

Contents

1900-1925 Concrete Ambitions

Pages 8-25 Reedbirds, Seaford Library, Wilmington Trust Company, Smyrna Opera House, Delaware Idioms, First Skyscraper, Delaware Art Museum, DuPont Highway, Holly Industry, World War I Munitions Support, Suffragettes, Delaware State Fair, Mulholland Spoons, First Study Abroad, Broiler Industry, Baseball Hall of Fame, Citizen's Police Reserves, Rum Runners

1926-1950 War & Resilience

Pages 26-43 Sweet Potatoes, Indian River Bay, Oystermen, Civilian Conservation Corps, American Liberty League, Rural Electrification, 1938 Hurricane, Federal Art Project, Fenwick Island Lighthouse, First Public Airport, Fort Miles, Dover Army Airbase, Medal of Honor Recipients, Lonely Hearts Murders, Nylon in Seaford, Pauline Young Library, Polio Epidemic

1951-1975 Corporate Legacies & Societal Shifts

Pages 44-59 Delaware Memorial Bridge, University of DE Desegregated, Amish Mennonites & Dunkards, First Television Station, Mancus Club, Union Strikes, Space Suits, Beach Culture, Delaware State Parks, Civil Rights Act, First Community College, Vocational Schools, Bird Migration, Delaware Wild Lands, Coastal Zone Act, Women's Rights Commission

1976-2000 Toward Digital Horizons

Pages 60-75 Arts Council, Gore-Tex Invented, Low-number License Plates, 20th Century Public Figures, Nanticoke Powwows, Delaware State Housing Authority, Punkin Chunkin, Credit Card Industry, Estuary Protection, Hispanic Immigration, Tourism Industry, Wilmington Religious Leaders, Digital Medical Technology, Biotechnology Institute, Delaware State University Icon, University of Delaware Internet Research

Custom & Folklore Sidebars

Page 11	Smyrna Opera House
Page 14	Delaware Art Museum
Page 16	From the Land of Holly
Page 23	Baseball Hall of Famer
Page 29	Civilian Conservation Corps
Page 43	Polio Epidemic
Page 46	Amish, Mennonites and Dunkards
Page 56	Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge
Page 62	Low-number License Plates
Page 72	Digital Medical Technology

