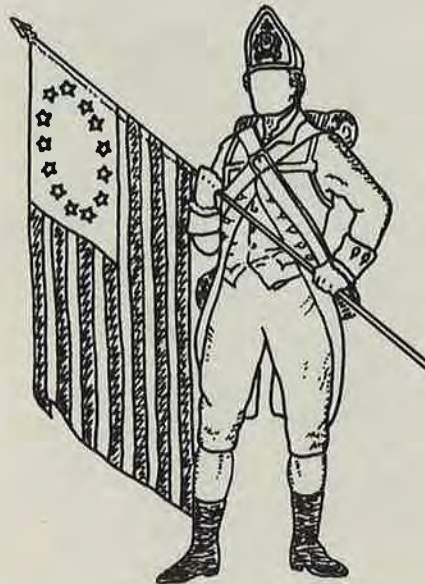


# Riding Tours of Kent County 1976

IN MEMORY OF  
COLONEL JOHN HASLET  
c.1727-1777



Col. Haslet, first commander of the Delaware  
Regiment, left behind no portrait nor likeness--  
only the memory of a brave leader  
and the uniform he wore until killed  
in the Battle of Trenton.

Kent County, the youngest of the three counties of Delaware, was created on December 25, 1682, by William Penn. Before that, it had been a part of Whorekill County, stretching from Duck Creek to the southernmost possessions of the Duke of York. In 1680, a petition of the inhabitants of the area from Duck Creek to Cedar Creek had resulted in the creation of another county, temporarily called St. Jones County.

Most of the early settlements were along creeks and the Bay, and many of the county's first settlers came from Maryland. The first land title was granted in 1671. During the early eighteenth century Kent County was sparsely settled. Most of the inhabitants raised wheat, corn, and tobacco for a living.

By the time of the American Revolution, only three towns of the county were of any size: Dover, ordered laid out in 1683 by William Penn, whose directive was not acted upon until 1717; Duck Creek Village, about a mile north of present-day Smyrna; and Duck Creek Crossroads, now known as Smyrna.

During the American Revolution, Dover was the scene of exciting events. A public meeting of Kent County residents in 1774 protested the treatment of Boston by the British. Militia companies drilled, and the First Delaware Regiment, under Colonel John Haslet, marched off to join Washington's army. On the courthouse square, a portrait of George III was burned to show the feelings of patriots. The County, however, also contained some residents who hesitated to break away from the mother country, and others who were prepared to resist change. In 1776, as Thomas Rodney remembered, Tories plotted the burning of Dover in retaliation for the destruction of a petition in opposition to the calling of a state constitutional convention, and to the mistreatment of a conservative political leader. In 1778, loyalist Cheney Clow erected a fort near Kenton with plans, that came to nothing, to march against Dover. Dover had long been the county seat, and in 1777 the General Assembly designated it as the state capital.

The most famous event that ever happened in Dover was the unanimous ratification by a state convention of the United States Constitution on December 7, 1787.

During the nineteenth century most of the inhabitants were farmers who raised wheat and corn, and later fruit and vegetables. Transportation improved. First came the steamboat, then the train in 1856. As a result of the construction of the Delaware Railroad, seven or eight new towns appeared, including Clayton, Brenford, Moorton, now Cheswold, Wyoming, Farmington, and Harrington.

During the Civil War, Kent County was divided in feeling. The majority of the inhabitants voted for the pro-Southern presidential candidate in 1860, and continued to vote the Democratic ticket throughout the war. The Assembly received a formal invitation extended by a Mississippi judge in 1861 to join the Confederacy, but rejected it. Militia companies, which favored preserving the Union and letting the South go in peace, drilled in almost every town. Federal troops disarmed militia companies suspected of disloyalty and intervened at the polls. While the great bulk of the male inhabitants who served as soldiers joined the Union Army, a few entered the Confederate forces.

Following the Civil War, such improvements as electric lights, telephones, gas systems, and finally the automobile came to the County. The completion of the DuPont Highway in 1924 accelerated changes of all kinds. Steamships continued to be important for the transportation of passengers and freight into the twentieth century. Then automobiles and trucks replaced them. In 1900 Kent County was still an agricultural county in which manufacturing was of little importance. The only large towns were Smyrna, Dover, and Milford, and each of them had a population of less than 5,000.

