The History of Sussex County

1890's era political gathering in Cherry Lane behind the Sussex County Courthouse

Photo courtesy of Nick Varrato, Jr.

By Dick Carter

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Photo courtesy of Nick Varrato, Jr.

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Of the one thousand copies of this first permanent edition of "The History of Sussex County," this copy is number..... 725

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The History of Sussex County

Written and edited

By Dick Carter

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the permanent edition

This history of Sussex County first appeared as a special bicentennial supplement to the July 1, 1976 issues of THE DELMARVA NEWS and THE DELAWARE COAST PRESS. At that time, it existed only in newsprint form. In the months since the history first appeared, however, the response from the general public has been such that I and my employers at Community Newspapers, Inc., have decided to publish this permanent, limited edition of one thousand copies for those readers who wish to own a copy of the history in more durable form than its original newspaper version. In publishing the history in permanent form; we realize that we owe much to the nine Sussex County firms and organizations who sponsored the original printing. We also feel that their original sponsoring pages are an integral part of the whole. For that reason, those pages are a part of this edition as they were of the original.

Dick Carter
November, 1976

Preface

It has been a rare pleasure, and an immense pain as well, to prepare "The History of Sussex County" for publication in the Delmarva News and Delaware Coast Press. The project began in August of last year when my employers asked me - in all innocence, it should be noted - to write a history of the county.

I suspect that they had no idea what their request entailed. I wasn't in much better shape myself, although I thought even then that it was a pretty sizeable request. But after months of research and writing and editing and laying out, the history is finished.

Most readers conversant with the history of the county will realize that the work which follows contains little original research. That was not my objective. I sought, rather, to compile much of the vast body of writing which has been done on Sussex County and to distill it into concise and easily readable form, thus making the county's past accessible to the average citizen.

In preparing the history, I received assistance from many fine amateur Sussex County historians. I will not attempt to name all my benefactors but I must single out two, John T. Purnell and Ronald F. Dodd of Georgetown without whom the project would have been a failure.

I am also indebted to my mother, Mrs. Ann W. Carter, who consented to retype my generally illegible original into a readable manuscript.

I would also like to thank Susan L. Lathbury who heads the Coastal Communications, Inc., composition department for allowing me to disrupt the back shop routine and generally wreak havoc for months. Another friend whose assistance was invaluable is Susan Chadwick of Rehoboth Beach who helped in the layout of important sections.

Most important, however, are the nine sponsors of this history. It should be noted that their investment in it is considerable and it is only through their interest that this work is being published. The sponsor pages and half-pages in the back of the history are not advertisements. The firms represented there don't have to advertise. Their pages are part and parcel of the work itself.

Finally, I'd like to thank Coastal Communications sales manager Milton Mitchell who came up with the idea in the first place and put up with a lot before it was finished.

Dick Carter
Millsboro, Del. - July, 1976

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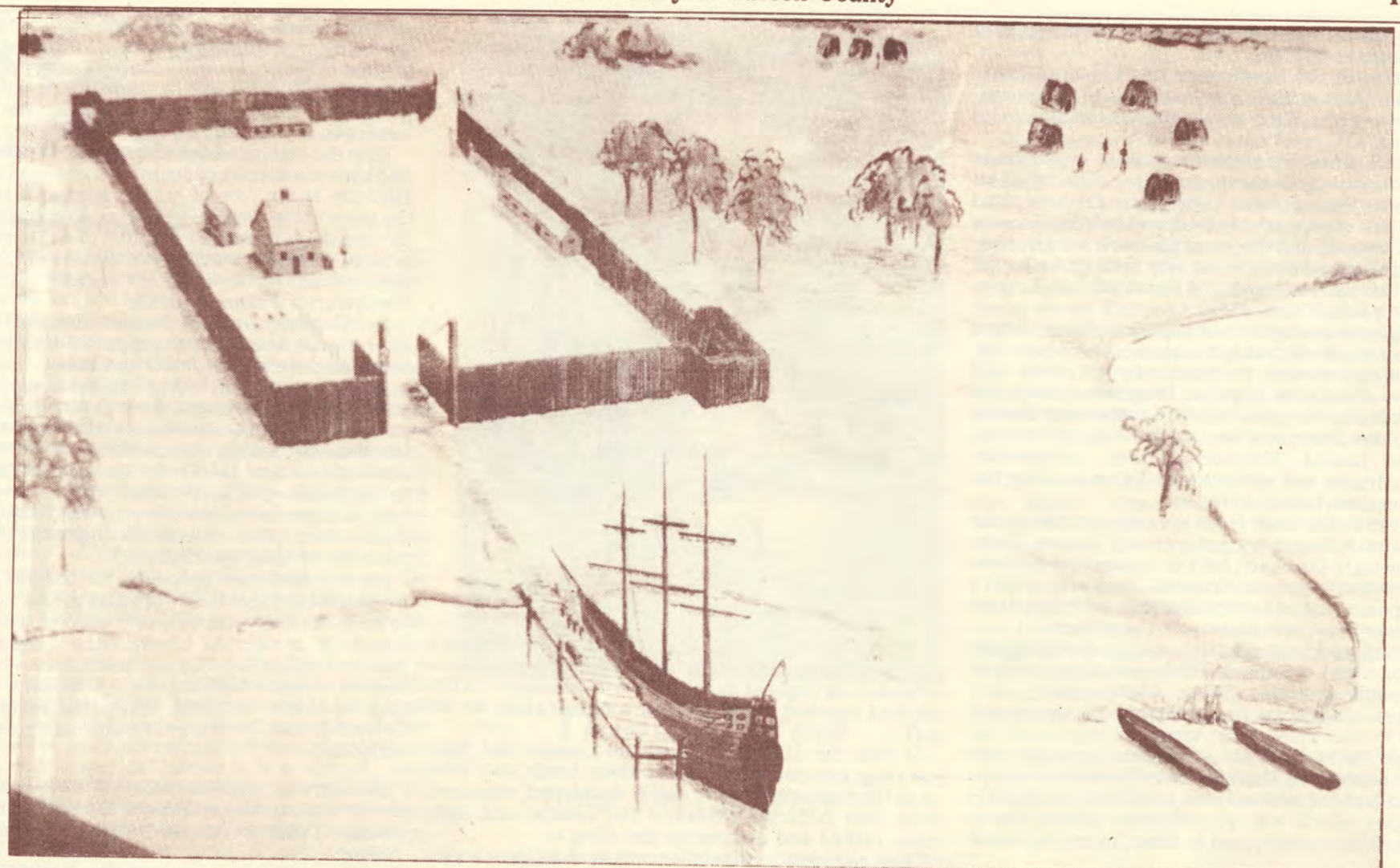


Zwaanendael

This sketch, drawn for the Lewes Historical Society by Rehoboth Beach artist Walter Reifsnyder, shows the probable appearance of the 1631 Dutch colony at Zwaanendael. The bay is in the background while the waters of the Hoornkill, now known as Lewes and Rehoboth Canal, are in foreground. The colony, near the present site of St. Peter's Cemetery on Pilottown road, was wiped out by an Indian massacre only months after it was established. (Drawing courtesy of the Lewes Historical Society)

Sussex County: *In the context of American History it is an ancient land.*

The narrow, winding Peninsula of Delmarva, lying peacefully between the two vast submerged river valleys of the Chesapeake and the Delaware, scarred and tattered by a seeming infinity of bays and sounds, rivers, creeks and streams, contains within its 200 mile length ten counties and portions - some say the best parts - of three states.

Near the center of the peninsula, where it bulges out to form the cape at the confluence of the Delaware and the Atlantic before narrowing once more into a chain of long, narrow barrier islands descending gradually to the mouth of the Chesapeake, lies the county of Sussex, the southernmost of Delaware and the largest on Delmarva.

In the broad scheme of things, far beyond the ken of man, the land known as Sussex is quite new and its borders, being simply the jottings of cartographers and surveyors, are artificial.

When one considers the county in terms of the European colonization of the American continent, that lens through which much of the history of the United States has traditionally been viewed, Sussex begins to assume different proportions.

In the context of American history, it is an ancient land, indeed, among the oldest places in the still youthful United States. It is also a land of startling contrast - between the warmth of the Gulf Stream and the cold fury of the North Atlantic, between the fragrant pines and great towering canopies of the south and the hardwoods of the north, between the seafarers of the coast and the inland farmers, between old and new.

In the American Revolutionary Bicentennial year, it is the last which perhaps most concerns the people of Sussex County, but if one is to view the county and her people with any degree of understanding, one must take all these factors and more into account.

Like all lands in all eras, Sussex is a marvelously rich and fragrant potpourri of different peoples, different times, different cultures and outlooks. Unlike many areas of the surrounding country, Sussex at the center of Delmarva has been near the great thoroughfares of American history and at the same time cut off, isolated, and therefore in many ways unique.

In spite of its geographic isolation, the county has suffered from the great conflicts of the American past even though its location has spared it the widespread destruction suffered by other areas unfortunate enough to find themselves in the way when great and opposing armies have met.

In some ways, Sussex is the oldest part of Delmarva. Among its residents are descendents of the earliest citizens of America, the aboriginal peoples who came to be called "Indians" because of one of the numerous failures of early European explorers to comprehend the real import of their discoveries.

Sussex was the site of the first European colony in what is now the State of Delaware and one of the very earliest in all of America. It was one of the last points of undecided territory on the peninsula when the British Crown established the colonial borders which came down to us in the form of the 13 original states.

Having been for so long the prize in contests between opposing factions - the Dutch and the English, the European newcomers and native American peoples, the Lords Baltimore of Maryland and the Penn family of Pennsylvania and "the Three Lower Counties upon Delaware," Sussex was to survive and even to flourish, only to be torn asunder, kinsman against kinsman, by the American Revolution.

And so, when one begins to look at Sussex Countians, and at the land from which they come, one must view all of these events and more which have occurred during the county's course through time. Those events are the threads from which the fabric of the present is woven.

No one can say with any degree of certainty when the first humans found their way onto the peninsula and moved southward to view the forests and marshes and bays and swamps of Sussex for the first time.

It may have been 5,000 years ago or longer when man first arrived. That those first inhabitants were American aborigines, descendents of the early nomadic bands who crossed the land bridge from Asia when ice covered the northern reaches of the continent and the seas were lower, is quite likely.

Those first Americans spread slowly across the face of the continent and down through Mexico into South America beyond. As they moved with the years and the seasons, they adapted to different climates and geological conditions, gathering as they went in a thousand directions a cultural heritage of differing tribal customs easily as rich and sophisticated as anything the first Europeans left behind when they made their way to the new world.

One of those early migrations found its way to Delmarva, spread out, and formed different tribal groups. By the time of Christ, the Indians were quite firmly established in what is now Sussex.

Recent archeological finds indicate that two thousand years ago and more, the Indians of Sussex and other areas of Delmarva were already conducting a flourishing trade with their neighbors in the middle Atlantic area and were thus a part of the systems of commerce which spread across the continent in pre-Columbian times. Highly prized shell and mother-of-pearl ornaments have been unearthed in the middle west, a thousand miles from the nearest ocean. Spearpoints and arrowheads unearthed in Sussex have been traced to quarries as far away as Ohio and even further west.

The dominant tribal group in northern Delaware, eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and southern New York State at the time of the first European explorations called themselves the Lenni Lenape which translates roughly as "original men." The Lenape were later to become known to the English as the Delaware Indians because of their location along the bay and river of that name.

The Lenape and the numerous smaller tribes who lived further south along the peninsula which were probably offshoots of the larger tribe, spoke a common tongue, classed generally in the Algonquin language group. Although there were minor differences among the different Delmarva tribes, those differences were of the same magnitude as those which might be found in the speech of a present-day New Castle Countian and a resident of Accomac County, Virginia.

Lower Delmarva Indians also shared a broad body of religious belief and tribal mythology with the Lenape. While the tribes which once inhabited the center of the peninsula have come to be called "Nanticokes," the Nanticokes, who first inhabited the area around the river of that name, were only one of perhaps a score of small tribes in the region.

Although many of the Indians were pushed early on further and further west by the pressures of European colonization, many of them have left their names and

portions of their language behind them in the form of Delmarva place-names.

In addition to the Nanticokes, the tribes of lower Delmarva included the Choptanks, the Pocomokes, the Accomacs, the Wiccomiss, the Assateagues, and others.

They led a relatively settled existence in the years before the coming of the Europeans. The tribes of what is now Sussex were fishermen, farmers, and small hunters. As opposed to the great hunting peoples of the north woods and the great plains, however, they hunted only for food and did not rely upon game for all their needs from home-building materials to weapons and trade goods.

Their villages were often on superior pieces of land which were made desirable because of their location, the prevailing breezes, the proximity of rivers and creeks, the abundance of game. When the Europeans began colonizing the area, many of those early Indian towns became European towns for the same reasons. In Sussex, Laurel, Millsboro, Lewes, Bridgeville, Rehoboth Beach, and other towns lie on or near the sites of onetime Indian villages.

The Indian residents of Delmarva also established a custom later followed by present-day Sussex Countians - moving to the beach for the summer. A particularly attractive summer "resort" appears to have been the point of land separating Rehoboth Bay from Indian River Bay now known as Long Neck.

The Indian residents of the area lived during the summer on a diet of fish, shellfish, and other fruits of the surrounding waters. When winter came, they generally returned to such heavier fare as venison and nuts.

Although theirs was not a written language, the Lenape and their neighbors in lower Delmarva had an assembled body of wisdom and mythology to explain their origins which was passed from generation to generation both verbally and in other, more ingenious ways.

The story of the coming of the Lenape to their homes along the Delaware, for instance, was passed down through the use of a series of painted sticks of various lengths, each with its own series of intricate markings. A trained reader of the sticks could decipher the entire epic, known to the Lenape as the "Walum Olum."

The story recounts the tribe's migration from a land beyond the Mississippi, or "Father of Waters," eastward. In his 1888 "History of Delaware," J. Thomas Scharf gave one version of the journey.

He wrote that the Lenape, embarking from a place near the western sea, made their way eastward in search of a promised land. The journey took place at a time lost in the haze of the distant past. Near the western shore of the Mississippi, the Lenape met another tribe which Scharf believed to be the Iroquois and the two tribes banded together for safety before continuing their journey to the east.

East of the river in what might have been the present-day Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, the two tribes encountered a nation they called the "Allegwi" who were much superior in numbers and armaments. The description of the great fortified towns inhabited

17th century Swedish artist's conception of the Lenni Lenape.

Indians

by the Allegwi led Scharf to conclude that they were a portion of the great mound-builder culture which once extended throughout much of the Mississippi Valley and had reached a high level of sophistication by 900 A.D.

At first the Allegwi allowed the Lenape and their traveling companions to enter their lands and then, when the newcomers were safely enveloped, attacked. After first suffering reverses, the Lenape and their allies rallied and conquered the Allegwi.

They continued on their journey and as they began to approach what is now Pennsylvania, the Lenape kept to the south while the Iroquois traveled north. When the Lenape reached the great waterway now known as the Delaware River, and which they called the "Lenape Wihittuck" or "River of the Lenape," they dispersed, with some of their number moving into what is now southeastern New York and New Jersey. Others remained in eastern Pennsylvania or moved southward into what is now northern Delaware. It is probable that a portion of the latter group gradually moved southward down the length of the peninsula where the tribes of Delmarva were to develop over the centuries.

When the first European explorers arrived on the shores of the peninsula, they found there an already long-established and rich culture. The Indians inhabiting the northern parts of the peninsula were generally in allegiance to the Lenapes and to the Iroquois of central and northern Pennsylvania, while those of southern Delmarva were generally dominated by elements of the strong Powhatan Empire of tidewater Virginia and Maryland.

The Indian residents of central Delmarva, however, lived in what served as a buffer zone between the strong nations to the north and the south and were generally unaffiliated with any larger nation. Their position, brought about by the geography of the area in which they lived could be likened to the borderline position of Sussex Countians during the Civil War hundreds of years later.

With the coming of the Europeans, however, all that had been the culture of Delmarva changed forever. An example of the fate of many Delmarva Indians was the story of the Assateagues who lived originally along the coast of Worcester County, Maryland, near the present-day towns of Newark and Berlin, Md., which was recounted by C.A. Weslager in his book, "Delaware's Forgotten Folk."

As English settlers began moving across the Chesapeake from the Jamestown colony and pushing northward during the 1630's and 1640's, they displaced many of the earlier Indian residents as they sought more and more land for their great plantations. The term "displace" covered a multitude of sins against the Indians, among the mildest of which was purchasing tracts of land from them under English law for little more, in some cases, than a few gallons of rum, a process made easier by the fact that the Indians were often unable to understand European concepts of land ownership.

As they sold their property, the Indians often failed to understand that they were also giving up their right to hunt the land and to dwell upon it, but misunderstandings or not, the transactions were legal in the eyes of English law. By the 1680's, when the pressure had increased from Virginia settlers were beginning to arrive in force under the auspices of the Calvert family - the Lords Baltimore, proprietors of Maryland.

The group of Assateagues living in eastern Worcester County fled northward in an effort to escape the intense pressure on them from the English. They stopped for a time at Assawoman Neck along Dirickson Creek in present-day Baltimore Hundred. As it turned out, of course, the move wasn't far enough and they were soon forced to move further away.

In the last years of the 17th century, the tribe settled along the southwestern shore of the Indian River in the area stretching from the present-day Piney Neck to the headwaters of the river above what is today Millsboro. With that move, the tribe became known as "the Indian River Indians," and in 1705 they petitioned the Maryland colonial assembly for a tract of land to be held by them as a reservation, all the land in present-day Sussex below the Indian River then generally considered a part of Maryland.

According to Weslager, the Maryland assembly granted their request in 1713 and established a reservation of 1,000 acres, encompassing most of what is now Millsboro. Almost immediately, however, English settlers in the vicinity cast a covetous glance upon the land. When the bulk of Indians living on Delmarva finally gave up their battle to remain in the face of European colonization and moved westward in the late 18th century, some of the more stalwart members of the Delmarva tribes stayed behind.

The Age of Exploration

It is difficult to say with certainty who the first European vistitor to the present-day Sussex County might have been. Explorers of many nations sailed along its coast and possibly some came ashore. Although the Spaniards may have ventured as far north in their early explorations as the Chesapeake Bay by 1524, most historians agree that the first European to "discover" the Delaware Bay was English navigator Henry Hudson.

Hudson was in the employ of the Dutch East India Company searching for a route to the far east when, in the late summer of 1609, he saw the bay for the first time.

Hudson's voyage up the bay and river that summer in his ship, "The Half Moon" and his explorations of the Hudson River Valley to the north established the later Dutch claims to the lands bordering upon the two rivers they named the South and North (Zuydt and Noordt) Rivers. Those claims were to play a major role in the history of Sussex for more than half a century.

After the English established their first permanent colony at Jamestown near the mouth of the Chesapeake in 1607, the military leader of the Virginia colony, Captain John Smith, made a series of exploratory voyages north up the Chesapeake and into its tributaries on both the eastern and western shores. It is certain that Smith and his crew explored the lower reaches of the Nanticoke River and encountered the Indians residing along its banks and while Smith may not have sailed into the upper Nanticoke which now lies in Sussex, residents of the area were clearly aware of his voyage.

Other explorers, English, Dutch, and men of other nations, were frequent visitors to the area in those early years.

One of the earliest investigations of the bay and the lands bordering it was undertaken by the Dutch navigator Cornelis May (or Mey) in the spring and summer of 1613. Sailing south from Manhattan, May charted the New Jersey coast. When he arrived at its southern cape and was able to see the cape lying opposite, May gave his surname to the northern Cape and his Christian name, Cornelis, to the southern cape. The Dutch explorer also named an apparent cape lying 20 miles to the south "Cape Hindlopen," or Henlopen, probably in honor of Thymen Jacobsen Hinlopen of Amsterdam.

When it bacame clear in later years that the southern cape (now known as Fenwick Island) was not a cape at all but merely a bulge in the coastline, the name Henlopen was transferred to its present location, the cape first called Cornelis. It was not changed, though, without playing a major role in the later boundary disputes between the English proprietors of Maryland and the "three lower counties

DeVries

De La Warr never saw Delaware

on Delaware" in the succeeding century when the British Crown was firmly in control of the Peninsula - as firmly as anyone was.

Called Lenape Wihittuck by the Indians and Zuydt River by the Dutch, the great bay and river received its present name in 1610 from the English sailor Samuel Argalls. Argalls, who was attached to Lord Somers' squadron, became separated from the fleet in a dense fog off the Bermudas, only to encounter a severe hurricane before he was able to rejoin Somers. According to legend, the storm served as the inspiration for Shakespeare's "The Tempest". It carried Argalls' ship as far north as Cape Cod. As he made his way south along the coast towards the English colony of Virginia, he sighted the same cape May saw three years later. Argalls called it Cape "De La Warr" after the first royal governor and captain general of Virginia, Sir Thomas West, Lord De La Warr.

In the years after the English finally reached a position of dominance in the middle Atlantic area, the name was given to the bay and river and to the Lenni Lenape as well. It is only another example of the inaccuracies of early nomenclature which brought us "Indian" and "America", since it is a virtual certainty that De La Warr never even saw the bay or river which bears his name, the Indians never saw India, and Amerigo Vespucci didn't discover America.

Interest in the colonization and commercial development of the new found lands was growing rapidly in Holland during the decades that followed the early explorations. With the formation of the Dutch West India Company in 1621 under a charter granting it enormous powers over a vast domain in the new world, those efforts got underway in earnest.

At the time all the then discovered lands in America were known as West India and the company was chartered to make in the name of the States General, the ruling body of Holland, "contracts and alliances with the princes and natives of the countries comprehended within the limits of its charter, build forts, appoints and discharge governors, soldiers and public officers, administer justice and promote trade."

The first Dutch colony on the Delaware was established at Verhulsten Island near the present Trenton, N.J., in 1623. It was abandoned within a year as was the nearby Fort Nassau, established at nearly the same time.

In the meantime, the Dutch efforts at colonization under the Dutch West India Company had largely given way to the much more lucrative (and officially sanctioned) practice of piracy against Spanish and Portuguese shipping throughout the Atlantic. Privateering continued to occupy most of the efforts of the company until a group of Amsterdam businessmen were successful in prevailing upon its governing body to establish the practice of granting "patroonships" over tracts of land in New Netherlands, as the area between the South and North rivers was then known.

The charter establishing the patroonship concept granted the right to stockholders of the West India Company to send representatives on company ships to New Netherlands, there to locate desirable sites for colonies and to negotiate for the purchase of such lands from the Indians. Such grants were to be made to any stockholders who, within a specified time, established colonies anywhere in New Netherlands except for Manhattan Island which had already become the major base of Dutch operations in America.

Among the earliest of the patroonships granted by the company went to Samuel Blommaert and Samuel Godwyn who sent two representatives to the South River in 1629 to find suitable land and purchase it. The purchase, the first by a European in what is now Delaware, was made from the Indians and is believed to have included all the ocean and bay from what is now Fenwick Island to the Mahon River in present-day Kent County.

In order to obtain full title to the land Blommaert and Godwyn had to colonize and improve it. This they proceeded to do by engaging the services of a well-known seaman, trader, and artilleryman named David Pietersen De Vries of Hoorn, Holland. DeVries refused to take part in the establishment of a colony unless he was given a full partnership in the endeavor.

This was done in the fall of 1630 and as soon as a ship and a smaller yacht could be obtained and equipped, the expedition sailed from Texel, Holland to establish the first European colony in what is now Delaware.

Thomas West

Lord De La Warr

The first expedition aboard the ship "Walvis" or "Whale" was under the command of Peter Heyes of Edam who had directions from DeVries to establish a whale and seal fishery as well as plantations for the cultivation of tobacco and grain.

In April of 1631, the expedition arrived inside the bay and sailed into a stream near its mouth. The stream, which Heyes named Hoornkill after the Dutch port, was later corrupted by the English into Whorekill before the name was changed with the coming of William Penn in 1682 to Lewes Creek and finally, in this century, the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal.

The Dutch built their small stockade, with a small building at its center, and called it Fort Oplandt. The land around the fort was called Zwaanendael or "Valley of the Swans". The native inhabitants had known it as "Sikoness".

Heyes and his commissary, Gillis Hossett, formally repurchased the land at Zwaanendael from a group of local Indians on May 5, 1631. Heyes crossed to Cape May the following month and purchased another 12 square mile tract for his employers from a group of ten chiefs living in the area, and then in September set sail for Holland, leaving Hossett in command of Fort Oplandt and the Zwaanendael colony.

The exact sequence of events which followed is not known but sometime in the months that followed the entire colony, animals and all, was massacred. According to a story supposedly told by a local Indian to DeVries on his visit to Zwaanendael in December of 1632, what may have occurred was a classic example of a clash between two cultures, neither understanding the values of the other.

The Dutch, so the story goes, erected a pillar inside their fort and affixed a tin plate to it bearing the coat of arms of the United Provinces of Holland. A visiting Indian chief, not realizing the sympolic value of the shield to the Dutch, removed it from its pillar and took it away to make pipes from it.

The Indians, who, at this early point in contact between the two peoples, continued to hold the white men in awe as powerful beings akin to their gods, sought to make amends for the theft when they realized how much it had angered the Dutch. Thus, they killed the offending chief and took a token of their deed to the settlers. The nature of the "token" is not clear - perhaps it was his head, but probably not his scalp since the custom of scalping their opponents had not yet been taught to the Indians by their European visitors.

In any case, the Dutch were appalled at the murder and rebuked the Indians for their deed. That, if the tale told to DeVries was true, proved to be their fatal mistake.

Some friends of the murdered chief, angered by the entire incident which they saw as having been instigated by the strange ways of the Dutch, vowed revenge. They crept down upon the settlers when all except one sick man were at work in the fields adjoining the fort and killed them all. They moved into the fort, killed the last Dutchman and even shot 25 arrows into a huge mastiff kept chained inside.

DeVries was informed of the massacre the following spring by a recently returned Governor Peter Minuit of Manhattan, as he was preparing to visit the colony with more settlers. DeVries set sail anyway and arrived at the mouth of the bay early the following December. When he reached the Hoornkill, he was appalled to find the stockade burned, the building ruined, and the bones of the settlers and their animals lying where they had fallen months before.

The Dutch ships lingered only long enough to hear the story of the massacre from the Indians. Even at the time DeVries suspected that it was probably a fabrication designed to sound somewhat better than the actual events, which he suspected were set in motion by some excess of the Dutch settlers themselves.

DeVries remained in the bay and river for much of the winter, discovering in the process another massacre, this time of the crew of a British ship near what is now Trenton, before making his way once more southward.

He visited Jamestown with news of the massacre of the expedition which had set out from there to explore the Delaware, and learned in the process that the English were apparently ignorant of the Dutch efforts at colonization along the bay.

And so ended the active history of the little colony at Zwaanendael which remained largely undisturbed by Europeans for many more years. But at the same time forces were in motion in England which were to have a major effect on the land now known as Sussex County. In that later chapter Zwaanendael was once more to play a part.

New Sweden

This late 17th century map of the Delaware River and Bay shows an early and erroneous view of the area with Swaanendael appearing to be at least 20 miles north of the "Hoorekil." The map also shows Cape Cornelius. Cape Henlopen was at the present site of Fenwick Island and "Bumties Hoeck" was an early spelling of Bombay Hook. (Reproduced from Scharf's "History of Delaware")

The Calverts file a claim

In the Sussex County of 1975 with its burgeoning development and increasingly complex lifestyle, it is difficult to imagine the vast emptiness, the endlessly beautiful vistas, the wild rivers and forests of the Sussex that greeted the English.

It was an age of adventurers, free-boaters, wildly bombastic aristocratic posturing and hazily idealistic dreams of Utopias, perfect societies in that uncharted land across the ocean sea.

Anything was possible and in the uncertain times that reigned, anything was probable. The sailors and soldiers and kings and wealthy investors of the day succumbed easily to what some historians have called "New World fever."

For the humbler folk from which most of us are descended, the new world also represented fabulous opportunity - the chance to worship in freedom, to escape the confines of normal life, to rise beyond the overbearing structures of European society, even the chance to escape debts.

One problem was that nothing about the new land was very definite. Map-makers had yet to do any but the most fanciful charts of the new continent. Reports of navigators were sketchy at best. This vagueness was in large part responsible for much of the strife that was to plague the colonies until, with the American Revolution, the colonies, for better or worse, took control of their own destinies.

In the spring of 1632, even as David DeVries was embarking on his voyage to determine the fate of the Zwaanendael settlers, King Charles the First of Great Britain granted a petition by George Calvert, First Lord Baltimore, for all the land lying between the 38th and 40th parallels. Calvert, as luck would have it, died before the patent was granted. The first Lord Proprietary of Maryland, therefore, was his son, Cecilius Calvert. Within the bounds of the grant lay all of present-day Delmarva and portions of Pennsylvania and New Jersey as well.

In petitioning for the grant, George Calvert swore that the land was uninhabited by any but non-Christian savages, since, according to English law, occupancy was necessary to gain complete title to lands in the new world. Since DeVries was told by the English on his visit to Jamestown in the early months of 1633 that they had no knowledge of Dutch efforts at colonization along the Delaware, which the English claimed for themselves, it is probable that the existence of Zwaanendael was unknown both to Charles and to Calvert. Later the Lords Baltimore were to become all too familiar with it.

In the two decades following the massacre at Zwaanendael, much of the European activity along the Delaware consisted of Swedish efforts at colonization near the present cities of Wilmington, Chester, Pa., and Philadelphia. The remaining Dutch in the area cooperated grudgingly with the Swedes since both nations feared the English more than they did each other. The Lords Baltimore were also in the early stages of their colonization of Maryland and the contacts between the various nationalities were on the increase.

Little activity had taken place after the massacre at Zwaanendael until after 1655 when the Dutch and the Swedes along the upper Delaware finally came to blows, a struggle which resulted in a Dutch victory and for the time, clear Dutch dominance along the Delaware.

In 1651, the Dutch formally established the colony of New Amstel near their earlier Fort Casimir at the present loction of New Castle. Several years thereafter, in 1658, Zwaanendael was resettled with the establishment of a second fort and trading post at the Hoornkill.

The first efforts at resettlement were augmented in July, 1663, by the establishment of one of the most ambitious - and least successful - colonies in Sussex County history, the Mennonite colony of Peter Cornelis Plockhoy at Zwaanendael.

Plockhoy was a Dutch philosopher who, by 1663, had for years nurtured a vision of a peaceful democratic commonwealth where no member of society should be dominant over any other. His early treatises on this concept of an ideal society have since been credited with inspiring many of the later social experiments which were established on American soil, including the "Brook Farm" settlement in New England and Robert Owen's "New Harmony" in 19th century Indiana.

Unlike many lofty idealists, Plockhoy also had the necessary drive to see his vision to fruition. After early unsuccessful efforts to convince the conservative burghers of his native Holland of the practicality of his ideas, Plockhoy traveled to England.

Hermann's Maryland

The first map of the Maryland Colony, made in the 17th century by Augustine Hermann, clearly shows the present Sussex County as a part of the grant. The map runs from left to right with north at right. Hermann, a Dutch adventurer, was awarded Bohemia Manor in Cecil County for his efforts. This reproduction, pictured above, was copied from an original in England by Dudley L. Willis of E.H. Richardson Associates, a Newark engineering firm.

There, in the years of the Puritan "Interregnum," after the beheading of King Charles I at the hands of the Puritan "Roundheads," he met repeatedly with Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell in an effort to gain Cromwell's support for a Mennonite colony under English sponsorship. Failing in that task, Plockhoy returned once more to Holland where he found that the climate had changed with the defeat of the Swedes along the Delaware. Dutch leaders, now seeking to expand their colonies in New Netherlands as rapidly as possible, looked finally with interest at the idealistic goals of Plockhoy.

With the financial backing of the City of Amsterdam, Plockhoy arrived at the Hoornkill, by this time already corrupted in popular usage to "Horekill or Whorekill," on the ship "St. Jacob" with a colony of 41 persons. He established an agricultural community in close proximity to the fort and all might have gone well had the group been left to itself, but world politics got in the way.

When the British monarchy was once more restored in 1660, after 11 years of the commonwealth and protectorate, the newly created King Charles II wasted little time in deeding virtually all of what is now New England, New York State, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania to his brother, James, Duke of York and Albany (later King James II). Two months after the Duke of York received his patent in 1664, war, which had long been threatening between the Dutch and the English, broke out.

The Duke quickly gathered a fleet and sent it off to subdue New Netherlands, the entirety of which fell within his grant except for the west shore of the Delaware. At the time, that area still appeared to the English to be within the lands granted to the Calverts of Maryland in 1632.

The Dutch stronghold at New Amsterdam was reduced to submission in September of 1664 and promptly renamed New York. Sir Robert Carr parted company with the main English force and sailed with a small company to the Delaware. One of his first stops was the ill-fated Whorekills, as it was known to the British, where the English put a quick end to the peaceful hopes of Plockhoy and his followers. Before Carr's soldiers sailed further up the Delaware, they had, according to Carr's report of the incident, "destroyed the quaking society of Plockhoy to a naile."

Plockhoy himself and perhaps others of his group remained in the area. Early records of the town of Lewes record the deeds of two lots issued to Plockhoy. In 1694, old and blind, Plockhoy and his wife turned up at the Mennonite colony at Germantown, Pa., where they requested aid. The old man was given a small house and lot where he lived until his death.

In 1672, war once more broke out in Europe between the allied forces of the French under Louis XIV and the English against a weaker Dutch force. The Dutch eventually prevailed, however, and immediately sent a fleet across the ocean to reclaim their possessions.

Although a formal treaty between the two sides early in 1674 restored to both all the lands which had been taken during the conflict, once again placing the English in control of the Whorekills, it wasn't fast enough to save the town another leveling.

In the meantime, Charles Calvert, 3rd Lord Baltimore, had not been idle in his efforts to colonize neighboring Maryland. The Maryland Council had "erected" Somerset County, comprising much of the present lower Maryland Eastern Shore, in 1666. The county also included much of what is today southern and western Sussex County. Somerset later was divided with much of its eastern portion becoming Worcester County, the northern boundary of which was then the Indian River and beyond, and its northern portion becoming Wicomico County.

Lord Baltimore, who had been attempting to proclaim his exclusive domain over the Whorekills for some time, took advantage of the onslaught of

hostilities between the English and Dutch to further his cause. In 1672, one Captain Thomas Jones was sent by Baltimore across the peninsula to plunder the town. According to an account of the incident published by former Delaware State Archivist Leon DeValinger, Jr., in 1950, Jones and some 30 horsemen attacked the town and plundered several of the inhabitants. Jones promptly administered an oath of allegiance to Lord Baltimore to the inhabitants of the town.

Shortly thereafter, Baltimore's ploy appeared wasted when the Dutch once again took New Amsterdam. Baltimore tried once more in December of 1673, less than two months before the treaty of peace was to restore the area to the English and the Duke of York. Acting on Baltimore's orders, about 40 horsemen led by Captain Thomas Howell rode to the Whorekills.

In accounts made concerning the incident several years later, entitled "Affadavit how ye Ld Baltimore took ye Whorekills," several residents gave these gruesome details:

"*In the Moneth* of December in the year 1673 the Lord Baltimore sent a Company of horsemen in number about fortye under the Command of Capt. Thomas Howell whoe came into the Whoore Kill Towne with swords drawn; And threatened & Terrified the Inhabitants whoe being frighted thereby submitted to them. After that they kild many of the Inhabitants Cattle; and when they had bene here about forteen days Capt. Howell went to the Lord Baltimore as he pretended to Aquaint him that the Inhabitants of this place was poor and not able to maintaine soe many souldgers ...."

The affadavit goes on to say that Howell came back, assembled the residents of the town and outlying areas, ordered them to surrender all arms and ammunition and informed them, "with Greife that his orders from the Lord Baltimore was that he must burn all their hourses and that he must not Leave one stick standing; and that he Could not be Excused from soe doeing;And that he was to give but one quarter of an hour warning before he did it. Soe Immediatly the houses ware by them sett on fire and Burnt downe to the Ground; but before the houses ware all sett on fire sume women very big with Child and others mad then Addrasse to Capt. Howell and Intreated him to spare One Hous for their Releife in distrasse; the said Capt. Howell Answered that he must obsarve his orders and that he could spare non; But said that if God would save them one they should have it and not Else."

Penn had a good case in spite of the fact that the man who deeded him the land didn't necessarily own it.

"And the good providence of God was that day sene in that peticoler; for a Thatch Barne standing in the Middle or betweene A Boorded Barne of Alexander Moulston that had about Two hundred Bushell of wheate unthrashe(d) in it. A dwelling house and severall other out houses standing betwene the said Thatch Barne ware sett on fir(e); And the said Capt. Howell said that if the Thatch Barne would not Burne it should be saft; the flame of the other barne and the houses flying over the Thatch Barne sett it on fir(e) three times and it went out Again. Upon that Capt Howell said that God had saft the Thatch Barne: And that he did not dare to meddle anymore with it."

With that Howell and his men departed, taking with them all the boats in the nearby creek and all the inhabitants' arms. "and Many were Barbours Cruelityes the Lord Baltimore party used to the Inhabitants of these parts; in soe much as the Indians that Lived here about wept when they saw the spile (spoil) that the inhabitants had suffered by their owne native countrymen. And this was the Manner of the Lord Baltimore taking the Whoor Kill now called the County of Sussex."

The affadavit quoted above is itself a fitting way to move on to the next chapter in the history of the county of Sussex since it was made before the civil authorities of William Penn in the early years of Penn's rule over what was to become a part of the colony of Pennsylvania.

Its purpose was to show that the Calverts' claim to sovereignty in the area were, in fact, spurious in moral terms if not legally as well.

Penn and the Three Lower Counties

With the return of its previously conquered possessions from the Dutch, England was firmly in control of the middle Atlantic area. The Duke of York was the proprietor of New York, the present-day Pennsylvania and Delaware, but not for long.

William Penn, eldest son of Admiral Sir William Penn of the royal navy, had become a stalwart of the not quite respectable new sect, the Society of Friends. As early Quakers went, however, Penn was in an advantageous position with many powerful friends, including the Duke of York. Upon the death of his father, Penn inherited considerable wealth as well as an uncollected debt against the English monarchy in the amount of about 15,000 pounds.

Penn, who had lately become interested in establishing a Quaker colony in the new world, suggested that as an alternative to payment of the debt, the King could grant him title to a portion of the Duke's domains. He proceeded to petition for an area roughly coinciding with today's Pennsylvania. The perennially debt-ridden Charles II found the idea to his liking, and the apparently persuasive Penn was able to convince the Duke of the merits of the idea as well.

The king made the grant early in 1681, in the process naming the area of the grant "Pennsylvania." Penn almost immediately began petitioning the Duke of York for the area later to be known as "the Three Lower Counties upon Delaware." He needed the protected coastline the land would give him and may, in addition, have hoped to keep it out of the hands of Lord Baltimore.

Highly principled and idealistic though he may have been, Penn was not lacking in shrewdness as his later dealings were to prove. Among Penn's first actions upon assuming the proprietorship of Pennsylvania and the "Delaware territories" was to officially unite the lower territories to Pennsylvania.

What had been loosely classified as two counties under the Dutch and Swedes were first known under the Duke of York as New Castle and the Whorekills. While the area was still under the direct control of the Duke, the lower and by far the largest county was divided into St. Jones County to the north and Whorekills (later New Deal) to the south. On the 25th of December, 1682, the names were formally changed to Kent and Sussex. At the same time, the town of Whorekill became Lewistown. It was still the only full-fledged town in the county.

The first of several charters based partially on the laws of England and partially on Penn's own political philosophy was passed. Although on paper it provided for the establishment of a general assembly with a lower assembly and an upper governor's council, in reality it was decades before the assembly was a working governmental body.

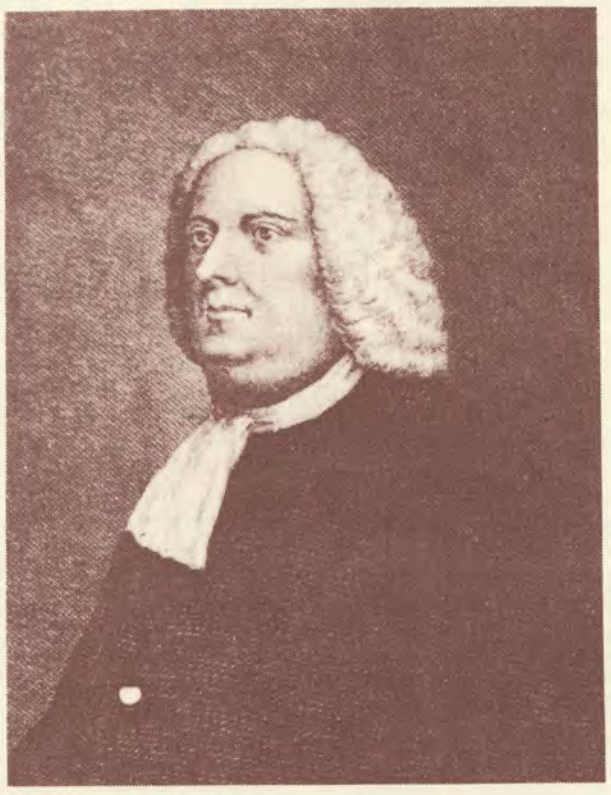
Also passed was the "Great Law." With 61 sections it gave the colony for the first time a basis of civil and criminal law which could be established within its own boundaries without the constant confusion as to which nation or which faction held power in the colony as had been the rule of the past. Among the fines and penalties established under it were:

-Two hours in the stocks or one shilling for uttering an obscene word.

-Public whipping and a year's imprisonment at hard labor if convicted of adultery. If convicted of a second offense, the penalty stiffened to life imprisonment. In addition, the wronged spouse could petition for divorce.

-"Slanderers, scandal-mongers and spreaders of false news are to be treated as peace-breakers; persons clamorous, scolding, or railing with their tongues, when convicted 'on full proof' are to go to the house of corrections for three days.

Laws were also passed making it a crime punishable by fine to sell rum to the Indians, a recurring problem throughout the colonial period. Hogs were required to be ringed. Measures were passed authorizing the appointment of sheriffs, justices-of-the-peace, and coroners tor each county, and for the erection of a 16-foot by 24-foot house of correction in each of the three lower counties. Cattle were to be clearly marked as to ownership and certain types of fields were to be fenced to prevent disputes over ownership of straying farm animals.



William Penn

Proprietor of Delaware

All told, life in Sussex and its neighboring counties was becoming more settled, more civilized, and less of the rough and often fatal pioneering experience of years past. But it was far from tranquil, even with the new sense of security felt at the arrival of Penn.

One problem was the increasing incidence of pirates in the Delaware Bay and River. Lewes was plundered with depressing frequency during the late 17th and early 18th centuries as were isolated communities and farms further up the bay. That problem and the continuing controversy over the boundaries between Delaware and Maryland called, in the minds of many residents, for strong displays of military force which the peaceful Quakers of Pennsylvania were generally unwilling to provide.

The residents of the Delaware Colony also had the feeling that they were being denied their rightful representation in the joint councils of state while the rapidly expanding Pennsylvania colony was, they felt, getting more than its fair share. The residents of the three lower counties also felt that Penn and his officials were working harder to settle and develop Pennsylvania than they were the lower three counties.

These feelings of resentment, subtly heightened by agents of Lord Baltimore seeking to cause a revolt of Delawareans against the authority of Penn, finally led in 1702 to a formal separation of the three lower counties from the Pennsylvania Colony and the creation of a separate Delaware Colony, albeit still under the ultimate proprietary authority of Penn and, after his death in 1717, that of his sons John, Richard, and Thomas. Thus, it might almost be said in a general sense that Delaware owes its independent statehood to pirates and to the Lords Baltimore.

Separate colony or not, the new distinction meant little in terms of peace of mind as long as the dispute continued between the Calverts of Maryland and the Penns of Delaware and Pennsylvania. That dispute, which began in 1632 with the granting of all the land between the 38th and 40th parallels west of the Delaware River to Cecilius Calvert, Second Lord Baltimore, was to run on for more than a century and in the final analysis, it was to benefit neither set of proprietors.

The Great Boundary Dispute

When seen in its full extent, the Maryland-Delaware-Pennsylvania Boundary dispute is one of the most interesting - and ironic - chapters in American history. It was the subject of innumerable diplomatic battles, royal decrees, legislative sessions, surveys, counter-surveys, and outbursts of pique, anger, and greed. Before it was over, the argument led to scores of border raids from one colony into the other, indignities, deaths, and miseries of all sorts.

Border disputes along the Delmarva Peninsula had involved the Dutch and the Swedes; the Dutch and the English owners of the "New Haven Company", a group which established several early colonies along the upper Delaware; the Dutch and the second Lord Baltimore; Virginia and Maryland; and several other conflicts before William Penn ever entered the fray.

Cecilius Calvert had laid claim to the Whorekill repeatedly before 1672. Early that year, he sent surveyors to the area to prove once more that Lewistown and everything between it and the Chesapeake were part of Maryland. The small raid led later that year on the town by Captain Jones may have been as much an act of piracy on horseback as a legitimate raid. The burning of the town the following year by Captain Thomas Howell, described earlier, appears to have been ordered directly by Lord Baltimore. Whatever effect it might have had, however, was largely nullified by the Duke of York's conquest of New Netherlands, including the Delaware, the same year.

No matter how compelling a case Lord Baltimore appeared to have on paper, it was hardly a match for the fact that the King's brother had wrested the area from the hands of the Dutch by a military victory. When Penn was granted his deed to Pennsylvania in 1681 and shortly thereafter talked the duke into deeding him the three lower counties as well, few people cared to point out that the duke did not himself hold any patents to the area. Initial attempts by Penn to settle the boundary question with Lord Baltimore were given a less than cordial reception.

Before long, Lord Baltimore began advertising the area to settlers at extremely attractive prices in an effort to fill it with citizens of Maryland before Penn could do so with his own settlers. Many of the present-day inhabitants of Sussex County south of the Indian River and west of Georgetown are descended from such early Maryland settlers and the area continued to be thought of as Maryland until shortly before the American Revolution.

Throughout the later years of the 1600's and the early 1700's, border raids, both official and unofficial, were launched from Maryland into Delaware and Pennsylvania. While raids launched by Delawareans and Pennsylvanians into Maryland were probably every bit as frequent and brutal, they were generally unofficial in view of the habitual hesitancy on the part of Pennsylvania officials to call out the militia. What's more, Penn had a good case for his claims in spite of the fact that the man who deeded him the land didn't necessarily own it.

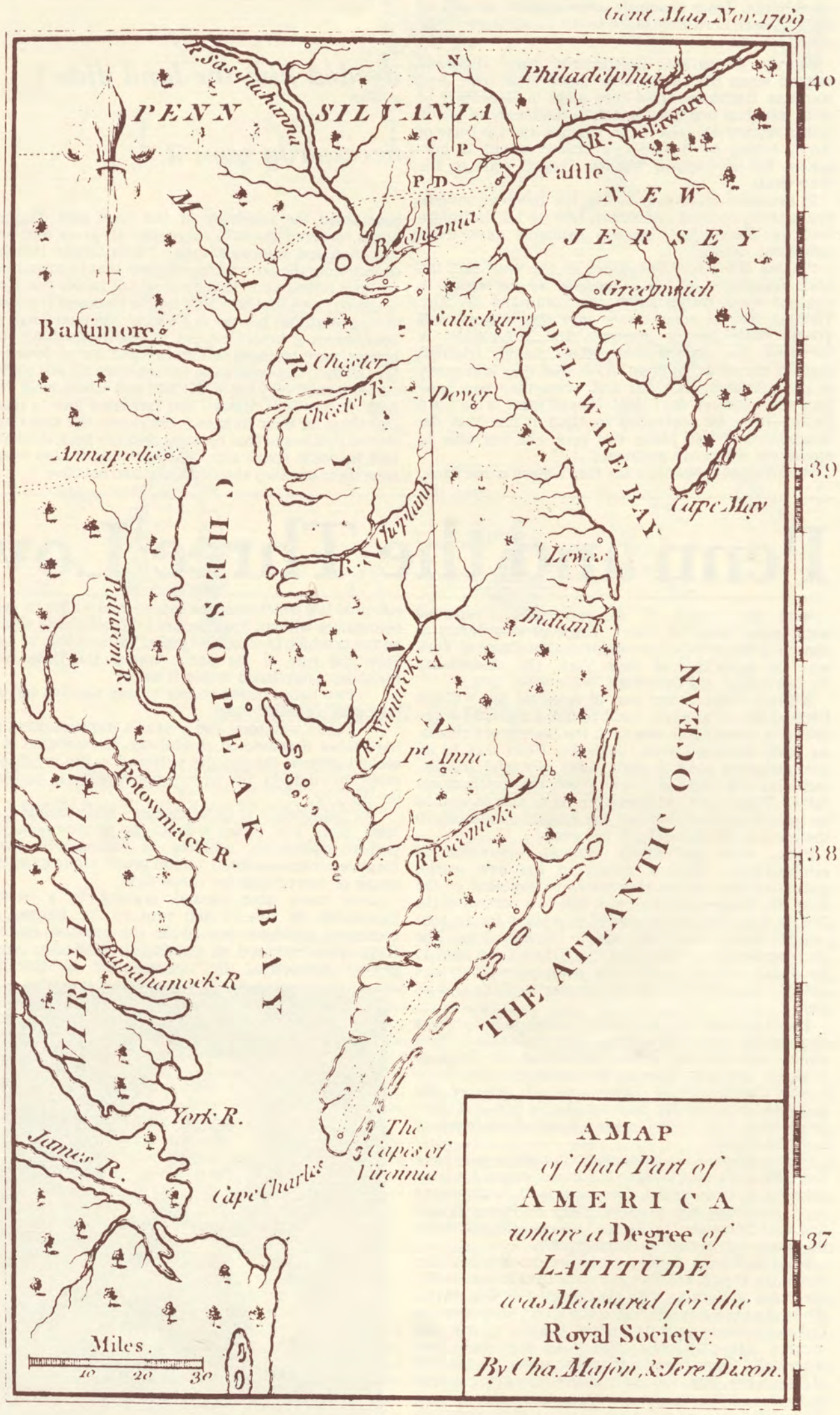
In 1685, both Lord Baltimore and Penn appeared before the council of King James II - James, Duke of York and friend of Penn had risen to the throne on the death of his elder brother, Charles II - Baltimore petitioned for the land in the three lower counties. Penn raised several arguments against Baltimore's petition one of which, as it happened, was a masterful ploy.

He merely pointed out that in originally petitioning for the land making up the Maryland Colony, the first Lord Baltimore had sworn that all the land was inhabited only by savages unaware of the existence of Almighty God when in fact it had already been settled by the Dutch at Zwaanendael the year before. The king's council found Penn's argument compelling enough that they decreed the two proprietors should split the area between the two bays down the middle from a line drawn west from Cape Henlopen.

Before the ruling could be implemented, James II was overthrown and replaced by his Protestant cousin, William of Orange. William, while no friend of Penn, was even less friendly with the Catholic Lord Baltimore.

Penn was removed from his proprietorship of Pennsylvania until he managed to improve his relations with the king and his lands were restored to him in 1694. Baltimore wasn't so lucky. He was overthrown in Maryland by an association of Protestants in 1689. In 1691 a royal government under the direct authority of the king took control of the government of the colony and the lands were not restored to the Calvert family until 1716.

When Lord Baltimore petitioned William's suc-



Surveyors

The British astronomers Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon were commissioned to complete the boundaries between Maryland and the colonies of Delaware and Pennsylvania in 1760. This map, reproduced from the Delaware Archives, shows their work.

cessor, Queen Anne, for the return of all his territory including the three lower counties on Delaware in 1707, she directed that the original 1685 decision to split the peninsula down the middle be implemented instead.

In the meantime, the border raids were continuing unabated. Charges and countercharges were flying back and forth between officials of the colonies. In some cases, Maryland authorities sought to tax landowners who believed themselves citizens of Delaware and vice versa. It is clear that the proprietors of both colonies had long since realized how destructive the situation was to their own interests, both in terms of contested property rights and in the number of potential settlers who were chased elsewhere by the fury of events.

According to one historian, William Penn, by now aged and infirm, became so worn out by the endless squabbles, court cases, and border raids, that he arranged to see his interest in the colonies. "At the last moment an attack of apoplexy prevented him from affixing his signature, and his mental troubles which followed never made it possible to transfer the land".

Agreements were signed between Baltimore and Penn's heirs in 1723 for a final settlement to the dispute but they were never finalized. In 1732, Charles Calvert, the fifth Lord Baltimore, met with representatives of the Penns once more to settle the dispute and that meeting proved to be the fatal undoing of his plans.

Although it is difficult to believe in the present age of sophisticated cartography, his Lordship was so unfamiliar with his territories that he submitted a map showing the location of Cape Henlopen as being 20 miles south of the entrance to Delaware Bay - at the present site of Fenwick Island which had originally been named Cape Henlopen by the Dutch navigator Cornelis May more than a century before.

Realizing immediately what Lord Baltimore had done, the Penns were exceedingly eager to agree to his terms. The agreement called for a final survey and settlement of the boundaries before the end of December, 1733. Under its terms, if the lines were not decided by then, the party which caused the delay was required to pay a penalty to the other side.

Needless to say, Calvert, when he realized his error, used every means possible to hold up the work beyond the deadline, thus voiding the agreement, but it was too late - the point from which the southern boundary of Delaware was to be run had already been fixed. Cape Henlopen was set at Fenwick Island, and that was that.

In 1734, Baltimore once more applied to the King to confirm his charter to the three lower counties on Delaware in an effort to sidestep the 1732 blunder. William Penn's sons and heirs, John, Richard, and Thomas Penn, filed a counter-suit in English chancery court, but the wheels of justice being even slower then than they are now, it was 15 years before the court made a decision in favor of the Penns.

The Cornerstone

The 1750 survey of John Watson, begun at Fenwick Island, established the much fought-over southern boundary of Sussex County. To mark the line, stones like this at the Fenwick Island Lighthouse were erected at five mile intervals. It bears the arms of Lord Baltimore on one side; those of Penn on the other.

Finally, in 1750 and 1751, the Pennsylvania surveyor John Watson was engaged to run a line west from "Cape Henlopen". When the line reached the western side of the peninsula and touched water, Maryland officials promptly claimed that it had reached the Chesapeake when in reality it had only reached Slaughter's Creek, three miles inland from the bay. That ploy resulted in another chancery court suit, this one requiring only ten years for a final verdict, once again in favor of the Penns.

In the meantime, Charles Calvert died and Frederick, the sixth and last Lord Baltimore, inherited his lands and his difficulties. In 1760, Frederick Calvert gave in at last. The English astronomers Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon were engaged to run the western boundary line north from the mid-point of the peninsula to intersect with a circle run 12 miles out from the courthouse tower at New Castle. The north-south boundary between the states of Maryland and Pennsylvania intersected with the circle at the 40th parallel and the famed Mason-Dixon line was complete.

It has been one of the continuing misconceptions of Sussex County history that the westerly line running from Fenwick Island to Delmar is also a part of the Mason-Dixon Line. While the two surveyors did, in fact, rerun the line in 1760, they did so only to reconfirm the earlier 1750-51 survey and they left it unchanged. That line, the southern border of Sussex County, has been known properly for the last 225 years as the Transpeninsular Line.

While Mason and Dixon completed their survey in 1760, it took another 15 years for the assemblies of the two colonies to formally implement the new boundaries. In the interval, there continued to be intermittent border squabbling, by then a tradition of several generations' duration. Both sides took time out for the French and Indian War during the late 1760's when both Marylanders and Delawareans had little time away from war on the western frontier to worry about who owned what at home.

With the passage of measures in the Delaware colonial assembly formally stating the boundaries, and allowing for the transfer of the claims of Maryland creditors against residents of the newly established Delaware to be transferred to the Delaware courts, the matter was once and for all complete - on October 28, 1775. If either party in the 143-year-old dispute felt any stirrings of satisfaction at the outcome, they were short-lived indeed. In less than a year, representatives of both colonies had signed the Declaration of Independence and the proprietary rights of both the Calverts and the Penns to their colonial domains had in effect ended forever.

Society Blossoms in pre-Revolutionary Sussex

Plantation House

The home of General John Dagworthy, which stood on the north side of Pepper Creek near the village of Dagsborough, is typical of the abodes of wealthy planters on the great land grants in the interior of the county. When Dagworthy was granted title to his lands, the area was in Maryland. (Reproduced from Conrad's "History of the State of Delaware")

In the years of the Delaware-Maryland boundary disputes, Sussex County and the adjoining areas of Maryland which were later to become a part of it were filling rapidly with settlers. The early years of a few lone settlers braving the wilderness was giving way to large plantations, the earliest mills and other small industries, villages at strategic locations along navigable streams and other signs of progress.

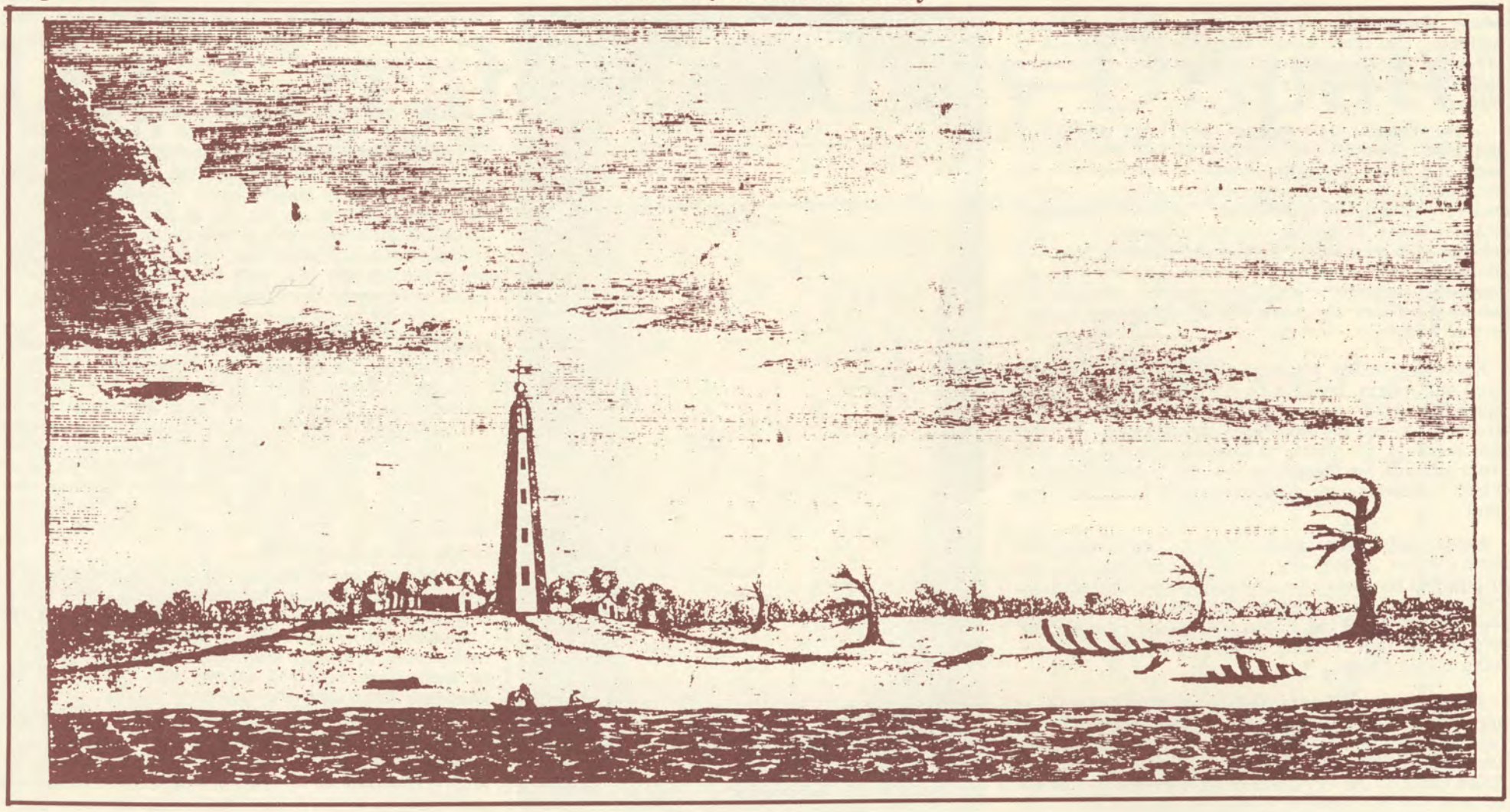
The proprietor of Maryland continued to issue warrants for land grants in much of what is now Sussex until 1765. In some cases land was purchased, often for little more than a few gallons of rum, from the local Indians who were beginning to seek refuge tarther and farther back in as yet unsettled areas in an effort to escape the patterns of early development.

Many families in what is today southwestern and southeastern Sussex originally came into the area from other parts of Maryland and Virginia. Among those early families in such present-day regions of Sussex as Northwest Fork Hundred, Nanticoke Hundred, Broad Creek Hundred, Little Creek Hundred, Gumboro Hundred, Dagsboro Hundred, and Baltimore Hundred were such names as Polk, Layfield, Layton, Adams, Nutter, Ricords (Rickards), Jacobs, Wheatley, Moore, Steele, Lewis, O'Neal, Philips, Timmons, Stockley, Whaley, Wingate, Messick, Bull, Truitt, Collins, Houston, Marvel, Elliott and others, most of which would be familiar to Sussex Countians of 1975.

The Penns largely confined their grants to the area above the Indian River and east of the present center of the county. At first there were only three hundreds in Sussex - Indian River, Cedar Creek, and Broadkill. The western boundaries of the county did not yet exist in any real form. The boundaries of the hundreds extended west as far as Sussex itself did. Thus, some early grants made by the Penns in the present Georgetown Hundred, for instance, were listed on the early deed books as being in Broadkill Hundred.

One early Penn grant in Indian River Hundred was made to Peter Waples in 1692 for a tract on Indian River near the present-day Warwick. Waples was granted a second tract lying on the other side of the river in present-day Dagsboro Hundred as well. He asked for and received permission to extablish a ferry across the river "for ye mutual commodacon correspondency of the Inhabitants of the County with those of the province of Maryland".

The names of the early grants as recorded in the records of Worcester and Somerset Counties of Maryland and those of Sussex display a flourish and a yen for independence typical of the age. Among the hundreds of early grants were such plantations as Gordon's Choice, Lost Conclusion, Batchelor's Delight (this 500 acre tract is listed by Scharf as having been worth 10,000 lbs. of tobacco), Puzzlewit, Liberty Plain,



Signs of Progress

This early view of the Cape Henlopen Lighthouse, circa 1780, shows the touches of progress which were underway in the county by the revolution. Built by the British in 1765, it replaced an earlier wooden structure. The engraving also attempts to show the way in which the Henlopen dunes were burying a forest behind them as they moved. It appeared in the Columbian Magazine in Feb., 1788. (Courtesy of Ronald F. Dodd)

Lane's Adventure, Houston's Folly, Archibald's Discovery and countless others.

The only established town in the county continued to be the county seat at Lewes. During the 1720's, the town had a population estimated by the late Chief Justice and Delaware historian Daniel F. Wolcott at about 60 families, 300 persons in all. In 1728, four years after becoming sheriff of Sussex, Ryves Holt estimated the population of the county to be 1750 persons.

Traveling conditions overland in the county were an indignity at best. John Watson, the Pennsylvania surveyor who ran the Transpeninsular Line from Fenwick Island west in 1750 and 1751, recorded in his journal that the road northward from Lewes to Dover was a sea of mud. "A Horse in the midst of the Road had like to have mired sinking up to his belly in the sand and water", he wrote. . .and he was writing about the main highway.

Many early settlers were regular users of the original Indian trails in the area. They had run from village to village along the peninsula and thus formed a reasonably direct network if one was willing to accept the bad conditions. Most farmers lived near navigable streams and possessed one sort or another of boat. A culture grew up which was as close to and dependent on the sea as it was to the land and many men spent years at sea before returning home to settle down to farming or tending store or, as in the case of Holt, becoming Chief Justice and Speaker of the Assembly.

Judge's House

The home of chief justice Ryves Holt, dating from the early 17th century, still stands on Lewes' Second Street near the former site of the courthouse where Holt served.

In those days before large-scale farming and building operations had filled the rivers and streams of Sussex with silt, they were navigable much nearer their sources than is the case today. Bethel and Milton were to become ship and boatbuilding centers in the next century. Today Broad Creek and the Broadkill River admit only small craft.

Early industry was becoming established in the county. Grist mills were being built on streams with sufficient fall to allow a dam. In the 19th century, some streams had as many as four and five dams on their length before they entered the tidewater.

Early sawmills were coming into existence in the county. Forges were coming into being and businessmen were taking note of the great amounts of iron ore in streams in central and western Sussex. Known as bog ore, it was low grade but it was easily available in an age when tunnel mining was extremely difficult.

A forge had been started in western Sussex before the revolution and they were to grow up elsewhere in the decades to follow.

Captain John Dagworthy, a Maryland French and Indian War hero, had been awarded a vast land grant in Worcester County. Only a few years later, it became a portion of Sussex County and was redeeded to Dagsworthy by the Penns under the name, "Dagworthy's Conquest". That and other tracts owned by Dagworthy in the area covered much of what is now Dagsboro (Dagsborough), Gumboro, and Broad Creek Hundreds, including much of the Great Cypress Swamp.

That 50,000 acres of bald cypress, cedar, virgin pine, and hardwoods was a wonderland. Owls were reported with heads equal in size to that of a small calf. The last bears on the lower peninsula lingered there. It was occasionally a haven for criminals and was, during the revolution, to be the refuge of many a loyalist in the days when the sound of hundreds of riders, hooves scarring the mud roads, was heard in the night.

Dagworthy had begun a sawmill near the swamp and was beginning to use its resources. In later years the cypress swamp and the system of forests and swamps moving from it down the Pocomoke provided the cypress shingles for the old houses of the county. The old farms in the Hundreds surrounding the swamps had cypress split rail fences and cypress outbuildings.

The cedar and cypress were used in the shipbuilding industry of the young America during the 19th century. In the 1820's slaves dug a great ditch through the swamp to open more of the surrounding land to farming. It was added to over the years until a system of ditches opened up four-fifths of the original acreage of the swamp to farming, settlement, and development.

By the pre-Revolutionary War era, country stores had begun at crossroads and farming hamlets. Some were later to grow into towns and others, like Angola, never grew a great deal. Assemblyman Thomas Robinson, a wealthy and influential resident of Indian River Hundred, ran a store and tended to his vast acreage along Angola Neck.

Money for all forms of commerce was in extremely short supply in Sussex as in other areas of the colonies and trade was generally conducted in terms of pounds of tobacco and other forms of non-monetary currency.

The Anglican Church was also growing on Delmarva. Although some historians record the existence of an Anglican congregation at Lewes as early as 1681, the first St. Peter's Church was not built there until 1724. It was followed shortly with the establishment of Anglican churches in outlying districts.

St. Matthews Church was in its formative stages in Cedar Creek Hundred by 1717 as was Prince George's in Dagsboro Hundred. Prince George's was originally built as an outlying "chapel-at-ease" to old St. Martin's Church situated near the present town of Showell, Md. Old Christ Church on Broad Creek near the present town of Laurel was part of Maryland's Stepney Parish at its origin, which dated back to 1685. The records of the parish list rectors who served both Stepney and Christ Church, Broad Creek, as early as 1704, although the present building was not erected for some decades thereafter. Anglican Churches were also built at Angola in Indian River Hundred in 1719 and in Broadkill Hundred in 1729.

The Presbyterian Church also got an early start in Sussex as did the Quakers. The Philadelphia Presbyterian Synod authorized the establishment of a presbytery of "Lewis-town" in 1735 and it is probable that a church was in existence there as early as 1707. Churches followed at Cool Spring shortly thereafter, at Broad Creek in 1760, and at Blackwater in Baltimore Hundred in 1767. What has become known in later years as "Saw Mill Presbyterian Church"

which once stood on Cow Bridge Branch above the present town of Millsboro was established before 1750 near the "Head of Indian River".

A Quaker Meeting was in existence at Lewes as early as 1712 with services held at the home of one Cornelius Wiltbank, a descendent of Hermanius Wiltbank, the first permanent settler in the area. A Society of Friends was established at Cool Spring by 1720 and a meeting house was erected in the area in 1742.

The Methodist and Baptist Churches were becoming active in Sussex by the time of the Revolution but the denominations played only a small part in the life of Sussex Countians before that time.

With the exception of a few early private schools in Lewes, what education was to be had in the county came through the churches whose early pastors were among the few literate residents of Sussex in the early 18th century.

The county government, such as it was, consisted largely of a sheriff and provincial courts together with offices such as prothonotary and recorder of deeds necessary to their proper functioning. Ryves Holt, who had come to Lewes with his wife and small daughter to assume the duties of naval officer of the now flourishing port of Lewes in 1721, held a wide variety of offices thereafter. He served as sheriff from 1724 to 1730, as King's Attorney for Sussex (the equivalent of a present-day deputy attorney general) from 1733 to 1745, and was Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Three Lower Counties from 1745 until his death in 1763.

Holt also found time, among other things, to operate a trading business, serve 16 terms in the colonial assembly of the Three Lower Counties during eight of which he was elected speaker; serve as Lieutenant Colonel of the Sussex County Militia Battalion during the French and Indian War; and sit on the commission established by the Penns and the Calverts in 1750 to oversee the survey of the county's southern boundary.

Simplicity

Lewes' 1750 Maull House, built about 1750, is typical of 18th century construction in Sussex, with its gambrel roof and frame and shingle construction. In the early 19th century, the Maull family entertained the brother of Napoleon, Joseph Bonaparte and his Baltimore bride when their ship wrecked off Lewes in a storm. The house has been extensively restored by the Col. David Hall Chapter of the D.A.R.

Most interesting, however, in terms of the county government of the day, was Holt's dual role as chief justice and prothonotary of the Court of Common Pleas of Sussex. In his account of Holt's career, Justice Wolcott notes that from 1753 to 1763 Holt held the prothonotary position for the Sussex Court of Common Pleas, "which was one of the trial courts from which appeals were taken to the court of which he was chief justice."

It is likely that the practice was a common one in an age when even the highest of officials received relatively low pay for their services and could probably not have served in government without an income from the fees collected by such court officers as prothonotary.

In addition to the continuing boundary raids and disputes which made life in the county in those days before the revolution uncertain at best, there was also the almost constant danger of attack by pirates. The Delaware Bay was a favorite anchorage for several well-known members of the profession and a multitude of lesser lights.

It has been recorded that the infamous Captain William Kidd anchored in the bay off Lewes on his return from a lucrative voyage to the East Indies in 1700. Lewes merchants, much to the consternation of provincial authorities, were only too happy to trade with him, at the same time failing to pay any customs duties on their purchases.

The town was raided and sacked repeatedly by pirates during the late 17th and 18th centuries. During King William's War between the English and the French in 1698, Lewes was "plundered by the crew of a French Sloop" according to former state archivist Leon DeValinger, Jr. DeValinger also noted in a 1950 article on the "Burning of the Whorekill" that French privateers attempted landings in August of 1703 and August of 1709 during Queen Anne's War.

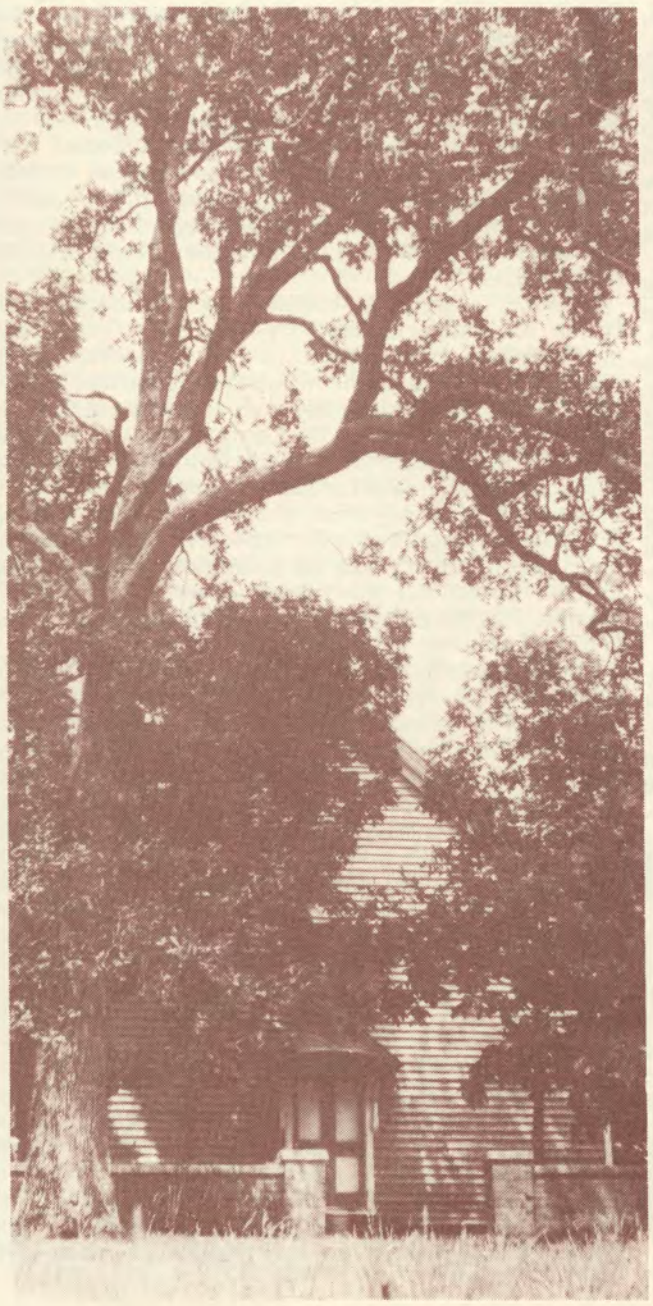
Those more or less official incursions during time of war were augmented by less formal raids by pirates for decades. It was believed by many residents of the area that some pirates had influence with high-ranking provincial officials. Whether or not that was the case, it is certainly true that the officials located in Philadelphia did little more than commiserate with their less secure subjects to the south.

