



Name of Property: George Read II House
City, State: New Castle, Delaware
Period of Significance: 1797-1804
NHL Criteria: 4
NPS Theme: III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
Previous Recognition: 1967 New Castle National Historic Landmark District
(contributing resource)
National Historic Context: XVI. Architecture
C. Federal (1780-1820)

NHL Significance:

- The house is exceptionally valuable in understanding the evolution of American architecture during the early years of the republic, particularly indigenous American punch and gouge ornamentation. The Read House is also significant by being a design probably inspired by the long-demolished but seminal 1787 Bingham House of Philadelphia, perhaps the most influential neoclassical Federal style mansion in America in the 1790s.
- Built by a prominent Philadelphia family, the George Read II House stands out nationally as an exceptional example of Federal style architecture in the mid-Atlantic



region and in the historically important Delaware River port town of New Castle, an NHL historic district. It is a rare survivor that exemplifies the city of Philadelphia where the Federal style first manifested.

Integrity:

- The George Read II House high-style Federal finishes are entirely maintained in the public and semi-public rooms located in the main block. These rooms convey an opulence and formality typical of the finest upper middle class houses built in the early years of the republic. The finishes of the subsidiary and service spaces throughout the main block and dependencies reflect a hierarchy of finish also common to elite Federal period dwellings.
- The house had two long-term private owners after the Read family. They preserved the important character-defining features of the Federal style, restricting changes primarily to the service areas. Previous owners also maintained the historic Read property, including the large open lot extending down to the river, an important factor in the historic integrity of the site. The house has been owned by the Historical Society of Delaware since circa 1975.
- Adjacent to the house is the formal garden, installed in the late nineteenth century on the site of the burned George Read I House and remodeled in the early twentieth century. While important to the history and development of the property, it does not date to the Federal style period of significance identified as nationally significant under NHL Criterion 4.

Owner of Property: Historical Society of Delaware

Acreage of Property: 2.5

Origins of Nomination: Until recently, research on the Federal period in the Delaware Valley that would allow an evaluation of the house as an NHL was not fully developed. In consultation with University of Delaware architectural historians, the Delaware Historical Society (DHS) concluded that the Read House merits recognition as a National Historic Landmark for its architectural design. They submitted their first draft nomination in 2007.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- Located in a historic town that relies on tourism, the George Read II House is the premier house museum that provides visitors with a greater understanding of architecture in the Delaware River Valley during the formative years of the Republic. Designation of this property would broaden the public's understanding of the national significance of this property.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None is known

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Mr. Hoyos moved, Dr. Leavitt seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 10/14/16):

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper, United States Senator, Washington, DC

The Honorable Christopher Coons, United States Senator, Washington, DC

The Honorable John Carney, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC

Gwenyth A. Davis, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, State of Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs, Dover, Delaware

Advisory Board Recommendation: