



*A 1916 photograph of the Adams house*

## The Adams Home Farm

*An Illustrated Historical &  
Architectural Description  
of an Old Family Farmstead  
in Northwest Fork Hundred  
of Sussex County, Delaware,  
and an Account of the Family  
who has lived there.*

By Catherine Adams Masek

*1916 Wedding portrait of Thurman G. Adams, Sr. and his wife, Bessie Lillian Adams*



# THE ADAMS HOME FARM AND THE ADAMS FAMILY—A HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT

The paternal ancestors of Senator Thurman Adams, Jr., and his father, Thurman Garrison Adams,\* settled in Somerset County, Maryland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and arrived at the Adams Home Farm in 1862 from the vicinity of Farmington in southwestern Kent County, Delaware.

James Raughley (1794-1865) and his wife, Elizabeth Tilghman, who died at some point between 1840 and 1848, had twelve children, one of whom, James Raughley, Jr. (1825-1884), bought the Adams Home Farm in 1862. His father, James Raughley, Sr., had been a successful farmer, and by 1860 owned real estate valued at \$18,600.00 and personal property valued at \$2,700.00. A com-

parison of tax assessment records in Northwest Fork Hundred for 1860 indicates that this value is five or six times that of the average landowner in the Hundred at that time. James Raughley Jr.'s 82-acre parcel, called "Tilghman's Regulation," forms the nucleus of the present day Adams Home Farm. It had included the c. 1850 rear section of the house, which still stands today. In 1864, Samuel P. Raughley, (1828-1888), brother of James, and his wife, Anna B. Cade, purchased the 82-acre tract. They raised a niece, Margaret Raughley (1844-1877), as they had no children of their own. Mar-



*Bessie Lillian Adams, circa 1910-1915, before her marriage to Thurman Adams, Sr. She was an Adams by birth who married an Adams.*

garet's father, Tilghman Raughley (1818-1848), who was Samuel's older brother, had died when Margaret was eight years old. Margaret Raughley married Garrison Adams of Kent County, Delaware in 1866, and, while he had property in Kent County, the couple resided at the Adams farm, which Margaret considered her home. They had a child, William Edward Adams, born at the Adams farm in 1870. The two-story, three-bay front section of the house was added between 1864 and 1870 under Samuel and Anna Raughley's ownership, as the house was shared by two families—Samuel and Anna Raughley, as well as Garrison, Margaret and baby William Edward Adams. The oc-

cupancy of this house by more than one family recurs throughout its history. Margaret died in 1877, when her son was seven years old. Her husband, Garrison Adams, married Sarah Catherine Cahall and had the first of their four daughters in 1878. William Edward Adams remained at the Adams farm and, at age eighteen, he lost his great uncle Samuel P. Raughley. At the time of his death in 1888, census, tax and court records indicate Samuel Raughley left to survive him a widow but no children, and approximately 21 living nieces and nephews. He employed four farm laborers, and owned 150 acres, whose tax assessment was \$2,307.00. The State of Delaware's Orphan's Court administered his estate settlement, since there were no direct heirs and some of his nieces and nephews were minors. Within the court record was a sketch of the "dower lands," those to be left to his widow, Anna B. Cade Raughley. The dower lands included a "mansion house," and three outbuildings that still stand today. These three agricultural structures include a carriage house or wagon shed,

\* Note: The elder Thurman Adams was born without a middle name, as was his namesake, the youngest of his three sons, Thurman Adams, Jr. As an adult, sometime after the birth of Thurman, Jr., in 1928, Thurman, Sr. took as his middle name, "Garrison," which had been his grandfather Adams's first name. Thus, he became known as Thurman G. Adams, but Senator Thurman Adams, Jr., never had a middle name and while he was a junior, he did not become Thurman G. Adams, Jr., despite the efforts of many who did not know him well to refer to him as such.



*The Adams Family in the front yard of the farmhouse in 1928: standing in front are Beatrice, Leon and Alvin Adams. Their father, Thurman, Sr., stands at left in hat. His wife, Bessie, holds baby Thurman, Jr. Mr. and Mrs. William E. Adams stand at right rear.*

a barn housing animals, which was later converted to a machine repair shop and a barn and packing house. In the settlement of the estate, Anna B. Cade Raughley relinquished or waived her right of dower and there was a sale of all of Samuel Raughley's land in 1889. John D. Brown, a Cain family relative of Margaret Raughley's mother (Unise Cain Raughley) purchased the 83-acre parcel on which the house and outbuildings were located, but continued to live in Harrington with his wife and children.

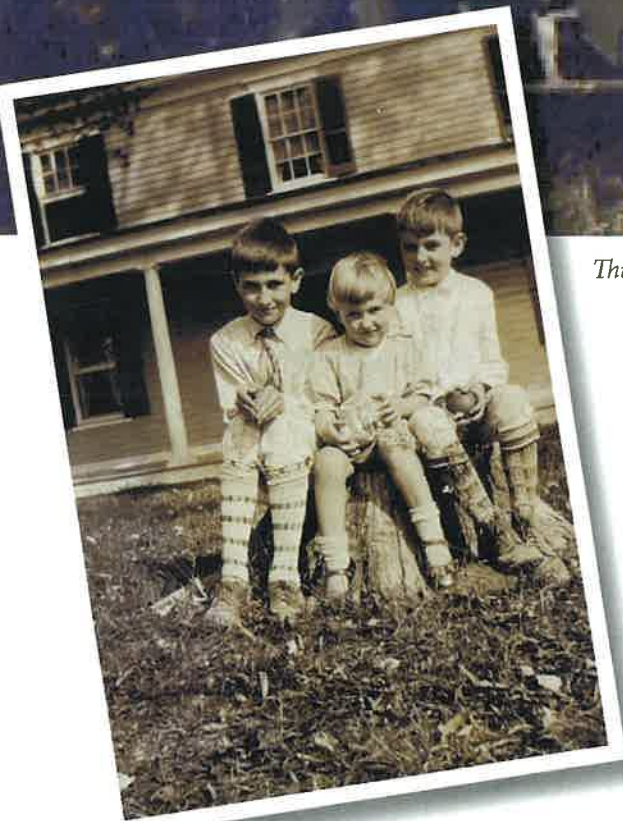
William E. Adams, his father, Garrison, and his new family, and widow Anna Raughley continued to reside at the Adams farm. In 1894, the federal census and Northwest Fork Hundred tax assessment records indicate that Garrison Adams and his new family had moved to Kent County, and William had married Mary Ellen Collison. William and Mary Ellen had a son, Thurman Adams, who was born at the farm. The widow, Anna Raughley

(1822-1912) resided at the Adams farm until approximately 1900, when she moved to Nanticoke Hundred to live with her nephew, James Wesley Raughley, brother of Margaret Raughley Adams. In 1916, Thurman G. Adams, the only child of William E. Adams, married Bessie Lillian Adams (1896-1984) of Adams Crossroads, Delaware. As evidenced by Samuel Raughley and Garrison Adams' tenure during the 1870s, the Adams farmhouse has traditionally accommodated two families concurrently. In 1916, the house was occupied by William E. and Mary Ellen Adams, as well as Thurman and Bessie Adams and eventually, their four children, Leon (1919-2009), Alvin (1921-1988), Beatrice (born 1925) and Thurman, Jr. (1928-2009). In 1989, the Adams Home Farm descended in the ownership of Senator Thurman Adams Jr., to his son, Brent M. Adams, Sr. (1954-2000) and thence to the current owner, Brent M. Adams, Jr. In summary, it is significant that





*Thurman and Bessie Adams with their  
sons, Alvin and Leon, and the  
family dog, circa 1923-1924*

