

## The Mayor and Council of Georgetown

### COUNCILMEN

EDWIN O. PEPPER, *First Ward*

EDWIN ROACH, *Second Ward*

LESTER H. PITTARD, *Third Ward*

WARREN W. EDINGER, *Fourth Ward*

GEORGETOWN, DELAWARE

### MAYOR

Harvey B. Spicer

### VICE-MAYOR

Edwin O. Pepper

### SECRETARY

Edwin Roach

### POLICE COMMISSIONER

Warren W. Edinger

October 20, 1958

Dear Sir or Madam:

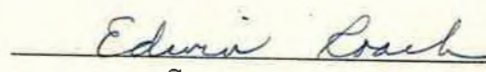
The Town Council of Georgetown cooperating with the Chairmen of the Democrat and Republican parties are making plans for the traditional "Return Day" celebration on Thursday, November 6, 1958.

We request your presence to this traditional celebration. The parade will be at 2:00 o'clock P. M. and a national speaker will be present.

It is customary for the elected officials and present office holders to ride in the parade.

Sincerely yours,

Town Council of Georgetown

  
Secretary



# Burying the Hatchet

*Return Day in Sussex County, Delaware*

Michael Mills

**B**usy as they are with the political backstabbing that seems to constitute the core of America's current election system, Republicans, Democrats, Independents, and members of various small political parties are gearing up for the final days of the 1992 campaign season. With voters going to the



BILL CAMPBELL



## BURYING THE HATCHET

■ The parade into town includes more than politicians. *Below:* High school marching band. *Opposite above:* Coaching two rivals. *Opposite below:* High school choral group.



ROBERT J. BENNETT

In Sussex County, Delaware, however, residents and lawmakers break from the traditional system that seemingly dictates on national and state levels which politicians of different parties cannot (or should not) socialize with one another. All the political grudges are discarded in tradition-laden Sussex, where residents of the mostly rural county—which boasts no true urban center where people can gather—celebrate an election-year custom that became firmly entrenched back in the mid-1800s. Called Return Day, the nearly 160-year-old custom brings politicians of all parties—winners and losers—and their supporters to the centrally located county

seat of Georgetown for a day filled with fun and political reconciliation. It is a time to say, "OK, the election is over. Now let's patch up our differences, have a good time, and move on with running the state to help improve life for the people of Delaware."

Sussex County is the only place in the United States believed to still celebrate the event, which once was commonplace in colonial America.

## A rich history

**R**eturn Day has roots dating back to the late 1790s and early 1800s, when Sussex County was enveloped in forests and farms, and travel was hard. State law required residents in all three of Delaware's counties to travel to their respective county seats to vote. Similar requirements were prevalent in the other states during the early part of America's history; this served as an opportunity for the citizenry to gather, to talk, and to have a good time with friends they may not have seen for months.

Because of poor road conditions that made travel seem more like work, residents did not head home after voting. Instead, they stayed in the county seat for two days, waiting for the results to be posted and for the town crier to bark out the numbers from the balcony or steps of the courthouse. Those two days would be a festive occasion, with people drinking, eating, and visiting friends.

As early as 1803, however, complaints were made by large groups of men living in the outer districts of Delaware's county seats. They protested having to travel to Georgetown over the rough roads in bad weather and having to leave their families home unprotected. They wanted to be able to stay closer to home and vote.

But change, as it still is, was hard to come by, and it was not until years later that the request was acted on. In 1828, the Delaware General Assembly passed legislation allowing citizens to vote in the districts—locally called "hundreds"—where they lived. After the polls closed, election officials from the districts would race on horses to Georgetown with the votes. The race was competitive, with officials reveling in the fact they could be first in carrying the tally from their respective voting





ROBERT J. BENNETT

■ It happens every two years, two days after the national election. Georgetown, Delaware, swells by many thousands as folks pour in to hear the election results and witness political reconciliation. *Opposite:* Winners and losers riding together in horse-drawn carriages. *Left and below:* Working the crowds to thank supporters.



BILL CAMPBELL

polls November 3, politicians and their eager-to-please staffers are hurriedly sending out stories reflecting not what their candidates can do but what the other candidates cannot.

Unfortunately, the political fighting will not stop when the polls close and signal an end to the campaign. The two-sided bickering—or multisided in these days of third and fourth parties—will continue, picking up again on November 4 and run-

ning without hesitation like a popular Broadway play until the next campaign season rolls around. Republicans will criticize Democrats, who in turn will criticize Republicans. All the while, Independents and others will criticize everyone.

Throughout it all, the American public is left in utter confusion, not knowing whom or what to believe.

Such is the condition of this nation and the states it comprises.



## BURYING THE HATCHET

■ There is plenty of food for all. *Below:* Treats for sale. *Opposite above:* Cutting up ox meat—three oxen are roasted—for sandwiches. *Opposite below:* Snackers along the parade route.

or oxen; in all types of carriages and on horseback. The public square, known today as the Circle, became filled with the spirit of a rustic carnival. Delaware biscuits, hot corn pone, rabbit roasted on the spit, opossum, fried chicken, oysters, clams, and white and sweet potatoes baked in hot ashes fed the hundreds present. Large quantities of beer, fresh cider, and Sussex County applejack were consumed. Participants dressed in outlandish costumes or in old clothes they had pulled out of the attic.

While waiting for the results, some citizens listened to band concerts that took place on the square. Others wagered on

cockfights, which took place in barns located just outside of Georgetown. Often, the crowds became rowdy as the liquor and moonshine flowed freely. The town's two hotels did a lively bar business, and it must have been through the influence of their managers that a crackdown on the moonshine vendors eventually took place. Because the town police force was small and often had trouble maintaining order, fights were common, with one man being killed in 1844. The town council would hire additional police officers on the day of the celebration to help control the crowd.

As the tradition grew, so did the number of people who attended. It was not uncommon during the latter part of the 1800s for three thousand people to gather in Georgetown. By this time, vendors saw opportunities to sell their wares, and they set up booths on the town streets.

A visitor to the celebration wrote in the local paper, *Wilmington Every Evening*, in 1872:

Many ladies who had not visited the "Capitol" since the last "Return Day" could be seen in the crowd buying knick-knacks for "the little ones." A part of the program of the day is to see that young girls are treated. A pretty young lady, whether acquainted or not, is licensed to receive a box of candy and be it said for the young gentlemen of Sussex that no pretty damsel goes away empty.

The highlight of all Return Days has been the parade down one of the town's main thoroughfares. Winners and losers ride together in horse-drawn carriages to signify the end of the political campaign and a new beginning. High-stepping bands march down Market Street, and people in colorful costumes ride in carriages and on horseback.



ROBERT J. BENNETT





COURTESY SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY

districts to the county seat.

Once there, the officials would give the ballots to the Board of Canvassers, presided over by the sheriff. The board would meet two days later, total the votes, and announce the results at noon on the Thursday after Election Day.

Only in Sussex County, however, did residents regularly return that Thursday to hear the outcome. Because citizens could vote closer to home and because travel conditions were poor throughout the new republic, residents in Delaware's two northern counties and in other states restricted their movement. Without other means (such as county newspapers) to learn of the outcome, they waited until election officials returned to hear who had won the election.

In Sussex, though, where traditions are hard to break, many of the farmers decided to take the day off and travel with



ROBERT J. BENNETT

their families to the public square. By the 1840s, Return Day had become a regular event, with county residents looking forward to gathering in Georgetown every two years, two days after the election.

They would arrive in the morning on foot; in wagons drawn by mules, horses,

Perhaps the most colorful parade took place in 1882 when Georgetown's Charles Stockley was elected Delaware's forty-fifth governor. The *Wilmington Sunday Star* of November 12, 1882, described the parade this way:

A procession moved through town while the people cheered and guns boomed. A boat in bright new paint was mounted on wheels rigged like a ship, and labeled the "Old Constitution." The craft was profusely decorated with a blue hen draped in ribbon and a dried coon skin was suspended from the mast. Six men on horseback moved in front and one hundred and twenty mounted men in the rear, all decorated and giving back to the crowd cheer for cheer. Standing on the quarter deck of the mimic ship, bowing to the multitude who enthusiastically applauded and saluted him, was the Governor-Elect Charles Stockley. When the ship was drawn in the Square, the people flocked from all sides to shake hands with the new Governor and at length he was lifted on brawny shoulders and carried into the Court House above the heads of the crowd, which cheered louder and louder.

As the years passed, the advent of automobiles made the trip to Georgetown only a matter of minutes from anywhere in the county. With the arrival of radio, people knew the election results before the newspapers arrived, and interest in the age-old custom of Return Day began to dwindle.

In 1942, the event was canceled altogether because of World War II, though on what should have been Return Day a group of farmers and other people from the outlying areas gathered in Georgetown for business. They could only stand and



remember the celebrations of years past.

Return Day remained canceled until 1952, when a group of residents, some Democrats and others Republicans, reinstituted the official celebration as enthusiasm for the event returned. In the 1960s, that excitement continued, and in 1965, the General Assembly made Return Day a legal half holiday in Sussex County.

