

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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APR 15 2016

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Downs House and Farm

other names/site number Ty Llwyd

2. Location

street & number 5793 Sound Avenue

☐

not for publication

city or town Riverhead

☐

vicinity

state New York code NY county Suffolk code 103 zip code 11901

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Ruth A. Purpoint DBHPO 3/24/16

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain):

for Elson H. Beall

5.31.16

Downs House and Farm
Name of Property

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property (Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
6	7	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
7	7	Total

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / Single Dwelling

AGRICULTURE / Animal Facility

AGRICULTURE / Storage

AGRICULTURE / Agricultural Outbuilding

AGRICULTURE / Agricultural Field

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / Single Dwelling

AGRICULTURE / Animal Facility

AGRICULTURE / Storage

AGRICULTURE / Agricultural Outbuilding

AGRICULTURE / Agricultural Field

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN / Italianate

NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone, Brick

walls: Shingle

roof: Asphalt

other:

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Downs House and Farm is located on the south side of Sound Avenue, west of Manor Lane, in the hamlet of Northville within the Town of Riverhead, Suffolk County. Located on the eastern half of Long Island, the Town of Riverhead is bordered by the Long Island Sound to the north, the Town of Southold to the east, the Towns of Southampton and Brookhaven to the south, and the Town of Brookhaven to the West. Sound Avenue is one of two primary east-west roads traversing Riverhead Town, the other being Main Road (Route 25) to the south. While several agricultural hamlets are stretched out along the road, the community is also often referred to as "Sound Avenue." Riverhead is the leading agricultural producer in Suffolk County; Sound Avenue, though heavily trafficked, still retains its rural character. For most of its distance, it is bordered by rich relatively flat farmland. The Downs Farm is surrounded by other agricultural properties in all directions. Indeed, it is possible from the south end of the farm to see over open potato fields and sod farms all the way to Main Road almost three miles away. No modern subdivisions or developments are visible in any direction. The farm is in Riverhead's core agricultural area and is designated as part of an "Agricultural Protection Zone" established by town planners in 2004.

The 34-acre farm is about 450 feet wide and 0.6 mile long and is divided into two parcels. It is a long and narrow "bowling alley" farm, typical of the shape found in the area, with the long sides following eleven o'clock lines first laid out in the 1661 Aquebogue Division. The parcel containing the house and most of the agricultural buildings is approximately two-and-a-half acres. The house faces north towards Sound Avenue, but is set well back from the road allowing a broad front lawn. A driveway extends from Sound Avenue and forms a loop in the rear yard. The family has always referred to this landscape feature as a pightle; this archaic word refers to a small meadow or enclosure.¹ An old hitching post stands in the center of the pightle. Mature trees and plantings are located along the road and near the house. Twelve permanent agricultural structures surround the main house, all laid out on a rigid grid typical of historic farmsteads in the area.

The remaining 32 ½ acre parcel contains the contemporary dairy barn and the farmland behind. The agricultural fields and farmyard are counted together as one historic landscape. There are also several temporary plastic-covered hoop structures located south of the main barn that house equipment or chickens; these have not been counted. The farmland immediately to the east of the farmyard is used for vegetable production. Most of the rest of the northern half of the farm is fenced for free-range cattle, including the field north of the dairy barn facing Sound Avenue. The south half of the farm is open fields, currently planted in hay. The farm is mostly flat sandy loam with a small hollow, originally a glacial kettle hole, on the east border about a third of the way back from Sound Avenue and extending into the neighboring farm to the east. This nomination includes both parcels, which have functioned as a distinct farm since the land was divided in 1873.

Narrative Description

Harrison Downs House, ca. 1874

The Harrison Downs House is a two-story, frame, four-bay by three-bay, Italianate with a one-story, one-bay hipped-roof wing on the right (west) and a one-story, one-bay shed-roofed wing in the rear. The house is

¹ Mary Downs always used the word "pightle" (pronounced PIE-thel or PIE-khel) to describe the loop the driveway made in the rear yard. Down the street at The Hallockville Museum Farm, the Hallock family used the same word to describe the enclosed grassy yard between the barn and the road around which their driveway looped. Mary's direct ancestors, 17th century Puritan settlers from East Anglia, brought the terminology with them when they settled on the East End. Although not found in most modern dictionaries, the word continued in common use in this area through the early 20th century.

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covered in unpainted cedar shakes, applied over the original white-painted clapboards in 1921. The foundation is made of cut blue stone, likely from Connecticut. The house's shallow hipped roof extends to form deep eaves.

A one-story, hip-roofed porch extends across the façade (north elevation) and onto the west elevation. The porch, which was added in 1921, is supported by paired, square columns on a solid knee-wall covered by wood shakes. This porch wraps around the left side to meet the west wing. The entrance is located in the second bay from the west; two-over-two windows surrounded by original trim light the remaining bays on the first floor. An exterior door with four glass panes over three horizontal panels protects the entrance door, which features two elongated panes. The doorway is capped by dentils and a simple cornice. Four two-over-two windows light the second floor.

On the west elevation, the porch extends across the first bay and meets a one-bay by one-bay hipped roof wing. The wing is lit by two-over-two windows, has a simple decorative cornice under the roofline, and appears to have been built contemporaneously with or soon after the construction of the house. A small, brick exterior chimney extends across the elevation. A two-over-two window lights the southernmost bay of the first floor; two windows light the second floor. A one-story, one-bay, shed-roofed ca. 1917 addition with an entrance door extends from the westernmost bay on the rear (south) elevation. The remaining bays on the elevation are lit by two-over-two windows. On the east elevation, the northernmost and southernmost bays are lit by two-over-two windows on the first and second floors. A small, brick exterior chimney is located on the elevation.

On the interior, the first floor is divided into a large parlor, dining room, sitting room, office, kitchen, pantry, and mud/storage room. The large parlor is located on the east side, connected with sliding doors to a dining room in the southeast corner. A smaller sitting room and small office are on the west side. The spacious kitchen occupies about two-thirds of the south side. The pantry and mud/storage room, which Mary Downs referred to as her "back place," is to the south of the kitchen; the "back place" was likely added ca. 1917 and was originally sided with 8-inch vertical beadboard identical to that used on the Main Barn and Old Chicken House. On the second floor, the house is divided into four bedrooms. The original layout had a large ballroom on the entire east half of the second floor, which was converted into two bedrooms. When Mary and Leland Downs moved there in 1916, they divided that space into two bedrooms and several storage closets. There is an original basement under the southwest quarter of house, made of large brick below ground level and cut bluestone above. Exposed floor joists in the basement are sawn with a vertical action saw, consistent with the period. Just off the southwest corner is a cistern that originally gathered rainwater from the roof and was connected to a pitcher pump in the kitchen.

Washhouse/Woodhouse/Outhouse, early 1920s

Situated directly behind the main house, this one-story, two-bay by four-bay, side-gabled, frame building is covered in vertical 6-inch bead board painted white. A board-and-batten door and one two-over-two window are located on the west gable end, two small doors on the north side, one two-over-two window and one large sliding door on the south. This structure replaced a smaller summer kitchen on the location and originally served as a combination washhouse, woodhouse and outhouse. Mary Downs kept her gasoline powered washing machine in the west end of the structure, which today serves as a farm retail shop and egg-grading room. The far left door on the north facade accesses a two-seat outhouse which survives intact. The large south door accesses a space that still serves as a woodhouse. Crude lean-to sheds on the east and southeast protect firewood for the main house, which is heated entirely with a wood stove.

Man's House, early 1920s

This small, one-bay by two-bay, front-gabled frame structure is located behind and slightly southeast of the woodhouse. It is sided in 6-inch vertical bead board painted white, the same as the washhouse, indicating that the two structures may have been built at the same time. A small four-pane window lights the west elevation

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and a simple plank door is located on the south gable end. Historically used by hired help, this structure is now used for curing sweet potatoes.

Old Chicken House, ca. 1917

This one-story, one-bay by three-bay, side-gable structure located southeast of the Man's House probably dates to about 1917. It is sided in vertical 8-inch, white bead board, the same as the Main Barn, indicating that the two structures may have been built about the same time. Double, board-and-batten doors, one of which has a six-pane window, are located on the west elevation; the opening, and a simple secondary door, are covered in chicken wire fencing. The south elevation has one board-and-batten human door with an interior, chicken wire screen door and two, half-size board and batten chicken doors. The building is still used to house chickens.

Camp Upton Building, 1917, ca. 1920

This one-story, three-bay by three-bay, side-gabled structure is located slightly south of the Old Chicken House. It has a low pitched roof, is covered in board-and-batten siding, and features a single sliding door in the west gable end. This structure was originally a horse stable at the World War I army training facility, Camp Upton, about 20 miles away in Yaphank, New York.² At the end of the war, in 1920, buildings at the site were auctioned off. The Downs family acquired one stable building, 120 by 30 feet. A section became the summer bungalow on Peconic Bay of Lewis Downs, Leland Down's father. The bungalow is still standing. Another section became a general purpose farm building on the Lewis Downs farm, visible across the fields to the west, but now demolished. Another section was sold to the Sydlowski family across the street. And the final 30-foot section was installed on this farm. The structure was disassembled and probably carted by rail to Jamesport's station and then transported the last four miles by wagon to the farm where it was reassembled. Numbers for the horse stalls can still be seen on interior framing. The plank sheeting on the west end has hastily painted numbers on the inside, likely to allow easily reassembly. The roof sheathing was re-installed upside down to avoid having to pull all of the broken nails from the original roof. This lightly framed building was designed as a temporary structure during the war, but has survived a hundred years of hard use since on this farm. There are also several other Camp Upton buildings scattered around Riverhead, most notably a series of officer houses on McDermott Avenue in the Downtown Riverhead Historic District.

Main Barn, ca. 1917

The Main Barn is a typical side-gabled, English-style barn. It was built by Frederick B. Hallock (c. 1869-1934), a contractor-builder from Jamesport. The six-bay by three-bay barn rests on a concrete foundation. The siding is 8-inch vertical bead board, except for the west gable end which has painted cedar shingles. A two-bay by three-bay lean-to shed extends from the west gable end; this was added before 1926 and is sided in 6-inch vertical beadboard, similar to that used on the Wash House and Man's House. The original barn structure is 42 by 30, feet with the shed adding an additional 22 feet to the west.

