

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUN 19 1979
DATE ENTERED JUL 26 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

The Richards Mansion

AND/OR COMMON

The Mansion House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

North Bedford Street & The Circle

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Georgetown

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Delaware

VICINITY OF

CODE

10

COUNTY

Sussex

One

CODE

003

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 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	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Offices

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

The Mansion House, Inc. (Mr. Howard T. Ennis, Jr. & Mr. Wm. Whalen, Jr.)

STREET & NUMBER

North Bedford Street & The Circle

CITY, TOWN

Georgetown

STATE

Delaware

VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Sussex County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

The Circle

CITY, TOWN

Georgetown

STATE

Delaware

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Delaware Cultural Resource Survey (S-132)

DATE

1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Hall of Records

CITY, TOWN

Dover

STATE

Delaware

7 DESCRIPTION

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

The Richards Mansion is a double-pile, five-bay, three-story mansion situated on the Public Square in Georgetown, Delaware. While it appears at first glance to be representative of the mansard style of the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, the mansion is in reality a mixture of three distinct architectural styles - federal, Greek-revival, and mansard. The oldest remaining portion of the house is an altered, two-story wing attached to the rear of the main house, which dates from the period 1796 to 1799. Known as the Anderson House, the wing has four bays and is of single-pile plan.

The rear late-eighteenth-century wing appears to be a substantial portion of the original house which was constructed on the 7,200-square foot lot. At some point during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, probably in the period of 1835 to 1845, a Greek-revival-style "storehouse and dwelling" was attached to the eighteenth-century structure nearer to the front of the lot facing the circle. This structure forms the first two floors of the main mansion house today.

When the Richards family acquired the property in 1883, the roofline of the Greek-revival portion of the house was altered substantially. A full third floor was built with a variation of the mansard style. Except for non-permanent alterations made during the past few years, to convert the front portion of the structure into law offices, there have been no major alterations to the structure since 1883. The third floor is almost completely original and still contains original gaslights and other details.

The mansion as it now stands has a straight-sided mansard roof with both rectangular and rounded decorative wooden shingles. The front and rear portions of the roof are pierced by three pedimented dormers with two on each side. Brick chimneys are located at each corner of the roof. The chimney at the southwest corner of the house has an extremely unusual exposed base. Although exposed base/interior end chimneys were a common feature of mid- to late-eighteenth-century lower Delaware farmhouses, they were of a much simpler style and were not stepped out from the wall as is the chimney on the Richards Mansion.

Decorative scroll brackets are placed at one-foot intervals along the cornice, which is decorated with dentil mouldings. The first and second floor windows are two-over-two sash type with pedimented window heads with carved decoration. First floor windows have panelled shutters; those on the second floor have louvered shutters. The house has wide pilasters at each of the corners.

The front door is located in the central bay of the house, corresponding to a central hallway running the full depth of the ground floor. The four-panel door is flanked by sidelights with a four-light transom overhead. A front porch extends across the westernmost three bays of the first floor front. It has a seamed tin roof and a simple moulded cornice. It is supported by round columns with Doric capitals mounted on panelled pedestals. A pedimented portico extends over the central bay at the eastern end of the porch. The pediment is decorated with carved, painted floral decoration.

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 checked="" 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/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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Richards Mansion is significant architecturally because of its rear wing, part of a late-eighteenth-century structure dating from the first decade of Georgetown's existence as a town. The main structure also possesses architectural significance as a very good example of Greek-revival architecture from the mid-nineteenth century with late-nineteenth-century embellishments. The rear wing of the house and the main portion both possess considerable integrity and are among the best examples of their respective styles which have survived in Georgetown.

The Mansion has played an important role in the jurisprudential history of Sussex County and Delaware as the home and offices of prominent members of the Delaware Bar.

The earliest mention of the property in Sussex County deed records is the sale of a lot laid for George Cooke in the original 1791 survey of the Town of Georgetown to establish a new county seat. The first reference to a house on the lot appears in a 1799 estate settlement when the third owner, James Anderson, died, willing the property to his wife.

It is most likely that James Anderson, who purchased the land in 1796, built the original house between that date and 1799. Based on a survey of the town during the summer of 1978 by the Sussex County Historical Preservation Planner it has been determined that the Anderson House is the earliest residential structure that has survived in town. The Old Sussex County Courthouse, built in 1791 and listed in the National Register in 1971, is the oldest extant building in Georgetown. While several other structures contain parts of earlier houses, the rear wing of the present-day Richards Mansion is today the largest and best-preserved.

At that time the older house, which was then being used as a storage building, had its southern end removed completely, its original roofline lowered, side porches added, and various structural changes made within. In spite of those alterations, an examination of either the outside of the house or the inside presents a clear picture of the plan, massing, scale, materials and detailing of the original Anderson House.

