

Governor Ross Mansion and Plantation

N. Pine St.

Seaford, Delaware

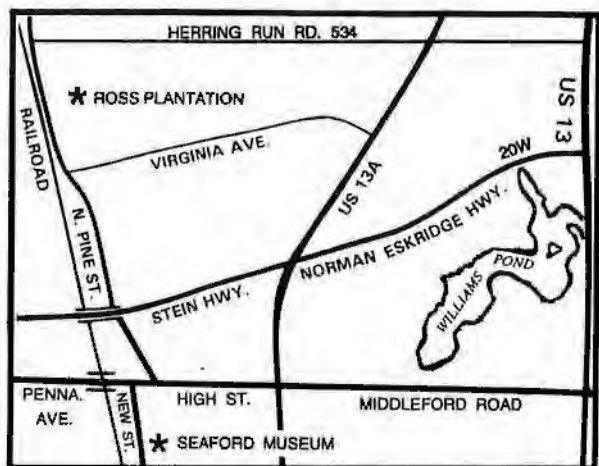


Front parlor of the Ross Mansion



Slave quarter

Visit this Civil War era plantation and
tour its eleven room Italian Villa
Mansion and unique outbuildings



- Governor Ross Mansion (c. 1859) is a brick Italian Villa style structure featuring a 3-story center entry.
- Once part of Maryland, the original 1,398 acre tract was known as "Grape Vine Thicket." In 1836, owner James Tennent (whose family's 18th-century farmhouse was incorporated into the Mansion) sold the property to Caleb Ross, who later willed it to his son, William.
- William Henry Harrison Ross was born in 1814 in Laurel, Delaware and died in 1887 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was a Democratic governor of Delaware from 1851-1855.
- This Sussex Countian was a leader in agriculture, politics and business. He was instrumental in having the railroad extended south from Dover to Seaford.
- Ross was a "Southern Sympathizer" who aided the confederate army and fled to England during the height of the Civil War. Ross had 14 slaves.
- Owned and operated by the Seaford Historical Society, this 20-acre property includes a granary, stable, corncribs, smokehouse, and Delaware's only documented log slave quarter.

Open for tours: Every Saturday 1 to 4 p.m., 4th Sunday of every month 1 to 4 p.m. or anytime by appointment.

Admission \$² per person. Members and students ¹² years and under admitted free.

Visit the Seaford Museum on New Street. Open every Sunday 2 to 4 p.m. or by appointment.

For information or appointment, contact:

Seaford Historical Society

Rt. 1, Box 393

Seaford, DE 19973

302-628-9500 Fax (302) 628-9501

Marker recognizes Ross grave site in Seaford

Ceremony at
St. Luke's sponsored
by Rep. Fallon

By Glenn Rolfe

The Leader & State Register

SEAFORD — While there was no grave danger, a marker recognizing a grave site's historic ties to Seaford, Laurel and Delaware now stands outside St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seaford.

Descendants of former Delaware Gov. William Henry Harrison Ross, representatives of the Seaford Historical Society, St. Luke's church and sponsor Rep. Tina Fallon, R-Seaford, joined Claudia Leister of Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs Sunday morning in dedicating a state marker for the grave site of Delaware's 27th governor.

Funding for the marker was allocated by Rep. Fallon, who is retiring after 28 years in the state legislature.

Several dozen people attended the dedication ceremony on a chilly autumn morning following the morning church service.

"Isn't this a big crowd?" said Rep. Fallon. "I bet Governor Ross would have liked it."

Reciting history, Ms. Leister, pinch-hitting for Delaware Public Archives representative Russell McCabe who was unable to attend the ceremony due to a family commitment, said Gov. Ross was born in Laurel and spent time west of the Mississippi but returned to his Sussex County roots.

"He was well-traveled. He lived out west, including Illinois, Missouri and Kansas. But there was a letter that said he just didn't feel he could live west of the mountains," said Ms. Leister. "He had sand in his shoes and he came back to Delaware to the Eastern Shore."

Gov. Ross was governor from



The Leader & State Register/Glenn Rolfe
Claudia Leister, left, curator of Collections Management for Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs, and state Rep. Tina Fallon, R-Seaford, unveil the state historical marker commemorating the grave site of former Delaware Governor William Ross outside St. Luke's Episcopal Church Sunday.

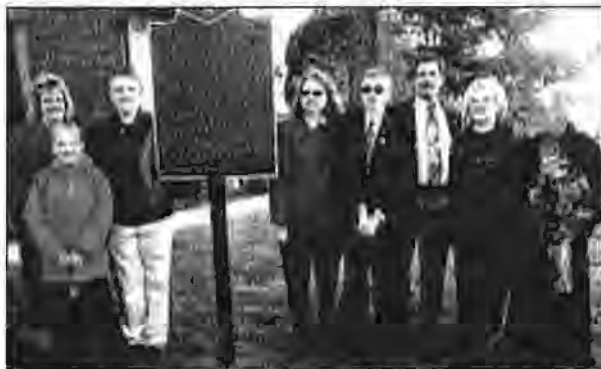
1850-54, having won a three-party election race by what is considered to be the closest margin in state history.

"Technically, he won by the narrowest of margins, 22 votes was the difference. And that was a year when there were three political parties," said Ms. Leister, a past SHS president. "I think he would have been a wonderful person know, a very interesting man to know."

Prior to the ceremony, Seaford Historical Society president Bob Warford presented Rep. Fallon with a floral bouquet, saluting her many years of service.

After the ceremony, Historical Society member Jane Watson gave a tour of the Ross family graves at St. Luke's cemetery.

News Editor Glenn Rolfe can be reached at 629-5306 or groffe@newszap.com.



Descendants by bloodline and marriage of former Delaware Gov. William Henry Harrison Ross, who is buried in Seaford, on Sunday attended the dedication of the state marker commemorating the grave site in the cemetery at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Ross family descendants are, from left, Allison Bell (married to Greg Bell, a fourth-generation grandson), Morgan Bell, Scott Bell, Mary Ann Marvill, Seth Ialah Marvill, Charles Marvill and the Rev. Jeanne Kirby-Cofadonato of St. Luke's church. At far right is Rep. Fallon, the legislative sponsor of the marker.

Chapter 3
William Henry Harrison Ross

HISTORY OF "GRAPEVINE THICKET"

As early as 1631, the western boundry of Northwest Fork Hundred was part of Dorchester County, Maryland. In 1732, Abraham Covington was granted fifty acres of land by the Proprietary of Maryland. Unable to pay the Quit Rent, a resurvey of the property, along with an additional 204 acres, was granted to John Tennent, Sr. in 1776. The whole parcel was known as "Grapevine Thicket." In NWFH in 1797, 485 slaves were held by 106 individual owners. John Tennent, Sr. was the owner of the greatest number of slaves which the assessment records show totaled nineteen negro men, women and children. In his will, John Tennent included this special item, "I do set free and to be at his Liberty a negro man which I hold and possess by the name of Jack at my Death to be Clear from the Claim of my heirs or the Claim of any other person." ¹ After Tennent's death in 1805, the property was inherited by his son, Colonel John Tennent. After the Colonel's death in 1831, his obituary in the *Delaware Journal* noted, "Kind, generous and benevolent, he was an affectionate husband, a tender and indulgent parent, a good neighbour, and a humane and feeling master." ²

By 1836 the property descended to the Colonel's son, James Tennent who sold 1,398 acres of land to Caleb Ross of Laurel. Caleb never lived on the property, but rented the farm to several tenant farmers. Caleb Ross died on November 1, 1841, and left his Seaford acreage to his son William. This property "includes all the land and premises which I purchased of James Tennent and wife, and Sarah Tennent . . . with all and singular the buildings and improvements with the appurtenances thereunto belonging." ³

"When Mr. [William] Ross took charge of the property, it consisted of 14,000 acres of worn out land. Intelligent care and liberal management improved and enriched the soil, increasing the yield of wheat from 5 to 30 bushels, and of corn from 10 to 50 bushels per acre." ⁴ William continued to enlarge the property and farm the land until 1866. His grandson, Brooks, lived on the property and farmed the land for his father's company, J.J. Ross & Sons. Due to financial difficulties, the property passed out of the Ross family ownership in the 1930's. Mr. Edward C. Davis purchased the property and lived there until his death in 1959. He bequeathed the farm to the Delaware Trust Company for the College of

Civil Engineering at the University of Delaware. In 1976, the Seaford Historical Society purchased the house and eleven acres of land.

