

Courthouse isn't 300 years old

I guess that's what happens when you hire an out-of-stater to be the Kent County administrator. But somebody should tell Mr. McLeod that the courthouse is not 300 years old. And I guess we should tell Mr. McKenna too. Sorry guys, the old court house is not 300 years old.

DSN March 21, 1992

Dover

~~ct. hse. burned to~~
~~get ye nails"~~

~~large + Buja~~

~~red/white stave~~

~~Matwell's Tavern~~

Barett's Tavern

General History
THE DEPT HSE
P. 85 - 87

N. Co. Ct. Hse

THE DEPT HSE

P. 87

KENT CO. CT. HSE.

DE Bench + Bar

p. 53 est. 1680 & hist.
tavern explained

BU



Richard Bassett story

(Geo. Wash. Tavern)

Hancock's Loyalists p. 9

" R. Co. II p. 9-10

Gov. Bassett 1745-1815

KENT COUNTY COURTHOUSE

NOTES

DE B. & B - LUNT

p. 53

✓ 1680 - ^{St. Jones} Co. est., sessions in private home Towne Point, on St. Jones R.

2nd session heavy fine to "Robberd Willin" for remarks disrespectful of the Royall Highnesses Justices of the Peace"

1697 - ct. order mentions ct. hse. to be built

✓ 1699 - ct. records for 2nd Tues. Sept. next session "to be held at ct. hse." also - ct. hse. to be leased

etc. chief community activity - well attended

ceremonial "twice & twice" etc

✓ 1684 sup. ct. est. "Provincial Ct" - Justices traveled lawyers had want of it - INSECT - R. Hse. chamber

1726 Act of Ass. of 3 lower cos. created "the Sup. Ct. etc.

DE ST HSE

✓ 1792 "rambling Liberty Hall tavern complex"

BLAGG p. 41

✓ 1918 4 stories to 3 stories (Georgian style)

clock retained

23 OCT 1951 - cable snapped as wound etc.

Eberlein & Hubbard

✓ 1690 - Manswells tavern east side St. J. Cr.

✓ 1695 - 200 A grantor Wm Southerly granted R. Co.

✓ 1699 - ct. hse. built (present) site - sold 1722 & used for King George's Inn

See page 2

K. Co. Ct. Hse NOTES p. 2

State News 8 Dec 1982

1682 W. Penn document foraming Kent Co.
} justices & the peace

~~Delaware History~~ by Sally Schwartz in
Historical Society of Delaware
1977

Delaware History (Sally Schwartz) p. 180-181

March 1690/91 meeting court decided
purchase 50 A land from William Morton
ct. hse. + prison be built
pd. by tax

burn old ct. hse. "to gett the nailies"

+ 1694 3 J.P.'s wrote to Provincial Council, Phila.
some J.P.'s would not sit at James Maxwell's
at the head of Jones's
1699 ct. hse. on (present) site K. Co. Ct. Hse, Comp.

§ 1680's - ct. hse. cont. "somewhere in K. Co."

" " " considered old by 1690

New Kent courthouse different

By CHRIS NOLAN
Staff Writer

DOVER—What's red, white, blue and sits on green?

Believe it or not, it is the newly remodeled Kent County Court House.

The courthouse, which probably has stuck in most minds' in the county as somewhere between dull gray and dingy brown, has just undergone a \$1.9 million renovation.

Before their regular meeting Tuesday three members of the Kent County Levy Court were led on a tour of the building by County Administrator Robert W. O'Brien, who supervised the work.

The county owns the building and operates many of its offices but the state paid for 90 percent of the renovations, O'Brien said.

The state will also pay the county rent for space it uses in the building, he added.

And while most of the major work should be done by the end of January, O'Brien said it would probably be March until all minor repairs, renovations and other details were completed.

While a coat of paint has gone a long way to make the courthouse more attractive, a number of modern and badly needed features have also been added.

The most noticeable is an addition on the side of the building, facing The Green, that will house the new main entrance.

That section, which has steps and a wheelchair ramp leading to the lobby doorway, also houses detention cells, a new, secured courtroom, new judges chambers and some badly needed space.

There is also a separate entrance at the rear of the annex, facing the parking lot between the courthouse and the



Staff photo by Mel Evans

A worker standing in what used to be Kent County's Court of Common Pleas stares out a courthouse window at a rainy morning.

Kent County Administrative Building, which leads onto a stairway up to the secured courtroom and down to the cells.

The secure courtroom, which will be decorated in burgandy, will have a room off to one side with a one-way mirror and a speaker. If a defendant becomes unruly during his trial, he or she can be put in the room and will be able to see and hear the trial but not harass or be seen by jurors, the judge or lawyers.

A two-man elevator has been installed behind the courtroom. It leads directly upstairs to the new judges' chambers.

The offices, which Judges William G. Bush III and George R. Wright will probably occupy by Christmas, have floor-to-ceiling bookcases and light blue carpet.

A new Chancery courtroom has separate chambers and a robing room.

The main courtroom on the second floor will also get a little spit and polish.

New drapes and, if money can be found, a carpet will be installed, in the colonial-style courtroom, O'Brien said. It already has been repainted in light green.

A modern ceiling light will be removed and a more appropriate chandelier will be installed, O'Brien said.

"When it's done, I personally think it's going to be the most impressive courtroom in the state of Delaware," he said.

When the corridor between the new and older sections of the building is put in, the law library also will be expanded by about 35 percent and the old Court of Common Pleas will move downstairs, O'Brien said.

The court administration offices also are getting a facelift.

The Prothonotary's office has been partially redone, and the Court of Common Pleas staff is already in their new office at the rear of the main hallway on the first floor of the building.

A panorama of the southeast and east sides of the Green was taken around 1890 and clearly shows the scale of the old Court House (right), which dwarfed other structures including the then-Victorian State House (far left). The

Court House was eventually reduced in size and renovated to Georgian appearance.

Courtesy of the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.



The ornate clock tower of the old Kent County Court House built in 1873 once rose a commanding four stories skyward. Reduced in height when the Court House was remodeled along Georgian lines in 1918, after the restoration of the nearby State House, the old clock works were nevertheless spared, and they continued faithfully recording and chiming out the hours until October 23, 1951. On that date, janitor Caleb Lewis was attempting to wind the old mechanism when a cable snapped and a thousand-pound weight went crashing down through the clock tower! Out of commission for nearly two years, the clock was finally restored to operation in September 1953.

Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Sheppard. 41

BLAGG'S DOVEC

Changes evident in

Kent building

Sunday, October 7, 1979 — 13

State News

By FRAN MULSHNOCK
Staff Writer

DOVER—Kent County's Levy Court Commissioners paid \$2.5 million for the new County Administration Building, but their predecessors could have possibly saved them the expense.

It was the 1920 Levy Court that decided to lop off the top floor of the then-three story county courthouse, state Bureau of Archives and Records chief Edward F. Heite said.

"They did it because they had no need for the third floor, which was a

big meeting room. Kent County did not grow for almost 100 years until 1930," Levy Court Commissioner and history buff, Samuel G. Thomas said.

That was the fourth of Kent County's courthouse buildings, a large structure that sits right where it does now but looks little like the present-day building.

It was a Victorian-style brick structure that was remodeled to look neo-Colonial to fit in with Dover's Georgian look, Thomas said.

New rough brick in the Colonial style was erected on top of the smooth Victorian brick walls, he said.

"You should see those walls. They are more than two feet thick in some places," Thomas said.

The courthouse was built in 1873 when the state decided to take full possession, for \$15,000, of what is now the State House, which had been owned by the county and shared by the two since 1787.

When Kent County's predecessor, St. Jones County, was carved out of Whorekill (Sussex County) in 1680, court was held in the homes of the appointed justices of the peace—in this case, a man named Edward Pack who lived on a tract called Towne Point on the St. Jones River.

The next place that was used regularly as a courthouse was Maxwell's Tavern, located in a small settlement on the St. Jones about where Kings Highway and Division Street now meet.

"Taverns were the best meeting places in those days. That is where everybody came to conduct their business," Heite said.

In 1722, William Penn ordered the city of Dover laid out and a tavern called Liberty Hall on the site of

today's the present-day courthouse was used as a courthouse. Later a small, 25 foot square building on the site of State House became the courthouse.

Then, in 1787, the state government asked the county for a room in the new courthouse Kent was building on the same site—the beginning a long and stormy relationship between the sibling governments.

The building was essentially what is today—the State House.

The City of Dover was even invited to share the State House with the state and county in 1829 when the city was chartered, Heite said.

"Boy, what slippery deals went on in those days," Heite said with a laugh.

"The county and state were always arguing. If the roof leaked they would argue over who would pay to fix the roof, and so on," he said.

So the first city council was invited to hold meetings in the county-owned General Assembly's chamber in the State House.

"But it was on condition the city fix the street and the building's walls. So the state and county got some free maintenance out of the deal," Heite said.

can't
over

Nothing's new about county-state battles

DOVER—Battles between Kent County and the state of Delaware are nothing new.

In 1792, the Levy Court Commissioners sent Sheriff John Clayton, an uncle of U.S. Secretary of State John M. Clayton, to eject the General Assembly from the recently built county courthouse (now the State House) because the legislators refused to cough up an appropriation to help the county pay for the building the two agencies shared.

The legislators asked to be included in plans for the courthouse, which was commissioned in 1787 and the county agreed, and asked the state to chip in.

Politics being what it is, though, the legislators caved in to "loud complaints of public creditors and constituents" and concluded they could come up with no money.

"The state kept promising to take care of it and then all of a sudden they just moved in," Edward F. Heite, chief of Archives for the state said.

Much like today's politicians, the insulted legislators found a tavern in Smyrna to adjourn to, and almost decided to stay but for the efforts of the Levy Court Commissioners who lobbied for this return.

"It tickles me to think of the power-play involved. Here was a member of one of the most prominent families in the state coming in to kick the legislators out," Commissioner Thomas said.

Finally, the assemblymen forgave and returned, and in 1795 they agreed to pay for a new copper roof as their share of the building.

cont

next page

TALES OF THE DELAWARE FENCH + BAR, LUNT 1963

PAGE

246 DR. SAMUEL CHEW appointed CH. JUSTICE of the THREE DE. COLONIES 1741

53 KENT COUNTY CT. EST. 1680, 4 justices present at 2nd session

(Francis Whitwell, John Hiljard, Robbert Hart, Edward Pak)

no courthouse - court held in home of a justice

1697 building of courthouse mentioned in court order (site of K. Co. Ct. Hse.) ¹⁸⁷⁴

1699 Second Tuesday Sept. court "to be held at the Ct. Hse.

Ct. Hse. leased [in effect a tavern was maintained on the premises which assured food, lodging, provisions for horses for convenience of travelers + those attending ct.]

courts were the chief community activity - well attended

" " therefore ceremonial (delivery of "a turf and a twig" by the grantor for conveyance of land - "ancient ceremony of livery of seisin")

courts fixed value of produce (corn, pork + tobacco) for ct. fees

" ordered roads in + out of all Necks + to all public landing places to be cleared + use of little salt creeks

courts ruled on status of indentured servants

Orphans Ct. - orphans + minors

Ct. of Common Pleas - master + servant

} influenced social structure + economy

68 1684 Supreme court created called the "Provincial Court", members went on circuit in all the counties, had jurisdiction over the trial of certain felonies + capital offenses"

1726 act of the Assembly of the Three Lower Counties created "the Supreme Ct. of the Counties of New Castle, Kent + Sussex upon DE"

travel by boat lv. Lewes evening ar. New Castle next a.m. } judges couldn't keep schedule

" " land Lewes thru Dover to New Castle 2 full days

246 John Vining (app. ch. Justice of the three lower counties' 30 OCT 1764)

73 " " recommended to Gov. John Penn that 2 residents of K. Co. be app. to fill 2 vacancies on Sup. Ct., Gov. Penn app. Casper Rodney to one of the vacancies

73-74 lawyers had worst of it (impossible ct. schedule, travel, accommodations)

" practical before all county cts., sup. ct., ct. of O. + T.)

Letter from Geo. Read to wife 1770

74 Ridgely Hse - chamber always ready for lawyer (associate or opponent) unable to return in the evening to his home in G-town, N.C., Wilms.

HISTORIC HOUSES + BUILDINGS OF DELAWARE
by Eberlein + Hubbard 1963
p. 53, 54

KENT COUNTY COURTHOUSE

- 1650 - 1690 House at TOWN POINT seat of government
- 1690 moved to James Maxwell's tavern on east side of St. Jones
Creek on a portion of Berry's Range
(200 A.)
- 1695 land conveyed to Kent Co. from Wm Southerby
- 1697 Court House built on what was later to be the southeast
corner of State Street and The Green
- 1722 the 1697 Ct. Hse. sold "and the King Georges Inn
subsequently took its place"
- 1722 Ct. Hse. built on site later to be location of The OLD
STATE HOUSE
- 1787 The 1722 Ct. Hse. torn down + the good bricks were
used to build the foundation for ~~the~~ a new building
- 1792 New building occupied while parts of interior were
being finished.



