DELAWARE PUBLIC ARCHIVES

A History of Harrington, Delaware and Area

Compiled by

THE HISTORY COMMITTEE

of the

GREATER HARRINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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A HISTORY OF
HARRINGTON, DELAWARE
AND AREA

VOLUME I

In Memory of
A FAITHFUL WORKER

THIS BOOK IS HEREBY
dedicated to

JOSEPH G. WARD

BORN: NOVEMBER 1, 1909
DIED: FEBRUARY 6, 1987

JOE'S ENCOURAGEMENT AND INTEREST WAS A GREAT HELP IN THE COMPLETION OF THIS PROJECT.

It is our desire as a Historical Society to record for future generations their background, their roots, and thereby to instill an appreciation of the history of Harrington, Delaware, and the surrounding area. Much of our past is lost every day due to death of our older citizens, loss of memory due to old age, or illness. Only by preserving our past, whether it is written words or artifacts, can future generations understand from whence they came and gain direction for their futures. We hope this offering will bring instances of the past to many minds. Please share with us as you read these pages of memories which have been provided by people who either reside in the community now or have done so in the past. Keep in mind that much of the contents of this book are from memories and, therefore, we ask your indulgence if you remember something happening a different way than we have recorded it. To prove the point, we have included three different histories written by three different people. Each was written at different times and so that means there will be differences in some of the facts. We have tried to document where we could and give as accurate an account as it is possible to do. We hope that you will read and enjoy. We also invite you to participate in future issues by completing the enclosed evaluation sheet and returning it to us. Enclose any memories or anecdotes you would like to see included in future issues and, if they are acceptable, your name will appear as a contributor. Thank you for your support and your comments.

The Greater Harrington Historical Society

JOSEPH WARD (SQUIRE WARD)

Since every town must have a beginning, those who help to bring it into being are important to that moment.

Such a man was Joseph Ward, more popularly known to all as "Squire Ward".

It was his duty to set the original boundaries for the Community of Clarks Corner, later to become Harrington, Delaware.

For this reason, we feel he has a special place in our History and so deserves a place of Honor in this, our first edition of our History of Harrington Books.

The son of Joseph Ward, Sr., (8-16-1793 to 8-2-1852) and wife, Sarah Jester Ward (1-1-1800 to 1-2-1873), was born on a farm southwest of Vernon on April 12, 1830. Squire Ward attended Prospect School. (The County School system was not in operation until early 1930's.) When he grew up, he became a surveyor like his father. He was married to Mary Klump, who was born 7-2-1844 and died 8-27-1917. They had two daughters...Rosell Ward, born 4-17-1869, died 12-5-1927 and married Solomon Layton Sapp; Anna Klump Ward, born 4-24-1883, died 9-21-1943, and married Dr. Howard Reggrie.

Mary Klump Ward's brother was John A. Klump who for years owned the Klump Block, the site of the present Harrington Post Office.

Squire Ward had a small office on Commerce Street where the Quillen Apartments are located. He also wrote deeds and wills, and made land plots.

When the Town was Incorporated in 1869, the Town Commissioners ordered Joseph Ward to survey one-half mile in each direction from the railroad tank house in order to establish the boundaries of the Town. Joseph Ward was a Town Alderman for the years 1871-1875; 1877-1878; 1883. His home was a farm located north of Harrington - now Kent County Road #290.

Joseph Ward was commissioned a Notary Public by Robert Reynolds, Governor of Delaware, the 5th day of May, 1894; John D. Hawkins, Secretary of State. His appointment was received for record by Henry N. Clark, Justice of the Peace, Dec. 27, 1895. James Verdin was the recorder.

Research was done by Joseph G. Ward

References: **Delaware Industries** - 1891

Census of 1890 of Harrington and Kent County Businesses including Lewis and Ward - Druggists

Scharff's History of Delaware

Miss Oda Baker taught school 45 years.

LEGEND FOR MISS BAKER'S HISTORY OF HARRINGTON, DE

#1 - See picture of Front Street on page #9.
#2 - Located on Reese Avenue
#3 - Frame Schoolhouse was located where Quillen's store is today.
#4 - Another reference to Hotel.
#5 - Swain's Hotel - located where Hardee's is today.
#6 - Reese Factory was located in the east end of Reese Avenue.
#7 - R. W. Vane and Co. was located just past where Satterfield and Ryan are located today.
#8 - First shirt factory was managed by Mr. Fred Greenley, Sr.
#9 - Creadick's basket mill was located where the present day Quillen's Shopping Center is today.
#10 - Presently, Welch's Seed Service, Inc., on Vernon Road.

A HISTORY OF HARRINGTON, DELAWARE

— by —
Miss Oda Baker - 1924

Harrington, Kent County, Delaware, is located just a trifle above 39° 55' north latitude. It is very close to the boundary line between Kent and Sussex Counties. Harrington, formerly called Clark's Corner, grew from a corner store to a fair-sized town in practically thirty years. In 1760, the land was held by Ben Clark. Later, it was divided and owned by Ben Harrington on the North, on the East by Matthew J. Clark, and on the South and West by the Dormans. In 1862, the name of the town was changed to Harrington by the Legislature, in honor of Samuel M. Harrington, then Chancellor of the State, Seven years later Harrington was incorporated.

The first house was built by the Clarks where the Hotel is now. (1) At the present time, it is the hotel property and stands back of the hotel as a storeroom. The second house was built by Mr. Harrington and is now located near the Reese Factory. (2) This house has all been destroyed with the exception of the frame. In four years after the beginning of Clark's Corner, there were twenty houses.

We have five churches in town: The Methodist Episcopal, built in 1870; the Methodist Protestant, built in 1881; the Episcopal, built in 1876; the Nazarene, and the Holiness. In 1873, a Presbyterian Church was built. It was used until 1921 when it was sold and turned into the Century Club building. There are also two colored churches. The first school was built in 1860, on the land where A. W. Spurry's home is now. The building was later moved to Commerce Street and it is now occupied by Mrs. L. Morris's Clothing Store. At a date later in 1884, a High School Building of frame structure was built. (3) This building was used until the fall term of 1912. At that date the present High School Building was opened. It is of brick

structure. At the time it was built it was considered the best High School in lower Delaware. The old building is now an apartment house owned by Mr. Benjamin Knox.

