

PH0021661

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Delaware	
COUNTY: New Castle	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	DEC 18 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Mermaid Tavern

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Mermaid Tavern

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: *N E of Newark on Del. 7*  
Delaware Route 7

CITY OR TOWN:  
Mermaid *Newark, Del.*

STATE Delaware	CODE 10	COUNTY: New Castle	CODE 003
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Sarah Pennington Evans and Helen P. Pennington

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Route 7

CITY OR TOWN:  
Mermaid

STATE: Delaware	CODE 10
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Public Building

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Rodney Square

CITY OR TOWN:  
Wilmington

STATE Delaware	CODE 10
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State

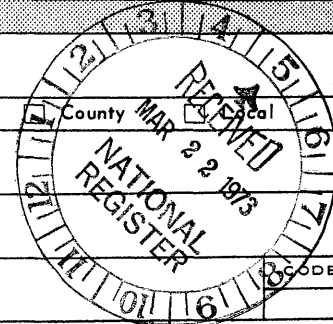
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:	CODE:
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mermaid Tavern, a colonial establishment, is located almost exactly at the geographical center of the Mill Creek Hundred. It has served not only as a tavern, but also as a polling place and as a post office. The old liquor cabinet, money drawers, postal cabinet and ballot box remain in the house. The house itself is a two-story stone structure with a frame addition. A log house was rebuilt in stone around 1725 to form the first section of the building and was enlarged circa 1750 and in the early nineteenth century. The exterior stone has been covered with stucco, giving the house a modern appearance. The interior retains many early features, such as floors, woodwork, and mantels.

The older two-story stone section is composed of two bays, with irregular fenestration. This section has been extended by a three-bay frame wing of similar proportions. To the rear is a frame lean-to wing that extends the roofline of the main structure. Most of the windows are glazed with six-over-six sash, except in the south end wall where each sash is single-pane.



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**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) c. 1725, c. 1730

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal          | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric         | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic            | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture        | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications      | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation        |   |   | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

When public accommodations were first available on Limestone Road is unclear. A deed dated 1718 is said to convey a farm, with a hotel license. A tavern at the Mermaid was licensed much later, in 1830, but an inn may have been kept there nearly a century before.

The tavern was the polling place for Mill Creek Hundred until May 15, 1891 when Mill Creek was divided into three election districts. For many years the Democrats held primaries in a room above the blacksmith shop across the road from the Mermaid. The election of 1862 sparked the "Battle of the Mermaid." Democrats tried to prevent soldiers from Mill Creek Hundred, members of the Fourth Delaware Regiment, from voting. The soldiers were stationed at Camp duPont, near Greenville, and the objection was that they had left the Hundred. The incident seems to have concluded when several objectors were jailed for a few days. The soldiers voted.

During the same period, beginning in 1844 or 1845, and continuing until 1882, the Mermaid Tavern served as a post office. Mail was kept in a glass-front case, near the one that held the finer wines and liquors.

The tavern business closed in 1869.

According to tradition, the tavern early in its history served as a way station for Presbyterians who stopped Saturday nights on their way to Sabbath services at Polly Drummond Hill.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Cooch, Francis A. Little-Known History of Newark, Delaware and its Environs. Newark: Press of Kells, 1936.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888. Philadelphia: L. J. Richards, 1888.

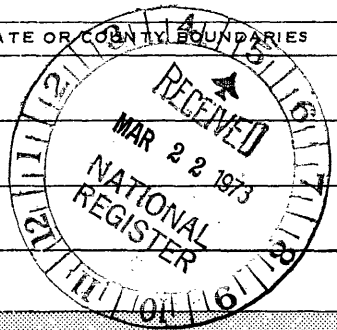
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "	39	44	34
NE	° ' "	° ' "			
SE	° ' "	° ' "			
SW	° ' "	° ' "			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 5

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Graydon Wood and Rosemary Troy

ORGANIZATION: Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs DATE: 7/11/72