The great transformation in the County came about the time of World War II. The first industry in Dover that was not connected with agriculture was International Latex Corporation, established in 1939. The Air Force took over the recently developed Dover Airport in 1940 and made it a major center of an urban-industrial complex, while such enterprises as Leeds Travelwear near Smyrna and the Coulk Dental Company in Milford, later purchased by a larger firm, also indicated that the County was changing.

Kent County was altering in other ways too. Wesley College, Delaware State College, and Delaware Technical and Community College provided a variety of educational opportunities. Kent General Hospital and the Milford Memorial Hospital furnished excellent medical care. In the nineteenth century most of the inhabitants were Methodists, but today a score of denominations serve the county. Recreational facilities have improved.

Proud of its historic heritage, today Kent County is a changing, growing place, confident of the future. While it is still possible to find villages which have grown little, if at all, and rural areas little affected by that transformation, in general, the County is on the move, anticipating a substantial growth in population and more industrialization by the year 2000.



## A TOUR OF DOVER

Time: 2 - 4 hours

**Objective:** To appreciate the heritage of Dover as a city more than 250 years old in a do-it-yourself tour. All houses are private unless otherwise noted. For those desiring a conducted tour, arrangements may be made with Dover Heritage Trail, 408 South State Street, Monday - Friday, 10 - 2, for a modest fee. Large groups should make arrangements in advance. Through that organization, some private homes and gardens are open.

**Starting Point:** Hall of Records, corner of Duke of York Street and Legislative Avenue, just off Loockerman Street.

1. Hall of Records contains the archives of the State of Delaware. Visitors will be shown the original royal grant from Charles II to James, Duke of York, and documents relating to William Penn's acquisition of the Three Lower Counties, as well as changing exhibits in show-cases.
2. Legislative Hall on Legislative Avenue, south of Hall of Records, was built in 1932-33 to house offices of the Governor and chambers of Delaware's General Assembly. Stroll through the halls, look into the legislative chambers, and enjoy viewing the pictures of past Governors.

Proceed south on Legislative Avenue and turn west on Water Street.



LEGISLATIVE HALL 1932

3. Old Christ Church, southeast corner of State and Water Steets, has a center portion built in 1734. The church porch dates from 1755. In the churchyard are a monument to Caesar Rodney and the Ridgely tombs. One of the rectors was the Rev. Charles Inglis, 1759-1764, who later became the first Bishop of Nova Scotia. Nearby is the rectory (3a) at 502 South State Street (private) built in 1770 and used as a residence by the Rector of Christ Church.



OLD CHRIST CHURCH, Episcopal 1734

4. The Old Academy at 529 South State Street is a private residence built by John Banning about 1766. As treasurer of Kent County he reimbursed Revolutionary veterans from his own pocket. In the nineteenth century the building housed an Academy.

Proceed north on State Street, passing the Bradford-Loockerman House (4a) (private) at 419 built in 1742. Note the boxwood garden maze. Proceed to the Green.

5. The Green was laid out in 1717 according to William Penn's directive of 1683. The Green was the site of early markets and fairs, and in the adjacent jailyard prisoners were sometimes placed in stocks or pillory, or whipped while hugging "Red Hannah", the whipping post.



THE GREEN (Southwest Side)

In 1776, a portrait of George III was burned in a public ceremony. The ghost of Samuel Chew once haunted the Green, but his spirit was laid to rest in a second public burial.

6. Kent County Court House, southeast corner of State Street and the Green, was built in 1875 on the site of an earlier court house "burnt to get ye Nails" in 1691. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was the site of inns and taverns.

Proceed east on the south side of the Green.

7. Sykes Building, 45 the Green, was built in 1812 by James Sykes, a well-known physician, and is now occupied by The Delaware Development Department, which will furnish agency brochures about historic buildings and the attractions of the state. (M-F, 8:00 - 4:30). Former occupants include Chief Justice Thomas Clayton, Congressman Nathaniel Smithers, and Judge George P. Fisher, who was asked by President Lincoln to present a plan of compensated emancipation to the members of the legislature.

Between the Sykes House and the Court House is a small frame building (7a) (private) # 45 believed to have been Dover's first post office in the 1790's.