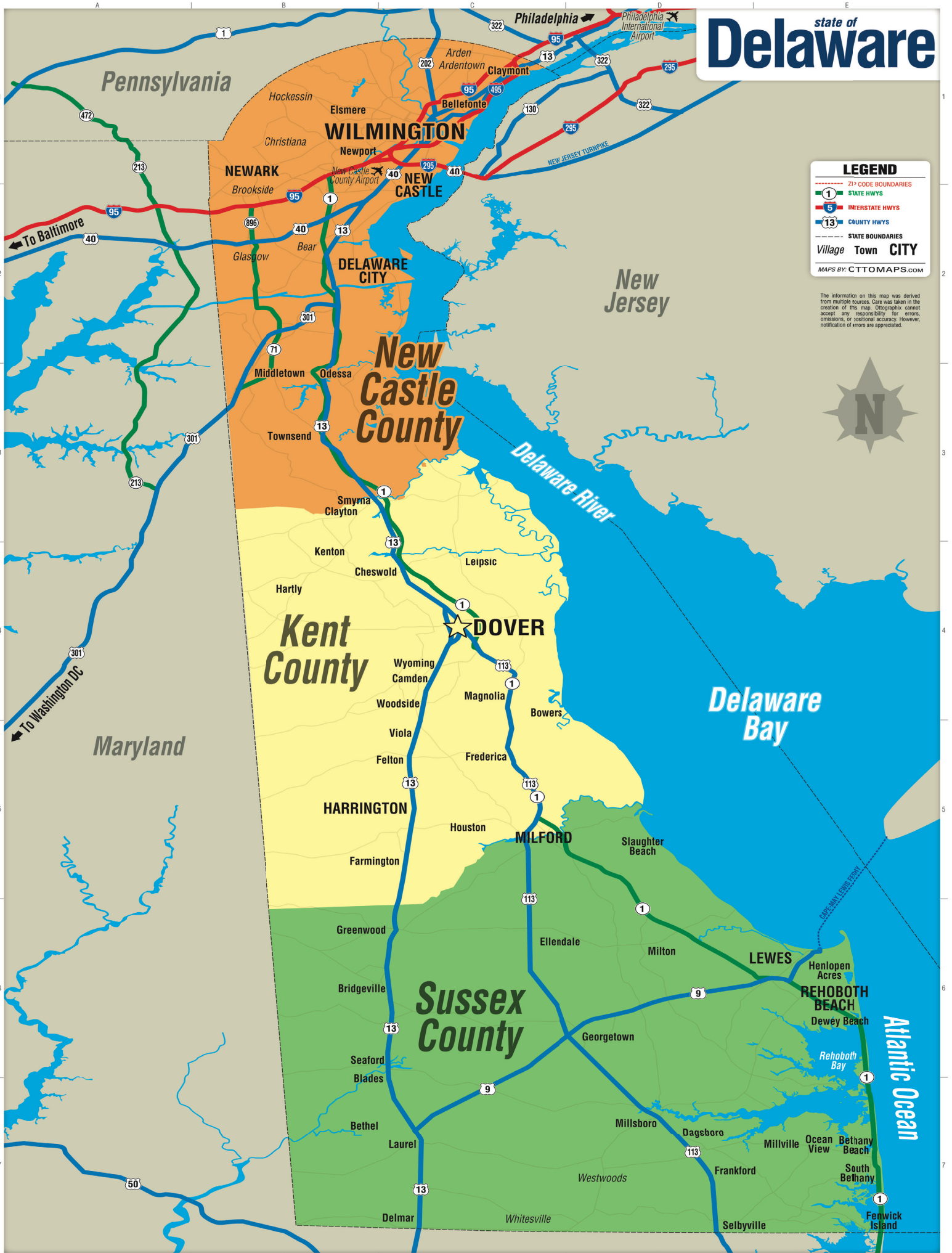
Delaware

state of

LEGEND

- 21 CODE BOUNDARIES
 - ① STATE HWYS
 - ⑤ INTERSTATE HWYS
 - ⑬ COUNTY HWYS
 - STATE BOUNDARIES
 - Village Town CITY
- MAPS BY: CTTOMAPS.COM

The information on this map was derived from multiple sources. Care was taken in the creation of this map. CTTOMAPS cannot accept any responsibility for errors, omissions, or positional accuracy. However, notification of errors are appreciated.



The reedbird has been viewed through three lenses across Delaware history. Initially prized as game, the bird was later deemed a pest, and finally recognized as a fragile species warranting legal protection. The story of *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (also known as the bobolink or ricebird) highlights how widely perspectives on nature can vary.

The *Delaware Advertiser and Farmer's Journal* mentions as early as 1824 a "fine string of reed-birds" gracing the market stalls. Reedbirds were both available and a delicacy, their flesh extremely juicy and tender. "What a luscious broil, or palatable pie they make," expounded the *Middletown Register* of August 1868. The birds' popularity led to soaring prices in city restaurants, making reedbirds an eagerly awaited and devoured epicurean event.

Yet, by the turn of the century, a shift occurred. An October 1, 1900, column in the *News Journal* noted that in New York, the reedbird was falling out of favor. "The up-to-date girl has finished with the toothsome reedbird," sniffed *Portia's New York Letter*, "and asks now for a stuffed partridge." Reedbirds were old news, at least for the urban elite.

In contrast, Delawareans remained steadfast in their love for the "reedies."
(cont. on pg. 77)



Public libraries were scarce in Delaware at the dawn of the twentieth century, particularly in farming towns. Twelve women with a vision, inspired by the saying “mighty oaks from little acorns grow,” banded together in 1902 to form the Acorn Club of Seaford. Their determination culminated in the founding of the Seaford Free Public Library. The Acorn Club’s early meetings took place in rented rooms, with the ladies donating chairs, books, cups, and saucers. Each charter member contributed an inaugural book to the library. A core of donors supplied 100 paper-bound volumes, launching the simple reading room. By year’s end, they had expanded the collection to 285 volumes.

Members regularly donated books and operated a traveling library, alternating duties among themselves. They continued this practice until hiring a part-time librarian, Miss Elizabeth Prettyman, for \$1 a week. These humble beginnings paved the way for the circle’s expanding ambitions and steadily improving facilities. By January 1904, the ladies had upgraded their quarters to nearby Bridgeville’s Cottingham Block. Enhancements included carpeting, a piano, and an antique desk. The group made space accessible to “the country people” and to “men friends” once a month, guided by Mrs. Madison Willin’s leadership. The club also initiated free reading sessions for the public every Friday evening. The ladies commenced distributing magazines, books, and newspapers at Seaford’s railroad station and by February 1908 they started producing plays and entertainments to raise funds. Members generated “nearly one hundred dollars last evening—February 18—from a play entitled ‘The Old Maids’ Club,” according to the *Morning News*. (cont. on pg. 77)



More businesses are incorporated in Delaware than people reside in the state. The one-million-plus registered corporations include two-thirds of America's Fortune 500 companies.