FAMILY OF WILLIAM HH ROSS

Caleb Ross first appeared in the Laurel assessment records in 1809 at the age of twenty-five. He had married Letitia Lofland five years previous. He owned one negro woman age twenty, and two boys eleven and one. In 1836, Caleb owned four men, one woman, and two girls. This was the maximum number of slaves he ever owned. One of the men was recorded as an indentured servant being specifically hired to serve for seven years. (See Attachments #11 & #12)

William Henry Harrison Ross, born in Laurel on June 2, 1814, was the youngest son of five children born to Caleb and Letitia. After the death of his mother in 1832, William left Laurel to attend Claremont Academy in Pennsylvania. He returned to Laurel in 1834 to work as a clerk in his father's grain and mercantile business. At the age of twenty-two, William had the opportunity to travel to Europe with his father visiting the British Isles and Ireland. The following year, 1837, he traveled to Adams County, Illinois.

On June 6, 1840, William married Elizabeth Emeline Hall of Concord, Delaware. They spent their early years of marriage living in Laurel. The assessment records for Little Creek Hundred during 1840 show William owning a negro woman, Hanner age twenty-eight, and a seven year old boy named Perry. William also was assessed for a cow, a sow, and 12 ounces of silver plate.

POLITICAL LIFE OF WILLIAM HH ROSS

Politics and the military provided interests for William from an early age. In 1846, he was elected captain of a cavalry unit which disbanded at the close of the Mexican War in 1849. During that same year his name headed a petition to the State Legislature that "protests and remonstrates against any Law being passed abolishing slavery in the State of Delaware."⁵ He was a candidate to the Democratic National Convention four times, and Democratic Governor of the State of Delaware from 1850 through 1854. At age thirty-six, Ross was the youngest man ever elected governor. He won over Whig candidate Peter Causey, and Temperance candidate Thomas Lockwood by the narrowest margin of votes in the State's history.

"While young in years, he brought with him to the office qualifications and attainments that eminently fitted him for the place. He possessed strong natural ability and was a man of extensive reading." ⁶

After his term as governor, William decided to retire from active State politics due to a hearing impairment.

As a staunch Southern sympathizer, he supported the enlistment of his son Caleb in the 9th Virginia Cavalry Regiment in 1860. Unfortunately, Caleb contracted typhoid and died on September 17, 1861. Soon after Caleb's death, William left for Europe to confer with Confederate agents in London and Paris. He returned to Delaware the following year surrounded by heated Civil War controversy. In August 1862, during a meeting in Georgetown, the Democrats declared their opposition to Abraham Lincoln's plan to abolish slavery in the border states. They resolved that "the relation of master and slave shall continue in the future as it has in the past." ⁷

In an April 17, 1861, letter, Ross wrote to Maryland Governor William Hicks about his fear of secession and civil war. "The Republican party mean a cruel war with the South, for the express purpose of creating Negro insurrection and the liberation of all our slaves, 'What should be the course of Maryland and little Delaware?'. . .As to the pretended offer of protection to our slaves made by some of the people in the North, it is the kind of protection which the Wolf gives to the Lamb. I am one among the largest slave holders in this state, and I feel a lively interest in this matter. This civil war is about to work my ruin, I fear, for some years past I have been investing nearly all my means in Virginia turnpike and Missouri state bonds; they will become worthless, if Negroes have to go next." ⁸

William Ross returned to Europe in 1863 after deciding to live out the remainder of the war abroad rather than face harassment and possible imprisonment as a traitor. In a March, 1863 letter, Ross wrote to his friend Henry Adams in Laurel: "You will recollect that I said something to you about taking charge of my farming affairs in case I should go abroad this Spring. . . I should not expect you to work as a hand, but only to superintend the workers and see that everything went right. . . Recollect that I do not want you as an overseer, I already have one. But I want you as an agent to look after the overseer as well as after everything else belonging to the farm." ⁹ It appears that William's decision to leave the country was a wise one. Many arrests were taking place in Sussex County on charges of using incendiary and treasonable language towards the government. On May 23, 1863, *The Delawarean* reported that "Messrs. Horsey and Martin of Seaford have been released and are at their homes again." ¹⁰ If Ross had remained in the States, it is probable that his name would have been included in this list.

WILLIAM HH ROSS AS SLAVE HOLDER

The possession of slaves was a cultural heritage that had been passed down to William through many generations. The 1844 NWFH assessment records show him in possession of five negroes: Zachariah, age thirty-five; Jerimiah, age twenty-three; Benjamin, two; and, Harriet, thirty-one with an infant. Zachariah was valued at \$100, the same amount as William's pair of black horses. Four years later, William was master of twelve slaves, and by 1852, he was assessed for his maximum number, fourteen slaves along with "1 doz. table spoons & 1 1/2 doz. teaspoons." ¹¹ William's father had owned a slave man named "Zack" (Zachariah) since 1828. After Caleb's death, the Assessment showed that William also owned a man by the same name. This family connection was probably the reason that William continued to keep Zack until 1860, even though the records show him to be afflicted or infirm and having no monetary assessment value. (See Attachment #13)

A single document exists to show us William's reaction to dealing with runaway slaves. On September 8, 1857, he wrote a letter to Judge Edward Wootten on behalf of twenty-nine of his neighbors. A slave belonging to William Cannon had runaway twice and kept the neighborhood "in a state of excitement by parties of men riding in search of him." ¹² Ross seeks a punishment that would "afford a wholesome and salutary example to our slaves," and thus requested permission to sell this "very bad boy" out of the State. ¹³ (See Attachment #14)

A farm account book provides a glimpse into Ross' financial dealings from 1846 through 1887. Most money lent to friends and neighbors was repaid by cash or check, but there were several instances where payment came through trade. Horses, cows, oxen, barrels of whiskey, roof shingles, and a slave girl are some of the items that Ross accepted as payment for outstanding debts. On January 21, 1856, the trio of Levin Allen, Joseph Allen, and Perry Darby borrowed \$1,261.84, "payable in 5 equal annual" payments. By the following January, only \$76.84 had been repaid in cash. The entry for March 28, 1857 states that a payment was made "By negro girl (Amey)" valued at \$300.00. ¹⁴ Amey's name is reflected in the 1860 Assessment. The impending war appears to have reduced the value of slaves since Amey is now only valued at \$90.00.

The 1860 U.S. Census listed only indentured servants, not slaves. William was living with his wife, nine children, and a white housekeeper, Mahala Powell. It noted that the housekeeper could neither read nor write. This Census report also included a category for occupation. William

was listed as "farmer." Most neighbors were also farmers, merchants, or craftsmen; one neighbor, Thomas J. Colbourn, was listed as "Slave Dealer."¹⁵

By the 1864 NWFH assessment, William Ross was no longer a slave owner. His property assessment included three horses, two cows, one sow pig, two shoats, three ounces of silverplate, and 850 acres of land. The free blacks residing in NWFH now included Zacariah and Denis Ross, the two oldest slaves that Ross last owned. The whereabouts of the remaining twelve slaves is unknown. It is possible that they relocated to another town or left the state entirely. It will probably never be known who or what influenced William Ross' decision to move, sell, or free his slaves especially since he was out of the country during that year.

WILLIAM ROSS IN THE COMMUNITY

Robert Hazzard wrote in The History of Seaford that "the lower part of Sussex is almost wholly pro-slavery in both sentiment and practice." ¹⁶ Northwest Fork Hundred is primarily an agricultural area. It is traditionally known to encompass the best farmland in the county. Large landowners in this area were dependant upon black labor for assistance in raising crops. Gradually, by over farming from raising mainly corn, the land became less productive. Hazzard also wrote, "After William Ross moved near Seaford and began to develop the resources of his farm, and other farmers around in the county who were stimulated by his system of farming, became more and more interested in the matter, the people began to act as well as talk. We venture the opinion here that no man who ever made farming a practical thing, contributed more to the progress and prosperity of the farmers' interests than Governor Ross." ¹⁷ Prior to the Civil War, William raised corn, wheat, fruit, and berries. After 1864, his agricultural efforts mainly involved fruit trees and bushes since they were less labor intensive and he no longer had slave assistance.

By the 1870 United States Census, William's oldest surviving son James had built his own home directly across the road and was recorded as being head of the household. James lived with a housekeeper, farm laborer, and two black common laborers, twenty-eight year old George Wilson, and fifteen year old Winfield Ross, neither of whom could read or write. William resided with a housekeeper, three teenage daughters, and a nine year old domestic servant girl.

William and his son James continued to farm this property in NWFH until 1886. At this time William moved to the Philadelphia home of his daughter, Sallie Skillern, where he died on June 30, 1887. William Henry

Harrison Ross is buried in the cemetery of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seaford, Delaware.