The first store was built by Eli Harrington where the Drug Store now stands. The present oldest store is that owned by the late W. L. Jones in the Wolcott Block. It was built by the VanGesel Brothers.

In 1856, the Delaware Railroad was built which gave the town a boom. A station was built to benefit the land. Harrington is now an important Railroad center. This year the wreck train and the work train have been moved from Georgetown and stationed here. With so many crews, the population of Harrington is expected to increase rapidly. The Franklin City branch connects here also.

In 1810 a hotel was built. (4) The same hotel is now being used. It is located on Commerce Street. A modern hotel is being built at the intersection of the Harrington-Milford Highway and the State Highway. Mr. Swain is to be the proprietor. (5)

With the beginning of Harrington, a blacksmith shop was built where the First National Bank stands. The industries were lumbering and agriculture. The first canning factory was built by Mr. Tom Sharp and Mr. William Quillen. It was located between W. L. Kennerly's and Mr. Harmstead's houses. There are now four modern canning factories. Two built in 1890; one by Mr. Reed (now Mr. Harrington's) and one by Mr. Fleming (now Mr. Sheldrake's). Reese's (6) was built in 1900 and the company factory in 1911 (now Mr. R. W. Vane's) (7).

The first shirt factory was built in 1904 on Delaware Avenue. It was destroyed by fire in 1919 (8). In 1920 the second shirt factory was built on Hanley Street.

Mr. A. C. Creadick is the owner of the only and very large basket factory (9). Mr. Charles Murphy is the owner of one of the largest flour mills in lower Delaware (10). The printing office was opened by Bob Downes and Mr. Harvey in 1880. The Harrington Journal was first published by Frank Fleming about ten years ago. It is now published weekly by Mr. Harvey Burgess.

The first Post Office was built in 1857 where Irving Legates' Barbershop now is. The first postmasters were Mr. Asbury and J. H. VanGesel. The present Post Office was built about 1915. Fred Powell is now Postmaster.

The first Drug Store was built in the Wolcott block, where Mrs. Langrell's store is, by W. T. VanGesel. The First National Bank was built in 1887. Mr. D. B. Tharp is cashier. The Peoples Bank was built in 1905. Mr. Fred Masten is Cashier.

The water plant was built in 1903. A company known as the Harrington Water Company held a lease for 20 years to manage the water supply of the Town. That lease expired last year. The town manages it now.

Electric lights were put in town in 1906. The Chamber of Commerce was established in January of 1923.

The first town lot was sold to John H. VanGesel for $100.00. The town Limits were marked one-half mile any direction from the tank house. Before the first schoolhouse was built, the people held their town meetings in the warehouse. The Town Hall is now on the second floor of the Firehouse.

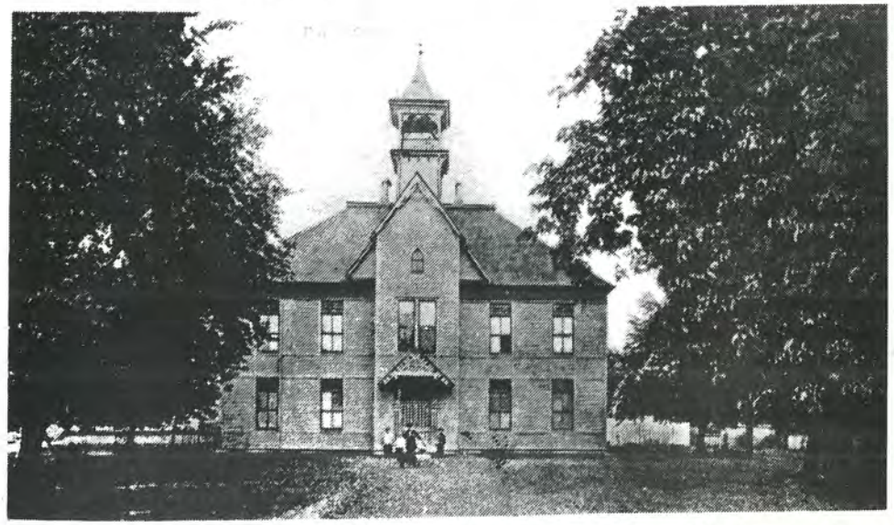
The New Reese Theatre, built in 1922, is the largest and most modern theatre in lower Delaware.

In the last year a concrete road has been laid through town. This adds much to the appearance of the town.

The Kent and Sussex Fairs are located just outside of town. This fair was begun in 1921. This and the Delaware State Fair near Wilmington are the only fairgrounds in the State.

The population of the town is between 2500 to 3000. Mayor is Mr. Sawtell. Town Council consists of S. O. Bailey, Frank Graham, A. W. Spurry, W. T. Moore, S. G. Markert.

Reference Sources: Present residents of Town and the **Sentinel Newspaper Report**



Frame Schoolhouse was used until 1912. Later became the Knox Apartments, belonging to Mr. Benjamin Knox. It was torn down at a later date to make way for the Quillen's Market.

SWAIN HOTEL, HARRINGTON, DEL.

The Swain's Hotel, built about 1921. It had a Dining Room, Bar, and Sun Parlor on the first floor with many bedrooms on the second and third floors.

COURTESY - MARIE AND HENRY BULLOCK

View of Commerce Street looking north. On the left are Milton Welch's Barber Shop, Wheeler's Radio and Appliance Store, and Hardware Store owned by D. E. Handley succeeded by Peck and Taylor and now Taylor's Hardware.

COURTESY - IRENE CURTIS WELCH

University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware

September 2, 1951

Dear Miss Paskey:

I have enjoyed your History of Harrington very much. I am sorry I've been so slow in reading it, but I've been very busy, both in preparing for my trip and in trying to tie up loose ends I leave behind.

When you finish this study, won't you please give a copy of it to the University of Delaware Library? We should have available just such helpful material as this, for we are naturally expected to be a chief center of local history and the legislature, by law of 1909 (or maybe 1911), called upon us to collect material relating to Delaware History - a request that was very wise, right, and proper.

I'm very sympathetic to such studies as yours because I think an understanding of our country should begin with an understanding of its neighborhoods and towns and cities. I wish every Delaware town was conscious without being unpleasantly vain or boastful of its own heritage.

I've jotted down a few specific comments as. . . where do the people of Harrington come from? Is there any noticeable influx from the Eastern shore? From foreign lands or other States? Do the natives of Harrington have any unusual customs or folk-ways? Are there any peculiar farming customs (as in planting)? Especially are there any such customs as might be forgotten? Are there any interesting political practices?