The mansard alterations were probably begun by Frederic F. Lynch, who acquired the property late in 1882. Whether or not he completed it is difficult to say, but Mrs. Lynch sold the lot and three-story house with outbuildings to Charles F. Richards nine months after her husband's death. It is likely that Richards bought a partially-completed structure and finished it.

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A side door in the main house, fronting on Bedford Street, has a four-panelled door with a low triangular pediment and a hood decorated with turned spindles and Victorian touches, although the door itself is of Greek-revival style. It is probably that this door led into the mid-nineteenth-century shop portion of the house.

Much of the first and second floor interior detailing has been covered by modern panelling and ceiling tiles, placed in the house when it was converted to offices several years ago. All alterations are removable and the present owners state that the detailing is intact underneath.

The four corner rooms on the first floor contain fireplaces with Greek-revival detailing. A stairway with heavy wooden balustrade with turned balusters rises with two landings to the third floor at the rear of the central hallway. Each of the four large corner rooms on the second floor also contains Greek-revival-style fireplaces. Several rooms on the third floor retain their original plaster walls and details, including three-quarter-round wooden mouldings with turned decoration on the corners where the walls meet the dormers. The third floor also retains some of its original gas lines and gaslight fixtures.

The rear wing, known as the Anderson House, the federal-style portion of the house, is generally intact but underwent numerous alterations at some time during the nineteenth century to convert it into kitchen and servants' quarters. In spite of these changes, much of its original detailing is evident.

The most dramatic alterations, apparently made at the time the first two floors of the main house were constructed, are the lowering of the original roofline and the removal of the end of the structure facing the public square. Both alterations were made to tie the older structure into the main house.

The old section has two one-story side porches with seamed tin roofs and simple cornice and simple Greek-revival-style trim. A pantry has been built onto the northeast corner of the rear wing with access doors to the porch and to the interior. A privy is located at the northwest corner of the wing with access to the porch.

Much of the siding on the wing is the original mill-sawn, wide, horizontal, beaded weatherboarding. Later, narrow horizontal weatherboarding has been placed in the gable end of the wing from the second-floor level upwards. It appears to date from the mid-nineteenth century.

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The first floor windows of the wing have six-over-nine lights and original late-eighteenth-century trim inside and out. The most distinctive feature of the window trim is the cross-set exterior window surrounds with double-mitered back bands, a feature also found on the door surrounds. Windows on the second floor have the same detailing but are six-over-six sash type.

The interior of the rear wing retains many original features, perhaps most impressive of which is two-thirds of a fully panelled end wall with a federal-style fireplace surround and a remaining panelled cupboard. The other third of the wall was altered apparently in the mid-nineteenth century by the removal of the panelling and the addition of a six-over-six double-hung sash window.

The two doors leading from the west side of the wing also appear to be original. They have wide strap hinges and are six-panelled with vertical board exteriors. The vertical boards are affixed to the inner door with round-headed hand-wrought bolts set at intervals of about a foot along the top and sides. The present kitchen, in what appears to have been the original parlor, also retains original chair rail mouldings. The floors on the first floor of the rear wing have been covered with linoleum.

A stairway, with two exposed steps leading to a landing and enclosed beyond, appears to date from construction of the main house. Alterations contemporary with the construction of the main house are also evident on the second floor. The east and west interior walls, plastered and with chair rail mouldings (which extend out into the present stairwell at the second floor level) are original, as is much of the wide plank flooring and the exposed beam ceilings with beaded beams and beaded wide ceiling boards.

The second floor, which apparently originally consisted of two rooms, has one original interior wall separating the rooms with a four-panelled door and original trim set into it. Although the north wall of the wing is also original, it has had two closets built in front of it.

The smaller second floor room was created when a new interior plaster wall, running north and south parallel to the side walls, was built forming a hallway on the west side of the wing.

Thus, while the rear wing of the house has been altered greatly it is still quite possible to gather, from an inspection of the remaining details, what the original structure was like in style and design. It is, however, impossible to tell how much larger the eighteenth-century house was before the addition of the nineteenth-century structure.

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Also situated on the lot is an early-nineteenth-century milk house of frame construction with wooden horizontal weatherboarding obscured by asbestos shingles. The interior of the structure extends about two feet below ground level and is plastered. The south, west, and north walls of the milk house contain small window openings with louvers. One original interior shutter remains. Two of the three windows have been covered over on the exterior with asbestos shingles.

A mid-nineteenth-century outbuilding is situated immediately to the rear of the milk house. Its frame structure appears to have been salvaged, in part, from the removal of the end of the eighteenth-century house. At the rear northeast corner of the lot is an early-twentieth-century garage structure with a low gable, shingled roof of frame and weatherboard construction. The remnants of a nineteenth-century garden are also located in the rear yard of the house.

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In any case, the exterior of the structure is virtually intact, unchanged since the 1883 alterations. All original details are present. The interior has undergone cosmetic change in its recent conversion to a law office, but all the original details remain and have only been covered over with removable panelling and ceiling tile.

