

222
Amendments proposed to the Bill for
removing the Court House in Superior County.

- Dec 1st Title 2nd line dele "Town"
Dec 2nd 3rd line after County say [and for other pur-
poses]
Dec 3rd Preamble 5th line after "Lewis" erase "Town"
4th 1st Clause 4th line dele Richard Flays and instead
Dec 4th thereof say "Nathaniel Young"
5th 4th line dele "John Ingram" and instead
Dec 5th say "William Peery."
6th 5th line dele "Nathaniel Waples" and say
Dec 6th "Woodman Stockley."
Agred. 7th 2nd Page 4th line dele "Three" & say "Two"
8th 2nd Clause dele from the word "occur" to
Dec 8th the word "effect" in the 5th line inclusive
Acceded to. ly, and say instead thereof, "accrue in
erecting the said buildings"
9th 3rd Page 10th line after the words "County"
Dec 9th dele to the words "require" inclusive
Acceded to. in 13th line, and instead thereof say half
an Acre of Ground each for the erec-
ting said Court and Prison on respec-
tively, and their respective accomoda-
tions
10th 3rd Page 17th line dele the words "carrying
Dec 10th on" and instead say "finishing"
11th 4th Page 8th line dele the word "Town"
Dec 11th 15th line dele thom the word "The" to the
disagreed. words "them" in the 17th line inclusive and
instead thereof say, John Gordon John
Collected Ralston, Andrew Barratt, Joseph
to Barker and Peter Lumber Merchant of
Dec 12th Acceded to.

the County of Kent or any three of them
attending for that purpose to be Certi-
fied under their Hands & longed with
the Prothonary of said County.

13^d --- 2^d line from the bottom of Page dele
Amended to. "Town"

14^d --- 6^d Page 10^d line dele the words "except
Amended to. "the recorder of Deeds"

15^d Add the following clauses

Amended to. And be it enacted That it shall
not be lawful for the Levy Court
of Sussex County to lay any Rate
or Charge on the People of that Coun-
ty for the purchasing the Land
aforesaid, erecting the Court House
or Prison thereon or finishing the
same other than such additional
improvement as they may think
proper after the persons aforesaid
shall think it fitting for the repair-
tion of the Court aforesaid.

And be it enacted That every An-
nual and other Election for the choice
of Representatives or Representative
in the General Assembly the Sheriff
and Coroners to be held in said ^{County} Sussex
shall hereafter be holden and kept
at the Court House herein directed
to be built as soon as the same is so
far finished that they may be

conveniently held there and that
untill the said Court is so far finish-
ed the said Elections shall be held
at the House of James Pettyjohn in
Broadhill Hundred any Law usage
or Custom to the contrary notwith-
standing.

Amendments proposed
by Council, to ^{the} Bill
for the Removal of the
Seat of Justice from
Lewis Town to a more
central part of the
County of Sussex.
Sent for Concurrence

An Act for Removing the seat of justice
from Lewis ~~Town~~ to a more central
part of Sussex County, and for other Purposes.

Whereas it appears to this General Assembly
that a great majority of the Inhabitants
of Sussex County, by Petition have prayed a
Removal of the seat of justice from
Lewis ~~Town~~ to a more central and
convenient part of said County.
And this Assembly considering the
prayer of said Petitioners should
be granted.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly
of Delaware that George Mitchell Esq:
Robert Houston Esq: William Moor Esq:
John Collins Esq: ^{Mathew} ~~Richard~~ ^{Young} Esq: John
William Perry Esq:
Jesse M. Shands Shankland Esq: Nathaniel
Wyndham Stockley
Joseph Esq: Daniel Polk Esq: and
Thomas Babin Esq: in a major part
of them being and are hereby appointed
Commissioners to execute and performe
the several trusts, and powers vested
in and required of them by this act,
and be, and are hereby authorized and
impowered to purchase in fee for the
use of Sussex County a quantity
of

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of land not exceeding one Hundred
Acres near the center of the said County
of Supes, at the place called James
Pettyjohns Old Field, or within ^{two} ~~three~~
miles of the House where Ebenezer Pettyjohns
now resides. Situate in Broad Kill Hundred
in said County: for the purpose of
building thereon a Court House and
Prison for said County, and shall
cause the said land, to be laid out
by the Surveyor of the County, with
good and sufficient Boundaries and a
Certificate thereof to be delivered to
the Recorder of said County, who shall
faithfully Record the same in due
form of Law

And whereas it may appear to the Commission
to Oblige those of the Inhabitants of
Supes County who do not wish a
Removal, to bear part of the expense
^{accrued in erecting the said Buildings}
that may ~~be used in carrying said~~
~~Buildings into effect~~. Be it enacted that
Robert Houston Thosd Shankland George
Mitchell William Moore and John Collins
^{Commissioners of said County} are hereby authorized and
imponed, with the assistance of the
Surveyor of said County to cause
the

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The said lands so to be purchased as
aforesaid, to be laid out in such
lots, and parcels, as to the said
Commissioners may seem proper.
who are hereby authorized, required
and impowered, to sell the same to the
best advantage, and execute deed or
deeds for the conveyance thereof
reserving ~~for~~ the use of Sussex
County a sufficient quantity of
said land ^{half an acre of ground each for the} ~~as the erecting of said~~
~~erecting said Court-House and Prison on respectively,~~
~~Court-House and Prison, and~~
~~and their respective accommodations~~
~~may require.~~ and appropriate
the monies arising from such sale
toward the discharge of such expenses
as shall be occasioned in the purchase
of the said land, and ^{finishing} ~~completing~~
the said Buildings, and the said
Commissioners, or a Majority of
them are hereby authorized and
impowered to open subscriptions
for the purpose of securing monies
to complete the said Buildings
and

and shall have power, to make demand
 and sue for the same when subscribed
 and be intended that the Court House
 and Prison, so to be Built as aforesaid
 shall be at least of the same size
 and dimensions with the Old Court
 House and Prison now at Lewes
Town, the Court House to be
 built of ^{wood} ~~Brick~~, and the Prison of
 Brick or Stone; and when the said
 Court House and Prison, are so far
 finished, that Courts can conveniently
 be held in said Court House and
 Prisoners safe kept in said Prison
 the fitness of which shall be judged
 of by ^{9 or 10} ~~the~~ ^{Here insert Sr. 12.} ~~Commissioners~~ aforesaid
 or a major part of them; then the
 said Commissioners or a majority of them
 shall have power and authority, to
 sell by way of public sale or otherwise
 to the best advantage, the old Court House
 and Prison in Lewes Town, and
 appropriate the monies arising
 from

from such sale towards the finishing
of said buildings, and shall give
good and sufficient ~~aid~~, as directed in fee simple
to the purchaser, or purchasers of the same

and be it enacted that after such sale is
made of the Old Court House and Prison
so as aforesaid to be made; that then all
the Courts of Super County shall
be held in such new Court-House
According to the usage, and practice
of other Courts in this State. and such
new Court-House, and Prison shall then
be used taken, held, and deemed to be
the proper Court-House and Prison of
Super County, and that ~~all the~~
all the process issuing out of any
of the Courts of said County, shall
be attested at, and returned to said
new Court-House, and such business
is directed by any law of this government
to be done at Swes Town, shall thereafter
be acted and done at ^{the} said ^{the} new Court-House
and be it enacted that the Clerks of the Supreme
Court, Court of Common Pleas, Clerks of

of the Peace, Sheriff and Register for the
 Probate of Wills, and granting Letters of
 administration Clarke of the Apprens
 Court. and the Recorder of Deeds for
 the said County of Sussex, shall reside
 them selves, or keep lawful deputies at said
 new Court-house within two years after such
 Sale made as aforesaid of the old Court-house
 and Prison, and in the mean time that
 the Clerks and Officers of aforesaid ~~except~~
~~the Recorder of Deeds~~ shall duly attend
 at the said new Court-house during
 the holding of Courts there, at all
 such times as the Nature of their respective
 duties may require

Any Law Customs or usage to the
 contrary Notwithstanding — 11

Here insert the 15th Ann. in dm.

Bill for the removal of
the Seat of Justice from
Lower Town to a more
central part of the County
of Sussex.

Sent to the Council for
Consideration & concurrence.

In Council
Jan 7. 25. 1791 Read &
Referred to
M^r. Shankland
M^r. Ridgely &
M^r. Baring

Super County Delaware State

This Indenture made the first day
of October in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred &
Ninety one betwix Thomas Evans Esq^r High Sheriff of the Coun-
ty of Sussex ap^d of the one part and Henry Edger, Samuel
Hall, Curtis Jacobs, Isaac Athens, James Mobbled,
John Morris, John Loftland, Scarborough, Tunnul, Robert
Lacy, and Elzey Spur,

Gentlemen Freeholders of the said County of the other part
Witnesseth that the said Freeholders together with the free-
holders in general having met at the New Court House for
the County ap^d on the first day of October did then and there
in full County choose Elect and Nominate Isaac Cooper,
George Mitchell, John Wiro Batson, Peter Robinson,
Rhoads Shankland, Charles Polk, Isaac Beauchamp,
John Collins, William Moore, and Daniel Polk,

Gentlemen Deputies for
the County ap^d to meet in Convention at the Town of Dover
on the twenty ninth day of November next for the purpose of re-
viewing altering and amending the Constitution of the Delaware
State agreeable a ^{the General} Resolves of General assembly passed at Dover ap^d
on the Eighth day of September one thousand seven hundred
and Ninety one In Testimony whereof the said
Sheriff and freeholders ap^d have hereunto set their hands

and seals the day and year first above written

Seal Thomas Evans

Henry Edger Seal

Samuel Hall Seal

Curtis Jacobs Seal

Isaac Atkins Seal

James Newbold Seal

John Morris Seal

John Lofland Seal

Sherborough Sumell Seal

Return for Convention
for Superior
County 1791

Robert Lacey Seal

Ezra Spicer Seal

To the Honourable the House of Representatives of the
Delaware State Convened —

The Petition of Adonijah Stanburrough
in behalf of himself and others
Humbly sheweth

That your petitioner presented a Memorial
to your Honourable House dated the sixth which
was referred to a Committee on the seventh instant
praying redress of certain Grievances particu-
-larly — that the Commissioner nor surveyor —
appointed in an act for the removal of the seat
of justice from the town of Lewis and other purposes
passed the 2^d of January 1791 and confirmed by a
Supplement of the 26th of October following —

are not vested with power to make authentic and
record a map or plat of Georgetown in Sussex —
shewing the Lots and Numbers with those set apart for
public uses — the streets alleys and other priviledges
whereby the proprietors and Inhabitants may be
encouraged to build with safety — and unnecessary
Expense in future be prevented — by putting it in the
power of each ~~person~~ ^{person} to find their own ground —
and the whole secured as Customary in this and other
States in similar Cases —

Which Memorial was accompanied with several
papers as testimony and evidence thereof —

That the time being near at hand when it is expected
your Honourable House to adjourn — and the whole
of said papers except the Memorial are indispens-
-sibly necessary for your petitioner to have again

as part of them are authorities for his proceedings
— and others — Sureties for private property made
Valuable by Improvements — and not recorded.

The aforesaid reasons together with the urgent
Necessity of your petitioners returning home
having a Number of hands Employed at his buildings
in said George Town — Strongly Induce him to
pray that your Honourable house maybe
~~pleas'd~~ pleas'd to direct that he may receive
his said papers again — or otherways expedite ~~the~~
business in such way as in their Wisdom may seem
Meet —

and your petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray

Dover 15th June 1793

Johⁿ Stanborough
In behalf of himself and others —

to have again
well and independent
and the whole
of when the people
themselves
promised with several
in this and other
near ground
nothing of it
and unnecessary
of the same
the same
has set apart for
in the year

Tillem,

Mr. Bury, no. by Mr. Hall, 1 B. Boston
Mr. Hookley, no. by W. Lockwood 50 1/2 - H. H.

Petition
A. Stanborough

1793. 2

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Delaware
in General Assembly met

The Petition of sundry Inhabitants of the County of Sussex.
Most Humbly Sheweth.

That the Roads leading from sundry parts of the said County
to the present Seat of Justice at George Town, are in many places very crooked and Miry,
and in some places almost impassable, which renders them very disagreeable to
those who have business to transact in the Courts of said County:

Your Petitioners therefore pray your Honours to pass an Act,
appointing Commissioners to lay off Roads to and from the following places
viz. One Road leading from Millford to George Town, and from thence to
William Newbolds, One Road from Lewes to George Town, and from thence to
the North West Fork Chapel, and one Road leading from George Town to Broad
Creek; to be laid off, cleared, grubbed and maintained, and the damages, if any,
to be paid by a Tax on the Publick in General: and to Vest in the Justices of the Court
of General Quarter Sessions, a discretionary power upon petition to order such other
Roads to be laid off as they may think beneficial to the Publick, the expence of which
to be defrayed by a Tax as aforesaid.

Your Petitioners humbly conceive that Roads laid off in the
manner aforesaid, will be a great means of inducing Jurors, Witnesses and others
to attend the Courts at George Town, who are now in danger of life or
Limbe should Night at any time happen to overtake them, and also further

The Impoverishment of our present County Town

Your Petitioners relying on your Honors well known integrity
Humbly hope your Honors will pass an Act for the relief of the said

And Your Petitioners as in duty bound will pray

January 5. 1795

Adam Short	1
William Jones	2
Phillip Marvel	3
Isaac Short	4
William Murphy	5
Adam Short	6
Thomas Marvel	7
Abram Harres	8
James Colliers	9
Burnel Tindel	10
Samuel Tindel	11
Thomas Ingram	12
Samuel Lewes	13
Jacob Johnson	14
Robert Marvel	15
John Harres	16
Zacharias Harres	17
Benjamin Johnson	18
John Johnson	19
Eli James	20
Dannel Long	21
Luke Fleatwood	22
John Eleot	23
Sturten Smith	24
Charles Tindel	25
Jacob Conaway	26
John Conaway	27
Isaac Conaway	28
Parrel McCalley	29

Petition of Sussex County

1795. Jan. 23^d

Read and referred
to the Committee
appointed on similar
Petitions from Kent.

To the Honorable The Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Delaware
in General Assembly met

The Petition of sundry Inhabitants of the County of Sussex.

Most Humbly Sheweth

That the Roads leading from sundry parts of the said County to the present Seat of Justice at George Town, are in many places very crooked and very narrow and in some places almost impassable, which renders them very disagreeable to those who have business to transact in the Courts of said County.

Your petitioners therefore pray Your Honors to pass an Act appointing Commissioners to lay off Roads to and from the following places

~~viz. One Road from Milford to George Town and from thence to Dagsbury or~~

Blackford: One Road from Lewis to George Town, and from thence to the North West Fork Chapel, and one Road leading to Broad Creek; to be laid off, cleared, grubbed and maintained, and the damages, if any to be paid by a Tax on the public in general; and to vest in the Justices of the Court of Quarter Sessions a discretionary power, upon petition, to order such other Roads to be laid off as they shall judge beneficial to the public, the expense of which to be defrayed by a Tax as aforesaid.

Your petitioners humbly conceive that Roads laid off in the manner aforesaid, will be a great means of inducing Jurors, Witnesses and others to attend the Courts at George Town, (who are now in danger of Life

or Limb, should Night at any time overtake them) and also further the Improvement
of our present County Town.

Your Petitioners relying on your Honors well known integrity
Humbly hope your Honors will pass an Act for the purposes aforesaid.

And Your Petitioners as in duty bound will pray

January 5. 1795.

Isaac Cooper
Samuel Williams Jun
William Cooper
Alexander Smith
James Cathell

Thos Moore
Wm Bryan
William Vaughan
John Goddard
William Hobbs

John Willis Esq
Wm Looch Esq
John Willis Jun
The Evans Foundry
Purnel Short
Jacob Short
J. Martins

Stephen Ellis
George Ellis
Haler Spicer
Joseph Nelson
Benj Vinton
John Bonnet
Am Coultter
Solo Vinton
Richard Phillips
Jacob Johnson
Joshua Bennett
puck pizer
John Bacon
Henry Edger Jun

Thos. Tucker Esq
Jackson Good
William Collins
Stephen Horsey
Jobe Serman
James Masters
Elijah Hoston
Samuel Mearns
James Vinton
Charles King
Robert Brighton
Manaan Bull
Jesse Green
Thos. Vinton

Petition for Sussex County

1795

674

To the Honorable The Senate and House of Representatives of
the State of Delaware in General Assembly met

The Petition of Sundry of the Inhabitants of George
Town in the County of Sussex most Humbly Sheweth,
That your Petitioners feel themselves aggrieved by the
very great Number of Allies that intersect the Ground
Plot of said Town, as many of them are owners of the Lots
on both sides of ~~the~~ Alley which frequently compels them to
erect more fences than otherwise would be necessary, besides
the Inconvenience of having their Lots thus unconnected, We
therefore pray your Honors to appoint three or five Commis-
sioners by a Law enacted for that Purpose to View said
Allies with full Powers to say what Allies shall continue
and what shall be done away, with directions to Report
to the Honorable The Court of Common Pleas whose Confirmation
shall be final, or such other mode as you in your Wisdom
shall think Right and expedient and ~~and~~ and as in Duty
bound we your Petitioners will ever Pray &c. Jan 7 15th 1798

Benton Lewis

Nathl Mitchell

Isaac Wilson

Thos Beware

Richard Watson

Geo Howard

Phillips Hollock

Wm McCreary

Russel

William Russel

The Petition of sundry
of the Inhabitants of
Georgetown in the County
of Sussex to The Hon^{ble}
General Assembly of
the State of Delaware

In the H. of R.
Jan^y. 19th. 1798 Read
Referred to Mess^{rs} Wells
Paynter &
Jordan

An additional supplement to an Act entitled
"An Act for removing the seats of justice from
Lewes to a more central part of Sussex County
and for other purposes"

Whereas by the said Act to which this is
a supplement Robert Houston, Rowers
Shankland, George Mitchell, William
Moore and John Collins esquires were
appointed commissioners to sell and
execute deeds for the conveyance of the
lots in George Town three of which
commissioners are since dead without
executing conveyances for many of the lots
sold by them and no provision being
made for the reappointment of commis-
sioners in case of death resignation re-
moval or inability to serve in said capacity

Sec. 1. Be it therefore enacted by the Senate and
House of Representatives of the State of Dela-
ware in General Assembly met, That
Benton Hayes Doctor James Robertson
and William Ruffell be and are hereby
nominated and appointed ^{ed} commis-
sioners

and in the place and stead of Robert Mott
and William Moore and George Mitchell
agrees, deceased, and the said com-
missioners hereby nominated and appointed
in him as aforesaid shall be vested with
all the power and authority given to the
commissioners in the act to which this
is a supplement and that the said sur-
viving commissioners and the commis-
sioners hereby nominated and appointed
their executors and assigns or a majority
of them are hereby authorized required and
empowered to sell all the lots in the Town
aforesaid which remain unsold by the
commissioners appointed as aforesaid
and to execute deeds or deeds for the convey-
ance of all those lots that have heretofore
been sold by the commissioners appointed
by the act to which this is a supplement.

Section 2. Be it further enacted that when an
emergency shall hereafter happen by the death
resignation removal or inability to serve
of any of the said commissioners that

it shall and may be lawful for the Justices for
the county of Suffolk to nominate and ap-
point a suitable person or persons to view and com-
missioners for the purpose aforesaid.

