

1

Introduction to the Corridor Management Plan, Statement of Purpose, and Corridor Story



1.1 - Statement of Purpose

The Nanticoke Heritage Byway (NHB) Corridor Management Plan (CMP) is intended to provide a detailed collection of information that will assist in meeting the corridor Mission and Vision Statement (see Chapter 2.0) developed for the corridor. This CMP will attempt to foster economic development, continued research, and set a clear course for future actions (projects) within the Nanticoke Heritage Byway region. In addition, the CMP will provide direction and foresight as to the proper course of promotion, use, and preservation of the corridor's resources.

The CMP is a product of extensive coordination and input from the NHB communities and stakeholders. This CMP is an extension of the people – the people of the NHB. The varied interests and goals of the diverse communities and vested interests along the corridor have been assembled and unified in this CMP, to give the corridor a cohesive voice to be heard and understood by many. This CMP will be the promoter and the protector of the NHB corridor for many generations in the future.

Throughout this CMP are colored boxes (see National Scenic Byway Point #1 in Section 1.2 below) that highlight the respective section of the CMP that addresses one of the 17 points or criteria required by the National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) for a CMP to be eligible for All-American Road (AAR) nomination.

1.2 - Corridor Limits

The NHB corridor is approximately 40 miles travelling through the southwestern portion of the State of Delaware. The corridor is divided into five (5) segments for ease of analysis and identification. The NHB travels west from Trap Pond State Park in Laurel, passes through Bethel, then heads north across the Nanticoke River in Woodland into Seaford to the intersection of Bridgeville Road and U.S. 13 north of Seaford. The corridor limits are displayed on Figures 1 through 6.

1.3 - Stakeholders

The development of the NHB began many years ago – well before the current process for the development

CMP began. There has been an actively engaged group of corridor residents that began meeting in 2009 / 2010 to discuss ways to enhance and promote the corridor's tremendous sites and resources. The current CMP process, which began officially in August 2013, has also engaged a diverse group of vested stakeholders, including many of the original stakeholders. These stakeholders include citizens, business owners, government and other public agencies, religious entities, and private entities. In an effort to include and coordinate with as many entities as possible the following groups (which we call Stakeholder groups) were coordinated with throughout the development of the CMP.

1.3.1 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee, which was formally identified in the early stages of this CMP development, acts as an advisory committee to assist in research, implementation, review and approval of all documents and deliverables related to this CMP. The Steering Committee is comprised of a variety of individuals including concerned citizens, business owners, government agency staff, college/university professors and students, neighborhood organizations, DelDOT staff, and other vested interests.

1.3.2 General Public

The general public was afforded the opportunity to review all CMP related materials to ensure that the CMP was a byproduct of the communities and those with a vested interest in the corridor. The general public was provided multiple opportunities to provide input pertaining to their vision, goals, actions, and wishes for the future of the NHB. Two (2) series of Public Workshops were held in communities along the Byway to ensure adequate public input in November 2013 and April 2014.

NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY CMP POINT #1

A map identifying the corridor boundaries, location, intrinsic qualities, and land uses along the corridor.

