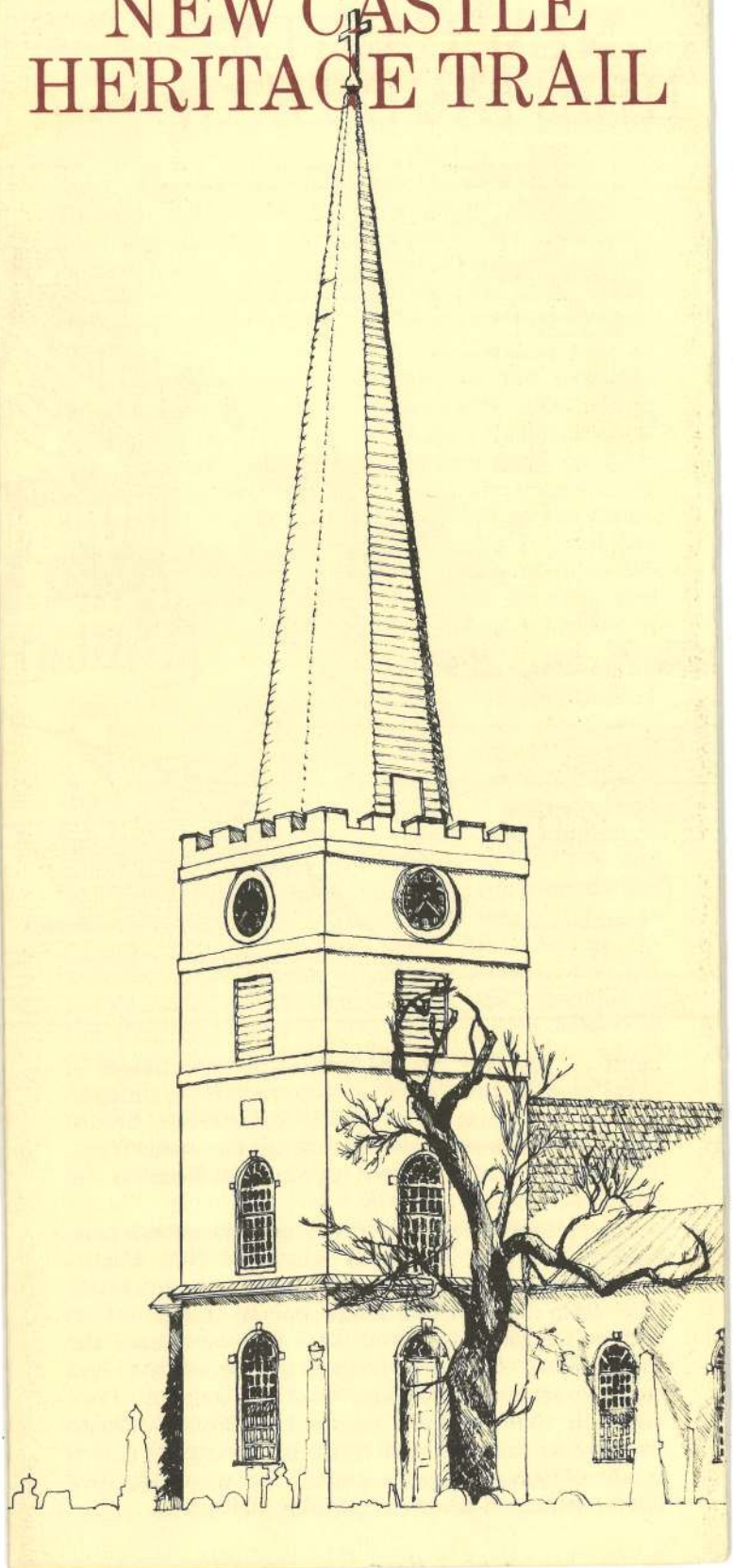
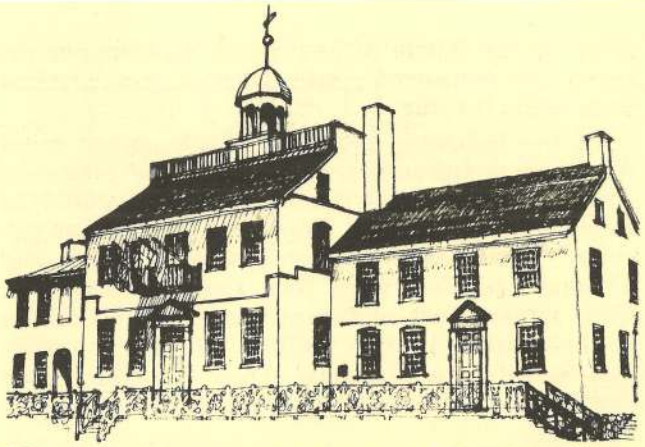
NEW CASTLE HERITAGE TRAIL