Sec. 3. Be it further enacted by the authority a-
foresaid that the following alleys and lanes
in Great Town to wit: South alley from Market
Street to Laurel Street South Lane from
Market Street to Laurel Street Cooper's Alley
from Front Street as far as the town land ex-
tends Cherry Lane from Market Street to Cooper's
Alley Cooper's Alley from lot number one
to the south side of lot number two hundred
and thirty three and two hundred and thirty
six Strawberry Alley from Beiper Street
with one hundred and twenty feet to the line
that divides lot number forty one and forty
from one hundred and one hereby held to be stop-
ped up and done away and that the said
alleys and lanes stopped up and done away
as aforesaid shall be divided equally between
the adjoining lot and land holders

An additional supplement
to an act entitled an act
for reserving the seat of
Justice from Lewis &c.
H. R. Jan. 19. 1800.

Read first time - read
a second time - 20. Jan.
Read a third time by
paragraphs and papers
to the house

Prints for concurrence

Resolution

In the Senate.

Jan. 20. 1801. read.

— 21. — read 2^d time

— 22. — read 3^d time.

by paragraphs and being amended

Yapped there mate

Wm Fisher Clerk

To The Honorable Body

The Senate and House of Representatives,
now sitting at Dover in and for
the State of Delaware

Your Petitioners are -
Informed that a Memorial is or will be laid
before your Honor, Praying an act of Law
for to stop up such alleys or lanes as may
be Injurious to George Town & the Inhabitants
thereof

Your Petitioners are of Opinion that
the S^d Town & the Lots therein is laid
off in a very Beautiful and convenient Con-
struction and there is not one alley or lane
But what is of great Use to the Inhabitants
of S^d Town and the Public in general,

Your Petitioners, therefore Request
that you should Take the Premises in^{to} Consideration
and prevent your Petitioners from Labouring
under the Disadvantages, they would Do by -
Such an act as afo^{re}

and Your Petitioners will ever pray,
Jan^y 9th 1801

Isaac Wilson
John Ham. Tinsman
Grenton Harris
Robert Waller
Seth Hudson
Mitchell Scott

Attingham Wire
John Bevans
James Brinkson
Zachariah Collins
John McCommas
John Priddyman
Charles Scott
William Marvel

Names of Petitioners

Names of Petitioners

William Jefferson

Benjamin Butler Jun

Benjamin Butler Senr

John Martin Senr

Robert Wilson

William Dickerson

Salathiel Fitchett

John Miller

Stephen Mitchell

Jesse Green

John Rodney

John Rodney

Samuel Butler

Thomas Charvel

Levin pepper

Joshua pepper

John pepper

John Willetts Senr

David Martin

Abram Harris

Petition George Town
read & referred.

1801

Edwards

TO the honourable the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Delaware—The petition of the subscribers, citizens of Sussex county in the same state, respectfully submits the following considerations with their prayer for the relief, which these considerations suggest.

BY the laws of the land, in all elections of governor, senators and representatives, also of representative to congress, levy-court commissioners, sheriffs and coroners, every white free man of the age of twenty-one years, having resided in the state two years next before such election and within that time paid a state or county tax, which shall have been assessed six months before the election, and the sons of persons so qualified between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-two years, although not having paid taxes, have right to vote.

It is self-evident, that this right to vote is of the greatest importance to those entitled to it. For in the exercise of this right are chosen—those, who make the laws—those, who appoint the judges, justices and officers to administer the laws and by their acts and judgments to bind and controul the persons and property of the whole community—those, who carry into effect these acts and judgments—and those, who lay the taxes. The importance of this right requires, that all those entitled to it should enjoy it fully and equally according to the letter of the constitution, which declares, that "all elections shall be free and equal." Every voter must pay taxes to support government. Therefore every voter ought, without inconvenience, to have a voice and consequent influence in choosing those, who administer the government; that there may be assurance—that those, who by way of salaries receive the taxes paid by the people, shall render to the people an equivalent in their services; that government shall be administered for the general good; and that in receiving benefits flowing from government none shall have undue and unmerited advantages over others.

But your petitioners consider, that under the present laws, owing to the circumstance that there is but one place in this county for holding the general election, all the voters in the county do not fully and equally enjoy their right to vote.

George-town is the place, at which the general election in this county, according to the present law, must be held. Many voters in the county live at the distance of at least thirty miles from this place.

Those voters living within six or seven miles from George-town, can, without trouble, inconvenience or expense go to the general election, even although the weather be bad or they have no means of conveyance. The aged and infirm can in most cases go these distances.

But those voters living at distances from fifteen to thirty miles from George-town, cannot go to the general election without much trouble, inconvenience and expense. Even in good weather, many voters, being aged or infirm or having no means of conveyance, are prevented from going to the election by the distances, at which they live from the place of holding it. To go these distances is a laborious, and in bad weather a very disagreeable task to those in good health and having good means of conveyance.

The consequences are obvious.

1. The right to vote is not fully enjoyed. For many voters in the county, at every election, are prevented from going to the election and giving their votes and thus enjoying their lawful influence in the state, by the distances at which they live from the place of holding the election.

2. The right to vote is not equally enjoyed. For while those voters living within six or seven miles from George-town can go to the election without trouble, inconvenience or expense, those voters living at distances from fifteen to thirty miles from George-town incur much trouble, inconvenience and expense, which if accurately computed would be seen to be no small tax upon them, in going to the election. In this particular, there is great inequality; those voters living at remote distances from George-town experiencing great disadvantages not felt by those living at small distances from this place—that too, in exercising a most important right, which the constitution explicitly declares "shall be free and equal."

The present law for holding the general election at one place only in the county subjects the distant parts of the county to many other great and manifest disadvantages.

For the distant parts of the county have not the effect of their numbers and of course not their lawful influence in the elections, because many voters living in such parts of the county are prevented from going to the elections by their distances from the place of holding them.

Many other evils, necessarily resulting from holding the general election at one place only in the county, might be mentioned. These evils naturally suggest themselves, when it is considered that to exercise the important right of voting at elections many voters in going to and returning from the place of holding the election must travel forty, fifty and even sixty miles.

For these evils the remedy is manifest and easy. If provision were made by law for District-Elections, every voter in the county would live so near to the place of holding the election in his district, as that he could attend and give in his vote without trouble, inconvenience or expense. In such case, no parts of the county would enjoy undue advantages over other parts; every district, without regard to situation, would have in the government the weight and influence of its own numbers; and the full sense of every part of the county would be expressed by the citizens meeting, deliberating and voting in their own neighborhoods.

If we deemed it necessary to cite example to prove the expediency of district-elections, we could find examples for that purpose in all the neighboring states. For these, and most if not all the states in the union, have adopted and highly approve of district-elections.

Your petitioners therefore pray the honourable the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Delaware to provide by law for District-Elections.

And your petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

Daniel Godwin
William Hedrick
Levin Edwin
Lukas Lofland
Lambert Pruitt
Woodman Stapp
Schemiah Soland
William Hickman
William Smith

James Reed
Thomas Davis
Schemiah Davis
John Y. Davis
Thomas Jones
Salathiel Jones
John Wright
Alexander Grant
Joseph Ackerman
Lewis Ingram
Bryan James

George Smith
John Campbell Esq
Butler Lofland
Andrew Russell
Lew Russell
Henry Smith
George Lofland

Starkes
Belcher
John Wilson
Thomas Shockey
House of Representatives
Amos W. Allen
Sark Morris
John Kildale
Thomas Smith

Found with 1808

TO the honourable the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Delaware—The petition of the subscribers, citizens of Sussex county in the same state, respectfully submits the following considerations with their prayer for the relief, which these considerations suggest.

BY the laws of the land, in all elections of governor, senators and representatives, also of representative to congress, levy-court commissioners, sheriffs and coroners, every white free man of the age of twenty-one years, having resided in the state two years next before such election and within that time paid a state or county tax, which shall have been assessed six months before the election, and the sons of persons so qualified between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-two years, although not having paid taxes, have right to vote.

It is self-evident, that this right to vote is of the greatest importance to those entitled to it. For in the exercise of this right are chosen—those, who make the laws—those, who appoint the judges, justices and officers to administer the laws and by their acts and judgments to bind and controul the persons and property of the whole community—those, who carry into effect these acts and judgments—and those, who lay the taxes. The importance of this right requires, that all those entitled to it should enjoy it fully and equally according to the letter of the constitution, which declares, that "all elections shall be free and equal." Every voter must pay taxes to support government. Therefore every voter ought, without inconvenience, to have a voice and consequent influence in choosing those, who administer the government; that there may be assurance—that those, who by way of salaries receive the taxes paid by the people, shall render to the people an equivalent in their services; that government shall be administered for the general good; and that in receiving benefits flowing from government none shall have undue and unmerited advantages over others.

But your petitioners consider, that under the present laws, owing to the circumstance that there is but one place in this county for holding the general election, all the voters in the county do not fully and equally enjoy their right to vote.

George-town is the place, at which the general election in this county, according to the present law, must be held. Many voters in the county live at the distance of at least thirty miles from this place.

Those voters living within six or seven miles from George-town, can without trouble, inconvenience or expense go to the general election, even although the weather be bad or they have no means of conveyance. The aged and infirm can in most cases go these distances.

But those voters living at distances from fifteen to thirty miles from George-town, cannot go to the general election without much trouble, inconvenience and expense. Even in good weather, many voters, being aged or infirm or having no means of conveyance, are prevented from going to the election by the distances, at which they live from the place of holding it. To go these distances is a laborious, and in bad weather a very disagreeable task to those in good health and having good means of conveyance.

The consequences are obvious.

1. The right to vote is not fully enjoyed. For many voters in the county, at every election, are prevented from going to the election and giving their votes and thus enjoying their lawful influence in the state, by the distances at which they live from the place of holding the election.

2. The right to vote is not equally enjoyed. For while those voters living within six or seven miles from George-town can go to the election without trouble, inconvenience or expense, those voters living at distances from fifteen to thirty miles from George-town, incur much trouble, inconvenience and expense, which if accurately computed would be seen to be no small tax upon them, in going to the election. In this particular, there is great inequality; those voters living at remote distances from George-town experiencing great disadvantages not felt by those living at small distances from this place—that too, in exercising a most important right, which the constitution explicitly declares "shall be free and equal."

The present law for holding the general election at one place only in the county subjects the distant parts of the county to many other great and manifest disadvantages.

For the distant parts of the county have not the effect of their numbers and of course not their lawful influence in the elections, because many voters living in such parts of the county are prevented from going to the elections by their distances from the place of holding them.

Many other evils, necessarily resulting from holding the general election at one place only in the county, might be mentioned. These evils naturally suggest themselves, when it is considered that to exercise the important right of voting at elections many voters in going to and returning from the place of holding the election must travel forty, fifty and even sixty miles.

For these evils the remedy is manifest and easy. If provision were made by law for District-Elections, every voter in the county would live so near to the place of holding the election in his district, as that he could attend and give in his vote without trouble, inconvenience or expense. In such case, no parts of the county would enjoy undue advantages over other parts; every district, without regard to situation, would have in the government the weight and influence of its own numbers; and the full sense of every part of the county would be expressed by the citizens meeting, deliberating and voting in their own neighborhoods.

If we deemed it necessary to cite example to prove the expediency of district-elections, we could find examples for that purpose in all the neighboring states. For these, and most if not all the states in the union, have adopted and highly approve of district-elections.

Your petitioners therefore pray the honourable the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Delaware to provide by law for District-Elections.

And your petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

Edward Graham
James Wright
Peter Wright
John Carlisle Junr.
Absolon Adams
William Adams
Lewis Hubbard
Matthew Cannon
Daniel C. Adams

Clément Clarkson
Juel Rife
Elizabeth Griffith
Wm. A. Ellegood
Wm. Jacob
Abel H. Brown
Spencer Williams
John Outten
John Robinson

James Poth
Constantine Smith
James Cornwell
Bartholomew Johnson
Shadrach Elliott
Joseph Cannon
Martin Goffin
Richard Garrison

Wm. P. H. Huntington
 John Wilson Camp
 William Smith
 Nathaniel Spence
 O. W. Morris 30

The petitioners... of the county...
 do hereby certify...
 that the petition...
 was presented to the...
 on the... day of...
 and that the same...
 was read and...
 and that the same...
 was referred to the...
 and that the same...
 was reported to the...
 and that the same...
 was adopted by the...
 on the... day of...
 and that the same...
 was carried to the...
 and that the same...
 was published in the...
 on the... day of...

The petitioners...
 do hereby certify...
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 was presented to the...
 on the... day of...
 and that the same...
 was read and...
 and that the same...
 was referred to the...
 and that the same...
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 and that the same...
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 on the... day of...
 and that the same...
 was carried to the...
 and that the same...
 was published in the...
 on the... day of...

**Petition for District
 Elections**

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Your petitioners therefore pray the honourable the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Delaware to provide by law for District-Elections.

And your petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

Curtis Jacobs
Wingate Cannon
Thomas Jacobs
Thomas Watts
William Cannon
William Brown
Henry Hubbs
Henry Hubbs

Thomas Royall
Thomas Pickens
Arthur H. Witley
Joshua Witley
Shiloh Dell
Robert H. Hays

Ally. H. Bellum
Bernard Ledy
Henry Adams
John Cade
Henry Little
James Means

Job Stokley

Wm Davis

John Timent

Elijah Nicholson

Truman Rose

John Rust

Jeremiah Coulbourn

James Collins

Isaac Knowles

Dilghman Wright

Jacob ^{his} ~~more~~
~~mark~~

Thomas Collins

John Larenton

John Scott

Wm ~~Sanborn~~

John Martin

Henry Waller

Thos Coulbourn

Levi Cannon

Isaac Wingate

Jacob Cannon

Jesse Jones

Nehemiah Lingard

Matthew ~~James~~ Cannon

Minus Jacobs

John Green

William Bradley -

promise, grant, and agree to and with the said Dagworthy Jones his heirs and assigns that he hath not willfully or knowingly done or caused or procured done any Act, Matter or Thing in deed or in law whereby the Premises hereby granted or any Part thereof can or may be charged or incumbered in the manner be impeached. And the said John Jones Do by these presents, nominate, constitute, and appoint David Hall and James P. Wilson Esqs. them jointly and severally to be my true and lawful Attornies for me and in my name to appear at a Court of Common Pleas to be held for the County then and there to Acknowledge and deliver this Indenture in due form of Law as my Act and Deed in order that it may be as such record as whereof the said John Jones has to the Curator set his hand and seal the day and year first above Written

Scaled and Delivered in the presence of
 David Murray, Thomas ^{his} ~~Son~~ ^{son} ~~son~~ Jones

John Jones

Subj. County Ct. Be it Remembered that said Murray came into the Court of Common Pleas held at George Town in and for *the* said *County* on the 10th day of November 1791 and then and there did prove the Execution of the above Indenture which said time and place came James P. Wilson Esq. and by virtue of the power and authority to him *then* given did Acknowledge the above Deed to Dagworthy Jones Esq. with the lands and premises therein his right and property according to the tenor and effect thereof. In Testimony whereof I have caused the public seal of my Office to *be* *set* *on* *the* *above* *Deed* *at* *the* *place* *and* *time* *above* *written*.

Hath. Mitchell *Acty*

Deed of Sale Hath. Mitchell from George Mitchell & others Commission

This Indenture made and concluded upon the twenty first day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety one George Mitchell, Robert Houston, William Moore, John Collins, & Rhoads Shankland, being the Commissioners appointed by an act of the general Assembly of the State intitled an act for amending the Seat of Justice from Lewis in the County of Sussex to a more central part of said County and for other purposes on the behalf of the County of Sussex of the one part & Hath. Mitchell of said County and State of the other part witnesses that the Commissioners above mentioned for consideration of the sum of thirty pounds thirteen Shillings good and lawful Money of the Delaware State to them in hand paid by the said Hath. Mitchell Sealing and Delivering these presents, the Receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, have by the power and authority vested in them by the above recited bargain, and sold, and by these presents do grant, bargain and sell unto the above Hath. Mitchell his heirs executors, and assigns, two several Viz Number sixteen lots lying and being in George Town in the aforesaid County, better and bounded as follows Beginning at the South Corner Number sixteen running North West sixty feet thence North East One hundred and twenty feet to a publick way with said Alley sixty feet to the thence South West with Market Street to the first Beginning containing twenty seven square perches more or less also Number fourteen lots and being in the Town aforesaid, better and bounded as follows, Beginning at the South Corner of said Lot Number fourteen running north West Sixty feet thence North East One Hundred and twenty feet thence South East sixty feet thence South West One hundred and twenty feet to the first beginning containing twenty seven square perches be the same more or less, to have and to hold the said lots Number six and number sixteen and number fourteen with the ^{belonging} and all the Advantages whatsoever to the said Lots above mentioned, or in any wise appertaining and all the Estate right title and interest Demand Whatsoever of the aforesaid County of Sussex of on and to the said Lots or tenements, and every part or parcel thereof unto the said Hath. Mitchell his heirs and assigns forever, and the said above recited Commissioners doth hereby on the part and in behalf of the said County of Sussex according true intent and meaning of the power and authority vested in them by the above recited act Warrant and Deed of the said lands and Lots in manner of persons Whatsoever that shall claim by or under the said County of Sussex, And further the above said Commissioners doth and do hereby constitute and appoint John W. Batson, George Mitchell, or Rhoads Shankland, Esquire or either of them to be true and lawful Attornies before the Court of Common Pleas and Acknowledge this Deed in due form of law in as ample a manner as they could do upon this present In whereof the said above mentioned Commissioners have to these presents set their Names and affixed their seals the day and year above Written

Signed Sealed and Delivered in the presence of
 Peter Parkes, William Harris, Hendrick Batson

Geo. Mitchell
 Robert Houston
 Wm Moore
 John Collins
 Rhoads Shankland

Subj. County Ct. Be it Remembered that said Murray came into the Court of Common Pleas held at George Town in and for *the* said *County* on the 10th day of November 1791 and there did prove the Execution of the above Indenture which said time and place came James P. Wilson Esq. and by virtue of the power and authority to him *then* given did Acknowledge the above Deed to Dagworthy Jones Esq. with the lands and premises therein his right and property according to the tenor and effect thereof. In Testimony whereof I have caused the public seal of my Office of the County of Sussex to be hereunto affixed and have also hereunto set my hand.

