

## Brecknock Manor House Conditions Assessment



Project Jointly Funded By  
Kent County Department of Community Services, Division of Parks  
and  
Kent County Department of Planning Services, Historic Preservation Program

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## ABSTRACT

Possibly one of the most recognizable historic buildings in Kent County, Delaware, the Brecknock Manor House is an important cultural resource to many county residents, particularly those living in the neighboring communities of Camden and Dover. Long associated with a nearby milling operation, the Brecknock Manor House rose to meet the needs of a changing agricultural and industrial economy. This Manor House became the social expression of the resident-family's economic success, whose measure can be found in the design choices made during the house's phases of expansion. Now vacant, the house stands as a reminder of these choices and, more importantly, as a reminder of the valuable social, agricultural, and industrial history of Kent County. Today, the Manor House is surrounded by an 86-acre County Park and although the interior of the building is not accessible to the public, park visitors may enjoy the bucolic setting of the Manor House while participating in recreational activities.

Two National Register nominations and one Historic American Buildings survey underline the local, regional, and national significance of the Manor House. The site's rich milling and agricultural history together with the Manor House's interesting architecture provided the necessary components for its listing on the National Register of Historic Places in the early 1970s (the House was first listed on the National Register in 1974). In 1982, the property was again documented in a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), while a multiple property National Register nomination, *Architectural Trends in Delaware, 1720 – 1880*, written in 1996 further outlined the history of the property. The descendants of the Howell family owned the property for more than 200 years, until the death of Elizabeth Howell Goggin, in 1992; Mrs. Goggin's will stipulated the transfer of title to Kent County's Division of Parks.

The Division of Parks, Department of Community Services, seeks to proactively protect the Manor House. Parks staff and maintenance personnel have taken measures, within recent years, to protect and replace in-kind the deteriorated historic fabric of the building. Nonetheless, several areas within the house will require intense rehabilitation. Limited resources preclude Parks personnel from further investigative and restorative measures. Compiled by an architect and engineering firm, JAED Corp., the Brecknock Manor House Conditions Assessment focuses on the structural and architectural elements of the building and outlines the rehabilitative measures needed for several proposed adaptive uses. The proposed uses are:

- A) protection of the house (commonly referred to as mothballing),
- B) general improvements,
- C) resident curator program (single occupancy, live-in resident), and
- D) public access (event or museum space).

JAED Corp. provided the Steering Committee with an Executive Summary detailing the construction of the house, the proposed uses of the house, and the methodology of their survey, as well as an Assessment Report in an Access® database format, and AutoCAD® drawings. In addition to the products provided by JAED Corp., this report includes information relating to the procurement of consultant services as well as photographic documentation of the house.

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