Information about William Ross' personality survives in a variety of sources. In 1851, an Editorial in *The Delaware Gazette* stated "Of one thing I am certain, that all who know Gov. Ross *intimately*, will concede to him honesty of purpose in his official acts, and if, like all other human mortals, he sometimes erred, it was from mistaken judgement, and not from a design to do wrong, for Mr. Ross is unquestionably a gentleman and a scholar." ¹⁸ The existence of a dozen letters from William to close friend, Henry Adams of Laurel, provide additional insight. In 1856, William admitted that, "I am so deaf that I do not like to go anywhere much." ¹⁹ He is very sensitive towards a misunderstanding with Adams, "When ever you and your family falter in your friendship towards me and mine, I will no longer believe there is any true and disinterested friendship in this world. Your having supported Capt. Phillips at the late election is a further proof of your friendship towards me, and I shall appreciate the act as long as I live." ²⁰ Letters from 1857 and 1861 recount the loss of two sons, John and George, where "our hearts are all wrung with anguish at our sad loss." ²¹ During the presentation of William's portrait to the State in 1898, it was said that, "Early in life he had learned the secret of success in many things, and what his hand attempted was, as a rule, accomplished." ²²

ENDNOTES

1. John Tennent, Sr., Last Will and Testament, Sussex County Probate, Vol. A1C1, p. 136, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
2. September 2, 1831, Obituary, *Delaware Journal* .
3. Caleb Ross, Last Will and Testament, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
4. Runk, J. M., Biographical and Geneological History of the State of Delaware, (Chambersburg, Pa.: J.M. Runk & Co., 1899), p. 841.
5. Legislative Papers, Petitions, Negroes and Slavery, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
6. Runk, op. cit.
7. August 1862, *The News and Advertiser*.
8. William Ross, Letter to William Hicks, April 17, 1861, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
9. William Ross, Letter to Henry Adams, March 1863, Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware.
10. May 23, 1863, *The Delawarean* .
11. William Ross, Northwest Fork Hundred Assessment Records, 1844, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
12. Papers of Edward G. Wootten, 1810-1887, Historical Society of Delaware.
13. Ibid.
14. Farm Journal of William Ross, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, p. 32.
15. 1860 United States Census, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

16. Hazzard, Robert B., The History of Seaford, (Seaford, Delaware: Sussex Printing, 1961), [no page numbers given.]
17. Ibid.
18. 1851, *The Delaware Gazette* .
19. William Ross, Letter to Henry Adams, August 28, 1856, Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware.
20. Ibid, November 5, 1856.
21. Ibid, May 31, 1857 and February 7, 1861.
22. Addresses Delivered at the Formal Presentation of the Portraits of the Governors of Delaware to the State, Thursday May 26, 1898, (Dover: The Delawarean, 1898), p. 49.

Chapter 4 *Ross Mansion Slave Quarters*

SLAVE QUARTERS IN GENERAL

By the beginning of the 1700s, only the house servants remained living in their master's house, while the field slaves were moved to houses constructed specifically for them. Architecturally, these dwellings were meager, simple structures, yet they provided a public view of a landowner's wealth.

John Vlach's book, Back of the Big House, contains a chapter on quarters for field slaves. He includes this definition of quarters by Edward Kimber, an eighteenth century traveler, "A Negro Quarter is a Number of Huts or Hovels, built some Distance from the Mansion-House; where the Negroes reside with their wives and Families and cultivate at vacant times the little Spots allow'd them." ¹

In the 1850's, Frederick Law Olmsted kept a record of the rural landscape as he traveled throughout the South. He discovered that, "The houses of the slaves are usually log-cabins, of various degrees of comfort and commodiousness. At one end there is a great open fire-place, which is exterior to the wall of the house, being made of clay in an inclosure, about eight feet square and high, of logs. The chimney is sometimes of brick, but more commonly of lath or split sticks, laid up like log work and plastered with mud." ²

Each State took advantage of the natural resources in their area. Journals describe a variety of styles and building materials used in constructing slave quarters. Dwellings improved from a single pen-type to hall and parlor houses in the nineteenth century. In the Maryland Slave narratives, many former slaves remember log quarters being used until after the Civil War. ³ The common log cabins gradually became plank covered frame houses.

This description of the interior of a slave cabin is by a Maryland slave who was sold to a plantation in South Carolina, "The only furniture in this cabin consisted of a few blocks of wood for seats; a short bench, made of pine boards, which served as a table; and a small bed in one corner, composed of a mat, made of common rushes, spread upon some corn husks, pulled and split into fine pieces, and kept together by a narrow slip of wood, confined to the floor by wooden pins. There was a common iron pot

standing beside the chimney, and several wooden spoons and dishes hung against the wall. Several blankets also hung against the wall upon wooden pins. An old box, made of pine boards, without either lock or hinges, occupied one corner." ⁴

NORTHWEST FORK HUNDRED QUARTERS

Statistics from the 1860 Census for NWFH show that on the farms of the sixty-nine slave owners there were only seventeen specific slave houses. Captain Hugh Martin was the only slave owner with two houses for his seventeen slaves. William Ross had one house for fourteen slaves. By this time, the remaining sixty-seven slave owners were slowly decreasing their number. The majority were females who were household servants instead of field hands. They probably lived in their owner's house instead of specific quarters.

ROSS MANSION QUARTER

On December 25, 1860, William Ross was in the process of acquiring insurance on his property. The description for building No. 7 was "Framed Quarter 16 x 24 , one and a half stories high with porch." ⁵ On January 1, 1861, the written description in the Kent County Mutual Insurance Company records included "No. 7 Negro Quarter 1 1/2 story high 24 x 16 porch in front \$150. Ashes kept in brick ash house 38 ft from the Quarter." ⁶ This house was located just fifty-nine feet northeast of the Mansion house. (See Attachments #15-#17)

The next entry dated November 19, 1884, shows the insurance transferred to William's son, James J. Ross. On January 1, 1886, an addendum notes that the Mansion house furniture and the Quarter were deducted from the total. William moved to Philadelphia to reside with his daughter during this year because of failing health. If the Quarter was removed from the insurance records during 1886, was it also moved from the Mansion yard at the same time? The decision to move the quarter across the field, and add improvements were probably made by James Ross.

In the Spring of 1992, the existence of a log structure in the woods adjacent to the Governor Ross Plantation was brought to the attention of Dr. Bernard Herman of the University of Delaware by the author of this paper. Subsequent research and field work was conducted on this structure supported by a State Historic Preservation fund subgrant awarded to the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware. Through their efforts, this building has been

identified as the same one listed in the 1860 Insurance report. "It is the only documented slave dwelling standing in Delaware." ⁷

Although originally listed as a framed building, this structure was actually built of square, hand hewn logs that were covered with clapboard on the exterior, and lath and plaster on the interior. It was a hall and parlor type structure with a rectangular floor plan divided into two rooms. The hall was slightly larger than the other room. It was entered directly from the outside. The hall served as a kitchen or workroom, while the smaller parlor was a bedroom. A loft above was probably used as additional sleep space. The chimney was the East end wall of the hall. A covered porch ran the full east-west length of the Quarter. This placed the front door facing south, the same as the Mansion.

During its decades of use as a tenant house, the structure was enlarged to include a second floor accessed by a corner box winder stair, and a lean-to shed. It has not been determined at what point in time the exterior clapboard and the interior lath and plaster were added. Considering that it is recorded as a "framed Quarter," ⁸ this change was probably completed before 1860. At some time during the early 20th century, asbestos tiles were installed as exterior siding, and electricity was added. There was never any interior plumbing, a fact confirmed by a nearby outhouse.

CONCLUSION

Was this house in existence on the property when Caleb purchased it from John Tennent? If so, were there other similar quarters, since it can be assumed that all of Tennent's nineteen slaves did not live in this single house, or did they live in the lofts of other outbuildings? Did William Ross' slaves all live in the Quarter or did some live in the house, possibly above the summer kitchen or on the second floor above his office? After the house was moved, did white or black tenant families occupy the structure? Unfortunately, these questions are unanswerable, but they will put the focus on just how much information is missing concerning early life in Sussex County.

A report was recently prepared by the University of Delaware's Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering titled, "Priorities For The Development Of A Historic Context For The Minority Experience In Delaware." This report stresses the importance "to take action to identify, evaluate, register, and preserve those resources that are associated with the African-American experience in Delaware." ⁹ The Ross Quarter has

provided an unanticipated opportunity to preserve a previously undocumented resource unique in Delaware's building survey.

