

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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K-1324:

Property Name: J. F. Betz, House

Location and Verbal Boundary Description:

The J. F. Betz House is located on the north side of Route 6, the Smyrna-Millington Road, about one-half mile west of Road 133. The house sits on a 40-acre farm. The nomination includes the entire property in order to preserve and include the late-nineteenth and twentieth-century agricultural outbuildings. Tax Map No. 17-2-07; Deed Book R-21, p. 328.

Owner: Leata M. Leager
R. D. 1, Box 619
Clayton, De 19938

Description:

The J. F. Betz House is, in plan, a typical Delaware farmhouse for the mid-nineteenth century. Its embellishments, however, make it anything but typical. The building is an early attempt to incorporate some of the innovations of Queen Anne architecture with the more familiar Gothic-Revival and Greek-Revival architecture.

A 3-bay, double-pile, 2-story frame building, it retains all of its original decorative elements. The gable roof is pierced by a central cross gable. A heavy box cornice with partial returns runs around the roof on both the main block and on the rear wing. The cornice is further decorated with dentils and widely-spaced brackets. The cross gable has a narrow, one-over-one window with a fully described round-arch sash and window cornice. The corner boards are

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treated as pilasters with an inset vertical panel. The two-over-two windows are also elaborately decorated with a wide architrave and cornice window heads designed to repeat the roof cornice. The one-bay-wide entrance porch carries the same decorative elements on its cornice. The door is a wide double door with a five-light transom and sidelights. The motif on the windows is repeated here. The rear wing is less elaborate, but of similar design. It has a low hipped roof and six-over-six windows with narrower surrounds. The service functions of the household are incorporated in the rear wing.

The outbuildings are arranged in an L-shaped plan along the driveway. To the rear of the house is a privy, tool sheds, and garden. At the turn of the L is a nineteenth-century granary and barn. To the east of the barn is a twentieth-century chicken house.

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Historical Background:

The J. F. Betz House was constructed in the late 1870's by William A. Stevens, the son of William Stevens, builder of the W. Stevens' House (K-1366). The land on which the house is built was part of the purchase made by William Stevens from James Jones in 1858. Byle's Atlas of Kent County, published in 1859, shows the extent of the Stevens' purchase. Beer's 1868 Atlas of Delaware lists the owner of the house as J. F. Betz. However, Betz must have been a tenant and not an owner, because the land remained in the Stevens family until well into the twentieth century.

Both maps indicate that a house was standing on the property. This house was torn down and replaced with the Betz dwelling. This occurred after 1874, when William A. Stevens inherited the land from his father. Like many of the properties in this nomination, the J. F. Betz House is located on the Smyrna-Millington Road. This major transportation route was an important factor in the

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general rebuilding that took place in the region during the mid-nineteenth century. Because of its existence and maintenance, growers were able to ship their products either to the Philadelphia or Baltimore markets. With the railroad passing through Clayton, just to the east, the farmers' ability to ship to market was greatly increased. The shipment of dairy products was greatly enhanced by the greater speed of shipment.

Statement of Significance:

The J. F. Betz House is being nominated under Criterion C, as an example of adaptability of traditional forms. In choosing the design for his new house, William A. Stevens opted to employ the traditional 3-bay, center-hall house, but was also concerned enough with current stylistic trends to apply classical details to his house that were being made fashionable by the Queen Anne, or "Free Classic" school of architecture.