

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

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

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N-3906

Property Name: Maple Grove Farm, built ca. 1840.

Location and Verbal Boundary Description:

Maple Grove Farm is located on the south side of Rt. 299 .8 miles east of Middletown. It is set in an environment of cultivated fields and a modern court of farm buildings. The house is set off the south side of the road up a tree lined lane approximately one mile back from the public thoroughfare. A parcel of one acre including the house and a small stone meathouse compose the nomination. The surrounding farm complex, of recent vintage, is excluded from the nominated property.

The nominated parcel begins 100 feet west of the intersection of the present farmlane and Rt. 299, extends southward 1200 feet, turns west at 90° for 200 feet, turns south at 90° for 500 feet, then turns northward and runs back to Rt. 299. From the last point then extends to the intersection of the northwest boundary and the south side of Rt. 299.

The nominated parcel is of sufficient size to provide for the preservation of the house, its grounds, outbuildings and setting as a whole.

UTM 18.39560.66440 Tax parcel 13-022.00-015

Owner: Mary Ann and John Fennemore

Maple Grove Farm

Middletown, Delaware

Description:

Maple Grove is a two-and-a-one-half story, five-by-two bay, frame Georgian house with a two-story, frame gabled wing to the east and a two-story kitchen wing to the rear (south). A one-story addition has been made to the rear of the east wing. The exterior walls are wood siding painted white. The foundation is brick.

The gabled roof covers two interior end chimneys as well as an end chimney in the east wing and chimney in the kitchen wing. The structure has two pedimented dormer windows, six-over-six sash, on the north facade. The cornice is boxed with dentil trim.

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The windows are all six-over-six sash excepting the rear kitchen wing which varies from two-over-two to six-over-six sash. The windows have wood trim and blue louvered shutters. The attic is lit by six-over-six sash gable end windows. The center front passage is a single leaf door surrounded by a three-pane transom and sidelights.

The front porch (south facade) is a one-story, five-bay, wood structure; three bays of which are screened in. The supports are Doric columns and the shed roof is pedimented above the doorway, reiterating the shape of the pedimented dormers. Decorative fish scale shingles fill the pediment. The rear porches have been enclosed, except a portion above the bulkhead to the basement.

The house is carefully landscaped in a Victorian fashion with iron posts and ornamental shrubberies in patterned arrangements. The plantings, in some cases are miniature species, and the attention to landscaping has been carried around to the back of the house. Directly behind the house is a small stone, stuccoed structure which appears to have been a meathouse.

Historical Background and Significance:

The Maple Grove farm, through written sources and remaining buildings, reveals the rise and decline of agriculture in the southern New Castle County during the mid-nineteenth century. The grain based agrarian economy enabled many farmers to use their profits to invest in apple and peach orchards to grow fruit for urban consumption. In 1850, Maple Grove concentrated on Indian corn, oats and butter and had a large investment in farm implements and machinery (\$1,000). Maple Grove farm's success was at its height in 1870 when its cash value tripled to \$60,000. While butter production decreased slightly, wheat increased ten fold and Indian corn remained at the same high level (2,000 bushels). The major difference was the \$5,500 value of orchard products earned from four acres of fruit trees. Farm machinery doubled in value: and \$2,500 in wages were paid for labor.

Ten years later, Maple Grove reflected the depressed state of post-Civil War Delaware agrarian economy. Orchard values decreased ten fold, machinery value decreased by 1/2 and the total cash value of the farm was 10% lower than in 1870. The only notable increase was in hay production.

The ostentatious facade and tree lined drive are the result of a prosperous grain based economy. The re-building period is reflected in the additions and landscaping of the Maple Grove is in its exceptional appearance and well-preserved state, and its social and agricultural past reflecting the history of the surrounding region.

Nomination by Trish Bensinger and Bert Jicha