African-American author Dorothy Redford in Somerset Homecoming describes her dream to recreate the conditions and community of the slaves who lived on the Somerset Plantation in North Carolina. "I want these grounds to be a model, an inspiration to other blacks whose families came off other plantations to realize their history and search for their own slave ancestors." ¹⁰ Further South, at Magnolia Mound plantation in Louisiana, consultants have located several nearby slave quarters and are moving them onto the plantation grounds. Gwen Edwards, director of Magnolia Mound, says, "You need a visual focus if you're really going to depict the slave community and the part it played. The cabins give us the opportunity and the challenge to incorporate more into our interpretive program." ¹¹

Reading about slavery can evoke some emotional reaction in the reader, but this cabin will provide a tangible, physical environment in which to interpret the conditions of slave life. The existence of slavery is a fact of Delaware's history. It is important to remember that however good or bad our ancestors might have been, this generation is not responsible for their actions. But we are responsible for our own. As historians we are responsible for the education of future generations through our appropriate interpretation of the past. Dorothy Redford sets a meaningful precedent when she states, "We don't look back in hatred, we look forward in freedom." ¹² This black woman insists, "You inherit your ancestor's genes and their blood, but not their sins or their glories. If they did something wrong, if they lived a life that was stained, you carry forward a sense of guilt only if you're carrying the same attitudes." ¹³

The members of the Seaford Historical Society, as owners and caretakers of the Governor Ross Plantation, recognize the importance in preserving this slave Quarter structure. It may only be a small log dwelling in western Sussex County, but it houses great significance in expanding the accurate multicultural interpretation of antebellum life in Delaware.

ENDNOTES

1. Vlach, John, Back of the Big House, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. 155.
2. Vlach, John, op. cit., pp. 155-156.
3. Federal Writers Project, 1941, Maryland Slave narratives, microfilm, University of Delaware library, Newark, Delaware.
4. Sunderland, Reverend L.A. Roy, Manual on American Slavery, 1837, p. 69.
5. Kent County Mutual Insurance Records Policy #1035, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
6. Ibid.
7. Ames, David and Rebecca Siders, "Priorities for the Development of a Historic Context for the Minority Experience in Delaware," Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware, 1991, p. 1.
8. Kent County Mutual Insurance Records Policy #1035, Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware.
9. Ames, op. cit., p. 7.
10. Redford, Dorothy Spruill, Somerset Homecoming, (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 261.
11. July/August 1993, Museum News, American Association of Museums, p. 69.
12. Redford, op. cit., p. 231.
13. Ibid., p. 219.

CONCLUSIONS

SYNOPSIS

The discovery that a ramshackle house hidden in the woods adjacent to the Ross Plantation matched the dimensions of the 1860 slave Quarter from the property, has led to documentation of the only existing slave dwelling remaining in Delaware. This project of researching the historic context of the Quarter, was undertaken after a recommendation by the University of Delaware Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The compilation of data gathered throughout this project has resulted in a final report much larger than previously anticipated. The excitement of finding unexpected pertinent information was balanced by the frustration of reaching dead ends and unanswered questions. State newspapers were extremely beneficial in providing general and statistical information about African-Americans in Delaware. There was a definite bias of information towards blacks of the period since the newspapers were published by the white population. The major primary source information on blacks was compiled from tax records and property transfers. Unfortunately, due to the difficulty in using the records and the lack of available information it was impossible to make a connection between William Ross' slaves, and the African-Americans Ross' still residing in the area today. Because this population is not very well documented, a lot of statistics and trend studies are included in this research. Additionally, there is a scarcity of State papers that survive from the 1850-1854 period when William Ross was Governor.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

A significant segment of this project involved the gathering of community input through the use of a questionnaire. Twelve questions were developed into a questionnaire which also presented basic background information on William Ross. This handout was given to each person who attended the three sessions (i.e. Seaford Public Library, Seaford Historical Society/Ross Mansion, or Delaware State University) where the slide presentation on the Ross Quarter research was given. Twenty questionnaires were returned from the total seventy-three distributed. The majority of these came from the Delaware State University students and faculty who filled out the forms before leaving the auditorium.

A unanimous "yes" was received as an answer to the first three questions: 1) "Do you think that the discovery of this historic structure is important for Seaford?", (2) "Do you think that the Seaford Historical Society should own and maintain this building?", and (3) Should this structure be restored and interpreted as pre-Civil War slave quarters?

All answers for Question #4 (Should we attempt to recreate a historic interior or leave it empty for display space?), favored the recreation of an historic interior. Comments showed that this would make the "whole project more interesting and realistic," and "blacks [would] know where we come from and where we should be going."

Moving the Quarter to their original location was the overwhelming answer to Question #5 (Do you think that the Quarter should be moved to its original location Northeast of the Mansion? Why?). Reasons expressed included, "for historical accuracy and access to it by guests," and "to more authentically recall and present the history involved."

In response to Questions #6 and #7, ("Should an archaeological survey of the original location be done?", and "Should an archaeological survey of the present location be done?"), all answers were yes in regard to the original location, "if funding is available." Five individuals felt there was no need for archaeological work at the cabin's present location. The fifteen other responses believed that "valuable information could also be found there."

For Questions #8 and #10 ("Will interpretation of this Quarter provide an educational opportunity for Seaford and for Delaware?", and "How can we get the schools involved?"), all responses showed that proper interpretation showing more than one viewpoint would provide a unique educational opportunity for Seaford and all of Delaware. Ideas for involving the schools ranged from letting "students do research, interviewing older residents, discuss, help restore," to finding "interested teachers and letting them carry the message to others," and "developing field trips and special tours," to directing information "to administrators and then to History, English, Music and Art teachers - correlation!"

Educational events (Question #9) should include "history, black pride, black awareness," "African-American Festivals," "seminars," and "interpretation of daily domestic activities."

Community involvement (Question #11) would come through "publicity and help from key people," "meetings at churches and PTA,"

"newspapers, schools, organizations, and churches," and "raising money to preserve the site." In essence, "Pass the word. There are always going to be people who want to be involved."

Even though there were a less-than-expected total number of questionnaires returned, the information collected was very valuable. It showed a positive response to the project that the Seaford Historical Society is undertaking, and provided some refinement as to the direction it should be headed. One final response stated that the "Ross Mansion has become a source of real community pride and concern - however the 'sticker shock' of restoration economics make it a matter of State-wide concern." (See Attachment #18)

PLAN OF ACTION

The Seaford Historical Society has decided to return the Quarter to its 1860 location before the Ross Mansion Civil War Re-enactment to be held on Saturday October 1, 1994. The structure has been documented with black and white photographs as well as video tape. Earlier this year, the exterior asbestos shingles were professionally removed and disposed of through approved State procedure. Prior to moving the Quarter, the remaining roof, second floor, and gable end leanto (which are not original to the early structure) will be removed. The second floor exterior wooden shingles will be removed and retained for the first floor restoration. The building will be braced; raised on four beams running the width of the structure, and two running the length; moved across the adjoining field; and placed adjacent to the Ross Mansion. Tarpaulins will be installed as temporary roofing for the structure to protect it from the weather. It will be roped off from visitors for safety and security reasons.

Research will begin immediately into grants and funding sources for restoration and future needs along with community fund raising. Once the building is moved, members of the Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, and the State Historic Preservation Office will be requested to visit the site and make additional recommendations. Further research into the availability of archaeological assistance for field work at both the original and woods location is necessary.

The production of plans and specifications will provide a restoration plan detailing the actual construction work. Work will be done based on the recommendations presented by the University of Delaware's Historic Structure Report. This work should begin in the Spring of 1995. Completion will depend on available funds, and possibly on volunteer time.

Ideally, the exterior work will be completed by the 1995 Town and Country Fair in September.

The remaining goal is a furnishing and interpretation plan that will be prepared by a committee of members of the Seaford Historical Society, along with interested members of the community, the Delaware African American Historical Society, and the Delaware State Museums. Finally, there will be a dedication of the Quarter and grand opening for the public. This building will then become an integral part of the interpretation and tour at the Governor Ross Plantation.

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Ross Mansion Quarter

by Claudia Nelson

1994



THE ROSS MANSION SEAFORD, DELAWARE

The Ross Mansion, property of The Seaford Historical Society, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built about 1859 by Governor William H. Ross. It is a brick Italianate style villa with three main two-story blocks of the house forming an H shape plan with a three-story tower in the center space. The round headed windows in this structure are varied in width. The main entrance is in the tower which faces south. A large veranda once faced the west; it has now been replaced by a concrete slab porch with an iron railing. The canopy over the first floor windows, the balcony over the front door entrance, and the cover over the balcony have been removed as has the scrollwork spire which once topped the tower. At the rear of the house is attached a frame wing which predates the main house. The inside of the house retains the plaster mouldings and the ceiling medallions, its Victorian trim doors and the original inside shutters. The original mantel remains in the ballroom. This style of architecture is unique in rural Sussex County and is often used as an important example to illustrate this type of architecture. The mansion is situated in a park laid out in the picturesque style popular during the middle of the 19th century. To the rear of the property are several farm outbuildings.

