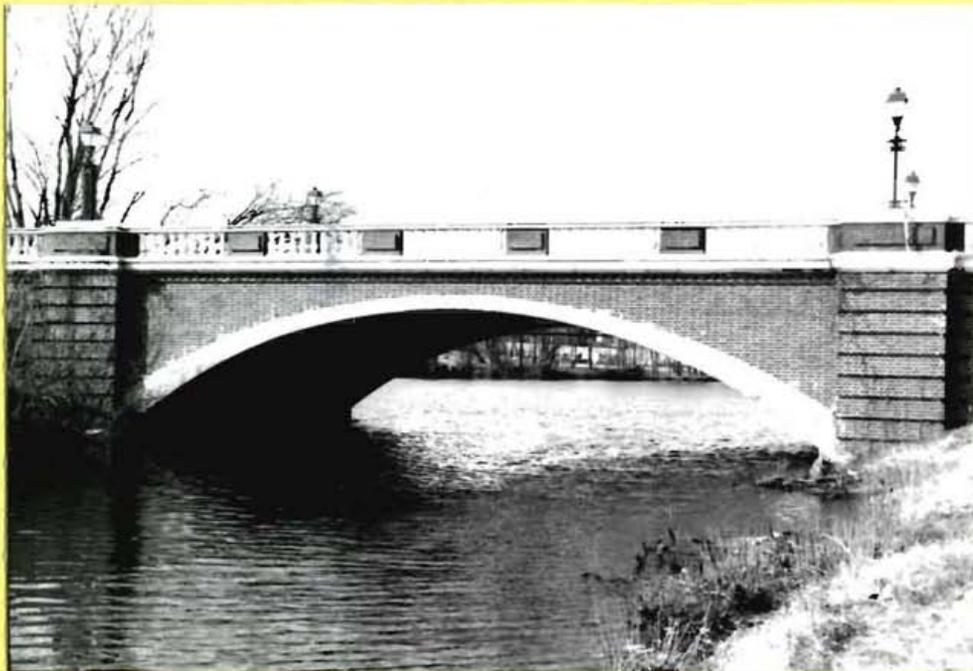


10. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE

State Bridge Number 23A

11. PHOTOS (W/ FILM ROLL & FRAME NO.) AND SKETCH MAP OF LOCATION

27A:20-31



27A:27

Mack, Warren W. "A History of Motor Highways in Delaware", in Reed, Henry Clay, Delaware: A History of the First State, vol.2, pp.535-550 (NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1947).

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Hancock, Harold Bell. A History of Kent County, Delaware. (Dover, Del.: Dover Litho Printing Co., 1976).

Spero, Paula A. C. A Survey and Photographic Inventory of Concrete and Masonry Arch Bridges in Virginia. (Charlottesville, Virginia: Virginia Highway & Transportation Research Council, 1984).

Kent County Levy Court Papers.

Delaware State Archives. Kent County Road Records 1875-1940. ms. State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

Delaware DOT records: Annual Reports; photo archives, contract files.

Plans on file at Delaware DOT: Contract #227A, 80-098-03, 81-098-04

13. INVENTORIED BY:

AFFILIATION

DATE

P.A.C. Spero & Company with Kidde Consultants for Delaware DOT

April-November 1988

HABS/HAER INVENTORY

See "HABS/HAER Inventory Guidelines" before filling out this card.

1. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE

State Bridge Number 23A

2. LOCATION

East Lookerman St. over Saint Jones River
Dover, Kent County, Delaware

3. DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION

1934

4. USE (ORIGINAL/CURRENT)

Vehicular

5. RATING

CA

6. CONDITION

Excellent: Some scour at waterline.

State Highway Bridge 23A (Dover Bridge) is a monumental single span reinforced concrete arch bridge embellished with brick veneer, a brick and white marble balustrade, and ornamental light posts. The bridge is 114'-3" long, with an arch clear span of 52'-0". The roadway is 30'-0" with a 5'-0" sidewalk on each side. The substructure consists of reinforced concrete abutments and wing walls which are supported on timber piling. The wing walls are U-shaped and highly ornamental, with rusticated brick pilasters accentuating the abutments and portals, and an arched niche breaking up the expanse between pilasters. All visible portions of the bridge are faced with brick veneer except for a white marble arch ring which emphasizes the arch and corresponds to the balustrade. The parapet wall is divided into three sections which correspond to the arch and the wing walls; it consists of a marble balustrade with corbeled marble rails, solid brick panels, and scrolled endposts.

