

A Story of
Delaware
Told in
100 Buildings

HOW THE FIRST STATE
HAPPENED



CRUDEN BAY BOOKS

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a group of settlers arriving in an undeveloped location. First come shelters in which to live and then structures in which to work and shop. There are buildings for worship and education. As the community grows government buildings are required. With prosperity comes places in which to spend leisure time. And each step along the way builds a story only Delaware can call its own.

That story is all around you in the work of those who came before you. In these pages you'll learn the explanations behind the quirks, the traditions and the secrets that make Delaware uniquely Delaware. The origin of the highball? Solved. Green serpentine stone? A mystery no more. The nation's oldest serving church building? Identified. The oldest golf course in Delaware? Revealed.

Swedish souvenirs...Blue Hen football...the "Penman of the Revolution"...iron horses...kissing bridges...illustrious illustrators...cast iron architecture...steamers...the CCC...sweet potatoes...horse racing...kit houses...the golden age of motoring...broilers...early aviation...the rise of suburbia...peaches...Sears Kit Houses...This book will have you telling stories like a native in no time.

Almost all of the selections within are open to the public, or at least visible from public spaces. So, if you haven't seen these landmarks in person, fire up your GPS and get out and see the story of the First State standing in plain sight on Delaware streets!

**A STORY OF DELAWARE TOLD IN 100 BUILDINGS...
HOW THE FIRST STATE HAPPENED
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Blockhouse

Claymont

1654?



The Block House lays claim to being the oldest structure in Delaware, raised as a defensive aide by the original Swedish settlers in 1654. There are accounts of the position being attacked by the Lenni Lenape and seized by Dutch forces when they laid siege to Fort Christina in 1655. But others say, "poppycock." The little stone building was only built as a kitchen for the Robinson House when it was constructed in 1723. Tradition says that George Washington stopped at the guest house in 1777. Others say, "poppycock" again.

Ryves Holt House

Lewes

1665



This house bills itself as the "Oldest House in Delaware" - its building date having been guessed as 1665 through the technique of dendrochronology, a method of analyzing growth rings of woody plants by extracting borings from timbers in a building. Others argue that its style indicates it could not have been built before about 1685. Either way, Delaware doesn't have too many houses arguing about an exact 17th century pedigree. Of its many owners the name that has attached itself to the building is Ryves Holt, who arrived in Lewes at the age of 25 in 1721 and purchased the property two years later. Holt became Naval Officer of the Port of Lewes and High Sheriff of Sussex County, eventually serving as Chief Justice of the Three Lower Counties on the Delaware River and Bay from 1745 until his death.

Dutch House

New Castle
1690s?



The Dutch House's curriculum vitae has taken a flogging in recent times. For many years the New Castle Historical Society property, picked up in 1937, was assumed to have been constructed during the brief nine-year window that the Dutch ruled Delaware from 1655 to 1664. After all, just look at it - with that sloping roof almost hanging down over the front to eye-level. But these days the best scholarship places its construction to the end of the 17th century, long after the Dutch de-camped to New York and the English were in charge. Maybe the best way to appreciate the Dutch House is as artists do - a quaint old cottage that makes a charming subject for a painting.

Holy Trinity Church

Wilmington
1699



Over the years Holy Trinity Church has hyped itself as "the nation's oldest church building still used for worship as originally built." There are some qualifiers in that boast. There are older churches - in Massachusetts and in Virginia and in New York and in Maryland just to name a few. But maybe they have been fiddled with a bit or services suspended for a time. And of course the claim discounts what the Spanish were doing in Puerto Rico and New Mexico. But there is no doubt that Holy Trinity deserves its more commonly used moniker - Old Swedes Church. The 300+ year old stones are locally quarried blue granite and the bricks are Swedish-made brought over in ships as ballast. And then there is the pulpit, crafted of black walnut, from 1713 that is the oldest in America. Except for that one in Albany, New York that is fifty years older or the one...