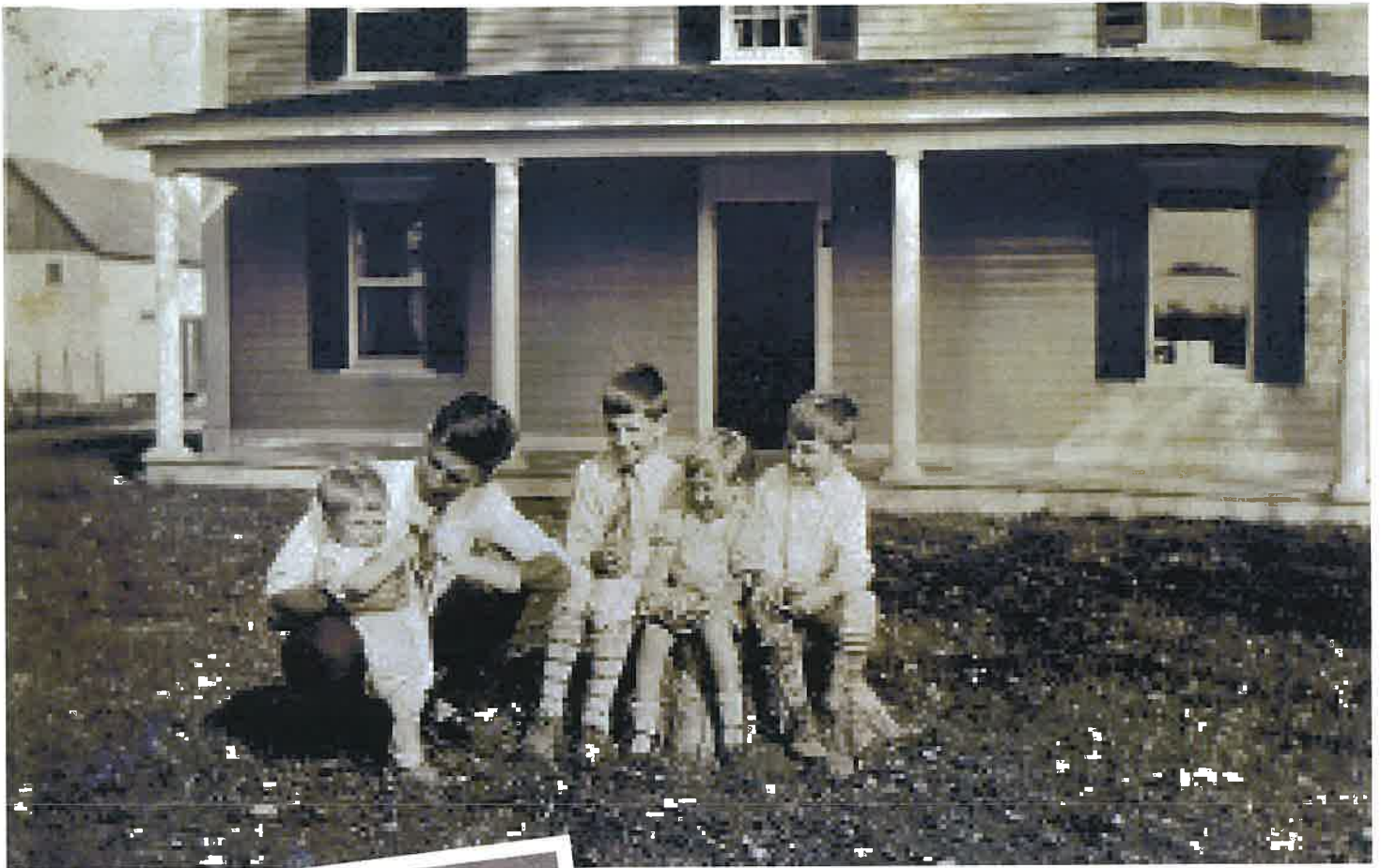


*Leon, Beatrice and Alvin, circa 1928*



*Leon Adams, circa 1923-1924*





*Thurman, Sr. holding Thurman, Jr. with, left to right, Leon, Beatrice and Alvin, in front of the Adams home, 1929*



*Alvin, Beatrice and Leon Adams, 1934*



*Beatrice (front) and T. G. Adams with relatives, about 1935—the packing house is in the background.*





*Alvin Adams is seen with his grandfather, William E. Adams, with a horse in the farm yard, about 1935.*



*At left is Beatrice Adams on April 8, 1945, with the family dogs. The chicken coop and packing house are visible in the background. At center is Beatrice's grandmother, Mary Ellen Collison Adams, wife of Wm. E. Adams. At right are Thurman Adams, Sr., and his wife, Bessie Lillian Adams. The center and righthand photos were taken in front of the farmhouse in the early 1940s.*

eight generations of one family have continuously owned and occupied the 83-acre Adams property. Equally unique and important is the fact that the house and three timber-framed agricultural outbuildings stand in their original locations and have continued in use for eight generations.

William E. Adams, great-great-grandfather of the current owner, was a farmer, and was categorized as an owner of 130 acres in Northwest Fork Hundred in 1913, with a mortgage privately held by John D. Brown, of Harrington, Delaware.

Compared with the 550 families in Northwest Fork Hundred in 1913, Adams held more land than 75 percent of the population at that time.

A study done in nearby Kent County, Delaware, revealed that more than 80 percent of all mortgaged farms, between 1912 and 1914 were privately held by individuals. It was not until public funds became available during the Great Depression years of the 1930s, that commercial banks and federally-financed mortgages gained the majority. The average value of mortgaged farms in the state of Delaware increased from \$4,355.00 in 1910 to \$6,002.00 in 1920 and \$6,670.00 in 1930, but dropped to \$4,872.00 in 1940. Adams' mortgage was privately held by Brown, in the amount of \$7,300.00; therefore, his farm was considerably more valuable than the average mortgaged farm in Delaware in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By February, 1920, this mortgage amount had been totally paid, along with \$700.00.

By 1938, 32 percent of Sussex Countians were still tenants rather than owner occupants. Factors contributing to the high value of the property were the existence of a substantial house, an agricultural complex including at least three barns, and fields which had been in use by William E. Adams's Raughley ancestors, cleared of



*Alvin Adams is seen about 1941 south of the primary farm lane with the animal barn, later converted to amachine repair shop, and corn crib in the background.*

tree stumps and tilled, for over thirty years. Additionally, "the largest and best body of farming land in the (Sussex) county lies in this (Northwest Fork) Hundred. The soil, being of a sandy loam and stiff clay, is well adapted to the raising of wheat and corn, and the growing of fruits, large crops of which are produced." And finally, convenient means for shipping Adams' products was afforded by the Delaware Railroad, which reached Bridgeville in 1858, and which provided the east boundary of Adams' farm. The Adams Home Farm was, there-

fore, extremely valuable for its location on above average farmland in Delaware, for its complex of standing structures, and the tax assessments were among the top two percent in Northwest Fork Hundred, c. 1920-1940. Such high values will continue through the period of significance, as detailed later in this report.

In the early twentieth century, there were certain similarities between Adams and other farmers of Sussex County and Delaware in general. William and his son, Thurman Adams, Sr., were born and reared in Sussex County, like most Sussex County farmers, but unlike most farmers in Kent and New Castle Counties. They grew a variety of vegetables and grains, including peppers, tomatoes, pumpkins, asparagus, strawberries, raspberries, fruit trees, beans, corn, hay, alfalfa and other grains. By 1938, the general proportion in Sussex County was as follows: of that 80 percent of the land which was tillable—some of the Adams Home Farm was forestland—about 40 to 50 percent was in grains, and the rest in vegetables and fruits.

The Adamses participated in truck farming (particularly for peaches) from the 1930s to the 1980s. That type of farming was popular throughout the State of Delaware. Apple and peach production was important in both Kent and Sussex Counties, but it was



solely peach orchards which were planted at the Adams Home Farm. While the number of peach trees in Sussex County decreased from 1,500,000 in 1890 to 135,000 in 1940, the peach orchards at the Adams Home Farm increased in size and number during that time. Other fruit orchards existed in Northwest Fork Hundred, at the nearby farms of Newton, Rous, Swain, and Smith, but Thurman Adams was the largest peach producer west of the railroad in Northwest Fork Hundred through the 1970s. Varieties of peaches grown included: Alberta, Hale, Hale Haven, Cumberland, and Belle of Georgia. The purchase of various sized baskets and lids, with stamps for labeling the lids, the construction of the packing house, purchase of peach cleaning and sorting equipment—all occurred in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s as this newest economic venture was begun. Produce was carried in small four- and six-wheeled trucks and delivered to clients in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and New York City, as well as to local towns in nearby sections of Maryland and Delaware. The drivers included sons, Leon, Alvin and Thurman Adams, Jr., and the farm's hired workers. Each truck had an open trailer portion, which was only slightly longer than the front tractor portion, and was vertically slatted for air circulation. Canvas covered the top, above the approximately four levels of peach baskets. In case of inclement weather, canvas could be unrolled and dropped on each side of the trailer. Historic photographs from the 1940s show the trucks with canvas tops, preparing to leave the open space between the barn, packing house and carriage house.

In the 1930s, migrant farm workers were hired to care for the peach orchards. Housing for the six to eight farm workers was constructed at this time near the Polk Branch. During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, nearly 90 percent of the home farm was in orchards; the last of the peach trees were removed about 1992. The Adams Home Farm was, thus, actively involved in truck farming for approximately 70 years, increasing and excelling in peach production.

Concurrent with the expansion of the peach orchards, Adams was entering the poultry industry. Thurman G Adams attended a course at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, concerning poultry. He borrowed some money from the Bridgeville Bank, and in the period, 1930-32, built a small hatchery. To this was added a chicken brooder house in the 1930s, (still standing), two chicken broiler houses by 1948, and additional chicken related structures. The hatchery was reused as a worker's housing in the 1950s and burnt in the 1980s.

The broiler houses were destroyed by Hurricane Hazel in 1954 and not rebuilt. So, Adams' foray into the poultry industry was short-lived.

Unlike the majority of farmers of Sussex County, Adams did not rely solely on one source of income. Thurman Adams, Sr., began a third business in 1949, in feed and fertilizer, both of which were important elements to the poultry industry. "As Sussex County farmers began to see more income from their fruit and vegetable crops, and from the rapidly expanding poultry industry, they were able to purchase manufactured fertilizer. The fertilizers helped corn and wheat and other crop yields improve and corn was critical to poultry feed."

Adams purchased an existing feed and fertilizer business owned by the Eshelman family located on Railroad Avenue in Bridgeville. The property contained an office building and warehouse. Initially, bagged fertilizer was sold, followed later by bulk sales. The Valliant Fertilizer Company of Laurel, owned by Delaware Governor Elbert N. Carvel (1949-1953 and 1961-1965), was Adams' primary supplier. The family business, named T.G. Adams & Sons, begun in 1948, and incorporated in 1961, was the first local non-affiliated warehouse where a farmer could purchase feed & fertilizer. The business expanded to include not only the sale of fertilizer, but service to spread it on the fields of local farmers (said service stopped in the 1970s). The business was expanded to include grain brokering, (the purchase of grain from local farmers, storing it and selling it to poultry companies like Purdue) and manufacturing of its own brand of hog and chicken feed. It was William E., and then Thurman Adams, Sr.'s diversification, first into the labor-intensive vegetable and fruits, followed by the chicken industry, followed by the feed and fertilizer business, which led to financial success. It also has resulted in a variety, rather than a singular form, of agricultural outbuildings on the Adams Home Farm. Mirroring other Delaware farms of the 21st century, the Adams Home Farm now concentrates primarily on the growth of soybeans, wheat, corn, and barley, using the latest in science and technology for the greatest yields.