THE OLD STATE HOUSE 1787

8. The Old State House has figured in many exciting events in Delaware's history. This site was once occupied by the Kent County Courthouse. With some of the materials from that structure, it was rebuilt in the period from 1787 to 1791, serving the state and county jointly until 1875, when a new courthouse was built. It contains fine portraits of Delaware statesmen and a bell, originally hung there by Thomas Rodney in 1774 to take into consideration the acts of the British Parliament in shutting up the Port of Boston.

Proceed west on north side of The Green.

9. The Ridgely House (private) with plaque was built in 1728 by Thomas Parke, a prosperous merchant, and was purchased in 1767 by Charles Ridgely. The home contains interesting furniture, china, and portraits.

Cross S. State Street and continue west along the north side of the Green.



THE RIDGELY HOUSE 1728

10. At the corner of Bank Lane and The Green is a brick house (private) built about 1740, whose owners included Caesar Rodney and Dr. James Tilton, a surgeon in the Revolution and the War of 1812. On the opposite corner sits the old Farmers Bank building, (10a) where the first bank in the county opened in 1807. The building with small white pillars (10b) on the south side of the Green, now owned by the Dover Century Club, once housed the first Baptist Church in Dover. It was built in 1850.

Proceed west on Bank Lane to Governor's Avenue, then north on Governor's Avenue to the center of the block, right hand side of street.

11. The Delaware State Museum occupies four buildings: an old Presbyterian Church, its Sunday School building, the old Dover Gas Works, and a new building which houses the Eldridge Johnson collection of early talking machines. Among the extensive exhibits are a log cabin, tools of craftsmen, period furniture, costumes, the uniforms of Apollo astronauts manufactured in Dover, and art objects. In the cemetery is the grave of Colonel John Haslet, who lost his life in the Battle of Princeton in 1777. Hours: Tues. through Sat., 11-5; Sunday, 2-5; closed Monday.

12. The Governor's House, King Street. To reach King Street, formerly King's Highway, go north on Governors Avenue to Reed Street. Turn right at Firehouse, and go west (3) blocks. Reed Street will deadend into King Street. Turn left. The Governors House, on the right, is a beautiful eighteenth-century house with spacious grounds. It was formerly known as "Woodburn." (Open Thurs, 2-4). It was a station on the underground railroad and the setting for a Patty Cannon raid in George Alfred Townsend's novel, *The Entailed Hat*.



THE GOVERNOR'S HOUSE 1790

13. State Street. Turn left at the end of King Street onto Division Street and proceed to the red light at the intersection with State Street. Turn right and proceed north on State Street. Pass Wesley College, founded in 1873, and some lovely Victorian homes. If you continue over Silver Lake and merge with Routh 13 north, you will soon pass the grounds and buildings of Delaware State College, founded in 1891. To see other historic places in Kent County, take the tour of southern and northern Kent County.



## A TOUR OF NORTHERN KENT COUNTY

- Length: 50 miles  
 Time: 2 or 3 hours, depending on stops  
 Materials: A good map, such as the official Delaware Road Map, which may be secured from the Highway Department or The Delaware Development Office on the Green.  
 Objective: To enjoy some of the pleasant countryside of northern Kent County and to visit such historic buildings as the Octagonal Schoolhouse and the Allee House.

All houses are private unless otherwise noted.

Leave Dover Green via William Penn Street and Court Street and proceed east on South Little Creek Road (county road) for Little Creek. Turn left on Del. Route 9 at the deadend.

1. Little Creek is a picturesque village strung out along a main street and is popular with fishermen. The most interesting house is the Old Stone Tavern (private) built prior to the Revolution. Little Creek has two good restaurants.
2. Octagonal Schoolhouse. Continue north on Del. Route 9 through pleasant farm country. Note the many potato farms. On the right is the Octagonal Schoolhouse (well - marked) built in 1836. It is kept open to the public by the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, and is fitted out like a nineteenth-century schoolroom. (Open 1-4, Sat. & Sun.) Continue on down Del. Route 9 to Leipsic.



