

A Hundred 'Days in Old New Castle'

Exploring 100(+1?) Years of the Colonial Home and Garden Tour

Published May 10, 2025, by Matt Alexander in [New Castle City Topics](#)



William Cooper drives a small carriage past the Dutch House, ferrying (likely) Ginny and Nina du Pont around A Day in Old New Castle, c. 1950. (NCHS)

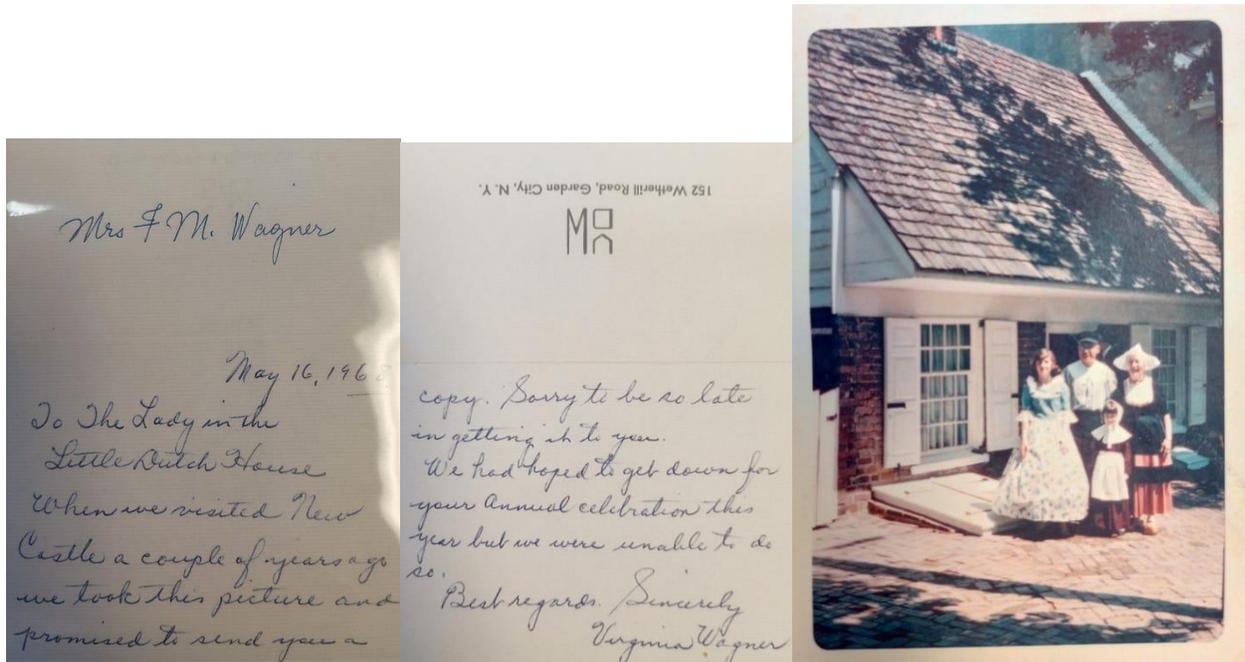
On a sunny day in May of 1966, the family of Mr. F. M. and Virginia Wagner - a young couple with their daughter - took a day trip to the City of New Castle. While the town had not yet been declared legally 'historic' (that would come the following year) local history was nonetheless at the heart of their trip, as they donned Colonial-era dress to join in that year's 'Day in Old New Castle' festivities.

During the Wagners' visit that year, they stopped at the Dutch House, occupied for the day by docent Louise Parisano. After touring and learning about the ancient little house, the family took a keepsake photo in front of the place with Ms. Parisano, promising to send a copy to the docent in thanks for her hospitality.

The rest of the year passed, and the next Day in Old New Castle, but no photo.

However, New Castle, the 'Little Dutch House' and Ms. Parisano clearly made a strong impression on the family, or at least on Virginia Wagner. For two years later, in 1968, she made good on what might, for many, have been an idle promise.

Her lovely note commemorating the family's good time at the event two years prior, and expressing regret that they couldn't make it again, is reproduced below - with the photo it accompanied, of course.



Mrs. Wagner's appreciative 1968 note to "the Lady in the Little Dutch House," and the photo her family took with "the Lady" - aka Louise Parisano - in 1966. (NCHS)

A Century of Celebrating ONC

A Day in Old New Castle (DIONC) has been delighting locals and visitors alike as a community celebration of the riverside town's colonial charm for five generations. On Saturday, May 17, 2025, the much-loved event returns for its 100th Anniversary.

As she has since 2016, occasionally with co-chairs, former New Castle Court House Museum supervisor Cynthia Snyder is leading the committee for this year's event. Her love for the event is very clear whenever she discusses it:

A Day In Old New Castle is important as a community event in that it brings together residents and businesses to produce an opportunity for visitors to experience our unique historical city and learn about the importance of New Castle, and the events that took

place here, in the settlement and founding of our State and also our National government. From 1925 to 2025, DIONC has been a historical record of our city's changes and growth.

New Castle Mayor Valarie Leary is also no stranger to the event. “As one of the former chairs of *A Day in Old New Castle*, I understand the effort and dedication involved in organizing this event,” she shared. “Therefore, I want to acknowledge everyone who has, over the years, poured their heart, soul, sweat, and tears into organizing this treasured tradition. It’s a chance to celebrate our heritage, connect with neighbors, and experience the charm that makes New Castle truly unique.”

“The 100th anniversary of the event is an especially remarkable occasion, leading us into Delaware 250 and America 250 in 2026,” Leary added.

In New Castle, even our celebrations of history are, themselves, historical.

In honor of this 100-year milestone, here is a look at the history of the event - how it started, how it has changed over the years, the effects it has had on the life of the city, and what to look forward to in this year’s centenary edition of *A Day in Old New Castle*.

In the Beginning, there was Immanuel (Episcopal Church on the Green) ... and Anne Janvier

The inception of the “longest-running private House and Garden tour in America” was intended to be a one-off fundraiser. In 1924, a group of ladies from the parish of [Immanuel Episcopal Church](#) (IEC) arranged a day of private tours as a way of generating extra funds to address maintenance needs in the (then) roughly 220 year old church. Despite doubts among some, it was a huge hit, prompting an encore that, in 1925, would be called “A Day in Old New Castle” for the first time, and established as an annual event, setting the stage for the 100th anniversary in 2025.

The leader of that group of event founders, Anne Read Rodney Janvier, would go on to chair DIONC for many years - among her many other efforts on behalf of the city. In 1974, the 50th Anniversary event was dedicated to her memory, crediting the original idea for DIONC to her and providing interesting details about its origin.

In 1924 Mrs. Janvier ... suggested to the Vestry an “open house” tour of the historic homes of New Castle as a means of raising funds for badly needed repairs to the church buildings. This idea met with mixed reactions. One member thought it doubtful that people would

“pay a dollar to see ten old houses.” Another parishioner thought a shad dinner would be a better idea. Mrs. Janvier persisted... and the Vestry acquiesced.

The immediate success of the tour in the first year led to its continuation as a “Day in Old New Castle,” held on the third Saturday in May except for a brief interruption during World War II.

... For many years, Mrs. Janvier headed “A Day in Old New Castle” herself, assisted by a small group of ladies of Immanuel Church, and Mr. James Rogers Holcomb, who handled the business affairs of the committee...

... In recognition of Mrs. Janvier’s vision and devoted service to Immanuel Parish, the 1974 [DIONC] committee... wishes to dedicate the Day’s events to her memory.

In her [brief profile of Mrs. Janvier](#) last year, Linda Suskie clarified that, “the idea came from Reverend Joseph Earp, pastor of [IEC], and he called the first meeting to discuss [it]. But Anne Janvier presided at that first meeting and organized and chaired the first Day in Old New Castle in 1925. Anne Janvier continued to chair A Day in Old New Castle for its first fifteen years until her death in 1940.”



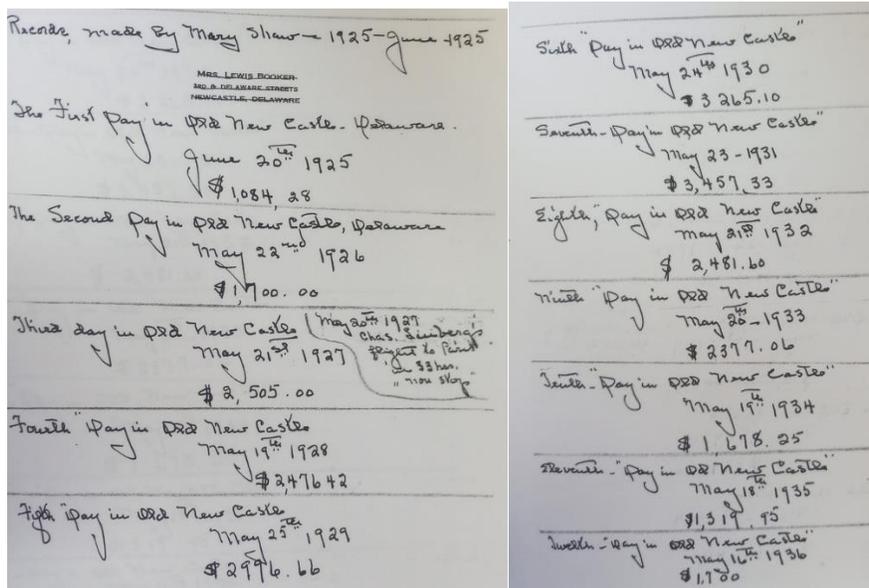
A photo of the organizers of the first A Day in Old New Castle - before it went by that name - from a 1955 *News Journal* story about the event. (NCHS)

With tours of roughly a dozen to eighteen historic homes and gardens, the earliest iterations of 'A Day in Old New Castle' were fairly simple. One special feature of the first DIONC (and those that followed) was the opening of the historic Read House, then a private home. As recorded by Constance Cooper in *350 Years of New Castle, Delaware*:

The Read House first opened informally to the public in May 1924 as a featured attraction in the first 'Day in Old New Castle.' [DIONC]... was organized by Anne Read Janvier, a descendant of George Read.

The 1929 event program offered details on sixteen houses open for tours that year as well as a luncheon at the Parish House "at a moderate price," and a "sale of antique furniture and Colonial articles" on The Strand in the afternoon (see below).

Year by year, the event grew, with its proceeds becoming an important annual fundraiser for the church, which was DIONC's only beneficiary for the first decade or so. An accounting of those years from Mary Shaw, below, displays event revenue during the 1920s and early 1930s. (Note that \$1000 in 1930 would be approx. \$18,700 "in today's dollars," according to the [inflation calculator](#) on BLS.gov.)



Financial records from the first twelve years of "A Day in Old New Castle," as recorded by Mary Shaw. (NCHS)

Far from being a flop - or less compelling than shad - DIONC remained strong even during the Great Depression, providing vital maintenance funds for IEC and a yearly day for New Castilians to come together in a celebration of pride in their community.

The program below, from 1929, lists the homes that were open that year. DIONC would use this adorable, quarter-fold brochure format well into the 1940s.

A Day in Old New Castle Delaware

Saturday, May 25th, 1929

1 to 6 Advanced Time

Friends of Immanuel Church, New Castle, Delaware, (built about 1704), have arranged an interesting day, to procure funds for its improvement. On May 25th, 1929, the historic homes of New Castle will be opened to visitors, revealing many quaint and beautiful bits of Colonial furniture and exhibiting some charming specimens of the builder's art.

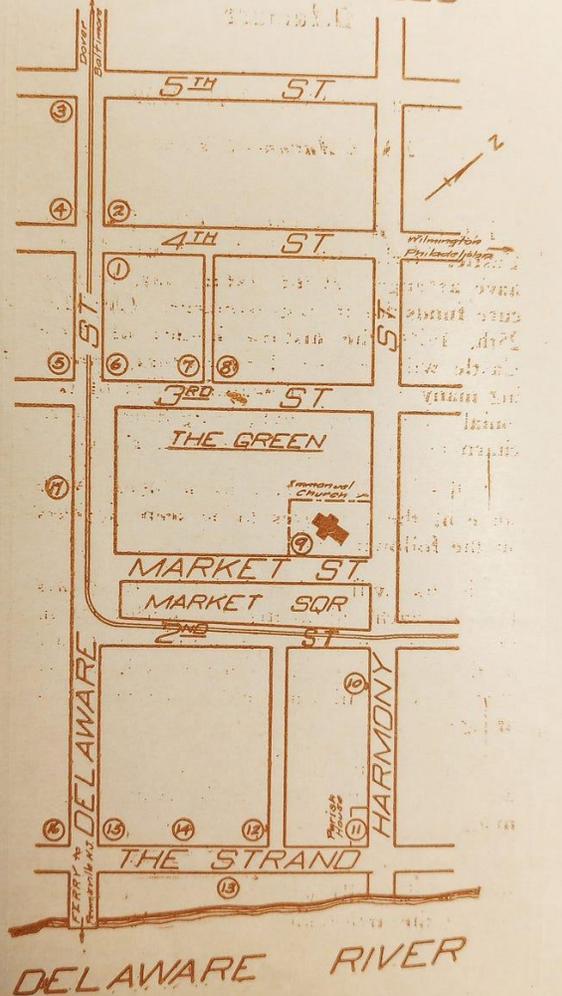
A list of the houses to be open, with some of the treasures to be seen, appears on the following pages.

