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*Delaware Guide, pages 176-184.*



## Dover

*Railroad Station:* Pennsylvania Station, W. end of Lookerman St., for Delmarva Division of Pennsylvania R.R.

*Bus Station:* 322 W. Lookerman St., for Greyhound, Trailways, Short Line, Red Star.

*Airlines:* Scheduled service at Dover Airforce Base, 3 m. S. of U.S. 113.

*Accommodations:* Three Hotels (one for Negroes); tourist homes; no seasonal rates, good motels.

*Information Service:* State Development Department, Legislative Hall; Highway Building.

*Motion Picture Houses:* Two.

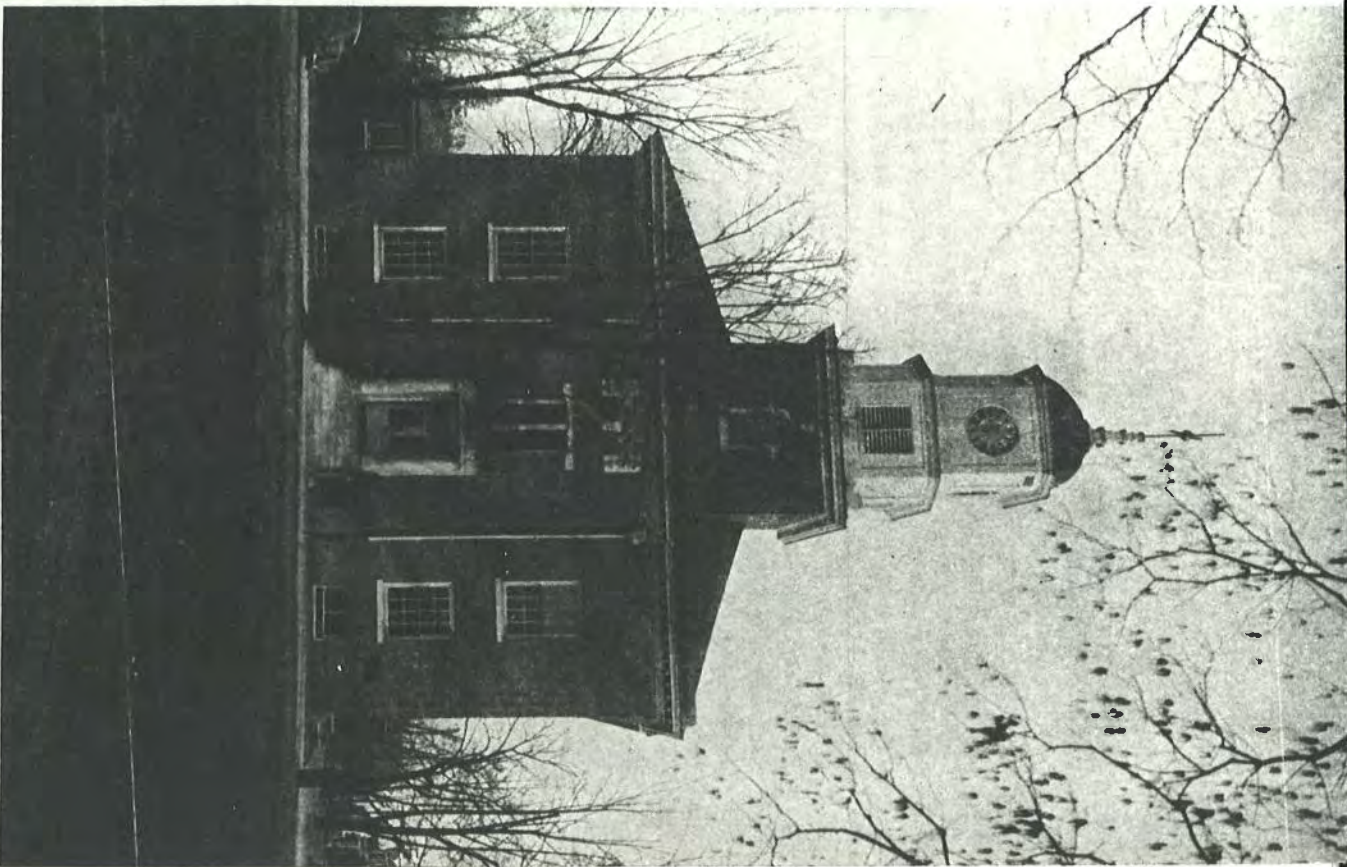
*Hunting and Fishing:* Areas and facilities within short driving radius.

*Annual Event:* "Old Dover Day," first Saturday in May, when many houses are opened to the public for an admission, proceeds used for further beautification of the city.

