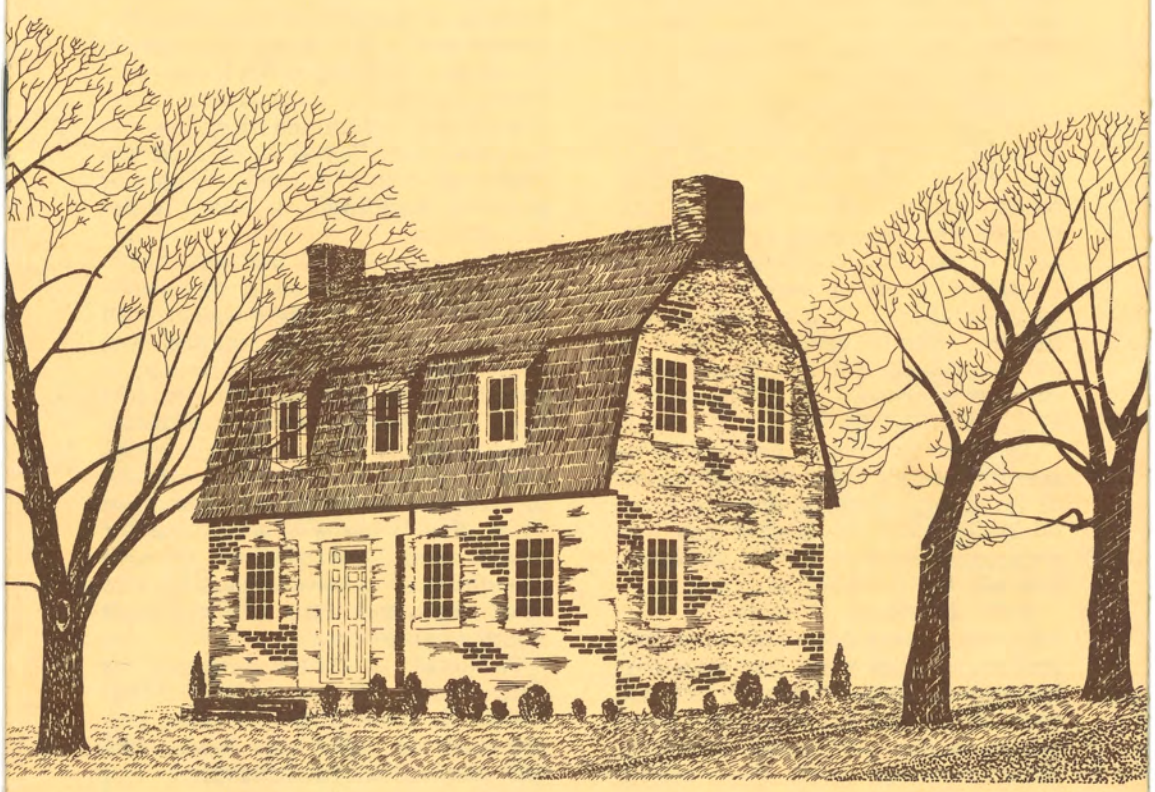
#1e
Smy.

Footprints of the Past



By GEORGE L. CALEY

DISTRIBUTED BY THE DUCK CREEK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Smyrna, Delaware

Footprints of the Past

By GEORGE L. CALEY

HISTORY is an ever-present entity. We are born into history, live through it, and die out of it, yet history continues. Our very lives, no matter how small the scope, have historical significance.

Many persons accept the time, place and situation of their existence in a very matter-of-fact fashion, never dreaming of their historical value. Others become immersed with the enormity of history, and in so doing, either alter the course of history, or seek to have history stand still. A few souls accept history, become enthralled with it, and they seek, not to change, alter, or stop history, but to live with it and enjoy its benefits.

Our town, Smyrna, has had as its inhabitants all such three divisions of humanity. Each and every hamlet or city on this planet has witnessed the effects, and in so doing has felt the presence of HISTORY.

