

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ELEMENT**

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Brief History of Sussex County

Native Americans first inhabited Delaware sometime around 14,000 years ago. They lived and hunted along the many tributaries and bays in the county. In 1631, the Dutch established a trading post in present-day Lewes.

For most of the eighteenth century, Sussex County remained heavily wooded. In 1728, Reverend William Beckett reported that there were 1,750 inhabitants in the county. Delaware became the first state to ratify the U. S. Constitution in 1787. In 1791, the Sussex County legislature voted to move the county seat from Lewes to Georgetown.

The Delaware Railroad reached Seaford in 1856, and Delmar by 1859. The Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia Railroad ran from Harrington to Milford, to Georgetown in 1869. A third line, the Junction and Breakwater Railroad, was constructed between 1859 and 1868 to Lewes; a spur line eventually connected Rehoboth in 1878. These railroads stimulated changes in agriculture and industry, and the growth of new towns.

Soon improved transportation made Sussex County's coastal towns more accessible to the people from Philadelphia, Baltimore and elsewhere. From the 1890's through the Golden Age of the 1920's, Americans discovered the beach. From that time on, steamboats regularly carried travelers to Sussex County's shores.

Sussex County has always been the most important agricultural region in Delaware. In 1880, corn was the dominant cash crop. In 1900, Sussex was the leading strawberry producer in the nation. By the early 1960s, orchard crops had been supplanted by more lucrative agricultural products. At the start of the twentieth century, the lumber industry was a significant source of income for Sussex County. The people of Sussex also worked the surrounding waters. The County's Menhaden fishing was one of the biggest fishing industries in the U.S. During its peak in the 1950s, Lewes was the epicenter of that industry.

In 1923, Mrs. Wilmer Steele, a farmer in Ocean View, raised broiling, frying, and roasting chickens for sale in urban markets. Originating with Mrs. Steele's success, Sussex County is now the leading broiler producer in the United States.

In 1939, DuPont acquired land near Seaford for a nylon production plant, which went into production in 1939. Bulked continuous filament nylon, a standard in the carpet industry, was developed at the Seaford plant in 1958.

Throughout the County's development, Sussex has maintained its rural character and small town charm. The rich history of Sussex can still be seen through the area's streetscapes, waterfront, and farms.

Why Preserve History?

Historic buildings and landscapes in Sussex County are visible reminders of the area’s heritage. In towns, in the countryside and in maritime settings, historic places illustrate the lives of people who lived and worked here before us. The Delaware State Historic Preservation Office 2001 Plan entitled “The Future of Our Past” states that:

“Our pride in where we live rests in part on our understanding and appreciation of the past inherent in the surviving historic buildings, structures, landscapes, streetscapes and archaeological sites that surround us.”

Besides providing perspective about days gone by, historic buildings and artifacts have contemporary economic value. Historic sites draw tourists, create jobs and generate commercial revenues. Campaigns to revitalize older downtowns usually depend heavily on re-establishing the traditional, small town, “Main Street” settings that many people find more appealing than highway commercial strips and shopping malls.



Historic preservation emphasizes reuse, quality of life, and sustainable economic growth. Historic preservation also contributes to all five principles underlying the State’s Livable Delaware initiative, including the following:

- Guide growth to areas that are most prepared to accept it in terms of infrastructure and thoughtful planning.
- Preserve farmland and open space.
- Promote infill and redevelopment.
- Facilitate attractive, affordable housing.
- Protect our quality of life while slowing sprawl.

Delaware Department of State Division of Historic and Cultural Affairs

Historic preservation is a deliberate effort to maintain, restore and protect buildings and surroundings that tell the story of the past. Successful historic preservation takes foresight, organization and adequate funding. Government, non-profit advocates, local historical societies, and private citizens all play a role in preserving and promoting Delaware’s heritage, including the unique character of Sussex County.

