



THE RIDGELYS OF DELAWARE & THEIR CIRCLE

*What They Befell*

IN COLONIAL & FEDERAL TIMES: LETTERS 1751-1890



EDITED BY MABEL LLOYD RIDGELY



*The Anthoensen Press*

PORTLAND, MAINE

1949

George II against granting a charter to Lord Baltimore in abrogation of the rights of the Penn family in the Three Lower Counties on Delaware. The original of this petition is contained in the Penn manuscript. Soon after his arrival in Delaware and until his death, he was a judge of the Supreme Court of the Three Lower Counties. In 1745, he was selected by the Signer, Caesar Rodney, then a minor, to be his guardian, and his papers show a warm attachment to his ward.

Nicholas bought land west of Dover, the County Seat of Kent, and in 1749 moved to the brick "mansion" he had just built upon it. His wife named this home plantation "Eden Hill." Nicholas, rather ashamed of the sentimental name, explained that she probably named it so because "it had a pleasant sound." Here he lived until his death in 1755. His son by his marriage to Mary Vining was Charles Greenberry, who succeeded his father as owner of Eden Hill, but in 1767 moved into the Parke house on Dover Green, finding it inconvenient to practice medicine from his country home. Dr. Charles Ridgely died in his early middle years and his second wife, Ann Moore, survived him. Ann liked a country life. She had spent her girlhood at "Moore Hall" near Valley Forge and she felt that life at Eden Hill would be agreeable to her. She liked the idea of bringing up her children in the country rather than in the house on the village Green. She closed the town house and the family made Eden Hill their home. In 1803, Ann's eldest son, Henry Moore Ridgely, married Sally Banning and brought his bride to the house on the Green.

At the death of Ann Ridgely, her stepson, Nicholas, the eldest son of his father by his first wife, Mary Wynkoop, came into possession of Eden Hill and made it his home. Nicholas was the second Chancellor of Delaware, succeeding Chancellor Killen in 1801. He married Mary Brereton who survived him many years. Nicholas and Mary were devoted to children but they had none, while the half-brother, Henry Moore Ridgely, and his wife, Sally Banning, filled the house on the Green with a large family. One of these children, Henry, born in 1817, ran away one morning from his many brothers and sisters and arrived at the door of Eden Hill Farm a mile away. When his aunt and uncle greeted him, he announced that he had come because there he wished to live. He was in earnest about it and though a small boy he

managed to carry out his intention. His uncle and aunt were devoted to him and the Chancellor named him his heir after the death of his widow.

After Sally Banning's death, Henry Moore Ridgely married Sally Ann Comegys, who had no children. She survived him many years, dying in 1887 in the old house on the Green. Seven years later it became the home of Henry Ridgely, son of Edward and grandson of Henry Moore Ridgely, who lived there until his death in 1940. It is now his widow's home.

A family tree is included in this volume showing all these lines from the Maryland progenitors and the Moore family of Pennsylvania to recent years, but especial interest is centered in the writers of the letters that follow and the persons to whom they were addressed. Many of these passed from the scene more than a century and a half ago; some lived until the later years of the nineteenth century. A great many of them lie in Christ Churchyard in Dover.

All pass, but both Eden Hill and the Ridgely house on the Green in Dover remain in possession of direct descendants of those Ridgelys who acquired them, lived and died in them, and cared for the fabric of the dwellings and the furnishings they contained. The fact that not a few of the wedding gifts of 1803 can be identified today and that some articles used before the Revolution are still sound as well as beautiful, testifies to the prudent care they have received for five generations.

I have decided on my epitaph. It is brief and I believe it is also truthful: "She died of the Eighteenth Century." Before that happens, I want to share some of my excursions into earlier times with others, and I have made this volume for those who, like me, have an interest in what went on before.

MABEL LLOYD RIDGELY

*The Green, Dover,  
December, 1948.*

Please to give our affectionate remembrance to thy Children, and accept it my Dear Mrs. Ridgely from J. Dickinson, and thy sincerely

Affectionate

and Sympathizing Friend

M. DICKINSON.

Wilmington January 17th 1786.

*Addressed to Mrs. Ridgely*

Dover,

The responsibilities which Ann faced on her husband's death were many. There were three grown stepsons, Nicholas, Abraham, and Charles, as well as her own five children. A large portion of Charles' estate was made up of farms. His will divided these tracts of land among his children but Ann had to supervise many of them, besides having the entire management of the home plantation, Eden Hill, which had been left to her for her life. Here she decided to make her home. She planted many fine shade trees, including a half-mile lane of catalpas. This tree became fashionable after John Bartram, the botanist, introduced it to Philadelphia. She established peach orchards and the farm is still famous for the quality and flavor of its peaches. Strawberries and asparagus were her pride; her flower garden was her special delight. The large, ancient boxwood, which survives today, gives an indication of Ann's garden plan.

