

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)  
(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Delaware	
COUNTY: New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON: Corbit-Sharp House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Corbit-Sharp House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: Main and Second Street

CITY OR TOWN: Odessa

STATE: Delaware      CODE: 10      COUNTY: New Castle County      CODE: 003

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: Wintherthur Museum, Mr. Horace L. Hotchkiss Jr., Curator

STREET AND NUMBER: The Corbit-Sharp House, Main and Second Street

CITY OR TOWN: Odessa      STATE: Delaware      CODE: 10

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Recorder of Deeds, New Castle County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 King Street

CITY OR TOWN: Wilmington      STATE: Delaware      CODE: 10

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey (7 photos, 1936)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1936       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress/Annex

STREET AND NUMBER: Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: D.C.      CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Delaware  
COUNTY: New Castle  
ENTRY NUMBER:  
DATE:

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Corbit-Sharp House is a two-and-a-half story brick structure, 46 feet long and 36 feet deep. The walls are laid in Flemish bond, with a molded water table, granite beltcourse and carved granite window lintels, providing exterior architectural decoration on the facade. The pedimented doorway, into which an arched transom is cut, is a fine example of the Doric type and is almost identical with the doorway of the famed Stamper-Blackwell House on Pine Street. White paneled shutters frame the windows on the lower level, while green louvered blinds are used on the second story. A cornice with carved mutule blocks rather than modillions surrounds the main block of the house under the low hipped roof. Foliated wooden consoles frame the arched dormer windows of the front, while the other dormers have plain rectangular windows. An intricate lattice work railing surrounds the roof deck between massive capped chimneys. On the south end of the main house a two story brick kitchen wing was added, prior to 1800, replacing the original kitchen in the cellar.

The house is a central hall plan with two rooms to each side. Broken pedimented door frames open into the hall which has a paneled dado and a cornice of carved mutule blocks, patterned after the exterior cornice but reduced in scale to fit the room. Midway in the hall is a lintel of full Doric entablature, supported by fluted pilasters which frame the stairway.

The parlor on the first floor has a paneled overmantel with crossetted corners and a finely carved dentiled molding under the mantel shelf and around the room cornice. The dining room has a similar cornice and fielded paneling on the chimney breast wall with flaking cupboards concealed within the side paneling. There is a ventilator in the floor that allowed heat to rise from the original kitchen in the cellar below. There is also a secondary staircase to the kitchen which opens off this room. All of the bedrooms have fielded paneling on the fireplace walls and ovolo moldings around the fireplace but are otherwise plainer in decoration.

Across the front of the house on the second story is a large room patterned after the ballrooms of some Philadelphia and southern mansions, but which was used here as a drawing room and bedroom. The chimney breast is framed by fluted pilasters supporting an entablature and modillioned cornice which extends around the room. A broken pediment crowns the overmantel frame and is repeated in the pediments of the flanking doors. A fret carved base molding and chair rail complete the wainscoting. This plan of a projecting chimney breast framed by fluted pilasters is identical to the Powell drawing room in Philadelphia, down to the guilloche of the baseboard and the chair rail fret. This room therefore illustrates in detail how the entire house embodies the sophisticated elegance of Philadelphia, transported down the Delaware River to Odessa, giving an example of provincial wealth and grandeur to almost rival that of its inspiration.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century            |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1772-74**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering  | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry     | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military     |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music        |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The William Corbit House, erected in 1772-74 in Odessa Delaware, is one of the finest examples of a late Georgian house to be found in the Middle Colonies. The main section is oblong with a hipped roof and balustraded roof deck. The walls are of brick laid in Flemish bond and the facade has a stone beltcourse and window architraves. A wooden cornice with carved mutule blocks goes all around the building. Though not unusually large, the rooms have fine proportions and architectural details. The Corbit House is also important because it serves as a documented example of the impact of the architectural design of a major city, in this case Philadelphia, on smaller towns in the area. Odessa was once an area of economic importance as a trade center and Corbit had close business and social contacts with Philadelphia. Although his house, like his life style, was a simpler version of the city model, the ambitions of its builder to emulate the elegance of his Philadelphia counterparts, produced one of the highest achievements of the period in the domestic architecture of Delaware, and of the Middle Colonies.

HISTORY

William Corbit, son of a prosperous Delaware merchant and landowner, was twenty years old when he was sent to Philadelphia to learn the tanners trade. Through this first and subsequent close connections with the city he acquired urban habits and tastes. By the age of 27 he had accumulated considerable wealth by his craft and real estate investments and was able to begin building an imposing house on land located on the rise above the tannery. Using the great houses of Philadelphia for a model, the house was begun in 1772 and completed in 1774. The interior woodwork was executed by Robert May and Company who also worked on the adjoining David Wilson Mansion, 1769, built by Corbit's brother-in-law. The house originally stood on a narrow terrace of land with five granite steps descending to the tanyard road. Prior to 1800, a two story wing with kitchen and bedrooms was added to the south side of the house. For 150 years the Corbits retained possession of the property. In 1938 it was sold to H. Rodney Sharp, who restored it in 1940 and preserved it as a small private museum, along with the Wilson House. At this time the old tannery road was removed and the property relandscaped, destroying the old outbuildings.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Bennett, George F., Early Architecture of Delaware, Wilmington, Del., 1922  
 Eberlein, Harold D., and Hubbard, Cortlandt V. D., Historic Houses and Buildings of Delaware, Wilmington, Del., 1963, p. 125-27.  
 MacDonald, Betty H., Historic Landmarks of Delaware and the Eastern Shore, Lancaster, Pa., 1963, p. 31.  
 Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture, New York, 1952, p. 532.  
 Sweeney, John A. H., Grandeur on the Appoquinimink; the House of William Corbit at Odessa, Newark Del., 1959.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	39 ° 27 '14 "	75 ° 39 ' 27 "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	39 ° 27 '07 "	75 ° 39 ' 23 "				
SE	39 ° 27 '01 "	75 ° 39 ' 27 "				
SW	39 ° 27 '02 "	75 ° 39 ' 30 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **25 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Patricia Heintzelman, architectural historian, Landmarks Review Project, original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1967.**

