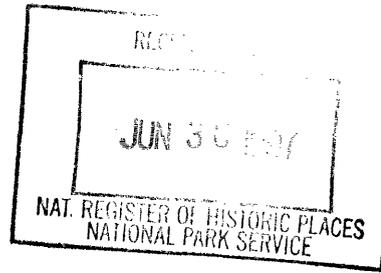


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 : Mayfield

other names/site number : Wilson, William, House; CRS # N-5832

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number : 1603 Levels Road not for publication

city or town : Middletown vicinity hundred : Appoquinimink

state : Delaware code : DE county : New Castle code : 003 zip code : 19709

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Daniel R. Griffin
Signature of certifying official

June 25, 1997
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Mayfield
New Castle County, DE

Agency Certification

In my opinion, Mayfield meets does not meet
the National Register criteria.



Thomas P. Gordon, County Executive
New Castle County, Delaware

5-27-97
Date

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of Keeper: Edson H. Beall Date of Action: 8/1/97

- 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): _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	TOTAL

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. *Function or Use*

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

Cat: Domestic Sub: Secondary Structure

7. *Description*

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Vernacular Greek Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

roof wood

other wood

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

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Mayfield
New Castle County, DE

Description

Mayfield is a brick, two- and one-half-story residence built circa 1839 in the Greek Revival style. The exterior of the five-bay, center-hall-plan house is notable for its balanced proportions; fine, pressed bricks on the main facade; elaborately-moulded brick cornice; and classical detail of the dormer windows and front door surround. On the interior, the original floor plan and most original woodwork are intact, including a built-in china cupboard and five mantels. Located in the southwest section of New Castle County, Delaware, in the northwest corner of Appoquinimink Hundred, Mayfield is less than a half mile from the Maryland-Delaware state line. The setting of the house is primarily level farm fields, with few buildings or structures, except for scattered, mostly nineteenth-century residences and the Delmarva Power Substation visible in the distance to the south. Immediately behind the house are the foundations of a brick bank barn, rebuilt as a frame barn in late 1995 (noncontributing). These foundations are the only remaining above-ground evidence of the house's original outbuilding complex. Mayfield was built and is still located close to a bend in a winding north-south road that predates the house, today designated as Route 15.¹ Located to the west of that road, the house faces southeast toward Levels Road. Levels Road runs in a northeast-southwest direction on the path of a road that was an unpaved private lane during the period of significance. Levels Road passes close to the front of Mayfield, merging with Route 15 east of the house.

The agricultural landscape surrounding Mayfield was historically known as the Levels. This area, situated southwest of Middletown, includes land in both the southwest section of St. Georges Hundred and the northwest section of Appoquinimink Hundred. The Levels is bounded on the north by Route 301, on the east by the line of the Penn Central Railroad, on the south by the headwaters of Wiggins Mill Pond, and on the west by the state line. The bounded area is defined by its rich Matapeake-Sassafras soils. These soils are most extensive in this section of Delaware, covering nearly a quarter of New Castle County. The Matapeake-Sassafras soils define the historically most productive agricultural areas in the state.² The landscape of the Levels is flat to gently rolling, averaging sixty-feet above sea level. In 1985, less than ten per cent of the land in the Levels was woodland.³ The flat, open fields, planted with feed corn, soy beans, potatoes, and some produce, were farmed with feed crops, wheat, and cattle during the historic period, along with orchard crops, which were primarily grown during the 1860s and '70s.

¹This road is dated 1798 on a map entitled, "Roads Across the Levels," appended to Bruce Bendler's paper, "'A Very Good Tract of Land,' The Levels: 1680-1850," Paper Written for the Delaware Heritage Commission, June 29, 1993. This was referred to as the Road Leading to Appoquinimink Forest in the 1826 division of Edward Wilson's lands in the Chancery Court. (Chancery Court Division of Lands, Vol. A: 25-43. RG 2840, microfilm NC-147, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.) On the map drawn in 1884 when this property was sold out of the Wilson family, this road was labeled, "Public Road leading across the Levels towards Wilson's Crossroads." (Orphans' Court, 1884, F2:360. Cited in Bendler, "Homestead Hall, Appoquinimink Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware," Student Paper, Vernacular Architecture Class, December 11, 1990.)

²Brad Brooks, Hubert Jicha, and Bernard Herman, "Levels Historic District," Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1995, Section 7, Pages 2-3.

³Ibid., Section 7, Page 3.

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Although the only vestige of the outbuilding complex is the barn foundation, the reconstruction of a barn framework on that foundation has reestablished the relationship of the house to the rear yard. Today, the driveway, located to the east of the house, leads to only the barn. Originally, the drive led to a neatly-ranked range of outbuildings, seen in an aerial photograph from 1932.⁴ The buildings on the Mayfield farm were listed in the Orphans' Court record of 1884: "Two-story brick dwelling house, kitchen, brick milk house, frame meat house, brick barn and stabling, frame granary, and carriage house."⁵ Documented in the aerial photograph are the milk house and bank barn, a gable-roofed building between the house and barn, several (at least four) small buildings behind the barn laid out along a path that continued the line of the driveway, and a small, square building next to the branch of the creek north of the house. The current owners found the foundations of the brick milk house outside the entrance to the side porch (on the northeast). A Red Jewel tree is now located in that spot.

Neighbors remember a cast-iron fence in front of the property at least as early as the 1940s. A state highway map, drawn in 1929, shows a fence lining both sides of the driveway and running along the front of the property.⁶ The fence was labeled "wire fence." The map depicts the plan for paving Levels Road with concrete to a width of nine feet. The original curve in the road near the front of the house was made somewhat smoother and straighter at that time. The highway map and aerial photograph from 1932 both indicate a grove of trees east of the driveway and several trees behind the wire fence in the front yard.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Mayfield was the most elegant of three, brick, five-bay, center-entrance houses owned by William Wilson and located on the north side of a private road leading to Maryland, where William Wilson also owned several properties. Today, two of the houses survive. The other house is located just over the line in Maryland (at 40 Joemeltz Road). Middlesex (N-5833), located west of Mayfield, was demolished about 1989, although the ruins were not completely removed until 1992.⁷

The condition of the Mayfield property today is excellent. A decade ago, the house was abandoned and vandalized; remarkably, most historic fabric, including original mantels, staircases, and other woodwork, was not permanently harmed, except for the window sash, which was severely rotted and damaged. Because the original sash was too deteriorated to preserve, and some had been vandalized, the owners had exact copies of the original windows custom milled and antique glass installed throughout the house. (This work was accomplished by Ken Dean of Howard & Dean of Chesapeake City, MD.) The front porch and side porch, not extant for more than twenty years, are also careful reconstructions based on historical evidence. These contribute to the integrity of design, although the materials and workmanship of these features are modern. Overall, the feeling and association of Mayfield are strongly tied to its historic period. The house is a finely-preserved example of the greatest period of agricultural prosperity in this region of Delaware.

⁴Preserved in the New Castle County Department of Planning.

⁵Orphans Court, 1884, F2:357. Cited in Bendler, "Homestead Hall."

⁶State Highway Department, "Contract #119, Plan Approved 7-2-1929, to Pave Levels Road from State Line to Sixteen-Foot Macadam Road to Middletown," RG 1540, 2A, microfilm, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

⁷Middlesex burned when the owners of Mayfield were restoring their home. The owners of Mayfield bought the salvage rights. Middlesex was evidently built by Wilson in 1854, for a brick over the lintel of the bulkhead entrance to the basement read, "W. Wilson, 1854," and two bricks with initials of William's sons, William N. and John T., were also set in the brickwork.

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Mayfield
New Castle County, DE

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The House

The five-bay, single pile, two- and one-half-story, center-hall-plan main block, measuring approximately forty-five feet wide by twenty-feet deep, faces southeast. Its four-bay, two-room, two-story service wing, measuring about nineteen-feet wide, extends about thirty-seven feet behind the northeast end of the main block to form a reversed L plan. Below the main block is a fully-excavated basement with stone foundation walls. The residence rests on a brick, eight-course, common-bond watertable. The walls of the house are brick, laid in seven-course common bond. The main (southeast) elevation is laid with fine, pressed bricks. The initials "W.W." are carved into a brick located behind the left shutter of the first window from the west on the main elevation. The high-pitched gable roof is clad with eighteen-inch cedar shingles, to match the original.

Exterior

A tetrastyle, Greek-Revival style porch, about nine-feet, two-inches deep and twenty-four-feet wide, covers the middle bays of the main elevation (southeast). The porch is a reconstruction based on physical evidence of its location and roof pitch. (The porch and most other carpentry work was accomplished by Dennis Smith and Mark Orwig of Smith & Orwig Builders.) The brick footings were built on the exact location of the original footings found during the reconstruction. The height of the porch and the shallow, hipped shape of its roof were determined by ghost lines and discolorations of the bricks, and pockets and spaces in the brickwork indicating where the roof was attached. The four, tapered, paneled columns with bases were copied from the classical treatment of the original front door surround. The entablature is decorated with dentil moulding. The porch floor is tongue-and-groove, painted gray, and three wood steps lead up to the front porch. (The owners detected evidence of two other porch configurations, but chose this format as most typical of other houses of the time period in this area.) The spaces between the brick piers are enclosed with diagonal wood lattice.

Two basement windows on this elevation are located between the first and second, and the fourth and fifth bays. These rectangular openings have off-white wood lintels and vertical, wrought-iron bars set into the masonry. Evenly spaced on the first floor of the main elevation are four, 9/6-sash windows. Five 6/6-sash windows on the second level correspond in position to the openings below.

The focal point of this main elevation is the deeply-set, wide and tall, paneled front door, framed by even taller, tapered, flat pilasters with bases. (The top two-thirds of the eight-panel door has two, small, horizontal rectangles positioned above and below two, longer, vertical rectangles. In the bottom third of the door are two, slightly shorter vertical rectangles.) The pilasters support a finely-moulded classical entablature. Dentil moulding, not original to the door surround, was added at the top of the entablature to match the moulding on the front porch. The door does not fill the entire space formed by the pilasters and entablature. Between the pilasters, below the entablature, and above the door, is a rectangular transom. Below the transom, the moulding is decorated with punch work forming a row of circles. Sash divide the transom window into eight units, arranged 4/4. The four, center, rectangular spaces are decorated with bent wood in the shape of horizontal ovals. The four, square, end units are decorated with bent wood shaped like diamonds on axis.

The off-white, wood, paneled shutters on the first floor and the black, wood, louvered shutters on the second floor occur on all elevations, and most are original to the house. These were retrieved from other locations on the property, and rehung and secured in place with their original hardware. Missing shutters were replaced with exact matches. Many of the cast- and wrought-iron hinges, shutter dogs, and slide bolts were also found on the property and reinstated. (Some were found in the charred remains of a few shutters that had been burned in the parlor fireplace during the period when the house was vacant.) The

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rosette shutter dogs on the front and north sides, the more public sides of the house, are hand wrought, not cast. The replacement windows are set in their original deeply-moulded wood trim with wide sills painted off-white.

