

PH0680443

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 26 1978
DATE ENTERED	1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

John B. Nelson House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER at the end of a .4 mile lane which is west of Road 417, 2,400 feet  
north of its intersection with Road 2

CITY, TOWN

Port Penn

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

One

STATE

Delaware

VICINITY OF

CODE

10

COUNTY

New Castle

CODE

002 03

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Kenneth Spicer (house) and Union Carbide Company, Real Estate Division (land)

STREET & NUMBER

R.D. #1, Box 195

Tarrytown, New York

CITY, TOWN

Middletown

VICINITY OF

STATE

Delaware 19709

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Public Building

STREET & NUMBER

Rodney Square

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington,

STATE

Delaware

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Delaware Cultural Resource Survey, N-3939

DATE

1977

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

CITY, TOWN

Dover

STATE  
Delaware

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John B. Nelson House is located at the end of a long lane which runs from Dutch Neck Road northwest to a creek. It is about three miles west northwest of Port Penn.

The Nelson House is an early-nineteenth-century house which retains many of its original interior features. The exterior has been somewhat altered, but much of the original detailing is discernible. The house was built in two parts. The larger southern section provided the core for a one-room wing to the north. Both are brick and have been stuccoed on all but one wall. For an unknown reason, the south gable end of the main block was left uncovered. It is laid in common bond. The bonding pattern of the other walls cannot be discerned. The presence of a brick belt course can be noted on the facade but other than its presence and the indication of a closed doorway on the rear of the main block, the stucco reveals very little of the brickwork beneath it.

The core of the house is a two-story, squared structure with a four-bay front wall and a three-bay rear wall. The entry is located in the southern central bay of the facade. Centered over the doorway is a small porch. Evidence in the stucco indicates that it replaces an earlier, larger porch. The door has horizontal panels with flat moulding in the Greek Revival mode and is surmounted by a transom. The windows on the facade have nine-over-nine light sash. On the first floor, one set of original shutters remains. On the second floor, the missing louvered blinds have recently been replaced with modern louvered shutters. The windows on the rear of this section are longer and narrower than those on the facade and have different surrounds. They have two-over-two light sash, except for the southern first floor window which has been recently replaced with a nine-over-nine light sash. There is a window in the center of the gable end wall. This matches those of the rear in style; however, it has small-paned sash. End walls of early-eighteenth century houses were usually unbroken by fenestration except at the attic level, so the presence of this window is unusual. The main block is set on a raised foundation. It has one interior end chimney in its southern gable and two in its northern gable. The gable roof, which was dormered, has a simple box cornice and is sheathed with a standing seam metal roof.

The two-story addition to the Nelson House was built at sometime around or before the mid-nineteenth century. Because it is not raised on a foundation, its roof is at a lower level than the roof of the main house. It had an interior end chimney which has been removed. A window pierces the end wall in the approximate location of the first floor fireplace. The two-bay facade of this section has an entry in its southern bay. The door lintel has been raised, and the door altered. The windows have six-over-six light sash and are flanked by original shutters. To the rear of this section of the house is a modern, one-story, cement block, shed-roofed addition.

The interior of the Nelson House has a four-room plan. A brick bearing wall rises from the basement and separates the front two rooms from the rear room in the main core. In this portion of the house the rooms are interconnected. Communicating doors allow access into each adjoining room. Doors from each of the north rooms allow access into the one-room wing. There is no passage from the central block

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to the wing on the second floor. Half of the basement under the larger section of the house has a brick floor, but is not finished in any other way. It seems to have been used only for storage. Three staircases, one on the exterior through a cellarway, and two on the interior below the upper stairs, provided access to the cellar. One of the latter has been removed.

The main door of the house enters through the east wall of the southeast room, the stair hall. The door and its surround are detailed in the Greek Revival mode. To the south of the door is a window similarly detailed. The main staircase rises along the south wall of the room, turning at the southwest corner and making another run before reaching the upper floor. This landing is lit by the window which pierces the gable end wall. The staircase has heavy turned balusters and a square newel. The contour of the banister is echoed by a chair rail which rises along the wall. This same type of chair rail is also found on each of the walls of the room. Under the closed string stair is a small field of panelling and a panelled door which leads to the now non-existent cellar stairs. Doorways pierce the west and north walls of the room. They are detailed with Georgian trim.