STREET AND NUMBER: Hall of Records

CITY OR TOWN: Dover STATE: Delaware CODE: 10

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Dr. E. Berkeley Tompkins

Title Director, Div. of Historical and Cultural Affairs

Date 3-12-73

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

Ernest A. Gurnally  
 Chief Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
 Associate Director, Professional Services  
 Date DEC 18 1973

ATTEST:

Com [Signature]  
 Keeper of The National Register  
 Date 12-13-73

Extract from letter of Mrs. Sara Pennington Evans, Sept. 30, 1973

The original liquor license granted Sept. 11, 1746 to James Walker-Historical Society of Delaware has original copy given by my great aunt Mary E. Walker-do you have a photostat-if not, would you like one? Operated as a tavern until 1866 or 67 but continued as a hotel without license until 1880. One of the original benches-called drunkards bench-we had repaired and placed on our side door patio.

In 1961, Robert Raley of Wilmington dated our house for my daughter, a student at University of Delaware-who was writing a term paper for a course in American Architectural and Decorative Art, so it would be authentic.

First section was log built about 1725-no cellar-and the unhewn logs are still under that part later enclosed in stone-second section-stone built between 1740-1750 like Williamsburg two separate parts; a vault under this part-then in 1800, the third section joined the house together. It is the oldest house along the Limestone Road left standing.

Also in the 1800 part, the back of the bar is intact plus shelf and three money drawers. In this small room between the barroom and the first section are glass show-cases with sliding doors where fancy liquors were kept.

When the name became Mermaid is uncertain-it was spelled Muirmaid-Mair maid-Meri-Maid.

It was the polling place for the third election district in New Castle County from about 1830 to 1891 we have the Mill Creek Hundred Ballot Box plus many ballots when they were voting for and against the new constitution. My mother gave the 1844 Hundred election flag which we found in the attic in 1959 to Historical Society through the Delaware State DAR and the list of the contributors-Flag cost \$83.50 was 8 x 15-I also have a small campaign flag for James K. Polk and George Dallas for Pres. and Vice Pres.-1844.

The earliest deed 1718 was destroyed but have several old deeds in my possession earliest 1768-speaks of the great road known as Limestone.

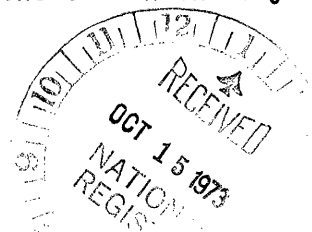
Opposite the hotel were sheds for 24 horses plus a blacksmith shop; across the road on the east corner-a wheelwright shop with a second story room.

Wagoners from Pa. spent the night here enroute to Stanton to place their grain on barges going to Newport also when returning stayed here.

Mermaid was a postoffice from 1848 to 1900 Josiah Walker, first postmaster, thus recorded in Harvey Bounds Postal History. The mail came three times a week-mail kept in a small glass case next to liquor-still here.

The Mill Creek Hundred Road Commissioners met here from April, 1832 to May 12, 1866-I have this leather bound minute book.

The Farmer's Mutual Fire Insurance Company was organized here in 1839 and we have chairs they sat on. Harmony Grange was also organized in the tavern in July 1874 then held meetings in the room over wheelwright shop.



The house has 17 rooms--all open into the hallways on all three floors. It is plain in design as fitting a hotel--large rooms. There are many old bottles--Anthony Higgins tells me many are wine bottles.

In the third section are the original old board floors also upstairs even in 1725 section, one room most of the boards are the originals. As we try to do restoring--we've painted the walls and done woodwork in Williamsburg colors.

Mrs. George Ward of Wilmington obtained her master's degree by her thesis on old taverns in Delaware. She told us (Mother was living then 91 years old) that she found so much that had been preserved here. In rereading her copy, I note that she has several mistakes in her dates.

