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N-5148

Property Name: Rosedale (Mary Del Farm)

Location and Verbal Boundary Description:

Rosedale stands in a rural area 1.3 miles to the west of Middletown in the northwest corner of the junction of routes 435 and 437. The nominated parcel includes approximately five acres containing the house, grounds, and outbuildings. Of the numerous structures standing in the complex only the dwelling, hay barn, barn #1 (see attached map), and mash furnace are eligible for listing. All other structures are noncontributing elements.

Owner: Mary Odom

P.O.Box 108

Middletown, Delaware

Description:

The main house has a rectangular plan which measures approximately 45 feet by 25 feet, with five bays forming a symmetrical facade. A wing attached to the east gable end forms an ell and is probably contemporary to the main house. Construction material is brick laid in common bond. All the brick has been painted white. A belt course four bricks wide runs around the north (main) facade of the house just above the first floor. Also on this facade is a water table, formed of seven courses of brick from the ground up to a molded quarter-round brick on the seventh course. The water table ends at the corners and runs to approximately 1.5 feet of either side of the main central door, where it drops to two courses with a molded brick until it reaches the door trim.

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The house has a gable roof, covered with slate and trimmed with a wooden box cornice with a bed molding. There are two interior end brick chimneys; each has single stacks. The house has two dormers on the facade; each is gabled with return and windows are semi-elliptical on top and have six over six sash lights. The wooden gable ends on the dormers overhang slightly and the windows are trimmed with wood molding. The sides of the dormers are covered with weatherboard.

The main facade has five windows on the top and four on the bottom. They are double-hung, 6 over 6 sash type with slender wood mutins. Windows have molded wood sills, framed with molded wood surrounds. Shutters on the bottom have three recessed and beveled panels, the first two are identical in size and the top one is smaller. All shutters are painted red, and most have decorative iron shutter dogs. The top shutters are louvered. Underneath each ground floor window is a small basement window, deeply recessed approximately 10 inches.

The house has a single central door on the main facade. The door has six panels which are recessed and beveled. The door has an architrave wood trim with ogee moldings. A wide lintel underlies a recessed semi-circular fanlight. The fan light consists of six radiating muntins that are scalloped at the top edges, producing a spider-web effect. The inside or recessed section of the fanlight is about 10 inches deep with four square, carved panels with a section of molded beaded wood in the center. Brick steps with a simple iron railing lead up to the door.

The northeast two-story wing that forms the ell is also brick, with a gable roof, and lies on an uncoursed rubble foundation, and there is no water table or belt course. There are two evenly spaced doors on this facade, each with a small verand type porch approached by brick steps. Each veranda has a wood bargeboard cut with a zig-zag design. Windows are double hung sash type, with six over six lights, and wood trim. Between each door are two windows that are flush with two windows on the second floor. The second floor has a third window over the northernmost door, creating a non-symmetrical facade. Wooden shutters on the second floor windows are louvered while those on the ground floor are made of horizontal wooden slats. Shutters are painted red, like the main house, creating a fine contrast

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with the white exterior. This wing has a single, small interior brick chimney near the northwest wall of the house.

Between the two porches is a battened door that leads to a full basement. The basement material is brick that was pointed with mortar; floors are earthen. First floor joists are exposed. The two chimney bases can be seen down here; the interiors are sealed with brick. Each has a brick arch consisting of one row of headers.

The house has a central hall plan: one room deep and two rooms wide with a central stair. The ell, provides two additional rooms on the northeast corner, which consists of a den with a fireplace against the north interior wall, and the kitchen. The dining room and the sitting room have fireplaces (on the outside wall, east and north respectively) that appear to be utilized mostly for decorative purposes, but they are still in functioning order. The dining room had a six panel door and was surrounded with wood molding and a wide transom bar across the top, reminiscent of the outside door. Also, the door jambs were very wide and were decorated with three recessed wood panels.

The central stairway that led to the upper floors was wood with a wooden railing, and carved wood decoration on the risers, which were painted white. Stairs were wood finished with clear varnish and each step had three evenly spaced, turned wood baluster.

Near these rear steps on the second floor is a very narrow, small set of stairs that lead straight up to the chimney structure on the east gable end of the house. This upstairs area is the attic, but it may have also been used as a chamber since there is plenty of headroom, as well as the fact that it is accessible by a service stair as well as the main stair. The east side of the attic is vacant, with two small windows on the east side. The west side has been fitted with a full cedar closet. Two small windows here infilled and can be seen in outline from the outside.