These are just random reflections which occur to me. I wish I knew the answers. There are so many rich stories of information around us that we can never do more than begin to explore them.

We are cleaning and packing and planning like mad for our big trip. With 2 tiny children, it's quite an adventure we have ahead. My best to you and my friend, Miss Jenny Morris.

Sincerely yours,

DR. JOHN MUNROE

This material on Harrington, Delaware, was collected as a special project by eleventh grade students and I during American History Classes. It was done in a six week study on Delaware History.

I personally interviewed Mrs. Annie Gordon, John Sheldrake, William W. Sharp, Frank VanGesel. and other older citizens.

The suggestions from Dr. John Munroe might still be applied by an interested, ambitious person.

So, I submit this collection of trivia, fact, and color stories for whatever it may be worth to the Harrington Historical Society. Should you care for further explanation, I will be glad to be of service.

Sincerely,

LORETTA PASKEY PURNELL

The following manuscript was completed August 7, 1949:

INCORPORATED BY ACT OF ASSEMBLY ON MARCH 23, 1869

GENERAL

The city of Harrington is the nearest city to the geographical center of Kent and Sussex Counties. As with most of Delaware, these two counties were one immense forest previous to the coming of the white men. In fact, the section including Harrington was known in the Deed Records as the Mispillion Forest.

Then the land was gradually cleared of the timber in spots where farms were developed. This was followed by further timber cutting and the production of boards and timbers for building purposes. Today, Kent County contains only 106,100 acres of woodland and Sussex County, 283,759 acres.

During the period of Sept. 21, 1680 to June 3, 1794, members of the English-born Clark family secured numerous land grants from the proprietors of William Penn most of which were located in the Mispillion Forest in Mispillion Hundred and many of which abutted on Brown's Branch of the Murderkill River and its Prongs. Included in this group were William, Thomas, Joshua, Benjamin, Matthew, John, Matthew J. and Zadoc C. Clark. The acreage granted or surveyed to them totaled more than 6000 acres and included all of the present site of Harrington.

Thomas Clark bought 200 acres located on Brown's Branch on May 9, 1733 from Henry Molliston, for 60 pounds. He also received the following land grants: 131 acres on Sept. 17, 1740, known as "Clark's Folly", 200 acres, adjoining his dwelling place, on Sept. 17, 1740, for which he agreed to pay one cent sterling per acre and 100 acres on August 10, 1750.

Thomas Clark, whose will was probated on Dec. 13, 1764 left a widow, Sarah; two sons, John and Benjamin, and five daughters, Ann McKnatt, Sarah Finch, Priscilla Henderson, Elizabeth Harrington and Ruth Sharp. He left his widow a half interest in his "present dwelling plantation"; to his son, John, he left "Clark's Folly", 131 acres, and to Benjamin he left "Sipplington", 200 acres, bought of Molliston. The residue of his estate he left to his widow and five daughters.

John sold "Clark's Folly" to Benjamin for 110 pounds on March 12, 1772. John, with his sons, Benjamin U. and Thomas J., then settled in the Milford area and founded the Clark family which was prominent in the life of Milford and Milford Hundred.

Benjamin, in partnership with his son, Matthew, received a land grant of 102 acres on Feb. 18, 1794, known as "Overplus". It was surveyed on June 3, 1794 and they paid the State Treasurer $51.45 on May 7, 1795. Overplus adjoined "Clark's Folly", owned by Benjamin and was located on Brown's Branch. The 100 acres plus 6 acres for roads plot, which had been granted to Thomas Clark on Aug. 10, 1750, was resurveyed to Benjamin Clark on June 2, 1794. It was located on a Prong of Brown's Branch and adjoined land of Matthew Clark. Benjamin paid State Treasurer Thomas Sipple $14.00 on May 7, 1795.

Matthew received a land grant on Oct. 9, 1793 of 21 acres known as "Ye Latch". It was surveyed on June 3, 1794. He paid the State Treasurer $10.61. The Kent County surveyor was George McCall. This tract adjoined "Clark's Folly" which was owned by Benjamin Clark.

Thomas Clark, the brother of Matthew, purchased at a Sheriff's sale, on May 17, 1793, a 200 acre tract known as "George's Purchase". It had been owned by George Stevenson.

Benjamin Clark's will was probated on March 25, 1796. To his wife, Ruth Janard, he left his "present dwelling plantation" for life and two slaves, a woman, "Starling" and a small boy "Sun". To his son, Thomas, he left a tract of land known as "Long Choice" and a woman slave, "Sylvia". To his son, Matthew, he left "Clark's Addition", part of "Clark's Folly", "Sipplington" the dwelling Plantation upon the death of his widow, Ruth J., a slave boy "Duke" and two slave children, "Pat" and "Shealy". To his daughter, Sarah, wife of John Harrington, he left 121 acres of the "Folly" where they now live", part of "Overplus" and a slave girl "Roase".

On March 26, 1803, Matthew Clark transferred the title to "Overplus", 102 acres, beside the "Folly" to his nephew, Abner Harrington, the son of John and Sarah Harrington.

Benjamin Clark had built a tavern on the present site of the First National Bank, in 1780. He also built and operated a sawmill in the forest. It was at this time that the name "Clark's Corner" was given to this cross-road. After the death of Benjamin, Matthew Clark continued to operate the tavern until his death in 1804, after which it was closed.

Matthew Clark's will was probated on May 8, 1804. To his wife, Mary, he left everything, including a female slave "Cate", for life. Upon her death, his son. Zadoc Crapper, was to get all of his land west of a drawn line except "Lantern Ridge" and his son, Matthew Jarrett, was to get "Lantern

Ridge" and all of his land east of the drawn line. To his friend, Thomas Strond, he left 70 acres of land between the head of Brown's Branch and a fork. He ordered 1 farm and 5 slaves to be sold to pay his just debts.

In the event that his two sons were dead, their shares were to be divided between Zadoc Crapper and Eliza Crapper, the children of Doctor John Crapper.

Matthew Clark's widow, Mary, died in 1816 and the Court appointed Zadoc C. to act as guardian for Matthew J., his brother, who was a minor.

On April 8, 1825, Matthew J. Clark sold to his brother, Zadoc C., for $800.00, 196 acres of land on the S.W. side of the road leading from Clark's old tavern to Clark's old sawmill on the north Prong of Brown's Branch. It was adjacent to land owned by Benjamin Harrington.

