

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received SEP 27 1982
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Eratt House

and/or common Not applicable

2. Location

street & number Del. Road 572 500 ft. E. of Road 569 Intersection N/A not for publication

city, town Bridgeville *vic.* vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~ N/A

state Delaware code 10 county Sussex code 005

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property (information obtained 1/5/82 from Sussex Co. Tax Records)

name Mr. and Mrs. Harold P. Castell

street & number R.D. Box 75K

city, town Bridgeville NA vicinity of state Delaware

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sussex County Courthouse

street & number The Circle

city, town Georgetown state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Del. Cultural Resource Survey-S-328 has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

city, town Dover state Delaware

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Eratt House, which is situated in rural Northwest Fork Hundred about one-fourth mile east of the Delaware-Maryland State Line, is a rare surviving Sussex County example of the classic hall-and-parlor-plan in brick. It is a three bay, single-pile, two-story house, displaying a surprising degree of sophistication for its remote location and early date of construction. The deterioration which the Eratt House has suffered has been in large part intentional, the result of an unfortunate conversion of the first floor of the structure into a mechanic's garage at an uncertain date. This deterioration does not affect the structural stability of the house to any marked extent. While these alterations have been extensive and hardly beneficial, a surprising degree of original integrity survives.

The facade of the Eratt House is laid in Flemish bond, while the gable ends and rear of the house are laid in common bond with header courses interspersed by three stretcher courses. A stuccoed water table extends around the four sides of the house up to a height of about two feet. The first and second floors are separated by a four-course belt course. The wooden box cornice along the facade has a fine dentil molding beneath it. The two first floor facade windows are nine-over-six lights, while the three above are six-over-six lights.

The central doorway is recessed from the facade. Its jambs and head are paneled with raised panels, three in each jamb and two in the head, which generally mirror the six panels of the door itself, which is of the low, wide proportions characteristic of rural Georgian architecture in the area. While the first floor windows also have paneled jambs and heads, in this case the paneling is on the interior. The windows are set nearly flush with the facade and are trimmed with a simple cavetto molding on both first and second floor. Some evidence remains to suggest that the two first floor front windows may once have had lintels covered with scored plaster or white paint to contrast with the unpainted brickwork. The exterior is also unusual in having on the gable ends cruciform iron "beam irons" extending through the brickwork between first and second floors, evidently to assist in tying the second floor beams into the masonry. The roof is presently covered with seamed tin, but wooden shingles are visible in the attic; the braced, morticed and tenoned rafters are intact.

With the exception of the front facade, the window placement is asymmetrical. The rear of the house has three six-over-six single-hung windows on the second floor. The first floor rear openings consist of two exterior doors and a six-over-six window. One door is directly opposite the front door in the rear wall of the hall. The second exits from the parlor. Both are battened with beaded boards on the interior. The door leaving the hall is paneled on the exterior and recessed into paneled jambs. That leaving the parlor is paneled on the exterior but recessed into plain jambs. This may well indicate the presence of an original or at least quite early rear wing leading off the parlor, though no further evidence of this is to be found.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates Ca. 1750 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Eratt house is significant for its architectural qualities, specifically its preservation and expression of eighteenth century building technology. It is one of only about a dozen surviving eighteenth century brick houses in Sussex County, even fewer of which have not been incorporated into later buildings. Also, it possesses a number of features which make it of great value to the study of early southern Delaware architecture. These features include the classic hall and parlor plan of the first story, the unusual divergence from plan on the second floor, the unusual exposed beams in the hall and the fine surviving woodwork. The early abandonment of the house as a residence has worked in favor of its integrity: electricity and plumbing were never integrated into the structure, and the material which survives is invariably early. The partial disassembly which has accompanied the conversion of the house to use as a garage has even enhanced its value as a study piece, since it has exposed some aspects of the construction which would otherwise be invisible. Among these are the under-structure of the diagonal fireplace and chimney, and first-floor masonry which is exposed to view because of the removal of flooring and joists. Significance is therefore claimed for the house under N.R. criterion C., as it physically embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction.

The Eratt house has proved stubbornly resistant to historical research, and is named here for the owner listed in Beer's 1868 Atlas of Delaware. The house is of course much older, but its early owners are unknown.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Beers, D.G. Atlas of Delaware. Philadelphia: Pomeroy and Beers. 1868
Scharf, J. Thomas History of Delaware, 1609-1888. Philadelphia, L.J. Richards & Co., 1888.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .52 acres

Quadrangle name Hickman

Quadrangle scale 7.5 minute

UMT References

A

1	8	4	3	8	2	0	5	4	2	8	9	7	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries of the nominated area enclose a 150 foot square portion of a larger 6.89 acre tract, a plot of which appears on Sussex County Tax maps 1-31-4 and 1-31-8. The nominated area begins at a point on the south side of the county road 572, 475 feet east-