Deed of Sale William Teage from George Mitchell Esq. & others

This Indenture made and entered into this Eleventh day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety one by and between George Mitchell, William Moore, Robert Houston, John Collins, and Rhoads Shambland, Esqrs. Commissioners appointed in and by an Act of General Assembly of the Delaware State an Act Intituled an Act for the removing the seat of Justice from Lewis in Sussex County to a more central Part of said County, for and in consideration of the sum of two pounds five Shillings lawful Money of the Delaware State to them in hand paid by the said William Teage the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged have granted, bargained, sold, aliened, conveyed and confirmed, and by these presents do grant, bargain, sell, alien, convey and confirm unto the said William Teage his heirs and assigns a certain Lot piece or parcel of ground number twenty four situate lying and being in George Town in the County aforesaid and is bounded as follows to wit Beginning at the corner of Market Street on the North side of thence with the said Street North East sixty feet to the North side of the Alley thence with the said Alley South East one hundred and twenty feet to the place of Beginning containing twenty seven square perches be the same more or less Together with all and singular the hereditaments and appurtenances thereto belonging or in any wise appertaining; and all the estate right title use possession property claim and Demand whatsoever either in law or equity or otherwise of the aforesaid County of Sussex and unto the said Lot of ground and premises with the appurtenances To have and to hold the aforesaid Lot piece or parcel of ground and premises with the appurtenances hereby granted bargained and sold to the aforesaid William Teage his heirs and assigns forever, and the Commissioners aforesaid do hereby on the part and in the behalf of the County of Sussex County according to the true intent and meaning of the power and authority to them given by the aforesaid Act of Assembly warrant and power defend the aforesaid Lot piece or parcel of ground from all and every person or persons whatsoever claiming from by or under the aforesaid County of Sussex and we the said Commissioners do hereby authorize constitute and appoint John W. Batson and Rhoads Shambland Esqrs. or either of them our true and lawful Attorney for us and in our names to appear in our Court of Common Pleas within the County aforesaid and acknowledge this Deed of the said William Teage in due form of Law which said Acknowledgment shall be as valid in law as any Acknowledgment that we could make were we personally present In Testimony whereof we the said Commissioners have hereunto set our hands and seals the day and year first above written

Sealed & delivered in presence of
 Rhoads Shambland
 John Collins
 Geo Mitchell
 John W. Batson

Be it remembered that Hendrick Batson came into the Court of Common Pleas at George Town the Eleventh day of Nov. 1791 and proved the execution of the within Deed in due form of law at which said Court came John W. Batson and by virtue of the Power and authority to him given he do acknowledge the within Deed to William Teage with the lands and premises therein specified to be his right and property according to the purport and Effect thereof In Testimony whereof I have caused the Public Seal of my office to be hereunto affixed

Deed Thomas Harvey on Court House Commissioners

This Indenture made and entered upon the 11th day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety one between George Mitchell, Robert Houston, William Moore, John Collins, and Rhoads Shambland Commissioners appointed in and by an Act of General Assembly of the Delaware State intituled an Act for the removing the seat of Justice from Lewis in the County of Sussex to a more central part of a County and for other purposes on the part and in behalf of the said County of Sussex and in consideration of the sum of two pounds five Shillings lawful Money of the Delaware State to them in hand paid by the said Thomas Harvey the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged do hereby on the part and in behalf of the County of Sussex County according to the true intent and meaning of the power and authority to them given by the aforesaid Act grant, bargain and sell unto the above named Thomas Harvey for the use of his son Abraham Harvey March who of age has hereunto set his name and assigns all that certain Lot piece or parcel of ground situate lying and being in George Town in the aforesaid County bounded as follows beginning at the corner of Market Street on the North side of thence with the said Street North East sixty feet to the North side of the Alley thence with the said Alley South East one hundred and twenty feet to the place of Beginning containing twenty seven square perches be the same more or less Together with all and singular the hereditaments and appurtenances thereto belonging or in any wise appertaining; and all the estate right title use possession property claim and Demand whatsoever either in law or equity or otherwise of the aforesaid County of Sussex and unto the said Lot of ground and premises with the appurtenances To have and to hold the aforesaid Lot piece or parcel of ground and premises with the appurtenances hereby granted bargained and sold to the aforesaid Thomas Harvey his heirs and assigns forever, and the Commissioners aforesaid do hereby on the part and in the behalf of the County of Sussex County according to the true intent and meaning of the power and authority to them given by the aforesaid Act of Assembly warrant and power defend the aforesaid Lot piece or parcel of ground from all and every person or persons whatsoever claiming from by or under the aforesaid County of Sussex and we the said Commissioners do hereby authorize constitute and appoint John W. Batson and Rhoads Shambland Esqrs. or either of them our true and lawful Attorney for us and in our names to appear in our Court of Common Pleas within the County aforesaid and acknowledge this Deed of the said Thomas Harvey in due form of Law which said Acknowledgment shall be as valid in law as any Acknowledgment that we could make were we personally present In Testimony whereof we the said Commissioners have hereunto set our hands and seals the day and year first above written

Burying the Hatchet

Return Day in Sussex County, Delaware

Michael Mills

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



BILL CAMPBELL



ROBERT J. BENNETT

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



BILL CAMPBELL

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

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

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

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

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

BURYING THE HATCHET

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



ROBERT J. BENNETT

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

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

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

A rich history

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

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

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

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



COURTESY SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY

districts to the county seat.

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

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

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



ROBERT J. BENNETT

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

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

BURYING THE HATCHET

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



ROBERT J. BENNETT

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

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

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

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



ROBERT J. BENNETT



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remember the celebrations of years past.

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

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

BURYING THE HATCHET



ROBERT J. BENNETT

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

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

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

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

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

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

A model for others

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

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

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

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

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

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



COURTESY SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY



COURTESY SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY

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

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

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

That open communication serves to emphasize how the people of Delaware

BURYING THE HATCHET



ROBERT J. BENNETT

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

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

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

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

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

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

season and providing a gesture of reconciliation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Return Day reminds both the win-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CAPE GAZETTE

Serving Delaware's Cape Region

Return Day - Thursday, Nov. 5, 1998

Sussex County celebrates a biennial tradition

People have traveled to Georgetown to hear election results since 1792

By Dennis Forney

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

The form of the celebration, which always takes place on the Thursday following election day, in all the even years, has changed considerably over the years. The purpose of the day, however, has remained the same. The residents of the county come to their county seat to hear the election returns, to celebrate victories and to drown the sorrow of defeat. Tradition has many of the opposing candidates riding together in horse-drawn carriages and convertible automobiles in the Return Day parade, while the leaders of the two major political parties "bury the hatchet" on The Circle in Georgetown - signaling the end of the political season.

In recent years, the Return Day celebration also has become the single-most unifying event that takes place for all of Sussex County. One of the largest parades held on the Delmarva Peninsula is the centerpiece of the Return Day celebration. The parade shows off the talents of musicians in bands from the middle school to high school and college levels, and a wide variety of floats, marching units and other exhibits out on wheels.

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

W. Emerson Wilson, a frequent contributor of historical articles to the News Journal papers in Wilm-

ington over the years, compiled a history of Return Day that was published in the official brochure for the event in 1974.

Much of the historical information that follows comes from that effort.

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

Georgetown, equidistant from all points in Sussex County, was created in 1791 to satisfy those complaints. A gentleman named George Mitchell was among the three men appointed to come up with a location and layout for a new county seat. Surveyor Rhodes Shankland came up with the circle concept and laid out the streets from there. Mitchell must have won when straws were drawn for the naming of the county seat. The new town was to be called Georgetown.

The county seat was closer for voting purposes for many of the county's residents. According to Wilson's history, "Voters had to drive into Georgetown to cast their ballots and it is unlikely they would return two days later for the results. Undoubtedly, the results of the election were known that night or the next day and voters would stay over to learn the results."

Continued on back page



Angie Moon photo

Former Georgetown Mayor W. Layton Johnson serves as Town Crier for Return Day. He is shown here standing on the balcony of the Sussex County Court House reading the results of the 1996 elections.

Schedule of events

- 9 a.m. to dusk - Food and craft booths on The Circle and on North Bedford Street.
- 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. - Music On The Circle, hosted by Light FM's Ron Letterman of "The Road Home" program. First act: Aimee Parker, country.
- 9:45 a.m. - Sarah Canady, contemporary, Circle
- 10 a.m. - Kamika Wells, contemporary, Circle; street dance with disc jockey Sky Brady on East Market St. next to Casapulla's
- 10:10 a.m. - Sussex Central's Take II Drama Club performs selections from "Welcome to Shakespeare's Nightmare" and "A Midsummer's Night's Dream," Circle
- 10:30 a.m. - "Monotones" - first place winner madrigal selections, Circle
- 11 a.m. - Reception and luncheon for candidates and honored guests, Delaware Technical and Community College; Music on Circle continues with Third U.S. Infantry (Old Guard) Fife and Drum Corps
- 11:30 a.m. - Delaware State Marching Band, Circle; Banjo Dusters, East Market Street
- Noon - Jim and Patty Jennette, country, Circle
- 12:15 p.m. - Jesus Is Lord praise team, East Market Street
- 12:20 p.m. - Jolene Cross, country, Circle
- 12:30 p.m. - Marie Mercy, contemporary, Circle
- 12:45 p.m. - Erin Williams, contemporary, Circle
- 1 p.m. - Miss Delaware, Jody Kelly, flute solo, "Dueling Banjos"
- 1:30 p.m. - RETURN DAY PARADE, from Sussex Central High School halfway around The Circle to King Street.
- 3 p.m. - Ceremonies On The Circle; oratory, patriotic music and traditional burying of hatchet.
- 3:45 p.m. - Ox Roast on The Circle; free open hit barbecue sandwiches.

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or of the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

- First Amendment to the United States Constitution

How we voted in Sussex County

Election District	Representative District	Polling Locations Sussex County 1998	U. S. Representative			Attorney General		State Treasurer		Auditor of Accounts		18th District Senator		21st District Senator	35th District Representative	36th District Representative	37th District Representative	38th District Representative	39th District Representative	40th District Representative	41st District Representative			
			Dennis E. WILLIAMS	Michael N. CASTLE	Kim Stanley BEMIS	John T. DORSEY	M. Jane BRADY	Jack MARKELL	Janet C. RZEWNICKI	Dianna M. KEMPSKI	R. Thomas WAGNER JR.	Gary W. DOWNES	F. Gary SIMPSON	Robert L. VENABLES	J. Benjamin EWING	V. George CAREY	John R. SCHROEDER	Harry W. CRYSTAL	Shirley A. PRICE	William O. MURRAY	B. Lynn MANGENE	Tina FALLON	Clifford G. LEE	Charles P. WEST
4	35	Milford Middle School	102	374	2	172	311	257	235	119	349	232	257											187
5	35	Milford Middle School	76	265	0	103	252	140	213	81	271													112
6	35	Greenwood Fire Hall	204	535	4	279	492	351	415	223	543													253
7	35	Bridgeville Fire Hall	291	624	2	358	561	486	427	310	588													341
8	35	Redden Community Hall CR 40	170	325	6	215	296	261	250	175	327													222
9	35	Higher Ed. Bldg, Delaware Tech	132	254	6	154	250	202	204	144	256													185
1	36	Lulu M. Ross School, Milford	219	795	7	349	683	525	517	279	754	468	575			863								394
2	36	Lulu M. Ross School, Milford	114	425	0	169	377	267	279	141	397	238	317			450								194
3	36	Slaughter Neck Comm. Action Center	160	282	0	200	240	256	186	162	272	233	206			338								217
4	36	Ellendale Fire Hall	328	717	3	420	640	532	521	324	712					806								453
5	36	Jason Building, Delaware Tech	89	272	3	143	223	168	195	95	262					286	286							158
6	36	Milton Junior High School	217	459	2	303	382	369	313	231	444					521	521							339
7	36	H. O. Brittingham School, Milton	295	724	6	407	626	570	522	326	695	478	534			744								478
1	37	Cape Henlopen High School	439	1019	7	580	886	754	722	494	930	665	787				738	739						675
2	37	Shields Elementary School, Lewes	226	621	5	336	513	452	396	271	556	402	426			441	414							381
3	37	Lewes Middle School	296	916	3	483	732	644	566	398	772	537	637			719	485							545
4	37	Lewes Fire Hall	289	722	3	397	608	534	468	362	607	493	487			541	460							506
5	37	Rehoboth Fire Hall	222	728	5	371	563	488	457	310	598					565	385							391
6	37	Reho. Elem. Sch., Stockley St. Ext.	200	771	4	384	590	483	487	280	662					518	454							379
7	37	Cape Henlopen High School	414	857	3	550	718	667	591	483	751	648	580			597	672							583
8	37	Indian River Fire Company Substation	209	498	4	275	431	380	325	271	421					401	302							357
1	38	Oak Orchard Fire Hall	518	702	1	622	581	719	486	568	587							804	408					719
2	38	Long Neck Elementary School	450	697	0	524	607	636	514	526	595							676	483					626
3	38	Lord Balt. Elem. School, Ocean View	431	1163	12	602	997	783	819	585	959							1,008	615					716
4	38	Bethany Beach Fire Hall	358	1136	10	501	979	686	800	576	924							837	669					625
5	38	Millville Fire Hall	342	763	6	453	650	552	529	448	617							686	422					530
6	38	Roxana Fire Hall	107	288	1	154	239	193	192	139	241							226	157					209
7	38	Selbyville Middle School	172	395	4	230	333	313	249	215	324							362	210					316
8	38	Roxana Fire Co. Sub-Station	350	653	0	417	586	507	484	404	540							567	434					416
1	39	Seaford Middle School	147	513	3	193	467	328	339	180	466								205	453				206
2	39	Blades Fire Hall	280	738	3	338	679	487	534	324	677			745				290	732					376
3	39	Seaford City Hall	95	292	1	132	257	188	203	130	248			261				115	275					168
4	39	Seaford Sr. High School	88	407	3	139	359	246	248	113	368							117	379					139
5	39	Seaford Sr. High School	156	565	2	215	512	386	346	213	497			507				181	533					241
6	39	West Seaford Elementary School	224	646	2	299	597	459	435	276	587			662				235	656					327
1	40	Sussex Tech High School	83	258	0	120	213	159	175	77	254			248										288
2	40	North Laurel Elementary School	182	541	3	256	471	356	369	232	467			576										143
3	40	Alderman's Court, Laurel	154	242	3	193	207	229	169	174	215			345										288
4	40	St. George's Community Hall	249	635	4	329	555	457	425	317	534			671										602
5	40	Laurel High School	183	429	5	265	342	324	289	207	388			501										275
6	40	Delmar Fire Hall	200	567	3	228	528	327	421	251	487			570										215
7	40	Laurel Central Middle School Fieldhs	135	515	2	213	439	281	365	157	490			498										215
1	41	Georgetown Court House	114	403	2	189	328	251	265	142	367													348
2	41	Georgetown Elementary School	168	556	2	244	484	349	377	179	543													234
3	41	Sussex Central HS, Georgetown	98	248	2	147	205	188	165	111	242			269										368
4	41	Sussex Central Middle School	299	721	8	416	593	539	469	325	666			289										200
5	41	Dagsboro Fire Hall	241	529	2	330	423	419	342	284	461													758
6	41	Frankford Fire Hall	182	277	4	216	241	265	186	210	229													647
7	41	Gumboro Fire Hall	90	296	2	128	258	194	203	130	248													546
8	41	East Millsboro Elementary School	209	666	9	310	581	438	443	251	614													473

TOTALS	10,997	28,024	174	15,071	24,085	19,979	19,150	13,183	25,001	4,394	4,806	6,132	2,682	4,008	4,520	3,911	5,166	3,398	1,143	3,028	3,560	3,765	17,818
	For SUSSEX COUNTY																						

Register Of Wills	Sussex County Recorder of Deeds	4th District Councilman	5th District Councilman	Sussex County Sheriff
Charles J. ROGERS	Ann Margaret TANSEY	Richard H. BELL II	Robert V. SIGLER	Robert G. FREDERICK
263	180	254	31	George B. COLE
201	104	209	37	Charles P. WEST II
388	289	393	63	Vance PHILLIPS
389	393	447	50	Milton W. HILL
219	219	250	30	Robert L. REED
155	174	192	24	
528	386	528	80	
295	199	290	37	
170	216	187	10	
449	433	578	86	
155	134	198	17	
289	303	328	28	
467	486	579	37	
752	609	752	37	
435	380	437	25	
612	457	656	37	
432	422	467	29	464 490
419	346	493	41	359 568
560	344	551	33	333 623
593	534	594	41	609 621
353	323	346	17	301 390
462	677	428	29	650 547
508	593	482	25	550 541
802	780	726	36	556 988
831	669	732	35	523 966
493	549	478	26	414 657
186	177	172	16	175 204
249	258	260	15	252 291
458	459	475	12	418 538
352	204	372	33	
481	423	503	55	
192	178	199	6	
300	139	297	19	
391	247	388	30	
421	339	455	48	
156	122	188	10	
312	288	356	21	
158	200	164	6	
395	364	426	33	355 524
284	277	283	15	255 353
385	309	372	30	303 437
346	240	370	18	
229	208	254	20	
331	237	428	22	
130	151	175	7	
425	456	465	26	477 521
343	379	322	19	377 371
172	271	157	12	286 180
169	168	184	11	265 131
428	370	454	36	405 477
18,593	16,583	19,168	1,455	4,954
				6,877
				3,373
				3,541
				16,404
				21,152

1998 election brings lower-than-normal voter turn-out, few surprises

When the winners and losers had all finally gone home following Tuesday's election, Ken McDowell, administrator of Sussex County's Board of Elections, reflected on the lower-than-normal voter turn-out generated by this year's election.

"Out of 89,688 registered voters in Sussex, we had about 37,500 that cast votes. That's only about a 42 percent voter turn-out. That's the lowest I've ever seen. I thought we'd at least see 50 percent. Of course we have to set up for the election as if 100 percent of the voters will turn out.

"It costs Delaware a lot of money to run an election for only half of the voters," said McDowell.

As low as 42 percent is, however, that's several percentage points higher than the statewide voting percentage this year. "Here in Sussex we had four representative seats uncontested and a senate seat uncontested. That holds the vote down," said McDowell. "There was no governor's race, no president's race - maybe that has something to do with it. I don't really know."

Sussex County Republican Committee Chairman Bruce Rogers, who walked through the elections office in Georgetown earlier in the evening, said that a study of voting trends in Sussex on election day showed that a lot of those people registered as independents didn't turn out for this year's election. "I think the statewide turn-out was

about 37 percent and part of that is a result of what we heard was a very depressed city vote in Wilmington," said Rogers.

Rogers said he was especially pleased with Vance Phillips' victory in the 5th councilmanic race for Sussex County Council. In the tightest race of this year's elections in Sussex, Phillips won over Charles P. "Chip" West 3,541 to 3,373. "That's really remarkable



PHILLIPS

when you consider that Phillips is a Republican and there are 1,200 more registered Democrats than there are registered Republicans in that district," said Rogers.

Marlene Elliott of Laurel, who serves on the staff of Republican U.S. Sen. Bill Roth, said she was particularly pleased about Phillips' victory because he had brought so many young people into his campaign. "He had a group of young people who gave blood for him in this campaign," said Elliott. "The 20 somethings. It's great for them to see that their efforts made a difference."

Sussex County Democratic Chairman Tim Willard said he was very pleased with Shirley Price's strong showing in winning against Republi-

can challenger Bill Murray. Price beat her challenger in each of the 38th representative district's eight precincts to post an unexpectedly strong 5,166 to 3,398 win.

"On the other hand," said Willard, "it's disappointing to see Chip West lose his race to Vance Phillips after he worked so hard."

Sussex County Council President Dale Dukes, who spent a good while at the election office on election night, said he thinks Phillips will be a team player as a council member. "I played softball with him many a year and he's a tough competitor," said Dukes. "I think once he sees how we go about things he'll fall in line. You don't get things done if you don't."

Dukes, a Democrat, said he will have no problem continuing to work with George Cole who defeated challenger Bob Frederick by a comfortable margin. "I've worked with George [a Republican] for 10 years. We differ on a lot of issues but we don't get mad and stay mad.

"George wants more restrictions on development, even though he's a Realtor. And Vance wants less restrictions. There will be a leveling process."

Dukes is finishing his eighth year as president of Sussex Council. With Phillips' election, Sussex Council now includes two Republicans [Cole and Phillips] and three Democrats [Dukes, Lynn Rogers and Findley Jones].

Return Day officers and directors coordinate event

The effort to produce Sussex County's unique biennial election holiday is considerable. Here is a list of Sussex County Return Day Inc. officers and directors. Officers include Rosalie B. Walls, president; Eleanor Raye Warrington, vice pres-

ident; Ann Couch, secretary; and Allan Kujala, treasurer. Directors include Sue H. Barlow, Joseph W. Booth, Richard M. Calhoun, Charlotte P. Campbell, George F. Crouch, Claire T. Croll, Terri Croll, James Dukes, Dallas Green, George

Headley, W. Layton Johnson, William H. Lawson, Christine C. Lecates, William H. Lecates, Joan D. Messick, Daniel L. Milburn, Isabelle Morris, Mark Pettyjohn, Bob Ricker, Lawrence Sammons, Harold Short and Jay M. Stevens.