William Henry Harrison Ross, son of Caleb Ross (1784-1841) and Letitia Lofland Ross (1787-1832), was born June 2, 1814. He attended the schools in Laurel until 1832 when he was sent to study for two years at Claremont Academy, a Friends' School in Pennsylvania. He returned to Laurel and became a clerk for his father who was engaged in a large mercantile and grain business. He and his father traveled throughout Europe in 1836. In 1837, he spent the year in business in Adam's County, Illinois. On his return to Laurel from 1840-1845, he engaged in milling, tanning, and merchandising. Purchasing the Tennent farm near Seaford, he moved there and improved and enriched his land and became a very successful farmer. On June 7, 1840, he married Elizabeth E. Hall of Middletown. In 1846, he was elected captain of a Cavalry Company which was organized in the vicinity of Laurel and Seaford. They furnished their own horses, equipment, and uniforms. This troop was disbanded at the close of the Mexican War. He was always a Democrat, as was his father. At the age of 36, he was elected Governor of Delaware and served from 1851-1855. During the Civil War, he lived in Europe to avoid words with his contemporaries over his pro-South sentiments. His son, Caleb, died while serving the Confederate cause. William H. Ross promoted the growth of the railroad on the Delmarva Peninsula, and was the founder of the first agricultural society in 1849. He was the senior partner in the business of importers and manufacture of fertilizer and agricultural supplies. He died in 1887 and is buried in the churchyard of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seaford. A pastel portrait of Governor Ross by J. Paul Brown hangs in The Hall of Governors, Sussex County Court House, Georgetown, Delaware.

Compiled by Madeline Arnold Dunn

Compliments of The Nylon Capital Shopping Association



A HISTORY OF DELAWARE
THROUGH ITS GOVERNORS

1776 - 2008

ROGER A. MARTIN

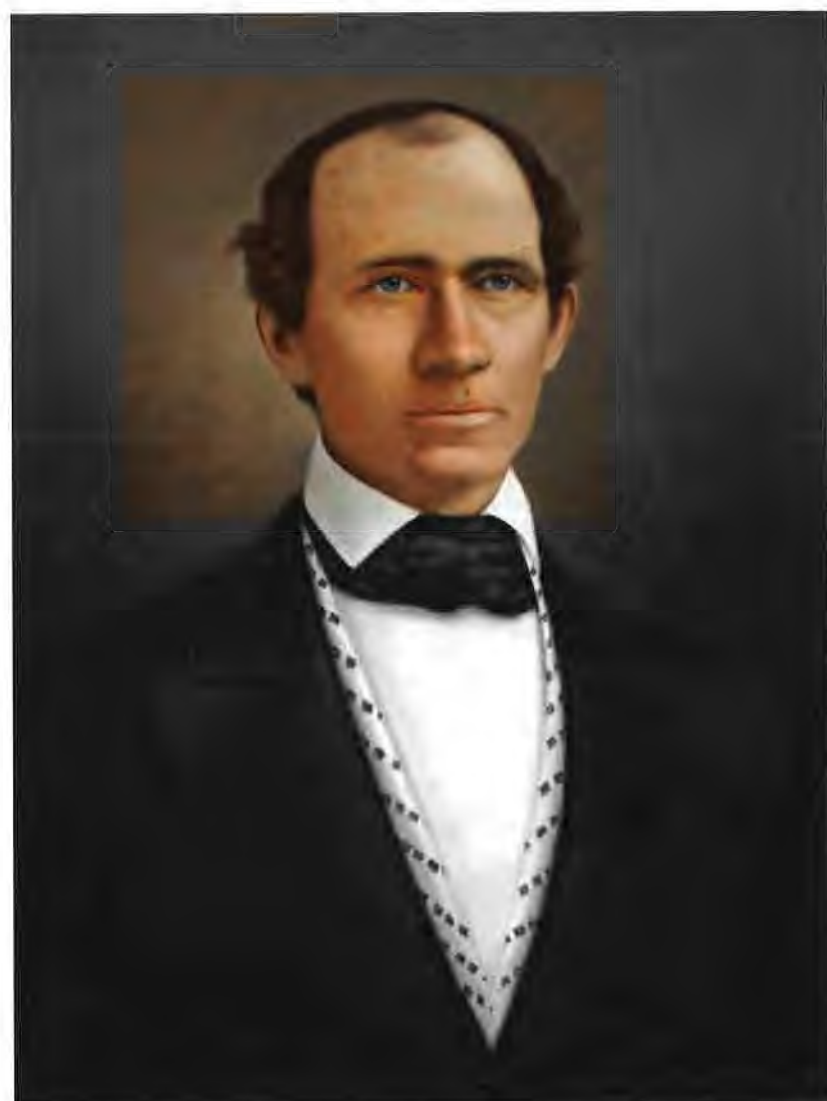


38. WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON ROSS

June 2, 1814 – June 30, 1887

Ross was so outspoken in his attitude toward the Union in the Civil War he found it necessary to get out of town and go to Europe, once in the early part of the war and a second time in 1863 until the end of the conflict.

He served as governor during the 66th and 67th General Assemblies, from January 21, 1851, until January 16, 1855. Ross was a Sussex County Democrat, a plantation owner, and a Methodist. He became governor at the age of 36.



Oil portrait of Governor William H. H. Ross at Legislative Hall was painted in 1898 by artist J. Paul Brown. It was presented to the State of Delaware that same year by the governor's widow (courtesy of the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs).

JAMES ROSS WAS THE FIRST MEMBER OF THE ROSS family to settle in what is now Delaware, when he put down roots in Northwest Fork Hundred near the present-day town of Seaford in 1730. That area was then considered to be part of the colony of Maryland and remained so until 1775. James Ross's brother, William, was Governor Ross's grandfather. William's son, Caleb, lived in Laurel and married Letitia Lofland. Governor Ross's mother was a stepsister to Dr. John Lofland, the "Milford Bard."

William, the future governor, was born on June 2, 1814 in Laurel, nine months after General William Henry Harrison soundly defeated the British in Canada. Caleb obviously thought enough of the future president to name his son after him. Two locations in Laurel are associated with the Ross Family. One was a home that once stood on the lot now occupied by the Bank of Delmar, and the other is the old Henry Clay Lewis home on the Sycamore Road, just opposite Lakeside Manor.

First educated at the local Laurel Academy, Ross moved on in 1832 to the classical Claremont Academy in Rising Sun, Pennsylvania. One of the most cosmopolitan governors, Ross accompanied his father on a trip to the British Isles in 1836. A year later, they traveled to Adams County, Illinois. Caleb owned interests in land, saw and grist mills, and other businesses around Laurel. William followed in his footsteps by embracing the new peach industry. As Caleb was a director of the Farmers Bank of the State of Delaware, so also was William after the Civil War.

William's sister, Sally Ann, married Governor Paynter's son, Samuel R. Paynter, in 1830. In the Paynter file at the Delaware Historical Society, there is a cryptic notation to the effect that Ross's brother, James, was murdered in Monticello, Georgia in 1833.¹

Never serving in the General Assembly, Ross was a delegate to the National Democratic Conventions of 1844, 1848, 1856, and 1860. Militarily, he was head of a local cavalry company which was disbanded in 1849 after the Mexican War.

In 1850, Ross was ready for political office and was selected as the Democratic candidate for governor. The Whig Party was in a shambles and in its absence came forth a Temperance Party, whose candidate was

Thomas Lockwood of Frederica. The temperance issue had been building gradually in the state and was reaching its peak. George Read Riddle, a descendant of George Read, was running as the Democratic candidate for U.S. Congress. The campaign was heralded by the Democrats with the slogan "Ross-Riddle-Reform." Riddle was elected and Ross barely squeaked through in the closest gubernatorial election ever. Out of the total of 11,979 votes cast statewide, Ross won by only 23 votes. In addition, at age 36, Ross became the youngest governor ever to be elected to the office in Delaware. Democrats made a clean sweep of both the governor's office and the legislature.

On May 12, 1851, the new U.S. President, Millard Fillmore, stopped over in Wilmington on his way to New York with his entire cabinet. A reception was held for them in City Hall. At 2:00 p.m., the President's party left for Philadelphia on the steamer, *Roger Williams*.² No record has been found to indicate that Governor Ross met with the Whig President on that occasion.

Delaware's fledgling oyster industry was having its problems again. Demand was outstripping supply, so laws were passed banning oystering from May 1 to August 10. Boat licenses were required for out-of-state oyster boats and dredging was prohibited. The new laws provided the impetus for the establishment of a celebration at Bowers Beach on the Delaware Bay on the second Thursday in August each year in honor of the resumption of oyster season. People would come from all around to celebrate oystering after the end of each banned season.³

Demographically, the 1850s were years of immigration into Delaware by Germans from Philadelphia and Baltimore looking for jobs. The year 1852 was most eventful, for it made the long-sought goal of a railroad downstate a reality. Talked about since June 1836, the charter was revived and in 1852 the state subscribed to 5,000 shares to be paid from proceeds of the sale of the New Castle-Frenchtown Railroad. Though John M. Clayton was still avidly interested, the president of the railroad, and its prime-mover, was now Samuel M. Harrington, Sr. Plans proceeded, but one other momentary obstacle stood in the way—the issue of whether the railroad should

* Note: The following information was taken from James Ross's tombstone: "James Jefferson Ross, born 1809, a native of Laurel, Delaware, who was murdered on the night of October 8, 1833, aged 24 years, 19 days, at the theatre in Monticello [Georgia], where he had resided for three years. Beloved by all who knew him (his murderer excepted), his memory will be cherished, his fame can never die." (found on the website: <http://files.usgwarchives.net/ga/jasper/cemeteries/cm155ross-ceme.txt>, 2013).