A single course of bricks separates the second floor windows from the moulded brick cornice. The cyma reversa brick cornice is made up of five courses: a stretcher course, projecting from the wall below, is surmounted by a cavetto brick, above which, and slightly projecting from the course below, is another stretcher course, which is capped by a course of ovolo bricks, above which is a single stretcher course.

Directly above the second and fourth bays are gable-roof dormers. Their 6/6-sash windows have smaller proportions than the second-floor windows, which, in turn, are smaller than the windows on the first floor. The dormer windows are framed by trim similar to the main door surround: pilasters (these are paneled), with bases, surmounted by a moulded capital. Here, the capital is decorated with a recessed four-petal clover shape. Resting on the capitals is a pediment with a partial return. The name James McDougal, Smyrna, presumably the name of the carpenter, was written on the back of the beaded exterior trim board of the left or western dormer. (This board was replaced and the original, with the signature, is preserved by the current owners.) Located at the peak of the gable at each end of the house is a brick chimney stack with a two-course cap.

The main feature on the southwest elevation is the brick, bulkhead cellar entrance located near the rear of the house. The rear wall of this entrance (northwest elevation) is almost entirely (except for the watertable) laid with left-over cornice bricks. The cavetto and ovolo bricks are interlocked into a unique patterned surface.⁸ The brick bulkhead, with a gable roof covered with cedar shingles, is entered through double board-and-batten doors. Two, square window openings flank the chimney block at the attic level of this southwest elevation. These have slightly-projecting wood sills and are filled with hinged, 2/2 windows. The flat verge board with beaded edge exactly replicates the deteriorated original board.

The first two bays of the rear wall of the main house (the northwest elevation) are covered by the projecting wing. The middle bay contains an original, paneled door, located slightly off-center, because the stairway is located inside to the left of this door. A 6/6-sash window is located directly above the door, lighting the stair landing and therefore positioned below the level of the second-floor windows. A new wood stoop, composed of three steps, a landing, and a simple railing, was built by the present owners. The original stoop was not extant, nor was there evidence for its design. The fourth and fifth bays are filled with windows that correspond in size and location to those on the main elevation, including the basement window. Again like the main elevation, a single course of bricks separates the windows from the brick cornice. The rear cornice is composed of four courses of stepped bricks.

The endwall of the main block (on the northeast) has a basement window corresponding in its location to the bulkhead entrance on the opposite (southwest) endwall. Its form is like that of the other basement windows. Above this window, on the north side of this elevation, are a 9/6-sash first-floor window and a 6/6-sash window on the second level. Two square windows flank the chimney block at the attic level. Their form, type, and location correspond to those on the southwest endwall.

The service wing is joined to the main block by continuous brickwork on this northeast elevation. The two stories of the four-bay wing are proportionally smaller than the main block. The cornice level of the wing is on line with the level of the window sills of the main block. The northeast wall contains four

⁸Pamela Simpson noted this unusual use of cornice bricks in her article, "Molded Brick Cornices," *APT Bulletin* 12 (1980): 31, fig. 8.

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openings on its first level in the order of door, window, window, door. These openings are symmetrically arranged, and like the story height, are of smaller proportions than the main block. The door opening at the northernmost end of this wing was originally a window, but was converted to a door by the present owners. The doors, with a 9-light top half and paneled bottom, are modern. (An interior door was hanging in the place of the southernmost door on this elevation when the house was purchased.) Directly above the 6/6-sash windows on the first floor are two 6/6-sash windows lighting the second floor rooms. A single course of bricks separates the second-story windows from the cornice. The cornice line is composed of three courses of stepped bricks. Extending through the ridge of the roof in the center of this wing is a tall chimney stack with a two-course cap. This stack exactly replicates the original, which was deteriorated and its bricks crumbling and parged when the present owners acquired the house. The stack was rebuilt with old bricks salvaged from Middlesex, the house built next door by William Wilson in 1854.

Extending across the entire length of the northeast elevation of the wing is a shed-roof porch with a brick floor and square wood posts. Like the front porch, this porch was not extant when the house was purchased by the present owners, but there was evidence of its presence. The porch is a reconstruction based on physical evidence. The porch's roof line is on level with the second floor window sills. The fourth bay of the porch (the last bay on the north), has been enclosed by the owners to form a mud room entrance and first-floor powder room. The enclosure is covered with wide weatherboard, painted off-white. A single, 6/6-sash window, with off-white, paneled shutters matching the other first floor shutters, is centered in this enclosure on this northeast elevation.

On the rear (northwest) elevation of the wing, a single, tall and narrow window is centered in the enclosed end of the porch. There are no openings in the rear of the brick wing, except for the 2/2-attic window centered in the gable end, of the same form and type as the windows in the attic of the main block.

On the southwest elevation of the wing, there are no openings in the first (north) bay. A window, door, and window correspond with the openings on the opposite (northeast) elevation of this wing. Although the opening is the original plan, the door itself, like the other exterior doors in this wing, is a replacement. The second level contains two windows corresponding with those on the opposite (northeast) wall. A small skylight window is located in the roof above the fourth (southernmost) bay.

Interior of the Main House

A basement is located below the front section of the house only. Stone walls, below ground level, support the exterior brick walls. Tall and narrow brick arches support the gable-end fireplaces. An open-string staircase descends into the basement directly below the staircase in the center hall above. Alongside the staircase (on the northeast side), a brick wall divides the basement space into two sections. The walls and ceilings are whitewashed. The exterior bulkhead entrance is accessed through a modern steel door.

On the interior of the main house, the room divisions and woodwork are original, except for the door between the bedroom and rear wing on the second level (that door was made to match the others in the house), and the two doors in the attic (the new doors are modeled after those in the basement, with flat, vertical panels). The interior doors are five-panel front and back (three rows of horizontal rectangular panels in the top section and two vertical panels below). Closet doors (on chimney closet and china cupboard) are paneled in the front, with floating panels (plain, flush boards) in the back. Throughout, the floors are the original heart pine and the walls are plaster. The lighting fixtures are not original to the house, but are antiques. Three original carpenter locks (No. 60 Improved Lock) and one plate latch

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were found in the house and are still in place on the second floor.⁹ Matching antique locks were installed throughout the house, as were the latches and hinges where needed, to match the original. The fireplace hearths in all rooms except the original kitchen in the service wing were rebuilt with bricks salvaged from the bricks removed from the original, deteriorating kitchen floor. The owners found evidence of graining, in bird's eye and tiger stripe patterns, in the dining room (including the mantel), the hall and stair, and on the second floor. The grained finish was not the lowest level of finish. These surfaces have been carefully stripped of layers of paint and repainted off-white.

The three, first-floor spaces of the main block, the center stair hall, parlor, and dining room, retain their original, heavily-planed wood trim, notably, an eight-inch high baseboard with moulded cap, elaborately moulded chair rail (five and three-quarter inches high), and moulded window and door surrounds with bull's eye corner blocks. The chair rail is set on level with the window sills, and functions as the sill as it passes the windows. Throughout this section of the house, the plaster walls are covered with Winterthur reproduction wall papers. Benjamin Moore historical paint colors were used throughout the house.

The entrance hall is eight-feet, ten-inches wide and extends from the front to the back of the house. A rear, exterior door is located on the left side (the western side) of the hall. Its eight-panel form is identical to the front door. A staircase ascends the length of the hall on the right side (eastern side) to a landing, turns ninety degrees, ascends three steps along the rear wall to another landing lighted by a window, then turns a final ninety degrees to ascend to the front of the house (the southeast elevation). The staircase woodwork is simple and bold, in keeping with the bold trim elsewhere in the main house, with a turned newel post, bulging slightly in the center; square, stick balusters, two per tread; and a highly-polished, tall, narrow, rounded mahogany handrail. A stylized scroll decoration is applied below each tread. Below the staircase is a five-panel door leading to the cellar.

To the left (west) and right (east) of the main door, positioned exactly opposite each other, are two, five-panel doors opening into the parlor and dining room, respectively. These rooms are finished with the same bold and thick moulding as the entrance stair hall.

The focal point of the parlor, emphasized by the projection of the fireplace block into the room, is a Greek Revival style mantel. The owners have located a similar mantel in Asher Benjamin's pattern book, *The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter, 1830* (reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.), ultimately the stylistic source for this mantel. The square, brick fireplace opening is trimmed with the same moulding that surrounds the interior doors and windows, including the bull's eye corner blocks. This framework, in turn, is framed by the Greek Revival mantel. Two, free-standing Doric colonnettes support an entablature containing an applied, wood, Greek key decoration. The unfluted columns rest on low pedestals, in keeping with the treatment of pilasters in other sections of the house (notably, the front door surround and the dormer windows). The smooth, turned shape of the colonnettes, with a rounded capital and base, echo the form and finish of the similarly-crafted newel post in the entrance hall. The columns support a square architrave block, on which rests the frieze. The Greek key decoration is centered in the frieze, beginning and ending within the space between the columns. Above the frieze is a projecting cornice, which forms a wide mantel shelf. The mantel is painted off-white.

During the preparation to paint this mantel, the owners removed several layers of paint. The bottom layer appeared to be black paint with a marbled finish. The baseboard in this room also appeared to have

⁹The type has been identified by the owners as a lock imported from England, made specifically for an American market from 1830-1840.

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been finished in a marbled manner, originally. The bricks in the hearth were salvaged from the bricks removed from the original, deteriorating kitchen floor and laid here to replicate the other hearths in the house, for the original brick hearth had been filled in with concrete.

The parlor has only one entrance, balanced fenestration (two windows in the front wall and two opposite in the rear wall), and a central focal point of ornament, the Greek Revival mantel. The dining room, with two entrances (the rear wing is accessed from this room), front and side fenestration, and a highly decorated hearth wall, is a space of greater activity. The hearth wall has an ornate mantel flanked by a window and a floor-to-ceiling, built-in china cupboard. The carved mantel is balanced by the taller window and china cupboard.

Like the parlor fireplace, the square, brick fireplace opening is trimmed with the same moulding that surrounds the interior doors and windows, including the bull's eye corner blocks. Rather than being framed, as it is in the parlor, the moulding supports an entablature with boldly projecting center and end blocks, forming a deep mantel shelf. A carved, delicately thin moulding, an undulating dentil moulding, is applied to the frieze below the projecting cornice shelf. Stylistically, this mantel is a high-style example of a type that was prevalent in the Federal period in this area. The bricks in the hearth were salvaged from the original, deteriorating kitchen floor and laid here to replicate the original hearth, which was severely damaged and decayed.