**DOVER** (20 alt., 6,500 pop.), capital of Delaware and county seat of Kent, borders St. Jones Creek and Silver Lake at the approximate center of the State. It is the market and shipping point for the fruit, vegetables, and other products grown in the low, fertile orchard and farm lands that surround it. Approached through this cultivated land, Dover has the aspect of a manorial park where houses and other buildings have been set down among oaks and elms and flowering trees. The town extends north and south between the creek on the east and the railroad on the west. State Street and Governor's Avenue, the main north and south arteries, and the streets parallel to them are bordered chiefly by residences. They are crossed at right angles by other residence streets and by the main exclusively business thoroughfare, Lookerman Street, near the center of the town. Two short blocks south of Lookerman Street, State Street runs into and through the Green, an open square, planted in grass under tall elms, and surrounded by old houses and public buildings.

Though US 13 follows Governor's Avenue and US 113 is a bypass east of town, State Street remains a popular route. One of the oldest streets, the section near the Green, originally part of the King's Highway, is broad, heavily shaded by tall elms and oaks. Here are many of the larger homes, outlined against shrubbery and trees affording glimpses into celebrated back gardens.

The older industries of Dover lie by the railroad tracks to the west,



COURTHOUSE, DOVER

with the exception of the nationally-known Richardson and Robbins Plant in the center of town. Several newer plants are in the east-central section. Dover industries include canning and the manufacture of silk hosiery, mattresses, baskets, auto bodies, cheese, plumbing supplies, and rubber products.

The biennial convening of the General Assembly, when its fifty-two members converge from all parts of the State, scarcely disturbs the flow of Dover life, except for the dignified bustle that pervades the streets and the mall adjoining the State buildings.

A lively scene is usually presented by Lookerman and other streets of the business district, lined with stores, banks, and markets. Here, Dover residents and crowds of people from the countryside throng the streets, especially on Friday nights. Occasionally one sees a Mennonite from the colony near Dover, in his severe black garb, his stiff-rimmed black hat, and his long beard; or a group of "yellow people," the so-called Moors of Cheswold who are related to the Moors of Indian River in Sussex County (*see Tour 15*). In the total of 6,322 inhabitants (1950 census), there were only 131 of foreign parentage.

The Negroes, numbering 1,643, or over 26 percent of the population, are with few exceptions natives of Delaware, mostly descendants of Delaware slaves. A few are in the professional class, but most are laborers, porters, and domestics. Those who can afford it reside on N. Queen Street; the remainder live in small frame houses of two and four rooms in the city's outskirts.

When the territory about Dover became a county separate from the Whorekill (Sussex) in 1680, with the name of St. Jones County (now Kent), the site of the town was a part of an estate of 800 acres, called "Brothers' Portion," belonging to John and Richard Walker. The Indian rights had cost the Walkers three match-coats, twelve bottles of drink, and four handfuls of powder. John Walker had been one of the petitioners for a separate court district or county, and was one of the first to receive a grant of land from the newly-appointed court at its session, November 17, 1680.

William Penn, in 1683, gave orders that a county seat, named Dover, be laid out along the King's Road with a broad cross street from the river, on which a courthouse and prison were to be erected, and in 1694 representatives of the county bought from William Southbee, who had bought the land from Walker, 200 acres for the town. Meanwhile, the court, which had at first met at the home of one of the justices, Edward Pack, at Town Point near the mouth of St. Jones Creek east of the site of Dover



(see *Tour 2A*), was being held at James Maxwell's tavern on land adjoining the site for the county seat.

