moved, with his wife's encouragement, to Middle Space. They built a new house at Middle Space, after having spent eleven years in the house at Locust Grove.

Upon the two hundred and twelve acre property, John E. Richards raised successfully several varieties of fruit and a family of seven children. In 1874, after the death of his mother, Mrs. Ann P. C. Richards, John E. Richards purchased the three hundred fifty eight acre Locust Grove property, which he called Locust Park. There he raised two thousand fruit-bearing trees, sheep and cultivated many fields of grain.

After John E. Richards' death in 1897, Middle Space descended to his children. Lizzie C. and Lewis W. Richards jointly owned it until 1902, when Lewis W. Richards and his wife, Bessie, received it.

After the death of Lewis W. Richards in 1956, Middle Space descended to his children, Katherine and David Richards, who are the present owners. Grains, corn and soybeans are the principle crops.

It was during the ownership of Lewis and Bessie Richards, 1902-1956, that most of the additions and alterations to the property were made. The front and side porches were added and later, enclosed. The rear summer kitchen was removed and replaced by a storage room and basement. The floors were repaired, as found necessary. Most of the outbuildings were built and/or altered. The large barn was enlarged to accomodate more cows, the dairy (office) was built to accomodate the dairy business that Lewis W. Richards had, the small barn (granary) received new siding and roofing and a corncrib, and the two machine sheds were built.

Under the ownership of David and Katherine Richards, the property has received few changes, but has been well-maintained. Asphalt shingles replaced the wood shingles on the roof of the house, the fireplace opening in the dining room was closed and the one in the sitting room made smaller in size.

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S-2987 .2 Poplar Level
Rd. 34 Blanchard Road
Greenwood, Delaware

Description and Property Location

Located northwest of Bridgeville and southwest of Greenwood at the intersection of County Road 32 and County Road 34, Poplar Level was constructed c. 1758 by John Richards. The three-bay, two-story frame section of the house is the oldest existing unaltered part, dating from the mid-eighteenth century. The interior and exterior of this section presents elements characteristic of the Georgian and Federal styles. The two-story, two-bay frame sections of the house to the east, which were originally one-story in height, were altered in 1939 to two stories, each successively lower in height than the three-bay section. A porch was added to the south (front) elevation c. 1939 and one was added to the east wall of the house c. 1960. The outbuildings surrounding the house on three sides are representative of nearly seventy years of building.

The exterior of the three-bay, two-story horizontal clapboard-sided section with brick foundation presents similar elevations on the north and the south sides. An entrance exists in the far left bay on the first floor of the north (rear) elevation and in the far right bay on the first floor of the south (front) elevation. Above each wood-paneled door in the above-described entrances is a leaded transom. Protruding in front of the center and right bays and adjoining the left bay of the center section of the house is a one-story screened porch. Two cement steps approach the porch. On the north (rear) elevation, the entrance into the three-bay section is by way of three brick steps and directly above the doorway is a small pent roof. Six-over-six double-hung sash windows exist on the first and second story of the north and the south elevations.

To the east of the three-bay section of the house is a two-story, two-bay, gable-roofed, frame, horizontal clapboard-covered section. On the south (front) elevation, above the two six-over-six double-hung sash windows on the first floor are narrower six-over-six double-hung sash dormer windows. On the north elevation, there is one six-over-six double-hung sash window in the right bay on the first story and two narrower dormer windows in the two bays on the second floor. In front of the left bay on the first story of the north elevation protrudes the end of a partially enclosed passageway. Above the east wall of this center two-bay section is a brick chimney.

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Attached to the east of the center two-bay frame section is another two-bay, two-story, gable-roofed frame, horizontal clapboard-sided section, lower in height than the two above-described parts of the house. As in the center section, on the south (front) elevation, there are two six-over-six double-hung sash windows on the first floor and two narrower dormer windows above them. A one-story, shed-roofed, partially enclosed passageway projects out in front of the north (rear) elevation of this end section, just below the second story dormer windows. A door centered on the north (rear) wall of this section on the first floor is approached by two brick steps. The passageway is supported by four simple wood columns, which rest on a brick walkway. An entrance to the screened porch exists at the east end of the passageway, which adjoins the east wall of the house.

A one-story gable-roofed screened porch with brick floor is the easternmost addition to the house. Above the east wall of the porch extends a brick chimney. The porch roof, as well as the other three gable roofs of the house, is covered with asphalt shingles; originally the roofs were wood-shingled.

On the west elevation of the house, the gable end of the three-bay section of the house presents six-over-six double-hung sash windows on the second floor and two-over-two windows at the attic level. The exposed chimney base on the west wall was covered with clapboard siding c. 1952.

Entering the house through the screened porch on the south facade, one arrives in the entrance hall. The hall and the parlor, first floor rooms in the three-bay section of the house, are the best preserved. Symmetrically balancing the entrance on the south wall of the hall is the entrance on the north wall. The door in each entrance is divided into the double cross design. Original door hardware and transoms are intact and in place in the house. A two-run, open-stringer stair with left-hand rail is located on the east wall of the hall. Outstanding scroll-cut designs on the ends of the stair risers are Georgian in style. Very similar stair ends were designed for the staircase in the hall, added about 1795 to the Sudler House, built about 1750, in Bridgeville, Sussex County, Delaware.

The parlor, to the left of the entrance hall, is, like the hall, the depth of the three-bay section of the house. The mantlepiece, centered on the east wall, is in the late Federal style, "Broken out at ends and center."

