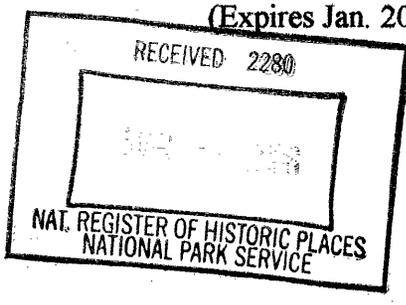


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Wilmington Club

other names/site number John Merrick House / N-00778

2. Location

street & number 1103 North Market Street not for publication
city or town Wilmington vicinity
state Delaware code DE county New Castle code 003 zip code 19805

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

John D. Lawrence, Deputy SHPO
Signature of certifying official

3/8/06
Date

Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

full copy

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 3 Page 1

Wilmington Club
name of property

New Castle County, Delaware
county and State

Agency Certification

In my opinion, the Wilmington Club Building meets / does not meet the
National Register Criteria.

James M. Baker
James M. Baker
Mayor
City of Wilmington, Delaware

11-22-05
Date

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Edson H. Beall 4-19-06

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the

National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the

National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

None

Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Domestic</u>	Sub: <u>single dwelling</u>
<u>Social</u>	<u>clubhouse</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Social</u>	Sub: <u>Clubhouse</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN
Italianate

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>rubble granite</u>
roof	<u>synthetic</u>
walls	<u>brownstone</u>
other	<u>brick</u>
	<u>stucco</u>

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Industry
Architecture
Entertainment Recreation

Period of Significance 1864-1955

Significant Dates 1864 Date of Initial Construction
 1900 Date Purchased by Wilmington Club

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Merrick, John

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Lind, Edmund G

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.71 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 18 453100 4399600 3 _____

2 _____ 4 _____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Debra Campagnari Martin, Preservation Planner, & Andrew Homsey

organization City of Wilmington, Dept. of Planning date 9-26-2005

street & number 800 N. French Street telephone 302-576-3107

city or town Wilmington state DE zip code 19801

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name John Herdeg, President, Wilmington Club
street & number 1201 N. Orange Street, Suite 500 telephone _____
city or town Wilmington state DE zip code 19801

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Section 7 Page 1

John Merrick House/Wilmington Club
name of property
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county and State

Description

The Italianate style John Merrick House/ Wilmington Club is a large, detached dwelling located on the west side of the 1100 block of Market Street, in the upper (northern) portion of the central business district. The high style brownstone façade is an outstanding example of its type in the state of Delaware. Despite large additions to the rear of the building to house expansions for the Wilmington Club, they are stylistically subordinate in size and placement to the main Italianate block. The retention of historic landscaping, including mature trees and masonry retaining walls, stairs and circulation system preserves the presence of a single family dwelling to the façade elevation facing Market Street. The John Merrick House was one of a number of large and unique residences constructed in this part of the city by the end of the 19th century. Gradually, the other residences in this fashionable section of town were razed for the construction of public, religious and corporate buildings as the central business district expanded throughout the 20th century. Flanking this high-style residence is the Colonial Revival-style First and Central Presbyterian Church (1929) and the International-style I.M. Pei building (1971).

Exterior

The house was originally built on a T-plan, but later additions have given the building an irregular footprint. The exterior of the original three-story building is brownstone with rusticated quoins. The five-bay facade is symmetrical, consisting of a central, first floor entry bay flanked by two windows. A flat roof with overhanging eaves and an elaborate bracketed and denticulated cornice tops the building. The cornice brackets are of wood and finely crafted in scroll shapes. Four large, interior brick chimneys pierce the roof. The exterior of the building is in good condition, though a significant amount of it has been patched and coated in well-intentioned maintenance programs.¹ The interior has been maintained very well by the owners, and showcases the fine materials and workmanship of the original builder.

Entry is gained by a central granite stairway, which flares slightly at ground level. Pierced stone balustrades on either side terminate in large stone newels topped by carved owls. A wrought-iron handrail flanks the interior of the stone balustrades. The entry features a large, double-leaf, paneled and carved wooden door topped by a half-round glass transom. Elaborate brownstone door-surrounds include a carved, half-round arch topped by a flat cornice supported by two large, scroll-shaped brackets carved in low relief. The keystone is expressed as a small cornice bracket. As in all of the first and second story openings of the facade, the interstices between the trim and the cornice of the door is filled with ornate, low relief carving.