The Ross Mansion, built between 1854 and 1860 on the extensive plantation of former Governor William Henry Harrison Ross north of Seaford. The structure, now maintained as an historic site by the Seaford Historical Society, is one of the finest examples of Italianate architecture in the State of Delaware and one of Sussex County's most beloved historic landmarks (photo by Dick Carter).

follow the creeks and rivers in the downstate coastal area near Milford or run in a more westerly fashion near the Maryland border. Finally, Andrew Gray of New Castle came forth with the present north-south alignment along the western corridor. With the controversy settled, construction on the project began at last. Isaac Trimble, West Point-educated engineer from Virginia, did many of the surveys of the railroad sites.⁴

On July 15, 1853, Wilmington received another president as he made his way through the state. Franklin Pierce and his Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, spoke at City Hall.

The two decades between 1830 and 1850 were years of conflict between downstate agricultural interests and upstate industrial interests. Social and political demands were made on state government for prohibition of alcohol, abolition of slavery, and, most importantly, more equitable representation for New Castle County in the General Assembly. For the first and only time in Delaware history, a proposed con-

stitutional revision was submitted to the populace in 1853 and it was soundly defeated.⁵ Despite the growing mistrust, it would be more than 40 years before a serious attempt at constitutional revision would be tried again.⁶

On Thursday morning, May 30, 1854, just before noon, three five-horse wagons filled with five tons of gunpowder were en route to the wharf from the Du Pont Powder Works. As the wagons rumbled along 14th Street in downtown Wilmington between Tatnall and Market Streets, an horrendous explosion of unknown origin sent the drivers, horses, and wagons into oblivion. Hundreds of window panes in the neighborhood were shattered, with considerable damage to private homes. While the owners paid the losses, Wilmingtonians had second thoughts about allowing the transport of such cargoes again through their streets.⁷

Public education continued to grow, though slowly, with 236 school districts in the state.

When Ross left the governor's office, he retired to a private, but certainly not an inactive life. He



Restored structures on the Governor Ross Plantation include the gatehouse (upper left), the slave quarters (upper right) and a complex of farm buildings, including the granary in the center of the photo, below, which dates from the 1850s, a barn and a log corn crib or "stack," among other buildings (photos by Dick Carter).



continued to experiment with peaches and other new crops and to promote the expansion of the Delaware railroad. In 1859, he built one of Sussex County's finest homes, an ornate Italianate mansion on his extensive plantation north of Seaford, one of the largest in southern Delaware. More than perhaps any other Delawarean of his day, he was a true embodiment of the "Old South" aspect of life in the First State.

With the coming of the Civil War, Ross, one of Delaware's largest slave-owners, became the gadfly to those in the state who feared for Delaware's position in the Union. Ross trod a very thin line and was seen by many as a southern sympathizer, especially after

one of his sons joined the Confederate Army in 1861. At the time, Ross had written to a friend:

...My son, Caleb, left home yesterday...he intends to join the Confederate Army...Of course I shall be charged with having sent him...For that reason I had better leave the country for a while....

In early 1861, Caleb Ross did go south and enlisted in the Confederacy. Within the year, the 20-year-old was dead of typhoid fever in Big Spring, Virginia. Shortly after his son left home Ross went to Europe.

In the meantime, Federal troops raided his home near Seaford in October, 1861. When he returned a year later, he found Federal troops at the polls in Seaford on Election Day, 1862. He tried to reason with the commanding officer, old General John Wool from Baltimore, but all his arguments came to naught. Ross left the country again from 1863 until the end of the war. While in exile, he wrote few letters except to his wife, to whom he wrote the following:

...Not that I am guilty of any act against the government of the US but I am considered to entertain opinions which are pronounced by some people as disloyal. For that reason I remain out of the country, hoping that the American people may some day return to their reason when I may return in safety to spend the remainder of my days in a country ruined by the madness and fanaticism of its own people.⁸

When the war was over, Ross paid a dear price for his posture during the war years. For one thing, he had invested \$62,000 in border-state bonds which eventually became worthless. This did not prove to be a terrible financial calamity for Ross, for he was extremely industrious. After he returned home, he resumed cultivation of his extensive lands and attended to his agricultural interests. Ross was instrumental in having the railroad extended down the Delmarva Peninsula and through Seaford. He had his own whistle-stop on the edge of his estate, named *Ross Station*.

To some, Ross's actions during the war were as

worthy of condemnation as had, perhaps, been those of Thomas Robinson, the Sussex Loyalist leader of the Revolutionary War era, who eventually escaped to Nova Scotia. Yet, to assume that such men were voices in the wilderness, shouting out their personal feelings as solitary voices of protest would be a mistake. Many of their peers and neighbors felt exactly as they did but did not feel so free to express their true feelings. Such is the dichotomy of Delaware politics that has attended major issues since the foundation of the Delaware State and even before. Downstate is one thing; upstate is another, and vice versa. Perhaps it is true that never the twain shall meet.

After quietly tending his lands for some years, Ross went in the last year of his life to live with his daughter, Sarah, and her husband, Dr. S. R. Skillern, in Philadelphia. Ross died in that city on June 30, 1887, at 73 years of age. He was buried in the cemetery of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seaford. At his death, the value of Ross's estate was estimated at \$200,000 (equivalent to a sum in excess of \$5 million in 2013 dollars), mostly in stocks and bonds.

His wife, Emeline, daughter of George K. Hall of Concord, whom he had married in 1840, lived until June, 1909. She was a distant relative of Governor John Wood Hall and the granddaughter of General Jesse Green, a Delaware militia officer of the War of 1812 and a direct descendant of the Lords Baltimore of Maryland.⁹ The Ross Mansion still stands today a short distance north of Seaford, where it is maintained as a historic museum by the Seaford Historical Society. A fine example of the Italianate style, it remains one of Sussex County's most important and beloved historical landmarks.¹⁰*

Governor Ross's great-grandson, James Ross, was still living in Seaford as of 1984.

10. "Seaford's 12th Annual Towne & Country Fair," 2005, Morning Star Publications.

* NOTE: The Governor Ross mansion is located on a tract of land once known as *Grape Vine Thicket*, which was, prior to 1775, part of Dorchester County, Maryland. John Tement purchased the property in 1776. He married Sally Hooper, a member of one of the first families to settle in the Seaford area. Caleb Ross purchased the 1,398-acre estate in 1836. After his death in 1841, the property devolved upon his son, William, the future governor. William and his wife, Elizabeth Emeline Hall, lived in Laurel until 1845, when

they moved into the 18th Century Tement farmhouse on the estate Caleb Ross had purchased. Ross started construction of his Italian Villa style mansion in 1854, as he neared the end of his term as governor. The house was completed in 1860. Half of the original frame house remains attached to the rear of the mansion. The other half was moved to serve as a summer kitchen, but was later demolished. The mansion was purchased by the Seaford Historical Society in 1976. The society has carried out extensive restoration and renovation of both the mansion and other structures on the property, including a complex of agricultural buildings and an ornate gatehouse. In recent years, they have also acquired one of the original Ross slave quarter structures and have moved it back to the estate.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. Paynter Folder, Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Delaware.
2. J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Delaware, 1609-1888*, (Port Washington, N. Y./London, 1888), p. 326N1.
3. Joanne O. Passmore, *Three Centuries of Delaware Agriculture*, (Dover, 1978), p. 64.
4. Hugh R. Gibb, *The Delaware Railroad*, (Master's Thesis, University of Delaware, 1965), pp. 114-118. It was Isaac Trimble who later went South to the Confederacy and helped lead Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg.
5. Paul Dolan, *The Government and Administration of Delaware*, (New York, 1953), p. 17.
6. Scharf, p. 316.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 656-657N1; Johu D. Gates, *The du Pont Family*, (New York, 1979), p. 50.
8. Harold B. Hancock, *Delaware During The Civil War*, (Wilmington, 1961), p. 153.
9. The children of the marriage were: Letitia Lolland (m. Victor Green, Esq.), James Jefferson (1846-1934), William Madison (1848-1910), Edward C., Caleb (1841-1861), Sarah A. (m. Dr. S. R. Skillern of Philadelphia), Mary G. (m. Montgomery Fisher, Esq. of Seaford), Laura F. (m. John Gray and died in 1916), John Wood and George Hall (1844-1861). James's son, Brooks, died in 1948.