The Division of Historic and Cultural Affairs is the State's historic preservation agency. The Division's main responsibilities:

- Operating the eight State-owned museums in Delaware and over 90 other historic state-owned properties, including two historic homes that serve as conference centers.
- Conserving the State's collection of historic documents, fine arts, and other memorabilia.
- Preparing and participating in exhibits, special events and educational programs.
- Identifying, studying and preserving historic buildings, districts, and landscapes, including archaeological sites and their contents.
- Providing information on tax credits and other funding incentives available for rehabilitating officially designated historic buildings.
- Working with others to administer state and federal regulation that protect officially designated historic places.

The Director of the Division is Delaware's State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), designated in accordance with federal regulations. The SHPO, with advice from the State Review Board and State staff, is responsible for:

- Evaluating the historic significance of properties nominated for the National Register of Historic Places (the list of officially designated historic locations).
- Deciding who will receive federal Historic Preservation Fund monies awarded to Delaware.
- Administering local compliance with federal regulations that require an assessment of potential effects whenever federal money is to be spent on a project located near a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Administering Delaware's Tax Credit Program, under which people can earn tax credits for preserving buildings listed on the National Register. The amount of the tax credit is equal to a percentage of the rehabilitation cost. Federal tax credits worth 20% of total cost are available provided the building is an income producing structure. State income tax credits equal 20% for income producing buildings, 30% for owner-occupied homes, and an additional 10% for low-income housing.



Zwaanendael Museum in Lewes - one of eight museums owned and operated by the State of Delaware

Preservation Delaware, Inc.

Preservation Delaware, Inc. is a State-wide, non-profit organization devoted to preserving Delaware's historic and architecturally significant buildings. Their motto is "*Protecting the Irreplaceable in the First State*". This group works with State agencies, local governments, educational institutions and others to:

- Provide technical support, advocacy, and mediation for local efforts to find alternatives to demolition.
- Acquire easements on buildings of interest.
- Provide education and training on historic preservation matters.
- Administer their Delaware Preservation Fund, which offers: a) loans to people rehabilitating structures who do not qualify for conventional loans; or b) loans with lower interest rates to encourage rehabilitation. Loan proceeds are reinvested as part of a revolving loan fund.
- Acquire endangered historic buildings using monies from their Delaware Preservation Fund. Preservation Delaware, Inc. sells these buildings (and buildings acquired by donation) to people who will preserve them. Sale proceeds help replenish the Fund.

The National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official inventory of America's historic sites. It is administered by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service. The National Register features over 80,000 sites. In addition to federal properties with historic importance, the National Register includes properties across the country that were nominated by governments, organizations, and individuals because of the importance to the nation, a state, or a community. The inventory includes buildings, districts, sites, and structures significant to history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. Most properties on the National Register are at least 50 years old.

The benefits of listing on the National Register:

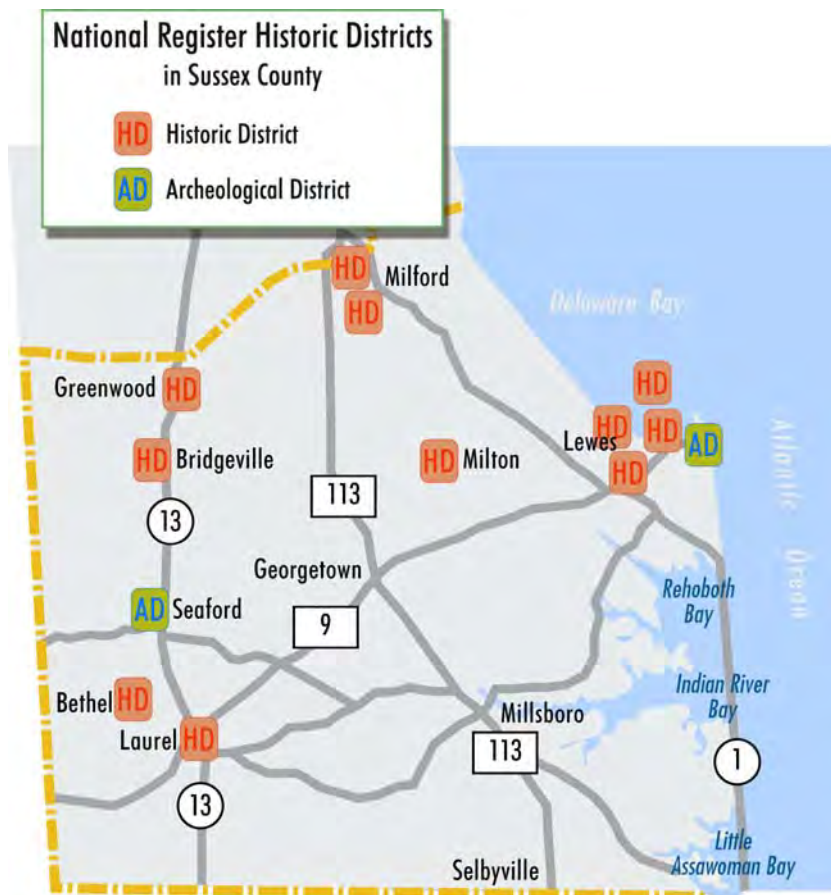
- Official recognition that the property is significant.
- Qualification for certain federal funds when these very limited funds are available.
- Eligibility for state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits.