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To the right of the south entrance is the sitting room, which, like the hall and the parlor, is the depth of the house. The paneling around the fireplace on the east wall of this room, created in the late eighteenth century, has been preserved intact.

To the east of the sitting room on the first floor are the kitchen and the family room, which were altered in the 1950's by the present owners. The screened porch to the east of the kitchen, built in the 1960's, was constructed at ground level, with a brick floor, three steps below the level of the kitchen.

Above the stairhall and parlor in the three-bay section of the house are two bedrooms and a hall. Through the doorway to the right of the stair landing on the second floor are two bedrooms and a bathroom. These rooms were constructed by Robert H. Richards in 1939, when he added second floors to the two-bay sections of the house.

A full-height attic exists and a basement is beneath only the sitting room. The cellar is accessible by way of the paneled door in the sitting room and by way of the double metal doors on the exterior of the north elevation of the house.

To the northwest and southwest of the house are twelve outbuildings necessary to the property owner's business. Those that were unnecessary to the production of the farm were either demolished or altered to serve a more useful purpose. The oldest existing outbuildings are the small frame gable-roofed barn to the north of the house, erected c. 1850 and altered in 1939 and 1952. The easternmost one is now a machine shop. Other frame outbuildings include: between the twin barns, an open-ended machine shed (c.1952) and west of the barns, a gable-roofed corncrib (c. 1939). Southeast of the barn, altered into a machine shop, is a small, gable-roofed, frame corncrib (c. 1900). South of the machine shed is a frame, gable-roofed florist workshop (c. 1955). East of the corncrib is a pigpen (c. 1939) and two machine sheds (c. 1952). South of the machine sheds is a frame chicken house (c. 1939) and south of this chicken house are two large brooder houses. One brooder house was built c. 1939 and one was built c. 1952; both are located southwest of the house.

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S-2987 .2 Poplar Level
Rd. 34, Blanchard Road
Greenwood, Delaware

Significance

Poplar Level is significant both historically and architecturally. Historically, Poplar Level represents the earliest known existing residential structure in Northwest Fork Hundred that was erected by a descendant of John Richards, who patented large tracts of land in the area in the seventeenth century. John Richards, the builder of Poplar Level, was probably the grandson of the first John Richards who immigrated to America from England. Also of historical importance is the fact that the property was continuously owned by a member of the Richards family until 1952 and the house remained little altered. When the house at Locust Grove was built in 1828, the massing and floor plan of the three-bay, two-story section at Poplar Level was obviously used as a model. The first and second floor plans and interior detailing were probably the most significant influence upon John Richards, grandson of the builder of Poplar Level, when he constructed Locust Grove nearby.

Besides being of architectural significance in relationship to Locust Grove, the house at Poplar Level exhibits characteristics in its massing, floor plan and detailing typical of southern Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The use of wood clapboards or shingles on the exterior was not unusual, due to the abundance of timberland. The end brick chimney was exposed for a number of feet above ground level, as at Poplar Level, when the house was covered with clapboards or shingles. The gable-roofed, three-bay, two-story form was a common one in the eighteenth century in the area. Inside Poplar Level, the paneled fireplace wall in the sitting room, the curvilinear scroll-cut designs on the stair ends and the wood paneling beneath the staircase in the hall were all elements typically found in houses of that period.

Of additional historical merit is the fact that several well-known Delawareans descended from John Richards, builder of Poplar Level. Eight generations of his family grew up in Northwest Fork Hundred and remained in the State of Delaware. Descendants intermarried with other families in Northwest Fork Hundred and settled the area; these families include Charles Fleming Richards, lawyer; Robert H. Richards, founding member of the Wilmington law firm of Richards, Layton and Finger; Charles Sudler Richards; lawyer, Associate Justice and Chief Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court.

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT

The exact construction date of the house at Poplar Level is unknown, but conjectured as 1758. Documentary evidence, in which John Richards is listed in Maryland's "Debt Books" of 1758 as owning Poplar Level, a fifty-acre tract for which he paid two shillings in rent, indicates that a residence of some sort existed by that date. A "Patent" and "Patented Certificate of Survey" of 1761 show that John Richards' fifty-acre tract was resurveyed to include nine hundred thirty-three acres, and renamed "Poplar Level Improved." Poplar Level, reduced to three hundred acres in 1790, the year of John Richards' death, was conveyed to his son, David, who, according to John's will, had to sell parts of the property. Since John owned one thousand four hundred and fifty acres at the time of his death and these lands were divided among his seven children, it is possible for David and his family to have lived at Poplar Level for a short time. In 1801, however, when David's son, John Richards, married Anna Wilson, it is known that they lived at Poplar Level until 1828. From 1790 to 1801, then, it is possible that Poplar Level was occupied either by other Richards family members, by tenants, or left vacant. Poplar Level descended to John Emory Richards' ownership in the late nineteenth century; John Emory Richards was a grandson of John and Anna Wilson Richards. He sold the property to someone in Governor Small's family and in the early twentieth century one of John Emory Richards' daughters, named Sallie, bought it back. Sallie Richards Willey Hayes, at her death in 1937, sold Poplar Level to Mr. Howard Lyons, who resold it in 1939 to Mr. Robert Haven Richards, younger brother of Sallie. A partner in the Wilmington law firm of Richards, Layton and Finger, R. H. Richards spent much to rehabilitate the property, but rarely lived there. Lewis Richards Loockerman, son of Robert's sister, Elizabeth, acted as a caretaker for the property between 1939 and 1952. Upon the death of Robert H. Richards in 1952, Poplar Level was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. Workman. The two hundred and seventy-six hundredths acres owned by the Workmans are worked as a farm.