The first-floor facade has elongated round-arched window openings containing four-over-six, double-hung, wood sash. Smooth stone trim and a keystone frame each opening, which topped by a flat cornice supported by

¹ The brownstone facade and balustrades were under restoration in 2005.

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John Merrick House/Wilmington Club
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carved, scroll-shaped brackets. The cresting that surmounts the cornices is similar to the cresting above the door. These first floor windows open onto shallow brownstone balconies supported by massive carved stone brackets.

The second and third stories are separated from the first by a brownstone belt course. The second story windows are similar to those in the first floor but that they are not full length and lack a paneled stone apron below each opening. The central window pair features a broken, segmental-arched pediment and central crest. The third story windows feature bracketed sills and low relief hoods with keystone details. The central window pair features round-arched heads, while the four flanking windows have softly-squared heads.

The window configuration on the three remaining elevations is greatly simplified and similar on all levels. The side windows feature heavy stone sills without the relief work, pediments, sills or balconies seen on the facade. On the south elevation, a bay with oversized segmental arch windows indicates what may have been a secondary entrance at the first floor level, although a one-story addition now covers that portion of the building. The original rear elevation of the building is completely obscured by 20th century brick additions.

The Wilmington Club began to alter the original footprint of the Merrick House shortly after they purchased the building. Board meeting minutes from the early summer of 1900 record estimates were to be sought for the construction of "a summer house in the backyard" and "a porch on the south side of the back building of the Club House." The summerhouse, if built, no longer exists, but the 1936 Franklin Atlas depicts a frame addition to the south side, in the angle between the main block and the rear extension. The same map indicates that the rear extension had been widened significantly to the north. Later construction added to the east side of the porch (presently part of the bar/lounge area) between 1936 and 1950, and to the west (rear) of the property, when the dining room, foyer and service area were completely remodeled and expanded in 1966. This latest addition is of red brick, laid in common bond. It is virtually unadorned, featuring a simple stone coping and a tall arched window in the stair tower. There are several brick chimneys placed irregularly throughout the newer section additions. The additions do not imitate the original structure, nor do they visually detract from it as viewed from the facade. Though massive in plan, the additions are executed in such a way as to allow the original portion of the house to appear to dominate the lot as it did historically.

Interior – Original Portion

The house was built on a double pile, center hall plan, containing four rooms on each of three floors. Historic maps show a rear wing that no longer exists, having been replaced by a series of dining and kitchen facilities by the Wilmington Club after their purchase in 1900. From the marble-tiled foyer, the main hallway is entered through double-leaf wooden doors with two-thirds glass panels. The hallway, divided in half by a round archway with molded wood trim, opens to two rooms on each side and to the main staircase on the left (or south) side of the building. The

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northern rooms are open to each other, separated by ceiling and wall moldings only. If walls or doors once separated the two rooms, no evidence of them is visible presently. On the opposite side of the hall, the door to the southwest room now leads to the club's bar/lounge area, a room remodeled and expanded prior to 1936. The stair hall includes a squared second doorway into the bar/lounge, an addition that began with a porch in the early history of the club.

The decorative features of the original house are bold and heavy but not complicated, giving a feeling of classical simplicity in contrast with the elaborate facade. The original doorways are round-arched and feature wide, uninterrupted wooden molding. The window trim is wide and molded as well. The windows have paneled shutters that fold and store in the side casing, but which now are painted open. The rooms feature crown molding of varying detail, wooden chair rail and tall wooden baseboards. The floors, where visible, are of narrow strip hardwood. The two front rooms contain white marble fireplace surrounds, one featuring a fruit and vine relief (northeast) and the other with an arched rope pattern and a large wooden-framed mirror above (southeast). Both fireplaces were adapted to a coal furnace and retain their decorative cast iron grills. The staircase features a wooden faceted, carved newel post and a balustrade with turned spindles.

The second-story contains three rooms and a hallway that lead to the original rear wing. The north room, mimicking the arrangement of the room below, probably was once two rooms. These rooms retain their molded window trim, chair rail and tall baseboards. The crown molding, very narrow and simple in design, is probably a replacement material. No fireplaces remain on this level. The flattened arch of the stairwell is the most notable decorative element of the second floor, featuring heavy scrolled brackets at the wall. The same brackets also occur at the first floor opening to the stair.

