

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received SEP 16 1982
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Peterson and Mustard's Hermitage Farm

and/or common

2. Location *F of Smyrna DE 1025*

street & number Road 325 NA not for publication

city, town Smyrna *md* vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Delaware code 10 county Kent code 01

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>NA</u> 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
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (confirmed 5/21/82 at Kent County Board of Assessments)

name George C. Rothwell

street & number 129 S. Main Street

city, town Smyrna vicinity of state Delaware

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kent County Recorder of Deeds

street & number Kent County Administration Building

city, town Dover state Delaware

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Delaware Cultural Resource Survey - ^{K-3960} has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

city, town Dover state Delaware

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____ NA
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Peterson & Mustard's Hermitage Farm is a mid-nineteenth-century mansion house set in the middle of a tree-ringed "island" of land, formed by the forking of two branches of Mill Creek, southeast of Smyrna, and the county road which fronts the property at the head of the long lane. The two-story frame house is accompanied by a set of outbuildings, several of them early. The dwelling itself is a variation on the Italianate-eclectic "peach house" type, which has been extensively discussed in the Delaware context. Although the house is rented and the interior was not accessible, the exterior and the setting possess a very high degree of integrity.

The house is ell-shaped, with a two-story, three-bay main block and a long, irregularly-fenestrated service wing at right rear. The roofs of both sections--hipped in front, gabled on the service wing--are pitched very low, so that the front section, particularly, appears virtually flat.

Beneath this low roof the main block is distinguished by deep eaves bracketed in the Italianate manner. The windows are four-over-four-light sashes, except for a pair of narrow casements in the center bay of the second story. The surrounds of the second-story windows have shallow-arched heads which tap directly up against the frieze board of the elaborate cornice. The row of low attic windows, which is a typical feature of the peach house type, is conspicuously absent. The clapboard siding on this section is framed with corner pilasters.

The small, centered portico, also low-roofed, deep-eaved and bracketed, is supported by two pairs of squared, Tuscan-derived posts, with chamfered edges and simple molded bases, "capitals," and neckings. Greek Revival elements appear in the entryway, with its narrow three-paned sidelights and double-light transom. The double wooden doors are embellished with octagonal moldings.

That the windows of the rear wing are generally six-over-six lights is one indication, though not an absolute one, that at least part of the long rear wing was probably remodeled from an earlier house. Other and stronger indications are the seam and the break in the brick foundation between the second and third bays of the rear wing, and the several doors which penetrate that wing on the south side. A long, screened, shed-roofed porch has been set along that side. The clapboarding is uniform over all, however, except for a section on the north side of the service wing. This area shows the marks of a recent remodeling, perhaps the enclosure of an inset porch.

The surviving outbuildings are principally agricultural rather than domestic in function, except for the reworked stable directly behind the house. The machine-utility shed-barn-silo complex beyond the stable is of recent vintage. But the granary-loading shed group to the rear, like the stable, is of pegged braced-frame construction, and probably dates from the nineteenth century.

(see continuation sheet)

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 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 checked="" 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 probably ca. 1863 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Peterson & Mustard's Hermitage Farm is a splendidly sited and preserved, formally unusual version of the "peach house" type, a regional variation of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. The type was broadly associated with an agricultural prosperity enjoyed in Delaware through much of the nineteenth century, a prosperity based in part on a booming business in peaches. It is an imposing, angular style, characterized by broad, often extra-tall facades and nearly flat roofs. The refined but summary forms of Hermitage Farmhouse represent both a narrowing and a flattening of the usually more portentous peach house facade. This modesty may be the key to the historical situation the house so handsomely evokes. It was probably built or remodeled as the main tenant house for a recently enlarged and consolidated farm, rather than as the residence of the actual landowner. In such an instance, less grandiloquent forms may have seemed most suitable. In any case, it has been a tenant house since its ownership by tanyard and land owners John Mustard and Alexander Peterson, who put together this island-like tract in 1863. As such it stands as an image of the forms of prosperity, trickling down to the relatively less prosperous. In the building up of the countryside in the mid- to late nineteenth century, a substantial tenant farmer could live in more spacious and elegant conditions than most landowners had done in the previous century. The property is nominated to the National Register under criterion C for significance, as it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.

The peach house type, it should be stressed, was associated with the peach prosperity rather than in every case with actual orchards. The style can produce effects of great mass without substantially increasing interior space over that of an ordinary, gabled house. These emphatic facades obviously appealed to many of the peach barons whose fortunes flourished during the decades of the peach prosperity. But if historian John Thomas Scharf is accurate in counting three-quarters of the land around Smyrna in peaches in the late 1850s, it is clear that many peach growers built in other styles, and it is probable that some non-peach-growers built "peach houses." Still, as an architectural expression of a prosperity which lasted long and which no doubt seemed firmly grounded before it began to collapse under the peach blights of the 1870s, the boxy and slightly boastful peach house can hardly be improved upon.

