

Book 1 in this series: **“Delaware Before the Railroads”**

Book 3 in this series: **“Delaware from Freeways to e-Ways”**

***Coming soon!***

“Delaware from Railways to Freeways”

Published by Dave Tabler

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Advance Reader Copy — not for sale

## Preface

The advent of the railroad ushered in a prosperous era for the First State. Delaware boasts a strategic location along the easily navigable Delaware Bay. This unique geographical advantage facilitates efficient cargo distribution to a myriad of ports throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Thriving industries established themselves along these bustling waterways, from which they could ship goods to nearby urban centers such as Philadelphia.

The early 19th century arrival of the New Castle & Frenchtown Railroad prompted a significant shift from sea to land transport. Two decades later, the Delaware Railroad dropped like a plumb line through the center of the state, creating ‘whistle stop’ towns such as Clayton, Wyoming, and Felton. The rail network hastened the transport of farm produce and ripened fruit, enabling farmers and orchardists to access major markets before spoilage. Large scale production blossomed, fostering a sense of regional pride and satisfaction.

Sailing ships built in Delaware continued to navigate ocean waters, but locally constructed steam-powered vessels gained importance, and finally dominance. The demand for the latter spurred the growth of iron shipyards in Wilmington. The town of Bethel, meanwhile, developed the specialized schooner Chesapeake Ram.

DuPont emerged during the era’s early industrial expansion, establishing an explosive-manufacturing facility in the Brandywine Valley. The U.S. Government sought it out for gunpowder supplies in both the Mexican and Civil Wars.

The War Between the States precipitously disrupted all this progress. Delaware’s border state status in the conflict led to a bitter split, pitting brother against brother. Despite its allegiance to the Union, Delaware supplied between 3,000 to 4,000 soldiers in support of the Confederacy.

“Delaware from Railways to Freeways” encapsulates all this expansive history and more. Ultimately, the volume’s narrative arc culminates in the advent of the automobile.

The book’s structure presents a thorough and captivating pictorial history. Guided by meticulously selected photographs, vibrant illustrations, and informative captions, readers have the option to explore further through extended accounts found in the “Notes on Photographs” section. Sidebars add a touch of local flavor, highlighting unique 19th-century Delaware traditions.

Both casual readers and aficionados will value the exploration through Delaware’s vibrant history. Noteworthy personalities, along with their challenges and triumphs, are duly acknowledged. Their endeavors, amplified by the state’s inherent geographical advantages, played a significant role in sculpting Delaware’s distinct identity.

My hope, dear reader, is that the formative years of Delaware remain relevant and celebrated.