She used tact and yet was candid in her attitude toward her stepchildren, and her devotion to her own children was not allowed to interfere with the discipline she believed it her duty to impose on them. As she grew older, she developed a really judicial habit of mind; she was austere, yet truly generous; frank, but affectionate.

To maintain the health of a household was in those days extremely difficult. The country was subject to malaria, not yet recognized as such, but prevalent. Stagnant pools and unscreened windows brought the poisonous mosquito into the nursery and the care of food was not understood. Flies were numerous; the children were frequently exposed to grave fever epidemics and to smallpox. At times Ann Ridgely appealed to James Anderson of Chestertown on whose friendship she



No. 25. "EDEN HILL" FARMHOUSE, BUILT 1749 BY NICHOLAS RIDGELY



PEACH ORCHARD, "EDEN HILL" FARM



OLD GATE HOUSE, "EDEN HILL" FARM



No. 26. OLD GARDEN AT "EDEN HILL" FARM



No. 29. OLD WILLOW OF ANCIENT STOCK, "EDEN HILL"





No. 28. BARN AT "EDEN HILL"

A CALENDAR OF  
RIDGELY FAMILY

LETTERS 1742 - 1899

*in the*

DELAWARE STATE ARCHIVES

*Edited and Compiled by*

Leon deValinger, Jr., State Archivist

*and*

Virginia E. Shaw, Classifier

Family Data Supplied By Mrs. Henry Ridgely

Volume I

Published privately by some descendants of  
the Ridgely Family for the  
Public Archives Commission  
Dover, Delaware, 1948

Where Nicholas Ridgely dwelt during his first years in Dover is uncertain, but from 1743 to 1748/49 he rented a house from Robert Willcocks, who was assessed in adjoining Murderkill Hundred. In July 1748 he bought a tract bordering on the west boundary of Dover Town, which he soon considered his "home plantation." This purchase formed the nucleus of the farm since known as "Eden Hill." It is related that he wrote a friend that his wife had suggested the name, he supposed "because it had a pleasant sound." On his newly acquired property he immediately erected a brick house to which he moved his family about January 1748/49. No description of the homestead in his day is known, but the old house, with broad lanes and great trees, which still preserve an authentic eighteenth century atmosphere, also suggests its appearance when it was new despite the alterations farm management and family needs have dictated during the intervening two centuries. The approach from Dover lies through grassy "Cedar Lane", close to a mile in length and very wide between the boles of its ancient cedars, catalpas, pin-oaks, horsechestnuts, willows and maples. At the point where another broad lane running in from the north crosses "Cedar Lane" stands the house itself, with a wide lawn in front and garden at the south side. Its sixty-seven foot frontage faces eastward, and its wide doorway looks directly down the lane toward Dover. The structure, of bricks which records show were burned on the premises, has two full stories with a generous attic under a wide, sturdy gable at the southern end. The central section has a slightly lower roof, and indeed a lower level throughout than the southern one. At the extreme north, and known to be of later construction, is a two-story flat-roofed office and office chamber, with a twelve-foot frontage and an entrance at the east. The house is deep as well as long, and has huge chimneys to serve its many fireplaces. On the north wall, with the ten-foot kitchen chimney as its inner face, projects a Dutch oven.

The interior arrangement is pleasing. The main entrance, in the south wing, gives access to a wide hall running the full thirty-five foot depth of the building to an open stairway at the back. To the east are connecting drawing rooms, also running the full depth of the house, with twin fireplaces whose original woodwork was replaced in the nineteenth century by

dark marble mantles and the trim then fashionable. To the right, on a slightly lower level, is a long, low-ceiled dining room with its windows facing "Cedar Lane", and a kitchen still structurally of the eighteenth century though somewhat modernized in superficial appearance. The second floor holds four bedrooms in the south wing, with three more above the dining room and kitchen.

The grounds have, of course, been modernized far more than the house, though some of the plantings along the lanes seem of sufficient age to have been set out within a short time after the house was built. The flower garden to the south of the drawing-rooms, too, is old. Letters show that Nicholas Ridgely's daughter-in-law, Ann (Moore) Ridgely, cherished it and obtained plants for it from relatives in Philadelphia as well as by the usual exchange among neighborhood flower-lovers. It is possible that the fine old box, which she undoubtedly tended, may have been set out under the supervision of one of the two Mary Ridgelys who preceded her as mistress of the household. Orchards, which now produce the farm's major crops, have been a feature of the property ever since it came into the hands of the Ridgely family, though in the earlier days, grains were commercially the most important produce. The farm buildings are, of necessity, relatively new. The oldest of them, a huge barn, dates from Nicholas' great grandson's time, but the packing and grading houses, cow barn and milk cooling room are of the twentieth century.

