

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Property Name: A. M. Vail (1868)

Location and Verbal Boundry Description:

The A. M. Vail House is located on the north side of Rt. 299 approximately one mile west of the intersection of Rt. 299 and Rt. 13 in the village of Odessa. The nomination includes five acres containing the house granary and barn. The nominated parcel is situated on land which has remained agricultural in use.

The nominated parcel begins at a point on the north side of Rt. 299 200 feet east of an existing farm lane on the south side of Rt. 299. The line runs north for a distance of 700 feet, where it turns 90° to the east and runs for 500 feet. At this point, the line turns 90° to the south and runs back toward Rt. 299 for a distance of 600 feet. The property is closed off by joining the two points on the north side of Rt. 299.

The nominated parcel contains sufficient acreage to provide for the preservation of the house, outbuildings, grounds and immediate setting.

UTM 18.40440.67000 Tax parcel 13-022.00-012

Owner: Louis and Christa Pederson

R. D. 2

Middletown, Delaware 19709

Description:

The A. M. Vail house is a late Federal style dwelling with a five-bay fenestration and two-story elevation. A tetra-style Greek revival porch across the south elevation of the house was removed in the early twentieth century. The timber framed and weather-boarded structure was covered with asbestos shingle at the time of the porch demolition. The sash windows are six-over-six light with paneled shutters on the first floor and louvered shutters on the second. Built on a center-hall passage plan the original house

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was nogged with stone. Later frame additions to the rear of the dwelling incorporated service functions (cooking and servants' lodgings) into the overall plan.

At each end of the gable roofed house are interior chimney piles with plastered breasts and molded mantel pieces. In the passage, the stairs retain their plain stick balusters and cherry hand rail. All walls are plastered with plain baseboards and no original chairrail or corner trim. The service wing is equally plain with its original gable end chimney pile and evidence of a boxed winder stair leading up to the second floor. Where structural members are visible in the attic they are sawn, joined, and fixed with wooden pins.

Outbuildings include a smoke house, a drive-through crib barn and granary, and a large frame cow barn. The barn frame is fully joined and contains four horse stalls, eight cow stalls and a calving area. Other farm buildings formerly standing on the site included a carriage barn, piggery, sheds, and a later chicken house. Surviving nineteenth century plantings in the yard are composed of Maple and Spruce trees.

Historical Background and Significance:

Alexander Vail was small at 41 acres in 1850. Production was centered on corn and butter but livestock was also an important asset. By the time of the 1860 census, Vail had more than tripled his land holdings, doubled his production of corn and butter and also grew oats, potatoes, sweet potatoes and wheat. Before 1870, orchard crops were added, reflecting the post-bellum emphasis on fruit production. By 1880, Vail retired to his original 41 acres.

This parcel is particularly significant, not only because of the imposing vernacular Federal style dwelling, but also due to the survival of several outbuildings behind the house. Thus, the architectural resources provide evidence for reconstructing the daily farm working life in this area as well as analyzing our understanding of the social and domestic arena.

Nomination by Bert Jicha and Trish Bensinger