While the nation plunged into an economic depression during the 1930s, William and Thurman Adams's financial success with truck farming allowed them to renovate and improve the house and farm building complex, following the latest trends and construction techniques, as well as providing higher education for the children. But, while capable of bringing in modern





*Above, left, University of Delaware senior class portrait of Leon W. Adams, eldest of Thurman and Bessie's children. Leon was the president of the Class of 1941 and president of KA Fraternity. At right, above, are members of the family surrounding Leon at his graduation ceremonies. At right, Leon is seen visiting the Home Farm during World War II with his wife, Theresa, while on leave from the army on April 16, 1944. Below, left, is a December, 1941 snapshot of Thurman, Jr., that he sent to his older brother in the Army. Leon carried it in his wallet throughout the war. In the larger photo, below, Leon is surrounded by family members as he prepares to leave home to enter the army in 1941.*





## *The Growing Family Business*

*At right are trucks of peaches waiting in front of the carriage/wagon shed in the mid-1940s to be driven to nearby cities. Below, left and right, are two views of Thurman Adams, Sr., in the 1940s. At the bottom of the page is a view of Eshelman's Feed House in Bridgeville, which became the family's new feed and fertilizer business, T. G. Adams & Sons, in 1949.*







*Truck farming, circa 1941–1942*

amenities to improve the quality of life for the Adams family, who were occupying the farm, limited alteration was made to the architectural fabric of the buildings on the farm. In 1912, a telephone was installed in the house, followed by electricity and indoor plumbing in 1937-39. This was early by any standards, since only 14 percent of Sussex County residents had telephone service and 21 percent had electricity as late as 1939. Electricity was available in 1912 in only eight towns in Sussex County (including Bridgeville) and only 16 towns and cities in the entire state. So it was extremely unusual to have telephone service outside the urban areas as early as 1912, since telephone lines followed the electrical poles for installation in rural locations, and electrical poles did not yet exist in that area.

A porch on the southeast side of the house, where the pump was situated, was enclosed and a bathroom installed in 1937-39. Another bathroom was installed at the same time in the second floor room over the kitchen. With the installation of electricity and indoor plumbing, there was a washing machine installed on the southeast porch, indoor running water in the kitchen, and a refrigerator and lighting added to the interior.

Influenced by the post-World War II housing being constructed near Bridgeville, south of the farm, certain changes were made to the house during that period, also. This included removing the walls at the stairhall to provide an open floor plan. One of the walls removed at that time was reconstructed in the 1990s by the present

owner. Also during the post-war improvements, three windows with Chicago-style three-part windows, were installed, replacing eight windows with a six-over-six configuration, with a one-over-one configuration, on the second floor. The staircase dating from the Victorian period was replaced in the same location with a lighter colored Colonial Revival-styled wooden stair. The fireplaces in the two-story section of the house were removed, forced-air heating was installed and the fireplace wall in the kitchen was covered in knotty pine paneling, a popular building material at the time. In carrying out the new work, Adams was following building trends of the 1950s, while altering the overall appearance of the house very little.

Approximately ten outbuildings were constructed during the Great Depression period, of which six survive. The latest technology of the day that was published and available was used in their construction. These buildings included: the chicken brooder house, the stable and shed, a chemical shed, migrant workers housing, and a shed-roofed addition to the barn and packing house to accommodate the family's new, 1928 Pontiac automobile. The Adamses purchased three new American-made automobiles between 1928 and 1949.

The newest building publications aided the design and construction of ventilated and sunlit chicken houses, the brooder house, hatchery, and the chicken houses (which were later destroyed in 1954's Hurricane Hazel). The brooder house incorporates interior





*Left: Alvin Adams on Easter Sunday, 1945 at age 21; Center: Beatrice Adams Shockley standing between two friends; Right: Beatrice in front of the packing shed*



*Left: Thurman, Jr., age 17, in his Bridgeville High School track suit, 1945;  
Right: Thurman, Jr. and his sister, Beatrice, in front of the house, circa 1941-1942; Below: Thurman, Jr., 1947.*





*On the farm in 1949: Thurman, Sr. and Bessie are seen here with William E. Adams's half-sister, Margaret Croll and her husband, Will. Thurman, Jr. and his then-girlfriend, Louise Hitchens, are in front.*

concrete trapezoidal-based columns. Concrete was mixed, using wooden forms/molds and recipes that were in published literature of the time, for use in constructing feed troughs for pigs in the animal yard or pen and in footings for brooder house, footings for the carriage house/wagon shed, footings for the migrant workers housing, and footings for the stable and shed. Illustrations in the literature showed how to create fencing, such as that around the animal yard, which was still in use in 1950; and how to install sliding barn doors that would pass one behind another, such as those on the carriage house/wagon shed. All of these improvements exist today, except the fencing and the chicken houses that were destroyed 1954.

In 1939, approximately five percent of Sussex County's families sent their children for higher education after high school, but the Adams family supported three of their children in their completion of degrees from business school or the University of Delaware during the period 1937 through 1950. While Thurman and Bessie Adams finished their formal education at the eighth grade level, they understood the value of higher education. Having sufficient funds available to make new car purchases, pay for improvements to home and agricultural structures, and cover the cost of higher education for three children,

was not only extremely unusual during this time of national economic depression, but indicated wealth and success at the Adams Home Farm.

The original geographic boundaries of the property expanded simultaneously with farming activities and on-going improvements to the farm between 1920 and 1940. W.E. Adams (1870-1936) and Thurman Adams (1894-1989) jointly owned initially a parcel of more than 93 acres. The taxed value of the property, upon settlement, in 1920 was \$4,600.00, but with improvements the value had increased to \$5,830.00 by 1923. In 1930 and 1931, an additional 141 acres was purchased by William E. and Thurman Adams from William S. and Margaret L. Knowles, whose family had owned the farm immediately south of the Adams building complex since *circa* 1800-1820. The Knowles family cemetery has been preserved, and its buildings reused or moved to the Adams farm building complex as necessary. This purchase, during the Great Depression, completed the parcel known today as "Adams Home Farm." The approximately 230-acre parcel had a tax value in 1931 of \$10,000.00. By comparison, the average farm in Sussex County in 1931 was approximately 100 acres in size and its value was approximately \$4,000.00. The Adams Home Farm was therefore more than double the size and double





*Thurman, Jr. drove this Pontiac convertible during his student years at the University of Delaware in the late 1940s.*

the value of the average Sussex County farm in 1931. Further proof of the high value of this property is the fact that the Adams Home Farm was classified in the Delaware Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin in 1941 as Land Use IV, the most intense system of land usage and the highest and most sophisticated level of building construction and land use. Only 16 percent of the farms in Sussex County could boast such a rating, and there were only four in Northwest Fork Hundred. By 1953, with the completion of certain construction and improvement of agricultural structures and home, the tax assessment for the Adams farm was \$13,568.00. During the period of significance, 1928-1953, the value of the Adams Home Farm more than doubled, from \$5,830.00 to \$13,568.00. Additionally, a study of tax assessments during the period of significance revealed that the farm's value rose from the top quarter to the top one percent compared to other farms in Sussex County.

Public service for the Adams family began in the 1940s. Thurman Adams, Sr. took the opportunity to participate in political life, as his sons grew old enough to take control of day-to-day farming activities. He unsuccessfully ran for elected office, losing in 1944, to

Norman H. Scott, for the office of representative from Sussex County to the Delaware General Assembly. Effectively, however, Adams served on the Board of Peoples Bank of Harrington and various community organizations.

In those days, Delaware state government operated on what was known as "the commission form of government," in which a large number of state boards and commissions shared the sovereign power of the state with the governor. Among the most powerful of these was the Delaware State Highway Commission, which oversaw the operations not only of the Delaware State Highway Department but also the Division of Motor Vehicles and the Delaware State Police. Thurman Adams, Sr. served on this commission from 1955 to 1961. He also served on the Military Pay Commission for veterans of World War II and the Korean War, and on the Delaware River Basin Authority, a multi-state compact with Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York State overseeing the Delaware River Valley. The fact that Mr. Adams was named to serve on these influential boards and commissions was indicative of a substantial amount of political influence and civic



*With the Governor: In addition to serving as Governor of Delaware from 1947 to 1951, and again from 1961 to 1965, Elbert N. Carvel was also CEO of Laurel's Valliant Fertilizer Co. He is seen here shaking hands with one of his most successful dealers, Thurman Adams, Sr., on the Adams farm in 1951 as Thurman, Jr., a recent agriculture graduate of the University of Delaware and now a member of the family business, stands by the governor.*

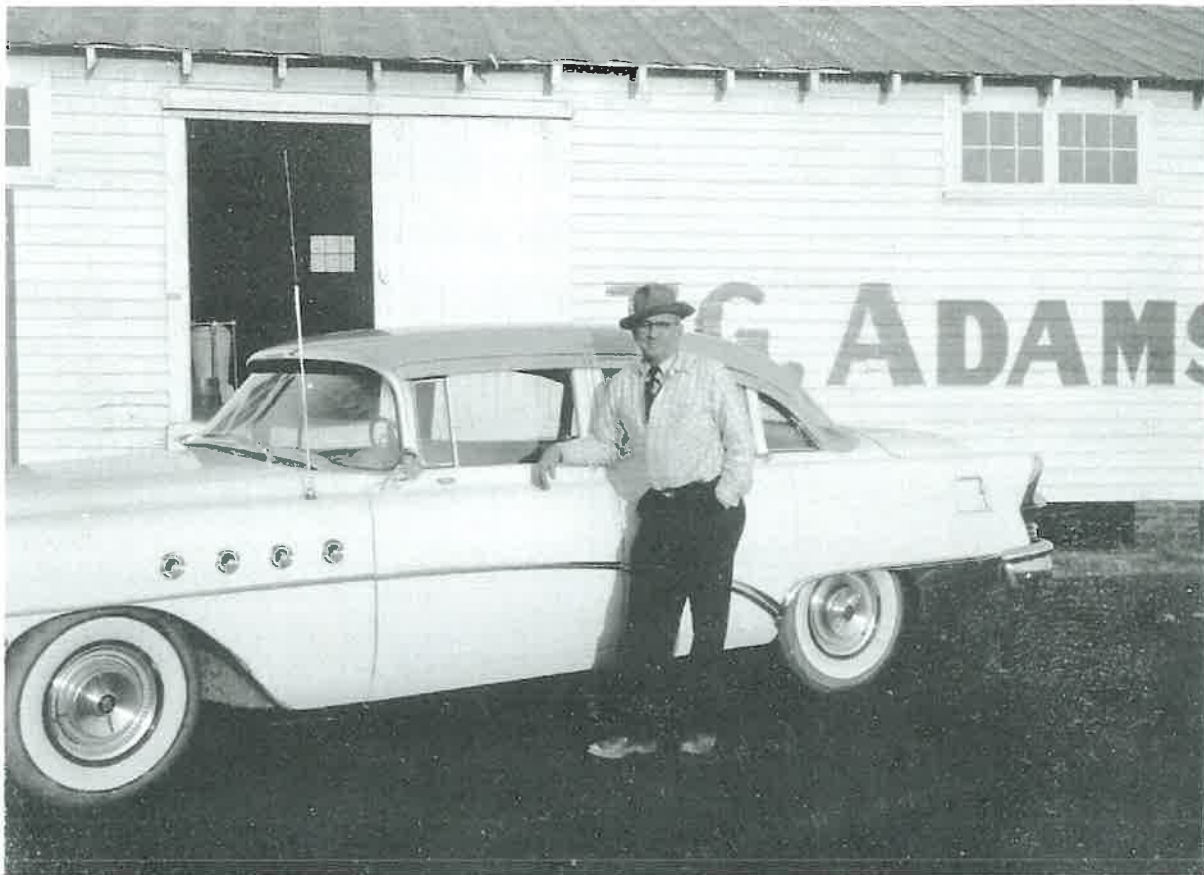
prominence.