This brochure is given to you with the sincere hope and wish that you may enjoy what our ancestors have given to us. We have enjoyed their gifts, we have seen their footprints of the past, and therefore, we generously share their monuments with you, and ask that you, too, follow the footprints of the past.

Smyrna had its beginnings and its roots early in the annals of the English occupation of this peninsula. The first actual settlement was not at the present site of this town, but one and a half miles north—along Duck Creek.

The settlement of Duck Creek Village occurred about 1700. As a village it enjoyed a favorable location for a beginning—the head of navigation. Seemingly, there was a house or houses, then possibly a grist mill was next erected. However, we know that the village boasted a tavern, a blacksmith shop, a Quaker Meeting House, later a Church of England edifice, two cemeteries and other small businesses. Then as swiftly as it had emerged, DUCK CREEK lost its position. DUCK CREEK did not immediately become a "ghost town", but it entered the phase of non-expansion, lingering gentility, and finally lapsed into deterioration.

The monument to the original village is "THE LINDENS", #1* (public). This brick building was erected by a miller before 1725, and was constructed along the lines of a Dutch dwelling. In the middle 1800's the wooden wing was added. This house has always been a home. THE LINDENS has had almost uninterrupted occupancy. However, in 1959, this home was scheduled for destruction. It was saved through the efforts of interested persons who later organized THE DUCK CREEK HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Adjacent to "THE LINDENS" is THE PLANK HOUSE, #2 (public). Before its removal to this spot, this so-called log cabin was hidden under clapboard and shingles. The structure sat empty on Main Street in Smyrna. It, too, was scheduled for destruction. The Public Archives Commission, along with the Town Council of Smyrna, helped us save this evidence of early habitation. As it now sits among the trees on the lawn of "THE LINDENS", THE PLANK HOUSE looks as though it had always been in its present location.

Near "THE LINDENS" is THE OLD MILL, #3 (private). The present structure encloses an earlier structure dating back to the early 1700's. This was possibly built by the same person who erected "THE LINDENS".

*All numbers refer to the map on page 8.

Past

that the village
, a blacksmith shop,
ing House, later a
nd edifice, two cem-
er small businesses.
as it had emerged,
st its position. DUCK
immediately become
, but it entered the
expansion, lingering
nally lapsed into de-

nt to the original vil-
NDENS", #1* (pub-
building was erected
fore 1725, and was
ng the lines of a
g. In the middle
len wing was added.
always been a home.
has had almost un-
upancy. However, in
e was scheduled for
was saved through
terested persons who
THE DUCK CREEK
IETY.
"THE LINDENS" is
OUSE, #2 (public).
val to this spot, this
bin was hidden un-
and shingles. The
npty on Main Street
too, was scheduled
The Public Archives
ong with the Town
rna, helped us save
early habitation. As
ng the trees on the
E LINDENS", THE
looks as though it
en in its present lo-

LINDENS" is THE OLD
ivate). The present
ses an earlier struc-
k to the early 1700's.
ly built by the same
ted "THE LINDENS".

In THE QUAKER CEMETERY, #4 (public) may be found tomb stones dating back to the year 1750. This spot once housed a Quaker Meeting House and School. The Meeting House was used by the Methodists when they first came to this area.

Efforts are being made to restore this burial ground.

The Church of England flourished in this settlement of Duck Creek and in Duck Creek Hundred. A church was erected in 1750, and along side of it, as was the custom in those days, ground was secured for burial. The edifice was demolished sometime after 1827, but the burial grounds are still in use. Recently the remains of Thomas Collins, an early governor of Delaware, were reinterred in this cemetery. This project was under the auspices of the Duck Creek Historical Society. Genealogists frequently use THE EPISCOPAL CEMETERY, #5 (public) for research work.

