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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 Dickinson House

AND/OR COMMON John Dickinson House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 5 miles south of Dover via U.S. 113 and .3 miles east of U.S. 113 on
Kitts Hummock Road.

CITY, TOWN Kitts Hummock VICINITY OF 1

STATE Delaware CODE 10 COUNTY Kent CODE 1

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input 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 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 type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME State of Delaware, administered by Delaware State Museum, Mr. Henry Draper,
Milton, Delaware.

STREET & NUMBER Hall of Records
CITY, TOWN Dover STATE Delaware

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Kent County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN Dover STATE Delaware

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE 1936 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs

CITY, TOWN Washington STATE District of Columbia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built between 1739 and 1754, the John Dickinson house is an excellent restored example of an Early Georgian mansion. The house illustrates what may be called the "telescope type of planning," in which a series of smaller wings are added to the main house at later dates. The main house here was erected by Judge Samuel Dickinson in 1739-1740, on a 13,000 acre plantation tract. The mansion is a five bay, two-story structure, built of brick in Flemish bond, with black glazed headers. There is a wide central hall with a parlor to the east and two smaller rooms, each with an angle fireplace to the west, or left. The cellar of the main house, which is raised almost to ground level and is well-lighted, originally contained a large storage room to the east, a wine cellar under the front door, and a scullery and kitchen at the west end. To the west, two lower wings step down from the main house on the same axis. The first of these wings was added in 1752 and contained a dining room with a bedroom above. The smallest and westernmost wing was added in 1754. This whitewashed section housed the kitchen and the quarters of the household slaves above it, and is fronted with a brick-columned arcade.

The mansion faces directly south and though well-lighted, has only three windows on the north side, in order to conserve heat in the winter. The main house, as it was built by Judge Dickinson, was three full stories in height, over a raised basement, and had a hipped roof. The first floor windows, which are unusually tall, still reflect the original design that was proper for such a Georgian three-story house.

In 1804 a ~~disastrous~~ fire occurred, which left little of the house standing, except the four walls. John Dickinson supervised the repair of the house, through an extensive correspondence from his home in Wilmington. The original hip roof was replaced with a gable roof, and the mansion was lowered to two stories. The interior of the repaired house was substantial but plain, unlike the expensively decorated and carved woodwork of the original. The repair of the house along simple lines was natural in view of the fact that Dickinson now made his home in Wilmington, and apparently intended the house for tenant use.

In 1952, the National Society of Colonial Dames of America raised \$25,000 which was presented to the State of Delaware to preserve the Dickinson House, when its destruction appeared imminent. The State matched the gift and purchased the house and a 13-acre tract around it. Architectural, archeological and historical research was performed under the direction of the Delaware Public Archives Commission, and with the assistance of an Advisory Committee, restoration was carried out. The restoration of the house was based on Dickinson's correspondence and written instructions of the 1804-1806 period. Materials of the original structure were reused when possible, and the house has been refurbished with pieces formerly owned by the Dickinson family.

There are no surface remains of the outbuildings and slave quarters which once were a part of the plantation, and no archeological work has been done in this area. There are slight vestiges of the long lane which ran from the house south to the landing on St. Jones River, and it is reported that along this lane is the site of the slave burying ground. A formal boxwood garden has been laid out directly in front of the main house, and to the west of the house is a large kitchen garden. Both gardens are enclosed by picket fences. To the east of the house is a log outbuilding, which was recently moved to the site and is not historic.

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 checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
(1732-1808)		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES (1732-1808) BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"John Dickinson has been aptly termed the 'Penman of the Revolution.' In the literature of that struggle, his position is as pre-eminent as Washington in war, Franklin in diplomacy, and Morris in finance."¹

His internationally famous Letters From a Farmer in Pennsylvania (1767) and the subsequent Letters to the King provided calm analysis of the strained relations between England and the colonies from an economic and legal standpoint. Following the Revolution, Dickinson remained an active political leader and proved one of the prime movers in the Constitutional Congress of 1787 and in the ratification of the Constitution.

The Dickinson house, located five miles south of Dover, Delaware, where it is believed he wrote the famous Letters, was built in 1740 by the author's father. It is a fine example of Delaware plantation architecture, and has been restored to its early appearance by the State of Delaware, and it is presently open to the public.

