

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet

Item number

K_1563

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K-1563:

1. Property Name: (ALEXANDER LAWS) HOUSE (1868 name)

2. Location & Verbal Property Description: Southwest corner of Front and Walnut Streets, Leipsic, Kent County, Delaware. It is sited on an L shaped parcel of land fronting Front Street and the Leipsic River, 100 feet wide, 235 feet deep with a 110 feet and 120 foot deep extension fronting the east side of Denny Street (Route 9). The nominated property contains .843 acres.

3. Owner: Harold Remley, Box 324, R.D. 4, Dover, Delaware.

4. Property Description:

Located on the southwest corner of Front and Walnut Streets in Leipsic, the house is a two-and-a-half story, gable-roofed dwelling of braced frame construction, with frame wings extending to the rear of the structure along Walnut Street. The exterior of the structure is presently covered with aluminum siding, but the house is distinguished by a fine Eastlake porch, round-arched roof dormers, and handsome Greek Revival entry.

The earliest portion of the structure may be the kitchen wing, one-story in elevation with a large gable and hearth and an overhead loft originally reached by a ladder-like stair. Such low profile dwellings were common in Leipsic and several may still be found moved behind larger additions now fronting the village's primary thoroughfares.

Between 1820 and 1830 the main block of the present structure was added fronting on Front Street and the Leipsic River. The first floor of this section contains a Federal period side-hall plan, one room deep with an interior gable end chimney pile. All the rooms of the Federal period block retain their mantel pieces typified by the east parlor with a composition made up of a bulls-eye capital on an engaged fluted pilaster and bearing a full entablature. The paneled front door has a three light transom, side lights and pilasters, and a box lock and bell (dated September 8, 1868) on the inside. The stair passage contains an open string stair with a turned newel and stick type balusters. Outbuildings, no longer extant, included a smokehouse immediately behind the house and a horse barn and loft located across Front Street.

5. Historical Background

By 1868, this property had come into the ownership of Alexander and Elizabeth Laws. Alexander Laws represents the non-water-oriented component of nineteenth century Leipsic and Little Creek, through his activities as a farmer and merchant. The commitment of Laws to farming is illustrated in the 1850 census, which lists his wealth at \$33,000--86% of which was tied up in real estate.

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6. Significance:

This building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for Criteria C. The architectural significance of the Laws House resides in its siting, nineteenth century spatial development, and detailing representing several architectural styles. Built in the early nineteenth century as a two-room plan dwelling with a modillion block cornice and balanced three bay facade, the Laws house was enlarged in mid-century with a new two-and-a-half story side-passage plan front. To accommodate the new front block on the lot, the builders moved the first house into a secondary position as a wing to the rear. Late in the nineteenth century a full length, one-story, Eastlake style porch was added to the facade. By the time Laws purchased the house prior to 1868 a small timber frame kitchen had been added to the rear ell. At all times in its history, the Laws House occupied a position as one of the row of finer nineteenth-century houses fronting the Leipsic River and occupied by affluent farmers, ship builders, and sea captains. One of these individuals was Alexander Laws a wealthy farmer and merchant who was listed in 1870 as the occupant of the house. The constant journal and stylistic rewriting of the building through the 1800's reflects one sense of architectural important characteristic of the building and its relationship to its neighbors through the nineteenth-century.