The settlement of Duck Creek was eclipsed by the founding of Duck Creek Cross Roads, now Smyrna, in 1768, by James Green. We do not know if any building dates back to that early time; however, we do know that there are dwellings still standing in the corporate limits of the town which were erected prior to the American Revolution. Smyrna, as a whole, had its greatest growth during The Victorian Era. Many structures attest to this fact. We are rather proud of the fact that many of the Victorian structures are still intact.

THE STOCKLEY HOUSE, #6 (private), is a brick pre-Revolutionary structure. The basic house consists of two rooms on the first floor and two rooms on the second floor. The panelling in the two rooms of the lower floor is in excellent condition. A unique feature of this home is its very small room situated on the left side of the front entrance. This little narrow room has but one window. The fireplace is not on a flat wall, but is cater-cornered.

The next structure of importance is the PRESLEY SPRUANCE HOUSE, #7 (private). This is of colonial design and is representative of a home of the well-to-do.

Immediately adjoining this property is THE CUMMINS HOUSE, #8 (private). This home is now occupied by a doctor, his wife and family. This dwelling is symbolic of the fortunes made by grain and mercantile businesses during and after the American Revolution. The doctor's waiting room was at one time detached, and in its earlier day served as "the retreat" for the head of the household.

#9

Number 9, (private) is A VICTORIAN TOWNE HOUSE. The yellow paint detracts from the massiveness of the building. The raised corner siding was made in the imitation of marble, and was so painted, originally. This double structure, once a single home, suggests powerful elegance. The ceiling cornices on the first floor of the main house are decorated with carved leaves and rosettes of plaster of Paris, while the areas at which chandeliers hung are decorated with intricate motifs interspersed by figures of nymphs' faces.

Standing alone on a slight rise of ground on South Mt. Vernon Street is CENTENNIAL METHODIST CHURCH, #10 (public). This edifice built in 1846 has housed four con-

gregations. The first to occupy the structure were the Methodist Protestants who erected the edifice. Next came the Presbyterians who worshipped there after their reorganization in 1848. In 1883, the Roman Catholics purchased the building, renamed it SAINT POLYCARP'S after the martyred bishop of Smyrna, Asia Minor, and then used the church until 1914. It now serves a prosperous Negro congregation. The square box-like tower resembles those found in New England.

ASBURY METHODIST CHURCH, #11 (public), largest church structure of Smyrna, is a combination of many types of architecture from early Victorian to Modern. Especially noteworthy is its tall spire, the Victorian section's door knobs which bear the likeness of the bust of Asbury, and the solid black walnut gallery fronts found in the main sanctuary.

Directly across from Asbury is a large frame building. Upon first inspection there seems to be nothing noteworthy about this drab apartment building. Yet if one studies this structure for any length of time, one is impressed by its symmetry and balance. This is #12, TUSCAN VICTORIAN, (private), an outstanding example of the few remaining Tuscans in this area.

On the opposite corner, painted white, is a fine example of the Victorian with a Mansard roof, #13, (private). Attached to the Victorian section is an older wing which is a fine example of Georgian.

Allen McLane, Smyrna's contribution to the American Revolution, donated the land on which was erected the first Asbury Methodist Church. As customary in those days, a cemetery was located around the area of the house of worship. OLD ASBURY CEMETERY, #14 (public) is also a haven for genealogists.

THE MUSTARD HOUSE, #15 (private) has had several interior renovations, but no attempt has ever been made to erase or modify the classic exterior.