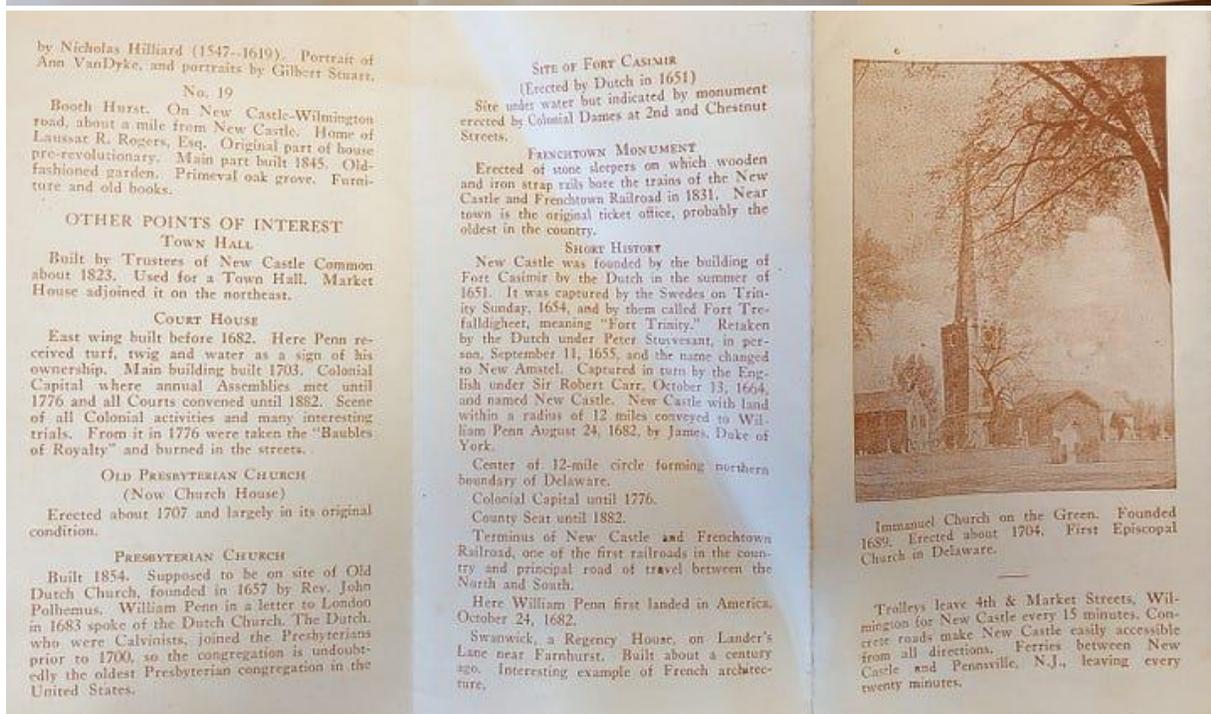
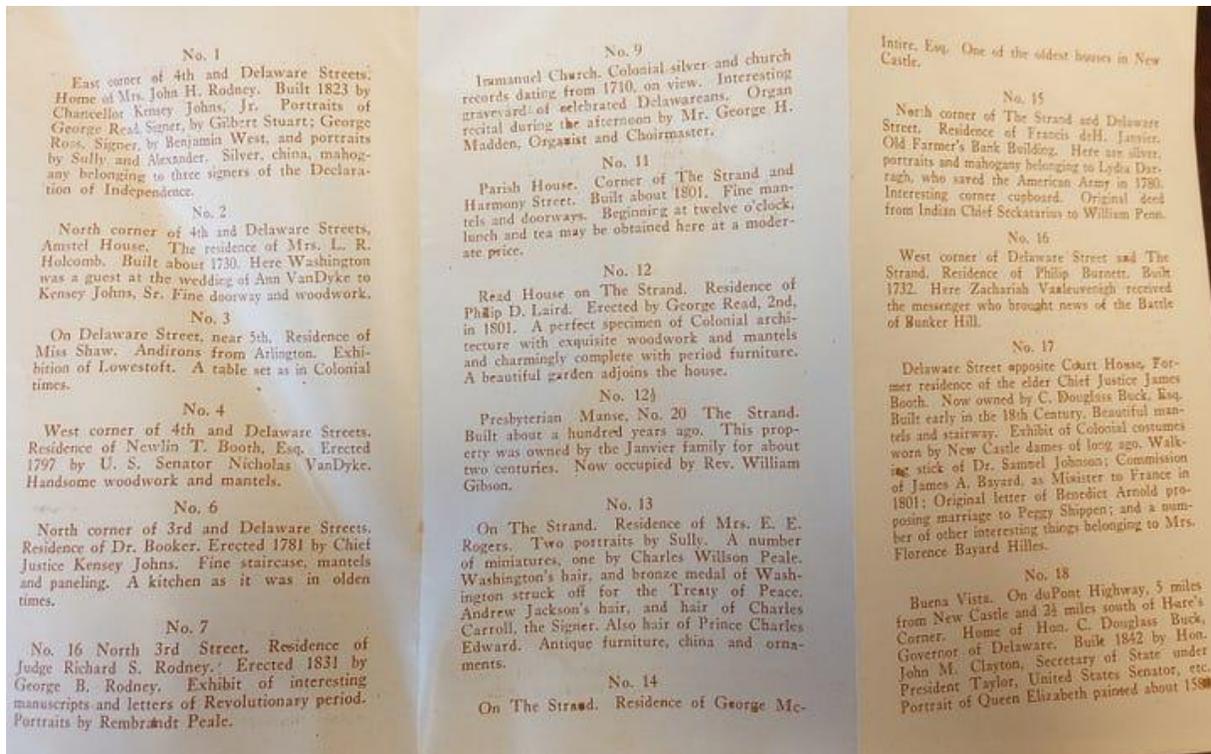
Tickets will be sold at two dollars (\$2.00) each, admitting the holder to all the houses, and can be obtained at any of the places visited. Tickets will be required for children over twelve years of age.

Beginning at twelve o'clock, lunch may be obtained at the Parish House at a moderate price.

A sale of antique furniture and Colonial articles will be held at 25 The Strand during the afternoon.

MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF HOUSES





The earliest extant DIONC program in the NCHS archive, from 1929.

1930s-1950s: A Local Tradition Develops

By the mid-1930s, DIONC had begun to draw regional attention to New Castle, as the event garnered articles in Philadelphia newspapers (both previews and reviews). A 1934 *Public Ledger* story estimated that 2,000 visitors had attended that year's event, for which eighteen private homes had been open.

In the following decades, DIONC - which also became known as 'New Castle Days' - continued to flourish and grow. During these years, garden tours were added and then expanded, organized by Arasapha Garden Club after its formation in 1934.

The oldest known video from A Day in Old New Castle, shot by M. H. Hill in 1931, was conveyed years later by former city mayor Don Reese to local historian James Meek for preservation. That video, to which *City Topics* has added contemporary music with Mr. Meek's permission, is below and [on YouTube](#).

Some of the popular DIONC attractions that are part of the event today first became fixtures during these early decades, including:

- Recitals & Performances from local choirs, bands and artists,
- Plein Air painting on The Green,
- Displaying of antiques and historic artefacts, and
- Townspeople and visitors donning Colonial or Victorian costume.

A few interesting early features that did *not* survive to the present included:

- Antique auto rallies held at the Hermitage,
- Kids dressed as 'Colonials and Indians' reenacting Penn's landing in New Castle,
- Pageantry around a May Pole on the Green,
- A 'Queen Anne Silver Communion Service,' and
- Gravesite tours of New Castle's ancient cemeteries and interesting tombs.

By the late 1950s, New Castle Days had come to include additional local churches and community groups, with the former offering extra luncheons and ticket sales, while the latter got involved as docents and helpers for the increasingly sprawling event. Thus DIONC began to include more of the community.



Photos of DIONC activities in the late 1940s and 1950s.

In 1959, after years of simply-printed brochures, the DIONC Committee introduced the event's first full-sized program booklet, which - printed early - shared details of over forty homes that might be open, promising that roughly 25-30 would be available to tour on the actual day.

The 1959 program also touted the recently-completed restoration of New Castle Court House Museum and introduced advertisers to the event for the first time, featuring paid promotions from DE and New Castle businesses. This was to help defray costs and maximize the profit from the event, which by this time IEC was splitting with its fellow churches.



A day in...
**OLD
NEW CASTLE**

SATURDAY, MAY 16, 1959

PRIVATE HOMES OPEN 11 A.M. TO 3 P.M.	PUBLIC BUILDINGS OPEN 10 A.M. TO 3 P.M.
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A DAY IN OLD NEW CASTLE
Held Annually - - the Third Saturday in May

Center of attraction in New Castle is the Old Court House, now being restored to original condition through state funds. This was the first Capitol of the State until 1777.

Friends of Immanuel Church, New Castle, Delaware, have arranged an interesting day for visitors on the third Saturday of May each year, when the historic old homes of the town are opened for inspection. At this time only is it possible to see these well preserved and restored specimens of the colonial builder's art, fine original pieces of colonial and other early furniture, portraits of many early Delawareans, old time kitchen equipment, ancient china and porcelain, antique silver, early pewter, letters, documents and records going back to the earliest days of the town, men and women of the town dressed in authentic reproductions of early day costumes, and a host of other varied items. Although New Castle could well be considered a museum of the early days of the nation, it is in fact a living and lived in community. In the corner beyond the Queen Anne highway you may see a 21" television, or a fine Chippendale chair next to the high-top. The houses are much prized as homes, and the public buildings are still in use serving the town.

Of the thirty-nine buildings described in this booklet, some twenty-five or thirty are open each year. In 1958 there was an antique auto rally at The Hermitage, and at the end of the day the men and women in costume gathered on The Green for the benefit of the camera fans; it is anticipated these will be repeated in 1959.

The buildings and homes that have been open in other years have all been described in some detail in succeeding pages. At this writing some months in advance, it is impossible to say certainly which will be open in 1959, but of this you may be sure, some 25 or 30 will be available for your inspection. The public buildings will, as always, be at their best for New Castle Day. It is also probable that many of the private homes open in 1958 will repeat in 1959.

It will be possible to see the great progress that has been made in the restoration of the Old Court House, putting it as nearly as possible into its original condition. The Queen Anne silver communion service will be shown at Immanuel Church. A perennial favorite with visitors is the oldest building in town—the Old Dutch House with its many pieces of antique furniture and pieces of kitchen equipment whose use today can only be guessed. The Amstel museum is also

(Continued on Page 4)

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1960s-1979: Regional Success, National Recognition - DIONC Hits the Big Time

In the ensuing years, A Day in Old New Castle became a local and regional phenomenon, with scores of homes and gardens open the third weekend of most Mays and attendance estimates in the 1960s and 1970s occasionally approaching *ten thousand* according to newspapers from the time.

During this period, the event was featured in multiple regional newspapers and even national style magazines.



The Board, New Castle: Once a year, when the city's old-time homes are opened to the public, ladies in costume add little enthusiasm to



the middle Early American setting. The modern University of Delaware sits in Newark, surrounded by homes with a Colonial-style campus.

DELAWARE

The amazing story of a tiny state where things have always happened in a big way—from high deeds in the Revolution to the fantastic growth of the Du Pont colossus

by James Warner Bellah



To understand the Delaware character you will have to know my great-granduncle, and that will be difficult, for he was born in 1816 and died in 1899—and we have no forwarding address. I never knew the Hon. Edward Trenchard Bellah myself, but he fascinates me. He made his own bread from his own apple grove for that sole purpose on his own lands outside Brandywine Village, appropriately enough. In his long career as a banker and public servant, he refused ever to take an oath or make a sworn statement. "Each occasion approaches its track," he wrote, "and the ironwood roots of fortune."

His telephone number in Wilmington was 9. He uncovered the belt of fourth-archy in the afternoon and did not let it ring thereafter until half past ten the next morning. "I will not have my home invaded by any man whatever, until a cord is first sent in."

If considered choice he left no will. "No heir shall hate my dead hand. Let them hate the courts' lives once instead."