Today, it is common for twenty to twenty-five thousand people to descend upon Georgetown, coming from Delaware's other two counties and from the neighboring states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Dozens of par-



## BURYING THE HATCHET



ROBERT J. BENNETT

■ Following a tradition once commonplace in America, the town crier announces the election results from the courthouse balcony.

ties take place in residences throughout town, with legislators gathering among their constituents for a good time.

It is during these parties that much political positioning for future elections takes place. Politicos try to mend fences and to gather support for the future. Georgetown Mayor Joseph Booth said potential lawmakers throw out position statements to see how they will be received.

"They shed the political labels for a day. It gives them a chance to celebrate and discuss issues," Booth said. "They say the most politics takes place after the elec-

tion on Return Day, and I believe it. The ideas discussed that day seem to carry through until the next election. People position themselves for that next run."

Thus, not much has changed over the years. People still flock to the county seat for an abundance of food, a colorful parade, the official announcement of election results, speeches, band concerts, and socializing. Although the opossum and rabbit have been replaced by roast oxen, crafters and vendors still line the streets and alleys of Georgetown to hawk their goods.

## A model for others

Residents of Sussex County are traditionalists, and Return Day serves as a reminder of the past. It helps people to remember a time when their ancestors gathered to renew acquaintances. A 1912 newspaper account stated,

Hard is that man or woman to find who can beat Sussex Countians when it comes to standing about the old courthouse or around the public square on a cold "Return Day" afternoon, with no particular purpose in view—just merely "standing round looking" to see who they can see.

Traditions and customs are difficult to hold on to in this electronic age, when children seem more interested in watching television and attempting to beat the latest video games than they do learning about their past. Delaware, particularly Sussex County, is attempting to hold on to that past, attempting to use the past to give the future some meaning. Return Day is an effort to keep alive the memories of

people who made Sussex County, Delaware, and the United States what they are—places that are rich in democracy, places filled with people who understand the process but sometimes get too caught up in it.

Delaware appears to be the essence of what this country's forefathers must have been thinking when they drafted the Declaration of Independence and declared that democracy would rule. It is no coincidence that the state was the first to sign the U.S. Constitution in 1787.

In a state that is only ninety-six miles long and thirty-five miles wide—the sec-



COURTESY SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY



COURTESY SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY

■ On the steps below, the hatchet is buried, symbolizing goodwill and reconciliation between the rival parties.

ond smallest state in the Union—statewide problems are easily solved, because everyone seems to know most everyone else on a first-name basis. It is not unusual, for example, for a northern lawmaker to call a southern counterpart about a statewide issue and suggest the two meet later that afternoon in Dover, the state capital, an equal distance for

both. In larger states, debates take months and years before solutions are reached; in Delaware, it is a matter of hours or, at the most, days. Residents simply get on the telephone and call their representative, no matter whether he be serving on the state or the national level.

That open communication serves to emphasize how the people of Delaware



## BURYING THE HATCHET



ROBERT J. BENNETT

■ In this American town, people remember the cooperative spirit of republican government that serves the people and not itself.

view their elected officials. Titles are not impressive—governors, U.S. senators, and representatives are all referred to by first name. Both citizens and legislatures share the good times and the bad.

Former two-term governor Pierre S. du Pont IV recalled in 1985 the story of a woman who telephoned his office just six days after his inauguration. It was a Saturday, and everyone was unpacking boxes when the phone rang. He answered, and the woman on the other end was complaining that a heavy rain had left her basement flooded. She could not be convinced, he said, that the matter was a local problem that should be handled by the town or county in which she lived—she wanted to talk with the governor.

"She called the man in Delaware she just saw sworn in and who is the leader of

the state and he better be able to do something," he said. "That's the kind of state it is. Where else in America would you find people who think that when their basement is full of water the thing to do is to call the governor?"

That type of informality strikes at what Return Day means to Sussex County and Delaware. There are no political grudges carried over, no hard feelings lingering. If there are, those involved keep the feelings to themselves and do not let them interfere with the festivities. Winners and losers join together, wave to supporters, and put behind the charged campaigns that sometimes, though not often, result in unnecessary accusations being tossed around. Literally, in a special ceremony, the hatchet is buried by political leaders, signifying the end of the political

season and providing a gesture of reconciliation.

"It's a healing process that sets the election aside and says we're now going to get on with the business of government," said du Pont. "It's a very personal thing. It brings government right down to your backyard, and I think that's why it works."

It worked when people began gathering in Georgetown in the mid-nineteenth century, and it continues to work today as Delaware prepares to enter the twenty-first century. Residents are as close-knit now as they were when Caesar Rodney led the fight for independence in the 1770s.

W. Layton Johnson, who for twenty-six years served as mayor of Georgetown, has been helping organize Return Day celebrations for about four decades. Johnson has hosted Return Day parties for upward of seven hundred people, including governors and other state lawmakers. This year will mark his first stint as town crier.

"Return Day heals a lot of political wounds," he said. "Nobody likes to lose, whether it's a town election or a state election. It's nice to get together and shake hands with a winner. It takes a good person to ride in the vehicle with his opponent."

Sen. William V. Roth, Jr., who first represented Delaware in Congress in 1966 as a member of the House of Representatives and who has been a member of the U.S. Senate since 1970, has seen his share of negative politics. He said that the current system of political campaigning emphasizes the need for something similar to Return Day on a national level.

"The divisiveness of the presidential campaign needs to be put aside after the election so the process of political healing and bipartisan cooperation can begin," said Roth.

"Return Day reminds both the win-

ners and losers that their aim is not to persist in partisan squabbling but rather to work together for the benefit of the state and of the country."

J. Everett Moore, Jr., who as chairman of the Sussex County Republican Party has helped bury the hatchet several times, said Return Day would work well in small towns or counties throughout America where residents and officials know or know of each other. Large cities or states that do little to embrace a community feeling would be hard pressed to have a Return Day-type celebration, he said.

"This is a small rural area where people know each other, where they know their candidates. We have a tendency to be not as vicious. In those cases where we do get testy, it's important to join together and say, 'That was our job during the political process, now let's move on.'"

Jean West, who served as president of the Sussex County Return Day Committee for about twenty-five years before stepping down several years ago, said she hopes the people of Delaware always honor the tradition.

"I know of no better way to show future generations that there can be good sportsmanship among candidates after a hard and vigorous political campaign," she said.

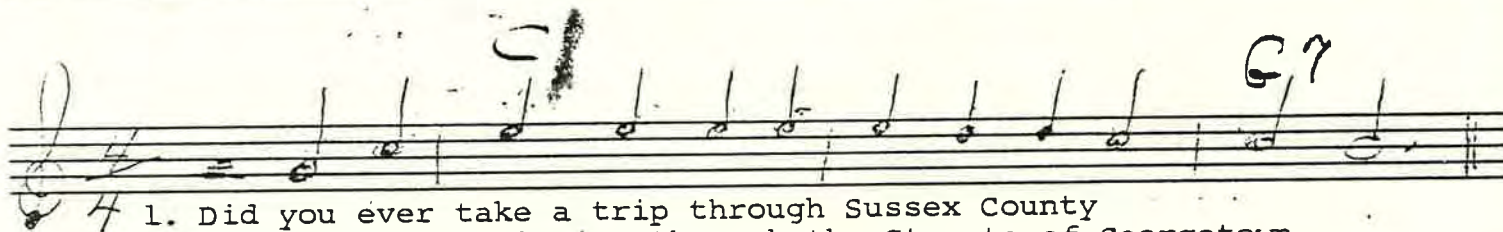
It is a lesson much of America could learn from, whether the political game is being played in the marbled halls of Washington, D.C., or in small towns nestled in the cornfields of the Middle West, or among the great redwoods of the Pacific Northwest. After all, it is hoped that everyone—citizens and politicians alike—wants the same thing: a better government for the people, by the people, of the people. ■

*Michael Mills is chairman of the communications department at Delaware Technical and Community College in Georgetown, Delaware.*



SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY  
WRITTEN BY VICTOR R ADAMS  
DEDICATED TO NUTTER D MARVEL SR

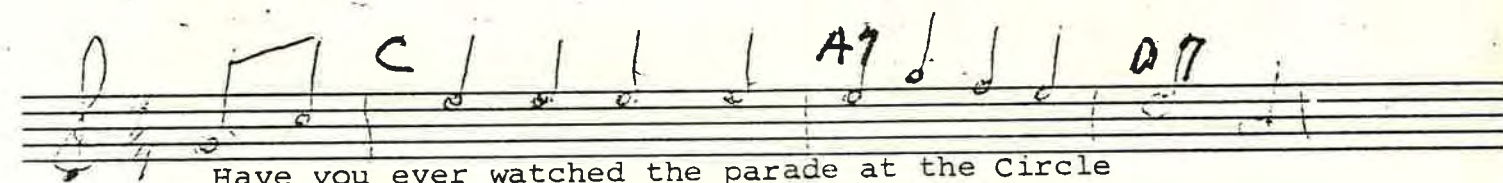
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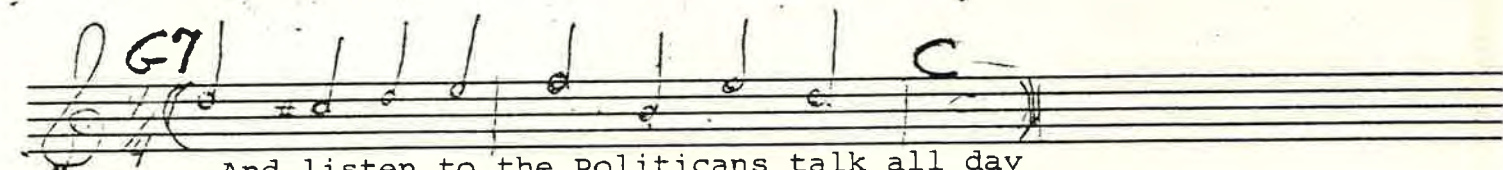
1. Did you ever take a trip through Sussex County
2. Oh the breezes blowing through the Streets of Georgetown
3. But the strangers come and try to teach us their way.
4. Now if there's going to be a life hereafter



Maybe to the County Seat for Return Day  
Are perfumed by the cooking of the ox  
They scorn us just for going back a hundred years or more  
And somehow I'm sure there's going to be



Have you ever watched the parade at the Circle  
And folks at Nutter Marvel's Carriage House talking crazy  
But they might as well go chasing light beams  
I will ask my GOD to let me make my Heaven



And listen to the Politicans talk all day  
Speak a language that the strangers do not know  
Or light a candle with a falling star  
In that Dear Land called Sussex County

*Victor Adams*

1978-79

I'm No Good

Written by Victor R Adams

Dedicated to all the Delawareans in Florida for Delaware Day.

I ain't as spry as once I was

I guess I'm getting old.

I'm pushed aside for younger men

I'm no more good I'm told.

But I'll know when I'm getting old

And want to go away.

That's when I'll come down to Fort Lauderdale

And be here for Delaware Day.



Dr. Kefauver  
Return Day

Gift of John Purnell  
November 1972

#571

RETURN DAY  
The Circle, Georgetown, Delaware  
Approximately 3:00 p. m.  
November 9, 1972

ADDRESS  
GIVEN BY  
GEORGE M. WORRILLOW

#### ACKNOWLEDGE PLATFORM

AGAIN AFTER MORE THAN 175 YEARS,  
SUSSEX COUNTIANS AND DELAWAREANS GET IT  
ALL TOGETHER TO OBSERVE THE TRADITIONAL  
RETURN DAY HERE ON THIS BEAUTIFUL CIRCLE  
IN GEORGETOWN, DELAWARE. (THE ONLY TOWN  
IN DELAWARE WITH A CIRCLE?)

I AM SO PLEASED AND HONORED THAT YOUR  
COMMITTEE HAS CHOSEN ME AS ITS AFTERNOON  
SPEAKER.

THE RETURN DAY ASSIGNMENT DID RETURN  
ME TO SUSSEX COUNTY WHICH I ALWAYS CONSIDER  
TO BE A FORTUNATE HAPPENING.



RETURN DAY -- 2

TO BE CERTAIN, I ACCEPTED THE INVITATION  
AT ONCE, BUT WITH SOME TREPIDATION,  
WONDERING IF I COULD MEASURE UP. THE FACTS  
ARE THAT I ACCEPTED, SO I AM NOW AT A POINT  
IN TIME WHEN I WILL HAVE TO DO THE BEST I CAN,  
AND DO IT NOW.

A GREAT SUSSEX COUNTY TRADITIONAL EVENT  
LIKE THIS PUT ME BACK IN THE LIBRARY TO THE  
HISTORY BOOKS. AND I FOUND SOME HELP, AND  
OF COURSE, ONE OF OUR DELAWARE HISTORY BUFFS --  
MR. EMERSON WILSON -- HAS WRITTEN THE FOREWORD  
TO TODAY'S PROGRAM. HE QUOTES SCARF AS WRITING  
IN HIS HISTORY OF DELAWARE THAT:

"RETURN DAY HAS BEEN A CUSTOM PECULIAR  
TO SUSSEX COUNTY SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL."  
(A FAIRLY SAFE ASSUMPTION IF YOU DO NOT  
GIVE ANY DATES).

RETURN DAY -- 3

I ALSO INQUIRED OF A LIVING DELAWARE STATESMAN AND A NATIVE SUSSEX COUNTIAN -- OUR BELOVED SENATOR JOHN WILLIAMS -- WHO WAS YOUR SPEAKER TWO YEARS AGO -- AS TO THE REAL MEANING OF MODERN RETURN DAY AND ASKED HIM TO RECALL THE THOUGHTS HE HAD GIVEN YOU IN 1970 WHEN HE WAS THE SPEAKER. HE COULD NOT RECOLLECT WHAT HE SAID AND I AM NOT GOING TO BURDEN ANY OF YOU BY ASKING YOU TO REMEMBER. BUT, SENATOR JOHN -- WITH HIS USUAL DRY HUMOR -- DID SAY THAT RETURN DAY WAS USUALLY COLD AND WINDY AND THAT THE WIND VELOCITY DEPENDED A GOOD BIT ON THE SPEAKER AND IF HE WERE TO MAKE A PROPHECY, THE WEATHER TODAY MIGHT NOT BE COLD BUT HE WAS CERTAIN THAT IT WOULD BE QUITE WINDY, IF I WERE TO BE THE SPEAKER. SO, THOUGHTS LIKE THESE COMING FROM SENATOR WILLIAMS PROVIDE



RETURN DAY -- 4

ONE WITH THE GREAT COURAGE NEEDED TO  
PROCEED AND THIS I AM GOING TO DO WITH  
SOME MISGIVINGS.

A BIT MORE OF HISTORY (CONRAD 1908) --  
WHAT HAPPENS ON RETURN DAY? QUOTE:

"THIS OCCASION BRINGS THOUSANDS OF  
PEOPLE TO THE TOWN AND EVERY EFFORT  
IS MADE TO MAKE THE DAY A MOST  
ENJOYABLE ONE. SO LONG HAS THIS  
CUSTOM BEEN OBSERVED, THAT THE DAY  
IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS A HOLIDAY  
WHEN MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN  
CONGREGATE FROM EARLY MORN UNTIL  
LATE AT NIGHT AT THE COUNTY SEAT,  
GIVING VENT TO THEIR HILARIOUS FEELINGS  
BY THE MOST AMUSING ACTIONS CONCEIVABLE. "

RETURN DAY -- 5

THE RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS OF THE TOWN ARE WELL MAINTAINED, AND GIVE EVIDENCE OF INCREASING PROSPERITY. STILL TRUE. GEORGETOWN HAS BEEN THE HOME OF MANY PROMINENT MEN AND WOMEN IN SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE. THE IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS OF THE HUNDRED AND THE THRIFTY SPIRIT OF ITS RESIDENTS ATTEST ITS CONTINUED GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, AND I REMIND YOU THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE'S AGRICULTURAL SUBSTATION ON THE LAUREL ROAD HAS BEEN A SUPPORTING ECONOMIC FACTOR TO THE COUNTY'S AGRICULTURE SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT ABOUT ONE-QUARTER OF A CENTURY AGO.

AGRICULTURE STILL RANKS AS ITS NUMBER ONE INDUSTRY IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT 180,000 ACRES



RETURN DAY -- 6

OF FARM LAND HAVE BEEN DIVERTED TO OTHER  
USES SINCE 1940. LAND IS LIMITED AND THE  
SCIENTISTS HAVE NOT YET COME UP WITH A  
FORMULA FOR SYNTHESIZING LAND. DELAWARE  
FARM INCOME TOPS ALL THE STATES IN THE  
NORTHEAST IN BOTH GROSS (\$40,000) AND NET  
(\$12,000) FARM INCOME AND RANKS FIFTH AMONG  
ALL STATES, AHEAD OF THE GENERALLY WELL-  
KNOWN FARM STATE OF IOWA, INDIANA AND  
ILLINOIS.

AGRICULTURE HAS NOT AS YET BEEN  
REAPPORTIONED, BUT ITS POPULATION HAS.

ENOUGH OF HISTORY.

AS I CONSIDERED WHAT TO SAY AND  
WHAT NOT TO SAY, I DECIDED AT ONCE THAT

RETURN DAY -- 7

THOSE ASSEMBLED HERE WILL NOT HAVE TO LISTEN TO ANY PARTISAN POLITICAL POSITION PAPER. WE HAVE HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH LATELY. I WOULD BE SAFE WERE I TO REPEAT HISTORY FOR YOU AS I HAVE SAID, BUT IT HAS ALL BEEN WELL WRITTEN. ALL YOU NEED TO DO TO LEARN IS TO READ.

SO, INSTEAD, LET US THINK TOGETHER A BIT ABOUT WHAT RETURN DAY MEANS TO THOSE ASSEMBLED HERE TODAY AND WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF DELAWARE'S MODERN DEMOCRACY.