Immanuel Episcopal Church

New Castle
1703



The Episcopal congregation first gathered on this site in 1689, one of America's oldest church organizations. The first meetinghouse here was built in 1703. In 1980 the building was heavily damaged by fire and was painstakingly restored to its 1820 look - the year celebrated architect William Strickland directed the addition of the bell tower, covering expenses out of pocket. In the adjoining cemetery are the graves of many Revolutionary War Veterans and George Read, signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Parson Thorne Mansion

Milford
1730



A *Who's Who* of Milford history has called this rambling mansion on the outskirts of town home at one time or another. The first known resident was Joseph Booth, who purchased 510 acres of what was called Saw Mill Range and granted to Henry Bowman in 1680, from the Bowman family in 1730. The center brick section of the present structure was erected by John Cullen in 1746. Reverend Sydenham Thorne, an Episcopal clergyman who was instrumental in Milford's development, bought the property in the 1780s and is interred on the grounds. John M. Clayton, United States Senator and Secretary of State, spent a portion of his boyhood here. This was also the home of philanthropist Benjamin Potter and William Burton, Governor of Delaware during the early years of the Civil War. Colonel Henry Fiddeman, founder of the First National Bank of Milford, came into ownership of the mansion in 1858 and fiddled with the Georgian architecture, adding sharp Gothic gables and raising the roof. The Draper family purchased the property in 1916 and conveyed it to the Milford Historical Society in 1961. Restoration projects were begun, pulling off a porch among other things, but money ran out leaving a bit of this and a bit of that from the house's more than 275 years.

Loockerman Hall

Dover
1730



There was no list of the *Forbes* 400 wealthiest Americans in 1633 or Govert Loockerman might have been on the top of it. A descendant, Nicholas, bought a large swath of land at the head of the St. Jones River known as "The Range" and erected a fine Georgian brick mansion worthy of the Loockerman name. When the Delaware College for Colored Students was established in 1891 at this site it was carved out of a working farm where slaves were once impounded and Loockerman Hall was the college's first building. For 70 years it did duty as academic and dormitory space. The old workhorse did not fare well in retirement, There was neglect and a fire and no champion for its restoration. But as Delaware State University grew up around Loockerman Hall to be acclaimed as one of the nation's most attractive campuses the zest for preservation was kindled. Loockerman Hall now looks every bit the proud founding father.

New Castle Court House

New Castle
1732



One glance at a map of the United States reveals immediately that only one state boundary features an arc - the top of Delaware forming the border with Pennsylvania. Its official name is the Twelve-Mile Circle and it was created in 1701 at the directive of William Penn himself. The center of the circle is the cupola atop this courthouse and its purpose was to define the southern portion of Penn's vast land holdings, then known as the "Lower Counties on the Delaware." That pivotal courthouse and cupola were destroyed by an arsonist's torch and the current building was raised over the ruins. The beginnings anyway; it was added onto three or four times. One of the oldest public buildings in the nation, the courthouse also did time as Delaware's first colonial capitol building. Most judicial proceedings moved to Wilmington with the county seat in 1881 but a trial is still held here for old time's sake.

Amstel House

New Castle

1738



Researchers believe the ground floor kitchen may have roots back into the 1600s and be the oldest structure in town. At any rate it is one of the oldest large brick townhouses in New Castle. The property was acquired by John Finney in 1738 but the date when this house first appeared on its corner is unknown. The headers of the bricks are glazed a bluish-gray that emerges from the natural salts in the clay during the firing process but that's no clue to its age. The center-hall entrance is a standout from the Georgian period and the house was fine enough for Governor Nicholas Van Dyke to rent. The most famous tale from inside these walls took place on April 30, 1784 when George Washington attended the wedding reception of Ann Van Dyke and Kensey Johns. Chief Justice James Booth wrote at the time that General Washington kissed all the pretty girls - "as is his wont." Amstel House has been a house museum for over 90 years.

Poplar Hall

Dover

1740



John Dickinson spent the late 1700s putting together quite a resume: Continental Congressman from both Pennsylvania and Delaware, governor of both Pennsylvania and Delaware, and delegate to the United States Constitutional Convention of 1787. Beyond that he was most famous as the "Penman of the Revolution" for his passionate writings in support of separation from Great Britain. In his spare time Dickinson amassed one of the greatest fortunes in the American colonies. No wonder he scarcely spent any time in his childhood home that his father Samuel built in 1740 on the family's 13,000-acre plantation. The house picked up telescoping wings in the 1750s and Dickinson was here to rehab the house after a British raid in 1781. Four years before he died in 1808 the house was gutted by fire. Knowing he would never return, the old Penman picked up his quill and sent instructions to Dover to rebuild smaller. The State has operated Poplar Hall as a museum since the 1950s.