Figure 1-1: Corridor Limits

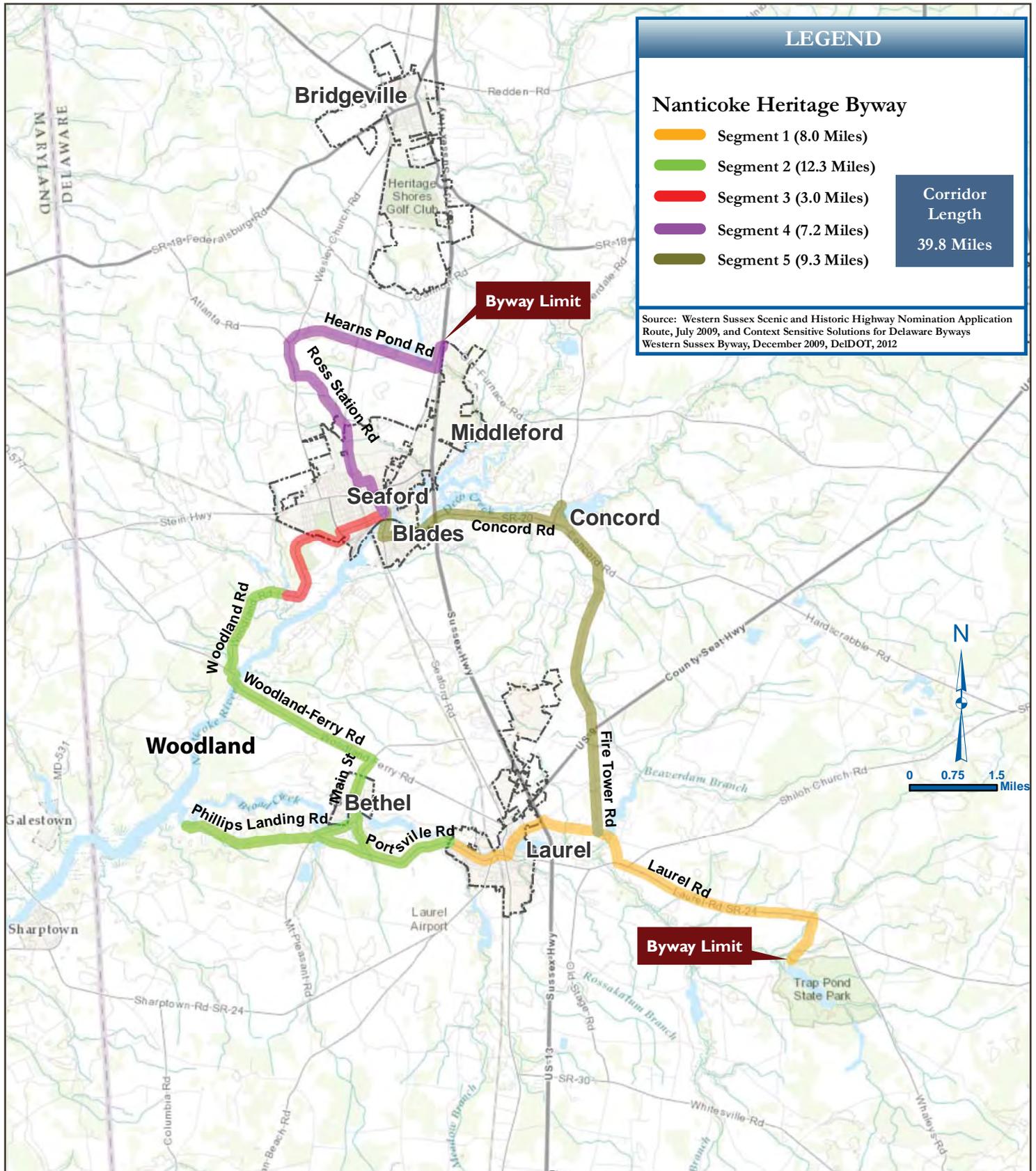


Figure 1-2: Corridor Segment 1