Two large main sliding doors serving the threshing floor dominate the north elevation; a smaller sliding door is located to the east. A dirt ramp serves these two doors, as the main barn floor is about three feet above grade. A band of vertical boards finished with a scallop pattern runs underneath the roofline; a horizontal window with six fixed panes is centrally located in this band over the main doors. To the east, the lean-to has one person door and one six-over-one window. The scallop pattern continues around to the west, running horizontally across the elevation. A small, open square window is located on the gable. The south elevation has a large sliding door in the center and a smaller sliding door on the left (west); the scallop pattern runs above the doors as on the north elevation. Concrete steps covered by two wooden doors lead to the original potato cellar on

² Brookhaven National Laboratory, "Our History," <https://www.bnl.gov/about/>;
"Real Estate: Camp Upton buildings reincarnated on the North Fork," *News-Review*, February 22, 2011.

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the southeast corner. The south elevation of the lean-to has two six-over-one windows and a sliding door. On the west, the lean-to is lit by seven six-over-one windows. Old photos show black letters "L.L. Downs & Son" on the west gable end. The exterior is all original, except for the doors and windows in the west shed, which were added in the 1970s when David, the current owner, converted this area to a farm shop.

All of the interior framing is post-and-beam construction with sawn lumber and mortise-and-tenon joints. Under the barn is a spacious potato cellar, about 30 by 28 feet. This is a feature that began appearing under North Fork barns in the mid-19th century, as potatoes became an important crop in the area. It was capable of holding about 4,200 bushels. The main barn floor has a number of hatches. Potatoes were dumped down these hatches into canvas chutes to protect them from bruising. Originally all of the potatoes had to be bagged and carted up the cellar step by hand. However, Leland Downs later installed a homemade elevator that was operated from a set of rollers onto which he drove his Model T Ford Truck. By putting the truck in gear, he was able to use the elevator while loading potatoes into the back of the vehicle.

The earliest barns on the North Fork were always "English" style barns, rectangular buildings with doors on the middle of the broad side walls, as opposed to "Dutch" style barns found elsewhere in New York state that were closer to square and had doors on the gable ends. This English barn design, also referred to as the three-bay barn, was brought to the area from East Anglia by the area's earliest Puritan settlers -- including ancestors of the Downs family -- in the 17th century.³ While English barns were replaced by more modern, adaptable gable-entrance styles elsewhere in New York, they continued to be built on the North Fork well into the 20th century.⁴ The continued use of the three-bay barn type reflects agricultural trends on the North Fork; while other regions needed to adapt their barns to new activities, such as dairying, farmers on the North Fork continued to find the three-bay barn serviceable. One other interesting local trend is that these barns were generally painted -- and almost never painted barn red. The choice of colors tended to be white like this one or pastels, and some of the older barns still sport these color schemes. While farmers preferred inexpensive "barn red" in many areas of the country, many farmers on the North Fork were determined to show their prosperity by painting their barns any color but red.⁵

Garage, ca. 1930

This side-gabled, three-bay by two-bay building rests on a concrete foundation. The vertical bead board siding is 5 1/2 inches wide, indicating that this structure is a little newer than the barn shed or Wash House. The east elevation, which faces the farmyard, is covered by three sliding doors. Three windows and a small door on the south elevation, the location of the farm's original machine shop. Three windows light the west elevation, and one is on the north elevation.

Terry Outhouse, 1862, moved ca. 1975, non-contributing

This one-bay by one-bay, front-gabled, three-seater outhouse is covered in vertical plank siding. A vertical plank door is located on the southern elevation. The building is not framed; rather, the plank walls are self-supporting. This building originally stood behind 5229 Sound Avenue where David Wines grew up. That house and this outhouse were built by George Mitchell Terry in 1862. This building was moved to this location in the mid-1970s and currently used to store chicken feed.

³ John Michael Vlach, in his book *Barns*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2003, differentiates between the English barn (which he calls a "three-bay barn" (see pages 39-43) and Dutch barns (see pages 73-82) primarily on the basis of layout, with the Dutch barn having its principal entrances on the gable ends, being more square shape, having a wider central passageway and having a taller roof. In contrast, the three-bay barns were more rectangular with their smaller central passageways entered from the non-gable sides and flanked by wider bays for stabling animals and storing hay.

⁴ Vlach, *Barns*, p 44-48.

⁵ For example, according to an interview with Estelle Evans, her grandfather Herbert Wells, who farmed in Riverhead in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was Mary Downs's father, always painted his barns a cream color because he thought that red looked cheap.

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Lapinski Chicken House, early-20th-century, moved ca. 1975, non-contributing

Located east of the Terry outhouse and south of the Camp Upton Building, the Lapinski Chicken House is a three-bay by one-bay, shed-roofed building. The south elevation has two board and batten doors and three windows, all with chicken wire coverings or screen doors. This building was originally located on the former Lapinski farm on the northwest corner of Sound Avenue and Penny's Landing road. David moved this building to his mother's house in the 1960s, when he first started raising chickens as a young 4-H Club member. When he moved to the Harrison Downs House after his marriage in 1974, he moved the chicken house to this property.

School House Kitchen, ca. 1911, moved ca. 1975, non-contributing

This one-bay by one-bay, shed-roofed building is clad in painted wood shingles and is located east of the Camp Upton building. The south elevation has double plank doors with interior chicken wire screen doors; three square windows are located above the doors. The east and west elevations each have open windows covered in chicken wire.

This structure originally served as a ca. 1911 addition to the District 10 one-room school house, which originally stood about two miles to the west on Sound Avenue. David's great-grandfather, Herbert Wells, acquired the school when a new larger structure was built combining two districts. He used the building to house hired help. He divided the main school room into four rooms and added this wing as a kitchen. In 1992, David's brother and sister-in-law, Richard Wines and Nancy Gilbert, acquired the school and moved it to their property in Jamesport where it is restored today. At that time, David detached the kitchen wing and moved it to his farm where it has been used as a chicken house ever since.

Wells Chicken House, ca. 1900, moved ca. 1975, non-contributing

Located east of the Lapinski chicken house, this one-bay by two-bay, front-gabled building is covered in shakes and has vertical boards in the gables. The south elevation has two board and batten doors, one with a six-pane window, two chicken wire screen doors, and an open window covered in chicken wire in the gable. The east and west elevations each have open windows covered in chicken wire. This building was originally located on the farm of Vernon Wells Jr., about a mile to the west on Sound Avenue near the intersection of with Phillip's Lane; David moved it here in the mid-1970s to use as a chicken house.

Potato Storage Barn, 1975, non-contributing

This four-bay by eight-bay, front-gabled building covered in green asbestos shingles sits just to the east of the main house. It is 80 by 40 feet and has a capacity of storing 12,000 hundredweight (20,000 bushels) of potatoes. A large overhead door and a small pedestrian door are on the north gable end facing Sound Avenue. There are no windows. The only exterior openings are three ventilation hatches in the south gable end. It is wood-frame construction and has 8-inch-deep well-insulated walls designed to keep potatoes from freezing in the winter. The ceiling is also heavily insulated to prevent condensation from dripping onto potatoes. It was built by Harold Reeve, a Mattituck contractor, and cost \$24,000. David built this structure shortly after he moved to this farm. At the time he was growing about 70 acres of potatoes and realized he did not have sufficient room to store them all.

The purpose of a potato storage barn was to allow the farmer to store the crop after harvest, when the price was typically lowest, and then sell the potatoes over the winter when presumably the price would be higher. In a typical year, potatoes could be loaded into the barn in October and then sold over the winter as the market presented opportunities. Potatoes generate their own heat, so can be kept over the winter in a well-insulated building. The bigger danger is having the potatoes get too hot. Potatoes could only be loaded into the barn

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after cool weather arrived in October and needed to be emptied out by about April. If an unlucky farmer filled the barn and then faced an unseasonal warm spell, the potatoes would rot quickly and become worthless. The ventilation hatches were designed to be opened at night to let in cool air to help prevent this problem. The building is also designed to prevent dehydration of the potatoes, which would reduce their market weight. David gave up growing potatoes commercially in 2012; the barn is now used for general farm storage.

Dairy Barn, 2014, non-contributing

This new dairy barn was constructed in 2014 by Christopher Wines, David and Elizabeth's younger son. This is a 7,200 square foot modern compost-bedded-pack pole barn covered in sheet siding. The main structure is side-gable with open sides, and is designed to accommodate 25 dairy cows although it currently houses only about half that many. A smaller front-gabled wing to the north houses milk processing equipment. This structure was built by Sam King, an Amish contractor from Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. Chris is one of two licensed sellers of raw milk on Long Island. It is probably the only dairy barn built on Long Island in the past century.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Agriculture

Architecture

Period of Significance

ca. 1873-1965

Significant Dates

ca. 1916

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with Harrison Downs's purchase of the property and construction of the house ca. 1873. The property has been continuously used as an agricultural from that time through the present day; as a result, the period of significance has been ended in 1965 to illustrate its continuing significance.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Downs House and Farm is significant under Criterion A for its long and varied agricultural use, which helps illustrate the changing trends in agricultural practice in Suffolk County. Established as a separate farm in 1873 by Harrison Downs, it has been owned and occupied by family members since that date and continues to operate as a commercial farm today. It initially functioned as more of a gentleman's retreat in the late 19th century, but was operated as a typical Eastern Long Island potato farm through much of the 20th century. Currently, the farm is operated by the fifth and sixth generations of the family. Recently, like many farms in the area, it has specialized in ways that serve primarily a retail customer base -- in this case selling raw milk, fresh eggs and farm-grown vegetables directly to customers.

The Downs House and Farm is also significant under Criterion C as good examples of both the Italianate style in a rural setting and vernacular local farm architecture. The nominated property includes the ca. 1873-4 Harrison Downs House and a complex of early-twentieth century agricultural buildings. The house started as a gentleman's country retreat and was built in the Italianate style more appropriate to an urban setting than to its farm location. No other examples of Italianate farmhouses exist in the historic agricultural community on Sound Avenue. The Downs family modified the house in 1921 by adding a wide, wrap-around front porch to make it more like other farmhouses in the area. The property also includes a ca. 1917 English type barn that is a good example of this barn design that characterized this area from the 17th century through the 1930s. Furthermore, the farmyard itself is an excellent example of the typical layout of a North Fork farm in the late-19th and early 20th century.