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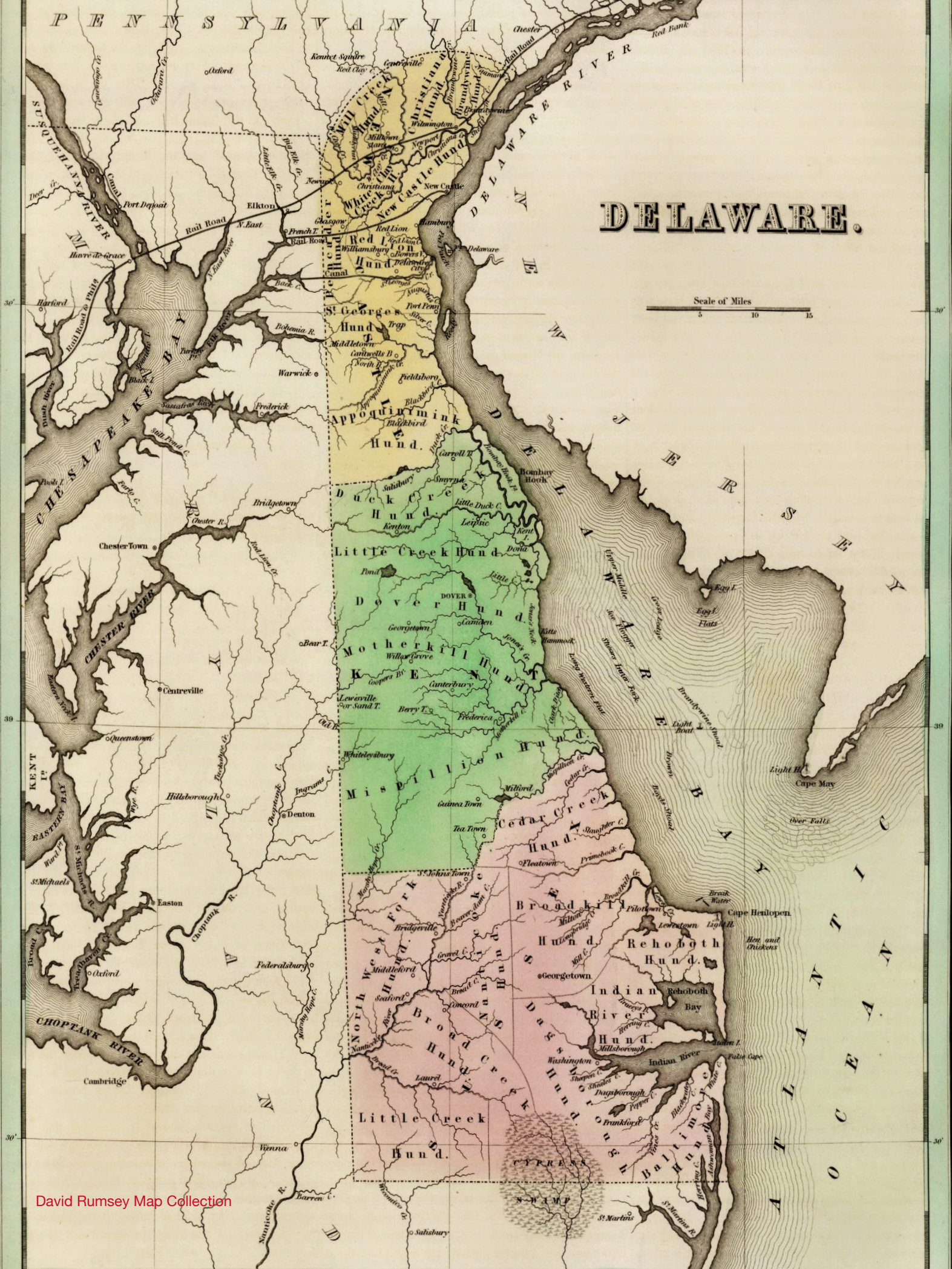
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# DELAWARE.

Scale of Miles  
5 10 15









## Return Day

Sussex County takes unique pride in a distinctive political tradition known as Return Day. The custom occurs on the Thursday following an election. Festivities include parades, celebrations, and other forms of revelry. However, Return Day was not always a lighthearted affair. In fact, the practice originated as a response to the political tensions and violence erupting during the 1787 election. The Tories and the Whigs aimed to prevent such conflicts in the future. (cont. on pg. 77)





