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LEGGINGER, MANUFACTURER OF WHOLE-ALL OPIUM  
CANDLES, ICE CREAM & CROCKERS



A TOUR OF EARLY MILFORD

compiled by

Edward Millis Hurley

for

Captain Jonathan Caldwell Chapter  
Daughters of the American Revolution

to commemorate the

One hundred sixty fifth Anniversary

of the

Founding of Milford

1787-1952

The last place any of us would choose for a sight-seeing tour would be our own home town. If there is one place we all know by heart it is Milford. And yet it is sometimes possible not to see the woods for the trees, and through looking at the same thing every day not to see it at all. So we are going to do a kind of travelogue in reverse and try to get a picture of the town as it looked when it was young - young and small.

Most of you know that North Milford was the old town and was a prosperous settlement long before South Milford grew up. For many years there was nothing on the southern side of the creek but the Crapper plantation, a stretch of 1570 acres of land valued at \$120,000, a large fortune in that day. The plantation house, which we know as the old Causey Mansion, remains to this day, and is still the most beautiful residence in the town. It was built about 1763 by Levin Crapper and was then a house of two stories and a half with dormers in the roof, the back of the house being what is now the front. It was Governor Causey who raised the third story and gave the house the stately classic lines it now has. Perhaps no house in Sussex so perfectly represents Delaware civilization and culture during the years before the War between the States as this one. All the culture, all the hospitality and open handedness of our ancient Delaware stock is enshrined there and you have only to look to catch a glimpse of the past. In one of the slave quarters lived the black Mammy of the household. As she grew old she grew fat so that

she could no longer ascend the narrow little staircase to her sleeping room above, so her master had enough bricks removed to make a wider passage for her and to this day the hollow place made for her comfort can be seen in the wall.

For many years the life of the Crapper plantation provided the only activity of the southern side of the stream, but in North Milford things were stirring. The town owes its origin to two men, both of whom we must meet before we examine the work they accomplished. First, Mr. Joseph Oliver, whose plantation comprised the land known as Saw Mill Range. His house stood about half way between the present site of Mrs. James Stanton's and the creek. It was many years later cut in half and moved to Front Street in South Milford about where Joseph's Garage now stands and where many of you probably remember it. Mr. Oliver was a keen business man; he ran a store and bought country produce which he shipped in his own vessels out of the river. He petitioned for a drawbridge across the stream and it was built at the expense of the two counties. As enterprising as Mr. Oliver was, it is possible that his house might have remained the only one on the creek bank had it not been for the advent of a new man, a Virginian, Mr. Sydenham Thorne. Mr. Thorne was the rector of Christ Church, an able business man and a fine scholar. He bought all that land at the edge of town now known as the Draper Farm and built on it the handsome colonial residence which we know as Silver Hill. He was quick to see the possibilities of the location for a town and he was not slow to follow up his ideas. He approached

Mr. Oliver and offered to build a dam across the creek at his own expense if Mr. Oliver would agree to lay out his land in building lots. The agreement was made and both projects were carried out. Then a grist mill was built where the Old Red Mill stood and a saw mill farther up stream. By 1790 there were eighty buildings in the town, thus showing a fairly rapid growth. When Mr. Thorne came here the church stood at Church Hill about half way between here and Houston, in fact the present highway passes over the old graveyard that surrounded the church. Mr. Thorne was so sure of the future of the town that he accepted the gift of a town lot from Mr. Oliver for the church and began the work of building the present edifice although some of the congregation objected to the removal. He himself paid for the making of the bricks, but in the midst of his work he died at the age of 45 years, and the walls stood unfinished for some twenty years. In 1789 Mr. Oliver also donated the land for a Methodist Church and graveyard, a part of the foundation yet remaining in the old yard on North Street across from the Milford Elementary School. Whatever Mr. Thorne did was well done and in the best of taste. For his house he choose the most commanding elevation we have, because, it is said, it resembled the situation of "Shirley" in Virginia, the home of General Lee's mother's family, the Carters. Although the pitch of the roof was spoiled about 1880 and the old dormers removed, yet in all other respects it is today one of the best colonial survivals in the county, if not the very best. Filled with handsome paneling and curious staircases it is a worthy

memorial to its builder.

Mr. Thorne also built that row of brick dwellings that stood about where Mr. Wilson Vinyard's home now stands and which most of us remember only in the last stages of decay, yet, like all of his work there were well designed and so long as they stood, gave an 18th century look to Front Street. For a long time they were known as the Mitchell Buildings, later as "Purity Row".

What is now the business section of the town was then a corduroy road serving only as a passage to the bridge. The business section was out West Front Street on the high ground near Silver Hill. Here was the tan yard store, the bark yards for quercitron bark, the vats for tanning hides, cord wood and staves stacked for shipment out of the river, and places for all the lesser trades that went with these. As the town grew the building we remember as the Old National Bank was built by Mr. Wadhams for a storehouse and dwelling. He also built what is now the Mulholland Apartments as a two story tavern kept by Mrs. Hetty Starr and known as Starr's Tavern. This tavern was then an important stopping place for the stage line down state. Mrs. Starr is said to have died of fright. Her son came home drunk, mounted on a spirited colt, and rode up the steps into the hall. As she opened the parlor door to see what the noise was the colt reared in the well of the staircase and she died of heart failure. When it came into the possession of Mr. Daniel Currey it received its third floor and the general appearance

it now has. The daughter of Mr. Curry married General Torbert, our consul general at Paris and the most famous citizen the house has ever had. It was here that Mrs. Torbert waited for the return of her husband's body after he was lost at sea in the wreck of the Vera Cruz, his funeral having been the largest the town has ever seen. As the town prospered all those stately homes in the Torbert block sprang up and fortunately remain today pretty much as they were in the beginning. In the old Hammersley house - where the Collins insurance office is - may be seen what can happen to these treasures when they fall into intelligent hands. No one has been more successful in sympathetic restoration than has Mr. Collins both here and at the old Carlisle house where he lives. Not only he, but the town has a right to be proud of his work. Other very old houses that have come down to us and are yet to be seen are the Towers, once a store, and now showing but little of its original architecture, and Max Willson's house which until 1850 stood on the southeastern corner of North Walnut and Second Streets, and has been carefully preserved by the Willsons. As to schools, the old Academy, built in 1810, was the most noteworthy and is yet to be seen in the older portion of the Milford Elementary School.

A new industry gave rise to South Milford. The Town there grew up as the shipyards grew and prospered and from 1820 to 1875 they showed a steady growth. At one time there were seven yards in operation at once. Mr. Henry Hudson laid out South Front Street parallel with the creek

and convenient to the yards and in many of the old houses there the peculiar style of ship carpentry work may be easily recognized. Fortunes were made in shipbuilding. One of the earliest firms was that of David Black, later there was Carlisle and Reville, Truitt and Deputy, and yet later, Lank and Reville, the Scribner Yard and Abbott and Company. Considering the size of the river really large ships were built, some of 600 tons burden. All this activity caused the growth of stores on Walnut Street and the foundation of the present business section, although it long remained a street of stores and dwellings interspersed, the old Marshall property being about the last of these to go. Some of the houses on Front Street show the effect of this prosperity, notably the Scribner house, now Colonel Lank's and the Hudson house, now Mrs. Jennings. For many years there were wooden bars across Carlisle Lane - the lane leading only to the Trusten McColley Farm. The old McColley house still stands and Dr. William Marshall is now restoring it. It is remarkable for its fine staircase and its curious second floor fireplaces. No account of South Milford would be complete without some mention of the old Causey Spring House. It stood near the corner of Church Street and Causey Avenue, where the Short lumber stacks now are, and was a place of resort for young people on summer evenings. There were carved the heart emblems with their intertwined initials. It was always said that those who drank from this spring would never leave Milford. The spring is gone but Mr. Joseph Holland moved the spring house into his yard where you probably remember



it. We can no longer drink from the spring, but those who live here are usually confirmed Milfordians if not to the extent of a certain old man they used to tell about, whose feet began to hurt the minute he crossed the stream at the Tub Mill and didn't stop until he came back on this side and was again in sight of town.

It used to be the fashion to conclude with a moral so that what we say to you now will serve in the old fashioned way to point a moral and adorn the tale. That old Roman saying - time destroys everything - is just as true for us as it was for them. It is only when we resist and make some organized effort that we are able to rescue some spoils from the wreck of time. The buildings we have been thinking of, some remarkable for their architectural beauty, others for their antiquarian interest, have survived by the merest chance. Much has been lost, like the old Mitchell Buildings, on Front Street, for instance, which a New England town or a Virginia Williamsburg would have taken care to preserve. Until the bridge was built across the creek on Washington Street, it appeared that business would inevitably expand out North and South Walnut Streets and that the Causey Mansion and the fine old houses in the Torbert block in North Milford were doomed to give place to commercial buildings. Most fortunately for the town the bridge has made possible a more compact and convenient business section - convenient because it makes a circular drive for automobiles and provides greater ease of access to the stores. And yet, in spite of

this lucky chance, the fact that they will be preserved remains a pious hope - the hope that this or that building will not fall into the hands of the Philistines, but into hands ready to restore and preserve that which can no longer be replaced. The preservation of such things is already the serious concern of other communities. Not long ago some of you may have seen a photograph in the papers of some citizens of Boston sitting in groups on the pavement. The city had threatened to remove the old brick pavements which were so well in keeping with the buildings on the street, but the determined resistance of these enthusiastic "sitters" called so much attention to the proposed desecration that the pavements were saved and will remain for many a long day to delight the antiquarian eye. So jealously do the citizens of Boston guard even the pavements that front their historic buildings. Here then is our moral - private citizens can do all - or even enough to win the battle. Without some sympathetic civic help our treasures will continue to disappear one by one, in the future as they have in the past. We cannot get back what our town has lost - we can save those really fine things that remain.

Parson Thorne House

This house was built about 1785 by the Rev. Sydenham Thorne, an Anglican minister who came here from Virginia about 1773 to take charge of Christ Church which then stood at Church Hill. This house is one of the best colonial survivals in the county. It has the curtain wings so typical of plantation architecture in the 18th century. Exquisite panelling and built-in cupboards with butterfly shelves remain in place in the parlor. You will note that the roof line was changed in the late years of the last century, being raised to a square pitched roof, the old dormers removed and the present peaked gables installed. These changes may be plainly seen in the attics where even the frame of one of the old dormers still exists. Notice also that there is no indoor communication between the plantation offices, the ~~small~~ rooms behind the arcades no doubt having been larders and butteries. Until a few years ago some of the slave quarters still stood in the rear.

It is impossible to look at this house without giving some thought to its builder. In addition to his clerical duties Mr. Thorne was a mill owner, a planter, and a co-founder of Milford. In politics he was a zealous Tory. It was during his rectorate that the present Christ Church was built although it was not finished due to his untimely death. As was the custom he is buried on the plantation and those who are curious may see his tomb within the walled family graveyard.



Christ Church

Christ Church, Milford, originally Christ Church, Mispillion, founded 1704, was one of the first colonial parishes of the Diocese of Delaware, organized by the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel of the Church of England, with the Right Reverend Bishop of London as the Ecclesiastical Authority.

The first church edifice, known as Christ Church, Savannah, Mispillion, was built about 1705. This was replaced by a larger edifice and a churchyard upon land granted Jehu Davis in 1720. This building was used until 1836 and was known as Christ Church, Milford, from 1790. In the year 1789, Joseph Oliver, a Vestryman, gave two lots in the newly-planned community of Milford. Upon a portion of this plot the present edifice was built. The remaining part is used for churchyard purposes. This building remained incomplete until 1836 when it was consecrated for Divine Services.

The present Christ Church originally was of colonial design. This was changed by alterations and the addition of the chancel and the tower 1861-1865.

Pettigrew House

This house now owned and occupied by Charles Windsor was built by Capt. John Pettigrew. Especially interesting here is the quaint kitchen wing with its towering chimney. The house is equally interesting as the long time residence of Capt. Pettigrew's daughter Mrs. Ann T. Greer. Mrs. Greer kept store in a small story and a half building just west of her residence, carried on a farm, and was famous for her business ability and shrewd worldly wisdom. Her advice on many matters was often sought by her fellow townsmen. So competent was she that Judge Wise of Virginia carried on a legal correspondence with her and seeing her letters signed "A. T. Greer" presumed that his correspondent was a man and complimented him on his business ability.