- Mandatory consideration of potential impacts when projects using federal funds are proposed nearby.

Local Historic Districts

Groups of closely located properties are often listed together on the National Register as historic districts. These districts should not be confused with the historic districts that local municipalities establish and regulate through their zoning ordinances or through separate special purpose ordinances.

National Register sites may or may not be part of locally-created historic districts. National Register sites outside of local historic districts are not subject to any of the restrictions on renovation and demolition that local municipalities often attach to properties within their local historic districts. National Register status by itself does not legally prevent property owners from doing whatever they want to their properties, including demolition.



Several Sussex County municipalities established historic districts to regulate renovation and demolition of structures within these districts. These include Bethel, Bridgeville, Georgetown, Laurel, Lewes, Milford and Milton. Millsboro is currently assessing its resources for a possible ordinance in the future.

**Table 19
Sussex County Sites on the
National Register of Historic Places**

Resource Name	Address	City	Year Listed
Abbott's Mill	SW of Milford	Milford	1972
Abbott's Mill (Boundary increase)	Rd. 620 W of DE 36	Milford	1979
Adams, Joseph T., House	12 E Pine St.	Georgetown	1998
All Saints' Episcopal Church	18 Olive Ave., Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred	Rehoboth Beach	1991
Avery's Rest Site	Address Restricted	Rehoboth Beach	1978
Baltimore Mills Historic Archaeological Site	Address Restricted	Omar	1997
Barnes Woods Archaeological District	Address Restricted	Seaford	1996
Bethel Historic District	0.4 mi. W of Laurel	Bethel	1975
Blackwater Presbyterian Church	W of Clarksville on DE 54	Clarksville	1976
Brick Hotel	The Circle	Georgetown	1979
Bridgeville Historic District	Roughly bounded by Market, Main and Edgewood Sts., School House Ln., Maple Alley and the Penn Central RR tracks	Bridgeville	1994
Bridgeville Public Library	210 Market St.	Bridgeville	1990
Building at 200-202A High St.	200-202A High St.	Seaford	1987
Building at 218 High Street	218 High Street	Seaford	1987
Building at High and Cannon Sts.	SE corner of High and Cannon Sts.	Seaford	1987
Burton Hardware Store	High St. and Spring Alley	Seaford	1978
Cannon's Ferry	Across the Nanticoke River	Woodland	1973
Cape Henlopen Archaeological District	Address Restricted	Lewes	1978
Carey's Camp Meeting Ground	W of Millsboro off DE 24	Millsboro	1973
Carlisle House	205 S. Front St.	Milford	1982
Chandler, Capt. Ebe, House	Main and Reed Sts.	Frankford	1979