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

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard B. Carter, Phyllis A. Hastings

organization Sussex County Historical Preservation
Planner's Office

date December 1981

street & number Old Courthouse, South Bradford St.

telephone (302) 856-7701, ext. 361

city or town Georgetown

state Delaware

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Daniel R. Appell

title Deputy/State Historic Preservation Officer

date 9/15/82

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 10/29/82

Delores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet

Item number 7

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In plan, the Eratt House is unusual in that its first floor is a pure example of the hall-parlor type, while the second was laid out on a different basis entirely. It is what would commonly be referred to as a "double-pile side-hall" plan were it the principal plan of the structure. The two interior partitions on the second floor, only one of which survives complete, consist of vertical beaded planks. The centrally-placed front door gives access to the larger room at the south end of the house, the "hall," which also shows evidence of having contained a corner enclosed stairway.

At the present time the ceiling of the larger hall incorporates exposed beams, while that of the parlor is plastered. Whether or not the plaster is original is unknown, but the beams of the hall ceiling are virtually unique in the body of eighteenth-century Sussex County architecture in that, rather than having beaded edges or the still less common chamfered edges, they possess a very fine ovolo molded edge. The chair rail of hall and parlor is equally fine, consisting of compound elements, illustrated elsewhere in this document. The second floor chair-rail, while somewhat less elaborate, is equally well executed.

A crude wooden shed, and a two-story wood frame addition behind it, extend from the rear of the house. They were clearly added at a much later date, probably mid-nineteenth century, and may indicate that even that early the house was being used as a tenant house.

The alterations attendant to the conversion to garage use are as follows. The original south gable end fireplace and chimney have been removed and sliding wooden garage doors installed in their stead. The first floor joists and flooring have been removed so that when one stands inside the house today, one is actually standing at ground level. The original wood panelling from the now absent south fireplace and that from a surviving diagonally placed fireplace in the northeast corner of the house have been removed, probably for use in another house. The original plank wall between the hall and the parlor has been removed. A corner stairway in the northeast corner of the house has been removed and replaced by a barn-type ladder stair. These changes all appear to have occurred at about the same time and are reminiscent of similar alterations made to the even older brick Masten House several miles to the south during the 1920's. The Masten House, which is listed in the National Register, has been partially restored to the extent that its 1920's garage door opening has been bricked back in.

A substantial degree of integrity remains. The rear wooden section, for instance, is only tenuously connected to the brick main core and does little to obscure the rear or east wall of the house. The Eratt House appears to have fallen on hard times sufficiently early in its history never to have had either electricity or plumbing installed. The exterior walls of the first floor, the entire second floor and attic, the windows and doors, rafters, second floor and attic flooring, and second floor interior partition walls are still intact and appear to be original. The outer walls of the first floor interior have survived largely intact even to the extent that most of the original chair rail molding survives. The removal of the panelling from the surviving fireplace affords a fine look at the construction of the diagonal fireplace and chimney.

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verbal boundary description,