The house in later years was the home of Mrs. Clara Yardley and is still well preserved and in excellent repair.

112 Front Street, N.W.    (Dr. William Marshall Jr.)

The northeastern rooms were built in 1787 by Elias Shockley, tenanted successively by Lowder Layton, the Fitzgeralds, the Commercial Bank of Delaware and in 1811 the western rooms were added by the Milford Branch of the First National Bank of Smyrna. In 1879 both properties were snuggled against each other in the lines shown on the bricks from the frontal view, were purchased by Dr. & Mrs. George W. Marshall, who joined the two parts in one and raised a family of four boys, of whom the second oldest, Dr. William Marshall Jr., assumed ownership on the death of his mother in 1933.

The house is of brick and contains the offices which have been used first by Dr. George Marshall until his passing in 1915 and then by his sons Drs. William and Samuel Marshall.

### The Towers

This house which architecturally presents today all the gingerbread romanticism of the 80's was not always so. The room on the corner was once a general store kept by John Wallace the step-father of John Lofland, the Milford Bard. It is to him that the house owes its fame. It was in the little garret room whose window is to be seen next to the chimney that he acquired his education and it was from that garret room that he sent forth the poems, short stories and essays that made his reputation. Unfortunately, he was an alcoholic and an opium addict and these vices hastened his untimely end. According to his friends he fell into evil habits because of disappointment in a love affair in his early years. Mr. Mitchell, the father of his fiancée, forbade the marriage and on the day of Miss Mitchell's marriage to another man John withdrew from the world and for the succeeding three years never left this house. Indeed, during that time he is said never to have had a hat on his head. Having loved society he came to abhor it and it was during this period that the case bottle became his constance companion. However, he left a considerable body of writings and to this day is the literary luminary of Milford.



Old School

The cafeteria was originally the Milford Academy built about 1810 and sponsored by the Masonic Lodge. Before 1817 a second floor had been added for a lodge meeting room and a belfry added for the old iron bell, cast in 1809, and now displayed in a cabinet at the new school through the interest of the local D.A.R. The Masons did not own the building until 1832 when Temple Lodge #9 bought it and retained it until 1846 when they sold it to the school committee for the United Districts #42 and 43 of Kent County. This was a pay school and most of Milford's prominent men attended here. John M. Clayton was born at Dagsboro but his parents lived at Silver Hill during his academy attendance. You will better understand the excellence of the curriculum offered here when you consider the many eminent men who came from the school. John Lofland the Milford bard was educated here together with other well known names as George P. Fisher, Hiram McColley, Caleb Layton, Daniel Godwin, Daniel Currey, James Lofland and other doctors, ministers and statesmen. Col. Haslet, the Revolutionary hero, had a son who attended school in Milford. The nickname of the state, Blue Hen's Chickens, originated in this locality. Captain Jonathan Caldwell commanded a company in his regiment. His men took with them some game chickens with celebrated fighting qualities and said to be from the brood of a Kent County Blue Hen. The fame of these fights spread through the army and into contemporary history until Delaware Veterans became known as Blue Hens Chickens and the state the Blue Hen State. We wish this old building could be preserved for posterity as there is nothing of the past which links so many of us as intimately as this.

### Old Methodist Graveyard

This graveyard grew up around the first Methodist chapel in Milford, a small frame building, the brick foundation of which you may see in the rear. In 1842 this building stood, or rather, leaned on props and sometime thereafter was sold for \$27.00. Across the street is St. Paul's, the second Methodist building, now a colored church. Many of the old worthies of the town are buried here, General Torbert, Trusten P. McColley, Daniel Currey and Governor Causey.

### General Torbert House

This house was built about 1825 by Benjamin Wadhams (also the builder of the old National Bank on the other corner) for a tavern, since it stood on the old stage line. To visualize it as it was then you must take away the veranda on the garden side and the bow window above it and remove the third floor. Here Mrs. Hetty Starr kept Starr's Tavern and is said to have died of fright one night when her drunken son rode a blood horse into the front hall. She is buried in the old Methodist graveyard.

The house later became the home of Daniel Currey who added the third floor according to plans drawn by Alonzo Reynolds. Mr. Currey's daughter Miss Mary married General Torbert of Civil War fame. General Torbert was our Consul General at Paris from 1870 to 1874. When the Torberts returned to Milford they brought handsome French furnishings with them. This house was famous for its hospitality and was the scene of many fashionable reunions. Mrs. Torbert was especially

gracious to all visiting clergy and here were entertained many of the most prominent people of this country. General Torbert lost his life in the shipwreck of the Vera Cruz in 1880 in his efforts to save his fellow passengers. His funeral was long remembered as the largest ever seen in Milford.

It is worthy of your attention to notice the chaste lines of Greek architecture employed on this house and on the Mitchell house directly opposite and especially to the curious fact that the portico of this house provides a perfect example of the Doric column while the portico of the Mitchell house is an equally splended example of the Ionic order. This house is a perfect architectural example of the classic "Maison Carre" (Square House) of which there is a famous specimen in Richmond. The walls were originally raised for a bank but the building was completed and the service wing added by Dr. Mitchell.

The houses in this block form the stateliest group of homes remaining in the town. They are seen to the best advantage from the National Bank corner ~~where~~ the succession of stately facades mount the hill in increasing grandeur. Fortunately, the entire block still retains its ancient Brick pavements which are in admirable keeping with the buildings. Although the portico of the Davis home has been destroyed. The house was once the old Methodist parsonage long the home of the Rev. Jonathan S. Willis and there was a Dame's School for small children kept in the cellar to which there was an outside entrance below the level of the street.



The next house south now in the process of restoration by its present owner, Edgar Welch, was built by John McCurdy of Philadelphia for his daughter Mrs. Nehemiah Davis, the grandmother of Mrs. Helen Pierce. The parlor, which has been restored, boasts a handsome roccoco ceiling and fireplace. The next house, long the home of Dr. Collins, was built by Mrs. Collins's father Daniel Godwin on the site of the old Causey home. The rear rooms of this older house are a part of the present edifice and with their low ceilings, tiny staircases and paneled doors form a delightful contrast to the more stately rooms built by Mr. Godwin in the front. Especially noteworthy here is the sharp roof line with its casement garret windows reminiscent of a Parisian roof top.

#### Baker House

Where the house now stands there stood about 1830 a one story frame dwelling occupied by William Jammons. From him it passed to Peter F. Causey and by him was sold to Daniel C. Godwin, who changed the sloping hill to the present terrace and built the handsome three story residence now occupied by Dr. John B. Baker. Mr. Godwin sold it to Dr. Robert Frame. It was next bought by Dr. Robert H. Clark, paymaster in the United States Navy. During his lifetime it was greatly beautified and boasted a splendid boxwood garden. There was once a curious brick bath house built into the bank of the terrace where there were wooden tubs which provided a steam bath when filled with hot water. The house has been

sympathetically cared for by Dr. Baker and is as beautiful today as ever.

### Causey House

This house, known to most of us as the Causey Mansion from its long occupancy by Governor Causey's family, was built for Levin Crapper in 1763 by an English architect named Mitchell. The plantation counted 1500 acres and included what is now South Milford. The house was then two and a half stories and what is now the back was then the front. About 1855 it was remodeled by Governor Causey in the mode of the Greek revival. There is much elegance and simplicity in this adaptation which is to be seen in the window caps and the beautiful iron grille work at the windows in the third story. Most of the slave quarters have disappeared but one yet remains, the small brick building to the right of the house. Governor Causey was in the mercantile business. He shipped his products by schooner to Philadelphia and brought back articles of household use for sale here. Another governor of Delaware, Daniel Rogers, lived there.

McColley House (Egglinton Hall)

About 1792-95 a Mr. Egglinton built the back room (now the kitchen) and the room above. After Egglinton's death his widow married Mr. William Black, who impounded the pond and ran the plantation of several hundred acres. About 1805 he added two rooms above and one large room below to the earlier Egglinton Building. On the death of the Blacks the plantation was bought by Trusten Polk McColley about 1828. He added the three story frontal building of two large rooms on each floor and a staircase and hall, perhaps the finest in Sussex County, that is open to the third floor.

Mr. McColley was a hatter by trade but is better remembered as a popular Methodist preacher whose fame was state wide. His popularity may be judged by the fact that in the course of his ministry he married 1600 couples and preached over 1000 funerals.

T. C. Collins House

The home of T. C. Collins, 205 S. E. Front Street is said to be the second oldest house in South Milford. It was built in 1794 by a ship carpenter named David West and occupied by him until he sold it to Peter F. Causey. In 1836 it passed to Manlove Carlisle and in 1866 was purchased by Thomas Carlisle, grandfather of T. Carlisle Collins. At that time portions of the present boxwood gardens were laid out and were later extended when the property passed to Mrs. Darwin Collins, daughter of Thomas Carlisle. Her son, the

present owner, has made extensive additions to the dwelling and the gardens and has been especially successful in his restoration of the house. The peculiar character of ship carpenter work is plainly evident in the interior. The windows are fitted somewhat in the manner of a port-hole without sills. The present owners have filled it with fine old furniture and share their pleasure in the property with all lovers of old Milford.

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There are yet other houses in town of the greatest interest which our space in this brief catalog will not permit us to describe. Among these are the Scribner House now occupied by Col. Lank; the two beautiful Watson Houses with their classic fronts in pressed brick, the one occupied by Mrs. Sarah Stanton and the other by the Masonic Temple; the Harrison White Property (No. N.W. Front Street); the Charles white house built by John M. Darby and probably once the mill house; the Billie Welch House (now occupied by Mrs. Sallie Sapp) built by the proprietor of the Blacksmith Shop which stood on the opposite corner; the old Senator Abbott House (No. 115 N. W. Front Street); the Max Willson House which has a stairway similar to that at Mt. Vernon; the Clarence F. Jewell Property (203 N. W. Front Street) which was built by Dr. John Ralston and later used as the office of Dr. Joseph Sudler.

## ADDENDA

Sudler Apartments

This quaint old house was built by John Ralston in 1793 on land bought from Joseph Oliver. Ralston's son-in-law Dr. Joseph Sudler lived in the dwelling and had the use of the shop. It is a curious commentary on the times that Ralston in his will made provision that Sudler should pay no office rent unless he should attempt to bring in a bill for medical services to Ralston or his family, in which case the rental charges for the office were to become retro-active. In 1837 the estate was sold and the building changed hands many times. It was owned by Captain George Primrose, a Philadelphia ship builder, until 1843, then by Daniel Godwin. On one side was a milliner shop, now the residence of Mrs. Lee Truitt. In the shop end of the building Martin Chamberlin kept a grocery store for many years and it was also occupied by John Emerson in 1848. It was he who printed the old Milford Beacon.

This house is especially interesting in it's roof lines with the tall old dormers that give it such an 18th century look. It has been very successfully restored by Mr. Clarence F. Jewell, the present owner, and is now known as the Sudler Apartments.

MS 9558 Gift of David Burton, Milford



## Milford

Milford, located on both sides of the Mispillion River and fifteen miles from Delaware Bay by water, is divided by the river into north and south Milford. Milford is the fourth largest town in the state and is an industrial and trading center for lower Delaware. Because of industry and prosperity, many of the older houses have been either removed or altered. The dwellings on the pleasant tree lined streets are architecturally varied, comfortable and complacent, designed for large families.

The trend in building homes in Milford was to build them in the country rather than the city. Therefore, despite the network of good roads and the modern conveniences of home living, homes in Milford are still centered near the country. Most residents are still too close to the farm to forget mud, dust, frozen pumps, and hog-killing dinners. Meanwhile it is still the aim of most of the young people to get away from the country.