KINGSTON UPON HULL

THE HISTORY OF A PROMINENT KENT COUNTY FARM

By James B. Jackson

"KINGSTON-UPON-HULL"

About two miles upstream from the mouth of the St. Jones River, close by its eastern bank, stands one of the oldest and most historically interesting landmarks in Kent County - a building which, despite its prominence, has been wrongly identified in every guide book or other publication in which it has been mentioned during the last quarter century.

This brick and frame dwelling and the tract of land upon which it stands have thus come to be known erroneously to the present generations, as "Toune Point" - alleged site of the first county courts.

The origin of this case of mistaken identity can be traced to the publication "Delaware, a Guide to the First State", the generally reliable and authoritative directory published by the Federal Writers Project of the WPA in 1938. This account has, unfortunately, been accepted as accurate historical fact by other writers, and the error has thus been compounded in several other well-known publications, including Eberlein and Hubbard's "Historic Houses and Buildings of Delaware."

It seems quite apparent that the "Guide" researchers simply misinterpreted the historian Scharf's earlier writing on the subject, and that their own research did not include the original land and court records relating to it. These records, including a 1677 survey plot of the tract, show beyond the question of a doubt that the old house actually stands on a tract named "Kingston-Upon-Hull", which was the next tract west of "Toune Point"; on which no buildings of colonial vintage are to be found standing today. Regarding the old building, it should be noted that no positive proof has been found that any part of it was the original house on the site. There is, however, some interesting circumstantial evidence that it could be. The drawing on this page is a representation of what a competent architectural authority thinks the existing building might have looked like in its original form.

This account is based solely upon original research by this writer involving the preserved public land, deed, probate, and court records of the county, and some reliable private contemporary writings which contain references to the subject.

THE YEAR 1671 marked the beginning of the organized settlement of the area that is now Kent County, Delaware. In that year the first formal grants of land were issued by the Duke of York's Governor, Francis Lovelace, to the pioneer settlers of the region. Prior to that time the only inhabitants, other than the peaceful native Lenni-Lenape Indians, are believed to have been a few isolated squatters and traders. The area, except for the coastal marshes, was almost entirely covered by a vast forest, and the earliest patents of land were taken up along the major creeks and rivers that provided the only convenient means of travel and communication before the first roads were cleared.

An Original Patent

The first group of these original patents was issued in June of 1671, and several of them were for tracts along "a Creek now called St. Jones his Creek". One of these granted Mr. George Whale, Sr. a tract of 400 acres, not precisely located, which had a frontage of "two hundred poles" (rods or perches) along the east side of the creek and marsh, and ran "northeast into ye woods three hundred and twenty poles" (one mile). Mr. Whale also took up several other patents on other creeks along the Delaware, and it is not known whether his St. Jones land was ever occupied by him. Subsequent developments indicate that he either abandoned it or transferred his right to it in some manner not recorded. In any event, nothing more is known of it until some six years later.

On February 20, 1677/8 a new survey for this same land was "layd out for John Briggs and Mary Phillips." The description mentions the 1671 patent of "George Wale", notes that it is now called "Kingston-Upon-Hull", and that it is bounded on the northwest by "the Lands of Robert Jones" and on the southeast by "land belonging to the Towne Point." It also enlarged the tract to include an additional fifty acres of land and about forty acres of marsh along the creek.

Accompanying the description is a remarkably clear and accurate map of the tract which shows a distinctive bend in the creek and some swamps that still exist which make it possible to plot it precisely on a present day map of the area. This interesting plot is also unique in that it is the earliest one of the many tract maps in the preserved "Duke of York Record" which notes that it is the land whereon its owners "now dwell", and further locates and identifies the "dwelling house." But perhaps the most interesting feature is that the location of this house, with respect to the nearby creek, appears to be identical with that of the old house still standing today.

The actual patent for the land, calling for an annual quit rent payment of five bushels of wheat, was issued to the new owners on August 14, 1678. Briggs was also the original patentee of several other tracts in the area, including the adjoining "Towne Point" which he owned jointly with his friend Edward Pack who made his own home on this latter 140 acre patent. Pack was

one of the first set of Justices to be appointed, and it was in his house that some sessions of the earliest courts were undoubtedly held. This house, on "Towne Point", has long since disappeared and no traces of it can be found today.

A Choice Location

It is not difficult to see why John Briggs selected "Kingston-Upon-Hull" to be his home plantation. It was the only one on the lower St. Jones that had some high land frontage on the main course of the creek. "Towne Point" and all of the other neighboring ones had broad areas of treacherous marshes between their land and the creek, and were accessible by small tributaries such as "Towne Point Gut." It had other advantages too, not the least of which was an abundance of game, waterfowl, and seafood. Perhaps its only disadvantage was one shared by all of Jones Neck even today - great numbers of mosquitoes during the summer - but insects were a plague everywhere in those days, and a few more probably didn't make too much difference to the hardy settlers.

There are numerous references to Briggs as "Captain" which suggest that he was probably a waterman. In any event, he was obviously a man of considerable substance and talents because he immediately became one of the acknowledged leaders of the local colony. He was one of the signers of the historic petition requesting the establishment of local courts so that the settlers of the area might be spared the "long and perilous" journeys to the Hoornekill (Lewes) which was then the county seat for the whole area below Blackbird Creek. This action resulted in the formal establishment of "St. Jones County" in 1680, and changed to "Kent" four years later.

Government In The Beginning

In 1680 the first census of the new county was taken by Briggs, whose family of six was the largest in the area. It lists only thirty-six families of "responsible house-keepers", totaling 99 persons, living then in the whole area between Cedar Creek and Duck Creek. Unfortunately we have no certain knowledge of the exact relationship between the Captain and "Mrs. Mary Phillips", who deeded her interest in "Kingston-Upon-Hull" over to him in 1679. However, later deeds show that he had a wife named Mary so perhaps they did make it legal.

In 1682, at the beginning of William Penn's proprietorship, Briggs was appointed to his first public office - the important position of Sheriff. The next year he was one of the ten men representing the county in the inaugural meeting of Penn's Provincial Assembly. In 1685 he was commissioned a Justice of the Peace and, as such sat as a Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, the highest judicial body in the county. Its sessions, held at the homes of the various judges at that time, were always events of great public interest, and each of these locations thus became an important hub of its area. It is most likely that

Justice Briggs' home must have seen its share of these historic activities.

If, as indicated, Briggs was also a waterman, his ideally located plantation landing near the mouth of the creek, must also have been the focal point for the area's shipping and communication with the outside world. In view of all this it seems fair to assume that "Kingston-Upon-Hull" was undoubtedly one of the most important and active plantations in all of the county, and thereby played a significant role in its earliest history.

Plantation Changes Ownership

John and Mary Briggs' life in Kent County was an active but short one. In 1686 he moved to "Cape May in the Province of West New Jersey", and sold "Kingston-Upon-Hull" to William Frampton, a Philadelphia merchant who had extensive operations in the county at that time. The price paid was "three-score thousand pounds of tobacco." This common medium of exchange had a legal tender value of 10 shillings per hundred pounds, so he received the equivalent of 300 English Pounds money. This price, several times higher than the average being paid for tracts of the same size, indicates, among other things, that the house thereon must have been a substantial one.

The deed specified that Frampton was to pay for it in installments through the year 1690 - but he was not destined to complete his purchase. He died before making any substantial payments, and Briggs resold the property in 1688 to Richard Basnett of Burlington, New Jersey who had, by this time, married the widowed Elizabeth Frampton. The price for this second sale was also 60,000 pounds of tobacco, paid this time in a lump sum.

Nothing of interest is apparent about "Kingston-Upon-Hull" or the Basnetts during their tenure. He died c.1697, and his widow, then back in Burlington, sold it in 1700 to Stephen Nowell of Kent County for 250 Pounds "silver money" - still a much higher price than the average at that time.

Nowell was a farmer and active in county affairs. At the time he purchased "Kingston-Upon-Hull" he was "Overseer of Highways" for the Hundred, and was also to serve as "Viewer of Fences" during the next five years. He also saw considerable service as a juryman, but perhaps his greatest claim to local fame is found in his activities with the ladies - which brought him into court several times, on the other side of the rail. In 1702 he brought suit against one Abigail Cook for speaking "some Scandalous words" against his reputation, and won damages of twenty shillings. In 1704, and again in 1705, he was charged with adultery, each case involving a married lady. On both occasions he was acquitted, but each of the unfortunate ladies was subsequently convicted of bastardy and given "twenty-one lashes on her bare back well layd on." We are happy to report that he was, in this latter case, completely vindicated when the woman involved, at her later trial for perjury, confessed that "the

Child was not the Child of the said Stephen Nowell", and was thereupon sentenced to be "forthwith putt in the Pillory for the space of One houre." On another occasion Mr. Nowell was not so fortunate, being fined ten shillings when it was found that he "did assault . . . beat, wound and evilly Intreat with force and Armes" one Daniel Smith. He was, no doubt defending either his own good name or the honor of some fair damsel!

Stephen Nowell was the first owner of "Kingston-Upon-Hull" to break up the original tract. In 1701 he sold fifty acres of it to Robert French - a narrow strip along the northwest side next to the Jones tract.

After an apparently short but obviously lively life Stephen Nowell died intestate sometime between 1709 and 1711. Although there is no record of his estate, it is known that he was survived by a son George and two daughters. A fitting epitaph to this master of "Kingston-Upon-Hull" should note that he did more than his share to add a little spice to the early social life of Jones Neck.

In 1711, George Nowell, having by then acquired sole possession of the plantation from his sisters, sold another fifty acres of it, the upper northeast corner, to Alexander Donaldson. Four years later a cloud upon the title of the whole tract appeared in the person of one Abraham Bickley who claimed that the Frampton deed to Stephen Nowell was "imperfect", and that the land actually had descended to Thomas Frampton, who then sold it to Bickley. This claim was resolved when George Nowell paid him 200 Pounds for his alleged rights to it. In 1716 Nowell sold off another parcel of 64 acres to Nathaniel Hunn, then owner of the adjoining "Towne Point". This piece was along the central part of their common boundary line.

George Nowell held "Kingston-Upon-Hull" for about nineteen years. He was a farmer and merchant, and maintained a general store with post-office and dock facilities to which boats from Philadelphia and other ports came frequently. It is apparent from the available reference to his establishment that it was the shopping and shipping center for the area during this period. He had slaves to work the plantation, and it was well stocked with forty head of cattle and seven horses, including "a large black pacing horse."

Young Caesar Rodney (Sr.), who lived nearby, noted in his diary that he bought his harvest-time rum at Nowell's, and that, on one occasion when he went there to mail a letter, he had "a deal of pastime" watching "a pancel of drunken men who was fitting with cugels." So again it seems that life was seldom dull at "Kingston-Upon-Hull" when either of the Nowells owned it.

A Swinging Time

In fact, judging from Rodney's diary, life in most of Jones Neck in the 1720's seems to have seldom been dull - at least in so far as enjoyment of the simple pleasures of the good country life were concerned. The everyday pace was a casual one with much visiting and helping

with each other's farming, then "playing at cards, fiddling and dancing" in the evenings. Fishing and hunting for plentiful trout, drum, oysters, squirrel, turkeys, and waterfowl were regular pastimes, and when they tired of this they held "shooting matches" for prizes of money, a fiddle, cloth, or a hat. Following one of these in which George Nowell won five Pounds, he took the group to his home and "treated us all with rum" until midnight.

One of the major social events of the period was a notable marathon wedding celebration in October of 1727. At noon on Wednesday the 18th young Rodney and Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of the Rev. Thomas Crawford, were married at the Crawford home on adjoining "Poplar Ridge". There was "a Grate Company which wass fiddling, dancing, and verry merry", and the festivities continued on into the night and the next day, when the Reverend himself, a widower, took Katherine French for his own bride. The happy couples, their "Brides Men and Brides Maids" and celebrants then paraded through the neighborhood with "a Drum and two Viol Ends before us." Then they all "Came Back . . . sent (to George Nowell's?) for more Rum and Syder and Past the night away with the same Plesher as before." The "Company contened" into Friday, but finally broke up, and the newlyweds then "Got our super of oysters and Went to Bed quietly." Almost exactly a year later the young Rodneys had a more quiet celebration - on the birthday of their first son - his father's namesake, and destined for greatness.