THE FOLLOWING ARE MY THOUGHTS ONLY.

MOST CERTAINLY, THIS YEAR'S ELECTION AT ALL LEVELS FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES DOWN HAS NOT BEEN A USUAL ONE.



RETURN DAY -- 8

IN DELAWARE MOST CANDIDATES GENERALLY  
HAVE CONDUCTED THEMSELVES AS LADIES  
AND GENTLEMEN -- WITH PERHAPS A GREATER  
TENDENCY BY SOME CANDIDATES JUST BEFORE  
ELECTION DAY TO PANIC UNDER PRESSURE,  
AND TO RESORT TO PICAYUNISH CHARGES AND  
COUNTER CHARGES, SMACKING THE USUAL  
POLITICAL HACKERY WHICH SURFACES WHEN  
THE GOING SEEMS TO BE GETTING TOUGH.

ON THE POINT OF THE INFLUENCE OF  
NEWS MEDIA TODAY -- THE NEWSPAPER AND  
TELEVISION --- ALMOST DARE ONE TO BE BRASH  
AND TO OUTDO OR OUT-PROMISE YOUR ADVERSARY  
CANDIDATES. THE WOULD-BE SPECTACULAR AND  
THE IRRESPONSIBLE CANDIDATES ARE PROVIDED  
A GREAT STIMULUS TO SO ACT. AND, TOO, MOST  
EVERY VOTER IN HIS MIND AT LEAST HAS LOOKED

RETURN DAY -- 9

AT HIS FAVORITE CANDIDATE AND ASKED THE QUESTION -- WHAT HAS HE DONE FOR ME LATELY? THE NEWSPAPER STAFFS HAVE BEEN TALKING TO THEMSELVES, RAISING SUCH QUESTIONS AS "SHOULD EDITORIAL PAGES CARRY ENDORSEMENTS OR NOT? IF YOU WILL RECALL THE ENDORSEMENTS AND LOOK AT THE RESULTS, YOU CAN EASILY COME UP WITH YOUR OWN ANSWER -- WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

THE VOTER MOVED AWAY FROM AND AROUND PARTISAN LINES AND VOTED FOR HIS CANDIDATE. THE INDEPENDENTS SWUNG THE ELECTION, WITH A BIT OF A TENDENCY TO VOTE OUT, RATHER THAN VOTE IN.

BUT LET'S FORGET IT. ELECTION WAS TUESDAY. SOME WON, AND OF COURSE, SOME



RETURN DAY -- 10

LOST IN SPITE OF -- OR BECAUSE OF --  
POLITICAL ISSUES, POSITION PAPERS, INTEGRITY,  
LEADERSHIP QUALITIES, ABILITY, FATE OR SOME  
UNKNOWN REASON.

TODAY IS THURSDAY, THE SECOND DAY AFTER  
THE GAME HAS BEEN SCORED. BESIDES, ON  
RETURN DAY IT IS TRADITIONAL TO PUT ASIDE  
PARTISAN POLITICS. IT IS A DAY MEN AND WOMEN  
OF ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS HAVE COME TOGETHER  
HERE IN THE COUNTY SEAT WITH THE RESOLVE TO  
WORK AS CITIZEN PARTNERS FOR A FAIR AND  
HONEST SOLUTION TO OUR GRAVE NATIONAL AND  
STATE PROBLEMS. JUST REMEMBER THAT NO  
POLITICAL PARTY OR CANDIDATE -- WHETHER HE  
WINS, LOSES, OR COMES OUT A DRAW -- HAS A  
CORNER ON IGNORANCE, TALENT OR LEADERSHIP.  
SO THERE IS A NEED, A PLACE, AND A JOB FOR ALL  
OF US.

RETURN DAY -- 11

THEN, TOO, THE POLITICAL YOUNGSTERS  
HAVE FOR THE FIRST TIME EXERCISED THEIR  
FRANCHISE, AND INDEED THE LEVERS (STRINGS)  
THEY PULLED BEHIND THE POLLING PLACE CURTAINS  
HAVE INFLUENCED NOT ONLY THIS ELECTION, BUT  
THE "WAY OF POLITICS" IN CHOOSING AND  
ELECTING CANDIDATES IN THIS COUNTRY FOR  
GENERATIONS TO COME. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN THESE "YOUNG POLITICAL SOOTHSAYERS"  
AND THOSE OF US OF GREATER MATURITY, AND  
IT LIES MAINLY IN THE FACT THAT FOR THE  
MOST PART WE QUESTIONED NOTHING. OUR SONS  
AND DAUGHTERS QUESTION EVERYTHING. WE  
WERE BELIEVERS. THEY ARE SKEPTICS. JUST REFLECT  
A MOMENT. WE ARE MORE COMFORTABLE. IT IS  
ALWAYS EASIER TO ACCEPT. IT IS MUCH MORE  
DIFFICULT TO QUESTION. THEY ARE NOT BOUND  
TO THE PAST, AS WE SEEM TO BE. THEY ARE MORE  
FREE. BUT I HONESTLY DO NOT KNOW WHICH IS



RETURN DAY -- 12

THE WISER. I DO KNOW WHICH IS EASIER, AND WHEN YOU ARE CONFRONTED WITH MAKING A DECISION, YOU JUST AUTOMATICALLY WEIGH THE ODDS TODAY AGAINST USEFUL CHANGE AND YOUR CHANCE OF INFLUENCING IT. IN SHORT, THE SENIOR INFLUENCERS CRY FOR "YOUNG BLOOD" BUT MOST OF US WOULD FEEL MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE IF IT WERE CIRCULATING THROUGH MORE MATURE -- ? -- BODIES. DON'T WORRY, YOUNGSTERS, IT ISN'T.

THE 18-YEAR-OLDS FOR THE FIRST TIME EXERCISING THEIR FRANCHISE ON TUESDAY DID GIVE US SOME INDICATION OF HOW THIS NEW AMERICAN MINORITY CAN AND PERHAPS WILL INFLUENCE POLITICS IN THE FUTURE. AND LET ME SUGGEST IN ALL KINDNESS TO THOSE NEW VOTERS THAT THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER TIME IN LIFE WHEN YOU KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS AND WILL BE AS CONFIDENT THAT YOUR VOTE WAS RIGHT.

RETURN DAY -- 13

BUT, NO MATTER. WE MUST LEAD OUT  
IN OUR EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE.

AND WHAT ARE THE BASIC VALUES, TRAITS,  
VIRTUES OR INGREDIENTS OF A LEADER? ONCE  
WHEN ASKED WHAT HE REGARDED AS THE MOST  
IMPORTANT VIRTUE, WINSTON CHURCHILL REPLIED:

"COURAGE -- BECAUSE IT IS THE GUARANTOR  
OF ALL OTHER VIRTUES."

BUT HOW ABOUT INTEGRITY? WITHOUT IT  
WE WOULD BE BUILDING ON QUICKSAND; ANOTHER  
MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT IS THE TALENT FOR  
THOSE STRATEGIES AND PROCESSES WHICH ADD TO  
THE CORE OF CITIZENS WHO BELIEVE THEY ARE  
RIGHT.

RETURN DAY -- 14

ADMITTEDLY, THESE ARE THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR LEADERSHIP. THEY HAVE BEEN AND STILL ARE AS SUSCEPTIBLE OF ABUSE AS THEY ARE ESSENTIAL. (A LEADER IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT.) THE COUNTRY AND ITS CITIZENS CAN SUFFER FROM AN OVERDOES OF ANY ONE.

FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN RESPONSIVENESS AND ENTHUSIASM BECOME DEMOGAGY AND PLANS BECOME CONSPIRACY.

NEVERTHELESS, YOU HAVE AN OBLIGATION AS A LEADER AND AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE AFFAIRS OF OUR STATE TO CONTINUE TO PRESS FORWARD WITHIN THIS BROAD DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP AND WORK TOWARDS BUILDING A BETTER STATE, A BETTER NATION AND A BETTER WORLD.



RETURN DAY -- 15

SO, LET NO MAN HERE COME UP SHORT  
ON THIS SCORE BY FAILING TO STAND UP, BE  
COUNTED AND LEAD OUT.

I REPEAT. THE CHALLENGE WE REALLY  
FACE TODAY IN DELAWARE -- TWO DAYS AFTER  
ELECTION -- IS NOT THE QUESTION OF WHO CAN  
WIN. YOU HAVE DECIDED THAT. BUT THE  
IMPORTANT THING IS HOW WE GOVERN. WILL WE --  
ALL OF US -- WORK TOWARDS BRINGING THE  
EXECUTIVE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND THE  
PEOPLE TOGETHER TO DEVELOP AN ESPRIT DE CORPS  
WORTHY OF THE IDEALS AND DREAMS OF A STATE  
THAT STARTED A NATION AS WE MOVE TOWARDS  
CELEBRATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ON JULY 4, 1776?  
REMEMBER -- DELAWARE IS THE FIRST STATE.