The three-bay, two-story section of the house, dating from the mid-eighteenth century, has been well preserved, while the two-bay sections attached to it and the outbuildings have been altered considerably since 1939. Due to a fire that occurred at some time prior to 1903 and burnt the second floor and attic of the two-bay sections of the house, one-story rather than two-story sections were rebuilt. When Robert H. Richards constructed in 1939 a second story and attic to each of the two-bay sections, family members who were familiar with the previously existing second stories praised these particular reconstructions for their exterior historical accuracy.

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The house at Poplar Level underwent numerous changes after 1937. R. H. Richards excavated a cement-walled and floored basement beneath the central two-bay section in 1939, but left the rest of the foundation as it had been previously. On the first and second stories, new flooring was laid as necessary in 1939, and windows also changed at that time from nine-over-six paned, double-hung sash to six-over-six paned, double-hung sash windows. Also in 1939, a porch was added to the south (front) elevation and one to the north (rear) elevation, now a covered passageway. Three new bedrooms were added by R. H. Richards on the second floor of the two-bay sections of the house.

Under the present ownership of the Workmans, other alterations have taken place in the house. On the first floor, in the parlor, eighteenth century paneling has been installed on the walls on either side of the chimney breast and plaster removed from above the mantelpiece. All plaster ceilings were patched and because cracks were not sealable, fake ceiling beams were installed throughout the house. The easternmost two-bay section of the house was altered on the first floor to include a large kitchen-den with bay window, bathroom and closets. A cook-out area constructed 1952 east of the house was enclosed as a screened porch in 1975. The bedroom on the second floor over the hall was remodeled into a bathroom and the plaster on the chimney breast in the western bedroom was removed.

Around the house significant landscaping changes have occurred over the last hundred years. Of the five sugar maple trees planted south of the house in the front yard in about 1880, two have been lost due to natural disasters. Southeast of the house, pine trees were planted c. 1939 and more were planted c. 1955 southwest of the house.

Of the outbuildings at Poplar Level, few remain from the nineteenth century. Outside of the two small twin barns north of the house (c. 1850) where wooden pegs still join the roughly hewn framing members, the outbuildings date from about 1939 to about 1955.

The name, "Poplar Level," dates back to about 1758. Poplars were probably plentiful on the property then. It is geographically a flat area of land, at sea level, and thus the second half of the name, "Level."

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S-2987 .3 Locust Grove
Rd. 34, Blanchard Road
Greenwood, Delaware

Description and Property Location

Located northwest of Bridgeville and southwest of Greenwood on County Road 34, Locust Grove was begun in 1828 by John Richards, grandson of the builder of Poplar Level. The brick section of the house, completed in 1828, is excellently preserved and contains characteristics of the Federal and Georgian styles. A frame section, added in 1914 to the brick section of the house, has replaced the original shingled sections that were there. This addition does not in any way impair the visual impact of the brick section. A complex of agrarian structures, erected at various times since 1817, exist to the north and east of the house.

The exterior of the brick section of the house presents identical elevations on the north and south sides. The two-story, three-bay, gable-roofed brick part of the house is flemish-bonded on the first and second floors. The twelve rows of brick above ground level on the north and south elevations are laid in Liverpool bond. An entrance exists in the far right bay on the south (front) elevation and in the far left bay of the north (rear) elevation. Each wood-paneled door in the above-described entrances is flanked by fluted wood pilasters, which rest upon simple rectangular wood bases. Above the door on the north elevation is a leaded transom and above that a flat arch of rubbed brick. Three cement steps approach the north entrance. It may be assumed that a flat arch is located over the door on the south elevation, but this assumption is not verifiable because the area directly above the leaded transom is obscured by the roofline of the front porch. There are nine-over-six double-hung sash windows on the first and second floors. Above the windows are flat arches of rubbed and gauged brick. Above the second floor windows is a wooden cornice and above that a drainspout and an asphalt shingle-covered gable roof; the original cypress-shingled roof is underneath the asphalt-shingled one.

On the west elevation of the brick section of the house are nine-over-six double-hung sash windows on the second floor, two one-over-one double-hung sash windows on the attic level, a metal exterior entrance to the basement and a chimney flush with the gable.

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On the south (front) elevation, adjoining the brick section of the house is a lower, cross-gable-roofed, two-story, two-bay, wood clapboard-sided section of the house, built in 1914. In the two bays and on both the first and second floors of the south elevation are one-over-one double-hung sash windows. Between the first and second bays on the exterior wall is a narrow brick chimney. Above the second floor windows on the south elevation is a gable containing a small one-over-one double-hung sash window, which is located to the right of the chimney. Protruding from the south elevation of both the brick and frame parts of the house is a one-story, screened porch with wood columns, which extends from the third bay of the brick section, right, to the first bay of the frame section of the house.