The third story, which was not accessible, contains private quarters for the property manager. The rooms of this floor, as depicted in the plan drawing, appear to have been modified slightly to include a kitchen and bathrooms.

Interior - Addition

The first floor of the 1966 rear (northwest) addition includes a reception area open to a wide, curved second staircase to the northeast, and a kitchen and large formal dining room to the southwest. Other service rooms include bathrooms, a coatroom, elevator, a staff dining room, loading dock and service stairs. The dining room features a large, circular recession in the ceiling containing a modern chandelier and other hidden lighting. A wallpaper mural along the south wall, interrupted by structural pilasters, is the dominant feature of the room. Minor remodeling in 2001 included the removal of acoustical tiles from the ceiling of the dining room.

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The second floor contains offices, and meeting rooms arranged around the staircase. Service facilities include an elevator, pantry, storage room and a rear stairway. The second floor rooms of the addition all date to the 1966 renovation and later, as do the third floor mechanical room and sun porch.

Grounds

The lot includes 0.71 acres and is situated on a terrace several feet above the level of Market Street. A granite staircase with wrought iron handrails leads up to the front yard, which is approximately fifty feet deep and is separated from the street by a coated brownstone balustrade on a granite base. There are many low shrubs and small trees in the front and side (north) yards and two large Dawn Redwood trees flank the entrance. The ground is covered in beds of pachysandra. During John Merrick's residence the site originally included a stable/carriage house on the Orange Street property line. Parking was a concern in the early 20th century, and in 1904 the meeting minutes of the Wilmington Club board record a resolution to make "...the stable a suitable place for an automobile station." The stable/auto station was demolished in 1929, and the large parking lot at the back of the property was paved in 1954. The facade remains, in its symmetry and studied formality, largely what it was at the time of construction – stately and reserved behind its foliage and heavy balustrade.

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John Merrick House/Wilmington Club
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Significance

The John Merrick House/ Wilmington Club, originally constructed in 1864, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A, B and C. It is eligible under criterion A because, as the Merrick house, it reflects the trend of successful 19th-century industrialists to build large, high style dwellings just outside of the commercial/industrial district. The building's subsequent role as home to the Wilmington Club (1900 – present), adds to this criterion. The Wilmington Club, founded in 1876 to promote the discussion of literature, art and history and to provide an exclusive, restful environment for its members, reflects the increasing social and economic stratification in Wilmington at the turn of the 20th century. The building is eligible under Criterion B for its association with John Merrick, one of Wilmington's most successful and influential carriage makers, who is credited with building the first steam-powered carriage factory in the nation in 1864. The building is eligible under criterion C as a rare example in Wilmington of grand scale and high style Italianate residential construction. Executed in brownstone, a material rarely used in Wilmington, and set in a formal landscape, the residence was distinguished from other large, detached residences of the period. Presently, it is further distinguished as one of the few mid-19th century mansions remaining in what is now the urban core of this city.

The Merrick House

The Merrick House represents the peak of upward mobility that was possible for industrious entrepreneurs in Wilmington in the mid 19th century. As the industries of Wilmington gained momentum and local competition increased, a class-conscious attitude arose among the populace, which resulted in, among other things, geographic stratification. As successful industrialists felt the need to emphasize their newfound wealth, external manifestations such as the construction of stately homes reinforced class distinctions. In commissioning and building his house during the Civil War, John Merrick appears to have been unaffected by the generally cautious attitude that preceded the post-war building boom.

The Merrick House, at 1103 N. Market Street, is the surviving example of such dwellings as were built on Market Street, between 9th Street and the Brandywine River, and between French and Orange Streets in the 19th century. Physician Thomas Draper's Greek Revival mansion was located adjacent to the Merrick House, at the corner of 11th and Market. Across the street, the Second Empire house of industrialist and Civil War veteran Col. Henry McComb occupied the entire block. Other influential residents of the immediate area included the Hilles family, bankers and education advocates (10th and Market), James E. Price, merchant miller and the first president of the Wilmington Association and Reading Room (1307 Market), and Elizabeth Canby of the prominent merchant/milling family (14th and Market, at the Brandywine River). Additional finely crafted, but modest houses were built by other prominent citizens in the locale as well, as seen on the Hopkins map of 1876 (Figure 1). Confirming the prominence

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of this part of Wilmington, the first of Wilmington's county courthouses was built in 1880 between 10th and 11th Streets on Market, on what is now Rodney Square.