Thurman Adams, Jr. built on his father's political base and became the longest-serving state senator in Delaware history—1972-2009. His first experience in government came in 1961, when he was appointed by then Governor Elbert N. Carvel to his father's old seat on the Delaware State Highway Commission, serving from 1961-1970, when the old commission form of state government gave way to the new cabinet system under Governor Russell W. Peterson. He also chaired the Governor's Highway Safety Committee from 1966 to 1969, attending the ceremony at which President John F. Kennedy formally opened the new Interstate-95 on November 15, 1963, one week before his assassination in Dallas, Texas.

Senator Adams's term as State Senator for the 19<sup>th</sup> Senatorial district, which encompassed northwestern Sussex County, south to the greater Seaford area and east to the Milford, Georgetown, and Milton areas, began in 1972. This was a diverse area to represent,

including both rural western Sussex County, and parts of the rapidly-changing eastern Sussex County, where development of housing, industry and roads was occurring rapidly near the coastline. He was a senior member of the Delaware Senate and chairman of the Senate Executive Committee, which oversaw confirmation proceedings for gubernatorial nominees, as of 1996; Senate Majority leader from 1999 to 2003, and President Pro Tempore of the Senate from 2003 until his death in 2009. Adams was elected by his peers at the beginning of each two-year session to the position of President Pro Tempore, a coveted position because the "pro tem" is in effect the chief executive officer of the Senate, second in power only to the Governor. But "no matter how long he served, no matter how big a deal he became, no matter how much power he gained, he never lost his head," said his old friend, former Delaware U.S. Senator and now U.S. Vice President Joe Biden at Adams' funeral. Thurman Adams built a "legendary reputation... he was committed to the





*Thurman, Sr. leans against his Buick in front of the feedhouse in the mid-1950s.*

people of Delaware” said U.S. Senator Ted Kaufman. He was “a strong and trusted leader, his word was his bond,” said U.S. Congressman Mike Castle. Delaware Governor Jack Markell said at Adams’ funeral, “Senator Adams dedicated most of his life to serving the public and there has not been a law passed in the last 30 years that he did not touch in some way. His legacy will be felt for generations.”

An important piece of legislation for which he was responsible was the establishment and implementation of Delaware’s “Enhanced 911 program,” one of the earliest in the United States, which allowed operators to both locate and identify a caller. This law provided an emergency network within the state which has aided victims of abduction, stroke and other medical emergencies, as well as bomb threats and countless other emergencies. Adams significantly improved the quality of life in Delaware with such landmark legislation as these: (1) organ donor legislation easing the acquisition of organs for transplant after losing his son, Brent Adams, Sr., who was awaiting an organ transplant; (2) legislation to obtain Delaware State Police helicopters, which have improved public health and safety; (3) a law allowing traffic to proceed right on

red lights after stopping; (4) a law allowing motorists to mail in their traffic fines instead of appearing in court; and (5) supporting the preservation of family farms by sponsoring bills to preserve agricultural lands.

“He worked tirelessly for the interests of Delaware’s agriculture and business communities,” said U.S. Senator (and former Governor) Tom Carper. Adams was a member of the Senate’s Agriculture Committee, serving 22 years as its chairman. He “believed in getting research-based information to consumers,” said Nancy Brickhouse, Interim Provost of the University of Delaware. He wanted to make sure that “Delaware agriculture was the best in the country,” said Mark Isaacs, Director of the Carvel Research and Education Center located on the University of Delaware’s Agricultural Research Farm in Sussex County.

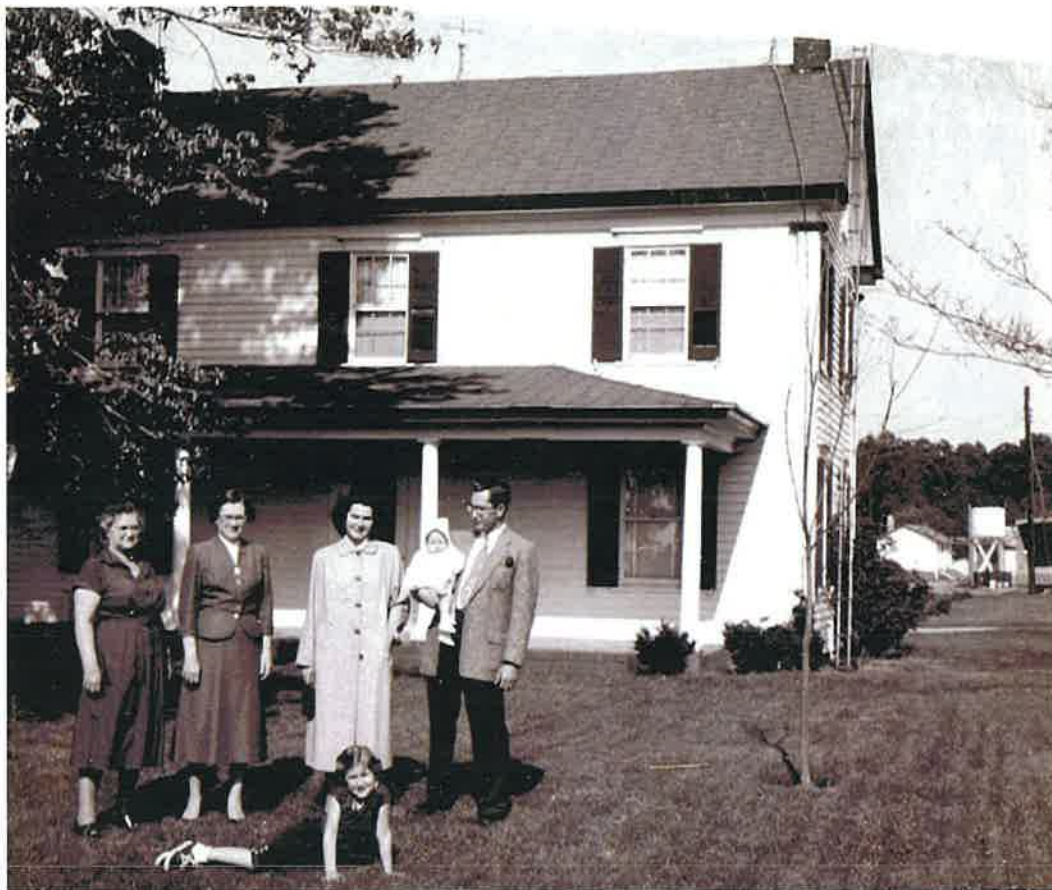
“He played a huge part in determining who served in the judiciary and other important posts in Delaware,” said Congressman (and former Governor) Mike Castle. As chairman of the Senate Executive Committee from 1977 to 2009, Adams was responsible for “vetting gubernatorial nominees for judgeships and other important positions, profoundly influencing Delaware’s court system, and preserving its national

and international reputation for quality,” said Richard B. Carter, Director of Communications for the Senate Majority Caucus and chairman of the Delaware Heritage Commission.

Senator Adams led a frenetic pace of life, from his marriage in 1953 until his untimely death from pancreatic cancer in 2009. There were day-to-day farm-related activities at either his family’s farm or the feed business in Bridgeville. He also had a Senate office and related political activities at Legislative Hall in Dover. In addition, he was actively involved in numerous civic organizations. He and his wife, Hilda McCabe Adams, had a home in downtown Bridgeville, where they raised their family of three children. While he did not occupy the farmhouse after

1953, his parents did live there until his mother’s death in 1984 and his father’s death in 1989. Additionally, the farm was the center of the family business, where the Senator was employed. His son, Brent M. Adams, was also employed by T.G. Adams & Sons until his death in 2000, and Senator Adams’ grandchildren have continued to manage the family business, with the farmhouse again being owner-occupied by Mr. & Mrs. Brent M. Adams Jr. and their three children.