The flags of The Netherlands, Sweden, Great Britain, and the United States are displayed on the balcony of the Old Court House to honor New Castle's proud and intriguing history. Founded by the Dutch, conquered by the Swedes and English, and prominent as the capital of Delaware in the early Revolutionary War era, New Castle began her story when Old World explorers sailed up the Delaware.

The Dutch nation supported three expeditions beginning with Henry Hudson's in 1609. In 1623 they established a fort, called Nassau, on the east bank of the river in what is now New Jersey. Colonization on the western shore, in present-day Delaware, began and ended in the tragedy of the 1631 Zwaanendael settlement massacred by Indians. For twenty years the Dutch did not return in strength to Delaware, but their claims nevertheless extended to Cape Henlopen at the southern end of Delaware Bay.

To the Dutch it was therefore an intrusion when subjects of Her Majesty, the young Queen Christina of Sweden, established a colony at present-day Wilmington. Landing in 1638 they built a fort and log cabins, tilled the soil, and traded with Indians. A prospering Swedish settlement existing on land claimed by The Netherlands caused alarm and anger in New Amsterdam. Relations between the Dutch and Swedish colonists steadily deteriorated, and intermittent bickering ensued.

This took on a martial air with the accession of Pieter Stuyvesant to the Governorship of New Amsterdam. A legend in his own time, the stubborn and firey patroon organized and led a military expedition by land and sea against New Sweden. His arrival with an armed levy surprised the Swedes and forced their capitulation. To further establish Dutch dominion, Stuyvesant erected Fort Casimir, the forerunner of modern New Castle. From that date, in 1651, to the present, New Castle has existed on its river bank; its history as engaging as its cobblestone streets.

Fort Casimir was unable to repel the armed forces which appeared at intervals during the late seventeenth century. The Swedes reversed the Dutch triumph in 1654 by capturing the fort and renaming it Fort Trinity. It was recaptured the following year, however, by the indomitable Stuyvesant who took advantage of his trip to Delaware to lay out the town streets, and The Green. He named the town New Amstel. This final strike at New Sweden ended for all time the New World pretensions of the Swedes.

Thriving as a subsidiary of the great Dutch city of Amsterdam, New Amstel was part of the vast New Netherlands colony which stretched from Cape Henlopen in the south, northward to the valleys and mountains of present-day upper New York state. This territory divided the English colonies situated both north and south of it, and caused alarm in Great Britain. To solidify his New World interests the English King Charles II dispatched soldiers to conquer New Netherlands.

In the autumn of 1664, His Majesties Ship GUINEA, 40 guns, and an armed merchant vessel, WILLIAM NICHOLAS, arrived at New Amstel. Laden with 100 men-at-arms, eager for battle, and fresh from the English conquest of Pieter Stuyvesant's New Amsterdam colony, the two vessels anchored in the channel, guns run out, decks cleared for action, with the flag of Saint George snapping in the breeze.

Commanded by Sir Robert Carr and under orders to reduce Dutch garrisons in the New World, the English force launched an attack against the stockade. Thus beleaguered, the small Dutch garrison capitulated, adding yet another victory for the English King over his maritime rivals. With the Dutch surrender the town was re-named New Castle and added to the holdings of Charles' brother, the Duke of York, later King James II.

The Duke of York's government proved capable. Brick kilns fed the colony with stout material to raise homes and reinforce defenses. The town grew, and its lanes and alleys resounded with the hammering of carpenters, the clanging blows of metalsmiths, and the steady drone of mills which ground the harvest from the surrounding fields. This peace was shattered by the Anglo-Dutch war in 1673 when a force of Lowlanders arrived and captured the town for the Dutch Prince, William of Orange.