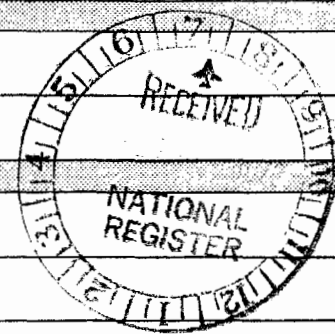
The precise number of individuals who occupied "Eden Hill" when the house was new is not clear from the letters, but seventeen persons closely allied by blood or marriage made up the family group at about that time. Nicholas and Mary Ridgely themselves, their son Charles and little daughters Sarah and Elizabeth of course lived there. Mr. Ridgely's daughter Mary, a child of his second wife, was with almost equal certainty a member of this household until her marriage. So also was Mary Vining, Mrs. Ridgely's daughter by a previous marriage. Two daughters of Mr. Ridgely's first wife, with their children and husbands, James Gorrell and John Vining, the latter being Mrs. Ridgely's son, were intimates at "Eden Hill", though it is improbable that any of them were residents there over any extended period.

PH00 11142

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Delaware	
COUNTY: Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 8 1973



**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Eden Hill

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
West end of Water Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Dover

STATE Delaware	CODE 10	COUNTY: Kent	CODE 001
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mrs. Lloyd H. Scheller

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Eden Hill Farm

CITY OR TOWN:  
Dover

STATE: Delaware	CODE 10
--------------------	------------

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Kent County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:  
The Green

CITY OR TOWN:  
Dover

STATE: Delaware	CODE 10
--------------------	------------

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:                       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:                      STATE:                      CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER:
DATE:
FOR NPS USE ONLY

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

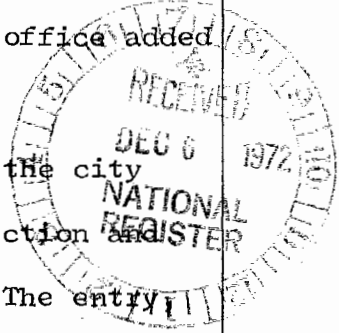
SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Eden Hill is composed of two principal sections: a double-pile, side-hall structure to the south, and a lower section of two rooms to the north.

The hall in the south section has an open stair to the rear, which provides access to the three bed chambers and a newly-added bathroom. On the first floor, two south rooms adjoin the hall. Very little original detailing is extant. The first floor had received Greek Revival additions in the first half of the nineteenth century. Thus, the windows are enlarged with paneled, splayed casings reaching the floor, and wainscot was added beneath the windows. The lintels are supported by tapered jamb trim. During the first half of the twentieth century, chair railing was added throughout the house, and the marble fireplace mantels were replaced by wooden mantels.

The north section contains a dining room to the front and a kitchen to the rear; an enclosed stair leads to the three rooms above. The detailing in this portion is minimal, with the exception of the dining room, to which has been added a considerable amount of wood-work. Adjoining the dining room to the north is a small office added in the mid-nineteenth century by Dr. Henry Ridgely.

The stuccoed facade of Eden Hill faces east, toward the city of Dover. A division line between the three-bay south section and the two-bay north portion is discernible in the stucco. The entry located in the center bay, is marked by a reeded entablature. A box cornice stretches across the frontage, and evidence of a water table remains on the north section.



**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1749 - house built

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Eden Hill is noted, not primarily for its innate architectural value, but for its connection with a prominent Delaware family.

In 1680 a large tract called "Brothers Portion" was warranted to John and Richard Walker. In 1694 two hundred acres of "Brothers Portion" were purchased to create the town of Dover, under a warrant issued by Penn. When the town plot was completed in 1718, seventy-five acres to the west were not laid out. Sixty-nine of these acres were purchased by John Mifflin, and, after passing through several owners, they came into the possession of Nicholas Ridgely in 1748.