The First State's emergence as the premier spot for incorporation is marked by three key factors. The Chancery Court plays a vital role in drawing companies to Delaware. In addition, Delaware's extensive body of corporate case law is reassuring to conglomerates. Finally, incorporators can depend upon sophisticated banking support from specialized entities, such as the Wilmington Trust.

This financial institution came to play a central role from the start. Like so many aspects of Delaware corporate history, the trail leads back to the du Pont family. Three relatives — Coleman, Pierre, and Alfred (pictured above, left to right) — stunned their complacent family at the turn of the twentieth century. The DuPont Company's outstanding success caught the eyes of potential corporate raiders. The trio, in response, quickly acquired control to allay any possibility of a hostile takeover. (cont. on pg. 78)



Smyrna Opera House

The Smyrna Opera House, constructed in 1878, played a remarkable role in the life of native residents. The center functioned for over a half-century both as an entertainment venue and vibrant Smyrna neighborhood hub.

Local arts patrons enjoyed the melodies of an in-house orchestra by 1888, while community activities continued to proliferate. In 1900, the auditorium hosted presidential aspirant William Jennings Bryan.

Smyrna women Wilhelmina Wells, Helen Lewis, and Bertha Price competed in a fashion design contest in that same year. The storied walls of the Smyrna Opera House lent a dramatic backdrop to the competition for the coveted Demorest Gold Medal.

The arena saw a wealth of theatrical productions, such as the Dover Singing Society's 1903 comic opera "Reuben Scraggs." Two years and hundreds of events later, the Lyric Glee Club put on a benefit for the Teacher's Institute. (cont. on pg. 78)



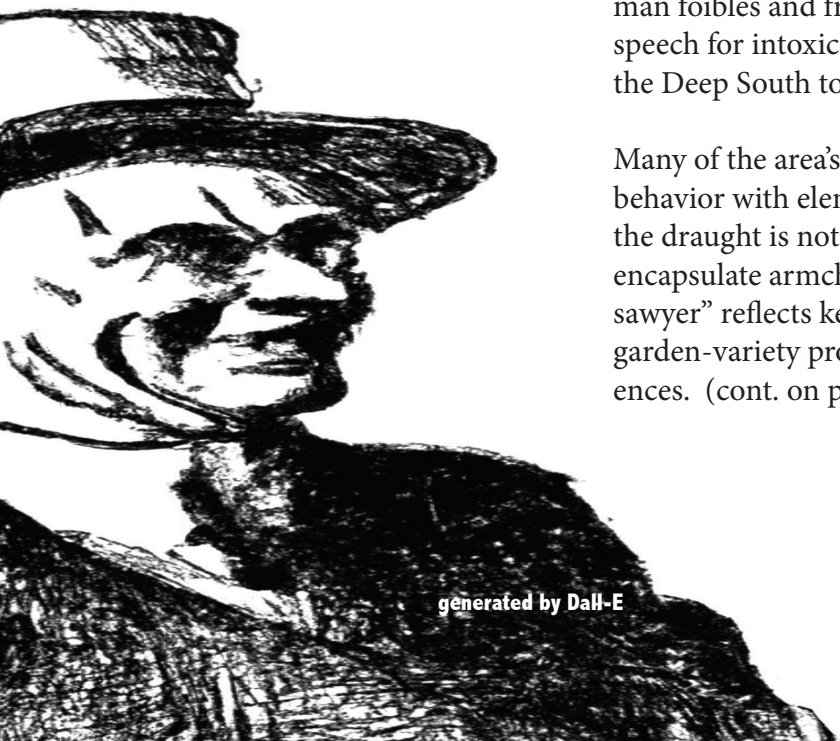


Delaware speech has long harbored rich traditional idioms. Plenty of the state's colloquialisms have evolved in parallel with general American usage. The term "gumshoe," for example, originally referred to rubber galoshes. The meaning shifted over time due to the footwear's sound-muffling qualities, coming to signify a surreptitious detective.

Many customary First State expressions highlight a keen sense of observation and a deep connection with nature. Vivid descriptions like "pert as a cricket," "tadpole" (for small children), and "happy as a June bug" reveal a popular fondness for natural imagery.

Conversely, local folkloric clichés just as eagerly embrace human foibles and frailties. One of the more colorful figures of speech for intoxication, "high as a Georgia pine," borrows from the Deep South to aptly describe a state of lofty inebriation.