Hale-Byrnes House

Stanton
circa 1750



Hale is Warwick Hale who originally owned the property and his son Samuel who may or may not have built the house. Byrnes is Daniel Byrnes, a Quaker preacher and miller who bought the house from its second owner, David Finney, who is the other suspect in the two-story dwelling's origin story. It is basically just like hundreds of other old colonial brick houses save for what happened here on September 6, 1777 when a patriot war council was held to plan the defense of Philadelphia. Sir William Howe had surprised the Americans by sailing around Delmarva to land in Elkton, Maryland and the only skirmish in Delaware, at Cooch's Bridge, had been fought three days earlier. All the heavy hitters from the Continental Army were here: George Washington, Nathanael Greene, Henry Know, the Marquis de Lafayette. Whatever was discussed must have left something out because Washington's troops suffered one of the Revolution's worst defeats five days later at the Battle of the Brandywine.

Prince George Chapel

Dagsboro
1757



This small frame house of worship is so old it was named for the hated King George of England when he was still a prince. It is one of 18 churches erected in Delaware before 1800 and, despite its size, stands as a paragon of traditional English ecclesiastical architecture. The heart-pine timbers to construct the vaulted ceiling, gallery, and pews have never been painted. The original congregation was in Worcester Parish in Maryland and this was a chapel-of-ease for circuit-riding preachers. The man who gave the town its name, John Dagworthy, is buried in the graveyard. Dagworthy commanded the Sussex County militia during the American Revolution but his military roots stretch much further back; he once clashed with George Washington, 11 years his junior, over rank in the French and Indian War.

Greenbank Mill

Wilmington

1760



For the better part of 200 years Delaware was a land of millers. Communities existed where there was sufficient water flow to power mills. By the 1960s there was only one grist mill operating in the First State on water power - Greenbank Mill. There had been a mill on this spot on Red Clay Creek almost three hundred years earlier. Greenbank Mill was created by Robert Philips in 1793 when he bought the property and installed an automated milling system invented by his neighbor, Oliver Evans. The milling complex expanded with the addition of a stone factory to process wool. In the 1850s wood working machines and the first circular saw mill in New Castle County joined the team. Owners came and went and finally an arsonist put an end to Greenbank Mill in 1969. Happily, an award-winning restoration returned the 1760 grist mill to life for visitors to once again experience the Delaware of the 18th century when waterpower was king.

Cannonball House

Lewes

circa 1760



The White House in the nation's capital took a beating during the War of 1812 but other than that not many houses remain that can claim damage from that little dust-up with the British. The lodging of ship pilot Gilbert McCracken is one. The house is most notable as being that rare centuries-old street resident that has never been moved from its original location. But it best known as the Cannonball House when a piece of British ordnance fired from an invading frigate in the harbor during a two-day bombardment in April 1813 lodged in the brick foundation, five courses up from the sidewalk. For many years this was the home of generations of river and bay pilots. The Lewes Historical Society took over in 1963 to use as a maritime museum.

Belmont Hall

Smyrna

1773



Belmont Hall has enjoyed a circuitous history for 250 years since Thomas Collins bought the property in 1771 that included a "Manor House near Duck Creek." Collins built one of the finest Georgian houses in Kent County and he used it to bolster his active political ambitions. Many rabble-rousing patriot meetings were held here and Collins invited the Delaware Assembly to convene at his place when the British made things too hot in the capitol of New Castle. Collins spent his own money to raise a local militia during the Revolution. He became the 8th President/Governor of Delaware in 1786 but was unfortunately the first to die in office three years later. The Cloaks arrived in 1827 and the estate was converted into a model of scientific farming. Plump, tasty Belmont-labeled canned tomatoes were cupboard staples around the turn of the 20th century. The house was also dressed up in Victorian finery which led to a restoring of the elegant colonial architecture in its final incarnation. The State has used Belmont Hall as an event center since 1987.

Corbit-Sharp House

Odessa

1774



Settling new areas can always be a bit of a throw of the dice. When William Corbit, a successful tanner, built one of the best Georgian brick homes in the region on Main Street in Cantwell's Bridge he was picturing his tannery in the center of a go-getting Delaware town in a matter of years. Not so much. There was a boomlet in the 1800s when 400,000 bushels of grain were shipped out of here but the coming of the railroads doomed Cantwell's Bridge. In a desperate attempt to restore its relevancy the citizens voted to re-name the town Odessa, after the great Russian grain port. It was futile and the town fell into decay. The Corbit house was still in family hands in the 1930s when Hugh Rodney Sharp began acquiring similar historical properties to lay the groundwork for the Historic Houses of Odessa. These days the Corbit-Sharp house stars in the popular walking tour, Christmas in Odessa.

