

# Wyoming toots its own horn, marks its history

If Camden has a sign, so must its rival

By J.L. MILLER  
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Appearances mean a lot in Wyoming, where folks often have locked horns with neighboring Camden on issues such as police protection and whose name goes on the water tower.

So it might come as a surprise that for decades, no one in Wyoming seemed to notice that Camden has a state historical marker and Wyoming doesn't.

That inequity will be corrected at 3 p.m. today when state and town officials unveil Delaware's newest historical marker in front of the old Wyoming train station, now the

town hall.

"It's a wonder they didn't have one before," said Russ McCabe, the Delaware Public Archives official in charge of the historical markers program.

Camden has had its historical marker on US 13 since 1971, but it wasn't until recently that Wyoming resident Hans Reagle realized his hometown three miles south of Dover had none.

"He wanted to do it because Wyoming just didn't have one. It seemed like every other town did — particularly Camden," said Reagle's wife, Anne Hartnett.

The couple brought the matter to the attention of state Rep. Gerald A. Buckworth, R-Fairfield Farms, and

plans for the sign were set in motion.

The marker heralds the history of the town, which got its start when the railroad was built in 1856.

In 1865, the Rev. John J. Pearce moved to the area from the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, purchased land and subdivided it into building lots. Other Pennsylvanians moved south to join Pearce, and the village grew.

Even then, as the marker delicately notes, relations between Wyoming and Camden were prickly at best.

"Desiring to sever any shared identity or connection with Camden, residents chose to honor the new citizens by changing the name of the community to Wyoming," the marker reads.



The News Journal/GARY EMECH  
Richard Haxton (left) of Kent Signs and Russ McCabe of the Delaware Public Archives set a historical marker Friday in front of the old Wyoming train station.

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## Marker: An ongoing tale of town rivalry

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The town got its post office in 1866 and was incorporated in 1869, developing a reputation as a shipping point for the region's peach crop.

The addition of the historical marker is just the latest chapter in the rivalry between the two Kent County towns.

In the early 1980s, the towns sparred over whose name should go on the water towers operated by the towns' joint water and sewer authority. The solution: Leave the towers blank.

In 1984, Conrail inadvertently stepped into the fray when it erected a small sign along the railroad tracks to alert engineers to their location.

The sign read "Camden," but the railroad tracks are in Wyoming. Within hours, telephone switchboards at Conrail headquarters in Philadelphia lighted up with protests from Wyoming residents.

Conrail protested that the word "Wyoming" was already in use on its tracks, and suggested a replacement sign with the inoffensive locator "Point" instead.

That didn't sit well with Wyoming, either.

The solution: Up went a new sign with the word "Wydel."

More recently, the two towns squabbled over their joint police department, and on Jan. 1, 1999, the force was split into two.

Hartnett said she hopes that today's dedication, with refreshments to follow, will "smooth any bad feelings left over from that."

The event is open to the public — including folks from Camden.

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