The Clark mill was located in the vicinity of Hollywood Cemetery.

On April 8, 1825, Matthew J. Clark deeded 192 acres to Thomas Dorman. This land was transferred back to Mr. Clark in the same day. This transaction was for the "purpose of docking an entailment" on the land. The description mentions Schoolhouse Prong of Brown's Branch; it also mentions the Clark hotel, the Clark mill and a blacksmith shop.

Zadoc C. Clark died in October, 1828 leaving as his principal heirs, his widow, Henrietta A., who administered his estate, and sons, Matthew J., Zadoc C. and John. John, an infant, died in 1829.

The will of Matthew J. Clark was probated on April 6, 1829. He left everything to his widow, Sarah, for her lifetime. Upon her death, the entire estate went to Matthew J. Clark, the son of his brother, Zadoc C. Clark.

Included in Matthew J. Clark's inheritance were the old tavern dwelling place with a house 18 ft. by 38 ft., storehouse, smokehouse, another farm dwelling and a large acreage of land.

Timber was the largest natural asset in the neighborhood and up until 1870 it was marketed in the rough.

Previous to 1856 all of the timber was hauled to Fork Landing on the Murderkill River where it was loaded upon flat-bottomed barges and towed to Wilmington and Philadelphia.

Money was scarce and most of the trade was by barter in products of the farm and forest. At first, there was scarcely any cultivated fruit. Wild berries were abundant and were sent to the city markets to be used chiefly in wine-making.

The picture of the old Railroad Station.
LOANED BY MARIE AND HENRY BULLOCK

RAILROAD

The Delaware Railroad, from Porter's to Delmar, was built in 1856. The station at Harrington was known as Junction Station for three years. The depot was built in 1856 and stood close to Clark Street where the watch-box now stands. The present station was built in 1875-76.

The train service at first consisted of one passenger and one freight train north and south, daily. A freight train would consist of ten cars of 20,000 lbs. each, and hauled by a small wood-burning locomotive that had a hard struggle to keep moving. The late Tom Hawkins, about whom many yarns were woven, told of the following experience while he was a freight conductor. Tom's train overtook Isaac Jester early one morning walking up the railroad track on his way to reach the Court House at Dover and Tom kindly offered him a free ride on the train. The offer was refused because Isaac said that he was in too much of a hurry to reach Dover in time for the opening of the Court.

On another occasion, while irritated, Tom told the Station Master at Harrington to go plumb straight to Hades. The Station Master reported it, Tom was called up on the carpet and then he was told that he must apologize to the Station Master. On arriving at Harrington on his next trip, Tom approached the Station Master and called his attention to the fact that he had told him to go to Hades. The Station Master said, "Yes, you did." "Well," Tom replied, "You needn't go, if you don't want to."

JUNCTION AND BREAKWATER R. R.

By an Act of the General Assembly of Feb. 13, 1857, the Junction and Breakwater R. R. was incorporated to build a steam railroad from the Delaware Railroad, at some point convenient to Milford, to the harbor of the Delaware Breakwater at or near Lewes.

An Act of Mar. 14, 1865 authorized the Company to issue more bonds in order to complete the construction of the railroad.

It was 1869 before this road extending to Milford, Georgetown and Selbyville was completed. The road from Selbyville to Franklin City was completed in 1876 by the Worcester R. R. Co. These roads were consolidated on May 31, 1883 to become the Del., Md., and Virginia Railroad Co. This road has been operated by the P. R. R. since 1885.

A company was formed in Baltimore to construct a railroad from Love Point, Md., to Harrington and then on to Rehoboth Beach. The Maryland end was started and reached as far as the Ezekiel Fleming property, southeast of Harrington. The project was abandoned because of lack of funds. There are places where the old right-of-way can be distinguished as on the Walter J. Paskey, Jr., farm at Andrewsville.

The Queen Anne R. R., extending from Lewes to Queenstown, Md., was built in 1886. The Cannons of Seaford were heavily interested in this road. It ceased operation about 1932.

NAME

The name of Clark's Corner or, as it was called among railroad men, Junction Station, was changed to Harrington by an Act of the General Assembly passed on Jan. 31, 1859.

Previous to this a town meeting was held to select a new name. Three names were proposed: Harrington, Clarkstown, and Tuttleville. In the selection of the name Harrington it was presumed to honor Chancellor Samuel Harrington who was interested in the building of the Delaware Railroad and who owned large tracts of land in this vicinity.

With the establishment of the railroad, Matthew J. Clark, recorded as a resident of Duck Creek Hundred, laid out a number of building lots west of the railroad and held an auction sale on Aug. 23, 1856.

Lot No. 3, on the east side of Commerce St., and south of Clark St., was sold to Richard Harrington, negro, for $80.00; lots Nos. 4 and 5 were sold to Levi Cain for $150.00; lot No. 6 was sold to Henry N. Clark for $50.00 and lot No. 7 was sold to Zadoc C. Clark; this lot adjoined the land of Benjamin Harrington to the south. The lots, which now include the site of the Reese Theatre, were sold to Cary and Wm. Frazier for $190.00

Commerce Street looking south from in front of the present day Stone's Hotel. Notice the number of trees and the dirt street.

Some of these plots were described as running from a corner where a half-brick was buried to a corner in the middle of the street where a whole brick was buried.

On July 16, 1857, Levi Cain bought lot No. 3 from Richard Harrington, negro, for $100.00 and on Aug. 5, 1857, Mr. Cain bought the present theatre site from Cary and Wm. Frazier for $274.00. During 1857, Zadoc C. Clark sold lots to Jonathan Minner, Fred J. Owens and Henry B. Fiddeman.

The triangular plot formed by Clark St., Commerce St. and Railroad Ave., and later known as the Wolcott Block, was sold on Dec. 20, 1856, by Matthew J. Clark to John VanGesel, of Smyrna, for $650.00. Mr. VanGesel converted an old stable on the site into a store building and opened a general store. He conducted the business until 1860 at which time it passed into the hands of his brother, William S. VanGesel.

The second store was built in 1856 by Davis and Bennett, of Milford, on the west side of Commerce Street. This business was later conducted by Eli and Abner Harrington. The building was destroyed by fire at a later date. It was located on land now occupied by the Reese block of stores and Tee's drugstore.