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Several wings have been added to the house, some of which have already been mentioned. A three-bay, one-story wing constructed of a wood siding has been added to the west gable end of the house. It has been painted white and has windows and shutters that match the main house. There are no exterior doors and appears to be used for a guest room only. Two wings were added to the rear (south) between 1960 to 1965.

The property contains a number of outbuildings that lie behind, or to the north of the house and roughly form a "U" shape. They are now used for the care and grooming of horses and related activities. It appears that at least two buildings are older than all the others. For purposes of clarity, buildings will be discussed according to physical layout, moving from the house north. The first building that lies northwest is a one-story structure with wood siding and a small enclosed front porch. It now serves as the office for the farm. Informants indicated that the attached barn is one of the oldest on the property. It is a long walk through type building covered with wood siding and a central chimney (Barn #1). It is now used for mare stalls, and another newer barn is attached to this at a right angle. Other outbuildings on the property with the exception of the hay barn appear to be made of corrugated steel siding and roofs. Behind the office is a "bunkhouse" that was supposed to have been occupied by workers for the previous owner. Whether this was originally used by slaves or hired help is unknown, and at present it is being totally rennovated.

To the rear of this is a rectangular building used for breeding stalls. In the front (south) of the building is a horse ramp. Moving to the north is an open pole barn used for gear, oil, equipment, etc. It is supported by four circular posts and is weather boarded. There are two feeding troughs, a water basin, and a large equipment/machinery shed to the rear of this building. To the west is a second building dating from the nineteenth century. This outbuilding is an addition to Barn #1. It is a two-story, drive through, rectangular structure that serves as a hay barn on the second floor and has horse stalls on the bottom. This building is also constructed of wood siding.

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Perhaps the most unusual and possibly the oldest structure among these outbuildings is a brick fireplace. It is approximately 5' x 5' and about 3' high, with a high stack, probably about 12', centered at the back. In the front is a double semi-elliptical iron door where wood was put in to stoke the fire. In the center of the fireplace, on top, is a circular iron vat where a mash was cooked for the horses. This procedure is now carried out in Barn #1.

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Historic Background and Significance

The earliest mention of the property is 1792 when a John Reynolds willed a tract of land that encompassed Rosedale to his grandson, Joshua E. Driver, who, in 1847, sold this tract (158 acres, 8 perches) to Thomas Murphey. John Reynold's original property, is also shown on an 1801 map of Maryland and Delaware (Shallus 1801). The 1804 Tax Assessment still lists the property as belonging to John Reynolds, who possessed 350 acres, 250 of them improved, with a dwelling house, kitchen, barn, stable, granary, livestock and four slaves. The total value was assessed at \$2,100. Wills and probate records for the State of Delaware did not reveal any helpful documentation on Mr. Reynolds' original land.

Up until 1847, the exact owners of this property are uncertain partly because descriptions in the deed records (which were gleaned from chain of title lists in later deed records) do not always in accord with what appeared to be the correct geographical location. Previous owners were sometimes cited by name only and a search through the deed indexes indicated that 5 of these individuals in fact owned or sold numerous properties in the area during the early nineteenth century. Also, because the Rosedale property is so close to the Maryland border, earlier records would have been found in Cecil County, Maryland deed registers. At one time the property appears to have been a part of Bohemia Manor, one of the earliest tracts of land in the area, surveyed by Augustine Herrman of Maryland. Bohemia Manor covered some 20,000 acres in Cecil County, Maryland, and New Castle County, Delaware.

In any case, Thomas Murphey, the longest-time owner acquired the property in 1847. Before that, in 1831, he had also acquired a tract of land that consists of "Bohemia Brick Mill, with dwelling house, outhouses, and several lots of improved land and unimproved land for convenience of the mill". Two years later he acquires another portion of the mill property, "lying and being partly in Cecil County, and partly in New Castle ..." This mill would have been located over a mile from the Rosedale house on the Little Bohemia in Cecil County. It is possible that Rosedale was the "dwelling house" for the mill, and a mill appears on the Shallus

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1801 map (in Maryland). Historical accounts and county/state records searches, did not shed any further light on the existence or specific later function of the mill, or its association with the house. It is assumed that it was a brick mill, that may have served as a cotton/wool manufacturr as evidenced by later maps (this will be discussed below). Today, the community in the area is still called "Bohemia Mills".