The nomination boundary takes in the entire acreage that has been part of this farm since 1873. The farm contains a complex of buildings dating from 1874 through 2014. While the resources moved to the property or built after 1965 are counted as non-contributing resources, they reflect the evolution of this farm as well as wider agricultural trends in the region during the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Early History of Sound Avenue and Northville

The first European settlers arrived on the North Fork of Long Island in the 1640s. The majority were Puritans seeking to escape persecution; tens of thousands arrived between 1629 and 1641, in a movement that has become known as the Great Puritan Migration. Most of these immigrants landed in Boston or nearby Massachusetts ports, but within a few years began spreading out throughout New England. Because of its close proximity by water to New England and promise of good farmland, the Twin Forks of Long Island attracted several groups of these Puritan immigrants. Because of this original settlement pattern and geographic proximity to New England, the East End of Long Island developed architectural and cultural forms that were more closely tied to New England. These ties were also apparent in the local dialect, which included archaic East Anglian words into the early 20th century.⁶

These first arrivals on the North Fork settled initially in what is now the hamlet of Southold, about eight miles to the east of Northville. The rest of the North Fork was essentially common land for the first two decades. But then in the 1660s and 70s, as soon as somewhat satisfactory title was finally established from the Native Americans, the Southold undertook a series of divisions or "dividends" in which all of its common land was divided up amongst the freeholders of the town.

⁶ See David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, Oxford University Press, 1989, for a general discussion of the Puritan migration. See Warren Hall, *Pagans, Puritans, Patriots of Yesterday's Southold*, Cutchogue-New Suffolk Historical Council, 1975, p.14-28 for more information on the early founders of Southold Town.

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A Southold Town meeting on November 20, 1661, voted that the land "West of the Canoe Place" to the end of the town be laid out in "smaull lotts."⁷ Each original lot was approximately 3.5 to 4.0 miles long, but only forty rods or 660 feet wide, and contained about 250 acres, with boundaries dividing the allotments along the "eleven o'clock lines" that still define the landscape today. These boundaries, which referred to the eleven o'clock position on the compass dial, or roughly 30 degrees west of north on the magnetic compass dial as it read in 1661. Most of the original allotments were quickly subdivided within a generation or two of the grants -- resulting in farms that ranged from about 30 to 100 acres. The east and west boundaries of virtually all of the farms in the area still follow these eleven o'clock lines. The only way to subdivide the long narrow lots into smaller lots that still had frontage on Sound Avenue or Main Road was to create even narrower, but quite long farms; known colloquially as "bowling alley farms," they are often only a few hundred feet wide but sometimes a mile or more long.

Gradually, as the Southold population grew, settlers began spreading out both east and west from the original settlement. Sound Avenue, which extended from Mattituck to the Wading River, existed by the 1680s and was one of two primary roads west; it was known by several names but was generally referred to as the North Road until 1899. The Northville area was relatively distant from the core of Southold; few pioneers began filtering into the area in significant numbers until the late 17th and early 18th centuries. These settlers were often the children of the 1661 grantees and mostly second and third generation descendants of the original Southold settlers; most were looking for land, driven by the pressures of an expanding population and attracted by the fertile-but-empty land in the area that had been organized and divided in the 1661 Aquebogue Division.⁸

The early settlers along Sound Avenue were all farmers. By the time they arrived, most of the original allotments had already been subdivided several times -- resulting in farms of 60 to 120 acres or so; the majority of the acreage remained uncleared woodland. The farms were primarily for subsistence, but did produce small surpluses of grains and livestock that were sold into the commercial market. Although Peconic Bay and Long Island Sound were both nearby, there is no evidence that any early Northville settlers earned their living primarily from the sea. However, these pioneering farmers certainly took advantages of the resources that the bay offered; fish, eels, clams and oysters were an important part of their diet. Moreover, as time went on these farmers began to use seaweed and fish as fertilizer on their fields to increase soil fertility. They also harvested salt hay for their livestock.

The area was never wealthy in the 18th century and recovered slowly from the economic devastation of the Revolution and British occupation, as well as the impact of Hessian Fly on wheat crops and the general exhaustion of the sandy soils. Typical farms raised a wide variety of crops, most of which were consumed by the family. These included wheat, rye, oats, corn and flax. Most farms also had cattle, hogs and sheep.

Harrison Downs: A Gentleman Farmer

Joshua Harrison Downs (1843-1912) acquired this farm in 1873 and probably built the house in 1874. He was the son of Joshua and Laura Terry Downs, who lived on Manor Lane on a farm near the south end of Ty Llwyd Farm.⁹ The Downses, like virtually all the families in the Northville community, had deep roots in the area. The first Downs on Long Island, William Downs (1667-1751) was not one of the founding settlers in Southold who arrived in the 1640s. He arrived from Boston soon thereafter, sometime before 1691, probably between 1683

⁷ *Southold Town Records*, Vol. I, p. 350.

⁸ See Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years: Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636-1736*, Norton Essays in American History.

⁹ The house where Harrison was born was destroyed by fire in the early 20th century, but his parent's simple English-style barn still survives. One of Harrison's brothers, Sheldon Roe Downs, built a new house on Manor Lane, closer to Sound Avenue, in 1860. This house still survives and is visible from parts of the Ty Llwyd farmyard.

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and 1687. His father was part of the Great Migration of Puritans that came from England to New England in the 1630s. He was too late to be given a parcel of land in the 1661 Aquebogue Division, but soon after arriving apparently acquired one of the original lots extending from Long Island Sound to Peconic Bay just west of Edgar Avenue and the Aquebogue School. William's sons, William Downs Jr. (1700-1771) and John (1704-1745) were early settlers in Aquebogue with homes on the south and north side of Main Road respectively and were both among the pioneers of Riverhead Town who helped build the Jamesport Meeting House in 1731.¹⁰

The second William's descendants stayed on or near their Aquebogue parcel for the next three generations until one of his great grandsons, Joshua (1811-1894) acquired the farm on Manor Lane where Harrison was born. Harrison's mother, Laura Terry, was from another of the old North Fork families, a direct descendant of Richard Terry (1612-1675), one of Southold's founding settlers.

Joshua and Laura Terry Downs were fortunate to establish their farm during the 1840s, when agriculture became a more lucrative occupation in the region as a result of improved methods, new crops, improved transportation methods and the growth of New York City.¹¹ Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, the potato gradually became the region's primary crop. Potatoes were ideally suited to the area's light sandy soil. Potatoes are an amazing crop. They produce more calories per acre than any other major food staple. Indeed, in the temperate zone only corn comes close and wheat is only a third as productive. Commercial potato production began before the Civil War, but initially the labor-intensive nature of the crop limited production to a few acres on each farm. As new inventions gradually mechanized the production of potatoes, increasing acreage was devoted to the crop. By the end of the century, a virtual potato monoculture existed on the North Fork. This increased prosperity is reflected by the appearance of two-story homes of increasing size along Sound Avenue in that period. It also allowed for families to travel more, expand their cultural horizons, and invest in greater education for their children.

Harrison attended the District 11 elementary school, the westernmost of two one-room elementary schools that served Northville. It was located on Sound Avenue, just a little west of Manor Lane -- a short walk for young Harrison. He later attended the Northville Academy, a former church turned into a private school, and eventually taught there and even served briefly as principal.¹²

Harrison attended Yale College and graduated in the class of 1866. At Yale he was honored by membership in the Yale Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa.¹³ According to his class book: "Harrison Downes (Northville) entered at beginning Sophomore year. Since graduation has taught at Easthampton, LI, Norwalk, Conn, and in New York

¹⁰ Arthur Channing Downs, Jr, *The Downs Family of Long Island*, typescript, 1959, p. 10-12, 24, 39 and 41; Virginia Wines, *Pioneers of Riverhead Town*, 1981, p. 24-35.

¹¹ Period diaries and account books indicate that the principal products brought into the new port at Jamesport in the 1830s were ash and other materials used by farmers for fertilizer. See Richard Wines, "James Tuthill Finds a Metropolis," unpublished MSS chapter for book, 2010.

¹² Harrison's Greek and Latin books were part of a special exhibit about the building. See "The Sound Avenue Grange Hall: Its Many Lives," Special Exhibit at Hallockville Museum Farm, 2013; A Congregational Church was built in Aquebogue on Main Road in 1831 and moved three years later to a location about a mile west of Ty Llwyd on Sound Avenue, where it became the center of the Northville community. In 1859 the original Northville church was converted to a private academy. Harrison Downs was both a student, and later a teacher and principal, at that academy. A steeple was added and a new church built across the street. Harrison Downs, as well as his great-nephew Leland Downs were members of that church. In 1867 the Northville Academy also become the headquarters of the Riverhead Town Agricultural Society, in which Harrison probably, and certainly his nephew Lewis Downs who inherited the farm, participated. The Agricultural Society served as a forum for the area's progressive farmers to discuss the latest developments in agricultural practices. It also functioned as a cooperative for the purchase of fertilizer and other supplies. In 1913 the building became the meeting place of the Sound Avenue Grange, in which Mary and Leland Downs and their daughter Virginia Wines were active participants.

¹³ *Catalogue of Members, Yale Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, Alpha of Connecticut*, 1905, p. 178

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City, also has been reading law, and expects eventually to enter that profession."¹⁴ At Yale and Columbia Harrison spelled his name "Downes" with an extra "e" not used by any other family members. The reason is not known, perhaps to distinguish himself. Harrison graduated from Columbia Law School in 1871, practiced patent law for about five years and then engaged in private tutoring until 1896.¹⁵

It was an extraordinary accomplishment for Harrison to attend Yale and Columbia. Most of his family was not educated beyond grade school and only a few made it through a local academy. In the entire second half of the 19th century, he is the only one from the Sound Avenue community that is known to have attended Yale or any other college or law school. Many years later, a collection of his patent office books was found in the attic of the house, along with bound editions of *Scientific American* and some amateur scientific equipment that attested to his intellectual and professional interests.

