

10. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE

State Bridge Number 508S

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

8B-1:8-13



8B-1:10A

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].

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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: contract files.

Plans on file at Delaware DOT: DuPont 145, DuPont 845

13. INVENTORIED BY:

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

AFFILIATION

DATE

April-November 1988

HABS/HAER INVENTORY

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

1. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE

State Bridge Number 508S

2. LOCATION

Route 113S over Betts Pond
Millsboro, Sussex County, Delaware

3. DATE(S) OF CONSTRUCTION

1912/1930/1946

4. USE (ORIGINAL/CURRENT)

Vehicular

5. RATING

CS

6. CONDITION

Good

State Highway Bridge 508S is a reinforced concrete slab bridge, 23'-0" long, with a clear span of 20'-0" and a curb-to-curb width of 44'-0". This small span features concrete abutments and flared wing walls and a solid concrete parapet with three incised rectangles and chamfered top edges. Corbeling on the fascia creates a horizontal line.

Delaware Department of Transportation records state that Bridge 508S was built in 1912. 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. Bridge 508S was rehabilitated in 1930 and 1946. 1946 repairs were carried out under Contract 84S, Federal Aid Project No.66 (3). Both repairs involved widening the roadway; in 1930 the bridge was widened to the east and in 1946 it was widened on both sides.

Bridge 508S, 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. Successive widenings in 1930 and 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.