Delaware Department of Transportation records state that Bridge 23A was built in 1934 under State Highway Department contract 227A (Federal Aid Project 94C & D). The State awarded the contract to Snyder Engineering Company, Inc. of Middlesex, New Jersey for \$27,085. Original drawings, dated August 1933, illustrate the configuration of the bridge and its construction and ornamental details. The bridge was designed for a twenty ton truck. Added notes on the drawings document the construction process. In 1932, the State Highway Department began planning for a new concrete bridge over the St. Jones River at East Lookerman Street in Dover, the state capital. The Department noted that this structure required "special attention . . . to secure a design which will be in harmony with its surroundings and setting", specifically the new Georgian Colonial State Legislative Building nearby. To achieve this harmony, the Department developed five alternate elevations, and considered a sixth of polychrome concrete. The decision was made for a traditional Colonial Revival appearance, and E. William Martin was engaged to detail the ornamentation. Martin, designer of the State Legislative Building, was among Delaware's most prominent architects of the period. A graduate of the University of Delaware and of the School of Architecture of the University of Liverpool, England, he had toured France and Italy and studied the architecture of those countries. He began practicing in Philadelphia, and was admitted to American Institute of Architects in 1923. In September 1926, he came to Wilmington and opened offices in the DuPont Building. He quickly rose to statewide prominence in his profession, becoming a charter member (and later President) of the Delaware Chapter of the AIA, which was organized in November, 1931. One of the first activities of the Chapter was to support legislation requiring the registration of architects in Delaware; this legislation was passed in 1933, and Martin served as the first President of the state Registration Board. He served as regional director for the Historic American Buildings Survey in Delaware in 1934. Martin received an honorary degree from the University of Delaware in 1936, in recognition of his distinction in architecture, and was honored with a Chamber of Commerce award for the "finest residence and finest public building designed by a Delaware architect" in 1940. He was elevated to Fellowship in the AIA December 14, 1945 for ". . . his achievements in the practice of his profession. By the conscientious and painstaking devotion to the design of his buildings, his sense of scale, and understanding of the use of his material, he has contributed notably to the practice of architecture in Delaware and vicinity." Martin's commissions included several large residences for prominent Delawareans, as well as several smaller suburban dwellings. Pierre S. duPont was among Martin's most active clients, commissioning numerous houses, an organ room and concert hall addition for his residence at Longwood, an Azalea House addition to the Horticultural Group at Longwood Gardens, and several other buildings on his estate. Among Martin's public commissions were the Federal Court Building and Post Office in Wilmington, the State Legislative Building in Dover, several school buildings in Delaware and Pennsylvania, and the Contagion Wing of the Chester County Hospital (which was donated to the Hospital by P. S. duPont). For the East Lookerman Street Bridge, Martin detailed the structure's red brick fascia and white marble trim; the result proved satisfactory to the State Highway Department, which in its 1933 Annual Report called it "one of the beautiful small bridges of America. It is a 52-foot concrete arch finished with colonial brick and white marble, the motif being suggested by that of the nearby new State Legislative Building. The completion of this bridge . . . will transform this formerly ugly locality into one of undeniable attraction". The marble consoles on the parapet were modeled by Edward Ardolino, Inc., architectural sculptors of Philadelphia, whose work is represented in such monumental buildings as the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City and the Nebraska State Capital. The decorative stonework was executed by the Vermont Marble Company of Proctor, Vermont. Construction began in November, 1933. Detailing the East Lookerman Street Bridge ornamentation was E. William Martin's first commission for the State Highway Department. Martin subsequently was commissioned for the Colonial Revival detailing of the ornamentation for the North State Street Bridge over Silver Lake in Dover (1937), a similarly prominent crossing in a picturesque location.

Bridge 23A occupies a prominent location in the state capital city adjacent to the State Legislative Building. Designed to harmonize with its setting, it features extensive architectural elaboration in the Colonial Revival style. It is one of two Dover bridges for which distinguished Wilmington architect, E. William Martin designed the details of the ornamentation.