Among the many honors and distinctions that Senator Adams received during his career, several were of special significance. These include his listing in the National 4-H Club Hall of Fame, his elevation to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Degree in Freemasonry, his receipt of the University of Delaware’s Medal of Distinction and of the Distinguished Public Service Award of the national Kappa Alpha Fraternity. Other positions that he held included his service as President of the Eastern Shore Grain Dealers Association, Director of the University of Delaware Agriculture Alumni Association, Director of the Baltimore Trust Company (later merged with Mercantile Bank), Director of Milford Memorial



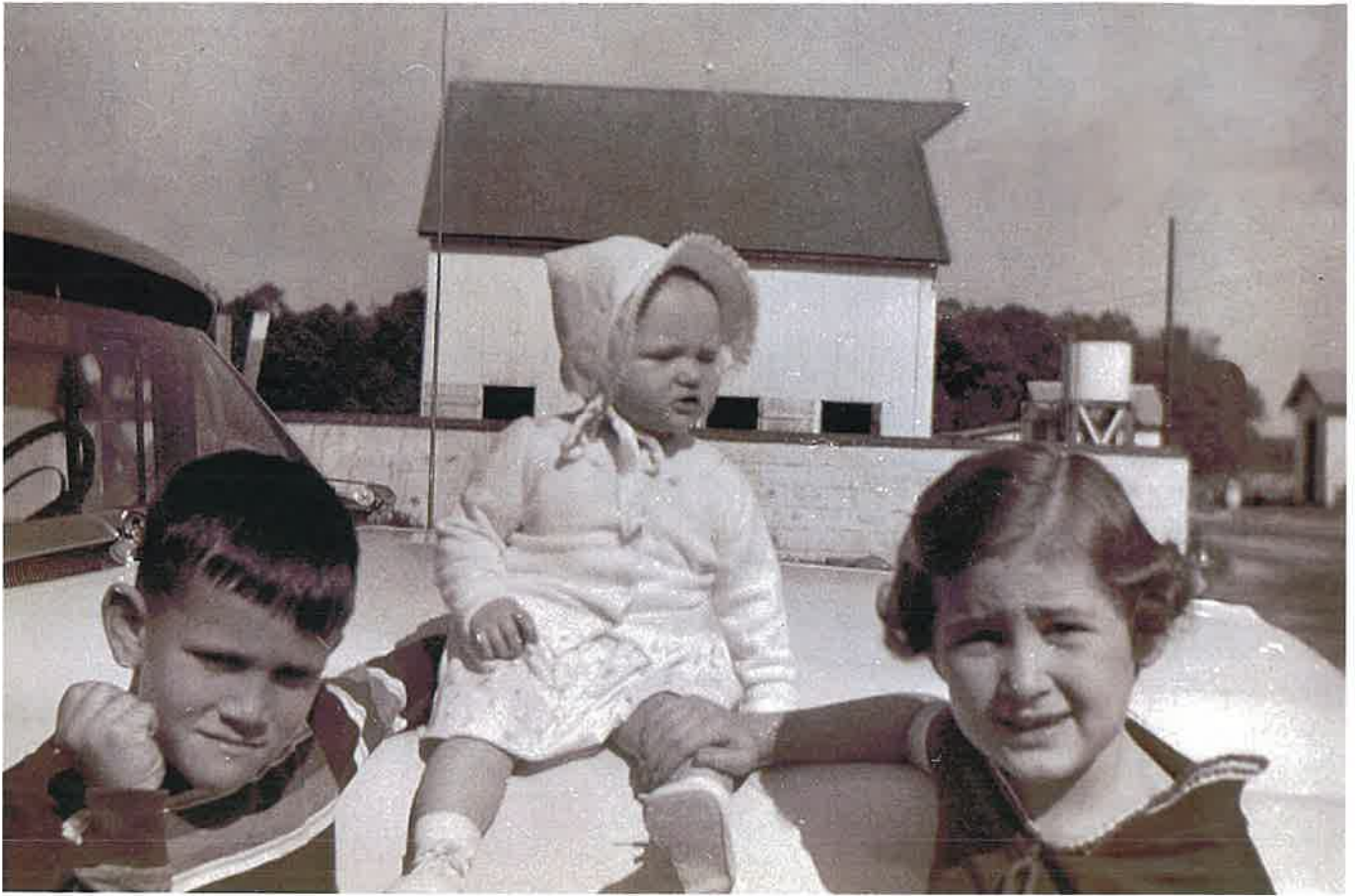
*In front of the farmhouse in 1955: from left, Bessie Adams, Beatrice Adams Shockley, Theresa Schreppler Adams, and her husband, Leon, holding baby Cathy. Beatrice’s daughter, Mary Lee, is on the grass in front.*

Hospital, and Director of the Medical Center of Delaware. At the time of his death, he was the President of T.G. Adams & Sons, Inc., and was active in community service organizations including, but not limited to, the following: Bridgeville Lions Club, Kent & Sussex Shrine Club, Nur Temple Shrine, and the Lower Delaware Shrine Club.

Known for his “commitment to the people of Delaware,” as Senator Ted Kaufman said, “Adams was respected by members of both the Republican and Democratic parties.” He was a “tireless advocate for his district, for Sussex County and for Delaware,” said Delaware Democratic Party Chair, John D. Danielo. He was “more than just a legislator, he was the embodiment of Sussex County: conservative, reserved, and always a gentleman.”

“Another legislator will be selected to serve in the role of Senate President Pro Tem, but there will never be a replacement for Thurman,” said House Minority Leader Richard Cathcart, Republican, of Middletown, Delaware. “He not only represented his district well in Dover, but he was also representative of it, bringing





*Grandchildren in 1955: Above, Leon and Theresa's children, Bill and baby Cathy Adams are seen at the farm with their cousin, Mary Lee Shockley, daughter of Beatrice and Tom Shockley. In photo at right, Bill rides his bike in the barnyard.*

with him the down-to-earth values that are common of the people in western Sussex. His constituents have lost more than a local official. They've lost a good friend and neighbor," said House Minority Whip, Republican Daniel Short of Seaford, Delaware.

Posthumously, Senator Adams has received the following honorary tributes: 1. the State of Delaware's Health & Social Services Division's newly enlarged and renovated Georgetown location was named "Thurman Adams State Service Center;" 2. in consideration of his interest in research-based information and Delaware agriculture, the University of Delaware's 310-acre farm in Georgetown, Delaware, is named the "Thurman Adams, Jr. Agricultural Research Farm;" 3. the University of Delaware has acquired the personal papers and collectible memorabilia of Adams and is in the process of reviewing and processing these items for inclusion in their Special Collections."





*The Farm in More Modern Times: Above, the Adams Farm's present owner, Brent Adams, Jr., with his two daughters and the family dog; Right: Thurman, Jr., his daughter, Lynn's, husband, Tucker Kokjohn, Brent, Sr., and family friend, Tom Smith, in the living room watching a football game; Below Left: Thurman, Jr's daughter, Polly with her husband and baby son, Stephen, in the farmhouse kitchen during their occupancy in the 1990s; Below Right: Stephen Mervine on a journey of discovery in the backyard.*





# AN ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF THE ADAMS HOME FARM



*An aerial view of the Adams Home Farm complex dating from the early 1970s*

*What follows is a portion of the nomination of the Adams Home Farm to the National Register of Historic Places prepared by Catherine Adams Masek, daughter of Leon and Theresa Adams, in 2013*

The Adams Home Farm is located on the east side of the once rural two lane paved Adams Road, (known as Old Bridgeville-Greenwood Road or county road 583, until the 1990s) halfway between two small, rural agricultural centers, Bridgeville and Greenwood, Delaware. The town of Bridgeville, which contains approximately 2000 residents in .8 square miles, has an historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The National Register boundaries for the Adams Home Farm are the Bee Branch to the north, the Polk Branch to the south, the Adams Road to the west and the Conrail (old Delaware Railroad) tracks to the east. There are approximately 211 acres of agricultural fields included within this nomination, surrounding the historic building complex.

The farm features a two-story, single pile, three bay vernacular frame farmhouse dating to c.1866-70, with an earlier one-and-a-half story frame two-bay addition that stylistically represents c.1850. As the family gained in agricultural success, the house was modernized to

current trends, yet still retains architectural integrity, representing the 1950s period. Agricultural success was not achieved by entering the broiler (chicken) industry, as most large farm owners have done in Sussex County, but by diversifying. It was this diversification of activity, including truck farming, grain production, grain brokering, feed and fertilizer sales, which allowed the Adamses to modernize the house, increase acreage, and add a variety of agricultural structures to the property.

The Adams family continues to own and occupy the farm today, 150 years after their initial purchase of the property. More than three-quarters of the buildings erected on the farm between 1850 and 1953 still stand today. Rather than being demolished, the historic structures on the farm were adaptively reused by each subsequent generation of the family. Other than an early 20th century smoke house near the house, agricultural outbuildings include: an early 19th century timber-framed granary moved to the property; a timber-framed carriage house, timber-





*The Adams Home Farm as it appears today along Adams Road.*

framed barn adapted for use as a machine repair shop, and a timber-framed barn (connected to the packing house) all from the 19th century; a packing house (for fruit) and garage addition to the barn, several sheds, a corncrib, a water tower, migrant workers' housing, and a chicken brooder house all dating from the early 20th century; a machine storage shed and silos all from the mid 20th century; machine storage sheds and silos all from the late 20th century; and a machine storage shed from the early 21st century. House and outbuildings were, historically, arranged along one paved farm entry lane. As machinery storage buildings were added to the site, a second unpaved entry lane from Adams Road was created. A cemetery, with gravestones dating from the late 19th century, exists southeast of the building complex, on an adjacent parcel of land which had been owned by the Wilson, Dawson and Knowles families before 1930.

### **Geography**

Geographically, the Adams Home Farm is located in a flat, largely agricultural area, near sea level, composed of light well-drained soils, where hedge/tree lines form farm boundary lines, about halfway between the small towns of Greenwood and Bridgeville, in northeastern Sussex County, Delaware. As population

has burgeoned in Sussex County, the county's agricultural landscape and economy has been altered. A three story tall Woodbridge High School building is under construction about 2,000 feet away, across Adams Road west of the farm; its athletic fields and football stadium are completed and in use. The future development of services and housing around the school property is likely. Woodbridge Road (County Road 585) on which the school is located, ends at the entrance driveway into the Adams Home Farm. Adams Road runs generally north-south and the Adams farmhouse sits approximately 150 feet east of the road and five feet south of the entrance driveway. All other structures are located in a partially paved area, 640 feet by 320 feet, north and east of the farmhouse. The exceptions are the cemetery of the Knowles/Dawson/Wilson families, who were adjacent property owners until 1930, and the migrant workers' housing (built in the 1930s), both located approximately 1400 feet southeast of the farmhouse. The Adams' farmland north and south of the building complex continues to be used as it has for more than 150 years for crop cultivation. This includes the area surrounding the cemetery, and extends east to the railroad tracks. Significant landscaping includes walnut trees from the late 19th century standing north and west of the main house, an oak from c. 1950 standing





*The brooder house, dating from the 1930s.*

southwest of the main house and a holly from the early 20th century, located to the rear near the smokehouse.