The china cupboard is united in style to the rest of this room by the same moulding, with bull's eye corner blocks, used elsewhere in the house. Here, the moulding surrounds the cupboard and divides the area into four sections. Two, floor-level cabinets are located in the space below the chair rail, above which are two tall cabinets extending almost to the ceiling. A narrow space above the upper cabinets is filled with a wood frieze decorated with applied diamond shapes. The lower doors contain a square panel. The fronts of the upper doors are constructed like the other interior doors in the house, with three horizontal panels over two vertical panels. (The back sides of the doors are flush panels.) This china cupboard was designed for display, with original shelves and plate rails. A chimney closet is located on the left of the fireplace (its north side). This tall cabinet contains two vertical panels. The name of the cabinetmaker was written inside of the door of the chimney closet. The name was removed by workmen before it could be recorded; however, the owner recalls that the name was followed by "Philadelphia." The room is finished with the baseboard, chair rail, and window and door trim with bull's eye corner blocks used elsewhere in this section of the house.

The second floor of the main block contains its original room arrangements and finishes, mirroring the floor plan and finishes found on the first floor, although the trim is somewhat simpler. The staircase leads to a short hallway running parallel to the ridge of the roof, connecting the two main rooms located at each end of the house in the space above the parlor and dining room. The attic doorway, similar to the other doors in the house, is located in the hallway. The latch on this door is original. The door opens to a staircase ascending to the rear (northwest) wall of the house, directly above the main staircase. Directly in front of the main staircase, above the first-floor entry, is a small room functioning as a bathroom. The lock on this door is one of the original locks. This room may have been used for storage once, for a moulding with wood pegs encircles the room. The bannister and railing in the upstairs hall are original to the house. The railing, damaged by vandals, has been carefully repaired using the original materials.

The door to the southwest room (over the parlor) contains one of the original locks. Each of the two main rooms is lighted by two windows on the main (southeast) elevation. The southeast room is also lighted by two windows on the rear (northwest) elevation. Both the rooms contain projecting fireplace blocks and identical mantels. Paneled pilasters, with bases, support an entablature, with projecting end blocks and cornice supporting a wide mantel shelf. There is a long, narrow chimney closet on the southeast side

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of the fireplace in the northeast bedroom (over the dining room). A doorway connects that bedroom to the wing. Whether or not this passage is original is not known. The door located in this space when the present owners purchased the house appeared to be from the late nineteenth century, suggesting that the opening may not be original. Before the owners rebuilt the stairs, the descent to the rear wing from this door was steep and awkward, again suggesting the possibility that this opening was not original. The present door was custom made to match the originals. Its lock, found in the basement, is original.

The original finishes in the attic of this main block include beaded-board walls, plastered ceilings, and board floors. The room divisions correspond to the hall and two main rooms on the floors below. Each room is lighted by two gable-end windows and a single dormer window. The railing on the attic stairs is original, and consists of a board bannister cut in the shape of a post with a rounded top. The spindles are square and the railing is narrow and rounded. Because the attic is finished, it is not possible to see the framing of the roof structure.

Interior of the Service Wing

The lower level of finish in the wing is in keeping with the smaller proportions and simpler finish of its exterior, reflecting its service function. The service wing is physically lower than the main house, accessed by descending a few steps from the dining room, or directly from the exterior at ground level. The owners found evidence of dark, possibly black, paint on the baseboards in the original kitchen and room above it, and the wall finish was originally white. Whereas the design features of the main block of the house are predominantly Greek Revival, the rear wing is finished with slightly less up-to-date trim, except for the mantel in the front room on the first floor. The baseboard in the rear wing measures five-and one-half-inches high, considerably lower than the eight-inch baseboard in the main block.

The first room entered from the dining room is today the kitchen. Its historic function is not known with certainty, although it was called the sitting room in an inventory of 1879.¹⁰ By design, this was a busy space, with two exterior doors (on opposite sides of the wing), a winding stair leading to the second floor, and a passage to the original kitchen at the back of the wing. The wood floor in this wing is a replacement, replicating the original, badly decayed boards. The joists, which had been secured in pockets in the brick walls, had severely rotted. Some moulded cornice bricks were found below these joists. The bricks functioned as piers to provide extra support. The rest of the woodwork in this room is original. In the wing, a chairrail is present in this room only. It measures five inches in height, slightly narrower than the chairrail in the dining room. The projecting fireplace block is decorated with a fancier mantel than those found on the second floor of the main house. Paneled pilasters, with bases, support an entablature with projecting center and end blocks and a boldly moulded cornice forming a wide mantel shelf. The cherry cabinets in the kitchen are modern and were custom made, with dovetailed joints and shaped feet instead of a kick plate. To the immediate left of the fireplace (southwest) is an original closet, and to its left is a winding stair with well-worn treads leading to the second floor. The door to the stairs was found in the basement and rehung in place.

The second floor chamber above the present-day kitchen has been converted to a bathroom. The small attic space above this wing was removed to create a cove ceiling of plaster. Steel beams were used for reinforcement. The ascent to the higher second level of the main house was awkward because of the low ceiling height of the wing. (The original ceiling height was six feet, four inches.) The steps were rebuilt

¹⁰"Inventory and Appraisalment of the Goods, Chattels, and Money, which were of William Wilson, Late of Appoquinimink Hundred, Deceased." September 26, 1879. Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

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to create a safer access. The railing design imitates the attic railing. Originally, there was no door between this chamber and the rear, second floor chamber in the wing. The present owners created a doorway on the right (northeast) side of the central chimney block through the interior brick wall for fire safety. The first few steps of the corner stair leading to the attic, on the left side of the chimney (northwest), remain in place and function as a closet. This was the only access to the attic over this wing. The air-conditioning unit is housed in the space in between the upstairs rooms of the wing, above the attic steps, behind new beaded-board walls, matching original beaded-board walls found in the attic of the main house. This chamber was originally unheated. The room is lighted by a window on each side of the wing.

The rear room on the first floor of the wing today functions as a den but was originally the main kitchen. This was the most severely-damaged space in the house. Its brick floors, laid directly on the ground without mortar, were deteriorated beyond repair because of a rising damp problem. The owners laid a waterproof barrier, then rebuilt the floor with bricks salvaged from the demolition of the Middlesex house. The bricks were laid to replicate exactly the original pattern, although the bricks were laid in mortar. The room contains a large, brick cooking fireplace. The brick arched lintel of the fireplace is strengthened by two, approximately one-inch, wrought-iron bands. Today, the fireplace is fitted with a crane. Its original cooking apparatus, a wrought-iron lug pole from which pots were suspended, is still in place in the flue, out of view of the opening. Curved bricks were used to finish the inner jambs of the opening. The first layer of brick on this fireplace, its facing, is a modern replacement, for the original bricks had been painted yellow and their mortar painted black, which could not be removed.

The cupboard (now a television cabinet) to the right (southwest) of the fireplace is a modern construction, built out of remilled, beaded heart pine. The original cupboard was not in place when the house was purchased. The bowl of a clay pipe was found on the floor of this space. The staircase in this wing is also entirely new. It was designed, however, to fill the space occupied by the original. This staircase was built from remilled flooring from the attic in this wing. The stairs ascend in a straight flight to the second level. This work was accomplished by Michael Borne, a restoration architect of Chestertown, Maryland.

The room above the kitchen is lighted by a window on each side of the wing and by the gable end window at the attic level. The attic floor was removed from this room to create a cathedral ceiling. Originally, there were two rooms in this space, for a thin wall running parallel to the ridge divided the room in half. Each room would have been lighted by a single window. There is no evidence that this space was heated originally. Today, there is a door between this room and the front room of the wing, although originally there would have been no access from this chamber to that room nor to the attic. The railing enclosing the stairwell is a modern addition for safety purposes. It was modelled after the railing in the attic of the main house. There is no evidence for a railing in this location.

The Barn

A modern, frame barn is located at the rear of the parcel. The framing, erected by Amish carpenters late in 1995, rests on the brick and rubblestone foundations of a brick bank barn, which had stalls on the first level. The foundations may date to circa 1841, for in 1845 Wilson was assessed for a barn, and no barn had been listed in the previous itemization of Wilson's buildings, which was in the assessment of 1837. The new barn built on the old foundations is about one bay shorter than the original, because during the period when the house was vacant many of the bricks from the northeast end of the barn ruin were pilfered. A hill of stone is located on the northwest side of the barn, which was evidently the man-made bank to support the ramp leading to the loft on the second floor of the original barn.

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SUMMARY OF RESOURCES:

1 contributing building (house)
1 noncontributing building (barn)

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)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
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.
Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

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

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

Areas of Significance: (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Agriculture

Periods of Significance: ca. 1839-1884

Significant Dates: ca. 1839

Significant Person: N/A
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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Statement of Significance

Mayfield is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C for its agricultural and architectural significance. Mayfield is eligible for inclusion in the National Register under criterion A and the historic context of agriculture during the period from circa 1839 to 1884 in this region of Delaware known as the Levels. Emerging from a depressed period for farming in the early nineteenth century, farmers of the region, including William Wilson, were able to achieve estates such as Wilson's Mayfield, built circa 1839, because of their adoption of advanced agricultural practices. By the mid-nineteenth century, Mayfield and the other farms in the Levels were among the largest and the most valuable in Delaware. Mayfield is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C as a finely-preserved architectural example of the greatest period of agricultural prosperity in this region of Delaware. Mayfield's Greek Revival style, along with features of its plan, express William Wilson's position within the farm community. The end of this era of agricultural renewal in this region corresponds with the sale of Mayfield in 1884.

Agriculture

Mayfield is eligible for inclusion in the National Register under criterion A and the historic context of agriculture in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century in this region of Delaware known as the Levels. Beginning about 1830 and continuing through the 1870s, the farmland in this area experienced a renewal because of the adoption of scientific farming methods, such as crop rotation and the use of lime, manure, and other fertilizers; the purchase of new farm machinery, such as the reaper; and better record keeping. The results of these agricultural changes were particularly evident in this region, where the soil was a tremendously high quality. Developments in the transportation network also advanced the farming economy, including the opening of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal in 1829, the completion of the Delaware Railroad in 1856, and the creation of roads. Only one new road was built in the Levels between 1810 and 1830.¹ During the 1840s and 1850s, many of the present roads across the Levels were created.²

Mayfield represents the restoration of an agricultural estate. Consolidation of landholdings marked the beginning of the reform period, and William Wilson was a major player in that movement. At the age of sixteen, he inherited 383 acres. By the time of his death in 1879 he had more than quadrupled his inheritance, owning 1,540 acres in New Castle County. In addition to his Delaware holdings, according to his biographies, he owned about 2,000 acres in Maryland for a grand total of about 3,500 acres in Maryland and Delaware combined.³ Much of the land in the Levels area had been owned since the mid-eighteenth century by William Wilson's mother's family, the Rothwells. Along with the Rothwell family seat, Homestead Hall (N-3907), and his other inherited and purchased holdings, Wilson retained, rejuvenated, and added to the Wilson family's holdings, as the Cochrans, Claytons, Biggs, and other local families were represented in clusters of family settlements elsewhere in southern New Castle County.

¹Bendler, "'A Very Good Tract of Land,' The Levels: 1680-1850," Paper Written for the Delaware Heritage Commission, June 29, 1993, 28.

²Ibid., Appendix, Map of Roads Across the Levels.

³"William Wilson," *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware* (Wilmington, DE: Aldine Publishing & Engraving Co., 1882), 297.