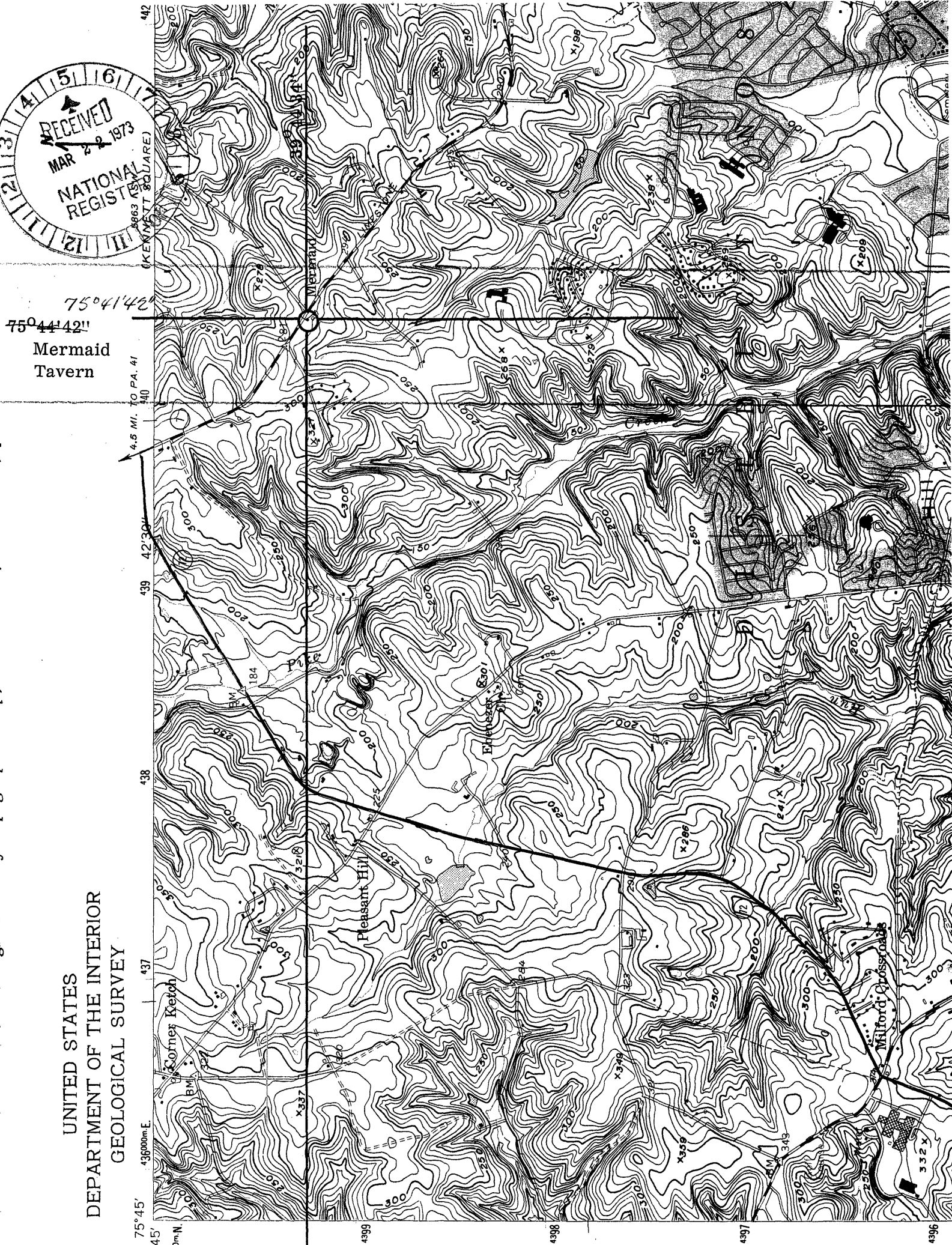


75°41'42"  
75°44'42"  
Mermaid  
Tavern

4.5 MI. TO PA. 41

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

75°45'  
43600m.E



437 438 439 440 441 442  
43600m.E 43700m.E 43800m.E 43900m.E 44000m.E 44100m.E 44200m.E  
4396 4397 4398 4399