Sen. Bill Roth, former Gov. Elbert Carvel serving as Grand Marshals for 1998 Return Day Parade

Two of Delaware's most venerable political leaders - U.S. Sen. Bill Roth and former two-term Gov. Elbert N. Carvel - are serving as Grand Marshals for this year's Return Day Parade.

"Both men have made enormous contributions to Delaware and we wanted to honor them both this year," said Rosalie Walls, president of Sussex County Return Day Inc.

Carvel served as governor from 1949 to 1953 and from 1961 to 1965.

Sen. Roth is in his fourth term as a U.S. senator. As chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, he is now recognized as one of the most

powerful elected officials in Washington D.C.

Honorary parade marshals for the 1998 Return Day Parade include Orlando George, president of Delaware Technical and Community College; Timothy Kavel, vice president of Delaware Technical and Community College and campus director of the Owens Campus in Georgetown; and George J. Collins, who is retiring as a Sussex County councilman after serving from 1991 until 1999.

Parade judges include Delaware State Police Sergeant Lewis W. Briggs, Sussex County Tourism's executive director Cindy Small, Sussex County Emergency

Operations Director Joe Thomas, Apple-Scrapple Festival Executive Director Bonnie Workman, Delaware Volunteer Firemen's Association President Emeritus Norman Tate and Centenary Methodist Church Secretary Janet Lee.

Parade announcers include WGMD morning man Dan Gaffney, antique car enthusiast Floyd Megee Jr., Delaware State Fire School Past Director Louis J. Amabili and Nur Temple's Charles E. Downs Sr.

Fire equipment judges for this year's parade include Delaware State Fire School's Wayne Hutchinson, Delaware Volunteer Firemen's Association President Mike Vincent, Rehoboth Beach Fire Chief Chuck Snyder and Laurel Fire Company President Jeff Hill.

This year's parade will begin at 1:30 p.m. from Sussex Central High School.



CARVEL



ROTH

History

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

"It wasn't long though before voters complained about having to drive all the way to Georgetown to cast their ballots. Although it took more than two decades to change the system, the state's General Assembly passed laws in 1828 which set up polling places in the 13 hundreds of the county. That meant votes had to be gathered from polling places throughout the county and carried to Georgetown for tabulation, where they were turned over to the sheriff . . . and the results announced from the courthouse at noon on Thursday."

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

Wilson's history continues:

"It would seem that Return Day as we know it now probably started with the election of 1830 or the presidential election of 1832. Certainly by the 1840s the custom was well-established. Several thousand persons would pour into Georgetown that morning coming on foot, in wagons drawn by mules, horses or oxen, in carriages of all types, and on horseback.

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

"The results were read from the door of the courthouse at noon and were printed on a white sheet hoisted over the courthouse door. The winning candidates were placed onto the shoulders of their

adherents and paraded around The Green. A large pole was erected in The Green and the emblem of the winning party was run up it. Generally an ox roast was provided by the winners.

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

The Return Day tradition grew and grew throughout the 1800s and represented a major festival in Georgetown every other year. With the turn of the century, however, new forces came on the scene.

The automobile and telephone and radio brought people closer to the county seat and they no longer had to go to Return Day to find out who own. Interest in the old tradition began to fade. World War II was raging in 1942 and Return Day was canceled altogether.

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

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

Return Day has been a festive celebration throughout the second half of this century - and has even gained national prominence as several nationally televised shows have often focused their cameras on Georgetown for this event that is unique in all the land.

This year, under the guidance of Return Day veteran organizer Rosalie Walls, hundreds of volunteers will staff Return Day activities which have been scheduled from 6:30 in the morning to dusk.



Angie Moon photos

Scenes from Return Day, 1996

These photos, clockwise from top left, show Roland Derrickson, Jack Dalton and Myrtle Shockley - chairs of the Sussex Republican, Libertarian and Democratic parties - burying the hatchet; Sussex County Return Day President Rosalie B. Walls enjoying herself in the Return Day Parade; and five Delaware governors - (l-r) Russell Peterson (partial), Elbert Carvel, Tom Carper, Mike Castle and Pete duPont - on the reviewing stand after the parade's conclusion.



The Sussex County Return Day Committee would like to thank the hundreds of volunteers who have helped make the 1998 Return Day

A Huge Success!

RETURN DAY SOUVENIR EDITION

CAPE ELECTION 2004 GAZETTE

Serving Delaware's Cape Region "The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance" Return Day - Thursday, Nov. 4, 2004

Return Day Firmly Rooted In Sussex County

By Dennis Forney

Politicians and all the people of Sussex County have been assembling for Return Day ever since Georgetown was made the county seat in 1791.

The form of the celebration, which always takes place on the Thursday following Election Day, in all the even years, has changed considerably over the years. The purpose of the day, however, has remained the same. The residents of the county come to their county seat to hear the election returns, to celebrate victories and to drown the sorrow of defeat. Tradition has many of the opposing candidates riding together in horse-drawn carriages and convertible automobiles in the Return Day parade, while leaders of the major political parties "bury the hatchet" on The Circle in Georgetown - signaling the end of the political season. In recent years, the Return Day celebration also has become the single most unifying event that takes place for all of Sussex County.

One of the largest parades held on the Delmarva Peninsula is the

centerpiece of the Return Day celebration.

The parade shows off the talents of musicians in bands from the middle school to high school and college levels, and a wide variety of floats, marching units and other exhibits put on wheels.

Thousands of Sussex County residents, and Delawareans from north and south join together in Georgetown to celebrate the conclusion of campaigning and the democratic process. W. Emerson Wilson, a frequent contributor of historical articles to the "News Journal" papers in Wilmington over the years, compiled a history of Return Day that was published for the official brochure for the event in 1974.

Much of the history information that follows comes from that effort.

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

Georgetown, equidistant from all points in Sussex County, was created in 1791 to satisfy those complaints. A gentleman named George Mitchell was among the three men appointed to come up with a location and layout for a new county seat. Surveyor Rhodes Shankland came up with the circle concept and laid out the streets from there. Mitchell must have won when straws were drawn for the naming of the county seat. The new town was to be called Georgetown.

The county seat was closer for voting purposes for many of the county's residents. According to Wilson's history, "Voters had to



A big part of Return Day is Burying the Hatchet. Shown at Return Day 2002 are (l-r) Sussex County party leaders Wolfgang von Baumgart, Independent Party; Jack Dalton, Libertarian Party; Keller Hopkins, Republican Party; and Thelma Monroe, Democratic Party.

drive into Georgetown to cast their ballots and it is unlikely they would return two days later for the results. Undoubtedly, the results of the election were known that night or the next day and voters would stay over to learn the results. Under that arrangement, the earliest Return Day would have been the day after the election. Those who had won held celebrations informally.

"It wasn't long, though, before voters complained about having to drive all the way to Georgetown to cast their ballots. Although it took more than two decades to change the system, the state's General Assembly passed laws in 1828 which set up polling places in the 13 hundreds of the county.

"That meant votes had to be gathered from polling places

throughout the county and carried to Georgetown for tabulation, where they were turned over to the sheriff...and the results announced from the courthouse at noon on Thursday."

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

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

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"The winning candidates were placed onto the shoulders of their adherents and paraded around The

Continued on back page



Former Georgetown Mayor W. Layton Johnson reads returns during festivities in 2002.

Return Day Schedule of Events

- 9 a.m. - Food and art/crafts vendors open; youth activities begin on Youth Stage
- 10 a.m. - Dedication of Vietnam Veterans Monument by Vietnam Veterans of

America and Dedication Of Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bench by the seven Sussex County Rotary Clubs (corner of The Circle and S. Bedford St.)

11:30 a.m. - Steel The Show (Steel drum band) from Southern Delaware School of the Arts on Wilmington Trust Stage located on The Circle

Noon - Mayors Hatchet Toss in front of the old Sussex County Courthouse - Sussex County Mayors compete for the coveted Hatchet Toss trophy

12:45 p.m. - Miss Delaware 2004 Linda Kurtz

1:30 p.m. - Return Day Parade steps off. Parade announced by WMDT-TV 47 personality Kelly Rouse

3:30 p.m. - Ceremonies On The Circle with Master of Ceremonies WBOC-TV 16 Anchorman Steve Hammond introducing honored guests

3:45 p.m. - Reading of Sussex County Returns by Town Crier and retired 26-year Georgetown Mayor W. Layton Johnson

4:00 p.m. - Burial of the Hatchet by Sussex County's four

political party chairmen using sand brought from the beach of the first city in the First State - Lewes

4:30 p.m. - Free ox roast sandwiches at the ox roast located in the Sussex County Courthouse parking lot. Ox Roast is sponsored by Freeman Communities.

4:30 p.m. - Unveiling of historical marker At Georgetown Train Station, 140 LAYTON AVE.

HOW WE VOTED

		Polling Locations Sussex County 2004																President & Vice President		U.S. Congress				Governor			Lt. Governor			Insurance Commissioner		16th Senatorial District		18th Senatorial District
Election District	Representative District	KERRY/EDWARDS	BUSH/CHENEY	NADER/CAMEJO	Paul DONNELLY	Michael N. CASTLE	Maurice J. BARROS	William E. MORRIS	Ruth Ann MINNER	William Swain LEE	Frank INFANTE	John C. CARNEY Jr.	James P. URSOMARSO	Michael R. DORE	John M. REDA	Matthew DENN	David H. ENNIS	James B. TESTERMAN	Colin BONINI	F. Thomas SAVAGE														
1	14	Lewes Fire Hall	988	1,147	7	527	1,497	16	2	1,026	1,016	63	1,185	832	22	6	892	1,112			786													
2	14	Rehoboth Fire Co., Station No. 2	825	772	8	464	1,063	5	6	783	771	23	927	586	9	7	772	723			699													
3	14	Rehoboth Fire Hall, Rehoboth Ave.	811	676	7	400	1,030	7	6	765	686	20	835	576	11	8	706	691																
4	14	Rehoboth Elementary School	948	1,070	11	507	1,435	7	10	965	1,005	33	1,046	866	7	10	894	990			805													
5	14	Beacon Middle School	808	980	10	401	1,263	14	4	894	813	61	1,002	675	19	3	762	926			745													
6	14	IR Fire Company, Substation	769	986	3	485	1,202	6	7	831	843	59	929	730	23	4	770	889			710													
7	14	Cape Henlopen High School, Kings Highway	750	1,119	9	411	1,372	11	7	851	939	61	969	799	16	7	743	1,019			643													
8	30	Milford Middle School	66	195	4	35	220	3	1	76	169	14	93	153	9	1	82	170	61	199														
9	33	Milford Middle School	313	654	8	152	791	5	9	453	481	36	514	412	18	7	364	542			185													
10	33	Milford Middle School	78	216	2	47	229	7	7	93	183	13	126	148	7	2	109	177	78	209														
1	35	Greenwood Fire Hall	445	1,235	13	303	1,294	19	12	585	987	104	785	795	32	6	584	1,009																
2	35	Bridgeville Fire Hall	836	1,358	14	498	1,567	24	20	932	1,127	103	1,166	889	31	9	916	1,145																
3	35	Woodbridge High School	117	254	2	56	299	3	1	143	201	23	178	166	10	0	122	229																
4	35	Delaware Tech Higher Ed. Building	542	733	12	322	892	14	5	518	667	81	704	485	31	5	565	637																
5	35	Redden Community Hall	116	299	3	73	322	4	6	162	233	20	207	183	6	5	150	224																
6	35	Sussex Technical High School	228	451	4	137	515	6	2	245	372	55	331	292	27	1	265	386																
7	35	Elendale Fire Hall	156	251	1	102	290	3	3	156	217	29	217	163	12	2	169	218																
1	36	Lulu Ross Elementary School	531	851	13	266	1,071	11	12	643	662	65	761	564	24	8	562	769			318													
2	36	Lulu Ross Elementary School	509	972	6	269	1,153	12	6	684	724	55	792	615	20	0	586	817			330													
3	36	Slaughter Neck Community Center	510	657	7	259	851	3	6	570	555	28	684	436	10	1	516	588			384													
4	36	Morris Early Learning Center	496	818	7	286	967	14	7	556	644	96	731	512	31	4	575	678																
5	36	Delaware Tech Jason Building	121	256	2	60	307	1	2	124	232	18	195	169	5	1	152	218																
6	36	Morier Middle School	552	610	9	314	796	8	9	568	538	38	673	417	18	7	581	519																
7	36	H.O. Brittingham School	721	1,108	12	413	1,349	11	4	809	957	53	953	781	18	2	770	970			614													
8	36	Elendale Fire Hall	354	491	3	210	595	7	6	371	388	66	479	303	17	6	408	391																
1	37	Lewes Middle School	918	965	12	456	1,345	9	3	1,001	838	29	1,072	697	10	6	742	1,028			652													
2	37	Shields Elementary School	821	1,071	10	425	1,407	7	10	893	941	51	1,037	773	17	9	787	1,012			711													
3	37	DelDOT Building, routes 9 and 30	494	815	11	286	976	10	6	482	753	60	655	587	20	3	540	711			476													
4	37	Harbeson Church Hall	112	219	5	56	269	4	3	113	204	18	142	182	7	0	126	199																
5	37	Georgetown Elementary School	287	702	6	140	825	8	5	364	598	26	471	499	7	0	361	606																
6	37	N. Georgetown Elementary School	629	980	15	308	1,233	15	16	656	873	61	861	672	22	9	695	845																
7	37	Sussex Central High School	260	496	5	139	604	6	1	279	437	42	405	332	10	0	328	416																
8	37	DelDOT Transportation Building, S. Bedford St.	135	148	0	69	193	3	6	131	138	15	170	96	5	4	142	132																
1	38	IR High School	604	1,267	10	327	1,459	12	6	763	1,022	60	876	891	19	3	642	1,126																
2	38	Milville Fire Hall	571	958	8	363	1,082	12	6	686	769	41	795	641	5	1	613	812																
3	38	Lord Baltimore Elementary	857	1,367	9	528	1,591	20	5	1,073	1,076	49	1,158	923	21	6	865	1,202																
4	38	Bethany Beach Fire Hall	656	1,009	5	365	1,232	10	6	822	809	12	869	716	2	5	600	919																
5	38	Fewick Island Town Hall	441	720	4	254	855	6	2	561	570	17	561	519	7	3	419	658																
6	38	Roxana Fire Substation	554	915	5	412	947	10	6	770	644	39	788	577	11	1	593	750																
7	38	Roxana Fire Hall	673	1,147	6	425	1,304	14	12	820	917	66	956	753	22	11	705	985																
8	38	Selbyville Middle School	307	493	3	149	586	5	4	382	367	26	428	296	7	1	315	401																
1	39	Seaford Middle School	151	387	5	90	439	1	0	195	318	25	257	259	6	1	169	351																
2	39	Seaford Senior High School	523	856	12	234	1,090	8	10	599	713	34	716	590	9	4	539	756																
3	39	Seaford Senior High School	391	651	3	188	815	4	3	459	541	30	542	445	10	1	360	607																
4	39	Seaford City Hall Annex	518	655	6	263	865	8	6	537	583	37	665	446	13	2	489	596																
5	39	West Seaford Elementary	352	700	8	154	863	4	7	465	534	46	577	423	8	3	370	618																
6	39	Blades Fire Hall	427	739	5	210	905	11	7	469	635	51	603	492	19	3	432	673																
7	39	Blades Elementary	335	466	5	195	562	5	4	337	400	53	475	269	18	4	356	393																
1	40	North Laurel Elementary	489	823	8	275	1,005	11	4	566	686	63	746	514	28	5	598	674																
2	40	Laurel Ctr. Middle School Fieldhouse	491	1,240	11	282	1,395	15	7	661	950	107	878	773	34	3	655	1,010																
3	40	Laurel Fire Hall	431	404	3	265	541	4	7	444	349	32	546	247	8	2	472	330																
4	40	Laurel High School	348	791	9	206	901	4	7	490	580	65	624	472	17	3	473	622																
5	40	Laurel High School	274	446	5	150	559	2	2	345	337	27	427	255	7	3	329	345																
6	40	Delmar Fire Hall	261	780	5	162	829	6	4	426	555	48	517	458	12	3	350	621																
7	40	Delmar High School	476	849	13	275	997	10	5	676	555	73	755	475	25	8	583	653																
1	41	Gumbooro Fire Hall	299	816	6	152	931	8	4	348	685	81	549	522	16	1	364	720																
2	41	East Millsboro Elementary	296	608	5	164	713	7	2	357	494	51	442	418	16	2	331	542																
3	41	Frankford Fire Hall	352	439	3	193	573	8	5	391	367	31	489	266	14	3	362	395																
4	41	Dagsboro Fire Hall	341	676	9	190	792	12	5	397	558	49	500	458	19	6	376	587																
5	41	Sussex Central Middle School	492	814	12	267	1,005	10	6	576	657	59	735	516	17	1	510	742																
6	41	Millsboro Civic Center	317	417	8	177	532	8	2	326	376	32	403	291	11	3	316	382																
7	41	Oak Orchard Fire Hall	715	789	11	421	1,000	13	5	663	732	85	844	547	30	7	688	733																
8	41	Long Neck Elementary School	713	969	6	448	1,126	15	10	787	788	78	876	674	33	5	699	859																
9	41	Mid Sussex Rescue Squad	147	225	4	102	250	4	2	158	190	17	193	156	8	2	175	183			163													
Election Totals for SUSSEX COUNTY			30,098	47,003	454	16,783	16,783	551	371	34,271	38,967	3,003	41,085	31,667	1,003	249	31,484	41,231	139	408	8,221													

SHORT	14th District Representative			30th District Representative		33rd District Representative	35th District Representative		36th District Representative		37th District Representative		38th District Representative		39th District Representative		40th District Representative	41st District Representative		Sussex County Clerk of Peace			Sussex County Council District 1			Sussex County Council District 2		Sussex County Council District 3	
	Peter C. SCHWARTZKOPF	Mary SPICER	Everett M. WODISKA	Kimberly Zeiler ROBBINS	William Robert OUITTEN	G. Wallace CAULK Jr.	J. Benjamin EWING	John T. ELLIOTT	Brian F. DOLAN	V. George CAREY	Nicholas J. MIRRO	Joseph W. BOOTH	Shirley A. PRICE	Gerald W. HOCKER	Thomas Joel CHAPMAN	Tina FALLON	Clifford G. LEE	Barbara A. LIFFLANDER	John C. ATKINS	Thelma D. MONROE	George S. PARISH	John F. POTTER	Dale R. DUKES	Michael R. VINCENT	Quentin A. WILKERSON	Finley B. JONES Jr.	Stella R. REED	Lynn J. ROGERS	A. Judson BENNETT
	1,371	689	9																	932	1,030	8						907	1,138
	1,141	396	32																	795	690	20							
	1,011	426	20																	716	662	21							
	1,424	549	12																	903	971	21							
	1,154	585	15																	763	912	14							
	1,145	570	11																	765	889	19							
	1,150	665	11																	757	975	12						822	993
				95	163																81	174	0				123	133	
						791															346	554	14				474	461	
						255															96	181	6				126	164	
							1,344	99													553	989	27				1,103	560	
							1,651	150													885	1,135	29				1,332	786	
							308	18													111	228	7	153	198	10	713	532	
							858	103													589	588	23						
90							337	22													145	247	10	225	184	5			
							521	48													258	373	7				388	269	
							276	35													180	200	8					241	154
									526	837											535	783	15				699	640	
									537	910											559	824	10					774	658
									412	730											505	578	10					663	471
									488	803											533	695	18					710	564
									143	230											146	220	1					172	204
									517	628											572	519	13					687	445
									738	1,040											738	985	9					873	904
									360	462											397	391	8					528	303
											576	1,211									854	880	8					756	1,061
											615	1,207									823	954	18					819	1,034
											335	933									556	681	9					650	620
											83	243									127	195	4					144	185
											156	832									400	566	2				554	427	
											359	1,218									743	781	19				941	616	
93											146	607									380	362	5				435	311	
											82	195									145	118	6						
													639	1,233							661	1,115	16						
													597	919							605	813	14						
													852	1,364							875	1,202	13						
													634	1,017							618	903	12						
													404	744							433	634	9						
													651	810							573	784	4						
													713	1,101							732	967	20						
													312	465							319	407	6						
															219	316					169	341	3	229	304	2			
27															600	752					513	753	14	531	771	15			
															430	597					379	582	9	440	548	11			
36															492	648					500	583	10	532	587	9			
47															422	618					381	607	8	458	567	5			
26															443	698					450	643	9	534	593	15			
14															320	453					336	406	9	416	333	15			
13																					1,053	575	676	15	777	508	19		
52																					1,460	703	959	11	985	710	10		
08																					605	442	346	8	556	246	10		
79																					918	422	659	11					
38																					576	311	369	7					
76																					854	331	634	9					
38																					1,034	513	715	25					
04																					176	927	456	625	9				
																					185	706	443	435	4				
																					259	514	421	342	7				
																					221	772	458	519	12				
																					286	997	664	604	12				
																					208	513	343	361	4				
																					485	968	721	707	11				
																					772	866	694	880	18				</

History

Continued from front page
Green. A large pole was erected in The Green and the emblem of the winning party was run up it. Generally the winners provided an ox roast.