The southwest room in the house is now the parlor. This room has been substantially altered. Access is gained to the room from the stair hall to the east and from the present library to the north. These two doorways retain their original trim, as does the single window which pierces the west wall. A door in this wall has been closed at an undetermined date. The original trim is Georgian in detail and includes raised six-panel doors and dog-eared architraves around the east door and the window. The architrave of the north door is unusual in its simplicity, consisting only of a quarter-round moulding set into the plaster. Evidence for a heavy cornice was found on the walls and ceiling and a dentil cornice of similar size has been installed. The mantel is simply detailed and is of undetermined date. Evidence in the walls indicates that a fully panelled end wall may have been removed. The chair rail in this room was also removed, but has been replaced with one to match the others in the house.

The northwest room which is currently used as a library has its own set of winding stairs which leads to the bedchamber above. The staircase is located in the southeast corner of the room and several steps protrude beyond its panelled enclosure. A panelled door closes off the staircase; another door under the stair allows access to the cellar staircase. Other than the stair enclosure, the room is simply detailed. The fireplace is set off-center on the gable end wall of the room. It has a dog-eared surround. Adjacent to it is a small, narrow doorway which leads into the wing. A recently-installed bookcase flanks the fireplace on its west side. The chair rail was removed except for one small remnant. The newly-installed chair rail was cut to match it.

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The northeast room, presently the dining room, was probably the original parlor. This room provides an interesting combination of federal and Greek Revival detailing. The windows are trimmed in the Greek Revival mode, having architraves with flat mouldings and plain corner blocks. Centrally located on the north wall is a federal-style mantel with reeded insets. Above the mantel, the wall is plastered but there is evidence to indicate that a panelled overmantel may have been cut away. To one side of the mantel, filling the space between the chimney breast and the west wall of the room, is a cupboard with butterfly shelves and raised panel doors. To the other side of the mantel is a door which leads into the kitchen wing. Above this door, which is set back from the front of the chimney breast, are cupboards with panelled doors. A chair rail, similar to that in the rest of the house, is also found in this room.

The doorway which leads into the wing is two steps above the floor of the wing. The detailing of this room reflects its use as a nineteenth-century kitchen. It has been adapted to modern kitchen usage. Access to the exterior is obtained through a door in the east wall. This doorway has been altered. In the northwest corner of the room is a winding stair which leads to the chamber above. There was originally a chimney next to this stair; this has been removed. Modern kitchen facilities fill the west wall of the room, along with a horizontally-panelled door with large HL-hinges. This was originally an exterior door, but now leads to a modern addition which houses the bathroom for the house and a storage area. A long shelf is placed high on the south wall of the room between the two interior doors.

The second floor plan roughly parallels that of the first floor. There are four bedchambers in the main portion of the house and one in the wing. The area above the stair hall is divided between an upstairs hallway with its access door to the third floor and a small chamber. This chamber has a Greek Revival door and door frame. The other chambers are approximately the same size as the rooms below. The best chamber, located over what was the original parlor, has a fully panelled end wall. The latter is divided into three sections. The center section projects slightly and contains an off-center fireplace with a dog-eared surround. Above the fireplace is a raised overmantel, flanked by two additional raised panels with four small panels above. All of the panels have reeded moulds at the edge of the bevel. On either side of the fireplace are six-panelled doors which contain chimney closets. The doors have concealed butt hinges and contain double-beaded-edge clothes rails with turned pegs. A deeply moulded cornice and a chair rail are around the other three sides of the room. The windows have Greek Revival detailing similar to the room below. The two rear bedchambers are rather plain. The south bedroom has Greek Revival trim. The north room uses quarter-round moulding. The chair rail and mantel in this room are newly installed. The panelled-door cupboard next to the fireplace is original. The rooms in the attic are plastered and were probably used as bedrooms. The dormers which would have afforded light to these rooms have been closed.