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service** DATE: **12/13/74**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1100 L. Street, NW**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington,** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: **11**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK)

Designated: **Dec. 24, 1967.**  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Boundary Certified:  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Arch. Surveys

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK)

Boundary Assumed:  
 Keeper of the National Register  
 Director, OAHPS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Delaware	
COUNTY	
New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description second page

The house was acquired by H. Rodney Sharp in 1938, and a few Victorian additions and alterations were removed including a bay window, a lean-to bathroom addition on the side and a two story back porch. The later kitchen addition was converted into living quarters for the curator and a modern kitchen and pantry were added. Second Street, which once continued past the front of the house down to the tannery was removed and a garden, designed by H. Rodney Sharp, was installed south of the house. The removal of Second Street caused some dis-orientation to the placement of the house, but no serious injury to the integrity occurred. Also at this time, various outbuildings were removed with the exception of the old smoke house which is located at the western corner of the house. Again no harm was done to the house itself but an interesting group of buildings that would have demonstrated the workings of an 18th century tannery is lost. A scale model is included as part of the museum exhibit which illustrates the appearance of the property before these alterations were made. The site of the tannery has undergone preliminary excavation and more extensive investigation is planned.

BOUNDARY

The boundary has been drawn to include the site of the tannery by the estuary of the Appoquinimink Creek; beginning at the intersection of Main Street and the walkway between the Corbit House and the Wilson House at the northwest corner, then proceeding south along Main Street about 103 feet to the next house, then proceeding about 22 feet along the side of this house in a southwesterly direction to a rear wall; then in a southeasterly direction about 800 feet to the edge of the marshland, then following south and west to a point at Longitude 75°39'39"; Latitude 39°27'02" at the southwest corner, then north about 1600 feet in a straight line to the point of beginning, an area of about 25 acres.

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

((NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS))

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Delaware	
COUNTY New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance second page

Then in 1958 it was presented to the Wintherthur Corporation,  
which now maintains it as a house museum.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

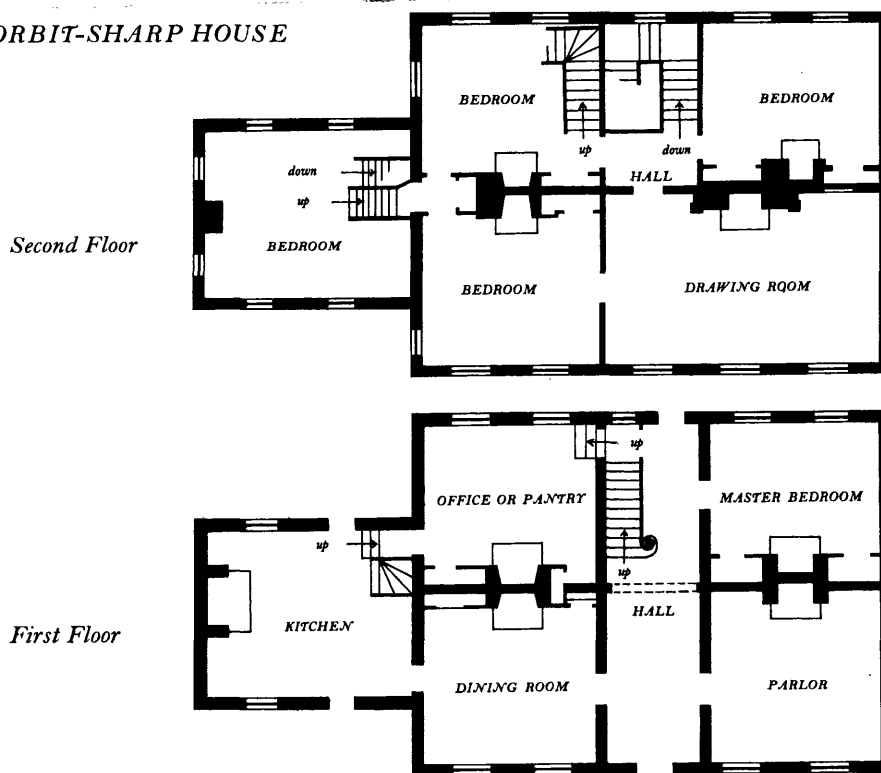
(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Deleware	
COUNTY New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries) 7. Description

THE CORBIT-SHARP HOUSE



Plan of the Corbit-Sharp House, from The Corbit Sharp House,  
museum pamphlet.