The relationship of the Merrick House to the surrounding Rodney Square area has changed over time as the neighborhood orientation has moved from large-scale detached and semi-detached houses to public and corporate buildings. In 1907, a group of fourteen houses on the 1000 block of Market Street was demolished to erect the new DuPont Building. The county courthouse was removed in 1920 for the creation of Rodney Square. In 1922, several residential structures fronting Rodney Square along King Street were razed to make way for the Public Building. One year later the Public Library was constructed on the site of the colonial period Old Central Presbyterian Church. The new Colonial Revival style First and Central Presbyterian Church was constructed in 1929 adjacent to the Merrick House, on the site of the Draper house. The house of Col. Thomas McComb, fronting Rodney Square, was razed in order to build the Federal Post Office in 1937.

In architectural style, the Merrick House follows the composition of the formal Italian Renaissance Revival town house, a form used infrequently in the United States in comparison with the many variations of the informal Italianate villa built in urban and rural settings in Delaware and across the country. Introduced in the 1830s and propelled by the books of Andrew Jackson Downing in the next two decades, the Italianate style was at its peak when the Merrick House was built in 1864. McAlester (1993) notes that, in purest form, Italian Renaissance Revival townhouses were austere boxes with little ornament save for window crowns (usually triangular pediments) and restrained cornice moldings. New York City brownstones illustrate the simple yet imposing form. With its symmetry and sharply defined vertical and horizontal elements the Merrick House resembles the austere roots of the style, but departs from it in the builder's use of a scroll-bracketed cornice and very exuberant floral forms to embellish the window and door surrounds.

The basic Italianate townhouse, featuring restrained window hoods and bracketed cornices, enjoyed great popularity in Wilmington through the late 19th century, and many working class residences survive from the later part of that period. As a number of architectural historians have noted, Delaware was conservative in adopting new styles of architecture, frequently lagging behind trends in other regions. That the Merrick House was built at the height of Italianate popularity may be attributable to Merrick's business travels to Baltimore and other cities where the style was in vogue. Upper class residents in the Wilmington neighborhoods north of the central business district constructed the other major manifestation of Italianate form, the informal Italianate villa, with some frequency. These buildings were almost always constructed with brick, however, further distinguishing the brownstone of the Merrick House. The number of brownstones built in Wilmington is not known but only a few remain, among them the former Security Trust and Safe Deposit Building (1885 and 1908) in the 500 block of N. Market Street.

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Architect Edmund G. Lind (1827-1909) designed the Merrick House. Lind was born and educated in England, immigrating to the United States in 1855. He immediately found employment with the New York firm of M.G. Starkweather, who had just designed the First Presbyterian Church in Baltimore. Establishing himself in Baltimore in partnership with William F. Murdoch, Lind completed numerous commissions in the region, including every variety of construction from high-style country estates and city dwellings, to churches and warehouses. The Merrick house commission came in the first half of Lind's career, which continued to prosper as he was named an assistant supervising architect under the Ulysses S. Grant administration, and was made a Fellow of the AIA in 1870. Lind went on to found several chapters of the AIA, and to serve as the national organization's vice president twice in the 1870s. In the latter half of his career, Lind moved his practice to Georgia and became "...an elder statesman for architecture in the emerging New South."¹ The published history of the Wilmington Club relates that Lind proudly pointed out the Merrick House to his daughter as an example of his work.² It is interesting to note, however, that later in his career Lind espoused simplicity of design and ornamentation for all buildings, especially residences.³

The Carriage Industry

The career of John Merrick saw the rise of carriage making in Wilmington from its humble beginnings before the Civil War to a major industry. Within Merrick's lifetime, carriage making went from a small, craft oriented business to a major economic force with national and international interests. Immediately prior to the Civil War, Delaware was the leading state in carriage production. The restriction of the southern markets during the war devastated some carriage firms, while others were able to shift their production to fill government contracts related to the war effort. Merrick and other industrialists in Wilmington found the 1860s to be a time of significant prosperity.