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Wilson's land purchases effectively brought back under one owner many of the farms that with the death of his father had been dispersed among William's siblings. By naming his home Mayfield, Wilson was acting in accord with the estate mentality, for he resurrected the name given to the original, 1,500-acre land grant of 1686.⁴

By the mid-nineteenth century, about eighty to ninety percent of the land in the Levels was cleared and actively farmed. According to agricultural census data, farmers in this area owned more horses, agricultural implements, produced more wheat, and owned fewer dairy cattle than average because of the supremacy of grain cultivation. Peaches only supplemented the income generated by grain production during the 1860s and 1870s. The houses and outbuildings built during this era were typically larger than those found in other areas of the state. Still today, with the exception of the loss of the small, farm-laborers cottages, the landscape is a mid-nineteenth century one, with open vistas of cultivated fields and large, mid-nineteenth-century buildings. Mayfield is a prime example of this era in agriculture, here carried out by a long-time landholding family of this region. Moreover, Mayfield represents the prosperity of one of largest landowners in this region of Delaware during this time period.

William Wilson's Inheritance

William Wilson was born September 17, 1810 in a house known as Homestead Hall, which had been built about fifty-years earlier by his maternal great-grandfather, Thomas Rothwell, Jr.⁵ When William was just seven years old, his father, Edward Wilson, died.⁶ Edward's property, primarily former Rothwell land, was divided among his children. William inherited the tract on which Mayfield would be built. The land on which William Wilson built Mayfield about 1839, therefore, had been owned by his mother's family, the Rothwells, since the mid-eighteenth century.

In the assessment of 1797, the man who would be William's father, Edward Wilson, was assessed for a mere \$482, which included livestock and personal tax. In the same assessment, Edward's future father-in-law, Thomas Rothwell, was the richest man in Appoquinimink Hundred in that year, owning 709 acres, two brick dwellings (Homestead Hall and Hill Island Farm, N-5898, NR Listed 1992), slaves, and silver

⁴Bendler, "A Very Good Tract of Land," 5. A tract of 1500 acres was granted to Francis Cook, Isaac Wheeldon, John Wheeldon, and William Oliver on April 30, 1686. (New Castle County Land Warrants and Surveys, T2, No. 27, Delaware State Archives, as cited in Bendler.)

⁵Homestead Hall has long been considered to have been William Wilson's main residence throughout his life. Mayfield was considered to have been built by Wilson as a residence for his farm manager or farm tenant. The idea that Mayfield was William's primary residence was posited by Bruce Bendler in his paper, "A Very Good Tract of Land, 'The Levels: 1680-1850" (Paper Written for the Delaware Heritage Commission, June 29, 1993). Bendler's research is footnoted throughout this nomination, where additional documentary evidence is presented to prove that Mayfield was built by William Wilson as his primary residence. Homestead Hall was truly the family homestead, for it was built by the Rothwells, and it witnessed the births and deaths of many Rothwell descendants until the house was finally sold out of the family in 1882. When William moved out of Homestead Hall, which he had done by 1830, it remained the family homestead, for his mother, Lydia Rothwell Wilson, lived there until her death in 1846. Homestead Hall symbolizes the first rural elite in southern New Castle County, whereas Mayfield represents the agricultural success of the descendants of the area's early settlers.

⁶There is no known connection between Edward Wilson and the Wilsons of Odessa.

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plate, for a total assessed value of \$102,221. Thomas Rothwell died about 1807, when Edward, then the son-in-law of Thomas Rothwell, became the administrator of the estate. In 1816, the last assessment in which Edward Wilson appeared (he died in 1817), Edward had accumulated 2,320 acres of land. His holdings included the two brick houses previously owned by his father-in-law, four other dwellings, and twelve slaves. Edward Wilson was the wealthiest taxpayer in Appoquinimink Hundred in 1816.

Edward Wilson (William's father), died in 1817. In 1822, the assessment records included an entry for the Heirs of Edward Wilson, Dec'd. The assessed properties were identical to Edward's holdings of 1816, except for two omissions from the 1822 record: a 265-acre tract with a log dwelling (presumably sold before Edward's death, for this tract was also not included in the division of his lands in the Chancery Court in 1826), and a 312-acre estate with a brick house, which was the Homestead Hall estate. The Homestead Hall estate is found in the assessment records for 1822 under the name of Philip Lecount. Lecount was the new husband of Edward's widow, Lydia Rothwell. The fact that Lecount was taxed in 1822 for the Homestead Hall property is the first indication in the documentary records that Lydia remained at Homestead Hall after remarrying.

In 1826, the Chancery Court finalized the division of Edward Wilson's lands among his five children. His widow, Lydia, conveyed to her children all her interest and right of dower to the lands of her deceased husband.⁷ The Homestead Hall tract, however, was not included in the lands divided by the Chancery Court, further evidence that William's mother, Lydia Rothwell Wilson Lecount, retained Homestead Hall, her family's homestead. Indeed, the Homestead Hall plat was not conveyed to her children until after her death in 1846.⁸

William's inheritance from his father came in two parcels. One tract, designated lot F, contained 231 acres. This was the tract on which Mayfield would be built. The surveyor drew a house near the vicinity of Mayfield on that tract. William was given another parcel, designated lot G, containing 152 acres of woodland. His total inheritance was approximately 383 acres. (The three other houses owned by his father were given to William's siblings. The brick house at Hill Island Farm, which had been owned by Edward Wilson's father-in-law, Thomas Rothwell, was given to William's sister Lydia Wilson and her husband John Whitby.) William's inheritance is documented in the assessment record for 1828. William Wilson, a minor, owned a tract of 383 acres with a frame dwelling, a barn, and four outhouses.

In 1826, at the age of sixteen, William inherited the tract on which he would build Mayfield about 1839. The plot granted to William by this court corresponds in its survey almost exactly with the Mayfield plot of 1884, when the tract was surveyed after William's death. The main difference in the surveyed plots was that in 1884 a new line was drawn (on what was lot F in the original inheritance), separating Mayfield from the house Wilson had built in 1854, known as Middlesex.

The Establishment of an Estate

During the period of William Wilson's childhood and young adulthood, from 1810 through the 1830s, the farm-based economy in southern New Castle County was in decline, as evidenced by the many sheriff's sales of property and migration of farmers out of the area to more fertile lands during these

⁷Chancery Court Division of Lands, Vol. A:25-43. RG 2840, microfilm NC-147, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

⁸Division of Real Estate of Lydia Lecount, Proceedings in New Castle County Orphans Court, February 28, 1846, T1/164.

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years. It was during this period of depressed land values and depleted soils that William's father died and William inherited a large tract of land and a frame house.

William, like his father, became a landholder because of customs of inheritance, and, like his father, he significantly added to his holdings. In the next few years, William transformed his inheritance into one of the richest farming operations on the Levels, eventually quadrupling his landholdings in Delaware and owning many houses. By chance, the land Wilson inherited in 1826 became his northernmost landholding in Delaware. Seemingly by design, Mayfield was situated on this northernmost tract so that it faced southeastward toward much of the 1,500 acres of the original Mayfield tract and toward the majority of the land Wilson would own in Delaware by the time of his death in 1879. Mayfield is an example of the farm owner's house in the first wave of rebuilding in this area. In 1859, William's son, John T. Wilson, who also resided at Mayfield, became the farm manager. Mayfield was then the home of the farm manager as well as the landowner. As the seat of the family's successful agricultural enterprises, Mayfield is a prime example of a Levels Estate.

In 1830, at the age of twenty, although technically still a minor (under twenty-one), William had moved into the house on his inherited estate, for in that year he was listed as the head of a household in the federal population census records. There were six in his household, including, in addition to himself, one male slave and four free blacks. In that year, 1830, slaves made up three percent of the population of Appoquinimink Hundred, and free black persons were only one percent of the population. William's household, therefore, was not typical of the area. On April 3, 1832, William married Rachel Naudain.

Although William's inherited estate was fairly modest compared with his later holdings, it was a valuable property. According to the assessment records for 1834, only nine other people, including his father-in-law, Arnold Naudain, and step-father, Philip Lecount, had more valuable livestock in Appoquinimink Hundred. Only two other people had more of their wealth in slaves. In the assessment recorded February 10, 1837, William had added to his landholdings, then owning 490 acres, although he owned fewer buildings than he had inherited in 1826. The assessment of 1828 had listed a frame dwelling, a barn, and four outhouses, which were undoubtedly in a run-down condition, for in 1837 he owned only the frame house and three outhouses. In 1837, only sixteen persons had more valuable real estate than William Wilson in all of Appoquinimink Hundred.

In 1837, although he owned a lot of land, the only house he owned was the frame house. A few years after marrying, years in which William built up wealth through farming and possibly through his wife's dowry, a new brick house was built near the frame house. The new house was named Mayfield, reviving the name of the original land grant in this area of 1686. The house was built sometime between the February 10, 1837 assessment and the birth of their second son, John T. Wilson, at Mayfield on April 17, 1841.⁹ The circa 1839 date has therefore been assigned to the residence.¹⁰

⁹"John Thomas Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 485-86. That history records that John T. Wilson was born April 17, 1841, "on the farm 'Mayfield,' which is still, and has always been, his home."

¹⁰For some yet unknown reason, their first son, William N. Wilson, born in 1839, was not born in the frame house or at Mayfield, which was perhaps not yet completed, but was born on the neighboring farm, then owned by William's sister and her husband. The biography of William N. Wilson records that he was born in 1839 on the Foard Farm in Cecil County, Maryland. See "William N. Wilson," *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 512. In the division of Edward Wilson's lands in 1826, the western boundary of William's inheritance was

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In the 1840 census, the number of people in William's household had nearly doubled to include eleven people, another indicator that Mayfield had been built by that date. The fact that his mother was not in his household in 1840 but was living with her husband, Philip Lecount, in a separate household, which was identified in the 1822 assessment as the Homestead Hall tract, is another definitive indicator that Mayfield was William's residence. William's immediate family included his wife (Rachel Naudain), and two children under five (two-year-old Lydia and one-year-old William N). In addition, William owned seven slaves.

The assessment of 1845 recorded that there was a two-story brick dwelling, as well as a barn and two outhouses, on William Wilson's Delaware lands. The parcel with the house was valued at \$7,500, compared with the value of \$4,400 for the frame house and land in 1837. His total estate, which included a parcel of woodland and eight slaves, was assessed for \$11,427. He was among nine people in Appoquinimink Hundred with real and personal property valued at about that high level.