### **House alterations over the years**

There have been alterations made to the house by each generation of the family, providing the latest modernization, additional living space, and typifying the latest building trends. These modifications include the following:

The gable-roofed, frame, two-story, single pile Vernacular farmhouse, built c. 1864-70, originally sheathed in wood siding, was covered first by asphalt shingles in the 1950s, then by vinyl siding in the 1990s. (Two story corner posts with bases and capitals, and protruding window lintels were removed in the process.)

Attached to the rear or east is an earlier frame one-and-a-half-story frame house, stylistically consistent with a circa 1850 simple Gothic cottage, originally sheathed in horizontal wood siding and currently covered by vinyl siding. A battery-operated telephone arrived 1912. Between 1937 and 1939, a screened porch was added south of the c. 1850 section, enclosing the exterior pump and adding an indoor bathroom, running water and cabinetry in the kitchen, as well as electricity. A 19th century "cold storage room" on the porch was updated as a pantry. In 1941-45, there was a small

addition made east of the c. 1850 section, for a home office and a doorway was created to access the office, where the cupboard had existed on the fireplace wall of the c. 1850 section. In the 1940s, the west (front) porch was screened. At about this time, the north side columned porch on the circa 1850 section was enclosed with screening. In 1955-56, a number of changes occurred to the interior of the circa 1866-70 section. One hall wall and door was removed to create an open floor plan, a new colonial revival staircase replaced the Victorian-style, dark-finished original, three-part Chicago-styled windows replaced historic ones on the first floor and first floor fireplaces in gable ends were removed and forced-air ductwork installed. At the same time, the then popular knotty pine paneling was installed on the fireplace wall of the c. 1850 section around the winder stair and fireplace. In 1960-63, the south porch containing the pump was insulated and shingled. A modern ceramic-tiled bathroom was installed, which was easily accessible via the rear door in the stairhall to the living/ dining room. In the 1990s, the foundation of the circa 1850 section was excavated, and a crawl space a four feet in height was created in order to insert concrete block piers, a concrete block foundation & termite protection for the historic wood framing of the building. The fireplace in the c. 1850 section was removed, when its brick foundation crumbled upon excavation in the

late 1990s - At the same time, both the north and west porches were totally enclosed with glass walls.

## Description

On the west (principal) exterior façade, there is a shed-roofed, enclosed one-story porch that projects in front of all three bays of the house and the main entry is in the center of this enclosed porch. Originally, this had been a portico with four slender wood columns. The paneled main entrance door replaced in the 1950s the original wood door which had a frosted upper half displaying a dog design etched in glass. A window transom may exist over the main door, as that configuration appears possible in historic photographs, but cannot be confirmed. The first floor windows flanking the main entrance date from 1955-56 and are Chicago style three-part windows. Originally, a six-over-six double-hung sash window existed on either side of the main entrance; three six-over-six double-hung sash on the second floor. Currently, the second floor windows are one-over-one double-hung vinyl-clad sash, c.1994. Until the 1950s, there were tapered corner boards with distinct capitals and bases at either end of the west (main) facade, as well as simple wood architraves and rectangular protruding window lintels.

On the north (side) façade, an eight-foot-wide Chicago-styled, three-part window was installed, c. 1955-1956, on the first floor, replacing the chimney in the north gable end of the c.1866-70 house. On the second floor, two windows of one-over-one double-hung sash configuration from c.1994 replaced the six-over-six double-hung sash. The main entry into the c. 1850 section is on its north façade, although its shed-roofed, columned portico was removed and a glass-walled room replaced it in the late 1990s. The entry door was moved from the center to the left bay. Three-over-three double-hung sash windows on the second floor of the c. 1850 section of the house were replaced c. 1994 by one-over-one vinyl-clad windows. In the north façade of the rear 1941-45 office addition, there is a six-over-six double-hung sash, unaltered.

Visible on the east (rear) façade are several small shed roof additions and two rear entrances. In the left bays, there are: a 1950s first floor rear entrance into the shed roofed laundry/mud room and two 1950s casement windows in the shed-roofed pantry. On the second



*Thurman, Sr. and Bessie in their living room in the early 1950s.*

floor, there are two one-over-one double hung sashes in the c. 1866-70 section. An unaltered rear entrance and two six-over-six double-hung sash windows are located in the rear gable end of the 1941-45 office addition. The second floor of the right bay is filled with roofline protrusions from the right bay of the c.1866-70 section of the house. In one of the shed-roofed additions is located the second floor bathroom, and in the gable roofed c. 1850 section are storage areas.

On the south façade, the original chimney was removed from the gable end of the c.1866-70 section, but window openings exist that originally flanked the chimney on the first and second floor. A bathroom window is evident on the second floor of the shed-roofed addition, and three small late 20th century windows exist below, in the laundry/ mud room. A double window, each six-over-six double-hung sash, stands in the south façade of the office addition. A 1980s cement patio, enclosed by a metal fence, connects the rear entry into the laundry/mud room with the





*50th Wedding Anniversary: the Adams family gathered at the farmhouse on June 28, 1966, for Thurman, Sr. and Bessie's 50th Anniversary celebration. From left in this photo are Beatrice, Leon, Bessie, Thurman, Sr., Thurman, Jr. and Alvin.*

smokehouse. Historically, this area had a pathway, allowing access between the rear porch and kitchen, and the smokehouse.

### **A description of the interior**

On the interior, the overall historic footprint and structure of the house remains from c.1850 thru c.1950. All rooms have historic wood floors, most covered by carpeting or sheet flooring, and except in the kitchen, plaster walls and ceilings. There were alterations made to the interior as the family's agricultural pursuits gained success. The one-room-deep, two-story, three bay plan of the c. 1866-70 section remains intact on the second story. However, the first floor plan was made an "open floor plan" in 1955-56, partitions and chimneys were removed, and Chicago-styled windows, varnished light colored woodwork, and a new staircase were installed. The one-room 15' x 20' c.1850 section

was once a complete house, with doors opposite each other on north and south wall and a fireplace wall in which a winder stair and built-in cupboard flanked the fireplace. The space was first remodeled in the 1930s, then in 1955-56, and again in c.1994; the winder stair and original doorway on the south wall remain. A telephone arrived in 1912, and electricity and indoor plumbing were installed, 1937-39. In the south porch (now laundry/ mud room), the first-floor bathroom was remodeled in 1960-63. A rear first-floor office addition, from 1941-45, is intact and unchanged. On the second floor are three bedrooms in the c. 1866-70 section, unchanged, with winder stair to the attic in the middle bedroom. In the attic gable ends are original split lath & plaster walls. HVAC ductwork is located in the attic level. Above the kitchen in the c. 1850 section, bathroom fixtures of 1994 have replaced those of 1937-39, and storage areas with shelving created within the small two-room space. Originally, a vertically joined



*A lid for a pepper basket dating from the days when William E. Adams was running the Adams farm*

board wall had existed on the second floor of the c. 1850 section, to divide the space. A set of built in- drawers from the 1950s renovations remains in the second floor storage space.

### **An evaluation & summary of the architectural integrity of the house**

The Adams farmhouse is in excellent condition, well maintained, and with a new roof installed in the 1990s. While there have been chimneys removed, windows replaced and columned porches enclosed, those areas that were altered during the period of significance, 1926-1953, remain relatively intact. Those historic and intact areas include structural walls and floors, half of the first floor & all of second floor plan, half of the windows, the rear office, pantry, winder stairs on first and second floors. The alterations

made to the house after 1953 have been carried out by descendants of the builder, members of the family that has continuously occupied the house since its construction. Additionally, the farm was, and continues to be, the center of the family business, and the place where the day to day work activities have taken place for the family, even after marriages took place and some younger family members built individual homes within a mile of the farm. Measured drawings for the house have been prepared and attached for 1928, 1953, and current conditions, as well as site plan and selected outbuildings.

### **Smokehouse (c.1900)**

A 10 foot x 12 foot frame smokehouse stands 10 feet east of the house. Vertical tongue and groove interior





*Senator Thurman Adams, Jr., President of T.G. Adams & Sons, Inc.,  
in front of the Bridgeville office during the 1990s*

paneling exists, typical of the early 20th century. The gable-roofed one-story building was originally oriented to face west, towards the rear of the house, but in c. 1994 the building was turned 90 degrees clockwise, and the main entry now faces north. The narrow chimney stack was removed, and window, door and roof were replaced in the 1990s. Artificial shingle covers the exterior, but the building is intact, in use, and in excellent condition.

### **Brooder house (1930s)**

A clerestory-roofed, frame chicken brooder house with artificial shingle roof stands about 30 feet southeast of the house. Its 60 foot exterior side walls and west gable end wall are clad in three inch wide vertical tongue-and-groove painted wood siding. Its 24 foot wide east gable end wall is clad in eight inch wide vertical tongue and groove painted wood siding. Facing the rear of the house is a door into the brooder house (a 3' wide tongue and groove door), located on the west façade. There is a 7' opening (without door) on the east façade, which allowed wagons or carts to enter, and a 2' wide tongue and groove door located on the south façade, which directly accesses the center section, where chickens had been housed. On the interior, there are 4 wooden square posts on 12" height trapezoidal shaped concrete blocks, attached

by wooden canted bracing to the north roof. There is a concrete floor inside the building, which slopes down to exterior grade at the west door opening. Five windows, each divided in 3 parts, are located on the south wall, and would have provided light and air to the chickens, inside that part of the building. A vertically tongue and grooved full height wall, with door, and 30" square, 6-paned window, divides the chicken area from a front room. Historically, this was where asparagus was sorted. Asparagus stalks were gathered together, using a "bundler" wrapped in wet newspaper and boxed for shipment to cities, by truck. Once located in the front room was also the water pump for the house. The above farm activities took place from the 1930s to the late 1950s. A 1930s freezer, 6' in height x 5' in length, for domestic use, stands abandoned in its original location, in the front room. The building has been used for storage since c.1960. It is in fair condition, architecturally unaltered and contains abandoned peach cleaning equipment.