Rising competition in the Wilmington carriage trade in the mid 19th century resulted in comparatively low prices for high quality conveyances, making Wilmington known as the best place to purchase a carriage in the nation.⁴ While the number of carriage firms multiplied in the second half of the century, the growth was not due to an influx of entrepreneurs but to the trend of Wilmington-trained journeymen to start their own shops. Harkness Magazine (1872-3) decried that, for all of their excellent products, Wilmington carriage makers had been known for decades to settle for too little profit (about 10-15%), allowing carriages to be sold at retail in other cities for three times their wholesale cost.⁵ Corresponding low wages probably encouraged journeyman to strike out on their own to attempt to improve their circumstances. Merrick himself trained a large measure of his eventual competition, once losing seven craftsmen in one day as they set up an independent shop nearby.⁶

1 Richard D. Funderburke, 2002, for The New Georgia Encyclopedia, www.georgiaencyclopedia.org.

2 *The Wilmington Club, 1855-1955*

3 Richard D. Funderburke, 2002, for the New Georgia Encyclopedia, www.georgiaencyclopedia.org.

4 Ibid.

5 Harkness Magazine, 1872-73, p. 133.

6 Conrad, 1908, p. 393.

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By the 1880s the carriage industry was on the wane, being overshadowed by the iron working and shipbuilding industries. Widespread acceptance of the automobile by the turn of the century spelled the virtual demise of carriage making; many firms were forced either to adapt to the new technology or face failure. According to the 1860 census, New Castle County carriage makers invested \$204,850 of capital that year to produce \$553,250 worth of product. In contrast, by 1880, the capital invested had risen to \$415,270 while the total value of products had actually dropped to \$479,067. Thus, even as early as 1880, carriage-making firms were getting less profit for a significantly higher investment. This trend in carriage making occurred at a time when other industries were enjoying rapid growth: the total value of products in New Castle County during this period rose from less than \$9 million to over \$13 million. Carol Hoffecker, in her *Portrait of an Industrial City*, attributes the faltering of the carriage trade to the post-war flood of "cheaper, cruder products" produced in the Mid-West. Merrick, an integral part of the rise of carriage making in Wilmington, also bore witness to its eventual decline; his lifetime coincides almost exactly with the carriage industry's rise and fall in Wilmington. His mansion at 1103 Market Street remains a tangible reminder of the City's economic involvement in these enterprises.

John Merrick

Born in Kent County, Delaware in 1814, John Merrick learned the carriage trade from a relative living in that part of the state. At the age of 20 he moved to Wilmington, and in the next several years worked in wheelwright, livery and carriage shops in Wilmington, New York and New Orleans before returning to Wilmington in 1837 to employment at John Kirkman's carriage factory at Fourth and French Streets. While working for Kirkman, Merrick, on his own, constructed a carriage of the finest materials he could afford and set off to sell it in the south, ending up in New Orleans again. Encouraged by his first sale, Merrick struck out on his own in Wilmington to make carriages and sleighs, first renting a former employer's livery stable and later, in about 1842, purchasing John Kirkman's factory. In about 1844 he rented the presumably larger Gause building at Tatnall and Front Street, and there became the first of the Wilmington carriage manufacturers to consistently ship large quantities of carriages abroad, delivering to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Petersburg and other areas of Virginia, and later to New Hampshire and California⁷. In December of the same year he married Sarah Stevens at Old Swedes Church. Four years later, in 1848, he built a large carriage factory at the southeast corner of Second and French streets and settled into carriage making there for nearly twenty years.

Merrick commissioned the construction of a new factory in 1863-64, at the corner of Ninth and King Streets, in what may have been a show of confidence in the eventual recovery of the nation following the resolution of the war. The building housed the largest carriage making enterprise in Wilmington, measuring 218 feet long by 70 feet wide, with a 90-foot frontage on King Street. It included numerous carriage-related industries, such as wheelwright, blacksmith and paint shops, under one roof, and, most importantly, was completely fitted for steam power. Though

⁷ Harkness' Magazine, 1872-73, p 117

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by the 1870s steam powered carriage factories were common, Merrick's factory is credited with being the first in the nation.⁸ Prior to the use of steam, successful, traditional shops such as Flaglor and Co. were able to produce 700 carriages per year by hand; in the 1870s, the shop at Ninth and King was producing 1500 carriages per year. The new factory opened a new chapter in the carriage industry.