Dutch resurgence in America was brief. English colonists had flooded the continent, and, in interminable waves, pushed on through the former Dutch territories. The Lowland Burghers, realistic and astute in politics, withdrew claims on New Castle in 1674 in return for British islands in the Pacific. Their control of Delaware ended but

news of the Battle of Lexington. As Congress debated the course of political action, preparations were made for war.

In the following year New Castle joined other American communities with enthusiastic jubilation when the news of the signing of the Declaration of Independence was read from the Court House balcony. Two of the "Signers", George Read, and Thomas McKean, were New Castle residents. A third signer, Ross of Pennsylvania, had been born in New Castle. Another resident, Charles Thomson, was Secretary of Congress. Thus was New Castle embroiled in the tumultuous events of the Revolution.

Delaware responded quickly to the Congressional appeal for arms. In July, 1776, units of the Kent County militia paused in New Castle on their way from Dover to Washington's army in New York. Joined here by other Delaware troops, they bivouacked in town, and "took out of the Court House all the Insignia of Monarchy .... all the baubles of Royalty, and made a pile of them before the Court House .... set fire to them and burnt them to ashes .... and a merry day made of it."

Naval engagements of the early Revolutionary War centered on the Delaware, the gateway to important Philadelphia. The infant American navy skirmished with the formidable Royal Navy within earshot of New Castle. Notable battles were those of the Continental brigantine LEXINGTON against the British ROEBUCK and LIVERPOOL, and the spirited engagements between Commodore Hazelwood's small American flotilla and the English fleet. John Adams described the American effort as "gallant" but gallantry aside, the American navy was incapable of repelling the huge British force which landed at Head of Elk in 1777, nor the naval squadron which fought its way to Philadelphia, forcing the surrender of the American capital.

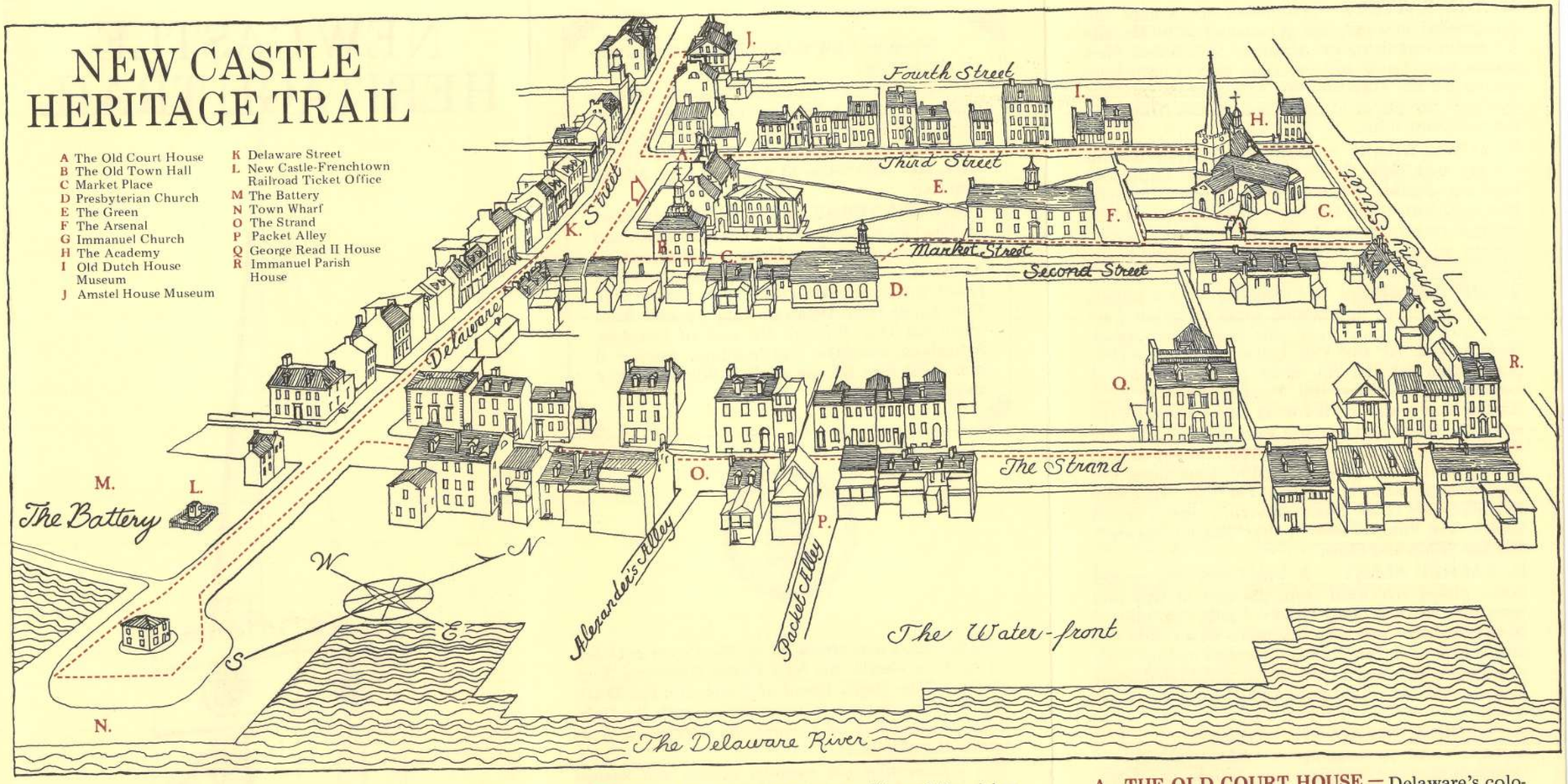
At this time the British captured John McKinly, the "President" of the newly formed "Delaware State", along with the State treasury, important documents, and the Great Seal, all aboard a ship as it fled New Castle. With the American Congress re-settled in York, Pennsylvania, the British in Philadelphia, and Washington painfully at bay in Valley Forge, the Delaware Assembly fled south. By October 1777, the seat of government passed for all time from the capitol building in New Castle, to relative safety in Dover.