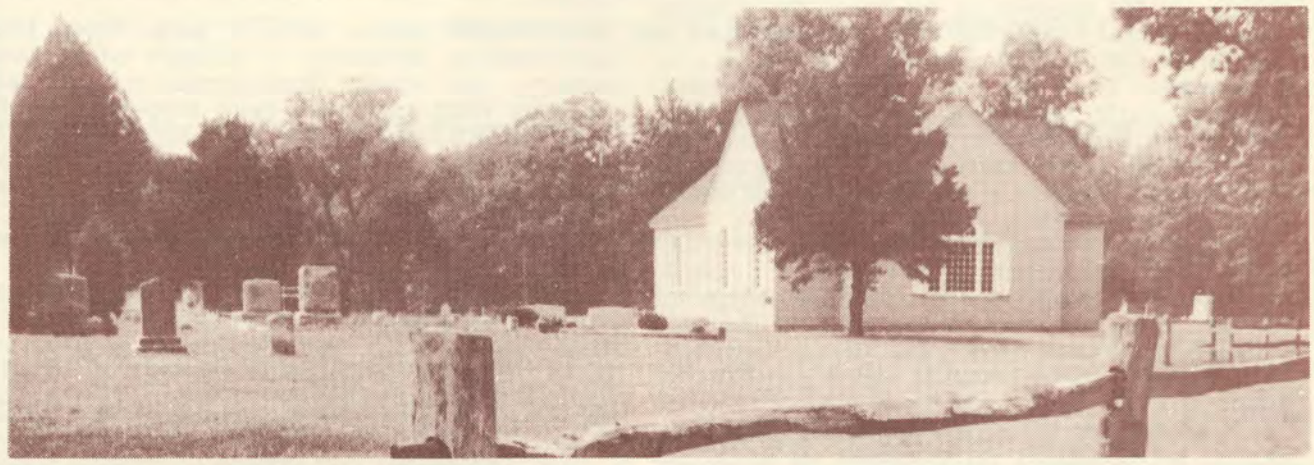
When Holt sent an express vessel to Philadelphia in September of 1747 with the news that French privateers were active in the bay off Lewes, officials there "could only lament their & the good People of Lewes Town's unhappiness in being thus remedilessly exposed to any Attempts the Enemy should please to make".

That inactivity on the part of Pennsylvania authorites was in no small part responsible for the constant schism between the Three Lower Counties and the Colony of Pennsylvania.

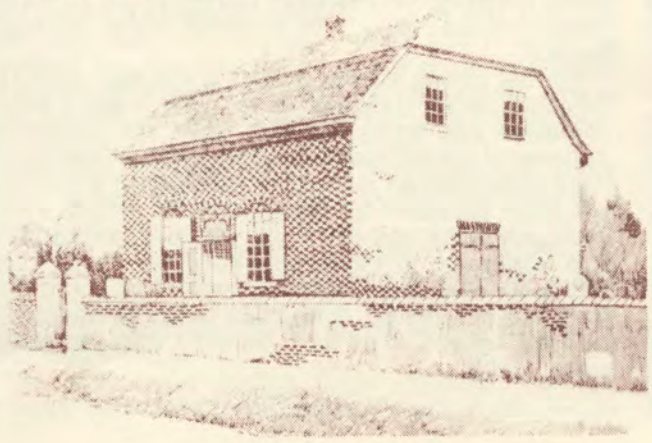
18th century Sussex Countians were conservative

and their houses of worship reflected that trait.





One of the best remaining vestiges of life in pre-revolutionary Sussex County lies in our heritage of early churches, four of which are illustrated here. Clockwise from top are: Prince George's Chapel, .. Dagsboro, erected in the 1750's and now a state historical museum; Old Christ Church on Chipman's Pond near Laurel, dating from about the same era and like Prince George's, once a part of a Maryland parish of the Anglican Church; Lewes' first Presbyterian church, dating from the 1720's and one of the few brick buildings in Sussex, replaced in the early 19th century by the present church building; Old Blackwater Presbyterian Church near Clarksville, erected in 1767.



1776: The Coming of the Revolution

Life in Sussex County and the surrounding peninsula has about it a lingering air of strict and rock-ribbed conservatism which might be said to be the very breath of the American Revolutionary era as it was known on Delmarva. It is easy to consider, after two centuries of tales about the fathers of our country and their revolutionary spirit, that all of the 13 colonies were solidly committed to the fight for independence. Such an assumption would be a mistake.

It has been variously estimated that anywhere from half to four-fifths of the 14,000 Sussex Countians in 1776 were loyalists, committed, if not absolutely to the king, at least to a very cautious approach to independence.[1] There is little doubt that the cause of independence ran away with many Sussex Countians in 1775 and 1776 and that events in the colonies proceeded with a speed foreign to the leisurely pace of existence which had been the rule on Delmarva for 50 years. In the years before the revolution Sussex County and its neighboring counties on Delmarva were very English, very agricultural, very isolated, and very conservative. The people were rooted to the soil and to a view of themselves as Englishmen.

They were, in the years to follow, forced to conceive of themselves in an entirely new .... a revolutionary .... way. It has often been observed that tumultuous changes in society force conventional political viewpoints to the extremes of the political scale. So it was for Sussex in the years following that day in 1776 when the brave, impassioned, and all-too-puny Continental Congress declared the 13 American colonies along the eastern seaboard free from the bonds tying them to the mother country of Great Britain.

Before 1776, the Delaware Colony had encompassed representatives of every political viewpoint from conservative to extreme liberal. The conservatives, known as Tories in the parlance of the day, were strongly in the majority in the lower two counties while the liberal Whigs generally controlled events in New Castle County. There were several reasons for the presence of strong Tory elements in Sussex. Following early settlement by Dutch and other nationalities, English settlers had gradually migrated to the area from other parts of the peninsula until by 1775, the approximately 14,000 residents of the county were of overwhelmingly English origin.

Along with their English heritage went a generally strong belief in the tenets of the Church of England. Although there were, in fact, more Presbyterian churches in the county by the outbreak of the war, Presbyterianism was a relatively new development and the Anglicans continued to hold a considerable numerical edge. Many historians have pointed out that while the Presbyterians tended to be favorably disposed to the fight for independence, the Anglicans tended, in general, to be more conservative in their outlook.

The Quakers were also represented in the religious make-up of Sussex in 1776 with three meeting houses in the county - at Cool Spring, Marshy Creek, and Cedar Creek. The Quakers, by religion and philosophy pacifists, generally sought to avoid active involvement in the struggle that was to follow. Thev were therefore seen by some of the more radical Whigs as Tory sympathizers, though this was often not the case.

In the Sussex of 1776, religion played a large part in daily life. Ministers, often among the only educated persons in an area, strongly influenced the opinions of their congregation on political as well as religious questions. Thus, the war for independence was to assume to some extent the appearance of a religious war in Sussex before it was over.

Another factor contributing to the conservative views of Sussex Countians was the county's isolation. In an era when the primary means of transportation was by boat or bad roads, Delmarva was removed from the great thoroughfares of inter-colonial commerce. Most of the county's contact with the outside world came from the ships, many of them English, that stopped at Lewes or from the smaller coastal trading vessels which plied the navigable rivers and creeks.

The county had no newspapers of its own; there were none in the state, for that matter, and those printed in Philadelphia were inadequate in their coverage of Delaware events.

It has been estimated that half to four-fifths of the 14,000 Sussex Countians in 1776 were loyalists, committed, if not to the King, at least cautious to a very approach to independence . . .

As proprietary colonies, both Delaware and Maryland were spared much of the machinery of royal government and the harsh dictates such governments meted out to residents of such royal colonies as New York, Massachusetts, and Virginia. By comparison the Penns of Delaware and Pennsylvania were mild in their conduct of government, and most public officials at all but the highest echelons were Delawareans and Pennsylvanians.

Thus, while the populace of Sussex did generally support the sanctions taken by the early Continental Congress against England in response to such measures as the Stamp Act, they stopped short of calling for outright independence, lacking much of the impetus that drove other areas to take more radical stands.

New Castle County, with its large Scotch-Irish representation, proximity to northern cities, early industry, and strong Presbyterian outlook, was generally Whig and much more supportive of the moves toward independence. Such support began to waver in Sussex and Kent when talk in Congress and throughout the colonies began to move more and more toward a complete break with England, but by then it was too late for the loyalists of Sussex to turn events around.

It is a curiosity of Delaware History that the strong loyalist stand taken by the Tories of Sussex during the Revolution has often been overlooked. It had continued to be regularly played down until 1940 with the publication of a monograph, "The Delaware Loyalists" by Dr. Harold Bell Hancock, a Dover native and Delaware historian.

While the presence of such figures as Col. David and Henry Fisher of Lewes; Gen John Dagworthy, Col. Simon Kollock, and Col. John Jones of Dagsborough Hundred, and Col. Joseph Vaughn and Col. Nathaniel Mitchell of Broad Creek Hundred serve as evidence of a body of patriotic sentiment in the county, staunch pro-independence elements were in an extreme minority.

The loyalist stand taken by Sussex was entirely logical when viewed in the terms of the day and it should be noted that in many cases the residents of the county displayed as much courage and resolve in defending their status as Englishmen as their more liberal opponents showed in the opposite direction. Two hundred years of emphasis on the achievements of the founding fathers have caused many important aspects of the struggle to be swept under the rug of history.

For the people of Sussex in 1776 and the years that followed, the struggle was all too real. It was a time of confusion and terror, a time when the established patterns of generations were quivering and falling into ruins about the feet of the men and women whose lives had been governed by those patterns. It was a time when men who had exercised the greatest authority and leadership in the county suddenly found themselves outlaws, their views declared illegal, and those they had considered dangerous radicals leading the colonies toward what they believed was the wildest sort of folly.

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The decade preceding the actual outbreak of hostilities at Concord and Lexington in April of 1775 was characterized by a titanic struggle between the colonies and Parliament over the question of what sovereign powers the mother country had over the growing domain across the Atlantic.

The conception of many leaders in Parliament that the colonies had been established and continued to exist largely for the economic advantage of England led to the passage of a series of repressive import duties and taxes on the colonies. Those measures affected the Americans in that most tender of soft spots, the pocketbook. At the same time, the purely economic aspects of the problem were made worse by the colonists' view of themselves as full-fledged British citizens with all the sovereign rights and freedoms associated with that designation, and by their unwillingness to accept the dictates of Parliament without any representation in that bodv.

After the passage of each series of repressive measures, the ensuing fire storm of protest in the colonies led to a moderation of those measures in Parliament. The pattern of the English authorities in first passing the measures and then giving in to the colonists when those measures led to difficulties helped greatly to add fuel to the fire for independence.

The events which led to the ultimate break, if they can be isolated at all from the complex affairs between Britain and her colonies, might be said to have stemmed from the passage of the Townshend Acts by Parliament in 1767. Those measures established import duties on a wide variety of imported goods, the proceeds of which were to be used to defray the cost of royal government in the colonies.

The new acts were especially damaging to the colonial cause since in the past the colonial assemblies themselves had in most cases levied taxes to pay the cost of that government, a practice which had given them at least some control over the nature of their own government. By removing the "power of the purse" from the hands of the colonial assemblies, the Townshend Acts would have done much to further increase crown authority over the colonies.

The protest, especially in royal colonies like Massachusetts and New York, was so great that by 1770, Parliament moderated its position by dropping the duties from everything except tea, thus giving in on almost all points but its fundamental right to tax the colonies.

In short order, the colonists began to purchase Dutch tea smuggled in duty-free, thus further undermining royal authority. In 1773, Frederick, Lord North, the English prime minister, in an effort to once again exert crown authority and, at the same time, to bail the British East India Company out of a fiscal crisis, got a measure through Parliament enabling the company to sell its tea for the first time in the colonies. Thus, even after payment of the Townshend duty on tea, the company could offer its wares to the colonists more cheaply then could the smugglers. It was almost a form of official blackmail since by buying the cheaper tea, the colonists would be conceding the right of Parliament to levy external taxes for revenue.

The colonists by and large did not fall for the bait. In Boston and several other places "tea-parties" were organized to throw the East India Company tea overboard before it had been unloaded from ships, thereby symbolically denying to Parliament the right of external taxation. Rather than give in once more, the British government took strong measures against the port of Boston and the colony of Massachusetts, closing the port of Boston, removing the colonial capital of Massachusetts, closing the port of Boston, removing the colonial capital to Salem, Massachusetts, "royalizing" the upper house of the Massachusetts assembly, providing for the quartering of British troops in Boston to enforce crown authority, and making life in the colony miserable in other ways as well.[2] These "Intolerable Acts" led directly to the first Continental Congress early in 1775 and to the radicalization of of sentiment in the 13 colonies to the point where the final break was virtually inevitable.

In Delaware in 1773, a group of patriots formed to keep the East India tea out of the colony. Calling itself "The Committee for tarring and feathering," the group entreated Delaware Bay pilots not to escort the

first tea ship up the bay and river and warned them, "... this you may depend on, that whatever pilot brings her into the river, such pilot will be marked for his treason and will never afterwards meet with the least encouragement in his business. Like Cain, he will be hung out as a spectacle to all nations, and be forever recorded as the damned traitorous pilot who brought up the tea ship ...". When a ship fiinally did arrive at Chester on Christmas Day of 1773, a crowd of over 8,000 citizens of the area forced it to turn back without unloading its carge.

In October of 1773, the Delaware Assembly established the colony's first "Committee of Correspondence and Communication with the other Colonies" to remain in contact with similar movements throughout the colonies. Its members, all assemblymen, were Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean, John McKinly, and Thomas Robinson. Even at that time the political makeup of the assembly was conservative enough that of the five members of the first committee of correspondence, only two, Rodney and McKean, were strongly in favor of independence. Two more, Read and McKinly were moderates who were later to support the patriot cause but never entirely without reservation. The fifth member and the only Sussex Countian, Thomas Robinson, of Indian River Hundred, was later to become the state's most notorious loyalist.

An examination of the gradual shift from responsible opposition to the repressive dictates of the British government to outright rebellion shows many such curious alignments. Early in 1774, for instance, meetings were held in each county to discuss the growing struggle and the need for a general continental congress. Among the resolutions passed by the Sussex meeting, held in Lewistown on July 23, was the most radical official utterance yet made by Delawareans. It was resolved: "That it is the inherent right of British subjects to be taxed by their own consent, or by Representatives chosen by themselves only; and that every Act of the British Parliament respecting the Internal police of North America is unconstitutional, and an invasion of our just rights and liberties."

At the same time, the Sussex Countians reaffirmed that, "the inhabitants of this county do owe and will pay allegiance to his majesty King George III." The committee appointed at this meeting to meet the following month with those of Kent and New Castle to choose delegates to the first Continental Congress included Thomas Robinson, Levin Crapper, Boaz Manlove, Benjamin Burton, John Wiltbank, Stephen Townsend, David Hall, Rev. Matthew Wilson, Jacob Moore, John Clowes, Daniel Nunez, John Rodney, and Wm. Perry. Four years later Robinson and Manlove, both assemblymen and respected politicians in 1774, had been forced to flee, their property confiscated and their lives in ruins. Hall, Moore, Rodney, and Perry went on to become continental officers.

The first congress met in September of 1774 in Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia. The delegates from Delaware were Caesar Rodney, Thomas McKean, and George Read. Among the measures passed were "non-importation, non-consumption and non-exportation" agreements in effect dissolving all commercial agreements with Great Britain after December 1, 1774, unless Parliament lifted the repressive statutes which had started the process in motion in the first place.

In the spring of 1775, congress took a further step toward the ultimate break when it was deemed necessary by the members to establish a military force for the protection of the colonies. The Delaware Assembly agreed shortly thereafter to bear whatever the state's share should be of the expenses involved.

Shortly thereafter, a group of staunch patriots in what is today southwestern Sussex, and was then still officially in limbo between Sussex and neighboring Maryland, met with the intention of establishing a separate county of western Sussex. In a note on their meeting in his "History of Delaware" J. Thomas Scharf wrote, "Following the chronological order of events, mention should be made ... of the project to organize a fourth county in Delaware. The committee having the plan in charge, held a meeting at Broad Creek, Head of Indian River, June 20, 1775, and adopted resolutions declaring that, although they were not represented in the Delaware Assembly, they yet reposed such confidence in the delegates to Congress that they would bind themselves to support all its measures. The resolutions continue: 'And further to support the union of the Colonies on which under God, our safety depends, we unanimously resolve that John Dagworthy, John Jones, John Tennant, John Collins, Simon Kollock, Wm. Holland, Samuel Slosse, Joshua Polk, Clement Bayley, Wm. Polk, John Mitchell, Peter Hubbard and Elijah Cannon be appointed to a committee to meet and correspond with the other committees of this and the other governments...' "

"'And whereas disadvantageous conclusions may probably be drawn from the conduct of the people here, with respect to their entering into this Association at this late period, this committee does with pleasure embrace this opportunity to satisfy our fellow-subjects in general that our backwardness in this affair has been totally and wholly owing to the fluctuating or unsettled state of the lines or boundaries between the two governments of Pennsylvania and Maryland, and not from the influence of any Tories amongst us, or any disregard to the common cause ..' "

' "...In this new County military preparations for self-defense against the bloody attacks of the infatuated British ministry are carried on with great spirit. It is expected we shall soon have fifteen hundred or more of a well-trained militia; and the committee are endeavoring to obtain the necessary supplies of warlike stores'."

While the final boundary between the colonies of Delaware and Maryland was not formally enacted in the Delaware Assembly until October of that year, the lines had been run 15 years before and it is an interesting commentary on the power of the seemingly interminable boundary conflict that as late as June of 1775, men of southern and western Sussex should still be so vague as to their proper legal status.

Even though the plan for a fourth county was never implemented, the committee's resolutions came at a good time for the embattled Whigs of lower Delaware. As the actions of Congress moved the colonies ever closer to the moment of decision that was to come on July 4, 1776, something of a conservative back-lash was occurring among the Tories of Sussex County.

The well-known Indian River Hundred farmer, store-keeper, and Assemblyman Thomas Robinson, as had been noted previously, had been involved in the highest councils of government in the colony even while his clear loyalist views were known. It is possible that Robinson became more and more outspoken in his views as the course of the colonies became more and more apparent to him. Or it may have been that Robinson had always spoken his mind and it had simply taken some time for the increasingly radical Whigs of the area to feel powerfully enough to take him on.

In any case, the newly established Sussex County Committee of Correspondence, after some prodding, issued a circular in July of 1775 noting that they had taken too little notice of Robinson's loyalist views in the past and thus, "Mr. Robinson, weakly imagining that this tenderness and lenity proceeded from fear, began to vaunt and exult, and with an effrontery ever the companion of ignorance proceeded more boldly and openly to stamp his vile and slavish ministerial principles upon the weak and unwary, over too many of whom, in the forests of Sussex and Maryland, by means of his office and store, he has too much influence."

At the committee meeting from which the circular against Robinson emerged, members collected testimony against him. One man told of seeing Robinson's clerk sell "two parcels of tea" to several customers in spite of the ban against sales of the substance.

Another testifies that he had told Robinson the committee was advising people to band together to defend their liberties and the assemblyman had replied, "They were a pack of fools, for it was taking up arms against the King; ... and that the great people were only leading the poor into a premunire, and after they had done it would not help them out of it."

TO THE

DELAWARE PILOTS.

THE Regard we have for your Characters, and our Desire to promote your future Peace and Safety, are the Occasion of this Third Address to you

IN our second Letter we acquainted you, that the Tea Ship was a Three Decker: We are now informed by good Authority, she is not a Three Decker, but *an old black Ship, without a Head, or any Ornaments.*

THE *Captain* is a *short fat* Fellow, and a little *obstinate* withal ....So much the worse for him.....For, to sure as he *rides rusty*, We shall heave him Keel out, and see that his Bottom be well fired, scrubb'd and paid ....His Upper-Works too, will have an Overhawling.....and as it is said, he has a good deal of *Quick Work* about him, We will take particular Care that such Part of him undergoes a thorough Rummaging

WE have a still *worse Account* of *his Owner*, ... for it is said, the Ship POLLY was bought by him on Purpose, to make a Penny of us; and that he and Captain *Ayres* were well advised of the Risque they would run, in thus daring to insult and abuse us.

Captain Ayres was here in the Time of the Stamp Act, and ought to have known our People better, than to have expected we would be so mean as to suffer his *rotten* TEA to be funnel'd down our Throats, with the *Parliament's Duty* mixed with it

WE know him well, and have calculated to a Gill and a Feather, how much it will require to fit him for an *American Exhibition*. And we hope, not one of your Body will behave so ill, as to oblige us to clap him in the Cart along Side of the *Captain*.

WE must repeat, that the SHIP POLEY is an *old black Ship*, of about Two Hundred and Fifty Tons burthen, *without a Head*, and without *Ornaments* ....and, that CAPTAIN AYRES is a *thick chunky Fellow* .....such. TAKE CARE to AVOID THEM.

YOUR OLD FRIENDS,

THE COMMITTEE FOR TARRING AND FEATHERING

Thinly-veiled threat

Nathaniel Mitchell of Broad Creek testified that Robinson had called the Continental Congress, "an unconstitutional body of men and that the great men were pushing the common people between them and all danger."

When, in light of this testimony, the committee summoned Robinson to appear before them on July 22 to answer the charges against him, he sent word that "he did not, nor could not, think of coming before them unless he could bring forty or fifty armed men with him.' As far as taking any further active measures against Robinson, the committee was largely at a loss for the time being since they had no military force as yet. All that could be done to make an example of Robinson at that early stage in the conflict was to label him, "to the publick, as an enemy to his country and a contumacious opposer of liberty and the natural rights of mankind," and to urge all citizens, "to break off all dealings and commercial connections" with him.

Far from being cowed into submission by the committee's resolution, which was printed in a Philadelphia newspaper, Robinson countered with a certificate from five members of the inspection subcommittee of the committee of correspondence that the earlier resolution has been illegal since it was enacted by only four members when a quorum of seven was required for such an action. In their statement, the five inspection committee members said in part, "... The public is therefore desired to suspend their opinion in regard to said Robinson until he is heard by the General Committee."

In September, the newly established Council of Safety organized the colonial militia. Three battalions in New Castle County were organized into a brigade with John McKinly as brigadier general. Kent County's two battalions and one battalion from Western Sussex were organized into a brigade under Brigadier General Caesar Rodney. The remaining three battalions in Sussex under David Hall, John Dagworthy, and Jacob Moore were organized into a third brigade under the command of Brigadier General John Dagworthy. The on-paper strength of the militia stood at about 5.000.

Early in 1775, Captain (later Major) Henry Fisher of Lewes was established as a permanent lookout scout to alert the Continental Congress of any British warships in the area, and pilots were warned against escorting any British men-of-war up the river. In September a "chevaux-de-frise" or armored barrier was put in place across the upper Delaware River south of Philadelphia. The buoys were removed from the Delaware and pilots were ordered to suspend their activities except when on special service. Fisher was later empowered by Congress to raise a company of 100 men for the defense of the Cape "and near country" and arm them at his own expense. He was also given overall command of the pilots in the river.

Early in 1776, the new force got a chance to test their mettle against the British when the man-of-way "Roebuck" entered the bay in the last week of March accompanied by a tender. Col. John Haslet, then commander of the Delaware Militia, wrote on April 9 to inform Congress of the affair. "I beg leave to inform you that, being well acquainted with the defenceless condition of the County of Sussex, on the first intimation of the Roebuck being the Road of Lewes, two companies of the battalion still under my command were directed to do duty there, where they still continue ....".

The first engagement between the Delawareans and the British occurred on Sunday, April 7, when a schooner owned by Nehemiah Field of Lewes which had been sent by the Council of Safety of Sussex to acquire powder arrived at the mouth of the bay and encountered the British vessels.

According to a report of the ensuing incident enclosed in an April 10 letter from Haslet to President John Hancock of the Continental Congress, "... an express came from the Light House Guard to Lewes, with intelligence that Capt. Field, who commanded the schooner .... demanded assistance to unload her. I gave orders for the troops to march as soon as the boats could be had to ferry them across the creek, which the inhabitants procured with amazing despatch. We then marched with the utmost expedition to reinforce our guard, which had taken post by the schooner to assist in discharging her cargo...She then lay seven or eight miles to the southward of our Cape. At the time of our arrival, the (British) tender, making sail, bore down upon the schooner; on observing this the men immediately ran her (the schooner) on shore. Our troops were outgone by the tender, though they marched at the rate of seven miles per hour. Just before our arrival the tender gave our guard a broadside with swivels and musketry, which they returned."

"On our junction, a constant fire was kept up for some time, until we perceived the distance too great. We then left off firing and unloaded the schooner, though several hundred shots were fired at us to

As the actions of Congress moved the colonies ever closer to the moment of decision, a conservative backlash was occurring in Sussex

prevent it. Our people picked up many of their balls rolling in the sand. The tender dispatched one of the barges to the ship (the Roebuck) for assistance, who made sail immediately, but was soon obliged to come to anchor for fear of running on the Hen and Chickens (A shoal near the point of the Cape). About the time the ship turned the Cape, the tender anchored within musket shot of the schooner and kept up a continual fire with her swivels. We had by this time got the swivels in the schooner loaded with grape-shot, and a constant fire for two hours was kept up on both sides. We undoubtedly wounded their men, for we perceived some to fall and others run to their assistance. They made several efforts to purchase their anchor, which were prevented by our fire, but at last they succeeded. Fortunately, however, one of our swivels cut their halyards and down came their mainsail, which compelled them to anchor one more ...".

The British tender was towed out by a barge and a boat from the Roebuck, distinctly the worse for its encounter with the militia who, according to the report, emerged unscathed from their first engagement with the enemy. While the damage inflicted on the British had been slight, the battle had done wonders in boosting the spirits of the militiamen and the patriots in the area of Lewes.

Early in May, the "Roebuck" was joined by the 28-gun sloop-of-war "Liverpool." Together the vessels sailed up the river where they were attacked by a group of small American boats near the mouth of Christiana Creek. After coming out second best in that engagement as well, the vessels eventually left the Delaware.

The following year, however, the "Roebuck" was back and the British on the vessel succeeded in gutting much of the interior of the Cape Henlopen Lighthouse. The structure was not fully rebuilt until 1785 when the port wardens of Philadelphia raised funds to have the tower completely restored.

William Barry, an American seaman who had been captured by the Roebuck in March and was able to escape from her when the ship sailed for Norfolk late in May, made a formal statement to a justice of the peace in New Castle which indicated that not all the residents of Sussex were cast into a patriotic fervor by the April 7 battle. Barry's statement read in part, "About three weeks after they came to Cape Henlopen there came three men (one of whom was almost certainly Thomas Robinson) one night in a small boat from Lewestown shore on board said vessel and stayed on board until about 10 o'clock at night. The next night when they came alongside they reached up a small bag, which one of the men belonging to the ship told the dependent were letters, etc. ... Said three men informed the people on board that they had, or that there were, cattle, stock, &c. for them at Indian River, which the tenders endeavoured to get, but were prevented by (a brig) and a small schooner ....".

On June 11, the Lewistown Committee of Safety alerted Congress that 1,500 Tories had assembled along Cedar Creek 18 miles above the town. According to a June 13 letter from Thomas McKean to President Hancock, "... their intention was to proceed (to Lewes) and join the British forces from on board some men-of-war now in the Horekill Road, who were to land this night in order to cut off three companies of the Continental troops at that place, and that it apprehended that they have been supplied with arms and ammunition by the men-of-war, and, perhaps, may intrench. The militia from Kent marched yesterday, at least half a dozen companies and the rest were to follow as soon as they could be ordered down ..."

As it happened, the revolt involved 1,500 Tories under the leadership of Robinson, among others. It was caused when the Whigs circulated a petition calling for a constitutional convention after the recommendation of Congress earlier in the month that a government favoring independence should be formed. The Tories of Sussex immediately circulated a counter petition supposedly written by Robinson. himself. It claimed that the Whig petition had only 300 signatures while the Tories had gotten 5,000. When John Clark of Kent County made his way to present the Tory document to Congress, he was seized by Whigs, put in the stocks, and the petition was destroyed.

Robinson claimed that this action was directly responsible for the uprising, according to an account of his career written by Dr. Hancock for the March, 1950, issue of "Delaware History." The group moved to a position near Lewes and requested arms and ammunition from Sir Andrew Snape Hammond, the commander of the "Roebuck." The request was refused since the ship had only a small supply of armaments. The next step was to blockade the small garrison at Lewes.

Congress sent 3,000 Pennsylvania militiamen under the command of Colonel Miles to break up the insurrection. While Robinson and other leaders were placed under bond at the time, they were pardoned in short order by the Assembly. That was to be the rule for more than a year in lower Delaware. Tories were everywhere. Their "aid and comfort to the enemy" was to become a regular occurrence and they went about expressing their doubts about the legitimacy of the patriotic struggle with relative impunity.

In June and early July of 1776, Congress was moving toward a final break with England. On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia offered a resolution to his colleagues to the effect that, "... these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

The debate began and as Thomas Jefferson noted later, "the colonies of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and South Carolina were not matured for falling from the parent stem, but that they were fast advancing to that state., it was thought most prudent to wait awhile for them."

Of the Delaware Colony's three delegates to Congress, Thomas McKean and Caesar Rodney were staunch Whigs who strongly favored independence and statehood. George Read, the great New Castle statesman, was more moderate on the issue and could be expected to vote against the resolution for independence, at least in the early stages of the debate. Read was not unlike several other men who were to become leaders of the revolution in the years that followed. John Dickinson, a later delegate to Congress, President of both Delaware and Pennsylvania, and one of the primary philosophers of the early American republic, was at first opposed to the idea of independence.

Anticipating much resistance at home, Rodney requested and received a brief leave of absence late in June to return to Delaware to drum up support for independence. On July 1, a trial vote was held in Rodney's absence. Nine colonies voted for the measure. The votes of South Carolina and Pennsylvania were negative and New York abstained from voting. McKean of Delaware voted for independence; Read against. The final vote was held the following day, July 2. During the night, McKean sent a messenger to summon Rodney whom he knew to be in support of the resolution, in an effort to break the tie.

According to persistent legend, Rodney was in Lewes paying a visit to the comely Tory widow, Sarah Rowland, daughter of the Lewes postmaster. That story, colorful though it may be, has been largely discounted by historians who say that Rodney was, in fact, in Dover. At any rate, he left for Philadelphia immediately on receiving McKean's summons and arrived on July 2, in time to cast the deciding vote for the Delaware delegation and, in the process, make the resolution for independence unanimous.

Shortly after the declaration was formally passed and signed on July 4, Congress called up the colonial militias as an early step toward increasing the size of the Continental Army. Under its resolve, a flying camp of 10,000 men from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware was to be established to see to the defense of the middle Atlantic area. Of the total, 600 were to come from Delaware. The unit was placed under the command of Col. John Haslet of Kent County.

In the absence of many militiamen from Sussex, the Tories became active anew. A communication from the Sussex Council of Safety reported curious activities in the area of Broad Creek and over the line in Maryland. "... a number of armed vessels lately appearing in our rivers, occasions us to think of ourselves bound in duty, both to our country and our families, to lay our case before you."

They wrote that the British vessel "Fowey" had appeared in the lower Nanticoke River with several tenders and that it was receiving supplies and assistance from the residents of the area. "This much you may depend upon," the message continued, "That vast numbers of the inhabitants of Somerset and Dorchester Counties in Maryland (Wicomico not then being established), and Sussex County in Delaware have men on board these men-of-war and tenders, either trading, enlisting, taking the oath of allegiance, or something we are really not informed of, but we have it from such authority that we do really believe

that they purchased some sorts of goods from the tenders very low, and also that this captain of the tenders registers the name of every person who goes on board of them. We are also fully convinced that numbers of the inhabitants have actually voluntarily entered into the service under (Lord) Dunmore, some of whom, we have reason to believe, now bear command on board these tenders,and we look upon them as a more dangerous enemy than the Europeans. They know our country and are able to carry the vessels they command to the heads of our rivers ...."

Rodney, as commander of the militia for Kent and western Sussex, decided not to send any troops to the area at the time. He wrote to his brother, Thomas, in part, "... These enemies to our righteous cause will, I apprehend, be less on their guard if they are not held up in that publick way than if they are, and will undoubtedly meet their due reward, provided you pursue steadily your line of patriotism and at the same time keep a watchful eye toward their conduct in the politicks of your country."

On June 14, 1776, the Delaware Assembly approved a resolution passed by Congress in May calling for the establishment of governments in each colony to replace the old system. After the passage of the Declaration of Independence, the Assembly called, on July 27, for the election of 10 deputies from each county to attend a convention to establish a constitution for the new government, since the assemblymen did not consider such a task to be within their powers.

The election was to be held on August 19 with the state convention set for August 27, in New Castle. One of the rules established for the election sought to insure against Tory dominance; "If one or more of the judges of the election required it, any elector offering his vote was to be placed upon oath to support and maintain the independence of this government as declared by the honorable Continental Congress." When the election was held, however, the measure did little to stop a Tory victory.

A mixed ticket of Whigs and Tories was elected for New Castle County. The conservative Tories won a clear victory in Kent. In Sussex Countyy two tickets of delegates were elected, one Whig and one Tory, but with the help of conservative leaders, the Tories were seated. While few of the Sussex delegates were as open in their opposition to the new government as Robinson, at least one of them, Joshua Hill, was later to flee the state, his property confiscated and sold. Many staunch Whigs, Rodney among them, were infuriated at the turn of events, fearing that what they had fought so hard to achieve might be offset by the conservative victory.

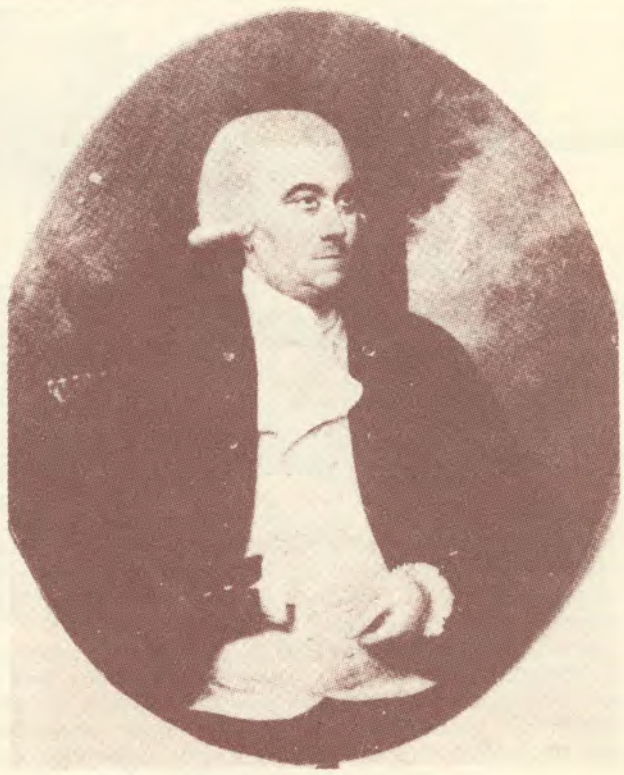
The convention met and although the first plan of government for "the Delaware State" contained some surprisingly liberal clauses including a condemnation of the slave trade and guarantees of religious freedom, the government established by the delegates was criticized by some Whig leaders as being little more than a carbon copy of the old government.

In spite of that fact, some Sussex County Tories were apparently still unhappy with it. Henry Fisher, the lookout stationed at Lewes, reported that when the first elections were held for the new state general assembly in October of 1776, a mob of five or six hundred Tories gathered in the town and chopped down the Liberty Pole at which, "the Streets resounded with Huzza for King George and General Howe, execrations against Congress, Whigs, &c," and the pole was sold for 13d (dollars). Dr. Hancock wrote in his work on the state's loyalists that among the assemblymen elected were, "one disarmed during the insurrection and another convicted of being hostile to the Cause before the committee of safety." Hardly a victory for the patriot cause.

Rodney and McKean were replaced as delegates to the Continental Congress by John Dickinson and John Evans, both considerably more conservative in their views, while the conservative Read was retained as the third delegate. John McKinly of New Castle County, himself a conservative, was elected by the General Assembly as the state's first President and Chief Magistrate.

According to Hancock, the worst appointments involved judgeships to which out and out British sympathizers were in some cases appointed. Of Sussex he writes "Equally bad were the selections in Tory-ridden Sussex County. The chief justice was a former captain of the militia, who had vainly tried to persuade his soldiers to engage in an insurrection, had plundered his neighbors of arms, and was placed on the black list of 1776. His colleagues exhibited like talents; two had participated in the first Sussex rebellion. Continental officers who captured loyalists in this section found it necessary to send their prisoners directly to Congress, since there was 'no great probabilitv that Tory judges will punish Tory offenders'."

The situation became almost a bad joke. Although the assembly did pass measures against loyalists providing for the death penalty for serious offenses, the legislators appear to have their best to overlook any evidence of loyalist sentiment in the state even at a time when many lower Delaware and Eastern Shore Maryland loyalists were openly aiding the British. In April of 1777, the Maryland delegates in the Continental Congress warned their colleagues that there was "imminent danger of an insurrection in the Counties of Somerset and Worcester, and that the insurgents may be joined by disaffected persons in the County of Sussex, in the State of Delaware ..."



Loyalist

Thomas Robinson, powerful Angola planter, storekeeper, and assemblyman, was the county's leading Tory before being forced to flee to Canada later in the war. His portrait, from which this photo is taken, now hangs in the home of his descendents, Georgetown's Robinson family. (Photo used by permission of Robert Robinson)

At the order of Congress the Marylanders dispatched Colonel Richardson's Battalion to the Eastern Shore where, according to Scharf in his "History of Maryland," "they arrested a large number of loyalists in Somerset and Worcester Counties, and took possession of their estates. A large number fled the province or took refuge in the swamps on the Eastern Shore; and with the aid of the British Fleet and deserters, frequently plundered the patriotic people all along the shores of the Chesapeake."

The Delaware General Assembly was under considerable pressure from Congress to carry out a like effort in Sussex County. Patriotic Sussex Countians were furious at the inactivity of their elected representatives and finally complained directly to Congress. Among the loyalist activities of which they complained was a plot to purchase cattle for the British fleet with 70,000 pounds in counterfeit Continental currency. The leading conspirator was a loyalist named Simon Kollock, Jr., who was assisted by, of all people, the Sussex County sheriff, Dorman Lofland. (It is interesting to note that there were several Simon Kollocks active in the affairs of the county at that time and the counterfeiter is not to be confused with Major Simon Kollock of Dagsborough Hundred, a staunch Whig and a member of Dagworthy's staff in the Sussex County Militia.)

Finally, the Assembly acted and 200 Delaware Militiamen were sent to Sussex to quell the loyalist activities in company with the Maryland Battalion under Colonel Richardson. Brigadier General Caesar Rodney was also engaged in "Tory-catching" and seized a few loyalists who had been trading with the enemy. Both Rodney and Richardson found, however, that loyalist sentiment was so strong in the county at the time that it was virtually impossible to stamp it out. Sheriff Lofland fled into the swamp with Richardson hot on his trail. In one case, when Rodney offered a reward for information leading to the capture of loyalists, the Tories topped it.

At some time during the early months of 1777, Thomas Robinson, the Angola storekeeper and political leader was forced to flee the state. It appears likely that the Assembly was finally moved to call for his arrest after seeing the contents of one or more letters written by Robinson to friends in New York which had been intercepted by patriots. In any case, with his flight, Robinson made his final stand in Sussex against independence.

The climax of the struggle between the loyalists and patriots of Sussex came in the summer of 1777. Admiral Howe's fleet disembarked from Amboy, New Jersey, in July. The question of his ultimate destination was of vast importance for the patriot cause since the limited Continental forces had to be rushed to his probable destination in an effort to contain the next British offensive.

On July 30, Major Henry Fisher, Congress's lookout at the Delaware Capes, reported that the fleet had been seen at the mouth of the bay, four miles from the Cape Henlopen Lighthouse. Congress began preparations for what they thought was to be an assault on Philadelphia up the Delaware. After his flight across the Rehoboth Bay in a small boat some months before, Robinson had made his way up the coast and finally to a British vessel with which he sailed to New York, then in British hands. At Admiral Howe's request, Robinson helped him to obtain pilots for his voyage south.

The Sussex Countian also suggested that he be put ashore at Lewes with 500 men, predicting that the force could raise an army of 6,000 loyalists during a march up the peninsula to intercept Howe's force when it landed at the head of the Chesapeake Bay. Although the plan was never put into action, it may have had a considerable chance for success since the loyalists were said to outnumber the patriots by more than two to one on many parts of the peninsula.

When Howe left the mouth of the Delaware early in August, it soon became apparent that he would sail up the Chesapeake instead. Washington moved his 10,000 man army from Chester towards Wilmington during the last week of August. At the same time he called out the Delaware militia under Rodney and units of the Maryland and Pennsylvania militia with orders to remove any and all supplies from the path of the British and to harass them in their progress across the upper peninsula as much as possible.

As Howe's force moved from Elk Neck in Cecil County Md., toward Iron Hill and Cooch's Bridge in New Castle County, many lower Delawareans were expecting a full-scale insurrection in Sussex; to the sorrow of many and the relief of a few, it never materialized. In short order, the Americans met the British in a small but fierce skirmish at Cooch's Bridge as Howe made his way toward Wilmington and Philadelphia with 17,000 seasoned fighting men. He met Washington head on in his effort to cross the Brandywine on September 11.

On the evening after a hard-fought battle along the creek, Howe sent a detachment to Wilmington. The city was occupied, the records of New Castle County

Battlefield Hero

Col. David Hall of Lewes joined the patriot struggle early on and was named commander of the second Delaware Regiment in 1777. Hall's Regiment went on to win great renown, especially during campaigns in the south late in the war. Hall himself later became an early Governor of Delaware.

and many of those of the early Delaware Colony were seized and destroyed. The first president of Delaware State, John McKinly, was seized from his bed at his home in Wilmington and taken prisoner.

After several more battles, the British occupied Philadelphia on September 25, forcing Congress to flee to Lancaster and then York in Pennsylvania. The Delaware Regiment under Col. David Hall, Jr., of Lewes, saw heavy action throughout this campaign.

Although many loyalist residents of the lower peninsula were ready to rise up in support of the British, most simply fled to join them in Philadelphia. Throughout the months of Howe's forays along the Chesapeake and into northern Delaware, the British successfully recruited men along the rivers and creeks leading into Sussex from the Chesapeake. There are also references to friendly and cordial visits by Robinson and Boaz Manlove, another former Sussex assemblyman who had been forced to flee because of his loyalist views, to the imprisoned President McKinly. It is apparent that McKinly, elected when the conservatives held firm control of the assembly, was somewhat less than adamant about the patriot cause.

The Tories of Sussex were, according to Hancock, bitterly disappointed when the expected uprising failed to materialize. Several Lewes pilots had sailed with Sir William Howe's fleet. When elections for the assembly were held on October 1, pandemonium broke out at the polls at the courthouse in Lewes. The Whigs attempted to enforce the rule that voters must take an oath of allegiance to the independent colonies before their vote could be recorded. The traditional Tory gathering of several hundred boisterous souls at the polls threatened to throw the Whigs out of the courthouse if they persisted in their demand. Col. Jacob Moore and John Wiltbank, both conservative assemblymen, opposed the oath and threatened to sue if the measure was forced on the voters.

Major Henry Fisher, one of the county's leading patriotic spokesmen, demanded that the election be adjourned if the oath were not taken. With that, the Tories set on him and would have injured him seriously if he hadn't been saved by the timely arrival of the militia. The Whigs went on the counter attack and the melee resulted in the Tories fleeing through the windows of the courthouse with the militia fast behind them.

That episode proved in retrospect to have been the end of open Tory power in the county although loyalist activities continued until the end of the war in 1783. McKean, the staunch patriot, put off accepting an appointment as chief justice of Pennsylvania in order to serve as acting president of Delaware in the absence of the considerably less fiery McKinly and for the first time during the war, the Whigs were firmly in control of state government.

In March, 1778, another election was held in Sussex which still had no delegation in the assembly after the inglorious conclusion of the fall election in Lewes. To the astonishment of many leading Whigs, a Whig delegation from Sussex was elected. Their victory seems in large part due to the fact that the oath of allegiance was applied to all voters, causing many Tories to shun the election entirely. The Whig victory was a sign of things to come; the Whigs were to carry every election in the county until the end of the war.

The newly organized Whig assembly was quick to pass strong measures against the Tories. Rodney was elected president of the state in March for a three-year term. General John Dagworthy, commander of the Sussex militia, was ordered to pursue loyalists in the county. Perhaps most importantly, laws were passed requiring all white males over the age of 21 to appear before a justice of the peace to take the oath of allegiance before July 1, 1778, or to lose many of their rights as citizens and, in addition, providing for the confiscation of the property of loyalists who had been found guilty of trading with the British. "An Act of Free Pardon and Oblivion" was also passed authorizing the pardon of all but 46 of the most active Delaware loyalists if the oath was taken before August 1. Such persons, although pardoned and restored to their lands and property, would be forever barred from holding civil or military positions and from voting. If they did not take the oath, they would lose all their property which would be sold with their families receiving some support from the proceeds.

Among the 46 persons exempted from the pardon were some Sussex Countians including Robinson, Dr. James Rench, a former assemblyman; Joshua Hill, another assemblyman and perhaps the state's wealthiest loyalist who later fled to Canada; former Sheriff Dorman Lofland and Simon Kollock, Jr., the cattle purchasers; Assemblyman Boaz Manlove; Abraham Wiltbank, a onetime militia lieutenant who later fled to Canada; and pilots Samuel Edwards, William Rowland, Nehemiah Field, and Luke Shields. Shields, who was captured by the British earlier in the war and forced to pilot their ships, was later pardoned after appearance in court in 1783.

Fisher's Paradise

According to persistent legend, "Fisher's Paradise," built about 1725 on Lewes' Pilottown Road by the father of Major Henry Fisher, the Continental Congress' lookout and commander in the town, played a major part in the story of Caesar Rodney's ride. He was said to have visited Fisher here in order to see the attractive loyalist daughter of the town's postmaster when he was summoned by messenger to Philadelphia to cast a crucial vote for independence. Although the story has been largely disproved by historians, it still persists. This painting of the house, reproduced courtesy of John T. Purnell, was done by Alexander Wyeth of the famed Chadds Ford family.

Some historians have observed that Sussex was such a hotbed of loyalist sentiment because so many of the county's leading Whigs were serving in the Continental Army. While this may be true to some extent, it does not appear to explain either the extent or the ardor of loyalist sentiment in the county. There were, however, a considerable number of staunch patriots among the residents of the county whose stand in favor of independence means all the more because of the difficulty of holding their views in the loyalist atmosphere which prevailed until 1778.

Christopher L. Ward in his book "The Delaware Continentals" called Major Henry Fisher, "the prime representative of the revolution in his town and county." Fisher, one of Lewes' leading pilots in the years before the war, selected the site of the Cape Henlopen Lighthouse in 1765. He determined the proper locations of the first buoys set in the Delaware River and Bay in 1767. In 1775, Fisher was appointed as lookout by the first Committee of Safety in Philadelphia. The same year he became a major in the state militia and was maintaining a guard of 30 men at the lighthouse as well as a second force of 24 men at "false cape" (the present-day Fenwick Island) south of Cape Henlopen. Later in the war, Fisher maintained armed whale boats at Lewes Creek and at Indian River Inlet to control enemy activities in the bays and river and to aid American vessels being harassed by the British.

In April of 1777, Fisher was authorized directly by the Continental Congress to raise an independent company of 100 men, "for the safeguard of the pilots and the persons and good of other well-affected inhabitants .... residing or being near Lewistown and the coasts of Delaware Bay." Although he did, in fact, establish such a company - and purchased its arms and equipment with his own money - he refused to accept the command, giving it instead to Captain William Peery. John Wesley was named first lieutenant, David Hazzard, second lieutenant, and John Hazzard, ensign.

During the series of Tory-dominated elections before 1778, Fisher was often the only strong Whig voice in Lewes, for which he was nearly murdered several times. It was because of the testimony of Fisher and Peery to Congress in June of 1777, that Colonel Richardson's Maryland regiment was sent to Sussex to help Rodney's militiamen chase Tories.

It does not appear likely that the John Hazzard named by Fisher as ensign of his company in 1777 was the same John Hazzard who was to add another proud moment to the county's history. Hazzard enlisted in the first Delaware Regiment from Indian River Hundred early in 1776. According to a reprint of a March, 1934 Wilmington Sunday Star article which later appeared in a Milton town history in 1957, Major John Hazzard, while still a captain, guided Washington's boat on its epic voyage across the Delaware River on Christmas Eve night in 1776. In that surprise raid on the British and Hessians at Trenton, Washington unknowingly received the valuable assistance of General John Dagworthy's sister, Sarah De Hart, the charming New Jersey hostess who entertained Hessian officers while the American army was creeping up on their fort to surprise them

Of the three regiments raised during the war from Delaware, two were commanded by Sussex Countians. Col. David Hall, Jr., of Lewes, was chosen by the Assembly in the fall of 1776 to head the Delaware Line Regiment. In his "History of Delaware" Scharf concluded that, "It was Hall's regiment that made the perpetual fame of the Delaware soldiers in the Revolution."

He was served by a large number of officers and men from Sussex in the several years that he actively commanded the unit. Among them were Col. Nathaniel Mitchell, Lt. Col. Joseph Vaughn, Captain George Purvis, and many others. Later in the war, when the regiment had been sent to the south, it became one of the best-known units in the Continental Army. Hall had been severely wounded at the battle of Germantown and to a lesser extent in several later engagements and saw little active service after 1780. Vaughn, who before the war had been the owner of an iron furnace near Concord, became the acting commander after the retirement of Hall and led the regiment until his capture at the Battle of Camden in South Carolina in 1781. He was held as a prisoner until the end of the war.

A leading Delaware soldier in a future war, Thomas Fisher, who was to become Brigadier General of the Sussex County militia during the War of 1812, became inadvertently involved in the revolutionary war when he was captured by a press-gang from the Roebuck during the winter of 1779-80. Fisher, then 17, was taken on board the frigate which was then lying at anchor near the cape. Word was sent to his father, Jabez Fisher, that the youth and a slave captured with him would be released only after 100 bullocks had been delivered to the ship. Cattle from the Fisher herd and those of friends and neighbors in Lewes were driven across a thick sheet of ice then covering the bay two or three miles to the ship. Upon receipt of the cattle, Fisher and his slave were released.

Henry Neill of Lewes, a lieutenant in the Sussex County militia as early as 1778, was named colonel of the second Delaware Regiment raised in 1781 to relieve Col Hall's regiment which had by then been largely decimated. The lists of Sussex Countians who served in the war are substantial; it is interesting to note that the county's representatives in the Continental Army came from virtually every part of Sussex as did the Sussex loyalists. Thus, it would seem that the stand taken by various Sussex Countians on the issue of independence had little to do with their geographic location. Both loyalists and patriots came from nearly every economic level and occupation. In spite of the disfavor into which the loyalists fell in the emerging republic, it must be admitted that many showed principles every bit as deeply felt and courage at least as great as the men who happened to be on the

Col. Hall's Regiment

This illustration from a history of the Delaware National Guard depicts uniforms worn by members of Col. David Hall's Regiment of the Delaware Line. at different times during its Revolutionary War service. Shown are, left to right, private (1781), private, light company (1778), Captain, private (1778). (Aid to Shipping)

Delaware Musket

The vintage flintlock, above, was used by Delaware soldiers during the American Revolution. Although smaller than the six and a half and seven foot long Pennsylvania rifles, the five and a half foot rifle was still an armful. (Courtesy of John T. Purnell)

Peace Comes to the Delaware State

Sussex County had not been officially established within its present boundaries until 1775, by which time Delaware and the other American colonies were already deeply involved in what was to become known as the American Revolution. Not surprisingly, much of the time, energy, and financial resources of Sussex and its neighboring counties were devoted to the struggle at hand and the uncertainties surrounding the civil affairs of the newly constituted county were left largely unresolved until the conclusion of the war. As life in the county returned once more to a peacetime footing, one of the first things to occupy the minds of Sussex Countians was the boundaries of the county.

Before 1775, virtually all of Sussex lying south of a line running from Farmington to the mouth of Rehoboth Bay had been generally considered a part of Maryland. The area formally taken into the Delaware Colony by an act of the Assembly in the fall of that year, which included the present Baltimore, Dagsboro, Gumboro, Little Creek, Broad Creek, seaford, and Nanticoke Hundreds as well as portions of Georgetown and Horthwest Fork Hundreds, was known to the Sussex Countians of the day as "New Sussex".

The older, northeastern section of the county was referred to as "Old Sussex", and for some time during and after the war there was still some question about whether all the area would be included in one county. Shortly after the end of the revolution in 1783, a group of New Sussex residents attempted to establish a fourth county which would have encompassed portions of the present southwestern Kent with a separate county seat.

The reorganization plan which paralleled an earlier effort by staunch patriots in the Broad Creek area during the war, didn't get far in the General Assembly. It was, however, the result of strong sentiment among New Sussex Countians that Lewistown, situated as it was at the extreme eastern edge of the county, was no place for a county seat. From a plantation in Northwest Fork Hundred or a farm in the sparsely populated southwestern corner of the county, it was a full day's journey to Lewistown. If the planter had any amount of business to conduct, it would take him a minimum of three days to get there, conduct his business, even if it was simply to cast his vote, and return home.

The legislature bowed to popular pressure in January of 1791 and passed an act establishing a commission of prominent Sussex Countians to purchase a proper site for a new county seat near the center of the county. The area chosen was described as "James of his Residence within the British Lines & also by collecting and preserving the Records of the County of New Castle & other public Papers when they were taken at Wilmington & but for your Pets. Care would probably have been lost or destroyd; That your Petr. having experienced many Hardships during an Absence of ten Years which have much impaird his Health, is desirous to spend the Evening of his Life among the Friends of his earlier Years in his Native Country ... for which Favor your Petitioner will ever show a grateful Sense."

Little more than two months later, on November 22, 1786, Robinson died at the home of his brother Peter Robinson, later Chief Justice of Delaware, in Indian River Hundred, his vast estate confiscated and sold to many of his less affluent but more patriotic neighbors of years past.

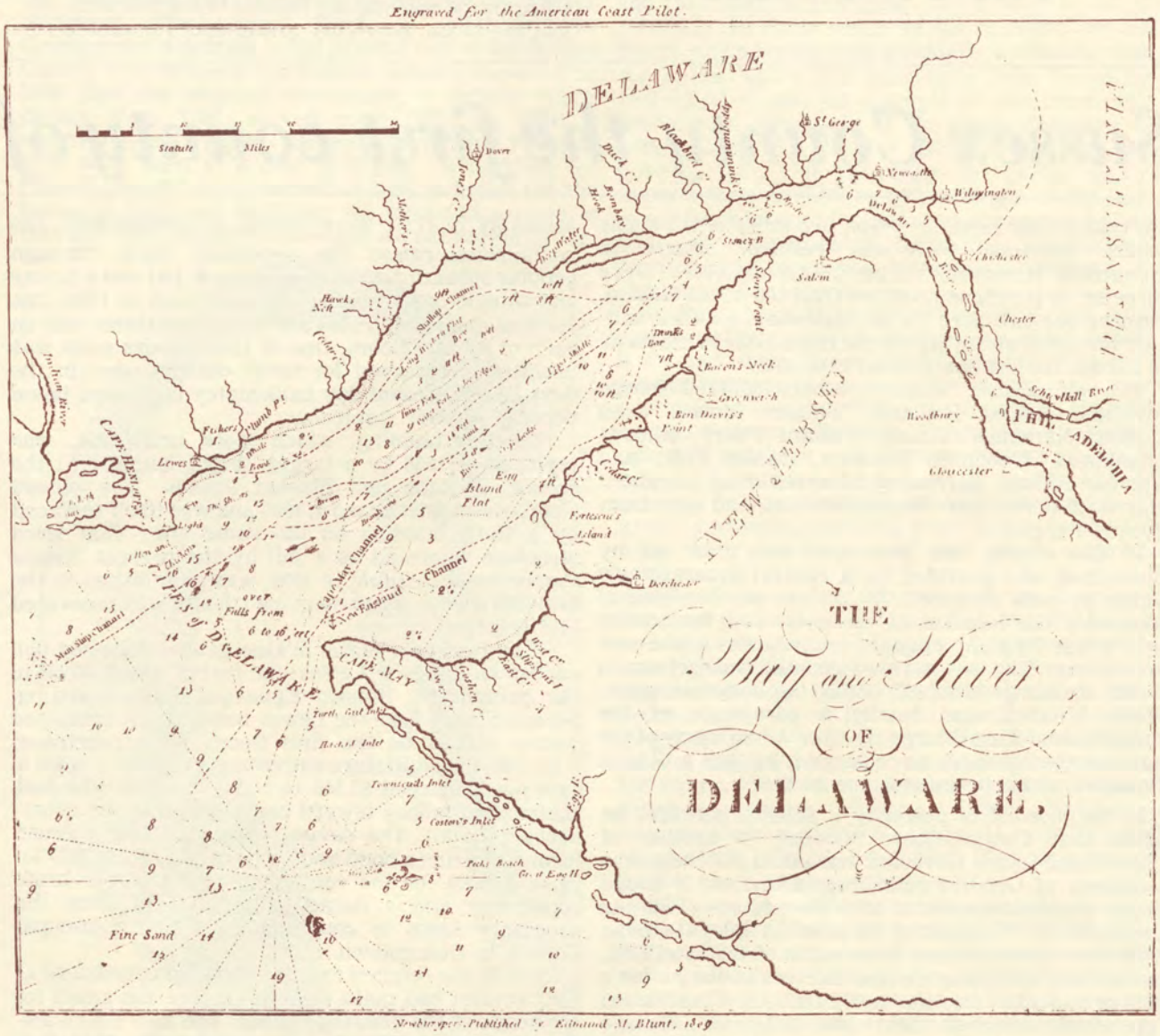
It was to take generations for the sentiment which expressed itself during the revolution as loyalist to disappear completely from Sussex County. With the end of hostilities, however, most Sussex Countians banded together with their fellow citizens elsewhere in the new state to see to the building of a Delaware State.

winning side.

Robinson is perhaps the best case to demonstrate the suffering of the loyalists in the later years of the revolution and its aftermath. After fleeing Delaware in 1777, he went on to serve with the British in Georgia in 1778 and in South Carolina in 1779. Robinson returned to New York in 1780 and left for Nova Scotia in 1783 where he purchased a farm. In September of 1786, a sickly Robinson appeared once again in Delaware State where he petitioned Governor Nicholas Van Dyke for permission to return to his home because of his declining health.

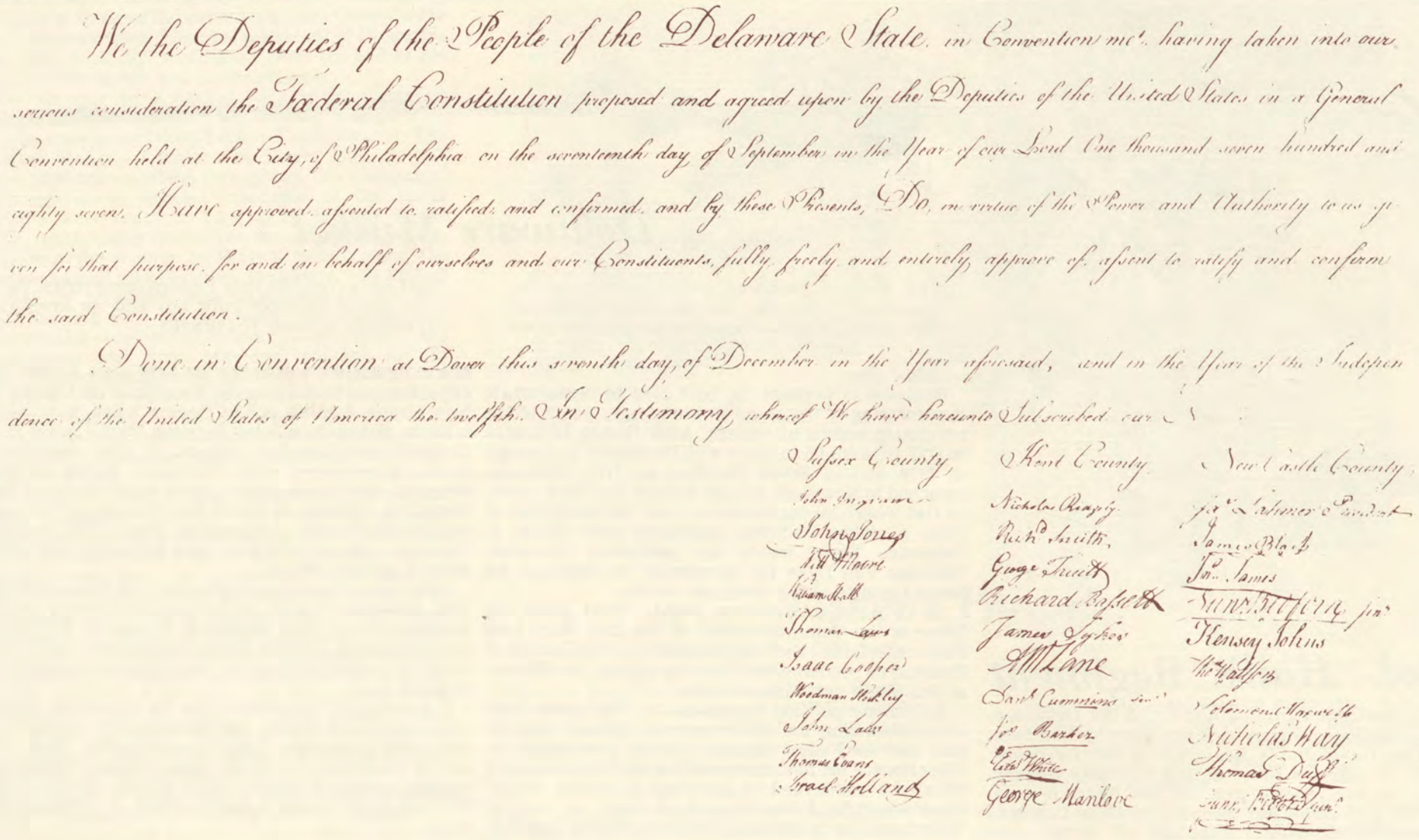
In his petition, Robinson noted, "That about the Time of the Commencement of the late War, your Petr. entertained such Sentiments upon the Subject of Politics, as rendered his Situation among the Citizens of this State very disagreeable ....".

Robinson's petition continues, "... That your Petr. notwithstanding the Difference in Opinion between him and his Fellow Citizens always entertained an Affection for the Inhabitants of this his Native Country which he endeavord to manifest by every Act of Kindness in his Power to such of them as were as unfortunate as to be taken Prisoners during the Time



Aid to Navigation

This early chart of the Delaware River and Bay was published in the navigational book "American Coast Pilot" in about 1809, superseding the first chart published in the middle of the 18th century. An interesting feature is the shallop channel marked near the Delaware coast from Lewes to New Castle, used by the small, sturdy vessels which served as Sussex County's main commercial link to the outside world at the time. It is reproduced from an original in the Delaware Archives.



We the Deputies of the People of the Delaware State, in Convention met, having taken into our serious consideration the Federal Constitution proposed and agreed upon by the Deputies of the United States in a General Convention held at the City of Philadelphia on the seventeenth day of September in the Year of our Lord One thousand seven hundred and eighty seven, Have approved, assented to, ratified, and confirmed, and by these Presents, Do, in virtue of the Power and Authority to us given for that purpose, for and in behalf of ourselves and our Constituents, fully, freely and entirely approve of, assent to ratify and confirm the said Constitution.

Done in Convention at Dover this seventh day of December in the Year aforesaid, and in the Year of the Independence of the United States of America the twelfth. In Testimony whereof We have hereunto Subscribed our Names.

Sussex County — Kent County — New Castle County

The First State

On the seventh of December in 1787, 30 Delawareans, including ten Sussex Countians, signed the above document ratifying the U.S. Constitution and making Delaware the first state to join the union. Any Tory sentiments remaining in the county, and there was still much to be found, began to express itself with the formation of political parties under the new constitution as the strong conservativism for which Sussex has long been known.

Sussex County-the first county of the 'First State'

Pettyjohn's old field, or within two miles of the house where Ebenezer Pettyjohn resided, situate in Broadkill Hundred". The commissioners were directed to purchase no more than 100 acres of land, reserve one-half acre for a courthouse, another half-acre for a jail, and to lay out the remainder in the form of a town, the lots thus plotted to be sold.

The commission, whose members included George Mitchell, Robert Houston, William Moore, John Collins, Nathaniel Young, William Peery, Rhoads Shankland, Woodman Stockley, Daniel Polk, and Thomas Batson, purchased 50 acres from Abraham Harris, 25 acres from Rowland Bevins, and acre from Joshua Pepper.

In due course, the new town was laid out by Shankland who provided for a central square of 100 yards in each direction. By an act of the General Assembly the location of the polls and the county courts was formally changed from Lewes to the new county seat. The new town was named Georgetown in honor of George Mitchell, one of the commissioners. While Mitchell was hardly a personage of the magnitude of King George III after whom many of the nation's Georgetowns were named, he was a Sussex Countian and a prominent one at that.

In the interest of posterity it should, perhaps, he noted that Commissioner Mitchell, a brother of Colonel and future Governor Nathaniel Mitchell, was a nephew of General John Dagworthy and a Broad Creek Hundred planter of note. He was one of Sussex County's first "Trustees of the poor", a delegate to the Delaware Constitutional Convention of 1791 and 1792, one of the state's presidential electors in the nation's first presidential election under the U.S. Constitution (in which Mitchell cast his vote for George Washington), and a three-term state senator. Mitchell was also apparently well-respected among his fellow Sussex Countians, none of whom seem to have balked in the least at the choice of names for the new county seat.

Under another act of the General Assembly, the pillory and whipping post, which had first been erected near Lewes by order of the old colonial assembly in 1717, were moved to Georgetown. The commission raised the necessary funds through popular subscription to erect a brick jail and a frame and shingle courthouse in the new town in 1793. The jail was enlarged in 1798 and contained three cells on each of its two floors. One of the upstairs cells was exclusively reserved for tardy debtors who, in the days before present-day bankruptcy law, were jailed because of their insolvency.

The first building, which stood until 1854, was replaced in 1835 by a larger brick building at the corner of Race and Market Streets. The second Georgetown jail burned in 1865 and was itself replaced by a third building on the same site. That third structure, replaced as a jail by the present Sussex Correctional Institute in 1931, was demolished in the late 1960's when the present courthouse was renovated and enlarged.

The first courthouse in Georgetown followed two earlier buildings in Lewes, the last of which stood in the present St. Peter's Episcopal Churchyard on Second Street. Like the Lewes buildings, it contained county offices on the first floor and a courtroom

In 1795, the legislature authorized a lottery to raise a sum not to exceed $3,500 to repay citizens who had contributed money toward construction of the courthouse and jail. The device, somewhat like a cruse form of floating a bond issue, was used again in 1837 to raise $25,000 for the construction of a larger brick courthouse and a decade after that to raise the necessary funds to construct St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Georgetown.

By 1837, the original cypress-shingled courthouse at Georgetown had quite clearly become too small for the needs of the growing county. The new Delaware Constitution of 1792, the first under the 1787 U.S. Constitution, had established in each county the Court of Chancery, the state Supreme Court, the High Court of Errors and Appeals, the Court of Oyer and Terminer (for capital offenses), the court of General Gaol Delivery, the Court of Common Pleas, the Orphans' Court, the Register's Court, the Court of Quarter Sessions of the Peace, and justices of the peace throughout the county. With all of that activity taking place in one building equipped with only one courtroom, the old building was totally inadequate.

The old courthouse building was moved to South Bedford Street in the summer of 1837 and later became, among other things, a private house, a printing shop, and a shoe-repair shop before falling into complete disrepair by the 19960's. It is presently being restored to its 1792 appearance by the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

In the two year interim between the moving of the old building and the completion of the new structure, court was held in the brick hotel on the Georgetown Circle which had been built in 1835 and was then operated by Burton C. Barker.

The brick courthouse was built at a cost of $15,000, the sum realized from the lottery. Early in 1840, shortly after the new building went into use, the Sussex County Levy Court passed a resolution congratulating the citizens of the county on the fact that the fine new building had cost them nothing in taxes. The building was completely refurbished in 1916 when the courthouse clock-tower was completed and an ornamental portico was erected in front. An additional wing was also added to the building at that time, filling the area between the original rear of the courthouse and Cherry Alley. In 1968, the courthouse was once more extensively renovated and further enlarged with the addition of a new wing covering Cherry Alley and all the area between the alley and Race Street including the location of the second and third county jails at Georgetown. At that time, a separate building was erected between the south side of the courthouse and Pine Street to house the Sussex County Family Court (a descendent of the old Orphans' Court) and other county offices.

By 1786 it had become clear to many American statesmen that the Articles of Confederation under which the first government of the United States had been formed was inadequate. Although the Continental Congress had certain powers including the conduct of war, there were few machanisms for uniting the 13 states into any real semblance of a

This painting, the original of which hangs in the Sussex County Council Chamber, shows the present Sussex County Courthouse shortly after it was completed in 1839. The brick courthouse replaced an earlier frame and shingle structure built when the new county seat was established in 1791. The old building is now being fully restored by the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs. (Courtesy of the Sussex County Council)

New County Seat

nation.

What began in 1786 as an effort by five colonies including Delaware to establish commercial regulations for trade among the various states led in short order to a constitutional convention which began in May of 1787 in Philadelphia. The delegates worked on the document until the middle of September when it was sent to the Continental Congress with the recommendation that it be sent to the various states for ratification.

A constitutional convention met at Dover during the first week of December, 1787, to consider the document. It was formally approved on December 7, 1787, giving Delaware the distinction of having been the first state to ratify the federal constitution. The state's first constitutional elections for congress and for the election of Presidential Electors took place in January of 1788. The new government was established by the spring of 1789 and one of the first acts of importance passed by the first United States Congress was the federal assumption of a major portion of the outstanding state debts.

The Delaware General Assembly called for a state constitutional convention late in 1791 to replace the first 1776 constitution. The delegates from Sussex were Isaac Cooper, George Mitchell, John Batson, Rhoads Shankland, Isaac Beauchamp, Daniel Polk, and James Booth. The document was approved and forwarded to the General Assembly on December 31, 1791, where it was eventually enacted without having been ratified by the voters of the state.

The General Assembly passed an act in June of 1793 establishing the county levy courts as they were constituted until the passage of home rule measures for Sussex and New Castle Counties in recent years. The governing bodies of the counties had been first established in 1736, when a law was enacted requiring any three justices of the peace in the county to meet annually with eight grand jurymen, "...to calculate and settle the public debts and charges of the respective counties", and further, "to settle and adjust the sums of money which ought of necessity to be received yearly to defray the charges of building and repairing Court-House, prisons, workhouses, for destroying wolves, crows and blackbirds, with such other uses as may redound to the public service and with power to make good deficiencies and to collect and enforce collections.

The 1793 law provided for the election of levy court commissioners from each county. In Sussex, one commissioner was to be elected from each of the ten Hundreds then in existence. Although records of the 1793 commissioners are unavailable, Jacob Townsend, Arach F. Phelps, Eli McCaulley, Armwell Long, Elijah Adams, George Walter, Stephen Stryer, and Jacob Hazzard were serving on the court in 1798.

The offices of prothonotary, recorder of deeds, register of wills, clerk of the peace, sheriff, Justice of the Peace, and coroner had been in existence since the late 1600's. Register of Chancery and Clerk of the Orphans' Court were established in the 1770's as was the office of county treasurer.

