

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Item number 7

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N-5146

Property Name: Armstrong-Walker House, Built ca. 1870

Location and Verbal Boundary Description:

The Armstrong-Walker Farm is located on the west side of route 896 approximately .65 miles south of its intersection with route 429. The nominated parcel contains five acres including the house, a timber framed horse barn, and the yard. A more recent outbuilding near the house is set outside the nominated acreage.

The nominated parcel begins at a point 500 feet north of the intersection of the present farm lane and the west side of route 896, continues west for 800 feet, turns southward at 90° and runs for 700 feet, and then turns eastward at 90° and runs back to route 896. The final line closes the boundaries between the points where the north and south property lines join route 896. The nominated acreage includes all grounds, buildings, and sufficient acreage to protect the setting as a whole.

UTM 18.37940.69140 Tax parcel 13-017.00-007

Owner: B. Irvin Armstrong

Armstrong Corners

Middletown, Delaware

Description:

The Armstrong-Walker House is a two-and-a-half story brick dwelling with an original brick service ell and a later 19th century frame kitchen added to the west end of the ell. The front of the house, laid in pressed brick mechanical bond with butter joints, displays a balanced five-bay facade complete with elongated four-over-four light sash windows, a double leaved entry door, and cross gable. The windows on the east elevation are finished with marble sills and framed architraves, and, on the first floor, are provided with three panel solid panel shutters. The central bay of the second floor is accentuated through its tripartite division into a four-over-four light central element flanked on either side by two-over-two light units. Above the central bay of the second story is the brick cross gable which is finished with a simple round arched opening under an austerely ornamented verge board. The main entry

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into the house is through a double leaved, four panel doorway finished with mahogany graining and flanked by three-light sidelights and a four-light transom. The doorway is also furnished with a dressed granite sill. Framing the central three bays on the first floor is an open front porch with square, paneled posts graced with open sawn-work brackets. The simply molded cornice is carried visually on quatrefoil sawnwork trim. A porch on the south elevation of the house repeats the same motifs but spans only two bays.

The standing seam metal roof is pierced by two chimney piles which serve stove flues located against the interior bearing walls of the centerpassage plan dwelling. At the corners of the extended eaves, the roof is ornamented with pendant drops.

On the interior the house is largely unaltered. Original mantels, stair trim, maple-grained built-in wardrobes reflect the original finish of the dwelling. Of particular note is the section of flooring in the hall between the south parlor and the dining room which retains its black on brown checkerboard paint scheme.

Associated with the house is a braced frame stable with a gable front. Attached to the south side of the stable are a pair of leanto sheds and a silo.

Historical Background and Significance:

The Armstrong-Walker House represents with Okolona the last stages of the rebuilding period. Erected around 1870, the house incorporates in a single building period all the requisite spaces for domestic activity and internally segregated living spaces.

The house was built by Martin E. Walker, a farmer and brick yard operator at Armstrong Corners. In 1870 Walker employed six laborers who were paid total wages of \$1000.00. The kilns only operated on a seasonal basis burning brick for seven months out of the year. In that period however, Walker was able to produce 300,000 bricks worth \$3000.00. Some of the bricks produced in Walker's operation reportedly were used in the construction of the house. As a farmer in 1870, Walker owned 225 improved acres worth \$17,000.00. The mainstays of his farm operation were wheat, corn for his livestock, orchard products and butter. By the time of the 1880 agricultural census, Walker's lot, unlike that of the vast majority of his neighbors, had improved. His farm rose 50 percent in value rather than falling an equivalent amount. The reason for this may have two sources. First, the farm's economics could have remained supported by the profits of the brick kilns; or, second Walker's turn to raising chickens for egg production instead of seeking wealth in orchard products may have placed him in a different, more secure market place.

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Whatever the causes of Walker's success in a difficult economic period, the fact remains that his house is one of the last major architectural statements generated out of the rebuilding period of St. Georges Hundred.

Nomination by B. Herman and William Macintire