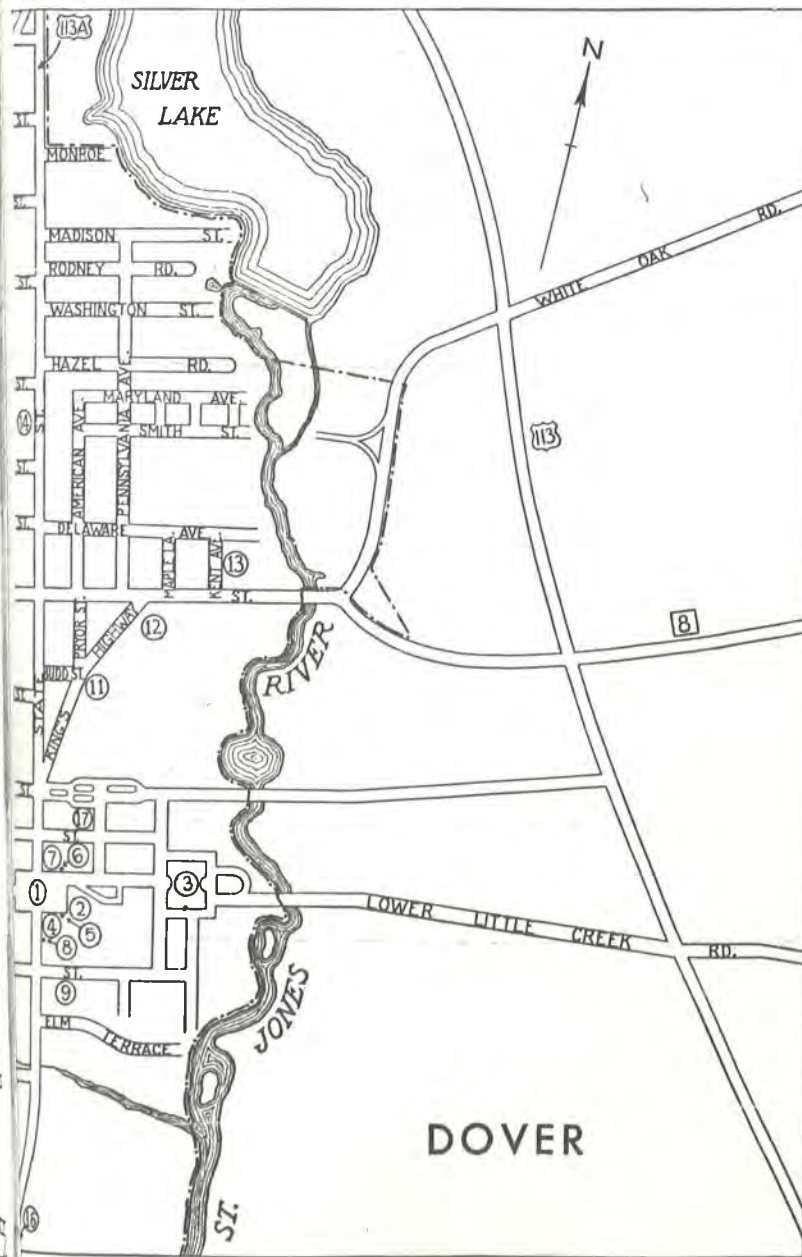
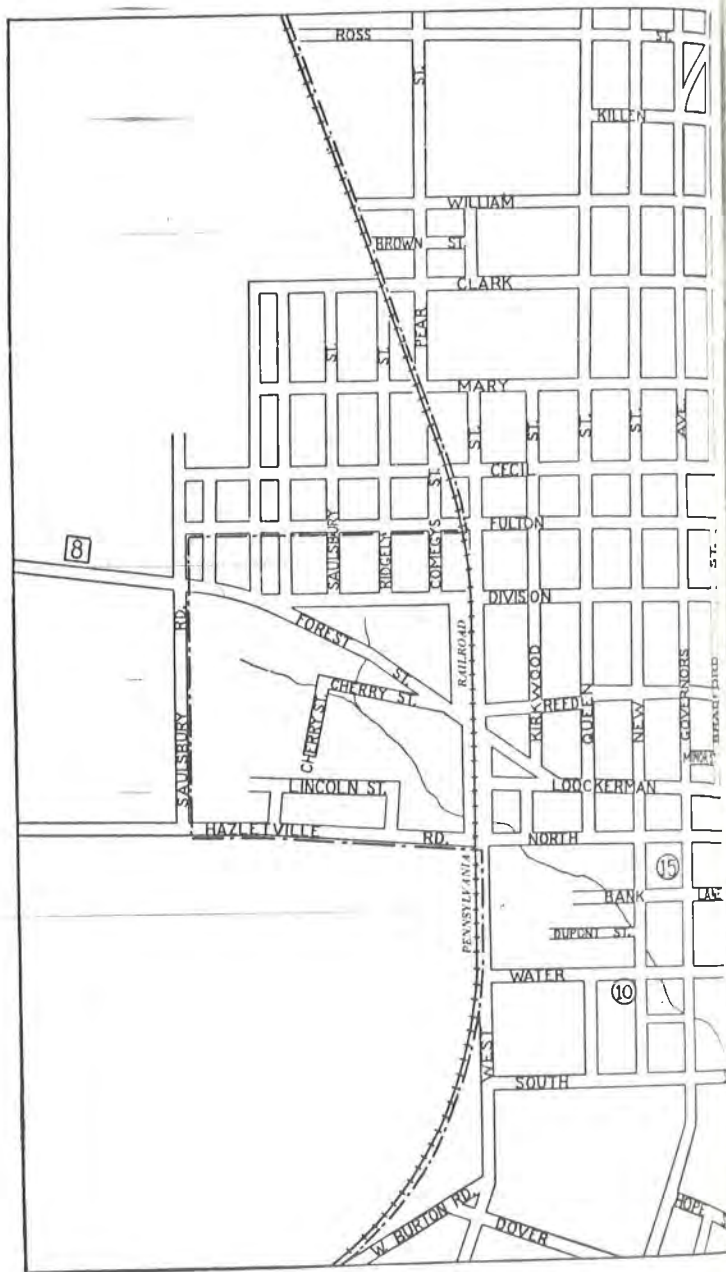
The courthouse and prison were built between 1694 and 1697 on the site of the present Kent County Courthouse. Nothing was done about laying out the town, however, until 1717, when the Delaware Assembly meeting at New Castle appointed three commissioners to lay out the town of Dover, the work to be finished on or before March 10, 1718. The commissioners so arranged the street from the creek running at right angles across the King's Highway that the courthouse stood in the spot appointed by Penn in the original plan, in the northwest corner of a courthouse square extending south and east.

