

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received SEP 7 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic SHORT'S LANDING HOTEL COMPLEX

and or common

2. Location

NE of Smyrna

street & number Road 317, Duck Creek Hundred not for publication

city, town Smyrna vic, X vicinity of

state Delaware code 10 county Kent code 001

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name John G. McKay, H. McKay Stinson and L. McKay Stowell

street & number 2720 Stoney Creek Road

city, town Broomall vicinity of state PA 19008

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds, Kent County Courthouse

street & number Federal Street

city, town Dover state DE 19901

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title K-3993 and K-3994 Delaware Historic Site Survey; has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date 1981 federal X state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

city, town Dover state DE 19901

7. Description

Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

Check one

unaltered

altered

Check one

original site

moved

date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Short's Landing Hotel Complex consists of two dwelling houses, a small abandoned factory and an extensive collection of outbuildings. The oldest structure on the site is the c. 1780 brick hotel. The other dwelling is a c. 1800 frame federal-style dwelling. The complex is in Duck Creek Hundred, Kent County. It is just east of Route 9 and on the south side of Duck Creek or Smyrna River. Fleming's Landing is a short distance to the north. The land to the east is fairly flat and dry, but the land in the other directions is wet and marshland. Woodland Beach Wildlife Area is directly to the east.

The entire complex is part of a 720-acre farm. At present, most of the acreage is marshland and creek with the only fast, dry land being that around the hotel and mansion house. The marsh has been slowly eroding the fast land. In 1880, when the land was sold at sheriff's sale, the entire tract contained 900 acres. The deed of sale listed the land as 200 acres of tillable land, 250 acres of woodland and 450 acres of marshland. A farm of 150 acres that had half the tillable land was split off in 1894.

The farm complex is bounded on the north and east by Duck Creek. A short distance from the mansion house is the remains of Short's Landing. About one-half mile to the east, also on Duck Creek, is the remains of Steamboat Landing. Both are accessible by foot, only at low tide in a dry season.

The brick hotel is a 5-bay, 2-story structure. In plan, it is a center-hall, single-pile type. The facade is laid in Flemish bond with a wide belt course. The rest of the walls are laid in 5-course common bond. The endwalls, at first glance, appear to have a pattern to them in glazed headers, but on closer inspection the "pattern" is actually the random use of bricks with glazed headers, either with the header or stretcher face to the outside. The windows

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c.1800 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Short's Landing Hotel Complex is an important surviving complex of a type that was once very common. For the most of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Delaware was dependent upon water routes for transportation. Most of the towns and settlements developed along navigable waterways and those that were inland, such as Smyrna, soon developed a series of landings along the routes from the town to the Delaware Bay. Short's Landing was one of the earliest to serve Smyrna and it is the only one left besides Brick Store Landing (listed 1973) in Blackbird Hundred, New Castle County. As an important link with the transportation history of central Delaware, the hotel complex is eligible under Criterion A. The complex is also eligible under Criterion C. The brick hotel is an example of a late-eighteenth-century dwelling that was a common feature on the land, but which has been disappearing rapidly. The mansion house is a fine example of a Federal-style frame dwelling and one that has been unaltered, except for the addition of the c. 1880 porch.

The hotel was built c. 1780 by Abraham Taylor. The hotel is a vernacular structure that incorporates the spacial arrangements that became popular during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. This includes the central stair hall and the rear wing as a service wing. At that time, it was accessible only by boat along the Duck Creek. That creek was an important transportation route in central Delaware. Duck Creek Crossroads, now known as Smyrna, developed as a grain shipping point in the mid-eighteenth century. It was located astride the main north-south road down the state, and at the start of the main road to Chestertown, Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay. Overland travel was difficult at best; therefore, water transit was of prime importance. Landing spots, such as Short's Landing, sprung up to handle the river traffic. These landings usually consisted of a pier, a store, a hotel and a few dwellings.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Beers' Atlas of Delaware, 1868.
Byles' Atlas of Kent County, Delaware, 1859.
Kent County Orphans Court Records, Plot Book 4, 1866.
Scharf's History of Delaware, 1888.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 91.8

Quadrangle name Smyrna

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	8	4	5	4	0	9	0	4	3	5	5	2	40
Zone		Easting				Northing							

B

18	4	5	3	7	1	0	4	3	5	4	7	5	0
Zone		Easting				Northing							

C

1	8	4	5	3	2	4	0	4	3	5	5	1	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

1	8	4	5	3	1	2	0	4	3	5	5	6	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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 Stephen G. Del Sordo, Historian

Bureau of Archaeology and

organization Historic Preservation

date May 1983

street & number Old State House, The Green

telephone 302-736-5685

city or town Dover

state DE 19901

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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

David R. Griffith

title

date 8/31/83

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

Patrick Andrews

date 10/17/83

6/ Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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have been replaced with two-over-two sash windows. This was done in the 1880's, but the replacement windows still stain the narrow width of the originals. The porches are modern replacements for the originals. There is a short, 2-story rear wing that houses a kitchen. This was added sometime after the building was constructed. The building is still in use as a hotel of sorts. It is a bunk house for groups of duck hunters who come to the area each hunting season.