Down memory lane in Old New Castle

where the colonists walked during annual house-and-garden tour

By GARY SOULSMAN

Staff reporter

NEW CASTLE — The Delaware Town That Time Preserved makes the most of its brick-and-candlelight heritage Saturday with an event that draws visitors from throughout the East.

A Day in Old New Castle shows how the historic half town to the 1,600 people expected at the 60th house and garden tour. It's one of the two biggest days for visitors here, an epic event for a Colonial capital that's usually more private than public.

All that changes from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. when you're invited to visit 14 homes with gardens and 26 separate gardens.

"The day is about hospitality," said the Rev. Ed Godden, rector of the sponsoring Immanuel Episcopal Church on the Green.

"A Day in Old New Castle is about making space in our life and community for people to learn about values of an earlier age."

Distinctive public buildings are open, too, including the opulent 22-room Read House, the Court House, the state's first capitol, and a true survivor of the Colonial era, the Dutch House. To the modern eye, the Dutch House looks humorously out of place in the town, as if Goldilocks and the Three Bears once played out a drama there.

But these buildings are regularly open to view. The day is a stand-out because the town's residents open their homes, many of which date from the Federalist boom of the late 1700s and early 1800s.

The fun is to marvel at the way things were and the decorations, says Timothy



Betty Nickle, 8, at home in historic New Castle.

Mullin, director of the Read House. "You look around and say, 'Oh, this is pretty. Can you imagine they did that?' Or, 'Isn't that the most atrocious interior you've ever seen?'"

That's why some homeowners, expecting to see akads of middle-aged curiosity seekers in their Nikes, escape with the kids and the dog for a drive. They leave guides in charge, armed with cheat sheets. The notes are needed because in a historic town, visitors expect a date on everything—from the carpets to the goldfish pond.

Because it's Old New Castle, the mystique is everything is antique and wonderful," says Mullin. "And people expect to see the best—or near the best."

That makes for pressure, which residents relieve with a burst of outdoor hammering and compulsive cleaning.

But inevitably "you learn that what you were most worried about nobody notices," says Anne Nickle, the town's co-chairwoman. "You find out that what you over looked—like the big crack in the wall—is what everybody sees."

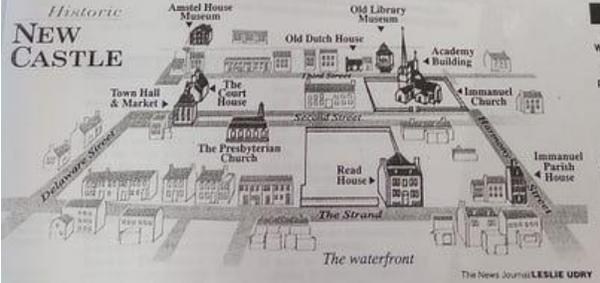
Framed portraits are often a subject of curiosity. Sometimes, joked Nickle, by the end of the day a picture of a 19th-century merchant and his wife who never set foot in New Castle becomes a portrait of Colonial forebears who sold William Penn his first brushes in the New World. She conceded, however, that in a few notable families, the portraits do show stately branches of the family tree.

A Day in Old New Castle as planned as a walking tour, residents believe the town's cobblestones and river vistas are best seen on foot. "When you walk, you notice little details like the boot scrapers," says Nickle, pointing to a wrought-iron sidewalk fixture near a marble stoop.

Walking also warms people to the town because the intimacy of the 18th-century town houses gives the impression of a close-knit community.

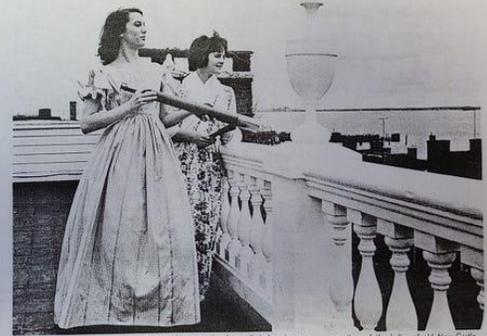
The gardens are a delight, too. As you approach from the street, they often peek through secret alleys before bursting into view. "There's great diversity," says Mullin. "You find takeoffs on the formal French parterre like you find at Versailles or Stourhead. And there are informal English gardens. In those, people have an open spot and toss the next thing in. It makes a lovely jumble."

This is the one time of year—the third Saturday in May—when that jumble opens its arms to you.



The News Journal/LESLIE UDURY

A Day In NEW CASTLE



Spouting ships on the Delaware River, perhaps carrying home their loved ones, was a pastime of the ladies of old New Castle.

A DAY IN

When: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Where: Historic New I Delaware 9, three miles Delaware Memorial
Parking: Free. There's a bus for those who.
First Baptist Church 141 at Delaware streets at the corner are closed to cars.
Information: Call 328-7
Tickets: Can be purchased at the Court House Street for \$10. More information are in illustrated tour book
Related events:
10 a.m.: Immanuel fingers will ring an open peak. T periodically through

TV Listings/Things to Do Around Delaware

The Delawarean

Supplement of The Philadelphia Inquirer

Vol. 6, Issue 20 May 15-21, 1977

Far Out
Joe Farley Reflects on Some Familiar Feelings page 4

Around Delaware
Spring Means A Lot of Music For Delaware page 5

Special Events
A New Column by Carl Kramer Debuts This Week page 4

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NEW CASTLE COUNTY GAZETTE

Map Showing Points of Interest

Points of Interest

Go To Map

1. Old Castle
2. Christ Church
3. Delaware State House
4. Delaware State Capitol
5. Delaware State Archives
6. Delaware State Museum
7. Delaware State Library
8. Delaware State Office Building
9. Delaware State Court House
10. Delaware State Police Station
11. Delaware State Fire Station
12. Delaware State Jail
13. Delaware State Prison
14. Delaware State Hospital
15. Delaware State University
16. Delaware State College
17. Delaware State Technical College
18. Delaware State Community College
19. Delaware State Vocational School
20. Delaware State Junior High School
21. Delaware State Elementary School
22. Delaware State Kindergarten
23. Delaware State Day Care Center
24. Delaware State Child Welfare Center
25. Delaware State Family Planning Center
26. Delaware State Health Center
27. Delaware State Senior Center
28. Delaware State Nursing Home
29. Delaware State Hospice
30. Delaware State Cemetery
31. Delaware State Funeral Home
32. Delaware State Mortuary
33. Delaware State Crematorium
34. Delaware State Burial Home
35. Delaware State Mausoleum
36. Delaware State Monastery
37. Delaware State Convent
38. Delaware State Church
39. Delaware State Synagogue
40. Delaware State Mosque
41. Delaware State Temple
42. Delaware State Shrine
43. Delaware State Cathedral
44. Delaware State Basilica
45. Delaware State Sanctuary
46. Delaware State Chapel
47. Delaware State Parsonage
48. Delaware State Rectory
49. Delaware State Vicarage
50. Delaware State Clergyman's Residence

Make This Your Official Guide For "A Day in Old New Castle, Delaware"

In New Castle

... (text continues) ...

In New Castle
(Continued from page 15)

... (text continues) ...

The Great New Castle Fire of April 25, 1824

... (text continues) ...

The old Court House (left) and hotel of The Greenway (right) before the fire.

View of Christ Church with spire and old Court House (right) and the old Court House (left) and hotel of The Greenway (right) before the fire.

Who Wears These Products of Chemistry?

DRESS - Of the Pure Dyeing possible only in white and red lines.

HAT - Of "Colleton" cotton, like in white with falling ribbon binding like in red line.

'Day in Old New Castle' scheduled for May 18

... (text continues) ...

Panhellenic plans spring tcheon

... (text continues) ...

HISTORIC BUENA VISTA, home of the late Gov. C. Douglas Buck Jr., will be opened for "A Day in Old New Castle" for the first time this year. County Council President C. Douglas Buck Jr. walks over the grounds with Mrs. Walter E. Koo and C. Michael Marsh, co-chairmen for the annual event to be held a week from today.



Newspaper and magazine clippings featuring DIONC, from Holiday Living, the Philly Inquirer, the News-Journal, the County Gazette, and others (unidentified). (NCHS)

Often focused largely on accommodating ever more people, changes to DIONC during these years included...

- Free motorized transportation around town, including to more distant open houses like Buena Vista and the Hermitage,
- An Evensong service at the end of the day's events,
- Food and drinks offered from Good Will Fire Co., the Century Club, Academy Building and other locations,
- A Lost and Found operated at the Frenchtown RR Ticket Office,
- Colonial military encampment reenactments and demonstrations,
- Maypole Dances on the Green, and more.

In the 1960s, the enthusiasm for New Castle's colonial history and the commitment to preserving and sharing its physical remnants, nurtured for so many years by DIONC, paved the way for the 1967 designation of the entire Historic District as a registered national landmark. The decade's savvy DIONC committee also, of course, capitalized on this important recognition in the following years' promotional materials.

Admit One

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A DAY IN OLD NEW CASTLE

May 20th 1967

10 AM to 5 PM

Admission \$3.50

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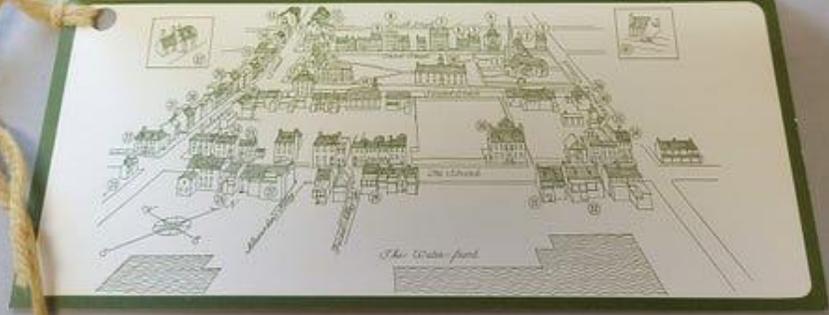
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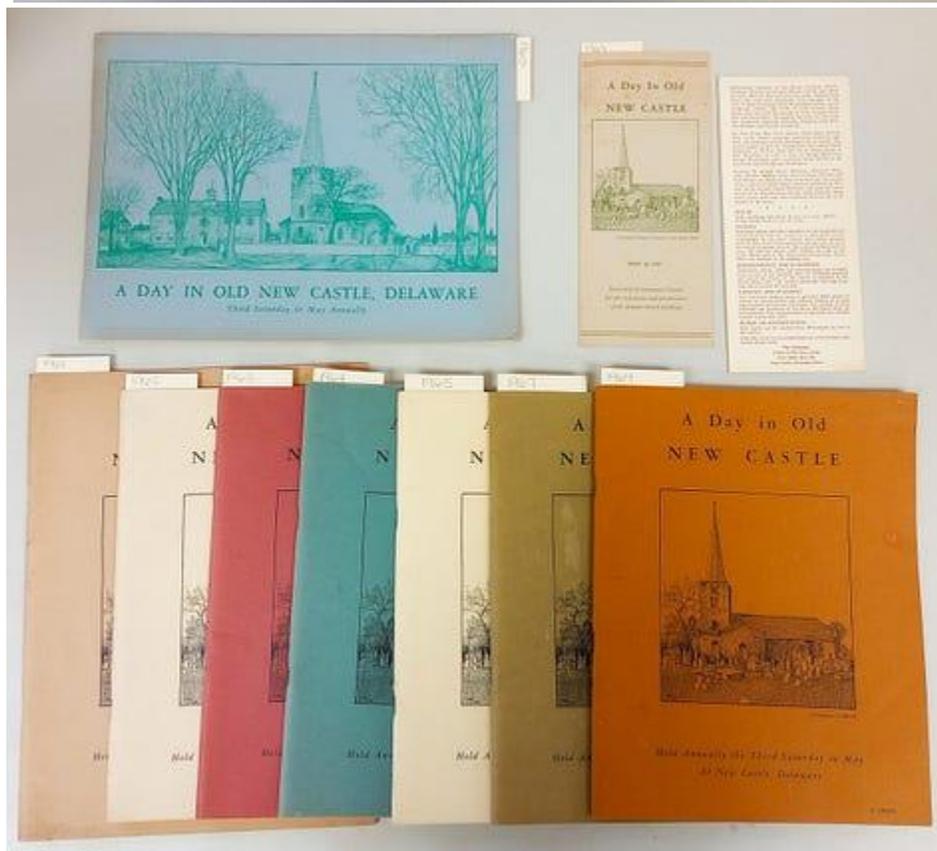
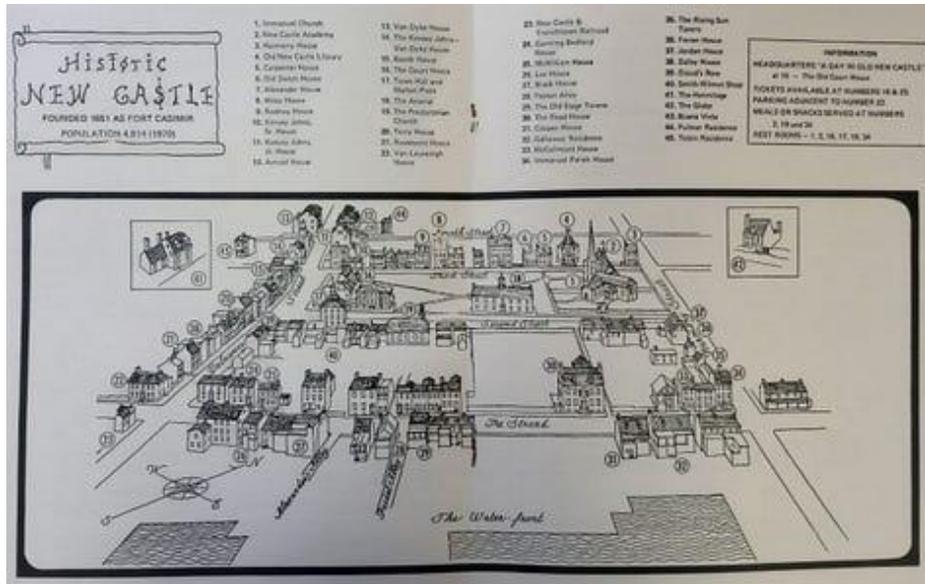
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VISITORS GUIDE TO STREET AND STRUCTURE LOCATIONS:

1. Immanuel Church	12. Arnstel House	22. Van Leuvenigh House	32. Galloway Residence House
2. New Castle Academy	13. Van Dyke House	23. New Castle & Frenchtown Railroad	33. McCallmont House
3. Harmony House	14. The Kensey Johns-Van Dyke House	24. Gunning Bedford House	34. Immanuel Parish House
4. Old New Castle Library	15. Booth House	25. McIntire House	35. The Rising Sun Tavern
5. Holden House	16. The Court House	26. Lee House	36. Jordan House
6. Old Dutch House	17. Town Hall and Market Place	27. Gallery House	37. The Hermitage
7. Alexander House	18. The Arsenal	28. Packet Alley	38. Dalby House
8. Gemmill House	19. The Presbyterian Church	29. The Old Stage Tavern	39. Church's Row
9. Rodney House	20. Terry House	30. The Road House	40. Foster House
10. Kensey Johns, Sr. House	21. Rosemont House	31. Ault House	41. The Globe
11. Kensey Johns, Jr. House			



<p>1 21</p> <p>2 22</p> <p>3 23</p> <p>4 24</p> <p>5 25</p> <p>6 26</p> <p>7 27</p> <p>8 28</p> <p>9 29</p> <p>10 30</p> <p>11 31</p> <p>12 32</p> <p>13 33</p> <p>14 34</p> <p>15 35</p> <p>16 36</p> <p>17 37</p> <p>18 38</p> <p>19 39</p> <p>20 40</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>OLD DUTCH TILE HOUSE 1687 1884</p>  </div> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>CHOLERIC GOVERNOR PETER STUYVESANT</p>  </div> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>THE ORN 1654</p>  </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>OLD DUTCH HOUSE</p>  </div> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>THE ORIGINAL IMMANUEL CHURCH-1705</p>  </div> </div>	<p style="text-align: center;">"A DAY IN OLD NEW CASTLE"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MAY 16, 1964</p> <p style="text-align: center;">10 A. M. to 5 P. M.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ADMISSION \$3.50</p>
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1960's promotional materials for 'A Day in Old New Castle.'

The growth over this period was only possible due to a small army of volunteers and IEC community partners mobilized for the event each year. By the late 1970s, almost every organization and business within a few blocks of Delaware Street - and some well beyond the historic area - was involved in the annual event.

Below are assorted photos of New Castilians and visitors dressed up for DIONC events during this period...





Images from 'A Day in Old New Castle,' c. 1950s-1970s. (NCHS)

1980-1983: Recovery from New Castle's *other* 'Great Fire'

As solemnly recounted on the 'History' page of IEC's website...

On February 1, 1980, embers from a fire in the marsh by the river caught in the wind and landed on Immanuel's roof. The church was badly damaged in the ensuing fire, one of the more traumatic events in the town of New Castle's long history. Talk to any long-time resident of New Castle today, and they most likely will be able to tell you exactly what they were doing when they heard that Immanuel was on fire.

Famed church burns

New Castle mourns loss

By MIKE SCHAFFER and PHIL MILFORD

New Castle's Immanuel Episcopal Church On The Green was destroyed by fire yesterday, nearly three centuries after it was built.

The fire apparently started after strong winds blew sparks from a marsh fire onto the wooden roof.

Ashes from the marsh fire, about a mile away, "were falling like snow for awhile," said New Castle Police Chief Eugene Petty. Once the fire began, "the wind whipped it so badly . . . it spread quickly," Petty said.

With part of its structure dating back to 1703, Immanuel was the oldest Episcopal church in continuous service in the United States, according to its rector, the Rev. Myles W. Edwards.

By dusk yesterday, little was left but the walls, belfry and a charred, 70-foot-high timber, the only surviving piece of the church's steeple.

The only injury occurred when Rector Edwards, 40, struck his head and broke his wrist when he fell on a patch of ice. He fell while running to

Other stories, photos, Pages 4, 5

the nearby parish house at 100 Harmony St. after someone incorrectly reported that the parish house also was on fire.

About 300 firefighters from as far away as Claymont, Newark and Hockessin converged on the church. Goodwill of New Castle Fire Company arrived on the scene at 2:11 p.m. Within minutes, another alarm was turned in as fire broke out on house roofs on The Strand, a block away.

The other fires were extinguished quickly, but the fire in the church remained out of control until 5 p.m., according to fire officials. In a scene of bizarre beauty, water being sprayed on the fire from aerial ladders crystallized into plumes of ice in the cold air, coating nearby trees and making sidewalks hazardous. Ash floated down onto the church graveyard, blackening the old grave markers and vaults.

Inside the church, charred beams lay in disarray. The marble baptismal font was shattered and lay in pieces in the rubble. The organ in the choir loft was little more than a blackened frame of sticks and twisted metal. Burned pews had fallen through the floor, and a thick, gnarled tree that could well have been planted in the seventeenth century stood blazing among the grave stones of parishioners.

The clock in the tower, with flames licking at its numerals, had stopped at 1:53 p.m. Flames later burned out several of the clock faces.

Susan McLaughlin, 25, of 215 Harmony St., said her father, Joseph Keenan, turned in the alarm.

As flames roared from the church's shattered windows and threatened for a time to ignite Mrs. McLaughlin's house as well, she pointed across the street at a grave marker within three feet of Immanuel's historic walls. That's where George Read's buried," she said. Read was a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

"I heard crackling and thought somebody got shot," said Lisa Short, 16, who lives across Harmony Street from the church. When she



Firefighters from Holloway Terrace Fire Company were among the 300 firemen who turned out yesterday in a vain effort to save Immanuel Episcopal Church On The Green in New Castle from fire. (Staff photo by Ron Dubick)

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Historic Immanuel succumbs to flames



Firefighters spray water through a window at the church, their fire hose snaking through the grave markers outside. (Staff photo by Fred Conegys)



It takes teamwork to handle this fire hose as two firefighters direct the water toward the burning church. (Staff photo by Ron Dubick)

looked out her window, she saw fire spreading out from the middle of the church roof.

Across the green, Ann DiMaio looked from her Booth House tavern and package store and saw the flames. She ran to the church with bartender Victor Kasun to try to help save what she could of the church's vestments and furnishings. She got some flags and candlestick holders, she said, but firemen "kept screaming at me to get out."

The firemen and Joseph Monigle, another neighbor, also ran into the church to help, and managed to save assorted vestments, candleabrae and communion vessels.

Mrs. DiMaio said she stood on the green "and said 'Hail Marys,' hoping the steeple would hold, but it finally collapsed." She spent the rest of the afternoon dispensing coffee to firemen.

Members of the Immanuel congregation were stunned. "I'm really upset," said Pat Robinson as she stood watching the old church die. "I was married here."

Leona Calder watched the fire from a friend's house across Third Street from the church. "I would have given up my house to save Immanuel, she said.

"Needless to say, we loved every inch of that place, every squeak in the floorboards," Edwards said. But "it wasn't the building that mattered, it's what happened inside."

"How do you replace something like this?" asked parishioner Richard L. McLenaghan.

"There's no question it will be rebuilt," said Harley E. Clymer, senior warden of the church vestry. The vestry will hold a meeting this morning to discuss rebuilding, he said.

Immanuel will not lose a day of worship, the church's rector vowed. Services will be held in the parish house tomorrow, he said, and every church in New Castle has offered space.

Some Episcopal churches in the United States are older than Immanuel, according to Edwards, but the others suspended operations during the American Revolution.

Parishioners were always aware that fire was a danger to the old church, Clymer said. "The vestry has discussed it any number of times" but decided there was nothing that could really be done to protect the church from fire. Neither an alarm nor a sprinkler system would have helped Immanuel yesterday, he said.

Dean Murphy contributed to this story.



Hank Alfree of Goodwill Fire Co. managed to salvage part of the cross which fell from the steeple as fire gutted Immanuel Episcopal Church yesterday. (Staff photo by Fred Conegys)

... an important time to be close

By DEAN MURPHY

It was chilly, and the surroundings were unfamiliar.

But a few hours after Immanuel Episcopal Church was destroyed by fire, the congregation met for its regular evening prayer service last night at another church.

To the 50 people gathered in the neighboring New Castle Presbyterian Church, it was a particularly important time to be close.

"Losing our church was a very personal tragedy for everyone," said Betty Lee Patterson. "But tonight's service brought everyone

together. There was a tremendous amount of love."

Immanuel's vicar, The Rev. Myles W. Edwards Jr., was unable to attend the prayer service because of injuries he received at the scene of the fire. But Ralph Johnson, pastor of the group's host, the New Castle Presbyterian Church, and The Rev. C. Reed Brinkman, Edwards' assistant, were both there.

"As the church was in flames and the water was pouring down, there was a rainbow," Brinkman said. "I certainly remain one of the rainbow in Noah's story."

Brinkman said it was important

to hold the regular prayer meeting to "show some normalcy" to the congregation.

"A lot of people were generally confused," he said. "But tonight during the prayer service the reaction was robust. The spirit was there."

At the group prayed in the neighboring church, firefighters continued to soak the ruins of their historic church.

Brinkman and Johnson said the prayer service, which usually only attracts a handful of congregation members, was a spiritual, emotional and physical coming together of the community.

A similar service for Sunday afternoon is also in the making, they said.

Yesterday's tragedy and last night's prayer service was particularly significant to Robert and Mary Davis. Mrs. Davis, baptised and married in the church, is a direct descendant of Immanuel's first vicar. Her baby boy, baptised two weeks ago, was the last child to be baptised in the church.

"We feel as old friends in gone now," she said. "But tonight's service was comforting. We're to go on with a whole new start, the beginning of a whole new chapter."

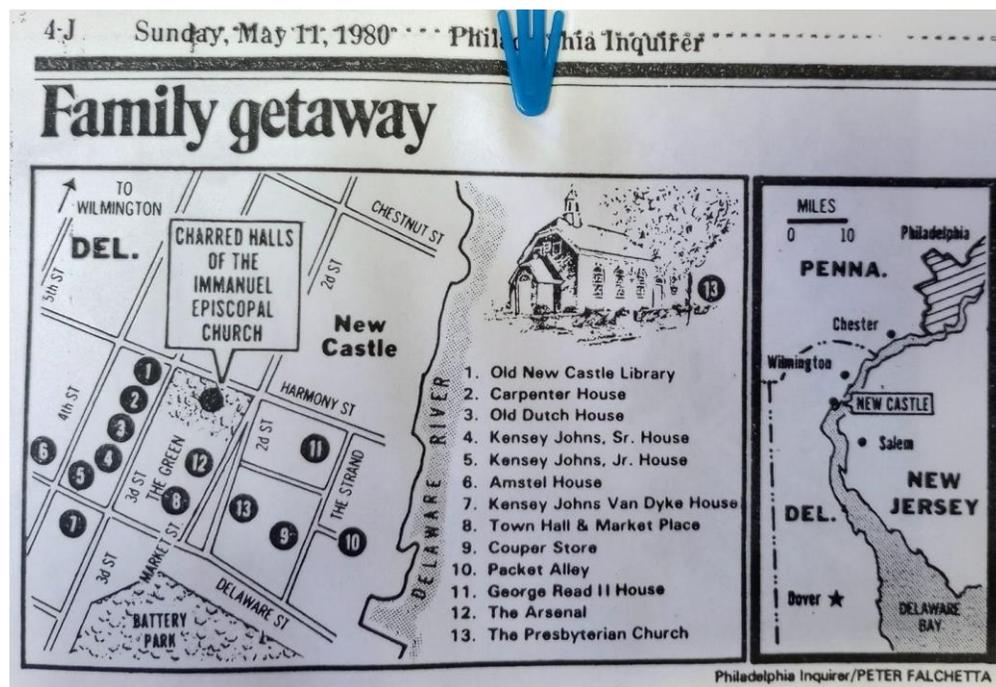


Ankle-deep in water in the graveyard, firefighters battle the blaze at the historic church. (Staff photo by Ron Dubick)

The IEC recounting continues...