The diamond among the jewels of architecture in our community is #16 — SAINT PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH (public). The original

#16

e for any length of
impressed by its sym-
alance. This is #12,
TORIAN, (private), an
xample of the few re-
ans in this area.
posite corner, painted
ne example of the Vic-
a Mansard roof, #13,
tached to the Victorian
older wing which is a
of Georgian.
ane, Smyrna's contri-
American Revolution,
land on which was
irst Asbury Methodist
customary in those
ery was located around
the house of worship.
CEMETERY, #14 (pub-
haven for genealogists.
ARD HOUSE, #15 (pri-
d several interior reno-
no attempt has ever
o erase or modify the
or.
nd among the jewels of
in our community is
r PETER'S EPISCOPAL
ublic). The original

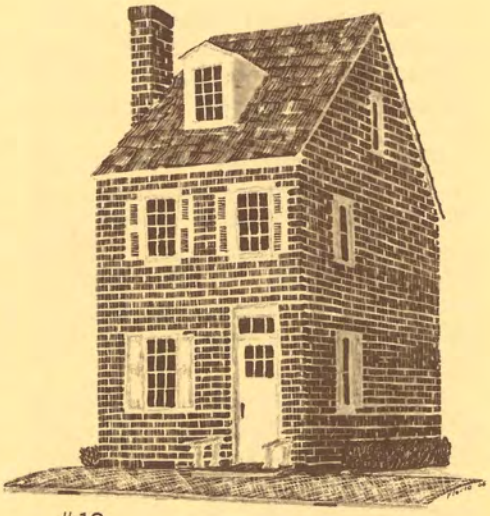
building erected in 1827, after the demise of the congregation in Duck Creek, is still used for worship. Attached to the original structure are other additions, but the simplicity of the original structure still remains. Unlike most other Episcopal churches, this edifice has blue doors, not red ones. The interior is enhanced by the large stained glass window over the altar.

One may find many small beauties from the altar site. However, the most precious is usually overlooked. Turn to look toward the tower door. Gaze upward. (We hope that the day has an abundance of sunshine). There with the sunlight streaming through is "The Angel Window". The original painting by Raphael "The Sistine Madonna" had these two angels leaning on the walls of Heaven while gazing up at the Infant Jesus.

After the Presbyterians abandoned their church #10 on Mt. Vernon Street, they moved into this building. THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, #17 (public) is one of the very few in lower Delaware constructed of serpentine stone. Early English Gothic is the style.

All communities in all ages have contained the very rich, the rich, the middle class, the working class, the poor and the indigent. Many of the private homes previously mentioned have belonged to the rich and the upper middle class. However #18 and #19 are representative of the homes of the working classes.

Number 18 (private) THE DAVID STEVENSON HOUSE is one-half of a double house. These houses were built in the 1840's. Soon after their erection David Stevenson, a stonecutter, purchased the right side of the double house. His family was reared there, and Mrs. James Miller, now the occupant, is a direct descendant. Although this home, too, has been remodeled, it contains all the lines of the original. The interior still contains the enclosed "Queen



#18

Anne" staircase. The adjoining house, with the enclosed porch, still retains the original shed kitchen. Noteworthy of THE DAVID STEVENSON HOUSE is the marble stoop which was erected by David Stevenson.

THE ONE AND A HALF STORY HOUSE, #19 (private) nestles closely to the adjoining building as though seeking comfort and care. This was the home of some unknown worker. Local tradition holds that beneath the Victorian sheet-iron brick is a wooden structure that is the last remaining building of DUCK CREEK CROSS ROADS. For many years this building served as the town's main barber-shop.

Duck Creek Cross Roads never had "a square" or "the green". As the name implies, it had "the cross roads" which later became THE FOUR CORNERS, #20. This was/is the center of town. On a busy day, standing here, it is not too difficult to visualize the stream of history which has passed through here. THE FOUR CORNERS has seen change. Change is reflected in the various types of architecture seen surrounding this corner. "THE FOUR CORNERS" is an artist's delight.

HANDSBERRY'S STORE, better known as "THE GUN SHOP", #21 (business) is of the proud Federal style. This property has been a store since its erection.

THE GARDENS AT "THE GREY-BOX", #22 (private) are of boxwood. The family who owns "THE GREY-BOX" has withstood the pressures and the inroads of the business world, and thus has created a peaceful nook on an otherwise busy thoroughfare.