North Milford, the older part, stands on a tract of land formerly called Saw Mill range, taken up by Henry Bowman in 1680. During the next century, farms and plantations covered most of the countryside near the river, but no effort to establish a town was made until 1787 when Joseph Oliver, a landowner and merchant, laid out streets on his plantations at Oliver's landing. That year the Reverend Sydenham Thorne built a dam for a gristmill and sawmill at a ford on the stream, hence the name Milford.

On the Sussex County side, South Milford was laid out in 1819 on the land of Henry Hudson. Milford was early noted as a shipping and ship-building town. By the 1850's, before the railroad began to undermine water shipping, a dozen schooners and sloops of the port took away annually more than 300,000 bushels of grain in addition to tanbark, slaves, lumber, cordwood, and other products. From Philadelphia and other ports, they brought

manufactured goods for a region extending well into Maryland on the west. In contrast to Frederica and other villages whose growth was also based largely on water transportation, Milford did not stagnate with the decline of shipping, but grew steadily larger and busier. Booming industries of the nineteenth century were the manufacturing of fruit-drying machinery and an iron foundry, both established by an English ironmaster and inventor named George S. Grier. The last sailing vessel was launched in Milford in 1917, the three mast one hundred ninety-five foot schooner Albert F. Paul. Between 1920 and 1930 the population increased thirty-eight percent.

Industries past and present in Milford include: dental materials, wood veneer products, dresses, woolen yarn, building materials, brick, fertilizer, flour, feed and monuments. Boatbuilding consisting of the expensive cabin cruiser, the other, party boats for fishing parties. The largest weekly paper in Lower Delaware is the Milford Chronicle.

At one time Milford had almost forty fruit drying establishments. There was some shipbuilding and much manufacture of agricultural implements; and the town had many substantial merchants, among them: Charles Barker, J. B. Counselman, Zachariah Johnson, J. L. Smith, E. C. Peck, Samuel Darby, George S. Grier, Allen Tolbert, James H. Denning, Nathan Adams, Molton Richards, Samuel Ratcliff, Walter Sipple, Lowder Layton, Daniel Goodwin, Trustin P. McColley, Isaac Lofland, Curtis Watson and Joseph Bennet.

James Johnson, an old schoolmaster, took up town planning project in 1817, laying out the Sawmill Range into building lots and thus the beginning of Milford. The town derived its name from the fact that to get to Oliver's Mill it was necessary to ford the creek at Oliver's Landing. In 1791 a bridge was built at the landing. Joseph Oliver's house was the first one built, it's site being on North and Second Streets. Before 1800, Thomas Collins built a home. Another old building on the northwest corner of



Second and Church Streets was referred to as one of the landmarks of the place as early as 1813. Other early settlers were Henry and Thomas May, descendants of the early Dutch navigator, Cornelius May, after whom Cape May and May's Landing in New Jersey take their names.

James Johnson laid out South Milford some years after North Milford and it was resurveyed by Thomas J. Davis. Lewes Crapper built the first house in South Milford. It was erected in 1763. He owned the land that became the town site, also much of the adjoining land in Sussex County. He was the wealthiest man in that county, owning thousands of acres. His mansion house was erected at the intersection of South Walnut and Depot Streets, and was later occupied by many prominent citizens, among them Lowder Layton, Governors Daniel Rogers and Peter F. Causey and Joseph E. Holland.

Milford was first incorporated in 1807 and re-incorporated in 1867 and 1887. During the Nineteenth Century, Milford contributed four governors to the state, Peter Causey, Daniel Rogers, William Burton and William T. Watson.

The early settlers in Milford were deeply rooted and grounded in religious beliefs, and early in the history of the settlement we find mention of the places of worship and of the donation of the tracts of land for the purpose of erecting meeting houses. Strange as it may seem, the earliest sect is now completely extinct. A Quaker meeting house was built in Milford about 1790. Baptists were meeting as early as 1781. The Three Runs Meeting house of the Presbyterians, a quarter mile from Milford, dates back to 1762 and united with the Milford Church in 1850. A few miles west of Milford was an Episcopal body referred to in 1704 or 1705 as "Savannah Church" or "Christ Church Mispillion", the predecessor of Christ Church Milford founded in 1791. Methodists were holding

services near Milford in 1777, and in 1789 Bishop Asbury was in Milford.

1923 by the owner, Dr. Frank L. Grier. Dr. Grier and his brother, Dr. G. Layton Grier, were dentists who bought a dental supply business and moved it to Milford in 1900. They developed it into an international business, now the L.D. Caulk Division of Dentsply International. Dr. Grier was instrumental in bringing about the initiation of President Warren G. Harding into Milford's Evergreen Forest #49 of the Tall Cedars of Lebanon. On that occasion President Harding was a guest of the Griers' in this house.

***East Side of Old Rehoboth Boulevard between S.E. Front & S.E. 2nd Streets . . .***

UNION CEMETERY. The little used Union Cemetery was laid out by Captain Thomas Humphreys. "The Peninsular News and Advertiser" stated on March 27, 1874 "It is beautifully located on high ground, about a quarter of a mile from South Milford on the bay road."

**Funded by:  
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and  
The City of Milford  
Milford, Delaware**

**Prepared by  
The City of Milford  
Landmarks and Museum Commission**

**DELAWARE**  
SMALL WONDER

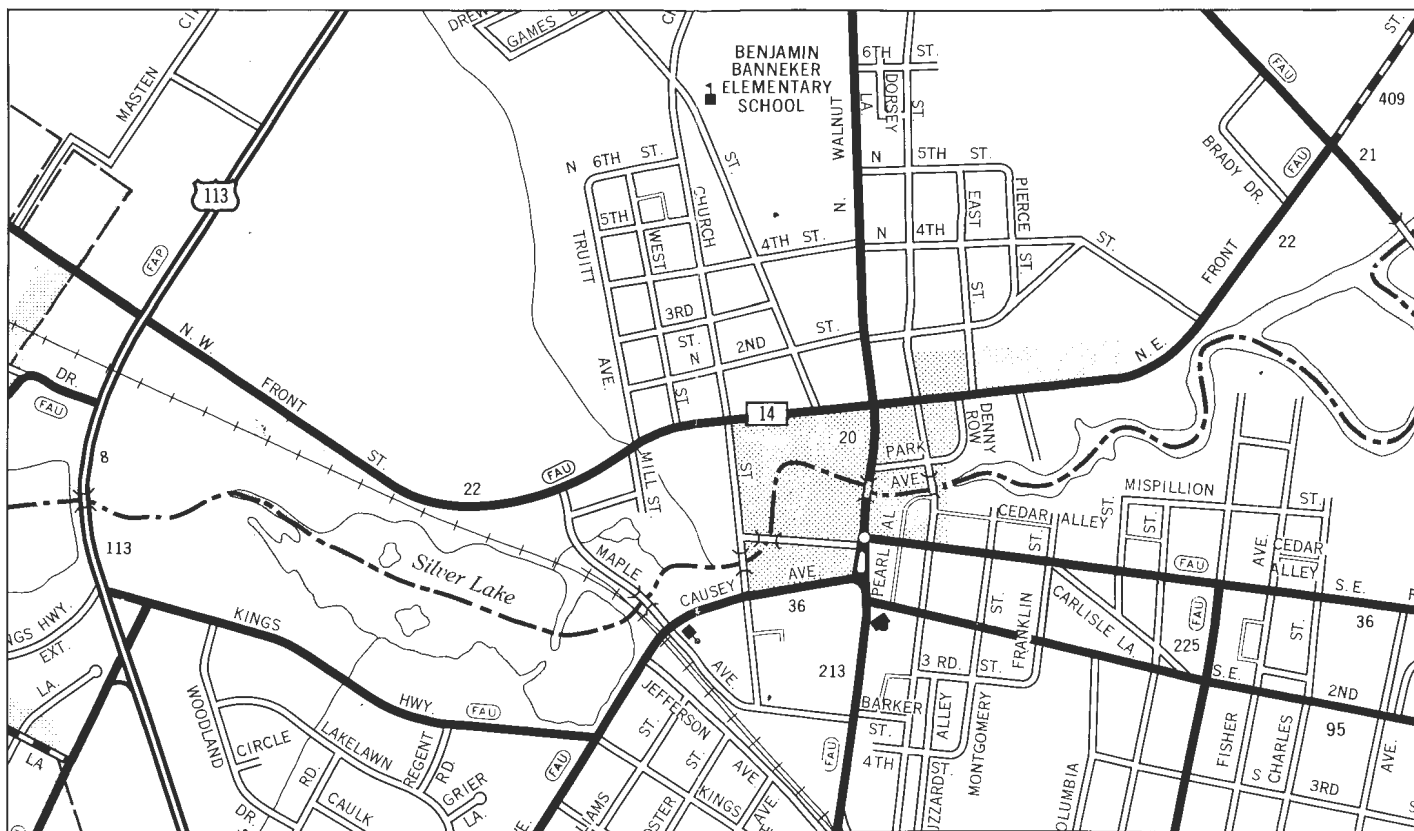
**Milford  
Delaware  
Founded  
1787**



**A  
Walking / Riding  
Tour of Historic  
Milford**

**W**

ELCOME to Milford, Delaware, a city rich in the development of both Kent and Sussex counties and of our country. Your tour starts with the Parson Thorne Mansion and continues to the east toward the center of town.



## HISTORY OF MILFORD

For many years a river-crossing settlement, the town was founded in 1787 by the Reverend Sydenham Thorne, an Anglican clergyman who had arrived in 1774, and Mr. Joseph Oliver, a merchant who had extensive landholdings in the area.

In 1787 Reverend Thorne purchased property on Silver Hill, just west of Oliver's holdings, both properties being part of a tract of land which had been granted to one Henry Bowman in 1680 which was known as "Saw Mill Range."

The Thorne residence is now known as the Parson Thorne Mansion.

The two men are reported to have entered into an agreement whereby Thorne would build a dam across

the river at his mill and Oliver would lay out his land in building lots. The founders adopted the Old English system of 99 year ground leases in perpetuity rather than outright sales.

Milford has been the home of eight governors of the State of Delaware: John (Jehu) Davis 1789; Daniel Rogers 1797-99; Joseph Haslet 1811-14 and 1823; Charles Polk 1827-30; William Tharp 1848-51; Peter F. Causey 1855-59; William Burton 1859-63; and William T. Watson 1895-97.

★ Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

★★ Listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of an Historic District

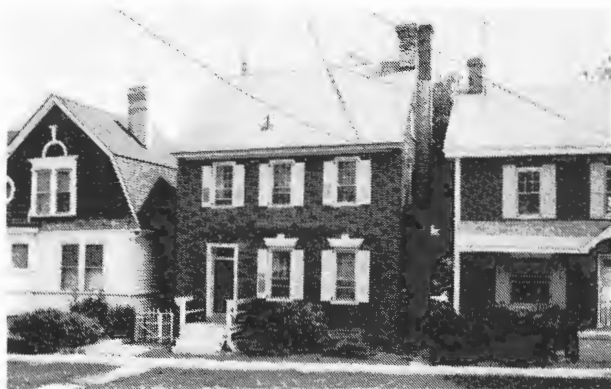


## N. W. FRONT STREET



★ ★ 501 PARSON THORNE MANSION—Property of Milford Historical Society. The rear wing, which is the oldest part, was built by Joseph Booth between 1730 and 1735. The main section was built by John Cullen between 1745 and 1750. In 1879 Col. Henry B. Fiddeman remodeled the mansion by adding the three gables and raising the roof line. It receives its name from Reverend Sydenham Thorne, first rector of Christ Church, 1774-93, and co-founder of Milford. Famous occupants were statesmen John M. Clayton, Secretary of State under President Zachary Taylor, and Governor William Burton during his term as Governor, 1859-63.

★ 414 MILL HOUSE (Privately owned). A late 18th century two story brick house with a tin gable roof, it is associated with Milford's industrial interests. The most notable occupant was newspaperman George B. Hynson, author of "Historical Etchings and Vicinity" published in 1899 and "Down Yan and Thereabout," a book of poems published in 1920, illustrated by Milford artist William H. Roach. Hynson is best known as the author of the state song, "Our Delaware," written in 1906.



★ ★ 318 WELCH/SAPP HOUSE (Privately owned). A two story frame shingled house built c. 1825.