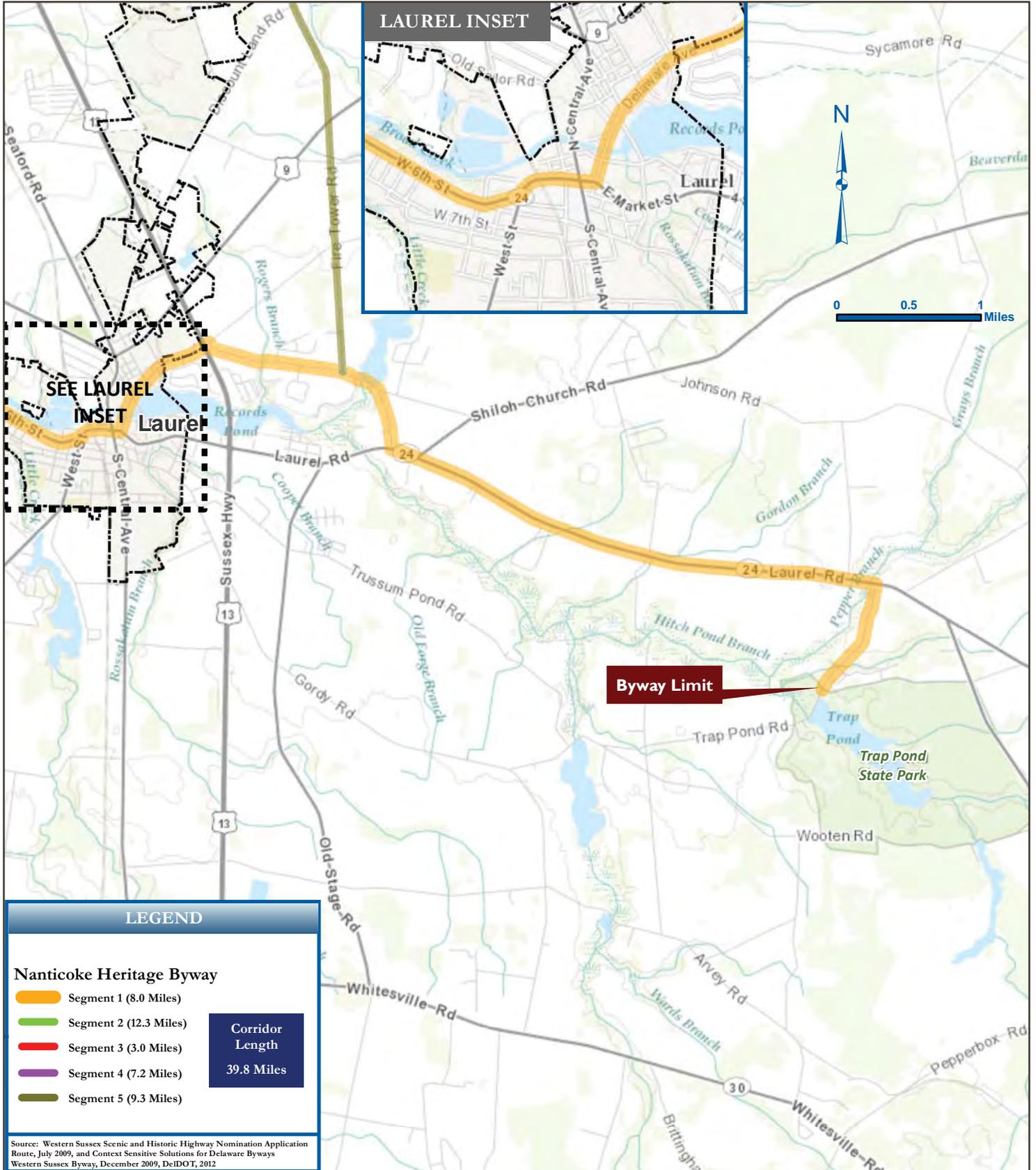


Figure 1-3: Corridor Segment 2

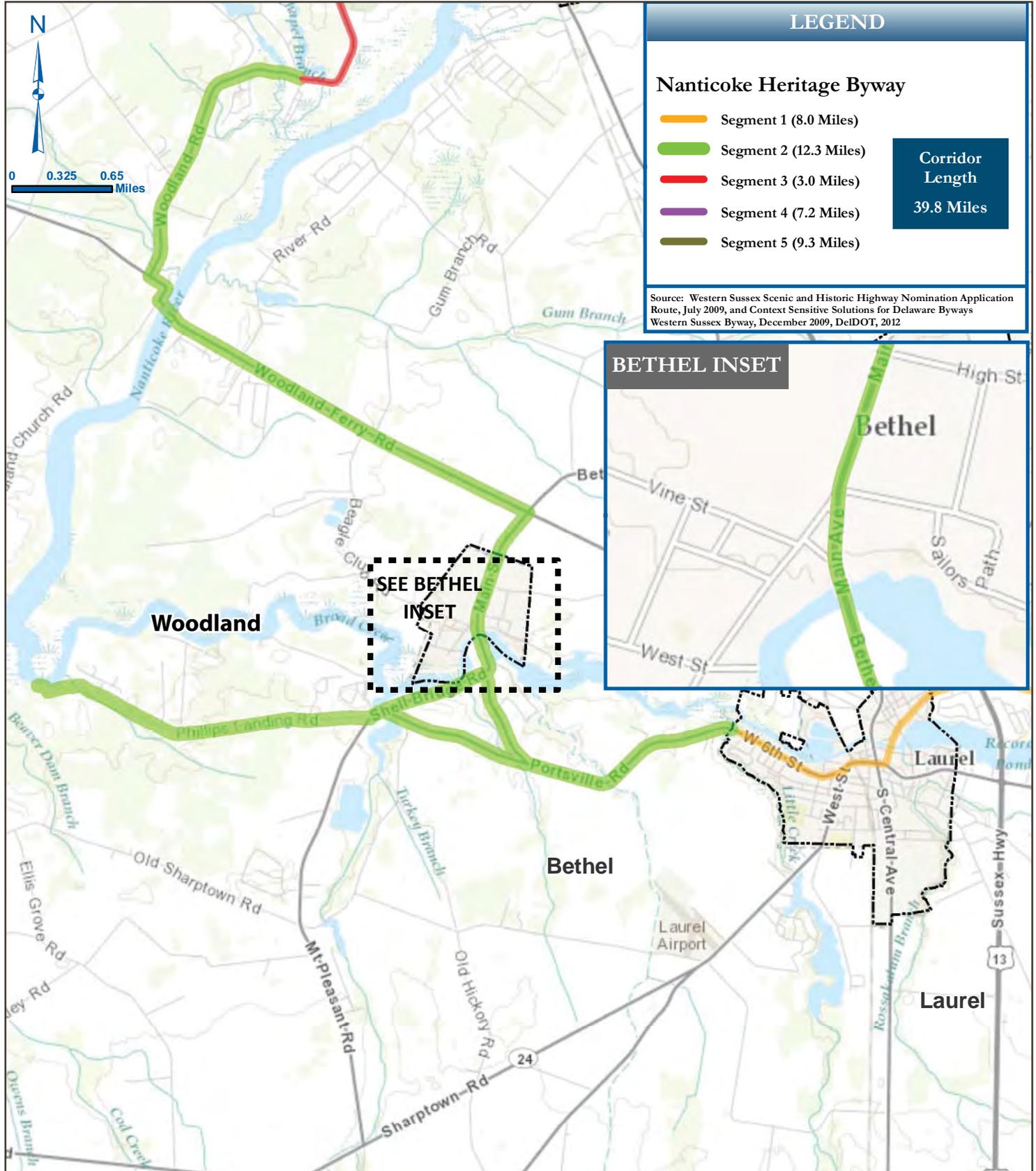