No longer a capital, New Castle nevertheless remained a county seat and an important center of trade in the burgeoning Federal era. The excitement of the War of 1812 brought new danger of naval assault, but failed to dim the town's prosperity. More damaging was the disasterous fire of 1824 which leveled a portion of the waterfront, The Strand, and evoked sympathy from as far away as Boston.

Energetically rebuilt, New Castle became a celebrated passenger terminus when the New Castle-Frenchtown Railroad began operation in 1832. The train supplanted stage coach traffic on an earlier turnpike between the Delaware and the Chesapeake, the new train was one of the first steam powered passenger lines in America. Travelers on river packets stopped in New Castle to transfer to the overland route on the exciting new mode of travel. Long a center for travelers, New Castle attracted a host of notable visitors.

NEW CASTLE HERITAGE TRAIL

A The Old Court House
B The Old Town Hall
C Market Place
D Presbyterian Church
E The Green
F The Arsenal
G Immanuel Church
H The Academy
I Old Dutch House Museum
J Amstel House Museum
K Delaware Street
L New Castle-Frenchtown Railroad Ticket Office
M The Battery
N Town Wharf
O The Strand
P Packet Alley
Q George Read II House
R Immanuel Parish House



The slow decline of river traffic and the rising preeminence of nearby Wilmington lessened New Castle's commercial importance. The routing of the main railroad lines through Wilmington instead of New Castle in the middle 19th century was a final blow. By 1881 Wilmington had attained such prominence that the county offices and court were removed from New Castle, and the town settled to a productive yet secluded life. Happily her relative "poverty" during the Victorian era kept architectural alterations to a minimum, and New Castle survives today much as the colonial and Federal generations knew it. A surprise to modern visitors, a walk through town is a journey to an earlier age. Although touched by the winds of progress, New Castle echoes with faint whispers from the past.

A. THE OLD COURT HOUSE — Delaware's colonial capitol and meeting place of the State Assembly until 1777. Here in 1776 the Declaration of Independence was read, and the first Constitution of Delaware drafted. Originally built in 1732 on the site of the earlier Court House of the 1680's, it was substantially modified and remodeled throughout its history. The handsome cupola atop this structure served as the center of the twelve mile radial circle surveyed by Mason & Dixon, which formed Delaware's northern boundary with Pennsylvania. Guided tours are available, free of charge, Tuesdays — Saturdays 10 a.m. — 5 p.m. (Winter, 11 a.m. — 4 p.m.), Sundays 1 — 5 p.m. (Winter, 1 — 4 p.m.). Open on legal holidays, except New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

happily Dutch culture survived and was imprinted on the traditions of a new people — the Americans. New Castle was a blend of nationalities — Swedes, Finns, Dutch, French, and English — when William Penn arrived.