Nicholas Ridgely was a descendant of Henry Ridgely, who emigrated from Devonshire in 1659. By 1749 Nicholas Ridgely had erected a house on his farm west of Dover; he also purchased a house within the town itself. Among his public interests, Nicholas Ridgely served as Treasurer of Kent County and as one of the provincial justices of the Supreme Court of the Three Lower Counties. At the age of seventeen, the orphaned Caesar Rodney, one of Delaware's most illustrious patriots, chose Nicholas Ridgely as his guardian. At the death of Nicholas Ridgely in 1755, his third wife, Mary Middleton Vining, continued to live at the plantation house. She had named the house Eden Hill and also planted two avenues of trees.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Biographical and Genealogical History of the State of Delaware.  
 Chambersburg, Pa.: J.M. Runk and Co., 1899. p. 787.  
A Calendar of Ridgely Family Letters. Dover: Public Archives Commission,  
 1948. 3 volumes.  
 Eberlein, Harold Donaldson and Hubbard, Cortlandt V.D. Historic Houses  
 and Buildings of Delaware. Dover: Public Archives Comm., 1962. p. 96.  
 Hammond, John Martin. Colonial Mansions of Maryland and Delaware.  
 Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1914. pp. 270-90.  
 Lathrop, Elise. Historic Houses of Early America. New York: Tudor  
 Publishing Co., 1941. pp. 409-10.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		39 09 06	75 32 14	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Five**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Mr. Vincent Rogers**

ORGANIZATION: **Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs**      DATE: **10/11/72**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Hall of Records**

CITY OR TOWN: **Dover**      STATE: **Delaware**      CODE: **10**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National       State       Local

Name **E. Berkeley Tompkins**  
**Dr. E. Berkeley Tompkins**

Title **Director, Div. of Historical and Cultural Affairs**

Date **11-21-72**

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

**Robert M. Utley**  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date **5/8/73**

ATTEST:  
**[Signature]**  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date **5 2 73**



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Delaware	
COUNTY Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 8 1973

(Number all entries)

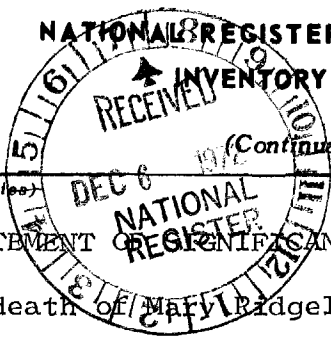
7. DESCRIPTION (continued)---

The west, or rear, wall is faced in brick laid up in three-course English bond. This facade contains a box cornice and two doors.

The south gable wall is dominated by two chimneys. The present fenestration includes an attic window and two second-story windows. However, brickwork inconsistencies indicate the presence of a window once located to the rear of the front chimney stack. Two doors cut into the south wall provide access to a garden containing some excellent boxwoods and trees.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM



(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	Delaware	
COUNTY	Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE
		MAY 8 1973

(Number all entries)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (continued)---

At the death of Mary Ridgely, possession of the house passed to her son, Dr. Charles Ridgely.

Dr. Charles Ridgely, a physician, moved to the Ridgely house in Dover, where he held several public offices. At his death in 1785, his second wife, Ann Moore Ridgely, returned to live at Eden Hill. In 1810 Nicholas Ridgely, son of Charles by his first marriage, became master of Eden Hill. Nicholas Ridgely had served as an Attorney General of the State, an elected delegate from Kent County to the Delaware Constitutional Convention, and a representative to the General Assembly of Delaware. In 1801 he was appointed Chancellor of the State, a position he held until his demise. By the time of his death the house had been expanded to its larger present appearance. At the death of Nicholas' wife, Mary Brereton, the house descended to Henry Ridgely, the son of the Chancellor's half-brother Henry Moore Ridgely. Henry Ridgely, trained as a physician, established an office at the north end of the Eden Hill house. While at Eden Hill, Dr. Ridgely headed several business enterprises as well as farming the Ridgely land. In 1869 Dr. Ridgely moved from Eden Hill.

Between 1869 and 1950 Eden Hill was occupied by tenants, usually the Ridgely farm managers. In the early twentieth century, control of Eden Hill passed to another Henry Ridgely, a nephew of Dr. Ridgely. He served as president of the Delaware Bar Association, president of the Farmer s Bank, and president of the State Board of Education. Henry's

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Delaware	
COUNTY	
Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 8 1973

(Number all entries)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE-2 (continued)---

wife, Mabel Lloyd Ridgely, made extensive alterations to the house, including the reconstruction of a considerable amount of woodwork.