To the left of the brick section of the house on the north elevation is a two-story, three-bay, horizontal clapboard-sided frame section with brick foundation of American or stretcher bond. Protruding in front of the right bay of the frame section are the left two bays, which are encompassed in the kitchen wing, and in front of that is a one-story, horizontal clapboard-sided shed extension. One-over-one double-hung sash windows with simple wood surrounds are located in the right bay of the frame section on the first and second floors and in the left two bays on the second floor. In the left two bays of the frame section on the first floor is situated the shed extension composed of a pantry and an enclosed porch. The enclosed porch, on the left, approached by five cement steps, contains a narrow wood and two-paned door and a row of fixed one-over-one paned windows. In the pantry there are no openings on the north elevation. Above the second floor windows in the first and second bays rises a chimney flush with the gable.

Adjoining the east elevation of the house, in which there are four bays and two stories, are the one-storied, shed-roofed extension to the north and the chimney and one-storied, screened porch to the south. The left two bays of the east elevation, two stories in height, are set back from the right two bays. Four cement steps lead to a screened door in the porch, through which one approaches the two-paneled wood door with wood surround in the first floor second bay. The right two bays of the east elevation, two stories in height, are topped by a gable end of the roof, containing a small one-over-one double-hung sash window. All window openings in the east elevation contain one-over-one double-hung sash windows, except those in the one-story shed-roofed extension. A chimney is located in the east wall of the brick section of the house, which extends above the frame section, and it is flush with the gable. The attic story window openings in this wall are now covered by the roofline of the frame section.

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One arrives in the entrance hall by way of the screened porch on the south (front) elevation. Symmetrically balancing the entrance on the south wall is the hall entrance on the north wall. The door in each entrance is divided into the double cross design on the exterior side, and batten on the interior side. Original door hardware and rectangular transoms exist intact. The front doors, as well as the other interior doors in the brick section of the house, are framed by mitred architraves. A two-run, open-stringer stair with left-hand rail is located on the east wall of the hall. Georgian in style, the stairway is noteworthy for the scroll-cut designs on the ends of the risers, which are described by thin pieces of wood. Attenuated pilasters support a handrail which is attached to the east wall of the hall, ascending with the staircase.

A paneled wood door to the left of the south entrance leads into the parlor, which, like the hall, is the depth of the brick section of the house. Two window openings on the north wall of the parlor are balanced by two on the south wall. Pilasters, seemingly, reinforce the geometrically carved chairrails and window sills in the parlor. They successfully attenuate the window enframements and visually balance the floral-carved wooden window valances. The parlor mantelpiece is the most intricately carved element of the interior woodwork. The joiner-cabinetmaker of Locust Grove, a member of the Needles family of Talbot County, Maryland, introduced a modern design that incorporated attenuated and fluted parts, recessions and bulges, pilasters and rope mouldings in an imaginative fashion. The mantle supports, which are shaped like bulging pilasters, appear to mimic the style followed by the Salem, Massachusetts craftsman and architect, Samuel McIntire. The original hand-painted fireboard for the plaster opening in the parlor fireplace is stored in the house, unaltered. According to family tradition, the design on this fireboard, as well as the others in the house, was chosen and executed by Anna Wilson Richards, wife of the builder of Locust Grove.

Through the paneled wood door to the right of the south entrance is the sitting room, which is a part of the frame section of the house. Continuing to the right or east is a screened porch, which is supported by decoratively carved columns in the Queen Anne style. A door on the west wall of the sitting room, opposite the porch entrance, leads to the cellar stairs. This small entryway is a 1914 alteration; access to the cellar was originally from the hall. North of the sitting room is the kitchen and then the pantry.

Stairs on the west wall of the kitchen lead up to the second floor of the frame section of the house. Three bedrooms and bathroom are accessible by way of the upstairs hall in the frame section of the house. One bedroom, and the bathroom are located over the kitchen. Two bedrooms are located over the sitting room.

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Above the hall and parlor in the brick section of the house are two bedrooms and a hall. The bedroom, on the west wall of the house, contains a fireplace on the west wall directly above the fireplace in the parlor. The mantelpiece in this room is off-center, due to the flue arising from the parlor fireplace. The original painted fireboard is intact and in place in this room. The other bedroom in the brick section of the house, located on the south side of the second floor, also has a fireplace. The small fireplace located over the stairway in this bedroom appears to have no first floor supports. Two vertical posts were placed, in 1959, beside the staircase on the first floor to lend both the staircase and the second floor hearth support. On the north side of the second floor is a hall, which connects to the hall in the frame section of the house and from which a stairway leads to the attic.

A full-height attic and cellar exist only in the brick section of the house. The second floor ceiling rafters of the frame part of the house are accessible only through the open window frames in the east wall of the attic in the brick section of the house. Beneath the frame section is only a crawl space, but there is a cellar under the brick part. The brick-walled cellar is dirt-floored and accessible, not only through the sitting room, but also by way of the cement steps and metal doors on the west wall of the house.

The outbuildings, north of the house, importantly reflect the evolution of the property as a farm. Once necessary for self-sufficiency, most of these agrarian structures are now deteriorating. Outbuildings on an adjacent Richards' property, Middle Space, provide the necessary storage and maintenance for the farming of both Locust Grove and Middle Space lands. The Locust Grove property now functions only as a residence; therefore, the only outbuildings used are the machine shed (c. 1950) and the well house (1960). The earliest-used site north of the house was the area of land from which clay was taken to make bricks for the building of the house. This is now obliterated. The cemetery, which contains graves of members of both the first and second families who lived at Locust Grove, is located northwest of the house. To the east of the cemetery are located several wooden buildings of the early twentieth century, now decaying. These include: the cornerrib (c. 1940), the outhouse (c. 1910), and the barn (c. 1906). Further east, dating from the late nineteenth century, are the woodshed (c. 1879) and the (meat) smokehouse (c. 1879).