Charles F. Richards, who died in 1906, was himself a prominent attorney. His two sons, Charles Dudler Richards and Robert Haven Richards, both raised in the house, became prominent attorneys as well. Robert H. Richards moved to Wilmington to practice law in the early years of this century and became one of the state's most respected attorneys and civic leaders.

Charles Sudler Richards continued to occupy the house on The Circle until his death in the 1960's. During his residence there, he served as Delaware's Secretary of State, as Attorney General, as resident Superior Court Judge, and finally as Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court.

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(11/78)

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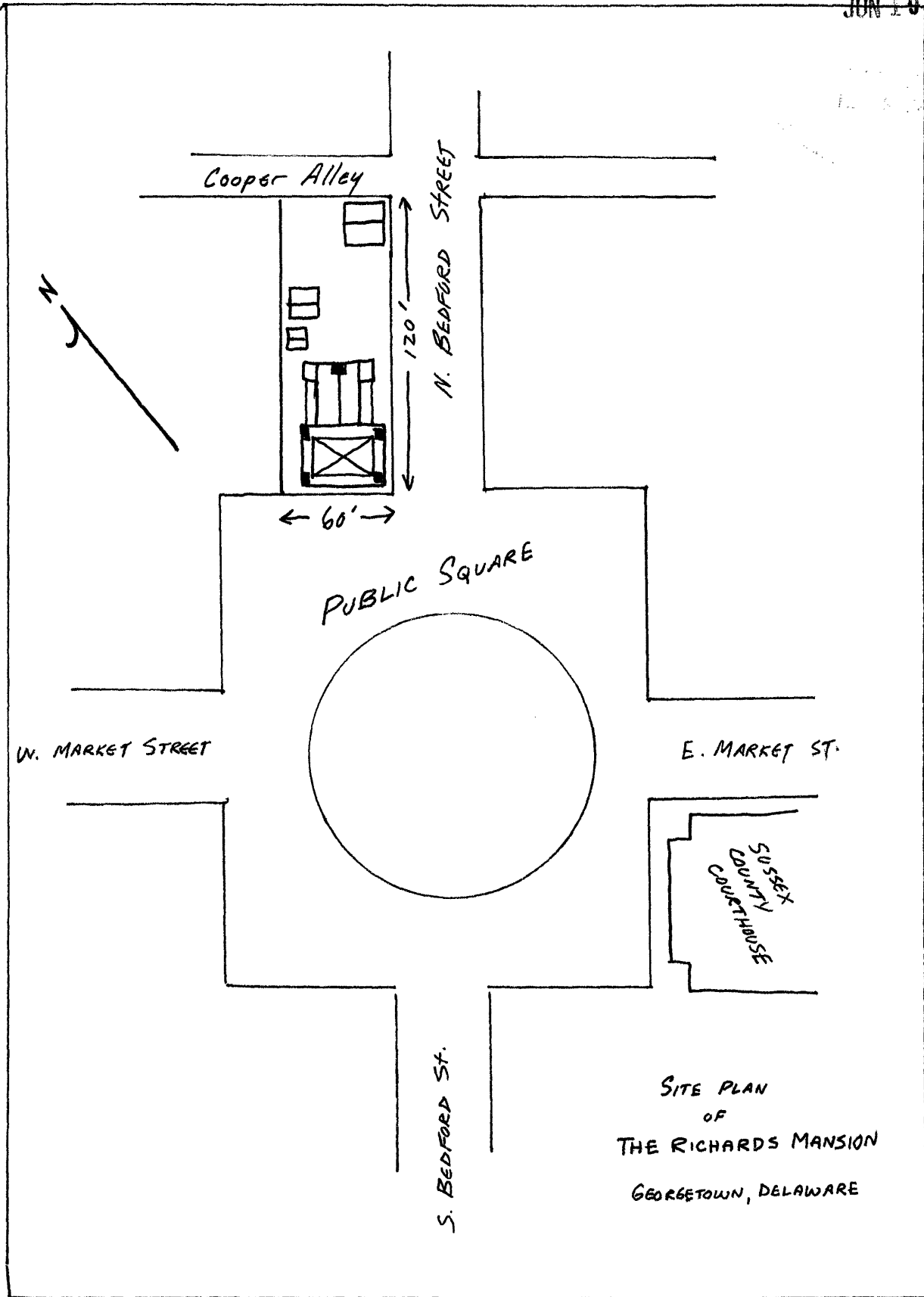
DATE ENTERED

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stand the house, the milk house, the shed, and the garage. The lot is 120 feet deep along Bedford Street and 60 feet wide on the Circle and on Cooper Alley. It contains 7,200 square feet.

JUN 10 1979



SITE PLAN
 OF
 THE RICHARDS MANSION
 GEORGETOWN, DELAWARE

NOT DRAWN TO SCALE