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Cox-Phillips-Mitchell Agricultural Complex



Location: The marker is near Hockessin, New Castle County, Delaware. It is at the intersection of Old Wilmington Road and Farmstead Drive, on the right when traveling west on Old Wilmington Road. This marker was erected in 2020 by the Delaware Public Archives.

The Historical Marker Reads:

“In 1726, **William** and **Catherine Cox** built a Flemish bond brick house named "Ocasson" on 350 acres of land acquired from Letitia Penn. William Phillips and his heirs owned the farm from 1766-1830 and added a bank barn by 1770. From 1830-1856 Quaker farmer and abolitionist Jacob Heald owned the property. Farmer and businessman John Mitchell acquired the farm in 1868 and expanded the barn for dairy operations. Mitchell's heirs retained ownership of a portion of the farmstead into the 21st century. The property reflects changes in agricultural practices over nearly 300 years. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2017.”

abolitionist Jacob Heald owned the property. Farmer and businessman John Mitchell acquired the farm in 1868 and expanded the barn for dairy operations. Mitchell's heirs retained ownership of a portion of the farmstead into the 21st century. The property reflects changes in agricultural practices over nearly 300 years. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2017.”



William Cox Jr (1692-1767) was married to Catherine Kinkey (1696-1744) and the son of William Cox Sr (1657-1742) and Naomi Amy Cantrell (1660-1742). The parents of William Cox Sr are unknown.



[State fiscal year 2017 review: Delaware properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places - Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs - State of Delaware](#)

By Madeline Dunn, Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs' historian and National Register of Historic Places coordinator.

“The Cox-Phillips-Mitchell Agricultural Complex, located at 1651 and 1655 Old Wilmington Road in Hockessin, was eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A as an excellent example of the practice of remodeling agricultural complexes in Delaware during the 19th and early-20th centuries.



In the first half of the 19th century, a variety of social and economic factors combined to transform the agricultural landscape of northern Delaware, including the agricultural reform movement, an increase in population, rising prices of farmland, and improvements in transportation. This transformation took the form of changes in building materials, architectural styles, construction methods, and spatial arrangements, affecting both

dwelling and agricultural buildings and aimed at increasing agricultural production and farm efficiency.

Expansions of house plans and new types of agricultural outbuildings, such as dairy barns, also accompanied and followed this trend. From the second half of the 19th century to the early-20th century, farmers in the Delaware Piedmont turned to dairying on a commercial scale, resulting in further changes to their barns and farm complexes. They built larger barns, specifically designed to support milking operations, and modified them over time to meet the ever-changing state regulations. Supporting agricultural outbuildings for equipment and crop storage also changed in this period to accommodate changes in machinery and the scale of production. Both the dwelling and the bank barn at Cox-Phillips-Mitchell Complex represent multiple periods of construction and adaptation, while the various other buildings demonstrate experimentation with efficiency. The farm also features several unusual combination buildings including a chicken coop/piggery and corncrib/granary.

The house and original outbuildings were built by **William Cox** who acquired the property in 1721. The house and outbuildings were expanded over the years by subsequent owners including William Phillips (a cooper who owned the property between 1766 and 1830) and John Mitchell who purchased the farm in 1868 and whose descendants continue to reside on the premises today.”