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A boxwood garden, which was probably planted between 1828 and 1850, was nearly destroyed around 1900; only one bush has survived. Landscaping on the property was changed around 1903 when the driveway was moved to its present position in order to facilitate farming activities in the fields in front of the house. Prior to 1903, the unimproved driveway began at County Road 34, wound around the west side of the house, and ended north of the house, amidst the out-buildings. Two maple trees, planted around 1790 near the original driveway, still stand in the front yard. Other maples, probably planted around 1828 by John and Anna Wilson Richards, have endured. Locust trees planted between 1840 and 1903 survive near the original driveway location in front of the house. There were only flowers and other small plantings around the house between 1903 and 1932. A major landscaping effort began in 1932, under the direction of Mary R. Loockerman, of formal flower gardens and flowering trees. These were located on the west side of the house and at the south end of the front yard which borders on a field.

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S-2987 .3 Locust Grove
Rd. 34, Blanchard Road
Greenwood, Delaware

Significance

Locust Grove is significant as one of the most elaborate examples of rural residential architecture of the early nineteenth century in Sussex County, Delaware. Of the three Richards properties in Northwest Fork Hundred, Sussex County (Locust Grove, Middle Space and Poplar Level), Locust Grove is the most sophisticated architecturally, and the best preserved.

When it was constructed in 1828 by John Richards, the grandson of the builder of Poplar Level, the owner controlled one thousand twenty-seven acres, which is a far larger amount of land than any successive owner of the house has held. Indicative of his status in the community as a large landowner, Richards lavished attention on the design and construction of his house. The house was built in wood and brick, at a time when most houses in Sussex County were built solely of wood. Conveniently, there was a source of clay located just north of the house and lime and sand were abundant in the area. Besides the materials utilized on the house, the talents of a cabinetmaker-joiner of the Needles family of Talbot County, Maryland were employed for seven years to finish the interior of the brick section of Locust Grove. The results of his labors are most evident in the parlor, where the intricately carved Georgian and Federally-styled woodwork is excellently preserved and covered with only three layers of paint finishes. The existence of pierced wooden window valances and blinds in the parlor are highly unusual features to find in houses in Northwest Fork Hundred or Sussex County. A unique feature in the house is the small fireplace in the second floor bedroom, located over the stairway. Two vertical posts were placed, in 1959, beside the staircase on the first floor to lend both the staircase and the second floor hearth support. Such a fireplace, cantilevered from a load-bearing brick wall, is unusual.

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Following the death of John Richards Sr. in 1832, John Richards Jr. and his wife, Ann Polk Cary Richards, inherited Locust Grove. At the time of his death in 1853, John Richards Jr. controlled a great deal of land, according to the taxes he paid. It was the youngest of John Richards Jr.'s seven children, Charles Fleming Richards, who became active in law and politics in Delaware during the 1860's through 1980's.

John Emory Richards, older brother of Charles Fleming Richards and son of John Richards, Jr., was an intelligent and industrious farmer who lived at Locust Grove 1853-1868. At that time, he and his wife, Elizabeth Warren Wright Richards, moved into their new house at Middle Space. Mrs. John Richards, Jr. lived at Locust Grove until her death in 1874, when John Emory Richards bought the three hundred fifty-eight acre Locust Grove property and named it Locust Park.

John Richards, son of John Emory Richards, and his wife, Nellie, lived at Locust Grove from 1888-1893. After that time the four hundred and fifty-acre tract was jointly owned by Lewis W. Richards and his sister, Elizabeth Causey Richards, children of John Emory Richards. They held Locust Grove from 1897 until 1902. When Elizabeth C. Richards married Jay Clarence Loockerman in 1902, the property ownership was divided and the Loockermans received two hundred and seventy-four acres.

It was during the Loockermans' ownership of Locust Grove, 1903-1957, that major alterations were made. Comfort, efficient farm production and changing economic conditions were factors which allowed the owners to make alterations to the house, outbuildings and landscape. The two shingled sections of the house were removed in 1914 and subsequently replaced by the present clapboard sections. At the same time, the shingled kitchen building with a sloping "catslide" roof was moved to the north of the woodshed and subsequently adapted for use as a workshop until about 1955. The kitchen corner cupboard was moved into the new kitchen. Other changes that took place in the kitchen of the new house include the installation of a sink and a water closet in the stairway. This occurred in the 1940's. After the present frame section was built, the stepped passageway between the bedroom in the brick section and the second floor of the frame section was converted into the bedroom closet. In 1928, there was a fire in the west wall sitting room chimney. The fireplace was rebuilt but was relocated to the south (front) wall. The charred sitting room mantelpiece, bought in 1914, was removed. The exterior chimney is located on the south elevation. In the hall of the brick section, the original cellar door was repositioned to the top of the cellar stairs. The original cellar opening was filled with plaster. Other than the additions of interior plumbing and electricity in the 40's, there were no other major changes to the interior of the house.

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On the exterior of the house, alterations were made only to the porches 1914-1957. The front porch was added to the south (front) elevation of the house in 1914 and enclosed with screening about 1950. The back porch, which contained the pump, now known as the pantry, was enclosed with wood siding about 1946.