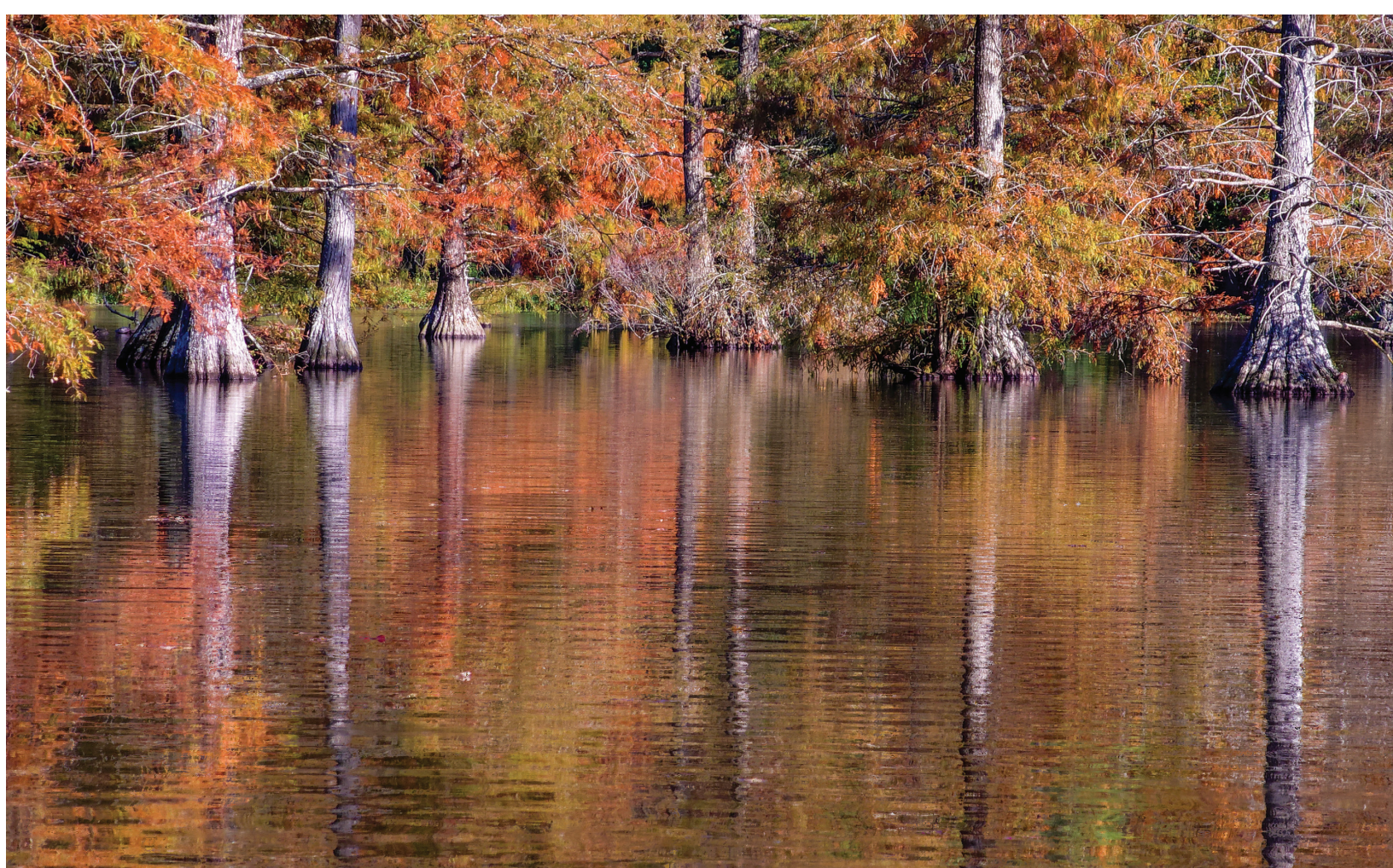


Envision the emblematic Conestoga wagon, synonymous with early American history. One might associate these wagons with the Oregon Trail, which is often characterized by a parade of 'prairie schooners' journeying across the Kansas territory. In actuality, the wagon derives its name from Pennsylvania's Conestoga River. It was there that German immigrants encountered the Native American tribe known as the Conestoga or Susquehannock.

The widespread use of the wagon, primarily designed for freight transportation rather than pioneer conveyance, extended into Delaware. Its contoured design promoted cargo stabilization, preventing items from sliding off when navigating mountain inclines (or, considering Delaware's topography, gentle slopes!). During their zenith, more Conestogas passed in and out of New Castle daily than through any other landing sites in Delaware. (cont. on pg. 78)