Squeezed between two buildings and looking as though it were fighting for its very life is the town's smallest shop. The insides have been remodeled to meet the demands of time and business, but the exterior has remained the original Carpenter Gothic. This then is #23, THE VICTORIAN SHOP.

A narrow alley leads almost unnoticed from Commerce Street. This is Smyrna's link to Duck Creek Cross Roads—the last vestige of "THE KING'S HIGHWAY," #24 (public).

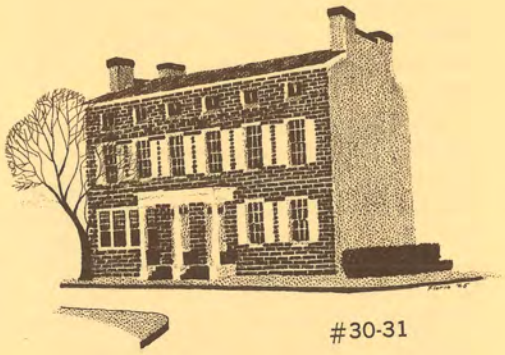
Located next to THE KING'S HIGHWAY, is TILGHMAN'S SPORTING GOODS STORE, #25 (public). The main building itself was erected after the Civil War. However, the store front with its set of double windows plus the extended overhanging pavement room is one of the few remaining in the State of Delaware.

The newest addition to the "footprints of the past" is BROADWAY'S RESTORED GEORGIAN, #26 (private). Until 1962 this structure was just "an ordinary house". Mrs. Broadway inherited this property, and beneath its ordinariness was a good sound basic Georgian structure. This structure restored inside and out is a fine example of private restoration.

A short distance below BROADWAY'S RESTORED GEORGIAN is a small one-and-a-half storied brick dwelling. This is the ABRAHAM PIERCE HOUSE, #27 (private) built about 1750. One of the outstanding features is its 15 paned windows.

Directly across the street from the PIERCE HOUSE is the ENOCH SPRUANCE HOUSE, #28 (private). The Spruances, who were wealthy merchants, built this massive home, and for a period of time the west section held the only bank between Wilmington and Dover. The window headings and the keystones of the first floor are not stone, but wood.

Number 29 is THE BARRACKS (private). This much altered long brick building is also known as THE LOCKWOOD HOUSE. The title THE BARRACKS is derived from folk-lore which holds that the building was used as "a barracks" during The War of 1812.



#30-31

Perhaps one of the finest examples of a "double Federal house" is to be found in #30 and #31 (private). The exterior lines of both houses are practically unaltered, although #30 has had two front windows removed, and a large quarto window installed. This was the birthplace of John Bassett Moore who served as a judge on The World Court.

#32

The tern
denotes a
structure w
verted finia
ornaments,
Smyrna ha
#32 (priva
is not outla
but in its s
torian hous
Nearly
several str
finery of N
Our town
quickly up
this prope
The squar
at the cor
Streets bo
with NEW
#33 (priv

#33

lf storied brick
the ABRAHAM
7 (private) built
the outstanding
ıned windows.
the street from
is the ENOCH
#28 (private).
ıo were wealthy
is massive home,
)f time the west
ly bank between
Dover. The win-
the keystones of
not stone, but

THE BARRACKS
uch altered long
so known as THE
. The title THE
ed from folk-lore
the building was
cks" during The

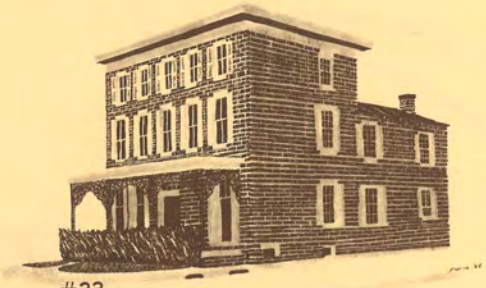
#30-31

f the finest exam-
Federal house" is
:30 and #31 (pri-
rior lines of both
cally unaltered, al-
had two front win-
ınd a large quarto
d. This was the
hn Bassett Moore
a judge on The

#32

The term "Gingerbread Gothic" denotes a basic Victorian Gothic structure with added curlicues, inverted finials, extra scroll work, iron ornaments, and other adornments. Smyrna has a GINGERBREAD GOTHIC, #32 (private). However this home is not outlandish in its adornments, but in its setting, among other Victorian houses, is pleasant and airy.