### **Corncrib (c. 1900-1930)**

A three bay, gable roofed, 7' x 16' corncrib stands 79' east of the brooder house, facing the primary farm lane. The building is supported on six formed concrete block piers which are trapezoidal in shape,



*Thanksgivings Past: At left are Thurman, Jr., and his wife, Hilda McCabe Adams, at a family Thanksgiving dinner in 1987. Above are Thurman, Jr. and Thurman, Sr. at Thanksgiving dinner in 1978.*

three on the east and three on the west side. There is a standing seam metal roof. There are two access doors cut in the west 16' facade, with primary door in the north gable end. The painted frame walls are vertically slatted to provide air circulation. It has not been used as a corncrib since about the 1950s, is in fair condition, architecturally unaltered.

### **Granary (c. 1800-50)**

A timber framed, gable front, one and a half story, house-like granary, 24.5' x 17' in size, 19' in overall height, stands 7' southeast of the corncrib. The original exterior walls are covered by artificial horizontal siding, 8" in width, on all four sides, and replacement roof is of standing seam metal. The foundation is composed of six concrete block piers. Moved c.1974-1980 from the adjacent parcel of land, once owned by the Knowles/Dawson/Wilson families, the axe hewn sills and corner posts now are supported by concrete block and brick. In the process of reconstruction, two upbraces at interior corners are missing, and four lap joints un-used. But the principal posts and rails show combination lap and mortise and tenon joints. Similar to the central square

section of the Willowdale Barn, Accomack County, Va., built c. 1800, the Adams granary is built of axe hewn and pit sawn timbers, with no down braces, and the interior is divided into two nine-foot bays on the north side. The divider, originally full height, is composed of random width horizontally laid roughly cut boards. The exterior vertical board walling, in random widths of 11", 6", 8.5", 11.5", would have provided a tight seal for the first floor threshing. Flooring is composed of random width 11", 12", 8" and 8.5" width boards, held with early cut nails. A second floor, originally, was accessed only on the exterior via a second floor 4' door on the south façade above the exterior door. Now it is accessible via an open stringer stair without rail, inserted into the southwest corner of the building. Horizontal wainscoting, 28" in height, is located on the lowest portion of the second floor walls, probably used to contain or enclose loose grain or bagged grain. In moving the granary from the Knowles farm to the Adams home farm, the building was not rotated to be oriented to the primary farm lane. This is apparent when viewing the original exterior entry door to the first floor, which is on the south façade, away from the primary farm lane. A second entry has been cut into the west façade beside the stair, which provides better





*An aerial view of the Adams Home Farm dating from the mid-1990s.*

access from the farm lane. The building was saved by the family from demolition, its architectural integrity is intact, and the building is currently used for storage.

#### **Water tower, shed (c. 1929-1930)**

A metal water tower, built c. 1929-1930, is located seven feet northeast of the granary and measures 8' x 8' with a square metal bin balanced on the top, to hold water. It was constructed to hold water pumped from the adjacent pump, up into the tower from the well. (The access cap for the underground well is located 3 feet north of the granary.) Historically, a water truck was driven along the farm lane, under the spigot on the metal bin and filled with water from the water tower, chemicals/insecticide added from the adjacent chemical shed, and then driven into the fields to spray the peach

trees. The tower has not been in use since about 1990.

A 10' x 10' shed, once used to store chemicals, is located 4' east of the water tower, facing the primary farm lane. The gable roofed building faces north, has sliding wooden doors, held on an overhead metal track, a standing seam metal roof, formed concrete footings at each corner, and its exterior is clad in 3" wide vertical tongue and groove painted wood siding. The building has not been in use since about 1990. The water tower and shed are in good condition.

#### **Barn for animals (c.1850-1880), connected machine repair shop (c.1965), & animal yard or pen**

A gable fronted, two story, timber framed, 30' x 30', 3-bay barn faces the primary farm lane, its main entrance on the south façade. While axe hewn sill plates

and corner posts exist, modifications occurred in c. 1965 that removed interior first floor studs, upbracing, flooring, windows and doors. Exterior wall material is vertical corrugated metal panels. The original north gable end center bay door was moved to far right end of the north wall and reduced in size. The door accesses the connecting machine repair shop, added c. 1965. Flooring is now concrete in the barn. From the second story up to the roofline of the barn, original timber frame configuration exists. A rolling metal door on the east façade replaced Dutch double doors for animal access and 75% of the second floor was removed.



*Baskets of peaches from the Adams orchards are seen here at Leon's home in Newark.*

Historically, Dutch doors in the barn once existed on the east (for cows) and west (for horses) and the main entrance was a 4' wide door in the center bay of the south facade, which accessed a central interior alley, flanked by animal stalls. A door was also located in the center bay of the north gable facade. This is an older stabling pattern, in which a 3 bay barn is utilized, and the animals are housed and fed, and hay stored above. Dutch doors (4) on the east façade provided the means to bring horses in and out of the building, via the side pen or animal yard (later reused as pigpen). Dutch doors on the west facade allowed cows to be brought out of the barn and around to the animal yard. The hay loft was filled from wagons parked in the farm lane below the second floor south façade door. To move hay from the loft to the stalls and feed boxes on the first floor, there were most likely hatches in the loft floors to pitch hay down. Historic photographs show this barn on this site in the 1940s, and oral history indicates it was in use in the 1920s. Furthermore, the sketch of Anna B. Raughley's dower lands, of 1889, included in the estate records of her husband, Samuel P. Raughley, shows three agricultural structures and this would be one of those three, based upon location in the drawing. So this barn was most likely built by Samuel or James

Raughley or an owner previous to 1862. When the barn was altered in c.1965 for use as a machine repair shop, there was also a steel framed shed roofed metal building, 34' x 30' in size, added to the north façade of the barn, including metal windows and two rolling doors. Both the shed roofed section and the historic barn have concrete floors. They each have open interior floor plans, to accommodate the family's large farm machines. The current concrete floor in the barn is level with the bottom of the floor joists. The barn has lost much of its architectural integrity, but is in its original location, and in use, as is the adjacent shed roofed machine repair shop. Both

are in good condition.

A cement block- walled animal yard or pen, about 50'x 50', faces the primary farm lane, once accessible from and adjoining the barn for animals/ machine repair shop. The yard was enclosed by a wood fence from c. 1850 to c. 1953, and was utilized by the horses, mules, cows and pigs who lived on the farm. An historic photograph from c.1933-35 shows the wooden fence in place, as does an historic photograph of c. 1950. After that time, the current wall was constructed. Metal gates were built into three openings, one at the southwest corner, one at the southeast corner, and one at the northeast corner. No gates remain, but two of the openings and mounting hardware remain. Two small sheds of the late 20th century stand within the pen. The animal pen is in good condition; small sheds are in fair condition.

#### **Stable (1927-32), shed (c.1910-32)**

A wooden stable and wooden shed stand on the north side of the animal yard or pen. The stable, 22' x 12', built between 1927 and 1932, has a standing seam metal roof, walls are clad in vertical tongue and groove painted wood siding and the foundation piers are of



formed / shaped concrete. An historic photograph from c.1933-35 shows the stable in place. Its south open façade is accessible from the animal pen or yard. Used for storage, the stable is architecturally intact, and in fair condition.

A gable roofed shed faces north to the packing house and barn. The 10' x 12' shed has no roof, has walls in vertical

tongue and groove painted wood siding, and foundation piers of formed/ shaped concrete. A tongue and groove simple hinged door is located on the north façade, while a 6 light window sash is located in the center of both the east and west facades of the shed. No longer in use, the shed is in poor condition.

#### **Carriage house (c.1850-80)**

A gable fronted, three-bay, frame carriage/wagon shed faces the entrance driveway and Adams Road and encloses the farmyard or open space on the east side. It is located immediately west of and abuts the animal yard or pen. Timber framed, asphalt shingle roofed, one and a half story, house-like in its size, the building is 27' x 18' in size, 9' in height, with a mid 20th century roof framing. Historic photographs show the existence of the building at the farm by 1933-35. The sketch of Anna B. Raughley's dower lands, of 1889, included in the estate records of her husband, Samuel P. Raughley, shows three agricultural structures and this would be one of those three, based upon location in the drawing. So this barn was most likely built by Samuel or James Raughley or an owner previous to 1862. There are three sliding doors, each 7'4" in height and 8' in width, accessing the first floor bays on the west (front) façade. A smaller hinged door, now fixed, above the entrance doors, once accessed the loft area. The building rests on formed (molded) concrete piers, of loose aggregate material, in rectangular shapes approximately 12' in length. On the interior, timber framing is complete; no indication of move/ reconstruction, and clearly, the building was



*The barns, silos and granary, as seen from the southwest*

constructed on this location, rather than moved to it. As with all the timber framed structures on the farm: there are approximately 8" x 8" axe hewn sill plates, intermediate framing, roofline plate level, corner posts, and upbracing -all held with mortise and tenon and lap joints. The two dividing walls on the interior are full height, of vertical board and

batten design, boards varying in width from 12" to 7 3/4". At one time used to house mules and equipment, the building now holds farm tools unused for more than 60 years, is dirt floored, and in poor condition.