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

The Return Day tradition grew and grew throughout the 1800s and represented a major festival in Georgetown every other year. With the turn of the century, however, new forces came on the scene.

The automobile and telephone and radio brought people closer to the county seat and they no longer had to go to Return Day to find out who won. Interest in the old tradition began to fade. World War II was raging in 1942 and Return Day was canceled altogether.

Following the war, however, a group of Republicans and Democrats got together and made plans to bring Return Day back bigger and better than ever.

While in previous years the celebration was dominated by whichever political party had been victorious in the elections, the goal of the bipartisan Return Day committee was to have a bipartisan celebration. A Burying of the Hatchet ceremony was begun and continues today. The county chairpersons for the Republican and Democratic parties join together on the reviewing stand and signify a renunciation of purpose, following often-bitter campaigns, by burying the hatchet.

Return Day has been a festive celebration throughout the second half of this century – and has even gained national prominence on ABC-TV's "Good Morning America."

Delaware's General Assembly gave the event official recognition in 1965 when it made Return Day a legal half-day holiday for Sussex County. This year, under the guidance of Return Day veteran organizer Rosalie Walls, volunteers will



Bridgeville Fire Department's 2002 Return Day float paid tribute to those firefighters who died in the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center.

staff Return Day activities that have been scheduled from 6:30 in the morning to dusk.

Return Day, with its candidates and carriages, free ox roast sandwiches and speeches, rousing

music and festive parade, is a great Sussex County tradition – unique in all the world.

Youth Entertainment Stage to Feature Wide Array of Events

The Delaware Electric Cooperative youth entertainment stage at Return Day festivities in Georgetown, Thursday, Nov. 4, will feature youth singers, dancers, baton, fiddlers and recitals from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.. The youth will also honor military personnel.

Big Brothers-Big Sisters of Delaware will give out the Sussex Countian's youth stage entertainment schedule and coloring page, with crayons for the coloring contest. Deadline date for entering the coloring contest is Friday, Nov. 12. Premier Glass & Screen Inc., Frankford has donated trophies. U.S. Savings bonds are donated by Citizen's Bank, on The Circle. Gift Cards have been donated by Wal-Mart Super Center Georgetown Store, and three fluffy stuffed puppies donated by Mother's Against Drunk Driving Delaware Chapter. The Sussex County Return Day will provide blue, red and yellow ribbons for the winners. Awards will be presented by Nov. 19.

Boy Scout Troop 95 will assist with red, white, and blue balloons donated by Givens' Flowers & Gifts, Georgetown. Truth & Life Center of Georgetown teens will paint faces. Girl Scout Cadet Troop 701 and the Daisies will distribute

American flags, patriotic tattoos, and yellow ribbons. The American flags, balloons, tattoos and yellow ribbons are free while they last. Clowns will juggle, and entertain as well. Taylor Amusement Shows from Wye Mills, Md. will provide rides and thrills.

The Youth Entertainment Stage will be located on East Market Street. For additional information call Jo Ann Kruger Chair Youth Activities Stage 856-9495 or Sussex County Return Day office 855-0722.

The complete schedule includes:

- 9 a.m. Medley of Songs – Jordan & Strickland Warfel
- 9:30 a.m. "Welcome" by Jake Breasure – Master of Ceremonies, and introduction of Keely Gorman, 2004 Return Day Youth Ambassador; Chase Harmon, Junior Master of Ceremonies
- 9:31 a.m. Chase Harmon, speaking on "Return Day" and "Service Men & Women"
- 9:36 a.m. Present Flags Navy JROTC – Seaford Senior High School & American Legion Post 28 Oak Orchard Color Guard
- 9:39 a.m. "The Star-Spangled Banner" sung by Elise Harmon
- 9:43 a.m. Jake Breasure recognizes

and honors veterans

- 9:45 a.m. "O Say Can You See" sung by Amy Pugliese
- 9:50 a.m. Jake Breasure and Chase Harmon read names of Delaware soldiers lost in Iraq and Afghanistan
- 9:53 a.m. Moment of silence
- 9:54 a.m. "Dixie" and "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and The Ladies Aid Society of Sussex County with Katie Hughes, Jordan Frey, Katie Frey, Meghan Lee, Emily Mathews, & Kylie Dietzel
- 10:04 a.m. Sandy's Starlites Baton Twirling Club and Color Guard performs
- 10:08 a.m. "Tomorrow" and "You Raise Me Up" sung by Sierra Spicer
- 10:14 a.m. Jazz dancers Whitney Handy and Catrina Church perform
- 10:17 a.m. "Dust in the Wind" sung by Melissa Alesi accompanying herself with a guitar
- 10:21 a.m. "Aaron's Party" rap by Tay Moore
- 10:26 a.m. Sandy's Starlites Baton Queens perform
- 10:30 a.m. "Part of Your World" sung by Janelle Marie Ames, Little Miss Millsboro
- 10:34 a.m. Poem "One Night in My Room" – recited by Courtney Russum, Little Miss Georgetown

- 10:36 a.m. "Daddy's Hand" recited by Jazmyne Harris, Miss Petite Dover
- 10:39 a.m. Poem "Sticklie Lickie" recited by Adriana Roque, Little Miss Harbeson
- 10:40 a.m. Ballet dancer Ashley Wilson performs
- 10:45 a.m. Christonee & Alexis Hudson sing "Ain't No Mountain High Enough"
- 10:49 a.m. "Born to Fly" sung by Chelsea Betts, Miss Teen Georgetown
- 10:55 a.m. "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" and "Respect" performed by The Alley Cat Dance Troupe
- 11:10 a.m. Patriotic song "America the Beautiful" and in Spanish "God Bless the USA" sung by Stephanie Benavides
- 11:15 a.m. Georgetown Boys & Girls Club Choir sings
- 11:25 a.m. Students of the Delaware Music School perform
- 11:45 a.m. Jazz dancers Whitney Handy and Catrina Church perform
- 11:48 a.m. Cab Calloway School of the Arts students perform
- 12:10 p.m. Middletown High School "Ensemble Choir" performs
- 12:30 p.m. DJ TECH – Chase Harmon
- 1 p.m. "God Bless America" sung by Rebecca Wilson

Oakley Named Grand Marshal; Honorary Marshals Announced

Sussex County Return Day has named Pete Oakley of Lewes, winner of the British Open, as its grand marshal. Oakley, touring professional from The Rookery, won the British Senior Open on July 25.

Oakley was instrumental in the design and opening of The Rookery in 2000.

Honorary grand marshals are C. Russell McCabe, manager of the Delaware Public Archives, and Dan Gaffney, WGMD morning talk show host.



PETE OAKLEY



C. RUSSELL MCCABE



DAN GAFFNEY

Cupola Gets a Makeover

Clock, Bell Back in Order

A new cupola sits atop the Sussex County Courthouse on the Circle in Georgetown.

The 28,000-pound structure was rebuilt because of deterioration, particularly its east side. The cupola, a clock and a large antique bell located inside were removed following Return Day 2002.

The bell, cast by Bernhard & Co. in 1857, was kept in its original wooden cradle and replaced inside the cupola in the early hours of Sunday, Oct. 17.

In the 23-month interim after its initial removal, the bell was on exhibit at the Georgetown Historical Society.



Rosalie Walls photo

The 28,000-pound cupola was lifted atop the Sussex County Courthouse in the early hours of Oct. 17, by John L. Briggs & Co.

Ox Sandwiches: A Big Part of the Return Day Tradition

Free ox roast sandwiches are distributed on Thursday following the events on the Circle around 3:30 p.m. Stop by during the day to see ox/slow roasting on a spit in the ox roast building under the watchful eye of Ox Roast Committee Chair **Danny Milburn**.

The "ox" is beef from one of Delaware's finest cattle ranches and it is prepared with all required health permits. About 1,200 ox roast sandwiches are prepared and given away each Return Day.

Cold beer is for sale from the VFW beer truck until 11 p.m. under the direction of **Town Crier W. Layton Johnson**. No ID, no beer.

The ox cooks all night and takes about 24 hours to reach that perfect, mouth-watering flavor using the **secret Return Day sauce recipe**.



The Mayor and Council of Georgetown

COUNCILMEN

EDWIN O. PEPPER, *First Ward*

EDWIN ROACH, *Second Ward*

LESTER H. PITTARD, *Third Ward*

WARREN W. EDINGER, *Fourth Ward*

GEORGETOWN, DELAWARE

MAYOR

Harvey B. Spicer

VICE-MAYOR

Edwin O. Pepper

SECRETARY

Edwin Roach

POLICE COMMISSIONER

Warren W. Edinger

October 20, 1958

Dear Sir or Madam:

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

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

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

Sincerely yours,

Town Council of Georgetown



Secretary

#1

Hack Jawis 1968



RETURN DAY
FOR
SUSSEX COUNTY
GEORGETOWN, DELAWARE

THURSDAY, NOV. 7, 1968

1791-1968: A Time To Remember

By William P. Frank

History books and historical records do not tell us when Return Day was started in Sussex County.

Back in 1791, the General Assembly granted a petition of Sussex Countians that the "seat of justice" be moved from Lewes to a more central and convenient part of the county. The General Assembly authorized a board of 10 commissioners to buy not more than 100 acres "near the center of the county at the place called 'James Pettijohn's Old Field' or within two miles of the house where Ebenezer Pettijohn now resides."

The same board of commissioners had orders from the General Assembly to build a court house, a jail, a pillory and a whipping post.

Later in 1791, the General Assembly decreed that James Pettijohn's Old Field shall be known as George-town, in honor of George Mitchell who was the chairman of the acquisition commission.

For years, Sussex Countians seemed to have the idea that Return Day was peculiar to and characteristic only of their county and its county seat. The historical fact is much more interesting and certainly more to the credit of Sussex County. The truth is that Sussex County and Georgetown have been more faithful to Delaware customs than two upper counties of New Castle and Kent. For in the early days, according to the law, all election inspectors were required to deliver their tally sheets to the court house of their respective counties on the Thursday after Election Day.

That made it an occasion for the people from far and wide to gather in their county seats to hear and learn the results. Only Sussex Countians seemed to have taken such a personal interest in their elections; and so down through the years, in good season and bad, they flocked by the thousands to the hub of Sussex and settled in and near the court house. Of course, it wasn't always that the people were able to learn the results of the elections, particularly in the tight ones, but they all had a good time.

Sussex County
Return Day Committee, Inc.

1970 OFFICERS

Mrs. Jean West, President
Vincent J. Sears, Vice President
Mrs. Carol W. Collins, Secretary
Mayor W. Layton Johnson, Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Mrs. Nell Barr	Thomas Henning
Eugene Bowne	Edward Marzoa
John Briggs	Gordon McFadden
Mrs. Charlotte Campbell	John Purnell
Mrs. Claire Croll	Anthony Racaniello
Miles Frederick	James Sabo

Master of Ceremonies -- Mr. Houston Wilson

Parade Marshal -- Mr. Louis "Bud" Collins

Guest Marshal -- Mr. Alan Glover

Old Timers Judges	Antique Car Judges
Mrs. David Conly	Mr. John S. Cordrey
Mrs. Lewis Knowles	Mr. Andrew Rice
Mrs. Mabel Lambden	Mr. William Jones

Parade Judges

Mr. David J. Conly
Mr. H. W. Hoad Froehlich
Mr. Lewis Knowles
Mr. Glenn Smoot
Mrs. William L. Steele
Mr. George W. Wilkins

Parade Announcer -- Mr. "Country Chuck" Manning

RETURN DAY PROGRAM

11:30 A.M. — LUNCHEON FOR CANDIDATES
(Thomas C. Mulligan Hall, Grace
Methodist Church, South King Street,
Georgetown)

1:30 P.M. — PARADE
(Starts promptly at 1:30 from
Georgetown High School. Will travel
East on Market St.)

3:00 P.M. — OFFICIAL RETURNS
Announcement by James F. Walls

PUBLIC SPEAKING
(at the Circle)

AWARDS

4:30 P.M. — OLD-FASHION OX ROAST
(Just off Circle on North Bedford
Street)

PROGRAM AT THE CIRCLE

National AnthemSussex Central High School Band
Invocation The Reverend Charles E. Covington
Greetings Mr. Houston Wilson
Welcome Mayor W. Layton Johnson
Announcement of National, State and County Returns
 . . . Mr. Ronald Dodd

Brief Remarks --

Gov. Russell Peterson
Lt. Gov. Eugene Bookhammer
U. S. Senator J. Caleb Boggs
U. S. Representative William V. Roth
Former Gov. Elbert N. Carvel
Former Sen. J. Allen Frear
Brig. Gen. Lawrence F. Snoddy, USMC

Introduction of National Candidates --

. . . By Mr. Houston Wilson

Address Senator John J. Williams

Introduction of County Candidates --

. . . By Mr. Houston Wilson

Presentation of Awards Parade Chairman,
 . . Mrs. Charlotte Campbell

Appreciation Chairman, Mrs. Jean West

Benediction The Reverend Charles E. Covington

LETTER OF THANKS

On behalf of the officers and directors of the Sussex County Return Day Committee, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to each and every person who has helped in so many ways to make Return Day a reality again this year.

To all of the officers and directors, who have spent so many hours and performed so many jobs behind the scenes, I want to give a special word of thanks. Without these dedicated and loyal citizens, an event like this could never take place.

In times such as we live today, with the civil unrest at home and the troubled times around the world, we are indeed fortunate to be able to have the opportunity to celebrate our time honored Sussex County Return Day. There is no other place in the world, where, after an election both the winning and the defeated candidates meet, shake hands and ride in the same vehicle for a parade through the streets.

Let us always continue to celebrate Return Day in Sussex County. I know of no better way to show future generations that there can be good sportsmanship among candidates after a hard and vigorous political campaign.

John T. Purnell
Chairman

Return Day was usually an occasion for rivalry among the election officers—to see who could make it by horseback first to the court house. In the meantime, the air of festivity and the spirit of rustic carnivals prevailed in the vicinity of the court house square. All kinds of food—and bad liquors—were sold from booths and stalls—Delaware biscuits and hot corn pone, rabbit roasted on spits and of course fried chicken, oysters and clams, white and sweet potatoes baked in hot ashes.

The people made for Georgetown by horse and buggy, farm wagons, on horse or mule back—and later of course, by excursion trains.

The town's two hotels did a lively bar business and it must have been through the influence of their managers that eventually, a crackdown was made on the itinerant vendors of moonshine.

On most Return Days, large strips of muslin were extended from one side of the court house to the other in the years of presidential elections. The names of the states that had gone one way or another were painted on the muslin with the approximate majorities.

The festivities of Return Day, of course, varied according to the excitement of the elections. For example in 1882 when Charles Stockley was elected governor, people cheered and guns boomed out as a victory procession moved through Georgetown. The "center piece" of the parade was a boat, named "The Constitution," decorated with a large blue hen and a coonskin cap suspended from the mast.

And there standing on the quarterdeck of the boat on wheels was the victorious governor-elect. When the ship arrived in front of the court house, the new governor was lifted on the shoulders of brawny men who carried him triumphantly into the court house and up to the balcony to speak to the cheering throng.

It can not be said that all Return Days were orderly. The newspapers of the past century always commented on whether there was any trouble. For example, the Morning News in 1884 noted: "Everything considered, the crowd was remarkably orderly and seemed jubilant over the county victory and the

prospect for the inauguration of a Democratic president on the 4th of March next."

As it happened, the Return Day crowd in Georgetown that year didn't learn that Grover Cleveland was really elected president until several days later.

If the weather was pleasant, Return Day festivities would extend over Friday and Saturday, marked by plenty of entertaining, old fashion eating and drinking, and even cock fights behind the barns on the outskirts of the town.

In the early days, a Sussex farmer would never think of missing Return Day in Georgetown, although as the years passed and so-called sophistication seeped into Sussex County, Return Day dwindled to a somewhat perfunctory occasion. In 1942, because of the war, it was cancelled but was later revived as people began to realize that Return Day was one of the few genuine folk customs in this part of the country, different in many ways from the more synthetic fiestas.



#571

Return Day



Sussex County

Georgetown, Delaware

Thursday, Nov. 9, 1972

HISTORY OF SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY

By W. Emerson Wilson

“Return Day” has been a custom “peculiar to the people of Sussex since time immemorial”, J. Thomas Scharf wrote in his “History of Delaware” back in 1888.

But “time immemorial” is a very indefinite term and certainly indicates no specific or even approximate date. When, therefore, did “Return Day” actually originate?

In colonial days elections were held at the county seat and this custom was continued under the first state constitution of 1776 but Lewes was a long way from the Delmar area and the citizens of western Sussex objected strongly to traveling such long distances to the polls.

In January, 1791, the General Assembly directed that a commission choose a central site for a new county seat. This was done by May and the new town, named Georgetown after George Mitchell, one of the commissioners, was ready for the election of 1792.

Was the first “Return Day” held that year? One may assume that it was, but if that is true it was much different than the “Return Days” of the present era. Voters had to drive into Georgetown to cast their ballots and it is unlikely that they would return two days later for the results. Undoubtedly the results of the election were known that night or the next day and the voters would stay over to learn the results.

As early as 1803 complaints about having to go to Georgetown over rough roads in bad weather, leaving their families at home unprotected, were made by large groups of men in the outer districts.

It took a long time in those days for the people to change customs, especially in Sussex County, so it was not until 1828 that the General Assembly adopted new election laws providing that the Presidential electors should be chosen by the people rather than by the Legislature and that the polling places should be in the hundreds rather than at the county seat. This meant that the election officers had to bring the results from each of the hundreds into Georgetown where they were turned over to the sheriff and tabulated and the results announced from the courthouse at noon on Thursday.

Thus the voters did not have to go very far from home to vote, but since there were no county newspapers in those days there was no way of knowing who had won the election. So many of the farmers decided to take a day off, load their whole families into wagons and go to Georgetown on Thursday to get the results.