The first reference to a brick house on William's lands occurred in the assessment of 1845. (In the intervening years between the 1837 and 1845 assessments, only a monetary value of property other than buildings was recorded in assessment records.) Also in 1845, on June 27, long before he inherited Homestead Hall, William Wilson of Appoquinimink Hundred took out policy 478 to insure his residence and farm buildings.¹¹ The policy corresponds with the number of buildings assessed that year, a two-story brick dwelling, a barn, and two outhouses. The policy read:

Two-story dwelling house &c his residence is said Hundred	1200
Furniture and household goods	400
Frame barn with brick wall under cribs	800
Contents of barn cribs &c	600
Frame granary shop and carriage house	200
Contents of	400
	<u>3600</u>
Insured	3600
Taxable value	4500

In 1846, after his mother's death, the Orphans' Court divided the approximately 318-acre Homestead Hall tract into two main parts, and granted tract one, containing 159 acres with improvements, valued at \$7300, to William.¹² William had petitioned the court to grant this tract to him, having priority as second

the land of Doctor Josiah L. Ford, called the "Refuge." William's sister, Mary, and her husband Richard Lockwood inherited the property in the 1826 division of lands. In 1839, the Ford Farm was still owned by William's sister and brother-in-law. William purchased that farm in 1840. See William Butler, "The Legacy of the Landscape: A Study of Tenant Farming in Appoquinimink Hundred," University of Delaware, Student Paper, 1980, 5. The brick house that stands on that property today was not the house in which William N. was born, but was built by William Wilson after he purchased the farm. Stylistically, the house is similar to Mayfield, although the finish is somewhat simpler.

¹¹Policy 478, William Wilson, Appoquinimink Hundred, 27 June 1845, Farmer's Mutual Insurance Company Members' Accounts, Ledger A (Farmer's Mutual Insurance Company, Accession 89.41, Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware).

¹²Division of Real Estate of Lydia Lecount, Proceedings in New Castle County Orphans Court, February 28, 1846, T1/164.

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son after his older brother Edward, who was of "unsound mind." Although William was granted this tract, he was ordered to pay the other heirs their share in this estate, except for his sister Sarah, who assigned all her interest in the real estate to William. The remainder of the estate, consisting of clear land and woodland, was assigned to Richard Lockwood, the husband of the next eldest sibling, Mary.

These facts from census records, historical biographies, assessment records, insurance policies, and Orphans' Court records, combine to indicate that William Wilson's primary residence was Mayfield, built on parcel F of his inheritance.

Where and how William Wilson acquired his farming acumen is not known. A history of 1882 and Scharf record that Wilson was educated at district schools and at the Middletown Academy.¹³ Unlike his own son, John T., who could learn from his father, William was only seven when his father died, although he did have two step-fathers. Histories state that William had advanced views and was not willing to follow old farming methods. It is not unlikely that William learned from his father-in-law, Arnold S. Naudain. Arnold Naudain, who was born in 1778 and raised on the Naudain Farm near Taylor's Bridge, was supposed to have been an intelligent man interested in scientific farming methods, which he carried out at the mid-eighteenth-century house near Middletown, where he lived after his marriage in 1805 (N-123, NR Listed 1973). He later became a minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church. His son, John M. Naudain, who was William's brother-in-law, was also a farmer.

A common practice among the farmers of the Levels was to use slave labor, a practice in which William participated. His father, Edward Wilson, in the last assessment of his holdings in 1816, owned twelve slaves.¹⁴ The practice of slavery was continued in this section of New Castle County longer than any other section of the county.¹⁵ Between the Revolution and the Civil War, Delawareans had freed most of their slaves.¹⁶ The persistence of slave labor in this area has been attributed to the conservative political makeup of the area's leading farmers.¹⁷

In the 1840 census, William was documented to have owned seven slaves. In that year, twenty-seven slaves were owned in all of Appoquinimink Hundred. Wilson's slave holdings therefore amounted to slightly more than twenty-five percent of all the slaves owned in Appoquinimink Hundred. Slaves made up a relatively small percentage of the total population of Appoquinimink Hundred in 1840. In that census year, .8 percent of the population of Appoquinimink Hundred was made up of slaves (twenty-seven slaves out of the total population of 3,075). By contrast, St. Georges Hundred, located north of Appoquinimink Hundred and south of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, had a much higher slave population in 1840,

¹³"William Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 297; and J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Delaware, 1609-1888*, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: L. J. Richards and Company, 1888), 1017.

¹⁴In 1822, William's new step-father, Philip Lecount, owned one slave. There were seven free black persons in Lecount's household in 1830. Still in 1840, Lecount did not own slaves. In that year, there were ten in his household, including five free blacks.

¹⁵Bruce Bendler, "The Levels: The Development of a Landscape, 1680-1860," *Fully, Freely, and Entirely, Newsletter of the Delaware Heritage Commission*, 4 (Summer 1993): 4.

¹⁶John A. Munroe, *Delaware: A Students' Guide to Localized History* (New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1965), 19.

¹⁷Bendler, "The Levels," 5.

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although its overall population was almost identical to that of Appoquinimink Hundred. Out of 3,130 people, 138 were slaves, or four percent of the population. Both Appoquinimink and St. Georges Hundreds had a similar percentage of free black persons, comprising about thirty-three percent of the population.

By 1850, William Wilson was among the top three richest men in Appoquinimink Hundred in terms of the value of his real estate as recorded in the population census. His holdings now included the Homestead Hall tract. There were fourteen people in his household, including his wife, their three children, a female relative, and eight black people, with the adult black males described as laborers. Thirty-six of the fifty-one slaves in Appoquinimink Hundred in 1850 were owned by farmers in the Levels.¹⁸ William Wilson owned about fifteen percent of the slaves in Appoquinimink Hundred, and about twenty-two percent of the slaves in the Levels. In the 1852 assessment, the 231-acre Mayfield tract was valued at \$10,395, and the Homestead Hall tract at \$7155.¹⁹

In the agricultural census for 1850, the first national census of agriculture, Wilson was among the wealthiest farm owners in Appoquinimink Hundred. Only sixteen out of the 269 farms in Appoquinimink Hundred were more valuable than Wilson's in terms of the value of livestock, products, farm implements, and machinery. In the rich area of the Levels within Appoquinimink Hundred, Wilson's farm generally exceeded the averages. With 430 improved acres, Wilson's farm exceeded the average of 322 improved acres in the Levels in 1850. His most abundant farm products, grains, were highly typical of this region. The fact that Wilson had an above-average number of cattle indicates greater diversity on his farm than on others in the Levels, where farmers owned somewhat less than the average number of cows because of the success of grain production in this area, although in general this area was characterized by a grain-and-butter economy. The total value of Wilson's farm was \$13,000, almost exactly the average of \$13,400 in the Levels.

On average, 741 bushels of wheat per farm were harvested in the Levels in 1850, compared with 1000 bushels produced by Wilson. His grains were sown and harvested by 11 horses and 3 working oxen. Wilson's 11 horses far exceeded the average number of horses per farm, 8.7, kept by farmers on the Levels in 1850.²⁰ This contrasts with the average of 5.3 horses in St. Georges Hundred to the north, and of 2.6 horses per farm in all of Appoquinimink Hundred.²¹ His farm had also produced 300 bushels of Irish and sweet potatoes, 60 pounds of flax, 27 swine, 35 sheep producing 100 pounds of wool, and 520 pounds of butter had been made from the milk of his 9 milch cows. This contrasts with the average of 6.8 cows in the Levels, producing an average of 420 pounds of butter. The value of Wilson's livestock, which was \$900 in 1850, exceeded the average of \$821 in the Levels. Only \$50 of the total \$13,000 value of his farm came from orchard products, although this exceeded the average of \$9 in the Levels. The

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Bruce Bendler, "Homestead Hall, Appoquinimink Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware," Student Paper, Vernacular Architecture Class, December 11, 1990, 14.

²⁰Brad Brooks, Hubert Jicha, and Bernard Herman, "Levels Historic District," Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1995, Section 8, Page 6.

²¹Ibid.

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average value of farm implements owned by farmers in the Levels in 1850 was \$445, whereas Wilson's farm implements were valued at \$650.²²

William's improvements to his estate in the 1850s were noted in the local paper, the *Delaware Republican*:

William Wilson . . . has also made great improvements in building and improving. He has in the last few years divided two large farms into four, and erected large and splendid brick edifices upon them as dwellings, such as are an ornament and an honor to that portion of the country. Mr. Wilson is a very extensive landholder, owning some eight large and highly improved farms. All these things greatly improve that section of the country, and such men are desirable and useful citizens to any community.²³

By the time of the 1860 population census, the value of William Wilson's real estate had boomed from \$34,000 in 1850 to \$156,000. There were only seven persons listed in his household, which included no black persons in that year. The population census records document one main Wilson household in 1860. William Wilson's two sons, William N. (age twenty-one) and John T. (age nineteen) were both listed in their father's household. William N. Wilson's biography records that after completing his schooling, he farmed with his father, managing, until 1861, "one of his father's farms near Middletown, known as 'Homestead Hall.'"²⁴

John T. Wilson's biography records that he had always resided at the home of his birth, Mayfield.²⁵ William Wilson's biography also recorded in 1882 that William's son, John T., then resided at the Mayfield farm.²⁶ The biography further stated that John returned home in 1859 from his two years of study at the Academy of New London, Pennsylvania. A later biography adds to this that John T. had first attended the district schools until the age of fifteen, and that after attending the Academy of New London he had attended Delaware College and Minnesota University, where he took a classical and mathematical course for two years.²⁷ Upon returning, "In attention to the large business of his father's estate, he gave evidence of the ability which has since distinguished him. In less than a year the charge of this large property passed into his hands."²⁸ After William Wilson's death, William's widow, his second wife

²²These statistics for Wilson's farm in 1850 are somewhat inflated, for apparently all of his holdings were reported together that year, whereas in 1860 only his home farm was counted under Wilson's name, and the other farms owned by Wilson were presumably listed under the names of his farm managers or agents. The decrease by 1860 in the size of the average farm in the Levels as indicated by the agricultural census records could be exacerbated by this method of accounting for farm holdings.

²³Improvements, " *Delaware Republican*, 16 August 1858.

²⁴"William N. Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 512.

²⁵"John Thomas Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 485-86.

²⁶"William Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 297.

²⁷J. M. Runk & Co., *Biographical and Genealogical History of the State of Delaware* (Chambersburg, PA: 1899), 1313.

²⁸"John T. Wilson," *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia*, 485.

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Lydia Wilson, attested to John T.'s character and integral role in the farm business, stating that he was her preference as an administrator. Lydia wrote that John T. Wilson "has been attending to his father's business affairs for the past twenty years, knows more about the estate, and can make more money out of it than any one else."²⁹ Furthermore, Lydia wrote, "by his *honesty* and integrity has proven his character to be *unexceptionable*."³⁰

In the agricultural census for 1860, only his primary farm, Mayfield, was accounted for under William Wilson's name, whereas the 1850 agricultural census had recorded his total holdings. The other farms owned by Wilson were presumably counted under the names of his farm managers, according to the instructions of the census, which counted farms individually by names of owner, agent, *or* manager. Nevertheless, Wilson's farm was still in the top six percent of the most valuable farms in Appoquinimink Hundred. The total value of his farm, as recorded in the agricultural census records, had increased from \$13,000 in 1850 to \$20,000. The cause of the increase is not clear in the agricultural census. The most significant changes of the decade included the reduction of sheep from 35 to 19 (although the production of wool did not change); reduction of swine from 27 to 18; and addition of 8 asses and mules. No orchard products were recorded, although it is possible that orchard crops were grown on the other farms he owned. Grains still were the primary product of Mayfield.