A store opened by Burton Bennett was later occupied by Walter Jones.

A granary was built beside the railroad, in 1857, by H. B. Fiddeman. It was in use until 1880 when it was torn down.

Many of the farmers of this vicinity, by virtue of hard work and attention to business, had prospered and, with the founding of Harrington, they were provided with a town conveniently located to which they could retire in one sense of that word. They built comfortable homes and lived in town, at the same time looking after their farming interests. They became interested citizens and aided in the growth of the town with their vision and capital.

In 1858, Levi Cain, a farmer, built a large store where the Reese Theatre now stands. Here, N. D. Merriken conducted a general mercantile business until the owner's death in 1861. The property was purchased by Wm. Sapp and T. H. Dorman who enlarged the building and converted it into a hotel. It was called the Delaware House. Some of their successors who operated the hotel were E. W. Macklem, who added a livery stable, Thomas Fountain, J. G. Guarby, Amos Cole and Alexander Newman, who named it Newman's Hotel.

In 1921, Delaware House was sold to E. C. Reese and moved to Reese Avenue where it was converted into three dwellings. The Reese Theatre was then built on the site.

A hotel, known as the Harrington House, was built by Zadoc C. Clark on the site of the old tavern, now occupied by the First National Bank. Some of the persons who conducted this hotel were Benjamin F. Fleming, Edward C. Shaw, James Satterfield, James Herserp, Frank Harmouson, Samuel Solomon, J. H. Westcoat, John Herdman, Amos Cole, J. Rathel, William and Thomas Anderson, A. J. Tucker, William Swain and Mrs. Edith Dickerson.

The Town of Harrington was incorporated by an Act of the General Assembly, signed by the Governor on March 23, 1869. Wm. T. VanGesel, Thos. H. Dorman, Wm. Shaw, James H. Vickery and Martin W. Harrington were named as the Town Commissioners, to hold office until the first Saturday in March, 1870, when a Town election would be held.

The town included a square plot of land measured 850 feet from the tank-house to the north, south, east and west. The Commissioners were directed to appoint a surveyor who was directed to lay out on a plot the Town of Harrington, the said plot to be placed on record in the Recorder of Deeds office in Dover.

The Commissioners were directed to elect an Alderman, an Assessor, a Treasurer and a Collector. The assessments were to include real estate,

Front St., Harrington, Del.

This was taken looking towards the J.C. Penney Bank from the Railroad crossing at Clark Street. On Left, Newman Hotel (presently Peoples Bank). Straight ahead is the Fleming's Hotel (later Dickerson). Picture taken before 1900.

Commerce Street showing M. P. Church, Harrington, Del.

Looking North on Commerce Street from Milby Street towards Trinity Church.

poll and personal effects. The taxes were limited to a total of $500.00 including the dog tax of 50 cents a head. Unimproved property was not to be taxed.

They were required to look after the repair and making of town pumps, the care and planting of ornamental trees, improving the streets and causing the sidewalks to be paved. They were ordered to have flagstones set across the streets where needed. Some of these flagstones can still be seen, as on Weiner Avenue.

The Levy Court agreed to appropriate $100.00 per year toward street improvements. This amount was increased from time to time by Acts of the General Assembly.

The Commissioners were required to adopt sanitary measures, order the removal of nuisances and to build a lock-up or jail. Bonfires and the discharging of firearms were forbidden within the Town limits.

Joseph Ward was elected surveyor to lay out the town. At the election in 1870, the following town officers were elected: Henry C. Wolcott, alderman; J. W. Stevenson, treasurer; Eli Harrington, assessor and C. C. Powell, collector.

On March 25, 1879, an Act of the General Assembly gave authority to extend the town limits westerly to West Street.

By an Act of March 9, 1883, the town limits were extended to 2640 feet in each direction from the tank-house.

The following is a list of the town aldermen: John F. Tharp 1870; Joseph Ward 1871-75; William E. Bates 1876; Joseph Ward 1877-78; William H. Powell 1879-80; Alex P. Sorden 1881; Joseph Ward 1882; R. C. Dale 1883-84; C. E. Simmons 1885-86; Henry Knox 1887. Records from 1888 to 1896 are lost. William T. VanGesel 1897; James W. Smith 1898-1902; Robert S. Downes 1903-1905; James W. Smith 1905-1910; C. N. Grant 1911; William T. VanGesel 1912; William H. Graham 1913-1914; Darwin E. Sawtelle 1915; J. Wesley Satterfield 1916-1923; Darwin E. Sawtelle 1924.

A new charter for Harrington was approved by the General Assembly on April 18, 1935. In this charter, Harrington is designated a City and it provides for a mayor, to serve two years, and six City Councilmen (one from each ward), each to serve three years with the terms of two expiring each year.

A town meeting must be held each year on the Friday evening preceding the City election. At this meeting, a report must be made of the work done during the previous year and a summary must be presented of the improvements planned for the ensuing year. The Council appoints the

COMMERCE ST., HARRINGTON, DEL.

A southern view of Commerce Street taken in front of the Sport Shop. On the left is the Quillen Apartments where Collins Clothiers and Brown's Accounting occupy the first floor and apartments are upstairs. Flag designates the Post Office at that time. On the right is Taylor's Hardware building.

COURTESY - MARIE AND HENRY BULLOCK

The Ezekiel Fleming Mansion - He reared his family in this home and was an influential businessman.

various City officers including a City Manager who has charge of the business affairs of the City.

A general assessment must be made every four years and a scrap assessment made on the other years. The Council is authorized to levy taxes not to exceed $20,000.00 per year. Farm lands within the City limits (which were not changed to any extent) are free of City taxes, Council to be the judge of what land is farm land. A dog tax of fifty cents per head is provided for.

The charter gives the Council the usual authority granted to cities in providing for the upkeep and improvements in the various city departments; plus one rather unusual grant. After designated procedure, unpaid taxes can be deducted from the salary or wages of a delinquent and, in extreme cases, the delinquent shall be imprisoned for a term not exceeding thirty days.

At the time Harrington was established, the land was owned by Nimrod Harrington on the north and on the east as far south as the present Clark Street. Matthew J. Clark owned the land on the east and south of Clark Street; Benjamin Harrington owned the land to the south and George W. Dorman owned the land to the south and west.