Continued on page 5

Sussex County
Return Day Committee, Inc.

1972 OFFICERS

Mrs. Jean West, President
Mrs. Charlotte Campbell, Vice President
Mrs. Carol W. Collins, Secretary
John T. Purnell, Treasurer

HONORARY DIRECTORS

Richard L. Timmons
Wm. E. Chandler, Jr.
John L. Briggs

DIRECTORS

Mrs. Nell Barr	W. Layton Johnson
H. Eugene Bowne	Robert L. Littleton
George F. Couch	Gordon C. McFadden
Mrs. Claire Croll	Anthony Racaniello
Ronald F. Dodd	Vincent J. Sears
Miles L. Frederick	John E. Unruh

Master of Ceremonies -- Mr. Houston Wilson

Parade Marshall -- Mrs. Edna Layton

Old Timers Judges
Mrs. Mabel Lambden
Mrs. Carilee Short

Antique Car Judges

Mr. John S. Cordrey
Mr. James P. Hammond, Jr.
Mr. Andrew Rice

Parade Judges

E. Richard Haarde
Joseph F. Hulihan
William T. Quillen
Charles F. Smith
Glenn T. Smoot
Preston C. Townsend

Parade Announcer -- Mr. "Country Chuck" Manning

RETURN DAY PROGRAM

11:00 A.M. -- LUNCHEON FOR CANDIDATES
Georgetown Fire House,
South Bedford Street

1:30 P.M. -- PARADE
(Starts promptly at 1:30 P.M. from Georgetown High School. Will travel East on Market Street.)

3:00 P.M. -- OFFICIAL RETURNS
Announcement by Ronald Dodd

PUBLIC SPEAKING
(At The Circle)

AWARDS

4:00 P.M. -- BAND CONCERT
(First United States Army Band, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, Conductor and Commanding Officer, Chief Warrant Officer, Harold M. Emigh)

4:30 P.M. -- OLD FASHION OX ROAST
(Just off Circle on North Bedford St.)

PROGRAM AT THE CIRCLE

National AnthemSussex Central High School Band

InvocationThe Reverend Charles E. Covington

GreetingsMr. Houston Wilson

WelcomeMayor W. Layton Johnson

Announcement of National, State and County Returns
... Mr. Ronald Dodd

Brief Remarks --

- Gov. Russell W. Peterson
- Lt. Gov. Eugene Bookhammer
- U.S. Senator J. Caleb Boggs
- U.S. Senator William V. Roth
- U.S. Representative Pierre S. duPont IV
- Former Gov. Elbert N. Carvel
- Former Sen. J. Allen Frear
- Former Sen. John J. Williams
- Col. Richard L. Lyman

Senior Army Advisor to the Delaware Army National Guard
Representing the Commander of the 1st United States Army

Lt. Col. J. Caleb Boggs Jr. - U.S.M.C.,
(VMF-321, MARTD)

Capt. James P. Adams - Dela. Army Nat'l. Guard
(Commanding Officer - 101 P1 DETA)

Introduction of National Candidates --

... By Mr. Houston Wilson

AddressDr. George M. Worrilow

Introduction of County Candidates --

... By Mr. Houston Wilson

Presentation of AwardsParade Chairman,
.. Mrs. Charlotte Campbell

AppreciationChairman, Mrs. Jean West

BenedictionThe Reverend Charles E. Covington

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

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

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

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

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

One of the flags made for the victory of Polk in 1844 for "Return Day" was carried by a group of voters going to the polls in 1862. The Civil War was being fought and feelings were running high. The Republicans had had the Lincoln administration bring in out-of-state soldiers to guard the polls. These soldiers did not recognize the Polk flag, thought it was a Confederate one, so they tore it to pieces and arrested all of the men who had been carrying it.

Generally there was a spirit of jollification with many of the participants appearing in old clothes dug out of attics and others in outlandish costumes they improvised. The news of the good times to be had in Georgetown on "Return Day" spread and many people from the Eastern Shore of Maryland came into the town on that day to join the fun even though they had no interest in the outcome of the election.

One of the best descriptions of "Return Day" was that published in the Wilmington Every Evening which sent a city slicker down to Georgetown to cover the event in 1872 just one hundred years ago. Excerpts from his story follow:

"Strolling from the Brick Hotel kept by a New Castle man, J. H. Wood, I found in front of the courthouse and on either side of the main street leading to the jail work benches, tables, and temporary stands, numbering 30 or 40 and called stalls and many were the boxes of confections on them."

"By 10 o'clock people of both sexes and all colors dressed in every manner and style, in wagons drawn by one, two and four horses with mule teams as well poured in from all directions. The ladies especially were gotten up well and I doubt not Harpers would have sent one of the best artists of the fashion world had they known of the day.

"By noon at least 2,000 persons had been added to the town's population for every avenue, lane, alley and street were lined with wagons in which old fashioned settees and chairs, some going back to Revolutionary times, had been installed as seats."

"Many dined at the hotels, others fared sumptuously in their wagons and carriages while others enjoyed roast beef, turkey, chicken, fish, coon, rabbits and possum at will, all of which could be had among the stalls cooked to order. Many ladies who had not visited the "Capitol" since the last "Return Day" could be seen in the crowd buying nicknacks for "the little ones"

"A part of the programme of the day is to see that young girls are treated. A pretty young lady, whether acquainted or not, is licensed to receive a box of candy and be it said for the young gentlemen of Sussex that no pretty damsel goes away empty."

This writer was not interested in the outcome of the election because his paper had already announced that Grant had carried the State and nation. Even Sussex, a Democratic stronghold, had given Grant a majority of 58 since the Democrats could not stand Horace Greeley, their own candidate, whom they considered too radical.

The unidentified writer stressed that "Return Day" was peculiar to Sussex County. In New Castle and Kent the returns were generally known the same night and then the winners would hold their "Jubilation" consisting of a parade and speeches by the winners as long as a week after the election.

In 1882 the feature of the "Return Day" parade was a boat mounted on wheels rigged like a ship and labeled "Old Constitution". Six men on horseback rode in front of it and 120 more in back of it. On the quarter deck was Governor-elect Charles Stockley who was cheered as the craft moved along the streets.

"Return Day" continued through the 1890s and on into the present century. But with the advent of automobiles, which made the visit to Georgetown from any part of Sussex only a matter of minutes, and with the arrival of radio which let the people know the results of elections even before the newspapers arrived, interest in the old custom began to dwindle.

There was a big celebration in 1936 when Franklin D. Roosevelt won in a landslide and the Democrats carried the State for the first time in many years. "Return Day" was canceled altogether in 1942 because of World War II, but it was too good an event to let die in Sussex County where traditions are important. It was not long before a group of interested citizens of both the Republican and Democrat parties joined together to revive it.

The progress made in the development of computers, modern communications, and the use of voting machines soon made it possible to know the results of election returns within minutes after the poles were closed. Not so in 1962 when the official returns for one State office were not determined until after "Return Day" had come and gone.

Throughout the 50s and 60s enthusiasm grew beyond all expectations as was evident with a bill being passed in the State Legislature in 1965 making "Return Day" a legal half holiday for Sussex County. From that time to the present this celebration has attracted more and more candidates from Kent and New Castle Counties who enjoy riding in the parade and joining in all of the activities of the day. The spectators have also increased in numbers, to the point where it is now necessary to roast two oxen to feed the hungry crowds after the speeches have been made on the square in Georgetown.



ms/Georgetown County, Sussex,

Return Day



Sussex County Georgetown, Delaware

Thursday, Nov. 7, 1974

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By W. Emerson Wilson

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Sussex County
Return Day Committee, Inc.

1974 OFFICERS

Mrs. Jean West, President
Ronald Dodd, Vice President
Mrs. Carol Collins, Secretary
John T. Purnell, Treasurer

HONORARY DIRECTORS

Oliver E. Hill
Ralph Benson
John Cannon
William Chandler
Richard Timmons

DIRECTORS

Mrs. Nell Barr	Robert Littleton
Eugene Bowne	Jack W. Owens
Mrs. Charlotte Campbell	Anthony Racaniello
George Couch	Vincent Sears
Mrs. Claire Croll	John Unruh
Miles Frederick	Mrs. Rosalie Walls
W. Layton Johnson	

Master of Ceremonies -- Mr. Houston Wilson

Parade Marshall -- Mrs. Edna Layton

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Mrs. Carilee Short

Antique Car Judges

Mr. John S. Cordrey
Mr. James P. Hammond, Jr.
Mr. Andrew Rice

Parade Judges

Mr. Ralph Aurillo
Mr. George Bryson
Mr. Ned Hankins
Mr. Charles G. Lamb
Mr. Charles F. Smith
Mrs. Irene Shendoan

Parade Announcer -- Mr. Jeffrey C. Pringle

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(First United States Army Band, Fort George G. Meade,
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Assistant, Sergeant Michael Oniffrey)

4:30 P.M. - OLD FASHION OX ROAST
(Just off Circle on North Bedford Street)

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National Anthem.....	Sussex Central High School Band
Soloist.....	Mrs. Jane Helm
Invocation.....	The Reverend Charles E. Covington
Greetings.....	Mr. Houston Wilson
Welcome.....	Mayor W. Layton Johnson
First Official Sussex County Flag Raising.....	
.....	William C. Scott - designer of the first Official Sussex County Flag
Sussex County Bi-Centennial Flag Raising.....	
.....	Oliver E. Hill - President, Sussex County Council
Announcement of National, State and County Returns.....	
	...Mr. Ronald Dodd
Address.....	Dr. John A. Munroe
Brief Remarks -	

Gov. Sherman W. Tribbitt
Lt. Gov. Eugene D. Bookhammer
U.S. Senator William V. Roth
U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden
U.S. Representative Pierre S. duPont, IV
Former Gov. Russell W. Peterson
Former Gov. Elbert N. Carvel
Former Sen. John J. Williams
Former Sen. J. Allen Frear
Former Sen. J. Caleb Boggs
Maj. Gen. William H. Blakefield
Deputy Commanding General
First United States Army

Introduction of County Candidates.....	Mr. Houston Wilson
Presentation of Awards.....	Parade Co-Chairman, ...Mrs. Charlotte Campbell
Appreciation.....	Chairman, Mrs. Jean West
Benediction.....	The Reverend Charles E. Covington

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

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

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

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

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

One of the flags made for the victory of Polk in 1844 for "Return Day" was carried by a group of voters going to the polls in 1862. The Civil War was being fought and feelings were running high. The Republicans had had the Lincoln administration bring in out-of-state soldiers to guard the polls. These soldiers did not recognize the Polk flag, thought it was a Confederate one, so they tore it to pieces and arrested all of the men who had been carrying it.

Generally there was a spirit of jollification with many of the participants appearing in old clothes dug out of attics and others in outlandish costumes they improvised. The news of the good times to be had in Georgetown on "Return Day" spread and many people from the Eastern Shore of Maryland came into the town on that day to join the fun even though they had no interest in the outcome of the election.

One of the best descriptions of "Return Day" was that published in the Wilmington Every Evening which sent a city slicker down to Georgetown to cover the event in 1872 just one hundred years ago. Excerpts from his story follow:

“Strolling from the Brick Hotel kept by a New Castle man, J. H. Wood, I found in front of the courthouse and on either side of the main street leading to the jail work benches, tables, and temporary stands, numbering 30 or 40 and called stalls and many were the boxes of confections on them.”

“By 10 o'clock people of both sexes and all colors dressed in every manner and style, in wagons drawn by one, two and four horses with mule teams as well poured in from all directions. The ladies especially were gotten up well and I doubt not Harpers would have sent one of the best artists of the fashion world had they known of the day.

“By noon at least 2,000 persons had been added to the town's population for every avenue, lane, alley and street were lined with wagons in which old fashioned settees and chairs, some going back to Revolutionary times, had been installed as seats.”

“Many dined at the hotels, others fared sumptuously in their wagons and carriages while others enjoyed roast beef, turkey, chicken, fish, coon, rabbits and possum at will, all of which could be had among the stalls cooked to order. Many ladies who had not visited the “Capitol” since the last “Return Day” could be seen in the crowd buying nicknacks for “the little ones”

“A part of the programme of the day is to see that young girls are treated. A pretty young lady, whether acquainted or not, is licensed to receive a box of candy and be it said for the young gentlemen of Sussex that no pretty damsel goes away empty.”

This writer was not interested in the outcome of the election because his paper had already announced that Grant had carried the State and nation. Even Sussex, a Democratic stronghold, had given Grant a majority of 58 since the Democrats could not stand Horace Greeley, their own candidate, whom they considered too radical.

The unidentified writer stressed that “Return Day” was peculiar to Sussex County. In New Castle and Kent the returns were generally known the same night and then the winners would hold their “Jubilation” consisting of a parade and speeches by the winners as long as a week after the election.

In 1882 the feature of the “Return Day” parade was a boat mounted on wheels rigged like a ship and labeled “Old Constitution”. Six men on horseback rode in front of it and 120 more in back of it. On the quarter deck was Governor-elect Charles Stockley who was cheered as the craft moved along the streets.

“Return Day” continued through the 1890s and on into the present century. But with the advent of automobiles, which made the visit to Georgetown from any part of Sussex only a matter of minutes, and with the arrival of radio which let the people know the results of elections even before the newspapers arrived, interest in the old custom began to dwindle.

There was a big celebration in 1936 when Franklin D. Roosevelt won in a landslide and the Democrats carried the State for the first time in many years. “Return Day” was canceled altogether in 1942 because of World War II, but it was too good an event to let die in Sussex County where traditions are important. It was not long before a group of interested citizens of both the Republican and Democrat parties joined together to revive it.

The progress made in the development of computers, modern communications, and the use of voting machines soon made it possible to know the results of election returns within minutes after the poles were closed. Not so in 1962 when the official returns for one State office were not determined until after “Return Day” had come and gone.

Throughout the 50s and 60s enthusiasm grew beyond all expectations as was evident with a bill being passed in the State Legislature in 1965 making “Return Day” a legal half holiday for Sussex County. From that time to the present this celebration has attracted more and more candidates from Kent and New Castle Counties who enjoy riding in the parade and joining in all of the activities of the day. The spectators have also increased in numbers, to the point where it is now necessary to roast two oxen to feed the hungry crowds after the speeches have been made on the square in Georgetown.



Bicentennial

Sussex County

Return Day



Georgetown Delaware

ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO GOVERNED SUSSEX COUNTY IN DELAWARE DURING AMERICA'S BICENTENNIAL YEAR 1976

President of The United States	Gerald R. Ford
Vice-President of The United States	Nelson D. Rockefeller
U. S. Senator from Delaware	William V. Roth, Jr.
U. S. Senator from Delaware	Joseph R. Biden
U. S. Representative from Delaware	Pierre S. duPont, IV
Governor of The State of Delaware	Sherman W. Tribbitt
Ht. Governor of Delaware	Eugene D. Bookhammer
Attorney General of Delaware	Richard R. Weir, Jr.
State Treasurer of Delaware	Mary D. Jorntin
Auditor of Accounts of Delaware	Richard T. Collins
Insurance Commissioner of Delaware	Robert A. Short
(resigned March 31, 1976)	
Insurance Commissioner of Delaware	J. Francis Richardson
(April 1, 1976 - Dec. 31, 1976)	

SUSSEX COUNTY MEMBERS OF DELAWARE'S 127TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY STATE SENATE

Senator From 19th District	Thurman Adams, Jr.
Senator From 20th District	Richard S. Cordrey
Senator From 21st District	David H. Elliott

SUSSEX COUNTY MEMBERS OF DELAWARE'S 127TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Representative From 36th District	Lewis B. Harrington
Representative From 37th District	Harry E. Demeckson
Representative From 38th District	Howard A. Clendaniel
Representative From 39th District	Thomas A. Temple, Sr.
Representative From 40th District	William J. Gordy
Representative From 41st District	Donald J. Lynch

SUSSEX COUNTY OFFICERS

Sheriff of Sussex County	Eugene D. Mills
(Served January 1, 1976 - Deceased June 29, 1976)	
Sheriff of Sussex County	Stephen E. Rogers
Clerk of the Peace of Sussex County	Ray H. Elliott
Register of Wills of Sussex County	Wilson O. McCabe, Jr.
Recorder of Deeds of Sussex County	Mary Ann McCabe
Register In Chancery of Sussex County	Harvey F. Donovan
Prothonotary of Sussex County	Elwood R. Rust

MEMBERS OF THE SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Ralph E. Benson	John T. Cannon, Sr.	Charles W. Cole
Oliver E. Hill	W. Howard Workman	

MAYOR OF THE COUNTY SEAT OF SUSSEX COUNTY GEORGETOWN, DELAWARE 1976

W. Lavlon Johnson

**SUSSEX COUNTY
RETURN DAY COMMITTEE, INC.
1976 OFFICERS**

Mrs. Jean West, President
Ronald F. Dodd, Vice-President
Mrs. Carol W. Collins, Secretary
John T. Purnell, Treasurer

HONORARY DIRECTORS

Mrs. Nellie R. Barr
Nutter D. Marvel, Sr.
Ralph E. Benson
John T. Cannon, Sr.
Charles W. Cole
Oliver E. Hill
W. Howard Workman

DIRECTORS

Eugene Bowne
Mrs. Charlotte Campbell
George F. Couch
Mrs. Claire Croll
W. Layton Johnson
Robert L. Littleton
Mrs. Cindy Pusey
Anthony Racaniello
Mrs. Rosalie B. Walls

Master of Ceremonies - Mr. Houston Wilson, Esq.

Parade Marshall - Mrs. Edna Layton

OLD TIMERS JUDGES

Mrs. Peggy W. Booth
Mrs. Lilly S. Walls
Mrs. Mabel Lambden

ANTIQUÉ CAR JUDGES

John S. Cordrey
Marshall Nesbitt
Andrew Rice

FIRE EQUIPMENT JUDGES

Arthur I. Guessford
Kline Kemp

Granville T. White
William J. Himes

PARADE JUDGES

Mrs. Irene T. Griffin
Charles A. Legates, Jr.
Mrs. Eileen W. Spence

Peter J. Gaffney
David Montgomery
Charles G. Lamb

Parade Announcer - Wayne Ellingsworth

Fire Equipment Announcer - John Smith

**DEDICATION OF RESTORED ORIGINAL
SUSSEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE OF GEORGETOWN
10:00 a.m.**

National Anthem Sussex Central High School Band Ensemble
Eugene Bowne, Director

Presentation of Colors Cub Scout Pack 95, Brownie Troop
Boy Scout Troop 95, Girl Scout Troop

Invocation Rev. H. Sterling Green

Salute to the Flag Eagle Scout, Thomas P. Veasey II

Welcome and
Introduction of Dignitaries Mr. Houston Wilson, Esq.

Governor Sherman W. Tribbitt
Lt. Governor Eugene D. Bookhammer
Secretary of State Robert H. Reed
Director of the Division of Historical
and Cultural Affairs Lawrence C. Henry
Architect Robert Raley
Senator Thurman Adams, Jr.
Senator Richard S. Cordrey
Senator David H. Elliott
Representative Howard A. Clendaniel
Representative Lewis B. Harrington
Representative Harry E. Derrickson
Representative Thomas A. Temple, Sr.
Representative William J. Gordy
Representative Donald J. Lynch
President of Sussex County Council John T. Cannon, Sr.
Mayor of Georgetown W. Layton Johnson
Chairman of Return Day Committee Mrs. Jean West

Dedicatory Address and Ribbon Cutting Governor Sherman W. Tribbitt

SUSSEX COUNTY BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE
TIME CAPSULE CEREMONY
10:30 a.m.