George Nowell's connection with the Rodneys was a close one, and in 1729, he married Caesar's mother Sarah, long a widow since the death of her husband William, the emigrant. She died that same year, and he re-married, almost immediately, Margaret Bell, widow of John Bell, owner of the historic inn on the Dover Green at the site of the present Court House. Nowell himself died in 1730, leaving all of his land "with my dwelling house, plantation, and appurtenances" to his new wife, except for a fifty-acre parcel to be laid off, between the Donaldson and French tracts, for his cousin Sarah Cook.

Following her husband's death Margaret Nowell eventually married Caesar Rodney's brother Daniel, and apparently moved from "Kingston-Upon-Hull" to her new husband's nearby farm - thus marking the beginning of a period when "Kingston-Upon-Hull" seems to have been occupied by tenants or lessees about whom nothing is known, with one notable exception.

The largest landowner in the area at this time was the prominent Maryland planter and merchant, Samuel Dickinson, who was to soon build his Delaware mansion nearby. About 1720 he had begun acquiring land in Jone's Neck, and, as his operations there increased, he spent a great deal of time there supervising them. From the available evidence it appears that he leased "Kingston-Upon-Hull", which was then the most substantial home in the Neck, from Margaret Rodney to serve as his temporary Delaware residence in the late 1730's until his

own home was completed in 1740.

Contradictions in History

We might, at this point, digress to comment on the brief but widely cited account of "Kingston-Upon-Hull" in Scharf's "History of Delaware" (Vol. II, p. 1079) and point out a major error and interesting contradiction to be found therein. It states that both this tract and "Towne Point" were purchased by Samuel Dickinson and became a part of his manor. This is obviously in error, as it is quite apparent from their chains of title that he never, owned, or claimed, either of them at any time, and that, as will be seen, they did not become a part of the Dickinson lands until purchased many years later by his son John.

It is equally clear from both the deed records and his survey that Samuel's 1368-acre "Dickinson Manor" included only three tracts: "Wharton's", "Mulberry Swamp", and "Shrewsberry", each 400 acres, plus some adjoining marsh along the creek. All of these lay northwest of "Kingston-Upon-Hull", separated from it by the Jones tract, and the mansion house was built on "Mulberry Swamp". Samuel's other lands in the area included adjoining parts of "Rixham" and "Burton's Delight".

Scharf also states that it was upon "Kingston-Upon-Hull" and "in the house of John Briggs that Samuel Dickinson resided until he built the mansion house . . ." Then, contradictorily, a few paragraphs later, is the statement that "he built a residence on the site of John Brigg's house . . . where he resided for several years after he removed to this county in 1734." This latter statement seems obviously mistaken because he would hardly have built on land that wasn't his just a few years before he did on land of his own nearby. It also appears wrong as to the date he moved here. Every one of his land transactions as late as 1737 refers to him as being "of Talbot County", while in those of 1738 and later he is "of Kent County". It thus appears that he moved here in that year - undoubtedly to supervise the construction of his new home. He must have lived alone at "Kingston-Upon-Hull" because it is known that he did not bring his wife and children here until the new mansion was completed.

Prosperous Living Along The St. Jones

Returning now to Margaret Rodney. She was widowed for the third time, while still a comparatively young woman, when Daniel died in 1744. While it cannot be said with certainty, it is indicated by a subsequent reference, that she then moved back to "Kingston-Upon-Hull", and, to provide herself with a livelihood, drew upon her past experience and converted the house to an inn to serve the busy rivermouth area. If so, she probably continued it in operation, with a tenant farming the land, until sometime in the early 1750's when her daughter, Mary Bell, married Caleb Luff. Young Luff had no land of his own at that time so they made their home at "Kingston-Upon-

Hull" with Mrs. Rodney. She turned the management of the farm over to Caleb and continued to live there with them.

Luff prospered and, in 1753, added to the plantation by purchasing 200 acres of the marsh adjoining to the southeast. He became active in public affairs and, in 1756, was commissioned an Ensign in Captain Caesar Rodney's company of the local militia. In that same year their son Nathaniel was born.

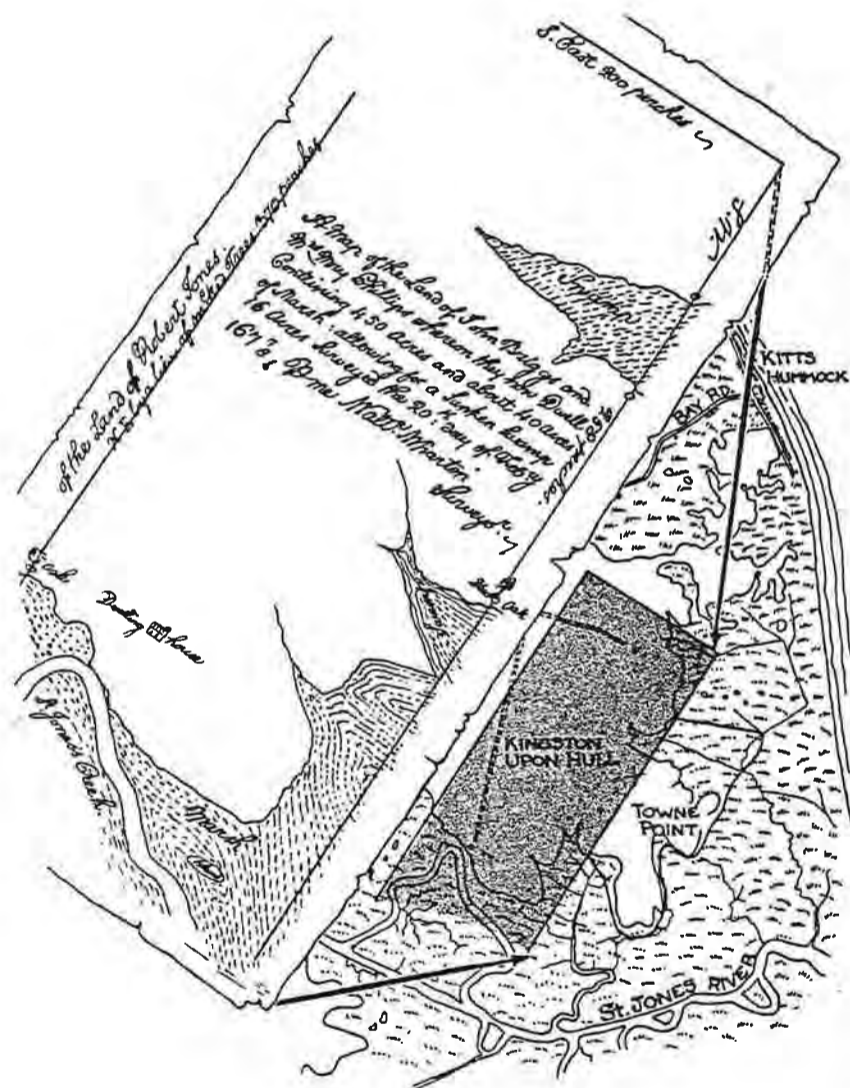
In 1760 his father died, leaving him "Point Lookout" in Mispillion Hundred. He chose, however, to stay on at "Kingston-Upon-Hull", and, three years later, purchased it from his mother-in-law for a bond of 800 Pounds guaranteeing her an annuity of 30 Pounds for the rest of her life. Two years later he added another 125 acres of marsh along the beach at the mouth of the creek.

In 1773, following the death of his wife, Caleb entered into an agreement with his mother-in-law to guarantee

the passage of "Kingston-Upon-Hull" to his son Nathaniel upon his death. This arrangement was prompted by Margaret Rodney's great love for her grandson, and her disapproval of Caleb's second marriage which followed her daughter's death. This second wife lived but about two years, and he married again shortly thereafter.

Caleb Luff's farming and real estate operations had made him a wealthy man, with additional holdings in both Mispillion and Murderkill Hundreds. During the Revolution he was active in support of the rebel cause, and was elected to represent his hundred in the Legislature.

Margaret Rodney died in 1781. She had left "Kingston-Upon-Hull" when Caleb remarried following her daughter's death. In an autobiographical "Journal" which he later wrote, Nathaniel described his "ancient grandmother" as "a woman of high spirits" - which he attributed to her "old English blood" - who could not brook to live within her former territories and removed elsewhere." She left



Eight

THE NAME:

KINGSTON UPON HULL

Kingston-Upon-Hull is the official chartered name of the port city of Hull, located in the East Ridings of Yorkshire, England. It dates from the year 1299 when the town's charter was issued by King Edward I.

The name first appears in connection with the Delaware tract in the 1677/8 survey to Captain John Briggs and Mary Phillips. It was presumably so designated by them, as the tract was not named in the 1671 patent to George Whale.

It cannot be said with certainty why this name was chosen, but the most logical assumption is that they simply followed the practice quite common among the early settlers, and named their New World home after the old one.

Nathaniel her entire estate which consisted of considerable silver plate, gold jewelry, furniture, and six negro slaves.

Caleb Luff died in 1782, and, in accordance with the previous deed agreement, "Kingston-Upon-Hull" passed to Nathaniel. The inventory of his considerable estate reveals the prosperity and self-sufficiency of the plantation at that time. The house was well-furnished and had all of the appointments requisite to the good country life of that day - including "133-1/2 gallons of Brandy." The farm was completely equipped with every necessary implement and tool, and there were "7 acres of wheat in the ground", a field of corn "supposed to contain 500 bushels", and large quantities of grain in storage. There was a scow at the dock, and his livestock included "22 fattening hogs, 16 others, 14 cows, 19 other cattle, 4 steers, 2 bulls, 2 yoke of oxen, 33 sheep, 2 mares, and 1 'Kipshotten' horse." To man the plantation there were six adult and thirteen minor slaves. It seems, from this picture, that "Kingston-Upon-Hull", then embracing about 667 acres, was certainly one of the largest and best farms in the Hundred, and probably surpassed only by the neighboring ones of John Dickinson and Caesar Rodney (Jr.)

New Owner A Doctor Not A Farmer

Nathaniel Luff, the new owner of the plantation, was, at the time of his father's death, a struggling young physician. He had been married for two years to Elizabeth Fisher, a Quakeress, and they lived on a small farm in Mispillion Hundred. He had been educated in Philadelphia and apprenticed in medicine there before the Revolution. In 1776 he served as surgeon of a Philadelphia militia battalion throughout the New Jersey campaign, after which he returned home to set up his practice, which was not initially successful, forcing him to supplement his income by farming.

To add to his troubles, his step-mother had designs on "Kingston-Upon-Hull" and remained living there after Caleb's death. In his "Journal" Dr. Nathaniel reported that "on discerning this plan I soon removed to my place and took upon myself the administration, and she removed to a small house on the premises."

Not long after moving in he was prevailed upon by his friend Philip Barratt to permit some of his neighbors, "a set of well inclined Methodists" who had no nearby meeting-house, to use "Kingston-Upon-Hull" for this purpose. The good Doctor, an Episcopalian and a man of generous impulses, permitted them to hold several meetings in his home, but Mrs. Luff "could not in any wise tolerate these goings on" and took steps to see that they were discontinued.

The young Doctor, obviously inexperienced, and not blessed with his father's business and agricultural talents; and faced with mounting problems after several years, he described himself in a classic lament as "surrounded by relations who were suing, friends deceiving, enemies frowning, mendicants begging & c, and an increasing family of children - house full of negroes naked and bare

of clothing; some good, others very great knaves - a multitude of advisors, with opposite directions - a plantation out of order - a plagueing practice, and no physician but myself near at hand. I could neither do one thing to advantage, nor another." In the face of all this he finally concluded "to let out my farm and return to practice."

He then released his slaves, at considerable financial sacrifice, moved to a small farm near his father-in-law's. After staying there but a short time he took in two apprentices and moved to Frederica, where he remained until about 1793. It was during this period that he assisted with the founding of the State Medical Society and became one of its charter officers.

Although his fortunes improved somewhat at Frederica, problems continued to harass him, and he "finally determined to remove on my farm, the only one I now had, having disposed of the rest, and with various twists and turns extricated myself from many embarrassments. . . I apprehended the farm the only safe and secure way, for when I raised grain and sent it to market, it would bring cash."

Thus again did Dr. Luff return to "Kingston-Upon-Hull" - for the last time. He did not, however, return in a manner exactly befitting the "Lord of the Manor" for he notes that "on coming to my plantation I had to remain part of the year with the tenants in the same building. The plantation being much out of repair, and I no spare money to go on, but I thought it best to endeavor to discharge my debts and live in a rough manner. . . ." He also observed that during his five or six year absence "the neighborhood had been greatly changed by deaths, removals, and newcomers. The shackled conditions of the fencings as well as the buildings required a vigorous exertion."