THE OCTAGONAL SCHOOLHOUSE 1836



3. Leipsic. Proceed off Del. Route 9 into Leipsic, most of whose houses face Little Duck Creek. Its charm and maritime activities make it popular with artists. On the corner is a general store, which sometimes sells muskrat and coon meat. It has one popular seafood restaurant. Leipsic was once called Fast Landing because it was the first firm land encountered on Duck Creek, but in 1814 the name was changed to Leipsic (pronounced lipsic) after the German town of Leipzig, noted for its fur trade.

4. Bombay Hook Migratory Bird Refuge and Woodland Beach.

Continue on through the village and turn left to Del. Route 9. Proceed northward across Little Duck Creek through potato farm country along the edge of Bombay Hook Bird Refuge. Turn right on Del. Route 6 if you wish to visit Woodland Beach, a bay resort popular with fishermen.

5. The Allee House. North off Del. Route 9 (well-marked) is Dutch Neck Road leading to the Allee House (2-5 Sat. & Sun.), a handsome example of an early, pre-revolutionary brick farmhouse, important enough to be included in the National Register of Historic Places.



THE ALLEE HOUSE 1753

6. Smyrna. To reach Smyrna, turn left on Del. Route 6. Smyrna, originally called Duck Creek Crossroads, was founded in 1768 at the intersection of the King's Highway and the Maryland Road. The inhabitants prospered from the raising of grain and peaches and from shipping at Smyrna Landing.

If you wish to take a walking tour to see more closely some of the interesting buildings, park your car at the Municipal Parking Lot behind the Smyrna School District Administration Building on South Main Street. Immediately across from the exit to the parking lot is a large brick building, the Lockwood House, known also as "The Barracks." Tradition holds that this home was used as a military barracks during the War of 1812. The first federal draft in the State of Delaware, during the Civil War, was conducted from the steps of this building by Colonel Edwin Wilmer on August 12, 1863.

Turn right to the Four Corners and then right again to #21 East Commerce Street — the Enoch Spruance House. The oldest part of the structure was erected in 1791. In 1812, it housed Smyrna's first bank.

Directly across the street at #20 is the Abraham Pierce House, built about 1750. The most outstanding feature of this dwelling is its 15-pane window.