Welcome Mrs. Joyce Dyer, Co-Chairman
Sussex County Bicentennial Committee
Introduction of Sussex County Bicentennial Committee ... Kenneth Douty,
Co-Chairman Sussex County Bicentennial Committee
Purpose and General Contents of The Time Capsule
Miss M. Catherine Downing
Sealing and Burial of Time Capsule
Our Delaware Sussex Central High School
Band Ensemble
Benediction Rev. H. Sterling Green

November 4, 1976

We who have placed this Time Capsule here today charge the people attending the Return Day Celebration in Georgetown in the year 2076 with the responsibility of opening the capsule and placing all items contained therein on display in a public place, for the citizens of Sussex County to observe and appreciate.

We do this as our Horizons Project for the celebration of the Nation's Bicentennial.

Joyce Dyer
Kenneth Douty

RETURN DAY PROGRAM

- 10:00 a.m. DEDICATION OF RESTORED ORIGINAL SUSSEX COUNTY COURT HOUSE OF GEORGETOWN
- 10:30 a.m. TIME CAPSULE CEREMONY
S. Bedford Street
- 10:30 a.m. CONCERT AT CIRCLE
Don Murray's "Old Time Religion" Gospel Singers
- 11:00 a.m. LUNCHEON FOR CANDIDATES AND HONORED GUESTS
Sussex Central High School
(Prepared By Students of Sussex Vocational Technical School under Direction of Joseph Heacock and William Gemberling)
- 11:30 a.m. BAND CONCERT
First United States Army Band
Fort George G. Meade, Maryland
Conductor, Warrant Officer James C. Choates
Assistant, Sergeant Richard L. Jansen
- 12:00 noon FIRST UNITED STATES ARMY JUMP TEAM
Fort George G. Meade, Maryland
(Performing at The Sussex County Airport)
- 1:00 p.m. PARADE
(Starts Promptly at 1:00 p.m.) From Sussex Central High School - Will travel East on Market Street
- 3:00 p.m. PROGRAM AT CIRCLE
Official Returns
Announcement by Ronald F. Dodd
PUBLIC SPEAKING
(At The Circle)
AWARDS
- 4:30 p.m. OLD FASHION OX ROAST
(Just off Circle on North Bedford Street)
- 6:00 p.m. DELAWARE STATE LOTTERY DRAWING

PROGRAM AT THE CIRCLE

National Anthem	Sussex Central High School Band Eugene Bowne, Director
Soloist	Rosemary Martin
Invocation	Dr. Brooks E. Reynolds
Greetings	Mr. Houston Wilson, Esq.
Greetings	Mrs. Jean West, President Sussex County Return Day Committee
Welcome	W. Layton Johnson Mayor of Georgetown, Delaware
Announcement of National, State, and County Returns ..	Mr. Ronald F. Dodd
Address	Mr. Harvey B. Spicer

BRIEF REMARKS:

Gov. Sherman W. Tribbitt
Lt. Gov. Eugene D. Bookhammer
U.S. Senator William V. Roth, Jr.
U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden
U.S. Representative Pierre S. duPont, IV
Former Gov. Elbert N. Carvel
Former Gov. Russell W. Peterson
Former Gov. David P. Buckson
Former Sen. J. Caleb Boggs
Former Sen. J. Allen Frear
Former Sen. John J. Williams

Introduction of County Candidates	Mr. Houston Wilson, Esq.
Presentation of Awards	Mrs. Charlotte Campbell Parade Co-Chairman
Benediction	The Reverend William Hitchens

1791-1976 A TIME TO REMEMBER

BY: William P. Frank

History books and historical records do not tell us when Return Day was started in Sussex County.

Back in 1791, the General Assembly granted a petition of Sussex Countians that the "seat of justice" be moved from Lewes to a more central and convenient part of the county. The General Assembly authorized a board of 10 commissioners to buy not more than 100 acres "near the center of the county at the place called 'James Pettijohn's Old Field' or within two miles of the house where Ebenezer Pettijohn now resides."

The same board of commissioners had orders from the General Assembly to build a court house, a jail, a pillory and a whipping post.

Later in 1791, the General Assembly decreed that James Pettijohn's Old Field shall be known as George-town, in honor of George Mitchell who was the chairman of the acquisition commission.

For years, Sussex Countians seemed to have the idea that Return Day was peculiar to and characteristic only of their county and its county seat. The historical fact is much more interesting and certainly more to the credit of Sussex County. The truth is that Sussex County and Georgetown have been more faithful to Delaware customs than two upper counties of New Castle and Kent. For in the early days, according to the law, all election inspectors were required to deliver their tally sheets to the court house of their respective counties on the Thursday after Election Day.

That made it an occasion for the people from far and wide to gather in their county seats to hear and learn the results. Only Sussex Countians seemed to have taken such a personal interest in their elections; and so down through the years, in good season and bad, they flocked by the thousands to the hub

of Sussex and settled in and near the court house. Of course, it wasn't always that the people were able to learn the results of the elections, particularly in the tight ones, but they all had a good time.

Return Day was usually an occasion for rivalry among the election officers - to see who could make it by horseback first to the court house. In the meantime, the air of festivity and the spirit of rustic carnivals prevailed in the vicinity of the court house square. All kinds of food - and bad liquors - were sold from booths and stalls - Delaware biscuits and hot corn pone, rabbit roasted on spits and of course fried chicken, oysters and clams, white and sweet potatoes baked in hot ashes.

The people made for Georgetown by horse and buggy, farm wagons, on horse or mule back - and later of course, by excursion trains.

The town's two hotels did a lively bar business and it must have been through the influence of their managers that eventually, a crackdown was made on the itinerant vendors of moonshine.

On most Return Days, large strips of muslin were extended from one side of the court house to the other in the years of presidential elections. The names of the states that had gone one way or another were painted on the muslin with the approximate majorities.

The festivities of Return Day, of course, varied according to the excitement of the elections. For example in 1882 when Charles Stockley was elected governor, people cheered and guns boomed out as a victory procession moved through Georgetown. The "center piece" of the parade was a boat, named "The Constitution," decorated with a large blue hen and a coonskin cap suspended from the mast.

And there standing on the quarterdeck of the boat on wheels was the victorious governor-elect. When the ship arrived in front of the court house, the new governor was lifted on the shoulders of brawny men who carried him triumphantly into the court house and up to the balcony to speak to the cheering throng.

It can not be said that all Return Days were orderly. The newspapers of the past century always commented on whether there was any trouble. For example, the Morning News in 1884 noted: "Everything considered, the crowd was remarkably orderly and seemed jubilant over the county victory and the prospect for the inauguration of a Democratic president on the 4th of March next."

As it happened, the Return Day crowd in Georgetown that year didn't learn that Grover Cleveland was really elected president until several days later.

If the weather was pleasant, Return Day festivities would extend over Friday and Saturday, marked by plenty of entertaining, old fashion eating and drinking, and even cock fights behind the barns on the outskirts of the town.

In the early days, a Sussex farmer would never think of missing Return Day in Georgetown, although as the years passed and so-called sophistication seeped into Sussex County, Return Day dwindled to a somewhat perfunctory occasion. In 1942, because of the war, it was canceled but was later revived as people began to realize that Return Day was one of the few genuine folk customs in this part of the country, different in many ways from the more synthetic fiestas.



Notes & Autographs



Sussex County Return Day



George Mitchell

Georgetown, Delaware
November 8, 1990



George Mitchell

In observance of Georgetown's bicentennial in 1991, the Sussex County Return Day Committee is honoring George Mitchell, for whom the Town is named.

Shortly after the boundary dispute between the heirs of William Penn and Lord Baltimore was settled in 1775 and Sussex County expanded to its present borders, two petitions signed by 979 inhabitants of Sussex County were presented to the General Assembly praying that the County Seat be removed from Lewes and more centrally located.

On January 29, 1791, an act was passed authorizing the removal of the County Seat from Lewes to a new site at "James Pettyjohn's old field", near the center of the county. The same act named George Mitchell, Robert Houston, William Moore, John Collins, Nathaniel Young, William Perry, Rhoads Shankland, Woodman Stockley, Daniel Polk and Thomas Batson as commissioners and charged them to purchase up to 100 acres of land and construct a new courthouse and jail.

On May 9, 1791, the commissioners met at the house of Abraham Harris and negotiated the purchase of 50 acres from him, buying also 25 acres from Rowland Bevins and one acre from Joshua Pepper. Commissioner Rhoads Shankland began to survey the new town the same day.

On October 26, 1791, the General Assembly officially moved the Seat of Justice to the new County Seat and named it Georgetown in honor of Commissioner George Mitchell, who was active in the movement to centralize the County Seat.

Little is known about George Mitchell, except of his career in the General Assembly. In January 1788, he was elected one of the three presidential electors from Delaware. Mitchell, along with Gunning Bedford and John Banning voted for George Washington for President and John Jay for Vice-President. Washington was inaugurated on April 30, 1789.

Mitchell was elected as a delegate from Sussex County on September 8, 1791 to the Constitutional Convention for the State. He served in the Delaware House of Representatives from 1784 to 1788. He was elected to the Delaware Senate in 1788 and served as Speaker of the Senate from 1788 to 1790.

(Return Day coin featuring George Mitchell designed by John T. Purnell)

The Sussex County Return Day Committee, Inc.

Officers

ROSALIE B. WALLS, President
GEORGE F. COUCH, Vice-President
ELEANOR RAYE WARRINGTON, Secretary
W. LAYTON JOHNSON, Treasurer

Directors

JOSEPH W. BOOTH	WILLIAM G. LAMBDEN
RICHARD M. CALHOUN	WILLIAM H. LAWSON
CHARLOTTE P. CAMPBELL	CHRISTINE LECATES
ANN COUCH	WILLIAM LECATES
CLAIRE T. CROLL	DANIEL L. MILBURN
RONALD F. DODD	JOHN T. PURNELL
CAROLYN GREEN	CINDY PUSEY
DALLAS GREEN	ANTHONY RACANIELLO
RICHARD T. HUDSON	JAY M. STEVENS
ALLAN KUJALA	ELMER WALLS

Honorary Directors

RALPH BENSON County Council	GEORGE COLE County Council
DALE DUKES County Council	R. JAMES MARINER County Council
WILLIAM D. STEVENSON County Council President	ROBERT L. STICKELS County Administrator

1990 Program of Events

- 9:00 a.m. to Dusk **FOOD & CRAFT BOOTHS**
(The Circle & Market St. area)
- 10:00 a.m. **RETURN DAY MARKER DEDICATION**
(The Circle between banks)
- 10:00 a.m. to Noon **OLD COURTHOUSE TOURS**
(South Bedford Street)
- 10:30 a.m. **MUSIC ON THE CIRCLE**
Performance by "Back In Time"
- 11:00 a.m. **LUNCHEON FOR CANDIDATES
AND HONORED GUESTS**
Sussex Central High School
Prepared by Bread of Life
- 11:00 a.m. **CONCERT ON THE CIRCLE**
Delaware State College Marching Band
Under the direction of Randolph Johnson
- 12:30 p.m. **SINGING ON THE CIRCLE**
Laurel High School Chorus
Under the direction of Penny Denney
- 1:00 p.m. **RETURN DAY PARADE**
From Sussex Central High School, halfway around
The Circle to King Street and westward on Pine
Street, back to starting point at school.
- 3:00 p.m. **CEREMONIES ON THE CIRCLE**
- 3:30 p.m. **MUMMERS ON THE CIRCLE**
Performance by Hegeman String Band
A Mummers unit from Philadelphia
- 3:30 p.m. **OX ROAST ON THE CIRCLE**
Free open pit barbecued beef sandwiches,
northeast corner of The Circle
- 4:00 p.m. **STREET DANCE ON THE CIRCLE**
Music by "Back in Time"
- 4:00 p.m. **BLUE GRASS ON THE CIRCLE**
Blue grass & country music by
"E.Z. Pickins" at the Ox Roast
- 5:30 p.m. **FIREWORKS FINALE**

1990 Return Day Parade

THE 1990 SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY PARADE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF CARL R. WALLS, A MEMBER OF THE RETURN DAY BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND PARADE CHAIRMAN FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. HE LOVED THIS BIENNIAL CELEBRATION AND WORKED DILIGENTLY TO MAKE OUR PARADE ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST UNIQUE ON DELMARVA.

THE SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPPORT IT RECEIVED IN THE PAST FROM FORMER U.S. SENATOR AND MRS. JOHN J. WILLIAMS, STATE REPRESENTATIVE CLIFF LEE, AND GEORGETOWN BUSINESSMAN WILSON G. BOYER. EACH LOOKED FORWARD TO RETURN DAY AND WILL BE MISSED THIS YEAR.

Grand Marshall

Sussex County Administrator
ROBERT L. STICKELS

Parade Judges

GROVER BIDDLE
Director of Governmental Relations
Delaware Development Office

SCORCHY TAWES
Feature Correspondent
WBOC-Channel 16

JOAN CRAFT
Volunteer Services Coordinator
Stockley Center

TED CLARK

Political Columnist
The Whale & Sussex Post

MRS. CLIFF (JANET) LEE
Secretary
Centenary Methodist Church

SYLVIA REYBURN
President - Liberty Bell Chapter
Telephone Pioneers of America

JACK OWENS

Director - Southern Campus
Delaware Technical & Community College

Parade Announcers

Judges Stand
(North Race Street)

KEVIN SHORT
MSA Recording Studios

BILL GRASTON
WECY - Radio

NORMAN TATE
Past President

Sussex County Volunteer Firemans Assoc.

Speakers Platform
(The Circle)

DAN GAFFNEY
Program Director
WGMD Radio

JOHN SMITH
Delaware State Fire School

Fire Equipment Judges

WAYNE HUTCHINSON
Delaware State Fire School

JOSEPH MUROBITO
Delaware State Fire School

Old Timer Costume Judges

BLANCHE EPOLITO
Past President
Georgetown Historical Society

ETHEL ROCKEMANN
Past President
Indian River DSFSA

Ceremonies On The Circle

- National Anthem Sussex Central High School Band
David Crede, Director
- Soloist Cathy Gorman
- Invocation Rev. Donald Clendaniel II
Georgetown United Methodist Charge
- Greetings Frank Calio
Master of Ceremonies
- Welcome Joseph W. Booth, Sr.
Mayor of Georgetown
- Introduction of Distinguished Guests, State,
National and Sussex County Candidates
and Incumbents Frank Calio
- Reading of Election Returns Ronald F. Dodd
Town Crier
- Burial of the Tomahawk Kenneth L. McDowell
Chairman
Sussex County Democratic Committee
J. Everett Moore
Chairman
Sussex County Republican Committee
Moss Wagner
Chairman
Sussex County Libertarian Party
- End of Campaign of 1990
- Appreciation Rosalie Walls, President
Sussex County Return Day, Inc.
- Presentation of Awards Jay M. Stevens
Parade Co-Chairman
- Benediction Rev. Michael Bye
St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Points of Interest

All around you are the accomplishments of proud Sussex Countians and Georgetown residents:

OLD SUSSEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Built in 1791, the original courthouse now stands on South Bedford Street just off the Circle. It was sold for \$22 and moved when the new courthouse was constructed. The old courthouse was built of equal size and style as the original courthouse in Lewes. It now serves as the home of the Georgetown Historical Society.

NEW SUSSEX COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Designed by famed architect William Strickland, the brick building was constructed in 1837, when the county outgrew the old wooden courthouse. It originally featured courts on the second floor and county offices on the first. A brick jailhouse was located at the rear as was the whipping post. Like the original courthouse, a lottery (raising almost \$15,000) was held to pay the construction costs.

THE CIRCLE

The Circle or Town Square was laid out by Commissioner Rhoads Shankland in 1791 to measure 100 yards each way. Legend has it that The Circle was beautified in 1860 when Dr. William Marshall purchased a slave girl named Liz, and with a mule she prepared the center of the Square for planting. Shade trees were secured from the Hudson River and shipped via Milford and planted.

COURTHOUSE WEATHER VANE

The Courthouse weather vane used to sit atop the Courthouse in Wilmington, when it was constructed in 1880. When a new Wilmington courthouse was constructed in 1916, Sussex County Judge Henry C. Conrad obtained the weather vane and had it placed atop the Sussex County Courthouse cupola.

COURTHOUSE CLOCK

Citizens petitioned in 1858 for a clock to be placed in the Courthouse belfry. In 1859, the clock was purchased and installed for \$235. In 1944, its wooden workings worn, the clock stopped and was replaced with an electric motor and put back into operation in 1946.

TOWN GOVERNMENT

The Delaware General Assembly directly controlled Georgetown until 1851 and was responsible for passing nuisance ordinances like controlling the running at large of swine, which could be killed and used for the prisoners according to the act. The Town limits were extended to one half mile each way from a central point in the Public Square in 1863. The first Town Council was elected in March 6, 1869. The Town Hall on the Circle is a gift of the Wilmington Trust Company.

BRICK HOTEL

Now occupied by Wilmington Trust, the Brick Hotel served as temporary quarters for the court system and county government from 1837 to 1839, while the new courthouse was under construction. The hotel was built in 1836 and at the time was known as Burton C. Barker's hotel, its first innkeeper. During the Civil War, it was known as the Union Hotel.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The first fire apparatus was purchased in 1831 through the Georgetown Fire Association and was given the old jail in 1833 to house the pumper. The fire department later constructed a fire hall on The Circle north of Town Hall. The new firehall is located on South Bedford Street.

History of Return Day

Despite its mispronunciation by most non-residents, "Return Day" has less to do with hearing the election returns than with Sussex Countians and others coming together to celebrate the end of the vigorous campaign and to begin the political healing process.

Although the date of the first "Return Day" in Georgetown is uncertain, it could have been as early as 1792. The State Law in 1791 removing the County seat from Lewes to a new place later named Georgetown required all votes to be cast in the County seat on election day.

The same voters would "return" two days later to hear the results. In 1811 voting districts in the individual hundreds were established, but the Board of Canvassers presided over by the Sheriff would meet two days later in Georgetown to announce the final tally.

Naturally, the gathering of two or three thousand politicians, supporters and curious on-lookers made for a very festive atmosphere. J. Thomas Scharf in 1888 described "Return Day" in the *History of Delaware* as "one of the customs peculiar to the people of Sussex, from time immemorial, is to hold high carnival on the day when the results of a general election are announced.

"By early in the morning people from all parts of the county, and even from Maryland; may be seen coming to the county-seat, some walking, others on horseback, and still others in wagons and carts, drawn by one or more oxen, by an ox and a horse, an ox and a mule, or several oxen and a horse, the vehicle being gayly decorated with bright colors or flags.

"Often this crowd presents a motley appearance, some being dressed in costumes which were used in primitive times, and others purposely arraying themselves in an outlandish manner to give more zest to the spirit of the occasion. The successful candidates also come to Town and are met by a great crowd of admiring friends, who extend their congratulations in an unmistakable manner. Some of these candidates are taken up bodily, and are carried around on men's shoulders when the results are announced from the window of the courthouse to the congregated mass below.

"Booths, stalls and stands are erected near the courthouse, where all kinds of edibles, such as opossum and rabbit meat, fish and oysters, can be procured. The women, who constitute a considerable portion of the crowd, are generously treated to cakes, candies and the best the booths afford.

"The citizens of the Town hold a general reception and all are expected to help entertain the people, especially if they are friends of the successful party. Everyone endeavors to make 'Return Day' a hilarious one, and all seem willing to perpetuate a custom which is now peculiar to Sussex County alone, and which sometimes brings three thousand people to Town."

