

MID-ATLANTIC HISTORIC BUILDINGS SURVEY

HENRY WHITEMAN HOUSE (CRS # N-261)

SMITH MILL ROAD, CORNER KETCH VICINITY
MILL CREEK HUNDRED, NEW CASTLE COUNTY
DELAWARE

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Site Name: Henry Whiteman House
CRS Number: N-261

Location: Smith Mill Road
Corner Ketch vicinity
Mill Creek Hundred
New Castle County, Delaware

Date of Fieldwork: July 1998

Type of Documentation: Level II: partial intensive
annotated field notes (3 sheets)
pencil drawings (3 sheets)
ink-on-mylar drawings (1 sheet)
35 mm black and white photos (15)
architectural data sheet

Description: The Henry Whiteman House is now part of the Middle Run Crossing subdivision in Mill Creek Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware. Located at 210 Smith Mill Road, the house stands east of Paper Mill Road, approximately 1.25 miles north of Milford Crossroads.

The Whiteman House is located on a hilly site, approximately 100 feet north of Smith Mill Road. Densely wooded areas and agricultural fields were once predominant in the area, and are still visible on the west side of Paper Mill Road. The land immediately surrounding the house is currently in the final phase of development for a single-family home subdivision. The lot directly west of the house has been designated as open space for the subdivision, leaving the view of the property from Paper Mill Road basically unaltered. Presently the Whiteman House is accessed from Smith Mill Road, although the original farm lane no longer exists due to extensive construction and regrading of the land surrounding the house. The house sits on a flatter portion of the land that extends westward to Paper Mill Road, while the terrain behind the house slopes gently down to the east. Recent construction prompted severe regrading of the ground directly abutting the east elevation of the house, resulting in a steep grade directly behind the house. Built in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the two-and-a-half story, five-bay, stone, gable-roofed dwelling is rectangular in shape, measuring 18 x 42¹ feet. Two interior gable-end brick chimneys rise through the north and south gables. A row of trees, approximately 30 yards

east of the dwelling and running north-south, line the front of the property from the northeast portion of the property down to Smith Mill Road. No outbuildings remain on the property.

The dwelling is composed of a two-and-a-half story main block, with a twentieth-century two-story, single-bay addition centered on the east elevation. On the first floor, there is a square concrete-pad entranceway on the west elevation, an open porch and addition on the east elevation, and a bulkhead cellar entrance on the south elevation. The main block has a gabled, wood shingle roof. The east addition has a wood shingle shed roof. A wood shingle half-hip roof covers the porch on the east elevation. The main block of the house is rubble fieldstone covered with stucco painted white. Some of the stucco and paint has deteriorated, revealing the quartz stone underneath.

The west elevation is the principal, or front, elevation. The first floor contains five unevenly-spaced openings. A square concrete-pad indicates the main entrance, which is the second of the five openings from the north. The doorway is set in to the stone wall, leaving about a one-and-a-half foot threshold, which has been paneled both overhead and on the sides. All other openings on the elevation are two-over-two-light double-hung sash windows. A scar under the second window from the south suggests that this opening was originally a door, later filled in and converted to a window. Three symmetrically spaced windows on the second floor directly align with the first, third, and fifth openings on the first floor; they are also two-over-two-light double-hung sash windows, like the majority of the windows throughout the house. A boxed cornice runs the length of the front of the house.

The north elevation contains two openings. Because the house is located on a slight slope, part of the cellar level is exposed on the north gable end and contains one opening in the western side – a small rectangular window – to air and light the cellar. The first and second floors on the north elevation contain no openings. The attic story contains one opening in the eastern portion of the gable – a four-pane casement window. The attic story also contains the outline of a date-stone in the center of the gable, although no writing is legible.

The east elevation contains four bays, three on the main block and one on the addition. The second opening from the south is a door. The other openings are two-over-two-light double-hung sash windows. A scar in the wall indicates the possibility of a fifth opening on the first floor, between the current third and fourth openings from the south. The twentieth-century,

single-bay, 4 x 6¹ foot addition is masonry on the first floor with a centrally placed two-over-two-light double-hung sash window. A half-hip-roofed porch shields the first floor and rests on six stone supports that are not tied into the house. Concrete stairs at both the north and south end of the porch provide access. The southernmost portion of the porch extends further out to the east and has a concrete slab surface, whereas the remainder of the porch floor is frame. The second story contains three symmetrically placed windows directly over the first floor window openings. The addition is 6² x 7² feet and is frame on the second floor. It is slightly offset to the north and cantilevers over the first floor level. It has a centrally placed two-over-two-light double-hung sash window and a shed roof.

The south elevation has three openings. The cellar's exterior bulkhead entrance is located on the eastern portion of the cellar level. The first floor contains a two-over-two-light double-hung sash window on the southern side. The second story contains no openings. The attic story has one opening, a four-pane casement window located on the western side of the gable.