Barratt's Chapel

Frederica

1780



John Wesley had been leading the spread of Methodism within the Church of England for thirty years when he sent eight preachers to the American colonies to organize the movement in the New World between 1768 and 1774. When revolution erupted six skedaddled home and only Francis Asbury and James Dempster carried on. Dempster retreated to a farm in Upstate New York, rarely to be seen again. Asbury was the de facto face of Methodism in America. When peace broke out, an aging Wesley sent Thomas Coke across the ocean as his personal emissary to find Asbury. The great summit took place in Barratt's Chapel on Sunday, November 14, 1784 and the two set out to chart the course of Methodism in America. Thus, the Frederica meetinghouse built by newly converted Methodist Philip Barratt came to be known as the "Cradle of Methodism." It is the oldest church building on this side of the Atlantic Ocean built by and for Methodists; were they to meet today Coke and Asbury would still recognize the little-altered brick chapel.

Old Sussex County Courthouse

Georgetown

1793



So country residents would not miss the original seat in Lewes too much, when Georgetown took over in 1791 the Sussex County Courthouse was assembled in its new home to the exact dimensions of the old building. Moving buildings around town was a relatively common occurrence in the 1800s before the era of indoor plumbing and electrical wiring, as long as you had a strong ox team. That saved on architect fees as well. So it was moved from its original location on The Circle in 1837 to make way for the present courthouse. After that it was used as a residence and then a printing office. Long abandoned and forgotten, the structure was purchased by the State of Delaware and restored in 1976 as a slice of America's Bicentennial celebration. It is occasionally still used by the court system.

Woodburn

Dover
1790



For the only state with a Colonial-styled capitol building you sort of need a matching Governor's Mansion. This Georgian brick townhouse was picked for the job in 1965. Strange sightings and sounds have been reported in and around Woodburn since at least 1815 when a Methodist preacher was interrupted by a female apparition during a breakfast blessing. Governors and elected officials have reported ghostly goings-on over the years. Charles Hillyard III was the builder; he had scored the land for a mere \$110 at a sheriff's sale two years prior.

Old Town Hall

Wilmington
1798



Construction for a Wilmington town hall, "to be built in a plain and handsome manner," commenced in 1798. For more than a century the brick Federal-styled building remained at the center of government and community affairs. The government departed for more spacious quarters in 1916 and the Historical Society of Delaware saved the building, later restoring it to its original appearance. Tours today visit the upstairs Long Room where the city council met and the notorious windowless jail cells below ground.

Columbus Inn

Wilmington

1798



When 60% of restaurants close before their first year you have to give props to a place that has been serving meals for more than 200 years. In 1798 the town's best bread was being baked here in Schmalz's Bakery. The stone building was converted into a tavern in 1812, becoming a favored stop on the Kennett Pike stagecoach route. In 1871 Scheutzen Park for trotting horses opened three blocks away and the tavern began catering to a sporting crowd. After Buffalo Bill Cody staged his Wild West show on the trotting grounds Cody, sharpshooter Annie Oakley, and Chief Sitting Bull led fans to the tavern for a night of rollicking music and rounds of three-cent pints of beer. The dive bar got a class upgrade in the 1950s and began operating as the upscale Columbus Inn. In 2007 when it was considered Wilmington's longest continuously operated business the stone building got an appointment with the wrecking ball. The wheels of destruction ground slowly, however, and the Columbus Inn lived to put out another spread for its famous Sunday Brunch.

Abbott's Mill

Milford

1802



In 1795 local carpenter Nathan Willey bought the land on this site. By 1802 he had finished a large grist mill and since he went to all that time and trouble and "large expense" - which no one asked him to do - Willey asked authorities to build a road to his business. He was persuasive and got his road. Willey died in 1812 and over the next 150 years the property passed through many hands, with the music stopping on Ainsworth Abbott who sold the property to the State for a nature center in 1963. So Willey got his road but Abbott got lasting his name etched into history. The mill - which is still in operation - used an automated system dreamed up by Delaware inventor extraordinaire Oliver Evans. With the use of ancient Egyptian Archimedes' screws Evans received the third U.S. Patent in 1791 for a multi-story mill that worked "without the aid of manual labor, excepting to set the different machines in motion."