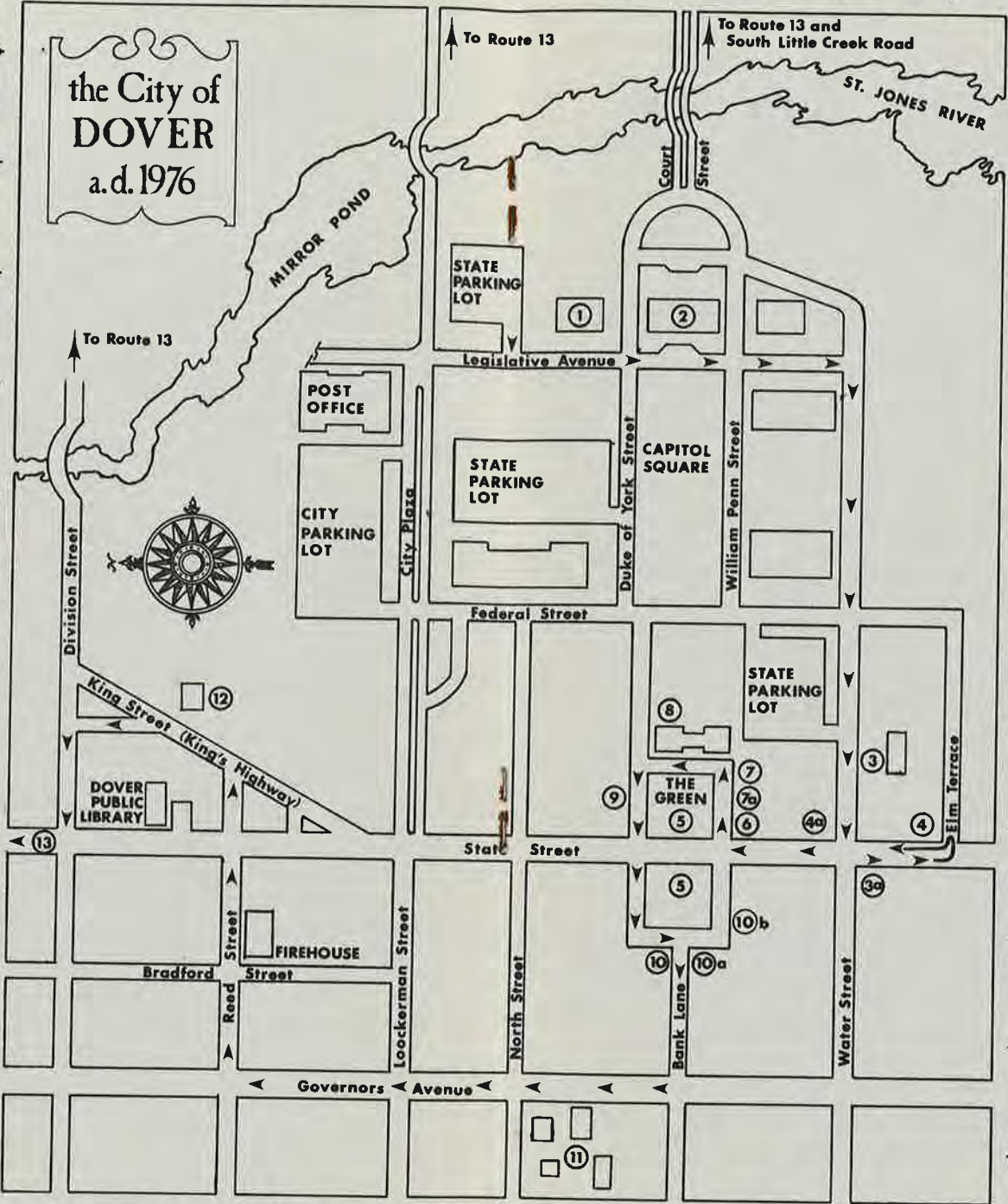
THE ABRAHAM PIERCE HOUSE 1750

Return to the Four Corners. Enroute you will pass an alleyway, the last vestige of the King's Highway. At the Victorian building at the corner, turn right onto North Main Street. The entire east side of North Main Street, with the exception of The Wicket (a gift shop) and the barber shop, consists of buildings erected between 1770 and 1840.

Continue north on Main Street to 116 and 120 to the Cummins and Presley Spruance houses, erected by prominent citizens.

Turn left on Mt. Vernon Street and you will pass Asbury United Methodist Church. On the opposite corner, painted lemon yellow and topped by a mansard roof, is the home where Colonel Allen McLane lived after the Revolution.

the City of  
**DOVER**  
a.d. 1976



Just off Mt. Vernon Street on North Main Street is St. Peter's Episcopal Church with its dignified, simple interior and beautiful Angel window.



SAINT PETER'S CHURCH, Episcopal 1827

7. Kenton. Proceed west on Del. Route 6 to Kent Route 300. Turn left towards Kenton. Most of the farmers in the vicinity raise potatoes, corn, and soybeans. On the right is Brynberg Cemetery, which was once the site also of the eighteenth-century Bryn Zion Baptist Church.



BRYNBERG CEMETERY

Kenton is an old town, known at the time of the American Revolution as Groggtown because of its tavern. Later it was called Lewis Crossroads. In the center of the town at the junction of 300 and Del. Route 42 is the Prettyman House (Private), built in 1775. A "General" Taylor, in reality a private soldier who once owned the house, thought so much of his horse that he buried its skull in his bedroom under the floor boards. Continue on Kent Route 300 if you wish to inspect Aspendale (private), built in 1773 and noted because its owner melted his lead roof for bullets during the Revolution. A few miles beyond, just off

Kent Route 300 before the Maryland boundary is reached, is the site of Cheney Clow's fort. He was a Tory who planned to invade Dover in 1778 with some of his associates. No visible remnant of the fort remains today.



ASPENDALE 1771

8. Hartly. Continue a short distance out of Kenton on Del. Route 42 and take Del. Route 11 toward Hartly through unspoiled farming country. Hartly is a small town with an attractive bank and school, once well-known in 1926 and 1927 because of the activities of a firebug. Turn left in Hartly and return to Dover on Kent Route 44, which merges with Kent Route 8. Enroute you will pass by some well-kept farms cultivated by the Amish, distinctive because of their dress and their horse-drawn vehicles.



