



MARKING THE CENTER OF DELAWARE: Last week the Killen family gathered at a new historic marker on their farm near Felton. The marker tells the story of how a seventh grader helped find the geographic center of Delaware, "located approximately 11 miles south of Dover in the field just south of this marker on the Killen Farm." Shown, right of marker, are: farm owners Lester Allen and Catherine Killen, with son Donald Killen and daughter Peggy Ivory behind them; left of marker: Russ McCabe, coordinator of the Delaware Historic Markers program; Harrington Rep. Bobby Quillen, R-30, who helped sponsor the marker; and Robin Killen. Photo by Joanna Wilson.

MIDDLE GROUND



Chris Moore, 17, of Dover, was part of the Caesar Rodney Junior High School class in 1989 that worked on finding the geographical center of the First State.



The News Journal/DARYL MILES

A 5-year search for Delaware's center ends in a Felton cornfield.

By **ROBERT MOORE**
Dover Bureau reporter

FELTON — In 1989, a curious seventh-grader whose name no one seems to remember asked the innocuous question: "Where is the center of the state?"

Thus began a five-year effort involving teachers, students, government planners, politicians and a community to locate the geographic center of Delaware, which happens to be two miles east of Felton, in Lester and Catherine Killen's cornfield.

In a brief ceremony Tuesday, state government, town and school district dignitaries placed a roadside marker nearby on Delaware 12 denoting the middle point of Delaware.

"We had no idea whatsoever ... no



The News Journal/GARY EMEIGH

Catherine and Lester Killen (foreground), their children and grandchildren use a tractor to mark the spot on their farm near Felton that represents the geographical center of Delaware.

idea," said Catherine Killen. "And this farm's been in our family three generations now."

Shirley Jarrell, an administrator in the Caesar Rodney School District, can explain further. It was in her seventh-grade reading class that a student piped up. "We were studying boundaries when the question was asked," she said.

Naturally, everyone first thought Dover was it. But some quick research indicated that the geographic center of Delaware was roughly 11 miles south of the capital.

With the help of the Kent County Planning Department, Jarrell and class narrowed it down to the Killen property. They've known the location for several years, but it was only recently

that the money for the highway sign became available.

Cheri Bragg, a W.T. Chipman Junior High teacher, got her class involved when it became apparent the center of the state was in the Lake Forest School District.

At the ceremony, one student represented Jarrell's seventh-grade class from 1989. Though he said he's kept volumes of notes and papers from earlier school years, Chris Moore, now an 11th-grader at Caesar Rodney High School, doesn't remember the fellow student whose question got the ball rolling.

If that student is still wondering, the answer is: Two miles east of Felton along Delaware 12, out there in Lester and Catherine Killen's cornfield.