The paneled threshold at the main entrance on the west elevation opens into a 19⁵ x 14¹⁰ foot room. There is a scar in the floor directly inside the entrance – possibly the location of a heater grate. A walled-in fireplace is centered on the north wall, flanked on the west by a cabinet and on the east by a closet. The window on the south side of the entrance lights the straight-run, open-string staircase in the southeast corner that runs along the south wall and leads to the upper story. This stair appears to be a twentieth-century replacement. A scar in the ceiling of this room, running parallel to the current stair, suggests that an earlier partition wall was removed. The original stair may have been located against this wall. This configuration is supported by the location of the door through the rear (east) wall into the bathroom addition. This would have originally been the exterior door at the rear of the stair passage. The two-and-a-half inch plank wood flooring runs east-west in this room and is a twentieth-century addition.

A door in the south wall, at the base of the stair, leads into the kitchen. The west wall of the kitchen contains two windows. The southernmost window is similar to the other windows in the house. The while the northern window is slightly wider and less splayed; this evidence is consistent with the exterior scar indicating an earlier exterior door. The south wall contains one window in the eastern corner, which sits slightly lower than the rest of the windows. The east wall contains two openings – a window on the southern side and a paneled door that serves as the

rear exterior door to the house. The north wall has a set-in area in the northeast corner that contains the opening to the cellar on the west and the opening to the addition on the east. The kitchen is heavily reworked with late-twentieth century materials; the twentieth-century addition is a 4 x 6¹ foot bathroom.

On the second floor, a 10⁵ x 2¹¹ foot hallway along the east wall separates the space into two main rooms, one each at the south and north ends, while a small central room houses the stairs to the attic. The entrance to the twentieth-century bathroom addition on the east is at the head of the stairway. The second floor has variable width plank flooring. A door at the north end of the hallway opens into the 15⁴ x 14¹¹ foot north room. A single window is centered on the west wall. A centrally placed blocked-in fireplace is on the north wall, flanked by a twentieth-century closet on the west and an older closet on the east. The earlier closet has an unusually high doorway. The fireplace surround was removed and is in storage; it is a simple Federal style surround with fluted pilasters and an empty panel in the center that might have originally contained a painted scene. The fireplace surround is topped by a molded cornice which undulates over the pilasters and the central panel. A centrally placed window on the east wall overlooks the first floor porch. Roughly 3 feet north of the south wall is a scar in the flooring that extends 10² feet from the west wall into the room is then connects to the partition wall. This scar corresponds to the scar in the ceiling of the room below on the first floor and again suggests a change in the location of the original partition wall and the stair.

The 10⁴ x 11⁶ foot central room is accessed from the hall and has a centrally placed window on the west wall. This window lights the narrow, straight-run closed stair leading to the attic that is located in the northeast corner of the room. A scar 3⁹ feet from the south wall runs the length of the room east-west and across the hallway to the east wall of the house. Nail marks on either side of this seam indicate an earlier partition wall. A door at the southern end of the hall opens into the 9¹⁰ x 14¹¹ foot south room. A window on the east wall overlooks the first floor porch. The south wall contains a centrally placed chimney stack; a scar in the southwest corner of this room indicates changes to the chimney. The west wall contains a window. A closet is located in the northwest corner of the room.

The attic is accessed from the central room on the second floor. The straight stair opens into the center of the attic. The east and west walls have a two-and-a-half foot stone knee wall.

A stone based chimney with a brick top is centered in the north gable end. A small window flanks the east side. The south gable end contains a brick chimney and a window on the west side. Jagged irregular stone around the stack indicates a former stone chimney that was replaced by the current brick one. The regularly spaced rafters (19 inches on center) are regular in dimension and are marked with roman numerals. The east rafters rest on the west ones, and some of them are pegged. Plywood covers the original floor, but a hole in the east knee wall reveals that the floor joists extend beyond the wall and carry the rafters.

The cellar is an open rectangular plan that corresponds with the main block of the house. Stucco covers the stone walls and the floor is concrete. Three symmetrically spaced windows line the east wall and open into the space under the first floor porch and addition. A relieving arch for the north gable end fireplace is flanked on the west by a small window. The south wall contains the centrally placed chimney stack, which provides part of the wall for the bulkhead entranceway in the southeast corner. A candlebox is located in this wall to light the entrance. Four regularly spaced log posts, two on either side of the center access from the kitchen, support a 4 x 4 inch summer beam running north-south. The summer beam was cut to allow for the central stair.

Although the interior plan of the dwelling has been altered, the lack of any clear seams in the stone suggests one period of construction for the main block, probably in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Decorative molding on some of the doors and windows, particularly in the north room on the first floor, suggests a hierarchy of finish to identify the "best" room. The baseboard molding is consistent throughout the house and is ogee cap quarter round on the floor. The scars in the north rooms on both floors suggest that the original plan was a central hall with the stair on the north side of the hall. The relocation of the stair and the removal of the north hallway wall probably occurred in the early twentieth century. The two-story bathroom addition is the most recent change made to the house and was probably done in the early to mid twentieth century.