Although the building was heavily damaged, the spirit of the congregation remained strong and faithful. They resolved to rebuild the church and continue to worship on the same spot where Anglicans had worshipped for so many years.

In the wake of the destruction, among other fundraising efforts, 'A Day in Old New Castle' once again became critically important to meeting the needs of the parish during the long restoration process. A *Philadelphia Inquirer* advertisement for the 1980 event, below, shows the "charred halls" of the church among other points of interest.



A map of DIONC points of interest for 1980 in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* shows the 'charred halls of the Immanuel Episcopal Church.' (NCHS)

With help from throughout the community, as well as the wider US Episcopal congregation, the work was completed over a few years. "The church was restored to its 1822 William Strickland design," IEC's website notes, "with modifications to the sanctuary to accommodate modern liturgical needs. The church was rededicated on December 18, 1982."

DIONC attendees in the following years were offered updates and details about the restoration 1981-1982. Then in 1983, following the rededication, a gratefully celebratory IEC congregation and DIONC committee welcomed New Castle, and its many visitors, back into the historic church.

A series of letters appearing in event programs from the period describes the parish's interregnum and subsequent joy, below.

On the first day of February, 1980 Immanuel Episcopal Church-on-the-Green, pictured on the front cover of this brochure, was destroyed by fire, except for the masonry walls. You may see these remains on your tour today. Since the fire, the vestry of Immanuel Church, and its reconstruction committee, have worked closely with the architect, John Milner Associates, Inc. of West Chester, PA and the Construction Manager, John E. Healey & Sons, Inc. of Wilmington, Delaware in order that reconstruction of the church may be completed as soon as possible.

Although construction is somewhat behind the original schedule, progress is being made. Contracts have been let for masonry work, which is now in progress, and all exterior millwork. The exterior of the building will be as nearly the same as it was before the fire. The design of the interior has been approved and the architect is now moving forward on the working drawings.

The present rate of progress would indicate that completion may be expected by early or mid-1982.

A fund raising effort is now in progress to raise \$450,000.00, which will be needed to complete the construction of the church. Anyone wishing to make a tax deductible contribution may do so by mail.

Mr. Elmer E. Bailey, Treasurer
Immanuel Reconstruction Fund
 P.O. Box 408
 New Castle, DE 19720

Harley E. Clymer
Immanuel Episcopal
Church-on-the-Green

telephone (503) 338-2413



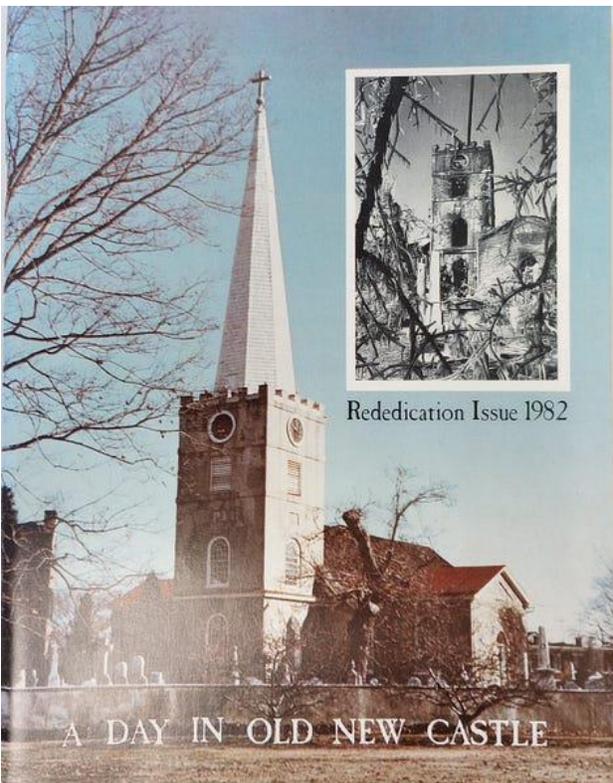
Immanuel Episcopal Church
on the green,
 p.o. box 47, new castle, delaware 19720
the rev. myles w. edwards
 rector

Surely the destruction of a place of worship is always traumatic for those whose lives have been enriched there. For over three hundred years the people of Immanuel Parish have brought their infants to this site for Holy Baptism; our children have come here to seek God's blessing in Holy Matrimony; and to this place we have come to bury our dead. Week by week we gather within these walls to give thanks to God for all his goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to seek his forgiveness and strength. Day by day we took our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows, to this place to lay them before the Father, and there we received comfort, vision and challenge.

Then, on the eve of the Feast of the Purification, in the words associated with that feast day, "... the Lord came suddenly to his temple, like a refiner's fire..." It seemed, for a while, we had suffered a blow from which we could not recover.

But we have learned, as several of us said that day, that while the building had been destroyed, the Church had not. We remembered that "the word of the Lord also is tried in the fire", and that the Holy Spirit had first appeared to the Church as "cloven tongues like as of fire". Since then we have devoted ourselves to two tasks. We have sought to rebuild that beautiful place of worship, and we have sought God's guidance that we ourselves might "be built, as living stones, into a spiritual temple". We look forward to the time when we may again kneel before him in that place, made holy by his presence, and "offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ". We hope that you will join us in our prayers of praise and thanksgiving.

Myles W. Edwards, Rector



IMMANUEL EPISCOPAL CHURCH
 On The Green
 New Castle, Delaware 19720

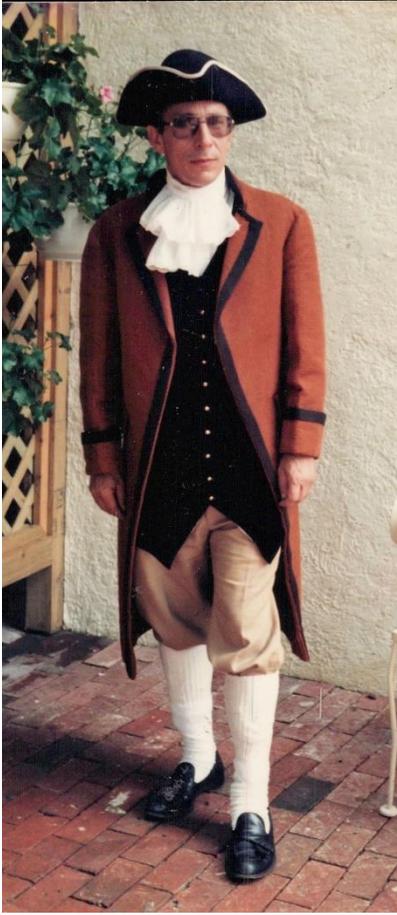
February 1, 1980 our parish, town and state lost a good portion of a beloved, historic church to fire. Almost immediately other churches in our town offered their sanctuaries for worship. Several services were held in these churches.

The generous response to our re-building campaign by New Castillians, Delawareans and friends elsewhere was overwhelming.

The partially finished Immanuel Church Building that you see on the green today is remarkable evidence of the love and generosity of a great many friends of Immanuel Parish.

Indeed, we have much to be thankful for.

Robert T. Beattie, M.D.
 Senior Warden
 Immanuel Church



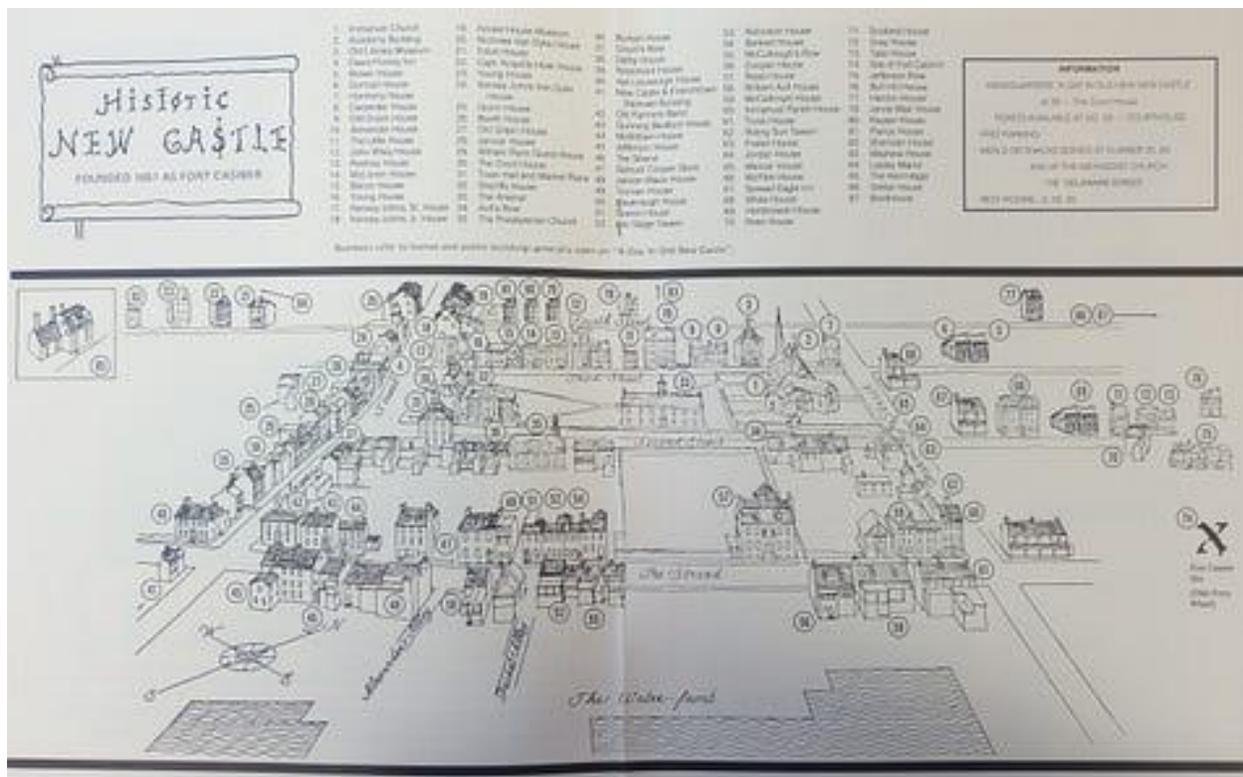
New Castle's Ted Joslin dressed for DIONC in the 1980s.

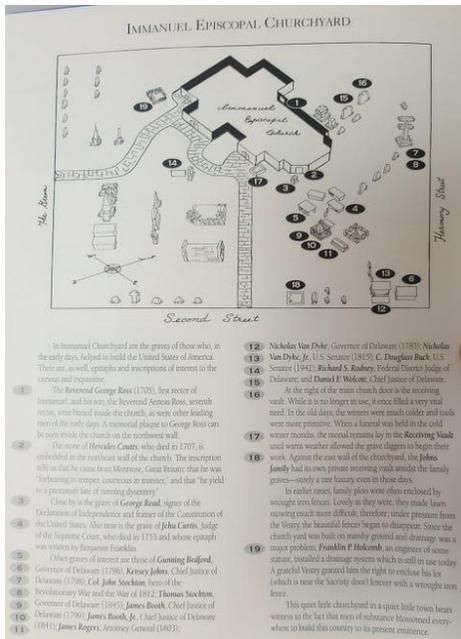
Activities and features added to DIONC during this time included:

- Full-day schedules of Instrumental, Vocal and Dance performances,
- Mock Trial exhibitions in New Castle Court House,
- Blacksmithing and other colonial artisan demonstrations,
- A 1999 **Cannon Battle** at the Wharf, between the Kalmar Nyckel and the Second Pennsylvania Regiment,
- Archaeology demonstrations by UD grad students working at sites in town,
- Military drills and historical encampments on The Green,
- Horse-and-carriage rides around the district,
- Fashion presentations and workshops,
- Silent auctions,

- Children’s Crafting and Play/Gaming areas,
- Historical puppet shows,
- Musket and Cannon fire demonstrations, and much more...