A law of January, 1791, established a series of measures providing for the housing and care of the poor. Under its terms, a group of "Trustees of the Poor" were appointed for Sussex with the authorization to hold bonds, erect buildings, and transact business as a corporate body. A further provision of the act required paupers in the county to wear on their left arm a red armband emblazoned in black with the letters "p.s.". That whim of 18th century sensibility was repealed in 1802.

In 1793, the trustees purchased a 400-acre tract lying on White's Creek in Baltimore Hundred upon which an almshouse and almshouse farm were established. In 1800, the farm was exchanged for a 401-acre tract in the then-Broadkill Hundred belonging to Warren Jefferson. The second tract, in what is now Georgetown Hundred, is the present site of the Sussex County Correctional Institution. Scharf reported in 1888 that the original almshouse, a former home dating from 1766, served until 1877. In 1874, a superintendent's house (the present warden's house at SCI) was built at a cost of $7,000. "A building for colored people" was erected in 1856, a house for the insane in 1878, and buildings for men and women in 1884 and 1885. Scharf wrote that an old building, formerly used to house the insane, was in 1888 reserved for "the worst cases of pauperism".

Commissioner

George Mitchell of Broad Creek Hundred, above, was a leading member of the commission which purchased land for the new county seat and helped to plan the town. As a result of his services as a commissioner and a leading political figure in the county, the town was named for him. (Painting courtesy of John T. Purnell)

The almshouse and almshouse farm continued in operation until well into the 20th century and stood on the site until the new jail was erected there in 1931. It appears to have been a sort of general purpose "social services center" in which those suffering from a variety of non-criminal mental and financial problems were housed and treated. Some older Georgetown residents can remember visiting the farm on Easter Sunday to display their spring finery to the inmates and take them small gifts.

During the early years of the republic, the United States government was gradually assuming many of the duties which had previously been borne by the individual states. An example of this trend was the transfer of ownership of the Cape Henlopen Lighthouse from the State of Delaware to the federal government in 1791. The structure was only the first of many aids to navigation at the mouth of the bay and would later be augmented by several other lighthouse and the monumental Delaware breakwater. A discussion of those developments is included in the chapter on transportation.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the patterns that were to govern the development of the county for a century were becoming established. Growth was slow in the area of Lewes, or Lewistown as it was still generally known, but that of the county as a whole was speeding up considerably. Towns were coming into being in southern and western Sussex at what had been tiny country hamlets with an inn and a few houses. As the first and second generations of the great landowning families were dying, their holdings were being divided among their heirs, cleared and settled.

When General John Dagworthy, the Dagsborough Hundred planter and soldier, died in 1784, he left the bulk of his 20,393 acre "Dagworthy's Conquest" to his ward, Elizabeth Dagworthy Aydelotte, who later married William Hill Wells, an early judge and U.S. Senator who lived in the Dagworthy Mansion at Dagsborough during much of his career. While the bulk of the estate went to the Wells, Dagworthy also left thousands of acres to his four nephews, Nanthaniel Mitchell, George Mitchell, James Mitchell and William Clayton Mitchell of Broad Creek Hundred, in the process helping to establish them as some of the largest landowners in the Hundred.

Such was to be the rule down through the generations until gradually the vast grants of the 16th and 17th centuries were sold to newcomers or divided among different lines of the original families who settled them. In 1677, William Burton received a warrant from Governor Edmund Andross, Governor of the Three Lower Counties under the Duke of York, for 1,000 acres on Indian River and Indian River Bay called "Long Neck" (by which the area is still known). The first grant was only one of several, and by 1700, the Burton family owned thousands of acres in and around Indian River Hundred. The original William Burton had 10 sons, to each of whom he gave land along the river. Scharf's "History" notes that at one time there were 30 different John Burtons living in the Hundred.

One line established their family seat at what has become known as "White House Farm" on Long Neck. A mansion house was built there in about 1722 and for more than a century after it was erected, it was owned by successive John Burtons. As the Burton family expanded, new lands were purchased or acquired by marriage throughout the Hundred and across the river in Dagsborough Hundred.

One of the major acquisitions of the first William Burton's sons was an early Indian reservation in the area of what is now Millsboro. The original Assateague tribe which migrated from Worcester County to Assawoman Neck in the late 1600's in the face of growing pressure from Maryland planters, had moved farther north by 1700 to the area on the south side of Indian River now known as Piney Neck.

The tribe, afterwards called the Indian River Indians, petitioned Lord Baltimore for a grant of land in the area. The fairness of the Indian claim was recognized by Maryland officials and in 1713, the tribe was granted 1,000 acres stretching along the river from Piney Neck to what is now Millsboro. Within a few decades, however, the Indians, under Queen Wecomiconus, had sold 200 acres of the reservation to William Burton. In 1741, the Indians sold an additional 200 acres to Joshua Burton, and within several more decades, the Burtons owned virtually the entire tract.

This pattern of land acquisition and an eventual division of original holdings to heirs was to be repeated countless times in the county and many of the relatively small farms of 100 and 200 acres found in the Sussex of 1975 have been held in the same families since the earliest days of European settlement.

Typical of the way in which early towns came to be established was the founding of what is today Millsboro in the last decade of the 18th century. In 1773, Benjamin Burton, Sr., established a grist mill on two acres of land on the south and north sides of Fishing Creek, the first creek on Indian River north of what is today Millsboro. The creek was dammed and the late 19th century there were three millponds along its length, including Ingram's and Betts Ponds which are still in existence. This development was followed in the years to come with numerous grist mills and saw mills on the tributaries of the river.

In 1792, the General Assembly enacted legislation authorizing Elisha Dickinson "to erect a mill-dam across the head-waters of Indian River near the place called Rock Hole in Indian River Hundred, and for the condemnation of a small piece of land on the south side of the river for use of grist-mill and log-yard". A small village rapidly grew up around the mill on the Indian River Hundred side. Known as Rock Hole until 1809, it was changed that year to Millsborough.

A village also came into being on the Dagsborough Hundred side of the river and came to be known as Washington. The villages were near enough the main roads from Lewistown to New Sussex so that the ferry established down-river between Warwick and Piney Neck in the 17th century was gradually replaced by a bridge across the Rock Hole Dam. The place became a regular stop for stage coach lines in operation on the peninsula during the 19th century.

It was also near enough to the Great Cypress Swamp, already the center of a growing timber and saw mill industry, to serve as a small port from which to ship timber products by water to the markets in the north. In 1815, Col. William D. Waples and several associates organized a stock company at Millsborough and established an iron furnace to take advantage of the natural deposits of bog iron lying in the beds of creeks and streams in central and western Sussex. Several years thereafter, the business was expanded with the addition of a foundry. Later owners bought ore rights in other parts of the county, such as the banks of the Nanticoke River, from earlier furnace owners. Iron ore deposits in the county were being turned into iron bars at such places as Concord Furnace, Deep Creek Furnace and Pine Grove Furnace as early as the middle of the 18th century.

Waples, whose wife, Rachel, was the daughter of Senator William Hill Wells, also established a tannery and other businesses in the area. The first store in the growing community was established by John Lacy in 1811. Growth in Washington, on the Dagsborough Hundred side of the river, had outpaced that in Rock Hole or Millsborough by 1837. The post office which had been established on the Indian River Hundred side was transferred that year to the other side of the river and both villages were combined under the single name of Millsborough, later shortened to Millsboro.

Variations of this process were underway throughout the county in the years after the revolution. Although the population had decreased slightly in Sussex between 1790 and 1800, the decrease was only temporary. In 1790 there were 20,488 persons living in the county of which 4,025 were listed as slaves, and 690 as "Free colored". By 1800, the population had fallen to 19,358 persons of whom 2,830 were slaves. Ten years later, there were 27,750 residents of Sussex, of whom 2,402 were slaves.

Gradually the vast grants were sold to newcomers or divided among different lines of the families who settled them.

In addition to agriculture with its related small industries such as grist mills, granaries and tanneries, the growing timber industry, and the iron industry, the county had an increasing number of shipbuilders by 1800. The earliest of these had centered around Lewes where there were boat-builders before 1685. Boat-yards were also coming into being along the Broadkill and Cedar Creek, and along the Nanticoke River and Broad Creek in western Sussex. In the decades that followed 1800, many affluent merchants of the county owned their own ships and engaged in trading voyages to the large ports in the United States and even further afield. Another thriving business in the sparsely populated county were inns, situated at most major crossroads and in virtually all of the larger villages.

In 1787, the General Assembly had granted to John Fitch "the sole and exclusive right and advantage of making, conducting, and employing the steamboat, by him lately invented, for a limited time". This and similar inventions were to have a profound effect on commerce in Delaware and the rest of the country during the 19th century.

The state's first public school law was enacted in 1796. Under its provisions, all the fees paid for marriage and treasury licenses between that year and 1806 were earmarked for the establishment of public schools in the state. It was to be well into the 19th century before any significant strides were made in public education in lower Delaware, however. Several private schools had been established in larger towns like Lewes and Milford during the 18th century but they were generally limited to those who could afford to pay the cost of boarding and tuition.

Lewes was also known as an early center of quality girls' schools and as early as the middle of the 18th century leading Delaware families sent their daughters to finishing school there. What country schools there were in the county by 1800 generally grew up around churches or were established as "subscription schools". Most were open only for three months of the year and the curriculum centered around the bare rudiments of "reading, writing, and 'rithmetic".

A subscription school was in existence in Northwest Fork Hundred near the present town of Bridgeville as early as 1765. At the time, it was the only school in the western half of the county. A school was conducted at Prince George's Chapel at Dagsborough before 1800. Among its early students was John M. Clayton, the great Delaware statesman, who attended the school for several years before leaving for more advanced education in Berlin, Md., Milford, and Lewes.

One somewhat surprising cultural development in the small town of Dagsborough was a library, established there in 1799. According to the Delaware statesman Outerbridge Horsey, mentioning the library in a letter to U.S. Senator William Hill Wells, plans were under discussion for similar facilities at Laurel and Georgetown.

Stephen Ellis, a planter, preacher, and teacher in Baltimore Hundred, established a school at his farm near the present-day Roxana as early as 1799. Ellis charged his students 50 cents per quarter.

The years during and just after the Revolution were also an age of considerable religious ferment. As has been noted in a previous chapter, the American Revolution was at least in part a religious struggle in the sense that the Church of England, to some extent a state religion in the colonies and at home, was strongly opposed to the cause of independence while dissenter sects such as the Presbyterians and Baptists were generally in favor of the colonial cause.

In Sussex at the outset, the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts", the missionary society of the Church of England in the American colonies, maintained six churches. The strongly pro-American Presbyterians were beginning to grow in strength in the county by the beginning of the revolution but they had yet to reach the dominant position they then held among the Scotch-Irish in New Castle County.

Three Baptist churches had been started in Sussex during the Revolution - at Broad Creek and Head of Sounds in Baltimore Hundred in 1781 and at Gravelly Branch near the present-day Coverdales' Crossroads in 1785. The Quakers had meeting houses at Cedar Creek, Cool Spring, and Marshy Creek in 1776. Neither the Baptists nor the Quakers, both originally dissenter groups within the Church of England, continued to play much of a part in the religious affairs of the county after the end of the 18th century.

In the years before the outbreak of the war, however, a third dissenter group began within the Church of England in Great Britain under the leadership of John Wesley. Centered around a strong fundamentalist approach to the gospel and a marked aversion toward such worldly pleasures as dancing, card-playing, and dramatic productions, the new sect found its way to the American Colonies in the late 1760's.

Among the most effective of the early missionaries of Methodism sent to the colonies by Wesley were Francis Asbury and a one-eyed British army captain named Thomas Webb, one of the first Methodists to preach in Delaware. The new faith found a cool reception in Wilmington and other developed areas in the northern part of the state, but the fervor with which the principles of Methodism were received in lower Delaware and the Eastern Shore more than made up for the early reverses.

At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, the Methodists still thought of themselves as members of the Church of England and as the struggle for independence began, the missionaries found themselves highly suspect among staunch Whigs. Wesley, who continued to direct the early Methodist efforts in the colonies from his home in England, did little to help the position of Methodists with his "Calm Address to the American Colonies", a strongly loyalist essay published in 1775. The Methodist cause was further hampered, according to Dr. John A. Munroe in his book "Federalist Delaware, 1785-1815", by a loyalist rebellion near Dover in 1778 led by a "backsliding Methodist" named Cheney Clow.

Dr. Munroe states that the real growth of Methodism in lower Delaware began in 1778 when Asbury took refuge in Kent County when he was forced to flee Maryland after his refusal to take a required loyalty oath to the American cause. In spite of the time he spent hiding in swamps and in the back country, Asbury found a ready audience. Soon, he was joined by other Methodist missionaries who took advantage of the strong loyalist sentiment in Kent and Sussex Counties to preach their gospel with relative impunity.

"Other Methodist preachers also flocked to the state", Munroe writes, and" "Melting times', faintings, and prostrations became common occurrences as the thrill of the power of God's word entered the monotonous lives of the peninsular farming folk. Freeborn Garretson, a native of the Eastern Shore, swept like the wrath of God through the peninsula, breathing such eloquence that many a humble auditor became frenzied or collapsed, unable to withstand the shock of this new world of emotion."

Garretson preached in Lewes as early as 1778 but he seems to have spent much of his time and effort during the early years of the Revolution preaching in the backwoods of Baltimore, Dagsborough, Broad Creek, and Little Creek Hundreds. Moore's Chapel in Little Creek Hundred, below the present town of Laurel, was the earliest Methodist Church building in Sussex when it was erected in 1779. Garretson served briefly as the pastor there in 1782. The church may also have been the first in Sussex to conduct a camp-meeting. Scharf's "History of Delaware" notes that one was conducted by the congregation there during the summer of 1805.

Bethel Methodist Church near the Nanticoke River in present-day Seaford Hundred was built in 1781, and Bishop Asbury (as he was titled after the establishment of the first Methodist Conference), Garretson, and other pioneering Methodist missionaries were frequent preachers there during the Revolution. Another congregation was established in Northwest Fork Hundred near the present town of Bridgeville shortly after 1781, although it was after 1800 before the first church building was built there.

Garretson was also personally responsible for the establishment of Old Sound Methodist Church in southeastern Baltimore Hundred, east of the present-day Williamsville. The first church was built there in 1784 after Garretson had spent several seasons preaching to farmers from the hundred under the spreading branches of a large oak tree. According to popular tradition, he constructed much of the building himself.

The war had meant the disruption of many Church

DEL... STATE ARCHIVES

of England congregations on Delmarva partly because of the church's strong loyalist stand, but even more directly because so many Anglican clergymen fled the colonies. Dr. Munroe writes that by the end of the Revolution, only three Anglican ministers remained in the state, including Parson Sydenham Thorne of Milford and Samuel Tingley of Lewes. The Methodists in the meantime had organized their first circuit in Delaware as early as 1779 and the growing denomination continued to attract more followers. One aid in attracting new members was the practice established by early Methodist leaders of sending itinerant ministers around the circuit from church to church, thus providing regular religious services even in isolated areas.

The former Church of England parishes in the state reorganized after the war as the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Delaware. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had halted all payments of salaries to Anglican ministers in Delaware in 1783 and those who followed after that date were Episcopal ministers under the control of the diocese. It was at the same time that the Methodists, who had continued to have a loose connection with the Church of England during the Revolution, finally seceded entirely from the church. They formally established themselves as an independent "Methodist Episcopal Church" at Barratt's Chapel near Frederica in Kent County in November of 1784. At the same time Asbury concluded that it was time to begin gently to separate the American Methodist movement from that of England, thus establishing an independent American Methodist denomination.

It was also important to the early growth of the church that the Methodists sought to minister to Negroes as well as to whites. An example of this concern was the appointment in 1799 of Richard Allen of Delaware as the first black elder in America.

Methodism continued to grow in Sussex after the revolution. Lewes' first Methodist church building was erected on Shankland's Lane in 1788. Known as Ebenezer Church, it was replaced by Bethel Methodist Church nearer the center of town in 1791. Wesley Chapel was built in Georgetown in 1802 as was Goshen Church in Cedar Creek Hundred. Cokesberry Methodist Church, the first Methodist Church in Nanticoke Hundred, was built in 1803. Concord Methodist Church was built in 1804. Mount Zion Methodist Church near the present-day Bethel was built in 1809. Zoar Methodist Church and Unity Church (near Fairmount) in Indian River Hundred were built in 1810 as was Zion Methodist Church on Slaughter Neck.

By 1812, there were also Methodist Churches at what is today Selbyville (Salem), and near the present-day Seaford (Asbury). The new denomination, which experienced its strongest early growth in the sparsely populated regions of western and southern Sussex, was to become the predominant faith in Sussex County in the 19th century.

Voting in Sussex County had posed substantial problems for citizens throughout the 17th and 18th centuries unless they happened to live near the county seat, first at Lewes and then after 1793, in Georgetown, where the polls were located. William Penn had begun the practice of dividing the three counties into political subdivisions known as hundreds upon his arrival in 1682. Roughly equivalent to townships in neighboring colonies such as New Jersey, the term "Hundred" is generally believed to have been an ancient Anglo-Saxon political subdivision referring to the area in which ten families lived.

In 1696, there were Rehoboth and Broadkill Hundreds. Cedar Hook Hundred was added in 1702 and in 1706 Indian Creek Hundred was established. The western boundaries of all these units with the exception of Rehoboth were generally uncertain until the resolution of the boundary disputes in the 18th century.

After 1775, Sussex County had a total of 10 hundreds. In addition to Lewes and Rehoboth, Broadkill, Cedar Creek, and Indian River, as they were known by that date, the area of "New Sussex" encompassed six new hundreds: Baltimore, Dagsborough, Broad Creek, Little Creek, Nanticoke, and Northwest Fork (the name derived from the Northwest Fork of the Nanticoke River which wound through the hundred). Georgetown Hundred was first established in 1831 from the western half of Broadkill Hundred. The legislative act authorizing its establishment was repealed in 1833 and the hundred was not reestablished until 1863. Seaford Hundred was established from portions of Broad Creek and Nanticoke Hundred in 1868 and Gumborough Hundred followed in 1873. In 1811, however, there were still ten hundreds, all of which were increasing rapidly in population.

The polls were still located at the courthouse in Georgetown. Although the shift of county seats from Lewes to Georgetown 20 years before had been a significant improvement for western Sussex Countians, voting still required a full day's travel for most voters and even more for the residents of outlying districts like Slaughter Neck, Northwest Fork, and lower Baltimore Hundred.

The increases in population by 1811 warranted the establishment of polling places in each hundred and on January 31, 1811, they were established by state law.

The polling places were as follows:

—First District - Cedar Creek Hundred - at the home of Milloway White at the Head of Cedar Creek.

—Second District - Broad Kill Hundred - at the house of Benjamin Benson at Milton.

— Third District - Nanticoke Hundred - at the house of the widow of Boaz Coverdale in Bethel or Passwater's Crossroads (now Coverdale's Crossroads).

—Fourth District - Northwest Fork Hundred - at the house of John Wilson at Bridgeville.

—Fifth District - Broad Creek Hundred - at the house of the widow of John Elliott.

—Sixth District - Little Creek Hundred - at the house of Thomas Skinner at Laurel.

—Seventh District - Dagsborough Hundred - at the house of William Howell.

—Ninth District - Indian River Hundred - at the house of William Walters near St. George's Chapel.

—Tenth District - Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred - at the house of John Wolf in Quakertown.

Election districts continued to be based on the geographical boundaries of the hundreds until the middle of this century when the county was extensively redistricted on the basis of population. Sometime after the establishment of the first ten election districts in 1811, Sussex Countians initiated the practice of descending on the county seat on the Thursday after election day from every direction and in every conceivable mode of conveyance to hear the election returns. When questioned on the subject, Sussex County Return Day officials date the holiday, the only one of its kind in the nation, "from sometime in the 1830's" when references to the event are first found.

It is likely, however, that the custom got its start in a limited way much earlier, perhaps even as early as the late 18th century when a trip to the polls would have required at least two days for many voters, some of whom may well have decided to extend their stay in the county seat long enough to find out who won.

Regardless of the actual beginning of the event, a date virtually impossible to determine in any case, the jolly and often rowdy spirit which has characterized the holiday over the years, with winners and losers shaking hands and at least making a semblance of letting by-gones be by-gones as they ride through the streets of Georgetown to the cheers of the assembled citizens of the county, has been common to Sussex County elections for 250 years.

Bombs over Lewes: The War of 1812

The War of 1812 can be seen as a continuation of the American Revolution in the sense that only after the second encounter did Great Britain finally accept the sovereign independence on her onetime American colonies. It occurred directly as the result of the Napoleonic Wars in which England and France were then engaged. The United States had adopted a position of strict neutrality in 1793, but since her vessels were trading regularly with both nations and their colonial possessions in the Western Hemisphere, neither France nor England were inclined to accept that position.

England was by far the more aggressive of the two warring powers in her dealings with the U.S., in some degree perhaps because some of her statesmen still continued privately to think of the new nation as a group of rebellious colonies who might even yet be brought back in to the fold. American commerce had increased greatly by the first decade of the 19th century and there was a constant and growing demand for more and larger ships, and for more crewmen to man them. As a result, the wages paid to sailors in the American merchant fleet were among the highest in the commercial world. Some British sailors signed on as crewmen on American vessels.

In an effort to halt the practice, the British government prohibited their seamen from serving on foreign ships. To enforce the ban, they ordered British naval commanders to stop and board all neutral vessels in search of English crewmen. In view of the close kinship between England and her former colonies, it was extremely difficult, even in the best of conditions, to distinguish between English and American seamen. In the midst of a highly charged international incident, it was virtually impossible.

Rather than give up and go away empty-handed, the British generally removed seamen from the American ships indiscriminately, seizing Americans in the process. In spite of formal protestations and warlike rumblings from the American President and Congress, the British continued to stop American vessels on the high seas and board them. It has been

The only major military action on Delaware soil was the bombardment of Lewes

estimated that before the seizures were halted by war, several thousand Americans were thus coerced into serving as crewmen on British vessels.

By 1807, American citizens viewed a war with England as an inescapable certainty for the most part. There were antiwar sentiments among some American leaders, including the lately retired ex-president, Thomas Jefferson, and a leading Delaware Federalist, U.S. Senator James A. Bayard.

The lingering traces of open British sympathy in the United States were increasingly few and increasingly weak by 1812. The strong loyalist stand taken by many Sussex Countians during the Revolution had slowly evolved into a rock-ribbed conservative political force which, in the guise of the Federalist Party, was to control the state often during the first half of the 19th century. With the passage of time, the onetime Tories had come to believe in the American Republic, however grudgingly, and by 1812 they were willing to fight for it. They also believed for the most in a strong central government - a legacy, perhaps, from their strong belief in the authority of the British crown. This view does much to explain Delaware's distinction of having been the last state in the union to remain in Federalist hands. The party established by Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, and other advocates of strong government lingered in power in various manifestations until it became the Adams Party in 1828, during the candidacy of John Quincy Adams.

The state began to prepare for war. State militiamen were activated and reorganized, as were federal naval and military forces (although not enough as was demonstrated by early American reverses along the northern frontier early in the war).

Congress authorized the construction of new fortifications at vulnerable points along the Atlantic Seaboard. Several new batteries were built at potential weak points along the Delaware River and Bay. Those new batteries in 1809 included the earthwork built at what is today Lewes' Battery Park.

In June of 1812, President Madison urged Congress to approve a declaration of war against Great Britain. The debate was short but intense before the measure was passed.

In Delaware, efforts got underway in earnest to prepare the state's defenses and bring her to a condition of combat readiness. Volunteers began coming forward from throughout the state. The first officer to volunteer for state service was, according to Scharf's "History of Delaware," "Captain Goodwin of Sussex County." In July, Goodwin and 45 fellow Sussex Countians organized a light infantry company and offered their services to Governor Joseph Haslet.

Haslet, one of the few early Democratic governors, who had defeated Daniel Rodney of Lewes for the governorship in 1810, was a farmer in Cedar Creek Hundred south of Milford. He was the son of Colonel John Haslet, the commander of the first Delaware Regiment during the Revolution. The elder Haslet had died at the Battle of Princeton in 1777 and his heroic status had no small influence on the success of his son's political career.

At the request of the federal government, Haslet sought to raise 10,000 militiamen from the state, a major undertaking in view of a statewide population at the time of 72,674 persons. Sussex was the most populous county at the time and it was asked to raise the most militiamen, a fitting request since, as it turned out, the only major military action to take place on Delaware soil during the war was the bombardment of Lewes in 1813. In all, more than 8,000 militiamen were called out in Delaware.

One of the first heroes of the war was Commodore Jacob Jones who, although born in Smyrna and an adult resident of New Castle County, had grown up in

'The commander and all his men ... Shot a dog and killed a hen.'

Lewes. At the beginning of the war, Jones, a physician by training who had chosen the navy instead, was given command of the sloop-of-war "Wasp." The vessel sailed from the Delaware early in October of 1812 and within a few days encountered a small convoy of British transports off the West Indies under the escort of the 22-gun British sloop "Frolic."

After a hard-fought battle at close quarters, the "Wasp" was the victor. Almost immediately the ship and her prizes were captured by the vastly more formidable 74-gun man-of-war "Poictiers," commanded by Commodore Sir John Poo Beresford. The "Wasp" and her crew were escorted to Bermuda where Jones and his men were soon exchanged. The capture of the "Wasp" did little to dampen the intensity of the patriotic fervor with which Jones' victory was greeted in the United States. then reeling from successive defeats on the Niagara Frontier .

A later Delaware war hero was Colonel James Gibson of Milford who was active as a regular army officer in the fighting along the Canadian border. Gibson had been one of the first Delawareans to graduate from the newly-established U.S. Military Academy at West Point, in 1808. By 1814, he commanded two regiments of riflemen at Fort Erie. He was killed there during heavy fighting in September, 1814.

In 1813, only a few months after Jones' engagement in the West Indies, the British declared a blockade of the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. Portions of the large fleet then stationed at Bermuda were sent north under the command of Commodore Beresford to enforce it. For several weeks after the British arrived off the mouth of the Delaware, they did little more than harass the small coastal craft along the lower bay and make quick forays ashore in search of provisions and opportunities for mischief.

Finally Beresford acted in the face of rapidly mounting preparations for defense of the town going on ashore under the direction of Col. Samuel B. Davis. Beresford dispatched a message to "The First Magistrate of Lewistown" informing him that, "As soon as you receive this, I must request you will send twenty live bullocks with a proportionate quantity of vegetables and hay to the 'Poictiers' for the use of his Britannic Majesty's squadron, now at this anchorage, which shall be immediately paid for at the Philadelphia prices. If you refuse to comply with this request, I shall be under the necessity of destroying your town."

Beresford could hardly have chosen a better and speedier way of alarming the citizenry of Delaware and launching them into a massive effort to prepare the defenses of the state. Governor Haslet immediately ordered large numbers of militiamen to Lewes to assist in the defense of the town. Among them were several companies who had been held in readiness near his farm at Cedar Creek Crossroads.

Thomas Fisher, the same person who had been kidnapped by the British as a youth during the Revolution and ransomed for 100 bullocks, had grown up to become a successful and popular politician who served as high sheriff of both Sussex and Kent Counties during his career. Haslet had appointed him Brigadier General in command of the Sussex County Militia and he sped to Lewes to take up his duties. Colonel Davis continued to hold active direction of the town's defenses, however, even in the presence of Fisher and later Haslet, who set out from Dover himself at the first alarm.

The defenses of the town included two forts, one at the site of the present park and one out at Pilottown which then lay a mile or so beyond Lewes. In an address to the Historical Society of Delaware in 1901, William M. Marine said that 1,000 militiamen were in the town, about 500 of whom were quartered at Blockhouse Pond.

The guns of the batteries were supplied with ammunition from an Arsenal at the corner of Second and Shipcarpenter Streets. Marine quotes a letter dated April 7 which appeared in the Baltimore "Federal Gazette" of April 9 to the effect that when the bombardment began, the defenses of the town were supplied as follows: "two eighteen-pounders were serviceable, but without ball; two nine-pounders, ball too large; there were but 15 casks of powder."

The batteries themselves were built of logs and filled with mounds of dirt and gravel. Among those who manned them were many volunteers from the town as well as militiamen. As the alarm spread around the state, more men and material arrived in the town almost hourly.

Col. Samuel B. Davis

Defender of Lewes

Colonel Davis steadfastly refused the British order for supplies, as did Haslet, and several more exchanges of unpleasantries ensued between the two commanders. Finally, the anticipated bombardment began on April 6.

The performance of the British fleet was quite simply miserable. The English vessels fired on the town for 22 hours and the sum total of their efforts was described by one was among the militia, thusly:

"The commander and all his men,
Shot a dog and killed a hen."

With the beginning of the battle, many of the townspeople who weren't doing duty with the militia withdrew to a farm about seven miles from town. Some residents of the county in past generations swore that the sound of the guns could be heard as far inland as western Broadkill Hundred.

Those Lewes residents who did stay on during the fight, often acting as gunners in the batteries, were called "Seafencibles. According to witnesses, except for minor damage to some houses and other buildings in the town, the effects of the British shelling were slight. Marine writes that, "The cannon fired at the time of the engagement were of sufficient force of propulsion to send a ball six miles. The shore was so slightly elevated above the sea, that British guns seemed unable to focus an accurate range."

The ineffectiveness of the British gunnery was nearly as great a surprise to the defenders of the town as it was to the British. Of the more than 500 cannonballs fired into the town, most fell short. They were retrieved from the sand by boys of the town and, when their diameter happened to match that of the American guns, they were fired back at the British, with, according to Marine, "especial care being taken to secure accuracy of aim when used." The shells and bombs and grape-shot fired by the ships off the town were also poorly aimed, either falling too short or flying over the town entirely.

On April 7, the British attempted to land small parties of men ashore in small boats, but they were repulsed by the militiamen in the town. Finally, on the 8th, the British vessels gave up the attack and withdrew to the mouth of the bay.

Shortly thereafter, the British, shorter than ever of supplies and fresh-water, attempted to land armed men at Newbold's Pond, near what is today The southern end of Rehoboth Beach, to bring back water supplies. Davis hurriedly sent 150 men under the command of Major George H. Hunter to the scene and they succeeded in driving the British back to their ships empty-handed. The Niles "Register" for April 24 (a popular Eastern Shore Weekly of the day) reported in a dispatch from Lewes that, "we have nothing new from this quarter except that Sir John Beresford has captured five oyster-boats, and, after a severe engagement, caused these whole cargoes to be devoured."

Although the British were to plague shipping along the bay for the remainder of the war and Lewes continued to be garrisoned by militiamen for several years thereafter, those days in early April, 1813, ended the town's active involvement in battle. During the last week of April, the lights of Cape Henlopen Lighthouse were ordered extinguished by the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, who had authority for the facility.

While the blockade of the Delaware continued for most of the war, the main thrust of the British effort shifted to the Chesapeake. That campaign eventually resulted in the partial destruction of the recently established federal capital at Washington City by British soldiers the following summer.

In June of 1814, the British frigate "Nieman" sent two barges into the Indian River Inlet, then a rude natural break in the barrier strand south of the present inlet. The barges carried a total of 60 men and in the course of their foray, they managed to burn several small shallops loaded with lumber and they held several more for ransom, being hard-pressed for food and water as usual. Daniel Rodney, a Lewes merchant and a leading Federalist politician who had defeated Haslet in the race for governor in 1813, sent a company of 50 men to Lewistown when the alarm was sounded with orders to protect the town and the surrounding countryside. The British sailed away without further incidents, however.

When the war ended in a second American victory over the British early in 1815, the militia was once more disbanded. The garrison at Lewes was discharged on March 15, and William Marshall, a pilot and lieutenant commander of the militia company in the town recorded in his diary, "This day discharged all the men; took the keys of the magazine; nailed up the guardhouse, and stopped the touch-holes of the cannon."

'Cannonball House'

One of the few casualties of the bombardment

Between Wars: Years of growth and slow but constant change

In February of 1815, the Treaty of Ghent was signed ending the war and returning Delaware once more to a peacetime footing. During the war, as in the decades before, there had been a considerable amount of industrial growth in New Castle County. While the census of 1820 determined that there were only 75 more persons in the state than there had been ten years before, the population had shifted dramatically. New Castle County had had a population increase of nearly three thousand and Sussex County had had a corresponding population decrease.

In what was to become a frequent lament in the following generations, New Castle Countians complained that the state tax levied in 1815 was unfair because that county, with only one-third of the assessed valuation in the state, was called upon to pay three-fifths of the tax. That inequity was to persist through much of the 19th century as the combined political might of Sussex and Kent Counties was much in control of state government.

The schism which was to divide the heavily industrial New Castle from rural Sussex and Kent was already obvious to observors of the 1820's. The heavily Scotch-Irish population in New Castle had been largely Presbyterian for several decades proceeding the Revolution. Many had been naturally inclined to detest British rule even before emigrating to America and their feelings became even more pronounced as the Revolution neared.

As a strongly pro-Independence area, New Castle County was often at odds with the two lower counties both before and after the war. With the formation of political parties in the decade before 1800, the two lower countries had become predominantly Federalist and held a virtual monop-oly on the state's high political office until well into the 1920's. New Castle County, on the other hand, was dominated by Jeffersonian Democrats.

In his book on the Federalist period in Delaware, Dr. John A. Munroe observes that, "the Delaware Federalists were, on the whole, the party of stand-pat, a doctrine subscribed to by downstaters, who faced none of the new conditions which bred radicalism on the frontier or in the city."

The strong English heritage of the lower counties was a major reason for this attitude, which had become coupled with an instinctive mistrust of the much more cosmopolitan and sometimes radical Scotch-Irish to the north.

"The phenomenal growth of Methodism downstate was another factor in Federalist strength," Munroe writes, "The Methodists were a schismatic development from the Church of England, and they remained loyal to the politics of what had been the Church party."

Relations between the Presbyterians and the Church of England had been by no means as friendly. By and large, the Democrats were much more favorably inclined toward the intellectual approach towards things religious espoused by Thomas Jefferson than they were toward the stirring tirades of a Freeborn Garretson.

Paradoxically, the only two Democrats to be elected to the office of governor before the War of 1812, Col. David Hall of Lewes and Joseph Haslet of Cedar Creek, were both Sussex Countians. There were Jeffersonian Democrats in lower Delaware, of course, but theirs was an uphill battle during the first decades of the republic. The downstate Democratic faction was led by men who had been staunch Whigs during the Revolution and who , like Hall, had served in the Continental Army. Munroe notes that the Democratic leadership in the state ran downstate Democrats like Hall and Haslet in an effort to divide the united front of downstate Federalism while the Federalists adopted an opposite strategy by running well-known New Castle County Federalists such as Senator James A. Bayard for high politicial office.

During the 19th century, United States Senators were not yet popularly elected but were instead elected by a simple majority of state legislators. Thus, the party in control of the statehouse was also the party represented in the U.S. Senate. Elections for governor and for the state's lone seat in the U.S. House of Representatives were, on the other hand, open to the mass of voters and were, therefore, much more indicative of the will of the people.

Although Sussex County remained overwhelmingly agricultural in the manner of the colonial plantation economy, the decades following the conclusion of the War of 1812 were a time of economic growth and development. By the close of the war the earliest industries in Sussex County were well established. Although most business activity was on a small local scale blacksmith shops, tanneries, cabinetmakers, grist and saw-mills, lumber yards, and similar enterprises—the county's bog-iron industry was reaching the point where its products were sold through much of the middle Atlantic region.

Ship-building and water-borne commerce were also on the increase. Small river towns like Milford, Milton, Laurel, and Seaford were doing a thriving business in boat-building as was the larger port of Lewes. Bethel, which was to become a ship and boat building center of note later in the century, was in the first decades of the 19th century, still a sleepy village along Broad Creek.

It was never a simple thing to distinguish between farmers and seafarers in Sussex County since many residents engaged in both activities on many different levels from a few acres and the smallest river craft to plantations and large trading vessels. Captain James Tunnell, a Baltimore Hundred merchant of the period, operated the vessel "American Trader," and, at the same time taught school on his farm near Blackwater Creek, at the mouth of which were located ship-yards.

At the other extreme were the small shallops which plied the navigable streams of the county and carried much of the area's produce and other goods to market up the Delaware River. Munroe quotes an account of a voyage on such a vessel published by Patrick Lyon in Philadelphia in 1799. Lyon, who sailed down the river from Philadelphia to Sussex the year before, wrote disdainfully:

". . .the main sail was not without its decorations, it was completely patched and was not confined to canvas only; but towards the lower part, were pieces of check shirts or aprons. The peak halyards had three or four knots, and it was with great difficulty some times to get the knots through the blocks either way; the foresail was passable the gibb was a delicate piece of goods, the upper part being made fast to a woolen stocking. Who would suppose that the exalted commander of such a temporary unseamed leaky machine as this schooner or shallop should or could have the conscience to assume more dignity, more importance and more affectation than the commander of a first-rate man of war in his Britannic majesty's navy - but that was the case."

Munroe concludes that such pride in one's vessel was entirely justified, if for no other reason than that the shallops of Sussex County were to a great extent her main artery of trade, a trade which included wheat, lumber, corn and hay."

Another extremely popular product of Sussex County agriculture was whiskey-apple jack and corn "likker" - in the manufacture of which Sussex Countians had few peers in spite of their strong inclination toward devout Methodism. Edward Noble Vallandigham, writing about the elixir during the early years of prohibition in his 1922 work "Delaware and the Eastern Shore," paid this tribute:

". . .it is discreetly whispered that here and there in deepest Sussex, and possibly elsewhere (on Delmarva), safe from prying eyes and sniffing noses, still lurk stores of precious liquor long ago distilled from native fruit, and forever fragrant with the tantalizing aroma of sun-bathed autumnal orchards. Experts declare that taken 'neat' this rarest of Delaware's products warms the inner man but burns not, that mixed judiciously with the smooth ambrosial honey of the hive, it rivals the richest distillations of ancient monkish alembics, is as harmless as mother's milk."

With the invention of early steamboats in the late 1700's, another revolution of an industrial nature was starint in northern Delaware. In 1787 inventor John Fitch had been granted exclusive rights by the Delaware General Assembly to build and operate steam vessels in the river and bay, but it was to be many years before the technological innovation caught on in the lower river and bay. Steam vessels were also developed during the same era by Oliver Evans of New Castle County. Evans, one of the nation's first acknowledged mechanical geniuses also created a one-man industrial revolution of sorts in milling and other land-based industries in New Castle County with his many inventions.

It was only with the development of railroads downstate during the second and third quarters of the 19th century that such new developments found their way to Sussex County in a big way, however, and life continued there in much the way it had always been for decades more. The authors of "Delaware, A Guide to the First State," produced in 1938 under the depression-era federal writer's project, note in reference to river and bay traffic of the early 19th century, "Hundreds of sloops, schooners, brigs, and larger vessels plied the river, many of them built and owned by merchants and transportation companies of Wilmington, New Castle, Smyrna, Dover, Milford, Lewes, and even smaller villages. By the early 1800's an extensive trade with Atlantic States, Nova Scotia, and the West Indies was in full swing, and several Delaware-owned vessels were engaged in European trade."

A canal between the Delaware River and the upper Chesapeake Bay had been a dream of many Philadelphia and New Castle County merchants virtually since the idea was first expressed by the Swedish Governor Rising in the 17th century. The massive project got a start of sorts in 1804 when a company was formed and a canal utilizing the Cristiana River was begun. The effort was stopped shortly by a lack of funds, however, and it was nearly 20 years before a similar project was begun in lower New Castle County. Finally the canal was completed between Reedy Point south of Delaware City (which owed much of its early growth to the waterway) and Chesapeake City, Md., at a then-astronomical cost of several million dollars. Its construction opened up a whole new market for Philadelphia and northern Delaware. Although it indirectly affected some eastern Sussex ports as well, the sentiment in the lower counties was generally against the engineering marvel.

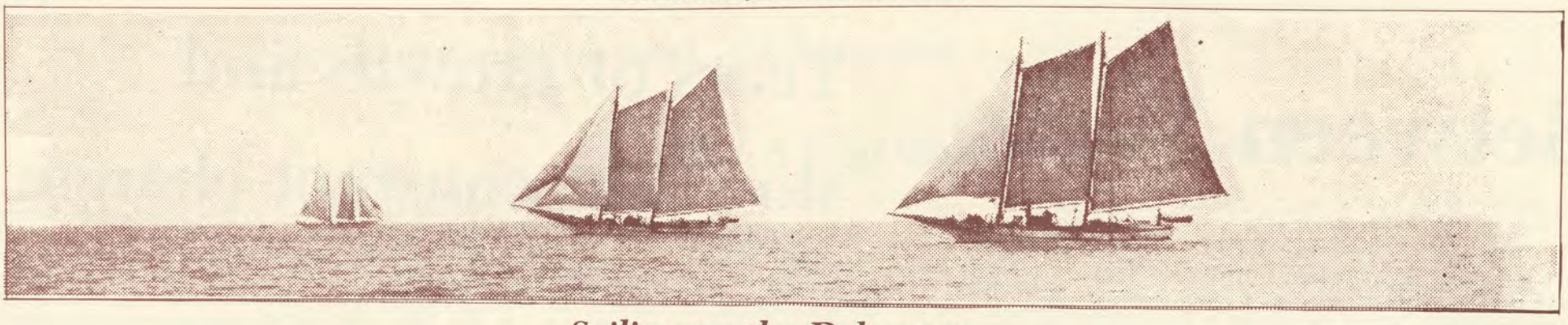
A marvel of even greater proportions was begun at about the same time, however, which would have a great impact on the ports of Sussex - the Delaware Breakwater at Lewes. James C. Booth, the Franklin Institute scientist who conducted the state's first geological survey in the late 1830's, called the breakwater, then under construction, "a great national work," and continued with a comparative analysis of the relative merits of the rock quarried in northern Delaware as opposed to that obtained elsewhere. The 2800-foot original breakwater and a later 1800-foot "ice-breaker" were to take 40 years and more than $4 million to complete.

Sussex County farmers had yet to adopt many of the progressive farming techniques which were then causing northern Delaware to blossom into a widely diversified agricultural economy. Although Sussex Countians did begin applying the new principles during the last half of the 19th century, many vestiges of the 18th century plantation economy with its strong dependence on slave labor continued until the Civil War.

Writing about Delaware agriculture in general in the years just before the War of 1812, Dr. Munroe notes that the chief crops were wheat, barley, corn, buckwheat, potatoes, cabbage, various pulse crops, and other garden truck. Oats and grasses, especially timothy and clover were grown for fodder, and flax for the domestic spinning industry. Tobacco and hemp used in the manufacture of rope were declining in importance by the early 19th century.

During the early generations of European settlement in America, farmers and planters had depended on the richness of the virgin soil to produce bountiful harvests, but by the beginning of the 19th century in Sussex County and other plantation areas the soil was becoming exhausted. Since it was to be decades before such progressive methods as crop rotation and the liberal use of fertilizers would repair the early abuses to the land, many farms which had once been productive fell into decline and their owners were reduced to little more than subsistence farming, augmenting their crop yields with the still rich products of the waters surrounding the county and the game filling its forests.

Farmers also raised livestock in great numbers. Dr. Munroe writes that, "the cattle, which were small, were 'bred in the greatest number on the marshes and



Sailing on the Delaware

This early 20th century view of Delaware Bay skipjacks gives an impression of the bay in the days when it was one of the most important highways of waterborne commerce in America - and one of the most active. The bay's skipjack oyster fleet, similar to that which still plies the waters of the Chesapeake, had been replaced by motor vessels by World War II.

forests of the two lower counties,' then driven to New Castle County, 'where the most cultivated meadows' abounded. Here they were 'grazed & stall-fed for the markets of Wilmington & Philadelphia.' "

"*Salt grass* was cut from the marshes and stacked about four feet above the ground on horizontal poles; in the winter the sheep took shelter under this roof and ate grass from between the poles." writes Dr. Munroe. He also notes that "a few mules were bred and horses were raised 'for the road & other services,' but few for racing, which was discouraged by the laws." The breeding of horses for the later purpose was to advance significantly later in the 19th century, however, not only in Sussex and Kent but on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia. This writer's great-grandfather, a typical farmer, railroad agent, politicianspostmaster, and country-storekeeper at the turn of the century, kept a race track behind his home where neighbors and friends would gather after Sunday church services. That practice seems to have been widespread on the peninsula by the late 19th century.

In the first decades of the 19th century, Delmarva still had many great plantations and farms, most dependent on slaves. One of the finest descriptions ever written of the life on one of those estates is included in Vallandigham's "Delaware and the Eastern Shore." It recounts in some detail the manner of life enjoyed by one Major Joshua Prideaux, a lower Worcester County planter who owned a small plantation along one of the many creeks leading into the Sinepuxent Bay; although the description is of life in Worcester County, it could as easily have been written about lower Sussex during the same era:

"As for the Major, the 'home place' was only one of his many preoccupations. He not only grew crops and managed the mill, but kept or at least owned a country store, where he sold whiskey by the gallon. He also hauled seine at night by the smoky glare of fat pine torches, and to the wistful music of the slaves, keedoop in the salt shallows, built ships, and sailed them as far as New York, bred Muscovy ducks and fancy cattle, and had his share in the local administration of church and state."

The plantation houses of the period were generally cypress shingled or clapboard structures with a separate summer kitchen laying some distance off from the main house and connected to it by a low passage called the "corridor" which was sometimes capped by a second story, "so that the house, corridor, and kitchen suggested three houses of varying height joined as one structure."

Vallandigham writes that, "as climatic conditions did not demand that the whole domestic establishment he brought under one roof, the dwelling was flanked by a group of outhouses-smoke house, ice-house, granary, wood-house-so that the whole, with its array of gables and pent-roofs set at old angles, presented somewhat the aspect of a small village, and needed only a palisade encircling all to repeat the ancestral Saxon 'tun', forerunner of the 'town."

In such outlying farms, neighbors were few and far between. The roads were traveled by itinerant ministers, judges and lawyers riding from county seat to county seat, peddlars, planters, vagabonds', and adventurers. "There was a stir of excitement indoors whenever a 'haloo' came at night from across the creek. A slave oarsman put out in answer to the call, and the friend or neighbor, or mere stranger was hospitably entertained, and sent on this way next morning."

Major Prideaux, whose ancestor was said to have floated ashore in the vicinity of Worcester County on a chicken crate in the early 18th century, was also a practitioner of the salt business that flourished along the Delmarva Coast during the 18th and 19th centuries. Vallandigham writes that, "when Major Prideaux returned of winter dusk with his slave oarsmen across the six or seven miles of Sinepuxent Bay, after boiling salt on the sandy peninsula of Assateague with the roar of the Atlantic in his ears, he had to stride up and down the boat, whip in hand, to wake any oarsman who seemed likely to freeze in his sleep. The salt thus made went to cure the Mayor's ham and bacon, his thousands of herring and other fish barreled for winter use, his dried and smoked beef, and whatever else was stored for the feeding of houses and 'quarters.' Doubtless some of the salted products, as some of the salt itself, he sold at the store."

The wealth of shellfish along the peninsula had given rise to a flourishing oyster and clam industry by the beginning of the 19th century which, with fishing, awas to make Sussex Countians and other residents of Delmarva even more independent. A few weeks of oystering could do much to augment a poor crop yield and, if worst came to worst, one had but to go down to the river or the bay to catch enough food to get by, and get by quite nicely at that.

It was never a simple thing

to distinguish between

farmers and seafarers

in Sussex County

Americans had discovered the virtues of the oyster and other shellfish early on in their ventures to the new continent. In all of that continent perhaps the richest shellfishing grounds of all lay in the waters of Delmarva. By the early 1800's the industry was becoming well-established.

In an article on the Delaware oyster industry published in "Delaware History," Mary Emily Miller refers to the discovery of Delaware's wealth of oysters by Connecticut watermen in the early 1800's. They sailed to the Delaware with the first dredges seen in the bay and had a fine catch. Too fine. Early in 1812. Delaware passed its first law limiting oystering to Delaware and Maryland vessels and establishing other regulations.

The War of 1812 put a temporary halt to the problem and it was in the 1830's before further legislation was passed prohibiting certain practices such as dumping oyster shells and refuse in creeks, resisting arrest for breaking laws relating to the industry, and taking more oysters than established limits allowed. Another law was passed which established seasons for oystering. Although that and other laws were designed to preserve the state's oyster beds and protect them from over fishing, a later version of the law had the interesting side effect of creating "Big Thursday."

Under the provisions of an 1851 oyster industry law, a closed season was established which ran from May 1 to August 10. When an earlier closed season had been observed during the 1840's, farmers in Kent and Sussex had begun going to bay and river towns to get their supply of oysters, an integral and honored delicacy on Delmarva from time immemorial. The visits to the river and bay began in earnest at the end of the 1851 closed season at Bowers Beach and spread to other bay towns as well as inland villages like Warwick along the Indian River in the area where Oak Orchard, Rosedale, and Riverdale are now located. The second Thursday in August thereafter became a great local holiday which exceeded the Fourth of July in many parts of Kent and Sussex.

The watermen used either tongs or the more efficient dredges to collect the bay and river oysters. They sailed out to the beds in a variety of craft ranging from sloops and schooners to shallops and log canoes. In later years, the oystermen of the Delaware borrowed the sleek Bugeye design from their colleagues in the Cheasapeake, and after that came the skipjack which continued in use until the early years of the 20th century.

By the late 19th century, Delaware oysters had become famed throughout the East. Delaware waterman sailed down into Virginia and Carolina waters to obtain seed oysters which were brought back and planted in the bay. They were left long enough for the bay waters to impart their particular pleasing flavor and ten were harvested and sent to market.

The oyster was used in other ways besides food. Its crushed shells were perhaps the major road surfacing material in use in parts of the county near the water. Age-old oyster bed deposits which lay in several spots in the county were also mined for that purpose. Oyster shells were burned and the ash used as lime for fertilizing the fields.

Lower Delawareans credited their famed sheilfish with surprising common sense and intelligence if the following news item from an August, 1885, issue of the Milford Chronicle quoted by Ms. Miller is a good indication:

"OYSTER LOST - An oyster 86 years old, estimating its age by the ridges or water lines of the shell, was some time ago in the possession of a New York fish dealer, who says of it: 'It was caught in the Delaware Bay three years ago. That oyster had intelligence. I put it in a tank of salt water and it opened and shut itself up as if enjoying a bath. One day I put the oyster on a plank in order to study its shell with a microscope. It lay there dumb and dreadlike. I stepped aside to wait upon a customer. The tomcat walked up the oyster and began to turn it over with its paws. Suddenly the bivalve opened its shell and caught the cat's tail. The cat bounded off like a rocket, bumping the oyster against the pavement. The octogenarian clung to the cat's tail. I never saw the cat or the oyster again.' "

The early commercial fishing industry was also well established. Shad fishing was a lucrative pastime for Delaware watermen as was seining for herring and other fish that traveled up the rivers of Sussex and other parts of Delmarva to spawn. Menhaden, later to play a major role in the Delaware commerical fishing industry, were already being caught in large numbers and ground up for fertilizer.

Slavery had been a major institution on Delmarva since the first European settlers landed and established themselves on the great landed estates granted by the Penns and Baltimores. Its existence might be seen in retrospect to have had a subtly impeding effect on the economic development of Sussex and the lower peninsula since it held off implementation of many of the progressive, work-saving methods for increased crop yields used by northeastern farmers of the same era.

Although some religious groups such as the Quakers had traditionally been staunchly opposed to slavery, most of the dominant denominations in Sussex accepted it in practice. Most early churches on the peninsula had their slave galleries and blacks and whites continued to worship together, albeit in a slave-master relationship until the time of the Civil War.

In 1810, there were 4,177 slaves in Delaware of whom 2,402 were owned by Sussex Countians, 728 by Kent Countians, and 1,047 by New Castle Countians. Although the state's first constitution ratified in 1776, an otherwise conservative document, had included strong prohibitions against the slave trade, those clauses were dropped from the new state constitution of 1792.

Sussex was at the height of its politicial power in the early 1800's when its population was still nearly equal to that of New Castle County and the machinery governing the General Assembly assured that Sussex and Kent Countians carried a combined clout. That situation did nothing to improve relations between nothern and southern Delawareans and even today when the pattern is quite clearly reversed, the hard feelings continue to flow deep, deep beneath the surface.

The importation of slaves was banned by federal law in 1808 but dthat did not prevent the smuggling of an additional quarter million slaves into the country before the Civil War. The 1808 law did not outlaw the sale of slaves within the U.S. and that trade also continued to flourish.

One unintended result of the ban on importation was to make the human chattel more valuable than ever. The rapidly expanding cultivation of cotton in the deep south and southwest, with its dependence on abundant and cheap labor served to increase the demand for slaves to the point where it became highly profitable to steal slaves and free Negroes in the North and resell them in the South.

Sussex County and other parts of the lower peninsula had a large population of free Negroes, a community which had florished on Delmarva since the earliest days of colonization. Most free blacks were craftsmen and small farmers. They earned their livelihood as boat-builders, wagon-makers, shoemakers, wheelwrights, cabinetmakers, butchers, watermen, wood-cutters, blacksmiths, carpenters and at virtually every other occupation then found on the peninsula. Freemen were denied many of the rights and privileges accorded to whites although they fared a great deal better than did slaves .

Into the midst of this world in about 1802 came a woman who was to win great notoriety on the peninsula and elsewhere - Patty Cannon, the best-known and most feared outlaw in Sussex County since the days when the pirate Canoot was plundering Lewistown with drepressing frequency. Patty Cannon's origins are uncertain. The entertaining tales about her early days - that her real name was Lucretia and that she possessed goodly amounts of Gypsy blood - are almost certainly the inventions of journalist of a later day more intent on dramatic flair than upon strict accuracy.

What is certain is that she came to Sussex County as the wife of a small farmer and apparently successful mechanic named Jesse Cannon, a lesser member of the great Cannon family of western Sussex. They lived on a farmfour miles from Cannon's Ferry along the banks of the Nanticoke a few miles below Seaford, at a tiny village now known as Reliance. It was situated only a few hundred feet within the Maryland State Line near the point where the boundary line between Caroline and Dorchester Counties intersects the border.

Cannon himself may have engaged in the slave trading - and slave stealing - business early in their marriage. He was named in an indictment in November, 1821, for kidnapping, along with several other persons including his wife and his son-in-law, one Joseph Johnson. Johnson was found guilty during a trial in Georgetown in May of the following year and was sentenced to be, "publicly whipped on the bare back with 39 lashes, well laid on." His sentence read further that he, shall stand in the pillory with both ears nailed thereto, and at the expiration of one hour shall have the soft part of each ear cut off and shall pay the cost of this prosecution ." The part of the sentence calling for the forced removal of Johnson's ear lobes was later commuted by the governor but the rest was carried out the following month.

Jesse Cannon died sometime thereafter and his wife continued the evil business with her son-in-law, Johnson. At the time of the Patty Cannon gang's activities on the peninsula, Reliance was known as Johnson's Crossroads largely because of the large two-story shingled house with its low, swung back verandah which 'GATH" Townsend called "Joe Johnson's kidnapper's tavern."

George Alfred Townsend, was the Georgetown-born son of an itinerant Methodist minister named Stephen Townsend. He became one of the best-known correspondents of the Civil War and in the late 1869's and early 1870's a wellknown poet and novelist.

While his account of Patty Cannon might have been improved for literary purposes, it still bears clear journalistic descriptions of the peninsula of the 1820's. Of Joe Johnson's tavern, Townsend wrote, "The big barn-roofed house is Joe Johnson's tavern for the entertainment of Georgy nigger-traders that comes to git his stolen goods. It's at the cross-roads, three miles from Cannon's Ferry, what the passengers from below crosses the Nanticoke fur Easton and the north, an' the stages from Cambridge by the King's road meets'em yonder at the tavern. The tavern stands in Dorchester County, with a tongue of Caroline reaching down in front of it, an' Delaware state hardly twenty yards whar every Sunday morn'in' the people goin' to church kin pick up a basketful of ears, eyes, noses, fingers, an' hair bit off afightin' on Saturday afternoon."

It was one of the most desolate and isolated points on an isolated peninsula and therefore perfect for the needs of Joe Johnson and his mother-in-law. The tavern contined a "keep"in its attic where Patty and Joe Kept the slaves and free Negroes captured during their raids up and down the peninsula. The Cannon gang would swoop down on outlying plantations, kidnap blacks and hold them at the tavern until slave dealers from the south arrived to purchase them. In several recorded instances, the unsuspecting slavers, heavily laden with money, were killed as they slept, their purses stolen and their bodies disposed of in the fields nearby.

The slavers sailed up the Nanticoke to Cannon's Ferry and took the kidnapped slaves with them in the holds of their vessels down to the Chesapeake and into the deep south for resale. Townsend wrote in his masterpiece, "The Entailed Hat" that one of Patty's raids was directed toward "Woodburn," the old Dover mansion which now serves as the Delaware Governor's Mansion. Although the account of the raid was probably fictional, the old house was said to have been a stop on the "underground railway," the collection of private homes, taverns, stables, and churches running along the borders between north and south which served as way stations for escaping slaves making their way north to freedom.

Patty Cannon's undoing came in 1829 when a farmer was plowing the field he had rented from her. As he plowed, his horse sank into a morass. Thinking that the depression might contain buried treasure, he returned later with several friends. When they dug out the pit, they found instead a large blue wooden trunk containing the remains of a man. He later proved to have been a southern slave-trader who had mysteriously disappeared 10 years before.

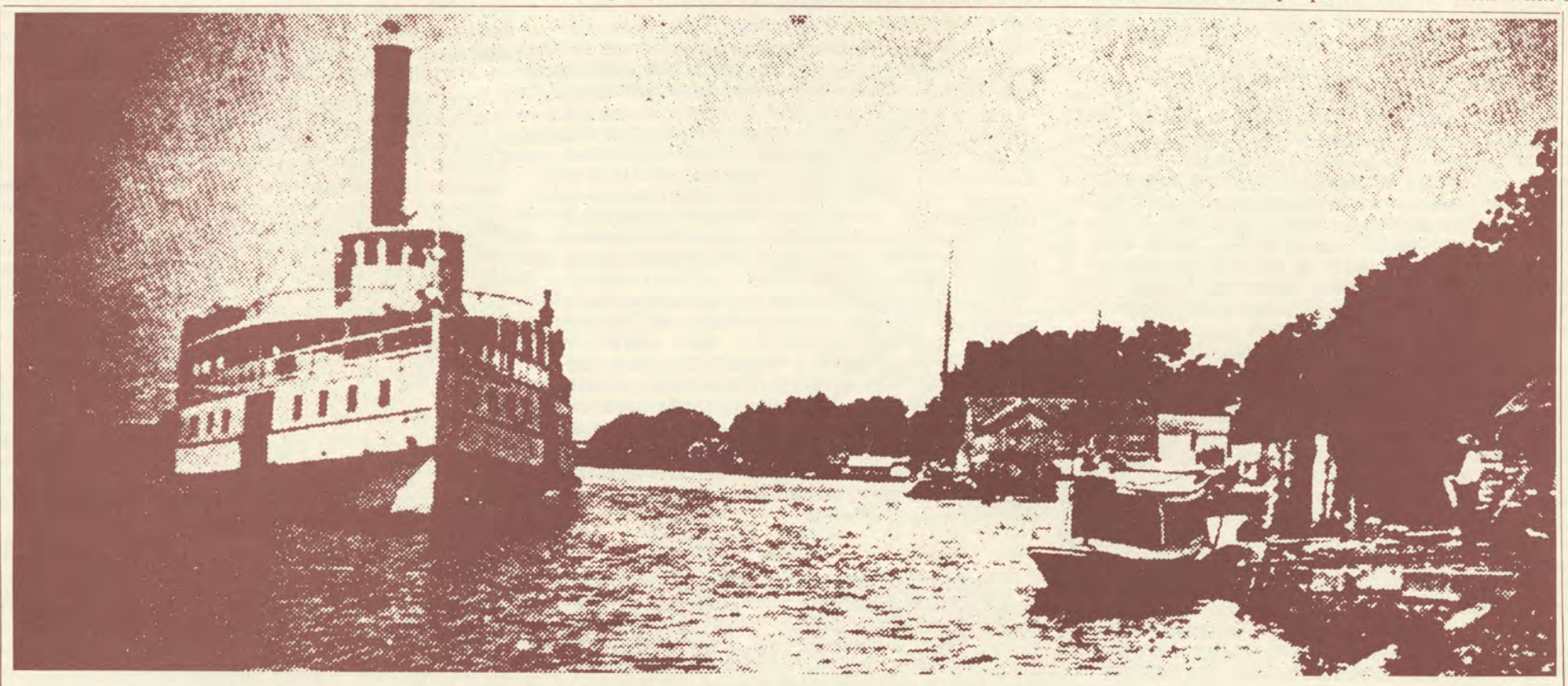
The authorities had been aware of the curious disappearances and other suspicious activities involving Cannon and Johnson and their associates for several years and had been looking for some conclusive evidence of their crimes. Sussex County authorities found a witness to many of the crimes in the person of one Cyrus James, a black servant of Patty Cannon.

Johnson was able to direct the searchers to several other burial sites and within three days after the discovery of the first body, three more were found, including that of a child. Patty Cannon, then said to be a woman in her late 50's or early 60's, was arrested. According to one report, the person who actually made the arrest was Thomas Holliday Hicks, a Dorechester County, Maryland, sheriff who later went on to become the Civil War Governor of Maryland.

Hicks is said to have turned her over to Delaware legal authorities and she was taken to the Sussex County jail in Georgetown. According to one newspaper account quoted by Ted Giles in his book "Patty Cannon, Woman of Mystery" the young Delaware attorney John M. Clayton, later to become chief justice of the state supreme court, U.S. Senator from Delaware, and U.S. Secretary of State, was hired in the late 1820's to direct the prosecution of her case. Like many of the details surrounding the Patty Cannon legend, this one is not entirely proven either.

The state archives contain Sussex County court records showing that she was indicted in the "Court of General Sessions of the Peace and Gaol Delivery of the State of Delaware held at George Town in and for the County of Sussex on the 13th day of April, 1829." In all she was indicted on four counts and bound over for later traial in the Sussex County Court of Oyer and Terminer.

There is considerable doubt that Patty Cannon ever came to trial, however. Instead, after reportedly having confessed to as many as ten murders and a lurid variety of lesser sins, she took poison and was found dead in her cell. She was buried in the yard of the county jail somewhere under what is today the Sussex County Planning and Zoning Office in the new wing of the courthouse. Her remains were later removed to the county "potter's field" near what is



Steamboat on the Nanticoke, late l9th Century.

Lydia Clark Monument

Lydia Clark, the last Sussex Countian to speak the Nanticoke tongue (in which her name was Nau-Gwa-Ok-Wa) was honored by the erection of this 1927 monument at Oak Orchard's grove. Seated before the monument in this 1927 photo by University of Pennsylvania anthropologist Dr. Frank Speck are, left to right, Lily Clark; William Russell Clark, first chief of the Nanticoke Association, and Ferdinand Clark. Chief Clark contended that the testimony given by Lydia in the Levin Sockum trial before her death in 1859 was not her true sentiment.

today the Sussex County Correctional Institute. Giles reports that at the time the bones were removed from the jail yard, a young clerk at the law office of Robert White obtained her skull, which in 1963 reposed in the Dover Public Library.

Patty's son-in-law and associate in crime, Joe Johnson, apparently escaped the state and one researcher quoted by Giles contends that he finally made his way to Arkansas where, under an assumed name he became a probate court judge. That story, while far-fetched, is considerably more conservative than many which were to arise about the gang and its many exploits on the peninsula. With the passage of time, the truth and fiction of Patty Cannon were to commingle into an enduring piece of the folklore of Delmarva. For generations after her death children are said to have quaked with fright and pleasurable terror at the sound of her name.

Relations betwen whites and blacks became strained in the 1840's and 1850's as a result of many of the conditions characterizing the later slave era when the strong feelings in favor against slavery were being vented in state houses and in congress. Even though Delaware had harsh laws dealing with the sorts of slave and free black kidnappings in the Patty Cannon and Joe Johnson specialized, the penalties which they set forth were rarely carried through, dealing as they did with nailing ears to the pillory and cutting off earlobes. Except in the most blatent cases like that of the Cannon gang, illicit slave trading was often overlooked.

In the 1840's and 1850's, the General Assembly passed laws making it illegal for free blacks and slaves to own guns and ammunition and limiting any public gathering to a curfew of 10:00 p.m. The law dealing with ownership of firearms by free blacks resulted in 1855 in one of the most curious series of trails in Sussex County history.

A public panic among whites swept much of the south and middle Atlantic region in 1831 after more than 50 whites were murdered by the followers of Nat Turner, a runaway slave and preacher, during a slave uprising in Southhampton County, Virginia, in August of that year. The Delaware Guide notes that on Election Day of 1831 most of the men of Seaford had gone to vote in the polls which were located seven miles away in Bridgeville. In their absence, some white pranksters started the rumor that thousands of rebellious blacks were approaching the town up the shores of the Nanticoke River.

Many frightened residents fled hurriedly with a few belongings and only returned when the threatened uprising did not materialize. The scares which originated from the Nat Turner Rebellion and the Election Day joke in Seaford remained beneath the surface for several years, although in Delaware there was literally no basis for them. Amateur vigilante groups took to the streets in many lower Delaware towns and harassed groups of free Negroes, confiscating their guns, breaking up church services, and over-reacting in general.

In Indian River Hundred near the present towns of Oak Orchard, Riverdale, and Rosedale, a group of people have lived largely aloof and apart from generations. A mixture of many racial strains beginning with Indians of the Indian River and Nanticoke tribes and including whites, blacks, and variations of all three, had created a group of people

The legal position of those from 'Down Sockum' had been ambiguous for generations. . .

as different from whites as they were from Negroes.

The area was often called "Down Sockum" because of the large numbers of people named Sockum then living in the neighborhood. The people themselves were known as "Moors" because of an old legend often recounted to explain their origin. They were said to have evolved from a group of Spanish Moors who survived a shipwreck centuries ago on the Delaware Coast and moved inland where they intermarried with the Indians.

In legal terms, the position of those from Down Sockum had been ambiguous for generations. While they were generally classed as free Negroes in an age greatly sensitive to racial distinctions, many of their number could be and often were as easily classified as white.

A leading businessman of the neighborhood, Levin Sockum, ran a general store at Warwick. In 1855, a white neighbor named Nathaniel Burton, who apparently had a grudge of some duration against Sockum, had him arrested on charges of selling ammunition to Isaac Harmon, "a free mulatto," and of possessing a firearm.

Both offenses were technically illegal under the 1832 law passed in the wake of the Nat Turner panic, but neither had been enforced in the 20 years since that time. The major points at issue in the case were whether or not Harmon could be legally classed as a Mulatto and whether Sockum himself came under the same designation.

The prosecuter was one of the state's best-known attorneys, George P. Fisher, the son of General Thomas Fisher, the commander of the Sussex Militia during the War of 1812. The younger Fisher, who had read law in the office of John M. Clayton and served under him briefly during the early 1850's when Clayton was the U.S. Secretary of State, had only recently been appointed Delaware attorney general by Governor Peter Causey of Milford. Fisher went on to become a Republican Congressman, the Colonel of the First Delaware Cavalry during the early years of the Civil War, and later Associate Judge of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, now the U.S. Appeals Court.

The first Levin Sockum Trial took place in the Sussex County Courthouse during the April term of 1855. In the first trial Fisher succeeded to the satisfaction of the jury, in proving that Harmon was indeed a mulatto when an old woman of the neighborhood, Lydia Clark, was brought forth to testify as to his origin . Lydia Clark, then near 80, related a tale about the origin of the Moors which supposedly proved their partial Negro heritage.

That was enough for the jury and Sockum was convicted of having sold the powder and shot to Harmon and was fined $20. In an account of the trial entitled "The So-Called Moors of Delaware" which appeared in a Milford newspaper in 1895 and was later reprinted by the Delaware Public Archives Commission, Fisher called Harmon, "by far the handsomest man in the courtroom, with perfect Caucasian features, rosy cheeks and hazel eyes." Lydia Clark, who was the last woman on the peninsula fluent in the Nanticoke tongue, was described as being, "as perfect a type of the Indian as I ever say ..." and, "of intelligence as bright as a new dollar."

She admitted to being a kinswoman of Harmon's and her testimony was later instrumental in convicting Sockum on the second charge of possessing a firearm in a later trial. Sockum, frustrated at his curious treatment at the hands of the law, sold his property and moved with his family to New Jersey where, presumably, he did his best to forget Nathaniel Burton, Lydia Clark, and Sussex County.

Lydia Clark died less than a year after the trial. C.A. Weslager in his book "Delaware's Forgotten Folk," writes that William Russell Clark, the first Chief of the Nanticoke Indian Association incorporated in Indian River Hundred in the early 20th century, and a descendent of Lydia Clark, "always insisted that the white man who brought the charges had forced her into making her deposition. Lydia died repentant, he said, for having dishonored her people."

Civil War: *The issue of slavery in Sussex and elsewhere was rapidly moving toward a final conflict*

The virulent sentiments reflected in the Levin Sockum Trial and the anti-Negro legislation which had made it possible were only one indication that the issue of slavery in Sussex County and elsewhere was rapidly moving toward a final conflict. By the late 1850's, one of the major points at issue among the various political parties and factions in Sussex and Delaware as a whole was the issue of slavery, even at a time when the institution was in clear decline in border states and much of the south as well.

Many northerners, including northern Delawareans, were becoming increasingly opposed to slavery because increasing industrialization and the emigration of free labor from Europe and elsewhere was making it more and more feasible to dispense with the institution, about which there had always been a great deal of moral ambiguity, even among many slaveowners. The industrial and agricultural revolution sweeping New Castle County, where some of the most modern and prosperous farms in the nation were to be found, had yet to descend to lower Delaware where the economy had been in a slump for years and the benefits of improved communications resulting from the railroads were not to be felt until the 1860's.

Politically, the state had long since evolved from the strong Federalism of the early 19th century. Since the late 1820's political power had been divided between the Whigs, headed by John M. Clayton, and the Democrats, who were rapidly picking up support in southern Delaware because of their pro-slavery stand.

The Whigs divided on the subject of slavery in 1854. One of the three factions resulting from the schism, the "Know-Nothings," so-called because of their refusal to divulge their political views when asked, won control of the legislature in 1854 and elected their candidate for governor, Peter F. Causey of Milford. The Know-Nothings lost much of the strength they might have had in 1855 when they adopted a prohibition law against the wishes of many Delawareans, and they were defeated by the Democrats during the elections of 1856 and 1858, when the Democratic candidate for governor, Dr. William Burton, also of Milford, was elected.

The Democrats were to suffer the same fate as the Whigs in 1860, and they split into two factions. Although both were more pro-slavery than most former Whigs, their division cost them the Presidential Election which, to the surprise of most observors, was won by Abraham Lincoln, a little-known candidate of the Republican Party, one of the three factions resulting from the break-up of the Whig Party in 1854. Delaware went with the southern Democratic candidate, John C. Breckinridge, but at the same time, the state elected George P. Fisher of Milford to Congress. Fisher, a former Whig and a moderate on the question of slavery, owed his election largely to his carefully maintained silence on the issue. As it turned out, Fisher, the grandson of the Revolutionary War patriot, Major Henry Fisher, became a strong supporter of Lincoln and one of the strongest Union men in the state.

Following the election of Lincoln, a development which had the effect of confirming to several southern states the correctness of their first hesitant moves toward secession, the south began to move rapidly toward secession. At the same time, a curious phenomenon became apparent among many of the state's staunch pro-slavery Democratic leaders. While expressing the sentiment that southern states were being driven to secession by the rigid anti-slavery stance of northern states, Delaware Democrats at the same time favored the southern cause and opposed secession for their own state.

While left largely unspoken, the view seemed to be that Delaware, the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution and, through its Federalist sentiments in the decades that followed, one of the new Republic's strongest defenders, would not consider secession from that Republic as a remedy of its own grievances concerning slavery. Having once reached that decision, however, many prominent Delawareans felt fully justified in supporting the Confederate cause and opposing the military efforts of the Union to force southern states back into the fold. Among the leaders

Many Delawareans favored

the southern cause,

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for their own state

expressing such sentiments were both of Delaware's U.S. Senators, James A. Bayard and Willard Saulsbury, and Gov. William Burton. It was to become the classic stand taken by border states during the war.

During the months preceding the outbreak of the war Delaware was visited and contacted repeatedly by representatives of the various southern states in an effort to bring about the state's secession, but the state's leaders, although expressing their southern sympathies, remained firm in their resolve that the state should not secede. At one point, Governor Thomas Hicks of Maryland, himself an Eastern Shoreman, suggested to Governor Burton that the border states should form their own Confederacy. In his reply, in which he turned down the proposal, Burton said that he feared the state might lose its independence as a separate entity if it joined such a confederation. In other words, Delaware, which had fought so hard during the colonial era to have its own sovereignty recognized, knew where it stood under the U.S. Constitution. In any new conjunction, all its past guarantees of statehood could well be null and void.