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The Nelson House is notable for the presence of much of its original hardware. Of particular interest is the handle on the door leading from the main portion of the house to the wing.

The Nelson House is set at the end of a long lane which leads from Dutch Neck Road. The lane curves just in front of the house and forms a circular drive to the north of it. To the north and west of this are the farm buildings. There is a small yard around the house. The nominated area is bounded by an imaginary rectangle, centered around the house which is fifteen feet out from the end walls and forty feet out from the front and rear walls. Only two small sheds are included within the nominated area. They are located to the west of the house and are not important to the significance of the property.

*Ann. 1/19/78*

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John B. Nelson House  
New Castle County, Delaware

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER #7 PAGE Amendment

Amended Description of Property

The John B. Nelson House is set in a farm environment. It is surrounded by cultivated fields and immediately adjacent to it are several farm outbuildings. Included among these are a feed storage barn with an attached pole shed for storage of equipment, a large cow barn with a small attached pole shed and storage wing, a chicken house and a shed. The buildings are constructed of vertical lapped boards which have been covered with metal siding in places. All of the roofs are of metal. Foundations are of brick or stone rubble. Pairs of large double doors on the feed and animal barns allowed wagons to drive through the center of them. Hardware on the feed storage barn indicates it to be the older of the two barns. Except as replaced, the windows have six-over-six light sash. The buildings probably date to the last half of the nineteenth century with some additions early in the twentieth century.

Between the farm buildings and the Nelson House is a circular drive, the end of a long (.4 mile) drive from Dutch Neck Road. Around the house is a small yard. The nominated area is defined by an imaginary rectangle fifteen feet from the northwest or rear wall of the feed barn, fifteen feet from the north-east wall of the wing of the animal barn, forty feet from the facade of the house and fifteen feet from the south gable end wall of the house.

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in the dining room, as well as the other raised panel trim, display the quality and scope of the full competence of local nineteenth-century builders and joiners. The craftsmanship indicates the original owner was quite prosperous and in a position to contract for a dwelling of substantial scale and sophisticated detailing. The unusual combination of Georgian and Greek Revival detailing provides an interesting study. The presence of most of the nineteenth-century hardware adds to the significance of the architectural detail.

After being abandoned for over a decade, the Nelson House has been in the process of restoration for the last five years. The current owner has strong feelings about preserving the integrity of the house and has made every effort to alter the house as little as possible. **The owner has interest in the house only, the land is owned by Union Carbide Company.**

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
—PREHISTORIC	—ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	—COMMUNITY PLANNING	—LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	—RELIGION
—1400-1499	—ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	—CONSERVATION	—LAW	—SCIENCE
—1500-1599	—AGRICULTURE	—ECONOMICS	—LITERATURE	—SCULPTURE
—1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	—EDUCATION	—MILITARY	—SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
—1700-1799	—ART	—ENGINEERING	—MUSIC	—THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	—COMMERCE	—EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	—PHILOSOPHY	—TRANSPORTATION
—1900-	—COMMUNICATIONS	—INDUSTRY	—POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	—OTHER (SPECIFY)
		—INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The John B. Nelson House, a farmhouse west of Port Penn, is notable for its unusual floor plan and for its fine architectural detail.