By the time of the 1870 population census, his real estate had retained its value and was listed at \$150,000 in that year. There were two Wilson households, William, the father's, and William N., the son's. There were eleven people in William's household, including his second wife, Lydia, their four young children, a white male relative, and three black persons, William Thomas, a laborer, Mary Thomas, a domestic servant, and an infant girl, Georganna Thomas. John T., then twenty-nine, was still residing in his father's home. His occupation was listed as farm agent. Again, since his biography records that he had always lived in the home of his birth, it seems that the family still lived at Mayfield. Furthermore, the entry preceding William Wilson's was for the Hanson family, who owned the tract abutting Mayfield on the north. William N. Wilson was listed as a head of a household, which included two white adults and two white children, all with the last name "Biddle." The census entry following William N. was the Crawford household. Since the Crawford home, Brook Ramble (N-101, NR Listed 1992), is close to Homestead Hall, it is possible that William N. was residing at Homestead Hall, where he had been the manager. William N. was still listed as a farmer in this census year.

In the agricultural census for 1870, the value of William Wilson's farm was still listed at \$20,000, but that value was below the average in the Levels of \$26,880. His farm was still among the most valuable in all of Appoquinimink Hundred, although it had dropped from the top six percent of the most valuable farms in Appoquinimink Hundred to about thirteen percent. There were a few changes in the value and production of his farm, indicative of the changing economy in the area, which was shifting from the emphasis on grain and butter to an emphasis on orchards. Wilson, however, still was not heavily invested in orchard products. Although the drop in grain production on his farm was typical of the region, only \$400 of orchard products were listed, far below the average of \$2,255 in the Levels. Instead, the number of sheep had shot up to 70 in 1870 from 19 in 1860, and wool production had accordingly increased from 100 pounds to 262 pounds. Additionally, 150 pounds of honey had been produced. His 6 horses were about the average number in the Levels. The production of butter was the same as it had been a decade earlier, although the trend in the Levels was toward a diminished role for butter as a market product.

²⁹L. A. Wilson to Sewell C. Biggs, 2 September 1879, Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover.

³⁰Ibid.

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Although milk production had also increased in importance in the Levels by 1870, the census records for Wilson's farm do not indicate such an increase. The farm at Homestead Hall, managed by Wilson's son, William N, was listed under his name and its value was equal to his father's farm in that year.³¹

In 1877, two years before his death, William Wilson was the second richest man in Appoquinimink Hundred, according to assessment records, although, as indicated by the probate of his estate, his financial situation was not secure. Like the assessment records for other years, his holdings were itemized. The first three items comprised his original inheritance. Mayfield was the first property to be assessed, as it had been since the 1837 assessment. The second entry was for the remainder of the acreage of the first parcel he had been granted in 1826, where Middlesex subsequently had been built in 1854. The other part of his inheritance, which had been woodland, was still in William's possession and now contained a log house. In addition, William owned several frame and brick houses, including a frame store at what was referred to in his probate records as Wilson's Crossroads. The store, which appears on Beers Atlas of 1868, was located on the northeast corner of present-day Route 15 and Caldwell Corner Road (N-5867).

The Sale of Wilson's Farms, 1881-84

On August 21, 1879, William Wilson died, leaving behind 1,540 acres in New Castle County.³² Court records suggest that he died at Homestead Hall, not at Mayfield. In a deposition taken to ascertain a fair division of lands in Maryland between John T. and William N., William N. reported that William "died at the Homestead on the Levels."³³ Regarding William's minor children, William N. wrote, "All live on the Homestead in New Castle County."³⁴ The deposition was taken in 1880, a year after William died. Census records of 1870 indicate that the family was living in the same household, which was Mayfield. By the time of the 1880 census, and for the first time in the census records, John T. maintained a separate household from his step-mother and her seven children.³⁵ John T. was living at Mayfield, where his biography of 1882 said he had always lived. This fact is corroborated by G. M. Hopkins's map of New Castle County, published in 1881. William Wilson's properties, including Mayfield and Homestead Hall, now say "W. Wilson, Est." Mayfield also says, "J. T. Wilson, Res." Since the census documented that

³¹William N. retired from farming in 1870, when he began a five-year term as a Democrat member of the Levy Court, after which he worked as a fire insurance agent. "William N. Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 512. According to advertisements in the *Middletown Transcript* from the 1880s, William N. Wilson was a Notary Public, with an office in Room 25 of the Middletown Hotel, and was also involved with real estate and insurance. These advertisements appeared in several issues in 1884, including February 29, 1884.

³²According to the burial records on file in the Delaware State Archives, William Wilson was buried in the Levels Cemetery. In the sale of Homestead Hall, the property was sold "excepting thereon a certain family burial ground containing 1/16th part of an acre of land. (Orphans' Court Record E2/456-58.)

³³William N. Wilson vs. John T. Wilson, Cecil County Chancery Case No. 1010, 1880.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵John T. was listed as the head of a household in the federal population census of 1880. Five other persons were listed in his household, one of whom, E. M. Naudain, may have been related. The others, all with different last names, were laborers, borders, and one was a servant.

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John T. Wilson lived in the same household as his father his entire life, there is no doubt that Mayfield had been William's place of residence. The census record of 1880 and the deposition suggest that William Wilson's widow, Lydia, was living at Homestead Hall. This was only a temporary residence, however, for Homestead Hall was sold in 1882, and, by the time of Scharf's history of 1888, Lydia had moved to a house in Middletown.³⁶ In the assessment records for the period from 1877 to 1881, before and after William's death, John T. owned neither land nor buildings, as the estate he farmed remained in his father's name.

William Wilson was described in the *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware* of 1882: "He was a man of great uprightness of character, faithful to every trust, and exceedingly kind to the poor and unfortunate."³⁷ His son, John T., was appointed the administrator of his father's estate on September 8, 1879 (Will Record E2/292). Like other farms in this region, William's had experienced a slight decline, but it was his debts to various creditors that resulted in the need to sell his holdings.

William Wilson died when the supremacy of this region agriculturally was waning. Farm values were falling across the Levels. The peach market was beginning to collapse due to the natural twenty-year life span of the trees and the effects of a blight known as Peach Yellows. The popularity of peach cultivation was shifting southward. Stepped up farming activity in the Midwest impacted the region, as well. In the inventory of his estate taken shortly after his death in 1879, 150 bushels of wheat were counted, compared with 500 bushels of wheat recorded in the census of 1870. He still had 20 swine, as he had in 1870, but his number of sheep had been reduced from 70 to 32.³⁸

The value of orchard crops, which had peaked about 1875 in the Levels, was realized at Wilson's farms in the early 1880s. The probate records for William's estate record the cash values of the crops on his various farms. From 1880 to 1883, corn, wheat, and peaches were the main crops. In 1880, the profits from the sale of wheat far exceeded the value of peaches sold.³⁹ Only in 1883 did peaches exceed wheat, heretofore the largest cash crop. In the biography of Wilson's son, John T. Wilson, written in 1882, it was noted that there were 40,000 peach trees on both the Delaware and Maryland lands, and that "Mr. Wilson tills all these trees with the exception of a part covering forty acres. He has an orchard-master for each orchard, a culling superintendent and a shipper. The largest crop of peaches gathered from his trees was in 1875, when about 80,000 baskets were grown, but not all of them were shipped."⁴⁰

To pay the debts of William Wilson's estate, his farms were sold. His lands were listed as ten separate parcels in the Orphans' Court records, and the sale of his lands began with lots 5-8 and 10 in 1881 (Orphans' Court, E2/107). At the 1881 term of the Orphans' Court, William's widow, Lydia, waived

³⁶Scharf, 1018.

³⁷"William Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 297. See also Runk, 1280, for a similar biography.

³⁸"Inventory and Appraisalment of the Goods, Chattels, and Money, which were of William Wilson, Late of Appoquinimink Hundred, Deceased." September 26, 1879. Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

³⁹First settlement of John T. Wilson, Administrator of William Wilson, Late Appoquinimink Hundred, Deceased. December 28, 1880. Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

⁴⁰"John T. Wilson," *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia*, 485.

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the assignment of her dower by land, and elected instead an equivalent share of the proceeds of the sale of the landholdings. Homestead Hall, with about 179 acres, was sold at public auction in 1882 for \$10,756.50 (Orphans' Court, E2/456). In the probate records for William Wilson's estate, the names of at least six farm managers were recorded, including his son, J. T. Wilson, and James A. Gonce, James F. Moore, William B. Pierce, Dennis Maloney, and S. B. Sanders.⁴¹

John T. Wilson retained Mayfield as long as possible. The debts still not satisfied, it was necessary to sell Mayfield, too. The court ordered the sale of Parcel 1, Mayfield, and Parcel 2, Middlesex on October 6, 1883 (Orphans' Court, F2/351). The property was surveyed and a new line drawn dividing the Mayfield tract from the Middlesex tract. Mayfield was sold on September 24, 1884 (Orphans' Court, F2/356). Of all the properties William had owned, Mayfield brought the highest price at its sale. Samuel Roberts, of Blackbird Hundred, purchased the two-story brick dwelling house and kitchen, brick milk house, frame meat house, brick barn and stabling, frame granary, carriage house, and 195 acres, 143 square perches for \$11,360.75. Middlesex sold for \$8,089.60 to Nathaniel Williams. In the final settlement, John T. Wilson was paid for his expenses during the course of settlement, including a new pump he had purchased for Mayfield.⁴²

This renewal of the land effected by William Wilson during the course of his life was summarized in biographies of the later nineteenth century, beginning in 1882 with the publication of the *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, and repeated in all essential details in Scharf's *History of Delaware* of 1888 and Runk's *History of Delaware* of 1899.⁴³

In the *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia*, this period of Wilson's life was described as follows:

He received a considerable landed estate from his father, but the system of farming then in vogue had worn out the soil and rendered the land of little value. But Mr. Wilson was not satisfied to continue on in the old beaten track. Being a man of broad and advanced views, of unusual business and executive ability, he improved the soil, bringing it up to a high state of cultivation, and so increased his fortune, that years before his death he possessed about thirty-five hundred acres of the choicest land in Delaware, and just over the line in Maryland.⁴⁴

Architecture

Mayfield is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C as a finely-preserved architectural example of the greatest period of agricultural prosperity in the region of Delaware known as the Levels. When Mayfield was constructed, circa 1839, the Greek Revival style was popular

⁴¹First settlement of John T. Wilson, Administrator of William Wilson, Late Appoquinimink Hundred, Deceased. December 28, 1880. Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

⁴²Final settlement of John T. Wilson, Administrator of William Wilson, Late Appoquinimink Hundred, Deceased. April 5, 1884. Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

⁴³Scharf, 1018; Runk, 1280.

⁴⁴"William Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 297.