Illinois, addressed a meeting in Wilmington, but his coming did not attract much attention, as at that time he was an obscure man and there was no thought in the public mind that he would afterwards reach the high place which he attained in the nation. The Whigs were successful at the election, the electoral vote of Delaware going to Zachary Taylor, and a majority of the Legislature of this state being Whigs.

In 1850 the Whig party of this state became somewhat divided owing to a temperance issue that had arisen in state politics, the outcome of which was the nomination of Thomas Lockwood, of Kent County, for Governor. This defection among the Whigs led to the election of William H. Ross, the Democratic candidate for Governor, by a small majority. George Read Riddle, his associate on the Democratic ticket, was elected Representative to Congress, and the Democrats also, for the first time in many years, obtained full control of the state government.

John M. Clayton became Secretary of State under President Zachary Taylor in March of 1849, and Governor Tharp appointed as his successor in the United States Senate, Joseph P. Comegys, who served until March 4, 1850, when he, in turn, was succeeded by Martin W. Bates, a Democrat, who was regularly elected by the Legislature in the January preceding. On the death of President Taylor in the summer of 1850, John M. Clayton retired from the Cabinet, and again assumed the leadership of the Whig party in this state. The succeeding election showed the effect of his management. The Whigs carried a majority of the House of Representatives, but by reason of the holding over of six members of the Senate, who were Democrats, the latter party had a majority of one on joint ballot in the Legislature. At the session of the Legislature in 1852, the Whigs nominated Mr. Clayton again for the Senate. The Democratic members of the Legislature refused for some time to go into joint session.

While the election was pending an attack was made in the United States Senate by several of the Democratic Senators

was spent near Farmington, and that was his residence when he was elected Governor. After his election he moved to Milford, at which place he spent the remainder of his life. Governor Tharp was a large land-owner, much of his land being cleared up and improved under his own supervision, and he was regarded as a very successful and progressive farmer. He was a strong man intellectually, a substantial citizen, prominent in his community and highly respected by all the people. His life, which was both useful and successful, ended on January 1st, 1865. He occupied a full term as Governor.

The election of William H. Ross as the thirty-seventh Governor in 1850 called to that exalted position the youngest man who had ever been chosen for the place. The campaign leading up to his election was an animated one, in which the leading cry of his political associates was "Ross, Riddle and Reform." Much enthusiasm marked the campaign, and both Ross and George Read Riddle, his associate on the ticket for representative in Congress, were elected by substantial majorities. While young in years, he brought with him to the office qualifications and attainments that eminently fitted him for the place. He possessed strong natural ability and was a man of extensive reading.

His birthplace was at Laurel, and he lived there from the time of his birth, June 2, 1814, until 1845, when he removed to Seaford, which became his permanent home. He showed a fondness for foreign travel, and having succeeded in business he was able to gratify his inclination in that regard, and both before and after his term as Governor he traveled extensively abroad. He filled the office with great acceptability, and was but forty years of age when, at the expiration of his term as Governor, he retired to private life. He left at his death three sons, all of whom have continued to live in the vicinity of Seaford and are leading and representative citizens of the State.

In 1854 Peter F. Causey was elected the thirty-eighth Governor as the candidate of the "American Party." He

Presidents of Delaware under the Constitution of 1776.

John McKinly	from February 21, 1777	to September 12, 1777
Thomas McKean, acting	September 12, 1777	October 20, 1777
George Read, acting	October 20, 1777	March 20, 1778
Caesar Rodney	March 20, 1778	November 13, 1781
John Dickinson	November 13, 1781	November 4, 1782
John Cook, acting	November 4, 1782	February 8, 1783
Nicholas Van Dyke	February 8, 1783	October 27, 1786
Thomas Collins	October 27, 1786	March 29, 1789
Jehu Davis, acting	March 29, 1789	May 30, 1789
Joshua Clayton	May 30, 1789	January 13, 1793

Governors under the Constitution of 1792.

Joshua Clayton	from January, 1793	to January, 1796
Gunning Bedford	January, 1796	September 28, 1797
Daniel Rogers, acting	September 28, 1797	January, 1799
Richard Bassett	January, 1799	March, 1801
James Bykes, acting	March, 1801	January, 1802
David Hall	January, 1802	January, 1805
Nathaniel Mitchell	January, 1805	January, 1808
George Truitt	January, 1808	January, 1811
Joseph Haslet	January, 1811	January, 1814
Daniel Rodney	January, 1814	January, 1817
John Clark	January, 1817	January, 1820
Jacob Stout, acting	January, 1820	January, 1821
John Collins	January, 1821	April, 1822
Caleb Rodney, acting	April, 1822	January, 1823
Joseph Haslet	January, 1823	June 20, 1823
Charles Thomas, acting	June 20, 1823	January, 1824
Samuel Paynter	January, 1824	January, 1827
Charles Polk	January, 1827	January, 1830
David Hazzard	January, 1830	January, 1833

Governors under the Constitution of 1832.

Caleb P. Bennett	from January, 1833	to April 9, 1836
Charles Polk, acting	April 9, 1836	January, 1837
Cornelius P. Conneys	January, 1837	January, 1841
William B. Cooper	January, 1841	January, 1845
Thomas Stockton	January, 1845	March 2, 1846
Joseph Maull, acting	March 2, 1846	May 1, 1846
William Temple, acting	May 1, 1846	January, 1847
William Tharp	January, 1847	January, 1851
William H. Ross	January, 1851	January, 1855
Peter F. Causey	January, 1855	January, 1859
William Barton	January, 1859	January, 1863
William Cannon	January, 1863	March 1, 1865

Seaford was crossed by means of a ferry, which for many years was under the management of the "Martin" family. In 1884 a fine iron bridge was erected on the site of the old ferry and a short distance above the railroad bridge, which is also provided with a draw-span to allow the passage of vessels. This town was for a long time noted for its vessel-building. Several sea-going vessels were built here, which gave employment to many and contributed to the prosperity of the town. Among those industries which have contributed to the development of the place may be mentioned the various fruit factories, phosphate works and canning establishments, all of which are in successful operation and conducted on an extensive scale. While agriculture forms the chief pursuit of the people, many fruit farms have been opened in late years, the aggregate profits of which have been large.

Seaford was the home of Governor William H. Ross, who owned one of the finest estates in the State, and is now in the possession of his son, James J. Ross, who is known as a large orchardist and fruit-grower. This town was the birthplace of Edward L. Martin, who, although a lawyer by profession, devoted himself principally to agriculture and horticulture. He was recognized as a most successful peach-grower, having for several years made this industry a study, both theoretically and practically. Mr. Martin was elected to Congress in 1878, and re-elected in 1880. He was a member of several National and State Democratic Conventions, and maintained an active interest in politics until his death. His religious affiliation was with the Protestant Episcopal Church, of which he was a vestryman for many years, and on several occasions was a delegate to the Diocesan Convention. His brother, Dr. Hugh Martin, was a prominent physician of Seaford, a member of both branches of the General Assembly of Delaware at different times, and was an active supporter of the cause of education.

For many years the Kinder, Noble and Davis families formed the chief part of the population in the northwestern

admitted to the Bar in New Castle in 1867. He began the practice of law in 1868 in Wilmington, and a year afterwards, moved to New Castle, where he has since continued his residence. From 1879 to 1885 he was Deputy Attorney-General of the State under George Gray. He was a member of the State Senate of Delaware during the sessions of 1883-1887, and Speaker for the last two years of his term. Mr. Cooper was appointed commissioner with William S. Hilles and Walter H. Hayes by the General Assembly of the State in 1905, to confer with like commissioners from the State of New Jersey respecting the Delaware River and Bay, in accordance with the compact agreed upon between the representatives of the two States under date of March 9, 1905. Mr. Cooper is President both of the Delaware commissioners and of the joint commissioners. With untiring devotion to his profession, his legal talents and strict integrity of character have given him high standing at the Bar. He still pursues the practice of law in Wilmington.

THOMAS COOPER.

Thomas Cooper was born in Little Creek Hundred, Sussex County, Delaware, and was a brother of Governor William B. Cooper. He studied law with James P. Wilson, and was admitted to the Sussex County Bar in 1805. After his admission he began the practice of his profession in Georgetown, where he continued to live until his death. From 1815 to 1817 he served as member of Congress from Delaware, and for many years was a leading Federalist in the State. Among the prominent Delawareans who were students under him were Judge Edward Wootten and Judge Caleb S. Layton. His professional character was marked by a painstaking industry and a thorough knowledge of the law, fulfilling his duties with ability and zeal. He was most highly esteemed and enjoyed the confidence of the public. He died in 1829, aged sixty-five years.