On October 27, 1682, the new Proprietor of Pennsylvania first set foot on New World soil at New Castle on the Delaware. His land grant from the Duke of York was a vast territory including present-day Pennsylvania, and the Three Lower Counties On Delaware. New Castle was specifically deeded to Penn, along with surrounding land extending to a twelve mile circular boundary. Penn took possession of his new holdings in a solemn ceremony called the "livery of seizin". He accepted "turf, twig, soyl, and water" from York's agents in New Castle.

His claims to the Delaware counties were contested by Lord Baltimore in nearby Maryland, and were the basis for a long and bitter dispute which sometimes erupted into violence. Friction interjected by Baltimore over his claim to Delaware was not enough, however, to hamper the steady growth fostered by Quaker administration, and New Castle prospered under Penn's rule. Delaware demanded its own home government, however, and in 1704 the reluctant Proprietor granted the Three Lower Counties On Delaware their own Assembly. Easily the foremost community in Delaware, New Castle was chosen as the seat of government, and remained a capital until 1777.

The presence of Assemblymen and other officials gave the town added status, and the pre-Revolutionary War era saw continued growth and prosperity. Life in the "wilderness" soon evolved to life in the "town and country". There was harmony in Delaware until the clouds of political controversy, gathering in Boston to the north and in England across the seas, rushed like brooding thunderheads over the American continent, and swept peace from the land.

As Delaware's colonial capital, New Castle provided the stage for political debates over such issues as the Stamp and Navigation acts. The handsome brick building now known as the Old Court House echoed with the voices of Delaware's early statesmen in a chorus of protest over unfair taxation. During July, 1774, meetings were held at New Castle, Dover, and Lewes, and resolutions passed which condemned British actions and appealed to the King. The Delaware Assembly, meeting at New Castle, appointed delegates to the Continental Congress in 1775. On April 26 of that year, at nine in the evening, a dispatch rider relayed to a stunned New Castle the



B. THE OLD TOWN HALL — Built in 1823 with a unique arch connecting Delaware Street with the Market Place, it once served as the fire house, a Federal court building, and now houses town offices.

C. MARKET PLACE — Used as a market as early as 1682. In 1730 an ordinance established that on Wednesday and Saturday no food except fish, milk, and bread might be sold anywhere else in town.

D. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH — Built in 1707 this church was used for services until 1854 after which it housed a Sunday School. Services were then held in a brownstone Victorian Gothic church which was, however, found to be structurally unsound and was therefore demolished after World War II when this building was restored to its original appearance. Dutch Reformed clergymen founded the congregation in 1657 but Presbyterians absorbed the Dutch group forty-nine years later. Unmarked grave markers in the cemetery date to the Dutch era; marked graves date back to the early 1700's. The church is open daily and visitors are welcome at religious services.



E. THE GREEN — According to plausible tradition, Pieter Stuyvesant himself pegged out this common land in 1655. Once a grazing area for barnyard animals, it is now the pleasant center of a pleasant town.

F. THE ARSENAL — Built by the Federal government in 1809 it served as an arsenal during the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. Shortly thereafter, a New Castle ordinance forbade the storage of ammunition or quartering of soldiers in town, and the arsenal became a public school. It now houses a restaurant.

G. IMMANUEL CHURCH — Founded in 1689, this was the first Church of England parish in Delaware. The nave of the present structure dates to 1703, and additions were made in 1820, and 1848. George Read, the "Signer", and other prominent Delaware statesmen are buried in the graveyard. The church is open daily and visitors are welcome at religious services.

H. THE ACADEMY — Planned for many years but delayed by the Revolution, this building was finally erected in 1789. Peter Crowding was the architect and builder, and the structure housed a school for 130 years. Behind the Academy in the enclosed garden is an old "Paulownia" tree supposedly grown from seeds brought by China clippers in the Federal period.



I. OLD DUTCH HOUSE MUSEUM — Although several New Castle homes consist in part of sections dating to the Dutch era, this is the only complete survivor in its original form built prior to 1700. Furnished with antiques from the Dutch colonial period, it is reputed to be the oldest brick dwelling in Delaware. Guided tours are available during warm seasons Tuesday — Saturday, 11 a.m. — 4 p.m., Sunday, noon — 4 p.m. (Closed legal holidays). A modest admission fee is charged.