During this period, ‘A Day in Old New Castle’ matured as a local landmark in its own right: a full-on festival throughout the Historic District that got much of the city involved. As it had in the past, IEC’s DIONC committee sought to share the largesse from the beloved event. Beneficiaries during this time included the Food Bank of Delaware, the New Castle Senior Center, and others, in addition to continued maintenance of parish buildings.





In Immanuel Churchyard are the graves of those who, in the early days, helped build the United States of America. There are a few epitaphs and inscriptions of interest to the curious and inquisitive.

1. The Reverend George Ross (1705), first rector of Immanuel and his son, the Reverend James Ross, seventh rector, were buried inside the church, as were other leading men of the early days. A memorial plaque to George Ross can be seen inside the church on the southeast wall.

2. The stone of Hercules Coats, who died in 1707, is embedded in the southeast wall of the church. The inscription will tell us how he came from Montreal, Great Britain, that he was "bearing a temper, anxious to be master," and that "he sold his premature fate of running dysentery."

3. Close by is the grave of George Read, signer of the Declaration of Independence and former of the Constitution of the United States. Also near is the grave of John Curtis, judge of the Supreme Court, who died in 1733 and whose epitaph was written by Benjamin Franklin.

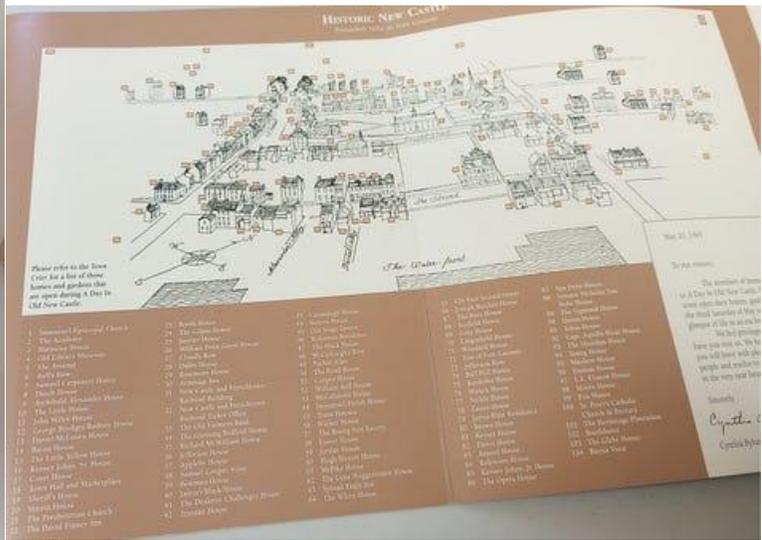
4. Other graves of interest are those of Gaining Bedford, Governor of Delaware (1766); Kelsey Johns, Chief Justice of Delaware (1780); Col. John Tasker, hero of the Revolution (1781); and the late (1812), Thomas Jackson, Governor of Delaware (1845); James Booth, Chief Justice of Delaware (1799); James Booth, Jr., Chief Justice of Delaware (1841); James Rogers, Attorney General (1843).

12. Nicholas Van Dyke, Governor of Delaware (1788); Nicholas Van Dyke, Jr., U.S. Senator (1853); C. Douglas Bask, U.S. Senator (1942); Richard S. Raskoy, Federal District Judge of Delaware; and Daniel F. Wolcott, Chief Justice of Delaware.

13. At the right of the main church door is the receding walk. While it is no longer in use, it once had a very real need. In the old days, the visitors were much older and took were more primitive. When a funeral was held in the cold winter months, the receding remains by the Hanning Walk and warm weather allowed the grave diggers to begin their work. Against the east wall of the churchyard, the Johns family had its own private receiving vault around the family grave—essentially a luxury even in those days.

14. In earlier times, family plots were often enclosed by wrought iron fences. Lovely as they were, they made lanes running through the graves more difficult, therefore, under pressure from the Vestry, the beautiful fences began to disappear. Since the churchyard plot was built on mainly ground and drainage was a major problem, Franklin P. Holcomb, an engineer of some stature, installed a drainage system which is still in use today. A grateful Vestry granted him the right to enclose his fee (which is near the Sacristy door) forever with a wrought iron fence.

15. This quiet little churchyard in a quiet little town bears witness to the fact that men of substance blossomed everywhere to build this country to its present eminence.



THE TOWN CRIER, NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE
SEVENTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY EDITION

A DAY IN OLD New Castle

CLEAR - WARM - SUNNY MAY 20, 1995
SPECIAL EVENTS

- Court House (17)**
The New Castle Court House served as the meeting place of the Colonial Assembly and Delaware's first General Assembly from 1732 until 1777. New Castle County Court trials and the Federal Circuit Court trials were held on the first floor of the court house. Presently on display is the flight of a fugitive slave family and the trials of the two Quaker Abolitionists who aided them.
- Read House (50)**
This elegant Federal mansion with 22 rooms was the largest house in Delaware when built in 1801. Paintstakingly restored and furnished following George Read's accounts and inventions, the interior reflects a lavish lifestyle. The surrounding gardens are the oldest in New Castle, and were designed by Robert Bost in the 1840's. They are currently under restoration. Guides will be in period costumes. Family activities will be available.
- Amstel House (83)**
A demonstration by Ms. Susan Palastoff of open hearth cooking and baking in the beehive oven will be taking place throughout the day. Owned and operated by the New Castle Historical Society.
- Dutch House (8)**
Decorated with 17th and 18th century Dutch furniture. Owned and operated by the New Castle Historical Society.
- Old Library Museum (4)**
Attributed to the Philadelphia architectural firm of Foxross and Evans showing an exhibit of "Businesses in New Castle from 1875 to 1955." Administered by the New Castle Historical Society.
- Buena Vista (104)**
This impressive Greek Revival house was built by John M. Clayton in 1845. Clayton held several offices in the state of Delaware and was U.S. Secretary of State under President Taylor (1849-1850).
- Town Hall (18)**
Horse and Carriage Races through the town will be available throughout the day.
- Academy (2)**
The Susquehanna Consort will perform period chamber music at 10:00 a.m. to 11:15 a.m., 1:15 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., 2:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Note the May Pole in front of the Academy. New Castle's children will dance this traditional rite of spring at 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- Around Town**
The Canal Watch/Pulaski artillery of Delaware Gap will be firing a cannon each hour on the hour from the point in Battery Park into the Delaware River. Saint Peter's Roman Catholic Church Adult Choir will present music written by 17th, 18th, and 19th century composers from 2:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. at the church. At Battery Park, the New Castle Sailing Club will race 17 ft Flashes and 19 ft Ping Pong. Enjoy the excitement from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. today.
- Change - Ringing - Bells**
The six bells in the tower of Immanuel Church are being change-ringed, an art form dating back four centuries to the English Reformation. Today heard almost exclusively in the British Isles.
- Immanuel Church possesses one of only twenty-five active rings in North America.
- The Ringers Guild will ring the bells from 2:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.; 11:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.; 2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.; 3:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. calling the people for the Evensong, and 4:15 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The Immanuel Church tower will be open to the public for the first time ever (10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., and 1:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.).
- Episcopal Choral Evensong**
A service of Anglican Evensong sung at 3:30 p.m. by the choir of Immanuel Church. Music by English Composers.

Please refer to the map displayed on the inside of this flyer for location of numbered homes, gardens & public buildings

WHAT TO SEE

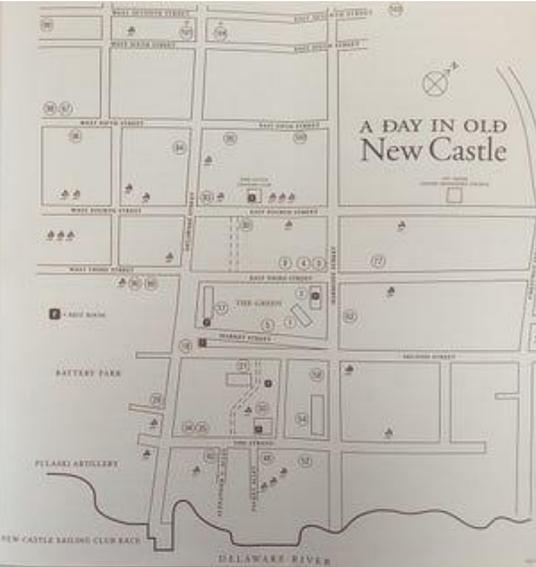
The following private houses and public buildings are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, May 21, 1995 for enjoyment by all alike.

1. Episcopal Church	56. Freney House
2. Academy Building	67. Lane Magnificent House
3. Museum House	71. Tuckle House
4. Old Library	80. Beane House
5. National on the Green	83. Amstel House
6. Beach House	84. Robinson House
7. Court House	85. Spingard House
8. Stone Hall and Workshop	86. Quinn House
9. "The Parthenon of the South"	87. Mayhew House
10. Brownell House	88. Howard House
11. Gaining Bedford House	89. Howard House
12. St. W. House	90. Free House
13. James M. & Sons	91. Read Peter's & Son's
14. Read House	92. The Knowledge Pharmacy
15. Read House	93. The Miller House
16. Read House	94. Buena Vista
17. William Bell House	
18. "Immanuel Church Tower"	

GARDENS

A highlight of New Castle gardens, large and small, representing a charming variety of styles of old and new. Several and informal is offered in conjunction with the house tour. Members bringing their own spread will be seated at each garden.

The Howard 94 & 95, Richard Anthony Dr. Barbara DeWitt Harris & Bill O'Quinn 94 & 95, The John Copley Inn, New Castle	Third Street 1. Catherine Bunker Cal House
Fourth Street Choir of Holy Trinity 104 & 105, William & Ellen Williams 106 & 107, William & Ellen Williams 108 & 109, William & Ellen Williams 110 & 111, William & Ellen Williams 112 & 113, William & Ellen Williams 114 & 115, William & Ellen Williams	Fourth Street 116 & 117, William & Ellen Williams 118 & 119, William & Ellen Williams 120 & 121, William & Ellen Williams 122 & 123, William & Ellen Williams 124 & 125, William & Ellen Williams 126 & 127, William & Ellen Williams 128 & 129, William & Ellen Williams 130 & 131, William & Ellen Williams 132 & 133, William & Ellen Williams 134 & 135, William & Ellen Williams



EVENT DESCRIPTIONS

Bell Ringing

The six bells in the tower of Immanuel Church are hung for change ringing, an art form dating back four centuries to the English Reformation and today heard almost exclusively in the British Isles. Immanuel Church possesses one of only 25 active rings in North America.

Mock Trial

A reenactment of a colonial trial held in the court of Oyer and Terminer in 1789. The Trial of William White, a tenant of John Dickerson, charged with manslaughter. Visitors will be able to participate as members of the jury and as two witnesses.

Robert Moulard

presents traditional Irish and Scottish music using period instruments and relates the culture and history of the music to the early life and times of this country. Arrived in traditional garb, Mr. Moulard performs on the clarsach, the bent-side spinet harpsichord and the hardy gurdy.

Dean Shostak

performs on the glass armonica, an instrument invented by Benjamin Franklin and popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. The three-foot series of crystal bowls mounted on a spindle is the only historically accurate armonica reproduction in existence. As he rotates the bowls by pumping a foot pedal, Shostak rubs the rims with his wet finger to produce clear, elegant tones that have been variously compared to the sound of a flute and wind organ. Mr. Shostak joins us from Williamsburg, Virginia.

Second Pennsylvania Regiment

has been called into town to identify Tories - British sympathizers - and to protect the homes, buildings and ritzers during A Day in Old New Castle.

Susquehanna Consort

This chamber wind ensemble performs period works and provides the music for our May Pole dancers.

James Goode

presents a lecture on historic house museums. Mr. Goode, a noted art historian who recently moved to New Castle from Washington, D.C., has given this talk previously at the Smithsonian.

May Pole/Children's Games

Local children perform the rites of spring dance and play.

Dover English Country Dancers

demonstrate dances that local citizens would have enjoyed during the colonial period.

Jeffrey C. Johnson

performs music by colonial composers including a setting of Charles Wesley's variations on 'God Save the King' plus music by Dutch composer Jan Sweelinck and other continental composers. Mr. Johnson is the organist and choirmaster at Immanuel Church.

Kalbar Nyckel

An authentic recreation of the 17th century vessel that brought the first permanent European settlers to the Delaware Valley; this tall ship will be docked at the wharf and open for town all day, with the exception of 1:45 to 2:45 when it will pull away from the dock to engage in cannon volleys with the Second Pennsylvania Regiment.

John Burkhalter and Eugene Roan

A recorder and harpsichord consort from Princeton, N.J., this duo has performed in many historic settings throughout the Northeast. Featured composers will be Henry Purcell and John Blow. Mr. Burkhalter will demonstrate several recorders and Mr. Roan will perform solo selections on the harpsichord.