Continuation sheet

continued

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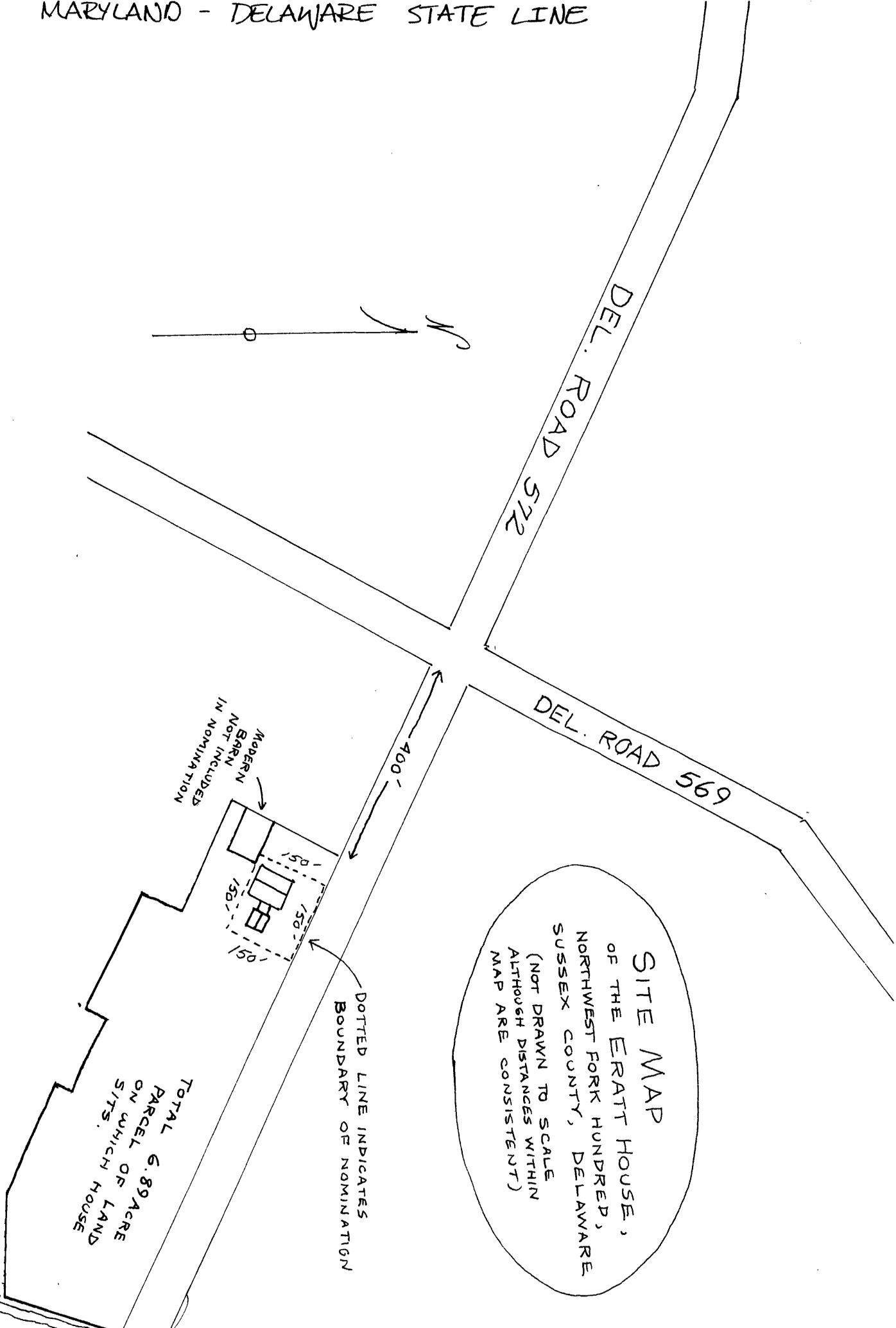
of the road 572-569 intersection. The boundary runs with road 572 in an east-southeasterly direction for 150 feet; turning 90° to the south-southwest, and running for 150 feet in a south-southwesterly direction; thence turning 90° to the west-northwest and running for 150 feet in a ~~south-southwesterly~~ west-northwesterly ~~south-southwesterly~~ direction; thence turning 90° to the north-northeast and running for 150 feet in a north-northeasterly direction to the place of beginning.

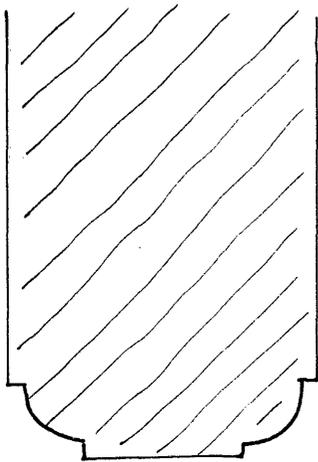
MARYLAND - DELAWARE STATE LINE

DEL.

DRAWN BY R.B. CARTER, 1981

ONES BR





*Detail of Hall Ceiling Beam
showing moulded edges*

1.



*first floor
chair-rail*

HALL AND PARLOR

2.

*SOME DETAILS OF THE
ERATT HOUSE
Northwest Fork Hundred, SUSSEX County,
DELAWARE*

NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

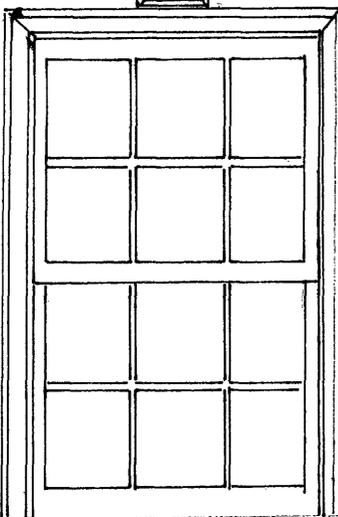
R.B. CARTER · 81



ATTIC LEVEL

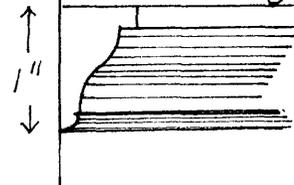
SECOND FLOOR

plaster



*A. SKETCH ILLUSTRATING
THE MANNER IN WHICH
SIMPLE CROWN MOULDING
IS MITERED AROUND
EXPOSED BEAMS WHERE
THEY MEET THE WALL,
IN SECOND FLOOR ROOMS.*

*B. Detail of
moulding*



plaster

3.