In 1873, Harrison bought a 34-acre parcel on Sound Avenue from Charles M. Warner of Brooklyn.¹⁶ Harrison Downs's purchase was only the second -- and the last -- time that this land was sold in the 384 years since the First Aquebogue Division. Charles Warner had inherited the land from his late father, Benjamin F. Warner, who probably lived in a house that stood just to the west. The Warner farms were both part of a double allotment granted to the "Widow Cooper" according to the records of the First Aquebogue Division of 1661.¹⁷ She was Margaret Cooper, the widow of Thomas Cooper who had died in 1658, three years before the division. She was the only woman who received land in the division. Two of her daughters inherited this land and they in turn sold the part north of Main Road to Nathaniel Warner in 1718.¹⁸ The land descended unchanged through the Warner family until the late 19th century. Upon Charles Warner's father's death, the long narrow farm, about 900 by 3,200 feet, was divided the way local farms typically were -- in half the long way, producing two even narrower farms of the same length. One son, George E. Warner, got the house, outbuildings, and land on the west half. The other son, Charles, got the unbuilt farmland on the east half.¹⁹ Charles, who had moved to Brooklyn, married the daughter of a Scottish-born brick-layer and become a bookkeeper, had no need for his half of the family farm and thus sold it to Harrison Downs.

Harrison built a house on the land soon after his purchase. The only evidence we have of the date of construction is a notation in the diary of a neighboring farmer, Samuel Tuthill. On July 25, 1874, Tuthill recorded that "I went R Head carried grain to Vails mill & got load lumber for Harrison Downs."²⁰ "R head" was his shorthand for Riverhead. The Vail family had a grist mill and also a lumber yard and planing mill in downtown Riverhead. It is possible that the woodwork in the house was planed at Vail's mill.²¹ Presumably rather than returning with an empty wagon, Tuthill carried Downs's lumber for a house, barn, or outbuildings

¹⁴ Quoted in Virginia Wines, Family Album, private collection.

¹⁵ *Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University, 1910-1915*, Yale University, 1915, p. 418-9. *Officers and Graduates of Columbia University, 1754-1882*, Columbia University, p. 161

¹⁶ Suffolk County Clerk's Office, Deed from Charles M. Warner to Harrison Downs; The deed says that it was 37 1/2 acres "more or less," but in actuality there were only about 34 acres in the parcel.

¹⁷ V. Wines, *Album X*

¹⁸ Virginia Wines, *Pioneers*, p. 70.

¹⁹ The deed uses standard boiler-plate language to describe a "Certain track land" in the Village of Northville "with the buildings thereon situate." But, in fact, there were no houses or other improvements on the parcel that Charles Warner sold to Harrison Downs. When the Warner farm was divided, Charles's brother received the family house and Charles, with no need for a house, received just undeveloped land. This is confirmed by both the 1858 Chace map and the 1873 Beers map (see Figures 1 & 2). Both maps only show the Warner house on the farm next door to the west, where the Cichanowicz farmhouse now stands. Although Harrison Downs acquired the farm late in 1873, even if he started construction that year, it would have been too late to have been surveyed for the Beers *Atlas* published the same year.

²⁰ Samuel Tuthill, *Diary 1863 to 1889*, Typescript by Virginia Wines, Hallockville Museum Farm and Suffolk County Historical Society.

²¹ Stark, *The Halcyon Years 1861-1919*. Maple Hill Press, 2005, p. 25.

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on his property. In 1875 the *Long Island Traveler*, published in Mattituck, reported that Harrison was building an addition on his house.²² Photographs of the house taken around 1900 show only one wing, the small west wing. Inspection of its foundation and other construction details indicate that this was almost certainly built at the same time as the rest of the house. So perhaps the newspaper account confused construction on the house with that of an addition.

The Italianate design of Harrison's new house was unusual in the Sound Avenue farming community, but it reflected Harrison Downs's exposure to contemporary styles in New York City. The Italianate style had become popular during the mid-19th century as a picturesque, highly decorated alternative to earlier styles based on classical precedents or simpler, vernacular styles. The style was predominant in urban areas across the country and was adapted for a variety of residential and commercial buildings.

While some Italianate houses were built in more urban areas of Riverhead, Harrison Downs built the only fully Italianate house within Sound Avenue's agricultural community. Rather than choosing to build homes wholly in the fashionable style, North Fork farming families preferred to add Italianate ornamentation to familiar vernacular, side-hall homes; however, even these modified examples remained uncommon in the area. Downs's choice of the style was almost certainly intended to reflect his education and urbanity. It also projected that while he had left the area as a farmer's son, he was returning as a sort of gentleman farmer. The Downs House itself is a simple adaptation of the style. Its square massing, shallow hipped roof, and wide, overhanging eaves are typical, but other choices muted the bold style. Simple window surrounds, rather than more dramatic hooded or bracketed types, framed the windows and historic photographs confirm that brackets were never installed under the roofline. This relative simplicity is carried over to the interior, which features stock doors, trim, and a staircase typical of the period. However, the interior does have 10-foot ceilings -- probably considered stylish by Harrison Downs, but were seen as impractical by Mary Downs forty years later.

Harrison's new house on Sound Avenue served as a country seat and also helped him maintain local ties within the community he had grown up in. While he was studying at Columbia Law School, Harrison maintained a residence at 272 Madison Avenue.²³ An 1875 New York City directory lists him as a lawyer living at the same address.²⁴ The 1880 Federal Census shows Harrison as a lawyer, living as one of 19 boarders at 112 Madison Avenue in New York City.

At some point before 1900, and possibly a decade or so earlier, Harrison moved back to Northville permanently. The 1900 Federal Census lists "Joshua H." Downs as a lawyer living in Northville with his sister. Rosalie (1851 to 1941), his mentally disabled younger sister, lived with Harrison and served as his housekeeper. Her name is carved on the inside of a window pane in the upstairs southwest bedroom of the house. Harrison never married. According to family oral history, Harrison did not like his sister's cooking and generally dined nearby with his nephew, Lewis E. Downs (son of his brother Sheldon). Lewis's wife, Rose Elma (Tuthill) Downs, was able to purchase a piano with the money Harrison gave her for board.²⁵

While Harrison was clearly aware of the value of his farmland, it appears that he was not personally invested in farming; agricultural work on the property was completed by hired hands or tenant farmers. He had a barn on the property and an undated, ca. 1910 photo shows threshing on the Harrison Downs place." Harrison purchased the farm to the east and appears to have rented it to tenant farmers. The 1900 census shows

²² *The Long Island Traveler*, August 19, 1875.

²³ Law School Notes of Harrison Downs, 2 vol., family collection; Both the 1865 New York State Census and the 1870 Federal Census list Harrison as a student still living in his father's household, but Downs' personal notes demonstrate otherwise.

²⁴ *Goulding's Manual of New York and General Statistical Guide*, 1875.

²⁵ This piano was donated to the Hallockville Museum Farm in 2005 and now sits in the museum's Cichanowicz Farmhouse.

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German-born farmer Michael Ambrost renting a farm next to Harrison Downs. By this time, Sound Avenue had developed into a prominent agricultural district; it became the first Rural Free Delivery route in the state in 1899. Creation of the route necessitated the change of the road's name to "Sound Avenue" in order to avoid confusion with other "North Roads." Sequential house numbers were assigned at this point, starting from Roanoke Avenue in the west and running to the town line in the east. The Harrison Downs house was assigned number 141, which it retained until all the houses in the town were renumbered in the 1980s to confirm with modern first responder criteria.

Harrison traveled extensively. The Downs family photo album shows him dressed elegantly in Berlin, Germany. He also bought a farm (or a mill by some accounts) near Richmond, Virginia. Several newspaper columns mention visits there in 1911 and 1912 either by him or by family members visiting him.²⁶ Newspaper references called him a "private tutor" or a lawyer, but never a farmer.²⁷

Harrison's life ended tragically in 1912. According to a newspaper account, "Harrison Downs, age 70, was taken violently insane on Sunday and on Monday was removed to the Central Islip State Hospital."²⁸ The account further states that "Mr. Downs was at the home of his brother, Dana Downes [actually Daniel Downs] and had been under the care of a physician for some time."²⁹ A Port Jefferson paper was more explicit. Under the heading, "Downs Attempts Suicide," the paper wrote that "Harrison Downs of Riverhead, well to do and deeply religious, aged about 69 years, was found Sunday night in his room trying to drive a small penknife into his heart by hammering it with a Bible. He was finally overpowered before he had succeeded in wounding himself any more than a mere scratch." This account also reported that "they decided to send him to [the] Central Islip asylum."³⁰ A slightly more lurid account in the Brooklyn Eagle added the detail that he had to be placed in a strait jacket.³¹

About two weeks after being committed to the mental asylum, Harrison died there; he was in a coma for most of that time. The *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that "his mind had been diseased for some time" and that his "death resulted from a general breaking down of mind and body." It also described him as "well-to-do" and "deeply religious."³² His brother, Daniel T. Downs, was appointed administrator. The estate was valued at \$9,200, of which \$7,000 was real estate.³³

Leland and Mary Downs: Potato Farmers

The farm was left to Harrison's nephew, Lewis E. Downs, whose own home and farm were just a short distance away on Manor Lane. Lewis rented the farm for a couple of years to O. A. Randall, who moved there from Middle Island in the spring of 1914. Shortly after 11 p.m. on November 28, 1915, while the Randall family was living there, the barn burned down mysteriously. According to an account in a local paper, "The Randall fire is believed to be of incendiary origin. It is the sixth barn to be burned in this vicinity within the past month of two.... There seems to be no question in the minds of people hereabouts but that someone with a mania for fires is responsible." Three horses perished in the fire, which also destroyed all of the equipment, grain, cornstalks and 300 bushels of potatoes stored inside. The total loss was estimated at \$5,000 "with little insurance."³⁴ Many years later, when David Wines was digging beneath the former horse stalls of his barn to

²⁶ *The County Review.*, March 22, 1912.

²⁷ *The County Review.*, August 09, 1912.

²⁸ *The County Review.*, August 09, 1912.

²⁹ The Suffolk County News (Sayville, NY), August 09, 1912.

³⁰ *The Port Jefferson Echo.*, August 10, 1912.

³¹ *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 5, 1912, Page 1.