Little is known of the early history of the Nelson House. Documentation has yet to reveal by whom or exactly when the property was built. Architectural detailing points to construction sometime towards the beginning of the nineteenth century. The 1849 Rea and Price map of New Castle County shows ownership by a James McMullin. He owned a considerable amount of land in St. Georges Hundred and may or may not have lived in this house. The next visual representation which shows ownership is Beer's Atlas of 1868. A Dr. S. Townsend is listed as owner of the dwelling. Deeds reveal that this was Dr. Stephen Townsend, a Methodist minister. Dr. Townsend served as the minister in nearby Delaware City in the mid-1840's. McMullin, who resided there for a time, may have been acquainted with Dr. Townsend and made him aware of the property in St. Georges Hundred. Deeds indicate that Townsend had moved on to Pennsylvania before beginning to speculate in land around the Port Penn area. There were mortgages on the property when Townsend sold it in 1869 to George G. Cleaver. The deed of transfer cites John B. Nelson as the tenant of the plantation. Throughout the deed references of the nineteenth century, the property is referred to as a plantation. George Cleaver sold the land and dwelling to John Nelson, the tenant, in 1872. According to Baist's Atlas of New Castle County, Nelson was the owner of the home of its publication in 1896. As John B. Nelson is the only nineteenth-century owner of the property who was known to have resided there, his name is associated with it.

The floor plan employed by the builder of the Nelson House is one that is not often used in Delaware. The Delaware farmhouse was most often one room deep, with a rear wing. Two-room-deep plans were also employed, particularly in the more elegant homes, but the rooms almost always were set on either side of a central stair hall. The four-interconnecting-room plan was certainly not in common usage. However, there are scattered instances of its use throughout the state. One notable example is the Baynard House, once located near Burrsville and now in Maryland. Historic American Buildings Survey drawings of the floor plans of the Baynard House are on file at the Library of Congress.

The craftsmanship displayed in the architectural detail of the Nelson House, particularly the panelled end wall in the main bedchamber and the butterfly cupboard



# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Rea and Price, Map of New Castle County, 1849.

Raist's Atlas of New Castle County, 1896.

Beer's Atlas of Delaware, 1863.

New Castle Deeds T-9, pg. 166; D-9, pg. 246; I-6, pg. 348; I-6, pg. 237.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888. Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Company, 1888.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY under 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 44,56,20 437,58,8,0  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 C                  

B                    
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 D                  

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated area is bounded by an imaginary rectangle which is drawn fifteen feet from the gable end walls of the house and forty feet from the front and rear of the house. It includes only two outbuildings with small sheds to the west of the house.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Michael S. May, Student, University of Delaware and  
 Joan M. Norton, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs DATE December, 1977

STREET & NUMBER Hall of Records TELEPHONE (302) 678-5314

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 x

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 *Lauren C. [Signature]*

TITLE Director, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE 7/21/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST *Charles [Signature]* DATE 12-8-78  
~~DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION~~ KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
*Lynn S. [Signature]* DATE Dec 8, 1978  
~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

John B. Nelson House  
New Castle County, Delaware

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

ITEM NUMBER #10 PAGE Amendment

Amended Acreage of Nominated Property:

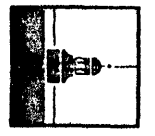
about 1.2 acres

Amended Verbal Boundary Description:

The nominated area is bounded by an imaginary rectangle which is fifteen feet from the south gable and wall of the house, fifteen feet from the rear of the attached barns and pole shed to the north of the house, fifteen feet from the northeast wall of the large barn to the northeast of the house and forty feet from the facade of the house. It includes the house and all the out-buildings which surround it.