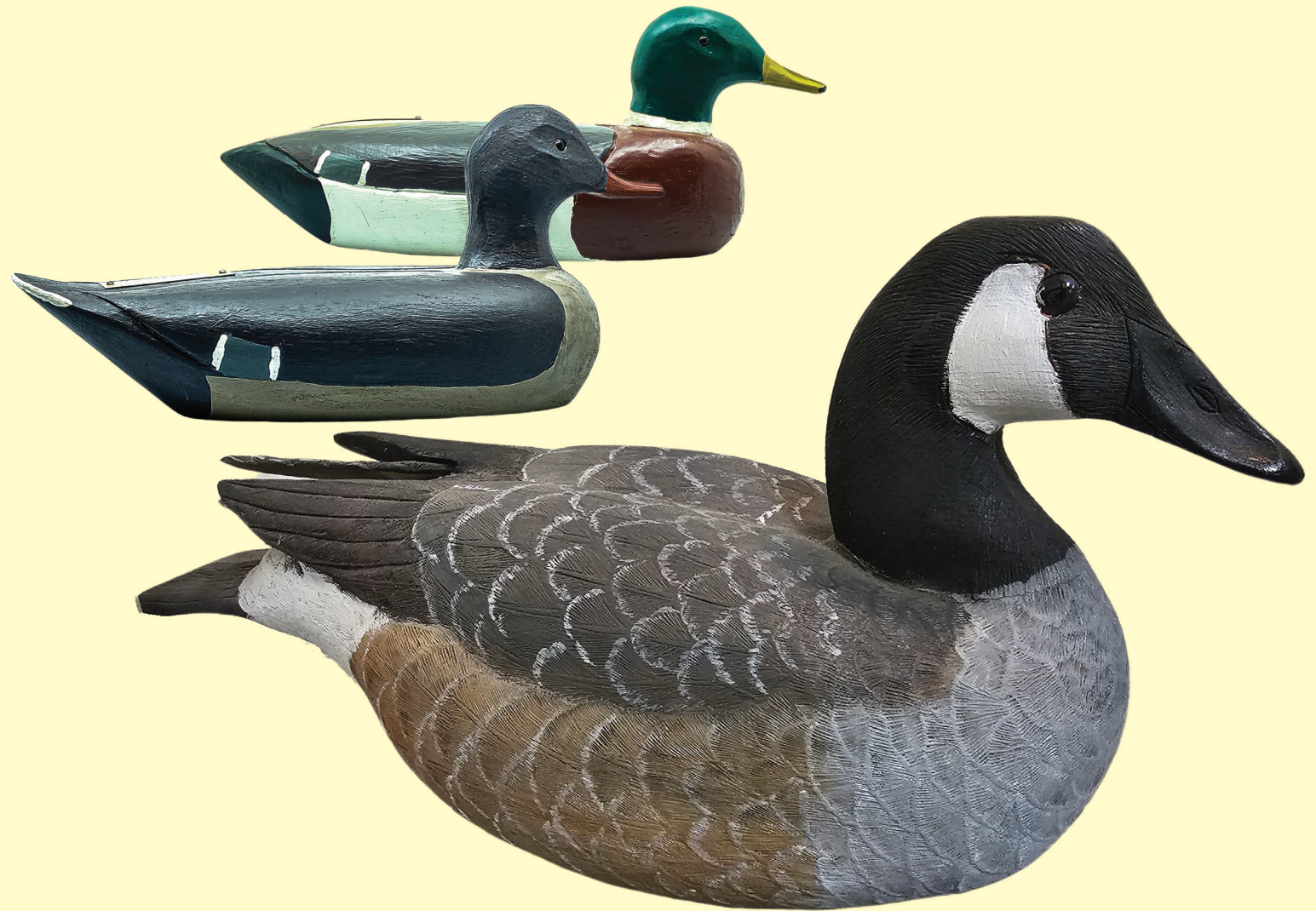


In the 19th century, bald cypress trees were a valuable resource for residents of Sussex County, providing insect and water-resistant lumber that was well-suited for outdoor use. This versatile wood was utilized for a variety of purposes, ranging from water pipes to coffins. The trees' large, straight trunks yielded easily split wood which was ideal for creating roofing shingles and comparable siding. If you come across an old house in Delaware with a silver-gray bald cypress roof covered in moss, like the one depicted to the right, it's a telltale sign the structure was constructed during the 18th or 19th century. Below, a stand of bald cypress in Trap Pond State Park. (cont. on pg. 77)