AMISH CHILDREN PASSING A FARM





## A TOUR OF SOUTHERN KENT COUNTY

Length: 50 miles

Time: 2 to 4 hours, depending on stops

Objective: To appreciate the County's historic heritage and to visit historic sites. All houses are private unless otherwise noted.

Take US Route 113 south of Dover past Dover Air Force Base, which has 5,000 enlisted men and officers and is the base for shipment of supplies to Europe.

1. Dickinson Mansion and Kitts Hummock. Turn off US 113 to Del. Route 9 if you wish to visit the Dickinson Mansion, built by 1740, the home of John Dickinson, Penman of the Revolution. (Free; open 10-5 Tues. through Sat. and 1 to 5 on Sun.). If you continue down Del. Route 9 to Delaware Bay, you will come to Kitts Hummock, a small summer resort on the Bay, supposedly named after Captain Kidd the pirate. Return to US 113 and continue south.



THE DICKINSON MANSION 1740

2. Bowers Beach. Where US 113 merges with US 113A is Little Heaven, once a site of housing for Irish laborers. At one time a nearby site for black laborers was called Little Hell. Just past this intersection turn left on Kent 18 if you wish to visit North Bowers Beach, a picturesque fishing community which has a good restaurant. On the right hand side of US 113, just across from Kent Route 18, is the Jehu Reed House (private), built by a wealthy farmer who grew peaches, silk cocoons, and grain.

3. Barratt's Chapel. Proceed south on US 113 to Barratt's Chapel, the "Cradle of Methodism". Here, Francis Asbury and Bishop Coke met to discuss the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. (Open: Weekdays and Sunday afternoon).



BARRATT'S CHAPEL 1780

4. Frederica. Take Del. Route 12 off US 113 to visit Frederica. In this interesting community, once called Johnny Cake's Landing, are some delightful houses built with the profits from shipbuilding, commerce, and farming. The Lower House, built before the Revolution of Flemish bonded brick, is especially notable.
5. Island Field Site and South Bowers. Return to US 113 from Frederica and continue south. At the intersection of US 113 and Kent Route 120 (well-marked) proceed to the Island Field Site to see an interesting museum of excavation among the graves of prehistoric inhabitants. (Open: Weekends, 1-5 in April, May, Sept., and daily 1-5 in June, July, and August). Continue on Kent Route 120 eastward to visit South Bowers, which is separated from North Bowers by the Murderkill River.



ISLAND FIELD EXCAVATION

6. Milford. Return to US 113 and proceed south to the first cut off to Milford, an interesting old town founded in 1787 on the banks of the Mispillion River. Turn left at the intersection of Del. Route 14 and proceed east on North West Front Street to Silver Hill Mansion – Parson Thorne House – (well-marked; open by appointment). Built by one of the founders of Milford and later occupied by John M. Clayton, Secretary of State under President Taylor, it is the property of the Milford Historical Society.



THE PARSON THORNE MANSION 1730

Continue down North West Front Street to West Street. Turn left to North West Third Street and then right until it intersects with Church Street. At the intersection is Christ Church, begun in 1791, but not completed until 1836.

Proceed south on Church Street to North West Front Street and turn left. On the corner of North Street is The Towers, built in 1793 and later remodeled during the Victorian period. Here in an attic lived John Lofland, "The Milford Bard," a prolific writer of stories and essays in the mid-nineteenth century.



THE TOWERS 1793

At 112 North West Street is the Marshall House. Formed of two separate buildings, one built in 1787, the other in 1811, they were joined together by Dr. G. G. Marshall in 1879.

Turn right on North Walnut (two blocks) to reach 200 S. Walnut, a large yellow mansion surrounded by much shrubbery and an iron fence. Built in 1763, this home was occupied at a later time by Governors Daniel Rogers and Peter F. Causey.

Return to North West Front Street and proceed west along Del. Route 14.

7. Harrington. If you continue down Del. Route 14 you pass Houston, a pleasant residential community, and reach Harrington, which, at its beginning, was important as the junction of the Delaware Railroad and the Harrington and Breakwater Railroad. The town is filled with pleasant homes and small industries. During State-Fair Week at the end of July, the town and nearby Delaware Fairgrounds will be bustling with activity. Turn right at US Route 13 and proceed north to Del. Route 12. Turn left into Felton. (See 9.)
8. Mordington and Killen Pond State Park. If you do not wish to continue on Del. Route 14 into Harrington, turn right just outside of Milford onto Kent Route 388 for Mordington (well-marked). This route leads past McCauley's Pond and Mordington, a fine Georgian house built by the Douglass Family at the time of the American Revolution. Legend says the ghost of a slave girl who committed suicide after mistreatment haunts the house.