³² *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 16, 1912, Page 4.

³³ *The County Review.*, August 23, 1912

³⁴ Virginia Wines, Family Scrapbook, private collection.

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convert the area into a machinery bay, he found evidence of charred grain. He also found the remains of a cistern that had served the original barn, which was located more or less where the current barn now stands. Improbably, later in 1914, a local paper reported that many thought the series of barn fires might have been caused by mice stashing matches in cauliflower barrels.³⁵

The following year, Lewis installed his newly married oldest son, Lewis Leland Downs (1893-1964), known as "Leland" or "Lee," on the farm. Leland married Mary Hallock Wells (1895-1978) on November 29, 1916. She was a descendant of William Wells, one of the first settlers of Southold, and was a member of the same church as Leland. Her father farmed about two miles to the west. A local newspaper account reported that "on their return from their wedding journey the young people will reside on the groom's farm on Sound Avenue, just east of Manor Lane." When the young couple returned to the Downs House from a 10-day trip to Washington, D.C., "They were promptly serenaded in thorough-going fashion . . . by a company of very noisy and very hungry boys."³⁶

It is doubtful that Leland's schooling went beyond the eighth grade education he received at the District 11 school house that still stands adjacent to the farm where he grew up. Mary attended the District 10 school house, which originally stood across the street from her family's home, and Riverhead High School. She went on to study for two years at Alfred College in Alfred, New York.

Upon returning home, Leland promptly hired local builder Fred Hallock to build a new, three-bay, side-gabled, side-entrance barn. George Henry Tuthill (1838-1919) of Jamesport, Leland's maternal grandfather, commended him for not having spared "any expenses on work or material" and advised him that if he kept it painted it should last 100 years. Unlike the old barn that had burned down, the new structure included a generous potato cellar under two-thirds of the structure. Potatoes could be dumped through hatches in the floor. Leland's grandfather, in the letter cited above, recommended that one of these holes be cut larger to allow hoisting two bags of potatoes at a time. Leland eventually installed an elevator to bring bags of potatoes up from the basement.³⁷ The Old Chicken House was also likely built at the same time.

The earliest barns on the North Fork were always "English" style barns. These were three bays wide, rectangular, with doors on the middle of the broad side walls, as opposed to "Dutch" style barns that were closer to square and had doors on the gable ends. This English barn design, also referred to as the three-bay barn, was brought to the area from East Anglia by the area's earliest Puritan settlers -- including ancestors of the Downs family -- in the 17th century.³⁸ On the North Fork, these English style barns continued to be built well into the 20th century while most farmers in New England and upstate rapidly shifted to gable-entrance barns after the middle of the 19th century due to their greater adaptability and ease of extension.³⁹ This is likely another example of the conservatism and cultural isolation of the North Fork during that the English style barn continued long after it became obsolete elsewhere.

One other interesting local trend is that these barns were generally painted -- and almost never painted barn red. Vertical plank siding was the norm by the middle of the 19th century, although older barns on the North Fork were originally shingled either wholly or on the gable ends. In the 19th century, red was the cheapest

³⁵ *The County Review.*, December 04, 1914, Page 6.

³⁶ Virginia Wines, Family Scrapbook.

³⁷ Virginia Wines, Family Scrapbook

³⁸ John Michael Vlach, in his book *Barns*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2003, differentiates between the English barn (which he calls a "three-bay barn" (see pages 39-43) and Dutch barns (see pages 73-82) primarily on the basis of layout, with the Dutch barn having its principal entrances on the gable ends, being more square shape, having a wider central passageway and having a taller roof. In contrast, the three-bay barns were more rectangular with their smaller central passageways entered from the non-gable sides and flanked by wider bays for stabling animals and storing hay.

³⁹ Vlach, *Barns*, p 44-48.

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paint because of its iron oxide base. While this made "barn red" the choice of preference for farmers in many areas of the country, farmers on the North Fork were determined to show their prosperity by painting their barns any color but red. The choice of colors tended to be white or pastels, and some of the older barns, including the white Downs barn, still sport these color schemes.⁴⁰

The young couple soon made several changes to the house. They quickly added a small wing to the back, with a rear entry, that Mary always referred to as her "back place." The wing included a generous pantry. Mary also redid the kitchen, adding new kitchen cabinets and covering both the ceiling and walls with wainscoting. The only subsequent changes to this room were a new sink added when indoor plumbing was installed in 1933 and an electric stove and one new cabinet added when Mary finally got rid of her combination gas and wood stove in 1955.

Leland quickly began operating the farm in a manner similar to the one he grew up on and to most of the others in the area. Like almost all of his neighbors, he specialized in potatoes. As potatoes became an important crop in the mid-19th century, farmers dug storage cellars under their English-style barns to keep potatoes from freezing in the winter. In the early 20th century, they began building separate potato barns that were mostly buried in the ground. As the century progressed, these potato barns gradually emerged out of the ground, first as masonry structures with earth banked around them and later as freestanding wood-frame and finally as metal-sided pole barns. All of the above-ground potato barns were well insulated to keep the potatoes (which generate some warmth on their own) from freezing in the winter.

From that point on, agricultural production at the Downs Farm was typical for the region -- except possibly that Leland was even more specialized than many other farmers. He didn't grow the strawberries, cabbage, Brussels sprouts or cauliflower that many other farmers in the area grew and brought to Riverhead for sale. While these crops were much more labor intensive and didn't have the potential to provide the profitability that potatoes could in good years, they did provide a measure of diversification. Potato prices and yields both fluctuated widely from year to year; some years resulted in blow out profits or were reasonably profitable, but significant losses were just as common. Cauliflower had the advantage of being much less capital intensive and using labor at times of the year when it was not needed for the potato crop. Mary said that "Leland was too lazy to grow cauliflower;" but, he may also have made the rational decision to specialize in the crop he knew best and which had the potential for the highest average long-term profit.

The young couple was blessed with some good years on the farm immediately after their marriage. Mary Downs noted in her journal that they were able to buy their first car in 1918, a Ford Model T runabout.⁴¹ This car significantly expanded the couple's horizons. Several photos in the family album show Leland beaming at the wheel of this car. A newspaper account a few years later recorded the he used it to drive a group of his friends to Coney Island, possibly the farthest he had ever been from home.⁴²

For the 1920 season, Mary recorded that they "Never sold a big [i.e., top grade] potato for less than \$2.00 a bushel and sold 25 loads for \$3.00 and as high as \$3.25." Given that potatoes averaged less than \$1.00 per bushel most years, this was a huge windfall. Indeed, the profit per acre probably exceeded \$500, well more than any of the other 22 years for which we have records. Even before adjusting for inflation, this was more than four times the \$128 net the farm averaged during those years. Adjusted for inflation, the farm grossed over \$100,000 and the profit per acre was \$6,372 in 2014 prices, nearly five times the average of just \$1,321 for the other years for which we have records.

⁴⁰ For example, according to an interview with Estelle Evans, her grandfather, Herbert Wells, who farmed in Riverhead in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was Mary Downs's father, always painted his barns a cream color because he thought that red looked cheap.

⁴¹ Mary Downs, journal 1916-1971, mss, private collection. Probably started in 1923 with early years entered from memory.

⁴² *County Review*, August 11, 1922

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These high prices lifted the means, spirits, and aspirations of the whole community. In 1921, the farmers living between Roanoke Avenue and the Southold town line incorporated as the Village of Sound Avenue. Leland Downs likely joined in this vote, although it is not known where he stood on the issue. It was perhaps the only village ever named after a road. They hoped to be able to maintain the roads better with a lower tax rate. The tax rolls from the village emphasized the community's agricultural character; every single property in the village, excepting the church and parsonage, was an operating farm. No professionals, tradesmen, or pensioners were recorded. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* could not resist poking fun at the Village of Sound Avenue, with only 544 residents. According to a 1923 article, "Sound Avenue, L.I. – Nothing to do and all day to do it in, seems to quite truthfully describe the life of John T. Downs, "mayor" of Sound Avenue village in Riverhead town."⁴³

Mary and Leland quickly conceived their first child, Virginia, who was born in May 1921. They also added a broad, wraparound porch to the house that year, much improving the appearance of the house, according to one newspaper account, and re-sided the house in natural cedar shingles, many of which still survive 95 years later. Potato prices returned to more normal -- but still profitable -- levels, about \$1.10 that year. Their second and last child, Willard, was born in August 1922.

In 1922 they bought a Fordson tractor for \$450, probably the first tractor on the farm, an Oliver plow for \$75 and a Aspinwall potato planter for \$50 to go with it.⁴⁴ However, 1922 turned out to be a disastrous year for most local farms, with potato prices depressed to only \$0.50 per bushel that October.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Leland bought a small piece of property on Peconic Bay, about four miles away, for \$1,000 that November and built a summer bungalow there the following year. The family story was that Leland had gone to Jamesport to purchase a fertilizer drill from a local farmer who owned a cottage next door and ended up buying the piece of land instead, much to Mary's consternation.

The family used the cottage in the off season for picnics and an occasional overnight get-away from the farm. Leland loved the water – especially clamming and fishing – and quickly acquired a small boat with a Model T engine. The bungalow, which was rented every year starting in 1923 according to Mary Downs's journal, also served as an additional source of income. Leland and Mary's daughter, Virginia, met her future husband, Robert Wines, across the fence that separated their bungalow from the Wines family cottage next door.

When Leland first began running the Downs farm, only the northern part of the farm had been cleared; this is a testament to the property's previously light use. He gradually cleared the woodland on the southern end of the farm to convert it to agricultural land, although as late as 1937 two acres of woodland remained on the far southern end of the farm.⁴⁶ They also made numerous other improvements to the farm, adding the Washhouse/Woodhouse/Outhouse, Man's House, Camp Upton Building, barn shed and garage in the early 1920s.⁴⁷

Leland was a very hardworking farmer, known for always trying to get his horses to go a little faster. He was also something of an inventor. An undated clipping shows a "field loader" designed to make it easier and quicker to load bags of potatoes onto a truck. The family photograph album shows several other of his

⁴³ *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 20, 1923

⁴⁴ Willard Downs, "Vocational Agricultural Guidebook for Young Farmers of New York," 1937-1940, MSS, Family Collection, p.9.