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Resource Name	Address	City	Year Listed
Chipman Potato House	Jct. Of DE 465 and DE 465A	Laurel	1990
Chipman's Mill	E of Laurel on SR 465	Laurel	1978
Coleman House	422 Kings Hwy.	Lewes	1977
Collins Potato House	Jct. of DE 509 and DE 510A	Laurel	1990
Cool Spring Presbyterian Church	W of Lewes on SR 247	Lewes	1982
Cox, J. W., Dry Goods Store	214 High Street	Seaford	1987
Dagworthy, Gen. John, Mansion Site	Address Restricted	Dagsboro	1979
Davis, Robert, Farmhouse	S of Rt. 24	Millsboro	1979
Dawson Dr., House	200 SE Front Street	Milford	1983
De Vries Palisade	Address Restricted	Lewes	1972
Deep Creek Furnace Site	Address Restricted	Middleford	1977
Delaware Boundary Markers	State boundary lines between DE-MD / DE-PA	Not Applicable	1975
Delaware Breakwater and Lewes Harbor	E of Lewes at Cape Henlopen	Lewes	1976
Dickerson Potato House	Jct. of DE 494 and DE 498	Delmar	1990
Dodd Homestead	W of Rehoboth Beach on DE 1	Rehoboth Beach	1982
Draper House	200 Lakeview Avenue	Milford	1982
Draper-Adkins House	204 Federal Street	Milton	1973
Egglinton Hall	700 SE 2 nd Street	Milford	1983
Ellendale State Forest Picnic Facility	US 113, ½ mi. S of DE 16, Georgetown Hundred	Ellendale	1991
Eratt House	W of Bridgeville on DE 572	Bridgeville	1983
Faucett, Peter S., House	W. Laurel Street	Georgetown	1985
Fenwick Island Lighthouse Station	Off DE 54	Fenwick Island	1979
First Broiler House	University of Delaware Experimental Station	Georgetown	1974
First National Bank of Seaford	118 Pine Street	Seaford	1987
Fisher Homestead	W of Lewes	Lewes	1980
Fisher's Paradise	624 Pilottown Road	Lewes	1972
Fort Miles Historic District	At the confluence of the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay	Lewes	2004

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Georgetown Coal Gasification Plant	N. Railroad Avenue	Georgetown	1985
Grier House	301 Lakeview Avenue	Milford	1983
Gyles, Stella Pepper, House	SW of Georgetown	Georgetown	1979
Hall, Col. David, House	107 King's Highway	Lewes	1976
Harmon School	S of jct. of Rt. 24 and CR 297	Millsboro	1979
Harmon, Isaac, Farmhouse	CR 312A	Millsboro	1979
Harmony Church	Rt. 24, E of CR 313	Millsboro	1979
Hazzard House	327 Union Street	Milton	1973
Hearn and Rawlins Mill	N of Seaford on U.S. 13A	Seaford	1978
Hearn Potato House	.6 mi. N of jct. of DE 74 and DE 62	Laurel	1990
Hells Neck	Address Restricted	Lewes	1976
Highball Signal	City park, near Penn-Central RR	Delmar	1973
Hitch, E.L., Potato House	Jct. of DE 460 and DE 489	Laurel	1990
Hitchens, Ames, Chicken Farm	N of Rt. 24	Millsboro	1979
Hopkins' Covered Bridge Farm	N side Rd. 262, E of jct. with Rd. 286, Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred	Lewes	1991
Hopkins House	NW of Oyster Rocks Road	Milton	1979
Indian Mission Church	Jct. of Rt. 5 and CR 48	Millsboro	1979
Indian Mission School	Rt. 24 between CR 312A and 313A	Millsboro	1979
Indian River Archaeological Complex	Address Restricted	Millsboro	1978
Indian River Life Saving Service Station	N of Bethany Beach on DE 14	Bethany Beach	1976
Johnson School	Rt. 24 between CR 309 and 310	Millsboro	1979
Judge's House and Law Office	100 and 104 W. Market Street	Georgetown	1979
Laurel Historic District	West St. To Rossakatum Creek to 10 th St.	Laurel	1988
Lawrence	N of Seaford on U.S. 13A	Seaford	1978
Lewes Historic District	Shipcarpenter, Front, Savannah, 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th Streets	Lewes	1977
Lewes Historic District (Boundary Increase)	Roughly bounded by Front St., Savannah Rd., McFee St. and the Penn-Central RR tracks, Lewes and Rehoboth Hundred	Lewes	1992