Eleutherian Mills

Wilmington

1802



A smaller version of this Georgian-styled stone house was the first permanent residence of the du Pont family in America, completed in 1802. There were significant enlargements over the years but the family was pretty much done living here after an explosion in the powder yards rocked the house in 1890. It did time as a workers' recreation hall after that. When the powder mills closed in 1921 Louise du Pont Crowinshield, a leader in the virtually non-existent world of historical preservation at the time, began restoring the family home. After her death in 1958 it opened to the public. Also on the grounds is the First Office of the DuPont Company, erected in 1837. From the three rooms in the small stone building the family business grew into the biggest explosives concern in the United States. It was not until a half-century later that DuPont moved to more expansive digs in downtown Wilmington.

Hagley Yard

Montchanin

1802



The year was 1802 and a rudderless French immigrant living in New Jersey named Eleuthere Irenee du Pont was invited to the Brandywine Valley to hunt game. It was not a successful trip. The damp weather fouled his gunpowder so that his musket continually misfired. It was so bad du Pont decided to re-enter the industry he had turned his back on in France as a youth: black powder. When it came time to launch his new business he remembered what he had seen in northern Delaware: the hardwood forests that would burn to charcoal, one of the ingredients he would need for powder; the abundant granite in the hills to build his mills; and the swift-flowing river to power the grinding wheels. And so he returned to Delaware to found a dynasty. The powder mills operated through World War I but live on as the heart of Hagley Museum.

New Castle Ice Piers

New Castle

1803



In the days before global warming ice floes would run regularly down the Delaware River in winter. They were such a problem for navigation on the river that one of the first acts of public infrastructure tackled by the Delaware Assembly was to authorize a lottery to raise \$12,000 for the construction of "two or more" piers off the shore of New Castle. Congress chipped in \$30,000 in 1802 - the first time Delaware dipped into the federal trough for non-military financial assistance. The small artificial islands consisted of an outer shell of finished granite blocks filled with rubble. The ice piers were designed to protect wooden-hulled sailing ships and were the first important harbor improvements on the Delaware River. Eventually there would be seven ice-battling piers arranged in a hexagonal pattern at New Castle, the last erected in 1882. The effort to keep the Delaware River safe for bad weather navigation has been recognized with a designation as an Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

Read House

New Castle

1804



George Read was a lawyer and signer of the Declaration of Independence. His son, George Read II, was also a lawyer and followed his father as United States attorney for Delaware but he was not the great achiever his dad was. In fact, he was not well liked and considered pompous. As if to prove his detractors correct, Read the Younger set out to build the largest house in Delaware in 1801. He wanted the best of everything so even with skilled local craftsmen and abundant building materials nearby he built a dock out front of the homesite and brought everything down, including 250,000 bricks, from Philadelphia. When completed the total bill for the 22-room, 14,000 square foot mansion was a ridiculous \$11,000 - and in a bad neighborhood at that. It was a wharf district; two doors down was a brothel. Most of the fine homes in town were built a block back on The Green. With this house - one of the finest examples of Federal architecture in the country - things changed in New Castle forever.

Henry Clay Mill

Wilmington
1814



Streams do not come much prettier than the Brandywine Creek. It is also one of the most energetic water courses on the East Coast - the country's first canoe slalom was staged on the Brandywine in 1954. Timothy Stidham was the first to tap the power potential of the river with a flour mill in 1679. In an industrial survey for the new country in 1791 the Brandywine was recorded as supporting 12 flour mills, a barley mill, a paper mill, six saw mills, a mill for manufacturing nails, and a snuff mill. This handsome stone mill building came along to spin cotton in 1814 but it was not one of the great Brandywine success stories. The DuPont Company wound up using it to make metal barrels before their powder yards shuttered in 1921. With the company's 150th anniversary approaching in 1952 it was decided to create an industrial museum to honor the Sesquicentennial. Henry Clay Mill got the nod as the focal point and everything inside was torn out to clear the way for the Hagley Museum, now one of the world's premier industrial interpretation sites.