⁴⁵ *County Review*, October 20, 1922.

⁴⁶ Willard Downs, "Guidebook," farm map, p.20

⁴⁷ Historic photographs show two more small outbuildings behind and to the east of the Main Barn that were removed before 1951

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inventions, including one that was a long series of machines and trailers hitched one to the next that allowed potatoes to be dug. He attempted to patent at least one of his inventions.

In 1923, potato prices returned to more normal levels of \$1.10 during the October harvest season. Leland and Mary were able to buy a new Hupmobile car the following summer, clearly a step up from their first Model T. A local paper advertised that the car cost \$1,150.⁴⁸ The same paper recorded that he took a group of five male friends all the way to the Danbury Fair, a distance of 170 miles, in his new car.⁴⁹

However, 1924 was a hard year, with prices back down to \$0.60 that October. But prices bounced back the following year starting at \$2.00 in October 1925, when snowstorms prevented shipping from Maine, always the biggest competitor for the Long Island crop. From there prices continued to get better, peaking at \$2.50 and holding there for most of the season.⁵⁰ The following year was also good; prices started in October at \$1.75. The local paper reported that a popular brand of safes was selling well because of the "High prices for potatoes and general prosperity on Eastern Long Island" and even provided a long list of farmers who had bought the Victor safes.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, Mary recorded in her journal that Leland bought a new Ford truck the following summer. They also had the dining room done over, had the house trim painted cream and had electricity installed in the house. Leland bought a new team of horses that year, too; although he was an early adopter of power equipment, having bought his first tractor and a motorized potato digging machine three years earlier, he was still using horses for at least some of the farm work. While the first tractors were useful for heavy work like plowing, their large steel wheels made them difficult to use for more delicate tasks like cultivating between the rows of potatoes without damaging the plants, a task for which many farmers continued to prefer horses. Within a couple of more years, however, he gave up horses entirely.

Switching entirely to mechanized production allowed Leland to grow more potatoes. In the blow-out year of 1920, the farm had only 15 acres planted in potatoes; about 10 to 12 acres of the remaining farmland needed to be in pasture, hay, or grain to support the horses. The shift to mechanized farming not only made it possible to grow more potatoes by reducing labor, but it also freed up a considerably larger part of the farm; 26 acres of potatoes were planted in 1930 and 30 acres were available in 1937.

While 1927 was a decent year, with prices in the \$1.10 to \$1.20 range, 1928 proved to be a very bad year – the first of many hard years that would plague Mary, Leland and most other farmers over the next decade. Prices started at \$.55 and fell quickly to \$.50 per bushel. Mary reported in her journal, "Did not have a very good yield of potatoes this year & no price either." The following year was not any better, with a combination of low yields and poor prices. One local paper reported that "Farmers in this section will just about break even on their potato crops on account of the small yield, due to the drought."⁵² Mary wrote in her journal that the average yield was only 110 bushels per acre. This was much less than half of normal yield of 250 to 300 or more bushels the farm achieved in good years. Even the relatively high price of \$1.75 was not enough to make up for the shortfall.

In the next few years, things only got worse. In 1930 Mary recorded that "Potatoes were very good, although \$1.00 was high mark for prices." The next year, 1931, she wrote: "Had a fine crop of potatoes. No price." That year they grew 6,111 bushels of potatoes on 26 acres, at an average yield of 235 bushels per acre. But they only grossed \$2,764 or an average price of \$0.41 per bushel, likely well below costs. The *Mattituck Watchman* reported that at these prices most farmers were probably losing about \$50 per acre.⁵³ Hard-pressed to keep

⁴⁸ County Review, September 15, 1922

⁴⁹ County Review, October 17, 1924.

⁵⁰ County Review, October 22, 1925, October 29, 1925 and January 28, 1926.

⁵¹ County Review, October 24, 1926 and November 11, 1926.

⁵² Port Jefferson Echo, October 31, 1929

⁵³ Mattituck Watchman, December 31, 1931

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their own farms afloat, Village of Sound Avenue leaders abandoned the idea of maintaining a local government; they unincorporated in 1930. With the price of potatoes so low, even the local theater in Mattituck was forced to lower its admission prices to attract hard-pressed farmers and their families.⁵⁴

The next year, 1932, the *County Review* reported that the "price of potatoes this year [about \$0.60] is offering farmers nothing but a terrific loss." Mary did not record anything about the crop or yield that year in her journal. However, Leland and Mary were forced to take out an \$1,800 loan -- effectively mortgaging the farm -- from the Suffolk County National Bank -- something also not recorded in Mary's journal.⁵⁵

In 1933, better potato prices brought a brief reprieve. Mary and Leland bought a new Chevrolet car that September, which Mary proudly noted in her journal was "Desert Sand with orange trim." They also installed a central heating system and indoor plumbing -- the latter only after a prosperous uncle got tired of using the outhouse when he visited and gave Mary and Leland money for a bathroom.

The situation got much worse the following two years, with potato prices at \$0.30-0.35 per bushel in 1934 and an average of \$0.50 in 1935. Mary, always an excellent cook, baked pies and cakes and sold them at a nearby public beach to make a few extra dollars. They had a better year in 1936, despite dry weather, and were finally able to repay the bank mortgage on the property in late 1937, when Mary received a bequest from her father, Herbert T. Wells, who had died the previous year.

Then new disasters struck. Leland had an accident in that desert sand Chevrolet that totaled the car in October 1935. They bought a second-hand Oldsmobile for \$500, but Leland had another "smash-up" in the new car that December. Four people were injured and, after an out-of-court settlement, Leland had to pay significant damages.

In 1937 things took an even more disastrous turn. Mary recorded in her journal that: "On Oct 12 Leland was taken mentally sick... Dr. Merwarth said he had melancholia. He was awful bad." This appears to have been some sort of mental breakdown, perhaps from the stress of overwork and financial concerns on the farm. Mary didn't feel safe alone with Leland, and had to have her brother come stay in the house with them; she reported later that his condition "got where I dared stay alone with him."

By chance, we happen to have an unusually good set of farm records for 1937. As part of Willard's participation in the "Young Farmers of New York," a vocational education class at Riverhead High School, he documented in detail every aspect of the farm's economy -- the value of the land and equipment, the costs of growing each crop, the yields and the profits (or losses).⁵⁶ The farm had a tough year: yields were only 167 bushels per acre, well below average, and the price was also poor, only \$0.47 per bushel, again well below average. As a consequence, the farm only netted \$424 for the year, not much to live on and not much compensation for all the hours of work put in.

In 1938 Leland was not able to farm, so they rented the land for \$915 for 30 1/2 acres. Mary reported that "Willard planted one good acre." This was apparently his high school Future Farmers of America project, as he was only 16 that year. The next entry in Mary's journal: "Leland gradually grew better . . . but in June [he]

⁵⁴ *Watchman of the sunrise trail (Mattituck)*, October 08, 1931

⁵⁵ The bond agreement with Suffolk County National Bank, dated August 29, 1932, was not technically a mortgage because the farm was still in the name of Leland's father Lewis Downs. However, the repayment document, dated December 19, 1937, was titled a 'Discharge of Mortgage.'

⁵⁶ Willard L. Downs, "Vocational Agricultural Guidebook for Young Farmers of New York," 1937-1940, MSS. It was intended that he similarly document the 1938 and 1939 farm years, but of course the farm was rented during those years due to his father's incapacity. Thus we only have the records of the one or two acres that Willard grew on his own as a class project.

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grew worse and the last of June police had to have him put in a safe place." The "safe place" was the Kings Park mental hospital, where Leland would spend most of his remaining 30 years.

On September 21 yet another disaster struck: "that terrible hurricane which cost us over \$400 for repair work besides losing 7 nice trees . . . [we had the] roof blown off and windows blown out." They rented the farm for a second year in 1939, and Willard again grew his one acre. Somehow, they managed to buy a new John Deere tractor that year for \$750, presumably using funds Mary had inherited from her father.⁵⁷ In 1940, Leland was able to come home for a while. Willard quit school without graduating and the two of them farmed together. Unfortunately it was another disastrous year, with potato prices at only \$0.36 per bushel on average. They grossed just \$2,611 despite an excellent yield.

Things got better during the war years. Yields were excellent except for 1944, and prices generally stable at or near \$1.00 per bushel. The farm had a gross average \$6,693 per year, more than twice the average of \$3,225 in the lean years of the 1930s. In the best year, 1943, they made \$9,736, probably far more than the farm had ever made before. Willard had to register for the draft, but received a deferment as a farmer, an essential occupation during the war years.

In 1944, Virginia, who had graduated from Cornell's Home Economics School a few years before, married her long time sweetheart, Robert Wines. Like most weddings in the Sound Avenue community, the wedding took place at the bride's family house. At that time he was a sergeant in the army, stationed at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn; the young couple lived there after Virginia finished a year of teaching at Westhampton High School.

However, Leland's mental condition deteriorated again, possibly in reaction to a devastating storm that destroyed the cement block bulkhead at his beloved Peconic Bay bungalow. He went to bed late in 1945 and did not get up again until it was time to cut seed potatoes the following spring. Leland and Mary received another hard jolt when Leland's father, Lewis E. Downs, died in 1945. They always assumed that the farm would be left to them, but Lewis had a complicated will. He left to Leland his "east farm of 37½ acres with stock, equipment, etc., [but only] on condition that he pay each of his [two] sisters \$2,000 and also pay \$100 annually to the widow [Leland's mother]." The farm was appraised at \$26,425. Leland's younger brother Irving received the somewhat larger "home farm" on the same conditions, but with the added burdensome requirement that he provide a home for their mother, Rose Elma Downs, and their unmarried younger sister, Laura B. Downs, during their natural lives.⁵⁸ Laura lived another 50 years, outliving her brother, but the obligation continued on. Although Leland at least escaped that obligation, the obligation to pay each of his two sisters \$2,000 cut substantially into Mary's inheritance from her father and caused resentment for many years.

Fortunately 1946 was another bumper year. The farm had record yields, over 11,500 bushels, or about 418 bushels per acre. Prices stayed at a reasonable level, over \$1.00 per bushel, thanks to government supports, and the farm grossed a record \$11,335. However, so many potatoes were produced that year that the government had to pay farmers to dump them in the fields. The family scrapbook has photos of huge piles of potatoes being purposefully destroyed.