Traveling Was Rigorous

But as before, moving back to the farm did not solve his problems, but, rather, brought on some new ones. While living at Frederica Dr. Luff had been converted to Quakerism. Like many converts he became an avid disciple of his new faith, and it became the governing force of his life thereafter - and one of the major reasons for his decision to leave Jone's Neck permanently after remaining there for only about three years.

There were few neighbors of his faith, and, with the Murderkill Meeting House located some distance across the creek he felt that his family "was very disadvantageously situated as to attendance of meeting, especially my wife and smaller children, for if we walked we had three miles to go, one over marsh, very cold in winter, and disagreeable when the mosquitoes were thick in summer, and sometimes it was impassable by being overflowed, or impractical by ice, etc., and if we rode, fourteen, sometimes eighteen miles to the creek."

Continuing further in his interesting "Journal" we find this account of his final decision to dispose of "Kingston-Upon-Hull" and move to Wilmington:

"We continued thus to attend as often as we could the respective week-days, first-days, month, and quarterly meetings, and attended to the business of the farm for the space of two years and more; and I had got an increasing stock, tolerably suited as to team, utensils, &c., for the prosecution of the farming business, and was prosperous; but as the plantation was large, and scarce of timber, and required secure fencing, as there was considerable thoroughfare on both sides of the plantation, and laborers scarce and unsteady - my houses wanting considerable repairs, &c., - and to this was added an indisposition of body that so reduced me, that I apprehended it absolutely necessary to remove to give some prospect for the prolongation of my life. As my children could not have the advantage of a suitable education, should I have died there, I apprehended the plantation divided into so many shares would have been spoiled, and, if offered for sale, perhaps sold to disadvantage, so that I finally concluded to dispose of it and seek a more suitable one. Having, therefore, come to this conclusion, I proposed the consideration for removal to my friends, who, having acceded thereto, about the latter part of the Third Month, 1796, we departed from the place of our abode, having previously sold the same to John Dickinson."

Thus departed the last owner of "Kingston-Upon-Hull" who was to ever make it his home. Under every subsequent owner, to this day, it has been occupied by tenants or lessees, or kept as a rural retreat for its owner who lived elsewhere. This was also the last time the property was ever to be sold - except for intra-family transfers - during the next 162 years.

From The Revolution To The Present

John Dickinson paid Dr. Luff 2500 Pounds for "Kingston-Upon-Hull" and its additions. In that same year he also purchased "Towne Point" and parts of some adjoining tracts for 1500 Pounds, and added all of this combined acreage to his other vast holdings along the St. Jones.

At his death it all descended to his daughter Sally who, in turn, left it to her four nieces and nephews, the children of her sister Maria and Albanus Logan, of Philadelphia. The easternmost section, embracing all of the original "Kingston-Upon-Hull", "Towne Poine" and their adjoining marshes -- 2600 acres in all -- ultimately passed in 1881 to Algernon Sidney Logan, the last member of that family to own it.

In a biographical sketch of Logan, his son Robert noted that, after inheriting the "ancestral farm and marsh on Jones Creek, Delaware", his father turned to a serious study of farming "with the result that in a few years he restored the impoverished land to fertility and developed an excellent herd of registered Guernseys".

During the next fifteen years the Logan men spent

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"a part of every Spring and Autumn there" and regularly enjoyed the excellent duck and quail hunting it afforded. Logan noted that "the house . . . which he used as his residence there was a small and very old brick house dating from long before the revolution, and life there, nine miles from Dover, the nearest town, was quite primitive." A photograph of the farmyard area taken in 1891 shows the house with its numerous and substantial out-buildings to be well-fenced and in excellent condition.

In 1896 the ancient scourge of Joneses Neck brought a halt to the Logan family's enjoyment of their Delaware farm when both father and son "developed severe and chronic cases of malaria" and thereafter "stayed away".

Algernon Logan died in 1925 and his Delaware farm passed to one of his favorite charities which maintained it as a marginal farming operation for the next thirty-three years.

It was purchased in 1958 by Mr. J. Everett Lofland of Smyrna. During the ten years of his ownership Mr. Lofland, with the assistance of State conservation officials, developed it into one of the finest waterfowl and upland game preserves on the Delmarva Peninsula. The fertile 600 acres of cropland was leased for grain production, and the entire area was utilized for hunting under carefully controlled conditions. In 1968 the whole property was sold to its present owner, Delaware Wild Lands, Inc.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mr. Jackson, a native of Dover, is Executive Vice President of the Delaware Bankers Association. He is the author of several published works on Delaware history and was president of Dover's Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary Committee. An active sportsman, he is a past president of the Del Bay Retriever Club and the National Retriever Field Trial Club.

*Del. Conservationist
Spring, 1974*



Town Point, near Kitts Hummock, circa 1675. The brickwork is admirable and intact. Note the stepped water-table. The frame upper storey is an early nineteenth century defacement.

TOWN POINT

Southeast of Dover for five miles on U.S. Route 113 to Kitt's Hummock Road. East on Kitt's Hummock Road three miles on the right

About a mile west of Kitt's Hummock, a long dirt lane runs south from the paved road. Part of the way, as it passes through a dense growth of trees and bushes, it is practically impassable in wet weather. At the end of this lane, and near the mouth of St. Jones Creek, is a derelict old house in a sorry state of decay, surrounded by a thicket of briars, brambles and weeds. The ground floor is brick; the upper storey frame.

The house, as originally built, was unquestionably a one-storey-and-attic structure, the slope of the roof beginning directly above the ground-floor walls. The frame upper structure was an "improvement" blown up in the early nineteenth century, as its remains plainly show, and looks like a badly swelled head.

The brickwork, Flemish-bond with black headers, is as fine as any in Delaware, as fine, indeed, as any to be found in all the region embraced in the old Middle Colonies. The brick walls are still sound. As there was no upper storey, only the roof over the attic, and hence no place for a belt course, the builders contrived a bit of refinement by stepping the watertable at the corners with its topping of moulded bricks.

The interior and the upper storey are ruinous. Through the years the house has been so maltreated that one can only conjecture what its successive interior arrangements may have been. All that can now be said with certainty is that the brick-structure was built at two separate dates, probably very close together on the evidence of division lines in the masonry. Also, that the ground-floor plan of the original structure was the same as at Resurrection Manor or at White Meadow Farm.

This house was the first seat of government in Kent County, under the Duke of York's Government. In 1680 it was the dwelling of Edward Pack, an early magistrate, who here held the first courts of St. Jones County, as Kent County was then called.

Not many years later, Pack sold "all the land, dwelling-house and tobacco-house" to William Darvall for 1200 pounds of tobacco. This must have been after 1687, for in that year Darvall is recorded as a member of Council for Sussex County. Darvall also, like Pack, was a magistrate or Justice of the Peace, and after he bought the place from Pack he performed his magisterial duties under the Penn Government.

Apart from his function as a magistrate, Darvall drew a yearly stipend of "40 in current maney" to run a ferry from his house to the opposite side of St. Jones Creek, with the understanding also that he employ a man to keep a tavern, dispense "all liquirs at retail" and "dispose of all manner of trade whatsoever."

Photocopy made 1 December 1982
from pp 52, 53

of HISTORIC HOUSES + BUILDINGS of DELAWARE
by Harold Donaldson Eberlein

+

Cortlandt V.D. Hubbard

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DOVER, DELAWARE 1963

Early Kent County courts recalled after 300 years

By **FRAN MULSHNOCK**
Staff Writer

DOVER—In 1680, Robert Willin stood before the newly-appointed Justices of St. Jones County and called them "sons of whores."

"He did wonder how the Duke of York could be such a fool as to name four such sons of whores judges," Dover historian James B. Jackson, reading from an account of the proceeding, said.

Jackson recounted the incident Friday, part of a Kent County Bar Association ceremony marking the 300th anniversary of courts in the county.

1980 is also, in effect, the 300th anniversary of government in the county as those four justices were the only form of county government until 1736 when the Levy Court was created.

"They were a combination of several courts we have today and a half dozen government agencies. They took care of suits, and criminal charges, took care of the roads, and handled just about everything that had to be done," Jackson said.

Willin escaped a hefty fine for his insult by later apologizing to the justices, said Jackson, who studies and writes about the history of the county when not working as director of the Delaware Bankers' Association.

The appointment of the four justices resulted from a 1680 petition by the approximately 100 people who lived in what is now Kent County. They were considered residents of The Whorekill, Sussex County—then little more than the town of Lewes.

They said they found it too difficult and dangerous to travel to that town to go to court.

The 100 residents lived mainly around the St. Jones and Mispillion rivers and Duck Creek, Jackson said.

"The settling of this area was different than that of Sussex and New Castle. In those counties people came directly from Holland, Sweden and England over the years," he said.

But Kent County is almost entirely English and was settled by immigrants from other, already settled areas, mainly from Maryland, beginning in about 1670, he said.

But Kent County is almost entirely English and was settled by immigrants from other, already settled areas, mainly from Maryland, beginning in about 1670, he said.

"It is easy to see why they settled around the rivers. Except for a few Indian paths, the only convenient transportation was by water," he said.

There was nothing that even resembled a town until Dover was built, starting around 1717, he said.

Delaware was the property of the Duke of York when the St. Jones court was established. Two years later, the Duke gave it to William Penn, Delaware became part of Pennsylvania and Penn changed St. Jones' name to Kent, he said.

The court was appointed in May of 1680 and the justices lost

no time meeting about a month later, he said.

"The first sessions make fascinating reading. They granted land deeds, held trials, settled suits, initiated charges and even registered earmarks to identify a farmer's livestock," he said.

There was no courthouse. The justices probably met in the house of Chief Justice John Whitwell, he said.

The first thing they did was to appoint a sheriff and clerks. One of the first cases they heard involved what may have been one of the first cases of civil disobedience in America.

Six men were fined 500 pounds of tobacco each for stealing the county stocks, the wooden contraptions in which prisoners were kept, Jackson said.

But it probably was not as much of a political statement as it seems, he said.

"What it was is they got drunk one night and thought they would have a little fun. In fact, most of them later became wealthy and became substantial citizens," he said with a laugh.

Although Friday's ceremony was held in Superior Court, the true direct descendant of the original court is today's Justice of the Peace Court, Jackson said.

"Today it's a lot different. They were responsible for nearly everything and our powers have been limited greatly over the years," said Russell T. Rash, chief of Kent County Magistrates.

The case where Willin insulted the justices struck a familiar note to Rash.

"I've had to call people down who have gotten out of hand in court before. Sometimes there are ignorant people who end up serving 10 days for contempt," Rash said.

Today other offices record deeds and wills and settle most (more than \$5,000) lawsuits and criminal charges (felonies and most misdemeanors), but some things remain the same, Rash said.

Justices now are tested, better educated and screened before being appointed, Rash noted.

"Apparently those four first Justices were appointed because they were the leaders of the petition to form a new court. The Duke just figured if they wanted it, they could be the ones to serve," he said.

Other differences can be seen in punishments meted out.

Those first four Justices administered whippings right in the room in which they met, Jackson said.

"We don't have that punishment, and we don't want it, either. At least I don't," Rash said with a laugh.

But some things remain the same, he said.

"It sounds like that old court was a people's court, just like today, where people can go and settle their differences," he said.

1 copy each

Cover - R. Co. Ct. Hse.

~~p. 7 - Ch. Ch. Cemetery~~

~~p. 11 - Statue C. Rodney~~

p. 13 - Photo "Det. Troops Lt. Green"

p. 23 - J. M. Clayton





Amateur historian uncovers copy of William Penn document

By CHRIS NOLAN
Staff Writer

DOVER—For years, Kent County and Delaware historians have sought the location of a historic document signed by William Penn, renaming the county Kent and appointing its first justices of the peace.

Now it has been found.

It is in the manuscript collection of the Pennsylvania Historical Society in Philadelphia, according to a photostat of the original that turned up in the Delaware State Archives earlier this week.

James B. Jackson, an amateur Kent

County and Delaware historian and a lifelong Kent County resident, found the copy in a "general reference file" of proprietary documents in the state archives.

He said he was in the archives when he found the copy.

"It was pure luck. I can't claim any credit for it," he told the Levy Court Commissioners Tuesday night.

Finding the document was "pure chance and it's difficult for the folks down there to understand because the file has been opened before," he added.

The hand-written document, signed and

sealed in Chester, Pa., on Dec. 25, 1682, names seven justices of the peace for the county and renames the area.

"By virtue of the authority (given to me) I do hereby in the King's name constitute appoint and authorize you Frances Whittwell John Hillyard John Curtis Daniel Jones John Brigs Thomas Heathern William Winsmore to be Justices of the Peace in the jurisdiction of the county of Jones, which my will and pleasure is shall from hence forth be called by the name of Kent," it says.