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nationally. The architecture of Mayfield is austere and grand, in keeping with the aesthetic of the Greek Revival style. Mayfield was one of the earliest of the new dwellings constructed during a period of rebuilding, which occurred in this area from the 1830s to the 1870s. The new houses, such as Mayfield, incorporated features of house alterations of the previous period when hall-parlor plans were converted to center-passage plans, and service wings, containing a kitchen and servants' quarters, were attached to the main house. With a center-passage plan and a service wing, Mayfield was built all at one time in an up-to-date style.

Just as Wilson made a substantial investment in livestock, farm machinery, slaves, and land, he also made a substantial investment in building the house that was to be the center of his estate. The Greek Revival style of Mayfield is expressed through the application of finely-crafted architectural decorations. That style is first indicated by the classical, tetrastyle front porch, a careful reconstruction based on physical evidence of the original. The focal point of the main elevation is the centered front door, framed by tall, tapered, flat pilasters supporting a classical entablature and containing a rectangular transom. The decorative trim of the dormers completes the classically-inspired style of the exterior. On the interior, the focal point of the parlor, and the grandest decorative feature of the house, emphasized by the projection of the fireplace block into the room, is a Greek Revival style mantel based on a mantel delineated in Asher Benjamin's architectural pattern book, *The Architect, or Practical House Carpenter, 1830* (reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.).

Because the construction of Mayfield was preceded by a lull in building activity due to the depressed farm economy in the early nineteenth century, many of the houses in the area of Mayfield at the time of its construction bore the hallmarks of the Federal style and earlier periods. The two, grander houses owned by William's father, Homestead Hall and Hill Island Farm, were, by the late 1830s, quite old-fashioned, stylistically. Hill Island Farm could have provided William with the model for the center-passage plan, for the original hall-parlor plan of that house had been converted to a center-passage plan in the late eighteenth century. A good example of a house from the Federal period in the area is Brook Ramble, built about 1810 across the road from Homestead Hall. Brook Ramble could have provided Wilson and his builder with the idea of attaching the kitchen wing to the house. Brook Ramble is one of the earliest examples of an attached service wing in the area. The restrained classical finishes Wilson added to his house indicate an interest in creating a home that was up-to-date, as Brook Ramble was upon its completion, with a fanlight over its front door and classical mantels within.

A bold example of the Greek Revival style had been constructed about 1834 less than two miles to the north, just outside of Middletown. Democrat John P. Cochran, who was the forty-third governor of Delaware from 1875-79, built Cochran Grange a few years before Wilson built Mayfield (N-117, NR Listed 1973). That house is more boldly Greek than Mayfield, for Cochran Grange has giant, two-story columns and a more square form than Mayfield, although underlying its decorative trim is a center-passage plan.

As one of the earliest of the new houses in the area, the architecture of Mayfield helped to set the style of the region. The Claytons built homes that were similar to Mayfield. For example, Choptank-Upon-the-Hill (N-5243, NR Listed 1985), built by the Clayton family in the mid-nineteenth century, has a five-bay, center-entrance, brick main section with a Greek Revival portico, a straight transom, and corbelled brick cornice. Similarly, the home built by Benjamin T. Biggs in 1846 is architecturally in line with Mayfield (Governor Benjamin T. Biggs Farm, N-5123, NR Listed 1987).

Perhaps the house style and type built by Wilson persisted in this region for decades because of the conservatism of the farmers. As pointed out by Bruce Bendler, many of the leading farmers of the Levels

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were Federalist or Whig.⁴⁵ Indeed, conservatives dominated Delaware's political arena from the Whig party's first emergence as the Federalist party in the 1790s.⁴⁶ The Claytons were a leading Whig presence in Delaware politics. Biggs, a Democrat, served as a Congressman from 1868 to 1872 and later as governor from 1887-1891. Unlike his neighbors, the Cochrans, Claytons, and Biggs, William Wilson never held a political position. Wilson was described in the biography of 1882 as an "old-line Whig," who "in early and middle life was very active in party affairs."⁴⁷ His son, William N., was elected to the Levy Court from 1870-1875 on the Democratic ticket.⁴⁸

Mayfield's elegance lies in the balanced symmetry of its formal plan and in the fine craftsmanship of its trim, which is characterized by a subtle variety of simple patterns and textures. Like the homes of their wealthy neighbors and relatives, including Homestead Hall, the home of William's birth then occupied by his mother and step-father, and the home of Rachel's father, Arnold S. Naudain (N-123, NR Listed 1973), William and Rachel Wilson built in brick. The elaborate curves of the cyma reversa brick cornice of Mayfield contrast with the planar surface of the finely-pressed bricks of the main elevation. Elaborate, moulded brick cornices appear on the fanciest houses in the area, like the Joseph Cleaver House in Port Penn, built about 1835 (N-3928, NR Listed 1978). As pointed out by Pamela Simpson, the cyma recta was an element of the classical cornice described in builders' guides of the early-nineteenth century, but none suggested its use in brick.⁴⁹ The smooth surface of the house is punctuated by the deep wood reveals of the front entrance and bold mouldings of the elaborately-paneled front door. Decorative patterns range from the geometric ovals and diamonds crafted from bent wood in the straight lintel over the front door, to the inset clover patterns on the capitals of the dormer windows. The interior patterns include the deep bull's eye corner blocks, the diamond decorations over the built-in china cupboard in the dining room, and the running Greek key on the parlor mantel. Who carved the mantels and was responsible for the other interior trim is not known, although the cabinetwork was executed by a Philadelphian, and it is likely that a Smyrna craftsman, James McDougal, was responsible for the exterior trim.⁵⁰

The plan of Mayfield represents the aspirations of the agricultural elite of this area and time period as detailed by Bernard Herman in his book, *Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware, 1700-1900*. Mayfield is William Wilson's expression of an estate, established by the successful scientific farming of

⁴⁵Bendler, "The Levels," 5.

⁴⁶Munroe, 19-30.

⁴⁷"William Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 297.

⁴⁸William Wilson does not seem to have participated as fully in community affairs as many of his neighbors on the Levels. As noted in Scharf, agriculture seems to have been the main "business of his life" (1017). He was, however, one of the directors of the Farmers' Mutual Fire Insurance Company of St. Georges and Appoquinimink Hundreds, organized in Odessa in July of 1849 (Scharf, 1011). Unlike many of the biographies of his contemporaries, his does not mention his religious persuasion. He was married to the daughter of a minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Upon his death, according to his probate records, he owed the Methodist Episcopal Church in Middletown \$100. His son, William N., united with the Presbyterian Church in Middletown in 1870 ("William N. Wilson," in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware*, 512).

⁴⁹Pamela Simpson, "Molded Brick Cornices," *APT Bulletin* 12 (1980): 33.

⁵⁰See Section 7, Page 4.

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the majority of his lands. Architecturally, Mayfield represents the social concerns of the time, defined by Herman as manifest in "the ordering of class distinctions within community, the compartmentalization of household functions, and the gradual wedding of regional and national identity."⁵¹ Herman points out the approximate time period of the late 1830s when new houses in this area of Delaware incorporated service and living spaces under a single roof.⁵²

Mayfield's plan reflects the tradition of the center-hall plan developed during the Colonial and Federal periods, a tradition modified during those periods to accommodate the changing lifestyle of the new class of farm owners by defining locations of service functions. By the 1830s, modifications had been codified, and Mayfield represents the culmination of the modern house plan. Mayfield is a well-preserved example of the domestic architecture of this region and period, in which class distinctions were sharply defined by locations of service functions, sizes of rooms designated for various household functions, architectural trim, and passage within the household.

The balanced, five-bay, center-entrance main block facing the main road contains the formal rooms, the parlor and dining room, behind which is a long service wing, accessed by the secondary road, the farm lane, which runs perpendicular to the main road to the rear of the property and to the outbuildings. The original kitchen was far removed from the main house, being located in the back room of the two-room service wing. Quarters for servants were located above the kitchen.

Class distinctions were further defined by room sizes, architectural proportions, and finishes. The width of the entrance hall is spacious when compared with the width of the two servants' bedrooms. The entrance hall is eight-feet, ten-inches wide. The servants' rooms, originally located in the space above the original kitchen, were each approximately seven feet, ten inches wide. The service functions are physically lower than the main house, evident on the exterior by the lower roof level and on the interior by the need to step down several steps to descend to the service wing. The wing was built with smaller proportions in every detail, including windows, doors, shutters, trim, and ceiling height. Finishes range from the mortarless brick floor laid on dirt in the original kitchen space, to the elegant mantel in the parlor stylistically akin to designs popularized nationally in Asher Benjamin's style book, and from darkly-painted baseboards in the kitchen and servants' chamber to faux marbled baseboards in the parlor.

As the room locations, sizes, and finishes indicate specific functions, the inventory of 1879 defined these clearly.⁵³ (It is not known what activities were intended for all the spaces of the house when it was constructed.) The inventory describes eleven spaces corresponding with the spaces within Mayfield, a kitchen, kitchen loft, dining room, hall and stairway, sitting room, parlor, two chambers, small room, attic, and school room. Details in the rooms noted in the inventory correspond with Mayfield's built-in features, such as a cupboard in the dining room; a closet in the sitting room (currently the kitchen); four window shades in the parlor, corresponding with that room's four windows; four window shades in the bedroom chamber number one, corresponding with the four windows in the room above the parlor; a small room, which today functions as a bathroom, inventoried between chambers one and two,

⁵¹Bernard Herman, *Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware, 1700-1900* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), 169.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 170.

⁵³"Inventory and Appraisalment of the Goods, Chattels, and Money, which were of William Wilson, Late of Appoquinimink Hundred, Deceased." September 26, 1879. Probate Records, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

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Mayfield
New Castle County, DE

corresponding with the room above the main entrance; and an attic containing two washstands and two beds, indicating two spaces, such as the two finished rooms in Mayfield's attic.

Multiple entries indicate multiple activities within the household, a trend observed by Herman as occurring in this period and region as an outward expression of unity of function within traditional architectural forms.⁵⁴ Mayfield contained five exterior entrances. The most formal entry was through the front door. The back door of the center hall led to the rear yard. The back door opens upon the door to the basement, where another entry to the house is located. The sitting room was oriented toward both the farm lane and the yard behind the house within the space of the ell, and also served as a passage to the dining room and to the second-floor chamber.

The servants' quarters were physically separated by space and a plaster-on-brick wall from the front of the house. Similarly, the room above the kitchen addition at Homestead Hall, an addition built when that house was owned by William, originally had no access to the main block.⁵⁵ The lack of passage between the two second-floor rooms of Mayfield's wing suggests that the room function of the front room of the second floor was associated with the Wilson family and not with the servants.

The first-floor front room of the wing was described as a sitting room in the inventory of William Wilson's estate. The current owners of the home speculate whether this room might have functioned as an office where business activity occurred between Wilson and his several farm tenants, because of the two exterior entrances to this space and lack of another appropriate space in the house for this purpose. No conclusive evidence has been uncovered to document this interesting idea, although a ceramic inkwell was found among the artifacts in the small attic accessed from the winding staircase in the corner of the room. The furnishings of the room, listed in the inventory, could have been appropriate to an office, and included a bookcase, lounge, large table, cane seat chairs, a rocker, clock, three lamps, and a mirror. The inventory also suggests that the room above the sitting room functioned as a school room, which also could account for the inkwell found near that room. The use of a room in the house as a school room and another as an office is appropriate to the trend of the period to incorporate several activities below one roof.