The good economic news did not help Leland. He had a setback and, as Mary put it euphemistically in her journal, "went away" in July and didn't come back until Thanksgiving. Of course the place he went away to was the state mental hospital at Kings Park, where the patient population peaked at over 9,000 in the post-war years.

The year 1947 was another good year, and the farm grossed \$11,152. So good, in fact, that they rented an additional 12 acres in Jamesport that belonged to Virginia's new father-in-law. Conveniently, this parcel was

⁵⁷ Willard Downs, Guidebook, p.9.

⁵⁸ Undated clippings pasted into the family copy of *Downs Family on Long Island*.

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adjacent to the Downs bungalow on Peconic Bay. This brought the total land under cultivation to about 46 acres, of which 38 to 41 was typically planted in potatoes. The remaining acreage included the farmyard and land that was planted in rye that served as both a way to rest and rejuvenate the soil for a year and also a source for seed to plant a cover crop on the entire farm in the fall. The cover crop was essential to keep the soil from blowing away when the ground froze in the winter. Farmers who were late harvesting their potatoes and planting rye often suffered severe dust storms and loss of soil. The cover crops also added to fertility when it was plowed under in the spring.

With the added land the farm grossed \$13,811 the following year despite somewhat lower yields. Moreover, Leland's fragile mental health remained reasonably intact. The next year, 1949, was a different story. As Mary wrote in her journal, it was "a terrible year, no rain." They produced only 2,971 bushels and despite reasonable prices grossed only \$2,925. Willard, who was mostly running the farm at the time, told stories later about only getting three bushel baskets of potatoes out of an entire quarter-mile long row; normally there would be a bushel every 50 feet or so. Their average yield was a dismal 78 bushels per acre. This terrible year may have affected Leland again. That November he drove a relative to Florida. When he returned a week later "he was all excited and way off" according to Mary's journal entry. A week later she wrote they "had to have him put in safe keeping" at the Kings Park mental hospital. From that time, he returned home only for brief infrequent visits until his death in 1964. Willard and his mother lived alone in the house the following year.

A few local farms started installing irrigation systems during World War II. But after the disastrous year in 1949, many farmers installed irrigation wells with diesel pumps, often World War II surplus engines. Water was abundant, but with the water table about 70 feet down drilling a well was an expensive proposition. Consequently, the Downs farm did not install its own well, but rather acquired irrigation pipe in 1950 and bought water from a neighboring farmer.⁵⁹ Willard did, however, install a well on the Jamesport field where water was much closer to the surface and thus less expensive to pump.

Irrigation significantly changed the nature of potato farming. In the seven years after getting irrigation water, yields on the farm average 384 bushels per acre, more than 50 percent higher than in the pre-irrigation years. Moreover, there were no years in which yields fell much below 300 bushels per acre, something that had happened more than half the time before. However, with the benefits came significant costs. In addition to the capital expenses of drilling wells and buying pipe, there was the fuel and maintenance of operating a well and the labor of moving irrigation pipe around the fields or weeks at a time in the summer. Irrigation also increased the burden on the farmer. Whereas previously July and August had been relatively slack times on a potato farm, now it was necessary to have a crew working all day moving pipe and the farmer often had to be out late at night changing lines and shutting down pumps.

The effects of irrigation were visible immediately. Yields bounced back to over 11,000 bushels in 1950. However, the vagaries of wild price swings did not change and may have gotten worse because prices no longer went up in years when potatoes were scarce. The low prices in 1950, averaging only \$0.57 per bushel, kept the gross to only \$6,538, probably not enough to cover expenses that were now growing rapidly. There was one bit of good news. Mary, who had recorded back in 1948 that "I haven't felt good all year" finally reported in late 1950 "I commenced to feel better."

The next year, 1951, yields held up. Indeed the farm set a new production record of 12,518 bushels. The price was a little better, averaging \$1.00 per bushel according to farm records, producing a gross of \$12,582 and probably a few thousand dollars profit. After Willard married in 1951, Mary lived alone at the house but Willard continued to farm the property.

⁵⁹ Date recorded on back of postcard aerial view of farm that shows irrigation pipe stacked behind barn.

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The year 1952 was even better -- a real blow-out year, the kind farmers hoped and prayed for and depended on to balance out lean years. The Downs farm produced a near record 11,781 bushels of potatoes on 41 acres. More importantly, the price was excellent, averaging \$2.19 over the course of the season. The farm grossed \$25,785, almost twice the previous record. Mary recorded that it was the "best potato year we ever had." Little did she know that it would be the best they would ever have. Like many other local farmers, Willard bought a new truck -- in his case a shiny red Diamond-T. Leland's brother, Irving, was about the only farmer in the region that didn't do well that year. Seeing the high prices, Irving kept most of his crop in storage until very late in the winter, gambling that the prices would continue to rise. However, prices collapsed and he was forced to dump most of his potatoes or sell them at a huge loss to a duck farmer for feed.

The following year, 1953, was the beginning of the end for the Downs farm. Yields were good, 371 bushels per acre, thanks to the new irrigation, but the price was weak and the farm grossed just \$8,648. Mary simply noted "didn't make expenses," which were now much higher than they had been in the pre-war years. The following year was a little better; they reduced their planted acres to 31, probably because they could not afford the capital expenses of planting the crop, but yields were good and they grossed \$14,315. It was also a year of tragedy. Virginia's husband, Robert, died of cancer that January, leaving Mary and their three young sons. In addition, two major hurricanes struck that fall, causing extensive damage.

The following year, Mary rented the south half of the farm to a neighboring farmer, reducing the family's potato crop to only 23 acres. They had a record yield of 537 bushels per acre, but the price averaged only \$0.54, producing just \$6,614 in gross, which was almost entirely eaten by expenses. Consequently, they rented the entire farm in 1956 to the neighbor, although Willard continued to farm the 12 acres at the bay in Jamesport. It was another dismal year and he grossed only \$3,992 -- again almost entirely eaten by expenses. The farm became more of a family operation during the mid-1950s; Willard's sister Virginia Wines helped with planting and harvesting and her 10-year-old son, Richard helped move irrigation pipe and pick potatoes. Willard quit farming entirely after 1956 and helped his wife run a restaurant in Riverhead and later a place in Watermill until they separated. Willard began working as an electrician and rented the farm to neighbors for nearly two decades.

David and Elizabeth Wines: From Commercial Potatoes to Specialized Retail

Mary continued to rent the land and live in the house until the mid-1970s, when declining health forced her to move in with her daughter, Virginia Wines, about a mile down the street; she died in 1978. Her will left the farm to her two children, Virginia Wines (1921-1993) and Willard Downs (1922-2012). Meanwhile, David Wines, Virginia's middle son, had taken up farming after graduating from an agricultural program at Cobleskill College in 1969. He planted 10 acres on a rented hillside his first year. The rainy season ruined many crops, but the hillside saved him. Nevertheless, the crop was afflicted with scab and only fetched \$1.75 per hundredweight (\$1.05 per bushel) at market. He only made \$300, but he kept on trying. For several years, he rented land where it was available and eventually had some good years. Potatoes were as high as \$7.00 in 1973 per hundredweight (equivalent to \$4.20 per bushel) and yields were good too. He acquired a new tractor in 1974 -- the only one he ever bought. He remembers that it only cost a little over \$6,000 and that he was able to pay for it with only six truckloads of potatoes.

That same year, 1974, he married Elizabeth Jones, the daughter of a Welsh dairy farmer, and the young couple moved into the Downs House; they later named the house and farm "Ty Llwyd," ("teek-klu'-id), meaning "brown house" in Welsh after the color of the shingles on the main house. David began farming the land and moved a chicken house from his mother's house. She also arranged for him to be deeded 2½ acres of the farm in 1975, including all of the farm buildings; this allowed him to build a modern potato barn. He

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inherited half of the rest of the farm when his mother died in 1993 and the other half when her brother, Willard Downs died in 2012.

Like his grandmother and uncle, David also began farming the Wines family property in Jamesport on Peconic Bay, adding another 10 acres to his production. At times, he also rented acreage from the farm next door, bringing his total land under cultivation to a maximum of 70 acres. Willard Downs also came back to help his nephew David on the farm, especially during the harvest season when extra hands were needed to drive the tractor that pulled the potato harvesting machine or the truck which carried the crop.

David had several more good years in the 1970s. In 1975, his first year of farming at Ty Llwyd, Great Britain experienced a 500-year drought. The export market drove up the price of potatoes. In the fall, he got \$6.00 per hundredweight out of field, and the price went higher in the storage season. He mostly farmed with second-hand equipment, including a 1937 Ford truck that had belonged to a great uncle, but he did acquire one new truck in 1979. After that, prices deteriorated and many local farmers abandoned potato growing. As more and more farmers abandoned the crop, the grading stations and dealer network disappeared; this made it more and more difficult to market. David, and the other remaining potato farmers, had to grade and bag their own potatoes – a very labor intensive process – and could only sell by the trailer truck load directly to buyers. Selling to distant buyers, occasionally as far away as Puerto Rico, was problematic; sometimes they didn't pay, or claimed the potatoes were rotten when they arrived at their destination.

David continued to grow potatoes as his main crop well into the 21st century, but, unlike his grandfather, he diversified by growing cauliflower as well as wheat and hay. He also raised chickens and sold fresh eggs from the farm. He gave up growing cauliflower after the Long Island Cauliflower Association's auction block in Riverhead closed in about 1991. He remembers taking his last load. It was very cold, a day after Thanksgiving. He had cut the biggest load he ever cut to get it out of the field before it froze, 120 crates compared to his usual 35 or so. And then he got one of the highest prices he had ever received: \$14 for his biggest load. What luck! But that is what farming on Long Island was always about: luck, both good and bad.