When last-minute efforts to solve the epic dispute between north and south by peaceful means failed and hostilities had commenced with the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, initial feelings expressed in Delaware at a series of public rallies were in support of the union, but such views were by no means widely held in Sussex County. One of the continuing issues in the state during the Civil War years began in the wake of the Sumter attack. In response to a federal call for 780 men to serve for three months. Burton maintained a long silence, only to reply after two weeks that he had no authority to detach men from the state militia even if there had been a militia. There was none at the time and the Governor pointed out that no state law existed for the formation of one. Although he was later to relent somewhat, Burton never did give in willing to the federal draft.

Burton called for the formation of volunteer companies instead to be known as Home Guards and placed under the control of state officials. The volunteer companies, Burton said, could volunteer for state service if they so desired. According to an account of that era by John S. Spruance in "Delaware-The First State," it was estimated that 16 of the volunteer companies formed after Burton's proclamation were in sympathy with the confederacy. Of the 16 companies thus inclined, many were located in southern Delaware.

As that first year of the war passed from summer into early fall, open southern sympathy and efforts to aid the southern cause were on the rise throughout the state but especially in lower Delaware. At the time it was suspected by federal authorities that the Delaware Railroad, only recently completed down the western side of the state to Salisbury, Md., was being used as a handy means of shipping supplies to the Confederacy. Soon men from the state were using the same route which involved the use of small boats to cross the Chesapeake to join the Confederate forces. Among them, according to Spruance, was Caleb Ross, the son of former Governor William Ross of Seaford, one of the states leading southern sympathizers. Before the war was over the former Governor had invested much of his fortune in Confederate bonds and had found it advantageous to take several extended journeys in Europe rather than remain in Delaware and face possible prosecution for his activities on behalf of the south. Ross's first trip abroad was prompted by his assumption that his son's departure for the Confederate Army and similar actions by any other young Sussex Countians would be blamed on him. Before the end of the war it has been estimated that as many as 2,000 Delawareans fought for the Confederacy, of whom many were Sussex Countians. At the same time, however, 12,000 men from the state fought for the north.

Early in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln decided to use Delaware as a test case for an early plan to emancipate slaves. Apparently the President saw the state, as have many since, as an ideal model because of its small number of slaves and its status as a border state. In any case, he proposed to Congressman George P. Fisher that the federal government would pay the state government $500 for each of its 1,800 slaves (of whom nearly 1,350 were owned by Sussex Countians) in annual installments of $900,000 for a period of 10 years. In return, the state legislature was to enact a bill freeing slaves in the state on a gradual basis. All slaves 35 years old and older were to be freed immediately with others being freed gradually over the next 10 years with their owners receiving $500 apiece as they were freed.

Before proceeding with the plan, Fisher arranged for Lincoln to meet with Benjamin Burton of the Indian River Hundred side of Millsboro who, as the owner of 28 slaves, was then the state's largest slaveholder. Burton told the President that he was agreeable to such a plan and that he felt others would be as well. As it turned out, he was wrong. Those he queried on his return to Millsboro didn't think much of the idea and neither did a bare majority of Delaware legislators ... or so Fisher believed. Thinking that the bill would be defeated by one vote, he never had it introduced in the general assembly and Lincoln's plan was never implemented.

As a result, Lincoln went ahead the following year with plans for his Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves in Confederate states. It was to be December of 1865 before slaves in border states were officially freed with the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In one of the curious historical footnotes with which the era is filled, a Negro was sold into servitude for seven years for $64 on the front steps of the Sussex County Courthouse as part of a state court sentence in August of 1865, three months after the end of the Civil War. Similar occurrences took place in Kent County in October of 1865. The sentences were voided by the passage of the amendment two months later. Delaware legislators refused to ratify the document until 1901.

The county's first "invasion" by federal troops took place in October of 1861 when two companies of the Second Delaware Regiment, then in federal service, came up the Nanticoke River by steamer to Seaford to begin disarming Sussex County Home Guard units after Governor Burton had refused to do so, much to the consternation of the state's Union sympathizers. At Seaford, the federal units arrested Captain Edward L. Livingston, who commanded a Home Guard company, and confiscated 60 rifles. Livingston, a prominent Democratic leader in western Sussex, was arrested later in the war and charged with aiding a young Seaford man in joining the Confederate Army. At his trial in 1864, Martin was found guilty, fined $1,000, ordered to sell his slaves, and denied his voting rights. He was later pardoned, however, and in later years was elected to Congress. Home Guard leaders were also arrested in Georgetown and Dover before the soldiers left the state for service elsewhere.

In March, 1862, an even more blatant invasion - in the eyes of pro-southern Delawareans - took place when two companies of Colonel Wallace's Maryland Volunteer Regiment marched into Delaware from their camp near Salisbury. Some of the Maryland troops refused to cross the state line at Delmar, according to one account by a participant, and did so

only at gun-point. The Marylanders march to Dover where they forced entry to the Delaware State House and, the legislature having adjourned, camped there for three days. One member of Wallace's unit wrote later that he "slept on the Speaker's platform with my saddle for a pillow." In Dover, the Maryland troops arrested several suspected southern sympathizers, including Captain John B. Penington of the Haslet Guards, a pro-southern Home Guard unit.

From there the soldiers marched on to New Castle, Smyrna, and Wilmington, where other prominent citizens were arrested, including Thomas F. Bayard, son of Senator Bayard, although he was later paroled after a protest to the commander of the military district which included Delaware. Wallace's troops returned to the state in even greater force the following November.

The 1862 election campaign took place during a time of almost unbelievable turmoil in Sussex County and elsewhere throughout the state. The Republican candidate was William Cannon of Bridegeville, one of the county's wealthiest men and, until 1862 one of its leading Democrats. His change of parties appears to have been in part due to a genuine love for the Union and in part to frustration after the Democrats had refused three times in a row to nominate him as their candidate. His opponent was New Castle County Democrat Samuel Jefferson. Another example of the outright confusion surrounding the 1862 campaign was the fact that Republican Congressman Fisher ran against former Governor William Temple of Smyrna who, until the campaign, had been a staunch Republican and changed his affiliation to Democrat.

Both Fisher and Cannon urged federal authorities to send troops to the state to guard the polls against an insurrection by southern sympathizers. The Democrats charged that anyone who was a Democrat was considered an anti-Union southern smypathizer, and denied any need for military forces to guard anything in Delaware. In any event, Wallace's troops and other federal forces arrived in Seaford two days before the election and were sent to most of the polling places in Kent and Sussex Counties, while units of the Fourth Delaware Regiment were placed on guard at New Castle County polls.

The election resulted in an extremely close victory by Cannon for governor and an even closer loss by Fisher for Congress. In addition to electing a Congressman, the Democrats also won majorities in both the state house and senate. With their new strength in the legislature, the Democrats immediately launched into an investigation of the use of the federal troops at the polls and of their earlier expeditions into the state. Not surprisingly, the result of the investigation was that the troops were not necessary and that they had been used to insure a Republican victory in the race for governor. Both federal authorities and the state's Republican hierarchy were soundly damned for an act which would mark the federal government, "with infamy and everlasting disgrace." The report was even less generous to the Republicans in Delaware.

Federal soldiers entered the state twice more during the war - during a special election to fill the vacancy caused by Temple's death in May of 1863 and during the general election of 1864. In the first instance, many Democrats stayed home rather than face a loyalty oath at the polls, resulting in a Republican victory. In the 1864 campaign, the Democratic candidate for President, General George B. McClellan, a former Union army commander and an outspoken critic of Lincoln, carried Delaware by a small margin as he did in two other states. Lincoln was overwhelmingly reelected but not, to the satisfaction of many Delawareans with the help of their state.

As the Civil War ended in Delaware, the state had once again been spared military actions on its soil. Governor Cannon who had been in unceasing battle with the state legislature since his election in 1862, died a month before the end of the war in the spring of 1865, from over-exertion while fighting a fire in his hometown of Bridgeville. He was succeeded by Democrat Gove Saulsbury of Milford, speaker of the senate.

While Sussex County had been a hotbed of pro-southern sentiment during the struggle, just as it had been a hotbed of loyalist sentiment during the Revolution, there were differences. During the Civil War, pro-southern sentiment was widespread throughout Delaware in large part because many had relatives and friends in the south. While many of the 2,000 Delawareans who fought for the south were from Sussex, many were likewise from Kent and New Castle Counties. What's more, two of the strongest Union men during the war, Governor Cannon and Fisher were descended from old Sussex County families, while such Democratic leaders as U.S. Senator Bayard, who resigned in 1864 in protest after being forced to take an oath of allegiance to the national government, were from New Castle County. Thus, while the war certainly served to heighten anti-Negro sentiments in lower Delaware, it was not the same sort of regional conflict within the state that the Revolution had been.

Although the 13th Amendment, formally abolishing the institution of slavery, was ratified by a majority of state legislatures and thus implemented in December of 1865, it was 1901 before the Delaware general assembly followed suit. Their 36 years of refusal to do so was the result of nearly complete Democratic control of the legislature during theose years and marked an era of extreme and often violent racism in the state. While Sussex suffered the same broken friendships and disrupted families as other southern and border areas, there never appears to have been strong sentiment for a dissolution of the Union only for a cessation of hostilities and a continuation of slavery.

By the Civil War, slavery had become much more emotional than economic in Sussex and elsewhere in Delaware and its abolition did little to bring about economic hardship as was the case in certain areas of the south since by 1865, the old plantation economy of lower Delaware was already largely dead. The coming of the railroads to the central and eastern portions of Sussex during the late 1860's and early 1870's brought about an economic boom in the county which, coupled with a great improvement in farming methods, more than offset any losses former slaveholders might have experienced. And it was to be those and later improvements wihich would change more minds in Sussex County than the Civil War did.

Towards the present

The history of Sussex County from the conclusion of the Civil War to the present is largely included in the following sections on the development of business, agriculture, and transportation; brief histories of each of the county's thirteen hundreds; and chapters on the county's governors and some of its seemingly endless number of interesting characters.

It will be noted by those who persevere in reading this account, that the writer has neglected to include detailed sections of Sussex during the wars of the 20th century and on Sussex as it appears in 1976, at the outset of the nation's bicentennial year. The omissions are intentional. In the first instance, while many Sussex Countians fought and died during the course of those later wars, their efforts took place on foreign soil. The single major exception to that rule was the campaign of submarine warfare waged by German U-boats along the Delmarva coast and other areas along the Eastern seaboard during the early months of 1942. An account of Sussex County's part in that grim episode appears in the section of Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred.

As far as the present in Sussex County is concerned, this writer and every other present-day Sussex Countian are entirely too close to the subject to possess any semblance of objectivity. That is for our grandchildren to deal with. It can perhaps be noted that the county's rural, agricultural lifestyle continues with the profound difference over past ages that whatever isolation we still possess is more a matter of choice than of necessity. Sussex County suffers today not from a lack of economic development, but from uncertainty as to which of the possible avenues into the future will prove to be the best one for us and for those generations of Sussex Countians which follow our own. And that, in the end, is the problem every generation must face.

Sussex has been rural and agricultural through most of its history

Geographic isolation has played a great part in determining the life style of Sussex County. It has decreed that the county should be overwhelmingly rural and agricultural in character through most of its history.

That isolation has done much to foster the strong conservatism Sussex Countians have been known for since the earliest days of European settlement, the same conservatism which resulted in the strong loyalist sentiment among many of the citizenry during the American Revolution.

When New Castle County was enjoying the fruits of early industrialization and economic growth because of its location on the main thoroughfare of commerce in the early United States, Sussex remained steeped in the slave-holding plantation economy in which its people had dwelt for more than a century. With few exceptions, its industries were local in nature because of the poor communications caused by geographic isloation. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, its agriculture was already quaint, outdated. Geography was a major factor in that obsolesence.

With the first efforts to overcome the natural barriers of the county's geographic location was to come an economic revolution in Sussex. The coming of steam boats to the peninsula in the 1830's and 1840's and to an even greater extent, the construction of lower Delaware's first railroads in the late 1850's and 1860's resulted in an economic upsurge greater than anything the county had yet experienced.

The construction of the county's first paved highway by T. Coleman duPont and the early state highway system which followed during the administrations of Governor John G. Townsend, Jr., and his successors, were to bring another revolution of sorts in the second quarter of the 20th century. The later construction of highway links between Delmarva and the western shore of Maryland in the early 1950's brought another wave of growth and development.

With each of these changes have come new forms of industry, new methods of farming, and new types of crops, each uniquely suited to the latest mode of transportation. Each successive wave has brought profound changes to the county's lifestyle. The entire western corridor of the county, for example, became a flourishing hub of economic activity with the construction of the railroads where before it had been one of the most isolated spots on Delmarva.

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To the Sussex Countians of the late 18th century, however, as they picked themselves up from the turmoil of the Revolution and proceeded once more with the business at hand, the management of their plantations and farms, such unimaginable changes were light years away.

What industries there were in those years were small and few. The county's economy centered around the primary crops of wheat, corn, buckwheat, barley, oats and other cereal crops. Potatoes, peas, beans, cabbage, and other vegetables were grown largely for local consumption as were grasses such as clover which were used for fodder. Many large farmers and planters maintained small orchards in which were cultivated apples, peaches and other fruits for home use. Cattle, hogs, chickens, and sheep were grown.

The farming implements most commonly used were the plow, spade, and harrow. Wheat and barley were harvested with horses while corn and other grains were threshed by flail. Cattle bred on the marshes and meadows of lower Delaware were often taken north of New Castle County to be fattened in its rich meadows before going on to market.

Most farm wives were competent in the craft of weaving and spinning their own wool and linen (for which flax was grown) and farm families dressed in homespuns. Wealthier Sussex Countians wore clothes of finer cloth, often imported from Europe. It was common for some form of alcoholic beverage to be consumed with most meals. The county was well known for its fine cider and applejack brandy, and "rey-brandy" made from distilled and fermented grains.

In addition to the home industries and crafts, Sussex County housewives could also purchase the wares and services of local craftsmen - cabinet makers and joiners, carpenters, and even silversmiths. According to an article on Delaware cabinet makers by Charles G. Dorman in "Delaware History," a long succession of cabinet-makers and joiners were at work in Sussex County towns in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

Most could not be considered among the most skilled craftsmen of their time. They were often ship carpenters who resorted to cabinet making when times were slow. Others were skilled artisans. Some, like Thomas Ralph of Little Creek Hundred, who was active in Sussex County for thirty years before moving west in 1815, were known for distinctive furniture styles. Ralph excelled at a particular type of corner cupboard, of which more than 20 still remain in houses in the vicinity of Little Creek Hundred and Laurel.

The more successful cabinet makers sometimes employed several assistants and often had apprentices as well. Their output often exceeded one hundred pieces of furniture a year. Polly Jose Scafidi, in an extension of Dorman's research, wrote in "Delaware History" in 1971 that Millsboro cabinetmaker Isaac E. Burton, working with apprentice

When New Castle County was enjoying the fruits of early economic growth Sussex remained steeped in the slave-holding plantation economy

Joshua Breasure, turned out 100 pieces of furniture in 1850. Asahel Dodd, working in the same town at the same time with one other cabinet maker employed in his shop, produced 100 pieces of furniture.

The craftsmen catered generally to the middle class. Those too poor did without or made their own while the wealthier Sussex Countians often imported furniture and household furnishings from Wilmington, Philadelphia, and beyond. Sussex did have a few silversmiths, however. William Coleman, whose career spanned the years 1794 to 1808, was working as a silversmith four miles above Lewes near the thriving hamlet of Drawbridge. Like many craftsmen, he practiced many trades to make ends meet and worked as a blacksmith, builder of ship masts, sailer, harness maker and farmer. He also ran an early equivalent to a livery stable and rented out horses and sulkies from his large farm.

Coleman seems to have prided himself most on his skills as a silversmith, however. In an account of his career in "Delaware History," Ruthanna Hindes writes that he repaired watches, made jewelry, knitting needles, silver spoons, silver pins, rings, buckles, buttons, and wire, and even repaired sword sheaths. Coleman was usually paid either in old silver or in items of barter. He died in 1829.

Craftsmen were valuable and highly-thought of citizens during those lean years of the county's history and in some cases, as that of Coleman, they were prosperous landowners. In a somewhat earlier era, young Joseph Haslet's guardian, Chief Justic William Killen of Kent County, had sent his charge to be an apprentice under Ziba Ferris, a Wilmington watchmaker. As it happened, Haslet never practiced the profession, choosing instead to become a farmer in Cedar Creek Hundred and later Governor of Delaware.

As had been noted in earlier chapters, most Sussex Countians were also watermen and they reaped a bountiful harvest of shellfish, shad, and herring for their own use and for export. Commercial fishing had already progressed to the extent that residents of the county had petitioned the General Assembly in 1796 to prohibit the exportation of oysters from Rehoboth Bay in order to preserve its oyster beds. The petition read in part, "Many years ago, one man in one day might have caught in Rehoboth Bay Thirty Bushels of Oysters and ... now a man is suckcessful if he can take in the Same time one Sixth part of that number." The bay was then becoming a favorite target for watermen from other states who had been limited in their activities by similar measures in other areas.

Prior to 1800, a ditch had been dug linking Assawoman Bay with Assateague Sound, a development which made some local residents unhappy. Before the ditch had been dug, an inlet from Assawoman Bay to the ocean had existed thus enabling a flourishing intercourse in coastal trading and piloting. There had also been great quantities of fish, oysters and other shellfish, many of which had died off when the new ditch caused the inlet to fill in.

The four main industries in Sussex at the close of the 18th century were grist-milling, saw-mills and the exportation of lumber, the manufacture of crude iron from the bog ore found in many streams in the county, and ship-building. There were also tanneries, a small but flourishing sea-salt business along the coast, and small local industries such as barrel-makers or coopers, wheelwrights, small distilleries, and blacksmith shops.

The salt industry along the coast seems to have existed in a very small way for decades before the revolution. It never amounted to more than a local industry, however. During the Revolution, Col. John Jones, a member of the Sussex County militia and a local inventor and agronomist of some note, was advanced the sum of 1,000 pounds by the legislature with which to build a saltworks at or near Indian River. Jones was to provide a minimum of 3,000 bushels of salt per year for the use of the citizenry of the state and its troops serving in the continental army. His endeavor was less than successful, however, and by the end of two years, Jones apparently had yet to produce his first bushel of salt.

In what is perhaps the only extensive article on the subject in the March, 1950, issue of "Delaware History," James M. Tunnell, Jr., quotes J. Thomas Scharf to the effect that, "Along the sea-shore, on the salt lands, shallow wells have been dug and the water gathering into them has been evaporated in rude saltworks, put up in that locality."

Scharf continued, "In the War of 1812 salt was made on the flats beyond Henlopen Lighthouse, and was sold at $3.00 per bushel. Some of the buildings used were afterwards occupied by Thos. Norman, and were swept away in a great flood, which is still (1888) remembered as 'Norman's Flood' by some of the old citizens of Lewes."

After the War of 1812, the salt business declined considerably. In 1832, Joshua Gilpin of Wilmington wrote in a report on Delaware industry to U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Louis McLane (also a Delawarean), "Of salt, there is a small manufacture on the sea-coast, by boiling or evaporating salt water in pans. I have not been able to procure an exact return of it, but it is described as a small concern, conducted by poor people, and sold in the neighborhood, to the amount of about 10,000 bushels annually, and perhaps $5,000, which seems to be a clear profit to the State."

Tunnell is doubtful that salt was ever manufactured in Salt Pond, north of Bethany Beach, as was reported by Francis Vincent in his 1869 "History of the State of Delaware" Vincent had written that the pond, which was connected to the ocean by an inlet from time to time, was so salty that no fish could live in it. William S. Hall, the proprietor of Hall's Store for which the town of Ocean View was originally named, recorded in a diary quoted by Tunnell that large numbers of fish were caught in the pond which bordered his property. Tunnell concluded, "Further, the presence of mineral impurities in the Salt Pond, even after the inlet had long been closed, as was more recently the case, probably has not greatly changed and is sufficient to render the salt derived for the waters of the Salt Pond unpalatable."

Salt works did exist, however, up and down the coast from Cape Henlopen to Fenwick Island. The Fenwick works, according to Tunnell, probably shut down about 1875. A salt works was also in existence at Cotton Patch Hill north of Bethany Beach during the 19th century. The earliest salt "factory" seems to have been, "on the old natural inlet to Indian River Bay, which was just to the north of Cotton Patch Hills, a considerable distance south of the present Indian River Inlet." He adds that, "it is the output from these locations at Fenwick's Island and north of Bethany Beach which was known as the Baltimore Hundred supply of salt. . ."

Another salt operation was conducted in the area of the present Henlopen Acres where Gordon's Pond once lay. Although a Gordon's Pond exists today in the area north of North Shores and "Whiskey Beach," it is considerably to the north of the original pond. The Dodd family owned the property during the last half of the 19th century and Tunnell writes that the family made salt there each autumn after their farm work was completed, until about 1876. His account of their operation is interesting in general because it

demonstrates the habit of the people of the day in utilizing all their resources:

"*The Dodds* used to make the salt in their day in connection with the work of clearing land for 'new ground.' The Dodds cleared huge fields and used the lapwood, stumps, and similar material as their fuel for the salt operation. In the fall, after the work of the farm was 'laid by,' they would go down to the scene of the old Gordon salt works and obtain hogsheads of brine. They used rolling hogsheads, pulled by team from the pot holes where the water was obtained to the old Dodd homestead, just inland of Rehoboth, (directly across Delaware Route 14 from the present Rehoboth Beach Safeway Store) and then, about a hundred yards from the old home of Mr. Dodd, the salt was 'boiled.' ... the salt was usually sold in Millsboro, Lewes, and neighboring towns in Sussex County. It was usually used for the curing of meat, being made, sold, and used in the early winter.

The county's oldest, and probably its largest, salt works was the operation at Cape Henlopen mentioned earlier. It lasted until the end of the 19th century when, "a stop was put to the unrestricted cutting of timber in the vicinity of Cape Henlopen," thus removing the supply of fuel for boiling sea water.

Iron furnaces had been in existence in Sussex at least since the middle of the 18th century. The early furnaces gradually evolved into a more sophisticated operation toward the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century with the development of forges and several foundries, the largest of which was at Millsboro. Of the early operations, Scharf writes, "before the Revolution the presence of ore at the heads of the streams in the vicinity (of Broad Creek and Little Creek) attracted capitalists from abroad, who established companies, purchased large tracts of land, built furnaces and forges, mined ore and conducted large business." The names of the various works were Deep Creek Iron Works, embracing Deep Creek Furnace, in Nanticoke Hundred and Nanticoke Forge at Middleford, Pine Grove Furnace on the present site of Concord, Unity Forge in Northwest Fork Hundred, Collins, Polk and Gravelly Delight Forges and the furnace and forge at Millsboro.

Jonothan Vaughn, an iron master from Chester County, Pa., and several associates established the first company, Deep Creek Iron Works, shortly after 1760. The company bought or was granted a total of about 7,000 acres of land in the county, most of which was in western Sussex.

Of the company in 1764, Sharf noted, ". . .necessary buildings, dwellings, grist and saw-mills were erected, and a large force of men employed as miners, woodchoppers, charcoal-burners, teamsters, furnace men and millers, and the place for miles around was a busy scene. A road was built straight from the furnace to the junction of the Deep Creek and Nanticoke River, a distance of four miles, at which place a stone wharf was built, a few of the stones still remaining."

The company shipped their product directly to England under the brand name "Old Meadow Iron" until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War and the difficulties of shipping which arose from it called a halt to the operation. Many of the workmen who had been employed there were organized into a company of the Continental Army under Colonel Mitchell Kershaw and Lt. Col. Joseph Vaughn, the son of the original iron master.

Vaughn went on to win fame as a staff officer in Col. Hall's Regiment of the Delaware Line and served as acting regimental commander during the regiment's most famous engagements in the south in the last years of the war when Col. David Hall had largely retired from active command. The operation was never resumed, although the grist and saw-mills owned by the company and a distillery on their property continued to operate for sometime.

The vast acreage held by Deep Creek Iron Works was broken up among the various heirs of the founders by acts of the legislature in 1802 and 1805. The present Hearn's Mill near Seaford, the last operating grist mill in lower Delaware, was an indirect descendent of a grist mill which had been owned by the company in its heyday.

The furnace and foundry at Millsboro were later and more successful than those in the western part of Sussex, largely because of imporved transportation and the advances which had been made in the technology of smelting iron ore. They were started in 1815 by a stock company headed by Col. Wm. D. Waples, a wealthy planter and entrepreneur and the son-in-law of U.S. Senator William Hill Wells.

Waples and his associates never developed their enterprise beyond a small charcoal blast furnace and in 1822 they sold it to Samuel G. Wright, a Monmouth County, New Jersey, iron master. Wright also purchased much of the land and mineral rights held by the defunct Deep Creek and Pine Grove Iron Works. Scharf notes that in the years 1828, 1829, and 1830, the furnace produced 450 tons of pig iron and 350 tons of castings. In its heyday under Wright and his son, Gardner Wright, the furnace and foundry employed 70 persons and turned out water pipes, wrought-iron fences, including those which surrounded Philadelphia's Independence Hall during much of the 19th century, and other products.

Grist Mill

Hearn and Rawlins Mill north of Seaford is the last functioning water-powered grist mill in Sussex County. The water wheel, shown here is an improved version of the original equipment installed when the building was erected more than a century ago.

The furnace was abandoned in 1836, although the foundry continued to operate until 1879, when much of its equipment was moved to Georgetown where it continued in use for several more years. By 1900, the only evidence of the Sussex County iron industry remaining were the numerous ruins of the old brick blast furnaces.

The iron business did give rise to another industry which outlived it by half a century in Sussex County - the manufacture of charcoal. Thousands of bushels of locally-made charcoal had been used in the iron furnace at Millsboro and in the early furnaces in Western Sussex to smelt the bog ore, but with the decline of iron-making in the county, charcoal burning had begun to die out.

Shortly before the Civil War, however, the business was revived when it was found that a market existed in the north for charcoal to be used in the filtering of rum and whiskey in distilleries and for the hardening tool steel in the large foundries in New England and the midwest. The authors of the Delaware guide published recorded the existence of 60 charcoal "pits" in the area of Indian River Hundred during the early 20th century. They noted that Sussex County charcoal was also used at home during prohibition and before in the manufacture of moonshine rye whiskey and applejack.

Included in the "Delaware Guide" is a description of a charcoal pit which one stood alongside Delaware Route 24 in Indian River Hundred:

"It is not a pit at all, but a large conical mound like an Eskimo igloo, giving off acrid pine smoke. To build it, several cords of 4-foot sticks are stacked on end in two tiers around a hollow center. Pine needles ('shats') and a coating of clay are spread over the whole surface save for a small opening at the top; a trench is dug around the base, and holes are punched through the shell to permit dehydration without combustion. Knots of fat-pine lightwood are ignited and dropped down through the hole at the apex, the hole is closed up, and the 'pit' becomes a slow oven for a week. Then the clay is removed and the charcoal drawn. The blue-tinged 'pigeon-wing' coal, considered the best, rings like a bell when tapped with a stick."

Those who worked the pits were known locally as "coalies" and often lived in camps or villages in the forests surrounding them. The resurrection of the industry in the middle of the 19th century was due at least in part of the extension of the railroads south into Sussex County in the decade before the Civil War. So much charcoal was shipped from Millsboro and other shipping points in the area during the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the ground spanning the railroad tracks still consists largely of charcoal down to a depth of several inches.

The Sussex County timber industry is as old as farming in the economy of the county. It has been seen how timber from the clearing of farmland was used as fuel for salt-works along the coast and how wood from inland forests was used to fuel the iron furnaces, but timber from the county's wealth of forests was also a leading product for export by the middle of the 18th century. The first settlers had established water-powered sawmills along many of the creeks and rivers of the county. Although some of the early lumbermen exported lumber by vessel to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other cities, most of the early lumber turned out by Sussex County mills was retained for home consumption in the building of houses and farm buildings or in the construction of sailing vessels.

Although the lumber business was underway in most of the state by 1800, it was an especially important part of the local economy in Sussex. A natural geographic division between the great pine forests of the south and the hardwood forests of the north runs through the county, with the northern limit of pine extending to Milford, a fact which gave Sussex great variety in its forest resources.

Dr. John A. Munroe writes in his "Federalist Delaware" that, "the white oak forests near present-day Milford were early exploited, while the Cypress Swamp and abundant pine and cedar forests in Sussex occasioned a considerable traffic on Indian River." The white oak and cypress was especially well suited to ship-building and large quantities were exported to the large ship-building centers in the years after 1800.

The geographic location of the county, drained by navigable rivers and creeks flowing into both the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and into the ocean, and its timber resources led early in the county's history to a flourishing ship and boat building industry along many streams. One of the most active early centers was the Broadkill River. In a notice in a 1957 history of Milton, Captain and Mrs. T. Clarke Conwell note that the shallop "Broadkill" of ten tons burden, almost cetainly built in the Broadkill River, was registered at Philadelphia on April 16, 1737. Their notice continues, "During the next 178 years until the last vessel was built at Milton in 1915, this small shallop was followed by a fleet of 150 vessels built in the Broad Kill, ranging up to over 1,000 tons burden. Of these, 135 are known to have been built at Milton."

One can see just why ship-building and water transportation played such a large part in the early economy and transportation of the county from this listing of the county's streams in Scharf's "History," nearly all of which were navigable for at least part of their length:

"It is drained by the Mispillion Creek, Cedar Creek, Prime Hook Creek, Beaver Dam Creek, Cool Spring Creek, Love Creek, Middle Creek, Miry Creek, Farry's Creek, Indian River, Irons' Creek, Pepper Creek, Turkey Creek, Herring Creek, Assawaman (sic) Bay, Pocomoke River, Sheals' Creek, Gray's Creek, Broad Creek, Coal Creek, Tussocky Creek, Little Creek, Nanticoke River, Deep Creek, Gum Creek, Gravelly Creek, Clear Creek, St. John's Creek, Marshy Hope Creek and the Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

At various times during the 18th and 19th centuries ship-yards existed at Lewes, Mispillion Creek, Cedar Creek, the Broadkill River, the Indian River, Assawoman Bay, White's Creek, Blackwater Creek (both tributaries of the Indian River), the Nanticoke River, Broad Creek, and at other points in the county.

"Boyd's Delaware State Directory," published in 1860 when ship-building in Sussex was in a slow decline because of the development of steamboats, lists three shipyards at Milford, three at Milton, two at Lewes, two at Millsborough, and one each at Hall's Store (present-day Ocean View) and Laurel. Two decades later, there were also shipyards at Lewisville (present-day Bethel) and at Seaford. In an article on shipbuilding in the state in "Delaware History," David B. Tayler writes that, "shipyards were easily established, for the location required only a firm river bank, enough depth at the water's edge, and nearby timber. Most of the workmen owned their own tools. The yard owner needed only to supply some saws, planes, and a steam box for bending planks and ribs."

Tyler adds that the virgin forests of the county yeilded white oak beams two and a half feet square and 60 feet long. They were brought to the yard, "to be shaped with the adze." In order to keep these yards supplied and to meet other timber needs, 50 sawmills were in operation on Indian River and Indian River

Burning Charcoal

This photo of a charcoal burning operation near Millsboro was taken in the 1920's in Indian River Hundred. It shows the curious, igloo-like appearance of the charcoal mounds. The charcoal produced was often sold to distillers as a filtering agent for whiskey.

Bay alone during the 1850's and 1860's, turning out 54 million board feet of lumber a year.

The major products of most of these yards were small shallops, coastal schooners and sloops, although in later years with the development of the Chesapeake and Delaware Bay oyster industries, they built bugeyes and skipjacks and other workboats. Although the major reasons for their decline in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the shift from wooden to iron ships and the great improvement in land transportation, an important factor lay also in the depletion of the county's white oak and cypress timber by the 1880's.

Another major cause of the depletion of Sussex County's stands of bald cypress was the manufacture of cypress shingles. The vast recesses of the Great Cypress Swamp or the Great Pocomoke Swamp as it was also called, contained great stands of bald cypress well into the 19th century but early on Sussex Countians discovered that the trunks of the tree made fine shingles for homebuilding. In fact, while New Castle County with its wealth of stone, is noted for its fine stone houses and barns, Sussex County was largely cypress shingled in the 18th and 19th centuries. Prince George's Chapel and Old Christ Church on Broad Creek were originally shingled in cypress as was the first courthouse built at Georgetown and the earlier buildings which preceded it in Lewes.

The great swamp was the largest of its kind on Delmarva and the northernmost cypress swamp in the United States. It's different areas were known locally as Cedar Swamp, Gum Swamp, and Burnt Swamp, the last because of the great fires which had burned there for months at intervals since the earliest days of European settlement and before. A description of one of these early conflagrations is contained in a "Description of the Cypress Swamps in Delaware and Maryland States" published in a July, 1797, issue of American Universal Magazine:

". . .the most terrible conflagration happened in June, 1782; the swamp being at that time exceeding dry, by some means took fire and burnt for many weeks before much notice was taken of it. The drought continuing and the fire constantly spreading. It was on the 20th of August, about two hours before sun-set, driven by a strong southwest wind, with such inconceivable fury, that it mowed or otherwise destroyed, at least three thousand acres of these venerable cedars in less than twelve hours - with myself and family, my buildings and property were in the utmost danger, and had not the wind providentially shifted, must have perished in it. The smoke was so thick that we could not see a yard before us, and to prevent suffocation, were obliged to keep our mouths close to the ground. . .'"

"*The scene* was grand and terrific, the whole city of Philadelphia in flames, would give you but a faint idea of this tremendous conflagration-"

"A constant strong blaze, at the same time of many miles square and at least one hundred feet high; the trees falling, the fire roaring; the atmosphere full of live coals at an amazing height, like flaming meteors. In short, it appeared as if the last fatal conflagration of this globe was begun. The light of this fire was seen seventy miles off."

The same author describes the swamp's groves of black gum, holly, sassafras of more than three feet in diameter, ash, varieties of oak, poplar, elm, hickory, pine, wild grape vines of immense size, and the baldcypress. The great trees rose, "to one hundred and forty feet, having but few branches till near the top, and these spread like an umbrella. The trunks of these trees are frequently to be met with from four to six and eight feet in diameter. . ."

Civilization was slowly making inroads into this vast wilderness where bears existed for a century after they'd died out elsewhere on Delmarva. Farmers like John Dagworthy were slowly draining its edges. The shingle-manufacturers were hard at work.

After they had largely depleted the standing cypress in the swamp, they started on the peat-bogs. For thousands of years, the winds had worked upon the great trees and sent them crashing to the floor of the swamp, there to be covered by the ooze and rotting vegetation. This process, repeated for century after century, had left layers of cypress logs in the bottom of the swamp virtually intact, preserved by the chemicals contained in the ooze which surrounded them.

In the early 19th century, this resource was "mined" by shingle manufacturers. "Tons of soggy peat were scooped from above the tree-trunks. Oxen floundered and wheezed, chains pulled taut, men cursed, and the logs were dragged out to where crosscut saws could be used."

That account in "Delaware - A Guide to the First State" continues, "Men with holly-wood mauls and heavy iron blades called "frows" rived the cypress cylinders into shingle blocks and then draw-knifed them into the 30-inch shingles that would wear out but never decay. Nearly all the mossy old houses of southeastern Delaware and nearby Maryland are sheathed with these lustrous handriven Pocomoke cypress shingles. Some have worn as thin as cardboard after 150 years of weather, but are still as sound as the day they were nailed on hand-hewn oak frame."

Writing of the swamp after later fires, ditching and the advances of civilization had done their worst, the author continues, "The water level was lowered to some extent but the great swamp is still here, a stubborn, melancholy wilderness whose mists rise like the ghosts of its vanished cypresses while the buzzards wheel overhead. On dark cloudy days there may be heard from the depths of the swamp, it is said, the sound of the "Old Man' riving out his shingles, hour after hour, as he used to do. He is a ghost too."

Port Scene

This early 20th century view of Milton harbor on a snowy day, reproduced from the town's 1957 150th anniversary booklet, could have been made at nearly any time in the 100 years before 1915.

The U.S. Quarantine Station near Cape Henlopen during the 1890's.

Sussex had been in decline for years when the railroads arrived

The predominantly agricultural economy of Sussex County had been declining slowly but steadily by the third decade of the 19th century. During the 18th century, when there were still ample quantitites of virgin soil left in Sussex, farmers and planters had not seen the need for fertilizers, crop rotation, and other refinements, prefering instead to depend upon the natural richness of the soil.

By 1800, poor farming practices were taking their toll in the form of reduced crop yields and reduced revenues. An agricultural society had been formed in New Castle County in 1804 and progressive farming methods were becoming generally known there. The infusions of captial into the economy of New Castle County with its strategic location and wealth of natural resources were providing alternatives to the slave economy which then still prevailed in Kent and Sussex. Lower Delaware, with its poor transportation, bad roads, and conservative populace, was slower in its development, slower by decades.

Some enlightened Sussex Countians had come to realize by the early 1800's that the abolition of slavery would in the long run be of benefit to the county and in 1809, an abolition society had been formed in Sussex. It's leaders were bipartisan and included the Federalist Caleb Rodney and the Democrat Phillips Kollock. Its other members were William Russell, Daniel Hudson, Liston A. Houston, John and David Hazzard, Benton and Stephen Harris, John Sharp, William Derickson, Edward Dingle, Jehu Evans, Ezekiel and Samuel Williams, Jocob West, Fretwell Wright, David Wolfe, Samuel and Curtis Jacobs, William Davis, William Carlisle, Purnel Tindall, and Jehu Stockley.

At the same time, however, there appears to have been a counter reaction among the pro-slavery farmers of Sussex and between the years 1810 and 1820 the slave population increased by eight percent while the population of free blacks decreased by one per cent. This trend was caused by a number of factors including what John A. Munroe calls a "reaction in the state against emancipation in the years before and after 1810." It could also have been brought about by an increase in the value of slaves throughout the United States as a result of a law against the importation of more slaves from outside the country at the same time there was an increase in the demand for slave labor in the newly developing states and territories of the southwest.

It was this body of sentiment in the county and elsewhere that enabled Patty Cannon and her gang to operate their slave and free black kindnapping ring with relative impunity until 1829.

Another factor affecting the agricultural economy in Sussex was the general economic slump in the United States in the years after the War of 1812 which occurred as a result of the reduced demand for American agricultural products in Europe after the close of the Napoleonic Wars. The slump in the economy of Sussex was to continue until the outbreak of the Civil War, when, as Harold Hancock writes in his history of agriculture before 1900, "real prosperity did not return to them until the growth of an urban manufacturing population in the eastern cities provided a larger and more diversified market - for fruits, vegetables, and dairy products, in addition to the old standby, the cereal crops."

Change did not begin in the county until the 1830's and 1840's with the development of regular steamboat lines which visited the rivers and bays of Sussex and greatly improved the speed of shipping agricultural products to market. Even then, however, change came slowly.

There were bright spots, however. A Georgetown citizen noted in 1846 that, "Corn at the rate of fifty bushels per acre is now made to grow where originally was nothing but stagnant frog ponds, and wheat of the finest quality is now being raised amongst us. About the year 1830 a few of our citizens commenced improving the lands adjacent to our town, draining the swamps and manuring the uplands, and now that, which but a few years ago, was waste land and spreading the bilious and ague and fever among us in the most profitable and productive of our soils."

The greatest changes were to come with the railroad ... at a time when the cities of the northeast were growing rapidly and there was a greatly increased demand for fresh fruits and vegetables, a demand which Sussex could always have filled had there been but the transportation available to ship their goods to market. An 1837government report on transportation in lower Delaware state: "Susceptible of a high state of agricultural improvement, and having an abundance of natural manures, the lands remote from navigation are neglected. With a climate as well as soil adopted to the abundant production of the finest fruits and vegetables long before they can be brought to maturity near our great commercial cities, (the county) produces little more than enough for the consumption of her own population."

The impact those first railroad lines had on the county can be seen by a statement mady by one contemporary local author, "It had literally made the wilderness to blossom as the rose. Thirty years before it was built the poverty and forlorn appearance of Sussex county had become a jest. Thirty years after, beauty, thrift, and enterprise meet the traveler everywhere across the peninsula."

Before that occurrance, the highway system in Sussex had been little improved since the years directly after the Revolution when there had been a short burst of enthusiasm for improved highways before water travel had once more overshadowed land transportation. By the 1830's and 1840's, the roads were used generally to connect inland farms with river and bay ports and to transport hardy stage coach travellers from one point on the peninsula to another.

The first state road through the county followed the course of the old King's Highway with few exceptions. It descended from New Castle and Kent Counties into eastern Sussex, crossing the major rivers and creeks near their headwaters to Lewes. At Milford, a branch ran to the "ford of the Nanticoke" or Seaford, and, after the establishment of Georgetown in 1791, a road ran south from Milford to Georgetown and thence south through Millsboro, Dagsboro, and Frankford into Maryland. At Lewes, another branch of the road ran down through Angola near St. George's Chapel and down to Warwick to Burton's Ferry and then through Dagsboro Hundred to the Maryland State Line.

This network was gradually expanded with branch roads running into outlying sections of the county. There were also changes in course as new development occurred. The Indian River Ferry, for example, was largely bypassed when Col. William D. Waples constructed a heavy earthen dam across the headwaters of the river at present-day Millsboro and built a road across the top of it.

The "railroad fever" began in lower Delaware in the late 1840's when the first lines were laid in New Castle County. Even before, however, some farsighted men saw the vast impact a railroad would have on lower Delaware. In 1836, John M. Clayton who had then just resigned from the U.S. Senate because of his strong disapproval of the policies fo President Andrew Jackson, turned this attention to the question of railroads.

There had been considerable ferment in neighboring Eastern Shore Maryland for a rail line down the western side of Delmarva and Clayton realized that if the Maryland railroad was, in fact, built, it would have the effect of diverting much trade and investment capital from lower Delaware to Maryland. He conceived, instead, of a rail line down the western side of Delaware which would be close enough to the center of the peninsula to benefit Maryland while protecting and enchancing business opportunity in Kent and Sussex.

Clayton made an eloquent appeal of the Delaware General Assembly for the granting of a charter for his railroad concept. The state's foremost politician was also its foremost orator and his stirring appeal to the legislature resulted in the granting of his charter virtually as he, himself, had written it. It gave his company the authority to build a railroad, "from any point on or near the Wilmington and Susquehanna Railroad, or the New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad, to the southern line of the State, in a direction towards Cape Charles, with full power to construct lateral branches to Lewes, Seaford, or any other points or places within the State of Delaware."

The company, to be known as the Delaware Railroad, had as its comissioners Clayton, Col. Wm. D. Waples, the Millsboro entrepreneur, and Richard Mansfield. Among the provisions of the charter were freedom from all types of taxes for 50 years, the right of condemnation over lands needed for right-of-way, the power to exempt from taxation forever any private lands whose owners gave rights-of-way of their own free will, and assumption by the state of all the costs of surveys and other preparations in advance of actual construction. In addition, the state subscribed in the stock of the company to the amount of $25,000.

Preliminary surveys were made, but the effort was eventually dropped when not enough subscribers were found to underwrite the project and the charter was allowed to lapse. A large part of the problem was the depression of 1837 rto 1839 which had the effect of making downstate farmers and businessmen even poorer than had previously been the case.

The effort was renewed in 1849 by Chief Justice Samuel M. Harrington of Dover, Clayton then serving as U.S. Secretary of State in the administration of Zachery Taylor. The charter was amended slightly, but once again the state was willing to subsidize the project with the purchase of 5,000 shares in the railroad to be bought with revenues accruing from the New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad.

Once more, the commissioners of the company were unable to raise necessary funds, and in 1852 the General Assembly agreed to provide half the necessary funds if the company would raise the remainder. The railroad was reorganized and officials of several northern Delaware lines were added to the board of directors with which construction began immediately.

With the development of railroads, there had grown an intense rivalry between the railroads and steamboat lines resulting in a price war in northern Delaware. One of the first steps taken by the revitalized Delaware Railroad Company was to purchase one of the main steamboats of the Dona Steamboat Line and sell it out of the river, thus removing a competitive force.

By 1856, the line was completed from a junction with the New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad to Seaford. The road thus far had cost $1,146,310, of which the state's share was $170,000. The citizens of Sussex had raised $35,875; those Kent $44,750; and the remainder divided between private corporations, New Castle Countians, private contractors, and out-of-state investors. In November of 1856, under the provisions of the reorganization in 1852, the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad Company took over management of the new line. In 1857, another group of investors including ex-Governor Peter Causey of Milford and former Congressman John W. Houston began work on a Milford branch line under another charter from the General Assembly. The Harrington to Milford line was completed in 1859.

The same year, the Delaware Railroad was extended from Seaford to Delmar to connect with the Eastern Shore Railroad which was then working on a line from there to Salisbury. The Eastern Shore line was completed to Salisbury in 1860 and extended to Crisfield in 1866. In 1861, a telegraph line was run down the Delaware Railroad right-of-way to Seaford.

In 1865, the General Assembly issued another charter for what was to become the Junction and Breakwater Railroad extending from Milford, through Georgetown to Lewes. That line was completed in 1869. In 1867, the Delaware Railroad, then headed by Samuel M. Felton who had been named to replace Harrington after his death in 1865, built a branch line from Seaford to the state line where it was to connect with the Dorchester and Delaware Railroad. The company also loaned the latter railroad the necessary funds to complete their line to Cambridge, Maryland.

Later lines were to extend from Georgetown south to the Maryland Line under the name Breakwater and Franklin Railroad to tie in with the Worcester Railroad which ran through Berlin and Snow Hill to tie in with the Eastern Shore Railroad at Pocomoke City. With the development of the resort at Rehoboth Beach in the early 1870's, a branch line was run there from the Junction and Breakwater Line.

All told, there were perhaps a dozen railroad companies operating on the peninsula during those years of intense activity. In many cases, they were connected through subsidiary relationships and interlocking directorates, a condition brought on at least in part by the mere necessity for cooperation between the various companies. As has been the case with other major utilities on Delmarva and elsewhere, there was a gradual consolidation over the years until by the 1880's, most of the lines in lower Delaware were part of the Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia Railroad which was to give way in later years to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The effect of this massive undertaking on Sussex

In 1836, John M Clayton turned his attention to the question of railroads

County were immediate and sweeping. It was through no idle compliment that the citizens of the present-day towns of Harrington and Felton saw fit to rename their villages for the first two presidents of the Delaware Railroad.

By the early 1860's business ventures of all sorts which would have been completely impractical only a decade before were underway. Roads from inland points to the new railroad stations were improved. In the meantime, sawmills had been freed from their once stationary position along rivers and creeks by the development of steam engines and many of the heretofore inaccessible stands of virgin hardwood lying along the western edge of the county were developed for the first time.

The Railroads

The beneficial effects of the railroads on western Sussex County can be seen from this early view of strawberry wagons waiting for the train at the Bridgeville Depot.

A revolution of sorts was also underway among Sussex County farmers who, for the first time, were able to move large crops of perishable fruits and vegetables to market with relative ease and with assurance that they would arrive in good shape. A picture of life in the county just before the arrival of the railroads can be seen from Joseph A. Conwell's "A Sussex Farmer Boy Sixty-Five Years Ago," As summarized by Harold Bell Hancock in his book "Delaware During the Civil War," Conwell remembered the immediate pre-Civil War era as, " a slow age- an age of oxen, sandy roads, big farms and crude machinery.' Wheat was still sowed by hand, cut with a sickle, and cradled. The farmer depended upon his own efforts for fruit, berries, vegetables, flour, and meat. Clothing was largely loomed at home, shoes frequently were manufactured and repaired on the farm..."

"*Commerce was confined* to the shipping of bark, wood, and grain from the nearest town, Millsboro, and there were no industries of more than local importance. Hard times during the war forced almost complete reliance upon homespun flax and wool, home-made sorghum molasses, and roasted grain or dried sweet-potato cubes for coffee. Not until after the war ended did such conveniences as a cook stove, a parlor stove, a reaper, and a thrasher appear on his (Conwell's) father's farm."

Even while that hard life was the rule in parts of the county not yet served by the railroad, things were changing rapidly elsewhere in Sussex. One of the largest crops in the state during the 1840's and 1850's had been peaches, but the development of peach orchards had been generally confined to New Castle County because of the lack of railroads in the lower counties. The extension of the railroads to Kent and Sussex, coupled with a blight known as the "peach yellows" which had decimated many of the orchards of New Castle County, resulted in the cultivation of thousands of peachtrees in Sussex in the late 1850's.

By the end of the Civil War, new strains of trees had been introduced into New Castle County and the entire state seemed covered with peach orchards. One can only imagine what it must have been like when the vast orchards were in bloom throughout Delaware. Shipments over the Delaware Railroad included 27,882 baskets of peaches in 1857. The number had increased to 225,697 baskets by 1862 and 736,494 baskets by 1864. In listing those statistics, Hancock notes that the peninsula produced a total of 803,180 baskets in 1864, most of which was from Delaware.

The conclusion of the Civil War brought further expansion of peach orchards into eastern Sussex and also early experimentation with other fruits and vegetables, notably strawberries.

In the late 1860's and early 1870's strawberries were being grown in many areas of Sussex. The first southeastern Sussex County farmer to try the new crop was D.J. Long of Selbyville in 1871. By 1872, 3,472,000 quarts of strawberries were shipped from the state. Blackberries, Huckleberries, and blueberries were also being grown increasingly for market.

The railroads in Sussex suffered a temporary setback in 1863 when the Delaware Railroad was unable to obtain enough railroad cars to move a peach crop and many thousands of baskets spoiled. Many growers sued the railroad and popular sentiment turned strongly against them for a time with many Delawareans saying that the money which had been spent on railroads would have been better spent on improving the roads to the wharves to speed movement of crops that way. The courts found against the railroad and awarded the growers a large amount in damages. The ""Delaware Guide" notes that, "thereafter, defense of the railroad's interests became an important factor in Delaware politics."

As Sussex County farmers have found from time to time over the years, it is possible to have too much of a good thing and such was the case with peaches in 1869, By then Delaware had become the undisputed center of the peach industry which supplied the cities of the northeast. The fruits of the estimated 1,099,590 trees growing along the railroad were so great that year that one Delawarean wrote early in August, "I am afraid there is ample to glut Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston markets. Railroads, steamboats, tugs, sail-vessels, and barges are taxed to their full capacity carrying peaches."

Events later proved him correct and many orchardmen fed their peaches to the hogs rather than sell them at low prices. The industry continued unabated, however, into the 1880's when the peach yellows broke out anew. The center of the peach industry gradually shifted southward from New Castle and Kent Counties until by 1890, Sussex was the main hub. But by then, the industry was past its prime.

By the 1890's, apples were just beginning to be grown in large quantities, and other crops included potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and, of course, corn and wheat. By 1900, more strawberries were grown in Sussex County than in any other county in the nation. According to the report of the State Board of Agriculture for 1902, "In 1899 the State produced 10,498,640 quarts of strawberries and of these 7,166,330 quarts grew in Sussex County." By 1901, the total crop was estimated at 14 million quarts of which 10 million were produced in Sussex.

Produce Auction

The Laurel Auction Block is seen above as it appeared 50 years ago. Wagonloads of cantaloupes are waiting to be sold.

Strawberry fields

Sussex County was the nation's largest producer of strawberries in 1898 and in the decades that followed. This scene of field workers picking strawberries was taken near Bridgeville. At the rear of the field was one of the county's many orchards.

Bridgeville was the center of the strawberry industry. 8.8 million quarts were shipped from there between 1898 and 1902 and, "in 1903 the promise is for about 3,500,000 quarts from this station. The fruit is sold by the quart, usually in 48-quart crates, at the railroad station in Bridgeville to the highest bidder and paid for on the spot, thus saving freight and commissions. Agents of the commission houses in Philadelphia, New York, Boston and other cities are tat the station and buy quantities, and of the desired qualities, as their respective houses can handle."

The railroads which gave rise to this new area of agriculture was also indirectly responsible for the development of two new industries in the county - canneries and basket and crate factories. The direct impetus which gave birth to canneries in those days before frozen foods were commercially feasible was the problem of what to do with excess fruits and vegetables during bumper crop years.

By the 1890's the manufacture of baskets, crates, and other wooden containers was flourishing at Millsboro, Frankford, Laurel, Seaford, and other towns in the county largely as a result of the county's gigantic fruit and vegetable crops. A major ingredient of the containers was gum veneers obtained from the stands of gum which were among the few hardwoods in the forests of Sussex not harvested earlier for other purposes.

Truck Crops

This view of lima beans being shelled in western Sussex shows the wealth of truck crops grown in the rich farmlands of the county in the early 20th century.

Sussex County continued to lag in industrial growth, however, and by 1875, Governor John Cochran could note that New Castle County contained more population than Kent and Sussex combined. The assessed valuation of its real estate equalled that of Kent and Sussex while the value of personal property was three times greater. The value of farm products and the amount of farm wages in New Castle equalled Kent and Sussex combined. New Castle County had been undergoing a period of industrial growth of epic proportions and in capital, wages, and value of products, its industries were ten times more valuable than those of Sussex and Kent combined.

Just when things were looking their worst, Coleman duPont arrived with a beautiful vision of the future

The development of railroads on the lower peninsula did much to stimulate industrial growth and agricultural diversification in Sussex County, but it did not go all the way in bringing the county into the 20th century. By the early 1900's, lower Delaware had long since realized the benefits John M. Clayton had envisioned when he conceived of a single rail line running south through the center of the peninsula and the weakness of his plan had manifested itself - namely, the virtual monoploy created by the reliance of agriculture and industry on the peninsula's lone railroad system.

The exploitation of forests during the last half of the 19th century with few if any efforts directed toward good forest management had, in addition to depleting many of the county's timber resources, left its roads very little better than the rude ox paths which crisscrossed the county in the early 18th century, and caused the silting up of its creeks and streams.

With other forms of transportation thus impeded, farmers were forced to rely more and more on the railroad at a time when their competitors in the south and the west were enjoying the low freight rates offered by competing rail lines in those areas. The temporary result of this condition in many of the outlying districts of the county was a lapse once more into economic slowdown and subsistence farming.

Bad roads were not to be the rule for long, however, because forces were already at work to bring about another great leap forward in the form of paved highways. The development of the automobile in the early 1900's and the popularity, of all things, of the bicycle had done much to generate a "good roads" movement throughout the United States. This new force had picked up sufficient momentum in Delaware by 1903 to cause the General Assembly to pass a State Aid Law appropriating $30,000 for that year with which to begin paving the state's highways. As a result New Castle County got its first eight miles of macadam-surfaced road, Sussex got its first mile of paved highway, and Kent did not bother to partake of the new fund.

Two years after this beginning, the state instituted its first motor vehicle registration law. The registration fee was two dollars and the owner was required to provide his own license plate. In 1907, state operator's licenses were issued for the first time and 313 motor vehicles were registered in Delaware, the vast majority of which were in New Castle County.

The earlier highway construction law met with disfavor in the General Assembly in the meantime and was repealed in 1905, delaying the construction of a highway system for another dozen years. But the idea had already been planted in the minds of many Delawareans and the popular clamoring for good roads was intensified by highway construction programs in Maryland and other neighboring states. The pressure had heightened to the point where by 1909 the General Assembly nearly passed a bill which would have financed the paving of the old and circuitous state road from Wilmington to Georgetown.

Shortly thereafter, the revolution in public roads in Sussex County occurred in the persons of General T. Coleman duPont and John G. Townsend, Jr., two of the most amazing men to have happened onto the Delaware scene in the 20th century. DuPont had, by 1911, been involved in street car companies, button factories, coal mines, the construction of sky-scrapers in New York, Delaware politics and a host of other projects, including the presidency of the DuPont Company.

In 1911, he turned his sights to the question of public roads. Having observed a tendency on the part of the General Assembly to put off dealing with the question, he offered to build and turn over to the State of Delaware at no cost a modern dual highway extending from the Maryland State Line to Wilmington on the condition that the legislature pass the necessary legislation. His plan had grown out of an extensive survey in Europe and the U.S. to determine the ideal "road of the future". It would have entailed the construction not only of a highway on a 200 foot right-of-way, but also of airfields at intervals along its median strip, agricultural experiment stations to benefit farmers along its route, underground electrical conduits although electricity was then in its earliest stages in the county, and other amenities.

Highway of the future

The Coleman duPont Road, shown above as it ran through Ellendale Swamp in the 1920's, ran straight as an arrow through much of Sussex County. It later became U.S. 113

The general reaction to duPont's offer appears to have been largely of two distinct types-those who were flabbergasted at the size and richness of his intended gift and were eager to accept it, and those who were flabbergasted at the size and richness of his intended gift and wanted no parts of it, believing that he must surely have ulterior motives for making it. Some believed that he planned through some nefarious scheme to reap vast personal profits. Others thought that he sought to advance his political career while still others thought simply that he was a maniac.

While duPont's political fortunes were, in fact, considerably enhanced by his effort to improve the state's roads, it is probable that he could have gone as far or farther had he never become involved in the project.

In any case, the General Assembly did pass a law authorizing a body of private citizens to construct a boulevard extending the length of the state, at their own expense. The law also stipulated that the roadway must be completed within six years, and that when all of it or any part of it ten miles or longer was completed, it should be turned over to the state free of charge with the agreement that the state would maintain it forever. The determination of all routes, designs, materials of construction and other details were subject to the approval of a commission composed of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Secretary of State. The private corporation was also granted the right of eminent domain. With the completion of any section of more than 10 miles in length, the Governor was authorized to appoint a Superintendent of Highways to supervise its repair and maintenance.

DuPont promptly organized his" Coleman duPont Road, Incorporated," and, acting as his own engineer, set off from Selbyville north in his Hispano-Suazo limosine to survey a route and acquire rights-of-way. The route he chose was later determined by leading highway engineers to have been perfectly suited to the needs of modern highway building. Although many parts of the 200 foot right-of-way were given by the citizens free, those who wished to sell were offered fifty percent above the market value of their property.

Ground was first broken for the incredible undertaking at Selbyville on September 18, 1911. In the process of acquiring legislative approval for his project, his original plans had to be scaled down considerably and a two-lane highway was started. If his original plan had been carried out to its completion, it is probable that the final result would have been the most advanced highway in the world. As it was, after the first mile from Selbyville northward had been completed, it was the most advanced highway in the history of Sussex County.

The road had proceeded just to the north of Georgetown when a property owner refused to sell his right-of-way and when it was condemned, he took the case to court. The case eventually proceeded as far as the United States Supreme Court before it was finally settled in favor of the state and duPont in 1915. In his book "Delaware and the Eastern Shore," Edward Noble Vallandigham presents a somewhat different and vastly more entertaining version of the difficulty: "(The highway) had crept Northward about twenty miles when it was stalled between two villages by a stubborn farmer who would not grant a right of way. John G. Townsend hastened to Wilmington with a strong delegation of Sussex county men, and in spite of their warning that he promised too much, pledged himself to remove the obstacle. Mr. Du Pont had already called off his engineers and workmen in disgust, but his answer was that they should return to the job on Monday, an answer given on Saturday. Mr. Townsend hastened home and bought the farm, wondering how he should come out whole, and the cement road began again its progress northward."

While Vallandigham's colorful account is almost certainly apocryphal, it would have been characteristic of both men. As it was, the stubborness of the Sussex County landowner which resulted in a supreme court duel is just as characteristic of Sussex County landowners. Finally on May 24, 1917, by which time Townsend was Governor, the first 20 miles of the Coleman duPont Road were presented to the state in a ceremony at Georgetown. Townsend's speech on that occasion is worthy of quotation:

"I feel I represent well the citizens of Sussex County when I say that no one thing since the building of the railroad has done so much for the development of this section of our commonwealth as the construction of this road. Further, by this practical demonstration you have advanced our ideas of the worth and benefit of good roads. We are living in advance of our time by your generosity. The difficulties of travel have made us strong advocates of good roads, yet few of us saw the possibilities to be gained. Only by having the advantage given us here did we realize the full advantages of good roads. Today, through this gift, Sussex County is thoroughly aroused. . ."

In the meantime, from 1905 to 1917, the counties had carried on a somewhat half-hearted road program with state assistance and 35 miles of road in Sussex had been surfaced with a macadam surface. By the time of Townsend's speech in 1917 there were 10,702 motor vehicles in the state. The combination of the Coleman duPont Road and the passage in 1916 of the Federal Aid Highway Act which provided for federal matching funds for highway construction up to $10,000 a mile had sought to awaken Delawareans to the need for an on-going highway construction program under a state highway department. The department was created in 1917 under a state highway commission which included Townsend, the governor, as chairman, T. Coleman duPont, and Joseph E. Holland as the member for Sussex County. The state highway law also gave the department authorization to issue bonds on the credit of the state for highway construction to the extent that the income of the department would pay the interest.

In light of these developments, duPont offered to abandon construction of the remainder of his road if the department would complete construction to Wilmington. He also offered to underwrite the state's cost to the amount of $44,000 per mile plus the costs of obtaining a right-of-way. The department accepted and the road was completed the length of the state by 1924. DuPont was true to his word and expended a total of $3,917,004 on that and his earlier Coleman duPont Road Corporation. With that beginning, Sussex County and the rest of the state soon had one of the most modern highway networks in the U.S.

The effect of this effort on agriculture and business was dramatic. It also had the longterm effect of developing the county's tourism to the point where it became a large factor in the economy. It brought about the development of trucking companies and added to the development of the county's next and perhaps its largest agricultural bonanza - the chicken business.

The Broiler: Sussex County's 'Golden Egg'

Two types of chickens have had major roles in the history of Delaware - first, the Kent County Blue Hen fighting cock which served as a mascot to Haslet's regiment of the Delaware Line during the Revolution, and, much later, the Sussex County Broiler. While the broiler is no match in personal style or fighting ability to the sleek and fast Blue Hen, its impact on the state and especially on Sussex County has been infinitely greater.

The broiler's arrival on the scene was considerably earlier than 1923 when the "Sussex County Broiler Industry" is generally believed to have gotten underway in earnest, but before that year, it had always been thought of primarily as a by-product to the market egg business. By 1917, that business had grown in Sussex to the point where virtually every farm wife had her flock of laying hens and the eggs left over after the family had filled their own needs were becoming increasingly important to the family budget.

The growth of the railroads and the more recent improvement in county roads had made it possible to ship eggs and other perishables to market in as little as half a day. Strawberries could be picked in the early morning, be loaded into baskets and packed for market by mid-day, and be in Philadelphia or New York by evening, there to be sent to retail stores in time for the next morning's contingent of shoppers.

At the same time, the markets themselves were rapidly expanding with the great industrial growth underway in the northeast during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As the population of that region grew in numbers and complexity with the arrival of successive waves of immigrants new crops became more sought after and the demand for old crops increased.

Thus, by 1917, when the county's highway system was first coming into being, speeding the movement of produce from the farm to the packing house to the railroad station and paving the way for the first commercial trucking companies, the agricultural economy of Sussex was perhaps more diversified than had ever been the case before or since.

Crops grown for market included the old mainstays of corn and wheat and to a much lesser extent such grains as buckwheat, oats, and rye, much of which was kept for home consumption or conversion into animal feeds. Soybeans were beginning to be grown in substantial quantity. Peaches continued to play a major role in the county's economy although they had long since fallen from their former position of dominance.

The cultivation of apple orchards was also increasing, especially in the immediate vicinity of railroad shipping centers like Nassau and Bridgeville. The strawberry business was strong and growing to the point where Governor John G. Townsend, Jr., would come to be known as "the Strawberry King of America." Cantaloupes and other melons were grown for market as were potatoes, sweet potatoes, string beans, lima beans, cucumbers, peas, asparagus, and other vegetables. Livestock production, mainly the raising of pork and cattle, was important, and the county had a limited number of dairy farms.

The bays, rivers, and creeks of the county continued to provide a large harvest of oysters, clams, crabs, and fish, although the rich abundance found in the earliest days had long since declined from overfishing. Some farmers who lived near the bay in Cedar Creek and Broadkill Hundreds were making considerable extra income from muskrat trapping. While the marshes surrounding Delaware City were generally acknowledged to be the state's richest muskrat grounds, Prime Hook was next in line of ascent.

"Industry" and "Agriculture" had never been separate areas of endeavor in Sussex. Throughout the history of the county there had been interlocking relationships between the farms and plantations, the grist and sawmills, the distilleries and charcoal pits, logging in its many forms, shipyards and shipping, and most other aspects of the county's economy. By 1917, there were also flourishing canneries which made a thriving business out of the leftover produce of farmers.

The container business was perfectly suited to Sussex as well. The manufacture of baskets for fruit and vegetables, crates, and other containers utilized the large stands of gum left in the forests of the county. Its needs gave work to the steam sawmills and logging crews and it was a natural offshoot of the logging industry which had thrived in the county since the 1700's. Among the leading basket manufacturers by 1917 were Houston-White Company in Millsboro and the Marvil Package Company in Laurel.

Houston-White, which had been founded in Millsboro in 1893 by Congressman Henry Houston and William J. P. White, a boyhood friend of John G. Townsend, Jr., owned large stands of timber and a sawmill in North Carolina by World War I and sold their products throughout much of the east. Similar operations were in existence in several parts of the county and the industry turned out hundreds of thousands of fruit and vegetable crates and baskets together with the boxes needed to ship them filled with produce to market.

The railroads were in the early stages of their retreat before the combined might of federally-subsidized highways and commercial trucking companies. While they would continue to dominate bulk transportation for another 35 years, by 1917 their freight carrying charges were beginning to reflect the existence of competition on Delmarva for the first time since they vied with the steamship companies in the 1850's.

As the egg business became increasingly important, the slowly declining number of millers in Sussex were grinding more and more grain for chicken feed. Small commercial feedhouses were springing up and selling pre-mixed chicken feed to the egg producers. Several small hatcheries were providing chicks and hatching eggs to those who owned flocks of laying hens.

In short, the stage was uncommonly well set for the beginning of a completely new agricultural experiment, a combination of traditional agriculture, industry, and big business which would come to be known as the Delmarva Poultry Industry. By 1920, the broiler business had come into being as a poor relation to the market egg business. Broilers themselves were the young male "cockerels" hatched as a necessary part of the production of laying hens. Since they were not required for breeding purposes, they were sold as a popular seasonal product in nearby cities, generally when they weighed from two to two and a half pounds. In the early days, they were of many different breeds - white leghorn, Rhode Island Red, New Hampshire, Barred Rock and others.

Most eggs were hatched during the late winter and early spring. Thus, the broilers arrived in the markets several months later when they'd grown to a desirable size. The birds were sold in quantities of generally less than one hundred and sometimes of only ten or twenty.

Early in 1923, an Ocean View housewife, Mrs. Cecile A. Steele, had the novel idea of raising an entire flock of broilers and selling them early enough to get a premium price. She started with a flock of 500 birds about three weeks before broilers would normally be hatched and by early summer, when they weighed two pounds apiece, she sold them for sixty-two cents a pound on the hoof.

Mrs. Steele's husband, Wilmer, was a member of the U.S. Coast Guard and served at the Bethany Beach Lifesaving Station. He and his wife had both been born and raised in Baltimore Hundred and Steele's service at Bethany Beach was characteristic of a tradition in the early U.S. Lifesaving Service of recruiting men from the local area to serve at their isolated stations along the coast. He was so pleased with his wife's success in the broiler business that year that he spent much of his off duty time during the next months building new brooder houses so that Mrs. Steele could add to her flock in 1924.

In 1924, she raised 1,000 broilers and sold them for fifty-seven cents a pound. By 1927, the Steeles had a capacity of 25,000 broilers on their farm. Finding the broiler business considerably more rewarding by now than the coast guard, Mr. Steele resigned and became a fulltime poultryman. The couple continued to have their flocks ready several weeks before the broiler market reached its height and they continued to get top prices.

Sussex Countians have always been quick to accord business success its proper degree of respect and just as quick to get into a promising business themselves. During 1925 and 1926, the broiler business spread throughout Baltimore Hundred and elsewhere. By 1927, farmers throughout Sussex were growing broilers and the business was spreading into Kent and even into New Castle. Southeastern Sussex Countians were closely tied to Maryland by kinship and friendship and the broiler business was also spreading quickly into that state.

By 1927, Sussex County had an estimated 500 broiler growers with flocks averaging 2,000 apiece. By 1935, most Sussex Countians had forgotten about peaches and oysters and were devoting their efforts instead to broilers. Former egg producers were rapidly converting their hen houses to broiler houses and expanding them. Millers and early feedhouse owners were finding it difficult to meet the demand for their products. The few hatcheries in the county were swamped with business and broiler growers were beginning to buy hatching eggs and biddies elsewhere.

At that point, a decisive factor in the early success of the chicken business was occurring - the market for broilers was expanding rapidly and it became a constant, year-round demand rather than the seasonal business of the past. Broiler growers were able to sell their flocks to any of a number of buyers who sent them to dressing plants in nearby cities on growing fleets of chicken trucks. The growers had then only to clean their houses, purchase a quantity of sawdust from a nearby sawmill with which to carpet the floors of their houses, purchase a new flock of broilers and begin the cycle anew.

First broiler house

This broiler house which once stood on the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer Steele in Ocean View is where the Sussex County poultry industry got its start. The small house which held 500 chickens is now on permanent display at the University of Delaware Agricultural substation near Georgetown. The steeles later increased their capacity by hundreds of thousands.

The county felt the hardships of the depression as other areas of the nation did, but its effects were not so serious that the growth of the broiler industry was seriously impeded. Delaware produced about two million broilers in 1928 and increased that amount by one million broilers a year until 1935. Another important boost to the early chicken business was the beginning in the early 1930's of the practice by hatcherymen and feed dealers of extending credit to broiler growers until their flocks were marketed.

Some large companies were beginning to combine several aspects of the poultry business within their overall operation by establishing feedmills, growing the crops needed for feed, building chicken houses, starting their own hatcheries, and raising chickens. Carpenters and farmers were busy building simple frame chicken houses from local lumber, creating in the process an architectural style which became a major characteristic of the Delmarva landscape. The low, rambling chicken houses of the early days often had small tenant houses built above central feedrooms. Groves of willows were planted in front to shade penned-in range areas from the heat of the summer sun.

Many businessmen in the county never before connected with the poultry business were becoming hatcherymen or the owners of feedhouses or tenant farms with their rows of broiler houses. These new poultrymen included merchants and bankers and even lawyers. Wilmer Steele had stayed in the chicken business and flourished and by 1935 had enough houses for a flock of 200,000 broilers. He also branched into politics, becoming a Republican state senator from Baltimore Hundred in 1938. In 1940, the Steeles operated seven farms with a total capacity of 250,000 chickens. In the fall of that year, the poultry industry pioneers were killed in a freak accident when their large cabin crusiser exploded several miles off the coast.

Pessimists were predicting that the market would soon become saturated with broilers and that prices would fall as had been the case with other crops in the past. While their theory was to prove partly correct, their timing was off by several decades. After 1935, production of chickens made a huge leap by many millions a year and prices remained stable. In 1939, 24 million chickens were raised in the county and by 1944, that total had risen to 60 million. The price averaged one dollar per bird. By that time, the county's poultrymen had generally decided that a cross-breed of the Barred Rock and the New Hampshire breeds made the best broiler.

Poultry buyers had discovered the fondness for chicken among New York City's large Jewish population and at the same time, their fellow New Yorkers of every faith were finding broilers a tasty and inexpensive alternative to beef. By the early 1940's, New York had become the major market for Delmarva chicken. Other industries in Sussex were benefiting from the upsurge of economic activity as well. The basket companies found a growing market in the manufacture of crates in which to ship chickens to market, a business which was to expand even more with the beginning of the county's first chicken dressing plants.

The first local dressing plant in Sussex was started in Frankford in 1938 by Jack Udell. It was soon followed by plants owned by firms such as the Sussex County Poultry Company at Milford, H & H Poultry Company of Selbyville, Millsboro Poultry Company, the Henlopen Poultry Company in Lewes, and Stephany Poultry in Seaford. The county's plants had a combined dressing capacity of 300,000 chickens a day by 1944 when the industry had grown tremendously because of World War II.

Even the commercial fishing industry had become indirectly involved in the chicken business. Lewes' Fish Products Company was producing fish meal from large catches of menhaden brought in by its trawler fleet and the meal was a primary ingredient in the manufacture of feed. Feed mills were growing in size as well and among the early leaders in that end of the broiler business were O.A. Newton and Son of Bridgeville, H.E. Williams of Millsboro, Townsend, Inc., which combined virtually all the phases of the broiler industry in its operation, and Murray's Feed of Frankford. Smaller feedmills and feedhouses were springing up all over central Delmarva.