Nearly every town or city has several structures enhanced by the finery of New Orleans Grill Work. Our town has one. As one passes quickly up or down Main Street this property is almost unnoticed. The square brick building situated at the corner of Frazier and Main Streets boasts a porch embellished with NEW ORLEANS GRILL WORK, #33 (private).



#33

"THE LINDENS" is located at one end of the town and THE OLD MILL HOUSE, #34 (private) is at the opposite end of the town. One is built of brick, the other wood. Both are Dutch structures with gambrel roofs, and both originally served the same purpose—the home of a miller.

The site of the first PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH and CEMETERY, is #35 (public). Until a few years ago this cemetery was just "here". It now has been cleaned and kept in condition by the Smyrna Jaycees. It, too, like its sister cemeteries, is accessible to genealogists.

BELMONT HALL, #36 (private) is one of the most noted old mansions of Delaware. A rear section of the house is said to have been erected in 1684, while the main section is reputed to have been built in 1753.

During the American Revolution, Colonel Collins, the owner, fortified the grounds with a stockade and kept a sentry on the roof. Tradition has it that one night a Tory crept up and shot the sentry who was at his post on the roof. The wounded man dragged himself down the stairs to a room below and died in a pool of blood. Such is the tradition.

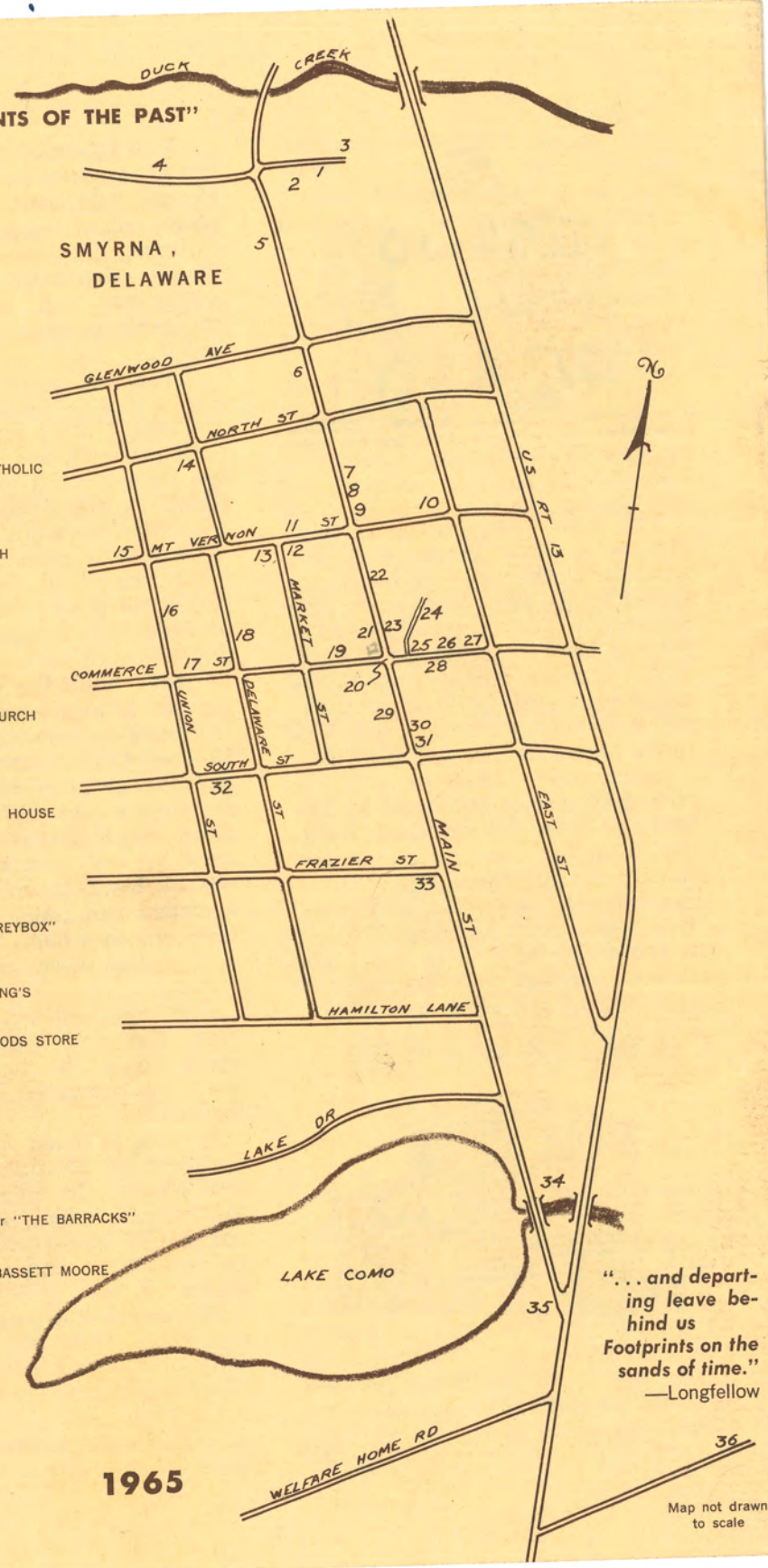
One important fact remains, however. The first legislature of the State under the Federal Government was convened in this stately mansion.