Many of the area's rural maxims weave astute insights of human behavior with elements of the natural world. Adages such as "If the draught is not right in your stove, the heat ebbs and flows," encapsulate armchair psychology. "He's independent as a wood sawyer" reflects keen observation of human character. These garden-variety proverbs came to be rooted in everyday experiences. (cont. on pg. 79)





The American architectural landscape underwent a notable metamorphosis in 1885 with the completion of the Home Insurance Building in Chicago. The city's ten-story edifice established a paradigm for what was considered a skyscraper.



Wilmington soon witnessed the construction of two likewise memorable establishments, the Equitable and Ford Buildings. Completed in 1892 and 1900 respectively, these adjacent nine-story towers did not achieve the height of the Chicago landmark, and so never earned recognition as bona fide skyscrapers. Nevertheless, they loomed over Market Street's skyline.

Wilmington's skyline would be further modified with the 1908 addition of the DuPont Building. Rising to a height of 12 stories, the structure occupied the entire block of Market between 10th and 11th Streets.

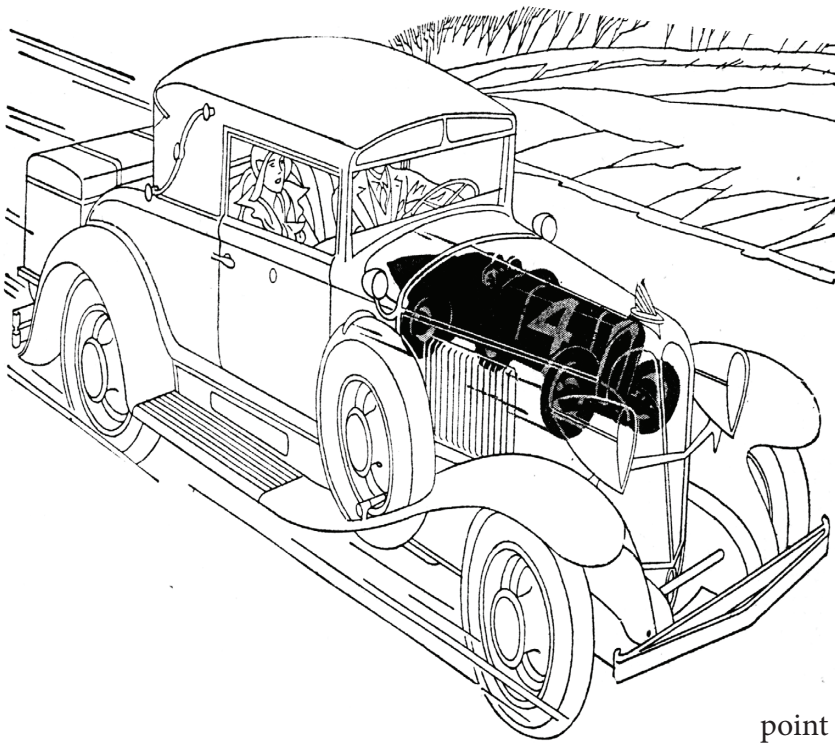
The du Pont family designed the building's height to compete with the Windy City standard as Delaware's first 'official' skyscraper. The monolith, from a challenging stance directly across the street, engulfed in shadow the shorter Equitable and Ford Buildings.

The DuPont Building set an early benchmark, but the structure's height held only a short-time record. (cont. on pg. 79)



The anticipation among Wilmington's circle of artists, collectors, and philanthropists mounted over several months. The November 1912 event initially aimed to celebrate the life's work of the recently deceased "father of illustration," Howard Pyle. Yet the exhibition sponsor, the Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, harbored a secondary ambition. They sought to amass, under a single roof, artworks by Pyle's first-ranked protégés. This distinctive assembly, for the first time, repatriated Delaware's finest art talent from private nationwide collections. An array of permanent loan selections subsequently spearheaded the Delaware Art Museum's establishment. (cont. on pg. 80)





T. Coleman du Pont was among the first turn-of-the-century Delawareans to anticipate the future of highway traffic. This corporate executive had repeatedly dealt with substandard roads during his approximately 100-mile trip between Wilmington and an estate in Cambridge, Maryland. "With the advent of the automobile," du Pont wrote in a letter to the State Highway Department, "I realized the wonderful development of which our little State is susceptible and that the first essential for this development is a well laid out system of highways traversing all sections of the State." He went on to point out the obvious —the backbone of such a system must be a main North and South highway, modeled after the great boulevards of Europe. And so, in

February 1911, du Pont announced his willingness to advance Delaware \$1,000,000 to construct just such a road. Du Pont's generosity spurred the General Assembly, which hastened to pass the groundbreaking Boulevard Corporation Act enabling a private corporation to build a public thoroughfare. According to the plan, once a section at least ten miles long was finished, that portion would be transferred to the state, free of charge. (cont. on pg. 80)

