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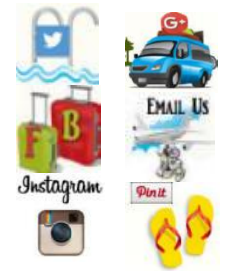


Wilmington, Delaware's "Chateau Country"
by Renee S. Gordon

*"...my most sincere respects, and accept yourself assurances of my constant affection, and my prayers that a genial sky and propitious gales may place you after a pleasant voyage in the midst of your friends."
Thomas Jefferson to Pierre du Pont 1802*

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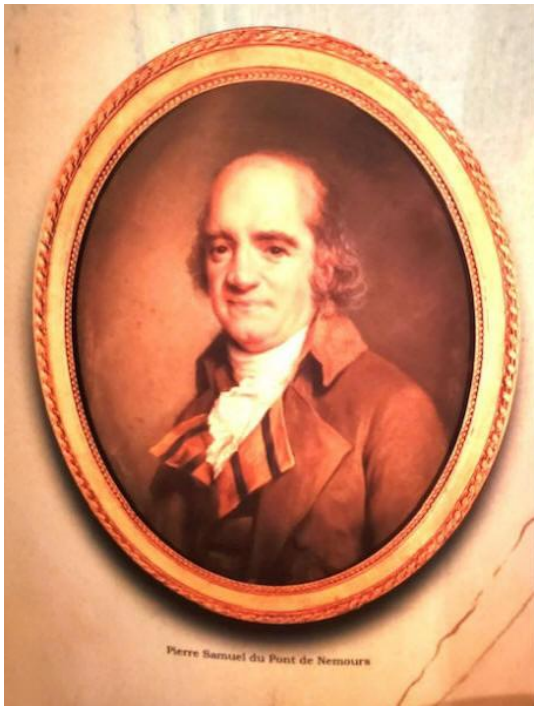
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Coming to America

During the French Revolution, Pierre Samuel du Pont de Nemours (1739-1817), a noted statesman and philosopher, made a difficult decision to leave France and move to the United States for a new beginning. This followed his second imprisonment for his political views. Du Pont had received high-level government appointments during the reign of Louis XVI and later was elected to positions of prominence in the numerous provisional governments leading up to and through the French Revolution.

Joining him on the trip were his two sons, Victor Marie and Eleuthère Irénée, with their families. Victor, employed by the diplomatic corps, had spent several years in the United States. The younger son, E. I. had been managing his father's printing and publishing business in Paris.

Preparations for the move took almost two years. Pierre Samuel raised capital from investors based on plans that he outlined for several commercial ventures in the United States. Along with his two sons and their families, he left France on October 2, 1799. Following a long, harrowing voyage aboard the *American Eagle*, they arrived in the United States in January of 1800 and settled in New Jersey.

In 1800 Pierre-Samuel du Pont de Nemours and two sons left France to settle in the United States. This voyage would alter the course of American history. Pierre had been elevated to nobility because of his position with Louis XVI as an economist, secretary to the Assembly of Notables and his assistance in crafting the 1783 Treaty of Versailles that ended the American Revolution. The journey was motivated by the fact that he had been imprisoned during the French Revolution in 1792 and only escaped the guillotine because of the death of Robespierre. After reimprisonment along with his son Eleuthère, in 1797 he made plans to leave the country.

The Role of Explosives in America

Gunpowder was an essential item in the opening of the frontier and the settlement of the nation. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, gunpowder was used not only for hunting, protection, and military purposes, but also for mining and canal construction. It was gunpowder that cleared the way for the building of the Erie Canal, which opened in 1825.

In the middle of the century, gunpowder was used in railroad building. Between 1851 and 1860, more than 20,000 miles of new track was built, opening up the West to new development. Gunpowder also had extensive military usage. During the Civil War, almost all of DuPont's production of gunpowder was purchased for the Union army and navy.

When dynamite became available it facilitated America's rapid industrial and economic growth. Dynamite was so powerful that it made it practical to move mountains. The building of cities, railroads, highways, dams, and aqueducts all used immense quantities of dynamite. The Panama Canal alone used nearly 61 million pounds of dynamite. One important use of dynamite was in the mining of stone. Crushed stone was used to make the concrete that built roads and cities. The use of dynamite changed our landscape and helped to build our nation's infrastructure.



Family legend has it that Eleuthère Irénée du Pont, while hunting in 1800, noted the poor quality of American gunpowder. In France he had trained under Antoine Lavoisier at the Royal Powder Works and he selected a location on the Brandywine River, accessible to transportation and sufficient water power, to establish a gunpowder operation. He purchased the land in 1801 for \$6,700. The company prospered and in the 1860s supplied 50% of the gunpowder used in the Civil War.



The American ancestral home of the du Ponts has come to be known as Chateau Country because of its general landscape with rolling hills and streams and its elegant estate museums. Nestled in the Brandywine Valley of Northern Delaware, mere miles from Philadelphia, Pierre hoped to create a community for French exiles and Eleuthere hoped to found a viable company. Today visitors can trace the family trail and have a unique vacation filled with fine dining, magnificent views and historic house and garden tours all with an international flair.



