

10. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE

State Bridge Number 504S

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

8B:24-36A



8B:26

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).

Delaware State Program. Delaware State Highways; The Story of Roads in Delaware... [Newark, Delaware: Press of Kells, 1919].

Federal Writers Project. Delaware: A Guide to the First State. (New York: Viking Press, 1938).

Carter, Dick. The History of Sussex County. Georgetown, Delaware: Community Newspaper Corp., 1976.

Hancock, Harold Bell. The History of Sussex County, Delaware. [s.l. : s.n.] 1976.

Rae, John B. "Coleman duPont and His Road," Delaware History, vol.16 (3), PP.171-183 (Spring-Summer, 1975)

Delaware State Archives. Sussex County Road Papers. 1875-1940. ms. State Archives, Dover, Delaware.

Delaware DOT records: Annual Reports; contract files.

Plans on file at Delaware DOT: DuPont 844, 82-073-06

12. SOURCES

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 504S

2. LOCATION

Route 113S over Wharton Branch
Millsboro, Sussex County, Delaware

3. DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION

1911/1946

4. USE (ORIGINAL/CURRENT)

Vehicular

5. RATING

CS

6. CONDITION

Good

State Highway Bridge Number 504S consists of a continuous two span concrete slab bridge with an overall length of 29'-0". The deck measures 42'-0" wide, carrying two lanes of traffic on an asphalt wearing surface. The 12'-9" long slab spans are supported on concrete abutments with flared wing walls; there is one battered intermediate pier which rests on a concrete footing whose outer sides are sheathed in vertical 3" x 6" timbers. A simple concrete parapet is embellished with three incised rectangles on its inner and outer surfaces. The upper edge of the slab is corbeled, and the lower edge is finished with a chamfer, as are the vertical corners of the pier.

Delaware Department of Transportation records indicate that Bridge Number 504S was constructed in 1911. The bridge was built for the first section of the DuPont Highway, completed in 1917 from Selbyville to Millsboro. The DuPont Highway was conceived and financed by Coleman T. du Pont, who offered in 1908 to organize a corporation authorized by the state to acquire right-of-way, and to construct a visionary superhighway within it. Du Pont, an 1885 graduate of M.I.T, and vocal proponent for good roads, proposed to build a futuristic superhighway from Wilmington to the Maryland border; his monument would provide all weather roads for the agricultural lower counties, facilitating transportation to the industrial, more developed New Castle County system. He envisioned a highway of grand scale, "the straightest, widest, and best road in the country". Initial plans called for a multi-modal layout, with central lanes for high-speed automobiles, and flanking lanes for trolleys, heavy motor freight, horses and horse-drawn vehicles, and pedestrians. Airfields were to be located at intervals within the median strip, agricultural experiment stations would be spaced along the way, and electrical conduits were to run underground. Unused land within the broad 200-foot right-of-way was to be leased to utilities and other enterprises, including farming, to enable the highway to be self-supporting. DuPont would bear all costs of construction, and turn the road over to the state upon completion. The Boulevard Corporation Act was passed by the General Assembly in 1911, authorizing the corporation, known as Coleman duPont Road, Inc., to construct a highway the length of the state. As each section of ten miles was completed, it was to be conveyed to the state free of charge. With existing roads which were practically impassible in bad weather, construction began in 1911 on the southernmost section in Sussex County September 18, 1911. Litigation interrupted construction from 1912 to 1915, but the first 20 miles of the road, from the Maryland Line near Selbyville to six miles south of Milford, was completed and presented to the State on May 24, 1917. In September of that year, DuPont, who had been appointed to the Highway Commission which supervised the newly formed State Highway Department, saw a possible conflict of interest in continued involvement in acquisition and planning the rest of the Highway. He turned over control for the completion of the road to the Department, but continued to underwrite the costs of finishing it, up to \$44,000 per mile. The completion of the Du Pont Highway was marked by a celebration in Dover on September 2, 1924. By the time of its dedication in 1924, Du Pont had contributed a total of \$3,917,004 toward the construction of this visionary highway project. Rehabilitation in 1946 (State Contract No.844, Federal Aid Project No. 66[2]) consisted of widening the bridge. Construction joints evident in the pier verify that it was widened to accommodate increasing traffic. Drawings for the 1946 widening, dated March 1946, show that the structure was widened six feet on both sides. The notes indicate that the new section should conform to the old structure. The alterations were designed to carry an H-20 load according to 1944 AASHO specifications.

Bridge 504S, a typical concrete slab bridge of standardized design, was one of the first structures built on the DuPont Highway. It derives its significance from its association with the initial phases of constructing that highway, a private roadbuilding initiative undertaken as a visionary response to the increasing importance of automobile transport in the early twentieth century. Alterations made in 1946 do not detract from the significance of this structure; rather, in reflecting the increase in road traffic that took place in the period after the completion of the DuPont Highway, these alterations underscore the importance of Du Pont's concept. Although not executed as envisioned by Du Pont, the highway was still an example of modern highway design in a state which previously had only 8% improved roadways.