A few months after the manufactory's construction, Merrick took on his only partner, Charles W. Horn who had worked with him for 15 years. Eight months later, in 1865, Merrick sold his entire business, including the Second and French Street factory, to carriage makers McLear & Kendall. The same firm, with carriage interests in Philadelphia, Charleston and Savannah, had purchased and resold another of Merrick's former factories, and was later counted among the largest and most successful carriage firms in the country. The Ninth and King Street enterprise was considered their flagship. Meanwhile, John Merrick retired to his newly built home a short distance away, from where he could comfortably monitor the progress of the industry.

Merrick briefly interrupted his retirement in 1874, partnering in a Wilmington banking and brokerage firm. He left the business shortly after it was formed and lived the rest of his life at 1103 Market Street, where he died in 1889. His wife, his daughter Clara and one grandchild, John Wm. Frederich Merrick, son of his deceased son William, survived him. William had established and maintained a carriage bazaar at the northwest corner of Fourth and Walnut Streets after his father's retirement from the business. Another daughter, Annie, also predeceased her father. Merrick's executors sold the house, as his will instructed, and the property went through a series of owners until the Wilmington Club acquired it in 1900.

The Merrick House /Wilmington Club is the only extant property that represents the contributions of John Merrick to the carriage industry. The Gause building, a former Merrick factory on the corner of Tatnall and Front Streets, burned in 1872, while the other factories located on Fourth and French Streets, Second and French Streets, Front and Orange Streets, and the corners of Ninth and King, as well as his original residence at Poplar and Robinson, were demolished in the 20th century.

⁸ Harkness' Magazine, 1872-73, p. 121; Hoffecker 1974, p. 24

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John Merrick House/Wilmington Club
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The Wilmington Club

As the construction of the Merrick residence crowned John Merrick's career and confirmed his rise from tradesman to industrialist, the establishment of the Wilmington Club also represented the new system of social intercourse that evolved in the late 19th century as the social and economic distance between the working classes and Wilmington's wealthier citizens increased. Purchased in 1900, the building immediately became the new home of The Wilmington Club and was its most distinctive headquarters yet.

In Henry Seidel Canby's memoir *The Age of Confidence*, the new industrial age social order was divided into four categories. In his words, there were: "the Negroes," who developed their own separate but parallel social and advancement organizations such as the Monday Club; "the working class", whose ranks comprised most of the fraternal societies such as the Knights of Pythias; the "plain people" or middle class, who might strive for social position through membership in various self-improvement clubs, such as the Wilmington Institute; and "Us" or the elite class mostly made up of one-time "plain people" who had achieved economic success and thus social prominence. The "Us" group sought to maintain the status quo. Their social instruments therefore tended to be relatively exclusive, with membership consisting mainly of their peers.

Such an instrument was the Wilmington Association and Reading Room, founded in 1855 by twelve of Wilmington's leading citizens, and housed at 820 Shipley Street. In 1876, the Wilmington Association merged with the Delaware Club, formerly called the Attic Club, which had a similar constituency. The consolidated club called itself the Wilmington Club and within its membership were the leaders of the Wilmington community. The newly formed club soon moved to 1007 Market Street, one of the fourteen or so residential structures once on the site of the DuPont Building. In 1881 the Club moved to 1006 King Street, on the site where the Public Building was later constructed. In 1892, after only a short independent existence, the Minqua Club, also made up of the elite of Wilmington society, was absorbed into the Wilmington Club. Finally, in 1900, the Wilmington Club moved to the John Merrick House, having bought the property for \$17,500 at sheriff's sale.

Upon the Club's incorporation in 1877, a constitution was drafted which included a statement of purpose:

Promoting social intercourse among Delawareans and encouraging the advancements of literature and art and the preservation of our State history and traditions and by such means as they [the members] may deem expedient and proper for such purpose.

As an adjunct to these admirable goals, the club served a recreational function: harried businessmen full of the day's events could go to the club to repose and socialize in comfort. A passage from a book published in 1955 entitled *The Wilmington Club, 1855-1955*, which chronicles one hundred years of the Wilmington Club's

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history, perhaps best illustrates its recreational aspects:

Of such was the Wilmington Club – a neighborhood club, a friendly club, a social club of gentleman who met in relaxation from the cares of the outside world and free for those moments of those insistent domestic demands which 19th – century America imposed on the human male.