History of DE
Conrad
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1846, on the Ross estate, near Seaford, Del.

James J. Ross attended the public schools of Seaford, Del., and in 1863 was placed under the instruction of Dr. Clemson, at Claymont, Del. He completed his scholastic studies at Edinburg, Scotland, and after a two-years' course there returned to his home to devote himself to agriculture. He is an enthusiastic husbandman and pomologist. Mr. Ross is now in charge of the Ross estate, on which he has carried forward the many improvements begun by his father. He has planted several new orchards, paying particular attention to the varieties. Small fruits also have well repaid his investments. His blackberries are chiefly of the Wilson variety; and his large beds of raspberries and strawberries yield abundant crops. In order to utilize his surplus fruit, Mr. Ross has large evaporators in which he can prepare 18,000 pounds. Fruit culture is, however, but one of the interests which claim his attention. His farm produces annually from 500 to 1,000 bushels of wheat and 2,000 to 4,000 bushels of corn; his cattle and sheep are of the best breeds, his herd of short horns and his Cotswold sheep having taken the premium at the State Fair, held at Dover. Mr. Ross is a member of the board of directors of the Delaware Railroad.

In April, 1873, James J. Ross was married to Sarah A., daughter of George Levan, of Lancaster county, Pa. They have one child, Brooks Levan. Mr. Ross is a member of the Protestant Episcopal church, and has been a vestryman for eight years.

HON. WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON ROSS, ex-Governor of the state of Delaware, son of Caleb and Letitia (Lofland) Ross, was born at Laurel, Del., June 2, 1814.

Caleb Ross, an influential citizen of Sussex county, Del., was born March 1, 1784; he died November 1, 1841. He married Letitia Lofland, of Milford, Del., who was born March 3, 1787, and died in 1832.

William H. H. Ross attended the public schools of Laurel, Del., until 1832, and after studying for two years in a Friends' school at Clamont, Pa., became a clerk in his father's mercantile and commission house. In 1836 Mr. Ross accompanied his father to Europe, traveling through England, Scotland and Ireland. After having been engaged in business

for one year in Adams county, Ill., Mr. Ross returned to Delaware, and opened a store at Laurel, where he was also interested in a mill and a tannery. In 1845 he removed to his estate near Seaford, Del. The handsome residence which he erected in 1859 is one of the most beautiful homes in the state. When Mr. Ross took charge of the property it consisted of 1,400 acres of worn out land. Intelligent care and liberal management improved and enriched the soil, increasing the yield of wheat from five to thirty bushels, and of corn from ten to fifty bushels per acre. Mr. Ross was also very successful in raising fruit. He had 1,200 peach trees in bearing, besides an orchard of thrifty young trees; 1,500 apple trees, 3,000 grape vines, and 150 acres in berries of different kinds. In 1846 Mr. Ross was elected captain of a company of cavalry which was raised in Seaford, Laurel, and the vicinity, the men furnishing their own horses and equipments. At the close of the Mexican war, in 1849, this troop disbanded. Like his father, Mr. Ross was always a Democrat, and in 1850, when only thirty-six years of age, was nominated and elected governor of his native state. Governor Ross discharged the duties of his high office faithfully and honorably. After his term as governor had expired, he was frequently urged to accept office, but invariably declined, alleging that impaired hearing unfitted him for public service. Governor Ross represented his state in the Democratic National conventions of 1844, 1848, 1856, and 1860. During the war of the Rebellion he was in Europe, where he visited the principal cities of France, Germany, Prussia, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Spain and Italy. He intended also to visit the Holy Land and to see Damascus and Constantinople, and had reached Cairo, Egypt, when he was obliged to return to England. He was the senior partner of the firm of W. M. Ross & Co., importers and manufacturers of fertilizers and agricultural supplies. The enterprise was started in 1873, by Mr. Ross and Mr. Ball. In 1875, Mr. Ball having retired, the present company was organized. The plant has been greatly improved and enlarged; besides the large main building the company has three storage rooms covering 10,800 square feet, and two sets of acid chambers with a capacity of 150 feet. The business is large and re-

munerative; all the goods manufactured and imported are of the finest quality. The manufactory is situated on the Nanticoke river, where the company owns large wharves. A railroad connecting the buildings with the Delaware and Dorechester, and the Delaware R. R. affords abundant facilities for loading and shipping.

On June 7, 1840, the Hon. William H. H. Ross was married to Elizabeth E., daughter of George K. Hall, Esq., of Middletown, Del. Seven of their children survive: I. Letitia L., widow of Victor Green, Esq.; II. James J.; III. William M.; IV. E. C.; V. Sarah H., married Dr. S. R. Skellern, of Philadelphia, Pa.; VI. Mary G., married Montgomery Fisher, Esq., of Seaford, Del.; VII. Laura F. Ex-Governor Ross died in 1887.

JAMES FRANCIS WILDS, P. O. Dover, Kent county, Del., son of James D. and Lydia E. (Spruance) Wilds, was born on the homestead near Kenton, Duck Creek hundred, Kent county, Del., February 9, 1846.

The founders of the American branch of the Wilds family were three brothers, Nathaniel, Samuel, and ——— Wilds, emigrants from Wales. Samuel Wilds settled in Massachusetts; ——— in Virginia. In 1830 Nathaniel Wilds, after spending some time in Maryland, came to Delaware and took up a large tract of land in Duck Creek hundred, Kent county. Mr. Wilds cleared and improved this land and built for himself a comfortable home. He also erected the first school house in what is now district No. 9, long known as Wilds school house. It was a substantial log house and in it his family was represented for five generations. Nathaniel Wilds, 1, owned a number of slaves and was considered a wealthy man. He had eleven children, among whom he divided his estate as follows: "I give and bequeath to each of my four daughters £300 in money; to my son, Joshua, a plantation; to my son John W., a tract of land in Duck Creek hundred, and £400 in money; to my son Nathaniel, 250 acres of the home plantation and all the belongings thereof." His personal property was divided between his sons Nathaniel and John W., who were his executors. Nathaniel Wilds died in 1800.

Nathaniel Wilds, 2, grandfather of James F. Wilds, was born on his father's plantation in Duck Creek hundred, Kent county, Del. He was educated in the schools of his native county, where his whole life was spent in the cultivation of the soil. Mr. Wilds was a Democrat, interested in public affairs. Nathaniel Wilds, 2, was married to Mary Denny, who was Welsh by descent. Their children are: I. James D.; II. Mary (Mrs. John Farran), died, leaving one son, Nathan Wilds, who married and died at Wilmington, Del., aged fifty-five; III. Sarah A., deceased, married first to James Savin, of Duck Creek hundred, afterwards to James Pratt, of the same hundred, by whom she had four children, i. Frank, ii. Samuel, iii. Sarah, iv. Lilly; IV. Elizabeth, married Samuel Griffins, of Duck Creek hundred, both deceased, had one son, James F., of Chicago, Ill.; V. Lydia A., deceased; VI. Georgiana (Mrs. Thomas A. Ross), of Smyrna, Del., has one son, Ralph, of Chesapeake City, Md.; VII. Susanna, married her brother-in-law, John Farron, has two children; VIII. Lydia A. (Mrs. William A. Hazel), of Duck Creek hundred, has seven children, i. George, ii. William D., iii. J. Frank, deceased, iv. Charles A., v. Benjamin A., vi. Herman P., vii. Emma (Mrs. Joshua M. German); IX. Nathaniel D., died in 1855, married Elizabeth Hoffecker, had ——— children, i. Susan A. (Mrs. Charles H. Register), ii. Mary E. (Mrs. Richard Smithers), of Dover, iii. Catharine, married Joseph Smithers, station agent at Clayton, Del., iv. James D., an employee of the P. R. R., at Smyrna, Del., married Elizabeth Cloak, of Smyrna, v. Emma, vi. Silas Gilbert, teller of the Fruit Growers' National Bank, of Smyrna; X. Francis, married Mary Durborough, has three children, i. Margaret R. (Mrs. Owen Cron), of Smyrna, Del., ii. Sarah, deceased, iii. Nathaniel F., cashier of the Fruit Growers' National Bank, of Smyrna, Del.; XI. William, ex-sheriff of Kent county, Del., an octogenarian, resides at Smyrna, Del., married Elizabeth Scott, has five children, i. Nathaniel, deceased, ii. Charles, deceased, iii. Samuel, iv. Ross S., deceased, v. William, Jr.; XII. Margaretta, married Emory Temple, both died in Queen Anne's county, Md., had three children, i. Edward, died in Springfield, Ill, ii. Franklin, holds a position about the U. S. Senate, iii. George D.