At that time, the streets of Harrington consisted of Clark St., Liberty St., Dorman St., Railroad Ave. and Commerce St. There was a railroad grade crossing at Commerce St. This was eliminated and the part of Commerce St. east of the railroad became Delaware Avenue which was extended parallel to the easterly side of the railroad until it reached Clark St. The railroad had agreed to grade this new street and to pave it with stone. The result was that there are spots where the stone foundation is several feet deep.

In 1859, Butler, Tuttle and Faulkner bought Nimrod Harrington's land west of the railroad. They cut oak timber and sold the cut timber over land to John F. Tharp who held it until his death in 1880. It was then subdivided and sold, extending the available building lots to the northern town limits.

Benjamin Harrington died in 1875 at the age of 99 years, 7 months and 27 days. His land was sold in 1879 extending the building area to the southern town limits.

Previous to 1880, as unimproved land, the Dorman tract was not taxable. The Town Board decided that streets should be laid out, making a portion of this land available for development. John Sheldrake, a member of the Board, was sent to negotiate with Mrs. Dorman.

Mrs. Dorman refused to either give or sell the land needed for the streets, giving as her reason the fear that any money so received would

be wasted by her sons. Mr. Sheldrake quoted the law of eminent domain which really implements the basic law that the interests of the public take precedence over individual rights, and told Mrs. Dorman that the Town would deposit $10.00 to her credit in a Milford bank (there being no bank in Harrington at that time) and proceeded with work. The result was that Mrs. Dorman sold the lots, after the streets were built, in record time. The first lot was sold to the Methodist Protestant Church and is the present site of the Town Hall and Firehouse.

One of Mrs. Dorman's sons, "Cudge", was known as a pugnacious character usually spoiling for a fight and Mr. Sheldrake was "leery" of meeting "Cudge" on the street for a long time after his argument with Mrs. Dorman.

When Weiner Ave., was laid out, the lots on each side were surveyed to include a depth of 300 feet with the usual narrow street between them. The lines of Weiner Ave., and Fleming did not coincide and the Town Board, with rare foresight, condemned a strip 12 feet wide on the easterly side to be added to the street bed. The deeds for this land contain a reversion clause in the event it ever ceases to be used for street purposes. This explains how it happens that Weiner Ave., laid out in the 1880's, is a fine, wide avenue in keeping with the present ideas as to street widths.

Nimrod Harrington died in 1890 after which his farm passed into the hands of his son, Albert, who developed building lots. He later sold the land to Richard D. Short who continued the development of this residential section to the eastern town limits.

In 1903, the portion of the George W. Dorman estate, which had been held by his widow as a dower for almost 40 years, was surveyed and placed on sale thus opening for development all of the land within the town limits.

The west side of Commerce St., known as "Wolcott's Addition", was surveyed in 1884 by Joseph Ward. The eastern side of Commerce St., owned by the George W. Dorman estate, was laid out in 1903 by John C. Hopkins. "Fleming Manor" located on both sides of the road to Vernon was laid out in February, 1911, by John C. Hopkins. The eastern section of the town, which was owned by A. C. Creadick, B. I. Shaw and Fred Marvel, was laid out in building lots on April 9, 1923 by William A. Smith. The north side of Clark St., owned by Stephen H. Porter, was surveyed on July 16, 1923. The south side of Clark St., owned by the heirs of Henry Dickerson, was laid out in 1926.

SCHOOLS, HARRINGTON, DELAWARE

The first school to cater to the district, now included in the City of Harrington, was District School #48 built in 1846, located at Powell's Crossing. School District #94 was set up by the Levy Court of Kent County on

as passed by the General Assembly on Feb. 12, 1829. The school was then built at what is now the S.E. corner of Dorman and Mechanic St. The district boundaries were changed slightly on Feb. 14, 1877. On Feb. 21, 1882, the Levy Court divided the district into three parts and established Districts Nos. 94, 126 and 127.

The School Districts, Nos. 94, 126 and 127, were consolidated and the Harrington School Board was provided for in an Act of the General Assembly passed on March 1, 1883. The School Board comprised: Robert S. Downes, Robert H. Short, James A. Smith, Ezekeil Fleming, Alfred Raughley, Wm. T. Sharp, Henry Dickerson, Amos Cole and James A. Moore. They were to serve until the first Saturday in April, 1883, at which time an election would be held. Three men to serve one year, three men to serve two years and three men to serve three years with an annual election of three members to be held thereafter.

The Board was authorized to borrow $5.000.00 with which to build a new schoolhouse. The new school was built on Dorman St. between W. Center and W. Liberty Sts. It was two stories high of frame construction, contained six large rooms and was built in the Queen Anne style of architecture. The old school was sold to Franklin Bros., who moved it to Commerce Street and converted it into a mercantile establishment. It was used until it was torn down to make way for the Smith Building.

By 1910, the school was considered by many to be too small and not too safe. John Sheldrake, who was a member of the State Senate from 1908 to 1912, told his wife that if she would get signers for a petition, he would have drawn up and introduced at the 1911 session of the General Assembly, a bill enabling the local School Board to issue bonds to the extent of $20,000.00 for the erection of a new brick elementary school in Harrington.

Thirty-five signers to the petition were secured and Mr. Sheldrake had the bill drawn up and passed by the State Senate. Many taxpayers were opposed to the bill and, previous to any action by the House of Representatives at Dover, a town meeting was called in the Town Hall. The hall was crowded with standing room at a premium. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Carroll, County Supt. of Schools, Colonel Theodore Townsend, of Milford, Sen. Louis A. Drexler and Mr. Sheldrake.

As the meeting was about to adjourn, someone in the audience asked all of those opposed to the bond issue to remain. The only men who left were the four who had spoken for the measure.

It finally developed that there were 165 petitioners against the bill. A committee was selected to appear in the House at Dover to fight the issue. Mr. Sheldrake continued his campaign and the bill was passed by the House on March 2, 1911 by a vote of 28 to 0. It was signed by the Governor on

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as passed by the General Assembly on Feb. 12, 1829. The school was then built at what is now the S.E. corner of Dorman and Mechanic St. The district boundaries were changed slightly on Feb. 14, 1877. On Feb. 21, 1882, the Levy Court divided the district into three parts and established Districts Nos. 94, 126 and 127.

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The school was built by a Milford firm, headed by Mr. Fisher, at a cost of $26,000.00. The additional $6,000.00 was subscribed by some of Harrington's citizens. The new building was opened for use in September, 1912. The old Queen Anne school building was sold to Benjamin Knox and converted into the Knox Apartments.