Choral Evensong

will be sung by the Choir of Women and Men of Immanuel Church. Composers will include Henry Purcell and a recent discovery of colonial music by an early American composer, Supply Belcher.

Tin Punching

Winterthur Museum staff will be set up on the Green to demonstrate the art of tin punching, helping visitors to bring back a personal memento of the day.

Miniature Model of New Castle

researched and constructed by fourth graders at P.S. duParc Elementary School, this model of the town provides a 3-D map of the town. It will be displayed throughout the day in the Academy.

Carriage Rides

may be taken through town for an additional charge.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

9:30	Bell Ringing	Immanuel Church
10:00	Opening Ceremonies	Court House
10:15	Harpsichord/Recorder Recital	Immanuel Church
	Period Instruments Concert	Presbyterian Church
	Susquehanna Consort	Academy
10:30	Mock Trial	Court House
11:00	Maypole/Children's Games	Academy
11:30	Dover English Country Dancers	The Green
	Glass Armonica Demonstration	Presbyterian Church
	Bell Ringing	Immanuel Church

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Archaeological Dig: On the Green

All Day

An excavation will be conducted on the historic Green behind the Courthouse. Delaware State Museum archaeologist, Charles Fithian, will be on hand to identify artifacts and answer questions on Delaware archaeology.

Bells, Bells, Bells! Immanuel Episcopal Church on the Green

12N, 4:15 pm

Our own Immanuel Episcopal Church on the Green will host the Mid-Atlantic Ringers for change ringing, an art form dating back four centuries to the English Reformation. Immanuel Church possesses one of only 25 active rings in North America.

Brandenburg Concerto: Immanuel Episcopal Church on the Green

3 pm

Featured at historic Immanuel Church on the Green will be one of Johann Sebastian Bach's great orchestral masterpieces, the Brandenburg Concerto, Number 4 in G Major. An eight-piece baroque orchestra will celebrate this historic festival with one of the happiest works written for strings and flutes.

Cannons and Gunfire! On the Green and Around Town

10 am, 12:30 pm, 3:30 pm

The rattle of musketry and thunder of cannons will mix with the sounds of fife and drum as the Second Pennsylvania Regiment presents a vivid look at the soldiers of the American Revolution. The Regiment will perform a drill as members of Washington's troops at Valley Forge, firing smoky volleys from flintlock muskets and a colonial field gun, and leading a bayonet charge. The audience is welcome to talk with the members of this internationally acclaimed infantry company.

Carriage Rides: Town Hall by The Courthouse for Boarding

11 am-3 pm

Visitors will experience colonial times on a horse-drawn carriage ride around town. Tail Winds Farms will charm riders with the period's prevailing form of transportation. (Additional Fee)

Children's Crafts/Games/May Pole: On the Green

11 am, 1:30 pm/All Day

Local children in period costumes will perform a May Pole dance and demonstrate authentic children's games taught to them by Winterthur Museum staff. Visiting children are welcome to join in our fun! Winterthur staff will also be set up on the Green to assist children in fashioning an 18th century potpourri out of calico cloth. Children will enjoy tucking this memento of their Day in Old New Castle into a drawer or closet.

Choral Evensong: Immanuel Episcopal Church on the Green

3:30 pm

The Choir of Women and Men of Immanuel Episcopal Church on the Green will sing today's Choral Evensong, a prayer performed through song. Dr. David Herman, visiting from Centenary Methodist Church in Newark, DE, will accompany the Evensong with an organ recital.

Dover English Country Dancers: Town Hall 11:30 am, 2:30 pm
 This dance troupe from Dover, DE will perform the most popular form of dance from 17th and 18th century England — the English Country Dance. After colonists brought the dance form to North America it flourished during Revolutionary times, later evolving into the American square dance and the New England Contra dance.

Half Moon Tall Ship: Battery Park Pier All Day
 The *Half Moon*, a full-sized replica of the first European ship to record a visit to the Delaware Bay, will be docked along "The Strand" and available for boarding. One hundred feet in length, the original *Half Moon* was built in 1608. The next year Henry Hudson served as captain as the *Henlopen* on August 28, 1609.

Historic House Museums of DE and MD: The Read House, 42 The Strand 1 & 2 pm
 James Goode, a resident of New Castle, will lecture on three homes: Sotterly Plantation (Georgian period) in St. Mary's County, MD, Homewood (Federal Period) in Baltimore, MD and Nemours Mansion (Neo-Classical Period) in Wilmington, DE. Mr. Goode will bring the 18th century to life as he describes how families lived and entertained in these three very different homes. Mr. Goode, a former curator at the Smithsonian, is a noted expert on the architectural history of buildings.

Irish Music and Storytelling: Presbyterian Church, 2nd Street 11 am, 2 pm
 Robert Moulard will perform traditional Irish music and storytelling. Mr. Moulard's use of period instruments and authentic historical clothing will entertain and educate his audience. He will be performing on the wire strung Irish Harp, the flute (c. 1790), the fiddle (c. 1760), the flageolet and the hurdy-gurdy.

Miniature Model of New Castle: The Academy, 3rd and Harmony Streets All Day
 A three-dimensional map of the town will be displayed in the Academy. The model was researched and constructed by fourth graders from P.S. du Pont Elementary School.

Mock Trial: The Courthouse, Delaware Street 11 am, 1 & 3 pm
 William White, a tenant on the Dickinson plantation, will be tried in the Courthouse today for the 1789 manslaughter by felonious assault in the death of Thomas Emory. This historically accurate reenactment features New Castle's own Justice David Finney and Attorney General Gunning Bedford. Audience members may participate as witnesses and jurors in this mock trial located in the Courthouse.

Organ Recital: Immanuel Episcopal Church on the Green 11:30 am
 Dr. David Herman will perform a program entitled "Our British Heritage." The program will contain works for organ by Henry Purcell, William Boyce, John Stanley and Handel's "Music for the Royal Fireworks." Dr. Herman is the Professor and Chair of the Department of Music at the University of Delaware. He has performed internationally, including recitals in London's St. Paul's Cathedral, Southwark Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

Peddler's Booth: The Courthouse, Delaware Street All Day
 Two colonial proprietresses, Gloria Henry and Brenda Chase, will be displaying and "selling" colonial wares in an 18th century peddler's booth. Peddler's booths were typical at 18th century market days and court term sessions due to the increased number of visitors to the town. Usual items sold included tin-ware, hand-dipped candles, colonial games, quill pens and dyed cloth.

Petting Zoo: Battery Park All Day
 Friendly farm animals welcome hugs from visitors both large and small. Talley-Ho Farm will present a wide variety of animals many of which are rare and exotic breeds. We will even shear a sheep!

Susquehanna Consort: The Academy, 3rd and Harmony Streets 10:30 am, 1 & 3 pm
 This five-person ensemble will entertain with music from Colonial America as well as the Baroque and Renaissance periods. Listeners will be treated to the sweet sounds of a range of recorders—bass, tenor, alto, soprano, soprano and piccolo—and the raucous crumhorn quartet. Based in Harford County, MD the Susquehanna Consort will appear in costumes of the day.

Town Crier: The Courthouse and Around Town All Day
 William Penn, played by David Culver, will be strolling through Old New Castle. Mr. Penn will be accompanied by his personal secretary, James Logan, and a business associate, William Markham. He and his associates will be performing the Livery of Seasons, an ancient tradition showing transfer of property performed when Penn landed at New Castle.

Troubadour—"Pirates, Rogues and Broad-sides": Battery Park 10:30 am, 12:15 & 2 pm
 Bill Schustik, our troubadour, will enchant his audience with authentic pirate lore and songs. His magnificent baritone voice and colorful array of folk instruments have been enjoyed near and far. Mr. Schustik has performed for three U.S. presidents, recorded more than a few commercial and public TV specials and has appeared both on and off Broadway.

Wood Conservator: Battery Park All Day
 Mike Podmaniczky and his apprentice Katinka Podmaniczky will demonstrate 18th century wood turning techniques. Lathes reproduced from originals in Winterthur's historic Dorniny family cabinetmaking shop will be used for this demonstration. Mr. Podmaniczky is the Senior Conservator of Furniture at Winterthur.

Schedule For The Day

* Denotes all day activity

Time	Activity or Event	Location
10:00 am	Bell Ringing	Immanuel Church
	Opening Ceremony	Courthouse Apron
	17th Century Dutch / Swedish Encampment *	Read House Green
	Candlemaking Activity*	The Green
	Town Crier *	Around the Town
	John Dickinson Peddlers*	Courthouse
	Archaeological Dig Opens*	The Green
	2nd PA Regiment Encampment *	The Green & The Battery
	Silent Auction Opens	The Academy
10:30 am	Fencing Demonstration	Read House Green
	18th Century English Country Dance	Read House Green
	Storyteller	Academy, Secret Garden
	Music as Heard in 18th Century America (John Burkhalter, Recorder & Eugene Roan, Harpsichord)	Immanuel Church
11:00 am	Winterthur Craft Table Opens	The Green
	Horse & Carriage Rides Open (extra fee)	Town Hall
	Pam Pipes & Puppets Show	The Academy
	Period Music for Recorders	The Green
	Tour of Remodeled Town Hall & Trustees of the Common Talk	Town Hall
11:30 am	Fencing Demonstration	Read House Green
	Madrigal Singers	Around the Town
	Rug Hooking & Penny Rug Demonstration	The Green
	Maypole	The Green
	Luncheon/Tea Opens	The Parish House
Noon	Musket Firing Demonstration	The Green
	Bell Ringing	Immanuel Church
12:15 pm	Madrigal Singers at The Tea	The Parish House
12:30 pm	18th Century English Country Dance	Read House Green
	Fencing Demonstration	Read House Green
	Cannon Firing Demonstration	The Battery
1:00 pm	Period Music Recital (Don & Rachel Anderson, Flute & Lee Detra, Organ)	Immanuel Church
	Tour of Remodeled Town Hall & Trustees of the Common Talk	Town Hall
	Pam Pipes & Puppets Show	The Academy
	Period Music for Recorders	The Green
1:30 pm	Maypole	The Green
	Fencing Demonstration	Read House Green
	Period Music at The Tea (Robert Moulard)	The Parish House
2:00 pm	Musket Firing Demonstration	The Battery
	Tour of Remodeled Town Hall & Trustees of the Common Talk	Town Hall
	Storyteller	Academy, Secret Garden
2:15 pm	Madrigal Singers at The Tea	The Parish House
2:30 pm	Fencing Demonstration	Read House Green
	Cannon Firing Demonstration	The Battery
	18th Century English Country Dance	Read House Green
	The Trial of Long Finn	The Courthouse
	Bell Ringing	Immanuel Church
3:00 pm	Tour of Remodeled Town Hall & Trustees of the Common Talk	Town Hall
3:30 pm	Cannon Firing Demonstration	The Battery
4:00 pm	Evensong (The Choir, Organist & Rector of Immanuel Church)	Immanuel Church
4:45 pm	Bell Ringing	The Courthouse
	Closing Ceremony & Flag Lowering	
5:00 pm	Close of Day	
5:30 pm	Last Shuttle to Parking	

Program excerpts: 1988 map; 1990s churchyard legend; 1995 booklet map; 1995 day-of pamphlet cover; 1995 pamphlet interior; 1999 event descriptions; 2000 event descriptions (2 images); and the 2002 schedule of events. (NCHS)

Unfortunately, human institutions - however successful - rarely maintain the same momentum forever. As it had at times in the past, interest in DIONC began to wane in the 2000s. The crowds of visitors contracted a bit. Meanwhile, among parishioners and locals -

many of whom had moved to town well after the explosion of historic pride in the 1960s and 1970s - fewer each year volunteered for the event.

In 2010, for the first time since World War II, it looked like 'A Day in New Castle' would have to be cancelled. Indeed, the *News Journal/Delaware Online* reported that it had been... before later reporting that it had been saved by a private non-profit group, the Historic New Castle Alliance (HNCA), that would run the event for one year to give IEC's committee a break.

Articles from Delaware Online about the 2010 near-miss. (NCHS)

The Immanuel-led team did return for 2011 but, within a few more iterations of the event, the "volunteer fatigue" referred to in that article by Rev. Godden had become too great. Event features were trimmed to make it more feasible, which reduced public interest, creating an unfortunate feedback loop. It became clear that the parish could not continue, at least not as primary organizer of the event.

2014-2024: From the Steeple to the (Main) Street

In 2014, DIONC came to a crossroads. After nine decades of stewardship by a committee working under the IEC Vestry, there were insufficient volunteers for the committee or event. As is natural in any institution over ninety years, the church's needs had changed, as had the interests and capacities of parishioners. It looked like the event might have offered its last tour at DIONC that year.