Hagley



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Chronologically Hagley Museum and Library should be your starting point. Situated on the Brandywine's shores, the restored gunpowder mill complex consists of the first du Pont family home, built on 65-acres in 1802. The museum interprets the history of du Pont's Eleutherian Mills, the family and early industrial technology. A narrated bus tour, a must, guides you along the Powder Yard Trail with stops at the worker's quarters and several demonstration sites. Highlights of a visit to the current 235-acre site include the first office, the largest Osage Orange tree in America, an orientation video, "Industry on the Brandywine" and a number of interactive exhibits. hagley.org









Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library, the estate of Henry Francis du Pont, is situated amidst 60-acres of gardens and features a superior display of American decorative arts from 1640-1860 showcased within a 175 room mansion. Complete room settings from each of the 13 colonies make up the 150 colonial rooms he relocated to Winterthur and the more than 90,000 furnishings include Martha Washington's mirror, 22 panels of 1700s Chinese wallpaper and a selection of the Washington's porcelain china. The home had the first heated pool in the country. Grounds' tours are via open trams and provide views of seasonal plantings, 8-acres of azaleas, the Enchanted Woods, a Forbidden Fairy Ring with misting mushrooms and a temporary exhibit of follies placed throughout the grounds. Take the Introductory Tour and be prepared to be awed.

Costuming
THE
CROWN

The Crown is a fictionalized account of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, written and created by Peter Morgan, CBE. Within the framework of history, this screenplay documents the public—and imagines the private—lives of the British royal family. A critical part of creating a believable historical drama is designing costumes that accurately represent the time and the people. This exhibition looks at the artistry behind the costumes for Seasons 1 and 2 of the Netflix drama *The Crown* and carefully considers how the designers both re-created history and evoked the personalities of the royal family on screen.









Until January 5, 2020 "Costuming the Crown" will be on view. A series of galleries thematically display costumes from the PBS series, "The Crown", as well as extensive production information, videos and memorabilia. www.winterthur.org







Alfred du Pont built the Neoclassical, 102-room, Nemours for his wife in 1909-10. The 47,000-sq. ft. chateau is reminiscent of Versailles' Petit Trianon complete with sunken gardens and magnificent views. The mansion is flanked by the Catherine Gates. The Russian Gates, were once owned by Catherine the Great and the English Gates are from a castle belonging to Henry VIII's wife Catherine Parr. Highlights of the interior are the notable pieces, Lafayette's chandelier and Marie Antoinette's clock. Self-guided and tram tours of the grounds and gardens are offered. nemoursmansion.org





Pierre du Pont Creates Longwood

After the death of George Washington Peirce in 1880, his heirs allowed Peirce's Park to deteriorate. In 1905, after 200 years of ownership, they sold the property to people who planned to cut the trees for lumber. When Pierre du Pont learned of this, he purchased the land in 1906 to save the magnificent trees. He named his new farm "Longwood" and began to indulge his interest in horticulture. It soon became his retreat from the business world and a place where he could entertain his family and friends.