I DO HAVE SERIOUS DOUBTS THAT WE ARE  
TOGETHER AFTER THIS, THE MOST MODERN OF

RETURN DAY -- 16

ELECTIONS AND PROBABLY A MOST DEMOCRATIC  
ONE WHICH HAS FOR THESE VERY REASONS QUITE  
LIKELY MOMENTARILY DRIVEN US FARTHER  
APART THAN AT ANY TIME IN HISTORY.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT AS DELAWAREANS WE  
WILL OVERCOME ALL OF THESE ALLEGED SINS OF  
COMMISSION AND OMISSION COMMITTED DURING  
THE CAMPAIGN SIMPLY BECAUSE EACH OF US HAS  
AN INBORN OR INGRAINED SENSE OF HONESTY AND  
VALUES AND ARE BASICALLY PRACTICING HUMANISTS,  
AS WELL AS DELAWAREANS.

THIS STATE OF OUR STATE AND ITS PEOPLE  
ALONE, I CONTEND, WILL RESTORE OUR MORAL  
PURPOSES AND AN INTEGRITY OF OUR GOALS AND  
THIS TRAUMA WE HAVE ENDURED SINCE LAST  
THANKSGIVING (AND THAT'S WHEN IT STARTED --



RETURN DAY -- 17

LIMIT TIME OF CAMPAIGN -- AND ELECT MEMBERS  
OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, BOTH  
WASHINGTON AND DOVER FOR A 4-YEAR TERM)  
WILL BE RIGHTLY INTERPRETED SO THAT IN THE  
LONG RUN WE WILL PROFIT FROM THESE SOMETIMES  
TRYING EXPERIENCES. WE MUST AS THESE TRYING  
EXPERIENCES -- OR CRISES -- OR WHATEVER --  
OF TODAY ARE NORMAL AND WILL ALWAYS BE  
WITH US -- IN POLITICS, GOVERNMENT, ECONOMICS  
OR JUST AS PEOPLE REACTING TO PEOPLE. THE  
TIME IS NOW FOR YOU TO ACCEPT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR MEETING HEAD-ON THE PROBLEMS OF CHANGE.

RESOLVE TODAY THAT IT WILL BE YOU WHO  
SEEKS AND BRINGS TO ALL OF US THE PURPOSE AND  
THE MEANING WE ARE ALL LOOKING FOR IN OUR  
LIVES. TODAY, SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN, TO  
RESTORE OUR FAITH AND TRUST IN THIS NOISY,  
POLLUTED AND CHANGING WORLD.



RETURN DAY -- 18

JUST REMEMBER THAT IF WE ARE GOING  
TO SAVE WHAT IS LEFT OF OUR CIVILIZATION,  
WE MUST NOW REDISCOVER AND RE-ESTABLISH  
THOSE BASIC PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH THIS STATE  
WAS FOUNDED -- WORK, SACRIFICE, DUTY,  
TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE AND  
CHARITY -- THE THINGS THAT MADE AND WILL  
CONTINUE TO MAKE US FREE.

SURELY I DO NOT NEED TO CONVINCE YOU  
FURTHER THAT WE CANNOT TAKE OUR FREEDOM  
AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRANTED. WE MUST  
WORK AT MEETING AND KEEPING THEM, AND THE  
TIME IS NOW. IT HAS GOT TO BE YOU. SO LET US  
RETURN HOME FROM THIS RETURN TODAY WITH THE  
RESOLVE NOT TO BE A "COP-OUT" BUT A RESPONSIBLE,  
RESPONSIVE LEADER IN YOUR COMMUNITY AND STATE.

THANKS.

By: George M. Worrilow  
Assistant to the Chairman for Community Affairs  
Farmers Bank of the State of Delaware, and  
Vice President for University Relations Emeritus  
University of Delaware.

Gen. Ref.

# 571

DELAWARE STATE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
DOVER, DELAWARE

RELEASE

"Returns Day," an event that is peculiar to Sussex County, Delaware, will again be observed on November 10, at Georgetown, advises the Delaware State Development Department. This observance, as was the highly successful 1958 "Returns Day," will be bi-partisan with both major political parties joining the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and the "City Fathers" in sponsorship.

Traditionally held at the County Seat the Thursday following Election Day, "Returns Day" restores some of the color of the past and attracts many visitors to picturesque Georgetown.

Planning is now underway for this year's observance, which will most likely include a parade, ox-roast, chicken barbecue and an address by a prominent speaker as well as the appearance of successful candidates.

"Returns Day" had its origin in the distant past when ballot boxes from the outlying sections of the county were taken to the County Seat prior to noon of the Thursday following Election Day and the results certified by an Official Board of Canvassers presided over by the Sheriff of Sussex County. In the absence of a fast, efficient means of communication, people from all over the county gathered in Georgetown on that day to learn the results and to greet the successful candidates.

J. Thomas Scharf, in his "History of Delaware," published in 1888 and still widely used as reference by historians, students and others interested in Delaware's past, has this to say about "Returns Day":

"One of the customs peculiar to the people of Sussex, from time immemorial, is to hold high carnival on the day when the results of a general election are announced. On this 'Returns Day' the official

Board of Canvassers, with the sheriff presiding, meets at Georgetown at twelve o'clock noon. But early in the morning people from all parts of the county, and even from Maryland, may be seen coming to the county-seat, some walking, others on horseback, and still others in wagons and carts drawn by one or more oxen, by an ox and a horse, an ox and a mule, or several oxen and a horse, the vehicle being gaily decorated with bright colors or flags. Often this crowd presents a motley appearance, some being dressed in costumes which were used in primitive times, and others purposely arraying themselves in an outlandish manner to give more zest to the spirit of the occasion.

"The successful candidates also come to town and are met by a great crowd of admiring friends, who extend their congratulations in an unmistakable manner. Some of these candidates are taken up bodily, and are carried around on men's shoulders when the results are announced from the window of the court-house to the congregated mass below. Booths, stalls and stands are erected near the court-house, where all kinds of edibles, such as opossum and rabbit meat, fish and oysters can be procured. The women, who constitute a considerable portion of the crowd, are generously treated to cakes, candies, and the best the booths afford. The citizens of the town hold a general reception, and all are expected to help entertain the people, especially if they are friends of the successful party. Every one endeavors to make "Returns Day" a hilarious one, and all seem willing to perpetuate a custom which is now peculiar to Sussex County alone, and which sometimes brings three thousand people to town."

With the development of better means of communication, "Returns Day" lost its significance and disappeared from the Delaware scene until



the early 1950's when it was revived in a somewhat modified form.

Through 1956, the winning political party staged the observance largely as a means to celebrate a victory at the polls and to present to the public its successful candidates.

However, in 1958, merchants joined with other leaders of civic and political organizations to present, along bi-partisan lines, a program that included a parade, an ox-roast and a chicken barbecue in addition to an address by a prominent speaker and the appearance of the successful candidates.

As a result of the favorable public response to the 1958 observance, "Returns Day" is apparently fully reinstated as a significant, biennial Delaware observance, notes the Development Department.

NEWS RELEASE      DELAWARE STATE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
DOVER, DELAWARE

"RETURN DAY", AN EVENT PECULIAR TO SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE, TO BE  
OBSERVED NOVEMBER 5

by David S. Hugg

"Return Day", an event that is peculiar to Sussex County, Delaware, will again be observed at Georgetown, this November 5th.

Traditionally held at the County Seat the Thursday following Election Day, the event serves to recapture some of the color of the past and, in recent years, has attracted many visitors to Georgetown.

As on past "Return Days", this year's observance will include a parade, an ox-roast, an address by a prominent speaker, and the appearance of a majority of the candidates who will have competed for statewide and county offices two days previous.

"Return Day" had its origin in the distant past when ballot boxes from the outlying sections of the county were taken to the County Seat prior to noon of the Thursday following Election Day and the results certified by an Official Board of Canvassers presided over by the Sheriff of Sussex County. Due to the absence, in those times, of a fast, efficient means of communication, people from all over the county gathered in Georgetown on "Return Day" to learn the results and to greet the successful candidates.

J. Thomas Scharf, in his "History of Delaware," published in 1888 and still widely used as reference by historians, students and others interested in Delaware's past, has this to say about "Return Day":

"One of the customs peculiar to the people of Sussex, from time immemorial, is to hold high carnival on the day when the results of a general election are announced. On this 'Return Day' the official Board of Canvassers, with the sheriff presiding, meets at Georgetown at twelve o'clock, noon. But early in the morning people from all parts of the county, and even from Maryland, may be seen coming to the county-seat, some walking, others on horseback, and still others in

(more)

wagons and carts, drawn by one or more oxen, by an ox and a horse, an ox and a mule, or several oxen and a horse, the vehicle being gaily decorated with bright colors or flags. Often this crowd presents a motley appearance, some being dressed in costumes which were used in primitive times, and others purposely arraying themselves in an outlandish manner to give more zest to the spirit of the occasion.