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

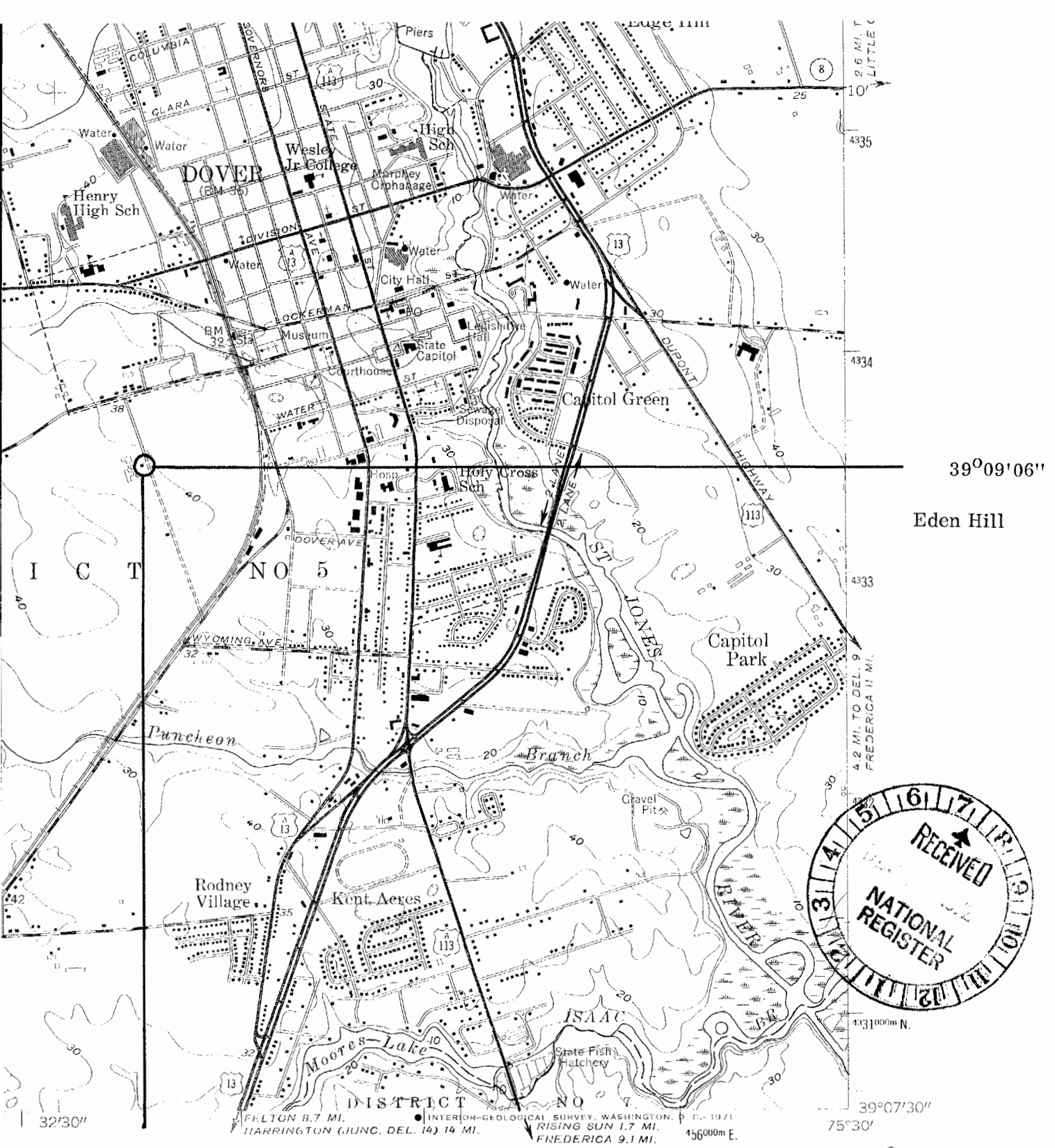
STATE Delaware	
COUNTY Kent	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 8 1972

(Number all entries)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)---

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware. Philadelphia. L.J. Richards and Co., 1888. pp. 1043, 1048.





1 MILE

7503214"

QUADRANGLE LOCATION



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty ————— Light-duty - - - - -
- Medium-duty - - - - - Unimproved dirt - - - - -
- U. S. Route (shield symbol) State Route (circle symbol)

DOVER, DEL.

NE/4 WYOMING 15' QUADRANGLE  
N3907.5—W7530/7.5

1956

AMS 5862 II NE. SERIES V832

(FREDERICA)  
5962 11 SW



~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ 5/8/73 \_\_\_\_\_

Title: EDEN Hill \_\_\_\_\_

Loc. Kent, Del. \_\_\_\_\_

FRONT VIEW FROM EAST \_\_\_\_\_

①

**PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

Eden Hill, front view from the east.  
Graydon Wood, Aug. '72.