Several of the outbuildings were demolished 1914-1957. In 1906 a Richards family member built a barn on the site of the stables, built about 1881. A carriage house, built about 1880, was replaced by a machine shed in 1950. New construction included the outhouse, corncrib, henhouses and brooder.

Since their parents' death in 1957, the Loockerman children, Lewis Richards Loockerman and Mary Richards Loockerman have jointly owned the property. Lewis R. Loockerman's family lives nearby, while Mary R. Loockerman occupies the house. There has been only routine maintenance work on the property since 1957. The one hundred seventy-six and ninety-three hundredths-acre Locust Grove property is still farmed by members of the Richards and Loockerman families who live nearby.

Locust Grove received its name from the locust trees, which once lined the original winding driveway. An unknown number of them were planted between 1840 and 1903. The position of the driveway was changed in 1903 from the west side of the house to its present position on the east side; therefore, the locust trees growing to the south and west of the house appear to be growing in a front yard, rather than beside a driveway.

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In a sense, then, the Richards Historic District is a self-contained statement on the development of rural architecture in Sussex County during the past two centuries. Missing, unfortunately, are the earliest structure or structures built by the Richards family when they began occupying the land in the late seventeenth century. (The John Richards who built Poplar Level in 1758 was probably the third generation of his family on this land.) Even without the first structure, however, what remains is a remarkably complete architectural and historic statement. This is enhanced by the reflection of another dominant trend in the rural life of southern Delaware which is embodied in it. From the 1830's and 1840's onward a major out-migration occurred, leading away from the family farms and toward nearby towns or cities. Many went even farther afield, joining the westward migration. This trend was caused in part by a period of agricultural depression in these years. While the Richards family was much better off financially than many others in Sussex County, various younger members of the family were forced by circumstance to leave the farm. One of these, Charles Fleming Richards, a brother of John Emory Richards, builder of Middle Space, read law and became an attorney in the County Seat, Georgetown. His sons, Charles Sudler Richards and Robert Haven Richards, followed him in the law. C. S. Richards became Chief Justice of the Delaware Supreme Court. R. H. Richards moved to Wilmington, the state's largest city, and became one of Delaware's leading corporation lawyers and a leader in the civic and political life of the state. In 1939, R. H. Richards bought Poplar Level, which had recently been sold out of the Richards family in the settlement of an estate, and refurbished it. The original two-story wings of the house had burned partially, probably at the turn of the century, and had been rebuilt as one-story wings. In his 1939 work, R. H. Richards added new second stories to these wings and made other alterations to turn the house into a country house, while keeping the main core in near original condition. He continued to use the house as his country home until his death in 1952. This 1939 work, thus, is in a sense a continuation of what had gone before in the history of the Richards family's use of the land. It constitutes, moreover, the only major alteration of any of the three houses.

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References

MAJOR REFERENCES

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Deeds

Wills

Sussex County Assessment Record Books

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Deeds

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Sussex County Road Papers

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Census Records

Debt Books

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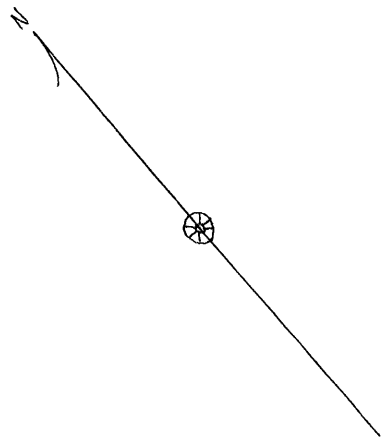
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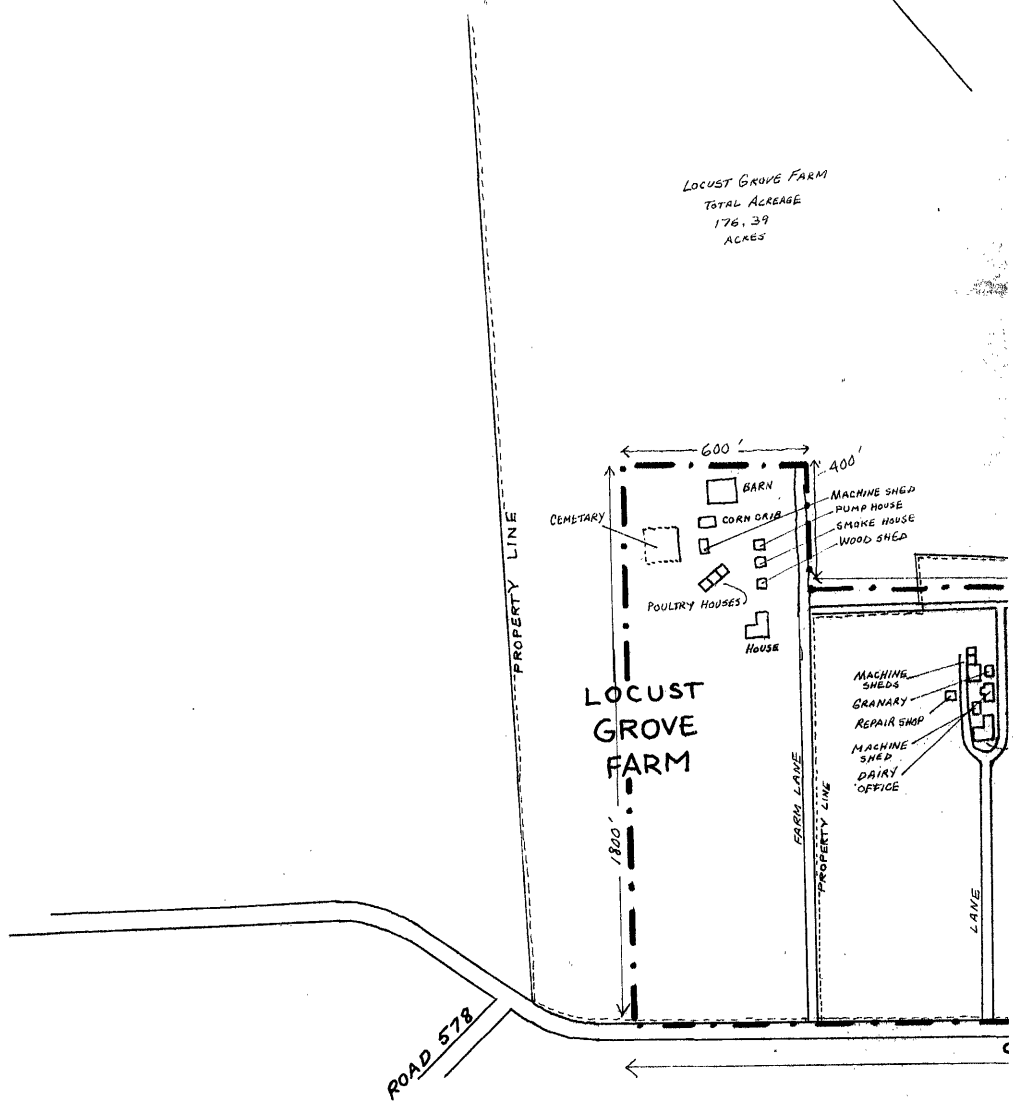
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated area of the Richards Historic District includes portions of the three Richards farms. Though the total acreage of the farms amounts to nearly 550 acres, the nominated area totals 141 acres. The boundaries were drawn in such a way as to include the three complexes of buildings in the district and the expanse of land between the three houses and County Road 34. It is felt that the visual relationship of the three farms as seen across the open space from County Road 34 is an important element in the impact of the district. The precise dimensions of the boundary lines may be seen on the accompanying diagram.