The peach house type was always more popular in New Castle County than in Kent. It achieved its greatest density in the Hundreds flanking the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. It is quite unusual in Duck Creek and Kenton Hundreds. And it is very noticeable that of the two principal examples, one was Peterson & Mustard's Hermitage Farm, and the other, the Stevens house six or seven miles west, was next-door to a farm owned in 1868 by this same set of partners.

(see continuation sheet)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Conrad, History of Delaware
 Scharf, History of Delaware
 Kent County Land Records, Orphan's Court Records

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 220
 Quadrangle name Smyrna Quadrangle scale 7.5

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>7</u> <u>2</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>2</u> <u>6</u> <u>5</u>	B	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u> <u>10</u> <u>10</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>6</u> <u>16</u> <u>10</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	D	<u>1</u> <u>8</u>	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>
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Verbal boundary description and justification The boundaries of the nominated resource are coterminous with the historic and modern property lines of Hermitage Farm, which are basically defined by two branches of Mill Creek and a short stretch of county road 325 southeast of Smyrna.

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

state	NA	code	county	code
state	NA	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia Wright, Historian
 organization Bureau of Archaeology & Historic Pres. date May, 1982
 street & number Old State House, The Green telephone 302-736-5685
 city or town Dover 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.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Daniel Ruffolo*
 title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 9/10/82

For NPS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
Bruce Alan Dwyer date 10/26/82
 Keeper of the National Register
 Attest: *Patrick Andrews* date 10/26/82
 Chief of Registration

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Hermitage Farm

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Justification of Boundaries

The island-like setting of Hermitage Farm evokes a sense of time, space, and place that is unparalleled at least in the Hundred, and unsurpassed elsewhere in the State. The boundaries of the tract also represent a deliberate nineteenth century consolidation of parcels that probably coincides with the building of the house. The farm has continued as an undivided entity for 120 years and is still under a single ownership. Therefore, the entire parcel is considered as a cultural resource, and the boundaries are set at the modern and historic property lines.

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LNT 10.1.11

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Continuation sheet Hermitage Farm Item number 8 Page 2

The close similarities between the two suggest that one may have prompted the other, and that they may have been the products of the same builder. The differences are equally interesting. Hermitage Farm, with its service wing remodeled to match the front, and its more elaborate brackets, window treatments and porch, is far finer in detail than the Stevens house. At the same time, it is radically truncated, almost miniaturized, in mass. Its width is clipped from five bays to three, its porch from three bays to one-and-a-half. The row of attic lights in a parapet-like wall is shaved off entirely. This scaling down of the classic peach house facade may, when we are able to put it in a wider context, offer us clues to the evolution of the type from what appear to be essentially late Georgian and Greek Revival roots to a more ostentatious Italianate manner. At present, and in this particular case, the use of this variant is the more interesting because it can probably be associated with a social function--with a reduction in pretentiousness appropriate to a tenant house.

It is not certain, but it is likely, that the house was built by the Smyrna business partnership of Peterson & Mustard, under whose ownership it appears in the 1868 Beers' Atlas of Delaware. The tree-and-creek-lined tract of land which they consolidated in 1863 was previously fragmented into four parcels with three owners. There had been at least one mansion house upon it, in about the location of the present house, when Philip Denney's estate was divided in 1859. Even allowing for schematicization on the part of the nineteenth century draftsman, the gabled, end-chimneyed representation on the Denny plot is difficult to recognize as the present peach house. It seems more likely that Denney's house was remodeled as service wing to a new house built by Peterson & Mustard. It would have been a very fine tenant house--if it was not built as one, it shortly became one--but then it was a very fine farm, especially in the almost idyllic, insulated setting evoked by the name given in it in the 1860s.

That the land was tenanted from 1860 on is not in question. Mathias Jerman, who acquired it from the Denny estate, was a Smyrna clergyman. John Mustard and Alexander Peterson were partners in a tannery that thrived at Smyrna Landing, but at the time they bought this land, Peterson lived in Philadelphia and Mustard had a fine house in Smyrna. The supposition that the partners made substantial improvements to the land is strengthened by the fact that when Mustard sold his half-interest in the farm to his partner in 1868, he received almost exactly the same amount that the two had paid for the full interest five years before: \$9,300 as compared to \$9,200 in 1863. The value had slightly more than doubled. When Peterson died in 1869, the farm passed to his children, one of whom was Emily Corbit of Odessa; thence to her sons and through several subsequent owners to the present landlord in 1949. The house remains as a fine, well-tended tenant house today, still set in undivided fields, though no longer tenanted by the farmer of them.

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Hermitage Farm

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Level of Significance

The level of significance checked in item 10 is state. This choice was made for two reasons: first, for the unusual integrity of the house and its setting, and second, for the extra-local importance of the "peach house" style of which this is an exceptionally attractive and well-preserved example. Few farms in Delaware can surpass Hermitage Farm for visual integrity; and the house is an important addition to the list of examples to be considered when it becomes possible to look closely at the evolution and associations of the Delaware peach house.