For the town plot only about 125 of the 200 acres were used. Sixty-nine of the remaining 75 acres were bought by John Mifflin, who sold them to Nicholas Ridgely in 1748. This land is still owned by his descendants, and is known as "The Ridgely Farm."

The courthouse lot, including the courthouse and jail, was sold in 1722 to John Lindsay. A tavern, the King George, later occupied the site. A new courthouse was built on the site of the present State House probably about the time of the sale.

From its laying out in 1717 to the Revolution, Dover grew slowly. A schoolhouse known as the Academy was built on the present Governor's Avenue, south of Bank Alley, soon after the middle of the eighteenth century. As early as 1708, a wooden church existed near Dover in charge of a missionary of the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and soon afterwards a Presbyterian clergyman was in residence. A Quaker meeting was organized later.

In 1738, Samuel Dickinson, father of John Dickinson, Signer of the Constitution and closely identified with the progress of Dover, became one of the magistrates of the Kent County court, later bought a town site, and lived but a few miles away (see *Tour 2A*). On another large estate nearby, lived Caesar Rodney, who as a member from Delaware in the Continental Congress of 1776 was to save Delaware's vote for Independence. In June 1776, Rodney, who was Brigadier-General of Kent County militia as well as member of Congress, came home from the Congress at Philadelphia to help deal with a threatened Tory uprising. For the final vote on Independence, Rodney's vote was needed to break the tie between Thomas McKean "for" and George Read "opposed," so a messenger was dispatched to notify Rodney to return to Philadelphia. He was found at his farm, and rode the 86 miles back to Philadelphia without stop, except for change of horses. Upon news of the signing of the Declaration of Inde-



pendence, patriots took the portrait of King George III from the walls of the Courthouse and burned it at a celebration on the Green.

At this period Louis Philippe, Comte de Ségur, kinsman of Lafayette, having come with the French squadron to Delaware Bay, made his overland way to the north. In his *Memoirs and Recollections*, he writes under the date of September 11-12, 1778:

I set out early in the morning for Philadelphia, and I could therefore only see Dover in passing. It was the first American town to which fortune had conducted me. Its appearance struck me; it was surrounded with thick woods because there, as in other parts of the thirteen States, the population was still scattered over an immense territory, a small portion of which was cultivated.

All the houses in Dover offered a simple but elegant appearance. They were built of wood and painted with different colors. This variety in their aspect, the neatness which distinguished them, the bright and polished knockers of the doors, seemed all to announce the order and activity, the intelligence and prosperity of the inhabitants.

Dover became the capital of the State on May 12, 1777, the seat of government being transferred from New Castle. Legislative sessions were held in the Kent County Courthouse, which between 1772 and 1776 had been enlarged and rebuilt at a cost of £800 or more.

At Dover on December 7, 1787, a convention of thirty delegates ratified the United States Constitution adopted in Philadelphia on September 17. This unanimous action brought Delaware the honor of being the first State in the Union.

Little change came in the picture of Dover during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, except that more houses, chiefly of brick, were built at a distance from the Green. Fears were expressed for the safety of the capital when the British fleet cruised in Delaware Bay during the War of 1812, but the conflict came no closer than Lewes.