★ ★ 214 RULE HOUSE (Privately owned). The original house, 216, -216 was a two story frame building erected about 1787, with the brick front added in 1810. The adjoining frame house, 214, was built in 1820. At a later date these houses were joined, then finally separated as they appear today.



★ ★ 211 HARRISON WHITE HOUSE (Privately owned). A 2-story frame house with a second story porch directly over the first story porch. The steep slope of the roof, together with the porch style and corner fireplaces in both the 1st and 2nd floor rooms, are signs of construction c. 1790-1800. The style is common in Charleston, South Carolina. Mr. White, an early owner, was a well known cabinetmaker and undertaker.

★ ★ 208 JAMES HALL HOUSE (Privately owned). A Victorian two story Italianate Villa/Second Empire style house with a widow's walk, it was built c. 1880.

★ ★ 201 SUDLER BUILDING (Privately owned). A plain two story -203 stucco over brick double house which was erected by John Ralston in 1797, with three living units, gable roof and twin dormers. It was later rented to Dr. Joseph Sudler, his son-in-law, with an agreement to provide free medical services to all of the Ralston family in lieu of rent. It was the location of Milford's first newspaper, "The Milford Beacon," published by John Emerson in September 1848.

★ ★ 127 JEWELL'S STORE PROPERTY (Privately owned). The -131 brick store was built by John Williams in 1814. The attached frame residence was built c. 1840, with two massive cross gables and decorative bargeboards. It became the home of Governor William Tharp, who purchased it when he became Governor of the State of Delaware in 1847.

★ ★ 115 ABBOTT/BROWNING HOUSE (Privately owned). A two story stucco over brick house built between 1811 and 1820 by Purnell Lofland. The original land was part of a tract running from N.W. Front Street between North and Church Streets, to their intersection to the North. Delaware State Senator Sylvester Abbott purchased the property in 1905.

★ ★ 112 JOHN LAWS/BANKING HOUSE INN. This structure was originally two separate two story brick houses. The eastern portion was built by John Laws between 1787 and 1789 on land purchased from Joseph Oliver. The western portion was built in 1811. A branch of the Commercial Bank of Delaware occupied the western side of the building between 1812 and 1827. The Bank of Smyrna conducted an office of Discount & Deposit from 1831 until the opening of the First National Bank of Milford at N.W. Front Street & Walnut Street in 1876. In 1879 Mr. Andrew Donnell of Newark



purchased both houses for his daughter, Mary Louise Marshall, founder of Milford's first hospital, and her husband, Dr. George W. Marshall. The houses were then joined together for use as their residence and office. A Bed & Breakfast and Restaurant is now open to the public in this building.



- ★ ★ 106 MARY ADKINS BROWN HOUSE (Privately owned). A two story frame house with double cross gables, it was built c. 1806. Mrs. Brown, familiarly known as "Miss Mollie," opened the library in the rear wing to school children of Milford from 1912 to 1921. A brick springhouse on the rear of the property straddles the property line with 108 N. W. Front Street, now the garden of the Banking House Inn.



- ★ ★ 101 THE TOWERS (Privately owned). This structure was built -103 in 1793 by John Wallace as a two story store and residence. His stepson, John Lofland, "the Milford Bard," did much of his writing in his "Garret." Later Delaware Governor William Burton, a prominent physician, lived there. His

daughter, Mrs. R.B. Roudebush, remodeled the building to its present Queen Anne Victorian style.

- ★ ★ 24 CENTRAL HOTEL/KENT & SUSSEX INN (Open to the public). Built in 1892, this three story brick hotel has a large cupola at the roof. The top floor served as the second location of Milford's hospital which opened in 1909. There were seven beds set up in the ballroom, each bed surrounded by screens for privacy. An equipped operating room was in the next room and the Central Hotel provided meals for the patients.

In the days of travel by train, the hotel was a popular stop-over for travelling salesmen. It was famed for its comfortable accommodations, good food and jitney service to and from the railroad depot. Entertainment was furnished by local story tellers sitting on chairs lined up on the covered front porch in seasonable weather.

- ★ ★ 10 WATSON/WELLS/HALPERN BUILDING. These 2 story -12 attached brick houses were built in 1855 by Curtis Wason (No. 10) and his brother, Bethuel Watson (No. 12). In 1909 No. 12, then owned by Temple Lodge #9, A.F.&A.M., housed Milford's first hospital in two rooms on the second floor. Later, the telephone company had its exchange on the second floor, in days when calls were made only through operators. Around 1920, during a shortage of rooms in the elementary school, one grade met here. Currently both houses are used for offices.

- ★ ★ 17 STEWARD BUILDING (Privately owned). A variety of commercial functions have taken place in this three story frame building, from icehouse, to bakery, to neighborhood grocery store. Milford's best known private secondary school was conducted on the third floor of the building from 1863 to 1873 by Reverend J. Leighton McKim, Rector of Christ Church, and bore the name "Milford High School." In 1891 the third floor was burned in the "Great Milford Fire" and was replaced by a mansard roof. The 19 N.W. Front Street attached two story frame dwelling was built in 1890. During the term of Mr. Steward's appointment as Postmaster, the store also served as a post office.

- ★ ★ 48 COOPER BUILDING (48 N. Walnut Street & Corner of N.W. Front Street). This stucco over brick structure was built in 1845 by the Godwins for use as a store. Originally a two story building with a corner entrance, the third floor was added as a meeting room for Temple Lodge #9, A.F.&A.M. The first floor of this building has served as a store since its construction.

## N. W. THIRD STREET

- ★ CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH (Corner of Church Street & N.W. Third Street). Christ Church Mispillion, founded in 1704 by the Society for the Propagation of The Gospel in Foreign Parts, is one of the earliest parishes in Delaware. The present building was started in 1791 by Reverend Sydenham Thorne, co-founder of Milford, who was rector from 1774 until his death in 1793. The building was not completed until 1836. Under the direction of Reverend John Leighton McKim, the church was remodeled to its present Gothic style in 1863-65. In the churchyard, against the west wall of the church, is the grave of Joseph Oliver,

co-founder of Milford. Also buried here are two of Delaware's Governors: William Tharp and William Burton. It is open for regular church services and upon request.

★ ★ OLD METHODIST GRAVEYARD (Corner of North & N.W. Third Streets). On land acquired from Joseph Oliver in 1787, this is the site of the first Methodist Church in Milford. The building was located in the center of the yard facing west. General A.T.A. Torbert and Governor Peter F. Causey are buried here.

★ ★ ST. PAUL'S A.M.E. CHURCH (Corner of North & N.W. 3rd Streets). Erected in 1842, this two story brick church replaced the original house of worship built by the Methodist Episcopal Church about 1788, which was located in what is now the old graveyard on the east side of North Street between 2nd and 4th Streets. By 1871 the congregation had outgrown the building and a new and larger one was erected in that year on Church Avenue. After its discontinuance as a house of worship, the edifice became a public hall where theatrical and cultural events were held, and, at one time, was used as a conserve factory. As late as 1875 a private primary school was conducted on the first floor of this building, and rooms were rented at intervals to accommodate several classes from the North Milford School.

In 1889 the congregation of St. Paul's A.M.E. Church bought the building, and, again, it became a Methodist house of worship. It is open for regular church services and upon request.

## N. W. SECOND STREET

★ ★ 9 WILLSON HOUSE (Privately owned). In 1854 this two story frame house was moved from 119 N. Walnut Street to permit the erection of the "Bank House." An interesting feature of this house is the beautiful stairway similar to the one at Mt. Vernon.

## N. WALNUT STREET



★ 119 BANK HOUSE (Privately owned). A three story brick Greek Revival structure designed by Alonzo Reynolds of Port Deposit, Maryland, it was erected in 1854 as a banking house for the Bank of Milford, then located a block away on N.W. Front Street. The bank failed before moving into the new building. Dr. J. R. Mitchell bought the building and furnished it for his home and office.



★ ★ 206 GODWIN/BAKER HOUSE (Privately owned). Built circa 1830 by Daniel Godwin, this three story frame Greek Revival house was later owned by Dr. Robert H. Clark, paymaster in the U.S. Navy. Since that time it has served as a doctor's office and residence.



★ 417 LOFLAND/SNYDER HOUSE (Privately owned). This Victorian, Second Empire, two story brick house was built by Peter Lofland circa 1880. The ground rent was \$18.00, payable annually. Bricks used to build the house were taken in payment for a debt. The Lofland's acquired all of the remaining ground rents of the original Joseph Oliver lands.



600 GOVERNOR WATSON HOUSE (Privately owned). A large two story brick house built in 1903 by William Tharp Watson, Governor of Delaware 1895-97, it contained one of the finest libraries in the state. Mr. Watson was the grandson of Governor William Tharp and was a prominent businessman and real estate investor, owning a large portion of Milford's business district.



## CAUSEY AVENUE and S. WALNUT STREET



★ ★ 2 CAUSEY MANSION (Corner of #2 Causey Avenue & S. Walnut Street, privately owned). A large two story brick residence built in 1763 by Levin Crapper, it is the oldest house in South Milford. In 1855 it was remodeled to a Greek Revival style with hip roof, and balustrade and widow's walk. Levin Crapper owned all of the lands on which "South Milford" stands and was considered to be the wealthiest man in the county. Upon his death, the house passed to his son Moulton. His widow, Esther, married Daniel Rogers who became a Governor of the State of Delaware. A later owner, Peter F. Causey, also became a Governor of the State. It was he who remodeled the mansion in 1855 to its present Greek Revival style.

★ ★ 121 OLD POST OFFICE/MILFORD MUSEUM, S. Walnut Street. This brick one story building was erected in 1910 in neo-classical style with a hip roof, concrete balustrade and wooden cupola. This was Milford's first post office erected by the federal government, and it served as such until 1962. Prior post office locations changed with the appointment of each new postmaster. It is now the Milford Museum, in the care of the Milford Landmarks and Museum Commission, and includes the E. Millis Hurley Library, which contains one of the most complete collections of volumes on Delaware History.

The museum is open to the public Saturday and Sunday afternoons except on holidays, is closed during the month of August, and may be opened at other times by appointment. Call: City Hall—422-6616.

## S.E. FRONT STREET

★ 205 CARLISLE/COLLINS HOUSE (Privately owned). A two story frame house, it was built c. 1794 by David West, a ship's carpenter. In 1859 this house, along with numerous other properties in South Milford, were owned by Mr. Manlove Carlisle, a Milford shipbuilder. The framing techniques and interior joinery are reminiscent of the shipbuilding technology most likely employed at the Carlisle shipyards which were located behind the house along the river. The adjacent boxwood gardens date back to 1866.

## S.E. SECOND STREET



★ 700 EGLINTON HALL (Privately owned). The original 1½ story frame house, now contained in the rear wing, was built between 1792 and 1795 by Henry Eglinton. His widow married William Black, who, in 1805, added a large room and hall downstairs and two rooms upstairs, in front of the original building. In 1825 the property was bought by Truston Polk McColley, a hatter and popular Methodist clergyman and large landowner, who added the three story front section noted for its beautiful staircase.

## S. CHURCH STREET



★ 6 MILFORD NEW CENTURY CLUB (Opened by appointment). The late Victorian building was erected in 1886 as a schoolhouse for the Classical Academy which was organized in 1883, and has not been altered since its construction. The Milford New Century Club, organized in 1898, began to hold its meetings in the building in 1899 when the school closed. In 1905 the Club bought the building and its contents from the Academy and, in 1913, purchased the land from the Tomlin family. Besides serving as the Club's meeting place, the building has been used for many social events and community functions.

Mr. Ruby Vale, a prominent attorney and benefactor who gave Milford the land and building for its present City hall, first moved to Milford as a teacher at the Classical Academy.

## LAKEVIEW AVENUE

★ ★ 301 GRIER/ROGERS HOUSE (Privately owned). The house was built in 1890 and was remodeled between 1921 and

**NINETEENTH CENTURY  
MILFORD**

*Edited by*  
*Harold B. Hancock*

Granary" of nearly one mile. (The site of successive mills on the Marshall Mill Pond east of town on Route 14.) He was a gentleman of the old school, jovial, dignified and universally beloved.