The boundary of the Richards Historic District begins at a point on the east side of County Road 34, 1,750 feet northwest of the County Road 34 - County Road 32 intersection. It runs 1,800 feet in a northeasterly direction and turns 90 degrees to the southeast, running 600 feet in a southeasterly direction. The line then turns 90 degrees to the southwest, running 400 feet in a southwesterly direction. The line then turns 90 degrees to the southeast, running 3,500 feet in a southeasterly direction. The line then turns 78 degrees to the south-southwest and runs 1,300 feet in a south-southwesterly direction to a point at the southeast corner of Poplar Level Farm along County Road 34 opposite the point where County Road 562 enters it. The line then follows County Road 34 in a west-northwesterly direction 4,450 feet to the place of beginning.

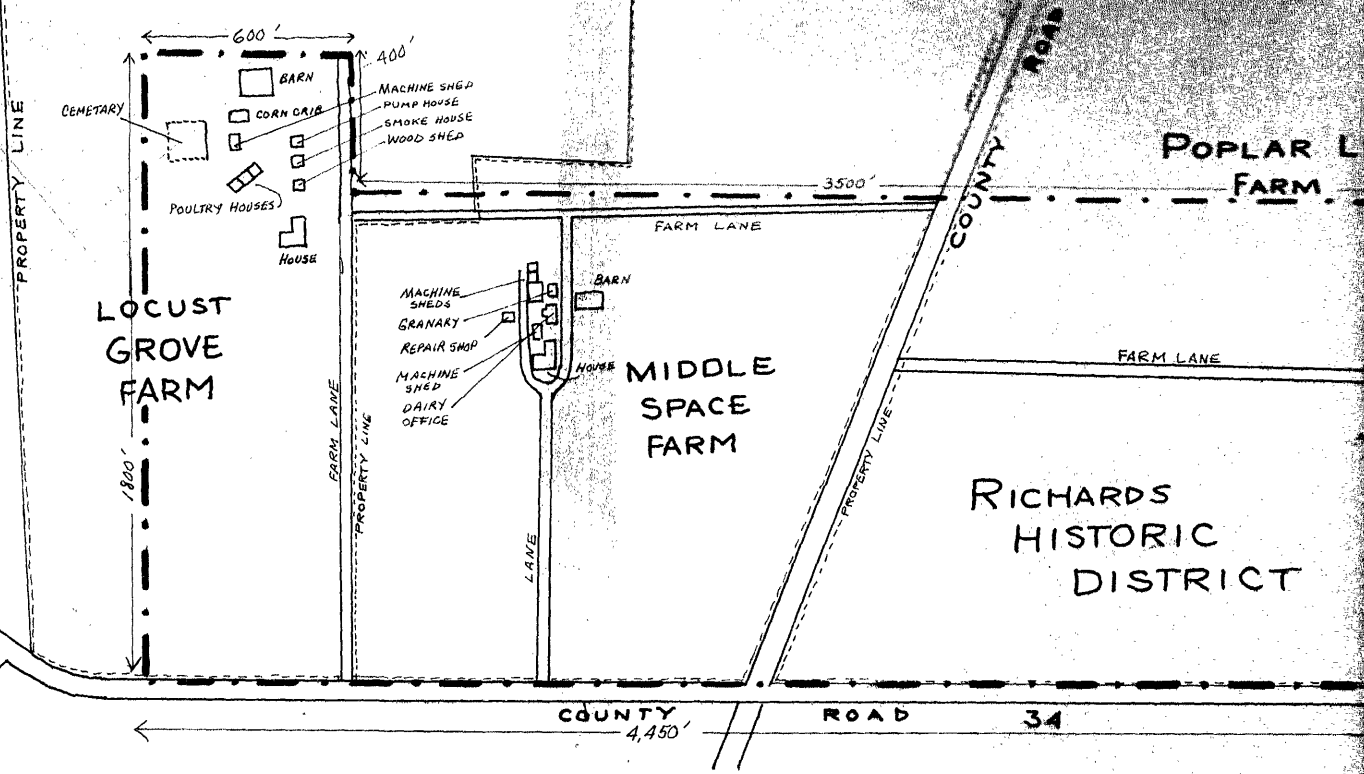


LOCUST GROVE FARM
TOTAL ACREAGE
176.39
ACRES

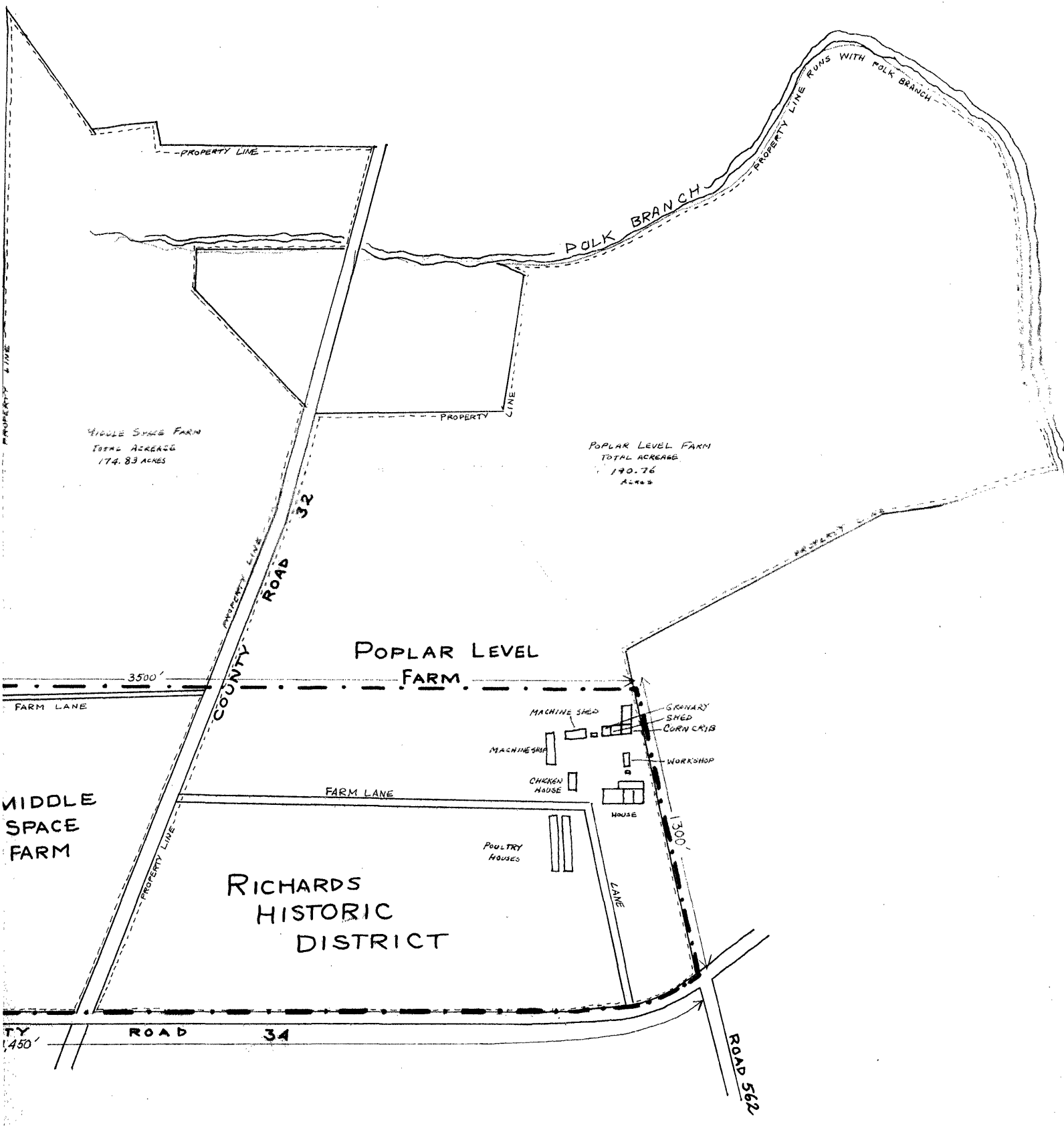


LOCUST GROVE FARM
TOTAL ACREAGE
176.39
ACRES

MIDDLE SPACE FARM
TOTAL ACREAGE
174.83 ACRES



--- DENOTES DISTRICT BOUNDARY



--- DENOTES DISTRICT BOUNDARY