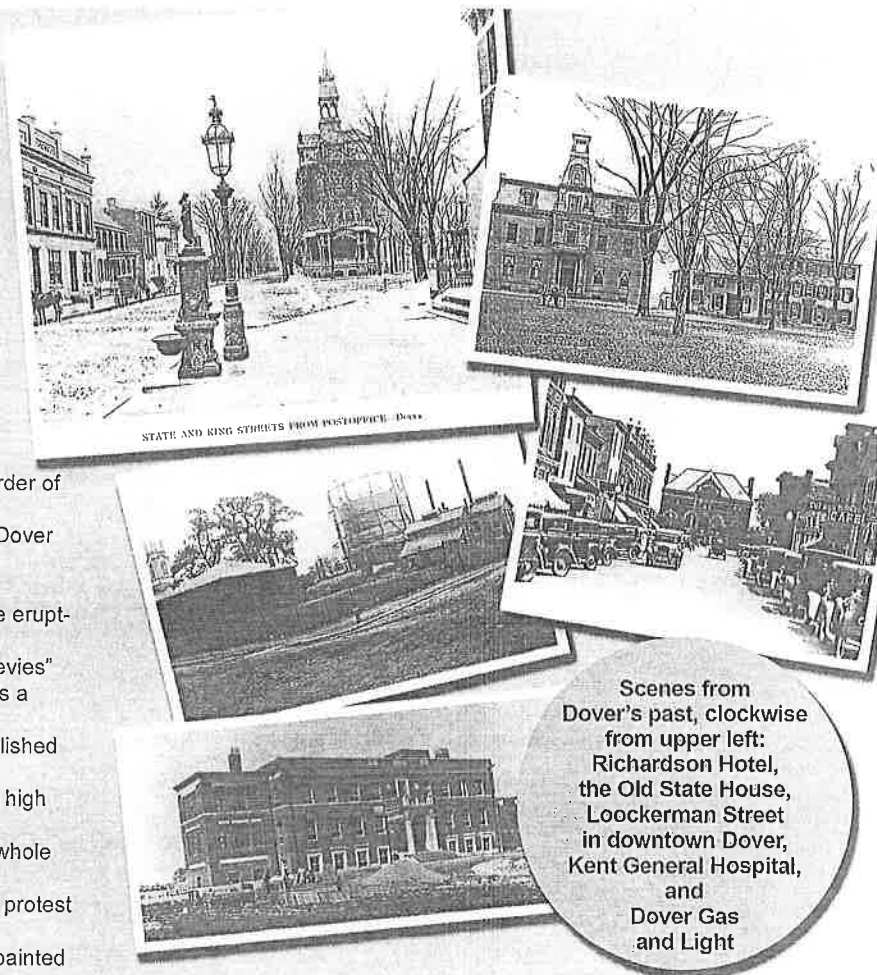


# Dover through the Centuries



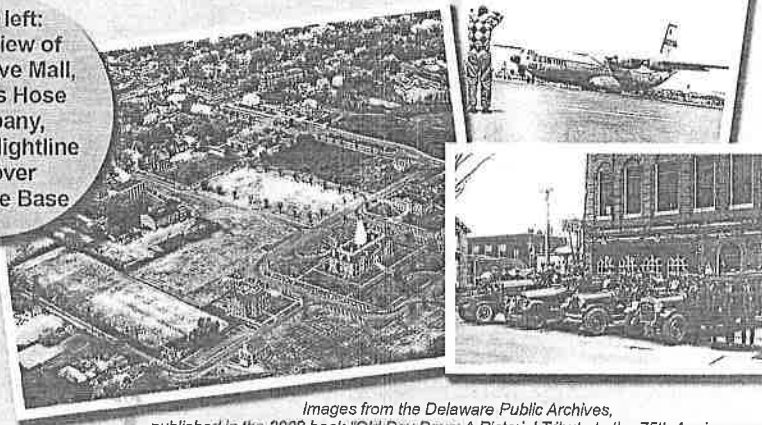
Scenes from  
Dover's past, clockwise  
from upper left:  
Richardson Hotel,  
the Old State House,  
Lookerkman Street  
in downtown Dover,  
Kent General Hospital,  
and  
Dover Gas  
and Light