#### **Barn (c.1850-1880), garage addition (c. 1927-28), packing house addition (1950s)**

A gable fronted, three-bay, two story, frame barn encloses the open space or farm yard area on the north side, just as the carriage house is situated on the east side of the open space. Timber framed, the building is 32' x 24', by 29' in height, and shows no evidence of having been moved/ reconstructed. It rests on brick piers, approximately 20-26" in length. There are vertical corrugated metal panels on the exterior walls covering original vertical board walls, and a roof of asphalt shingles. Ceiling height is 9' on first floor. There are approximately 8" x 8" axe hewn sill plates, intermediate framing, studs and floor joists, roofline plate, corner posts, and upbracing -all held with mortise and tenon and lap joints. The main entrance, in the center bay of the south façade, originally about 8' in width, with two sliding wood doors, was altered in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to be about 3' in width. A fixed hinged door, above the front entrance, accesses the second floor of the barn. On the first floor, there is an original winder stair in the southwest corner. The original floorboards, 9.5" above the current concrete floor, were cut 1940-45, and portions of the flooring are evident on the south wall of the first floor. The exterior door in the north wall, center bay, is fixed closed. The side bays on either

side of the center bay (outside of the winder stair) were enclosed in the 1950s to provide cold storage for baskets of peaches. Ascending the winder stair, the dramatic, totally intact, timber framed second floor is open to the roof peak, about 16' in height. On the second floor, west gable end wall, are two 9-paned windows, which slide left to right in order to open. These are of the traditional wooden farm window design, set in wooden tracks, which provide ventilation to the second floor. A window, once centered above these gable end windows, was changed to a door, and is now a closed opening. At each of the four corners where the roof and walls meet, are three massive joined members- corner post, end girt and plate for roof. Particularly interesting on the second floor are those intermediate posts, from which project upbraces, canted roofing support members, and horizontally joined wainscoting. The wainscoting is approximately 26" in height above the floor, used historically to contain or enclose grain or bagged grain. Existing photographs show this barn existing in c. 1926-28. The sketch of Anna B Raughley's dower lands, of 1889, included in the estate records of her husband, Samuel P Raughley, shows three agricultural structures and this would be one of those three, based upon location in the drawing. So this barn was most likely built by Samuel or James Raughley or an owner previous to 1862. Architecturally totally intact, well maintained and in use, the building is in excellent condition. It is used for storage.

Attached to the west façade of the barn is a shed roofed garage, 21' x 24', built c.1927-28 to house the Adams family's new 1928 Pontiac that had been purchased by Thurman G Adams. Like the barn it is attached to, its exterior is of vertical board walls, which are covered by modern metal vertical corrugated panels. Roofing materials are identical-asphalt shingle. The entrance is on the south façade, facing the open space or farmyard. The original sliding wooden tongue and groove door on the south facade has been replaced by a 3' wide door but the overhead exterior door groove and original exterior vertical board walls still exist on the north facade. Two windows were added to the west façade c. 1994, when the use changed from garage to florist shop. Now used as an office, the space has insulation, wallboard, HVAC and a new cement floor. A 4' wide doorway, added c. 1927-28, connects the office/garage with the barn, near the winding stair. Although altered on the interior, the exterior, roof and location of the garage addition are original. The structure is well maintained and in use, if not totally intact. Historic

photograph from c.1927-28 shows the barn and shed roofed garage in place.

A shed roofed, open-walled structure, or packing house, 36' x 84', was built in the 1950s to house the peach sorting and packing equipment. It wraps around both the north and the east sides of the barn and shed roofed garage. Metal posts support the asphalt shingled roof; macadam acts as flooring for the open air structure. Equipment for sorting and packing peaches is now stored in the brooder house. The packing house is currently used to house some of the trucks and cars associated with the family business, T. G. Adams and Sons, and is in good condition.

### **Machine storage shed (1950s)**

A gable roofed machine storage shed, five bays of one story and one bay of two stories in height, 104' x 24', stands about 30' north of the packing house, built in the 1950s. Three sided, its open side is the south façade. The roof is asphalt shingle, the sides are covered in modern metal vertical corrugated panels; originally exterior walls were of widely spaced vertical wood slats. Supporting metal posts rest on formed (molded) concrete piers and the roofing support system is exposed. Loose gravel creates flooring for the structure. Combines and tractors were originally stored in these sheds; storage is the current usage. The shed is in excellent and intact condition.

### **Machine storage sheds (2) (c. 1990-2010); silos (9) (c.1960-c.1990)**

A gable roofed machine storage shed, 130' x 49', built 1980-90, of metal columns and vertical corrugated metal panels, is located about 40' north of the 1950s machine storage shed. Partially enclosed, the roof is of standing seam metal. The left bay, closest to Adams Road, 12' x 12', houses machinery cleaning equipment, the next three bays are: three sided and the south façade is open, roof support system exposed. The right three bays are enclosed and house machinery repair equipment; a rolling metal door located in the east façade, accesses this repair shop. Loose gravel creates the flooring for the structure. This machine storage shed is in excellent condition.

The most recent machine storage shed, built 1990-2000, is located northeast of the previously described machine storage shed, measures 152' x 40', 16' in





*Leon with his father, Thurman, Sr., in the packing house, 1985. This was part of a series of photos taken for Travelers Insurance Company in conjunction with Leon being named Agent of the Year in a nationwide competition.*

height, gable roofed with a shed roofed addition in the right bay. It is built of wooden posts, metal roof, and vinyl siding. Its condition is excellent.

Silos were constructed in a line along the east border of the building complex, in order to store grain, both grown and purchased. The three silos closest to the primary farm lane and the water tower

are 27' in height, built c. 1960, of steel, with steel and concrete bases. The three silos in the center are 27' in height, built c. 1970, of steel, with steel base. The three northernmost silos are 25' in height, moved to the site c. 1990, of steel, with cone bottoms. None are in use at this time; their condition is good.

## Migrant farm workers' housing (1930s)

A frame, one story, gable roofed migrant farm workers' housing structure built in the 1930s is located approximately 1,400' south of the granary. Situated about 70' north of the wooded area around Polk Creek, the building was originally accompanied by a separate kitchen building that was located between the migrant housing and the creek. The 50' x 12' building faces north towards the Adams farm complex and is composed of four units. The roof is of wood shingle, in deteriorating condition, and nonexistent on the south side of the gable roof. Exterior horizontal painted siding covers all exterior walls, and a 6' roof overhang exists on the north façade. The foundation consists of concrete formed (molded) piers, which support wood posts and sills. A brick chimney (for stove use) 13' in height, is located on the east gable end and a concrete block chimney 10' in height is located on the west gable end. A wood vertical tongue & groove door and six-paned wood window are located on the north façade in each of the four units. On the south façade are the same sort of door and window in each of the four units. All windows slide horizontally in wooden tracks and have interchangeable screens. All doors on south facade have screened doors as well as solid wooden doors. Shelving and tongue and groove paneled walls exist on interior walls. Flooring is nonexistent, as the roofing is partially missing and interior has been used to hold debris since c. 1970 and trees, which are 10'-14' in height, are now growing inside the building. The condition of this historic structure is poor; however, its plan, materials and design are original and unaltered.

## Cemetery (late 19<sup>th</sup> century- early 20<sup>th</sup> century)

A cemetery is located approximately 1,486 feet from the migrant farm workers' housing. Although



*Door on the second floor south wall of the 19th century granary.*

never enclosed, the area has been avoided during tilling and harvesting of the field surrounding it since c.1931 when the land was acquired by William E. and Thurman Adams. The only gravestones evident are two, which read: "Cady Dawson June 26, 1812 to July 27, 1886" and "William W Knowles Born November 5, 1850 Died August 24, 1924." In 1919, the cemetery was identified as an "old family graveyard" and property as "once the lands of William Wilson." The earliest known owners of this parcel of land, William Wilson and wife Martha Esther Wilson (both born c. 1780-90), ancestors of Mrs. William W Knowles (Margaret Dawson Knowles), may be buried in the cemetery -their gravestones broken and turned, or in unmarked graves.

Their daughter, Arcada or Cady, has an existing stone, but her husband, William H.N. Dawson's grave is unknown. It is likely that additional graves from the early- mid 19<sup>th</sup> century are in the cemetery; however, their exact location is unknown, and so a 10' x 10' area has been respected and left undisturbed for the last 80 years. The condition of the two existing gravestones is fair. Cady Dawson's stone is broken and both are overturned.

There were additional agricultural structures on the Adams farm. Historic photographs identify their appearance. They no longer exist, but according to living relatives consisted of the following: 1. Frame one story carriage house, located opposite the barn housing animals/ machine repair shop. Demolished about 1936, after wagon and carriage were unnecessary and family relied upon motor vehicles. 2. Privy building, located between brooder house and corncrib, which included lower level seats for children. Demolished about 1939; plumbing was installed inside house. 3. Chicken broiler houses, each 300- 400' in length, which blew away in the high winds of 1954's Hurricane Hazel. These had been located where the six easternmost silos now stand. 4. A small chicken hatchery building, east of the house, built 1930-32 and the first of the Adams' chicken



houses on the property. This burnt in the 1980s. 5. Additional chicken houses were located north of the house, along the farm lane, demolished in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Adams Home Farm is significant at statewide level, under Criterion B. It is important for several reasons. Primarily, it is important as the birthplace and childhood home of Senator Thurman Adams (1928-2009), Past President Pro Tempore of the Senate of the State of Delaware and longest serving senator for the State of Delaware. It is also significant as a farm that has been occupied and in continuous use as a farm, by one family, since 1862, approximately 150 years.

While the rural landscape surrounding it is being encroached upon by high school and athletic field construction, the farm is also noteworthy as an intact agricultural building complex of 14 historic structures, dating c. 1850-c.1950, the majority of which existed before or during the period of significance-1928-1953, and four of which are timber framed and predate 1880. All have been adaptively reused, remaining intact and in use today. Mirroring the variety of farming activities that were popular in Delaware during the early- mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the farm represents in its building complex a diversification of activity and effort. Such endeavors led to financial and economic success, and eventually, sixty years of public service to the State of Delaware by two generations of the Adams family.\*



*The Thurman Adams, Jr. State Service Center in the Sussex County seat at Georgetown, Delaware*

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\* In fact, the Adams family tradition of public service has now extended to the third and fourth generations. Alvin's daughter, Ruthi Adams Joseph, and Thurman, Jr.'s daughters, Polly and Lynn, have all been involved in state service in various capacities and Lynn's son, Drew Slater, now serves on the staff of Delaware Congressman John Carney.