By 1847, as mentioned earlier, the land had been resurveyed, and now Thomas Murphey owned and lived on the Rosedale property (158 acres plus 8 perches). Here he stayed until his death in 1878, whereupon the property remained in the hands of family members until 1891. According to the 1850 manuscript census, Murphey was born in Maryland, was married and had three children. Also living in the house was an adult relative, Thomas C., and an unrelated adult woman, white, also lived in the household; presumably she was a domestic. Murphey also owned three slaves at that time. Murphey's farm was not found in the agricultural census for 1850, but the population census values his real estate at \$3,800. The 1860 agricultural census values Thomas Murphey's farm, at \$12,000, which includes property, farm machinery, livestock, and crops. Crops include wheat, Indian corn, oats, potatoes, and dairy products. The census does not indicate that he owned any orchards at this time.

Murphey was active in the Middletown community. In 1851, he and his wife, Susan, belonged to the Forest Presbyterian Church, Middletown, where he and Thomas C. Murphey were also on the board of trustees.

In addition to agriculture, Murphey's family, continues to be associated with milling. The 1849 Rea and Price map shows a "T. Murphey's Ct. & Wool.n Factory" located just over the state line in Cecil County on Bohemia Creek. The only other mention of this mill was in Scharf's sketch of the Cochran family, where he states that around 1805 James Cochran "bought" and removed to a farm on Bohemia Manor, Cecil County, Maryland, near what is now Murphey's Mill Pond". In the 1850 Rae and Price map, this mill is simply cited as "Murphey's Factory". The mill is not found on any later Delaware maps, although latermaps for Maryland were not investigated. However, a mill exists in that location in a 1794 Griffith map for Maryland, and on an 1801 Shallus map of Maryland and Delaware. It is possible that this was actually the earlier Bohemia Mill.

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Thomas Murphey was obviously a man of means, as evidence by his substantial dwelling house, farmlands, livestock, mill and farm produce. He was also active in bank affairs: in 1860 he was an officer at the Citizen's Bank of Delaware, and five years later was a director at the bank. By 1870 the agricultural census shows Murphey's property value had now risen from \$12,000 just a decade ago to \$20,000, and he now had hired help. Besides other crops, Murphey held orchards valued at \$2,100. By the next census, (1880) the property was also valued at \$20,000, but it was now expanded to 200 acres. Thomas C. Murphey now owned the property. Orchards covered 25 acres, with 2,400 peach bearing trees, and one acre or 24 apple trees.

By the end of the 19th century the "peach boom" had collapsed. In 1887, the property sold for \$16,000, and was no longer in the Murphey family by 1891. It was sold at a sheriff's sale in 1892, and sold again in 1897 for a mere \$6,000 - one-third of its peak value. In 1913 the property commanded \$11,500, but during the Depression, it sold for \$5,000 at sheriff sale. The property had a definite trend of frequent turnovers, but the acquisition of land, and of labor was typical during those times.

For the last few decades, the property was used as a horse farm; a track was built and additional buildings were added for the breeding and training of race horses, and "Rosedale" flourished once again.

Although addition, (principally rear) were added, the house possessed much if not most of its integrity both outside and in. The original facade appeared to be mostly unchanged; the bricks were repointed and painted over. Window and door placements, dormers, were intact, as was the roof and roof trim. Window and door trim and paneling retained their original design and carving, both inside and out. Chimney locations are unchanged and were functionally intact, although at least one interior newer firebox was added.

Outbuildings were apparently changed or added over the years, new outbuildings were added as recently as 1961. By 1880 the property had expanded to 200 acres, as it is now. Wood fences, painted white, have been erected along the pastures. Besides pasture land, the farm raised alfalfa and wheat. The outdoor brick bakeoven/fireplace may be contemporary with the house, and should be included as a contributing structure to this



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nomination, along with Barn #1 and the two-story Hay Barn, and the main house. Unfortunately, residents say the bakeoven is slated for destruction in the near future.

The significance of Rosedale lies with its prominent architecture which is characteristic of the industrious farming economy during the mid-to-late nineteenth century in St. Georges Hundred. This Georgian farmhouse possesses a well-executed style and quality that was an indication of the prosperity and perhaps of a bold and optimistic outlook that pervaded the minds of builders, farmers, and merchants at the early to middle of the nineteenth century in St. Georges Hundred. Another significant feature of the property is perpetual change in ownership towards the end of the nineteenth century, a common characteristic of an economy based on the acquisition and exploitation of land and labor.

Nomination by Lauren Archibald



ROSCOMB  
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