Friends Meetinghouse

Wilmington
1817



The Quakers in Wilmington constructed their first meeting house across the street in 1738 and a decade later replaced it with a larger building here. This brick meeting house, built in a simple form, dates to 1817. It was sufficiently roomy to handle a congregation of 500. Resting in the adjoining burial ground is Thomas Garrett, Delaware's most celebrated abolitionist. Garrett's work on the Underground Railroad was not always so secret. When he was 60 years old in 1848 he was arrested for aiding fugitive slaves. Found guilty, Garrett was forced to sell his iron and hardware business to pay the fine. Nearby is the grave of the state's most distinguished Colonial figure, John Dickinson, "the Penman of the Revolution."

Chesapeake & Delaware Canal

Delaware City

1829



Almost from the time the first Swedes arrived in Delaware in 1638 people were wanting to cleave the place in two. That is because only 14 miles separate two great bodies of water - the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware River. A route for a canal was first surveyed in the 1760s but construction on a great ditch did not begin until 1822. With 2,600 men digging and hauling dirt, the waterway finally opened for business in 1829, slicing 300 miles off the ocean route between Philadelphia and Baltimore. The federal government took complete control over the canal in 1919 and deepened and widened the channel to eliminate the need for locks. Today the 14-mile long, 450-foot wide Chesapeake and Delaware Canal is one of only two vitally commercial sea-level canals in the United States. Dredged to a depth of 35 feet, the "C&D" is deep enough to handle ocean-going ships. Over 20,000 vessels of all shapes and sizes float down the waterway, making it one of the busiest canals in the world.

Delaware City Hotel

Delaware City

1829



Sometimes, OK a lot of times, it is hard to get excited in Delaware. There are not many places that would qualify as "boom towns." It was not mineral riches that brought the dreamers here, it was the new Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Daniel and William Newbold laid out the town in 1826 and staked a claim to its future greatness by calling it "Delaware City." Hotels sprouted with the canal in 1829. A century later when the canal was enlarged and relocated two miles to the south Delaware City almost became another First State rarity, a ghost town. Another century further on Delaware City has become something much more recognizable in Delaware: a tourist town. Speaking of ghosts, like all places with strangers coming and going odd things will happen and some of those passing through may have decided to stick around - in spirit anyway. The old Delaware City Hotel has earned a reputation as one of the First State's most haunted buildings.

New Castle and Frenchtown Ticket Office
New Castle
1831



The New Castle-Frenchtown Turnpike that followed an old Indian trail 16 miles to the Chesapeake Bay, was a boon for New Castle after the American Revolution. By the 1820s rails had been laid strong enough for horses to pull carriages along the route. Delaware's first railroad opened in 1831 using horses and the next year the New Castle & Frenchtown Railroad (NC&FRR) became one of America's first railroads to employ iron horses. The small structure, now whitewashed and stripped of its functional trappings, is actually the nation's second-oldest railroad building. The ticket office was moved to several locations around town after the demise of the NC&FRR and landed here in the 1950s.

Old College
Newark
1834



Old College was "the" college for over 50 years. Classes were held here, faculty and students lived and ate here, there were recitation rooms and also a library. The school was still Newark College when it was built. This was Delaware's first classically-flavored Greek temple building, delivered by Winslow Lewis. Lewis, a Bostonian, came to Newark in a roundabout way. Originally a sea captain, he developed a lighting system for lighthouses in 1812 that resulted in more complete combustion of the whale oil and candle wick that won him a contract to outfit all American lighthouses with his new lamps. The job took four years and afterwards he branched out into lighthouse construction, becoming one of the most prolific builders on the East Coast. Delaware College officially became the University of Delaware in 1921 and around that time was sufficiently developed for its original academic workhorse to start being called "Old College."

Winterthur

Winterthur

1837



E.I. du Pont purchased this land in 1810, only eight years after he opened his gunpowder mills. He left the property to his daughter Evelina who began the house with her husband Jacques Bidermann. The couple named the 12-room abode after his family's Swiss ancestral home. Through the generations the estate expanded and developed as estates do with a little here and a little there until Henry F. du Pont inherited the property in 1927. Henry du Pont practically invented antiques as a pastime. He began adding on to the house to hold his collection which grew until he had almost 100,000 square feet and the fifth largest home in America. In 1951 Henry opened Winterthur to the public and shuffled off to a more livable house on the estate to enjoy his private golf course, prized dairy herd, and gardens by Marian Cruger Coffin. When the du Pont family needed landscape design in the early 1900s they turned to Coffin, a pioneering woman in the profession. She was landscape architect at the University of Delaware beginning in 1918 and the gardens here were her largest commission. The 175 period-room displays at Winterthur are the nation's final word on American decorative arts.