Return Day continued through the 1800s and on into the present century. But with the advent of automobiles, which made the visit to Georgetown from any part of Sussex only a matter of minutes, and with the arrival of radio which let the people know the results of elections even before the newspapers arrived, interest in the old custom began to dwindle.

There was a big celebration in 1936 when Franklin D. Roosevelt won in a landslide and the Democrats carried the State for the first time in many years. Return Day was cancelled altogether in 1942 because of World War II, but it was too good an event to let die in Sussex County where traditions are important. It was not long before a group of interested citizens of both the Republican and Democrat parties joined together to revive it in 1952.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s enthusiasm grew beyond all expectations as was evident with a bill being passed in the State Legislature in 1965 making "Return Day" a legal half holiday for Sussex County. From that time to the present this celebration has attracted more and more Delawareans and residents from nearby states to join in all of the activities of the day.

In modern times, when election results are often known before the polls close, Return Day serves as a reminder to all Sussex Countians of their past. An ox roast with free sandwiches to the public has replaced the possum and rabbit but craftsmen and vendors still hawk their wares. A large parade still highlights the celebration, but now the victorious candidates and their former opponents ride together in open horse drawn carriages and convertibles in the spirit of cooperation for the good of the citizens.

Return Day is still considered the official end of the campaign in Delaware illustrated by the ceremonial burial of the hatchet by political party leaders ... until the next Sussex County Return Day in Georgetown, two days after the election.



Return Day Volunteers

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

Ira & Shirley Hitchens

Special thanks to the following people, businesses and organizations for making Return Day 1990 a great success:

Greater Georgetown Chamber of Commerce	Meadows of Georgetown, Inc.
Georgetown Package Store	Delaware State Fire Marshall's Office
Grotto Pizza - Lewes/Rehoboth Beach	Georgetown Fire Police
Burger King - Georgetown	Georgetown Fire Company
Jamesway - Georgetown	David A. Banks, Inc. - Georgetown
McDonald's - Georgetown	Bill Norwood
84 Lumber - Georgetown	Rogers Graphics, Inc.
Southern States	Captain Paul Cunningham - Troop 4
Draper King Cole - Milton	Captain Joseph Forrester - Troop 5
Morgan & Co. of New York - Smyrna	Lt. Michael Cunningham - Troop 7
Thriftway - Georgetown	Wayne Hudson
Food City - Georgetown	Walls Builders, Inc.
J.G. Townsend, Jr. & Co. - Georgetown	Delaware Technical & Community College
Showell Farms - Showell, Md.	Delaware National Guard
Townsend's, Inc. - Millsboro	Robert Martin for artwork services
Salisbury Pepsi - Salisbury, Md.	Kevin Short - Mid-South Audio
Perdue - Georgetown & Salisbury, Md.	The Insurance Exchange, Inc.
Vlasic Foods, Inc. - Millsboro	GFWC - Zwaanendaal Club
Schmidt's Bakery - Salisbury, Md.	The Ribbon Outlet - Rehoboth Beach
Salisbury Coca Cola - Salisbury, Md.	Peninsula Bluegrass, Inc.
Nutter D. Marvel Estate	Roy Whaley
Downes Center, Inc.	D.B. Screen Printing - Georgetown

American flags have been donated by American Legion Post 8 of Georgetown in honor of our flag and American troops in Saudi Arabia. Distributed by Boy Scout Troop 95 of Georgetown.

Yellow ribbons donated by Rehoboth Unit of Disabled American Veterans and Chapter 8 Auxiliary to show support for the American service men and women in the Persian Gulf. Distributed by Junior Girl Scout Troop 701 of Georgetown.

Letter of Appreciation

On behalf of the Sussex County Return Day Committee, I would like to say, "Greetings", and welcome you to our historic Town of Georgetown, the County Seat of Sussex.

Not only is Delaware the First State, but as far as we can tell we are the only one in the country that celebrates this unique tradition, which may date back as far as 1792.

The celebration today is also the kickoff for Georgetown's bicentennial celebration in 1991. We invite you to join us as we celebrate our birthday throughout the year.

Since the early part of September, the new Board of Directors has faced many challenges. However, through the combined efforts of the Committee and many, many volunteers, everyone who attends Return Day 1990 will experience a potpourri of entertainment, events and enjoyment.

This Return Day will be a dawn to dusk affair appealing to all age groups. When this day ends with a burst of colorful fireworks over The Circle, the time and talent volunteered for this event will be clear.

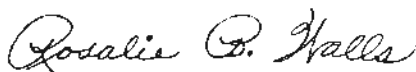
I have been inspired by the actions, accomplishments, and staunch support received from my friends, because, to quote George Washington, "Actions, not words, are the true criteria of the attachment of friends."

I am especially grateful to the Sussex County Council for once again providing the financial support necessary for this county-wide event. Several Sussex County communities graciously donated funds and police services and it is greatly appreciated.

The greatest praise must be reserved for the Town of Georgetown. Return Day simply could not happen without the Town's support. I received complete cooperation from Mayor Joe Booth and Town Council, the administration, the maintenance department and the police department. I thank each and every one of the Town employees for their kindness and generosity.

It is our hope you will enjoy your visit with us today so much that you will want to bring a friend to the next Return Day on Thursday, November 5, 1992.

Best Wishes,
SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY, INC.



Rosalie B. Walls
President

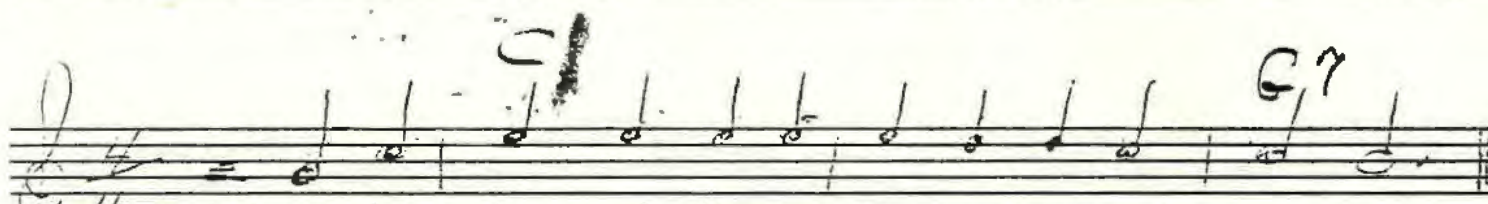


*Join us in 1991 as Georgetown
celebrates its bicentennial.*

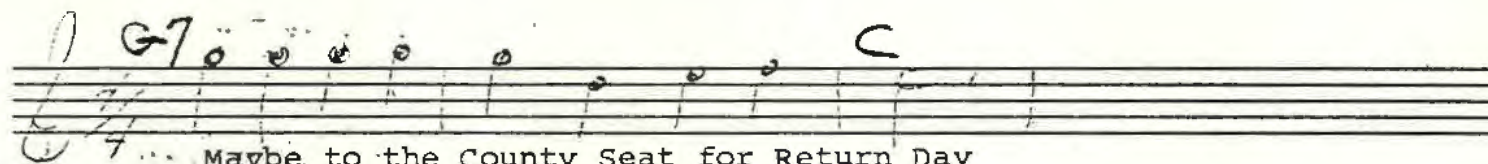
- JANUARY 26 - FEDERAL COTILLION
FEBRUARY 22 - 53RD ANNUAL OYSTER EAT
MARCH 7 - 9 - HISTORICAL PLAY
MARCH 16 - 200 YEARS OF FASHION SHOW
APRIL 13 & 14 - OLDE GEORGETOWN ANTIQUE SHOW
APRIL 20 - EARTH DAY IN GEORGETOWN
MAY 4 - BICENTENNIAL FESTIVAL
MAY 9 - PURCHASE DAY
JUNE 15 - MUSIC FAIRE
JULY 4 - OLDE FASHIONED 4TH OF JULY
AUGUST 3 - LIVING HISTORY IN GEORGETOWN
SEPTEMBER 7 - NEW COUNTY SEAT ARTS & CRAFTS SHOW
OCTOBER 6 - HOMECOMING SUNDAY
OCTOBER 26 - GEORGETOWN JUBILEE (LIKE RETURN DAY)
NOVEMBER - VARIETY SHOW
NOVEMBER 29 - HANGING OF THE GREEN
DECEMBER 5 - COLONIAL CHRISTMAS PARADE
DECEMBER 7 - HISTORIC HOME TOUR
DECEMBER 9 - CAROLLING ON THE CIRCLE

For more information about Georgetown's Bicentennial Celebration
Call (302) 856-7391 or write:
Georgetown 200 Committee, P.O. Box 446, Georgetown, DE 19947

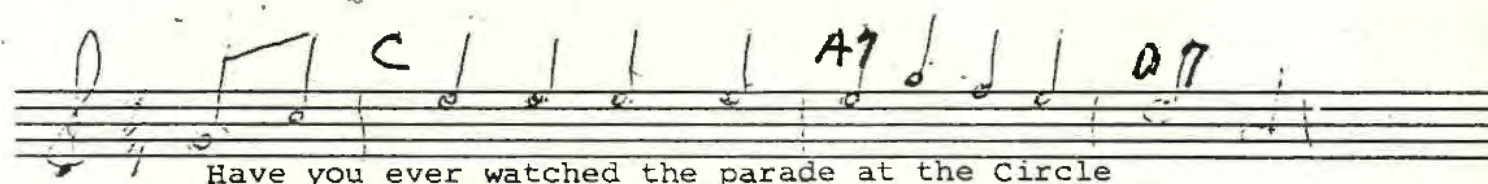
SUSSEX COUNTY RETURN DAY
WRITTEN BY VICTOR R ADAMS
DEDICATED TO NUTTER D MARVEL SR



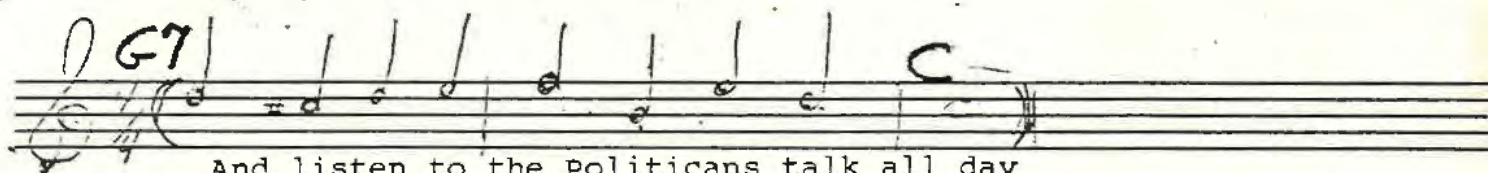
1. Did you ever take a trip through Sussex County
2. Oh the breezes blowing through the Streets of Georgetown
3. But the strangers come and try to teach us their way.
4. Now if there's going to be a life hereafter



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



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



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

Victor Adams



Whale & Post

Return Day

Sussex County's Finest Newspapers

November 8, 1990

History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please Turn To Back Page



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

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



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

Return Day

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

By STEVE HOENIGMANN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interesting additions to this year's event include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Schedule Of Return Day Events

- 9 a.m. to dusk - Food and Craft booths, (The Circle and Market Street area.)
- 10 a.m. - Return Day marker dedication
- 10 a.m. to noon - Old Courthouse Tours (South Bedford Street.)
- 10:30 a.m. - Music on The Circle (Performance by "Back In Time.")
- 11 a.m. - Luncheon for Candidates and honored guests (Sussex Central High School, prepared by Bread of Life.) Concert on The Circle (Delaware State College Marching Band, under the direction of Randolph Johnson.)
- 12:30 p.m. - Singing on The Circle (Laurel High School Chorus, under the direction of Penny Denney.)
- 1 p.m. - Return Day Parade (From Sussex Central High School, halfway around The Circle to King Street and westward on Pine Street back to school.)
- 3 p.m. - Ceremonies on The Circle
- 3:30 p.m. - Mummers on The Circle (Performance by Hegeman String Band of Philadelphia.)
- Ox Roast on The Circle (Free open pit barbecued beef sandwiches, northeast corner of The Circle.)
- 4 p.m. - Street Dance on The Circle (Music by "Back in Time.") Blue Grass on The Circle (Blue grass and country music by "E.Z. Pickins" at the ox roast.)
- 5:30 p.m. - Fireworks Finale

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

How We Voted In Sussex County

REP. DISTRICT 40		REP. DISTRICT 41		CLERK OF PEACE		REGISTER OF WILLS		RECORDER OF DEEDS		SUSSEX COUNCIL DISTRICT 4		SUSSEX COUNCIL DISTRICT 5		SHERIFF	
STONE	LEE	WEST	ROACH	AMERINE	SPICER	CLENDANIEL	WALLER	GREEN	PUSEY	BARBER	COLE	COLLINS	MARINER	JESTICE	JONES
				210	265	266	212	241	232					244	228
				123	150	148	125	134	139					127	146
				471	483	554	432	481	481					469	506
				418	428	444	375	440	409					459	395
				386	601	527	488	470	527					452	544
				168	231	221	186	207	201					195	216
				268	234	334	178	315	197					289	223
				506	475	680	336	601	382					545	432
				244	516	448	341	394	383					334	440
				361	463	490	353	481	350					400	438
				271	217	328	169	313	181					279	216
				354	481	452	387	447	396					393	454
				353	474	449	390	422	426					417	425
				277	390	353	327	352	335					323	356
				215	351	248	333	257	326	249	365			245	337
				147	246	166	251	165	257	134	310			167	248
				650	846	720	785	761	761	677	907			702	791
				387	468	480	371	437	420	439	445			413	445
				418	397	492	322	492	326			503	331	454	367
				623	691	700	612	689	635	615	755			654	672
				438	663	576	583	469	638	459	712			533	579
				588	780	657	709	611	771	649	818			665	724
				341	417	420	341	379	391	388	417			413	370
				155	174	200	125	159	168	183	154			181	156
				248	341	312	282	273	326	302	318			288	314
				217	209	211	224	203	218					207	223
				258	267	220	310	226	297					221	300
				51	33	56	31	49	34					55	30
				172	252	164	262	146	284					165	258
				349	382	315	419	323	404					336	376
				346	331	312	402	309	388					318	375
				216	166	200	192	203	179					214	166
				506	422	457	472	481	446					508	434
68	169			102	130	123	112	123	110					110	126
608	922			720	745	717	777	728	741					825	672
301	280			334	214	308	254	348	202					371	183
336	460			368	395	359	415	432	330			491	299	455	317
255	405			311	307	306	330	341	275			349	296	374	260
288	471			339	366	328	393	362	349			376	361	398	323
				401	322	281	484	423	302	410	313			319	409
				352	273	198	418	298	320	319	298			256	344
				391	167	179	365	365	185	320	223			230	320
				960	460	520	840	735	619	689	686	714	664	444	730
				490	365	333	385	441	375	412	409	473	364	431	393
				335	147	193	260	275	179	228	233	243	212	287	163
				357	53	154	216	188	182	175	193	194	195	191	189
1,856															
* 2,707															
* 3,286															
1,787															
14,753															
* 17,989															
* 17,456															
15,768															
* 16,817															
16,264															
4,095															
* 5,201															
* 3,343															
2,722															
16,560															
* 16,653															



Return Day 1988

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

Whale & Post

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

Sussex County's
Finest Newspapers

History

Continued From Front Page

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Many Volunteers, Many Hours Make Return Day Success

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

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

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

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

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

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



Georgetown Is Planning A Grand Bicentennial Year

By RHONDA H. TUMAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Highlights of the year-long events are:

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

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

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

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

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

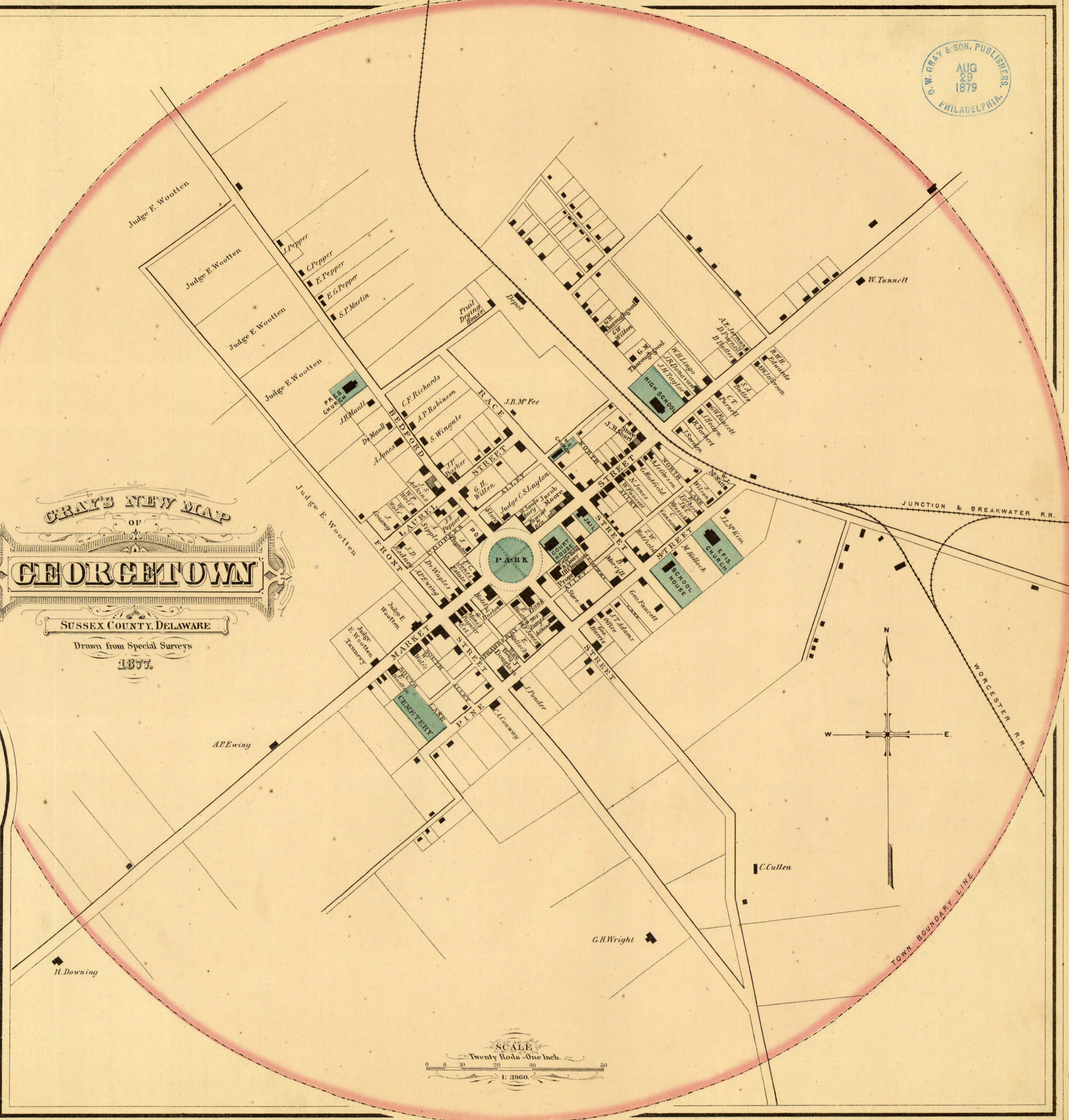
The parade will feature a Percheron One Horse Hitch sponsored by Southern States, Miss Delaware Lisa Maria Munzert, the First U.S. Army Band, the Delaware State College Marching Band and almost a hundred other bands, antique cars, fire apparatus, and floats. The Return Day parade is one of the largest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

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

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

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

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



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