Smyrna is proud of its past, yet confident in its future. Tour the area outside the map section, view the fine new homes, see our schools, notice our industries, contemplate the open land, and realize our potential.

WE AWAIT THE COMING GENERATIONS!!!

"FOOTPRINTS OF THE PAST"

1. "THE LINDENS"
2. THE PLANK HOUSE
3. THE OLD MILL
4. QUAKER CEMETERY
5. EPISCOPAL CEMETERY
6. THE STOCKLEY HOUSE
7. PRESLEY SPRUANCE HOUSE
8. CUMMINS HOUSE
9. A VICTORIAN TOWNE HOUSE
10. ST. POLYCARP'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH (Old)
    Remodeled and reconverted to a Protestant structure
11. ASBURY METHODIST CHURCH
12. VICTORIAN (TUSCAN)
13. VICTORIAN (MANSARD)
14. OLD ASBURY CEMETERY
15. MUSTARD HOUSE
16. ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
17. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
18. THE STEVENSON HOUSE
19. ONE AND ONE-HALF STORY HOUSE
20. THE FOUR CORNERS
21. HANDSBERRY'S STORE (FEDERAL)
22. THE GARDENS AT "THE GREYBOX"
23. LITTLE VICTORIAN SHOP
24. LAST VESTIGE OF "THE KING'S HIGHWAY"
25. TILGHMAN'S SPORTING GOODS STORE
26. BROADWAY'S RESTORED (GEORGIAN)
27. ABRAM PIERCE HOUSE
28. THE SPRUANCE HOUSE
29. THE LOCKWOOD HOUSE or "THE BARRACKS"
30. & 31. DUPLEX FEDERAL
    (30.) BIRTHPLACE OF JOHN BASSETT MOORE
32. "GINGERBREAD GOTHIC"
33. "NEW ORLEANS" GRILL WORK
34. OLD MILL HOUSE
35. PRESBYTERIAN CEMETERY
36. BELMONT HALL



"... and departing leave behind us Footprints on the sands of time."
—Longfellow

1965

Map not drawn to scale