At the North West Corner of Fourth and North Streets is an old house which is supposed to have been willed by Rev. Thomas Collins to his son John Wesley Collins; it is now much altered. The latter's daughter Harriet married Levin Latchum. After his death she moved from the Latchum farm to the house named. Before his father died, it was discovered by John W. Adkins, the father of our present grocer, that Mrs. Latchum was not named in the will. He went to Mr. Collins and induced him to leave his daughter the house. He consented and there she reared her two sons, James H. and John Latchum, two of our wide-awake businessmen.

The Latchum family is a very old one, extended back over five generations, and they have always been locally famous for the excellent shad caught at "Latchum's Fishery." (Uncertain, but assume on the New Wharf Road farm previously mentioned.)

#### SOUTH MILFORD

The reader will now be introduced to South Milford, which division of our town, owing to being fenced in by farm lands has not, until recent years, kept pace with the population of the North side. Hence a large majority of the houses are not so antiquated as those on the Kent side.

The oldest building is unquestionably where Hon. William F. Causey resides. (The well known "Causey Mansion" facing the plaza, now the home of Miss Caroline Vinyard, no. 2 Causey Ave.) On the authority of Hon. Caleb S. Layton—when he lived in Milford—and whose father, Louder Layton, owned the property, when asked who built the house, he said, an Englishman named Mitchell. This no doubt applied to the bricklayer, carpenter or contractor, for the building was erected sometime prior to 1760, by one Levin Cropper, an Englishman. Daniel Rogers, who at one time was Governor of Delaware, married his widow, and thus became possessed of the mansion and farm of 600 acres.

Daniel Rogers' remains are interred on the farm near the Railroad Depot and close to the King's Highway that runs from the "Three Runs" across the farm to and across Marshall's Mill pond to Lewes. (Family graveyard was on the northeast corner of the plot of land where the Medical Arts Building stands, intersection of Sussex and Foster Sts.)

When first remembered the main building comprised two stories. On the death of Louder Layton the property was purchased by Peter F. Causey, and he at once had it rebuilt and modernized and took up his residence there, remaining till his death.

The handsome lawn we now see was a common then, without fence or shade; there was no railroad then, nor was the dam by the side of the railroad embankment built. The old Tumbling Dam (on the peninsula) was the only one below the Haven Mills. Carriage travel was from Milford bridge towards Georgetown or up from the bridge across the common and passing between the west end of the dwelling and the two brick slave quarters—still standing—out across the farm southerly to "Plummers" on the forest road. (Plummers uncertain; Forest Road ran



south of Causey Mansion.) The Mansion house and buildings were about the only houses on the whole tract, except probably three or four small farm houses. The old Spring house we see there now was a great place of resort for all the lads and lasses in town, and if any one is curious to know what crowds frequented the spring to quaff its excellent water, let them as they pass the spring look over the railing towards the mansion and notice what a deep, wide path there yet is from house to spring. (Located about where Timmons Mobile Service is, No. 13 Causey Ave.)

Near the above is a two-story brick store house which was built by Martin De Waele prior to the close of the last century. It was occupied later as a store house by Walker Sipple, C.S. Watson and Draper and Hazzard. (Uncertain; northeast corner of S.E. Second and S. Walnut Sts.)

At the southeast corner of South Walnut and Second Streets is a large shingle board two-story dwelling, which is thought to have been built by Walker Sipple, as his widow, who remarried John R. Draper, lived there long after the death of her last husband. (Now the home of Mrs. Charles Lacy, No. 208 South Washington St.)

There used to stand contiguous, under a mammoth weeping willow tree about where Peter F. Causey's front yard is two one-story storehouses. They were painted red and looked very old sixty years ago. (About where the present theatre now stands on the Plaza.) Louder Layton once kept store there. After, Beniah Watson and later C.S. Watson & Company did a heavy business. In those days almost every merchant sold liquor, and any person who wanted a drink only had to hand his glass over the counter and get all he wanted gratis. One of the old red frame store houses may be seen today from Milford bridge; it is the first house at the edge of the river in the rear of Reis and Hirsh's canneries. It is now painted over with soap advertisements. (Reis & Hirsch stood on S.W. Front St., where the bus terminal now is.)

The two-story brick residence of Mrs. Hester O. Draper on the north side of South Front Street was built by Henry Hudson a good while ago, and in it William E. Jester kept store; it was later occupied by John A. Hazzard. (Later the Windsor home, west corner of the parking lot on S.E. Front St. between S. Washington and S. Walnut Sts.)

The red house at the South West corner of South Front and Washington Streets was built by John Hudson three or four generations ago and is still owned in the family. (Gone)

The building where Aaron W. Bell resides was built by a carpenter named Charles Fleetwood for a gentleman named Smith, supposed to have been a brother of Mrs. T.P. McColley. (Gone, now Milford Trust Company parking lot on S. Washington St.)

If we go back as far as 1833 there were but two or three old buildings east of Mrs. Thomas Carlisle's residence (205 S.E. Front St., now owned by Mrs. T. C. Collins). Then a fence ran from the river close to her house and thence down Carlisle's Lane towards the mansion of Rev. T. P. McColley. From the upper end of the lane a fence ran across the South Second Street and thence towards Marshall's Mill. All lands east of Mrs. Carlisle's were tillable land and cedar fields. (Rev. McColley's house was

located at Egglinton Hall, no. 700 S.E. Second St.)

The first house built on the field side of the street running past his house was built by Mr. James N. Wooters. His house is now in the center of South Milford, and Mr. Wooters is still living and quite active. (One story Wooters house in center of Franklin St., east side, 100 block.)

The handsome residence of Dr. John S. Prettyman was built by Justus Lowery, where a little one story stood. It has been greatly improved by the doctor. (Prettyman house, N.W. corner of S.E. Front & Montgomery Sts., now gone.)

To the west of the last named house one, Isaac Hudson, kept a small carpenter shop; it was very old. Captain H. W. Laws purchased the site and built the dwelling where Mr. S. N. Gray now resides to which Mr. Gray has added many improvements. (north side of S.E. Second St., about center of the 200 block.)

Some sixty-eight years ago there stood on the square bounded by South Walnut, South Front and South Second Streets and Pearl Alley, a little building about opposite the residence of P.F. Causey, Esq. It was too small for a dwelling, and evidently had a history. There was no Presbyterian Church nor other houses on the square except the brick store house and one dwelling, which last now stands on the street between Archibald McNair's residence and the old cannery.

The little house has at times been occupied as an office for Justices of the Peace and as a shoe shop by William Porter. It was about fourteen feet long, eight feet wide and ten feet high. When the march of improvements demanded its site for three-story houses, it was demolished, and under the roof scarcely a foot above the ceiling was brought to light an ancient swinging sign board about five feet long and eight inches wide. At one end was painted a man leading a horse to a trough; on the other end was painted "George III." There was other lettering, but the ravages of time and weather rendered the words illegible.

No doubt the old sign swung to the breeze in front of the diminutive structure when England ruled this country, and, as it was on the road and only 100 yards from Oliver's Landing, it was the place where man and beast halted to get a drink of—water.

### THE HAVEN MILLS

Before relating the history of the Haven Mills, it may be interesting to state that before any mills were built there, the King's high road or causeway crossed Mispillion River at a place about 150 yards above the present Mill dam. It was older than Milford, and was the highway between Dover and Lewes, traces of which may be seen when the pond is run off. (The Mills stood east of the present highway at Haven Lake.)

It is supposed that Joseph Dutton built the original grist mill, carding machine and the sawmill also. Mr. Dutton was the father of Elizabeth Bell Dutton, who married James H. McColley, who died at Callao in Peru, while U.S. Consul there.

The grist mill was burned in the fifties, and then a woolen factory was built on its site for Hoffecker Brothers. This was also burned; the site is now vacant. All the mills were purchased by Peter F. Causey, and he had

# A HISTORY OF MILFORD DELAWARE

In commemoration of  
the 175th Anniversary of  
the founding of Milford in  
1787

*Published by*

THE MILFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

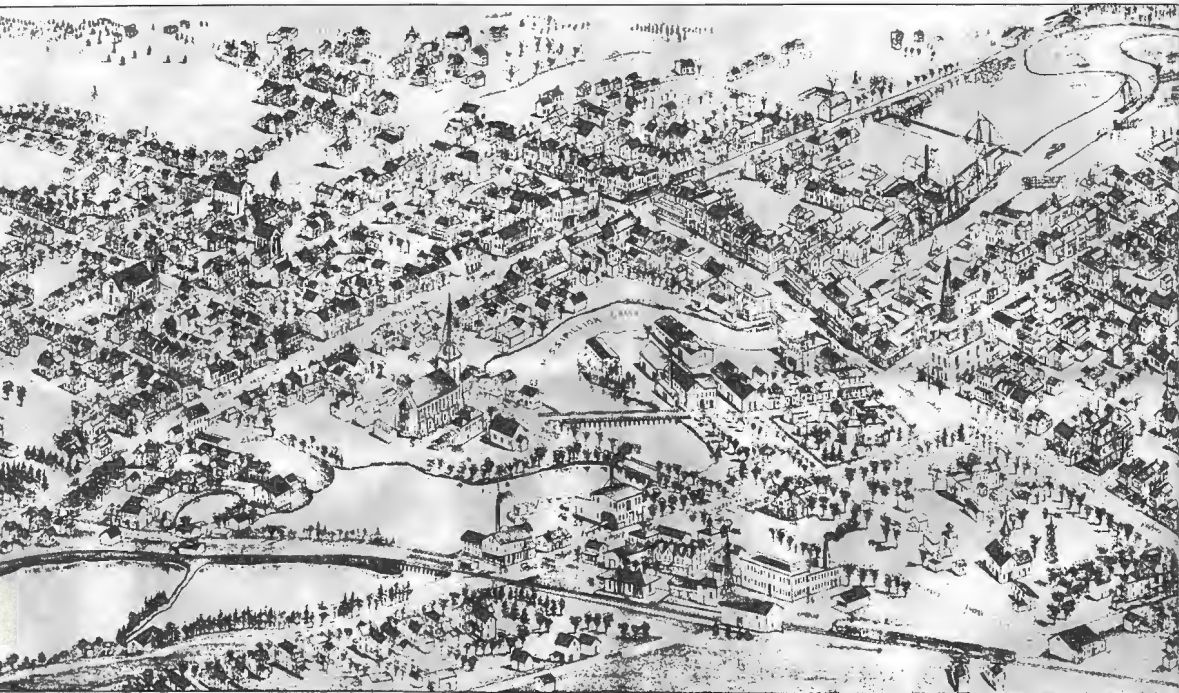


**An aerial view of South Milford before World War II.**



**Plaza Square in the 1930's.**





1885 LITHOGRAPH OF MILFORD. This map of early Milford provides a detailed replica of every structure and landmark in Milford when the population was 2,500. The Mispillion River begins at the original Silver Lake tumbling-dam site at the peninsula. The river meanders eastward past Hiram Barber's saw mill, Draper-Reis Cannery, Walnut Street Bridge, and east to the South Milford shipyards. The Causey mansion is visible at the corner of S. Walnut and Causey Avenue. The business district is centered on Walnut Street on both ends of the drawbridge over the Mispillion.