The broiler indusrty had become the county's most important business by World War II

The Pennsylvania Railroad, which by now controlled most of the lines on the peninsula, was flourishing because of the business of bringing in feed and other essentials to broiler growers. The broilers, themselves, were generally trucked to market, however. Specialty firms like Mumford's Sheet Metal, Inc., in Selbyville were doing a large business in the manufacture of chicken feeders and other needs of the poultrymen of the area. Fertilizer manufacturers like Valiant Fertilizer Company in Laurel were expanding to meet the demand from increasingly large scale growers of corn, soybeans, and other ingredients of chicken feed.

The broiler industry in all its many manifestations had become the county's most important business by the beginning of World War II. In 1941, the total agricultural income including that derived from livestock production was about $28 million. Of that total, $20,352,000 came from commercial broilers. By 1945, the county's total farm income had risen to $72,307,385, of which $60,807,342 came from broilers. During the 1940's, the broiler industry was open to everyone with enough money or credit to build a few chicken houses, buy a flock of chickens, enough feed to feed them, and other essentials. More millionaires were created during the two decades the poultry industry was at its early prime than in all the rest of the county's history put together.

With the conclusion of World War II came more sophistication than ever. Large agri-business corporations like Delaware Mills, Purina and Cargill were moving into poultry production in Delmarva and in other areas like Georgia and Arkansas. Ever since the introduction of large-scale broiler production, growers had been bothered by chicken diseases. With the help of the staff of the University of Delaware's Agricultural Experimental Station at Georgetown and a few other experts, poultrymen generally served as their own "chicken doctors" until the late 1940's and early 1950's.

After the war, many feedhouses and other concerns had begun selling poultry vaccines. In the late 1940's, several firms were established to produce their own poultry vaccines. One of the first in Sussex was Delaware Poultry Laboratories which started in Dagsboro and later grew into a new facility in Millsboro. Its products were first bought almost exclusively by Delmarva broiler growers, but as the firm's product line expanded into other types of animal vaccines, its business later spread throughout the country and to foreign countries. Among its products was a vaccine to prevent "Gumboro Disease" a new chicken disease first diagnosed by a DPL poultry pathologist and named for the town where it was first isolated. In the early 1960's, the firm was sold to the Sterling Drug Company and became Sterwin Laboratories, Inc.

Those who had been predicting that the broiler bubble would burst were proved at least temporarily correct during the early 1950's when broiler prices did drop significantly from their high process of the past to as little as 18 and 20 cents a pound. Many small broiler growers were forced out of the business enclosed down or were merged with larger companies better equipped to withstand the hard times. Some growers and hatcheries which had previously been independent, leased their facilities to large poultry companies, and for a time it looked as though the chicken business might be coming to a halt as the county's leading industry. Several chicken plants were closed down as well and an economic slump like so many others in the county's history set in.

What had happened, however, was not the end of the broiler business, but simply the end of the early boom days in Sussex County. As poultry production spread to other areas of the country and the ownership of production facilities fell to larger and larger companies, the entire nature of the industry was changing. Among the largest of the early poultry producers to make the transition into the newly reconstituted chicken business was Townsends, Inc. Another was the Worcester and Somerset County, Maryland, firm, Perdue, Inc.

By the late 1940's and early 1950's, Townsends, Inc., had shifted much of its emphasis from fruits and vegetables into poultry. The Townsend family still operated a cannery and frozen food plant at Georgetown, but poultry and its related enterprises had become the major focus. Thousands of acres of former apple and peach orchards and strawberry fields were converted to the growing of corn and soybeans, essential ingredients of the feed business. The company owned outright or leased hundreds of chicken houses and had many broiler growers under contract to raise flocks which were marketed by the firm either live or dressed in its own dressing facilities. In the 1950's, Townsend Incorporated built one of the county's first modern soybean processing plants and in the early 1960's, they built what was at the time the largest and most modern poultry processing plant in the world.

These facilities, coupled with existing hatchery and feed mill operations, and a fleet of trucks to haul their wares to market amounted to a "big business" approach to the chicken business. The development of Townsend Incorporated was paralleled in many respects by Perdue, Inc., H & H Poultry Company of Selbyville, and other large concerns. By the middle 1960's, such agri-business giants as Cargill, Inc,. had also moved into the Sussex County poultry industry in a big way, buying or leasing dressing plants, hatcheries, feedmills, and farms.

By the late 1960's and early 1970's, the business that began in Mrs. Cecile Steele's backyard brooder house in 1923 was bigger than ever. The day of the small, independent entrepreneur was gradually coming to a close, however, and poultry companies are moving ever closer to the large corporate image found in the production of automobiles, breakfast foods, and other products of the American economy.

As of 1975, it is still too early to judge whether the broiler industry has reached the limits of growth in Sussex County. It appears certain, however, that as other types of industry like the E.I. DuPont de Nemours Nylon Plant at Seaford which opened there in the 1930's, thus becoming the county's first large industrial facility, come to Sussex County, the broiler business will never again be in the position of total dominance as it was in the 1930's and 1940's.

It can truly be said, however, that the broiler industry, with its unusual dual nature as an agricultural enterprise and at the same time a major industry employing thousands of Sussex Countians, has served as a bridge into the future. What that future will bring can be answered only by the passage of time.

Competitive egg-laying plant

A pre-broiler era egg business near Milford in the 1920's

The Hundreds of Sussex County

Any account of the history of Sussex is incomplete without a discussion of the county's thirteen hundreds. Those quaint geographical subdivisions, largely unknown outside of Delaware, have had a large importance both historically and culturally in the state since they were first roughly established as assessment districts during the brief rule of the Duke of York between 1674 and 1682.

The hundreds were later confirmed by William Penn upon his assumption of the proprietorship of the Three Lower Counties upon Delaware in 1682. Although their importance as actual political subdivisions generally came to an end after the establishment of representative districts in the state under the provisions of the state constitution of 1897, the hundreds continued to play an important cultural role for decades thereafter. Even today, the county's thirteen hundreds are in use in deed descriptions, on certain legal documents, and in other ways.

Most Sussex Countians continued to think of themselves as residents of a particular hundred first and only then as Sussex Countians and Delawareans until well into the 20th century. During much of the county's history, nearly every hundred had its unique characteristics and variations upon the general Sussex County dialect, a fact which gave rise to the frequent claim made by numerous Sussex Countians that they could immediately spot a fellow native and categorize him still further by hundred just by hearing him speak a few words.

In the years of the proprietary government of the Penns after 1682, Sussex had only five hundreds - Lewes and Rehoboth, Broadkill, Indian River, Cedar Creek and Northwest Fork. While the boundaries of the more settled districts of Lewes and Rehoboth, Indian River, and Cedar Creek corresponded generally to their present limits, Broadkill and Northwest Fork Hundred extended westward into the hazy areas of confusion between the domains of the Penns and the colony of Maryland to the west.

In at least one case, that of the present-day Nanticoke Hundred, early Penn land grants refer to the area as Deep Creek Hundred while at the same time, Maryland patents call it the Nanticoke district.

In those years before the 1763 Mason and Dixon boundary survey, the Maryland "districts," a term generally equivalent to "hundreds," along the roughly implied border took their names generally from the waterways which served as their primary link to civilization. Thus, there were the Nanticoke and Broad Creek districts, referring to the river and its major tributary, and Little Creek district through which ran the creek of that name. In the northeast corner of Worcester County "Baltimore" district was established during the middle of the 18th century after early, and, as it happened, unsuccessful, efforts to start a town of that name along the Indian River.

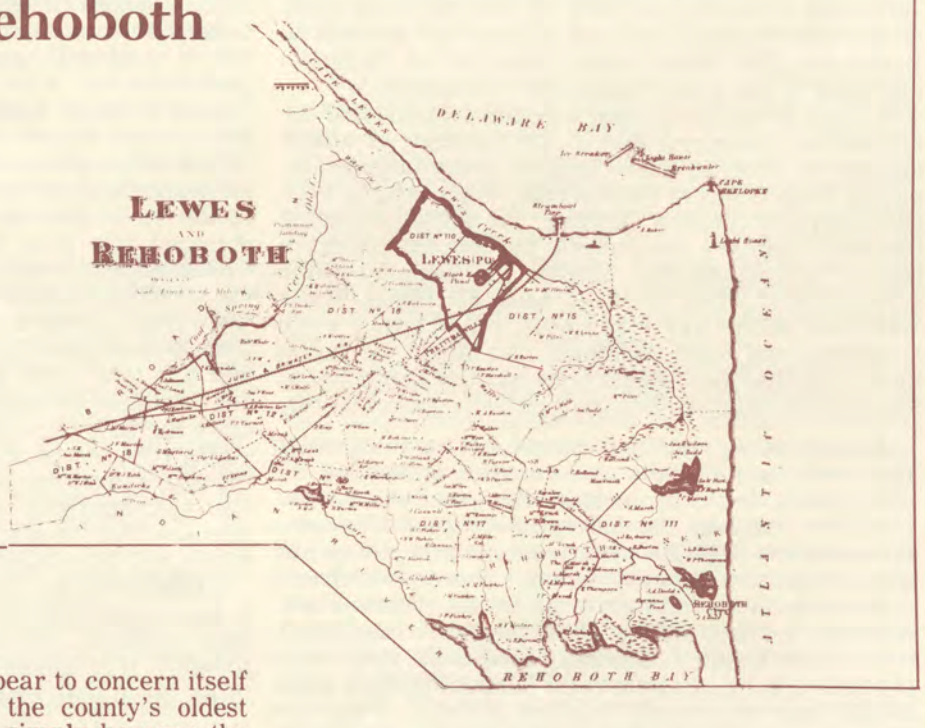
With the formal conclusion of the Maryland-Delaware Boundary dispute in 1775, "New Sussex," containing Baltimore, Broad Creek, Little Creek, and Nanticoke Hundreds, was incorporated into Sussex County. At the same time, the vast district between Baltimore and Broad Creek Hundreds was named Dagsborough Hundred after its wealthiest and most illustrious citizen, Lt. Col, later General, John Dagworthy.

Thus, by 1775, Sussex County contained 10 hundreds. As the population of the less settled parts of the county grew during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, three new hundreds came into being. Each was to be named for its most prominent town. The first of the new hundreds was named for the new county seat at Georgetown, near its center, after it was formed from the western half of Broadkill Hundred in 1833 by an act of the legislature. The bill which had established the hundred was repealed less than two years later and the area became a part of Broadkill once more. Finally, in 1861, Georgetown Hundred was reestablished. In 1863, the legislature enacted another bill giving the new hundred the right to elect its own levy court commissioner and the county's 11th hundred has been in existence ever since.

On March 11, 1869, the legislature enacted a bill calling for Northwest Fork Hundred to be divided in half. The southern half was named Seaford Hundred after the largest town in the area. That process also brought about the establishment of Gumborough Hundred, the county's 13th and final hundred, in 1873 from portions of Broad Creek and Dagsborough Hundreds. Although hardly qualifying as a town, the tiny crossroads hamlet of Gumborough was the largest settlement for miles around after it was established in a vast swampy wilderness in the early 1840's.

While it is impossible to delve in detail into the history of each of those hundreds and the the many towns and villages situated within their boundaries within the context of this account, what follows are brief accounts of those 13 hundreds, together with some of the deeds and places and traditions which make each unique.

Lewes and Rehoboth



The history of Sussex must appear to concern itself to an inordinate degree with the county's oldest hundred, Lewes and Rehoboth, simply because the area contains Delaware's first site of European colonization. Since that point near the mouth of the Delaware Bay is also the state's best natural harbor, it has had a major role in every war from the Revolution to World War II. Even in the years before the Penn proprietorship, its geographical importance had exposed the area's residents to almost never-ending harassment from a succession of pirates and border raiders.

As has been noted earlier, the "Horekill" once encompassed all of what is now Kent and Sussex Counties before being subdivided into the two counties of New Deale (later St. Jones) and Horekill by the Duke of York's governor, Sir Edmund Andros in 1680. Shortly after Penn gained title to his new world domains in 1682, he renamed the two counties Kent and Sussex, the latter for his home county in England. Since Lewes is the foremost port town of the English county of Sussex, it was a logical development that Penn should rename the town of Horekill "Lewes" as well.

Although the new name was rapidly popularized into "Lewistown" by which it was commonly known among many Sussex Countians until the end of the 19th century, "Lewes" continued to be used in most formal contexts.

The large bay situated several miles to the south of Lewes and connected to the Indian River by narrow inlets was named "Rehoboth" by early English settlers in the region before 1675. The word, taken from the biblical book of Genesis, is somewhat ironic in view of the present high cost of land in the area since it means "room enough." The neck of land extending down into the narrow spit of land between the bay and the Atlantic ocean was called "Rehoboth Neck" and, like other parts of the county in that era, was soon taken up with large tracts by early planters.

As settlers cleared fields and established footholds on the land, such crops as corn, tobacco, wheat, and flax were cultivated. The early residents also reaped a bountiful harvest from the nearby bay and ocean waters. Little attention was paid to the ocean beach, however, except as a ready source of sea salt, and, after the frequent wrecks along the coast, of salvaged goods.

While most of the hundred inland to Love Creek continued to be sparsely populated until well into the 18th century, the village of Quakertown, two miles from Lewes, came into being as early as 1725. Soon an inn came into being there and in later years the county's pillory and whipping post were situated at Quakertown, where they remained until the county seat was moved to Georgetown in 1791. During the Revolution, troops drilled in the village. Because of its central location in the earlier settled parts of the hundred, elections were also conducted there for many years.

Among the other villages in or on the edges of the hundred is Cool Spring which, like so many of the towns and hamlets of Sussex owed its origin in large part to the existence of two active religious congregations in the area. Near the head of what is today Red Mill Pond along Cool Spring Branch, a Quaker meeting was established as early as 1720, although no meeting house was built until 1742. The Cool Spring Presbyterian Church was established in a forest just inland before 1728 and, with the Lewes First Presbyterian Church and the later Indian River Presbyterian Church, formed one of the earliest centers of that denomination in Delaware.

Although the Quaker Meeting at Cool Spring had died out by the beginning of the 19th century, the Presbyterian Church remained and flourished. The present Cool Spring Presbyterian Church, built in 1855, is the third structure to have stood on the site.

Jake "Jigger" Bell, a free Negro who owned a farm near Quakertown, gave a plot of land for the establishment of a church in about 1840 and shortly thereafter began selling lots nearby. Soon a village had grown up which came to be known as Belltown in honor of its founder. Among its most illustrious residents was Arnsy Maull, a voodoo conjurer of apparent skill whose powers were known among blacks throughout the area. Maull soon became the head of a sect of "Devil-Worshippers."

According to an account of Maull and his followers in "Delaware, A Guide to the First State," Maull repudiated his strange faith on his deathbed and ordered his underlings to lash the air with bullwhips to, "'drive off the Devil and let the Lord in!'" In later years, his son, Silas, though hardly as well known as his sorcerer father, was known to sell charms and cures to his neighbors.

Nassau, several miles above Lewes, grew up along the Junction and Breakwater Railroad as it was run to Lewes in 1869. The village, like many tiny hamlets during the second half of the 19th century, had its own post office, several stores, and a church. Ironically, the village experienced its greatest burst of economic activity in the years when the railroad was not completed to Lewes, and Nassau was the major shipping point for the hundred. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Nassau was the center of a flourishing dairy and orchard business, which, while it still continues on a small scale, has suffered reverses with the declining importance of the railroads and the easy access to major markets for farmers in the south and west brought on by modern highway construction.

Midway, as its name suggests, lies midway between Lewes and Rehoboth Beach. It came into being as a natural crossroads village during the 1870's as the new resort town to the south was experiencing its first rapid growth. It too once had a post office of its own.

While the village has grown gradually with the expansion of the larger towns nearby, it has never developed into a true town on its own.

Rehoboth Beach was only a collection of pine woods, large farms, and unproductive sand dunes until the development of the railroads opened the area to those in search of a respite from the unpleasantries of city life in the 1860's. Its potential as a beach resort had, in fact, been realized as early as 1855 when the legislature incorporated the "Rehoboth Hotel Company" and granted its principals the use of five acres of state land lying at the point where Rehoboth Neck narrowed into a spit of sand running south to the Indian River Inlet, on the condition that they develop the property within five years.

While the potential of the area was growing increasingly obvious, however, it was still to be more than a decade before conditions were right for development. The break finally came in 1870 when Louis Tredenick erected a small combination summer hotel and hunting lodge in the area then optimistically known as "Rehoboth City." Since 1898, the area has been known as Dewey Beach after Admiral George Dewey, the hero of the Spanish-American War battle of Manila Bay.

The next major move forward for the fledgling resort came in 1872 when the "Rehoboth Association" of the Methodist Episcopal Church bought a tract of several hundred acres encompassing much of the present area of the city. It was laid out in building lots interspersed with broad avenues and streets. In the years that followed, the area experienced a rash of hotel and cottage construction beginning with the Bright and Surf Hotels.

In 1873, the Rehoboth Association changed its name to the "Rehoboth Beach Camp-Meeting Association and a camp meeting ground was established in a large grove of trees near the present Lewes-Rehoboth Canal bridge. Like most of the county's numerous camp-meeting grounds of the last quarter of the 19th century, the grove contained small frame "tents" laid out in a circle around a central tabernacle. The railroad was extended from Lewes to the grove in 1878. With that development, growth in the resort speeded up and, with the exception of the depression years, has continued largely unabated ever since. The camp-meetings themselves were discontinued in 1881, but that and other drawbacks, including hordes of blood-thirsty mosquitoes which infested the area until the Civilian Conservation Corps mosquito control programs of the 1930's, did little to discourage summer visitors.

The major mode of transportation into the resort continued to be weekend excursion trains running from nearby towns and cities for nearly 50 years after 1878, but finally by the late 1920's, construction of new highways up and down the peninsula gradually put an end to the trains. The boom years of the late twenties brought with them a vast leap in land values and the development of such sub-divisions as Rehoboth-by-the-Sea. Although such activities slowed during the early depression years, investors were once more active by 1936 when Indian Beach was established. It was to be followed by other early developments like Henlopen Acres which in recent years has become an incorporated municipality.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries also brought a series of major public works projects to the hundred which had the effect of further enhancing development. The first of these, the great Delaware Breakwater at Lewes was begun as early as 1828. The structure was completed in 1834 at a cost of more than $1.1 million. At its completion, the breakwater was known as one of the greatest engineering feats ever undertaken in the United States.

The first "breakwater light" was constructed in 1848. It became the Maritime Exchange in 1880 and was used as a transfer point for messages and other essentials from ship to shore. The facility was moved ashore in 1942 to its present location near the tip of Cape Henlopen.

The breakwater also has the "East End Lighthouse" and the "West End Post Light." Although the post light has long been automatic, the East End light was manned by revolving crews of U.S. Coast Guardsmen, as were such famed bay lighthouses as Ship John Light, Brandywine Shoals Light, and Fourteen Foot Bank Light until recent years when automatic equipment was installed. Though the automatic lighthouses are vastly more efficient and less costly, the passing of the crews has brought an end to the picturesque days on the bay when keepers were known to make their way in winter across more than a mile of treacherous ice floes from the breakwater to Lewes.

In 1892, Congress authorized construction of a further improvement, the much longer Harbor of Refuge. Construction began in May of 1897 and the 8,200 foot wall was completed four and a half years later at a cost of $2,500,000. The project also included 15 stone "ice-breaker" piers at the northwest end of the harbor of refuge, two of which were severely damaged during the hurricane of 1936.

Together, the Delaware Breakwater and the Harbor of Refuge formed a protected harbor at the mouth of the bay of more than 1,000 acres. Their combined might did much to lessen the danger of wrecks in the waters off Sussex County, although in the process most of the hardy souls who made their living from salvaging the wrecks, and the "anchor sweepers" who swept the bay bottom in search of anchors and other scrap iron were put out of business.

The old U.S. Life-Saving Service opened the first of four stations along the Delaware Coast half a mile above the Cape in 1882. Delaware journalist and historian Francis Vincent has been credited with bringing about that development as the result of a crusade to provide more protection for mariners and travelers along the coast. The Lewes Station was followed by later stations at Indian River Inlet, Bethany Beach, and in the area north of Rehoboth Beach near what is now known as Whiskey Beach.

Of the four stations, by far the most isolated was the old Indian River Inlet station which could be reached by land only by a nearly impassable sandy trail until construction of the coast highway in 1934. Its crew and those of the other stations maintained constant patrols up and down the beach during the days of sail and, for that matter, until well into the 1940's, by which time the life-saving service had combined with the old revenue cutter service to form the U.S. Coast Guard. Station crews rushed to the rescue in any type of weather and at any hour of the day or night with breeches bouys and great wooden surf boats kept in a state of constant readiness in boatrooms in the station and run out to the ocean on tracks across the beach when needed.

The job of the by-then U.S. Coast Guard became vastly more difficult and dangerous in the early days of World War II when German U-boats preyed upon Allied shipping moving north and south along the coast, often within sight of land. The torpedo sinkings off Sussex were numerous. From January to June of 1942, twelve vessels were sunk off the coast and many of the victims were brought ashore and treated at Beebe Hospital. Many others were not so fortunate and died in the frigid waters off Delaware.

In those grim days, coast guardsmen patrolled the beaches on horseback and in the company of attack dogs in an effort to guard against shore landings by agents from German submarines. Their efforts were not entirely successful, however. At one point during the war, military authorities put on an intensive search in southeastern Sussex for German radio transmitters. When a U-boat sank off Indian River Inlet late in the war was raised years later, bread wrappers and other evidence was found on board indicating that the vessel's crew had been supplied at least in part from southeastern Sussex grocery stores.

Another major development in Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred, though hardly as successful as some of the other public works projects in the area, was Lewes' Iron Pier, built by the federal government between 1870 and 1890. It got its name from the iron pilings and supports used in its construction, a process which was rare then and even more so in the years since. Although nearly 2,000 feet of the pier were completed, it was never finished. One story credits the suspension of building to an incident which supposedly took place as the pier was nearly finished. A team of six fine horses had been placed in position near a capstan at the end of the pier to provide the power for driving the last pilings into the bay floor. Their driver, reportedly overcome by the importance of his mission, had stopped in a nearby tavern for a quick dose of sustaining fluid before starting the job. He imbided too much sustenance, got his commands tangled, and drove the team into the bay. He was rescued, but the horses drowned. The strange structure was later used to hold various official activities, including the Maritime Exchange building which was located there for a short time. Finally it had outlived its usefulness to the government and was sold to a private sand company. Today, only a few vestiges of its once impressive length remain.

In 1884, the U.S. Marine Hospital Service established a quarantine station near the cape. Its staff boarded all foreign vessels entering the bay and inspected their crews for signs of epidemic diseases. If any cases of infectious illness were spotted, the crews were placed in quarantine at the station. That function was largely taken over by Drs. James and Richard Beebe in 1916 after the establishment of a tiny, two-room hospital which has since grown into the present Beebe Hospital on Savannah Road in Lewes.

The federal government authorized construction of the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal in 1913 as a major link in the inland waterway network which has since been extended most of the way from Maine to Florida. The canal which utilized portions of the old Lewes Creek, was to have served as an important artery of waterborne commerce, but those hopes never really materialized because of the shallow depth of the Rehoboth Bay and the development in the same era of the state's modern highway network.

For a short time after its completion, the canal was used by produce growers along the Rehoboth Bay and the Indian River to tow barges of tomatoes to a cannery at Rehoboth Beach, but that practice gave way to the speedier and more convenient trucks and in the years since canal traffic has been largely confined to pleasure craft. In 1937, the final link in the canal was completed with the opening of the Roosevelt Inlet north of Lewes. The inlet's name, bestowed in 1937 by then Lewes Mayor David W. Burbage, is said to have raised the hackles of many conservative Lewes residents who were none too fond of Franklin D. Roosevelt and refused to accept the name until it appeared on official charts of the bay area.

Although not a federal project, another development of vast importance was the formation in 1897 of the Pilots' Association for the Bay and River Delaware. While pilots have played an essential role in the affairs of the river and bay since local Indians guided vessels up the waterway in the early days of exploration and settlement, they had been unorganized during most of their history. By the time of the Revolution, many pilots were among the county's most respected citizens and they have remained so ever since. Theirs has been an inbred fraternity, with the coveted status of pilots held within single families for generation after generation.

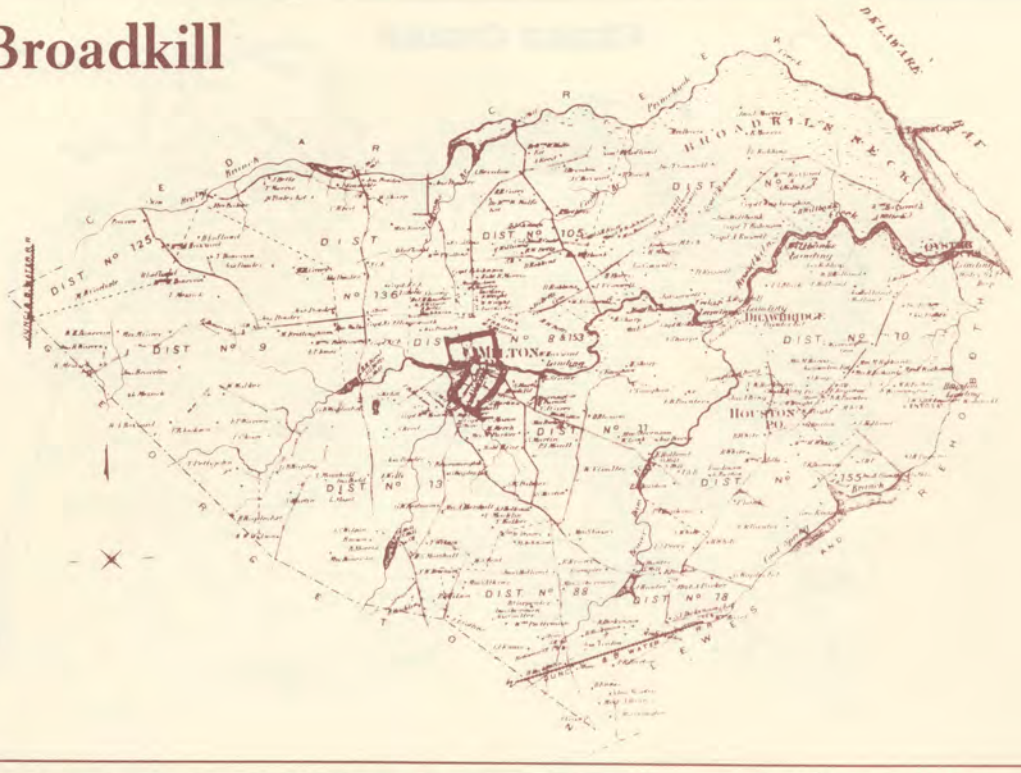
By the late 19th century, the numerous pilots in the bay had generally banded together into small associations, each of which possessed one or more small, swift pilot boats. The competition for assignments was keen and, according to a book on the pilots by the Delaware historian, Dr. James Marvil, it sometimes became so intense that competing pilots were known to sail as far as northern New Jersey, New York, and beyond in search of incoming vessels. Obviously, such rivalry was expensive both in physical and financial terms and by the 1890's the various associations were inclining more and more toward a formal association as a convenience as well as a way of maintaining the high standards of their profession.

Most pilots of Lewes as well as Cape May, New Jersey, and Philadelphia, joined the new association in 1896, although there were a few holdouts, commonly known at the time as "mud pilots." With the formation of the river and bay pilots' association, the group obtained two pilot boats, the "Delaware" and the "Philadelphia," which were stationed in the bay to place pilots aboard incoming vessels and remove them from outward bound ships coming down the bay from Wilmington and Philadelphia. While the age of sail has long since given way to modern ships and sophisticated navigational aids on vessels and up and down the bay, the need for pilots remains steady and young men, some of whose families have engaged in the profession since the 18th century, continue to put in four-year apprenticeships before being granted pilots' licenses and joining the long and proud Delaware River and Bay tradition.

While Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred is the smallest in the county, its history is longer and more extensive than perhaps any other area of the state. Unfortunately, it is impossible within the scope of this work to do more than skim its historical surface.

Summertime crowds in Rehoboth Beach, early 1900's.

Broadkill



Although historically one of the earliest settled portions of Sussex County, Broadkill Hundred has also been one of its more sparsely populated areas. With its division first in 1833 and later in 1861, with its western half becoming Georgetown Hundred, Broadkill's only major town was Milton.

The hundred derives its name from the river which flows through its center, once one of the county's more important waterways and the location, since the 18th century, of a flourishing boat and ship building industry. In the early 19th century some misguided soul, most likely a clerk in the Sussex County Courthouse, or perhaps in the state legislature itself, made the mistake of spelling the hundred "Broadkiln." The misspelling rolled easily off the tongue and seemed to have a certain air of legitimacy since one of the county's early industries was a brick yard at Milton, known, of course, as "the kiln." Since that now defunct concern was located on the river, the misnomer stuck for generations until, in fact, 1975 when the Sussex County Council formally changed the spelling back to Broadkill at the request of the Milton Historical Society.

"Broadkill" is an Anglicized version of the Dutch word for "Broad River" by which the waterway has been known since the earliest days of Dutch settlement along the lower bay. Once of the first permanent landowners in the hundred was wily old Hermanus Wiltbank who was also instrumental in the affairs of Lewes, or Zwaanendael, after his arrival there during the second wave of Dutch settlement. Although Wiltbank died shortly after making his peace with William Penn after the latter's arrival, his son Cornelius Wiltbank carried on the family interests in both the coastal and inland portions of the hundred. The family has remained active in the affairs of Lewes and Broadkill ever since.

Among the other early landowners of note in the hundred was William Clark, a lieutenant of Penn, who received a tract of 500 acres from the proprietor lying, between Cool Spring and Beaver Dam Branches of the Broadkill. Known by the picturesque title of "Penn's Manor of Worminghurst," the land later passed into the hands of one Preserved Coggeshall. Clark also conveyed land to Thomas Fisher, the son of John Fisher, who accompanied Penn to the colony, and an ancestor of Major Thomas Fisher of Lewes, one of the county's most important figures in the Revolutionary War era. Other early Broadkill families were the Dodds, the Bryans, the Clowes, the Ponders, the Paynters, the Hazzards, and the Reeds, many of which have continued to play important roles in the affairs of Broadkill and the state for generations.

In addition to farming and fishing, early Broadkill settlers, like those in other parts of the county established grist and later sawmills in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. John Clowes, who established grist and saw-mills on one of the Broadkill's branches in the early 18th century, also built a cotton factory where cotton was carded and prepared for spinning into cloth. The hundred was also the location of one of Sussex County's earliest shipyards. That enterprise was the first of many which flourished along the Broadkill until 1915.

The river was navigable for relatively large vessels up to Milton until a storm closed the Broadkill Inlet near Oyster Rocks in the 20th century and rerouted the channel through a complicated series of streams and rivulets to the present-day area of Roosevelt Inlet. Such changes are characteristic of the ocean and lower bay inlets of Sussex, ever shifting and unpredictable.

Though both Lewes and the Broadkill could be directly approached from the bay in early colonial times, the natural inlet at the mouth of Lewes Creek was almost entirely closed by the 19th century, forcing most inland river traffic to sail to Broadkill Inlet. As the result of the construction of Roosevelt Inlet in 1937 and a major storm some years later, the process generally reversed itself with some help from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As the result of a greatly reduced tidal flow in recent years and increased modern industrial activity along the upper Broadkill, the river has generally become polluted.

The land upon which the town of Milton is now located was patented to James Gray in 1686. His 1,000 acre tract was named "Milford." After a series of conveyances, the portion of present-day Milton on the south side of the Broadkill came into the possession of George Conwell, while that on the north side passed to William Peery, the father of Major William Peery, an assistant to Major Thomas Fisher during the first years of the Revolution and later an officer in the Second Delaware Regiment under Col. David Hall and the first Sussex County treasurer.

Conwell and Peery laid out portions of their lands in lots and began selling them. Soon a village grew up at that point, known respectively as Osborne's Landing, Conwell's Landing, Upper Landing, and finally Head of Broadkill, the name by which it was commonly known until an 1807 act of the general assembly changed it to Milton. Although one 19th century Delaware history notes that the new name was in honor of the poet John Milton, that supposition may not bear close scrutiny in view of the large number of mills of various kinds in the immediate vicinity and numerous other Sussex County towns named in one way or another for their mills.

By 1809, the town already possessed four stores and seven granaries, the latter supporting a flourishing waterborne grain shipping business. Lumber was also shipped from the small port in large quantities during the early 19th century. The town was officially incorporated in 1865 and continued to flourish until the close of the age of sailing ships and with it, a decline in the amount of lumber and other products shipped from that part of the county.

One of Milton's earliest houses of worship actually antedated the establishment of the town by nearly three-quarters of a century. St. John the Baptist Church of the Anglican religion was established at a ford on Long Bridge Branch in the Broadkill Forest in 1728. Although it has been through several changes of location and brief pauses in activity, the parish remains in existence. The Quakers and Presbyterians were also active at an early date near Cool Spring on the edges of the hundred as has been noted in the account of Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred. Milton's Methodist Church got its start in private homes before 1800, but it was not until 1801 that the congregation reached sufficient size to warrant the construction of a church building. Construction began the following year on Goshen Meeting-house but the building was not entirely complete until 1820. That Church has also lasted throughout the history of the town, although in different buildings.

The town and surrounding area have produced six governors during their history. Of that number, five were governors of Delaware and are mentioned in the chapter on Sussex County governors elsewhere in this history. The sixth, James Carey went west as a young man and settled in Wyoming, of which he became governor during the late 19th century.

As Milton moved into the 20th century, its only railroad link, the Queen Anne's Railroad (later the Maryland and Delaware Coast Railway) went out of business forcing local merchants to do their business through the small railroad junctions of Harbeson, five miles to the south, and Ellendale, six miles west. Although the last ship was built in 1915 at the old yards at the foot of Federal and Union Streets (so named during the Civil War), shipbuilding had ceased to be of much importance by the late 1880's. At their height, however, the Milton yards turned out many vessels as long as 125 feet, and served as the foundation of several very respectable fortunes.

In the modern era, the town was the location of several small garment manufacturing concerns, button factories, a brickyard, and, since the late 19th century, a cannery. The latter continues in existence today under the name "Draper King Cole" and now serves as the town's only major industry.

Among the smaller towns and villages of the hundred are Harbeson, Broadkill Beach, Overbrook, and, though of little importance today, Drawbridge. Of these, three had their origin because of their location on main arteries of commerce and only one, Harbeson, is readily identifiable as a town today.

Harbeson began in 1869 with the establishment of a railroad station on the main line from Georgetown to Lewes. It was named in the time-honored American tradition for the man who owned most of the land upon which it was built - Harbeson Hickman. The same year, the town got a post office and within twenty years had a Methodist church, a school--house, a blacksmith shop, two stores and about 10 houses. The early enterprises which aided its economic growth involved the shipping of great amount of timer and lumber cut in nearby forests and sawed at the numerous mills in the vicinity.

In the late 19th century, Harbeson was the site of a popular racetrack and fairgrounds which flourished for several years before dying out in the early 1900's. Though the town has never grown greatly beyond its early size, the poultry boom of the 1920's and 30's brought it a later surge of economic activity. As the result of those years, the town got its only major industry, a poultry dressing plant which continues to operate under the name "Paramount Poultry."

Drawbridge got its name from the first bridge across the Broadkill River on the main road south from Kent County to Lewes. As such, it was of considerable importance to travelers in the uncertain years of the 18th and 19th centuries. The most distinguished family of the hamlet from the 18th century onward were the Paynters who were of such importance in the area that Drawbridge was often known as "Paynter's Drawbridge." The most illustrious member of the family and easily one of the hundred's best-known natives was Samuel Paynter who served as Governor of Delaware from 1823 to 1827 after serving for five years as an associate judge of the superior court and earlier as a prosperous merchant and informal banker at Drawbridge. As one late 19th century orator said of him in glowing terms, "when he stepped out, the vote buyer stepped in."

Overbrook never really was a town or even a village. Rather, it was a name given to a neighborhood of prosperous farms. The name was also applied to a station of the Queen Anne's Railroad during the late 19th century and the early 1900's when popular excursion trains were run to Lewes' Queen Anne's Pier and thence to Cape May, N.J.

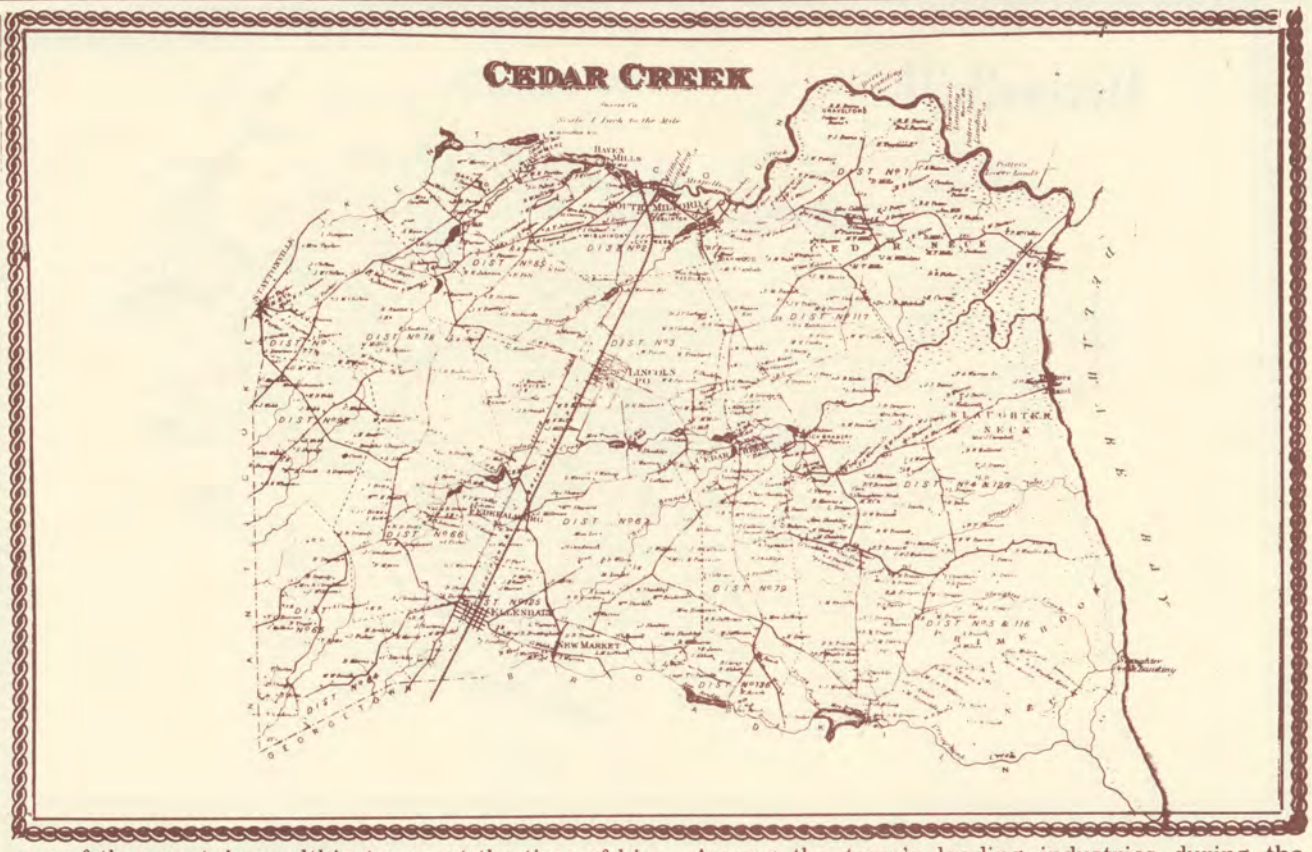
According to "Delaware, A Guide to the First State," Overbrook was also one of the leading centers of the hardy sport off downstate Delaware fox hunting. Unlike the more elegant version practiced in Maryland and Virginia in which the participants dress in well-tailored riding habits, ride fine hunters lickety-split across the equally well-tailored countryside, and enjoy the sound of gleaming brass hunting horns, the type of hunting for which Overbrook and other areas of Sussex was known was wild, boisterous, and down-to-earth. Many farmers had their packs of five or six hounds and as the dogs rushed baying across the fall and winter fields and forests, their owners were right behind them, generally running along on foot or, more commonly whooping and hollering as they hung precariously from the backs of pick-up trucks.

Broadkill Beach which lies on the narrow sand spit between Delaware and the Primehook National Wildlife Refuge owes its existence, or at least the sanity of its summer residents, to the depression-era mosquito control projects undertaken by the Civilian Conservation Corps throughout the marshes and wetlands of lower Delaware. Previously, mosquitos

had been so numerous and bloodthirsty on Broadkill Neck and other low-lying areas in eastern Sussex that the hardy old farming families, many of whom continued to shun such modern inventions as window screens until well into the present era, were at times forced to "huddle around 'smothers' of smoldering green leaves, and farm animals are ... driven to bellowing madness by swarms of stinging insects."

Broadkill Beach and other small resort towns in Broadkill and Cedar Creek Hundreds have experienced small booms during the 1960's and 1970's as the county's older resorts have become more and more developed and expensively priced. In spite of their recent entry into the economic mainstream, however, the hardy old bay settlements continue to possess a secluded and unprepossessing air.

Cedar Creek



Sussex County's northernmost hundred very narrowly missed becoming a part of Kent County. After the division of the lower two-thirds of Delaware, once known simply as the Whorekill or Horekills, into the two counties of Whorekill and New Deale, later St. Jones, by the English Governor Sir Edmund Andros in 1674, what is now Upper Cedar Creek Hundred became a part of St. Jones.

After the arrival of William Penn and the renaming of the lower two counties as Kent and Sussex, the southernmost boundary of Kent was changed from Cedar Creek to Mispillion Creek. That quick piece of geographical maneuvering also meant that Milford has grown into the modern era as a border town between the two counties rather than a solid part of Kent County.

The hundred takes its name from the great stands of southern white cedar which once grew along its banks. The timber was an essential factor in the early economic growth of the hundred since it was one of the finest known timbers for use as ships' masts and planking. The creek which runs approximately through the center of the hundred, was navigable for severalmiles up its length in colonial times and the area became the center of a shipping business as well as small boatyards and other nautical enterprises.

Even in those days, however, the inlet at the mouth of Cedar Creek often shifted and filled with sand. The economic drawbacks of the situation caused the Delaware General Assembly to enact a bill authorizing the cutting of a canal from the creek to either the bay or the more dependable Mispillion nearby. The project was never undertaken until 1848 several miles up its length in colonial times and the the Mispillion. The waterway was improved in 1869 by the newly formed Cedar Creek Navigation Company.

Like Lewes and Rehoboth, Broadkill, and Indian River Hundreds to the south, Cedar Creek was an early area of European settlement and Cedar Creek Village, lying at the head of navigation and long since vanished, came into being early in the 18th century. St. Matthew's Church was organized nearby the missionary arm of the Church of England, thus making it one of the earliest houses of worship in what is now Sussex County. The church, like the community which supported it, declined and finally ceased to exist more than a century ago.

During the Revolutionary War, before the city of Milford had risen to its later prominence as the largest center of commerce in the vicinity, Cedar Creek was one of the more important villages in the county, serving as a rallying point for militiamen and even, upon occasion, for their Tory opponents. Cedar Creek Village serve once again as a rallying point for the state militia during the War of 1812 as the state prepared for the bombardment of Lewes. At the time, Governor Joseph Haslet, son of the Revolutionary War hero, Col. John Haslet, owned a large farm at Cedar Creek Village and it was here that the soldiers gathered and drilled before proceeding on to Lewes with the governor in attendance.

The first mill in the hundred was began at Cedar Creek Village before 1769 by an ancester of the Draper family which has continued to play an important part in the history of northeastern Sussex over the years. Mary Draper, who inherited the mill and surrounding property in the late 18th century, married the future governor, thus establishing the not overly prosperous Haslet, who had been apprenticed earlier to a Wilmington watchmaker, as a member of the landed gentry and easing his way into politics.

Milling and the shipment of grain and lumber continued to be the main industries of Cedar Creek Hundred throughout the 19th century. Another early mill owner was Peter F. Causey who also owned the brick granary at Cedar Creek Village, one of the hundred's early landmarks. Causey had inherited great amount of property elsewhere in Sussex and was one of the county's wealthiest men at the time of his election as governor in 1854.

In 1803, the legislature authorized one Jonas Dawson to build a lighthouse at the mouth of Mispillion Creek on the bay coast of Cedar Creek Hundred. In order to finance the operation, Dawson was authorized to collect tolls of 25 cents from the captain of every vessel with a draft over three feet and 37 cents for every vessel of more than six feet draft. The logistics of that enterprise appear to the modern observor to be somewhat difficult and it is likely that the same thing occurred to Dawson since the first Mispillion Light was not apparently built until 1829. Within a few years, it was abandoned and a new light was built nearby. That structure was also poorly located and within five years a new lighthouse was built. The 1865 structure was later moved to Milford where it saw services as, of all things, a storeroom.

Of the towns and villages in or partly in Cedar Creek Hundred, by far the most important is Milford. It is somewhat ironic that Sussex Countians have for the most part been much more concerned by Milford's status as a border town between Kent and Sussex than they have by such towns as Delmar which span two states, but such is Delaware's north-south rivalry. Of Milford's two halves, the northern, or Kent County portion came into being first. It was in existence as a relatively unimportant village before the Revolution when one of its most illustrious residents was the Rev. Sydenham Thorne of the Church of England.

Thorne, who had been educated in England and later moved to the banks of the Mispillion from the Eastern Shore of Virginia about 1773, was a prosperous mill owner, planter, and builder in addition to being rector of Christ Church of Mispillion Hundred. Although Thorne was a leading Tory during the Revolution, his views do not appear to have hurt his standing in the area to any great extent and he continued to live in relative harmony in his imposing brick mansion on what is now Milford's Haven Lake.

After Parson Thorne's death in 1793, the plantation changed hands and eventually was purchased by James Clayton, the father of the eminent Sussex Countian of later years, John Middleton Clayton. The elder Clayton, a brother of Dr. Joshua Clayton, the state's first governor under the Constitution of 1792, sold his tannery and other interests in the village of Dagsborough and moved his family to the Parson Thorne Mansion.

Clayton at first prospered in his new home but he jumped into such a wide range of varied business interests that he died bankrupt in 1820, wiped out by the recession of 1819. He is buried behind the mansion, as is Parson Thorne. In later years, the mansion was also the home of Dr. William Burton, the first of the state's two Civil War governors.

In the meantime, South Milford was organized in 1819 and together the two halves of the present city grew to early prominence as one of lower Delaware's major centers of shipbuilding and commerce. Because of its advantageous position as a sort of halfway point between Dover and Lewes and because of the rich farms in the surrounding countryside, Milford was able to survive the blow caused by the decline of water transportation in the 1850's and became steadily more important as an industrial center.

Among the town's leading industries during the middle of the 19th century were an iron foundry and a fruit-drying manufacturing concern, both started by the English ironmaster and inventor, George S. Grier. There were also prosperous shipyards, canneries, phosphate factories (fertilizer mills), grist mills, basket and wood veneer mills, carriage manufacturers, bark mills, mercantile establishments and other businesses.

In 1895, G. Layton and Frank L. Grier, sons of George S. Grier, began one of the town's most interesting businesses from the remnants of a small dental manufacturing laboratory in Camden, Delaware, the L.D. Caulk Company. By the early 1900's the firm had become a leader in the dental products field and by the early 1930's, it had branches throughout the U.S. and in Canada, Japan, and South America.

G. Layton Grier appears to have been a man of singular drive and vision. As his business expanded, he traveled all over the world and was the the first American passenger to fly throughout South America by air. A friendship with the Antarctic explorer Admiral Richard Byrd resulted in the hospital facility at Byrd's Antarctic Base being named for him. The company he and his brother established continues in existence and continues to have Milford as its base of operations.

Other towns and villages in Cedar Creek Hundred include Ellendale, Lincoln, and Fleatown or Federalsburg as it was later to be known. Like many of the county's smaller towns, the running of the railroad into the area in 1867 was the direct impetus to the establishment of most of the towns.

Ellendale was laid out by Dr. J.S. Prettyman in 1867 and named for his wife, Ellen. It grew comparatively rapidly during its early years and by 1888 the town contained a brick yard, a cannery, saw and grist mills, several stores, and a basket factory. The nearby Ellendale swamp and forest and the state's tree nursery along U.S. 113 were established in the 1920's and 1930's as one of Delaware's early experiments in state forestry.

Lincoln was laid out as a town, or to be more precise, a grand metropolis, by Col. Abel S. Small of New York in 1865. The ambitious colonel was moved by the coming of the railroad in 1867 to plan for what he hoped would become the leading city of lower Delaware by laying out broad avenues and parks. He built stables for a future race track and was preparing even more extensive developments when he died suddenly, thus leaving the town as a relatively sleepy community, although it possessed, like Ellendale to the south, a small cannery, brick yard, basket factories and saw mills and other enterprises, as well as a set of uncommonly wide streets.

Fleatown was a small, early 19th century village lying midway between Lincoln and Ellendale. Although never overly prosperous, the village once supported two competing hotels. The owner of one of them, Samuel Warren, was known in the area for the wild late-night parties he threw in his establishment. Warren bought out the other hotel upon the death of its owner and closed it. By then, the town was known by the more imposing if less descriptive name, Federalburg. In spite of the name, however, it declined rapidly after the death of Warren in 1843, and his hotel became a private home.

In a sense, the present-day town of Slaughter Beach, along the bay coast on Slaughter Neck is directly descended from Cedar Creek Village since its first major building, a hotel owned by Joseph G. Morgan, was moved there by Morgan from Cedar Creek Village in the middle of the 19th century. The coastal village became popular as summer resort and the present town grew up around it. It has remained a sleepy fishing port and resort for most of its history.

North between Cedar Creek and Mispillion Creek is the remnant of the area's only military facility, the World War I era "Ford Saulsbury." A coast artillery battery manned by a small detachment for Delaware City's Fort Du Pont, the fort was named for Delaware's first U.S. Senator Willard Saulsbury when it was established during the term of his son, also U.S. Senator Willard Saulsbury. The fort's two batteries were named for Col. David Hall and Col. John Haslet, the commanders of the first two Delaware Regiments during the Revolution.

Indian River

In addition to being among the oldest hundreds in Sussex County, Indian River Hundred is among the most interesting and unusual in purely human terms. As the first word of its name suggests, the hundred has served as the center of the last remnants of the county's once proud and thriving Indian culture, just as it was the center of some of the earliest white settlement outside of Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred.

The early settlers in the area, both Indian and white, were attracted by its combination of high, forested, well-drained land in close proximity to the ocean coast, in some places less than two miles across the Rehoboth or Indian River bays. The hundred which occupies the north side of the Indian River and Indian River Bay and the west side of Rehoboth Bay, is also generally higher than Baltimore Hundred on the south side, and more pleasant during the summer months because of frequent breezes.

Those factors, together with an abundance of fish and shellfish in the waters surrounding it, and an abundance of game in its forests, made southern and eastern Indian River Hundred a favorite summer residence for many of the Indians of what is today Sussex County. In recent years, state archeologists have excavated many early Indian habitations dating back as far as the time of Christ in and around the hundred.

One of the first recorded patents of land in the area was made to Captain Nathaniel Carr in 1667 for 680 acres on "Cruder's Neck" between Indian River and Rehoboth Bays. In 1677, Governor Edmund Andross patented 1,000 acres of land known as "the Long Neck" to William Burton in an action which was to give one of the state's most important families of later generations its first foothold in Delaware.

The first William Burton became one of the most successful planters in the hundred during his lifetime and by the time of his death had accummulated several thousand acres of land in the area which passed on to his eleven sons. In its turn the second generation continued the acquisition of property, including most of a 1,000 acre Indian Reservation in what is now the area of Millsboro. One of Burton's sons, Woolsey Burton, built a white brick, Virginia-style plantation house on his portion of the family lands in 1722. The old house, which commands a broad view of Indian River Bay from its location on a slight rise above the water, was built in a style to which the elder Burton probably became accustomed in his native Accomac County, Virginia.

Although the house has passed through many changes of ownership with the succeeding generations, "White House Farm" has only rarely been out of the hands of Burtons and their descendents and is today owned by Samuel Showell, Sr., a descendent of the original Woolsey Burton. Other descendents of that and other lines of the Burton family have included many leading state officials of whom the best-known was Dr. William Burton, one of two Civil War governors of Delaware.

Perhaps the single most important member of the family with the exception of Governor Burton was Benjamin Burton of western Indian River Hundred. At the start of the Civil War Burton owned 28 slaves, which made him the state's largest slaveowner at the time. He was also a Republican, unusual in view of the strong anti-slavery sentiment in the party. When President Abraham Lincoln was considering a pilot plan under which the federal government would compensate slave-owners in Delaware in return for the emancipation of their slaves, Lincoln told Delaware's Republican Congressman George Fisher that he wished to consult with a Delaware slaveowner before proceeding further.

Fisher asked Burton to travel to Washington to consult with Lincoln. Burton readily agreed to give up his slaves for $500 apiece, the price tentatively agreed on by Lincoln and Fisher, and assured the President that other Sussex County slaveowners would feel the same way. As it turned out, however, Burton was wrong and the plan met strong opposition in Delaware. It was eventually dropped and Lincoln went ahead with alternate plans to free slaves in Confederate territory in his 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, thus bringing about an unusual situation in which slaves in southern states were legally freed in 1863 while those in northern border states, including Delaware, were not freed until the end of the war.

Among other early families in the vicinity were the Jones, a descendent of whom, Col. John Jones, was one of the best-educated and most intelligent Sussex Countians of the Revolutionary War era; the Dodds; the Clarks; and the Lingos. The Robinson family came to occupy a position on Angola Neck similar to that of the Burtons on Long Neck after the acquisition by William Robinson in 1693 of a 450 acre tract known as "Robert his fortune." Eventually the first Robinson and his heirs came to own most of Angola Neck and nearby areas.

The third generation of the family on Angola Neck included Thomas and Peter Robinson. Thomas Robinson "the Loyalist" was one of the wealthiest men in Sussex County in the years before the Revolution. He lived and operated a store near St. George's Chapel north of Angola Neck and served as a prominent Sussex County member of the colonial assembly. He went on to become the state's best-known loyalist during the war and was forced to flee to Canada. His borther, Peter, became a justice of the state supreme court in 1793, several years after the death of the ill-fated loyalist.

Peter Robinson, the son of Thomas Robinson the Loyalist, also became a prominent member of the Delaware Bar and built "The Judge's" in Georgetown. He married his first cousin, Arcada Robinson, daughter of Justice Peter Robinson. It is of interest that the younger Peter Robinson, who served three terms as Delaware Secretary of State, was appointed to the first of them by Governor Nathaniel Mitchell. Mitchell, who became governor in 1805 after establishing an impressive wartime record with the Delaware Regiment, had testified against Thomas Robinson the Loyalist during a trial before the Sussex County Committee of Safety in the early days of the Revolution.

Other well known early families of Indian River Hundred were the Marshes of Angola, the Warringtons, the Stockleys and the Frames. Further up the river toward present-day Millsboro, the Waples family's ancestor, Peter Waples, bought large acreage and established a ferry at Warwick in 1692. Waples also acquired land in present-day Dagsboro Hundred in one of the few recorded instances of William Penn granting land south of the river.

In the vicinity of Warwick in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, there came into being a group of prosperous farming families descended from remnants of the Indian River Indians, the Nanticokes, and other area tribes, the majority of whom had fled the peninsula during the middle years of the 18th century. Although the Indian residents of the hundred shared common family names and, in some cases, common ancestors with the prominent white families of the hundred, the group has always maintained its status as a race apart from both whites and blacks, although that status was severely tried during the racist era which saw the Levin Sockum trial of the late 1850's.

Throughout its history, the Indian River Hundred Nanticoke community preserved many vestiges of the Indian culture from which it is descended, including herbal lore, special methods of farming and hunting, the construction of animal traps, fishing nets and other crafts including toys largely unknown among the surrounding white and Negro populations. Many of those ancient traditions have been forgotten in relatively recent times, however, as members of the community, like their fellow Sussex Countians, have become more and more a part of the mainstream of modern American technological society.

While the Nanticokes, or "Moors" as the group is sometimes known because of a legendary Moorish ancestor, have always stood separately in everyday dealings with their neighbors, the Indian River Hundred community has had to exert a great deal of political power over the years to have their Indian heritage honored legally. The first important move in that direction came in 1881 with the establishment of the "Incorporated Body," a necessary first step to the establishment of the first state-sanctioned Indian schools in the hundred, the Warwick Indian School or "Harmon School" (so named because the land was donated by Isaac Harmon) and the Hollyville Indian School. The latter was also known as the Norwood School because it stood on land donated by Sam Norwood.

In 1903, the law establishing the "Incorporated Body" was further amended to read that. "The descendants of the Nanticoke Indians shall hereafter be recognized as such within the state of Delaware." The large community of Indian descendants living at Cheswold in Kent County were not included in the legislation since they called themselves Moors and had never claimed status as Indians.

At the same time, the Nanticoke community also established several churches which, though Methodist, were wholly independent of those in nearby white communities. The first, Harmony Methodist Church came into being during the first decades of the 19th century although it did not become formally affiliated with the Peninsula Conference of the Methodist Church until 1875. In 1888, the Indian Mission Methodist Church was established in the northern part of Indian River Hundred, and both churches have continued in existence throughout the years.

Shortly before 1920, after a dispute with the state board of education over their status, some Nanticokes withdrew their children from the Harmon and Norwood Schools and established the Indian Mission

School nearby. In 1922, some of the Nanticokes formally incorporated themselves as the Nanticoke Indian Association and elected William Russel Clark as their first chief. After his death in 1928, two of his sons, Ferdinand and Charles Clark held that position. According to extensive studies of the Nanticoke community of Sussex County by anthropologists William Babcock in 1898 and Frank G. Speck during the period from 1912 to 1940, and later research by C.A. Weslager, the group is similar in origin to communities of Indian descendants in other Eastern Seaboard states such as South Carolina's "Redbones," Maryland's "Wesorts," North Carolina's "Croatans," and Virginia's "Powhatan Confederacy."

Like Broad Creek and Nanticoke Hundreds, Indian River Hundred has had no major towns because of its proximity to towns such as Millsboro, Milton, and Lewes lying nearby. The hundred has contained many small farming hamlets and crossroads villages over the years and in recent years has become one of the centers of the rapidly expanding Sussex County tourism industry. Among the earliest of its hamlets were Angola and Warwick. Both had stores and a small collection of houses by the time of the Revolution. Angola declined during the 19th century from its early importance, but it has continued to be the center of a group of farms and, until the early 20th century, grist and sawmills. It was also the location of St. George's Chapel which came into being in 1719 as a small frame chapel and, late in the 18th century, was replaced by a classic brick Georgian church. In its cemetery, among the graves of many other early Sussex Countians of note, lie those of Angola's first storekeeper, Thomas Robinson the Loyalist, and its last, Dagworthy D. Burton. Burton served as postmaster at Angola from 1886 to 1937 when the post office was closed, and he ran his store along the bank of Burton's Pond from 1877 to 1941 when he died at the age of 91. The onetime farming hamlet is now the center of a residential and resort area which lays sprawling around Herring and Guinea Creeks.

Long Neck, the onetime domain of the Burton family, has also grown into a large resort area in recent years and the owners of the several large mobile home parks in the area are fond of pointing out that Long Neck's summertime population is considerably larger than that of Millsboro and Georgetown combined. In this sense, southern Indian River Hundred, like Baltimore Hundred across the river, illustrates the way in which a strategic location along navigable waterways, responsible for the area's early settlement, has brought about a whole new surge of development more than a century after that factor had ceased to play an important role in economic matters in Sussex.

Such inland hamlets as Fairmount, St. Johns, Zoar, and others which grew up around a church and a country store during the 19th century, have not been so active after they declined with the improvement in highways and railroads in the county. St. Johns, once known as Johnson's Crossroads, and Hollyville, continues to have an active Methodist Church and its crossroads store is still open. The Zoar Methodist Church, established in the late 18th century, is also still in existence. Today, however, the onetime hamlets continue in name only as the center of residential and farming neighborhoods.

The first resort area along the Indian River and still one of its most flourishing communities is the area encompassed by the three villages of Oak Orchard, Riverdale, and Rosedale. Although their limits are today virtually indistinguishable, the three came into being at different times, but all owe their existence to the pine groves and once sandy beaches along the northern side of the river. After the holiday of Big Thursday got its start at Delaware Bay resorts in 1851 at the close of the then-ban on oystering which ran until the second Thursday in August, it rapidly spread to other areas of eastern Sussex. During the middle and later years of the 19th century, Indian River Hundred's favorite Big Thursday celebration was held in the pines along the river at Warwick, upriver from present-day Oak Orchard.

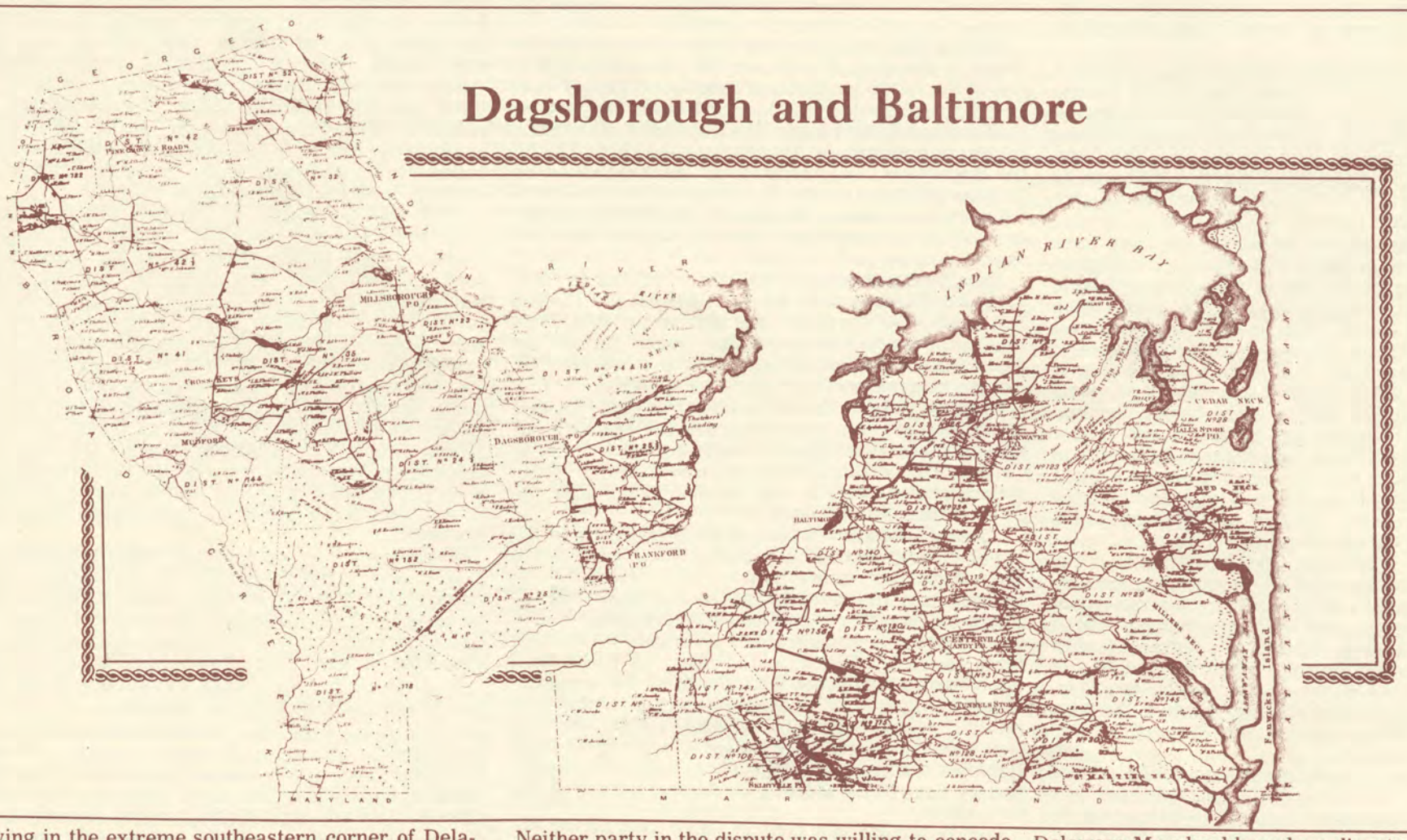
By the late 19th century the focus of the resort activity along the river had switched to Oak Orchard where a group of Victorian frame cottages, a hotel and other buildings sprang up. Although the state oyster law was later amended to include a ban on the taking of oysters until September, the later change did nothing to blunt the frenzy of activity surrounding Big Thursday once it was well established and the holiday continued to be one of the area's most important onces. In later years hundreds of residents of Indian River, Dagsborough, Georgetown and surrounding hundreds came to Oak Orchard by boat, wagon, horseback, and in automobiles for the celebration. Although the occasion died out before World War II, it has been resurrected by several towns recently.

In the 1920's and 1930's Riverdale and Rosedale came into being just upriver from Oak Orchard. Riverdale was largely owned by Charles Clark, a son of William Russel Clark and later a chief of the Nanticoke Association. It grew up around Clark's grocery store and pavilion in the grove at Riverdale Park where for years the Indian association held powwows each Thanksgiving Day. Rosedale, a mile or two further up the river, began as a black resort and amusement park which flourished during the 1930's and 1940's when some of the best-known big bands in the country appeared there regularly to entertain guests from Delmarva and nearby cities.

Further up the river, where Swan Creek branches off from the main river, U.S. Senator John G. Townsend Jr., established a large orchard and farming operation in the 1920's which he called Indian Swan Orchard. With the rise of the broiler industry, the orchards gradually declined and were replaced with one of the region's largest hatchery, grain storage, soybean processing, and poultry dressing operations, now the single largest industrial complex in Indian River Hundred.

Although Millsboro, began on the Indian River Hundred side of the river at Rock Hole, it soon grew into a full-fledged town on the Dagsborough Hundred side of the river and is therefore described in the section on that hundred.

Dagsborough and Baltimore



Lying in the extreme southeastern corner of Delaware, Baltimore and Dagsboro Hundreds have served for 200 years as a reminder of the days when more than half of Sussex County was a part of the colony of Maryland. In the years before the final resolution of the 90-year-old boundary dispute between the Calvert family of Maryland and the Penns of Delaware and Pennsylvania in 1775, the Indian River and Indian River Bay, the northern boundary of both hundreds, served as a natural, though unstated, boundary between the Delaware and Maryland colonies as well.

Neither party in the dispute was willing to concede entirely to the other and thus the Penns in several instances made grants of land lying below the river to settlers while the Calverts made similar incursions into the area north of the river. Generally speaking, before 1775, Baltimore and Dagsboro Hundreds, stretching inland from the Atlantic 20 miles westward to the Great Cypress Swamp and the headwaters of the Pocomoke, formed between them the upper third of Worcester County, Maryland.

As has been seen in the earlier account of the Delaware-Maryland boundary dispute, the confusion among early explorers and cartographers over the true location of Cape Henlopen had much to do with the final establishment of the present boundary between the two states by Pennsylvania and Maryland surveyors in 1750 and 1751. That boundary might as easily have been run westward from the present-day Cape Henlopen but for a mistake made by Lord Baltimore himself which the Penns were only too quick to turn to their own advantage.

The "false cape" bulging outward 15 miles south

of Indian River Inlet was generally known until the late 17th century as Cape Henlopen while the real cape, 25 miles to the north, was called either Cape "Cornelius" after the early Dutch explorer Cornelius May or Cape "Inlopen," a bastardization of "Henlopen."

By the beginning of the 18th century, the false cape had come to be known to many settlers in Sussex and Worcester as Fenwick's Island after Captain Thomas Fenwick who located on a large tract there in the confusing era following William Penn's acquisition of Pennsylvania and "the Three Lower Counties upon Delaware" in 1682.

Fenwick, who had been granted several sizeable tracts in Somerset County by Charles, Third Lord Baltimore, sold off this property and moved eastward into the virgin lands of Worcester County after receiving a large land grant in the area around the false cape. The few accounts of Fenwick's career are unclear as to whether he was granted the Fenwick Island area by the Calverts of Maryland, the Duke of York, who controlled much of the area now making up lower Delaware after his defeat of the Dutch in 1673, or by Penn, who prevailed upon the duke to grant him title to much of his conquest in 1682.

In any case, Fenwick appears to have possessed, like other successful planters and businessmen in that time and place, an acute sense of political self-preservation. Very shortly after his arrival in what was still a contested area, he was appointed to Penn's provincial council and became a justice of the peace, register of wills, and sheriff in the new county of Sussex. It is likely that Penn looked upon Fenwick as an important ally in his efforts to stake a claim to as much of the coast as possible in the years before Fenwick's death in 1708.

Although most early grants in the area now known Baltimore and Dagsboro Hundreds were made by Maryland, the Duke of York also made land grants thorugh the office of his governor, Sir Edmund Andros, before 1682. After Penn received his domain from the duke in that year, he also made several grants below the Indian River in an apparent early attempt to fill the area with settlers. One of his first actions was the establishment of a 10,000 acre manor for the Duke of York near what is now Fenwick Island.

By the last decade of the 17th century the area had begun to fill with settlers, most of whom had come there from further down the peninsula in Maryland and Virginia, although some moved south after having first settled around Lewes. Peter Waples had established his ferry between Warwick on the northern side of the Indian River and Piney Neck on the southern side in 1692. It connected with the only barely adequate "seaside" trail which ran down through Worcester County into the lower Eastern Shore.

In 1688, Matthew Scarborough was granted a tract of 500 acres known as "Middlesex" under the authority of "Charles, absolute Lord and Proprietary of the Provinces of Maryland and Avalon, Lord Baron of Baltimore," upon which is today located the town of Ocean View. After Scarborough's death, his lands passed into the hands of the Hazzard family and thence to the Hall family, the founders of Ocean View.

Other early families in the area now known as Baltimore Hundred included the Evans family, the Wilguses, the Townsends, the Daseys, the Aydelotts, the Wingates, the Grays, the Tunnells, the Derricksons, the Rickards, and others whose names are still commonly found among present-day Sussex Countians. Many of these family names have undergone several changes in spelling and pronunciation with the passage of the generations.

Thus, Derrickson's Creek, draining into the Little Assawoman Bay, was known originally as "Dirickson's Creek." "Daisey" was originally spelled "Dasey" or "Dazey," and "Rickards" as "Ricords" or "Rickords." Perhaps the most unusual evolution, however, involves the descendents of one Otto Wolgast Dutch settler who arrived in the vicinity of Lewes before 1675 and afterwards served as a Sussex County magistrate under the Penns.

A grandson of Wolgast's settled on a Baltimore Hundred plantation near the Assawoman Bay in 1760. He was generally known as "Thomas Wildgoose." While his three sons were also known by the name "Wildgoose," Thomas Wildgoose's grandson, Robert, who operated an early store at what is now Roxana, was named "Wilgus," and the family has been known by that name ever since.

The Evans family of Baltimore Hundred is descended from several sons of the Rev. David Evans, a native Welshman who was instrumental in the establishment of the early Welsh Presbyterian colony in western New Castle County known as "the Welsh Tract" during the 1730's. Rev. Evans later moved on to help with the establishment of another colony in North Carolina, but two of his sons, Ebenezer and John Evans, who had located in Baltimore Hundred, were among the original elders of Blackwater Presbyterian Church in 1767. One brother donated the land on which the old church stands.

The details of the land acquisitions of William Burton and his heirs illustrate the patterns of early settlement in Dagsboro Hundred. The first William Burton had moved up the peninsula from Virginia during the 1670's and in 1677 purchased large tracts of land on Long Neck in Indian River Hundred where one branch of his many descendents were later to establish White House Farm in the early 18th century.

Like many early planters, Wlliam Burton was faced with the need for more and more acreage, both because of the farming practices of the day which rapidly depleted the soil, and because of the practice then generally adhered to of providing one's sons with plantations of their own. Thus, by 1700, he had acquired new land along the southern side of the river on Piney Neck where his son, Woolsey Burton, settled in 1710.

At the same time, the Burtons were quick to acquire additional land from the Indians in the area. Remnants of the Assateague Tribe, after having fled from their original homes along Chincoteague Bay in lower Worcester County during the 1680's, moved northward by stages through Baltimore Hundred into Dagsboro Hundred where, In 1713, they were granted a large reservation of about 1,000 acres along the south side of the Indian River by the Maryland Assembly. By 1736, the leaders of the tribe, by now known as the Indian River Indians, had sold 200 acres of their reservation to William Burton, the son of the original William Burton.

In 1741, Joshua Burton, another of the numerous sons of the first William Burton, purchased another 200 acres of the reservation, and by the time of the Revolution, the family owned most of the land along the south side of the river from Piney Neck to "Fishing Creek," the first creek above the present town of Millsboro. A portion of the lands of Woolsey Burton, who died in 1750, passed to Robert Houston who, in 1754, recorded a two hundred acre tract know as "Houston's Folly" along "Indian Town Branch" (now known as Yellow Branch) several miles inland from the river.