The club provided a setting where upper class men could be free from some of the social restrictions in force when in the company of women. The various functions of the rooms reveal the types of activities these men felt comfortable engaging in away from women, the bar, card rooms, the billiard room, and the reading room. This is illustrated by a quote from the above book, which describes Christmas at the club. “It is the season for fun and merrymaking and when dignity, if any, goes out the window.” The club also provided technological amenities that distinguished it from the greater community, such as a telephone booth by 1905, electric lights in 1906, and a telegraph wire for receiving election results installed by 1908.

A significant change in the club’s membership philosophy occurred in 1982, when the first African American member was elected. This milestone was followed by another in 1992, when the Club elected the first woman. Presently, the club maintains an atmosphere for the social interaction of professionals from all spheres of the Wilmington community and supports cultural and charitable causes as the membership directs.

Contributing elements

The original block of the Wilmington Club (John Merrick House) is considered a contributing element for its period of association with John Merrick (1864-1889) and for its period of association with the Wilmington Club (1900-1955). That portion of the structure retains sufficient integrity under all seven qualities. The addition that created the bar area from a portion of the original west room of the main block is considered to contribute to the Wilmington Club era, since it was added sometime between 1936 and 1950, incorporating earlier, smaller additions also constructed by the Wilmington Club. The remaining portion of the building, entirely reconstructed in 1966, is non-contributing at this time, given that it is not yet 50 years old. As part of the ongoing history of the Wilmington Club, however, this section should be reevaluated when it attains 50 years of age.

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John Merrick House/Wilmington Club
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Comprehensive Planning

Zone: Urban
Time Period: 1830-1880+/-: Industrialization and Early Urbanization
1880-1940+/-: Urbanization and Early Suburbanization
Themes: Major Families
Architecture, Engineering and Decorative Arts
Community Organizations
Manufacturing
Property Type: Italianate Style Residence
Industrialist Residence
Private Social Club

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John Merrick House/Wilmington Club
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Section 2 Page 2

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Section 10 Page 1

John Merrick House/Wilmington Club
name of property
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Verbal Boundary Description