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Resource Name	Address	City	Year Listed
Lewes Presbyterian Church	100 Kings Highway	Lewes	1977
Lightship WLV 539	Lewes-Rehoboth Canal between Shipcarpenter and Mulberry Streets	Lewes	1989
Marsh, Peter, House	10 Dodd's Lane	Rehoboth Beach	1977
Maston House	3 mi. N of Seaford on Seaford-Atlanta Road	Seaford	1975
Mauil House	542 Pilottown Road	Lewes	1970
Mauil, Thomas, House (Boundary Increase)	542 Pilottown Road	Lewes	1978
Melson House	N of Atlanta on SR 30	Atlanta	1978
Messick, Dr. John W., House and Office	144 E. Market Street	Georgetown	1987
Milford Railroad Station	DE 36	Milford	1983
Milford Shipyard Area Historic District	Roughly bounded by Mispillion River, Franklin, Front and Marshall Streets	Milford	1983
Milton Historic District	DE 5	Milton	1982
Mispillion Lighthouse and Beacon Tower	NE end of CR 203	Milford	1987
Mispillion Site	Address Restricted	Milford	1976
Moore Potato House	SE of jct. of DE 72 and DE 463	Laurel	1990
National Harbor of Refuge and Delaware Breakwater Harbor Historic District	Mouth of Delaware Bay at Cape Henlopen	Lewes	1989
Norwood House	SW of Lewes on DE 9	Lewes	1982
Old Bridgeville Fire House	102 William Street	Bridgeville	1984
Old Christ Church	SE of Laurel at jct. of SR 465 and 465A	Laurel	1972
Old Sussex County Courthouse	S. Bedford Street	Georgetown	1971
Pagan Creek Dike	Pagan Creek near New Road	Lewes	1973
Pepper, Carlton, David, Farm	S of Georgetown on SR 469	Georgetown	1979
Perry-Shockley House	219 Washington Street	Millsboro	1985
Phillips Potato House	SW of jct. of DE 492 and DE 492A	Laurel	1990
Pine Grove Furnace Site	Address Restricted	Concord	1978
Ponder, Gov. James, House	416 Federal Street	Milton	1973
Poplar Thicket	Address Restricted	Bethany Beach	1978

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Resource Name	Address	City	Year Listed
Portsville Lighthouse	N side of CR 493	Portsville	1987
Prince George's Chapel	E of Dagsboro on DE 26	Dagsboro	1971
Ralph Potato House	SE of jct. of DE 493 and DE 494	Laurel	1990
Redden Forest Lodge, Forester's House and Stable	Redden State Forest	Georgetown	1980
Richards House - Linden Hall	E of Bridgeville on US 13	Bridgeville	1982
Richards Historic District	County Rd. 34	Greenwood	1983
Richards Mansion	N. Bedford St. and The Circle	Georgetown	1979
Rider Potato House	SE of jct. of DE 506 and DE 505	Laurel	1990
Robinson, Jesse, House	High Street	Seaford	1982
Roosevelt Inlet Shipwreck	Address Restricted	Lewes	2006
Ross Point School	CR 448 near jct. with Rt. 62	Laurel	2001
Ross, Edgar and Rachel, House	413 High Street	Seaford	1997
Ross, Gov. William H., House	N of Seaford on Market Street	Seaford	1977
Russell, William, House	410 Pilot Town Road	Lewes	1977
Scott's Store	NW of Bridgeville on DE 404	Bridgeville	1983
Seaford Station Complex	Nanticoke River at Delaware Railroad Bridge	Seaford	1978
Short Homestead	W of Georgetown at DE 526 and DE 529	Georgetown	1982
Sipple, Thomas, House	N. Bedford and New Streets	Georgetown	1985
Slaughter Creek Complex	Address Restricted	Milton	1976
South Milford Historic District	Roughly bounded by Mispillion River, Maple Ave., Church and Washington Sts.	Milford	1983
Spring Banke	NE of Clarksville on DE 26 and Irons Ln.	Clarksville	1976
Spring Garden	NE of Laurel on Delaware Avenue	Laurel	1982
St. George's Chapel	9 mi. SW of Lewes on DE 5	Lewes	1973
St. John's Methodist Church	Springfield Crossroads, jct. of SR 30 and Co. Rd. 47	Georgetown	1990
St. Luke's Protestant Episcopal Church	Front Street	Seaford	1977
St. Paul's Episcopal Church	E. Pine Street	Georgetown	1979
Stanley Potato House	N of jct. of DE 68 and DE 451	Laurel	1990