In 1919, the following districts were consolidated with Harrington: Little Masten's #35, Brown's Neck #38, Powell's #48, parts of Rice's #120 and Marvel's #63.

Some of these school buildings were moved to the Harrington school site and placed in use as classrooms, storage rooms, etc.

The present high school building, a modern brick structure, was erected in 1929. The Building Commission consisted of: Warren T. Moore, Chairman; Lewis M. Price, Vice-Chairman; D. Beniah Tharp, Harry S. Harrington, Leander G. Markert, George S. Williams, J. Pearce Cann, Joseph S. Wilson, Harry V. Holloway, Secretary and Jacob C. Messner, Superintendent of the Harrington Special School District. The architects were Guilbert and Betelle. The present enrollment is 603. There are twenty-nine instructors.

During the latter part of the last century, nearly all of the Delaware towns had academies or private schools. In Harrington, Professor Dukes maintained a private school in a portion of the store of the Finch building. He had an enrollment of about twenty boys and girls. This school was located on the present site of the home of Dr. W. T. Chipman on Clark Street.

CEMETERIES

The private graveyard of the Harrington family is located on Reese Avenue east of Hanley Street. Most of the bodies were removed to Hollywood Cemetery when it was opened in 1882. There are three tombstones still standing over the graves of Reynear W. Harrington, who died in 1867; Isaac J. Harrington, who died in 1878; and Robert H. Harrington who died in 1878 and was the son of William and Matilda Harrington.

The Dorman family graveyard was located on Dorman Street and extended from the New Century Club to Mechanic Street. It is mentioned in the Deed Records as being "the private graveyard of the heirs of Geo. W. Dorman". All of these bodies were removed to Hollywood Cemetery, in 1884, after the New Century Club (the former Presbyterian Church) was destroyed by fire.

The Clark family graveyard is located on the S.W. corner of Fleming and Mechanic Sts. Measuring 67 ft. by 49 ft., it was laid out by Benjamin Clark, close to his home, in the late 1700's. His family and most of his descendants are buried here. Apparently they believed, as the Society of Friends did, that tombstones should not be placed on graves as there have never been any tombstones in this plot.

Mrs. Annie Gordon, nee Morris, is the daughter of Zadoc Clark's daughter, Henrietta. Mrs. Clark's ancestors are all buried here.

Benjamin Fleming, father of the late Zadoc Fleming and W. W. Sharp's great-uncle, married one of the Clark heirs. Mr. Fleming secured possession of a portion of the Clark land including the graveyard and the site of the First National Bank and Tee's Pharmacy.

On June 23, 1932, Mrs. Annie Gordon secured possession of the graveyard plot from the Fleming heirs, of Chestertown, Md., and now owns it in fee simple.

Hollywood Cemetery, east of Harrington, was laid out in 1881 and originally consisted of ten acres of land. The original shareholders as of May, 1882, were as follows: Zebulon Hopkins, Pres.; Dr. B. L. Lewis, Sec.; Thomas H. Dorman, Supt.; James A. Smith, William Tom Sharp, George L. Baird, H. C. Wolcott, R. S. Dorons, S. L. Shaw, William Tharp, Amos Cole, James A. Moore, Chosen Friends Lodge, I.O.O.F., Beniah Raughley and Ezekiel Fleming.

The first interment was that of Mrs. Crook on Aug. 3, 1882. She had died of smallpox and, because of this, she was simply wrapped in a sheet and buried in the dead of night. The total cost, including the grave, was two dollars.

The cemetery was enlarged in April, 1931, by the addition of 10 acres of adjoining land. Services are held here on each Memorial Day.

LIBRARIES

The first lending library in Harrington was started in 1869 with Lucini Betts as Librarian. The books had been donated by Mrs. Edgar Weiner, of the family for whom Weiner Avenue was named. The books consisted chiefly of standard classical works such as Shakespeare, Dickens, etc.

The Harrington Library was started on November 10, 1880 with the following officers: W. A. Franklin, Pres.; Jennie P. Sheldrake, Vice-Pres.; Carrie D. Harrington, Sec.; E. W. Wapes, Rec. Sec.; and W. A. Ransom, Treas. A membership fee of one dollar was charged and ten cents a week dues. It was chartered as the Harrington Library Association on Feb. 6, 1883, by the Gen. Assembly.

In 1887, there were about 700 books, exclusive of periodicals, in the library, and Dr. B. L. Lewis was Pres., Amanda L. Wolcott was Sec., and L. W. Betts was Librarian. By 1890, the shelves of the library were bare because the members failed to return the borrowed books and the library became defunct. Surely, no library ever had a better reason for closing.

THEATRES

The first moving pictures were shown in the parlor of the Harrington House while operated by Mrs. Edith Dickerson as the Dickerson Hotel. The admission charge was five cents. Music to accompany the films was played on a piano by Miss Elizabeth Klett.

The first theatre was in Masten's Hall over Downes' drugstore and Cahall's furniture store. The second theatre was the Reese Opera House in the Reese Building over Collins' clothing store and the Silco store (present Salvation Army Store).

In 1921, the Delaware House at Clark Street and Railroad Avenue was moved away and the Reese Theatre was built. The first civic affair held in this theatre was the Commencement Exercises of the Class of 1922, Harrington High School.

This theatre was destroyed by fire on Nov. 15, 1943. The present modern theatre was built and was opened to the public on Oct. 4, 1945.

FUNERAL PARLORS

The Harrington Funeral Home was conducted by Fred Harrington, Samuel L. Shaw and Ezekiel Fleming. Mr. Fleming furnished the horses. The business was later conducted by Mr. Harrington alone. It was located at Fleming Ave. and Mechanic St., where the Wm. Berry Funeral Home is now located.

Wm. C. Wright and Joseph Calloway conducted a funeral parlor where the Harrington Hardware Co., now stands.

In 1934, Mr. and Mrs. Harry L. Boyer purchased the home of James Smith on Commerce St. After extensively remodeling the building, they opened their modern funeral home in Feb. 1935, the first in lower Delaware.

HARRINGTON — 1949

Harrington is situated in the center of the Delmarva Peninsula and is the natural center of highways leading in every direction. It is the marketing center for miles of outlying rural districts. It is a regular stopping point for trains on the Delmarva Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad running from New York to Cape Charles, Va. The Delaware, Maryland and Virginia Railroad, which covers the southeastern section of Delaware and eastern parts of Maryland and Virginia, has its junction with the Delmarva Division at Harrington.

