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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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N-5193

Property Name: Fairview

Location and Verbal Boundary Description:

Fairview is located on the north side of route 412 approximately 3.3 miles east of its intersection with route 896 and the town of Summit, and 1.5 miles west of the junction of 412 and route 13. The nominated property includes a rectangle measured from the intersection of the property's lane and route 412 northwest 325 feet and from that point southwest for a distance of 125 feet. The parcel contains the house, lane, and visible foundations of farm buildings.

Owner: Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Davidson

R.D. 1, Box 280

Middletown, Delaware

Description:

Surrounded by cultivated farmland and the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal to the north, Fairview stands as a two-and-a-half story frame building with a full basement and finished attic. The present five-bay structure is covered with asbestos shingle over weatherboard, a metal roof, and an early 20th-century shed roof, tetra-style porch across the middle three bays of the first floor. The five bay first floor with its centrally placed door and balanced arrangement of openings, rises to a balanced four bay second story, and then to a three bay attic level finished with segmentally arched roof dormer windows. The five bay facade includes double hung sash windows with six over six lights and plain frames. The centrally located, recessed panel door has a five light transom and sidelights with three panes each within a plain architrave. A one story porch with a tin roof shelters the building's three central bays. A rear, two story ell with shed roof and central chimney has one enclosed porch on the east side and two

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enclosed porches on the west side, one of which contains the farm's original brick-lined well. The entire building has a foundation of common bond brick with some uncoursed fieldstone under the ell. The main block of the house has a central hall plan with single pile and a tree run staircase. Beaded chair rail and baseboard moldings accompany the lath and plaster walls. Three original fireplaces exist with their mantels intact; two are simply designed and one has bold fluted carvings. A recessed panel cupboard was built into the east wall of the dining room. The ell is two rooms deep with a central fireplace and two side staircases, one of which is a winder stair. The building retains its environmental and structural integrity.

Although no longer a working farm, foundations remain which indicate the location of several outbuildings to the rear of the building ell. Minor alterations in the building's exterior, c. 1940, include asbestos siding and tin roofing over the extant original clapboard and cedar roof shingles, the removal of the original shutters, the extension of the facade porch from one that included the front door only to its present three bay length, and the removal of a second story balcony with railing after the accompanying door has been boarded up. The vernacular Greek Revival style of the building survives in the regular arrangement of the bays and, particularly, in the simple transom/sidelight adornment of the central doorway. No structural changes were made in the building's interior. All woodwork in the main block is original. The beaded moldings are characteristic of local workmanship and resemble those in nearby buildings constructed during the same period.

Historical Background and Significance

During the years from 1830 to 1870, an extensive period of rebuilding occurred in St. Georges Hundred, Delaware. Capital investment in the area increased due to a reapportionment of land, mechanization, and the development of a grain economy during the first half of the nineteenth century. A principle outlet for available

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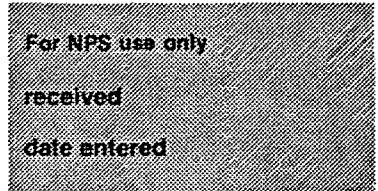
capital was in the construction of buildings. Successful farmers established their "plantations" as symbols of financial achievement. Fair View, built and managed as a farm by the Hudson family from 1850 until the early twentieth century, illustrates this era's agricultural developments and their architectural expression in New Castle County.

John P. Hudson purchased the original 143 acres of his estate from the Wilson family in 1846. They had been farming the tract, first as tenants then as owners, since the 1790s. After his acquisition of the farm, Hudson increased production of grain, primarily wheat, to nearly five times the amount harvested a decade earlier. Sometime after 1860, Hudson diversified his farm's output by investing in orchard production. He doubled his acreage under cultivation, maintained his high wheat yield and developed a peach orchard of 500 trees. Along with this diversification, Hudson channeled considerable amounts of money into machinery and hired labor. However, the peach crop, like that of many of Hudson's neighbors, succumbed to the dreaded "yellows" and his 1880 harvest yielded no fruit. The cash value of the farm dropped to its pre-diversification level, approximately one quarter of its 1870 value. Fortunately, Hudson's failure in the peach business was offset by other investments in town and country real estate and in bank stock. These investments prevented financial collapse and allowed the Hudson family to continue operating the farm until 1938.

Hudson built Fair View between 1850 and 1860 in a vernacular version of the Greek Revival style. The building's exterior reflects this style in its simplest form; other than the paneled main door with its lighted transom, no architectural ornament was applied. Interior decoration was restricted to the turned balusters of the hall staircase and the mantelpieces in both first floor rooms. Hudson's austere expression of a particular architectural style resembled that of his neighbors, many of whom adopted other styles in a similarly subdued manner. Despite its plain appearance, Fair View reflected Hudson's farming success of the period from 1850 to 1870. Furthermore, Hudson named his estate, perhaps for the view it commanded since his land holdings extended to the southern banks of the Chesapeake and

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Delaware Canal, thereby identifying himself as an established member of the farming community. Despite his fluctuating farm income, Hudson maintained his social and economic identity and distinguished his estate through the construction of his home, Fair View. As a product of the rebuilding of St. Georges Hundred, John P. Hudson's Fair View represents the intimate relationship between agriculture and architecture in the mid-nineteenth century.

Nomination by Karrie Diethorn



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