The name "Baltimore Hundred" dates from an act of the Maryland colonial assembly in 1744 ordering the establishment of a town to be known as "Baltimore" on a 50 acre tract in northern Worcester County on the Indian River. For some reason, not entirely clear today, the Worcester County surveyor refused to lay out the town. His failure to do so might have stemmed from the poor location of the site designated by the assembly because in the following year another act was passed calling for the town to be situated on "a more commodious and navigable part of the river." It is doubtful, that the second and more extensive "Baltimore" was ever laid out either. Despite the failed plans for the town, the residents of the area continued to think of it as Baltimore and when the final boundary was set in 1775, that part of the newly constituted Sussex County became Baltimore Hundred.

Dagsboro Hundred was named in 1775 in honor of the region's most illustrious citizen, General (then Lt. Col.) John Dagworthy who had settled near the head of Pepper's Creek before the onslaught of the French and Indian War in 1756. With the beginning of the war, Dagworthy, who had already distinguished himself as a skilled soldier in his leadership of a company of the "Jersey Blues" in the earlier King George's War, was sent to the Maryland frontier in command of Maryland troops. He was awarded several large tracts of land making up much of what is today Dagsboro and Gumboro Hundreds by an appreciative Maryland assembly at the conclusion of the war. Following the conclusion of the war, Dagworthy returned to the area and soon established himself as the wealthiest planter in the region.

Although the transpeninsular line establishing the present southern boundary between Sussex County and Maryland had been run in 1750 and 1751, it was to be almost 25 years before the line was formally recognized as the boundary between the two colonies. Since tightly rolled pound plugs of tobacco were the generally aknowledged currency of the day, county sheriffs were in the habit of collectiong a church tax in tobacco with which to support Anglican parishes in their counties. The tobacco warehouse housing the proceeds of the Worcester County church tax was located on Indian River not far from Prince George's Chapel.

The new church, located on a two-acre tract which had cost the vestry 207 pounds of tobacco, was situated across the river from Dagworthy's mansion near the eastern edge of his vast domain. Upon his return from the French and Indian War, Dagworthy established himself and his family in style in the long, sweeping shingled plantation house which faced southward across Pepper's Creek to the chapel on the other side. The house, which burned in the middle of the 19th century, was known as one of the most elegant in the county. Dagworthy himself paid much of the cost of an addition to the chapel in 1763 which took the form of a "T" shaped chancel with a large palladian window on its eastern end. At his death in 1784, the general was buried under that chancel at his own request.

The years that followed the end of the French and Indian War were busy ones for Dagworthy as he moved to develop his vast holdings, By 1774, when he was appointed a justice of the peace for Sussex County by Governor John Penn, Dagworthy was one of the wealthiest men in Delaware. With his large number of slaves, Dagworthy cleared his lands and grew tobacco, corn, wheat and other crops in the new fields. He established grist mills and saw mills and tanneries, built ships, and used them to carry lumber and shingles from his thousands of acres of forest land to Philadelphia and Trenton.

According to tradition, Dagworthy laid out the village of Dagsboro near his plantation, being careful to make the streets wide enough to serve as a drilling ground for this Revolutionary War battalions of Sussex County militiamen.

In Baltimore Hundred by the middle years of the 18th century, other men were busy developing their lands and gradually building an economy based not only on logging and agriculture but on the sea. There was a constant demand for small trading shallops and flat-bottomed coastal schooners and numerous small boat and shipyards grew up along the Indian River and its tributaries.

Perhaps the most important features of these early southeastern Sussex County craft were their flat bottoms and shallow draft, designed to enable their masters to run them through the shallow, constantly shifting, sand-clogged and treacherous inlets along the coastline. In some cases, local products were lightered out to large vessels laying off the Indian River and Assawoman Inlets. In other cases, the small local vessels themselves carried their cargoes directly to market in Philadelphia and other ports.

During most of the 19th century, the Assawoman Inlet connected little Assawoman Bay directly with the ocean at shifting points in the narrow spit of sand between present-day Fenwick Island and Bethany Beach. This opening allowed for a flourishing port for pilot boats and trading vessels of the prosperous planters and traders of southeastern Sussex. The rapid tidal action which resulted from the proximity of an inlet also helped the development of rich shellfish beds which supported a flourishing shellfishing industry.

Much of this activity in the Little Assawoman came to an end during the late 18th century, however, when a ditch was dug between the bay and the larger "Big Assawoman" to the south. Popular tradition has it that the ditch was dug by the then-owner of Fenwick Island to trap his cattle on the island thus created and guard against their straying. There may or may not be much truth to the story, but the same thing was said of the channell separating Burton's Island from the tip of Long Neck.

In any case, the ditch quickly widened into a broad channel because of tidal action and the waters of the Little Assawoman, having an easier access than the sandbar-riddled inlet began to flow through the much more indirect route down Big Assawoman Bay. The result was that the inlet rapidly filled in, ending the bay's value as a harbor, and killing off much of the shellfish because of the reduced tidal flow. Residents of the area dispatched an angry complaint about the "Fenwick ditch" to the Delaware General Assembly in 1800, but nothing was done.

Not all of the early ditching efforts in Baltimore Hundred met with such stiff opposition from local residents, however. When the first settlers had arrived, marshes and swamps covered much of the eastern portion of the present-day hundred and early plantations were largely confined to high ground in the vicinity of the present towns of Ocean View, Millville, and Clarksville and inland to Upper St. Martins, Roxana, and Selbyville.

J. Thomas Scharf writes that, "Robert Burton was one of the first to undertake the work of reclamation, and from this beginning grew the organization of companies to carry on the enterprise with larger means." These early ditching companies evolved in more recent times into the regularly incorporated tax ditches there and throughout the county.

Scharf also writes in the 1888 "History of Delaware" that "the General Assembly has granted authority for the construction of a canal of seventy-two feet width and six feet deep from Jefferson Creek, the head of Little Assawoman Bay, to White's Creek, a branch of Indian River Bay." The construction of the canal which ensued in the early 1890's completed the last link in the inland waterway through the state of Delaware, although the channel as it now exists was not dredged until the 1930's.

The completion of the Assawoman and Lewes and Rehoboth Canals had the same effect on the Indian

River Inlet that the earlier Fenwick Ditch had on the old Assawoman Inlet and the job of keeping the natural inlet open and free of sand, always difficult, became almost impossible. During the 200 and more years in which the inlet had served as a vital link between the inland plantations, villages, saw mills and wharves of the Indian River and Indian River Bay regions as well as the smaller Rehoboth Bay to the north, the actual location of the inlet along the gradually shifting ocean strand had changed repeatedly. Seemingly every new major storm which unleashed its fury on the coast filled in the old inlet and created one or two new ones.

For much of the time before the digging of the Assawoman canal, the inlet had been located south of the present channel, just to the north of Cotton Patch Hill. Even in those years when it was relatively deep and free of bars, sailors needed considerable knowledge and skill to navigate it. With the digging of the canal, that job became virtually impossible. Even while the importance of the inlet passage had decreased with the construction of the county's first railroads in the middle of the 19th century, it was still in use by watermen and some commercial fishermen.

The slow closing of the inlet put a stop to the great runs of herring, shad, and other fish in annual spawning runs up the rivers and creeks of the region. Shellfishing grounds were also suffering as a result of the reduced flow in the river and watermen living in the environs of the river and bay found it harder and harder to make a living.

Finally, by 1920, the Indian River inlet closed entirely despite the personal efforts of many local watermen to keep it open. Considerable pressure had been building for the state to reopen the inlet. The first official effort, recalled with considerable humor in later years by the late Senator John G. Townsend, Jr., met with a spectacular lack of success.

The Delaware General Assembly had appropriated $10,000 for the project, a sum which even in those pre-inflation times was hardly enough for a fullscale dredging and bulkheading job. Townsend and several other prominent area citizens happened upon the idea of spending the money on dynamite and blowing the inlet open. On the appointed day, hundreds of spectators from towns and villages and farms for miles around sailed down to the inlet in boats or made their way along the beach on foot, horseback, or in durban wagons to see the big bang.

As Townsend recalled the incident 35 years later, he and his fellow amatuer engineers had seen to everything . . .they thought. The dynamite was planted in the sand along the intended inlet course. The weather was clear and bright and a general carnival atmosphere prevailed among the throngs of eager spectators as they stood back at a safe distance in thrilled anticipation.

When all was in readiness, the dynamite was detonated and an immense pile of sand was thrown up, hundreds of feet skyward. Suddenly, as the cloud of sand neared the height of its climb into the sky, it began to dawn on the organizers of the entertainment with a sickening thud that they'd forgotten one crucial consideration - the day, perfect in every other respect, was completely without wind. And so, as could, perhaps, have been predicted, all those hundreds of tons of sand blown into the sky with the $10,000 worth of dynamite fell back down again - into the same hole it had left only seconds before.

In the years that followed, most efforts to open the inlet were made by individual watermen with mule-driven plows and scoops and hand-driven shovels. The state assisted at intervals when sufficient funds could be found to operate the state dredge. Former state Senator Custis W. Steen of Dagsboro is one of the last survivors of those private efforts to keep the inlet open.

He recalls that as a young man during the late 1920's, his uncle, also a state senator in his day, gathered up his nephew and several other watermen from up and down the river and traveled down to the inlet late one evening at the end of a strong easterly gale of several days duration. The state work crew had succeeded in opening the inlet for much of its 500-yard course across the beach and only a small portion of the job remained. The elder Senator Steen realized that the time to finish the job was just before the tide changed at the end of the gale, when the accumulated backup from several successive high tides would flow out through the new inlet to help widen the breech.

The party worked diligently throughout the night with shovels and at last, near sunrise, the hole was completed a few feet across. As the tide changed, the water began pouring through the trench from the river into the ocean. The hole grew wider and wider as Steen and his fellow workers watched, and before mid-morning, the inlet was open once more.

A fixed timber bridge was built across the channel in 1934 to complete the first highway between

Bethany Beach national guard camp - 1930.

Rehoboth Beach and Bethany Beach. In 1936, the federal mosquito control office at Lewes issued a study of the conditions at the inlet, stressing the importance of a permanent channel not only to mosquito control efforts then underway in the county's wetlands, but also to river and bay watermen, to the commercial and party fishing boats which were then just beginning to be common in the Delaware coastal area, and other interests.

The report touched off a series of public meetings on the issue and in 1937, as a result of the public pressure, Congress appropriated the funds needed to build the first permanent channel through the inlet. Additional funds were appropriated the following year for the construction of the Charles W. Cullen Bridge, a swingspan drawbridge which served until 1948.

In February of that year, the inlet sprang once more into the news when the drawbridge, weakened by weeks of constant battering by massive ice flows moving slowly downriver, collapsed early one morning, taking with it a utility truck and several of the vehicle's occupants, several of whom were drowned in the icy waters. The bridge was closed for several years thereafter. Reopened in 1951, it was nearing collapse once more in the early 1960's when it was closed permanently and replaced by a larger modern span.

Although the settlement of Baltimore Hundred began shortly before that of neighboring Dagsboro Hundred, the earliest substantial towns in the region were those of Dagsboro Hundred - Dagsboro and later Millsboro. Dagsboro, though smaller, came into being first around the earliest house of worship in southeastern Sussex and near the numerous business enterprises of General John Dagworthy.

The establishment of Millsboro was a result of the town's advantageous geographical location. Standing at the head of navigation of the Indian River, it was also directly in the path of the new county road descending southward through Dagsboro Hundred to Maryland from the newly established county seat at Georgetown.

The Warwick Ferry, begun by Peter Waples in 1692 and continued in later years by the Burton family, still operated during the formative years of Millsboro. It continued as an important link on the old road from Lewes, down through Indian River Hundred, to Piney Neck and Dagsboro Hundred.

The construction of a milldam across the upper Indian River at Rock Hole by Elisha Dickinson in 1792, the first direct impetus to the development of Millsboro, and the establishment of an iron furnace and foundry which followed some 25 years later, made Millsboro desirable as an alternate route for travelers moving south from Lewes.

Col. William D. Waples, a principal backer of the iron furnace and other businesses in the new village, established a stage coach line across the peninsula during the early years of the 19th century. Waples made the growing village of Millsboro an important stop on the line and soon a hotel and tavern had sprung up, thus establishing the town as a hub of business and commerce in southern Sussex County.

In the late 19th century, Millsboro became a center of the charcoal business and of the basket and container industry with the establishment of Houston White Company by William J.P. White and Congressman Henry Houston. During the first decades of this century, the town also became the home of several canneries and later a distribution point for poultry feed and coal for the broiler industry.

By the beginning of World War II, Millsboro was also the center of the Delaware holly wreath manufacturing industry and one of the most important holly manufacturing and shipping points in the nation. The business began in November and December of each year when families around the neighborhood would begin bringing in holly and other greens turned into wreaths. Workmen in gloves and long white coats would receive the wreaths at a building along the railroad tracks and pack them into wooden boxes for shipment by train and trucks. By Christmas, it was over for another year. Although brief, however, the holly wreath business enabled many local families to celebrate Christmas with an abundance which would otherwise have been impossible.

To the south, similar activities were underway in Dagsboro and Baltimore Hundreds. Isaiah Long established a store on the southern edge of Dagworthy's Conquest in 1808. Manean Gum took over operation of the store shortly thereafter and ran it for 33 years. Located as it was on the eastern supporting grist mills and water-powered sawmills, Gum's Store was a natural location for a village and shortly thereafter, other farmers and businessmen began to locate there. By 1848 Gum's Store, as the village was known, had grown sufficiently to warrant the establishment of a post office. The name was changed to Frankford shortly thereafter. With the construction of the first railroad through the area just before the Civil War, a hotel was started and the town was well on its way.

Frankford also profited by the coming of the railroads with the beginning in 1877 of a patent barrel factory by Charles H. Treat on the site of the earlier Gum Sawmill. Treat, a native of Maine, was to become a powerful figure in Republican state politics in the decades that followed. After 1877, he began experimenting with veneer baskets and containers and finally went into partnership at Frankford with his brothers-in-law, James and Norman Huxford in the manufacture of baskets. The Treat company proved to be the largest business enterprise in Frankford until the coming of the Sussex County poultry industry 50 years later. In 1883, Treat moved his factory to Georgetown.

Among the first hamlets to be settled in Baltimore Hundred was Roxana, known, as it came into existence with the opening of Joseph Wilgus's store in 1794, by the considerably more picturesque name "Dog's Ear Corner." Wilgus, who ran the store until 1801, also operated a distillery to which farmers in the surrounding countryside could bring their apples and peaches to be converted into brandy.Wilgus was succeeded as storekeeper near the head of the sound by John P. Burton and then by Nathaniel Tunnell. By the early 1840's, the town had come into being at its present location centered around a store kept by Jacob Wilgus and his son, Robert.

One of the first schools in southeastern Sussex County was started there in 1799 by Stephen Ellis, a local farmer and preacher who charged 50 cents per quarter per student. By 1824, Captain James Tunnell had established the first school house in the hundred, known as Blackwater School, on his farm near Blackwater Creek. Another schoolhouse was erected at Dog's Ear Corner in 1825 by popular subscription.

A post office was established in the village now known as Roxana in 1868. By then, Dog's Ear Corner had given way to the name "Centreville," by which it was known for several decades before becoming Roxana 1870's.

The largest town in Baltimore Hundred, Selbyville, grew up during the early 19th century around a long since departed millpond. The first settler in the area was the blacksmith and Revolutionary War soldier Matthew McCabe. In 1817, Joseph Jena and Isaiah McCabe started a sawmill after damming up a stream which drained into the Bishopville Branch of the St. Martin's River several miles away.

The town got its present name after Samuel Selby moved there from Maryland, moving a store building with him in 1842. He bought out Jena and McCabe. Selby later sold his store to William S. McCabe who considerably enlarged the business until it was one of the largest general stores in the county by the 1880's. While logically, the town might best have been named "McCabeville," the name "Selby's Millpond" appears to have considerably outlasted Selby himself, perhaps because the first postmaster of the town in 1845 was a relative named Josiah Selby, although the next three postmasters there were all McCabes.

Selbyville, like Frankford and Millsboro, was on the main county road southward from Georgetown, a fact which played a significant role in its early growth and was also a consideration in determining the course in

North Main Street, Selbyville, during the early 1900's.

the the first railroad to be run through the center of the county. With that development, expansion came quickly up and down the line.

In 1881, the Selbyville Steam Saw and Planing Mill was opened by E.J. Long, J. McNeill, and H. Campbell. That enterprise was followed in short order by the W.S. McCabe & Son steam flourmill and grain elevator and by a growing number of general stores, specialty stores, blacksmith shops and other enterprises. By the turn of the century, Selbyville was growing in importance as a center of the strawberry industry. In the years that followed, it also became an important center of the nursery business with the establishment of Bunting's Nurseries.

Shortly after 1800, W.S. Hall opened a store on his farm near White's Creek. The land was a portion of the old Middlesex Plantion granted to Matthew Scarborough in 1688. The area soon became known, logically enough, as "Hall's Store." A post office was established there in 1822 and soon a village came into being composed of farmers, watermen, seamen and their families. The name was changed to Ocean View after the Civil War as the nearby beach areas were first being discovered by those in search of comfortable spots to serve as refuges from the summertime heat of nearby cities and towns. In those days, the ocean could, in fact, be seen from the second stories of many homes in the neighborhood.

The hamlet of Bayard began when John Tingle opened a backsmith shop there in 1770. He sold the enterprise to John P. Burton, later a storekeeper at Roxana, 1779. Grist and saw mills had been started nearby even earlier and by the early 19th century, the area was an established community. Harbeson H. Hickman, one of numerous individuals of that name who have been active in the history of Sussex, was operating a general store in the area by the 1860's. The village got its own post office in 1868 and at the time, residents decided on the name of Bayard in honor of the Democratic U.S. Senator James Bayard who had been a spokesman for the anti-Lincoln Delawareans of the Civil War era.

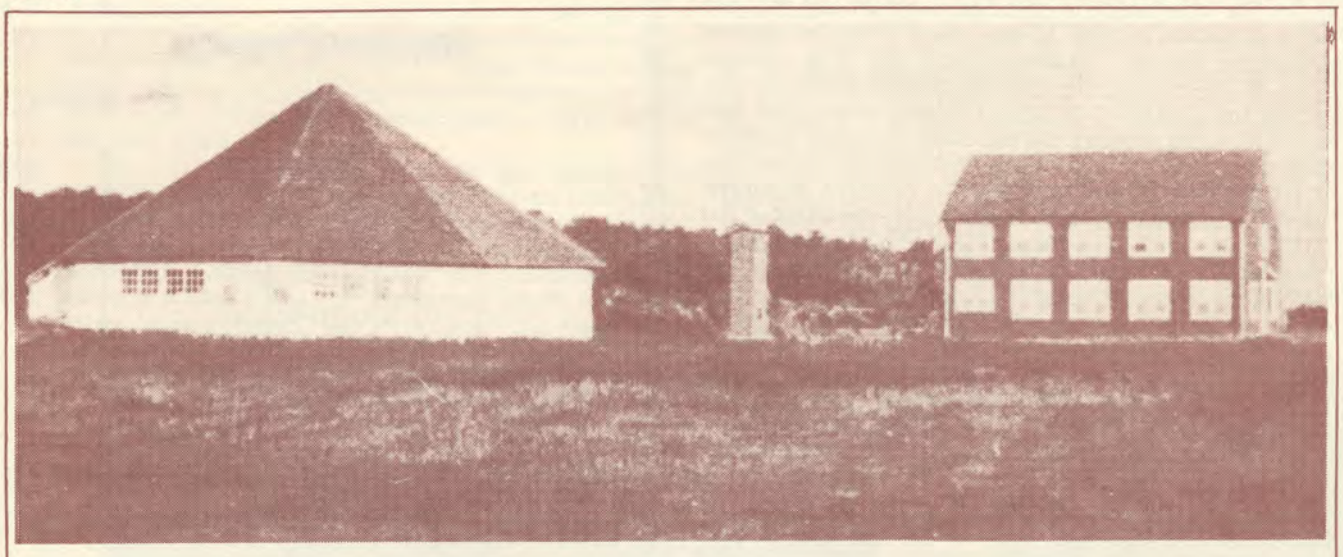
In the second and third quarters of the 19th century, when transportation in lower Delaware was still fraught with hardship and uncertainty, many crossroads hamlets acquired names and post offices and generally possessed considerably more eminence as established communities than has been the case since the onslaught of automobiles and good roads. Among the tiny hamlets of Baltimore Hundred to acquire post offices during that era were Blackwater (1821), Tunnell's Store (1887), Williamsville (1879) and Millville (1886). Of these, Millville was to grow into a substantial town as was Williamsville. Blackwater slowly evolved into the town of Clarksville and Tunnell's Store has, for all intents and purposes, died out entirely, although it had the distinction at one time of being operated by a future Delaware Governor, Ebe W. Tunnell.

The coastal towns of Baltimore Hundred, like those of Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred to the north, were not established until the late 19th century when transportation facilities had advanced to the point that summertime visitors could reach the area. Bethany Beach had its formal beginning in 1898 when a committee of the Christian Church Disciples of Scranton, Pa., chose it from among several sites along the Atlantic Coast as a summer camp for the Christian Missionary Society of Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia.

The Scranton committee formed the Bethany Beach Improvement Company and agreed to purchase the land, develop it, and provide transportation from the nearest railroad which in those days was across the Indian River and Rehoboth Bays at Rehoboth Beach. The only condition was that the missionary society agree to purchase no less than 100 lots and provide "moral support.""

The new resort was formally dedicated on July 12, 1901, at which time, a large tabernacle building to House the activities of the society was opened. The small steamboat "Atlantic" was pressed into service to transport visitors from Rehoboth station across the town bays and up White's Creek to Ocean View where they continued the journey in horse-drawn carryalls. The method was later improved by construction of a ditch from the Assawoman Canal within one mile of Bethany Beach.

At the time the new town was laid out in lots and deeds were drawn up, the staunch Christian society wrote in clauses barring the sale or possession of alcoholic beverages in the town. This indirect form of prohibition long outlasted the original religious fervor with which Bethany Beach was born since, in more recent times, it has proved a convenient way to keep resort development to a bare minimum, thus preserving the quiet charm of the town. The missionary society has also continued to use its facilities at Bethany Beach although the group's distinctive octagonal tabernacle was torn down in the 1960's.



Christian Missionary Society Summer Camp during the 1920's.

In relatively recent times the coastal areas nearby have been developed to some extent although National Guard artillery practice ranges along the coast have served to keep much of the building activities under control. The camp itself, on the northern outskirts of Bethany, opened in the years after World War I when the guard had been assigned its coast artillery mission and needed a place to train in the summer.

Bethany was also once the location of an old U.S. Coast Guard Lifesaving Station of which an account appears in the section on Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred. During the years of World War II, a U.S. Naval radio station was also in existence there. That station and others at Cape Henlopen and Cape May were used to track ships entering the mouth of Delaware Bay which, during the war, was guarded by an electrically operated minefield. Through the use of the radio stations and observation posts located in concrete towers up and down the coast, ships' positions could be accurately plotted and, in case of enemy attack, mines could be detonated from the shore.

The first major real estate development near Bethany Beach was South Bethany which came into being during the early 1950's. In 1971, South Bethany was officially incorporated as a municipality and now has its own town government and provides its own town services.

Fenwick Island, at the extreme southeastern corner of Sussex County is, perhaps, the second most important point in the county, the Zwaanendael settlement near Lewes being first. As the false cape, Fenwick played an essential role in establishing the present-day boundaries of the county which, had it not been for the confusion centering around Cape Henlopen's true location, would have been 20 miles to the north.

Although early settlers grazed their cattle there and fishermen and salt boilers maintained rude huts there from time to time during the 18th and early 19th centuries, Fenwick did not become any sort of permanent community until the construction of the 80-foot Fenwick Island Lighthouse in 1859. In the late 19th century the area got its first permanent residents in the form of squatters who moved to the beach, built shacks and shanties, and stayed for what, in many cases, amounted to the rest of their lives.

In the late 1940's, the State of Delaware got around to dealing with what already amounted to a town, although it was largely located on state land, by incorporating the community and selling lots. Since then, Fenwick Island, like other beach communities has grown tremendously in all directions.

Georgetown - the county seat

Georgetown Hundred, lying at the center of Sussex County, is there for two reasons - the affairs of government and the affairs of politics. As such, the county's tenth hundred represents in many ways the apogee of Sussex County culture. Sussex Countians have always been political animals. That has been what being a Sussex Countian was all about from the beginning and, while the county's once dominant political position in the state has declined in recent years with the numerical eminence of northern Delaware, Sussex Countians are still first and foremost politicians.

The county, in fact, has had the unique luxury of being the single most political county on a peninsula consumed by passion for that subtlest form of human affairs. Its position as the largest county in the peninsula's smallest state has meant for much of Delaware's long history that Sussex exercised an awesome power in state affairs and through the state, the affairs of the region. While Sussex County leaders have for the most played their political roles on the greater stages of Dover, Wilmington, and Washington, D.C., Georgetown has been their training ground and, for many, it has been the haven to which they return in the end.

Much of the spirit the town and surrounding hundred represents can be seen through the Sussex County Return Day celebrations held there every two years. In other parts of Delaware and the nation, elections have their winners and their losers and never, in all too many cases, shall the twain meet. But in Sussex, even the losers, especially the losers, are given their day in the sun and their chance, however briefly, to accept the homage of the crowds as they ride through Georgetown's central square together with their opponents. And always there is the unspoken but nevertheless deeply felt knowledge that there will be other elections, other Return Days, and that Sussex County will always manage, in spite of the age in which it finds itself, to be Sussex County.

While the county's first seat at Lewes greatly outweighs Georgetown in the breadth and richness of its history, it is doubtful that this same political refinement was found there in the days before Georgetown was formed in 1791. In its 16 years as the seat of government for the old and new hundreds of Sussex, Lewes was for most an anachronism, an inconvenience to be endured only until the first opportunity arose to change things. It has been seen that for a Northwest Fork farmer or a Deep Creek ironmaster or a Nanticoke river captain, being a Sussex Countian was a great chore when it came to casting a vote or recording a deed on a newly purchased farm. It meant at least a day of travel through the central forests and swamps of Sussex, both going to and coming from Lewes, and while life was slower in the 18th century, it wasn't that much slower.

William Wade, the author of a recently released

bicentennial history of Georgetown, has likened the establishment of the town and the hundred surrounding it to the nearly contemporary establishment of Washington City with its surrounding federal district. There is, indeed, a great similarity in the two endeavors. First and most importantly, both were purely political gestures. The sites chosen for the two governmental seats and others like them around the country had little to do with charm or geographical location. They were chosen because they happened to be in the center of whatever political unit it was they were meant to govern. There were certainly more attractive and strategically located points in Sussex upon which to raise a new town than James Pettijohn's Old Field in what was then still western Broadkill Hundred. But none had the decided advantage of being located almost exactly in the center of the county.

The actual mechanics of Georgetown's formation are recounted on pages 17 and 18, but suffice it to say that rarely has a new town in the county had so many willing supporters. The area of Broadkill Hundred upon which Georgetown Hundred was "erected" by act of the legislature in 1791 had been among the last parts of Sussex settled. It was miles from the nearest navigable stream. Situated along the high central spine of the county, the area was almost perfectly flat except for a number of large swampy areas that had made farming difficult during colonial times. Another impediment to early development was the ownership of large tracts in the area by non-resident landlords with no particular need to develop their holdings in the immediate future. Among the earliest permanent residents in that part of Broadkill Hundred were the Pettijohns whose progenitor, John Pettijohn, Sr., had acquired more than 500 acres of land in the area of present-day Georgetown in 1715. Other early landowning families were the Woottens, the Reeds, the Donovans, the Atkins, Rusts, Peppers, Kimmeys and Marvels.

During the 19th century, Georgetown Hundred had few outlying towns or villages with the exception of Redden several miles to the north along the main road to Milford. Such villages as Harbeson and Stockley which came into being as railroad stations in the late 1860's, and the farming hamlet of Cokesbury to the west have always been considered within the general sphere of Georgetown, but they lay in neighboring hundreds.

Growth was relatively slow during the new county seat's first years. With the exception of those who were already residents of farms nearby and those who established themselves in the town because it was the county seat, few new citizens arrived until the late 19th century. Georgetown was one of the best-designed towns in the county because of the careful planning which went into its establishment. It was laid out by Rhoads Shankland, Esq., of Nanticoke Hundred, a surveyor and member of the commission appointed to locate the new county seat. Shankland also appears to have played an important role in naming the town's streets and he was responsible for designing the town square with a circular park at its center "for publick use." The original symmetry of Shankland's master plan has been amended repeatedly over the years with new subdivisions and other additions, but generally, the central areas of the town have remained as he designed them.

One of the town government's earliest ordinances passed in 1795, was designed to restrain the "running at large of swine in the streets of Georgetown," according to Scharf's History of Delaware, and, "authorized the killing of the same for the use of the prisoners in the jail." The town did not get its first formal town commission until 1851 and most important public works improvements did not begin until after that date.

In 1868, the Junction and Breakwater Railroad was curved through Georgetown from north to east on its way to Lewes. Six years later the town became the northern terminus of the Breakwater and Frankford Railroad which ran south through Millsboro, Dagsboro, Frankford, and Selbyville into Worcester County. Together, the two developments brought about rapid growth and Georgetown's first taste of major commercial activity. Such early institutions as the Georgetown branch office of the Farmers Bank of the State of Delaware, built in 1807, had come into being largely because of the town's official nature, as had the 1836 "Brick Hotel" across the circle from the courthouse, and the later "Eagle Hotel" which occupied the spot where the Georgetown Post Office now stands, and several thriving taverns.

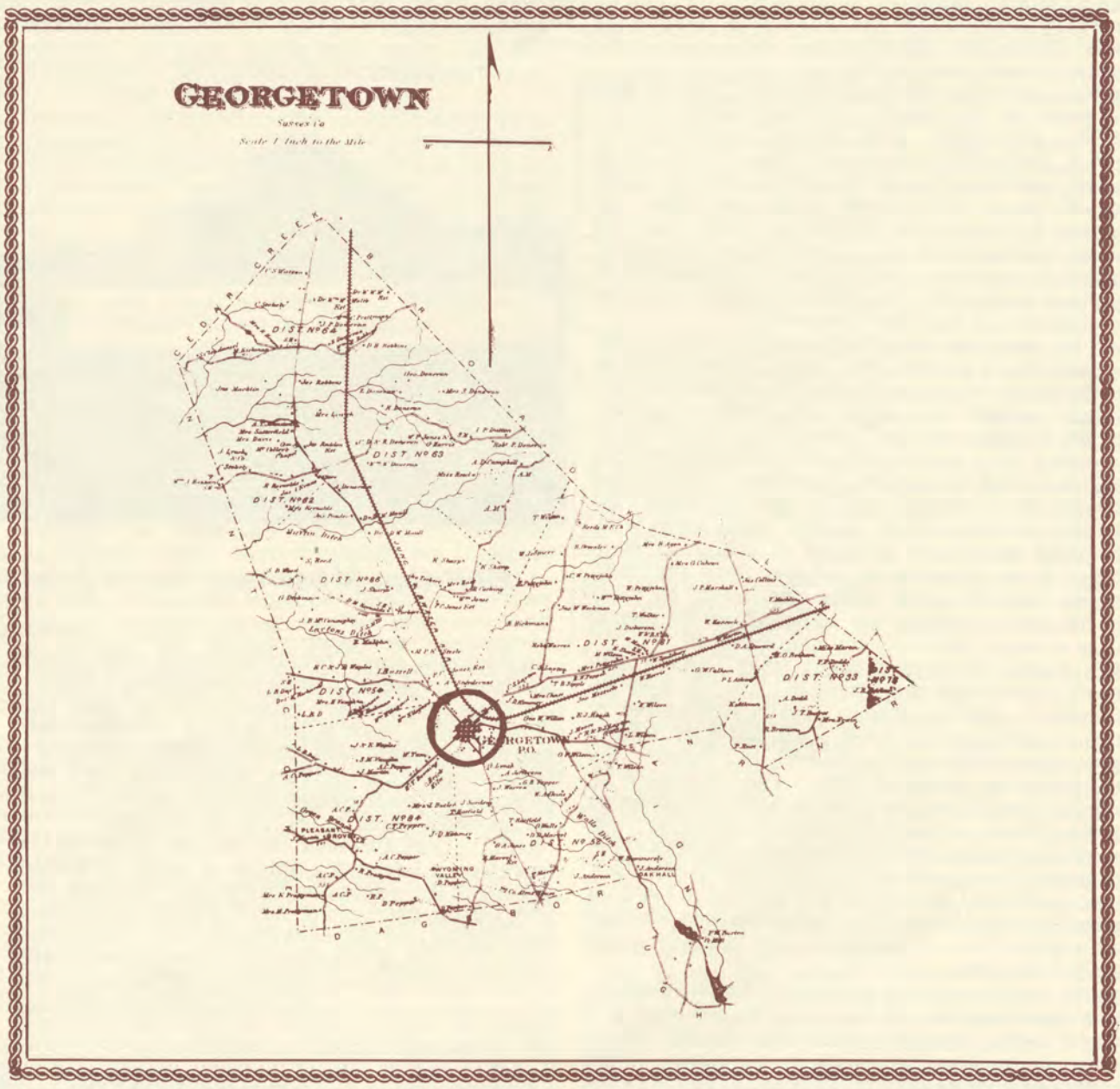
Other early enterprises included two brick yards; and a tannery, one of whose owners had learned his trade from John M. Clayton's tanner father in Dagsborough. Two hat-making establishments, necessities in any county seat of the day, also flourished. While sartorial splendor was more the exception than the rule in Sussex, many of the exceptions lived in Georgetown.

After the arrival of the railroad in 1868, a steam sawmill was erected. Its owner, Curtis A. Conaway, also purchased much of the equipment of the now-defunct Millsboro iron foundry and moved it to Georgetown about 1875. Conaway and a later owner manufactured farming equipment and did repair work. Another enterprise of that period was the town's first small cannery.

Later, businesses of a larger scale arrived. The largest during the late 19th century was the C.H. Treat Manufacturing Company and the associated Sussex Manufacturing Company. The concern manufactured barrels and casks, veneer fruit and produce baskets, wooden dishes, and similar products. Treat, who had gotten his business start in Frankford after moving to Delaware from Maine, also carried on a large-scale canning and packing operation and a general store. He was also a late 19th century power in state Republican politics.

Even so, the courthouse was one of the most impressive public buildings in the county during the 19th century. It was the scene of such memorable trials as that of Levin Sockum in the late 1850's. The second county jail, located nearby on the corner of Race and Market Streets, was the spot used to house Patty Cannon after her arrest in 1829. Although the people of the county were denied the excitement of her trial when she took poison and died in her cell, the events surrounding her capture and imprisonment there and her later burial in the yard of the jail have passed into the folklore of Georgetown.

During the Civil War, when Sussex County as a whole was undergoing much of the turmoil and division experienced in other border areas of the country, albeit without the bloodshed, the courthouse and the circle outside it became a central stage upon which both sides acted out their feelings. Although the circle had always been the center of political campaigns in the county, with men from all over the



Georgetown's St. Paul's Episcopal Church was established in 1794 but work was not begun on the church building until 1804. Early in 1805, the congregation faced a shortage of funds and prevailed upon the state legislature to allow a lottery to raise the sum of $1,500 to finish the structure. Even with the additional funds, however, the building was not fully completed for another 22 years and it required another lottery to finish the job. The legislature this time authorized a lottery to raise $10,000 to finish St. Paul's, and to build a town school and a Masonic Temple. The lottery has been a time-honored tradition in the county seat and it was resorted to once again in 1837 to raise funds for the new brick courthouse. The present brick church and later additions to the courthouse, however, have been built without the need for lotteries, town and county officials having instead preferred to rely upon the more modern mechanisms of tax increases and bond issues.

During the construction of the new brick courthouse, when the county's first frame courthouse had already been moved to its present site on South Bedford Street, court was held in the Brick Hotel on the circle, then owned by Burton C. Barker. The courthouse was exceedingly plain and almost severe in its appearance during its early years when it was without its present-day ornamental portico and the upper frame portion of its clock tower, both of which were added in 1916 when the building was refurbished and enlarged.

county gathering there for torchlight processions and rousing oratory, the area became especially known for such events during the war.

The authors of "Delaware, A Guide to the First State" write that a particularly virulent display of secessionist sentiment during an election rally in the circle on the Saturday night before the 1862 elections may have been largely responsible for a decision to send federal troops to Sussex to guard the polls and guard against outright rebellion. Later in the war, a Union rally was held there during which candles were lit on all the posts around the circle. According to the guide, a lone horseman is said to have ridden through the crowd slashing off the candles with his riding whip and shouting cheers for Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy.

Although many towns in the county have had their newspapers since the early 19th century, those of Georgetown have been among the most overtly political over the years, often owing their origin to a particularly strongly felt political issue and dying with its eventual resolution. The present-day Sussex Countian, in existence since the 1880's, is an exception.

Much of the great surge of economic activity which overtook the town with the establishment of the railroads had slowed once more by the early 20th century but the county seat continued in its position of prominence largely immune, because of its public offices, to the worst of economic woes suffered in more

remote areas of Sussex. It has also been home over the years to many of the state's most prominent public figures. George Alfred Townsend, later known to thousands of Americans as "GATH" when he was the nation's best-known battlefield correspondent during the Civil War and afterwards when he was a popular novelist, was born there in 1841 when his father, an itinerant minister, was stationed in the area.

Notable residents of the Civil War era included General Alfred T. A. Torbert, a hero on the Union side, and Russell Hobbes, who saw service as the quartermaster of the Confederate raider, "Alabama." Virtually every major figure of the Delaware Bar lived in Georgetown at intervals during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Several of those men have occupied the old home on West Market Street built in 1810 by Judge Peter Robinson and known ever since as "The Judge's." It has housed, in addition to Robinson, Judges Edward Wooten, David T. Marvel, and Henry C. Conrad, the author of the three-volume "History of the State of Delaware." The old house is presently owned by Mrs. Mary Houston Robinson, a daughter of the late Congressman and "Sussex Countian" editor Robert G. Houston. Mrs. Robinson's husband was a direct descendent of Judge Robinson and his father, the Revolutionary War loyalist Thomas Robinson.

Among the larger 20th century industries in the town have been a frozen food plant owned by Halsted P. Layton and L. Lee Layton, Jr., among whose other interests was much of the Great Cypress Swamp. During and just after World War II, the town was the site of a U.S. Navy Air Station which later became the site of an important All-American Engineering Co., Inc., testing facility where such sophisticated equipment as the airplane arresting gear used on aircraft carriers was developed during the late 1940's and 1950's. Related industries were the General Development Corporation which manufactured blimps for the U.S. Government and the Arrow Safety Device Company which continues to operate in Georgetown. The airport is today a county-owned industrial park and airport facility.

With the implementation of school integration in Sussex in the late 1960's, Georgetown also became an educational center for the county when the former William C. Jason Consolidated High School, an institution for Negro students, was closed and reopened in 1968 as the first branch of Delaware Technical and Community College.

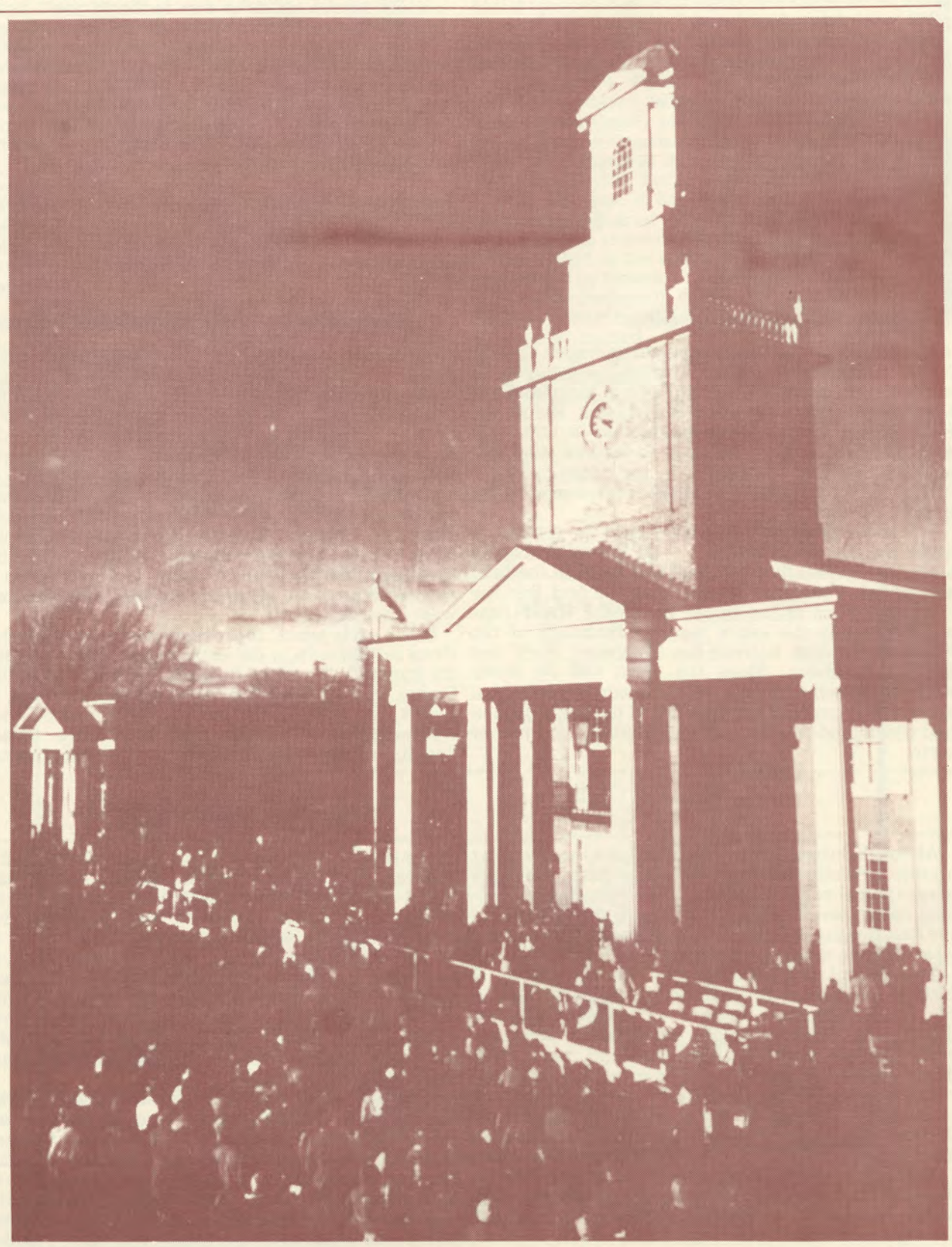
Among the outlying hamlets of the district are Redden which came into being in 1870 as a station of the Junction and Breakwater Railroad. At the time, the station was known as "Carey," but it was soon changed to the present name because a post office had been established nearby through the efforts of Col. William O. Redden and had been named for him. Nearby, Redden Forest, one of the state's earliest forest preserves, was established during the 1930's. At its center was a onetime hunting preserve owned by the railroad, complete with a large rustic hunting lodge. The forest was considerably improved through the efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the late 1930's.

The CCC maintained a camp on the Georgetown-Shortly Road near the Sussex Correctional Institution. The camp later became during the World War II years a prisoner of war camp housing German and Italian prisoners. During those years, the prisoners at the camp worked in poultry processing plants and other large industrial facilities throughout the county.

On the Southern and eastern edges of Georgetown Hundred are the hamlets of Stockley and Gravel Hill. While both owed their early existence to the railroad lines passing through them, both possess other notable features. In the case of Stockley, a farming hamlet named for Delaware Governor Charles C. Stockley, the area's best-known native, and a great shipping center during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it is best known today for its Delaware Hospital for the Mentally Retarded. The hospital was opened in 1921 on a 1,000 acre tract and was known during its early years as the Delaware Colony for the Feeble-Minded, or more commonly, "Delaware Colony."

During its first decades, when the colony was under the direction of Howard T. Ennis, Sr., it was largely self-sufficient, possessing its own laundry, dairy and truck farm, and training shops where patients were taught to make many articles of clothing and kitchen ware used in the hospital's residence halls. Today, the facility includes a well-equipped clinic, a chapel, new residence and recreation areas, and other improvements.

Gravel Hill, between Georgetown and Harbeson, derives its name from the largest of several gravel ridges which run through the county. James Booth, a Franklin Institute geologist who performed the state's first geological survey during the late 1830's, likened the ridges and similar deposits of sand and other materials in Sussex to the bottom of the Delaware Bay and theorized that the area now encompassing Sussex had only recently, in the geological scheme of things, been covered with water. The gravel in the area has been of prime importance in highway construction in lower Delaware and through most of its history, the gravel pits have played a major role in the hamlet's economy.



The Courthouse — two views

Above is the Sussex County Courthouse as it appeared before 1916; at right, as it appeared on Return Day, 1972.

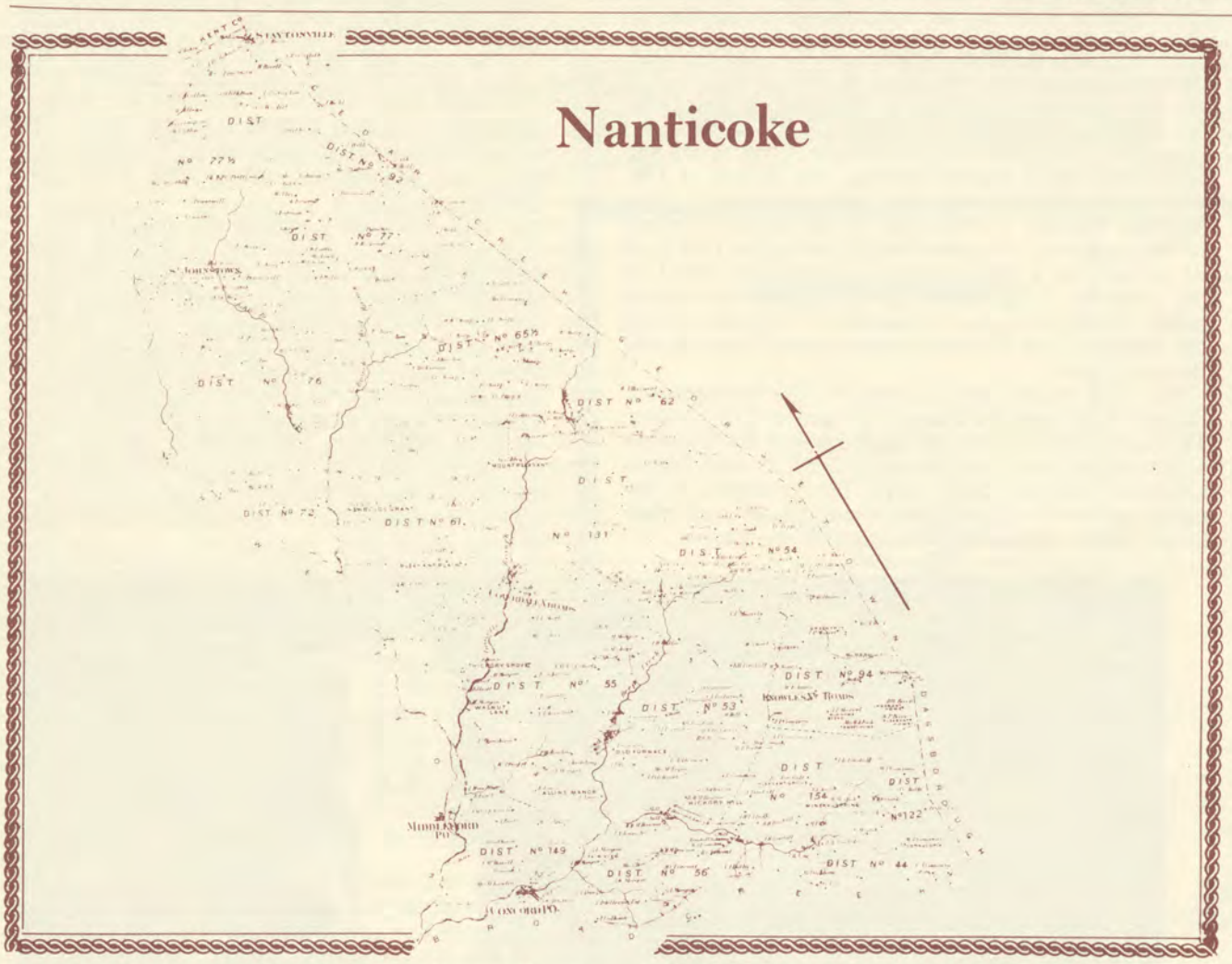
Western Sussex

The central ridge which runs down the center of Sussex from north to south upon which are situated virtually all of the county's freshwater swamps, runs through the western side of Cedar Creek Hundred. Thus, streams in that area meander down through what were once great stands of cedar and pine toward the Northwest Fork of the Nanticoke River, the major artery of western Sussex County.

The Nanticoke, after many more miles and convolutions drains into the Chesapeake. That geographical fact has had a major part to play in the history of the county from the days of the Penns and Calverts onward. Of the present-day hundreds, Northwest Fork, Nanticoke, Seaford, Broad Creek and Little Creek have all looked to the Chesapeake, just as Cedar Creek, Broadkill, and Lewes and Rehoboth have looked as much to the Delaware.

Of the remainder, Dagsboro, Indian River, and Baltimore have all relied upon the Indian River and Bay system, while Gumboro Hundred's story has been that of the swamp. Georgetown Hundred began its existence as a political gesture and in many ways, things haven't changed greatly since.

Nanticoke



Running down the center of northern Sussex County, Nanticoke Hundred was the dividing line between the early claims of the Lords Baltimore of Maryland and the Penns of Delaware and Pennsylvania. Before the final colonial borders were established in 1775, both sides granted lands in the area to settlers, and both sides had different names for it, the Penns calling it "Deep Creek Hundred," and the Baltimores "Nanticoke District."

It was no doubt easier for the Penns to graciously allow the Maryland title to be formally adopted since they got all that territory and more in the final settlement. The name derives from the fact that the Southeast Fork of the upper Nanticoke River runs along virtually the entire western boundary of the hundred, dividing it from the Northwest Fork and Seaford Hundreds. Along the river and its many branches which flow through the hundred were found abundant deposits of bog iron ore in the early days, a fact which made the area an early industrial center of sorts.

Nanticoke Hundred contains no major towns, however, a fact explained by its location between the early railroad lines running north and south through the county and by the vast forest covering much of its area until the latter half of the 19th century. According to Scharf's "History of Delaware," the first recorded land grant in Nanticoke Hundred was made by Lord Baltimore to George Layfield in 1695. Other early families in the hundred were the Newbolds, the Polks, Adamses, Nutters, "Ricords," Richards, and Jacobs. Most of these families came to Nanticoke after first settling in Maryland and Virginia and moving up the peninsula later on, generally stopping first in Northwest Fork Hundred.

In the early years, those receiving their lands from Penn settled only in the extreme eastern portions of the hundred after first stopping elsewhere in eastern Sussex. Among those families were the Bennetts, the Loflys, the Shanklands, the Stockleys, and others.

Among the early crops grown there were tobacco and, improbably enough, sugar cane, an experimental crop also grown in Northwest Fork during the same era. The subtropical crop never did well in Sussex and was soon phased out in favor of more traditional grains and other crops.

One of the county's most interesting early industries got its start in Jonothan Vaughn & Co.'s organization of the Deep Creek Iron Works in 1763. Although the Nanticoke iron business is discussed in more detail in chapters on early industry, suffice it to say that the iron works, which embraced nearly 7,000 acres of land in and around the hundred and employed many workmen in a wide variety of jobs is perhaps the largest enterprise ever undertaken in Nanticoke. Curiously enough, it was also the first. At the same time, the Gravelly Delight Forge, and the Pine Grove Furnace Company were also operating in the hundred. A later owner and operator of the latter, under the name Collins Forge, was Governor John Collins of Laurel. After his death in 1822, the forge passed on to his son, Theophilus Collins, who operated it until 1850, when the bog iron supplies were declining as was waterborne shipping.

Nanticoke Hundred also possessed a large number of grist mills, especially during the height of the iron business in the 18th century when the area was full of workmen. Because of the great Nanticoke forest in the area, which extended over into neighboring hundreds to the west and into Maryland, saw mills also flourished and timber production was a mainstay of the hundred's economy.

Only three hamlets in the hundred grew large enough to qualify as villages and of the three, only one exists in anything more than name today. In the northwest portion of the hundred, St. Johnstown came into being well before the Revolution. At one time before the coming of the railroads, the village had several stores and, briefly, two hotels. It was located on a stagecoach line and was the frequent site of political gatherings during the early 1800's. The railroad passed little more than a mile away in the 1850's, however, and with it came the development of Greenwood, just over the line in Northwest Fork Hundred. The history of St. Johnstown soon came to an end.

At the southeastern end of Nanticoke was the even smaller village of Knowles Crossroads which, at its height, contained one store and one tavern, both now long since defunct.

Near the center of the hundred is Coverdale's Crossroads, founded as Bethel Crossroads in 1800 and later known as Passwaters's, Collins', Coverdales,' Lafferty's, and then Coverdale's again. The village became the polling place for the hundred in 1811. At its early height, the crossroads possessed a store, two taverns, and a post office, though it declined in later years. Recently, the name has been resurrected anew in an unexpected way ... Coverdale's has become the county's, if not the state's, best-known depressed housing area.

Northwest Fork

Although Sussex County has often been thought of as almost perfectly flat, its surface does possess enough geographical relief to provide the slight central dividing spine mentioned earlier with all the streams to the east flowing into the Delaware and all those to the west flowing into the Chesapeake.

The natural division caused by this topography is further heightened by the fact that the high ridge in the county's center contains a series of shallow depressions along its length which, since the once-covering seas withdrew from the land, have been densely thicketed, swampy areas extending from the cedar swamps in the hardwood forests of northern Sussex and Kent to the vast system of the Great Cypress Swamp on the county's southern border with Maryland.

To the west of this line of swamps and thick forests, the land was covered with great stands of pine and hardwoods and, in southwestern Sussex, cypress and the other southern forest vegetation.

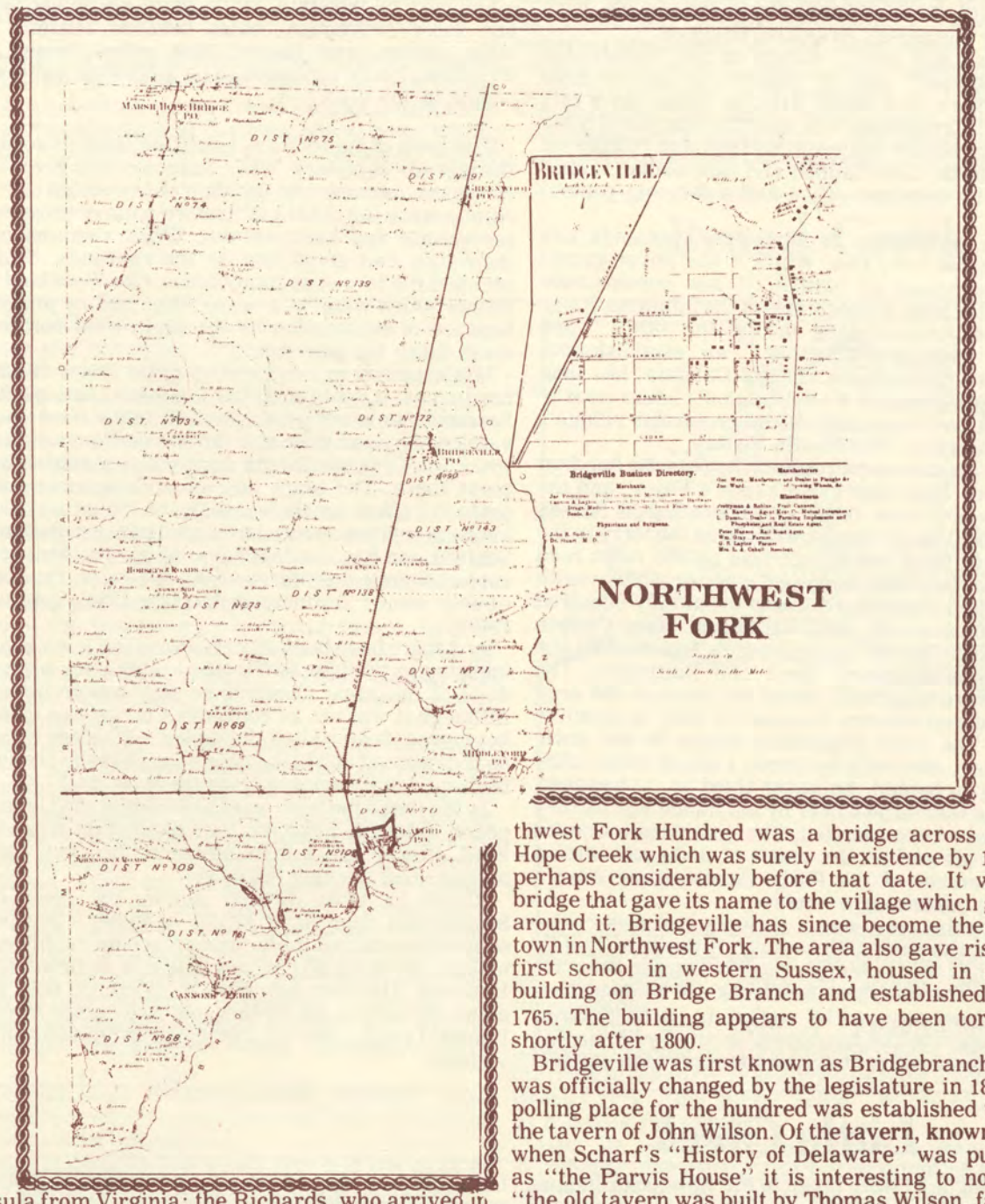
The effect of these natural barriers has been historically a natural inclination by western Sussex Countians to look to the Chesapeake as their natural artery of commerce with the world outside Delmarva, just as their neighbors across the forests to the east have relied upon the Delaware, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Indian River. It has been seen that Nanticoke Hundred, lying in the middle of the county, has, after the decline of its early bog iron industry, been relatively slow in its development. Such was not the case with Northwest Fork Hundred, the western border of which is the Mason-Dixon Line which has served since it was established in 1760 to separate those just east of it from their natural kinsmen on the other side - Maryland's eastern shoremen.

Northwest Fork, named for the northwestern fork of the Nanticoke which curves through the extreme western portion of the hundred, got its present name in 1682. Since then, the northwest fork has generally come to be known as Marshy Hope Creek, but the earlier name has continued, no doubt because it is expressive of the hundred's position in Sussex County. Northwest Fork was the county's largest Hundred until much of its southern half was "erected" into Seaford Hundred by the general assembly in 1869. The hundred also possesses the richest farm land in Sussex County, a fact that has played no small part in its development over the years.

Among the area's earliest settlers, four families were predominant - the Nutters, the Polks, the Layfields, and the Adams. While all four family names continue to be common to lower Delaware and Delmarva, only the Polks and the Adams have continued to be directly thought of as coming from that part of the county.

It is interesting to note that the Polks are distantly related to a Virginia branch of the same family which produced President James A. Polk and Confederate General Leonidas Polk who, before his career as a soldier, had been the Episcopal bishop of Louisiana. Of the Sussex County Polks, Charles, a 19th century governor of Delaware, and Trusten, who went west to become Governor and U.S. Senator from Missouri, Confederate officer and judge, and later a prisoner of war, are best known. The first Adams settled in the hundred in 1696 and today an ancestor represents the area in the Delaware State Senate.

Among other early families of importance were the Laytons, who settled there in 1730 after moving to the



peninsula from Virginia; the Richards, who arrived in 1760, the Davises, and the Sudlers. All have provided many leaders in the affairs of Sussex and of the state.

One of the earliest public improvements in Northwest Fork Hundred was a bridge across Marshy Hope Creek which was surely in existence by 1700 and perhaps considerably before that date. It was this bridge that gave its name to the village which grew up around it. Bridgeville has since become the largest town in Northwest Fork. The area also gave rise to the first school in western Sussex, housed in a stone building on Bridge Branch and established before 1765. The building appears to have been torn down shortly after 1800.

Bridgeville was first known as Bridgebranch until it was officially changed by the legislature in 1810. The polling place for the hundred was established there at the tavern of John Wilson. Of the tavern, known in 1888 when Scharf's "History of Delaware" was published as "the Parvis House" it is interesting to note that, "the old tavern was built by Thomas Wilson, father of John Wilson . . . and has been owned by John Wilson, Jr., William Morris, John Cannon, Daniel Wilson, Manlove Adams, Thomas White, George Willin, Purnel Short, James Prettyman, Samuel Laws, William Cannon and James Parvis."

Bridgeville grew rapidly during the first decades of the 19th century and for awhile stood well above Laurel and Seaford as the most important business center of western Sussex. Development slowed during the 1830's and 1840's, however, since there were no navigable streams in the immediate area, an advantage enjoyed by both Laurel and Seaford. An economic boom developed once more, however, in 1858 when the Delaware Railroad was extended to the town from Kent County, a development which also meant the end of St. Johnstown and the beginning of Greenwood.

Among the town's early industries were the first factory on Delmarva specializing in the production of square berry baskets, one of its earliest canneries, and a nursery specializing in apple and peach trees. The cannery, still owned by the family which started it in the 1850's, was started by William Cannon who went on to achieve much greater fame as the last Civil War governor of Delaware. As such, Cannon was in large part responsible for keeping the state in the union, for which he was vilified by the many southern sympathizers in lower Delaware.

His business interests moved on to his sons, Henry P. and P.L. Cannon and from them to later generations of the family. By 1940, the company was canning everything from asparagus to pumpkins and today it continues to flourish as a leading producer of frozen foods.

With the arrival of the railroad in 1858, Northwest Fork Hundred farmers were at last able to take advantage of the rich farmlands around Bridgeville and in the latter half of the 19th century, the hundred, and to some extent all of western Sussex, came into its own as a center of the Delaware fruit-growing industry. At first it was peaches, but blights eventually drove most growers into the cultivation of apples and, later still, strawberries and other crops such as cantaloupe melons, tomatoes, and asparagus.

By the 1890's, Bridgeville was the center of the state's strawberry industry and that was at a time when Sussex County produced more berries than any other county in America. In later years, it was to enjoy the same distinction as a poultry growing area, but while Bridgeville became heavily involved in the broiler business, it has never entirely given up its truck crop and fruit growing activities and is today still one of the richest agricultural towns in Delaware.

Greenwood, to the north, was established in 1858 on land owned by Simeon S. Pennewill, the father of Gov. Simeon S. Pennewill (1909-1913) and Chief Justice James Pennewill of the state supreme court. The elder Pennewill named the community "Greenwood" because of the large number of holly and other evergreens in the vicinity.

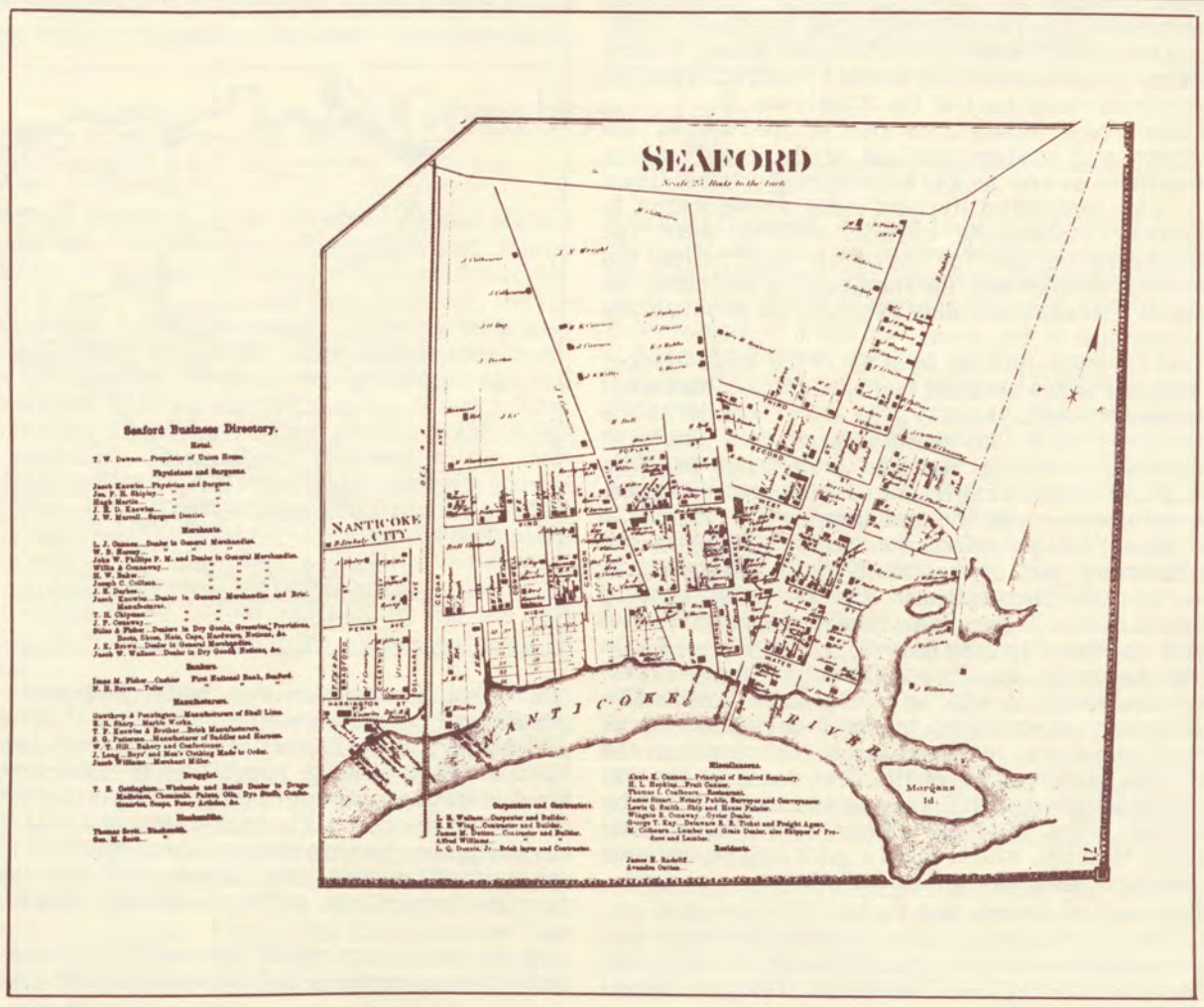
Seaford

Seaford Hundred, the county's 12th hundred, originally came into being in 1861 as the lower Northwest Fork Hundred election district. Eight years later, the district was finally elevated to the status of a separate hundred by the general assembly, a move which apparently came about as the result of the preeminence of Seaford among Western Sussex County towns. The hundred is among the best situated in western Sussex and it it was one of the earliest settled parts of the county. It sits 40 miles up the Nanticoke River from the Chesapeake Bay, the town of Seaford being at the river's head of navigation.

Because of its position along the Nanticoke, the hundred has for nearly three centuries been the center of a flourishing trade up and down the Chesapeake Bay. As a result, Seaford, like Laurel in Little Creek Hundred to the south, has, since it was founded in 1799, possessed many of the appearances of Eastern Shore towns like Cambridge and Salisbury.

It has also possessed many of the same southern traditions as Maryland's Eastern Shore. As a result, western Sussex remained a part of the southern slaveholding plantation economy considerably longer than was generally the case in other parts of the county. Its southern sympathies were much more intense during the Civil War, when numerous residents of the hundred, including a son of former Gov. William Ross of Seaford, fought for the Confederacy. Ross, himself, who lived in a large early Victorian mansion between Seaford and the village of Cannon, was an intense Confederate sympathizer who attempted to bring about Delaware's secession from the union throughout the war and was eventually forced to flee to Europe temporarily to avoid prosecution for his activities.

When the town of Seaford was founded in 1799 at the point where Herring Creek joins the Nanticoke River, it was known as "Hooper's Landing" after the family that owned the property at the time. One legend has it



that the town got its present name from a horse brought there from England by a surveyor named William Neal in 1815, but historians now point out that Hooper's Landing was sometimes referred to as "Seaford" before 1815 and that present name probably stems from Seaford, Sussex County, England.

Throughout its first half century of existence, Seaford was first and foremost a river town which, like other Chesapeake Bay towns, carried on a flourishing trade with Baltimore, Annapolis, and other bay cities. Even after its flourishing waterborne commerce was augmented by the arrival of the Delaware Railroad in the late 1850's and the completion of a branch line from there to Cambridge, Md., Seaford continued to possess a maritime flavor with oyster houses along its docks and a sizeable skipjack fleet based there until the early 1900's.

The hundred surrounding the town of Seaford contains many small villages, all of which came into being as a result of the successive waves of development in the area. Middleford, in the eastern part of Seaford Hundred, grew up around a grist mill which was a part of the Deep Creek Iron Works complex. Even after the iron industry declined in the late 18th century, the village continued to flourish because of the prosperous mill activities there and at one point Middleford supported the astonishing number of seven stores at one time.

In 1825, Thomas Townsend established the old Middleford Mills and expanded them into a major operation. At the same time, he pioneered a process for kiln-drying corn meal on a mass-production basis and carried on a flourishing trade with the West Indies and other areas. The village also possessed a large barrel-making operation as a result of the mills and even, for a time, a distillery. The mills were later sold and in 1846 they were destroyed in a fire. The new owners never rebuilt the enterprise on the same scale and, since Middleford was off the main routes of commerce, it went into a gradual decline until today it is difficult to imagine that the sleepy village was once the bustling hub of trade.

In northern Seaford Hundred are such hamlets as Cannon, Oak Grove, and Atlanta. Of the three, Cannon was most prosperous because of its location on the main line of the Delaware Railroad between Seaford and Bridgeville. A railroad station was established there in 1879 and the railroad once had a woodyard at the village for fueling its locomotives. With the decline of the railroads in recent years, the town's once flourishing businesses have also declined.

Oak Grove was once a station on the "Cambridge Branch Railroad" west of Seaford. It too declined when the line closed down. Atlanta, known until 1873 as Horsey's Crossroads, sits near the Maryland State Line on the border between Seaford and Northwest Fork Hundreds. Like Cannon and Oak Grove, it once possessed its own post office and a thriving general store.

Reliance, once known as Johnson's Crossroads, sits directly on the state line. While it has never grown beyond the status of hamlet, it has considerable renown as the base of operations of the infamous Patty Cannon-Joe Johnson gang during the 1820's. "Joe Johnson's Kidnapper's tavern," an establishment once likened to the Black Hole of Calcutta, has long since disappeared, but Patty Cannon's house nearby still stands as a reminder of the crossroad village's brief but notorious brush with history.

Perhaps the most picturesque village in the hundred is Woodland, once known as Cannon's Ferry, and the site of the last river ferry still operating in Sussex County. The Cannon family, who began the ferry in the 18th century when the village was on the main road south into Maryland, amassed considerable wealth from that and other interests and eventually acquired nearly 5,000 acres of land. Jacob and Isaac Cannon also owned a fleet of sailing vessels which plied the river and bay between there and Baltimore. The brothers were reportedly hated by many in the area and considered usurers because of their acquisitive instincts. The most impressive house in the town, Cannon Hall, was built by Jacob Cannon about 1820. According to legend, he never lived in it, however, because he was thrown over by his fiance just as they were to have been married. The unfortunate Cannon later met his end as the result of a dispute with a former member of the Patty Cannon gang over a hollow log containing a beehive.

Although the town was a thriving business center throughout the early 19th century, it declined rapidly with the shift from sailing vessel to railroad after the Civil War. The ferryboat has remained in operation, however. Now powered by engine, in its early days, the ferry operated by handpower as the ferryman and his passengers pulled it across the river with notched sticks on a steel cable. The ferry has long since been taken over by the state. While there are many faster and more convenient routes between Seaford, six miles above, and Laurel, five miles below, the Woodland Ferry continues to be a favorite route with people in the area.

The town of Seaford has benefited from its location throughout its history. When sailpower had given way to steam, steamboats in their turn sailed up the Nanticoke to the benefit of Seaford's many prosperous merchants and businessmen. When steamboats in their turn had given way to the railroads, Seaford escaped the fate of so many towns like Woodland and Bethel which were, in a sense, bypassed by progress, because of its location on the main road north and south down the peninsula.

While Laurel in neighboring Little Creek Hundred has in most ways been in the same fortunate position, Seaford also benefited in the late 1930's from the invention of nylon by the E.I. duPont de Nemours & Co., when the firm opened its first nylon manufacturing plant there. The plant has in modern times had a profound effect on the economy of the entire county and surrounding areas, but it virtually revolutionized Seaford and has insulated the town's residents from such economic downturns as the decline in the Sussex County broiler business in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

And there have been other booms. The town's major industry in the late 1800's was oyster packing in the days of the great Chesapeake Bay oyster industry. Although it was not as convenient to the bay as some bay towns, Seaford had the added advantage of being on the railroad and being near enough to the Delaware to draw some business from there as well.