Ty Llwyd Today

Agriculture remains an important part of the local economy and the dominant economic activity along Sound Avenue. Suffolk County still leads the state in agriculture as measured by dollar value of production, and South Avenue remains in the county's agricultural core. But, instead of a near-monoculture of potatoes, a traveler on Sound Avenue today will encounter a much more diversified agricultural landscape. Many farmers specialize in a wide variety of vegetables which are sold at the many farm stands along Sound Avenue and are shipped to the New York market and beyond. Sweet corn is especially popular. Several large-scale sod farmers operate along Sound Avenue, including one immediately west of Ty Llwyd. Nursery production may be the single largest form of agriculture in the area, including an operation immediately east of Ty Llwyd. There is also significant production of both vegetables and horticultural material under glass greenhouses or plastic hoop houses. One of the largest operators, Van de Wetering Greenhouses, is located directly to the north of Ty Llwyd across Sound Avenue. In addition, during the last three decades the North Fork has become an important viticultural area, with more than forty vineyards overall; several are within a mile of Ty Llwyd on Sound Avenue.

The North Fork has also become a major destination for "agri-tourism." Large numbers of visitors drive "out east" for seasonal agricultural treats and activities, including pumpkin picking, roasted sweet corn, and wine tasting. Several farms along Sound Avenue now specialize in this business, featuring corn mazes and fields of pumpkins -- including the Harbes orchard, pumpkin picking and corn maize operation to the west diagonally across the street from Ty Llwyd.

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Ty Llwyd remains one of the few surviving examples of a traditional family farm. In recent years, Ty Llwyd has followed the trend of many of the other farms in the area -- specializing in a niche area, generally with a direct-to-the-customer marketing model. As the local dealer network for potatoes disappeared and it became increasingly hard to sell the crop wholesale, David gradually reduced his acreage in potatoes; he finally ceased wholesaling in 2010. Meanwhile, he continued to expand his egg business, and today has over 1,200 laying hens at peak season. He sells all the eggs direct to customers who come to the farm.

About 2001 David and Elizabeth's son, Christopher, who had been working with his father since graduating from a two-year agricultural program, decided to diversify into raising cows and selling raw milk. Again, the model was direct sales to a specialized customer base at a premium price. That business quickly blossomed and in 2014, Chris built a large new dairy barn with modern equipment.

Today most of the farm is in pasture or hay to support the dairy operation, with just four acres in vegetable production, all of which is sold at retail along with the eggs and raw milk from a small stand in the back yard. The farm has developed a loyal customer base, attracted both by the unusual quality of the product and the experience of buying it on a real farm. Moreover, the farm has become the subject of numerous articles and film documentaries, the destination for local "foodies" and a featured stop on the area's annual "Foodie Tour."

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 33.67
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u> Zone	<u>701918</u> Easting	<u>4539319</u> Northing	3	<u>16</u> Zone	<u>702371</u> Easting	<u>4538440</u> Northing
2	<u>16</u> Zone	<u>702485</u> Easting	<u>4538508</u> Northing	4	<u>16</u> Zone	<u>701821</u> Easting	<u>4539253</u> Northing

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

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary was drawn to include the 34-acre property purchased by Harrison Downs in 1873. The property was divided into two lots in 1975, but is still operated as a single farm.

Downs House and Farm
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

Downs House & Farm
Riverhead, Suffolk Co., NY

5793 Sound Avenue
Riverhead, NY 11901



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

0 5501,100 2,200 Feet

Downs House & Farm



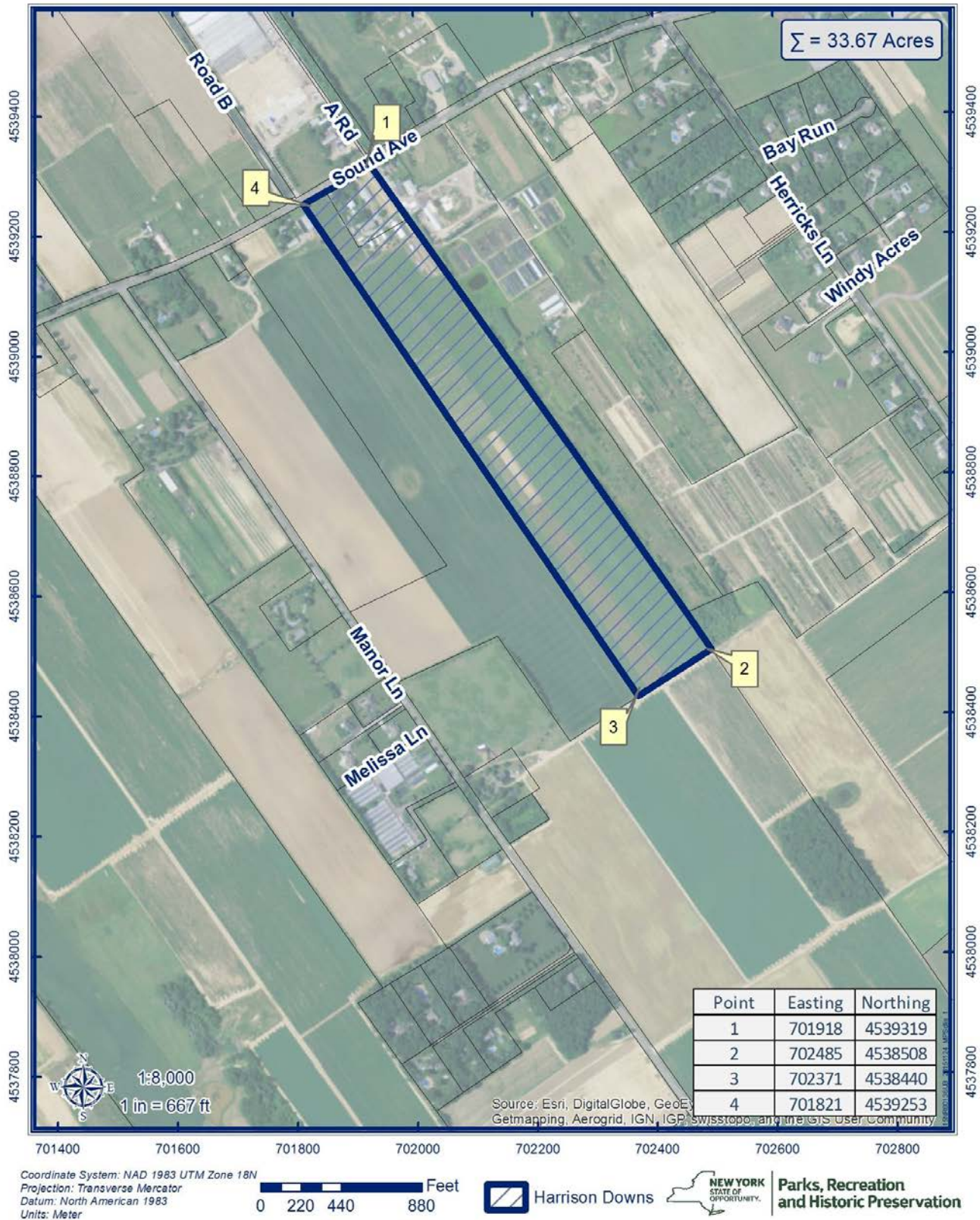
Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Downs House and Farm
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

Harrison Downs House & Farm
Riverhead, Suffolk Co., NY

5793 Sound Avenue
Riverhead, NY 11901



Downs House and Farm
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard Wines, edited by Jennifer Betsworth (NY SHPO)
organization _____ date November 2015
street & number 73 Winds Way telephone _____
city or town Jamesport state NY zip code 11947
e-mail _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Harrison Downs House and Farm

City or Vicinity: Riverhead

County: Suffolk State: NY

Photographer: Richard Wines

Date Photographed: September 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0001
Harrison Downs House, façade, camera facing south

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0002
Harrison Downs House, façade, camera facing southeast

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0003
Harrison Downs House, detail of front door, camera facing south

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0004
View across pigthel to Harrison Downs House, sales area, Potato Barn and Washhouse, camera facing northeast

Downs House and Farm

Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY

County and State

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0005

View from kitchen in southwest corner of house looking east into dining room. Some of cabinets date from the 1916 renovation of the kitchen. Sink dates from the introduction of electricity and plumbing ca. 1930.

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0006

View from east sitting room in northeast corner of the house looking south through pocket doors to dining room.

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0007

Staircase and banister in main hallway, at front center of house.

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0008

Main Barn, camera facing southeast

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0009

Main Barn, Terry Outhouse and Lapinski Chicken House, camera facing northeast

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0010

Barnyard showing Man's House, Old Chicken House, Camp Upton Building and Main Barn, camera facing east

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0011

East mow, interior of Main Barn, camera facing southeast

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0012

Washhouse/Woodhouse/Outhouse, camera facing southeast

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0013

Camp Upton Building, camera facing east

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0014

Old Chicken House, camera facing east

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0015

Man's House, camera facing northeast

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0016

Garage, camera facing southwest

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0017

Potato Barn, camera facing southeast

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0018

Dairy Barn, camera facing southwest

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0019

Wells Chicken House, camera facing northeast

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0020

Old Schoolhouse Kitchen, camera facing northwest

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0021

Temporary Structures behind Main Barn, camera facing southeast

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0022

View from middle of farm towards barns, camera facing north

Downs House and Farm

Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY

County and State

NY_SuffolkCo_TyLlwydFarm_0023

View from middle of farm, camera facing south

Property Owner:

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

name David Wines

street & number 5793 Sound Avenue

telephone _____

city or town Riverhead

state NY

zip code 11901

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Downs House and Farm
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



Figure 1. Harrison Downs House, ca. 1916 photo, camera facing southeast



Figure 2. Harrison Downs House and original Back Kitchen, ca. 1916 photo, camera facing northeast

Downs House and Farm
Name of Property

Suffolk County, NY
County and State



Figure 3. 1951 Aerial photograph of farmstead, camera facing southeast



Figure 4. Leland Downs driving Fordson tractor behind Main Barn, 1928 photograph, camera facing northeast

All historic photographs courtesy of the Wines family.











IMS # P23

Zappys

9-64 U.S. oz

IMS # P23















Please Return
Bottles Clean

farm fresh
eggs























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Downs House and Farm
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Suffolk

DATE RECEIVED: 4/15/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/19/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/03/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/31/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000308

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 5.31.16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

RECEIVED 2280

APR 15 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

7 April 2016

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following three nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Bodine's Tavern, Orange County
Downs House and Farm, Suffolk County
Walter Beckwith House, Dutchess County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office