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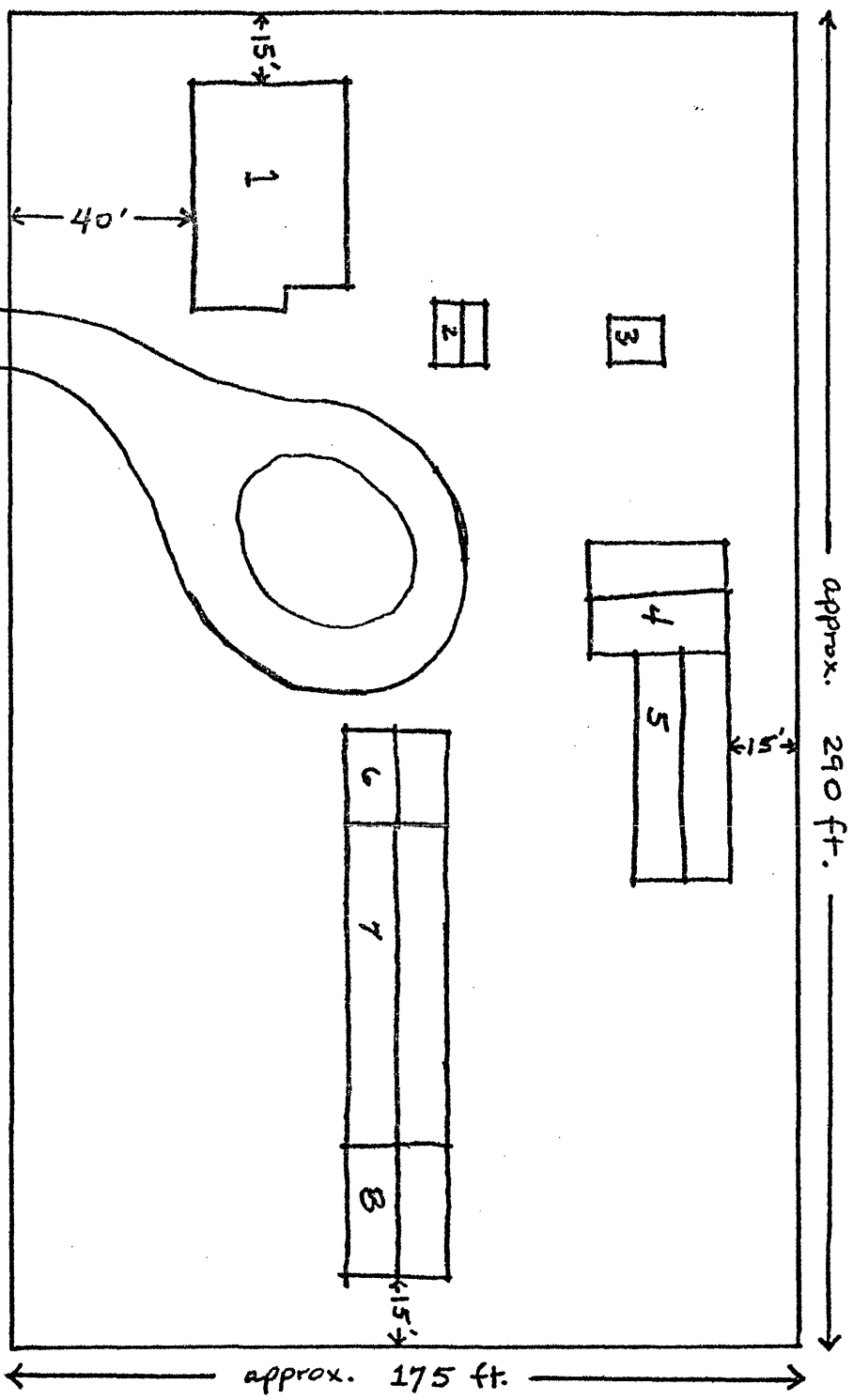
The John B. Nelson House  
 New Castle County  
 Delaware