IMAGES  
of America

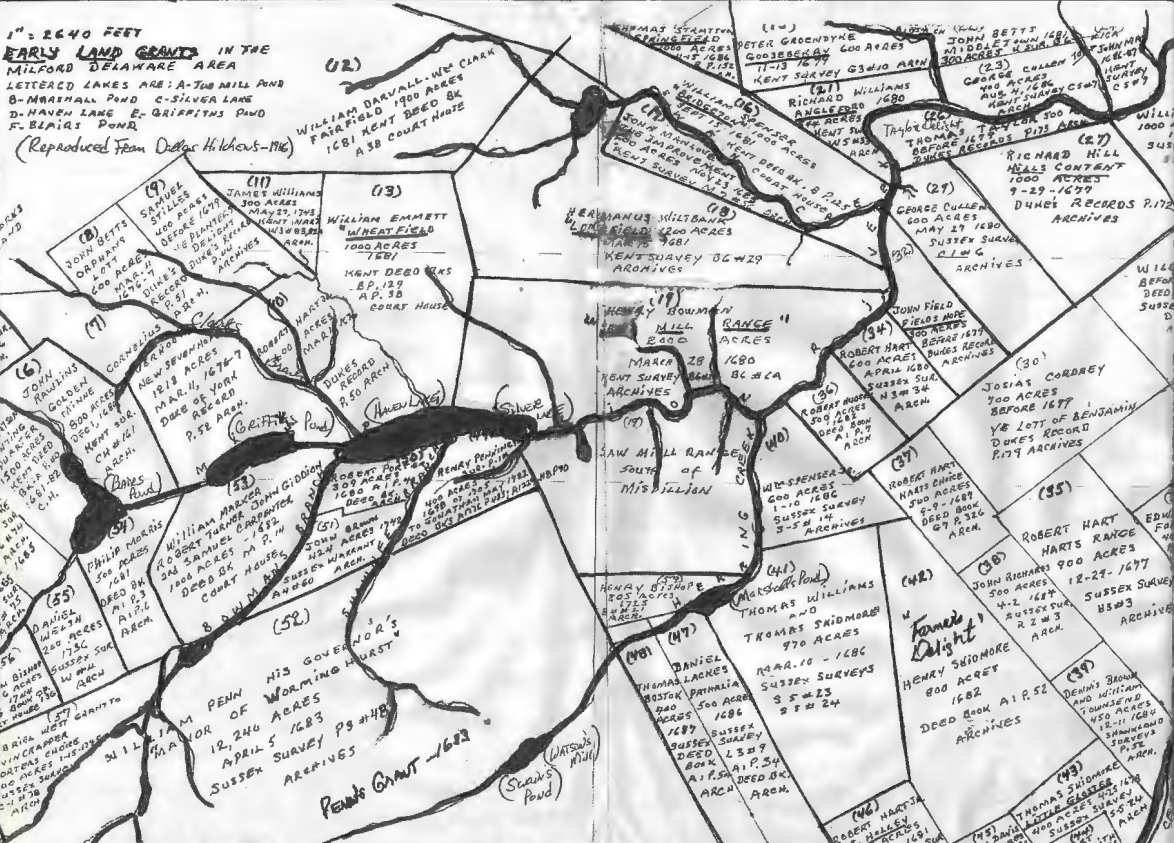
# MILFORD

Dave Kenton

DELAWARE PUBLIC ARCHIVES





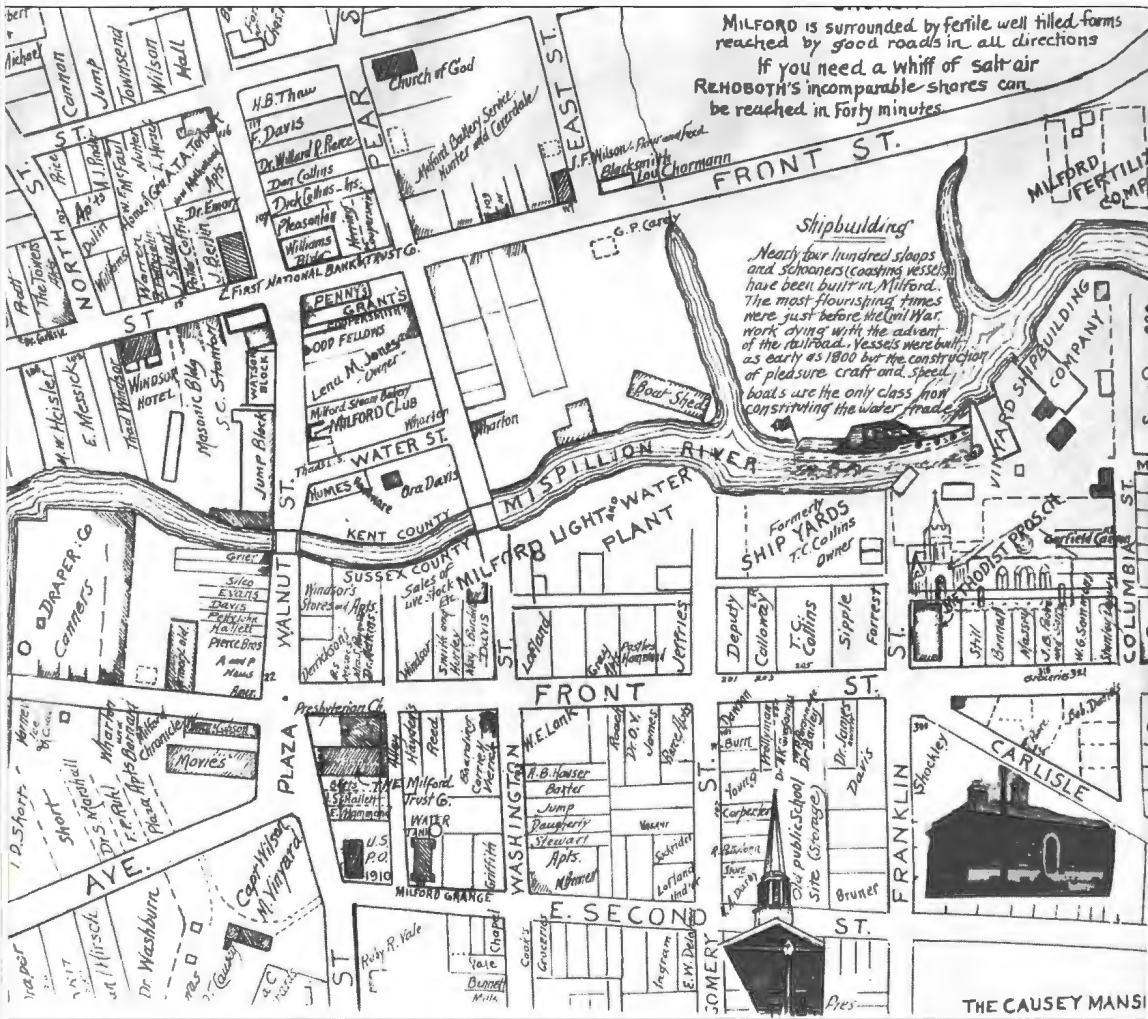


**EARLY LAND GRANTS.** Dallas Hitchens prepared this early land-grant map for his book titled *Milford, Delaware and Vicinity Before 1776* (reproduced with consent). It is a rough approximation of the early grants issued during the Duke of York period of Delaware History (1664–1682) until the arrival of William Penn in 1682. The chart extends from the headwaters of the Mispillion River at Blair’s Pond, eastward to Griffith’s Lake, Haven Lake, Silver Lake through the town of Milford, and out to the Delaware Bay at the right edge of the chart. In April 1683, William Penn set aside a 12,240-acre block of land for his future use. This tract was known as “His Governor’s Manor of Worminghurst” and encompassed an area four miles square, westward from South Walnut Street extending to Lincoln and westward to Staytonville. These grants were gradually broken down into smaller plots as successive generations bequeathed portions of their estates to their children and relatives.



**JOSEPH OLIVER GROUND RENT PLOT, 1787–1825.** This map represents the earliest known plot of Milford’s first lots, sold by Joseph Oliver in December 1786 and continuing until his death in 1807 and later. This plot was drawn on linen cloth and passed down through successive generations of owners who purchased the rights to ground rents under the early English legal system. The map depicts West Street at the left and lands of tanner Isaiah James (Avenue Church lands) and Ralston Alley (Church Street); the homes of Moulton Rickards and Elias Shockley (“Purity Row,” home of Earl and Kay Francis today); Shockley Alley (west side of Banking House Inn), and lands of David Walton and later Martinus DeWaele (site of New Windsor Hotel today). Along Northwest Second Street is a sketch of the original “Academy” school building that was constructed in 1810 and served until demolition in 1962. This plot was loaned to the Historical Society by the late trustee Sarah Nutter Snyder, and is owned by her children Elizabeth and Jeffery today. Joseph Oliver’s son sold the map to Elias Shockley in 1808. It was later sold to Purnell Lofland about 1840, then to Peter L. Lofland and descended to his daughter, Mrs. Lizzie Nutter (1920), her daughter, Sarah Nutter Snyder (1940) and to her children in 1990.





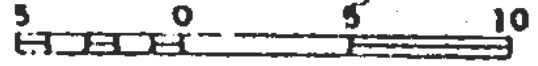
**MILFORD SHIPYARDS, 1780–1920.** Sailing ships were being built along the Mispillion River as early as 1750 at Millstone Landing (New Wharf) and Wyncoop's shipyard near Marshall's Mill. Shipbuilding began in Milford about 1782 when John Draper established a two-acre shipyard site at the base of East Fourth Street where it meets the river (Domino's Pizza). His son, Alexander Draper, purchased the shipyard in 1801 and built several wooden sailing vessels at this site before moving to New Castle County. The Drapers built about 22 vessels between 1780 and 1809. The bulk of shipbuilding, however, was conducted along the south bank of the Mispillion between S. Washington Street and Fisher Avenue. This map was charted in 1938 by W.P. Richards, a civil engineer, and depicts the location of the main shipyards between Montgomery Street and Columbia. David West began building sloops in 1818 and built nine from the wharf behind his home at 205 S.E. Front Street (T.C. Collins) before his death in 1832. Sylvester Deputy and his son, James H. lived next to David West on the west side and at the N.E. corner of Front Street and Montgomery. The father-son team began shipbuilding in 1828 and continued until 1872 when James H. Deputy retired. William A. Scribner who lived in the Lank home at the southeast corner of Washington owned the entire riverfront block between South Washington Street and Montgomery Street and Front Street. Scribner began his shipbuilding career in 1846 and built 21 ships before his death in 1882.

PENNSYLVANIA

Wilmington c1830

Delaware  
Map of Hundreds

c1800 - c1830



STATUTE MILES

39° 30'

39°

38° 30'

M A R Y L A N D

N E W J E R S E Y

DELAWARE

BAY

MILL CREEK

BRANDYWINE

CASHTOWN

WHITE CLAY CREEK

NEW CASTLE

PENCAKER

RED LION

ST GEORGES

Appoquinimink

Duck Creek

Little Creek

Dover  
1823

Murderkill,  
Muderkill  
or  
Murtherkill

MILFORD  
1830

MISPILLION

CEDAR CREEK

North  
West  
Fork

NANTICORE

BROADKILL

LEWIS &  
REMOETH

BROAD CREEK

INDIAN RIVER

DARBORO

LITTLE CREEK

BALTIMORE

76°

78° 30'

HUNDREDS OF SUSSEX COUNTY.

Rehoboth Hundred.(1696) - Lewes & Rehoboth.

Broadkill Hundred.(1696) - (Broadkill  
(Georgetown [Acts of 1833 & 1861]

Cedar Hook Hundred.(1702) - Cedar Creek Hundred.

Indian Creek Hundred.(1706) - Indian River Hundred.

Northwest Fork Hundred. - (Northwest Fork Hundred.  
(Seaford Hundred. [Act of March 11,1869]

Broad Creek Hundred. - (Broad Creek Hundred.  
(Gumborough Hundred. [Act of April 4, 1873]  
(Part of Dagsboro Hund red.

Nanticoke. - (previous to 1775 this was known as Deep Creek Hundred  
by Delawareans.)

Little Creek Hundred. - (1775, formerly part of Somerset County,  
Maryland.)

Dagsborough or Dagsboro Hundred. - (most of this hundred was formerly  
under the jurisdiction of  
Maryland until 1763.)

Baltimore Hundred. - (up to the time of Settlement in 1775 the land  
in this hundred was claimed to be in Worcester  
County, Maryland.)





# Milford Historical Society NEWS LETTER

Volume 29

Spring 1991

Number 1

## FORT SAULSBURY – SUSSEX COUNTY'S UNIQUE MEMORIAL

Hugh McHenry Miller

### 1. Where Is Fort Saulsbury?

Ft. Saulsbury stands today as Sussex County's unique monument to our four great wars!