History: The Whiteman family first came to Mill Creek Hundred in 1799, when Jacob Whiteman, Senior, purchased a large tract of land from Thomas Rice. By 1804, Jacob constructed a log house and a frame barn on the 196-acre property. The 1816 tax assessment for

the property lists the house as being constructed of stone. This improvement coincides with the trend towards stone construction that occurred in Mill Creek Hundred between 1798 and 1820.

Prior to his death in 1826, Jacob Whiteman sold 98 acres to his son Henry. According to the 1828 tax assessment, Henry Whiteman built a stone house and a frame barn on the property during his first two years of ownership. Henry and his wife, Anna, had six children while living in Mill Creek Hundred. When he died in 1855, Henry left the 98-acre farm to his son George. In 1850 and 1860, the farm primarily produced Indian corn and oats, but also raised smaller crops of wheat and potatoes. At this time Henry had improved 82 of his 96 acres, increasing the value of the property to \$8000.

George Whiteman occupied the farm for at least five years, but by 1864, the farm passed into the hands of George's brother, Henry. It was in this year that he in turn gave the farm to their brother Andrew Jackson Whiteman. Probate records show that the farm primarily cultivated grain crops, such as wheat and oats. Likewise, potatoes and Indian corn were also grown. The family maintained a small number of steers and milk cows to supplement their farming activities. Other smaller crops included hay and clover seed.

In 1930, Samuel Hallock du Pont, with the aid of the Equitable Trust Company, acquired the property as part of a larger 36-parcel purchase, most of which were in Mill Creek Hundred. When the land was sold the deed described it as the property formerly owned by the Whitemans, though it is not clear whether the Whiteman family sold the property themselves, or if it had left their hands at an earlier date. Members of the du Pont family lived on some of the new properties, while others were leased out or demolished. It was likely during this period that the dwelling was modernized with the bathroom additions and the change in the stair location.

PHOTOGRAPHS

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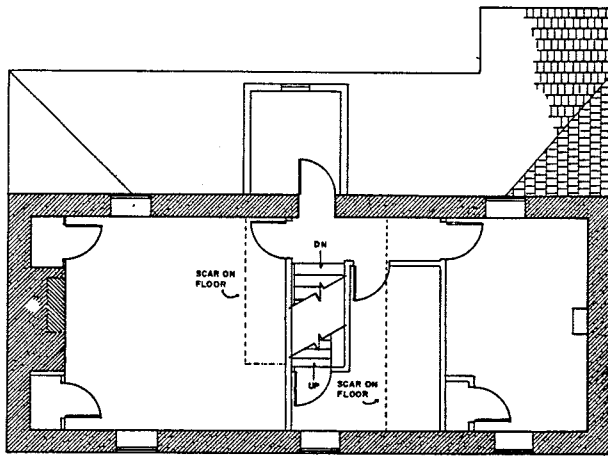
July 1998

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MEASURED DRAWINGS

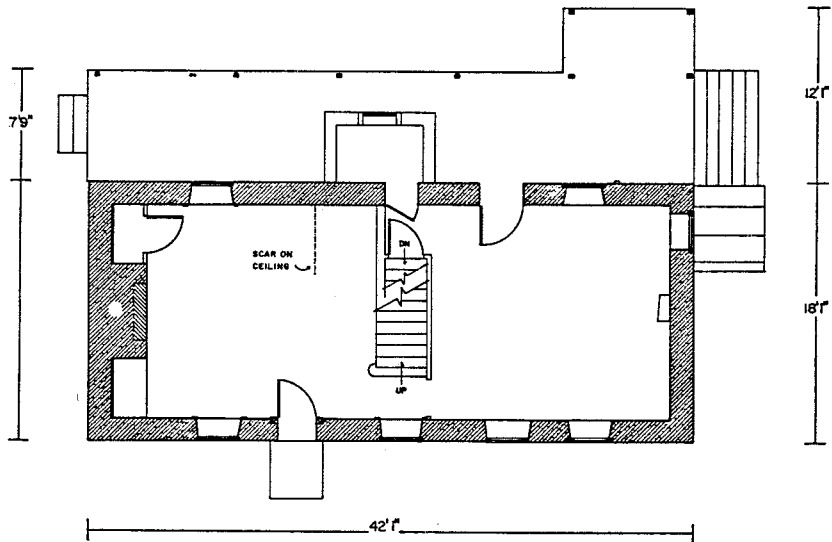
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

▨ PERIOD I
□ PERIOD II

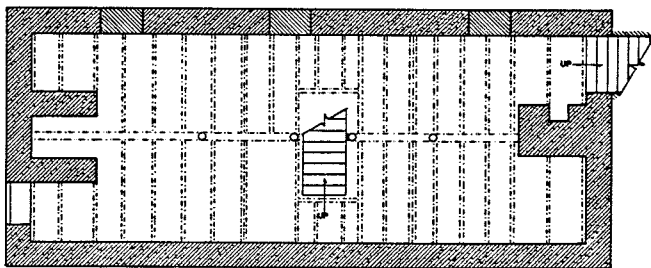


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

▨ PERIOD I
□ PERIOD II



BASEMENT PLAN



SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"
0 1 2 4 6