J. AMSTEL HOUSE MUSEUM — George Washington was a wedding guest here, April 30, 1784. Originally built around 1730 incorporating an older structure in the service wing, the collection here includes antique furnishings and a complete colonial kitchen. Guided tours are available Tuesday — Saturday, 11 a.m. — 4 p.m. (Closed legal holidays). A modest admission fee is charged.

K. DELAWARE STREET — Walking down Delaware Street be sure to notice the fine exterior of the Senator Nicholas Van Dyke House (400 Delaware Street) which features a slightly emphasized central pavillion on its facade. At 300 Delaware Street the Marquis de Lafayette attended the wedding of Dorcas Van Dyke and Charles I. du Pont, October 6, 1824. Further on near the end of the street, William Penn first set foot on New World soil, October 27, 1682.



L. NEW CASTLE — FRENCHTOWN RAILROAD TICKET OFFICE — Constructed in 1832 this office occupied several locations in its history, but was placed on this site in the 1950's. The New Castle-Frenchtown Railroad was pulled by the steam locomotive "Delaware" and its passenger coaches carried many notables in the pre-Civil War period.

M. THE BATTERY — Purchased for a park and playground in 1939, this is believed to be the site of early fortifications designed to protect New Castle from naval attacks. Here also cannon were placed by the Governor of Pennsylvania to exact by force the payment of customs duties from passing merchant ships.

N. TOWN WHARF — Little remains to remind visitors that New Castle was once an important shipping center. Wharves were located between Delaware Street and Harmony Street. In the Dutch era the waterfront was protected by Fort Casimir, the site of which is now believed submerged in the river.

O. THE STRAND — The Strand in New Castle is lined with many fine homes, some of which were once inns at a time when this was a busy waterfront street. At the Van Leuvenigh House (#2) post riders relayed the news of the Battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill. The Great Fire of 1824 started at #5 whence it spread along much of the east side. Steps and porches were added to #6 and #8 when The Strand was "lowered" at the suggestion of Benjamin Latrobe in 1803. Inns along The Strand were known variously as the "Delaware Hotel", the "Old Stage Tavern", the "Indian King", the "Ship Tavern", the "Betson Tavern", and the "Ship and Plow."

P. PACKET ALLEY — A wharf servicing packet boats jutted riverward from the end of this tiny thoroughfare, and many of New Castle's prominent guests in early times trod this path. New Castle was a vital link and rest stop for travelers making their way between Boston, New York, and Philadelphia in the north, and Baltimore and Washington in the south.



Q. GEORGE READ II HOUSE — An outstanding Georgian mansion built by the son of a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, and completed in 1801. The exterior is highlighted by the handsome doorway with fanlight, surmounted by an iron balcony and Palladian window. The formal gardens to the side and rear were laid out in 1847 by Andrew Jackson Downing, the foremost landscape architect of his day.

R. IMMANUEL PARISH HOUSE — Before turning onto Harmony Street for the short walk back to The Green, note this three and one half story structure built in 1801 by the architect, Peter Crowding. It has been used since 1891 as the parish house and church office of Immanuel Church.

When in NEW CASTLE, visit these nearby attractions:

BUENA VISTA — four miles south of New Castle on U.S. 13. Built in 1847, once home of John M. Clayton, President Zachary Taylor's Secretary of State. Open: Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 11 a.m. — 4 p.m. Admission free.

FORT DELAWARE STATE PARK — Located on Pea Patch Island in the Delaware River and reached by launch from Delaware City, via U.S. Route 13. Completed in 1859, it served as a prison for Confederate soldiers during the Civil War. Boats from Delaware City operate from Memorial Day through the end of October, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, noon — 6 p.m. Boat ride, $1. per adult, $.50 per child 14 and under.

This brochure was produced by the Mayor & Council of New Castle, the New Castle Historical Society, the New Castle Board of Trade, and the Trustees of the Common, in cooperation with the Delaware Department of Community Affairs & Economic Development.

For information on seasonal events and special festivals in old NEW CASTLE, write:

Mayor & Council of New Castle
New Castle, Delaware 19720

For travel information on DELAWARE, contact:
Bureau of Travel Development
45 The Green
Dover, Delaware 19901
(302) 678-4254

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