As the reader may have surmised, however, it did not. Instead, 'A Day in Old New Castle' became the province and pride of HNCA. The private non-profit and 'Main Street USA' affiliate had been founded as 'the Oxygen Group' around 2008 with a focus on community development. It would later - around 2016 - rebrand as the New Castle Community Partnership (NCCP).

So we return to Mayor Leary, who was HNCA/NCCP president at that time and spearheaded DIONC's transition, and current event chair Cynthia Snyder... "I went to Fr. Keene and asked if NCCP could assume the event," Mrs. Leary explained. "They agreed, and so NCCP started with the 2015 ADONC."

"Not wanting to see [DIONC] disappear," Synder added, "the Partnership stepped up to take responsibility for continuing the New Castle signature event... As site manager of the Court House Museum, I had always been involved with DIONC. When the Partnership took over then I became a committee member in charge of entertainments, historical reenactors, and vendors."



Transition years: DIONC programs from 2014-2017 show the host shifting from IEC & the Community, to just 'the Community,' to NCCP and Residents. (NCHS)

Beyond the Partnership and the Court House Museum, many institutions and organizations became involved in ensuring DIONC continued, including long-time event partners as well as new sponsors and associations. Snyder offered a non-comprehensive list: “We partner with many non-profits such as:

- [Arasapha Garden Club](#),
- [Friends of the Library](#),
- [New Castle Hundred Lions Club](#),
- New Castle Jaycees,
- [New Castle Library](#),
- [Read House and Gardens](#),
- [New Castle Historical Society](#),
- [several] local churches [including IEC],
- The [Trustees of the Common](#), and
- M&T Bank and other corporate businesses help with grants.”

Mrs. Leary clarified that, at first, “Arasapha got the homes and gardens; Friends of the Library did ticket sales pre- and at the event. Arasapha now [handles just the] gardens, and others do the homes.” The Friends continue to assist with promotional/group pre-sales and running the event’s registration/info area at the Court House.

The Partnership and its partners have continued the DIONC tradition while adding their own touches and flourishes to keep the event fresh for modern audiences. Ms. Snyder recounted some of the changes...

The house and garden tours stayed basically the same, but we added new activities for the visitors. We started more family-oriented and hands-on activities for children. We added [back] extra attractions like reenactment groups, entertainments, food vendors, music and the Kalmar Nyckel tall ship. Dennis Young added his Plein Air Painting Competition which is a popular addition. Some years we had special themes like Civil War, pirates, a colonial marketplace, and [last year] the Great Fire of 1824.

Welcome to the 91st Day in Old New Castle!

On the third Saturday of May, rain or shine, many of the residents open their homes and gardens to visitors from all over the east coast and beyond.

A Day in Old New Castle is the oldest continuously operating house and garden tour in the United States. Started in 1924 by a group of enterprising ladies from Immanuel Church, A Day in Old New Castle's mission was to share knowledge of life, art and architecture in Colonial America. It also offered a day of fellowship and hospitality to and by the community as well as to raise funds for the preservation of the church and other historic buildings. The mission has continued over the years, but today all of the funds raised are used to benefit local charities and institutions.

This year, A Day in Old New Castle is transitioning to a community based management, but all net proceeds will continue to be used to benefit local organizations, museums and institutions.

Join us as commemorate the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War with the theme "Union and Freedom." The year 1865 was a momentous time for New Castle as it was for the nation. The end of the Civil War brought reunification of the country as well as the promise of freedom for all Americans. We invite you to discover our city and tour the many homes, gardens and public buildings that witnessed the rebirth of America at the conclusion of the Civil War.

Please remember that most of the houses on tour are private homes. Photographs or videos of any kind are prohibited. There is no smoking permitted in any of the homes, museums or church buildings. The homes, gardens and museums will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Please enjoy our beautiful city and come back often!

Sincerely,

The A Day in Old New Castle Committee

Residents of New Castle, Delaware

May 16, 2015

Day in Old New Castle Committee

Event Chair: Valarie Windle Leary
 Event Co-Chairs: Cindy Snyder and Russ Smith
 Treasurer: Laura Fontana
 Entertainment and Supervision of the Green: Cindy Snyder
 Gardens: Sandy Beale, Judie Baldini, Linda Suskie
 Houses: Sally Monigle
 Marketing: Ted Joslin, Terry Gormley, Laura Fontana, Alice Richi
 Program: Terry Gormley
 Production Assistant: Eric Ziminsky
 Tickets/Hospitality: Barbara Whisman, Irene Biggs and the New Castle Library Friends
 Volunteer Coordinators: Joy Pietschmann and Debbie Keese
 Dewey Park Artisans: Shirley Davis
 Set up/Take Down: The New Castle Lions Club & The New Castle Jaycees, and many other helping hands
 Website: Jeff Meadows
 Immanuel Church Representative: Jon Barrett

The A Day in Old New Castle Committee wishes to thank:

All the residents who opened their homes and gardens, for without your hospitality, this event would not be possible.
 The Members of the New Castle Community Partnership (NCCP)
 The Arasapha Garden Club for procuring the homes and gardens
 The Museums for opening free to the public today
 The Trustees of the New Castle Common for their continued support
 Immanuel Church on the Green for their trust and assistance
 The New Castle Lions Club for the tents
 New Castle Library Friends for ticket sales
 All of our sponsors and local businesses
 The City of New Castle
 The New Castle City Police
 The North American Guild of Change Ringers

Schedule of Events

9am-5:45pm Shuttle buses from New Castle Baptist Church in Court House.
 5:45pm Last bus from New Castle to NC Baptist Church parking.
 9am-4pm Ticket and Information Booths open.
 10am-5pm Museums, Houses, Gardens open.
 10am-5pm Union Patriotic League Encampment- The Green
 2nd Delaware Regiment Volunteer Infantry Encampment- The Green
 2nd New Jersey Volunteer Infantry, Co. K Encampment- The Green
 Wood Spinners - Kate Crippen / John Trappman- The Green
 Furniture Maker - Jack Schuman, For Woodness Sale- The Green
 Children's Civil War Games - Read House Garden
 10am-5pm Artisan Vendors - Dewey Park
 10-11am 2nd Delaware Infantry Formation and Drill- The Green
 10:30-11am Ft. Delaware Coronet Band- The Green
 11-11:30am NCUM Choir sings Civil War songs- NC United Methodist Church
 11-11:30am Tour Historic Buttonwood School
 11-12pm History play- "Tide of Two Confederate Soldiers"- Immanuel Church Parish Hall
 11am-12pm Field Soup- 2nd Delaware Regiment String Band- The Green
 11am-1pm Matthew Dodd- Civil War Singer and Storyteller - The Green
 11am-3pm Carriage Rides- Front of Town Hall- Delaware Street
 11:30am-2:30pm VIP Progressive Lunch * Special MAWFF ticket purchase
 12-1pm Serenata Strings- Read House Garden
 12-2pm 1860s era Baseball Game- Brandywine Baseball Club of West Chester vs. Talbot Fair Play of Easton, MD- Battery Park
 1-1:30pm Tour Historic Buttonwood School

1-1:30pm NCUM Choir sings Civil War songs- NC United Methodist Church
 1-1:45pm Suzuki Violins- The Green
 1-2pm 2nd Delaware Regiment Children's Military Drill- The Green
 1-2pm Civil War Veterans Cemetery Walking Tour
 Immanuel Church Cemetery entrance
 2-3pm Ft. Delaware Coronet Band- Green
 2-3pm History play- "Tide of Two Confederate Soldiers"- Immanuel Church Parish House
 2:30-3:30pm Serenata Strings- Read House Garden
 2:30-4:30pm MAWFF- Beer & Cheese Pairing- Arsenal *Special ticket purchase
 3-3:30pm Historic Buttonwood School Tour
 3-4pm Civil War Veterans Cemetery Tour
 Immanuel Church Cemetery entrance
 3-4pm Field Soup- 2nd Delaware Infantry String Band- The Green
 4-5pm Evensong- Immanuel Church

Buttonwood School Tours and Bus Schedule

Historic Buttonwood School buses at 1:00am, 1:00pm, 3:00pm.
 Bus Schedule: Stop on Delaware St across from Court House.

10:45am Bus departs New Castle and arrives at Buttonwood at 11:00am.
 11:45am Bus departs New Castle and arrives at Buttonwood at 12:00pm for return.
 12:15pm Bus departs Buttonwood and arrives in New Castle 12:30pm.
 12:45pm Bus departs New Castle and arrives at Buttonwood at 1:00pm.
 1:45pm Bus departs Buttonwood and arrives in New Castle at 2:00pm.
 2:45pm Bus departs New Castle and arrives at Buttonwood 3:00pm.
 3:45pm Last Bus departs Buttonwood and arrives in New Castle 4:00pm.

Pages from the 2015 DIONC program - Welcome, Committee & Acknowledgments, Schedule (centerfold). (NCHS)

One thing that has not changed is that the proceeds from the event continue to be split among the non-profit partners that come together to make it work each year.

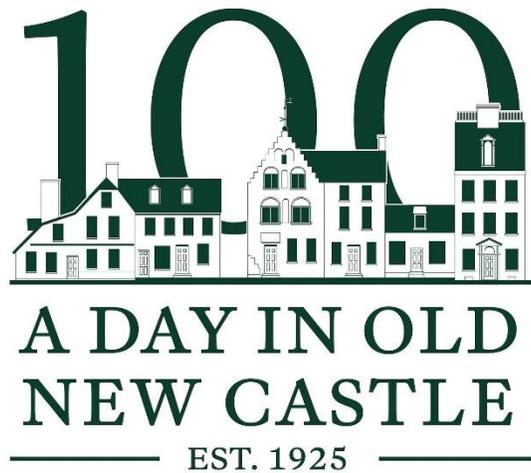
With the constant churn of people involved directly in NCCP and the DIONC committee, the ebb and (in some recent years, sadly constricted) flow of volunteerism, and the ever-changing expectations of digital-age event guests, 'A Day in Old New Castle' continues to change.

For example, having chaired quite her share of successful DIONC events over the last decade, Ms. Snyder will step back from the role after this year. This news led to some speculation that the Partnership might let the event reach 100 and 'call it a Day.'

"At first there was some concern that there would be no one willing to Chair the event," Snyder acknowledged. "But that problem has been solved. The New Castle Community Partnership will continue DIONC with a new Chair. We look forward to the 101st year!"

Mrs. Leary added, "Volunteers are always needed, so please reach out if you would like to do so. A couple of hours of your time would be greatly appreciated."

The chair of DIONC 2026 will be announced following this year's event.



2025: Celebrating 100 ‘New Castle Days’

On Saturday, April 17, 2025, New Castle will celebrate the [100th ‘Day in Old New Castle’](#) with an array of activities and events designed to evoke both the first DIONC event and the outgoing, art-deco-suffused spirit of the 1920s from which it was born.

Activities will include:

- Dock tour on the Kalmar Nyckel (ticket)
- Historic houses and gardens open for tour (ticket)
- Museums and church tours (ticket)
- 1900-1940 antique cars from the Brandywine Antique Car Club (free)
- Steam Cars from the Marshall Steam Car Museum (free)
- The Wheelmen antique velocipedes and bicycles (free)
- 1st Delaware Regiment Encampment/Ft. Casimir Garrison Encampment (free)
- Colonial Artisans and crafts (free)
- Children’s activities (free), and
- the concurrent New Castle Saturday Market

An entirely new feature of the DIONC festivities this year will be the ‘1920s Swinging Soiree,’ to be held in the evening at Zollie’s Shaw Alley venue.

Tickets for DIONC itself, as well as the Soiree, are available at HistoricNewCastle.com. DIONC visitors paying day-of will get \$1 off ticket price if they are dressed in Colonial or Victorian period clothing.



A DIONC docent in beautiful period attire in 2023.

...

As she prepares to oversee this momentous anniversary for ‘A Day in Old New Castle,’ Cindy Snyder shared what has motivated her to keep at it so long. “I love to see visitors come and be amazed at the history and beauty of our town,” she said. “It is wonderful to see so many residents giving of their time and talents to produce this event. Kids have a lot of fun, and that is also great to watch.”

Thanks for reading!

Huge thanks to Mike Connolly and New Castle Historical Society, as well as local newspaper archives, for making the research for this story possible. There were so many sources, sometimes slightly conflicting... If any details are off, please reach out, as we're always happy to receive feedback and, if needed, make corrections to the web version of a story.

Thanks also to Cindy Snyder and Valarie Leary for speaking to us for this feature, and to Dorsey Fiske for providing some background info on the header photograph with Mr. Cooper.

Hope to see you on the bricks for A Day in Old New Castle!

Originally published 5/10/2025 at <https://ttnc.substack.com/p/a-hundred-days-in-old-new-castle>.