- 1717 – The Green is laid out in accordance with William Penn's order of 1683
- 1722 – The First Courthouse was sold and a third Courthouse at Dover was erected on the site of the present Old State House
- 1728 – Caesar Rodney was born
- 1732 – Border disputed between William Penn and Lord Baltimore erupted in violence
- 1736 – Levy Court was established for "raising county rates and levies"
- 1740 – Samuel Dickinson, the father of John Dickinson, purchases a large estate in Kent County
- 1742 – A census taken privately by an Episcopal clergyman established a population of "1,005 families"
- 1755 – At 27 years of age, Caesar Rodney was commissioned as high sheriff in Kent County
- 1760 – Census establishes that "at a moderate computation" the whole contained about "7,000 souls"
- 1765 – Caesar Rodney with Thomas McKean with to New York to protest the Stamp Act
- 1776 – King George III's portrait at The King George Tavern was painted over with a portrait of George Washington
- 1777 – The capital of the new Delaware State was moved to Dover
- 1778 – Wesley Methodist Church of Dover was organized
- 1802 – The first newspaper printed in Dover, called The Federal Ark, was published
- 1812 – Nearly 500 men "capable of shouldering a musket" gathered on The Green to ward off the British ready to attack Lewes, Delaware
- 1829 – Dover becomes incorporated
- 1838 – Dover's first monthly magazine is started by William Huffington, the Delaware Register and Farmer's Magazine
- 1849 – Harriet Tubman escapes from her plantation near Cambridge, MD and stayed with Quaker Henry Hall at his home near Camden, establishing the first stop on her soon to be formed Underground Railroad
- 1856 – Train tracks from the New Castle and Frenchtown line finally reach Dover
- 1865 – The First National Bank of Dover opens its doors, providing a vital stimulus for the Town's growth
- 1875 – Ground breaks on Dover's first major Post Office
- 1882 – Hotel Richardson opens in downtown Dover
- 1885 – A charter for the Dover Library was issued and stocks sold with voting privileges to fund it
- 1887 – The St. Jones was dredged to allow larger boats and steam vessels to navigate the waterway
- 1891 – The Fifty-Eighth General Assembly of Delaware establishes the framework for the start of Delaware State University
- 1899 – Dover is lighted by electricity for the first time when 31 arc lights flash on downtown
- 1900 – City population is counted at 3,329. Farmers Bank opens a new

- building on Lookerkman Street. The structure is expanded in 1954 and is now the main Dover branch at Citizens Bank
- 1912 – The Dover Century Club creates the first playground for children in Dover
- 1913 – Robbins Hose Company buys its first engine. It is the first self-propelled fire-fighting apparatus south of Newark
- Jan 27, 1916 – Boyd's Theater, an early movie house on Lookerkman Street, is destroyed by fire
- 1918 – The courthouse on The Green undergoes a major renovation, including removal of the fourth floor
- 1921- Robbins Hose Company builds a new firehouse at its present location.
- 1922 – The Elizabeth W. Murphey School is established to be "a fostering home where children who would otherwise be neglected may have a happy childhood"
- 1923 – Warren G. Harding visits Dover, Smyrna, and Milford
- 1925 – The Apple Grove School opens as the first private Amish school in the United States
- 1927 – Kent General Hospital opens with 40 beds
- 1929 – Dover becomes a city with a mayor-city manager form of government. J. Wallace Woodford is elected the city's first mayor
- 1930's – The DuPont Highway reaches Dover and commerce flows
- 1932- The Old Dover post office at the end of Lookerkman Street is moved 90 degrees to face the new plaza and is converted to be used as city hall

# Dover through the Centuries

From left:  
aerial view of  
Legislative Mall,  
Robbins Hose  
Company,  
and the flightline  
at Dover  
Air Force Base



Images from the Delaware Public Archives,  
published in the 2008 book "Old Day Days: A Pictorial Tribute to the 75th Anniversary"  
presented by the Delaware State News and Kent County Tourism.