"The successful candidates also come to town and are met by a great crowd of admiring friends, who extend their congratulations in an unmistakable manner. Some of these candidates are taken up bodily, and are carried around on men's shoulders when the results are announced from the window of the court-house to the congregated mass below. Booths, stalls and stands are erected near the court-house, where all kinds of edibles, such as opossum and rabbit meat, fish and oysters can be procured. The women, who constitute a considerable portion of the crowd, are generously treated to cakes, candies, and the best the booths afford. The citizens of the town hold a general reception, and all are expected to help entertain the people, especially if they are friends of the successful party. Every one endeavors to make 'Return Day' a hilarious one, and all seem willing to perpetuate a custom which is now peculiar to Sussex County alone, and which sometimes brings three thousand people to town."

After disappearing from the Delaware scene for many years the observance was revived in the early 1950's with the successful political party staging a celebration on The Circle. In 1956, the "Return Day" program was expanded to include a parade, an ox-roast and the appearance of the successful candidates on a platform erected on The Circle. Two years later, merchants and other civic leaders joined in making "Return Day" truly bi-partisan and somewhat of a local holiday. The observance was further expanded in 1960 and in 1962, and this year's observance is, according to residents of the Georgetown area, expected to be "the best yet."

XX





# Whale & Post

Return Day

Sussex County's Finest Newspapers

November 8, 1990

## History

*People Have Traveled To Georgetown For Results Since The Town Was Carved From Broadkill Forrest*

Politicians and all the people of Sussex County have been assembling for Return Day ever since Georgetown was made county seat in 1792.

The form of the celebration, which always takes place on the Thursday following election day, in all the even years, has changed considerably over the years. The purpose of the day however has remained the same.

The residents of the county come to their county seat to hear the election returns, to celebrate victories, and to drown the sorrows of defeat.

In recent years the Return Day celebration has also become the single-most unifying event that takes place for all of sprawling Sussex County. One of the largest parades held on the Delmarva Peninsula is the centerpiece of the Return Day celebration.

The parade shows off the talents of high school and junior high school bands from throughout the county, features all statewide and county candidates riding in horse-drawn carriages and convertible automobiles, and a wide variety of floats, marching units, and other exhibits put on wheels.

Thousands of Sussex County residents, and Delawareans from north to south, join together in Georgetown to celebrate the conclusion of the campaigning and the democratic process.

W. Emerson Wilson, a frequent contributor of historical articles to the News-Journal papers in Wilmington, compiled a history of Return Day that was published in the official brochure for the event in 1974.

Much of the historical information that follows comes from that effort. Return Day as it is celebrated in these times is far more ceremonial than it was in the earliest days of our nation. In 1776, Lewes was the county seat of Sussex County and elections for state and federal offices were held there in accordance with rules adopted in the first state's constitution in 1776. People from Western Sussex understandably didn't cotton much to traveling a whole day across poor roads and in the unpredictable weather of early November to cast their ballots.

Georgetown, equidistant from all points in Sussex County, was created in 1791 to satisfy those complaints. A gentleman named George Mitchell was among the three men appointed to come up with a location and layout for a new county seat.

**Please Turn To Back Page**



Many politicians will be crowing like this Blue Hen Chicken as they celebrate election victories.

*Complete Sussex County Election Results, From All Polling Places, Included Inside*



Those who lost will be quickly seeking new alliances to head off on a different political path.

## Return Day

*When The Parade Ends The Returns Will Be Announced From The Court House Balcony*

By STEVE HOENIGMANN

It's a tradition with roots as far back as 1792 - a heritage that Sussex Countians - unlike their counterparts throughout the country - have refused to let die.

It's a day when tens of thousands descend upon the County Seat in Georgetown to hear the ceremonial results of Tuesday's General Election - a day when the proverbial "political hatchet" is buried.

It's Return Day - Sussex County's biennial celebration of the democratic process.

This Thursday's Return Day promises to be as exciting and entertaining as those in the past - perhaps even better, according to Rosalie B. Walls, president of the Sussex County Return Day Committee, Inc.

The highlight of the day is an immense parade winding east through Georgetown featuring marching units, floats, bands and, of course, politicians of all political persuasions who can be seen riding in horsedrawn carriages and convertibles. Often times opposing candidates will ride in the same vehicle.

The end of the parade about 3 p.m. signals an appearance by Town Crier Ronnie Dodd, who for years has ceremoniously announced the election results from a perch above the Courthouse steps while the "hatchet" is buried below.

But the Return Day parade, which begins at 1 p.m., is just a portion of what Mrs. Walls and her committee have planned for the thousands of people planning to spend the day in Georgetown (see schedule on page 3).

Interesting additions to this year's event include:

- a 3:30 performance by the Hegeman String Band, one of the famous Mummies units from Philadelphia;

- numerous concerts on The Circle, both in the morning and afternoon;

- flags and yellow ribbons will be handed out to the crowd all day to honor and remember our military personnel in the Middle East; and

- the day will conclude with a bang at 5:30 with a "fireworks finale" - the first-ever for Return Day, compliments of Garden State Fireworks of New Jersey.

But the day begins early when food and craft vendors throughout town open their booths at 9 a.m. Nobody will go hungry with the variety of munchies, hot beverages, soups and, of course, the free ox roast sandwiches which will be served at the barbecue pit just off The Circle in the afternoon.

Special morning activities include the 10 a.m. dedication of a Return Day historical marker on The Circle between the Wilmington Trust and Mellon banks. The marker will be one of four placed on The Circle in honor of Georgetown's bicentennial, a celebration the town begins this January.

In addition, the popular luncheon at 11 a.m. in the cafeteria of Sussex Central High School plays host to politicians and invited guests who will enjoy a catered buffet before participating in the parade.

For those who would like a memento of their Return Day visit, two commemorative coins can be purchased. The bronze coin, for \$5, and the silver coin, for \$20, feature George Mitchell, for whom the town was named, on the face and the Sussex County seal on the back. The Return Day Committee also will be selling T-shirts for \$6 and hats for \$5. Both feature a special Return Day logo, and all items will be for sale at a booth near Town Hall.

## Schedule Of Return Day Events

9 a.m. to dusk - Food and Craft booths, (The Circle and Market Street area.)

10 a.m. - Return Day marker dedication

10 a.m. to noon - Old Courthouse Tours (South Bedford Street.)

10:30 a.m. - Music on The Circle (Performance by "Back In Time.")

11 a.m. - Luncheon for Candidates and honored guests (Sussex Central High School, prepared by Bread of Life.) Concert on The Circle (Delaware State College Marching Band, under the direction of Randolph Johnson.)

12:30 p.m. - Singing on The Circle (Laurel High School Chorus, under the direction of Penny Denney.)

1 p.m. - Return Day Parade (From Sussex Central High School, halfway around The Circle to King Street and westward on Pine Street back to school.)

3 p.m. - Ceremonies on The Circle

3:30 p.m. - Mummies on The Circle (Performance by Hegeman String Band of Philadelphia.) Ox Roast on The Circle (Free open pit barbecued beef sandwiches, northeast corner of The Circle.)

4 p.m. - Street Dance on The Circle (Music by "Back in Time.") Blue Grass on The Circle (Blue grass and country music by "E.Z. Pickins" at the ox roast.)

5:30 p.m. - Fireworks Finale

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." -- First Amendment To The United States Constitution*