However, you will search in vain to find it on maps of the State of Delaware or even Sussex County.

It stands, shrouded in the memories of those still living among the thousands of men who served or were housed there. Located in the very northeast corner of Sussex County six miles east of Milford, it stands on the south side of Route 36 west of the drawbridge over the Cedar Creek Canal, adjoining the Town of Slaughter Beach.

Today it is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gerald L. Kendzierski and their three children. When Mrs. Kendzierski, several years ago, took their youngest child to register in a Milford School and said they lived in Ft. Saulsbury, the teacher asked why they were coming all the way from Maryland to go to school in Milford!

It is not Salisbury but Saulsbury!

The area includes 161 acres, about one-third marsh, bought by the Kendzierski family at government auction in 1948, after the Fort was declared surplus.

In its boundaries are two, thousand-foot-long man-made mounds or batteries, the heart of a remarkable U.S. Coastal Fort which was manned continuously from 1917 to the end of World War II.

At first it was a sub-post of Ft. DuPont. Early in 1941 the men of the 261st Coast Artillery Battery B, which had been activated in Georgetown in



**One of the guns at Fort Saulsbury**

**Anyone who can identify the people in the picture is asked to call the author at 422-0765.**

1936 and federalized January 27, 1941, came to Ft. Saulsbury, making it look more like a fort. In 1942 the headquarters for the coast defenses of Delaware were transferred to Ft. Miles at Lewes.

Emanuel R. Lewis, Librarian of the U.S. House of Representatives, in his book "Seacoast Fortifications of the United States," describes Ft. Saulsbury as a classic example of the East Coast fort of the period and worthy of preservation. He wrote, "The only good surviving specimens within the continental limits are two 12-inch gun batteries near Slaughter Beach, Delaware."

### 2. Building Fort Saulsbury for World War I

In June 1917, after more than a year

of study by various agencies within the War Department, the 161 acres were purchased from two neighboring farmers, David L. Shockley and Mark H. Shockley. The Fort's mission was coastal and Bay defense against potential attack from the sea. Its four guns, capable of twenty miles range, were designed to cover the Bay entrance and deep channel from the entrance to the anchorage by enemy surface and underwater vessels.

In World War I intelligence, largely British, had it that the Germans planned an attack up Delaware Bay to destroy the industrial Wilmington and Philadelphia area. With the coming of World War II this became a real threat and the larger installations of surface



guns, including two from Ft. Saulsbury, were established at Cape May and Cape Henlopen.

When completed at the end of World War I, Ft. Saulsbury included two batteries or casemates, each with two 12-inch gun emplacements. These huge bunkers were constructed of steel reinforced concrete, fourteen feet thick, with six feet of earth on top for camouflage. On the top were concrete trenches, connecting observation posts at the end of each.

This monumental task of construction in 1917-18 defies imagination. How to deliver the thousands of tons of steel, concrete, rock, soil and building supplies to the isolated site! A dirt road, often virtually impassible in winter and spring, was the only way to the nearest railroad in Milford.

At first, studies were made about delivering these by water. But, the Mispillion River and Cedar Creek Canal, with a mean depth of less than five feet, could accommodate very small barges and boats. Also, there was a lack of labor locally. Where would imported laborers live and eat? Finally, a narrow gauge railroad, following the north side of today's Route 36, was built from Milford.

The railroad had two small steam engines and a string of small cars. A bridge for the railroad crossed the Cedar Creek Canal to the Beach hauling sand for the cement. Raymond Masten as a boy lived on South Washington Street in Milford, near where this spur connected with the mainline of the railroad. He remembers Mac McClarey, his neighbor, one of the engineers on this line. The other engineer was Rollie Walls. In addition to the railroad, the contractor had ten trucks to haul the hundreds of loads of stone. The railroad trains and the trucks, passing just a few feet from the front of the Cedar Neck School, caused so much interest among the boys and girls that the teacher painted the windows, according to Granville Shockley. But, every boy had a penknife which was used to make peepholes to enjoy the unusual traffic.

Inside the batteries were emergency living quarters including showers, latrines, fireplaces, a kitchen, water and sewage, as well as working areas and storage rooms for the 975-pound four-foot-long projectiles and the powder for firing. It took 275 pounds of powder to

fire each projectile. Heavy steel doors sealed off the various areas of the casemates.

The four guns sat on concrete pads at each end of the two batteries. They were ground level on Barbette carriages and could turn 360 degrees on brass circles for aiming. The men kept the brass so highly polished they could shave in its reflection.

The guns were of twelve inch bore and forty feet long. Since the tiny railroad from Milford could not bear their weight, when they arrived for installation they were brought down the Mispillion River and to the site by barge, said to have been a major operation.

The Fort was and is today entirely circled by a high dirt mound, making the guns and building invisible from the Bay and surrounding land.

### 3. The Naming of Fort Saulsbury

The Saulsbury name is prominent in Delaware history. Willard Sr., for whom the Fort was named, was a United States Senator from Delaware from 1859 through 1871. A southern Sympathizer in the Civil War, Harold B. Hancock describes him as "Lincoln's most bitter foe in the Senate."

Eli, his brother, followed in the Senate serving until 1889. A brother, Gove, was Governor of Delaware from 1865 through 1871. His son, Willard S., was in the United States Senate from 1913 until 1919, during the time Ft. Saulsbury was built.

"Delaware's Role in World War II", published by the Public Archives Commission in 1955, describes the naming of the Fort for Willard Sr., who also had served as Attorney General of Delaware from 1850 to 1855.

In this account we find that the War Department's proposal in 1916 for a fort on the Bay was going to be very costly, almost a million dollars. The Senator's support was critical. Finally, he is said to have offered this in exchange for naming the proposed installation for his father and the deal was made.

### 4. Life at the Fort Between the Wars.

Following World War I, the Fort manned by a small detachment of six to eight men under the command of a sergeant, was the home of well-known Milford area families. The first commander was Staff Sergeant Dorphin C. Wigley who lived there with his wife and children. Mrs. Wigley died in 1988,

having made her home on Slaughter Beach in the latter years.

Wigley's first assistant for many years was Sergeant Robert I. Hayes, who later became the commanding officer. His widow, Serena, who died in 1989, would recount life at the Fort with her three sons, during fifteen years there.

The Wigley and Hayes families lived in government houses across the road from the Fort, an area now known as Bald Eagle Farm. The dirt road into Milford was often impassable during the winter and spring. Mrs. Hayes regularly would ride one of the mules used at the Fort into Milford for groceries and medicines.

Another commander was Sergeant Major Robert Fields. His son, Sergeant Major Robert H. Fields, now living near Bowers Beach, remembers growing up as an Army brat at the Fort and being interested in the big guns. He tells how the grounds were kept like a park and doing his homework as a schoolboy by the two-mantle Coleman lanterns since there was only electricity inside the batteries provided by an electric generator. The extensive gardens in the Fort were plowed by mules and all they wanted of rabbits, quail and pheasants were in the marshes and fields.

The great guns, never fired in anger, were kept in prime condition. From time to time they were fired at large orange targets, probably fifty-five gallon drums, anchored in the Bay.

Many are the stories of hearing these go off after the soldiers would go up and down the Beach warning residents to open their doors and windows to avoid the concussions. The final announcement was sounding a huge siren cranked by the soldiers.

Claims for cracked windows following the firings came from as far as Lewes. Farmers as distant as Greenwood reported turkey eggs cracked, although it is said no claims were ever proved or paid. It is commonly reported that the men of Ft. Saulsbury maintained the top accuracy record on the East Coast for such firings.

### 5. Ft. Saulsbury and World War II

In 1939, with the approach of World War II, Ft. Saulsbury was quickly expanded. A \$60,000 contract was let for eight new wooden buildings. Included were a mess hall, recreation hall, storehouse, infirmary, administration building and three two-story barracks,



View of Fort Saulsbury. Courtesy of Ray Bunting.

two for the enlisted men and one for officers.

During this period three huge steel frame towers were erected. These stood at Bigstone Beach to the north, Fowlers Beach to the south, and just south of the Mispillion Lighthouse. From these manned towers information on every vessel entering the Bay was sent to the plotting room located just inside the north entrance of Battery Hall.

William L. Ryan, now living in Millsboro, was the Sergeant in charge of what was for that time a quite sophisticated operation. This information came via connecting lead cables under the Bay. Only the Bigstone Beach tower is standing with its cable into the Bay still visible.

Sightings also came into the plotting room from the top of the bunker to judge the accuracy of the firing of the guns, which word was given the gun crews for their settings.

The tower on Fowlers Beach was the last to be erected. V. George Carey tells that on October 7, 1941 his father, Vinal H. Carey, sold .52 acres of his property to the Government for \$75. for this purpose. Incidentally, after the war, on December 1, 1947, the Government sold the land back to Carey, minus the steel tower, but then the price was \$290.!

On November 25, 1941, Governor Walter W. Bacon inspected the Fort and the then 200 officers and enlisted men, as preparation for World War II swept Delaware.

James F. Saulsbury, not related to the political Saulsburys and now living on Canterbury Road, Milford, was the Sergeant in command of the north gun crew on Battery Hall. He has provided a roster of thirty-six of the men stationed at the Fort at this time who had completed the Record Rifle Practice Course "C" with their qualifying scores. This

had been saved by the late William K. Kenton and follows:

Taylor, William R., Private  
Townsend, John G., Private  
Schrimmer, Charles F., Sergeant  
Saulsbury, James F., Corporal  
West, Joseph F., Corporal  
O'dell, Robert G., Corporal  
Ryan, William L., Sergeant  
Gray, James E., Pvt. 1 cl.  
Adkins, Oliver, Private  
Davis, Glenn V., Private  
Ryan, Patrick F., Sergeant  
Kenton, William K., Private  
Moore, George A., Corporal  
Parsons, Edward, Pvt. 1 cl.  
Bradley, Alton B., Sergeant  
Hall, Charles L., Corporal  
Kiamio, Edward, Corporal  
Wharton, Mervin L., Corporal  
Dorman, John A., Private  
Moran, Gordon H., Sergeant  
Niemeier, Frederick W., Corporal  
Coulbourne, Alonzo O., Private  
Jerman, Harold E., Pvt. 1 cl.  
Lindale, Augustus H., Private  
Smith, Raymond O., Private  
Fisher, David R., Pvt. 1 cl.  
Ellis, Gordon E., Sergeant  
Beidman, Samuel S., Pvt. 1 cl.  
McCaslin, Charles O., Pvt. 1 cl.  
Mitchell, Charles E., Private  
Stayton, Everett L., Private  
Legg, Reynolds W. Jr., Private  
Zeigler, George J., Sergeant  
Short, Everett A., Private  
Carmean, Carlton D., Private  
Hall, Chester L., Pvt. 1 cl.

Charles J. Rocco of Milford was the Sergeant on the south gun crew on Battery hall. Describing the firing of this gun, sometimes observed by dignitaries from Fort DuPont, he notes "We had to load, turn around, open our mouths and fire!" The concussion for men at the gun controls was very great.

Pearl Harbor Sunday, less than two weeks after the Governor's inspection, found the Fort alive. Saulsbury tells of the excitement when word of the Japanese attack came and the emotional reaction of the late Lt. William Craig, just out of OCS at the University of Delaware. Craig was sure Ft. Saulsbury would be next!

Saulsbury and several others of Battery B were chosen early in 1942 to install the gun emplacements at Cape May and then to duplicate the Ft. Saulsbury batteries in Greenland the later in France. Their Ft. Saulsbury experience was tops.

Air power and the fear of German dirigible attacks on the East Coast early in 1942 made Ft. Saulsbury obsolete since the guns could not be hidden from the air. Thus, the guns were dismantled, two going to Ft. Miles at Cape Henlopen, which now became the Headquarters of the Coast Defenses for Delaware Bay. One gun went to a fort in Virginia and the record of the fourth has been lost.

That this fear of air strikes was real at this time is attested by an event on the farm of V. George Carey's father, located just south of Slaughter Beach. The tower at Fowlers Beach has been built on his property.

