Have You Ever Wondered How The Du Pont Highway Got Its Name? When And Why Was It Built? Where Is It Go!
Did It Replace An Earlier Road?
The Delaware Department of Transportation, in part of the planning office for improvements in U.S. Route 113 (DuPont) to the Maryland state line, is buffing access to these and other questions at the history of the Du Pont Highway and the important buildings and historical sites that line the highway as it is meandered. This study will increase awareness and understanding of the people and places that have shaped Delaware.

How Did The Du Pont Highway Come About?

The idea for the Du Pont Highway grew out of a nationwide campaign for good roads that began in the late 1930s. The highway was the brainchild of W. Apartments du Pont (1856-1935), a Wilmington businessman, industrialist, and chief "superintendent" advocate. A Du Pont observed the poor roads and poor economic conditions of northern Delaware as he traveled from Wilmington to his (e) on the I-95 corridor. He was convinced that a modern highway would improve the economic development of the area, and the backbone of this system could be a major northeast-southwest highway.

Du Pont envisioned a 288-mile wide right-of-way with separate conditions dedicated to high-speed automatic traffic, industry, motor and wagon traffic, homes, and pedestrian traffic. Agricultural experimental centers were strung along the right-of-way, and monuments serving as "blue points" for future survey routes were plotted (1.000 feet intervals. Du Pont’s thought was that a multi-lane highway was the most practical and durable solution. This proposal faced significant local opposition, mainly because of the considerable revenue needed for the right-of-way.

When Was The Du Pont Highway Built?

Eventually, a narrower right-of-way was acquired, and construction of "The Straightest, Widest, and Best Road in the Country" was begun in 1932. It was completed in 1935 at a cost of nearly $1.3 billion (approximately $16.5 billion in today’s dollars) and presented as a gift to the people of Delaware. As a ceremony, W. Apartments du Pont was presented with a silver and gold plaque (now on exhibit at the Delaware Public Archives) bearing his contributions to the state.

What Changes Did The Du Pont Highway Bring?

Within a few years the Du Pont Highway was regarded in accommodation to traffic. By the late 1930s, approximately the northern section of the highway was rebuilt as a divided highway. In 1938, the Du Pont Highway was officially known as the U.S. Route 113, U.S. 1, and U.S. 13. Working of portions of the 113 miles with highway in Kent County began in 1938.

The highway brought changes in farming practices, with farmers, market producers, and poultry raising gradually replacing grain and livestock farming. Farmers and more modern farming practices and equipment. The highway brought new industries as well: While more through traffic than 1875 in Milford, more recently inspired to Route 113, the Du Pont Highway continues to serve local traffic needs and provides access to road and businesses. South of Milford, it continues to be home to one of Delaware’s major island north-to-south routes.

Telling The Story

The historical study of the Du Pont Highway is part of DelDOT’s continuing efforts to engage Delaware citizens in the discovery of their state’s history. DelDOT is responsible for the maintenance and safety of the state’s road network. This study examines and documents the history of the state’s road network and the landmarks along those routes.

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DelDOT’s Roadside History Project Web site:
http://www.delstate.edu/roadsideproject/113/index.html

DelDOT’s Archaeology and Historic Preservation Web site:
http://www.delstate.edu/roadsideproject/113/author.html