# How We Voted In Sussex County

POLLING LOCATIONS SUSSEX COUNTY 1988			U.S. SENATE		U.S. CONGRESS		ATTORNEY GENERAL		STATE TREASURER		AUDITOR OF ACCOUNTS		SENATOR DISTRICT 1		SENATOR DISTRICT 2		REP. DISTRICT 3		REP. DISTRICT 3		REP. DISTRICT 3		REP. DISTRICT 3		REP. DISTRICT 3	
Election District	Representative District		BIDEN	BRADY	CARPER	WILLIAMS	OBERLY	STONE	MCWILLIAMS	RZEWNICKI	DOWD	WAGNER	ADAMS	SMITH	CORDREY		SLATER	EWING	MORGAN	CAREY	SCHROEDER		BUNTING	MURRAY	FALLON	
4	35	Lakeview School, Milford	291	201	304	178	283	196	146	351	181	309					170	328								
5	35	Lakeview School, Milford	136	148	134	145	131	143	82	198	114	164	156	122			115	363								
6	35	Woodbridge Elementary S.	578	433	581	323	488	435	367	633	422	551	698	314			376	657								
7	35	Bridgeville Fire Hall	571	321	579	297	520	340	299	573	389	466	690	209			338	575								
1	36	Lulu M. Ross School, Milford	486	483	603	411	529	495	288	745	403	608							327	710						
2	36	Lulu M. Ross School, Milford	237	179	250	163	217	194	130	286	175	231							119	313						
3	36	Slaughter Neck C. Action Center	366	166	341	184	319	196	215	307	273	238							194	345						
4	36	Ellendale Fire Hall	696	324	685	316	600	395	484	589	500	497	685	313					496	539						
5	36	Del. Tech C. College, Georgetown	480	312	486	298	417	360	242	543	316	462	504	275					245	540						
6	36	Milton Jr. High School	682	270	562	272	510	314	273	579	358	471							249	610						
1	37	H.O. Brittingham E. School, Milton	358	163	347	162	302	204	209	309	266	240									385					
2	37	Shields E. School, Lewes	521	362	509	354	480	369	241	577	407	449									652					
3	37	Savannah Road School Bldg., Lewes	551	356	570	317	533	344	303	575	424	436									685					
4	37	Lewes Fire Hall	464	261	452	259	408	294	235	482	327	361			469						521					
5	37	Rehoboth Fire Hall	315	308	335	275	312	296	198	412	247	350			337						390					
6	37	Rehoboth Fire Hall	232	226	216	222	225	217	129	320	165	276			236						273					
7	37	Rehoboth E. School (Stockley St. Ext.)	909	711	903	684	892	680	580	1,014	711	830									1,108					
8	37	Rabbits Ferry Community Hall	541	355	530	348	488	381	309	571	421	461									644					
1	38	Indian River Fire Hall, Oak Orchard	600	259	571	267	537	297	380	455	456	363			636								554	302		
2	38	Indian River Fire Co. Long Neck	830	567	791	574	787	559	538	822	672	670			914								888	505		
3	38	Lord Baltimore E. School, Ocean View	659	515	641	507	611	528	374	773	469	648			702								689	499		
4	38	Bethany Beach Fire Hall	826	677	798	636	801	629	489	939	631	762			894								939	570		
5	38	Lord Baltimore E. School, Ocean View	480	340	482	307	452	339	299	487	361	411			571								524	304		
6	38	Roxana Fire Hall	240	113	231	114	208	123	136	201	162	163			259								242	117		
7	38	Selbyville Middle School, Selbyville	395	242	402	244	355	253	226	387	266	339			429								469	183		
1	39	Wesley Community (Near Seaford)	252	195	257	185	280	180	145	294	210	223	286	157												311
2	39	Katie L. Handy School, Seaford	299	245	317	222	287	246	154	384	221	309														413
3	39	New High School, Seaford	68	25	66	25	58	29	40	45	54	32	67	21												49
4	39	New High School, Seaford	226	216	236	205	225	198	100	336	162	263	248	183												327
5	39	New High School, Seaford	414	331	452	292	431	306	204	545	310	427														570
6	39	W. Seaford E. School, Seaford	426	309	421	307	419	290	223	502	318	382														525
7	39	Seaford City Hall	278	144	278	139	263	144	180	227	220	174														274
8	39	Blades Fire Hall	608	358	612	337	546	387	374	575	482	444														638
1	40	Vocational Tech. School, Georgetown	132	104	133	104	128	105	80	155	106	126	165	69												
2	40	N. Laurel E. School, Laurel	972	539	927	570	875	603	555	934	699	762														
3	40	Laurel Municipal Building	456	120	433	134	407	150	298	260	344	204														
4	40	St. George's Community Hall	532	260	524	251	482	279	318	453	399	360														
5	40	Laurel Central Middle School	472	181	452	191	435	197	257	379	321	295														
6	40	Delmar Fire Hall	471	286	481	259	434	299	288	442	342	366														
1	41	Georgetown Courthouse	467	260	475	235	413	300	226	493	271	442	461	246												
2	41	Sussex Central H.S., Georgetown	381	229	385	223	328	279	206	413	229	381	391	212												
3	41	Sussex Central H.S., Georgetown	386	169	383	167	325	227	186	361	246	297	353	186												
4	41	Millsboro Jr. High School	937	465	940	445	797	571	486	894	582	782			1,064											
5	41	Dagsboro Fire Hall	556	294	537	295	482	345	321	506	376	437			593											
6	41	Frankford Elementary School	333	157	326	133	301	158	193	265	236	212			347											
7	41	Gumboro Fire Hall	266	129	255	133	229	147	141	228	165	201														
SUSSEX POLLING PLACE TOTALS			* 21,376	13,302	* 21,187	12,679	* 19,522	14,071	12,117	* 21,819	15,409	* 17,875	* 4,704	2,307	* 8,402		999	* 1,723	1,630	* 3,057	* 4,658		* 4,305	2,480		* 3,107
*DENOTES WINNER																										



## How We Voted In Sussex County

REP. DISTRICT 40		REP. DISTRICT 41		CLERK OF PEACE	REGISTER OF WILLS	RECORDER OF DEEDS	SUSSEX COUNCIL DISTRICT 4	SUSSEX COUNCIL DISTRICT 5	SHERIFF						
STONE	LEE	WEST	ROACH	AMERINE	SPICER	CLENDANIEL	WALLER	GREEN	PUSEY	BARBER	COLE	COLLINS	MARINER	JESTICE	JONES
				210	265	266	212	241	232					244	278
				123	150	148	125	134	139					127	146
				471	483	554	432	481	481					469	506
				418	428	494	375	440	409					459	395
				386	601	527	488	470	527					452	544
				168	231	221	186	207	201					195	216
				268	234	334	178	315	197					289	223
				506	475	680	336	601	382					545	432
				264	516	448	341	394	383					334	440
				361	463	490	353	481	350					400	438
				271	217	328	169	313	181					279	216
				354	481	452	387	447	396					393	454
				353	474	449	390	422	426					417	425
				277	390	353	327	352	335					323	356
				215	351	248	333	257	326	249	365			245	337
				147	266	166	251	165	257	134	310			167	248
				650	846	720	785	761	761	677	907			702	791
				387	468	480	371	437	420	439	445			413	445
				418	397	492	322	492	326			503	331	454	367
				623	691	700	612	689	635	615	755			654	672
				438	663	516	583	469	638	459	712			533	579
				588	780	657	709	611	771	649	818			665	724
				341	417	420	341	379	391	388	417			413	370
				155	174	200	125	159	168	183	154			181	156
				248	341	312	282	273	326	302	318			288	314
				217	209	211	224	203	218					207	223
				258	267	220	310	226	297					227	300
				51	33	56	31	49	34					55	30
				172	252	164	262	146	284					165	258
				349	382	315	419	323	404					336	376
				366	331	312	402	309	388					318	375
				216	166	200	192	203	179					214	166
				506	422	457	472	481	446					508	434
68	169			102	130	123	112	123	110					110	126
608	922			720	745	717	777	728	741					825	672
301	280			334	214	308	254	348	202					371	183
336	460			368	395	359	415	432	330			491	299	455	317
255	405			311	307	306	330	341	275			349	296	374	260
288	471			339	366	328	393	362	349			376	361	398	323
				401	322	231	484	423	410	313				319	409
				352	273	188	418	298	320	298				256	344
				391	167	179	365	365	185	320	223			230	320
				960	460	520	840	735	619	689	686	714	664	144	730
				490	365	333	385	441	375	412	409	473	364	431	393
				335	147	193	260	275	179	228	233	243	212	287	163
				357	53	154	216	188	182	175	193	194	195	191	189
1,856															
* 2,707															
* 3,286															
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* 17,989															
* 17,456															
15,768															
* 16,817															
16,264															
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* 5,201															
* 3,343															
2,722															
16,560															
* 16,653															



## Return Day 1988

Crowds throng around the Circle in Georgetown on Return Day in 1988 as a high school band makes its way past the front of the courthouse. The 1990 Return Day Parade is expected to be one of the largest ever as Georgetown prepares to launch its bicentennial celebration in 1991.

## Whale & Post

A publication presented by the Whale and Sussex Post, newspapers proudly serving Sussex County, in celebration of Return Day, 1990. For information about the Whale, please call (302)645-2265. For information about the Sussex Post, please call (302)934-9261.

Sussex County's  
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# History

Continued From Front Page

Surveyor Rhodes Shankland came up with the circle concept and laid out the streets from there. Mitchell must have won when straws were drawn for the naming of the county seat. The new town was to be called Georgetown.

The county seat was closer for voting purposes for many of the county's residents. According to Wilson's history, voters had to drive into Georgetown to cast their ballots and it is unlikely they would return two days later for the results.

Undoubtedly the results of the election were known that night or the next day and the voters would stay over to learn the results.

Under that arrangement, the earliest Return Day would have been the day after the election. Celebrations were held informally by those who had won.

It wasn't long though before voters complained about having to drive all the way to Georgetown to cast their ballots.

Although it took more than two decades to change the system, the state's general assembly passed laws in 1828 which set up polling places in the thirteen hundreds of the county. That meant votes had to be gathered from polling places throughout the county and carried to Georgetown for tabulation, "where they were turned over to the sheriff . . . and the results announced from the courthouse at noon on Thursday."

Those were the beginnings of Return Day. " . . . since there were no county newspapers in those days there was no way of knowing who had won the election. So many of the farmers decided to take the day off, load their whole families into wagons and go to Georgetown on Thursday to get the results."

Wilson's history continues: "It would seem that Return Day as we know it now probably started with the election of 1830 or the Presidential election of 1832. Certainly by the 1840s the custom was well-established.

"Several thousand persons would pour into Georgetown that morning coming on foot, in wagons drawn by mules, horses, or oxen, in carriages of all types, and on horseback.