In the 1890's the town was the center of the Delaware peach industry, although that distinction was short-lived. It once had a thriving shell-lime plant and an annual shad packing business.

Blades, a town directly across the river from Seaford has enjoyed its larger neighbor's prosperity over the years, but it has never given up its individual identity, in no small part because it is in Broad Creek Hundred. The town has been in existence only since about the turn of the century and was named after the Blades family, one of the more prominent in the vicinity.

Little Creek

Little Creek Hundred, which extends southward from Broad Creek Hundred on the east and Seaford on the west, is the southeastern corner of the county and at its extreme southeastern corner is the Mason-Dixon cornerstone. That point, which was established as the center of the peninsula by the Transpeninsular Survey of 1750-51, served as the southern terminus of the state's boundary with Maryland. It gets its name from another of the branches of the Nanticoke River which curves through the lower part of the hundred and connects with the Broad Creek of the Nanticoke. Thus, it can be said that every part of western Sussex County with the single exception of Seaford Hundred draws its name from some part of the Nanticoke.

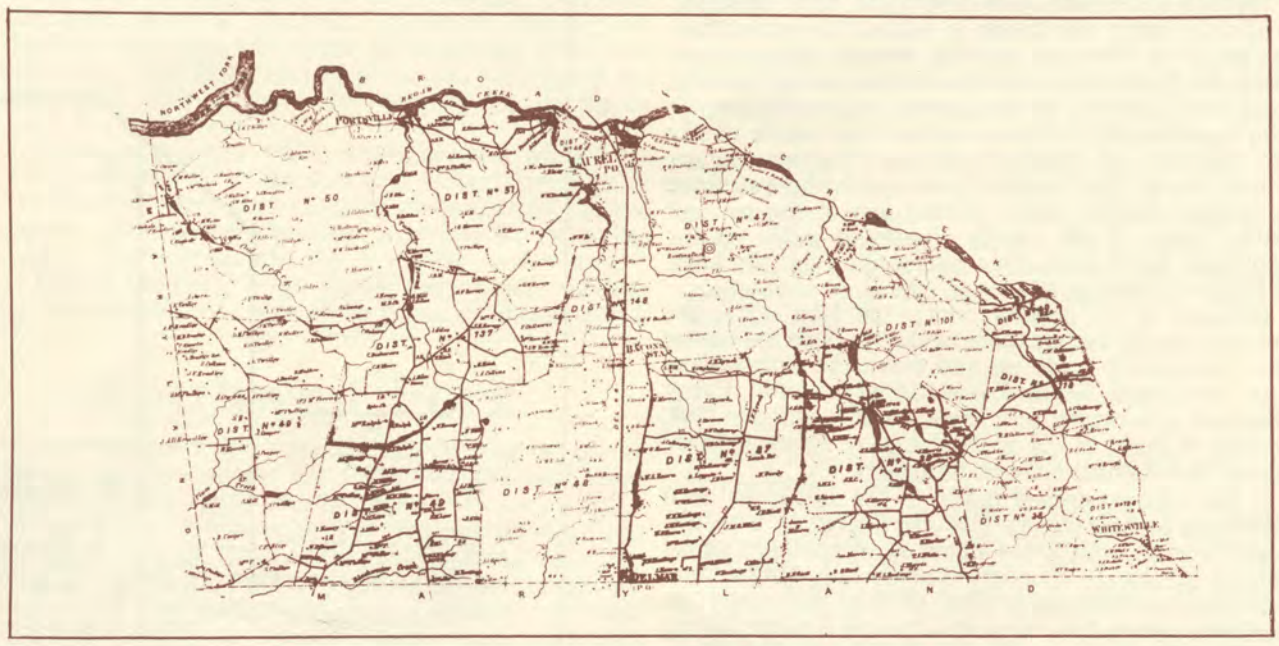
Little Creek Hundred is one of the few in the southern and western portions of the county about which there was no dispute at all during colonial times — it was considered by both sides as belonging to Maryland. Among its earliest settlers were the Moores, the Culvers (or Culviers), the Phillips, the Mitchells, the Marines, the Hastings, the Williams, the Wrights, Horseys and other families, all of which are still common in the area.

It is hardly surprising because of the large number of streams in the hundred that Little Creek possessed from its earliest days many grist and saw mills. At one time in the early 19th century there were nearly 50 millponds of varying size and importance in Little Creek and neighboring Broad Creek Hundreds alone.

In colonial records, the area is generally referred to as "Broad Creek" after the major stream in the southeastern part of the county. It is interesting to note that Old Christ Church, the early 18th century "chapel-of-ease" for Maryland's Stepney Parish which stands today near Laurel, is often referred to in early accounts as Christ Church, Broad Creek, although today it sits on Chapman's Pond. The discrepancy is explained by the fact that the creek above Laurel was dammed in several places in the late 18th century. One of the first dams in the immediate Laurel vicinity was erected in the 1790's by the Hon. John Mitchell, father of Nathaniel and George Mitchell, who erected a grist mill on one side of the dam and a sawmill on the other.

The town of Laurel, like that of Millsboro and certain others in the county, was established on what was once an Indian Reservation. Although the land was first surveyed in 1683 as "Batchelor's Delight," it and surrounding land were given to the Nanticoke Indians in 1711 as the result of an act of the Maryland Assembly. The 500 acres of the 3000 acre reservation now encompassing Laurel lay on the south side of the Broad Creek and was assessed at 10,000 pounds of tobacco shortly after it was given to the tribe. In 1768, the Indian lands were sold at public auction, again at the direction of the assembly, with the proceeds going to the Indians. The early village was well established by 1800 and in 1825 it contained seven general stores, but by then, it, like Millsboro, had become a center of the container industry as well, because of the efforts of Joshua H. Marvil, one of the best minds in the entire packaging industry of the day and later a governor of Delaware. After the turn of the century, Laurel, like Milford, became important as well for its fertilizer industry, Valiant Fertilizer, Inc., and of truck crop farming.

At the southern end of the hundred, directly on the Maryland-Delaware State Line is the border town of



two hotels, several taverns, mills, shipyards, and other small industries with a population of about 275 persons. By 1859, Laurel was the largest town in Sussex County with a population of 1,200 persons. Much of its prosperity during that era was the result of the almost unimaginably vast stands of forest in the Great Cypress Swamp nearby which were being cut, run through Laurel's large lumber mills, and shipped down the Broad Creek and the Nanticoke to Baltimore and beyond.

In the later years of the 19th century, Laurel continued to be a center of the peninsula lumber industry Delmar. Until the railroad was built to that point in 1859, Delmar was a wilderness. It rapidly gained prominence thereafter as the terminus of the Delaware division of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad (later a part of the Pennsylvania system running to Cape Charles, Va.) Delmar owed not only its origin, but almost all of its growth until well into the 20th century to the railroad.

The town is unique in Sussex County if not the entire peninsula in the sense that it is two incorporated communities — Delmar, Md., and Delmar, Del., with two mayors, two town councils, and two school

systems, although in recent years, the schools have been coordinated as have most town services.

Elsewhere in Little Creek Hundred are the villages of Portsville, and Whitesville. Portsville, like Bethel which lies nearby in Broad Creek Hundred, came into being during the days of the flourishing river traffic along the Nanticoke, and the end of that trade, for all intents and purposes, marked the end of the village's development. It once contained a shipyard and several grist mills. At one point during the early 1930's, some residents of the town thought they had a gold rush on their hands according to "Delaware, A Guide to the First State," when "some yellow stuff" was found in the sand nearby. As it turned out, no one was quite sure what the substance was, but it wasn't gold.

Whitesville, in eastern Little Creek Hundred, came into being in 1848 as the site of a steam sawmill on the edges of the Great Cypress Swamp. Although it later became the center of a farming community, the village has never grown greatly beyond its late 19th century size of a dozen dwellings.

Broad Creek

Broad Creek Hundred lies between Broad Creek on the south and the upper Nanticoke on the north. As such, the hundred contains modern-day extensions of both Laurel and Seaford although it contains no major towns of its own with the exception of Concord, Blades and Bethel. Portions of the hundred were joined to parts of neighboring Dagsborough Hundred in 1873 to form Gumborough Hundred.

Like other parts of western Sussex, Broad Creek was settled primarily by Marylanders and Virginians, but it remained largely undeveloped until as late as 1730 except along the streams in its southwestern section near present-day Bethel.

Much of the eastern part of Broad Creek, largely covered by the edges of the Great Cypress Swamp, remained unsettled until well into the 19th century and that the last unclaimed land in the hundred wasn't granted until 1838.

Of the 3,000 acres of land given to the Nanticoke Indians by the Maryland Assembly in 1717 following the assembly's 1711 bill to that effect, 2,500 acres lay in Broad Creek, opposite present-day Laurel. During their 51 years of ownership, the Nanticokes cultivated the land and built a small anchorage for their boats along Broad Creek. In 1768 they were moved further west and their lands were sold. John Mitchell purchased 2,236 acres of the reservation. Mitchell, brother-in-law of General John Dagworthy, left his sons some of the wealthiest men in the area. One, Col. Nanthaniel Mitchell later became Governor of Delaware and another, George Mitchell was, among other honors, the man for whom Georgetown was named.

In colonial days, planters in the hundred grew considerable amounts of sorghum and tobacco, both of which were later abandoned.

Peaches and apples were also grown in the area at an early date although not on the major scale of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Such early fruits were generally used in the distilling of apple and peach brandy.

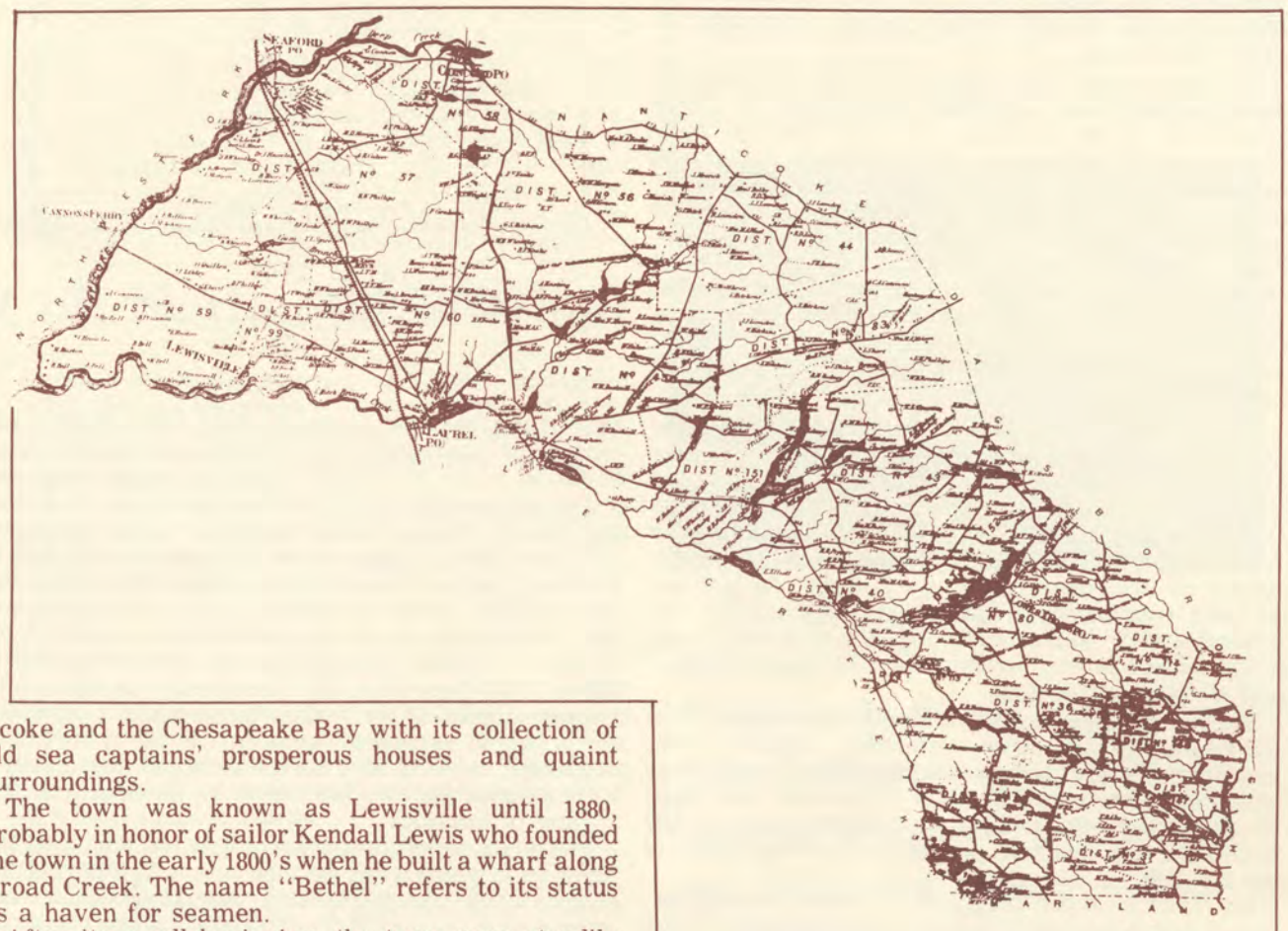
Another early landowner in Broad Creek Hundred was John Cannon, the first of that family in Sussex, who purchased a 1,000 acre tract in 1734. The Messick family of Sussex County also began in Broad Creek Hundred.

The Deep Creek Iron Works and other early iron smelting operations covered most of the northern portion of Broad Creek Hundred near the present-day town of Concord during the 1760's and 1770's. Most of the iron furnace operations in Broad Creek and Nantiocike Hundreds shut down during the Revolution when the furnace employees joined the Continental Army and the furnaces never reopened on a major scale thereafter. The owners of the later furnace and foundry at Millsboro leased the rights to the iron ore deposits along the streams in those hundreds during the 19th century.

The town of Concord was laid out in 1796 around the grist and saw mills which had been a subsidiary of the Deep Creek Iron Works. In addition to the mills, Concord also possessed a flourishing distillery, a tannery, stores, and other enterprises during its early years. John Houston, father of a future congressman, lived there during Concord's early days and built schooners although the creek running through Concord was not navigable and the completed vessels had to be transported overland down to one of the nearby Nanticoke landings.

Concord's most illustrious resident during the early 19th century was Col. Jesse Green, a lineal descendent of the first Lord Baltimore. Green moved to the town during the late 18th century and established himself as a merchant and large landowner, becoming in the course of time extremely wealthy. Green was adjutant general of the Delaware Militia for several years and went on to serve 31 years in the general assembly, many of them as speaker of the house. Among other notables born in the thriving little town were George Morgan, a late 19th and early 20th century author and biographer of some note. After the days of sail, Concord declined in importance and, while many of its old houses still stand, the once wealthy little town has become little more than a quiet village.

The town of Bethel stands today almost as a monument to the days of sailing ships on the Nanticoke and the Chesapeake Bay with its collection of old sea captains' prosperous houses and quaint surroundings.



The town was known as Lewisville until 1880, probably in honor of sailor Kendall Lewis who founded the town in the early 1800's when he built a wharf along Broad Creek. The name "Bethel" refers to its status as a haven for seamen.

After its small beginning, the town grew steadily during the 19th century to become one of the most active ports for its size on the entire bay. Its cargo business eventually suffered the same depression experienced in other western Sussex towns but in the meantime Bethel had become a leading center of the shipbuilding craft on the Chesapeake.

In the late 19th century the town turned out skipjacks, bugeyes, schooners, and other bay craft including the famous sailing ram, the design of which was developed there. The port's shipbuilding activities continued until the first decades of the 20th century when it, together with other remnants of the proud age of sail, slowly turned its eyes from the bay and became a sleepy backwater of the much less exciting and picturesque landlubber society.

In the meantime, the rich farmlands of Broad Creek Hundred had become the most extensive strawberry and blackberry growing area in the state. That enterprise lasted until the Sussex County broiler business made the growing of strawberries less profitable and Broad Creek farmers, like other Sussex Countians, turned their sights to broilers.

Gumborough

Gumboro Hundred is the smallest of the state's hundreds and it was the last to be established. It was created by an act of the Delaware General Assembly on April 4, 1873. It can also be said, however, that in another sense, a geological sense, the hundred is also the oldest part of the county, since it embraces much of that vast domain formed in the paleolithic age and little changed since - the Great Cypress Swamp. That huge clay bowl lying at the high middle point of the lower peninsula was a direct remnant of the days when Delmarva was still covered by the high seas of the last ice age. As the land emerged from the sea, the swamp remained a haven for vegetation which could flourish only in the damp, wet confines of the swamp basin - great towering canopies of baldcypress in its northernmost stand, rising 140 feet in the air and throwing off its knees around the submerged base of its trunk.

The swamp, together with the great interlocking system of springs and streams and creeks and rivers which emanated from its rich aquifer, was the source of many of the great forests of central Delmarva. From within it grew the streams which further down toward the bays or the sea became the Broad Creek of the Nanticoke, the Pocomoke River, the headwaters of the Manokin and the Wicomico, and on the east the Indian River and St. Martin's River. Indirectly it governed the lifestyle of the first European settlers in the interior of Delmarva and it served as a last refuge for the Indians those settlers displaced.

It was in the heart of the swamp, near what is now the dividing line between Gumboro Hundred and the State of Maryland, that the Indians of Delmarva made their last stand as an independent culture against the European settlers - or invaders, depending on one's view of the great historical moment known as the colonization of America.

According to an account of that incident in C.A. Weslager's "Delaware's Forgotten Folk," By 1742 the Indians, who had once ranged the peninsula in freedom with no understanding of such European concepts as ownership of property, had been placed on reservations, slapped with legal restrictions on their activities and their legal status, seen the vast resources of game which once ranged through their homeland decimated, and seen the marshes and forests slowly fill with European settlers.

The trend was occurring throughout the east as it was to occur in the west a century later. In 1742, a Shawnee war captain named Messowan appeared the large Nanticoke village of Chicacoan Town on the Nanticoke River near or slightly below the present town of Seaford. Messowan and other members of the Shawnee tribe had fled from their domains in the southern mountains sometime before and were then living among the Indians of the Susquehanna Valley in Pennsylvania.

When Messowan appeared at Chicacoan Town with a small band of braves, he met with Nanticoke leaders and described briefly a plot hatched by the French along the western frontier and their Shawnee and Iroquois allies to launch a sweeping surpirse attack against the English settlers along the middle Atlantic seaboard. Messowan asked the Nanticoke elders to

assemble a meeting of all the Indians of the peninsula to discuss the plan.

The word went out and within days hundreds of Indians had left their villages throughout much of the peninsula and made their way to what Weslager describes as, "an island hidden in the middle of the Great Pocomoke Swamp, known to the Indians as Winnasoccum. Scharf's 1888 "History of Delaware" refers to a neck of land partly in Delaware and partly in Maryland called "Wimbosoccum" upon which, in 1792, one of the first settlers in the area, Thomas Paramore, took up a tract of land. The discrepancy between Weslager's island and Scharf's peninsula might have its origin in the fact that throughout the last quarter of the 18th century, efforts were afoot to drain the swamp.

Weslager writes of the gathering, "Several hundred men women, and children assembled at Winnasoccum. Their clothing was half-English, half-Indian, typical of the dress of the natives of 1742 who were then assimilating European customs. Most of the men carried bows and metal-tipped arrows. The jasper arrowpoints of their fathers had found a more deadly substitute in the brass and copper brought by the Europeans." Some of the Indians also possessed firearms and, in a cabin even deeper into the heart of the swamp, there was an arsenal of, "guns, powder, and shot, and hundreds of brass-tipped arrows which had been treated with poison."

During the first day, Messowan explained the plot in detail and told the Delmarva Indians how it had come about and how he, himself, had been driven from his home in the south by the English. Then the Indians of Delmarva rose to reply. Their speeches lasted for four days, during which the entire question of English settlement was discussed in gory detail. At last the decision was made to unite and rise against the English and the Indians concluded the conference with a ceremonial dance, "accompanied by much shouting and shooting off of guns."

The medicine man of the Indian River Indians from the vicinity of what is now Millsboro, Possum Point, and Piney Neck, known as "Indian River Doctor" was called on to brew up a batch of the poison for which he was known and feared throughout much of the peninsula with which to posion the drinking water of the English.

But even as these preparations were in progress, their English neighbors had noticed the absence of the Indians from their homes and promptly alerted the authorities. Soldiers rounded up the Indians and imprisoned their leaders. The plot was exposed and the leading conspirators named.

For once, however, the English realized the value of treading softly and allowed the Indians to return to their villages on their promise to refrain from plotting against the settlers. Among the marks or signatures on a treaty of peace signed by the English and the Indians on July 24, 1742. were those of the chiefs of the Pocomoke Indians, the Assateague Indians, the Broad Creek Indians, the Choptank Indians, the Chicacoan Indians, and the Indian River Indians.

Weslager writes that the white settlers were angry, believing that the Indians should have been more severely punished, and," . . . greater efforts than before were exerted to rid the Peninsula completely of the pagan Indians or at least to denationalize them and render them harmless for all time. Thus the road was paved for their national breakdown and amalgamation with other races. The episode at Winnasoccum was the straw that broke the camel's back."

Following that era, the area began slowly to fill with English settlers. Much of what is today Gumboro Hundred was once a part of General John Dagworthy's vast "Dagworthy's Conquest" grant of 20,393 acres. Among other early grants were Paramore's "Friendship" Tract on Wimbosoccum Neck. In 1748, "Mount Pleasant" was warranted by the proprietor of Maryland to George Parker. Another early settler was Jonathan Betts who purchased acreage both from Parker and from Paramore.

Among those who settled on large tracts of land in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were Samuel and Isaac Short, Ebenezer Gray, Joshua Jones, Hezekiah Philips and John Morris. in 1833, Joseph Barnard amassed several thousand acres of land in Dagsboro and the present-day Gumboro Hundreds and cleared much of it, forming a farm he called "Newfoundland." After Barnard's death, his property passed into the hands of Short and Gray and was passed down to their heirs.

Among the early industries of the area, the most important were and still are farming and logging. The major reason for the slow development of the hundred was the fact that much of it was underwater during all or part of the year. Early settlers began the first efforts to drain lands surrounding the swamp in the last quarter of the 18th century, but their attempts were

BUSINESS DIRY

Mrs. J. S. Hearn Resident

Wm H. Betts Dealer in Dry Goods Groceries Hardware

Tin ware Hats Caps Boots Shoes Notions &c.

H. L. Grady Farmer

necessarily meager during a time when bears still were to be found there and records exist of owls with heads as large as calves' heads and other wonders.

A local tradition has it that the first great ditch was dug through the swamp during the first quarter of the 19th century with slave labor. Whether or not that is the case, one of the first major efforts at draining the swamplands began in 1867 with the incorporation of the "Pocomoke River Improvement Company" by William P. Jones, Elisha W. Cannon, and Joseph Ellis. Miles of ditches were dug through the marshes and swamps adjoining the river, which begins in a system of springs in northern Gumboro Hundred. With that beginning, miles of land surrounding the deep swamp were opened for the first time to farming and the raising of livestock.

There are several versions of how the town and the hundred in which it lies got their name. One part of the swamp wherein great stands of gum stood which were later used in the manufacture of baskets was known as "the Gum Swamp," a fact which might have led to the name. Another possibility was a large white-gum tree which stood prominently beside the woods road leading to the village. Some old residents, however, contend that the town got its name from the seedballs of the gum trees themselves, known as "gumburrs." Another theory is that the town was named for Dr. Francis Gum, an early physician in the area.

Scharf's "History" notes that, "a blacksmith-shop was kept by Ebenezer Hearn from 1814 to 1839. A brandy distillery was operated by Samuel Short in 1816, and the next year a steam saw-mill was built on the land of George Hearn by a Mr. Young of Philadelphia."

The sawmill was in operation until it was reduced to rubble in 1867 by an explosion resulting in the deaths of four persons. After that, the first sawmill was abandoned, and a later mill opened in the area of that operated by Carmel Collins at Gumboro until his death in 1974.

Lying to the east of Old Line Church along the Delaware-Maryland Line is Bethel Methodist Church which until recent years held the distinction of being the last place in Sussex County where one could see graves covered over with small roofs to keep of the rain. The tiny structures, once found in cemeteries throughout lower Sussex, were built from hand-hewn cypress shingles from the swamp.

The town of Gumboro got its first post office in 1849, before which residents had been forced to travel 14 miles by the convoluted roads of the day to get their mail. A later post office was established at Lowe's Crossroads in 1867.

The early distilling of applejack and corn whiskey in Sussex for which the county was wellknown during the 19th century had given way largely to simple bootlegging with the arrival of Prohibition and many of those bootleggers naturally repaired to the swamp where they could safely expect to carry out their enterprises with the least amount of interference from the forces of law and temperance. The oft-rumored explosion of one of those stills during the summer of 1930 is said to have led to the most recent and one of the largest of the fires which have swept through the swamp from time immemorial. Despite the efforts of hundreds of volunteers from the surrounding countryside to control the blaze, it burned out of control for nearly a year.

The worst aspect of the blaze, and that which gave the swamp the name by which it is known to many today - "Burnt Swamp," was the spreading of the fire into the rich underground layers of peat and buried cypress trunks. Because of the oxygen given off by countless tons of slowly decaying vegetation, there was enough air to sustain the fire which would smoulder underground and then, when firefighters hoped they were beginning to control it, would spring forth in new and unexpected places with fury, setting off in a new direction above ground. The underground fires emerged thus in the middle of cornfields, in the forests, and, according to one of those who fought the blazes that year, even while winter snows covered the ground. Finally, when much of the underground masses of peat and of the cypress which had supported the shingle industry were consumed, the fire died out of its own accord, leaving in its wake, thousands of acres of charred and ruined forest land.

Throughout the 1930's L. Lee Layton and his brother, the late Halsted P. Layton who between them owned much of the swamp engaged in a ditch digging project to drain the swamplands in Gumboro and Dagsboro Hundreds. Their efforts brought about the diversion of much of the swamp's groundwater to the Indian River. A later U.S. Soil Conservation Service project to channelize the upper Pocomoke "ditch" further lowered the water level of the swamp, thus enabling the large scale farming operations of recent years.

The Great Cypress Swamp shingle business (described in some detail in the chapter on early industry in the county) flourished throughout the 19th century. Many of the old houses in lower Sussex are covered with the shingles which were notoriously resistant to rot and other ravages of time. Cypress also served as the main material for the building of the early corn cribs and other outbuildings and for miles of cypress rail fences which once separated the farms and woodlots of the area. The few remaining fences of that type, athough covered with moss and weathered to a silvery gray, are as strong today as they were when they were first erected a century or more ago.

Although the swamp has been whittled down over the years to only a fifth or less of its original 50,00 acres, much of the remainder is now owned by Delaware Wild Lands, Inc., a non-profit conservation organization which will preserve what was once the largest and certainly the most mysterious of the state's swamps.

The Delaware State Police break up a still - Burnt Swamp, 1930's.

Twenty-four Sussex Countians have held Delaware's highest office

Sussex County has provided many of Delaware's leading statesmen, soldiers, and civic leaders in the course of the state's long history. Among those men have been more than 20 governors from all parts of the county.

Daniel Rogers

The first Sussex Countian to achieve that office was Daniel Rogers of "South Milford," as the Sussex County half of the town was then known. Rogers, speaker of the state senate, a position equivalent to today's senate president pro tem, succeeded to the governorship on the death of Governor Gunning Bedford in September, 1797. The office of lieutenant governor was still a century away from being established.

Rogers was born in Accomac County, Virginia, in 1754, and came to Sussex as a young man. He purchased a large farm of 600 acres in Cedar Creek Hundred prior to 1778 and lived the life of a wealthy planter in the large Milford home now known as the Causey Mansion. Rogers built what was known as the "brick granary" on the main state road leading south through Cedar Creek Hundred toward the "drawbridge" in Broadkill Hundred. Rogers also operated the Haven Mills on Milford's Haven Lake. Before assuming the office of governor which he was to hold for two years until January, 1799, Rogers was elected twice to the state senate. He died in February, 1806 and was bured at his farm in Milford.

Col. David Hall

Col. David Hall of Lewes was elected Delaware's 15th Governor in 1801, succeeding Governor James Sykes of Kent County. By the time of his election to the office, Hall had had a long and distinguished career as a lawyer, soldier, and patriot.

Born in Lewes in 1752, Hall was admitted to the state bar in 1773 and became one of the county's leading Whigs, firmly advocating the cause of independence at a time when it was often hazardous to do so in Sussex. With the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, Hall enlisted in the Continental Army as a private. With the formation of the First Delaware Regiment under Col. John Haslet in 1776, Hall raised a company and was commissioned a captain in the regiment.

He led his company through the battles of Long Island and White Plains. In April, 1777, Hall was commissioned Colonel of the second and most famous of the state's three Revolutionary War regiments. Hall was wounded at the Battle of Germantown and although he remained titular commander of the regiment for the remainder of the war, he saw no more active service thereafter.

David Hall

On his return to Lewes, Hall became a practicing attorney once more and, with the formation of political parties after 1789, the county's leading Democrat in an area of strong Federalist dominance. After his election as governor, Hall served one term, retiring from the office in 1805. Eight years later he was appointed as an associate judge of the Sussex County Court of Common Pleas and served in that office until his death in 1817. He was buried in the graveyard of Lewes' First Presbyterian Church.

Col. Nathaniel Mitchell

Colonel Nathaniel Mitchell of Laurel succeeded David Hall as Governor of Delaware in 1805, thus becoming the state's 16th governor. He served from 1805 to 1808. A resident of Laurel, Mitchell was born in Broad Creek Hundred in 1753.

He was the nephew of General John Dagworthy of Dagsborough Hundred and served briefly as Dagworthy's adjutant in the Sussex County Militia in 1775 and 1776. Later, he served as an officer with Col. Patterson's Delaware Battalion of the Flying Camp and fought with that unit in the battles of the Brandywine, Monmouth, and Germantown.

In 1786, Mitchell was elected to the Continental Congress where he served until 1788. After serving as governor, Mitchell served one term in the state House of Representatives. He died in Laurel in February of 1814 and was buried in the graveyard of Old Christ Church nearby.

Joseph Haslet

The 18th Governor of Delaware was Joseph Haslet of Cedar Creek Hundred. Haslet, the son of Col. John Haslet who died at the Battle of Princeton in 1777, was born in Kent County shortly after the death of his father. As a youth, Haslet was under the guardianship of William Killen, chief justice of the state supreme court and later chancellor.

Although he served an apprenticeship under the watchmaker Ziba Ferris in Wilmington, he never practiced the profession, and as a young man, he bought a farm in Cedar Creek Hundred. Haslet was the only other Sussex County Democrat to serve as governor in the years before the War of 1812. After his election in 1811, Haslet served through most of the War of 1812, including the bombardment of Lewes in 1813.

In 1823, he was elected to a second term, thus making him the first Delaware governor to have been popularly elected to two terms in office. Haslet died in June of 1823, shortly after beginning his second term.

Daniel Rodney

Daniel Rodney, the 19th Governor of Delaware, was born at Lewes in 1764. Although distantly related to the Kent County Rodneys, the Lewes Rodneys were on opposite ends of the political spectrum during the early decades of the Delaware State and were a leading Federalist family in their own right.

As the young master of a "coaster" during the last days of the Revolution, Rodney was captured twice by the British in the bay. He married a daughter of Major Henry Fisher of Lewes and became a merchant in the town. Rodney, a Federalist, was elected governor in 1813. At the conclusion of his term in office, he became a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for three years. He had held the same position before becoming governor from 1793 to 1806.

Emerson Wilson writes in his book "Delaware's Forgotten Heroes" that from 1813 to 1823, Delaware had two representatives in the U.S. Congress. In 1822, Rodney defeated his cousin, Democrat Caesar A. Rodney (the nephew of the "Signer") for one of those seats. After serving two terms in that body, he was appointed by the governor in 1826 to serve out the unexpired term of U.S. Senator Nicholas Van Dyke who had died in office. He served only two months before a Democratic victory in Delaware resulted in the election by the General Assembly of a Democratic U.S. Senator to replace him.

Wilson writes that although Rodney was respected by his fellow Sussex Countians, he was, "a very dignified, even pompous man, and was referred to by his political enemies as 'His Excellence, Don Dan Ramrodtwickadillo." After 1827, Rodney lived in Lewes in retirement and died there at the age of 82 in 1846.

Governors' House

Governors Nathaniel Mitchell and John Collins occupied this old mansion in Laurel. It is named for Collins but Mitchell built it.

John Collins

The 22nd Governor of Delaware and the second from Laurel was John Collins who was born in Nanticoke Hundred in 1775. His father, Captain John Collins of Nanticoke Hundred, was said to have owned "1,465 acres of good land, 1108 acres of swamp, and 14 slaves." The younger Collins lived in the same Laurel mansion once owned by Gov. Nathaniel Mitchell.

Collins spent most of his life as a farmer and as the owner of a mill and a Nanticoke Hundred forge . After his election as Governor in 1821, Collins served only 15 months before dying in office in April, 1822.

Caleb Rodney

Caleb Rodney, another member of the Sussex County Rodneys, brother of Daniel Rodney, and the 23rd Governor of Delaware, was born at Lewes in 1767. He was serving as the speaker of the senate when Governor Collins died in 1822 and succeeded to the office of Governor which he held until the end of Collins' term.

Both before and after his term as governor, Rodney was a leading merchant and storekeeper in Lewes. His store was one of the buildings hit by British cannonballs during the 1813 bombardment of Lewes. Charles W. Whiley, Jr., in an address on the governors of Sussex in 1898, recalled that, "in appearance tall, portly, with the dignified bearing of a gentleman of the old school, it is not difficult to call up a picture of him and his faithful servant, 'Peters,' whose attachment to his master is one of the traditions of Lewes."

Rodney died on his 73rd birthday in April, 1840, and was buried in St. Peter's Episcopal Churchyard in Lewes.

Joseph Haslet became the state's 24th governor when he was elected to succeed Rodney, but he died after serving only five months of his second term and was succeeded by Charles Thomas of New Castle County who served until 1824.

Samuel Paynter

The 26th Governor of Delaware and the first of four from Broadkill Hundred was Samuel Paynter of Drawbridge, a village which grew up around the first bridge to cross the Broadkill River on the state road south. When he was born there in 1768, the village was known as "Paynter's Drawbridge."

Paynter began his career as an affluent merchant and an unofficial banker in the neighborhood. He rapidly became the area's leading politician. In 1818, Paynter was appointed an associate judge of the Sussex County Court of Common Pleas and was elected Governor in 1823, serving from January of 1824 to January of 1827, the term of governor being three years under the state constitution of 1792.

In 1844, Paynter was elected to a seat in the state house of representatives at the age of 76. He died a year later and was buried in the St. Peter's Churchyard in Lewes.

Samuel Paynter

Charles Polk

Although Governor Charles Polk, the 27th Governor of Delaware, is generally considered to be from Kent County since he was living on his large farm in Milford Hundred at the time of his election in the fall of 1826, he was born in Sussex and lived there during much of his early life. A Bridgeville native, Polk was born in 1788, the fourth generation of the Polk family of western Sussex.

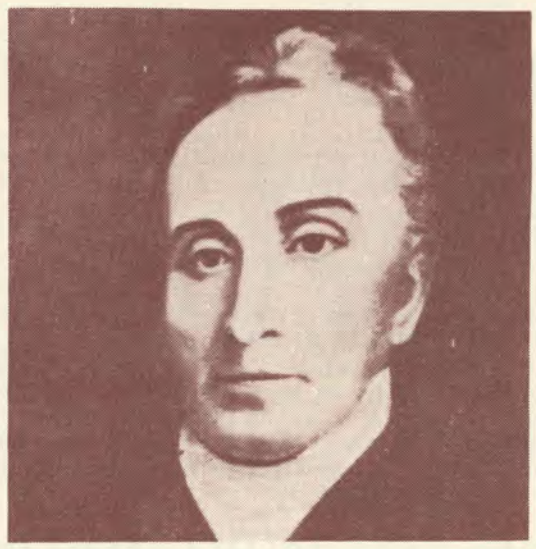
Polk lived a full life in many ways. Before his death in 1857, he had been a resident of all three counties and had held important office in all of them. He had a total of 15 children by his wife, the former Mary Purnell of Berlin, Md. After studying law under Kensey Johns, Sr., the eminent New Castle County attorney, Polk returned to Sussex without seeking to be admitted to the bar. He was elected to the General Assembly from Sussex in 1813 and 1814.

Shortly thereafter, Polk purchased his farm in Milford Hundred and served in the General Assembly from Kent County from 1817 until his election as governor in 1826, holding a term as state senator from 1824 until 1826. Polk was one of the last Federalist governors in the last Federalist state in the union, defeating Democrat David Hazzard of Milton in 1826 by only 100 votes. The youthful John M. Clayton, already one of the state's ablest attorneys at the age of 27 and a close personal friend of Polk's, was appointed Delaware secretary of state by the governor.

When the Federalist Party finally broke up at about the same time, leaving for a time only the Democratic Party, the Democrats promptly broke into two factions - the Adams Democrats who supported John Quincy Adams and the Jackson Democrats who were supporters of Andrew Jackson. Since Adams had more in common with the old line Delaware Federalists than did the populist Jackson, Polk threw his allegiance to the Adams faction.

In 1832, Polk was elected president of the constitutional convention which had been called that year to replace the constitution of 1792. After his term as governor had ended in 1829, Polk also served a term as Kent County Register of Wills and returned once more to the state senate. He was serving as speaker in 1836 when Governor Caleb Bennett died in office and he once more became governor.

Polk is said to have been offered and declined a seat in the U.S. Senate, and in 1840, he became the collector of customs for the Port of Wilmington, a position he held until 1853 when he returned once more to his farm in Kent County. Polk died there in 1857.



David Hazzard

The 28th Governor of Delaware and the last to serve under the Constitution of 1792 was David Hazzard. Born on Broadkill Neck in 1781, Hazzard's first public office was that of justice of the peace.

He served as an ensign in Captain Peter Wright's First Company of the Eighth Regiment during the War of 1812 and in that capacity was one of the defenders of Lewes in 1813. After the war Hazzard became justice of the peace and later was elected to the General Assembly. After his loss to Polk in the gubernatorial election of 1826, Hazzard became the gubernatorial candidate of the American Republican (later Whig) Party in 1829, defeating his opponent by 167 votes.

Wilson's account of his career in "Delaware's Forgotten Heroes" notes that Hazzard was governor at the time of the Nat Turner Rebellion in Virginia which resulted in a panic in Kent and Sussex Counties. According to Wilson, the scare, which began in Nanticoke Hundred, was designed to keep certain voters away from the polls and had no basis in fact.

Regardless of its origins, however, the panic resulted in the passage of a law in 1831 restricting the rights of assembly and ownership of firearms of free blacks. Hazzard signed the bill into law, thus providing the basis of the famous Levin Sockum Trial in Georgetown more than 20 years later.

After the conclusion of his term as governor, Hazzard was elected to the state senate. In 1844 he was appointed to an associate judgeship in the Sussex County Court of Common Pleas, becoming in the process the only man in Delaware History to serve as an associate judge without having been a lawyer. There was some precedent for the appointment, however, since Sussex had had a long line of "dedimus potestatae" or lay judges, during the 18th and early 19th centuries. In any case, Hazzard served as a judge for three years to the apparent satisfaction of lawyers and laymen alike.

He was named a delegate to the state constitutional convention of 1852 but resigned in protest over the way the convention had been called. Wilson writes that the constitution drafted by the convention was rejected by the voters of the state in 1853, largely because it failed to provide greater representation for New Castle County in the legislature. Hazzard retired from public life thereafter and returned to his home in Milton where he died in 1864 at the age of 83.

William B. Cooper

William B. Cooper was born at Broad Creek Bridge near Laurel in 1771 and lived in the Laurel area all his life. After serving one term in the General Assembly, he was appointed an associate judge of the Sussex County Court of Common Pleas in 1817. He was elected the 32nd Governor of Delaware in the fall of 1840 and served from January of 1841 to January of 1845. He died in Laurel in 1848 at the age of 78.

Dr. Joseph Maull

Dr. Joseph Maull of Milton became the 34th Governor of Delaware in 1846 upon the death of Governor Thomas Stockton. Maull, then speaker of the state senate, held the office of governor only six weeks before he also died in May of 1846.

Dr. Maull was born in Pilottown in 1781 and later practiced medicine for many years in Broadkill Hundred and the surrounding area. He served in the state house of representatives and later in the state senate before his brief term as governor. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Peter's Church in Lewes.

William H. Ross

William H. Ross of Seaford became the 37th Governor of Delaware in 1850. At the time he was 36 years old and was the youngest man ever to have been elected governor. Ross was born in Laurel in 1814 and lived there until 1845 at which time he moved to Seaford. While a resident of Laurel, Ross had traveled widely in the British Isles. He later lived briefly in Illinois.

After the end of his term as governor in 1855, Ross, who lived in an imposing early Victorian mansion in Seaford and was a man of considerable wealth, traveled widely on the continent. At least two of his trips to Europe during the Civil War were made, according to Dr. Harold Hancock in his book "Delaware During the Civil War" to avoid arrest for incriminating activities as a southern sympathizer.

Like many of his fellow lower Delawareans, Ross was a secessionist who believed strongly that the state should join the confederacy. He was instrumental in raising troops for the confederacy and outfitting them. Like many another Southern sympathizer, Ross lost a fortune in southern bonds. He died in Seaford in 1887.

Peter F. Causey

Peter F. Causey of Milford was elected to succeed Ross as governor in 1854, thus becoming the 38th Governor of Delaware. Causey, a staunch Whig, was born near Bridgeville in 1801 and moved with his parents to Milford in 1815.

He inherited the family's profitable mercantile business and in addition ran a flourishing business in bog iron ore mined on his own land in Nanticoke Hundred. Causey sent the iron to Philadelphia on his own vessels. In addition, he owned mills, a tannery, and a great deal of land in the Milford area. By the time of his election as governor he had become one of the county's wealthiest men. Causey and his family lived in the Causey Mansion in Milford which had previously been occupied by Governor Daniel Rogers.

Causey was a staunch Whig and served in both houses of the General Assembly before being elected governor in 1854. He died in February, 1871.

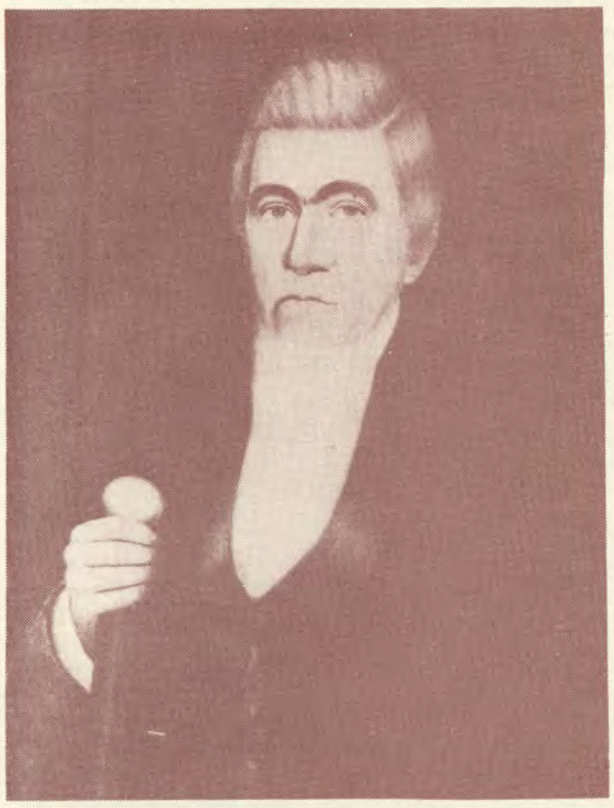
Dr. William Burton

Although like Polk a transplanted Sussex Countian who lived in Kent County at the time of his election as the state's 39th governor, William Burton was born the son of John Burton in Sussex County in 1789 and spent much of his boyhood there. He studied medicine as a youth with Dr. Sudler of Milford and later graduated from the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania.

After practicing briefly in Lewes, Burton moved to Milford where he lived for the remainder of his life. At

first a Whig, Burton served in 1830 as Sheriff of Kent County and a Brigidier General of the State Militia before that time.

As the Democratic Party became increasingly associated with the pro-slavery, pro-south cause in the late 1840's and early 1850's, Burton changed his party affiliation to Democrat in 1848, and ran against Causey for governor in 1854. He lost the election to his



Dr. William Burton

fellow Milford resident and ran again in 1858, this time winning the election.

Nearly 70 at the time he took office, there was some suspicion at the time that Burton's candidacy had been furthered by the strong Saulsbury faction of the Democratic party in the hope that he would die in office, thus paving the way for Gove Saulsbury, then speaker of the state senate. If so, Saulsbury's hopes were dashed since Burton lived out his term of office.

He served as Governor of Delaware at the most critical stage in the state's history since the beginning of the Revolution, holding office during the first years of the Civil War. Although Burton's status as a Democrat could easily have led him to favor secession from the union, he strongly believed that Delaware could not survive as a state outside it and thus helped to cool the secessionist sentiment then felt in lower Delaware. Even so, he had called on the legislature in 1861 to consider secession, a suggestion they chose to ignore.

With the attack on Fort Sumter, President Abraham Lincoln called upon Burton to raise the Delaware Militia. Burton replied that the state had no militia but that volunteers were free to serve if they wished to.

Although he was officially opposed to Delaware's secession and turned down a request from the Governor of Maryland to consider establishing a state of Delmarva to join the Confederacy, Burton was against the war and believed that southern states should be allowed to secede peacefully. Emerson Wilson writes that in 1862, when told that the state would have to provide more volunteers to the Union army or face a state draft, Burton appointed draft commissioners for New Castle and Kent Counties but said he could find no Sussex Countian who would accept the job.

Burton left office in January of 1863 and was probably thankful that his problem-fraught term had ended. He returned to his home at the Parson Thorne Mansion in Milford where he died in 1866.

William Cannon

William Cannon, a member of the Cannon family of western Sussex and perhaps the wealthiest man in Sussex County in the 1860's, became Delaware's 40th Governor in January, 1863, at the height of the Civil War. He was born in Bridgeville in 1809 and later became a leading merchant, farmer, and banker. He was also largely responsible for founding the family's canning company at Bridgeville.

Cannon began his career as a Democrat and was elected as that party's candidate for state representative in 1844 and 1846. In 1851, Cannon was elected to the office of state treasurer.

With the beginning of the Civil War, Cannon gave up his membership in the Democratic Party and instead joined the Republicans who were strongly in favor of the preservation of the union. In his book on Delaware during the Civil War, Dr. Harold Hancock suggests that Cannon's change of heart was due partially to a strong and sincere belief in the importance of preserving the union and partly to his ire at having been passed over as a gubernatorial candidate by the Democrats.

Whatever the cause of his break with the Democrats, Cannon was nominated for the governorship by the Republicans in 1862. He shared the ticket with Republican Congressman George P. Fisher, the man who as Delaware Attorney General had tried the famous Levin Sockum case in Georgetown in 1855. Fisher's often outspoken belief in the preservation of the union and his close personal friendship with Abraham Lincoln did much to lose him the election to congress, but Cannon, with considerably more political power in Sussex County, was narrowly elected.

One of his staunch supporters was Jacob Moore, a Seaford native, strong Democrat, and lawyer who became so alarmed at the secessionist stand of the party that he also switched his allegiance in 1861. Moore stumped the county, speaking out strongly in favor of Cannon and the union and against secession and the Confederacy. Moore began a newspaper in Georgetown that year and, according to Emerson Wilson, the new editor of the "Union," "wrote fiery editorials blasting the Confederacy and all it stood for, and calling for strong support of the Republican Cause in Delaware." He later served as Delaware Attorney General under Gov. Cannon.

Perhaps because of the rigors of his office, Cannon's health was poor and he died in office in March, 1865. Runk's "Biographical and Geneological History of Delaware" notes that, "the illness that caused his death was the result of over-exertion in assisting to extinguish a fire in Bridgeville."

Dr. Gove Saulsbury

Cannon was succeeded in office by Gove Saulsbury, the speaker of the senate. Although the Saulsbury family of which the Governor was a leading member were theoretically Kent Countians from Mispillion Neck, they played such a major part in the affairs of Sussex and the state as a whole that they are mentioned here.

Gove Saulsbury was, like Burton and Maull before him, a medical doctor who became active in politics. His brother, Willard, who had begun his legal career as one of the most successful attorneys in Sussex, had served as Delaware Attorney General until he was elected to the United States Senate in 1859. Willard

Saulsbury was reelected to that office in 1865, the same year his brother Gove became Governor. A younger Saulsbury brother, Eli, was elected U.S. Senator in 1871 and served two terms.

Between them, the three Saulsbury brothers controlled much of the state Democratic party during and after the Civil War. Gove Saulsbury, while not in favor of secession for Delaware, was strongly opposed to the Lincoln Administration's position that the secessionist states of the south should be forced to rejoin the union. In 1863, as a state senator, Saulsbury headed a legislative commission named to investigate the use of federal troops from outside Delaware to control the activities of southern sympathizers in the state during the 1862 elections.

After assuming the governorship on the death of Cannon, the last Republican to hold the office of governor for the remainder of the 19th century, Dr. Gove Saulsbury won general praise from most factions in the state for his skill in directing affairs after the war. He was elected to a full term of his own in 1867 and served until 1871, after which he retired from active political office, though not from behind-the-scenes political maneuvering.

Gove Saulsbury was probably instrumental in obtaining an appointment for his brother Willard as Chancellor of Delaware in 1873. Willard Saulsbury's brother-in-law, James Ponder of Milton was elected governor in 1871, succeeding Gove and retaining control of the office in the family until 1875. Willard's fondness for alcohol had won him considerable notoriety by the conclusion of his second term in the U.S. Senate in 1871, and, according to persistent rumor in Delaware political circles, he was given the job of chancellor in 1873 with the stipulation that he reform his bad habits. The former senator appears to have done so and to have established a laudable record in Chancery Court until his sudden death of "apoplexy" in 1892.

Gove Saulsbury resided in Dover after 1871 and was instrumental in founding Wesley College before his death in 1881.

James Ponder

James Ponder of Milton, the 42nd Governor of Delaware and a successful merchant and businessman like many of his predecessors, was born in Broadkill Hundred in 1819 and lived in or near Milton all his life.

When he was 24, Ponder went into partnership with his father, John Ponder, in the family grain and lumber shipping business and a related shipyard. The younger Ponder later expanded the shipyards considerably and became moderately wealthy. In 1860, he built a large steam mill at Milton where he sawed lumber both for the shipyards and for export to nearby cities.

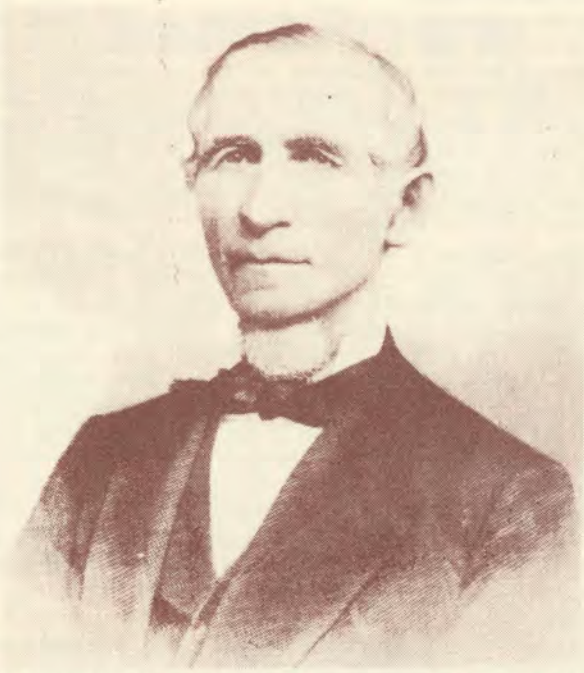
In 1856, Ponder was elected to the state house of representatives and in 1864, he became a state senator. Ponder was elected speaker in 1867 and served in that capacity until 1870 when he became the Democratic candidate for Governor. Ponder was elected, and in January of 1871, he was sworn in to succeed Gov. Gove Saulsbury, the brother of his sister's husband. Similar occurrences have been more the rule than the exception in the small state of Delaware for generations.

At the conclusion of his term, Governor Ponder moved to Wilmington, giving up at the same time, the presidency of the Georgetown Farmers Bank which he had held for a decade before 1875. He returned to Milton and lived largely in retirement there until his death in 1897.

Charles C. Stockley

Governor Charles C. Stockley who became the state's 45th governor in January of 1883, was born in 1819 between Georgetown and Millsboro near the village which now bears his name. He was the son of Jehu and Hannah Rodney Kollock Stockley. Stockley's mother was the sister of Governors Daniel and Caleb Rodney of Lewes.

Stockley, who was educated in Georgetown and Philadelphia, taught school in Sussex from 1839 to 1846 and during that time, occasionally tended store. He opened his own general store in Millsboro in 1846.



Stockley served as county treasurer of Sussex from 1852 to 1856 when he was elected sheriff.

In 1860, Stockley became a director of the Junction and Breakwater Railroad which was being built from Milford to Lewes. Several years later, he became president of the Breakwater & Frankford Railroad as well as a director of the Worcester Railroad in Worcester County, Md.

Stockley was elected to the first of two terms in the state senate in 1873, serving as speaker of the senate during his second term. In 1882, Stockley was elected governor and served until 1887.

At the end of his term he returned to Sussex and became president of the Georgetown Branch of the Farmer's Bank. In 1891, he was elected Register of Wills for Sussex County. He died in 1901.

With Joshua

Marvil's death

The strange

saga of J. Edward

Addicks began...

Joshua H. Marvil

On his election as the 48th Governor of Delaware in 1894, Joshua H. Marvil of Laurel was the first Republican elected to the office since the election of Governor William Cannon in 1862, and then he died less than three months after taking office and was succeeded by the Democratic speaker of the senate.

Marvil was born in 1825 near Laurel and went to sea at an early age. When he returned home, he became a ship carpenter and later began Marvil's Crate and Basket Factory in Laurel. Marvil, who was something of a minor mechanical genius, invented much of the early basket manufacturing equipment used in his plant.

By the time of his election as governor in 1894, it was one of the largest plants in Sussex County. Marvil died in April of 1895. He was succeeded in office by senate speaker William T. Watson of Kent County. A Milford resident at the time he served as Governor, Watson is recalled in political circles for the singular brashness of his most masterful political maneuver.

For the first time in decades, the Republicans had a majority in the legislature when the two houses were counted together. At the conclusion of the U.S. Senate term of Anthony Higgins of New Castle County, the legislature met in joint session to elect a successor, the senate race not then being a popular election.

In the absence of Watson, the senate speaker who had become governor after the death of Marvil, the Republicans outnumbered the Democrats 19 to 10 with a simple majority of 15 votes needed to elect. Several years previously, an unusually persistent man named J. Edward Addicks, a gas company representative from Massachusetts, visited Dover and announced to the Republicans he encountered that he would be receptive to a nomination as U.S. Senator from Delaware.

Addicks, who had lived briefly in the early 1880's in Claymont but was virtually unknown elsewhere in the state including Wilmington, spent several years ingratiating himself to New Castle County Republicans and by 1894, he had six members of the legislature pledged to support his U.S. Senate candidacy.

According to former U.S. Senator Daniel O. Hastings who included an account of the incident in his political memoir, "Delaware Politics - 1904-1954," balloting began in January of 1895 and continued almost daily from then until May. Senator Anthony Higgins and one other Republican counted 13 votes between them. Addicks had the remaining six Republican votes.

Finally, two of the Addicks men were ready to cast their votes elsewhere and with those two votes and the remaining 13, the Republicans had enough to elect a senator without the Democrats and without Addicks. At that point in the drawn-out affair, newly sworn-in Governor Watson descended to the floor of the senate and demanded the right to vote as speaker. The vote was taken. Col. Henry Algernon duPont got the 15 Republicans votes, Addicks 4, and Democrats the other eleven, including "Governor Speaker" Watson's.

Watson announced that a majority of 16 was needed to elect and there being no majority, he declared the election dead and adjourned the legislature, thus creating the state's first vacancy in the U.S. Senate.

DuPont protested Watson's action in the U.S. Senate, charging that Governor Watson had no right to preside in the state senate. The U.S. Senate denied duPont his seat by a vote of 31 to 30. The Addicks affair created a break in the newly powerful Republican Party which was to last until 1904. As Hastings wrote, "The determination of Addicks to get himself elected to the United States Senate resulted in the following vacancies in that body from Delaware: one from 1895 to 1897, one from 1899 to 1901, two from 1901 to 1903, (and) one from 1905 to 1906."

Ebe W. Tunnell

Ebe W. Tunnell of Baltimore Hundred by way of Lewes, was elected the 50th Governor of Delaware in 1897. Tunnell, a Democrat, was born in the area of Blackwater Creek in 1844 where he lived and operated a general store until 1873 when he moved to Lewes and went into the drug store business with his brother-in-law, Dr. David L. Mustard.

Tunnell's first political office came in 1870 when he was elected to the state house of representatives from Baltimore Hundred. During the 1880's, he served as clerk of the peace of Sussex County. In 1894, Tunnell ran against Joshua Marvil but was defeated. Running again in 1896, he was elected.

Tunnell, a bachelor, returned to Lewes at the end of his term in 1901 and lived there quietly until his death several years later.

Simeon S. Penniwell

Governor Simeon S. Pennewill, the 53rd Governor of Delaware, was born in Greenwood in the 1850's, the son of Simeon and Annie Pennewill. Educated in local schools there and in Bridgeville, Pennewill served several terms in the state senate before being elected governor in 1909.

Many of the forces which were to result in the reforms and innovations of the Townsend Administration several years later were already being discussed during Pennewill's Administration. U.S. Senator T. Coleman duPont offered to build a new, modern four-lane highway the length of the state but ran into difficulties early on when some downstate citizens refused to grant right-of-ways.

In his state of the state address in 1913, Pennewill said, "one of our broad-minded and generous citizens has offered to build (a road the length of Delaware) without one cent of cost to the State in construction, and actually commenced the work, but some of our citizens who did not realize the advantage to be derived by them, as well as the whole State from such an undertaking, put themselves on record as opposed to the project, and it is now held up by the Supreme Court of the United States. The people of our sister states. . .were amazed when they learned that some of our citizens were opposing such a princely gift, which they are spending vast sums of money out of their public treasuries to provide for."

When he took office in 1909, Pennewill appointed his brother, associate supreme court justice James Pennewill, as Chief Justice. Although in retrospect, it seems to have been the height of nepotism, it was perfectly justified according to contemporary observors since Judge Pennewill was considered the best qualified man in the state for the job.

After leaving office in 1913, Simeon Pennewill returned to Sussex County and lived in Greenwood and Dover alternately for the remainder of his life. Pennewill remained active in politics and was a strong voice for the conservative wing of the Republican Party. He was unalterably opposed to the adoption of a school code for the state in 1920 and also to the ratification of the Women's Suffrage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution although his brother's wife was one of the state's leading suffragettes.

John G. Townsend, Jr.

Delaware's 55th Governor, John G. Townsend, Jr., of Selbyville, was one of the most remarkable men in the history of Sussex County, and Worcester County, Md., where he was born in 1871. In his lengthy obituary of Townsend in the Wilmington Morning News on his death at 93 in 1964, Wilmington News- Journal reporter William P. Frank called him the classic "rags to riches" story.

Townsend, who served as governor from 1916 to 1920, including the years of World War I, went on to serve two terms in the U.S. Senate and became a business leader in farming, orchards, the strawberry business, the lumber business, the chicken business, canning, highway construction, and banking. The senator also, according to Frank, invented the strawberry ice cream soda one afternoon in a Millsboro restaurant.

He began his career as a relief telegrapher for the Pennsylvania Railroad in Bishop Station and in Millsboro at the age of 21. Shortly thereafter, having had a chance to study the operation of the railroad and learn its needs, Townsend began supplying the railroad with crossties. The new business soon enabled him to go from a $12.50-a-week job and a one-room house to owning his own sawmill, manufacturing crossties and pilings for the railroad. In 1894, he moved to Selbyville and began looking for other business opportunities, which he soon found in the cultivation of strawberries for market. One of the main problems of Sussex County farmers in days of imperfect transportation had been getting their produce to market. Townsend solved that problem in part by talking the railroad into sending refrigerator cars to southeastern Sussex for the fresh shipment of his strawberry crops.

The next problem was what to do with the excess strawberries and it was at that point that Townsend had the idea of manufacturing strawberry syrup and canning strawberries after his encounter with the Millsboro restaurant owner. Shortly thereafter, he began a cannery. Townsend eventually became known as the "Strawberry King of America," and in his later years was in the habit of sending thousands of quarts of strawberries to his former colleagues in Congress every year.

His next venture was banking. Townsend opened the Baltimore Trust Company in Selbyville on a $5,000 investment and lived to see it become one of the largest banks in the state.

Townsend became active in politics before the turn of the century and was elected a member of the state house of representatives in 1901, serving until 1903. Townsend ran for governor in 1916 and was the only Republican on the ticket to be elected.

During his four years as governor, Townsend guided to passage in the General Assembly one of the most progressive packages of legislation ever enacted in such a short period. A state highway commission was established and funds appropriated to finance the state's first major highway construction program. A state income tax and inheritance tax were established. Bills were enacted regulating child labor, and establishing workmen's compensation and mother's pensions. The program at Delaware College (now the University of Delaware) was expanded and improved. He set up the state's first draft system, created what later became the state Department of Public Welfare, paved the way for the state's first budget system, established the "Delaware Colony for the Feebleminded" at Stockley, streamlined and expanded the Delaware National Guard, enacted a program of school construction for blacks throughout the state, established the state banking commission and provided for annual bank examinations.

Townsend enacted legislation aiding vocational education, established the state industrial school for girls, authorized state tuition payments for teachers attending summer school, and established the state's first school code, a measure which angered many Sussex Countians. He finished his term with a surplus of $1,700,000.

Townsend, later known as "Mr. Republican of Delaware," attended every Republican National Convention from 1904 to 1960 with the exception of 1920 when his fellow Sussex Countians refused to endorse

Candidate for Governor

JOHN G. TOWNSEND, Jr.

him as a delegate, being still angry about his strong support of women's suffrage .and a uniform school code.

After he left office, Townsend expanded his strawberry growing operation, eventually establishing 23 strawberry processing plants from Tennesse to Delaware. He ventured into the raising and canning of other vegetables such as string beans and, in the 1920's and 1930's became the state's leading orchardman with 1,500 acres of orchards in the Bridgeville and Delmar areas and more elsewhere. Townsend later became owner of the second largest orchard acreage in the country. His U.S. Senate colleague, Harry Byrd of Virginia, was the nation's largest orchardman.

At the same time, Townsend had established a large highway construction company at Selbyville and was becoming heavily involved in the rapidly developing Delmarva poultry industry. Townsend was also one of the first major growers of soybeans. By the 1940's and 1950's, he owned or controlled more than 20,000 acres of farmland in Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire. In the meantime, his early sawmill business had grown into the Selbyville Manufacturing Company, a dealer in lumber and building supplies.

In 1928, Townsend was nominated by the Republicans for the U.S. Senate while away on a business trip to Florida. Running against the Democratic incumbent, Thomas F. Bayard of the famed New Castle County political family, Townsend won by 20,000 votes. He served two terms in the senate before being defeated for a third term by the late James M. Tunnell, Sr., of Georgetown, in 1940.

During the last 25 years of his life, he led an active retirement from political office, managing all his far-flung business interests. In 1957, nearly 1,000 persons, including then Vice President Richard M. Nixon, attended an 86th birthday party for him in Selbyville. In 1964, Townsend who in both business and politics had served as an integral link in the state's movement into modern times, died at the age of 93.

Elbert N. Carvel

Sussex County's most recent governor and one of the state's most effective chief executives of modern times is Elbert N. Carvel of Laurel who served as the 63rd and the 65th Governor of Delaware from 1948 to 1952 and from 1960 to 1964. Carvel was born at Shelter Heights, Long Island, in 1910, and grew up in Baltimore, attending college and law school there.

Like Townsend, Carvel came to Sussex as a young man, first becoming successful in business and then proceeding to demolish the old maxim of Delaware politics that someone who was born outside the state can't be elected to high office. In 1936, he was named general manager and treasurer of Laurel's Valliant Fertilizer Company. In 1940, he became vice-president of the Milford Fertilizer Company as well and in 1945, he was named president of Valliant.

Carvel also became active in Democratic politics and was elected Lieutenant Governor in 1944 to Republican Governor Walter Bacon. In 1948, Carvel was elected governor to succeed Bacon and was only the second Democratic governor the state had had in 50 years. During his first term, among other actions, the Governor was responsible for the acquisition by the state of large areas of parkland, and for the modernization of state governmental machinery.

He was elected to a second term in 1960, eight years after the conclusion of his first term and between 1960 and 1964 did much to promote the industrial development of the state, including the establishment of the Delaware Industrial Building Commission. Carvel also brought about the establishment of the state planning office and the state development department. Like Townsend, he left the state with a financial surplus at the end of his term, the last governor to do so.

Carvel has been his party's candidate for the U.S. Senate and has remained otherwise active in Democratic politics since leaving office in 1964. Still involved in his business interests in Laurel, Carvel has also remained active in education as a member of the University of Delaware Board of Trustees.

In recent years, he has become a strong spokesman for conservation and the development of clean, high-level industry in Delaware, and serves generally as one of the state's leading "elder statesmen." Together with former U.S. Senator John J. Williams of Millsboro, Carvel was the co-chairman of a state commission to study tax and fiscal reform in the state.

He is today Sussex County's only living ex-governor with the exception of former Governor Russell W. Peterson who maintains a home at Rehoboth Beach but spends much of his time in Washington, D.C., as chairman of the President's Council on Environmental Quality.

Sussex has had its share of interesting characters

In the 344 years since it was first settled by the Dutch in 1631, Sussex has been the home of a long succession of interesting, important, and unusual men and women. Some of these characters such as Peter Cornelis Plockhoy, the Dutch Mennonite Philosopher who established a colony at Lewes; Thomas Robinson, the Indian River Hundred farmer and storekeeper who became Delaware's leading loyalist during the Revolution; Major Thomas Fisher of Lewes who was equally important to the other side; and Patty Cannon, the county's most feared outlaw, are mentioned at length elsewhere in this history of the county.

The following pages include brief biographical accounts of some of the countless other Sussex Countians who have played a part in the history of the county.

Helmanus Wiltbank

Helmanus Wiltbank (or Hermanus, as he is sometimes known) was probably the first permanent European settler in what is now Sussex County and was the founder of the county's ancient Wiltbank family. Born in Sweden in about 1625, Wiltbank later emigrated to New Amsterdam about 1650 and according to Emerson Wilson's account of his life in "Delaware's Forgotten Heroes," he obtained a grant of 800 acres in what is now Sussex around 1660.

Wiltbank's ship is said to have wrecked off Cape Henlopen as he sailed toward his new home and he swam ashore with his wife and children. Wiltbank rapidly established himself near Lewes and was instrumental in persuading other settlers to come to the area. He may also have been Lewes first schoolteacher.

In the twenty years after Wiltbank's arrival, the Lewes area passed from control of the Dutch to the English, back to the Dutch, back to the English and under them was contested between Lord Baltimore and William Penn. Wiltbank was wily enough to pledge allegiance to each new master in turn and, with the exception of Lord Baltimore, was appointed to a variety of magisterial posts by each.

In the course of this diplomatic maneuvering, Wiltbank added substantially to his holdings in Lewes & Rehoboth and Broadkill Hundreds. Wiltbank was quick to pledge allegiance to William Penn upon the new proprietor's arrival in 1682 and Penn appointed him judge of the county. He died an honored and respected pillar of the community in January of 1683.

Captain Thomas Fenwick

Captain Thomas Fenwick, the man for whom Fenwick Island is named, first came to the Baltimore Hundred area in the early 1680's. Fenwick's early origins are largely unknown, but shortly after he first arrived on the peninsula, he was granted several large tracts in Somerset County, Md., among which were "Fenwick's Choice," "Winter Pasture," "Cow's Quarters," "Dumfries," and "Scottish Plot."

Shortly before moving to the Fenwick Island area, he received a large grant there of the same name from William Penn. Later, he was appointed to Penn's Provincial Council and became a justice of the peace, sheriff of Sussex County, and register of wills. Fenwick died at Lewes in 1708.

Rev. Matthew Wilson

The Reverend Matthew Wilson was born in Chester County, Pa., in 1731 and was educated as a Presbyterian minister at the New London Academy, the forerunner of the University of Delaware. Wilson also studied medicine in Philadelphia and seems to have made most of his income from that profession during his life.

Wilson came to Lewes in 1756 as the pastor of Presbyterian congregations at Lewes and Coolspring. In 1767 he was made pastor of the Indian River Presbyterian Church (also known as Old Sawmill Church) near the present-day Millsboro. He was one of the best-educated Sussex Countians of his day.

With the coming of the conflict against England, Wilson was an ardent patriot and preached his views from his pulpits. In his article in "Delaware History," entitled "Matthew Wilson - Professor, Preacher, Patriot, Physician," Elbert Chance writes that Wilson inscribed the word "Liberty" on his cocked hat and wore it proudly in the streets of the largely Tory Lewes. He even named a son "James Patriot Wilson."

Wilson was an accomplished writer and essayist and wrote frequently for publication in magazines and journals of the day. Among his best-known articles was one which appeared in a Pennsylvania publication known as the American Magazine at the time of the British tax on East Indian tea in which Wilson preached against the use of tea and included numerous recipes for concocting tea substitutes from herbs and vegetables.

Wilson also wrote for the American Musuem and for the prestigious journal "Transactions of the American Philosophical Society." Among his articles was one which appeared in the "Pennsylvania Magazine" of 1775 entitled, "History of a Malignant Fever, Attended with Some New Symptoms, in Sussex County, on Delaware," in which Wilson wrote, "The area affected by the fever was high and dry," largely in Indian River Hundred, while, "no people are more healthy than the inhabitants of our cypress-swamps, who raise healthy families, surrounded with water, woods, and ponds, in open cabins. . ."

Wilson was a surgeon with the Delaware Militia during the Revolution and a charter member of the Delaware Medical Society. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by the University of Pennsylvania in 1786. He died at the age of 60 in 1790.

General John Dagworthy

Although General John Dagworthy, the commander of the Sussex County Militia during the Revolution, has been mentioned in the chapter on the war, he is also noteworthy because of an earlier battle-his personal feud with George Washington. It began during the French and Indian War when Dagworthy was a captain in command of Maryland troops on the western frontier at Fort Cumberland.

Dagworthy had served in the earlier King George's War as an officer from his native New Jersey during the 1740's. At its conclusion, he visited England where he was given a commission as a regular British Army captain. Dagworthy later moved to Worcester County, Md., and under his same Royal commission commanded Maryland troops in the French and Indian War in the late 1750's.

While at Fort Cumberland, he refused to take orders from a young and inexperienced Virginia militia Colonel, the 24-year-old Washington, on the grounds that a regular British Army captain outranked a Virginia militia colonel. Washington was irate and threatened to resign his commission. The Governor of Virginia took his side, but the British General Braddock and Maryland Governor Sharpe sided with Dagworthy. After Braddock's death, Washington made a special trip to Boston to lay the matter in the hands of Braddock's acting successor, Governor Shirley of Massachusetts, who ruled in his favor.

Dagworthy took the ruling in good humor and went on to establish an enviable record in the war which resulted in his being awarded massive land grants by the Maryland Assembly in what are now Dagsboro, Gumboro, and Broad Creek Hundreds of Sussex County. At the beginning of the Revolution, Dagworthy, a staunch patriot, was one of the best qualified military officers in the colonies. Although he was later commissioned a brigadier general by the Continental Congress, Washington, as commander-in-chief, refused to assign Dagworthy to a command on the battlefield and he spent the war chasing the Tories of Sussex County through the swamps and forests, his talents largely wasted.

Colonel John Jones

Col. John Jones of Indian River Hundred was a leading farmer, militiaman, patriot, philosopher, and inventor of the late 18th century. Jones, who lived at his large estate at Unity Grove, on the river, was one of the few Delawareans elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia. The organization, which had been founded by Benjamin Franklin, was composed of the intellectual elite of the American colonies during the last half of the 18th century and into the 19th century. An account of the organization by Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., in "Delaware History" notes that it was an American equivalent to the British Royal Society and other eminent scientific groups of the day. amateur inventors, scholars, philosophers, and scientists from throughout the colonies sent articles and notices and manuscripts dealing with their work to the society and it was considered a mark of considerable achievement to have an article published in its journal, not to mention being elected for membership.