The document lists the boundaries of Kent

County—Duck Creek and the Mispillion Creek—and sets the justices' terms for a year.

The charter completes a set of early documents relating to the county's early history, most of which are in archive collections in New York and Pennsylvania.

Jackson has suggested the county issue reproductions of the documents, as to commemorating the county's 300th year.

It could include an early census of the county, a petition for a local government sent to the Duke of York and an order mandating the county seal and "could be done in a matter of a few months," Jackson said.

He also suggested that the county consider minting bronze and silver medals of the county seal, similar to those issued for Dover's 250th Anniversary.

"I think you would find a ready market for attractive limited edition silver and limited edition bronze medals," Jackson told the commissioners, noting that the medals issued for Dover's celebration have increased in value.

The Levy Court has formed a committee to decide how the county should celebrate its 300th birthday, and Commissioner Donald G. Culver said Jackson's suggestions would be considered.

State News

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Delmarva

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THE COURT HOUSES OF KENT COUNTY
Compiled by Public Archives Commission
Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware, 1965

Kent County was erected in the early months of 1680 to meet the needs of the area's residents for a seat of justice more accessible than those at Lewes or New Castle. The courts first met at "Towne Point" at the residence of Edward Pack, one of the Justices of the new County. It is obvious, however, that a separate court house was erected fairly soon, for by the spring of 1690/91 it was "old". Its location has not been determined.

A session of the Court of Quarter Sessions on April 28, 1691, ordered the purchase of fifty acres from William Morton and the erection thereon of a court house and a jail. The minute concluded: "And wee doe allsoe concent that the olde Court house may be burnt to gett the Nailles." This action did not immediately settle the evident problem concerning a county seat, for in 1694 certain justices refused to sit at "James Maxwell's att the Head of St. Jones", leading the others to petition for the issuance of new commissions.

The Provincial judges, in consultation with County officials, agreed in that year that the courts be held "on some part of the land belonging to William Southerby". In November, 1694 the two hundred acre portion of "Brother's Portion" which forms the original Town of Dover was acquired for "The inhabitants of Kent County". A court house, on the site of the present Kent County Court House, was in existence by 1699.

In 1722 the lot and "old" building were sold to a John Lindsey and a new court house erected on the site of the present Old State House. Deeds and accounts indicate the existence of a separate jail, sold and replaced before 1753; and of a building for offices and the housing of records, erected before 1772. A deed of March 29, 1775, formally vesting in trustees the two lots commonly regarded as public property, and another recently purchased adjoining it on the north side of the Green, make it evident that the court house and the record office were separate structures. From 1776 through 1779 thirteen hundred pounds were expended by the County in connection with the construction, maintenance and repair of these buildings.

On May 12, 1777, the General Assembly designated Dover as its permanent meeting place. For a few years, the State had no legal title to quarters there but presumably used the Kent County Court House by informal agreement whenever space was available, supplementing this by the rental of rooms elsewhere for special needs.

By 1786 the Court House was again outgrown. Commissioners were appointed before the November-December meeting of the Levy Court to erect a new court house and offices on the public lot, with considerable freedom to arrange the details within the limits of the appropriation. They reported on December 19, 1787, that there was insufficient money for a stone foundation, which they would have preferred, but that if they were authorized to raze the two old structures and salvage the hard brick from them, a satisfactory foundation could be made of these. They submitted at the same time a plan, no longer extant, for a building forty by sixty feet, with the further suggestion that a greater length would be desirable "as the rooms intended for the Sessions of the two branches of the Legislature would then admit of galleries for an audience when the doors were permitted to be open." The Levy Court Proceedings for the year 1787 contain the minute: "The Court empower the said Commissioners to pull down and remove the materials of the old Court House and offices and that they make such use of them as are proper towards the erection of the new House and that they have power to enlarge the present plan to any number of feet not exceeding seventy in front and forty feet back exclusive of a half octagon for the seat of the Justices of the Court, to sell and dispose of such of the materials of the old Houses as cannot be used and that the new Building shall be erected on the public ground between the House of Samuel Chew and the County Jail so as to have an alley at each end."

Early the following autumn, the rafters were in place to receive the roof and cupola. The supporting beams, however, proved too light; on September 18, 1788, the superstructure collapsed onto the second floor, injuring twenty persons. One of these, Charles Ridgely, a Commissioner, died a few days later. The accident, along with financial

difficulties solved by authorizing a State lottery in January, 1791, considerably delayed completion of the building. About April, 1792, it was ready for occupancy, at a cost of £ 2107:7:5. Completion of the battlements, sheathing the roof with copper, provision of stone steps, paving in front of the building, the erection of seats in both houses of the Assembly, and paying a share in the cost of the painting required an additional State appropriation of £404:4:4½ three years later.

The next extensive work on the joint State House and Court House was not undertaken for more than forty years. In 1836 a two-story and basement addition, forty by fifty feet, was erected at the east end of the original building. This provided an executive chamber, office for the Secretary of State, a library, committee rooms and a larger chamber for the House of Representatives. This adjustment appears to have again solved the problem of space for the two governmental units for almost forty years.

In 1873 the Assembly appointed a Committee on Public Buildings, which recommended that the State obtain sole title to the building. On April 3, 1873 the legislature appropriated \$15,000 for the purchase of the County's title to the land, and its equity in the building; and an additional \$20,000 for the repair, "improvement", refitting and refurnishing of the premises "for the use of the General Assembly, the Governor, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, Auditor of Accounts, and the State Library". In August, 1874, Manners, Fisher and Company completed the remodelling, which included replacement of the originally designed Georgian roof with one in the currently popular mansard style, at a cost of approximately \$8,000. The refurbishing was completed in December, ready for Governor John P. Cochran's inauguration in January, 1875.

The building, having become exclusively the State House, remained unchanged until 1895-1897, when the east, or rear wing, built in 1836, was extended forty feet farther to the east. This allowed larger quarters for various offices that were again becoming cramped.

In 1910 a new south wing of fireproof construction was added, primarily for the accommodation of the State Library, although it also increased the available general office

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space substantially. The exterior of the original section of the building was restored to its pre-1874 appearance at this time. The cost of the additions and restoration was \$62,500, representing a reimbursement from the Federal government of funds advanced by Delaware during the War of 1812, with accrued interest. In 1925 - 1926 a three-story annex was connected with the east wing of the older building. This proved to be the final expansion of the Old State House.

Before further space was needed, the State had adopted the concept of a capitol comprising a group of Georgian style buildings arranged about a campus and architecturally in harmony with the State House of 1787-1792. The first unit of this new expansion, Legislative Hall, was completed in 1933. At the end of 1964 there were six such buildings, with a seventh, the John G. Townsend State Office Building, authorized. The General Assembly, early in 1964, also provided for the restoration of the Old State House as soon as the projected office building is completed.

Kent County, meanwhile, had proceeded to replace its court house. Lots on the southeast corner of State Street and The Green were purchased on June 3, 1873, returning to public use the site of the courthouse of c. 1691 - 1722. The location has been occupied by a tavern from before the Revolution until the Civil War period. During the summer of 1874 Fisher Bockman, under contract to the Levy Court, erected a three-story brick court house, sixty feet by eighty feet. The first floor was intended for offices; the second for the courtroom, grand jury room, and witness-rooms; and the third as a public hall. The contract was let in April and the building completed by October but not fully occupied until the succeeding January. This is the Kent County Court House currently in use, with recent additions.

V. E. S.

Delaware ARCHIVES

General Reference File # 509

8 February 1984

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Volume _____ Page _____

Courthouse joins party in Dover

Historic building sports big facelift

By ROWAN SCARBOROUGH
Dover Bureau reporter

DOVER — Neglected and growing old, the Kent County courthouse in previous years has been left out of the Old Dover Days celebrations.

While other historic buildings on The Green were opened to the throngs of participants, the brick building, with its peeling paint, scuffed floors and cramped offices was closed and all but empty.

"Who would want to see it?" said Robert W. O'Brien, the county's chief administrative officer. "There was nothing to see except a rundown courthouse, which was really an embarrassment."

But on Saturday, for the first time in recent memory, the 109-year-old courthouse — spruced up with fresh paint, red and blue carpeting and fancy light fixtures — will be open for tours and exhibits of historical documents.

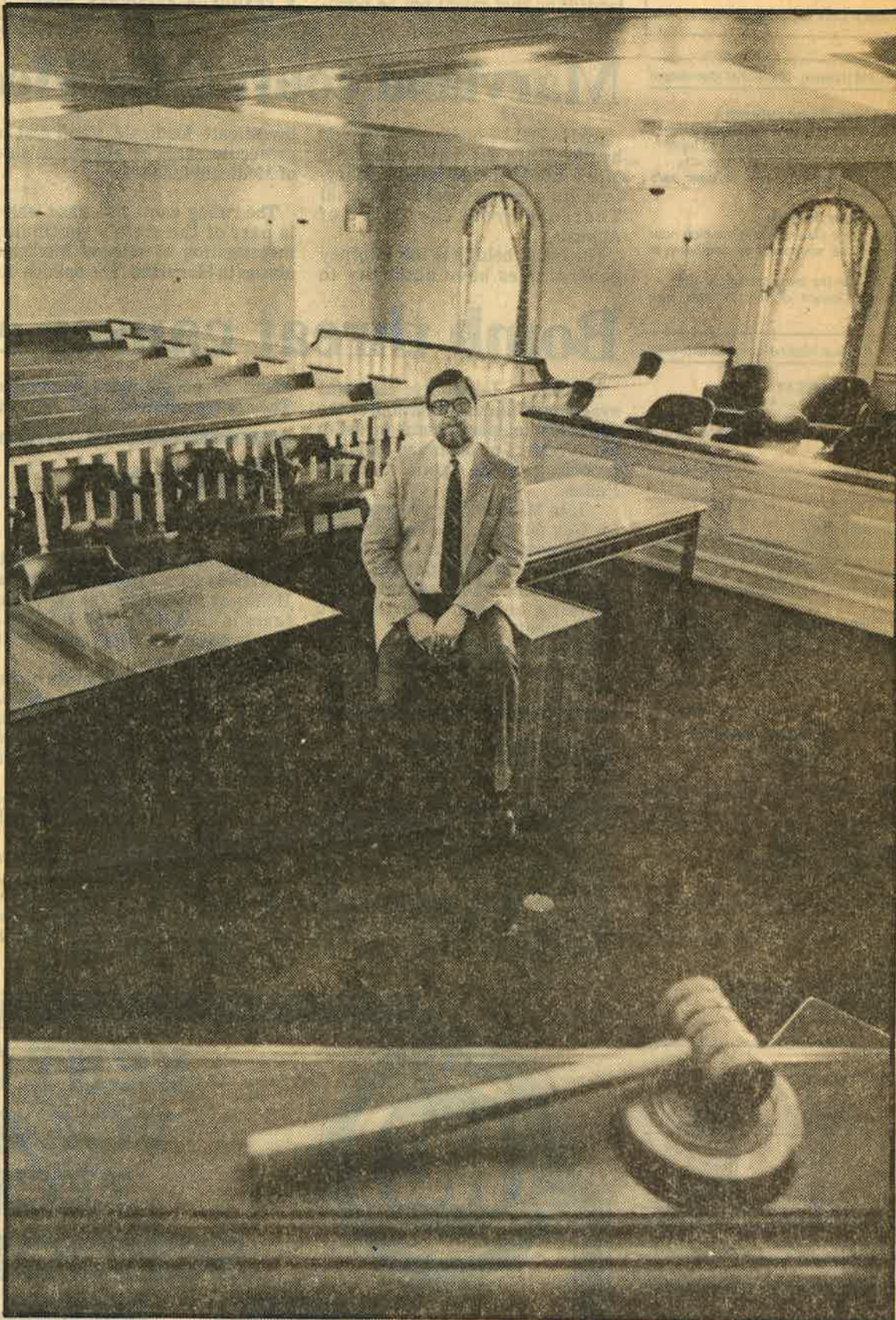
Workmen this week were putting the finishing touches on an 18-month, \$1.8 million project that has given the aging structure new life, yet retained its Georgian-style architecture.

And O'Brien, no longer ashamed of the county courthouse, was busy this week making sure such things as room numbers and door pumps were in their proper places. He also took time to answer questions from the courthouse staff.

"The flower pots, do they look kind of tacky for Dover Days?" one employee asked.

Visitors on Saturday will see new carpeting in offices and along hallways lit by brass sconces, bright chandeliers hanging in the courtrooms, and coats of paint brightening walls and the three-story trim outside.

See COURTHOUSE — B4B



Staff photo by Coleen Combes

Robert W. O'Brien shows off the courtroom in the refurbished Kent County courthouse.