#### KEY TO DOVER MAP

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|---|--|
| 1. The Green                                    | 9. Christ Church                                   |
| 2. State House                                  | 10. Kent County Jail                               |
| 3. Legislative Hall                             | 11. Richardson and Robbins Plant                   |
| 3a. Hall of Records                             | 12. Woodburn                                       |
| 3b. Highway Building—<br>Kent County Courthouse | 13. Elizabeth W. Murphy School                     |
| 4. No. 49, The Green                            | 14. Wesley Collegiate Institute                    |
| 5. Ridgely House                                | 15-16. Old Presbyterian Church<br>now State museum |
| 7. Parke Building                               | 17. Post Office Building                           |
| 8. Lookerman House                              | 18. City Hall                                      |

At the approach of the Civil War, Dover was the scene of active controversy between the majority for the Union and the minority whose sympathies were with the South. In 1862, Union troops disarmed some young Secessionists in the town and for a time kept the leaders under guard in the State House.

In 1873, the Courthouse containing the legislative hall and offices was sold to the State, and next year a new County Courthouse was erected on Penn's original site where the Courthouse of the 1690's and later King George Tavern stood.

Beginning in 1889, Dover was the scene of a hard-fought political battle over the attempt of the late John Edward Addicks of Boston and Philadelphia to win a seat in the United States Senate from Delaware. Until his final defeat in 1906, the biennial sessions of the General Assembly degenerated into sensational deadlocks, with vacancies in the Senate. The cry was "Addicks or Nobody" on one side; "Nobody," on the other.

In the twentieth century, the expansion of Dover has been notable. Population has doubled since 1920. Industry-developed, and the business of government brought more and more residents to the town and also finer public buildings. One of the most important activities of the State government in Dover is the granting of corporation charters and the collection of fees and franchise taxes. About one-fifth of all the active United States corporations listed in Moody's *Manual* have been chartered in Dover (*see Government*).

When the Du Pont Boulevard supplemented the Delaware Railroad, the capital came within an hour of Wilmington. To celebrate the completion of this modern highway, an important ceremony took place on the Green in 1924. Coleman du Pont presented the state-long road to the State, handing over the deed to the Governor. A map of Delaware in silver with the highway traced in gold was presented by citizens to Mr. du Pont.

In 1929, Dover adopted a modified form of city-manager government under a charter changing the corporate name from "The Town of Dover" to "The City of Dover." The mayor and council serve without salary. One mayor served fifteen successive terms and the town actually had only three mayors in 21 years. The city-owned electric generating plant is next to the largest on the Delmarva Peninsula, and, together with the efficient municipal government, has been a factor in the establishment of the present low city tax rate. The water supply and distribution system is also publicly owned, and in the summer of 1936, an incinerator and sewage disposal plant, sufficient to meet the needs of a population of 7,000, was completed.



Serving the needs of Dover and intended as an emergency hospital for middle Delaware, the Kent County General Hospital, west side of South State Street, near the city line, is thoroughly modern and well equipped and staffed. It was opened in October 1927, after a spirited campaign in which nearly everyone in Kent County participated, and represents an investment, including equipment, in 1953 of \$771,700. Its medical staff includes all the physicians of the vicinity, and its capacity is about 96 beds. A property adjoining is used as a nurses' home. Support for this hospital comes in part from the General Assembly and the Kent County Levy Court, and in part from gifts and payment of fees by patients.

A 35-acre park on both sides of the St. Jones River from the mill dam to the wharf near the Legislative Hall was originally laid out and constructed by the Works Progress Administration. Adjacent is the new section laid out by the city for the new public buildings, of which the Post Office, Legislative Hall, Hall of Records, and Highway Building are a part. The St. Jones River has been widened to form a beautiful lake.

Among other parks in Dover at the present time is Richardson Park in the northwestern section of the city. This recreation ground, while privately maintained by the Richardson family, is open to the general public. Silver Lake at the north end of State Street is popular for fishing, boating, and onboard motor races held in the summer, and ice skating during the rare freezing weather.

#### POINTS OF INTEREST

1. **THE GREEN**, junction of State St. and Bank Lane, Dover's tree-shaded public square, is surrounded by office buildings, law and corporation offices, and private residences. Laid out in 1717 in accordance with William Penn's 1683 order, in the Green were held early fairs and markets including slave markets. Here during the Revolution, the First Delaware Regiment was mustered and marched to join Washington's army. Because much of the history of the State has centered about this quiet spot, fact and legend have peopled it with notables for 250 years.

Here took place, in 1745, the laying of the restless ghost of Chief Justice Samuel Chew by a public ceremony. Chew, born in 1693, was appointed Chief Justice of the Three Lower Counties in 1741, and retained that office until his death in 1744. Late one night a rustic on his way home over the Green was astonished to see a shadowy figure under a poplar tree. Upon drawing nearer, he recognized it as the late Chief Justice, standing in his favorite attitude, head bowed in deep meditation. By