Additionally, the inventory cites objects that indicate the high lifestyle of the William Wilson household. In the kitchen, the large fireplace, originally intended for open-hearth cooking because of the presence of the lug pole for suspending pots, had by 1879 been fitted out with a cook stove. Other kitchen items included a table and flat irons. The dining room contained eight Windsor chairs. A hat rack and hall lamp were located in the hall. The sitting room contained a bookcase, lounge, large table, cane seat chairs, a rocker, clock, three lamps, and a mirror. The parlor contained the most valuable furnishings and carpeting, including a sofa, rocker, six chairs valued at \$15 (compared with the \$4 value of the eight Windsor chairs in the dining room), a marble top table, lamp, mirror, expensive Brussels carpeting, and both a piano, valued at \$150, and an organ, valued at \$40. There were four coal stoves and one cook stove listed in the inventory; therefore, one of the six fireplaces in Mayfield had not been converted to a coal stove, presumably the parlor fireplace.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Herman, 187-98.

⁵⁵Bendler, "Homestead Hall," 8.

⁵⁶This inventory of William Wilson's estate, which more clearly fits the floor plan and appurtenances of Mayfield than of Homestead Hall, further refutes the idea that Homestead Hall had been William Wilson's home. Homestead Hall has fewer rooms and never had some of the

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Later History

The farm remained in the Roberts family until 1928, when on June 28 it was sold to James A. Lee and Elizabeth Collins of Townsend for \$14,750, with the same description as that given in the Orphans' Court record of 1884 (Deed S35/191). Under the ownership of the Lees, three generations of tenant farmers, named Baker, rented the house and farmed the land. The Lee family, having acquired the entire property from Elizabeth Collins in 1939 (Deed F41/590), sold Mayfield and the same tract of 195 acres and 143 square perches described in the Orphans' Court record of 1884, excluding land deeded to the State Highway Department in 1930 (Deed H37/121), to Sydney D. Peverly of Bel Air, Maryland on July 6, 1960 for \$45,000 (Deed I66/519). The house was first electrified in 1966. In 1989, 4.92 acres of this land, containing the Mayfield House, were purchased from the Peverly family by Sharon and Charles White. The house was abandoned and vandalized; remarkably, most historic fabric, including original mantels, staircases, and other woodwork, was not permanently harmed. The house also retained its original floor plan and room configurations. No changes had been made, except that the original porches were gone. The only vestige of the original outbuilding complex was the foundation of the brick bank barn. There was also a modern, pole implement shed on the property, which has since been removed.

rooms described in the inventory. For example, the inventory describes a hall and stairway as a separate space, whereas Homestead Hall has a box stairway in its original dining room.

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Mayfield
New Castle County, DE

Comprehensive Planning

MAYFIELD (CRS # N-5832)

Geographic Zone: Upper Peninsula

Time Period: 1830-1880 +/-

Theme: Architecture, Engineering, and Decorative Arts

In reference to the *Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan*, this nomination for Mayfield expands the available information on the architecture historic context in the Upper Peninsula Zone during the 1830-80 +/- time period. The property contributes information on the beginning of the trend in this area to construct new houses with center-passage plans and rear wings for the kitchen and service functions. Mayfield also provides evidence of the local expression of the Greek Revival style.

Theme: Agriculture

In reference to the *Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan*, this nomination for Mayfield expands the available information on the agriculture historic context in the Upper Peninsula Zone during the 1830-80 +/- time period. The property contributes information on the farm production of William Wilson, one of the richest landholders in the northern, grain region of the Upper Peninsula Zone known as the Levels. Although Wilson's farming practices generally followed the trend of the area, the property contributes information on a farm that was more diverse than the norm, for Wilson also raised sheep and swine in large numbers. The nomination expands information on land ownership, farm management, and slave labor.

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 : New Castle County Department of Planning

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5.1895

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting Northing
1	<u>18 434920 4361260</u>	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 Susan Brizzolara title Assistant Historic Preservation Planner

organization New Castle County Department of Planning date April 11, 1997

street & number 2701 Capitol Trail telephone (302) 366-7780

city or town Newark state DE zip code 19711

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.)

Mayfield (4.9229 acres):

name Sharon and Charles White

street & number 1603 Levels Road, PO Box 536 telephone (302) 378-5358

city or town Middletown state DE zip code 19709

Levels Road Right-of-Way (0.2666 acres):

name Anne Canby, Secretary of Transportation, Delaware Department of Transportation

street & number P.O. Box 778 telephone (302) 652-5600

city or town Dover state DE zip code 19903

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.). 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 the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Mayfield
New Castle County, DE

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State Highway Department. "Contract #119, Plan Approved 7-2-1929, to Pave Levels Road from State Line to Sixteen-Foot Macadam Road to Middletown." RG 1540, 2A, microfilm, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

United States Bureau of Census, Population Schedules, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

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William N. Wilson vs. John T. Wilson. Cecil County Chancery Case No. 1010, 1880.

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Mayfield
New Castle County, DE

Geographical Data

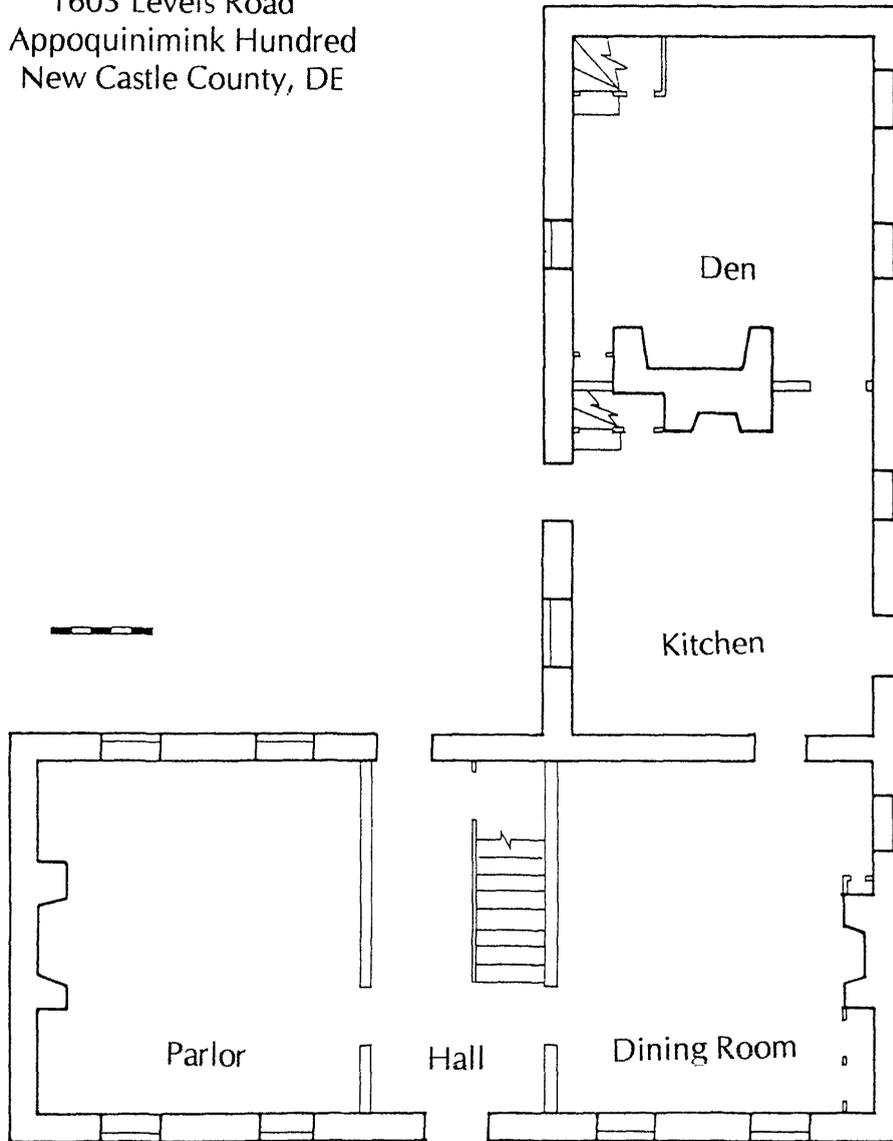
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated boundary for Mayfield is the boundary line around the legal parcel on which the house is located, except on Levels Road, where the boundary lies outside the existing right-of-way for that road, following the present edge of the road for the most part. The nominated boundary is outlined in a bold, black line on the accompanying map, "New Castle County Property Tax Map, Revised 6/1/1990." The outlined area includes parcel 14-014.00-024 containing 4.9229 acres and lands outside the existing right-of-way containing 0.2666 acres. The nominated boundary is shown in greater detail on the accompanying map, "Record Minor Subdivision Plan for Lands of Sydney D. Peverly, Jr., Recorded 5/10/1990, Microfilm 10396." The nominated boundary seen on this map lies approximately 33 feet outside the existing right-of-way along Levels Road.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the legal parcel are chosen as the nominated boundary because these lines contain the contributing resource (the house). The right-of-way is included in the boundary because it contributes to the historic setting. As seen on "Record Minor Subdivision Plan for Lands of Sydney D. Peverly, Jr., Recorded 5/10/1990, Microfilm 10396," the building setback line, which passes near the southeast corner of the house, is located 40 feet from the right-of-way line and approximately 73 feet from the edge of the road. The right-of-way line lies approximately 33 feet, 10 inches from the southeast corner of the front porch. Although the house has historically been close to road, the road was an unpaved farm lane until 1929, when it was paved with a 9-foot concrete roadbed (State Highway Department Contract 119). Today, the paved surface of the road is 18-feet, 8-inches wide. The house pre-dates the creation of the County Subdivision and Zoning Code, which mandates a 40-foot minimum building setback in R-2 zoned districts. This standard was applied to this parcel when the parcel was subdivided from a larger tract in 1990. This setback is inappropriate to the rural setting of this historic resource. The setting would be jeopardized if the boundary were drawn on the right-of-way line. In order to protect the integrity of the historic resource, the nominated boundary line is drawn outside of the existing right-of-way line, as indicated above, and not on the right-of-way line.

MAYFIELD (N-5832)
First Floor Plan
(Current Room Uses)
1603 Levels Road
Appoquinimink Hundred
New Castle County, DE



Drawn by William Butler
May 1980

Reproduced in:
Bernard Herman, *Architecture and Rural
Life in Central Delaware, 1700-1900*
(Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press,
1987), 167.



Mayfield
 CRS # N-5832
 Record Minor Subdivision
 Plan for Lands of
 Sydney D. Peveriy, Jr.
 Recorded 5/10/1990
 Microfilm #10396
 Scale 1 inch = 100 feet