Courthouse

• Continued from B1

Offices, once sectioned off haphazardly, have been remodeled and rearranged. The state law library, once bursting with over 36,000 books, has more shelves and more space for lawyers to work.

And there is a new addition — three stories of office and courtroom space on the east side of the building.

On the first floor is a prison holding area with two lockups, a guard station and walkway on which inmates make their way to a new courtroom on the second floor.

The 100-seat courtroom, used by both the Superior Court and the Court of Common Pleas, features wine-red carpeting, sconces and chandeliers and a conference room. From there, a disruptive prisoner who is ejected from the courtroom can watch his trial through a window and listen to testimony on an intercom.

Behind the judge's bench, a one-man elevator rides to the third floor, where the county's two Superior Court judges have new offices and conference rooms.

The courthouse also has a new

air-conditioning and heating system and is equipped with smoke detectors.

The construction project began in December 1981, after the state and the county Levy Court agreed upon a formula to pay the cost. The state contributed \$1.65 million, while the county is paying about \$180,000, according to O'Brien.

Although the courthouse will not be dedicated until September, the unofficial opening comes Saturday, marking another chapter in the history of courthouses in Kent County.

Vice Chancellor Maurice A. Hartnett III, who has researched the subject, said William Penn planned the City of Dover in 1682 so it would serve as a site for the county courthouse.

He said that sometime prior to 1690, a log courthouse was built on a location still unknown today. It was burned down before 1697 to recover the nails, a common practice of the period because of the value of nails.

A new log courthouse was built in 1699 on the current site at State Street and The Green. In 1722, the courthouse was moved across The Green to what is now the Old State House, adjacent to the Supreme Court.

Briefly/Delmarva

Kent County Court House rededicated

DOVER—Delaware, Kent County and court officials turned out Friday afternoon to help rededicate the recently refurbished Kent County Court House.

For the past 18 months, workers have been remodeling the old court house on the Green.

The \$1.9 million renovation now complete, includes a new addition facing Dover's Green. Within, are detention cells, a new, secured courtroom, new judges chambers and some badly needed space.

Three-quarters of the cost of renovation was paid by the state. Kent County paid the remainder, Kent County Levy Court President William J. Paskey said.

Under state law, Kent County Levy Court owns and maintains the court house. The state pays rent to the county.

State Supreme Court Chief Justice Daniel L. Hermann delivered the keynote address at the ceremonies which included remarks from Paskey, Lt. Gov. Michael N. Castle, Judge George R. Wright, the resident judge of the Superior Court, Vice Chancellor Maurice A. Hartnett III and Joseph W. Maybee, chairman of the Kent County Bar Association

Chesapeake Bay Model may get funds

WASHINGTON—The Chesapeake Bay Model on Kent Island, Md. stands to get \$35,000 a month if a continuing resolution passes both houses in Congress.

Rep. Tom Bevill, D-Ala., chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Water Resources

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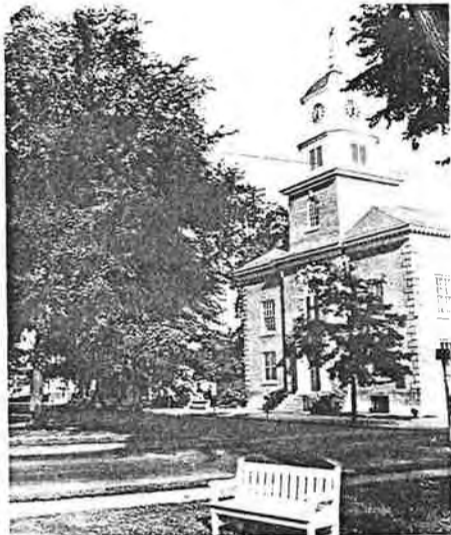
250 YEARS



the surrounding area. Growth was accelerated by the reactivation of the Air Base in 1954, expansion of International Latex and the coming of General Foods to the City in 1963. Houses, apartments and shopping centers sprang up, all requiring sewer, water and electric utilities. Policies were evolved

CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE-

1967 and Beyond



Kent County Court House, as it looks today.

Dover is a delightful city with a long and glorious history. It has character and charm in abundance. The total effect of appearance and atmosphere conveys with ease the general feeling of being a pleasant and desirable place to live and work.

The Green has a well-organized closeness with enough variety in building placement and types to lend interest. The architectural design of the buildings on The Green portrays good proportion and lines. All of this character and charm has mellowed and improved with age.

The area of Dover which is the seat of state government, the Capital Complex, has a pleasant openness. The size of Legislative Hall, the Capitol, is in harmony with the size of Delaware. Through the years new state office buildings have been designed to blend architecturally with the Old State House, Legislative Hall, and The Green.

to meet the demand. Bonds were sold to finance improvements in 1953, 1955, 1957, 1960, 1963 and 1965. The outstanding debt of the City grew from \$300,000 in 1950 to \$14,150,000 in 1965. All City services were expanded and improved. By 1967, only a few areas on the extremities of the City did not have sewer and water available. City-wide zoning regulations had been instituted. A Planning Commission was established and is active. Employees of the City number 175, with an annual payroll of approximately \$1,000,000. Assessed value of taxable property increased from \$21,000,000 in 1960 to more than \$50,000,000 in 1967. A tax rate of 90¢ per \$100 of assessed valuation has been retained since 1955.

A great many projects are under way or planned which will result in continued intense development of Dover and the surrounding area. With the approval of the Mayor and Council, Dover is engaged in the development of a Comprehensive Plan to serve as a guide to orderly growth. The objective of the City government will be to provide modern facilities, while retaining the Colonial charm of Old Dover.



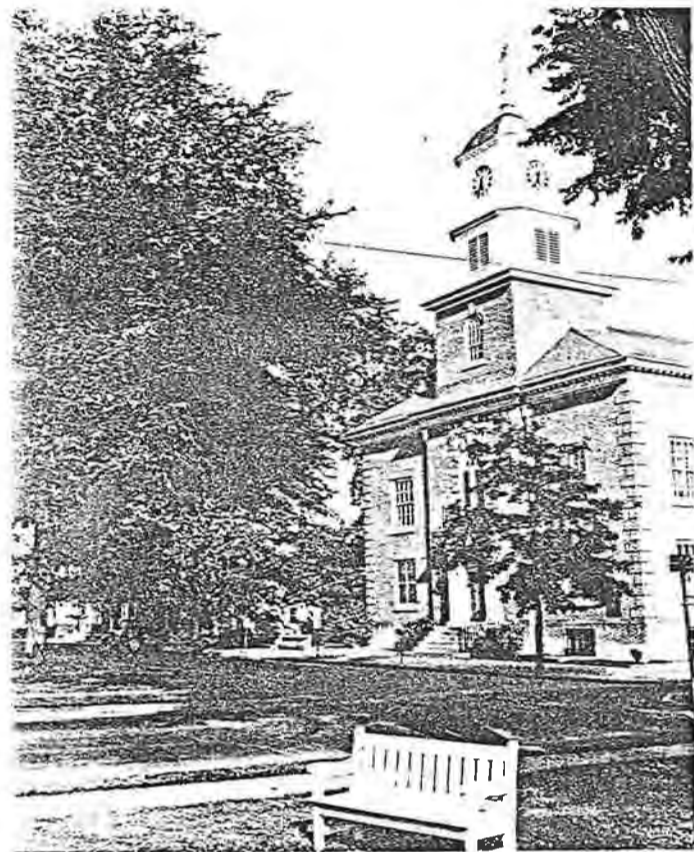
Interior view of Woodburn.

The Dover area is blessed with numerous historical structures. State Street, Governors Avenue, and Kings Highway are lined with many buildings of major significance.

In this setting, however, Dover is faced with a tremendous



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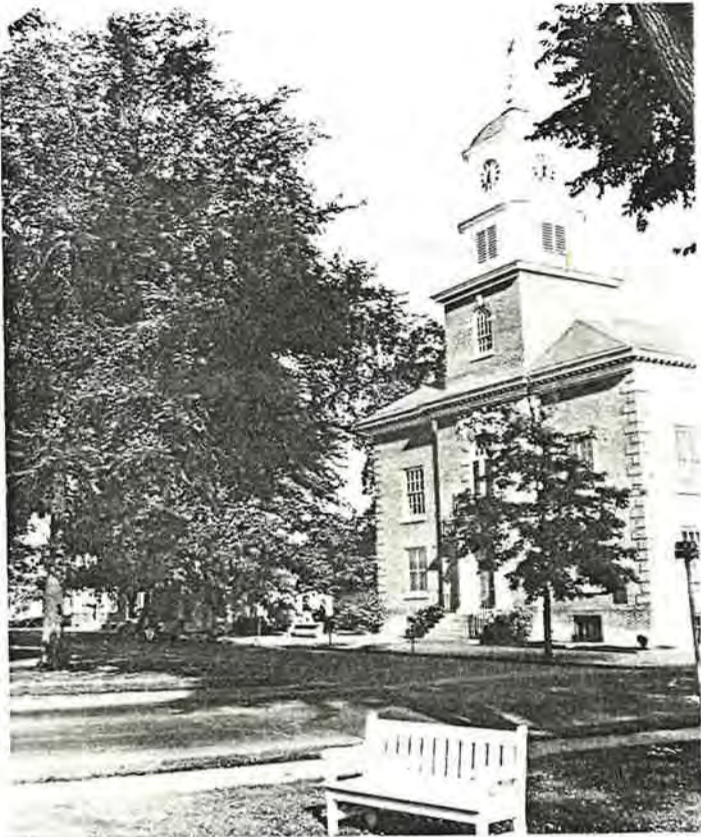
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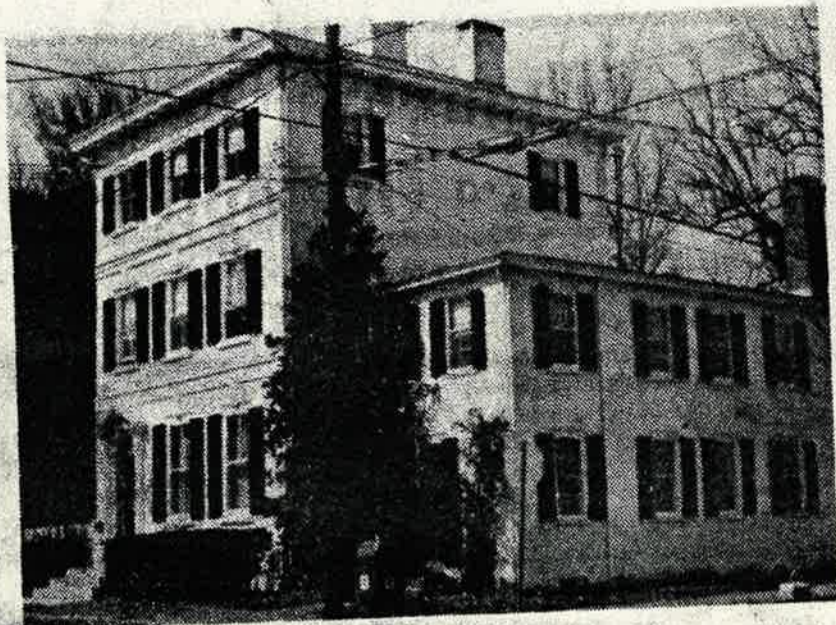
Downstate courthouses survive



The Kent County Courthouse started out as a tavern where elders met to run the town's affairs. The present-day structure bears little resemblance to the original. (Photo courtesy of the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs Department of the State of Delaware)

STATE NEWS
10-7-29

FOOTPRINTS OF THE PAST



THE MUSTARD HOUSE

This imposing residence situated at the northwest corner of Mt. Vernon and Union Street is a prime example of "an architecturally changed structure". At a cursory glance, it appears that the house is late federal with Greek adaptations. However, upon investigation, it has been found that the house was actually built in the late 1700's, along colonial lines and design. It, like the Col. Davis House, was/is a single structure three bays wide but two rooms deep. The double belt course, the Flemish-bond brick work, the keystone caps above the first and second floor windows, and the wide square chimney tops are evidences of its former self. There are conflicting dates about its "change over", but it appears to have been redone in the late 1850's. The A-roof and attic were removed. The flat roof over a third story, the double belt course over the second floor bays, the classic Greek entrance way, the granite stoop and the addition of the right wing are the additions. These exterior alterations also affected the interior design. It is thought that the original dwelling was erected by Samuel Ball who later sold it to General Pope. After a number of owners it was purchased by the Mustard Family who operated a tannery on the premises. Thus, the present name of the house. For many years this building was painted a mustard color. The present owners are Mr. and Mrs. William H. Willis, Jr.