**1933** - The First Old Dover Days is celebrated. The new Legislative Hall opens in Dover. Spence's Bazaar conducts its first auction, mainly horses and cattle

**1937** - A bridge is constructed across the St. Jones River, extending Lookerman street to the DuPont Highway. International Latex opens in Dover, the first major factory in the state capital not connected to agriculture

**1943** - The Dover Air Force Base is fully operational

**1950** - Delaware State Museum of Arts and History opens in Dover.

**1953** - The Delaware State News published the first daily newspaper in Dover making the capital the final one of the then 48 states to have a daily newspaper.

**1954** - Dover Air Force Base is activated by the Military Air Transport Service. Hurricane Hazel destroys the old Dover Armory

**1958** - The new Col John Haslet Armory is dedicated

**1961** - The new dover Public Library is dedicated on a portion of the Old Richardson lot along State Street

**1963** - General Foods opens its Dover plant

**1964** - Lyndon B. Johnson visits Dover during the 1964 presidential campaign

**1965** - Woodburn on Kings Highway becomes the official residence of the governor of Delaware

**1968** - The Blue Hen Mall, Dover's first true shopping mall opens along US 113

**1969** - Dover Downs International Speedway holds its first NASCAR race  
**1975** - Richardson and Robbins cannery goes out of business after 120 years of continuous operation

**1976** - The Old State House on The Green is taken down to its four exterior walls and completely refurbished for the nation's bicentennial.

**1979** - Kent County erects a new county building behind the Kent County Courthouse

**1982** - The Dover mall opens along US 13. Robbins Hose Company celebrates its 100th Anniversary

**1983** - The Kent County Courthouse is completely refurbished to its present configuration

**1986** - Dover Air Force Base Historical Center opens. Plans for a museum near the north gate are announced. The Air Mobility Command Museum celebrated its 30th Anniversary is 2016.

**1993** - Biggs Museum of American Art opens featuring 14 galleries, a \$6 million collection of some 200 paintings, 75 pieces of furniture, 60 pieces of silver and ceramics and sculpture.

**1994** - Delaware General Assembly passes legislation legalizing slot machines to help the horse racing industry

**1995** - Dover Downs Slots opens its doors to the public

**1997** - City's population is pegged at 32,500

**1998** - James L Hutchinson becomes Dover's first full time mayor. The

Dover Century Club celebrates 100 years of service to the community. The Dover Police Department opens a new and expanded headquarters at 400 S. Queen St.

**1998** - President Bill Clinton visits Dover including stops at Legislative Hall to address the General Assembly and the public and at Dover Air Force Base to address Air Force personnel.

**2001** - Schwartz Center for the Arts opens its doors after a 4-year renovation and lying dormant for 19 years when the Capitol Theater closed.

**2002** - Dover Downs Hotel & Casino opens with 232 rooms and the Rollins Center

**2007** - Dover Downs Hotel & Casino completes final construction with the opening of new hotel rooms, restaurants, and an expanded gaming floor  
**2007** - A \$3.5 million restoration of the Old State House is completed.

**2008** - John W. Pitts Recreation Center opens at Schutte Park. The \$3 million center with nearly 20,000 square feet of space includes a gymnasium, multi-purpose room, classroom and offices.

**2012** - The new City of Dover Public Library opens with a \$20.8 million expansion.

**2012** - Bayhealth unveils a \$147 million expansion at Kent General Hospital.  
**2012** - The Firefly Music Festival, attracting tens of thousands of fans annually, debuts.

**2014** - A new, \$114 million Dover High opens on Route 8

**2014** - Wesley College converts the former Frear Federal Building into classrooms for its nursing programs

**2015** - At Garrison Oak Technology Park, German flooring company Uzin Utz and the natural gas-fired power plant Garrison Energy Center open  
**2015** - Delaware State University opens its \$18 million Optical Science Center for Applied Research.

**2015** - The Green in Dover becomes part of the First State National Park  
**2015** - Sankofa Cultural Arts Center opens to provide after-school educational and recreational programs for youth.

**2016** - Kent County opens a \$10 million recreation center on the Kesslering Farm on New Burton Road.

**2016** - Kent County recreation center and adjoining Boys and Girls Club open on New Burton Road

**2016** - The Dover Air Force Base reopens its main runway after a \$100 million renovation

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