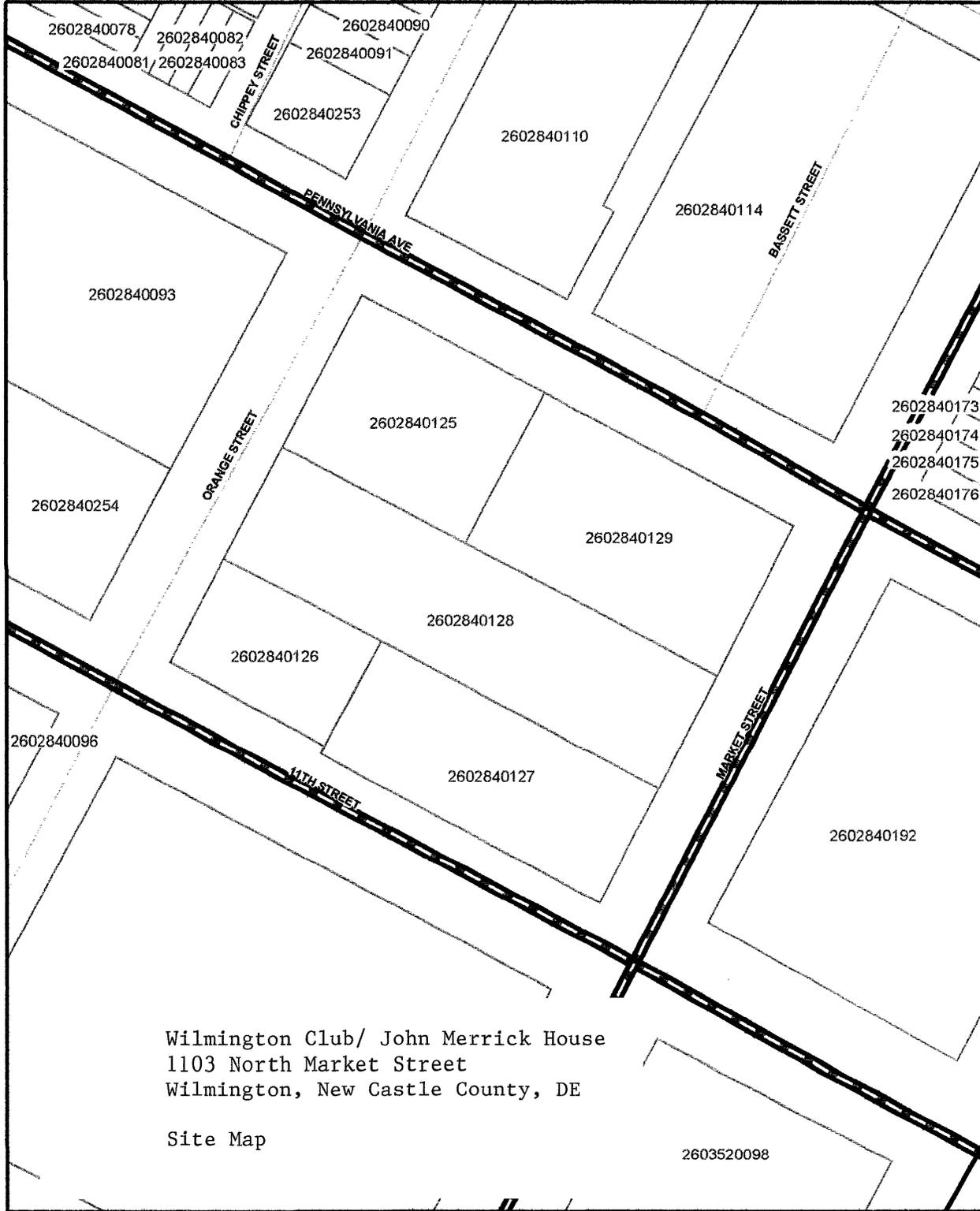
Beginning at a point 100 feet from the southeast corner of N. Market Street and W. 11th Street; thence northwesterly 345.5 feet along property line to end of the block at N. Orange Street; thence northeasterly 90 feet along Orange Street; thence southeasterly 345.5 feet to a point at N. Market Street; thence 90 feet southwesterly along N. Market Street to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire parcel that historically has been associated with the John Merrick House/Wilmington Club. The parcel number is 260 284 0128.



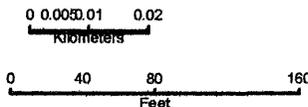
State of Delaware



Data on map are based on Delaware framework data layers. The Delaware DataMIL is jointly operated by the Delaware Geological Survey (DGS) and Delaware Department of Technology and Information (DTI)

For metadata information, visit <http://www.nsd.edu>

Scale 1:1,200



Magnetic Declination
Approx. 11 mils

DataMIL Mini Map



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Photograph List

Wilmington Club/ John Merrick House
1103 North Market Street
Wilmington, New Castle County, Delaware
Photographer: Debra Campagnari Martin
Date of Photographs: August, 2005
Negative Location: DE SHPO

- 1 of 19 Façade (east elevation), Facing Northwest
- 2 of 19 Entry Detail, Façade, Facing West
- 3 of 19 Front yard landscaping view, Facing Southeast
- 4 of 19 Detail of South Elevation and connection to addition, Facing Northwest
- 5 of 19 Detail of North Elevation, Facing Southwest
- 6 of 19 Rear (west elevation), Facing East
- 7 of 19 Interior: Merrick House, Entry Hall
- 8 of 19 Interior: Merrick House, View of the double parlor through doorways from the dining room
- 9 of 19 Interior: Merrick House, First Floor Hall connection into the Wilmington Club Expansion
- 10 of 19 Interior: Merrick House, Dining Room Mantle
- 11 of 19 Interior: Merrick House, Dining Room
- 12 of 19 Interior: Wilmington Club Expansion, Bar
- 13 of 19 Interior: Wilmington Club Expansion, Dining Room
- 14 of 19 Interior: Wilmington Club Expansion, rear Colonial Revival stair
- 15 of 19 Interior: Merrick House, original stair and newell post
- 16 of 19 Interior: Merrick House, staircase landing, 2nd floor
- 17 of 19 Interior: Merrick House, Card Room, 2nd Floor
- 18 of 19 Interior: Merrick House, 2nd floor connection to Wilmington Club Expansion
- 19 of 19 Interior: Wilmington Club Expansion, second floor stair landing