"While waiting for the results the crowd listened to band concerts, wagered on cock fights, and engaged in other pastimes. Soon merchants saw an opportunity for gain and stalls and booths selling all kinds of food, clothing and other articles were set up.

"The results were read from the door of the courthouse at noon and were printed on a white sheet hoisted over the courthouse door. The winning candidates were placed onto the shoulders of their adherents and paraded around the Green. A large pole was erected in the Green and the emblem of the winning party was run up it. Generally an ox roast was provided by the winners.

"However the spirit of good feeling and reconciliation which marks the Return Day of the present was not always there in the old days. The losers quite often did not take their defeat with good grace and in one fight in 1844 a Dagsboro man was killed."

The Return Day tradition grew and grew throughout the 1800s and represented a major festival in Georgetown every other year. With the turn of the century however new forces came on the scene. The automobile and telephone and radio brought people closer to the county seat and they no longer had to go to Return Day to find out who won. Interest in the old tradition began to fade.

World War Two was raging in 1942 and Return Day was cancelled altogether. Following the war however, a group of Republicans and Democrats got together and made plans to bring Return Day back bigger and better than ever. While in previous years the celebration was dominated by whichever party had been victorious in the elections, the goal of the bipartisan Return Day committee was to have a bipartisan celebration.

A Burying of the Hatchet ceremony was begun and continues today. The county chairpersons for the Republican and Democrat parties join together on the reviewing stand and signify a reunification of purpose, following often bitter campaigns, by burying the hatchet.



## Many Volunteers, Many Hours Make Return Day Success

It takes many hours and a lot of people to make Return Day the success it is every two years. In fact, not even before this Return Day is over, planners will be busy thinking about Return Day 1992.

The people who are responsible for Return Day include the officers of the Sussex County Return Day Committee, Inc., its directors and honorary directors and hard-working volunteers. They deserve a tip of the hat.

**Officers:** Rosalie B. Walls, president; George F. Couch, vice president; Eleanor Rayne Warrington, secretary; and W. Layton Johnson, treasurer.

**Directors:** Joseph W. Booth, Richard M. Calhoun, Charlotte P. Campbell, Ann Couch, Claire T. Croll, Ronald F. Dodd, Carolyn Green, Dallas Green, Richard T. Hudson, Allan Kujala, William G. Lambden, William H. Lawson, Christine Lecates, William Lecates, Daniel L. Milburn, John T. Purnell, Cindy Pusey, Anthony Racaniello, Jay M. Stevens and Elmer Walls.

**Honorary Directors:** All five members of Sussex County Council - Ralph Benson, Dale Dukes, William D. Stevenson, George Cole, R. James Mariner - and County Administrator Robert L. Stickels.

**Volunteers:** Evelyn Baker, Sue H. Barlow, Gail Brown, Helen Buchanan, Mark Cashdan, Jean Chafin, Vera Coleman, David Crede, Susan Crockett, Gus and Teresa Croll, Tammy Dorey, Jimmy Dukes, Amber Esham, Robin Esham, Betty Evans, Harvey Gregg, Constance Holifield, Charles Hawk, Walt Headley, Bob Hitchens, Ira and Shirley Hitchens, Joan Hitchens, Jim Hodgson, Debbie Holson, Olive Holson, Steve Kremer, Joyce W. Lambden, Kirk Lawson, Kris Lawson, Tom Lockerman, Walter McFall, Hazel Meegan, Joan Messick, Isabelle Morris, Greg Pettyjohn, Mark Pettyjohn, Steve Pepper, Levita Robinson, Tom Rust, Lawrence Sammons, Margaret Short, Joe Smith, John Spicer, Violet W. Stout, Wayne Thornton, Henry Vogt, Biffy Walls, Harvey L. Walls, Francis Walls, Kevin Walls, Linda Walls, Mary Walls, Tony Walls, Russell V. Warrington, David Webb, Joyce Weston, Al Wilkins, Shelley Wilson, Mary Lou Workman and M. Lawrence Wilkins.



## Georgetown Is Planning A Grand Bicentennial Year

By RHONDA H. TUMAN

Georgetown's mayor, town council and Georgetown 200 Committee have been busy for the past year planning a year's worth of activities to honor the County Seat's bicentennial to be celebrated in 1991.

Monthly events - from a Federal Cotillion to the Georgetown Jubilee - has been planned by the 200 Committee and town officials.

Four historical markers will be erected in each of the four corners of the Town Square that will tell about The Circle, the history of the new courthouse, why the County seat was established at Georgetown and about Return Day. A fifth marker will tell about the old courthouse and will be posted near the restored building which is located on the corners of South Bedford Street and Pine Street. State legislators, Rep. Charles P. West, Sen. Thurman Adams and Rep. V. George Carey provided funding for the markers.

Other planned activities include cultural events, a downtown revitalization project, colonial street lighting, the performance of an historical drama, which is in the process of being written, and will be performed by the Possum Point Players.

Debbie Holson, president of the 200 Committee, has asked that each Greater Georgetown Chamber of Commerce member light a candle in their storefront during the year-long celebration, "as a special welcome to all persons during the bicentennial."

Georgetown residents gathered on many nights to sew a bicentennial signature quilt and a pictorial quilt which is hanging in Georgetown Town Hall and will be auctioned off - and officials hope - donated to the town to be hung in the town hall.

An historical book, "Georgetown - From Crossroads to County Seat" is available for sale at the town hall for \$25. An historical time capsule will be buried to commemorate "Purchase Day" ceremonies May 9, 1991.

Highlights of the year-long events are:

- January 26, 1991 - Federal Cotillion (black tie ball; colonial dress is encouraged);
- March 7-9 - Possum Point Players historical play;
- March 16 - 200 Years of Fashion Show
- April 13-14 - Olde Georgetown Antique Show & Sale
- April 20 - Earth Day in Georgetown
- May 4 - Bicentennial Festival
- May 9 - Purchase Day (time capsule burial)
- June 15 - Music Faire
- July 4 - Olde Fashioned July Fourth Celebration at Delaware Tech
- August 3 - Living History in Georgetown (battle re-enactments)
- September 7 - New County Seat Arts & Crafts Show & Sale
- October 6 - Homecoming Sunday
- October 26 - Georgetown Jubilee (like Return Day)
- November - Variety Show-Hoedown
- November 29 - Hanging of the Green
- December 5 - Colonial Christmas Parade
- December 7 - Historic Home Tour
- December 9 - Caroling on the Circle

## Various And Sundry Facts And Other Information About The Return Day Celebration

Return Day will end with a bang this year as fireworks burst over The Circle in Georgetown beginning at 5:30 p.m. Return Day planners are also expecting a burst of pride as American flags and yellow ribbons are given to the crowd on Thursday, Nov. 8, 1990, in honor of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia.

The day-long celebration will feature entertainment from the Heqeman String Band, a unit of the world famous Mummers of Philadelphia. The Mummers, wearing their colorful costumes, will perform a concert on The Circle and march in the Return Day parade.

In addition to the Mummers, the Sussex County Return Day Committee has scheduled the Delaware State College Marching Band and Laurel High School Chorus for Concerts on The Circle. "Back in Time" will perform at a street dance on The Circle and "E.Z. Pickins" will perform at the Ox Roast.

The parade will feature a Percheron One Horse Hitch sponsored by Southern States, Miss Delaware Lisa Maria Munzert, the First U.S. Army Band, the Delaware State College Marching Band and almost a hundred other bands, antique cars, fire apparatus, and floats. The Return Day parade is one of the largest on Delmarva and attracts almost 20,000 people.

"This parade will be extra special with the Mummers and Percheron horse," said Return Day Committee President Rosalie Walls. "We have added fireworks to this year's celebration to give it a festive ending. The flags and yellow ribbons will add color to the parade and honor our troops in the Persian Gulf too."

Return Day activities will begin at 9 a.m. on The Circle in Georgetown and conclude just after dark. Hundreds of food booths, bargain tables, crafts and more will be featured. The parade will step off from Sussex Central High School at 1 p.m. and proceed down Market Street and around the Circle.

Return Day is considered by many as the official end of the political campaign. It brings together all the candidates and supporters on The Circle to hear the election returns and ceremoniously bury the hatchet. The event began in the early 1800s when votes were counted at the County Seat and the results were announced two days after the election.

In honor of Georgetown's bicentennial in 1991, the Return Day Committee is minting a gold plated bronze coin and a numbered silver coin. The coins will be available on Return Day for \$5 for the bronze coin and \$20 for the silver coin. The coin will feature George Mitchell, for whom the town was named, on the face, and the Sussex County seal on the back. The Committee will also have T-shirts and hats featuring a special Return Day logo for sale.





SPECIAL PULL-OUT SECTION



# RETURN DAY

## 2004



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The Sussex



### Countian

The County Seat Newspaper • Established 1886  
13 S. Front St. • Georgetown, DE



NOVEMBER 3, 2004





# WELCOME TO GEORGETOWN DELAWARE

## HOME OF RETURN DAY



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**Official Souvenir Guide of Return Day • 1998**

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