DELAWARE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

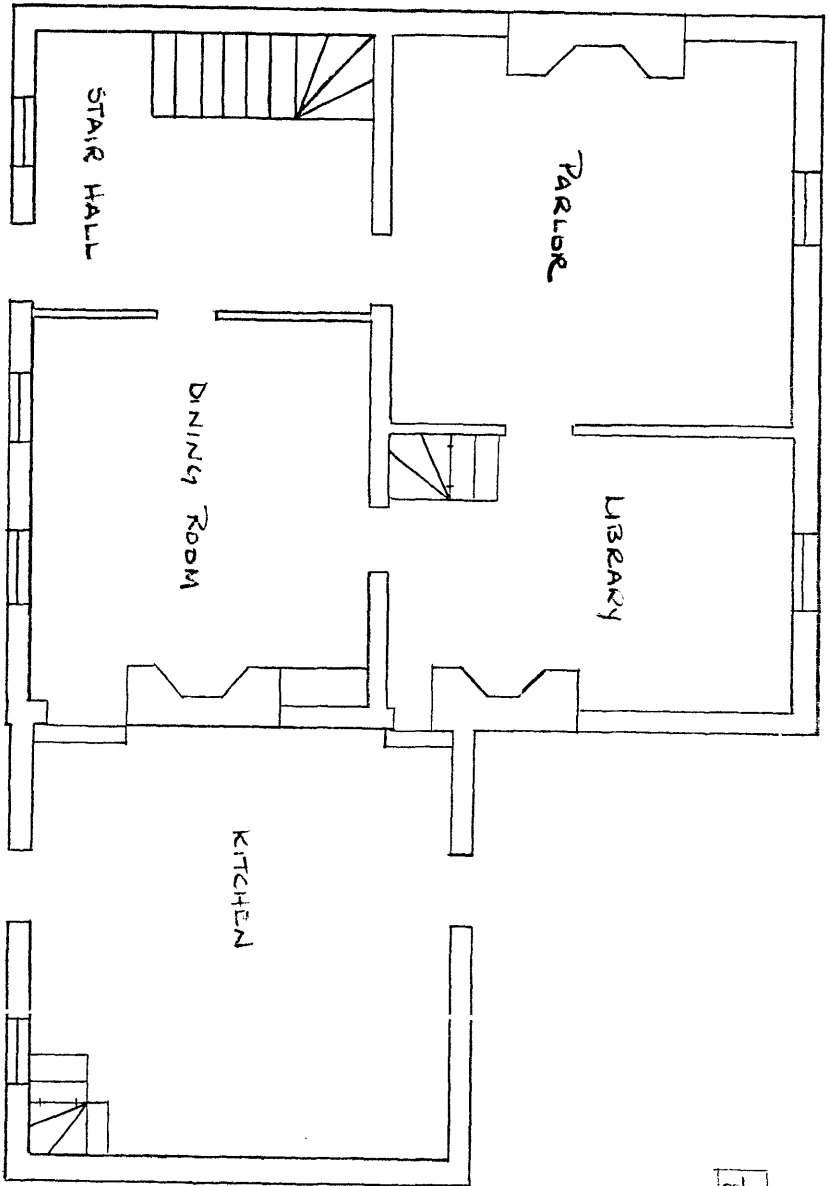
DRAWN BY GS4 DATE 11/28/78 SCALE none

FILE N-3939 TITLE Sketch Map

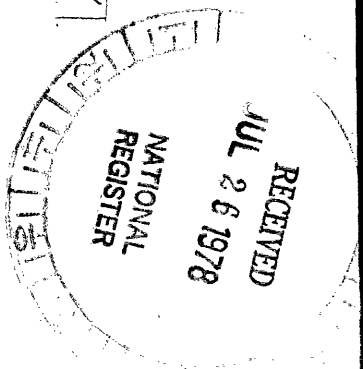


- 1 House
- 2 Shed
- 3 Chicken House
- 4 Feed Storage Barn
- 5 Pole Shed
- 6 Wing of large barn
- 7 Barn for Animals
- 8 Pole shed

DEC 19 1978



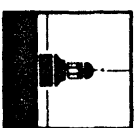
$\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'$