(Photo by Seward; History by Caley)



Bicentennial bricking

The sidewalk on the State Street side of the Kent County Courthouse is being torn up and replaced with brick as part of a state Bicentennial grant pro-

ject. Kent County approved about \$13,000 for the project. The county is also replacing an old fuel tank under the sidewalk, at a cost of about \$9,800.

State News/Gary Emelgh



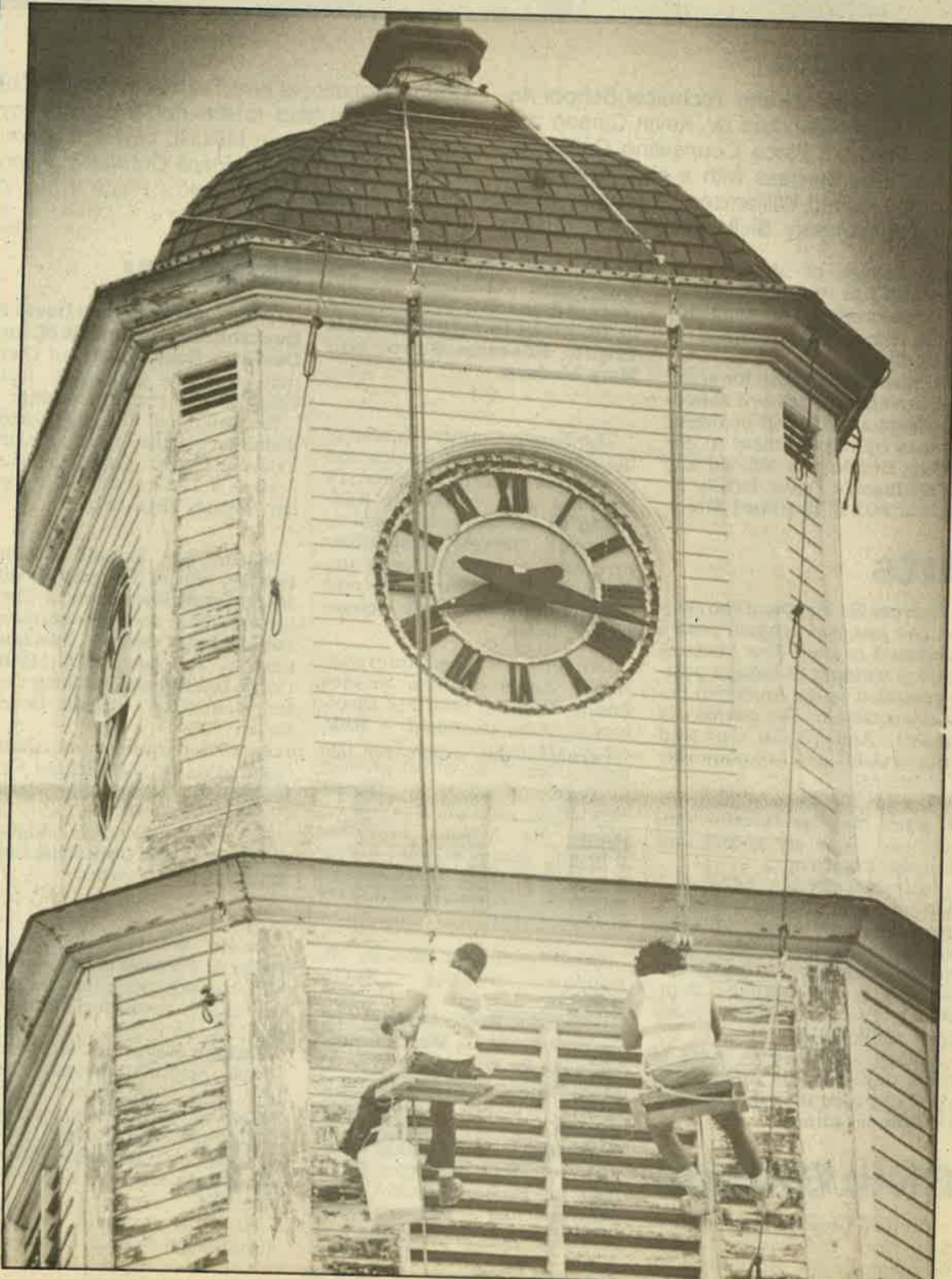
STATE NEWS 6 MAY 1990

State News/Kevin Heslin

Country dancers do their thing on The Green at Old Dover Days Saturday.

Clockwork

STATE NEWS 7 AUGUST 1990



State News/Kevin Heslin

Shawn Elliott, left, and Ricky Harris, employees of Elliott Painting, scrape old paint off Kent County Courthouse on The Green in Dover.

Delaware

Maryland

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Vol. 89, No. 356 DSN 30 SEP 1989

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State News/Kevin Heslin

Raising (to) the roof

The cupola on the Kent County Court House in Dover is being reshingled. Two workers are raised to the cupola via a large crane on Friday.



State News/Kevin Heslin

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caused by coa

By **Michael Pelrine**
Staff writer

DOVER — E. Stuart Outten isn't old enough to remember when Dover Light & Gas Co. made the natural gas that helped illuminate the streets of the city decades ago.

Now he owns Capital Cleaners at the intersection of North and New streets, across the street from the empty lot where the coal gasification plant used to be.

On Thursday, that lot was placed on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Superfund national priority list for cleanup as a major hazardous waste dump.

Mr. Outten, Democratic state repre-

sentative from Dover and lifetime resident of the city, has mixed feelings about the lot.

"Having spent the greater part of my life there, it's kind of frightening," he said Friday. "But it's encouraging to know that it's been identified and will be cleaned up."

Three employees working in a building across the street from the lot Friday had no idea they were within yards of a Superfund site.

Dover Gas Works, as the plant was known, was open for nearly a century, making natural gas from coal. The by-products of the plant, mostly coal tar, were used for years by commercial fishermen to treat their nets to make them last longer.

Teen drops rape cl against DelState gr

□ Hart will be reinstated to the Delaware State College football team soon. Page 15.

By **Ty Norris**
Staff writer

DOVER — Stephen Hart, the All-American guard at Delaware State College arrested on rape charges a month ago, was exonerated Friday morning when the state dismissed all charges at the request of his 16-year-old accuser.

Dover police Capt. H. Lee Ford said the 16-year-old girl requested the charges be withdrawn Thursday night because she no longer wished to pursue the case.

“I just thank God that everything worked out. I thank God that I am back in school and that I have a lot of friends. I hope God blesses her, also.”

— **Stephen Hart**

Andrew Beauregard, a prosecutor in the deputy Attorney General's office, said the girl went to Mr. Hart's attorney earlier this week and stated she consented to a sexual act with Mr. Hart on

DELAWARE STATE NEWS 19 March 1992

Kent opts to insure historic building's past

By Joseph D. Harris
Staff writer

DOVER — It's going to be expensive to buy a new insurance policy for the nearly 300-year-old Kent County Courthouse, County Administrator Robert S. McLeod told Levy Court commissioners Tuesday night.

Mr. McLeod gave the commissioners the option Tuesday of insuring the courthouse so that if it were ever destroyed, the structure and its furnishings would be replaced as they currently are. Or, the commissioners could have opted for a cheaper policy which, in the event of calamity, would have replaced one of the nation's oldest courthouses with a more modern structure.

With little debate, the commissioners chose to have the courthouse insured to restore the

structure to its original style.

"I believe to keep with the setting of old Dover we've got to get it replaced with an original — like the structure that's there now or else we'd be run out of town on a rail," Commissioner Ronald D. Smith said.

Mr. McLeod said the structure "would definitely be costly" to replace, but added that he did not have any estimates.

"We first have to determine what the value is," Mr. McLeod said. "The insurance could be double the cost of what it is now."

Mr. McKenna said that the courthouse was originally a tavern, and joked that the county would first have to make it a tavern, and later convert it to the courthouse to keep everything original.

Selbyville Town Manager Peter Nilles said Tuesday's 7-1 decision, with one board member abstaining and one absent, should satisfy townspeople, even though the school might be outside Selbyville proper.

Some board members had warned land prices might soar if the potential construction site were selected from a relatively small area.

Selbyville Middle is next to a chicken processing plant, a location many parents contend is inappropriate.

Besides replacing that school, the project includes construction of elementary schools in the Long Neck and Georgetown areas.

District residents will decide whether to invest \$12.8 million in the work. The state would contribute \$11.3 million.

no more than \$36.50 a year if the construction is approved.

A different version of the project, in which Selbyville Middle would have been renovated rather than replaced, was rejected by voters in November.

The current version, however, won only a limited endorsement from the State Board of Education, which maintains that Selbyville Middle need only be repaired to be satisfactory.

As a result, the state board has promised just \$2.8 million — the amount it would contribute toward renovation — for a replacement middle school.

The board ordinarily contributes 70 percent of construction cost and has said it would give that much to help build the planned elementary schools.

But district voters will provide the

Mountaire Farms of Delmarva, which operates the plant next to Selbyville Middle, has said it will try to buy part of the old campus if the district abandons it and expands its operation onto that property.

In recent months, support for a new middle school has even come from some residents who contend that the industrial atmosphere poses no danger to pupils.

They say a new location would end parents' fears and reduce the likelihood Mountaire would leave Selbyville to escape controversy.

The company's potential growth in Selbyville currently is stymied by a lawsuit filed by a group of parents who contend that further expansion of the facility is illegal.

NJ 15 APR 1992

Kent sheriff fires warning shot in chase

By JEFF MONTGOMERY
Dover Bureau reporter

DOVER — Kent County Sheriff Carl M. Wright fired a warning shot Tuesday over the historic Green while chasing a Dover man who was fleeing a 90-day jail term for a traffic offense.

The shooting startled bystanders near the Old Statehouse.

Ronald L. Evans, 20, of the 200 block of North Queen St., shoved a deputy sheriff and bolted from the Kent County Courthouse moments after sentencing for a third offense of driving while his license was suspended.

"He went out the front door and I went out the back door of the sheriff's office and headed him off at the pass," Wright said. "There was only one shot fired. Just a warning."

Dover Police Lt. James Beauchamp said three Dover police officers who were in the courtroom at the time also gave chase. Evans, fleeing north across State Street, immediately halted.

Beauchamp said the shooting was governed by Sheriff's Department policies.

"We restrict the use of warning shots to extreme circumstances. For all intents and purposes, we do not fire warning shots," Beauchamp said.

"It sounded a little like a cap gun going off," said state Auditor R. Thomas Wagner Jr., who was waiting nearby to introduce Insurance Commissioner candidate William C. Wyer. "The guy stopped right away."

Prof admits stealing from Winterthur

By TED CADDELL
Staff reporter

WILMINGTON — An art professor who told police he had been stealing artworks up and down the Eastern Seaboard since 1974 pleaded guilty Tuesday to stealing two \$11,000 plates from Winterthur Museum and attempting to steal a \$22,000 Chinese Export platter which once belonged to George Washington.

ing on a possible career



The News Journal/BOB HERBERT

rs operates a video camera interviews students from St. Career Expo Day at Howard. s and junior highs in New s daylong event, which is

planned by Howard's staff to increase students' awareness of career opportunities. More than 45 businesses set up information booths and displays for communications technology; graphic arts; electronics; health occupations; performing arts; computer technology; cosmetology; carpentry, and fashion merchandising.

ech misses tax hike deadline

"Naturally, we'll feel the pinch because it comes at a time when we're trying to complete our conversion."

GEORGE L. FRUNDZI,
Sussex superintendent

since the Castle administration "curveball" was served up in late January.