In 1769, the astronomers among the society's membership cooperated with their peers in such far-flung places as St. Petersburg and Yakutsk in Russia, Tahiti, Manila, Hudson's Bay, Gibraltar, and Greenwich, England, in observing the transit of the planet Venus across the surface of the sun. Obseratories were established at Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Lewes.

One of Jones' early experiments which won notice by the society was the draining of Sussex County marshes. Later he pursued the manufacture of wine from wild grapes along the beach and from the swamp. In 1771, he invented a mowing machine which Bell called, "perhaps the earliest of its kind," and followed it several years later with one of the first manure spreaders. Jones later invented a simple but effective bridge design which he felt would be of importance in the expansion of American society into the west.

Jones was also a patriot of importance in the state, serving as the president of the Sussex County Council of Safety in 1776 and later as a member of the state council of safety. In 1775, he was commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the Sussex County militia and served as a member of the staff of General John Dagworthy as well as the commander of a militia company.

Jones spent much of his life in pursuit of improved scientific methods of farming and early industrial development. Among his other projects, he had established a salt works at Indian River Inlet before the Revolution. In 1777, Col. Jones offered to expand his operation to provide the salt requirements of the entire state during the years of acute salt shortage caused by the war. The General Assembly appropriated one thousand pounds for the project, but Jones was unable to carry out the plan and the money was returned.

Jones, who died shortly after 1800, served as an associate justice of the state supreme court from the last years of the Revolution until his death. He is perhaps Sussex County's finest example of the classic 18th century philosopher-statesman-farmer of the Enlightenment who, like Jefferson in Virginia and Franklin in Pennsylvania, saw it as a civic duty to further the growth of science and the intellect as well as attending to the political and military needs of society.

William Hill Wells

William Hill Wells became the political and financial heir to General John Dagworthy when he married the childless General's ward, Elizabeth Dagworthy Adyelotte, in the 1780's. Wells, who was born in New Jersey but moved shortly thereafter to Sussex County, studied law in Georgetown and was admitted to the bar in 1791.

He was active at the same time in the management

of Dagworthy's vast land holdings and business interests in the Dagsboro area, and also in politics. Wells was elected to the General Assembly in 1794 at the age of 27 and in 1799, he was elected to the U.S. Senate at the age of 30.

Wells resigned from the senate in 1804 and returned to Sussex County where he and his wife established themselves in great style at Dagworthy's Mansion at Dagsboro. In addition to his business interests which by the early 19th century were considerable, Wells also maintained law offices in Georgetown and Dover. In 1813, he was elected to a second term in the U.S. Senate by the General Assembly and served until 1816.

In the meantime, according to Emerson Wilson, Wells entered the infant oil business since the demand for the substance was growing in America. His representatives discovered oil in Tioga County, Pa., near the New York State line on land owned by Wells and a thriving oil business grew up in the area. A town began because of the oil field and it was later named Wellsboro in his honor. Generally, the first Pennsylvania oil well is said to have been started by Col. Edwin Drake in the 1850's, but Wells' operations predated those of Drake by decades. Wells died at Millsboro in 1829 and was buried in the churchyard at Prince George's Chapel in Dagsboro.

His son-in-law, Col. William Waples, is generally credited with having started the present town of Millsboro because of his early and extensive business operations there, some of which he owned jointly with his father-in-law, the senator. Among the family businesses were a tannery, a saw mill, the iron forge at Millsboro, a stage coach line, and thousands of acres of farmland. Waples was also instrumental with John M. Clayton in the 1830's in trying to bring the first railroads to Kent and Sussex Counties.

Outerbridge Horsey

Outerbridge Horsey is a good example of a trend which has figured largely in Delaware politics since the early 18th century—the Sussex Countian who begins a career on home ground and then moves north to make a name for himself in the "great world" of Dover and Wilmington. Many of the venerable names affixed to Wilmington's largest law firms at any given time are among the oldest in Kent and Sussex history.

Of the firm "Richards, Layton, and Finger," the Richards family was from Bridgeville and Georgetown before a line branched north in the 19th century. The Laytons were from Nanticoke Hundred. The Morris of "Morris, Nichols, Arsht, and Tunnell" was descended from the Morris family of Northwest Fork Hundred, the Tunnell from the Baltimore Hundred Tunnell family.

Outerbridge Horsey was born in Little Creek Hundred in southwestern Sussex County near Laurel in 1777. He received a good education for the period from tutors and at several of the many private academies in existence in the state. Horsey studied law under James A. Bayard of Wilmington where he, himself, practiced after the conclusion of his studies.

Horsey also learned the Federalist creed from Bayard, who with Hamilton and Adams was one of the founders of the party. Horsey served two terms in the General Assembly from 1800 to 1804. Horsey was later elected attorney general of the state. In private life he was a man of some learning and was a strong supporter of an early college in Wilmington.

In 1810, he was elected by the General Assembly to a seat in the general assembly where he and his mentor, Bayard, strongly opposed the War of 1812. When war was declared, however, both supported the war effort and Horsey became a member of Wilmington's Committee of Safety. In 1815, he was elected to another term in the senate and served until 1812. In 1820, the voters of the state were strongly opposed to the Missouri Compromise, admitting Missouri to the Union as a slave state. Horsey and the state's other senator voted in favor of the measure, however, since neither believed that Congress did not have the power to govern the introduction of slavery into the territories.

In 1821, Horsey did not seek reelection in view of his unpopular vote. Shortly thereafter, he moved to his wife's large estate in Frederick County, Md., and died there in 1842.

The 'Milford Bard'

John Lofland, the "Milford Bard," was perhaps the state's finest early poet and author, but he died as the loser in a nearly life-long battle with opium addiction.

Lofland was born in Milford in 1798 to an affluent local family. In 1815, he began studying medicine with an uncle, Dr. James Lofland and shortly thereafter, he entered the University of Pennsylvania Medical School.

Lofland, like so many other Sussex Countians of his age, was a classic and pure example of an early American type. In his case, unfortunately, it was the 19th century stereotype of a country boy who goes to the city to find his fortune and finds instead dissipation. He became a hard drinker, hard partygoer and, incidentally, a brilliant student. Shortly before graduation, however, Lofland wrote a disparaging poem about one of his professors, infuriating the faculty and bringing about his expulsion.

Shortly thereafter his opium addiction began when he suffered a prolonged bout of illness and started taking "laudanum" for his pain. He went back home to Milford and took up residence in a tower room in his parent's home which he called "the garret." He spent his time reading widely and beginning his first serious work as a poet. In 1823, his first poems were published in the Delaware "Gazette" under the name "The Milford Bard." According to an account of his career in Emerson Wilson's "Delaware's Forgotten Heroes," Lofland's first poems, "described the beauties of Sussex County, the history and the importance of Delaware, and they often condemned slavery."

Lofland's work was eventually printed widely throughout the east and his first book, called "The Harp of Delaware," was published. In 1838, he went to Baltimore to edit a book on agriculture written by an uncle and remained to become a member of the city's literary circle and a friend of Edgar Allen Poe, another leading poet and author suffering from drug addiction.

He lived in Baltimore for the next eight years, continuing his writing and taking annual "cures" at a hospital there. After having his second book of poetry published, Lofland returned to Delaware and became the editor of a Wilmington paper. During those same years, Lofland advertised in local papers his willingness to write speeches, poems, and prose of all kinds for a small fee and he was regularly deluged with requests from fledgling lovers, describing their paramour's charms and asking for stirring poems extolling their virtues.

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Lofland continued his unsuccessful treatments for opium addiction at the New Castle County almshouse and, at the same time, continued to write. Lofland had by this time, according to Wilson, become so attached to his pen name "The Milford Bard," that he began signing his letters "John Lofland, Bard" and finally "John Lofland Bard," adopting the term as his surname.

The poet was working on a new novel about Delaware when, in January of 1849, he suffered a hemorrhage which led to his death on January 22. He was buried in Wilmington.

Russell Hobbs

With the coming of the Civil War, many Sussex Countians were strong Confederate sympathizers and some put their views into action by joining the Confederacy. One such figure was Russell Hobbs of Georgetown who became quartermaster of the Condederate raider "Alabama."'

Hobbs was born on a farm near Georgetown in 1808 and, in his youth, became apprentice to a local cabinetmaker. He was not happy in the role and soon fled to sea where for the next several decades he sailed much of the world and lived in England for a short time. He returned to Sussex County in the early 1840's and married a Georgetown girl who died several years later.

In 1857, Hobbs married Elizabeth Burbage Wilson of Milton and purchased a farm at Snow Hill, Md. As the Civil War approached, he became increasingly committed to his southern sympathies and with the beginning of hostilities, he sold his farm and bought a sloop. Hobbs began carrying supplies from Seaford and other ports along the Chesapeake to the south. Although some of his cargoes may well have included arms and ammunition, clearly a treasonous offense if captured, he was fortunate enough to be carrying nothing relating to munitions when he was seized by federal officers in 1862. Hobbs' sloop was confiscated anyway, and he was placed under a bond requiring him to cease giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

After a short stay on a farm near Milton, Hobbs disappeared in the spring of 1863 shortly after being notified that he was to be drafted into the Union Army. Hobbs surfaced in, of all places, Capetown, South Africa, and when the "Alabama" visited the port to refuel and resupply in August of 1863, Hobbs signed on as a member of the crew. He sailed with the raider through the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific, back to Africa, and finally up the coast to Cherbourg, France. During the course of the lengthy cruise, Hobbs was promoted to the position of quartermaster on board the vessel.

When the "Alabama" put in at Cherbourg for fuel and supplies, the U.S.S. "Kearsarge, "which had been stalking the raider, appeared off the port. The "Alambama" had little choicé but to face the Union vessel which was an early form of ironclad and therefore considerably superior to the wooden "Alabama." The "Alabama" was eventually sunk and Hobbs and the ship's officers escaped in a lifeboat. They were picked up by a British yacht and taken to England where Hobbs was given an honorable discharge from the Confederate Navy.

Later he returned to Sussex County where his wife and family still lived. Hobbs was arrested as a rebel pirate and was taken to Philadelphia to stand trial. According to Dr. Harold Hancock in his book "Delaware During the Civil War," Hobbs told authorities he had been on a vessel captured by the "Alabama," and had been forced to serve in her crew. His wife succeeded in enlisting the aid of fellow-Milton resident James Ponder who later became Governor of Delaware, and Hobbs was released from prison on a bond signed by Ponder and several other prominent citizens. He was pardoned in 1865 by President Andrew Johnson and lived quietly in Milton. One of his six daughters was named for the daughter of the captain of the "Alabama," a fact which does little to support Hobbs' apparently successful fabrication that he was forced to serve on board the ship. He died in 1901 at the age of 92.

General Alfred T.A. Torbert

Unlike his fellow Georgetown native, Russell Hobbs, Alfred Thomas Archimedes Torbert fought hard for the Union during the Civil War and became one of the county's highest ranking military men. He was born in 1833 and was educated in Georgetown before going on to West Point. He served as a young officer in the west before the outbreak of the war.

In 1861, he was appointed colonel of a New Jersey volunteer regiment and fought through the early campaigns of the war. He was promoted to brigadier general in late 1862 at the age of 29. Torbert was a calvary division and later corps commander and fought in most of the major battles of the war. He was promoted to major general in 1864. Among his officers was Brigadier General George A. Custer who later went on to uncertain glory at "Custer's Last Stand" at the Battle of Little Big Horn.

After the war, Torbert returned to Sussex County where he married a Milford girl and settled down to life as a farmer for several years. In 1869, he was appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant to the post of U.S.. Minister to San Salvador. In 1871, he assumed similar duties in Havana and in 1873, he became U.S. Consul General in Paris.

He resigned in 1878 and returned to Milford where he became active in Republican politics and went into business. In 1880, while on a voyage to Mexico aboard the steamer "City of Vera Cruz" to undertake an engineering assignment, Torbert drowned when the vessel encountered a hurricane off the Florida Coast. His body washed ashore and was brought to New York where memorials were held to him with full military pageantry. Later Torbert's remains were taken aboard a special train to Philadelphia and finally to Milford where he was buried.

Trusten Polk

Trusten Polk, a native of Bridgeville and a member of the prominent Polk family of western Sussex, went on to become a colonel in the Confederate Army and later governor and U.S. Senator of Missouri. Polk was

born in 1811, the nephew of Governor Peter Causey and a cousin of Governor Charles Polk. He was also distantly related to President James K. Polk and to Leonidas Polk, the Episcopal Bishop of Louisiana who became a major general in the Confederate Army.

Polk graduated from Yale in 1831 after an early education in Sussex County schools. After his graduation, he read law under Delaware Attorney General James Rogers and was admitted to the Delaware bar in 1835. Although Polk practiced briefly in Georgetown, he soon moved west and settled in St. Louis where he became a well known attorney and a power in Democratic politics.

Polk was a strong supporter of slavery and the southern cause and in 1856 he succeeded in defeating the Republican candidate for governor, former Missouri U.S. Senator Thomas Hart Benton. Polk had served in the position for only a few months, however, when he resigned to become a U.S. senator.

He served in the senate until December of 1861 when he returned to Missouri and from there was commissioned as an officer in the Confederate Army although his state did not secede from the Union. In January of 1862, he was expelled from the U.S. Senate, although by then he was already serving in the southern forces. Polk was later appointed presiding judge of the Trans-Mississippi Department of the Confederate Army. In 1864, he was captured and spent a short time in a Union prison. At the conclusion of the war, he returned to the practice of law and died in St. Louis in 1876.

Eugene Cooper

Only the sketchiest details of the life of Eugene L. Cooper of Georgetown survive, but the little information remaining is tantalizing. He was born on July 4, 1851, in Georgetown, the son of Benjamin B. and Hannah Cooper and enlisted in the U.S. Army under an assumed name, George C. Morris, in October, 1872.

On his enlistment papers, Cooper-Morris listed his profession as carriage maker. He was later assigned to Troop I of the 7th U.S. Calvary Regiment and died along with almost everyone else in his regiment at the Battle of the Little Big Horn in Wyoming Territory on June 26, 1876, still under his alias.

The only other references to Cooper who was a corporal at the time of his death at "Custer's Last Stand," involve a petition filed by his mother, Hannah Cooper, for her son's federal pension after the death of her husband in 1888. The reason for Cooper's enlistment under an assumed name is unknown. It is possible that he had committed a crime and in the time-honored American tradition decided to enlist rather than face the law. His family knew of his alias and wrote to him regularly under the name George Morris during his military service.

Paynter Frame

Paynter Frame of Indian River Hundred was born in 1826. He was descended from the well-known Paynter family of early Delaware and from the equally prestigious Frame family of Dagsboro and Indian River Hundreds. Frame's immediate family background is a good example of the often confusing relationships of Sussex Countians of the day.

His grandmother, Mary Vaughn West Burton Frame outlived three husbands, the last of whom was Frame's grandfather, Robert Frame. Her second marriage had been to William Burton to whom she bore four children, including Doctor and later Governor William Burton. She bore three children to Robert Frame, including Paynter Frame's father, George, and Robert Frame the younger who later became Delaware Attorney General.

Thus Paynter Frame's "step-uncle" was governor. His father served in the General Assembly and as Sussex County Sheriff and was an unsuccessful candidate for governor in 1840, before dying in 1845.

Frame was educated at private schools in Georgetown, Seaford, and Millsboro, and then took over the management of his late father's 1,500 acres of farmland. He became perhaps the most accomplished farmer and agronomist of his day in Delaware and was a pioneer in the cultivation of fruit trees and other crops which were to play a major role in the economic development of the county.

At one time, Frame owned more than 5,000 peach trees and large pear and apple orchards as well. He developed many strains of peaches and other fruit, but Frame is best remembered as "the Watermelon King," because of his extensive experiments with different strains of melons. Frame represented the state at the National Agricultural Convention in New York in 1879 and served on many national agricultural and horticultural commissions of the day.

He also found time for politics and served three terms at intervals in the Delaware General Assembly as a Democrat. Frame also ran as the Democratic candidate for governor in 1870 and 1872, losing both elections. He died a bachelor in the last decade of the 19th century.

Chief William Russell Clark

Chief William Russell Clark of Indian River Hundred is the man largely responsible for keeping the tribal heritage of Delmarva's Nanticoke Indians alive. Clark was born in 1855, shortly before the death of his kinswoman, Lydia Clark, the last person on Delmarva to speak the Nanticoke tongue.

The information in this sketch was taken from C.A. Weslager's "Delaware's Forgotten Folk," an account of the Indians of the peninsula into modern times. Throughout the 19th century, long after the bulk of their forebears had fled Delmarva in the face of European settlement, a small community of Nanticoke descendents remaining in Indian River Hundred struggled to keep their heritage alive.

The violently anti-black, anti-Indian white establishment of the day was in the habit of classifying anyone who was not absolutely white as colored, a designation which lumped a great many categories of people into one big "non-white" classification at various times and places including Mexicans and other Latin Americans, Indians, Negroes, Orientals and virtually everyone else of any descent other than European.

In the 1880's, the Indian community of Indian River Hundred had incorporated under state law as a means of establishing their own school and later the Indian Mission Church. Wm. Russel Clark was one of the most affluent members of the community which included the Wrights, the Harmons, the Streets, the Sockums, the Norwoods, the Moseleys, the Johnsons, the Burtons, the Jacksons, the Drains, and other families of mixed Indian and white ancestry.

Weslager writes of Clark that he was, "tall and austere. His black hair hung down to his collar. An aquiline nose, high cheeks, long face and copper color marked him as an Indian wherever he went." He adds that Clark considered himself the protector of the Indian community along the river and refused to accept any classification other than Indian.

In the second decade of this century, the community was visited by Dr. Frank Speck, an anthropologist on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, who sought to make a thorough study of the customs and folkways of the group in Indian River Hundred. Speck, who later wrote several books on the Nanticokes, became a close friend of many of the families in the area during the several decades in which he was a frequent visitor.

Weslager writes that, "Speck realized that Russel and his people did not wish to assume the privileges of white people any more than they approved of being classified as blacks. They were a people apart and wanted to exist as such."

Finally, in 1922, Speck assisted Clark and other Indian leaders in establishing the Nanticoke Indian Association which was duly incorporated in February of that year. Its first officers were William Russel Clark, chief; Lincoln Harmon, assistant chief; Eliza Ann Johnson, secretary; Arthur Johnson, treasurer; Isaac Johnson, field agent; and Warren Wright, Clinton Johnson, and Ferdinand Clark, councilmen. Clark, who had considerable political influence, was instrumental in prevailing upon the General Assembly to incorporate the body.

The most visible aspect of the association were the annual Thanksgiving "pow-wows" held on Clark's property along the river. Eventually, the pow-wows attracted nationwide attention and hundreds of spectators would descend on Oak Orchard to see the dancing and hear eminent Indian speakers from other areas of the country. The pow-wows were held annually until 1936 and then only intermittently in the years that followed.

William Russel Clark died in 1928. He was succeeded as chief of the association by his son, Ferdinand, and later by his sons Robert and Charles Clark. Although Charles Clark was known as Chief Clark "throughout the peninsula until his death several years ago, the Nanticoke Association had become largely inactive.

In recent years, however, there has been a rebirth of ancestral pride and sometimes militant nationalism among Indian groups throughout the U.S. With this new wave of sentiment, the Nanticoke Indian Association has been resurrected in Indian River Hundred and one of its leaders is Kenneth Clark, the grandson of William Russel Clark. With the growth of minority rights in the U.S. in recent years, it is beginning to seem possible that the Nanticokes and other American tribes can once more live simply as the rightful descendents of the first settlers on the American continent.

Mary Ann Sorden Stuart

Mary Ann Stuart was born in Greenwood in 1828 at the large farm of her parents, John and Sarah Owens Pennewill Sorden, and grew up to become one of Delaware's first and most fiery feminists. Her father, John Sorden, was a wealthy landowner and a state senator. He appears to have been liberal in his views of the rights of women and she later wrote that he was the first man in the state senate "to propose the repeal of some of our oppressive laws, and succeeded in having the law giving all real estate to the eldest male heir repealed."

Before the last quarter of the 19th century, women had almost no rights at all under the law. Upon their marriage, any property which they might have possessed became automatically the property of their husbands. If they worked, their wages became the property of their husbands. In 1873, a law was passed giving women the right to make a will, purchase real estate, and hold it exempt from their husband's debts. It was still to be nearly five decades after that date, however, before women were extended full suffrage under the U.S. Constitution with the ratification of the 19th Amendment without, incidentally, the help of the Delaware General Assembly.

Mrs. Stuart married Dr. William W. Stuart in what was described as "one of the most fashionable society weddings that Delaware had ever seen," and the couple had five children. It wasn't until the death of her husband during the 1870's that she became fully active in the early Delaware Women's Suffrage movement. She was also an accomplished businesswomen, chartering trains to carry vacationers on excursions to Rehoboth Beach and Ocean City, Md., then just getting their start as popular summer resorts.

A correspondent for the Wilmington "Every Evening" reported in January, 1881, on the occasion of her address to a joint session of the legislature in an effort to bring about passage of a women's suffrage amendment, "Mrs. Stuart dresses in black, weighs 250 pounds, is good natured, and can talk 10 hours a day at the rate of 200 words per minute."

She was one of the state's first two delegates to the National Suffrage Association convention in Washington in 1870 and was a close friend and associate of Susan B. Anthony and other early "Suffragettes."

Mary R. de Vou, who wrote an account of Mrs. Stuart's career in her history of "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Delaware," published in Reed's "Delaware, A History of the First State," noted that in the campaign of 1884, downstate Republicans had a "ship of state," a boat mounted on wheels, which they named the "New Constitution" and pulled from rally to rally around the state.

When the vessel got to Greenwood, Mrs. Stuart noticed that an Eagle was mounted on top. She came out of her house carrying a "blue hen" in a glass coop and put it in the boat, "saying they should not have an eagle to represent freedom for men and nothing to represent women. So the hen went from one end of Delaware to the other, sitting in state . . ."

Mrs. Stuart died in the late 1890's without living to see the end of her struggle. In later years it became quite bitter in Sussex County. Although many of the county's political leaders like Gov. John G. Townsend, Jr., and Congressman Robert G. Houston of Georgetown (whose wife was a leading suffragette in Sussex) favored ratification of the 19th amendment by the legislature, the anti-suffrage forces carried the day and final ratification of the amendment depended on the actions of other state legislatures.

'Mrs. Stuart dresses in black, weighs 250 pounds, is good natured and can talk 10 hours a day at the rate of 200 words per minute

At an age when most men retire. . .

John G. Townsend, Jr.
1872 - 1965
Founder

Preston C. Townsend
President

Townsends today

The Townsends, Inc. complex on Route 24, east of Millsboro, a portion of which is seen above, has grown enormously since 1935. It now ranks as one of the peninsula's largest fully integrated poultry and grain-handling concerns.

John G. Townsend, Jr., went into the poultry business.

. . . and yesterday

Before he entered the poultry business, John G. Townsend, Jr., was a well known orchardman. He is shown above inspecting a new caterpiller tractor in the early 1930's. The driver was Red Parker and the man at right was a representative of the manufacturer.

John G. Townsend, Jr., of Selbyville, could already look back on a remarkable career of business and public service in 1935 when he was 63 years old. Banker, lumberman, fruit grower, Governor of Delaware, later two-term U.S. Senator, he owned a thousand acres of fruit trees to keep him busy during the years most men retire.

But John G. Townsend was not the retiring type. He had watched with interest as the infant Delmarva Poultry Industry struggled into being just a few miles from his home. By 1935 it had grown into a sizeable local industry and Townsend decided to become a part of it by starting his first poultry-growing operation.

Two years later with that original growing operation expanded more than five-fold, he incorporated the Townsend's firm and launched into the final career in a life filled with careers.

Townsend's, Inc. built a hatchery in 1939 to provide chicks for their expanding business and shortly thereafter then ex-Senator Townsend and his sons began housing and ranging their own breeding flocks. By 1945, the firm had started its own feed mill and owned 10,000 acres of cropland. In five more years a soybean processing plant was added to the growing enterprise.

When Townsends, Inc. opened a large modern poultry processing plant at its Millsboro headquarters in 1957 and further expanded its over-the-road truck fleet in the years that followed it had become one of the first and largest fully integrated poultry firms in the nation. Since then, Townsend's has further expanded and modernized its huge production complex.

Today, with 720 employees, a capacity of 130,000 chickens a day ready for market, and the largest grain handling business in Delaware, Townsends, Inc., continues the tradition of innovation and leadership in the poultry industry which began with John G. Townsend, Jr. in 1935.

TOWNSEND'S, INC.
of Millsboro, Delaware

The legacy of a remarkable man.

Henlopen Light

This aerial view of the Cape Henlopen Lighthouse with the Harbor of Refuge stretched out beyond was taken in 1924 by a pioneering Delaware pilot-photographer. Less than two years later, the famed lighthouse collapsed.

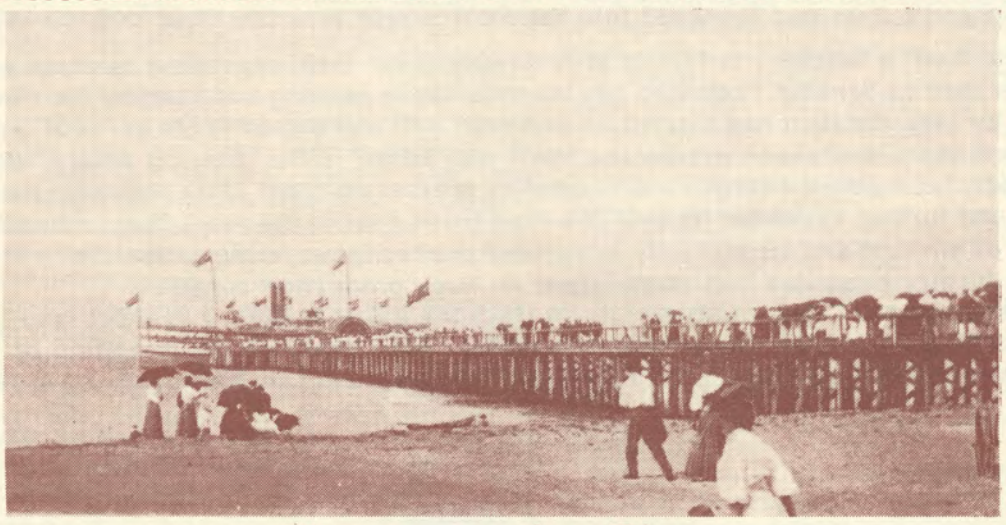
St. George's Chapel

Indian River Hundred

Vintage Sussex Scenes

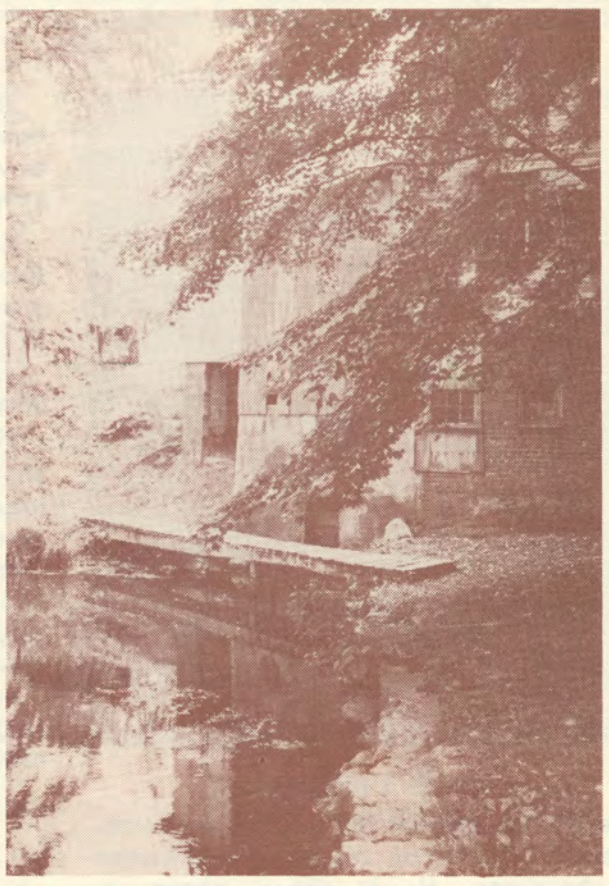
Camp Meeting

The old Lamb's Camp meeting shown above was typical of many camps which once served Sussex Countians as a major social event. Of the nearly 50 camp meetings in the county in the late 19th century, only two are left-the Delmarva Camp near Laurel and Carey's Camp near Phillips Hill



Transportation Pier

The old transportation pier in Lewes harbor, above, was an important link between peninsula railroads and Delaware Bay steamers when this photo was taken shortly after the turn of the century.



Abbott's Mill

Typical of many old Sussex County grist mills is Abbott's Mill, seen in the view above from its mill race. The old mill, several miles southwest of Milford, is now owned by the State of Delaware.

There've been quite a few changes since 1682, the year William Penn named Otto Wolgast one of Sussex County's first magistrates

The Wilguses of today

Donald Wilgus, left, and his brother, Gerald of Wilgus Associates, flank a portrait of their late father, William F. Wilgus, Jr., who founded the family business in 1945.

. . . even the family name is different.

A lot has changed since the first Wilgus arrived in what is today Sussex County before 1682 - even the family name. But there's one thing that hasn't changed - the tradition of community service that started with magistrate Otto Wolgast in 1682.

When Otto's descendents first came down to Baltimore Hundred in the early years of the 18th century, they were called "Wildgoose" and it wasn't until the family had been in the area nearly 100 years that they finally became Wilguses.

In 1945,William F. Wilgus, Jr., onetime state senator and the first fulltime paid secretary of the Delaware Senate, started the Wilgus Insurance Agency. The firm grew and prospered and in 1956, Gerald Wilgus joined his father in business. He was followed eight years later by the other son, Donald.

The family expanded their interests into real estate in 1965. In 1968 the former Wilgus Insurance Agency became Wilgus Associates, Inc., one of Sussex County's most up-to-date insurance and real estate concerns.

Mr. Wilgus, the founder, passed away in 1970, but Wilgus Associates has continued in the tradition he began. Company president Gerald Wilgus manages the Wilgus Associates real estate team while his brother, Donald, heads the insurance side of the firm. George G. Keen and Ronald L. Stephens serve as company vice-presidents.

The company's Independent insurance agency, with a sales and support force of five, handles a full range of insurance ranging from life, health, fire and accident, to flood insurance.

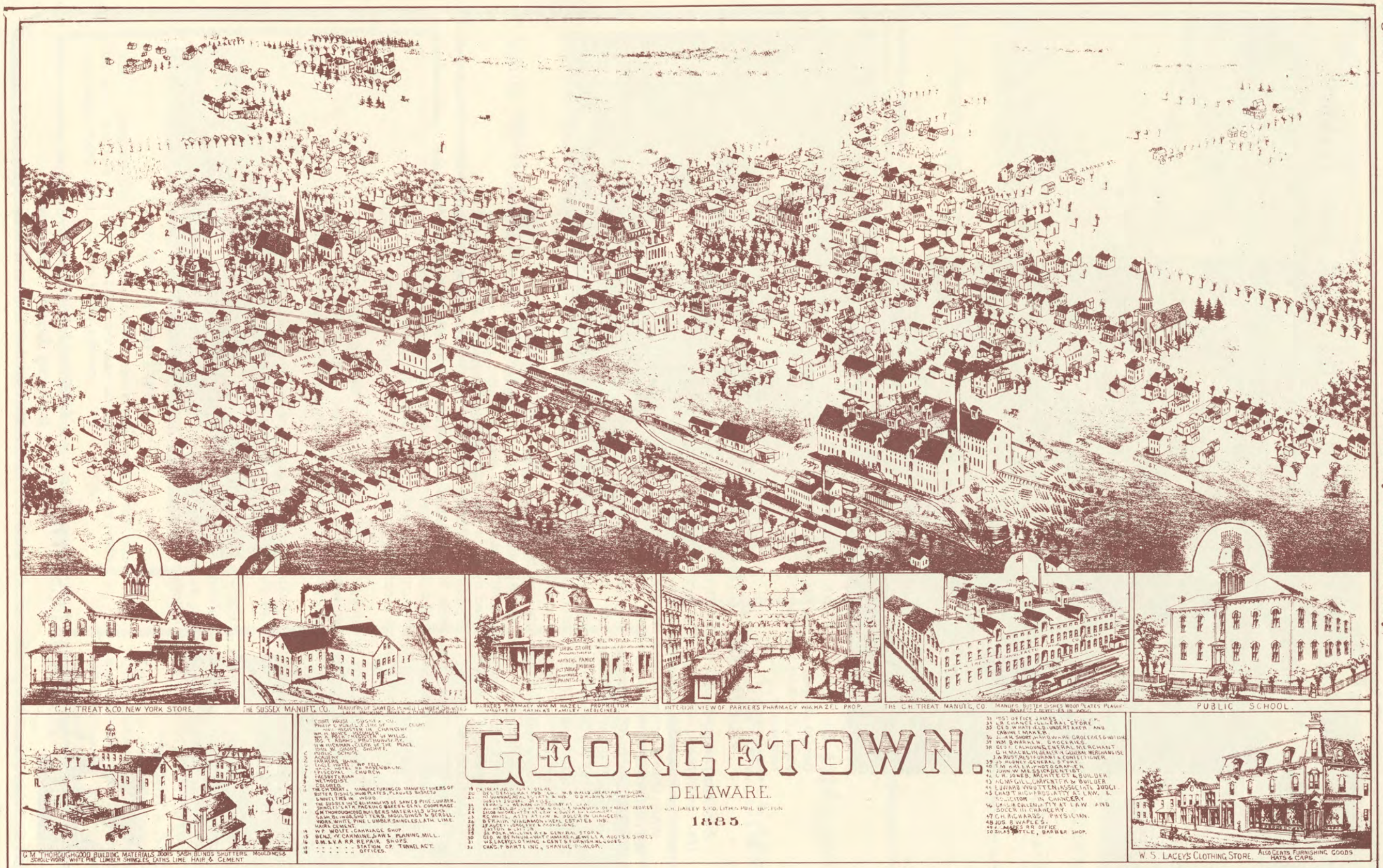
On the real estate side of things, Wilgus Associates has five brokers, two fulltime salesman, and six part-time salesman who together offer some of the county's top services in rental sales, rentals, property management, and high quality residential development.

The formidable combination of experience and expertise has given Wilgus Associates an enviable reputation as one of the county's more forward-looking and progressive firms.

But the Wilgus Associates of today owes its existence to that Dutch settler of 300 years ago, to the Baltimore Hundred planter of 200 years ago, to the Roxana storekeeper of 100 years ago and to a lot of other Sussex Countians, past and present. We are proud to play a part in giving the people of today the Sussex County of yesterday.

WILGUS ® ASSOCIATES, INC.

Delaware Route One
Bethany Beach, Delaware



Reproduced through courtesy of Robert H. Robinson

This panoramic view of the then bustling county seat was printed in 1885.

Are COASTAL *Construction and Supply new in town?*

Well, it depends on how you look at it.

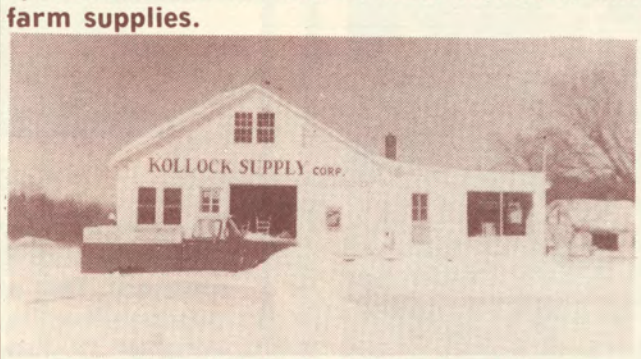
Coastal Construction & Supply - 1976

Coastal Construction Company and Coastal Supply Company are relatively new firms but their roots are deep in the history of Sussex County. The two firms, which share offices on the site of the onetime Dagsboro School, had their direct origins in the Standard Feed Corporation and the Chandler & McCabe Company which began there in the 1930's.

Standard Feed Corporation was owned by William B. Chandler, Jr., and Joseph A. Kollock, Sr. Chandler & McCabe consisted of Wilson McCabe, Sr., and Senator Ebe Chandler. Both firms grew out of the early years of the Sussex County Poultry Industry.

Joseph A. Kollock, Sr., Vernon Steen, Jr., and Wilson McCabe, Jr., are shown in front of Chandler & McCabe in 1957. The building which once served as Dagsboro School burned during the early 1960's.

In a series of evolutionary changes during the 1950's and 1960's, Standard Feed gave way to Kollock Supply Company and Chandler & McCabe to Sussex Litter Company. In 1968, the two firms merged into Coastal Supply Company with interests in farming, and poultry litter operations, and the sale of feed, fertilizer, and farm supplies.



This view of Kollock Supply Co. during a blizzard in the 1960's shows the building in its transition stage between Standard Feed Corp. and Coastal Supply Co., It, too, burned in 1973.

Further changes brought a shift again in the firm's emphasis to custom home construction during the early 1970's under the management of William B. Chandler, Jr., and Joseph A. Kollock, Jr. With that development Coastal Construction Company was formally established in 1973.

While Coastal Supply continues its agricultural business, the construction firm has grown in a short period of time into one of Sussex County's higher quality builders of custom homes with activities throughout the county.

Although the changes have been numerous, the Chandler and Kollock families, associated with the Dagsboro area even before there was a "Dagsborough," have continued their tradition of service to the community and to the county of which it and they are a part.

Coastal

Construction Company and Supply Company

Dagsboro, Delaware

The past and the present can live in harmony . . .

The Barcroft Company, Sussex County's most technologically advanced manufacturing firm, occupies one of the oldest developed sites in Delaware, blending the antiquity of the past with the technology of today.

Located on a tract of land near Cape Henlopen

Henlopen Light

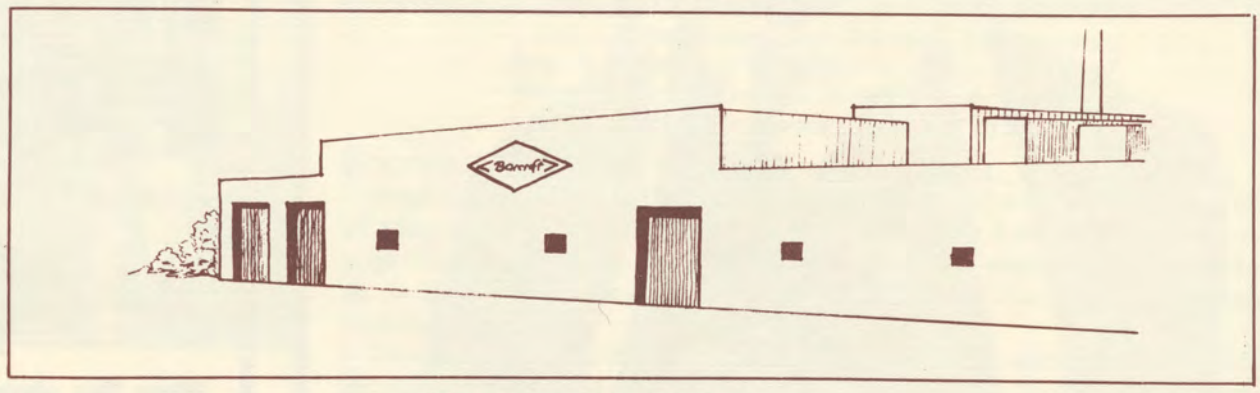
in buildings designed as a bulwark against the savage nor'easters and tropical hurricanes as the Henlopen Light was in its day, Barcroft depends on the sea every bit as much as so many historical Lewes enterprises have.

In years past, a quarantine station was located near the present-day Barcroft plant. The station was situated to receive the sick and maimed from vessels entering or leaving the bay. It is fitting, therefore, that Barcroft is the manufacturer of raw materials for Maalox, an ethical antacid and as such adds continuity to the use of the area as an aid to the sick.

Barcroft was founded in 1968 as a Delaware corporation. Its plant was opened in 1969 and production of aluminum hydroxide and magnesium hydroxide, the latter extracted from sea water, began immediately. This process is highly automated and extremely technical, requiring dedicated and highly trained personnel which Barcroft is fortunate to have. Of the firm's 52 employees, 47 are native Delawareans and more than half live in the Lewes area.

Our company has been and continues to be a good citizen in its approach to the community, its conduct, its use of city, county, state, and national facilities and lands, and in its positive contribution to the area.

Barcroft wishes to thank the author, Dick Carter, and the publisher, Coastal Communications, for their efforts in furthering an interest in the history of Sussex and we are proud to have played a part in its presentation to the people.



The Barcroft Factory

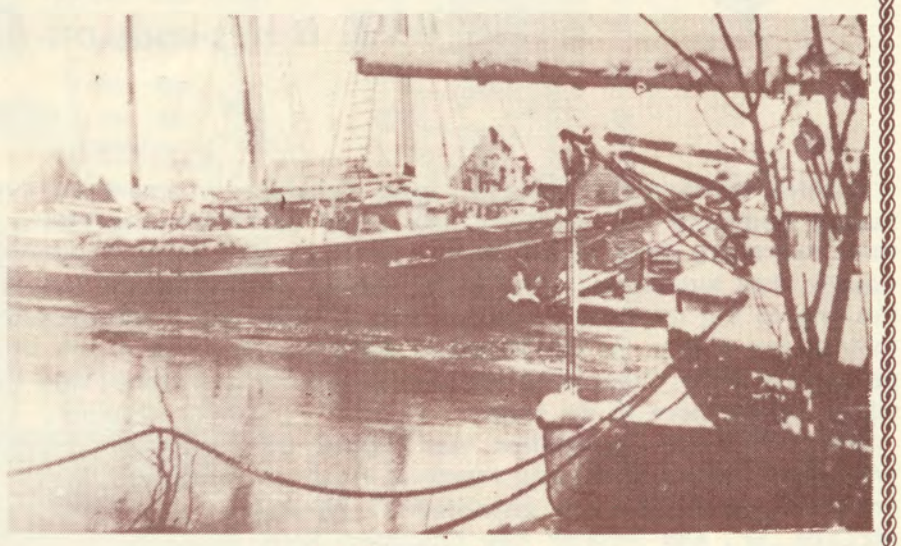
Barcroft ***The Barcroft Company***

Lewes, Delaware

The Pillory

Made before the pillory was abolished in 1905, this picture of an unfortunate evil-doer taken by Georgetown photographer E. Payne shows the festive spirit which prevailed when the pillory and whipping post behind the Sussex County Courthouse were in use.

Chief William Russel Clark



Milton docks

The town of Milton had one of the most active ports and shipbuilding industries in Delaware in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. This photo, which appeared in the town's 150th anniversary booklet in 1958, shows the "Marie Thomas," skippered by Captain George Megee.

Shad fishing

This engraving by famed Delaware artist Howard Pyle appeared in an 1881 issue of Harper's Weekly. It depicts shad fishing on the Delaware Bay as our ancesters knew it.

Rehoboth Avenue

When this photograph of Rehoboth Avenue was taken in the early 1900's, the avenue was largely unpaved. The railroad ran up its center nearly to the boardwalk, and Horn's Pavilion, the apparent destination of this lady, stood at the end on the oceanfront.

Reference Notes

This account of the history of Sussex County is a tapestry of the ideas, research and writing of a great many historians and popular writers, a few novelists, many everyday Sussex Countians and a smidgen of independent research by this writer.

Because of the informal nature of the work and space limitations governing its presentation it is not my intention to present each and every source as its influence is felt. It is my hope, however, that some readers will be moved by what they read to embark on their own voyage into the rich realm of Sussex County history.

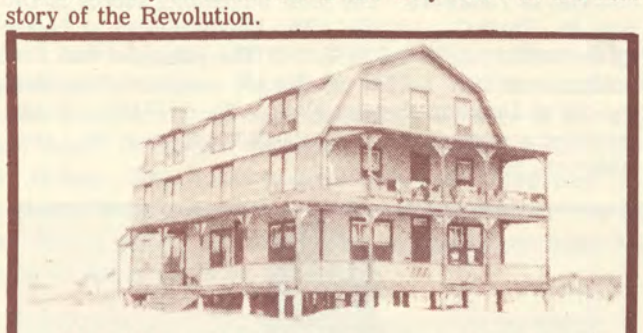
With that in mind, the following is a brief account of the most valuable sources referred to as well as short chapter-by-chapter summaries of important source material used.

+ + +

In the first place, I owe a great debt to J. Thomas Scharf, the author of some portions of his 1888 **"History of Delaware"** and editor of the rest. It has often been noted that Scharf's history is nearly as inaccurate as it is comprehensive. While this is no doubt true, Scharf, rather than puzzle over what information to include, included everything and in so doing generally left some clues as to where to correct the inaccuracies in his account. Scharf should be remembered by students of Delaware history if for no oher reason simply because he manages to include descriptions of the history and chief personages of every town, village, hamlet, country store and wide spot in the road in 1888.

C. A. Weslager's book **"Delaware Forgotten Folk"** is perhaps the closest thing in the body of historical and sociological writing on Sussex County to an "underground classic." Several public libraries in the county possess photocopies of it. Even those are much sought after by people familiar with the book, which gives perhaps the only comprehensive account of the county's single most interesting group – the Nanticoke descendents of Indian River Hundred. The book also explains the manner in which the Indian culture on Delmarva was slowly but surely reduced from the prevailing culture to a smattering of lore and tradition in the hands of a few survivors of the area's earliest residents.

Harold Bell Hancock's 1940 monograph **"The Delaware Loyalists"** is to my mind by far the most useful account of Sussex County during the Revolution. While there has been much of interest written about the Sussex Countians and other Delawareans who fought in the conflict on the battlefields, Hancock's work has blazed new trails in describing the nature of things at home. And in the case of Sussex County at least that is the very heart of the real story of the Revolution.



Kirklyn Hotel - Fenwick Island

Another historian whose works have done much to take the history of Delaware off its pedestal and infuse it with life and fire is Dr. John Munroe from whose book **"Federalist Delaware 1775-1815"** I have drawn much material on the everyday life of Sussex Countians during that era.

Although I drew from it only in passing, Hancock's **"Delaware during the Civil War, a Political History"** is also essential reading for anyone seeking to arrive at an understanding of life in Delaware in the 1860-65 period. Who else, for instance, has gone to the trouble to find out that Negroes were sold into slavery from the steps of the Kent and Sussex County Courthouses by order of the courts several months after the end of the Civil War?

H. Clay Reed's **"A History of the First State,"** published in 1947, is not a "comprehensive" history of the state in the sense of Scharf's history. That is, it does not seek to give an account of every important event in the state's history from the arrival of the first Indian to the present day. It is, though, especially helpful in arriving at an understanding of the state's history in the years since the Civil War, including the story of T. Coleman duPont's efforts to build the world's most modern highway through the state and a very good account of the early years of the Sussex County poultry industry. The accompanying biographical volume of Reed's "History," while suffering from the florid prose and overly subjective descriptions common to most subscription biographies, contains a great deal of otherwise unavailable information on modern Sussex Countians such as Senator John G. Townsend, Jr., and the Grier brothers who founded Milford's L. D. Caulk Company.

"Delaware, A Guide to the First State" is another work without which amatuer historians such as myself would find the going much more difficult. Produced under the auspices of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration during the New Deal era and further amended in a second edition published in 1960, the guide is a fascinating compendium of historical fact, folklore, demographic information, meaty gossip and all sorts of other nonessential but thoroughly enjoyable tidbits of knowledge every Delawarean should encounter.

Another book which I, personally, found to be very enjoyable if not entirely accurate is Edward Noble Vallandigham's 1922 work **"Delaware and the Eastern Shore."** It is subtitled "Some Aspects of a Peninsula Pleasant and Well Beloved" and in the course of the book Vallandigham does as fine a job as anyone since "GATH" Townsend, author of **"The Entailed Hat"** at presenting a true picture of life on Delmarva not only at the turn of the century but during the two hundred years before 1900. As one reads Vallandigham's generally irreverent prose and gazes at the book's marvelous trove of photographs, one can only note with a touch of sadness that the peninsula he knew is long since gone the way of the Delaware Bay steamers and Sussex County applejack.

It all started in Sussex County

A lot has changed since 1950 when Millsboro's Sterwin Laboratories Inc., came into being as Delaware Poultry Laboratories. The broiler industry, then in swaddling clothes, has grown beyond the Delmarva Peninsula to become a full fledged giant.

Sterwin Laboratories grew right along with the industry by researching and producing new poultry vaccines as new diseases emerged. In the beginning the company produced only one type of poultry vaccine. Today it offers the most complete line in America. Sterwin is the only firm manufacturing Gumboro, JMK bronchitis, and Cocci Vac vaccines.

The Founders

William H. Mitchell Dr. Hiram N. Lasher

Successful poultry growers, not only on Delmarva but in every major poultry growing area in the world, have come to rely on Sterwin products for protection, reliability, and flexibility for tailor-made vaccination programs to maintain the health of their flocks.

One of the present-day Sterwin Laboratories' first facilities was its complex at the corner of Wharton St. and DuPont Boulevard, shown above shortly after its first phase was built in 1952.

It all began with the firm's first laboratory and manufacturing facility at Millsboro. In 1958, the then Delaware Poultry Laboratories became a subsidiary of Sterling Drug Inc. and its facilities were increased further. In 1968, the firm became Sterwin Laboratories Inc., with a branch in Opelika, Alabama.

The company still has its headquarters in Sussex where Sterwin and the broiler business began. Happy Birthday, Sussex County and America. Your past and your future are ours.

Sterwin Laboratories Inc.

Millsboro, Delaware

Reference Notes

Chapter One:

This chapter contains a brief account of some of the prevailing theories of the origins of the Indian residents of Delmarva. Although Scharf's account of the "Walum Olum" cited in the text is somewhat more literary than factual, it is a reasonable synopsis of the old Lenape myth. Other works cited here included C. A. Weslager's **"Delaware's Forgotten Folk,"** his **"Delaware Buried Past,"** and **"A Brief Account of the Indians of Delaware"** as well as Wilsie G. Seabrease's small book, **"The Nanticokes and Other Indians of Delmarva."**

Chapter Two:

Once again, I have relied on the accounts contained in Scharf's **"History of Delaware,"** Francis Vincent's fine though unfinished **"A History of the State of Delaware from its First Settlement until the Present Time,"** and various other general histories for an account of the early explorations of Sussex County. Scharf's **"History of Maryland from the Earliest Period to the Present Day"** is also helpful for its information on early English explorations of the Chesapeake Bay and such tributaries as the Nanticoke River. For the serious student, a great wealth of printed material is available on this period.

Chapter Three:

While the general histories are useful for an understanding of the early conflicts between the Dutch and the Lords Baltimore and the Duke of York and the Baltimores, Leland Harder's article **"Plockhoy and his Settlement at Zwaanendael, 1663"** in Vol. III of **"Delaware History,"** and Leon DeValinger's **"The Burning of the Whorekill, 1673"** which appeared in the October, 1950, issue of the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography are especially important sources for the historical color they contain.

Chapters Four and Five:

William Penn is one of those figures of importance in American history who has always appealed widely to historians. His career was sufficiently unorthodox that a great deal has been written about him. The account contained here of his early career is drawn from the general histories of Delaware but the information is available in much more detailed form in a variety of sources. On the subject of the Penn-Lord Baltimore dispute over Delaware and Maryland boundary lines, Scharf for all his 19th century shortcomings as an historian is especially helpful since he covered the dispute from both sides. What's more, he appears to have pilfered some of the most valuable original documents to be found in Maryland before writing his Maryland history in 1879. Numerous other sources are used in these chapters although not quoted directly.

Chapter Six:

In addition to the general histories, Daniel F. Wolcott's **"Ryves Holt of Lewes, Delaware 1696-1763"** in Vol. III of **"Delaware History"** was an especially important source as was Elizabeth Waterson's **"Churches in Delaware During the Revolution,"** Frank R. Zebley's **"The Churches of Delaware,"** and Elizabeth Atkins' pamphlet on the history of the United Presbyterian congregations at Lewes, Cool Spring, and Indian River.

Chapter Seven:

This writer considers this chapter on Sussex during the Revolution to be the heart of this history of the county and the sources herein referred to are numerous. As was noted earlier, Harold Hancock's **"The Delaware Loyalists"** was the single most valuable source for this chapter. Others were Christopher L. Ward's **"The Delaware Continentals 1776-1783,"** John A. Munroe's **"Delaware Becomes A State,"** George H. Ryden's **"Delaware Troops in the Revolution,"** Hancock's 1950 **"Delaware History"** article **"Thomas Robinson, Delaware's Most Prominent Loyalist,"** Robert Calhoun's **"The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781,"** and the old Delaware Public Archives Commission publications of colonial assembly and council minutes and naval and military records.

Chapter Eight:

This chapter deals with the period from the end of the Revolution to the beginning of the War of 1812 and perhaps the most valuable source here is John Munroe's book **"Federalist Delaware 1775-1815"** which deals in vastly more detail with the same period. In addition to the general histories, other important sources included the **"Delaware Guide,"** Virginia Cullen's small history of Lewes, and the numerous books cited in the bibliography on early religious matters in the state.

Chapter Nine:

The basic historical information on the War of 1812 cited in this chapter comes from Samuel Eliot Morison's **"Oxford History of the American People"** and general histories of Delaware. The most interesting source is Dr. Wm. M. Marine's pamphlet **"The Bombardment of Lewes by the British, April 6 & 7, 1813."** The pamphlet was first published in 1901 as one of the old series of Historical Society of Delaware papers (Vol. 3 No. XXXIII). It was reprinted several years ago through a gift from the Lewes Historical Society.

Silhouette of John M. Clayton

Chapter Ten:

This chapter which deals generally with the period from 1815 to the 1850's, draws from a wide variety of sources including Munroe's **"Federalist Delaware,"** Edward Noble Vallandigham's **"Delaware and the Eastern Shore,"** Ted Giles' **"Patty Cannon, Woman of Mystery,"** Weslager's **"Delaware's Forgotten Folk"** and the related public archives commission's 1929 reprint of Judge George P. Fisher's 1895 article **"The So-called Moors of Delaware."** The **"Delaware Guide"** was important here (and virtually everywhere else) as was Booth's account of the first Delaware geological survey, Joseph P. Comegys' **"Memoir of John M. Clayton"** (Hist. Soc. of Del. Papers, Old Series, Vol. 2, No. X, 1895) Mary Emily Miller's **"Delaware History"** article on the early Delaware oyster industry, and Scharf's **"History of Delaware."** Another valuable source for a true picture of life during this era was George Alfred Townsend's masterpiece **"The Entailed Hat,"** one of the most popular novels of the late 19th century.

Chapter Eleven:

Most readers will have noted by now that the account of Sussex during the Civil War and the years from 1865 to present is sketchy at best. For the serious student of the Civil War period, however, Harold Hancock's **"Delaware During The Civil War"** provides perhaps the best picture of life on the home front. John S. Spruance's **"Delaware Stays in the Union,"** Nancy T. Wolfe's **"Confederate Prisoners at Fort Delaware"** and various booklets on the fort by W. Emerson Wilson are also good brief sources of information. One of the most useful sources of information on the late 19th and early 20th centuries is H. Clay Reed's **"History of the First State"** which contains an especially good account of the virulent anti-Negro sentiment which swept the state from 1865 to 1895 by Harold Hancock. The Delaware Guide also comes in very handy for information on this period as do many local histories of towns in Sussex.

Chapters Twelve, Thirteen, Fourteen, and Fifteen:

These chapters on agriculture, business, and transportation in Sussex once again draw from a wide variety of sources. The accounts of the early salt industry are drawn from James M. Tunnell, Jr.'s interesting article on the subject in the March, 1950 **"Delaware History"** (Vol. IV, 1950-51). The information on early Sussex County cabinet makers, silversmiths, and ship builders is drawn almost entirely from several **"Delaware History"** articles, all of which are cited in the accompanying bibliography. The accounts of Burnt Swamp shingle makers come from the Delaware Guide while information on the great fires which once swept it come from a 1948 **"Delaware History"** article **"Description of the Cypress Swamps in Delaware and Maryland States."** The Delaware Guide and personal interviews were the source of most material on the charcoal industry while Scharf's was helpful on the subject of the iron industry.

"The Story of Roads in Delaware from the Days of the Beasts of Burden to the Road of Tomorrow" and the **"Delaware Guide"** are useful sources on early roads as is Munroe's **"Federalist Delaware."** John T. Purnell of Georgetown possesses a possibly unique bound volume of every early Delaware railroad charter complete with maps and diagrams which contains priceless information on early railroads. Scharf's **"History of Delaware"** is also useful as are numerous other sources.

One of the best accounts of the construction of the "Coleman duPont Road" is contained in Reed's **"History of the First State."** Further information on the subject, although somewhat less objective, is contained in the account of duPont's life in Volume Three of that work.

As someone whose family and friends were involved in the raising of poultry as early as anyone else's on the peninsula, much of the information on the early chicken business was learned at my father's knee. Other good sources of information are contained in Volume Two of Reed's **"History of the First State"** and in Edmund Hoffman and Hugh Johnson's **"Successful Broiler Growing."** Other useful information is found in the third, biographical, volume of "Reed's" which contains brief biographies of many of the early leaders of the Sussex County poultry industry.

Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen:

The chapters on Delaware Governors from Sussex County and some of the county's interesting characters are drawn primarily from W. Emerson Wilson's **"Forgotten Heroes of Delaware,"** Scharf's **"History of Delaware,"** the biographical volume of "Reed's" and numerous other works. The information on patriot-philosopher John Jones is drawn from an account of his career by Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., in **"Delaware History,"** Vol. XI (1964-65) entitled **"Patriot Improvers – Some Early Delaware Members of the American Philosophical Society."** Another source for the chapter was Elbert Chance's 1962 **"Delaware History"** article **"Matthew Wilson-Professor, Preacher, Patriot, Physician."**

Other **"Delaware History"** articles and early papers of the Historical Society of Delaware contain useful information on John Dagworthy, Alfred T. A. Torbert, and others. The account of the career of William Russel Clark is drawn from Weslager's **"Delaware Forgotten Folk."** The life of Mary Ann Sorden Stuart is described by Miss Mary DeVou in her account of early Delaware suffragettes in "Reed's." Some sidelights on the Adventures of Russell Hobbes was provided by Ronald F. Dodd of Georgetown, a descendent. Dodd also provided the information on Custer's Last Stand victim Eugene Cooper.

The Hundreds:

The brief histories of Sussex County's thirteen hundreds, though drawn from numerous sources, rely perhaps most heavily on Scharf's **"History of Delaware"** and the **"Delaware Guide."** It is here, in fact, that Scharf and his host of anonymous associate historians really proved their worth with their voluminous accounts of every town, post office, social club, church, and landowner in every hundred in the state. The maps illustrating this section are adapted from Beers' **"Atlas of the State of Delaware."**

J. Conn Scott INC.
SELBYVILLE, DELAWARE

An institution on Delmarva since 1924

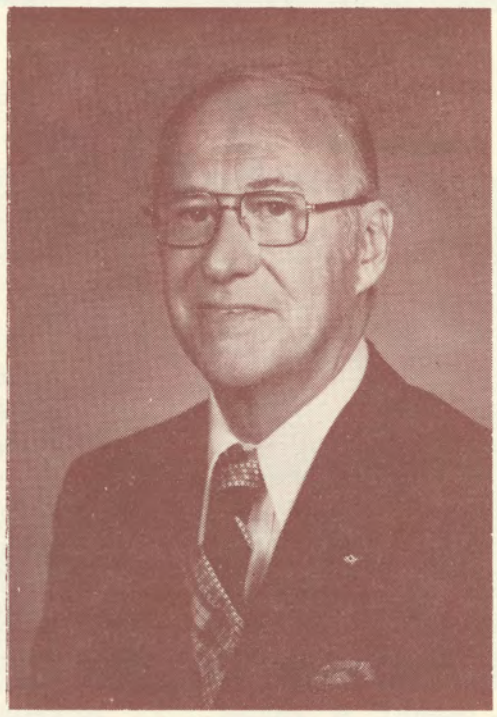
J. Conn Scott, Inc., is more than just a furniture store. It is an institution on Delmarva and is known throughout the Middle Atlantic area as a leader in the furniture business.

The firm's reputation for excellence began in 1924 when J. Conn Scott came to Selbyville as a partner in one of the town's first general department stores with his brother, Roland Scott, and Caleb L. McCabe.

From the company's new brick store on the corner of Church and Main Streets, everything was sold from groceries to clothing and furniture. By 1939, the business had grown to the point where the Scott brothers decided to divide the firm into separate clothing and furniture stores at their original location.

In 1945, J. Conn Scott built a new, larger store further down Church Street to house his growing business. Again in 1973 a further expansion was necessary and a new addition was built, doubling the size of the store.

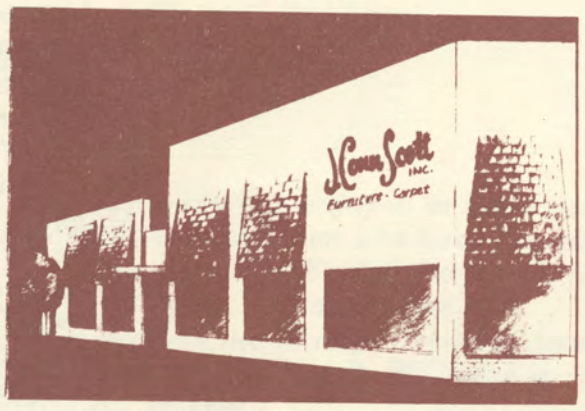
Today, William Conn Scott, the son of the founder, heads the firm in the tradition begun by his father. The Scott family has been involved in the history of Sussex for more than 200 years. J. Conn Scott, Inc. has been involved in that history for 52 years. We are proud to have been a part of it then and we are proud to be a part of it now.



J. Conn Scott
Founder

Church Street Store - 1939

New Showroom - 1946



Expanded Showroom - 1973

Preserving the natural history of Delmarva . . .

The human history of Sussex County has been an epic of men and adventure, of man's nobler moments and of human folly, of ancient traditions and of change. That history has been a long one but incomparably longer has been the natural history of the land.

The goal of Delaware Wild Lands, Inc., is to preserve the natural history of Sussex County and Delmarva, to protect valuable natural areas in their original state so that in the future the people of Delmarva may continue to enjoy that special sense of freedom and awe which comes with an easy association with nature.

Formed in 1961 as a private, non-profit conservation, organization, Delaware Wild Lands has been able with contributions from private citizens to acquire nearly 20,000 acres of valuable natural areas on Delmarva.

A major portion of those holdings are located in Sussex where in the past 15 years Wild Lands has been able to acquire much of Angola Neck, including many acres of salt marsh; much of the area surrounding the state's last existing cypress pond — Trussum's Pond near Laurel — and more than 10,000 acres of the once vast cypress swamp near Gumboro, that treasure which has sustained so many generations of Sussex Countians.

Trussum's Pond

In Kent County, Wild Lands holdings include 2,400 acres where the St. Jones River meets the Delaware Bay. This land, known for 250 years as Towne Point, is the site of the first Kent County Courthouse.

At Taylor's Bridge on Blackbird Creek in New Castle County, Delaware Wild Lands has acquired 2,300 acres of valuable forest and marshland at the point where the Delaware Bay becomes the Delaware River.

It is Delaware Wild Land's long range ambition to return these and other valuable natural areas as nearly as possible to the condition in which the first men saw and marvelled at them. Perhaps, in that sense, our human history is only one part of our natural history.

Delaware Wild Lands, Inc.

— The History of Sussex —

The Delmarva News and the Delaware Coast Press take great pride in presenting "The History of Sussex County" by Dick Carter to our readers as a special edition on the occasion of the nation's bicentennial.

In publishing the history, the largest special edition ever printed by our company, it was our desire to give our readers and all the people of Sussex County a meaningful gift of lasting value.

Our presentation of this edition at no charge to the public was made possible through the sponsorship of the nine firms listed on the title page and on the sponsoring pages elsewhere in the history.

We would also like to take this opportunity to recall a bit of our own history. The Delaware Coast Press, the oldest of the two newspapers, came into being in 1899 as the Rehoboth Beacon. As such, it followed in the long tradition of such forerunners as the Lewes "Breakwater Light" in covering the news and happenings of the Lewes and Rehoboth Beach areas.

In later years, the Beacon gave way to the Delaware Coast News. When it was acquired by the newly formed Coastal Communications, Inc., in 1968, the paper was owned and edited by Milton K. Fried, now as before a columnist for the paper.

The Delmarva News was started in Selbyville in 1935. Shortly thereafter, it was purchased by Ray and Ralph Grapperhaus who went on to become some of the state's most respected journalists. In 1969, Mr. Grapperhaus sold the News to Coastal Communications.

The company grew further with the acquisition of the Delaware Beachcomber and the Maryland Beachcomber. In 1973, Coastal acquired the former Selbyville Fire Hall and converted it to a printing plant and corporate headquarters.

In 1975, Coastal was acquired by Joseph I. Goldstein, the present publisher of the company's publications. After he assumed control of the company, Mr. Goldstein added the Calvert Journal-Gazette of Prince Frederick, Md., to the chain.

Coastal is continuing to grow and to expand its coverage into new areas. Among its newest acquisitions is a new name — Community Newspaper Corporation.

Through all their changes, however, the Delmarva News and the Delaware Coast Press have continued to give their readers a wide range of news, sports, stories of community and area-wide interest, social and opinion columns, and all the rest that goes into making two of the best-known and respected weekly papers on Delmarva. Our aim in the future, as in the past, is to present you, our readers, with more and better news of eastern Sussex County.

Delmarva News

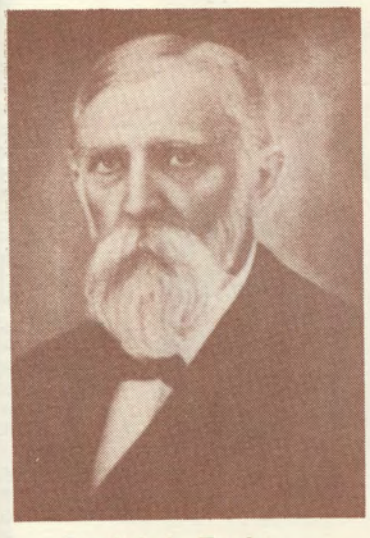
Covering Southeastern Sussex County

Delaware COAST PRESS

Serving Rehoboth and Lewes Since 1899

Covering Lewes and Rehoboth Beach

Four generations of service to the people of Sussex



Daniel J. Fooks
President 1898-1912

Dr. Wm. P. Orr
President 1912-1936

Thomas R. Ingram
President 1936-1944

Harvey D. Williams
President 1944-1949

James M. Tunnell, Jr.
President 1949-1951

The Sussex Trust Title & Safe Deposit Company started at Lewes in 1898

In 1895, the Delaware General Assembly formally chartered the Sussex Trust Title and Safe Deposit Company at a time when Sussex County was experiencing an upsurge in growth and economic activity.

Even so, it was to be another three years before the new company was established at a meeting of the incorporators in Seaford. The date was March 21, 1898, and six months later the first Sussex Trust Company office opened its doors in Lewes. On the second day of January, 1899, a second office was opened in Laurel.

The Milton branch of the Sussex Trust Title and Safe Deposit Company opened for business in 1902. In 1911, the original name was shortened considerably to "The Sussex Trust Company."

Sussex Trust, the county's largest locally owned bank, has been a leader in the banking field ever since. A Rehoboth Beach branch office was opened in 1957, followed by the Milford office four years later.

Today, there are two more Sussex Trust branch offices in Millsboro (1972) and Delmar (1975), extending the bank's services into nearly every area of Sussex County.

The success Sussex Trust Company has enjoyed in its 78 years has been due in no small part to the seven men who have served as its president during those years. Daniel J. Fooks, the bank's first president, was succeeded in 1912 by Dr. William P. Orr.

In 1936, Thomas R. Ingram became the third president of Sussex Trust Company. He was followed by Harvey D. Williams in 1944 and by James M. Tunnell, Jr., in 1949.

Ford M. Warrington became the sixth president of Sussex Trust in 1951 and it was under his leadership that the bank experienced its greatest period of growth to date. In February of 1976, Mr. Warrington became chairman of the board of directors. He was succeeded by the bank's seventh president, Robert A. Short, the former insurance commissioner of Delaware.

A part of Sussex County's past for nearly eight decades, Sussex Trust Company has grown by believing in Sussex County's future. But it has prospered as well through the support of four generations of Sussex Countians. Sussex Trust Company's part in presenting this history to the people of the county as America celebrates its 200th anniversary is one way of saying "thank you."

Ford M. Warrington
President 1951-1976
Chairman of the Board 1976—

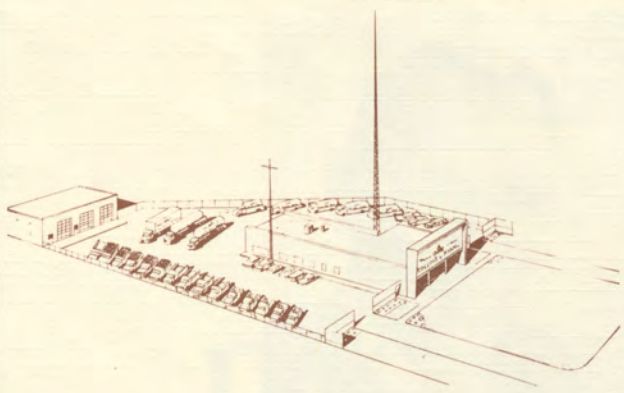
Robert A. Short
President 1976—

Sussex Trust
The growing bank for a growing community.
DELMAR • LAUREL • LEWES • MILFORD • MILLSBORO • MILTON • REHOBOTH BEACH
DELAWARE
Member FDIC

Original general merchandise store - 1911

Main Street Store Millsboro - 1925

Gas Plant - Old Landing Road - 1946



Main office and showroom - 1954

Main gas plant - 1968

Mr. E.B. Collins

The Founders

Mr. E.C. Ryan

65

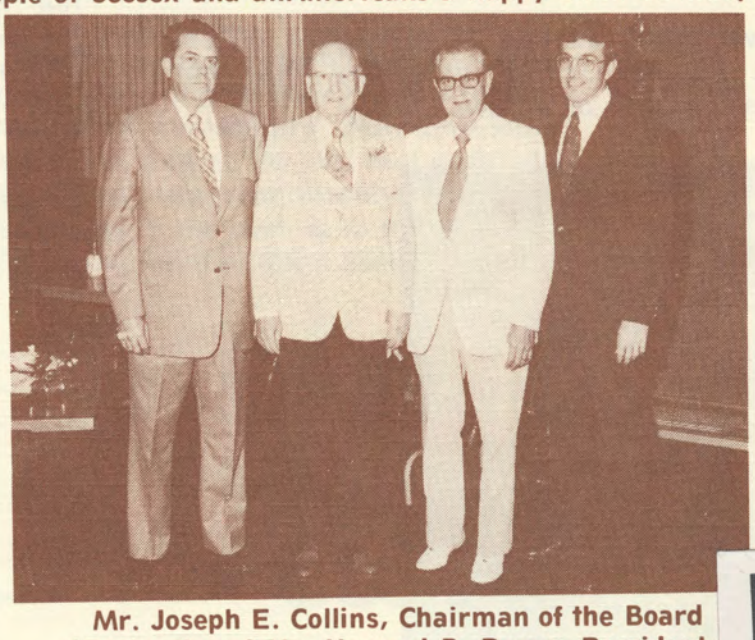
Years of Service

Since 1911, Collins & Ryan has been a symbol of quality products and dependable service to the residents of Sussex County and Delmarva.

Collins & Ryan was founded on May 10,1911, by Mr. E.B. Collins and Mr. E.C. Ryan, both of Millsboro. The Company grew from a general merchandise outlet into farm machinery and various other agricultural interests including a cannery business. C & R maintained a furniture and appliance store and became the largest distributor of battery radios on Delmarva during the early years of broadcasting. The Company eventually concentrated its resources on the gas business, shifting its total emphasis in that direction in 1947. Under the direction of Mr. Joseph E. Collins, son of the founder, C & R grew into one of the largest distributors of L.P. Gas on the East Coast.

The company continues to provide Delmarva with unsurpassed service as it moves into its 66th year. Its products range from L.P. Gas for farm, home, and industry to major gas and electrical appliances such as ranges, water heaters, barbecue grills, heating and air conditioning systems, and refrigerators.

Collins & Ryan joins in the nation's bicentennial celebration by wishing the people of Sussex and allAmericans a happy 200th birthday.



Mr. Joseph E. Collins, Chairman of the Board (Retired) and Mr. Howard B. Dorey, President (Retired) with present owners Mr. Aubrey P. Murray, Chief Operating Officer, and Mr. Brooks E. Reynolds, Jr., President.

Collins & Ryan, Inc.

Home Offices
Millsboro, Delaware

Showrooms:
DuPont Highway, Millsboro
Salisbury Mall (opens in Sept.)

B04374