Biography

John Dickinson was born in Talbot County, Maryland in 1732, and moved with his family to Kent County, Delaware in 1724. His father, Samuel Dickinson, was a rich planter and later a judge, who in 1740 purchased a 13,000 acre plantation on St. Jones Creek, and there erected his fine brick mansion.

In this house young Dickinson grew up as a rich planter's son enjoying the life of a country aristocrat. He was privately tutored by a young Irishman, William Killen, who later became the first Chancellor of Delaware. In 1750 John left home for Philadelphia to study law, and from there he traveled to London to continue his studies at the Middle Temple.

Dickinson returned to Philadelphia after completing his studies, where he began a successful law practice. He frequently returned to his father's house when his public affairs permitted.

1. Paul L. Ford, The Writings of John Dickinson, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Memoirs, XIV (Philadelphia, 1895) preface.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Delaware (The American Guide Series) (New York, 1938).

Paul L. Ford,, The Writings of John Dickinson, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Memoirs, XIV (Philadelphia, 1895).

C. J. Stille, The Life and Times of John Dickinson, 1732-1808, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Memoirs XIII (Philadelphia, 1891).

Moses Tyler, The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783, 2 vols. (New York, 1897). I.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 13

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	4,6,1,12,0	4,3,2,8,2,4,0	B	1,8	4,6,1,2,8,0	4,3,2,8,1,8,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,8	4,6,1,3,0,0	4,3,2,7,9,0,0	D	1,8	4,6,1,1,3,0	4,3,2,7,9,0,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at the inter section of Kitt Hummock Road and the abandoned dirt road, proceed south along the eastern curb of the dirt road 1000' to a point, thence east for approximately 500' to a point, thence north for approximately 750' back to Kitt Hummock Road, thence northwest along the southern curb of Kitt Hummock Road to the point of origin.

(See sketch map)

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

Richard E. Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

3/12/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW

TELEPHONE

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Landmark
Designated: JAN. 22, 1967
date
Boundary Certified: 3/4/77
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

3/10/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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The land to the east and south of the Dickinson house is presently under cultivation, and is reminiscent of the plantation days. U.S. Route 113 runs along the western boundary of the property and the Bay Road extends along the northern boundary.

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John Dickinson House, Delaware

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Biography (continued)

When trouble with England was made acute by the Townshend Acts of 1767, he wrote his Letters to a Farmer in Pennsylvania (Delaware was then in the Three Lower Counties of Pennsylvania) which brought him fame in America and abroad. These pamphlets, as well as his subsequent Letters to the King were an appeal to reason to avert or postpone a break with England. Unlike Patrick Henry's incendiary speeches, Dickinson's patriotism took the form of a calm analysis of the problem from a legal and economic standpoint. His thesis was that England would enjoy a more profitable trade with the Colonies if she did not labor them with taxes.

This unfulfilled hope for reconciliation cost him popularity when, in July 1776, as a delegate from Pennsylvania, he absented himself from the vote on Richard Henry Lee's resolution for independence, voted against the Declaration of Independence, and then declined to sign that document. The Colonies, he felt, would not stand much chance of winning the war without strong allies or a strong central government to hold the Colonies together. Nonetheless when the war began he was one of the few members of the Continental Congress to take up arms.

In 1781-2 Dickinson's prestige was sufficiently restored for him to serve as President of Delaware, after which he resigned to become President of Pennsylvania.

Dickinson's passion for justice and order in government reached its flower in the Constitutional Congress of 1787, where his counsel halted fruitless bickering and clarified many problems. After the Constitution was finally drawn up he campaigned for its adoption by the States with pamphlets signed, "Fabius," and had the satisfaction of seeing Delaware ratify it first.

Dickinson spent his last years in Wilmington, Delaware, where he died in 1808.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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PAGE

Revised Boundary Description

John Dickinson Mansion

National Historic Landmark

Beginning at the intersection of County Route 68 with a lane leading to the John Dickinson Mansion east along County Route 68 approximately .6 mile, from thence due south to the St. Jones River, thence west along the historic course of the St. Jones River to an unnamed creek, thence north along the creek and the west side of the lane leading to the John Dickinson Mansion to the point of beginning.