George Carey was just a boy when a delegation of high military brass appeared at the farm asking for his father. For a long period his father was questioned about seeming to help the Germans. Their problem was the planting of a field on the Carey farm in the form of a triangle with the corners pointing west to Washington, south to Ft. Miles and north to Ft. Saulsbury. The longtime innocent coincidence of the shape of the field had raised the possibility that it was to guide the enemy aircraft to these critical locations!



## 6. Ft. Saulsbury and Prisoners of War

Removal of the guns in 1942 did not finish the World War II mission of the Fort. It was assigned a task which old-timers in Sussex County remember well when it became a Prisoner-of-War Camp for thousands of German and a lesser number of Italian prisoners.

Some of these men became the only persons to actually have lived within the batteries, where security was no problem. They left the walls covered with beautiful paintings, dim remains of which are visible still. Many Milford area girls were guests at social affairs for the guard company and prisoners at the Fort during this time. Prisoners were a familiar sight on Milford streets when they were given passes to come into town.

Many prisoners worked in area canneries, poultry processing, orchards and in harvesting field crops. Stories abound from area families who were impressed by their hard work and honesty. Employers could not pay the prisoners, reimbursing the Federal Government for their work, but there were many occasions when giving cigarettes and other friendly gestures occurred.

Granville Shockley, whose father's farm was nearby, was impressed that the prisoners had no Army guard there and one of their own men was "boss." Noon meals were brought to them in the fields from the Fort.

Stories continue to surface that some of these men returned to this area after the war, having been well-treated and being in love with Sussex County. The writer has sought in vain to verify this.

Lt. Col. John J. Harris, who was in charge of the Delaware Prisoner-of-War Unit, reported that this program brought the Federal Government \$2,400,000 from the work of these men in Delaware.

On January 11, 1946 Ft. Saulsbury was deactivated with the departure of the last of the POW's from Delaware. It had been an active Army Fort for almost thirty years. The Federal Government placed the land and buildings in the surplus category on March 13, 1946. In March 1948 the Kendzierski family purchased it all at a Federal Government auction for \$12,700.

For a time the Liebowitz Pickle Co. rented the area within the bunkers for pickle processing and storage. Later it

became a center for collecting and selling old metal. The bunkers are now unused with Hall Battery having been cleaned out and easily available for inspection and the grounds beautifully restored and kept by the Kendzierskis. Visitation may be made only upon arrangement with the family.

## 7. Fort Saulsbury as a Unique Memorial

In large letters embossed over the entrance of the north bunker is the word "Hall" and over the south bunker the word "Haslet." Their naming is significant.

"Delaware, a Guide to the First State" tells that these were named in honor of Sussex County's two most famous Revolutionary War heroes - Col. David Hall and Col. John Haslet. Col. Hall of Lewes was commander of the famous Delaware Line in the Continental Army.

Col. Haslet of Milford recruited 800 Revolutionary War volunteers, mustered into the State's service in Sussex County, and was chosen their colonel. He was a close friend of Casear Rodney, his counter-part in Kent County, who corresponded daily with Hall from the meetings of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

When the enlistment of his Delaware Regiment ran out late in 1776, Haslet remained with General Washington. Probably crossing the Delaware on Christmas Eve 1776 with Washington, he took prominent part in the attack on Trenton and in the Battle of Princeton. In the latter a bullet struck him in the head and killed him instantly on

January 3, 1777.

Haslet was ordained a Presbyterian minister by Derry Presbytery in Ireland and also trained in medicine at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. The records of Lewes Presbytery show its holding meetings in his home which was near the present Milford Airport. His son, Joseph, was Governor of Delaware 1811-1814 and lived in the Lincoln area near Cedar Creek.

In 1941, the distinguished Delaware historian Christopher Ward wrote, "Who has heard of John Haslet?" Odd today that Haslet's only monument in Sussex County is the huge south bunker at Ft. Saulsbury, for who has heard of Ft. Saulsbury as well?

Here, just outside of Milford, the names of the two bunkers, the name of the Fort, the building of the Fort in World War I, and its expansion and use in World War II, combine to make Ft. Saulsbury the unique memorial to Sussex County's participation in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and the two World Wars.

**Editor's Note:** Dr. Hugh McHenry Miller is a retired Presbyterian clergyman who now lives in Slaughter Beach. His proximity to Fort Saulsbury has fostered an interest in its purpose, its construction, its part in World War II and its present condition.

Dr. Miller has not only searched available records but also has interviewed residents of the area who have a first-hand knowledge of its history and especially the part it played in World War II.

## MISPILLION - BUILT SAILING VESSELS

This long-awaited book by Betty Harrington Macdonald was released on December 15, 1990. An autograph party was held at the Milford Museum where Mrs. Macdonald graciously autographed books for patrons and buyers. In spite of the stormy weather, the attendance was excellent and large enough to keep the author busy past the appointed time.

This 347 page book gives accounts of 286 sailing vessels built on the Mispillion in Milford between the years 1761 and 1917. Each account includes such information as name of builder, date, description, owners, and ultimate

disposition. In addition to accounts of vessels, Mrs. Macdonald gives accounts of approximately 200 "Mispillion Area Seafarers sailing in the Foreign Trade c. 1793-1862.

MISPILLION--BUILT SAILING VESSELS comes in two forms - hard cover and soft cover, priced as follows:

Hard Cover \$42.50

plus cost of mailing if required.

The books are available at City Hall, Bank of Delaware and the Milford Museum. Mail orders may be directed to the Society at its post office address.

## FINANCIAL CRISIS



Restoration in progress on rear of Mansion.

The Milford Historical Society, for the first time in its almost thirty years of ownership of the Parson Thorne Mansion, is faced with the need of major structural repairs. Without warning, several critical problems have developed which must be corrected without delay and which are costly.

Some of the repairs that must be made are obvious - others are hidden ones. A new roof has been put on both the east and west wings and the arcades connecting each wing to the main house; the deteriorating dormer window has been restored.

A very expensive part of the work is installation of ground level rain guttering of brick, in the design used in Williamsburg, to eliminate water damage to the foundation and walls. Unfortunately, damage has already

been done to the foundations and walls by improper drainage.

Because so many needs have arisen at the same time, the Society cannot meet from its treasury the tremendous expense. In order to pay the bills for this preservation work, the Society has sent a letter to members and friends stating the need and asking for donations.

The expense of routine maintenance such as painting, refurbishing, repairs to plumbing and heating, as well as cost of fuel oil and electricity can be met from income derived from dues and from fund-raising events. This emergency situation calls for community help and we hope that the community will give us their support to return this historic building to its rightful place in the history of Milford and pride of the City.

## I REMEMBER MILFORD

By: George D. Truitt

Continued from Past Issue

## UTILITIES & IMPROVEMENTS -

Growing Milford had to be provided with transportation facilities and up-to-date utilities for community living. Usually at intervals of two years, the town authorities bought large quantities of oyster shells to resurface the streets. The shells were considered excellent material for this purpose, but for some weeks after they were spread over the road beds the townpeople enjoyed a terrific bouquet from the rotting integu-

ment that attached to the oyster shell.

For a while houses and streets were lighted by gas from the plant operated by George Russell (1875 - 1880), but for some reason this was discontinued. The town again resorted to kerosene or "coal oil" for a time. Before that, I can remember the whale oil lamps that my grandmother used. These were supplemented by candles. I still have the snuffer that she used for trimming and extinguishing the candles. You can imagine that our streets were fairly dim at night. Neither gas nor coal oil yields much light. Now that I look back, I believe that the first electric was ample

proof that Milford intended to keep pace with the upcoming twentieth century. Richard and William Johnson came down from Smyrna and built the first electric plant. The light bulbs that were used had carbon filaments and were very likely to peter out when they were most needed. (Arc lights with carbon filaments 1886-1892).

Houses were wired by local carpenters. By present day standards, the wiring must have been crude, perhaps not even safe. Mostly, it consisted of exposed wires fastened to the ceilings and set through porcelain insulators. Nevertheless, electricity was in Milford to stay. In my neighborhood, most of the wiring was done by Harry Wilkerson who became quite an expert and was in great demand. Finally, the Johnson brothers sold the electrical plant to the town and the town authorities added another municipal responsibility to their growing tasks.

Getting out of Milford could be a great event, too. A trip by railroad was something! You had to go to the Junction and Breakwater depot and buy a ticket to Harrington. The excitement of waiting the arrival of the train from Lincoln was almost too much. Thornton Vaules was the ticket agent and his assistant, Henry Pierce, handled the freight. These men were important. The railroad was a novelty and anybody who worked for it drew special attention, almost like the interest people have in the strange people connected with the circus. When the train finally came, if it did, there was much puffing and blowing of steam and ringing of bell. Then the logistics began. Henry Pierce stood on a high scaffolding near the freight house. As the locomotive switched and backed and jockeyed into position with much grinding of gear, Henry would pull down a large pipe attached to the water tower. After several tries (and misses) the tender was in place to take on water. If you happened to be a passenger, you missed the next part of the show because the moment the tender had quenched its thirst, all passengers had to get on the coaches. The engine was then uncoupled and switched to a siding where it took on cord wood for fuel. After an indeterminate time (strict schedules were not very important in those days) the engine was again coupled to the train comprised of one wooden coach and one com-



bination baggage car and "smoker." The conductor wore a frock coat just [to] show that he was the head man. After a certain amount of preparation, he gathered up his importance and gave the starting signal. We were off! By the time we had passed Grier's Crossing (WSFS Bank at Rt. 113), Haven Lake, and Redifer's Crossing (Southern States), we might be doing twenty-five miles an hour. Incredible speed! By the time we got to Houston, everybody was covered with cinders and dust because the excitement of the trip obscured the fact that there were windows (of a sort).

Did we have a rough ride? I expect so. The bed was not firm. The rails were made of soft iron which had worn uneven after a few wheels had passed over. But who cared? This was a lark. Pulling into Harrington the conductor and brakeman were already out on the platform of each car spinning the wheels that set the brakes while the engineer set the brakes on the locomotive. The Westinghouse air brake came much later. At Harrington everybody got off! walked up the platform and bought another ticket to Wilmington on the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk. In Wilmington you had to get off again and buy a ticket to Philadelphia (if that was where you were going) on the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore.

If you were the adventurous type, you could combine rail and sea for a trip to New York. First you took the J. & B. Railroad to Lewes. Then if you had made the proper preparations, you boarded the S.S. Breakwater for an uninterrupted trip to New York.



### COMMUNITY SERVICES

On February 26th a representative of the Society visited Milford Manor, at the request of the Director of Activities, to talk to the residents about the "Old Days in Milford" and the changes which have taken place.



On April 23rd the Society, with the Milford Museum as co-sponsor, will host the spring meeting of the Museum Committee of the Delmarva Advisory Council. The day's activities will start with a tour of the Milford Museum and the Parson Thorne Mansion followed by lunch and meeting at Geyer's Restaurant.



The Sussex Chapter of the Embroiders Guild of America, Inc. will hold a needlework exhibit at the Parson Thorne Mansion the first week-end in June.

### CAPE MAY TRIP

The Milford Historical Society is planning a bus trip to Cape May, New Jersey on Thursday, June 6th. We will tour the EMLen PHYSICK ESTATE and take a guided tour of the Historic District. Guests are welcome.

Later in the spring a letter will be sent giving price, hours of departure and return, as well as other necessary information.

### CHRISTMAS PARTY

The annual Christmas Party for members and their friends was held on Sunday, December 16, 1990, at the Parson Thorne Mansion. Decorated in keeping with the season, the Mansion presented a festive appearance. Delicious refreshments, good fellowship, and perfect December weather made it a very enjoyable occasion.

### COMING EVENTS

The ANNUAL GARDEN PARTY will be held in early September, the exact date to be announced later.

A dinner is planned for November to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the gift of the Parson Thorne Mansion to the Society.

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**This issue of the Newsletter comes to you through  
the generosity of a Friend who wishes to remain unknown.**

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**MILFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 352  
MILFORD, DELAWARE 19963**

<b>BULK RATE U.S. Postage PAID Milford, Del. Permit No. 150</b>
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