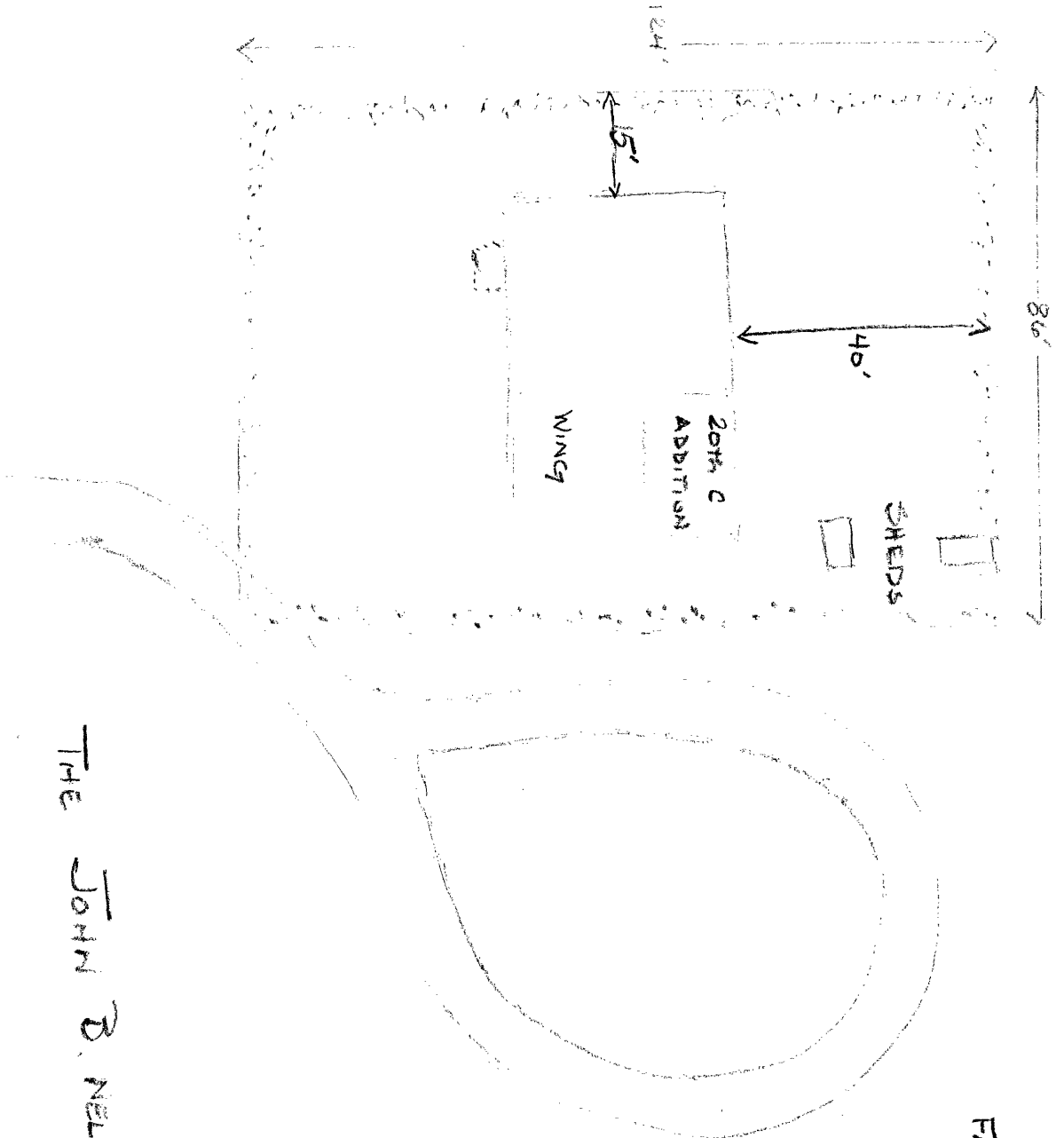


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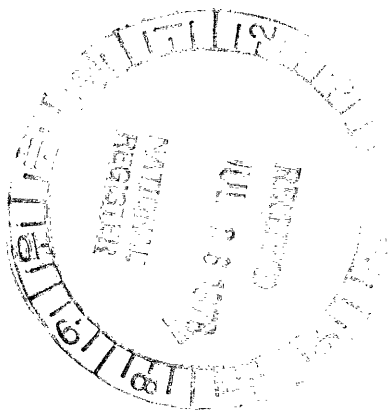
DRAWN BY MSM DATE 12/9/77 SCALE 1/8" = 1'

FILE N-3939 TITLE FLOOR PLAN





THE JOHN B. NELSON HOUSE



DELAWARE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

DRAWN BY JMN DATE 4/78 SCALE No SCALE

FILE N-3939 TITLE SKETCH MAP

To Dutch Neck Road