MORDINGTON 1785

9. Felton, Woodside, and Viola. Continue on Kent Route 388 until it intersects with Del. Route 12; turn left and cross US 113 to reach Felton, a town named in honor of the President of the Delaware Railroad and now a pleasant residential community. Turn right on Church Street in Felton to Kent Route 240 and proceed through two pleasant small towns, Viola and Woodside, the first named in honor of a postmaster's daughter and the other named because of some wood piled alongside a depot.



A WOODPILE AT WOODSIDE

Nearby is Petersburg Wildlife Refuge. In Woodside, turn right on Del. Route 30 to reach US 13A. Follow US 13A northward to reach Camden.



MAIN STREET, CAMDEN

10. Camden. Proceed through the intersection of Camden-Wyoming Avenue and Main Street (red light) on US 13A. To inspect the Historic District of Camden, now on the Historic Register, park in the parking lot of Whatcoat Church, United Methodist, half a block from the red light. Walk south on Main Street to inspect externally such impressive residences as Spruce Acres, a small estate set back in

trees; the Mifflin House, #12, built in 1796 by Daniel Mifflin, Sr.; the Cooper House, #15, built in 1782, and reputedly a station on the underground railroad; and the Jabez Jenkins House, next door at #11. At the intersection turn right on Camden-Wyoming Avenue to see more impressive brick houses.



THE MIFFLIN HOUSE 1796

The Friends Meeting House was built in 1806. The last house in the Historic District on Camden-Wyoming Avenue is the Kimmey-Ridgely House, #215.



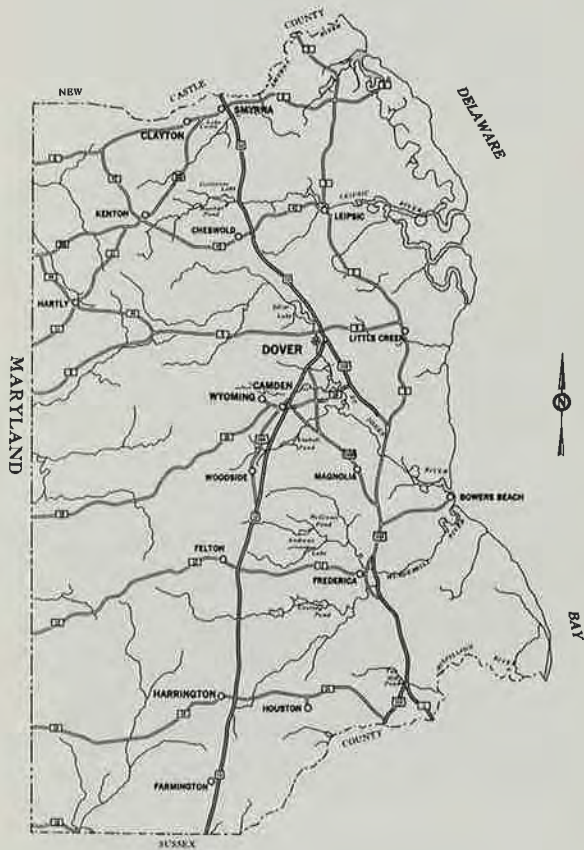
FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE 1806

Return to your car and follow US 13A back to Dover.



*A History of Kent County Delaware*, published by the Kent County Bicentennial Committee, is now on sale at the Kent County Courthouse on the Dover Green and at various places of business throughout the county.

# KENT COUNTY DELAWARE



*Bicentennial  
Celebration*



*Kent County  
Delaware*



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PROJECT COORDINATOR— *Beverly Steele*  
Kent County Bicentennial Committee  
Heritage Committee Chairman

TECHNICAL CONSULTANTS— *Jayes Denney*  
*Frank Davis*

DESIGN, LAYOUT, and EDITING— *Ali Stark*

TEXT by *Harold B. Hancock*

PHOTOGRAPHY by *Dee Dee Armistead*

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