## Decoy Ducks



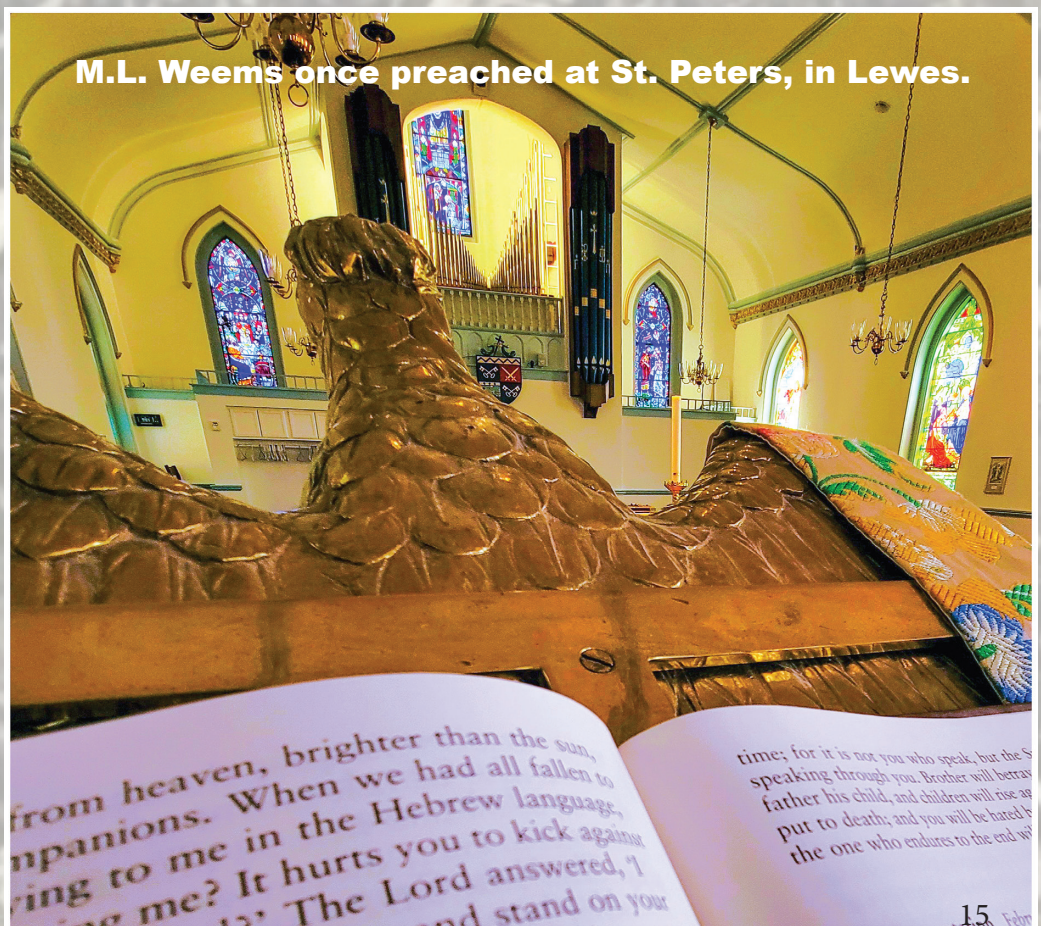
Collectors worldwide seek intricately carved decoy ducks depicting renowned Delaware birds such as the canvasback, brant, and mallard. The decoy duck industry emerged during the early 19th century in conjunction with the advent of steamboats and punt guns (massive shotguns often measuring between 8-10 feet long with up to 2-inch bores). (cont. on pg. 78)





The tale of George Washington chopping down a cherry tree and confessing to the act first appeared in M.L. Weems' well-known biography. Delaware remembers Weems as a colorful character with a penchant for storytelling. (cont. on pg. 78)

**M.L. Weems once preached at St. Peters, in Lewes.**



from heaven, brighter than the sun,  
companions. When we had all fallen to  
ring to me in the Hebrew language,  
ing me? It hurts you to kick against  
12' The Lord answered, 'I  
and stand on your

times; for it is not you who speak, but the  
speaking through you. Brother will betray  
father his child, and children will rise and  
put to death; and you will be hated by  
the one who endures to the end will