Harrington is a stopping point for Motor coaches of the Short Line, the Red Star Line and the Greyhound Bus Lines. Freight service is provided by the two railroads with door-to-door delivery and pick-up. This city also has freight service provided by the Victor Lynn.

Because of the facilities, Harrington is within 24 hours by either train, truck or bus travel of one-half the population of the nation.

Climatic, soil and drainage conditions combine to make the surrounding territory well adapted to the growing of diversified crops for which are provided adequate marketing facilities. The unlimited acreage combined with the unlimited supply of labor which is available, makes this community a valuable agricultural center. Climate the year around is mild and well tempered according to the season, the average temperature being 55 degrees. There are no marshes within fifteen miles, which reduced the number of pests, such as mosquitoes, to a minimum.

The soil in this section is suited for raising a large variety of products. The average annual rainfall is 45 inches and the well distributed woodland areas are factors in retaining the excess moisture so that there is always a reserve supply of water. These wooded areas also prevent the erosion of the soil. Drainage is provided by numerous small runs which empty into the river systems of the Peninsula.

The chief agricultural pursuit is the raising of truck crops. Tomatoes, strawberries, cucumbers, corn, wheat, buckwheat, rye, asparagus, turnips, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, cantaloupes, watermelons, peas, peppers, sweet corn, soybeans, string beans, and lima beans are all to be found growing on the farms in the near vicinity of Harrington. The most progressive of these is the strawberry crop.

For packing tomatoes, beans, peas, etc., there are canning factories at Harrington and nearby towns.

Apple and peach orchards are abundant. All the standard varieties are raised in such quantities as to enjoy commercial distribution in the eastern United States, Canada and South America. The most important commercial orchards of Delaware are located within ready access of Harrington. The fruit is not only carefully raised; it is also picked, graded and packed according to the highest standards.

During the harvesting season, which is from the first of July to the middle of October, many men and women are afforded employment.

Poultry raising, tho' not as extensive here as in other sections of the State, is by no means unimportant. Poultrymen lend special attention to the year around demand for broilers, placing them on the market every month of the year. This necessitates maintenance of large flocks, which, in this vicinity, average about 1,000 birds.

There are many farmers in the vicnity of Harrington who carry herds of high grade dairy cattle with profit. This practice is enhanced by the fact that grain and feeds can be raised and pasturage provided with little added

expense. Most of the milk produced locally, which amounts to about twelve tons daily, is handled at the milk cooling station at Harrington, from which place it is shipped to Philadelphia.

Hog raising, while not extensive, is more than adequate for home consumption.

This community, due to its temperate climate and location, is really a sportsman's paradise. The waters teem with oysters, clams and crabs. Both salt and fresh water fish exist in abundance. With ample cover for protection and a great abundance of food, the marshes, woods and fields afford excellent quail, rabbit, wild fowl and woodcock shooting. To those sportsmen who enjoy the thrill of a fox hunt, this community leaves nothing to be desired.

Most of the farm products are shipped to Wilmington, Philadelphia and New York by truck. The dairy farmers bring their milk into Harrington and sell it to the Hi-Grade Dairy and the Supplee-Wills-Jones milk plant. Most of the fluid milk, formerly shipped by train, is now sent by truck to Wilmington and eastern cities.

Poultry is shipped by truck to the larger cities or sold to the packing plants operated by Swift and Co., at Felton, Mervine at Greenwood and Sussex Poultry.

A great many eggs, after having been culled, are sold to the hatcheries. These are picked up by the hatchery trucks. Most of the poultry feed is shipped to Harrington by train and is picked up by the farmers at the railroad siding.

Truck farm products are packed on the farm and picked up by trucks. The late Benjaimin I. Shaw had a packing house where he graded, packed and shipped sweet potatoes and cantaloupes to the city. Ebere Kent has a packing house just north of Harrington.

Harrington is in easy overnight access to our great eastern markets for marketing farm produce by truck or by railroad. Most of our fresh farm produce leaves the area for Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore by truck.

The dairy farmers sell to a fluid milk market. Some is used locally by the Hi-Grade Dairy in town, but the majority of the milk goes to one of several milk plants—the Supplee-Wills-Jones station in town or the Pet Milk Company. at Greensboro, Md. The surplus milk produced in flush seasons is condensed, evaporated and canned at Greensboro.

Market broilers, young chickens 12 to 14 weeks of age, are the major type of poultry sold in this area. These are grown in lots of 4,000 to more than 30,000 on single farms, and are sold chiefly as live birds to the Jewish

trade in our large cities, or are processed in one of several dressing plants on the Eastern Shore. The dressed birds are simply killed, scalded, picked, boxed, chilled and then shipped to our large city markets. Very few are hard frozen, and stay in storage usually not more than two months.

Eggs form a large part of the income on many farms. These are sold mostly as hatching eggs because of a premium paid over market types. The flocks are usually small, 200 to 500 birds, and are usually managed by the wife in the farm home. Over a period of years, most farmers find that, if their flocks do not pass pullorum testing (necessary by law in selling hatching eggs), it usually pays to dispose of the flock until the next year. Likewise, most egg laying flocks are kept for only one laying year—since birds do not lay as well after then and, therefore, become unprofitable.

Turkeys are another source of income for the farm wife. These again are small flocks and provide the farm wife usually with her money for home improvements and for Christmas Shopping.

Truck farm produce is important in season. Acreages of any crop are usually small because of the large amount of hand labor needed for harvesting. Tomatoes and cucumbers and peppers are mostly sent to canneries - usually grown under contract. Cantaloupes, watermelons, sweet potatoes and asparagus are mostly packed locally and then trucked to the cities. Peas and beans are the gambling farmers crops - since so much of the success depends on the growing season and the growers' ability to market his crop to the canneries at the right stages of maturity.

Because this is a feed deficient area, a large part of the livestock feeds are shipped in by rail and by truck. Two large cooperatives and several private dealers distribute feed by the carload in the area. The major portion, of course, is for broiler and for dairy uses. A considerable amount of horse feed has been used in recent years by the horsemen who train harness horses at the Kent and Sussex Fair grounds during the winter season.

Old Kent and Sussex Race Track at the Fair
COURTESY - MARIE AND HENRY BULLOCK