The frame dwelling house is listed on old plot maps as the mansion house. It is a Federal-style building with the traditional center-hall, single-pile floor plan. It retains all of its original construction features, except for the porch which is an 1880's replacement for the original porch. The house has modern asbestos siding covering the original weatherboard. The roof is covered in asphalt shingles over wooden shingles. The Federal-style dormers are original, as are the dentils on the box cornice.

The house sits on a brick foundation. There is a 2-story rear wing that houses sleeping space and a kitchen. There is a small summer kitchen to the rear of the house. An enclosed porch and a 1-story shed have been added to the rear wing.

The small factory, which is east of the dwellings, was built in the early-twentieth century as a leadite factory. It was used to manufacture the caulking employed in the insulation of sewer pipe. It is a frame structure built on brick piers. The siding is corrugated tin. It is only accessible at low tide during very dry periods.

The outbuildings consist of braced frame, 1-story buildings. They include stable, granaries and storage sheds. Most date from the early twentieth century. There is also a large circular well with a small well house on the site. The outbuildings are lined up between the hotel and the mansion house on the south side of the access lane. The lane was at one time the Smyrna-Bombay Hook lighthouse road.

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Short's Landing was a small landing and it was the first one in from the Delaware Bay and a mile in from the thoroughfare which was cut through a short point of land to provide a fast route from the Duck Creek to the bay. The thoroughfare was dug in the early eighteenth century. It is also located on the earliest fast land in from the bay. Before the channel was cut, boats had to proceed down Duck Creek for 13 miles before it entered the bay.

No records indicate when Abraham Taylor acquired the property. It was originally part of a tract called "Bear Garden" that had been assigned to William Frampton in 1686. It is most possible that there were earlier structures on the site, but no evidence exists at the present time for their location. The hotel was very popular. When it was first built, it served the dual function of a dwelling for Taylor and his family and as a hotel. As his business grew, he added the frame mansion house to the east and moved his family there. The mansion house is one of the finer expressions of the vernacular, Federal-style in lower Delaware. The use of the dentils on the cornice and the well-executed dormer details all indicate an attention to construction not usually evident in the region.

Soon after the mansion house was completed, Taylor died and left his estate in the care of his wife and children. The estate was settled in 1808 and the hotel and mansion house were sold to Jacob Stout. In 1830, Stout laid out the road from Rothwell's Landing to the Bombay Hook light at the mouth of the thoroughfare. Rothwell's Landing is 2 miles east of Smyrna. This road exists now only as far as the mansion house.

Isaac Short bought the land and the buildings in 1837. He increased the acreage associated with the point and gave his name to the landing. When he died in 1865, his administrator Abel J. Reese bought the land. Reese operated the hotel, but the property began to decline as the railroads began to replace water transportation. By 1890, the hotel was closed. Another factor in the

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demise of the property and also the loss of much of the tillable land was the hurricane of 1878. In October of that year, a very large storm destroyed the dikes and levees along the bay, the whole length of Delaware. There was much flooding and loss of life and property. All the buildings at Collins Beach, a popular resort area on Bombay Hook, were all destroyed. Trees were blown down and many dwellings along the bay lost their roofs. Since this storm, most of the land between the bay and Duck Creek has become marshland. Reese tried to continue his operations, but lost the land due to heavy debts in 1880. Since then the tract has been owned by absentee landlords who used it for a combination of activities. The leadite factory was in operation mainly from the 1920's to the late 1940's. Since the mid-1950's, the major activity at the landing has been as a base camp for duck hunters. The brick hotel is used as a boarding house for the hunters. The camp operator also lives in the hotel, while the mansion house is a tenant house.

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The boundary for the Short's Landing Hotel Complex is a square of 2,000 feet on a side. Its center line is the roadbed of Road 317, the Smyrna-Bombay Hook Light Road. It includes the hotel, mansion house, factory, outbuildings and the Short's Landing. However, the factory is not a contributing element to the complex.

Starting at a point 1,250 feet northeast of the intersection of Route 9 and Road 317 on the southeast side of Road 317, then in a southeast direction perpendicular to Road 317 for a distance of 1,000 feet, then in a northeast direction at a right angle to the last line for a distance of 2,000 feet, then in a northwest direction at a right angle to the last line for 2,000 feet to the south bank of the Duck Creek or Smyrna River, then in a southwest direction at a right angle to the last line for a distance of 2,000 feet, then in a southeast direction at a right angle to the last line for 1,000 feet to the place of beginning. The total acreage is 91.8.