Smith's Bridge

Granogue

1839/2002



Covered wooden bridges are the favorites of romantics everywhere. Bridges were usually covered to protect the structural elements from the weather. It is estimated that over 14,000 covered transportation bridges have been constructed in the United States and fewer than 1,000 remain. The numbers in Delaware are about the same - 26 covered bridges constructed in the 1800s and three remaining. Smith's Bridge across the Brandywine River is the longest of the trio at 154 feet. Edward Smith was working a flour mill and cider press just this side of the Delaware-Pennsylvania state line and the bridge was close enough to his operation when it was built in 1839 to take his name. Wagons rattled across a single lane on pine boards through the shed roof in those days. Smith's Bridge was sturdy enough to handle vehicular traffic until 1956 when steel beams helped shore up the deck. Arsonists burned the bridge on Halloween night in 1961 and when it was rebuilt it was uncovered. That never set right with the folks who used the bridge and in 2002 a replica of the Burr truss bridge was raised on the original stone piers.

St. Joseph on the Brandywine

Greenville

1841



If was not unusual to be Catholic in Wilmington in the early 1800s but it was unusual to find a place to worship. Services were usually held in private homes or maybe a local mill when a traveling priest rode into town. The du Pont family, whose workers were mostly Irish and Italian, took notice and lobbied the Diocese of Philadelphia for a proper church. St. Joseph arrived in 1841. There have been numerous alterations and additions to the first Catholic church of the First State so that original sanctuary is unrecognizable. St. Joseph is the home parish for the second Catholic United States President, Joe Biden.

Delmar Highball Signal

Delmar

1840s



A true vestige of the rail-roading age of the 1800s so critical to the development of downstate Delaware, the highball was a signaling device that consisted of a large ball mounted on a chain or cable. When the ball was raised to the top it was "full steam ahead." Some sources credit the invention of the highball to the New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad in 1832; others delay its appearance a decade or two. This highball signal featured a box so that when it was lowered it disappeared and there could be no confusion as to whether the track was clear or not. It was first put in service in New Castle and later spent time directing trains in Maryland.

It came to Delmar in 1959 to help celebrate the town's centennial and has been a stalwart of Railroad Park ever since. Original highball signals are so rare that when railroad buffs around the country cite an example of one still in existence, the Delmar Highball Signal is the one they name.

Dry Stack Granite Walls

Brandywine Creek State Park
1850s



If you were going to build a black powder - and later a dynamite - business in the 1800s the one thing you needed was plenty of stone. You wanted as little that was flammable as possible in your mills. The DuPont Company had ready access to the Brandywine Valley's vast stores of granite and to assemble buildings with the "blue rocks" they hired Italian stonemasons, considered the finest craftsman of the age. DuPont also wanted this skilled workforce at the ready in case things had to be rebuilt in a hurry after an accident - there were 288 explosions in the DuPont Company's black powder mills over the years and 228 people "went across the river," the workers' euphemism for death in the yards. So to keep the masons on the payroll they built miles of dry stack walls around the family dairy farms in between assignments from the company. In the short term the benefit was that it kept the cows from wandering; in the long term it gave an enduring beauty to the rolling Brandywine countryside.

Deer Park Tavern

Newark
1851



The St. Patrick Inn, a log structure, operated here as early as 1747. Over the next 100 years it hosted numerable famous travelers including surveyors Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon as they were staking out the disputed boundary between Pennsylvania and Delaware that would evolve into the delineation between North and South in America; Edgar Allen Poe who may have put a curse on the building after a fall in the muddy street outside; and, perhaps, George Washington who hung his hat in many similar taverns. In 1848, James S. Martin bought a large chunk of Newark - 243 acres of land for \$16,000 - that he called Deer Park Farm. Included on his new property was the burned-down remains of St. Patrick's Inn. Martin had the rubble cleared and brought in the architect of his farmhouse to build a four-story brick hotel he also called Deer Park. The original structure contained only 12 rooms for hire on the upper levels. Patrons could enjoy a bar, a reading room and a dining room on the ground floor. The sawdust is no longer on the floor and the recent Victorian makeover may be a tad too pretty for some but the Deer Park trundles on as a college town institution.