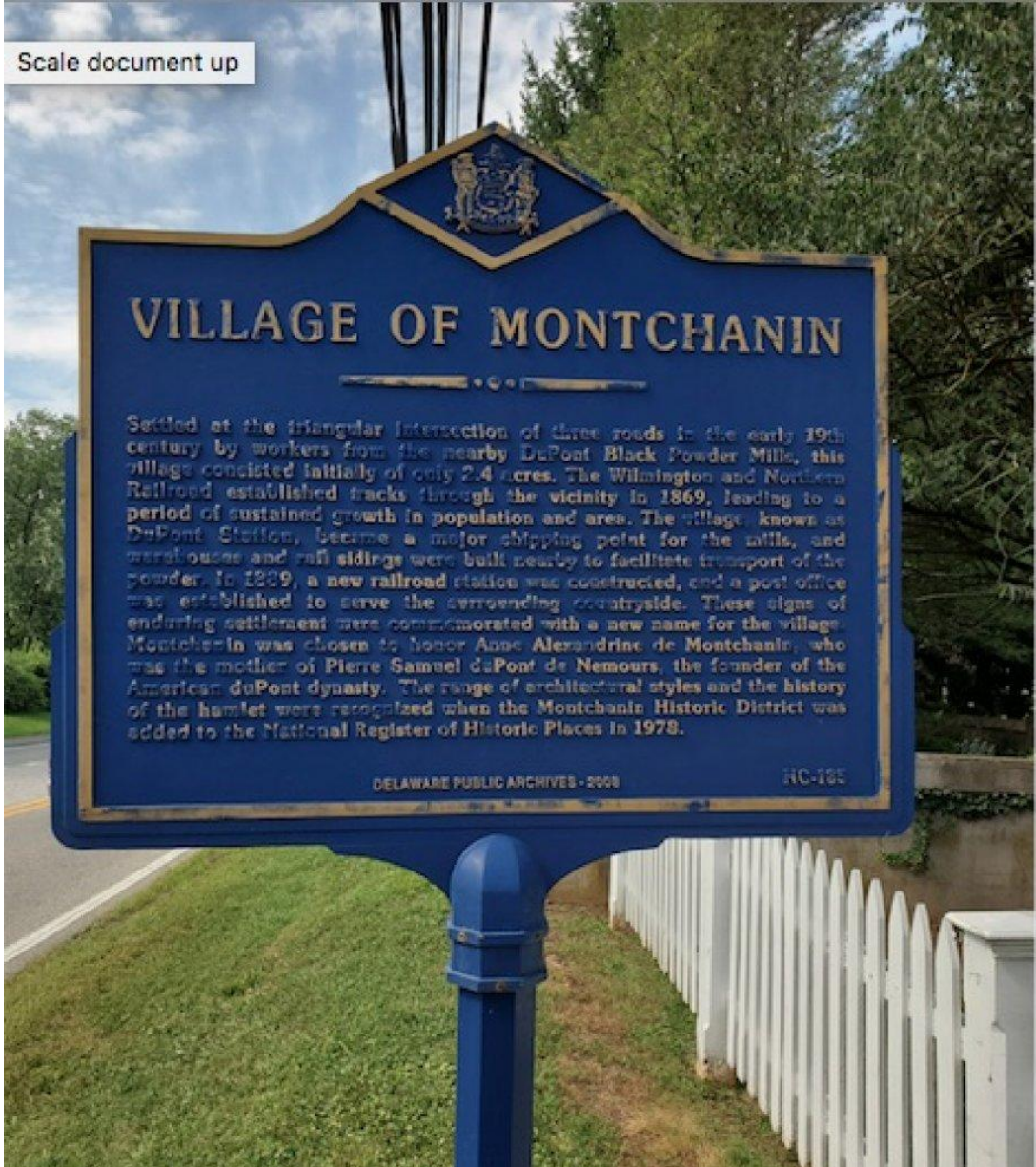
Initially, Pierre du Pont did not have any professional gardeners on his staff, nor did he seek design help from outside firms. He spent the winter of 1906-07 developing plans for the Flower Garden Walk, which was installed south of the house in the spring of 1907. In 1908, he added three enclosed gardens: the Square Pool, the Sundial Garden, and the Rose Garden. He later wrote that the "sectional features . . . give an air of privacy that appeals to people. Many groups may visit the grounds at the same time, each one maintaining a feeling of being apart from the crowd."



The 1,077-acre Longwood Gardens is one of the most renowned botanical gardens in the country. The complex features 11,000 plants and trees, a 4-acre conservatory with 20 interior gardens and a half-mile greenhouse. An exterior waterfall and fountains can be enjoyed from benches that line the paths. A schedule of events is available online. Note: Longwood is in Kennett Square, PA. www.longwoodgardens.org



Scale document up







There are no more perfect accommodations for visiting the area or a romantic getaway than The Inn at Montchanin Village. The inn, the entire village of Montchanin, is made up of eleven meticulously restored historic homes with 28 rooms and suites dating from 1799 to 1910. The village was once part of a du Pont estate situated on a former Indian trail at the juncture of three roads. Amenities include designer linens, canopy beds and upscale bath products. Defining architectural elements, interior stone walls, fireplaces, front porches and private gardens add to the luxury experience. The Inn is a designated Historic Hotel of America.





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KRAZY KAT'S

RESTAURANT





Krazy Kat's, an on-site French restaurant, is located inside a former blacksmith shop and is open to guests and visitors alike. The menu is a creative seasonal blend of American, French and Asian cuisine served for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The imaginative décor, the service and the meals are outstanding. www.montchanin.com



Wilmington is particularly ideal for a Philadelphia getaway. It is 30-minutes and a world and lifestyle away. www.visitwilmingtonde.com

Renee Gordon has written a weekly travel column for the Philadelphia Sun Newspaper for the past fifteen years and has published articles on local, national and international travel in numerous publications. Her columns focus on cultural, historic and heritage tourism and her areas of specialization are sites and attractions related to African American and African Diaspora history. Renee has been a guest radio commentator on various aspects of tourism and appeared in a documentary, "The Red Summer of 1919". As an educator for thirty years she was an English teacher, event and meeting planner, served as an educational consultant and intern-teacher mentor. She contributed to textbooks on women's history and classroom management and has facilitated workshops on both subjects. Renee considers herself a "missionary journalist" and as such she continues to promote heritage and sustainable tourism.

2013 Recipient of African Diaspora World Tourism Flame Keeper in Media Award for Travel Writing

Affiliations

IABTW- International Association of Black Travel Writers

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enakurt

2 months ago

Looks like an orchard and farm store I would love to visit. There aren't enough orchards adhering to a low or no-spray plan.

B. Joyce Washington

3 months ago

Interesting. My dad Ernest Washington grew up in Jackson, Ga. He was knowledgeable of all of those towns. I still have family in Griffin, Ga. cousin Darlene Thurston, Jackson, Ga Fay Lawson Cross, and cousin Helen Cook in Cataula, Ga. I reside in Spartanburg, S. C. where my dad stayed after WWII and married my mother Alice Powell.

Danial Ariff

4 months ago

I spent a week in New Orleans but I should have ventured out to Lafayette to sample



ad

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