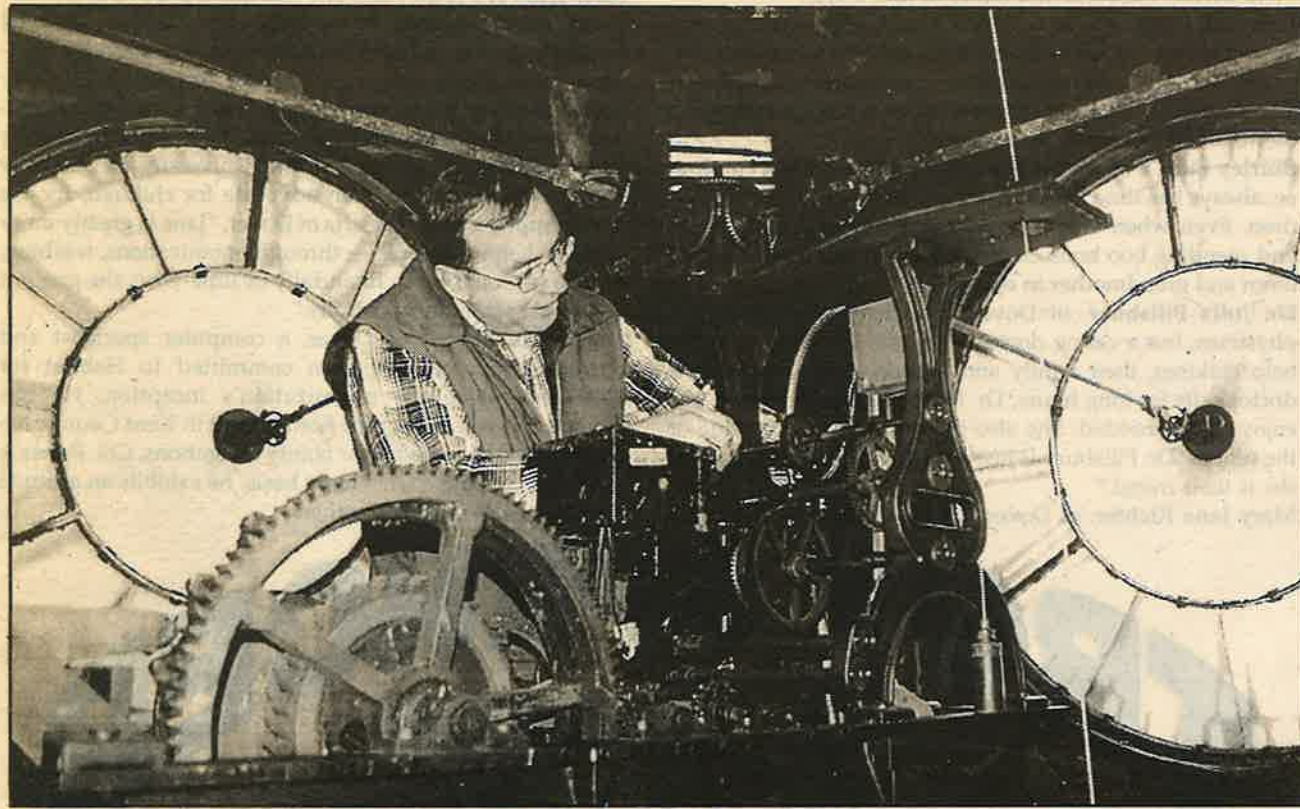
"It obviously altered the position that we thought we were in at that point," Frundzi said. "Naturally, we'll feel the pinch because it comes at a time when we're trying to complete our conversion."

He said he may reconvene the committee, which includes Ferguson, today or Thursday "to share the impact on our budget. Then we'll submit formal letters to parties who are supposed to get them."

The Sussex district's tax can is now

Like clockwork

Son continues father's tradition of caring for court house clock



CAREFUL CRAFTSMAN: Bob Rodgers of Rodgers Clock Service in Harrisburg, Pa. works on the century-old mechanism that drives the hands and powers the strike in the clock tower of the Kent County Court House on The Green in Dover. Photo by Joanna Wilson.

By Joanna Wilson
Staff writer

Bong! ... Bong! ... Bong! ...

The sound of iron on iron striking the hour is a tradition that has echoed across the Dover Green for more than a century.

The source of the sound, which can be heard as far away as Christ Episcopal Church to the south and Lookerman Street to the north, is the clock tower of the Kent County Court House. Originally built in 1874 as an ornate three-story Victorian structure, the court house was remodeled in 1918 into a two-story Georgian-style building to better match the nearby old State House.

Inside both towers, however, unseen by all but a handful of the general populace, the same deceptively delicate-looking brass and iron mechanism has been keeping time for the community.

FOR ALMOST 50 YEARS, a Pennsylvania company has kept the gears whirring and the hands in motion — Rodgers Clock Service of Harrisburg, founded soon after World War II by the late Burt Rodgers.

Today, his son Bob Rodgers upholds the family tradition — one he hopes will continue, since his children, Jeff, 12, and Melissa, 13, enjoy going up in clock towers with him, just as he did with his father.

And that tradition includes traveling to Delaware once a year to clean, oil and check the works in the Sussex County Court House in Georgetown and a church in Middletown, as well as those in the tower high above The Green.

Above the Kent County Court House's stately public areas, the third floor steps narrow to a steep, single-file flight of weathered wood. At the first level above the tower base, wind whistles through the tower vents around the clock's 1,500 pound bell and through the more recent HVAC equipment that heats and cools the building below.

In the southeast corner, a worn wooden ladder provides access to the topmost room containing the clock works. There, on a recent nippy November morning, Rodgers worked cheerfully, oiling and adjusting and cleaning with practiced precision, unfazed by his journalist visitor.

His profession is so unusual — and the 150 tower clocks

Continued on page 7

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at Dover Motors

We'll help you get a vehicle if you have credit problems!

DOVER MOTORS *Guaranteed Trade*
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PAY TO THE ORDER OF: **\$500.00**

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Continuing the family tradition

Continued from page 6

he services all over the East Coast are so central to their communities — he's used to giving interviews while he works, Rodgers explained.

IN DOVER, the clock works stand in the center of the tower room on gracefully curved cast iron legs, almost like a piece of antique furniture. Atop those legs, an intricate arrangement of gears powered by an electric motor is linked to the four sets of clock hands via four long metal tubes.

"Watch your head," Rodgers warned of the forehead-level tubes fanning out from the mechanism.

While working with a long-necked oil bottle and soft rag, he explained the clock works, starting with the nameplate on the front that reads "E. Howard & Co. of Boston, Mass." The works aren't dated, but they do have a model number: No. 2, which Rodgers said refers to the size of the mechanism.

The works were originally operated by a pendulum and weight system, with 300 pounds of weight to drive the time and 1,000 pounds to operate the striking mechanism.

"The strike side had to have enough power to lift a heavy hammer, but the time side just had to move the hands," Rodgers explained.

The clock had to be wound at least once a week, he said, adding the weights could be very dangerous if a cable broke.

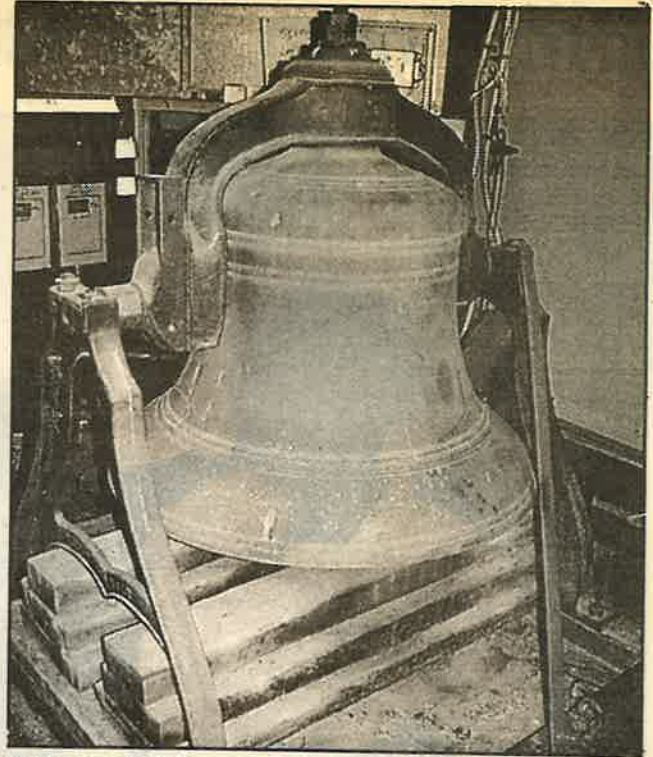
According to historian G. Daniel Blagg in his book "Dover: A Pictorial History," Kent County officials had that exact experience in October 1951, when a cable broke during

winding and sent a thousand pound weight crashing down through the tower. The clock was out of commission for two years.

THOUGH THE COUNTY has no maintenance records that far back, Rodgers said the weight story makes sense, since his father was the person who electrified the clock in the early 50s. Turning to the northwest corner wall of the tower, he pointed out the record his father had left in chalk of his work.

Below the date 1952 and the name Rodgers Clock Co., the first entry reads "Elec. Oct. 1953" — most likely a reference to when the works were electrified. The entries continue until 1976, the year Bob Rodgers joined his father's business.

Though some clock enthusiasts like to restore the old weight system, the clock mechanism is actually better off from the conversion to electric.



STILL STRIKING THE HOUR: This 1,500 pound cast iron bell made by Meneely & Kimberly of Troy, New York provides the sound when the court house clock strikes the hour. Working tower clocks like the one in Dover are a rarity — most have been replaced by recorded chimes. Photo by Joanna Wilson.



THE KENT COUNTY COURT HOUSE was built in 1874 as a three-story Victorian building and renovated to its present two-story Georgian appearance in 1918. During the renovation, new dials were installed in the new clock tower, but the original clock works remain in place. Photo by Joanna Wilson.

"The pressure is off without the weights, so the integrity of the clock is going to last that much longer," said Rodgers. "But the tick-tock is history now."

Another modern addition is the fluorescent lights which give the thick frosted glass clock faces their nighttime glow.

"The glass is different from what I see in other clocks," he added, noting only one pane in the stained glass-like assemblies had been replaced.

The striking mechanism is "relatively simple," with a cable that passes up through the rafters and down to the bell below to move the hammer. A graduated gear controls the number of strikes.

As for the age of the clock works, Rodgers said he couldn't be certain.

"I usually judge age by how primitive they are," he said, suggesting a source of information — the Library Research Center at the National Watch and Clock Museum in Columbia, Pa. — as a means to solve the mystery of the clock's age.

THERE, RESEARCHER Beth Bisbano not only found information about the clock company, she also found records of the Dover clock.

Edward Howard, who also made the first sets of scales used by the U.S. Postal Service, started his clock company in 1858 in Boston. After numerous company name changes and financial setbacks, Howard retired in 1881, but his company is apparently still in business today, having relocated to Wisconsin, Bisbano said. They made their last tower clock in 1964.

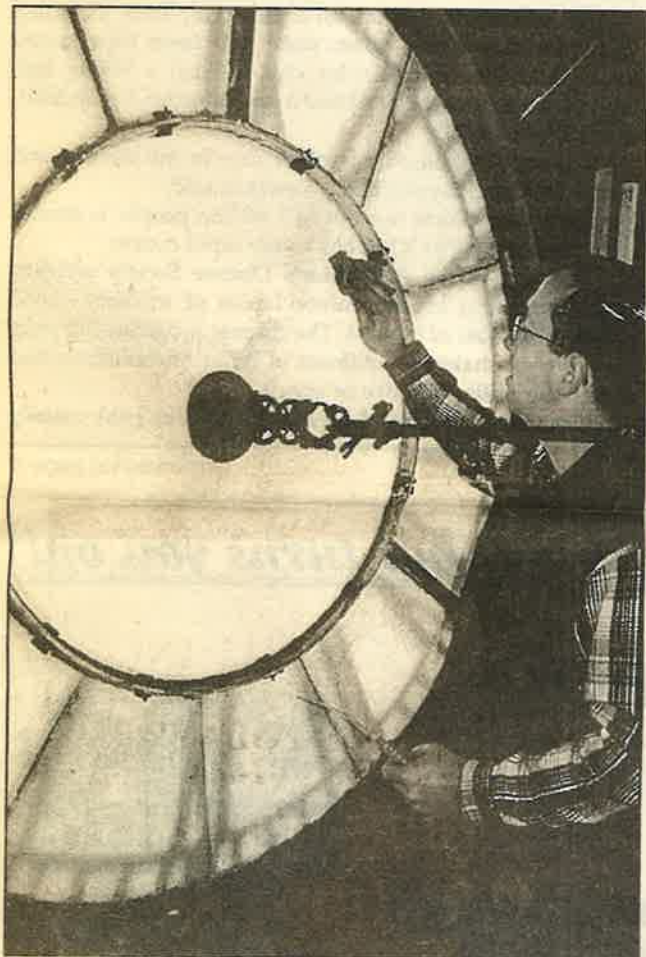
Bisbano also found copies of company catalogs from 1890 and 1923. The 1890 E. Howard Tower Clock Catalog includes an illustration of a striking clock mechanism almost identical to the one in Dover, along with descriptions and illustrations of different types of dials available.

The "sectional iron and glass dial" with Roman numerals appears to be the same as those in the Dover court house, and another type, a black "smalted" wooden dial, could be those used in the courthouse tower before its renovation.

Finally, records from the E. Howard clock company listing locations of their tower clocks include a #2 placed in a Dover, Delaware court house in 1874, the year the Kent County Court House was completed.

That makes the clock works 125 years old and counting. Rodgers aims to keep them that way.

"I come and look after it, and it will take care of the town," he said.



BEHIND THE DIAL: Bob Rodgers cleans the heavy frosted glass of one of the four clock faces in the clock tower of the Kent County Court House. Photo by Joanna Wilson.

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