Resource Name	Address	City	Year Listed
Sudler House	N. Main Street	Bridgeville	1974
Sussex County Courthouse and The Circle	The Circle	Georgetown	1973
Sussex National Bank of Seaford	130 High Street	Seaford	1987
Teddy’s Tavern	E side of Du Pont Blvd., 0.6 mi. N of jct. with DE 16, Cedar Creek Hundred	Ellendale	1991
Thompson’s Island Site (Boundary Increase)	Address Restricted	Rehoboth Beach	1997
Thompson’s Loss and Gain Site	Address Restricted	Rehoboth Beach	1978
Thompson’s Island Site	Address Restricted	Rehoboth Beach	1978
Townsend Site	Address Restricted	Lewes	1978
Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church	NW of Bridgeville on DE 31	Bridgeville	1978
Warren’s Mill	NW of Millsboro on DE 326	Millsboro	1978
Warrington Site	Address Restricted	Rehoboth Beach	1977
West Potato House	US 13 N of jct. with DE 454A	Delmar	1990
White House	White House Farm	Millsboro	1978
White, Benjamin, House	Jct. Of DE 258 and DE 264	Milton	1979
Wilgus Site	Address Restricted	Bethany Beach	1978
Wolfe’s Neck Site	Address Restricted	Lewes	1978
Wright Potato House	SW of jct. of DE 24 and DE 510	Laurel	1990
Wright, Gardiner, Mansion	228 S. Front Street	Georgetown	1979
Wright, Warren T., Farmhouse Site	Address Restricted	Millsboro	1979

Historic Preservation Strategies

- Continue partnering with the State, Preservation Delaware, Inc., local municipalities and private property owners to:
 - Encourage more nominations from Sussex County to the National Register of Historic Places.
 - Share more information about the benefits of historic preservation with local officials and the general public.

- Promote economically viable alternatives to demolition, such as more adaptive reuse, which involves the renovation and reuse of older structures for uses other than their original use.
- Prepare a model ordinance regulating demolition of historic structures and some forms of large scale exterior renovations to historic structures. Send Sussex County staff to the local towns to promote and encourage adoption of these types of regulations. Towns can adopt these types of regulations by applying them to a district or adopting them as an overlay ordinance that applies to buildings meeting certain specific criteria regardless of their location within the town. In presentations to the towns, the County should emphasize regulations on demolition first and promote additional historic preservation regulations as a second priority.
- The County's first historic preservation priority should be to adopt an ordinance regulating demolition of historic structures. This could be part of a more general demolition permit process that applies to all structures and is specified in the County's Zoning Ordinance. Among other things, a demolition permit process would help ensure that buildings to be razed are disconnected from all utilities and that the debris is disposed of in accordance with State and federal regulations. It would also give the County the opportunity to review proposed demolitions for historic significance.
- Integrate historic preservation criteria into the County's development review process. Require information about a site's historic status to be included as part of the application. Establish historic character as one of the criteria used in variance and conditional use decisions made by the County.