Figure 1-4: Corridor Segment 3

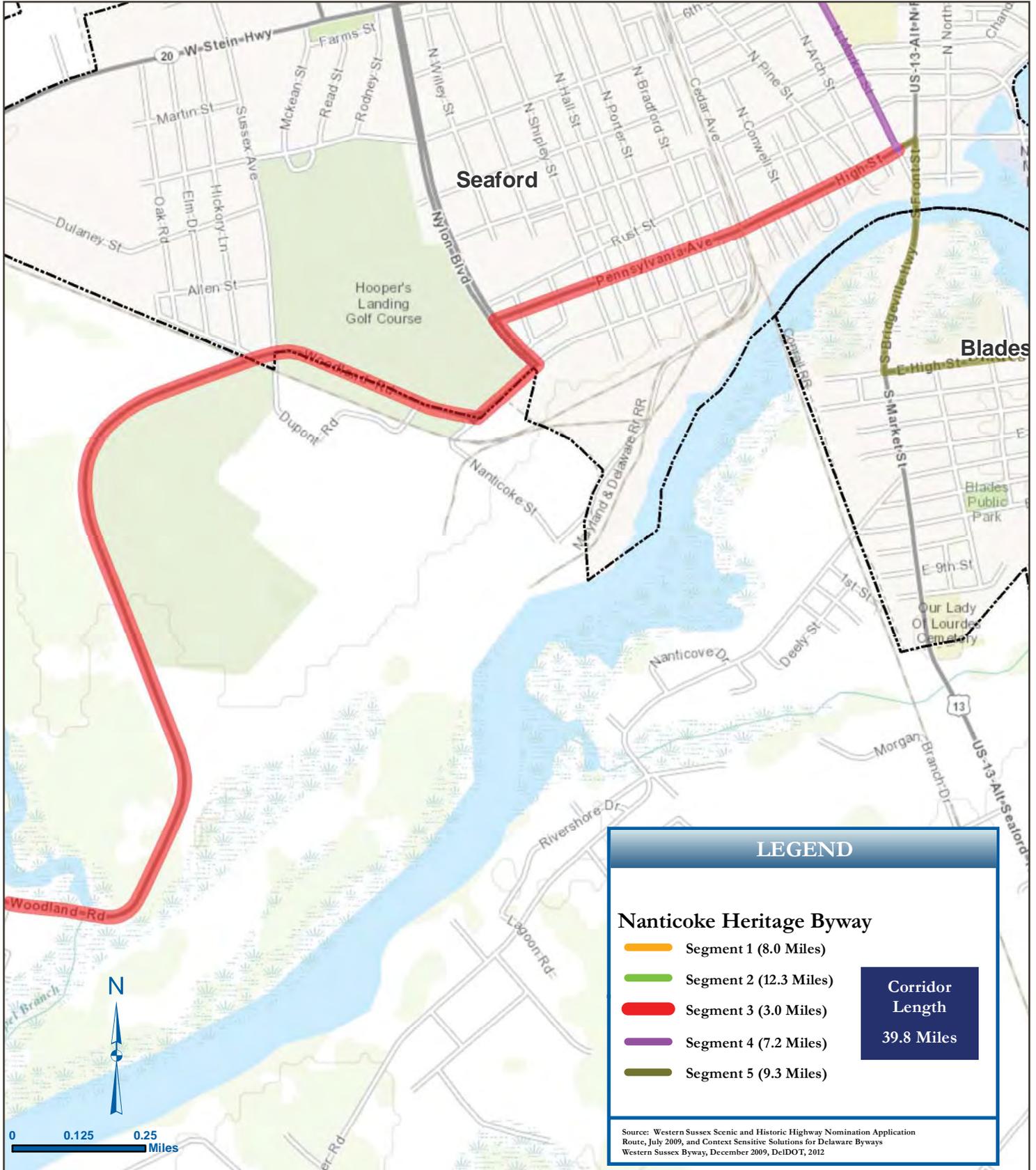


Figure 1-5: Corridor Segment 4

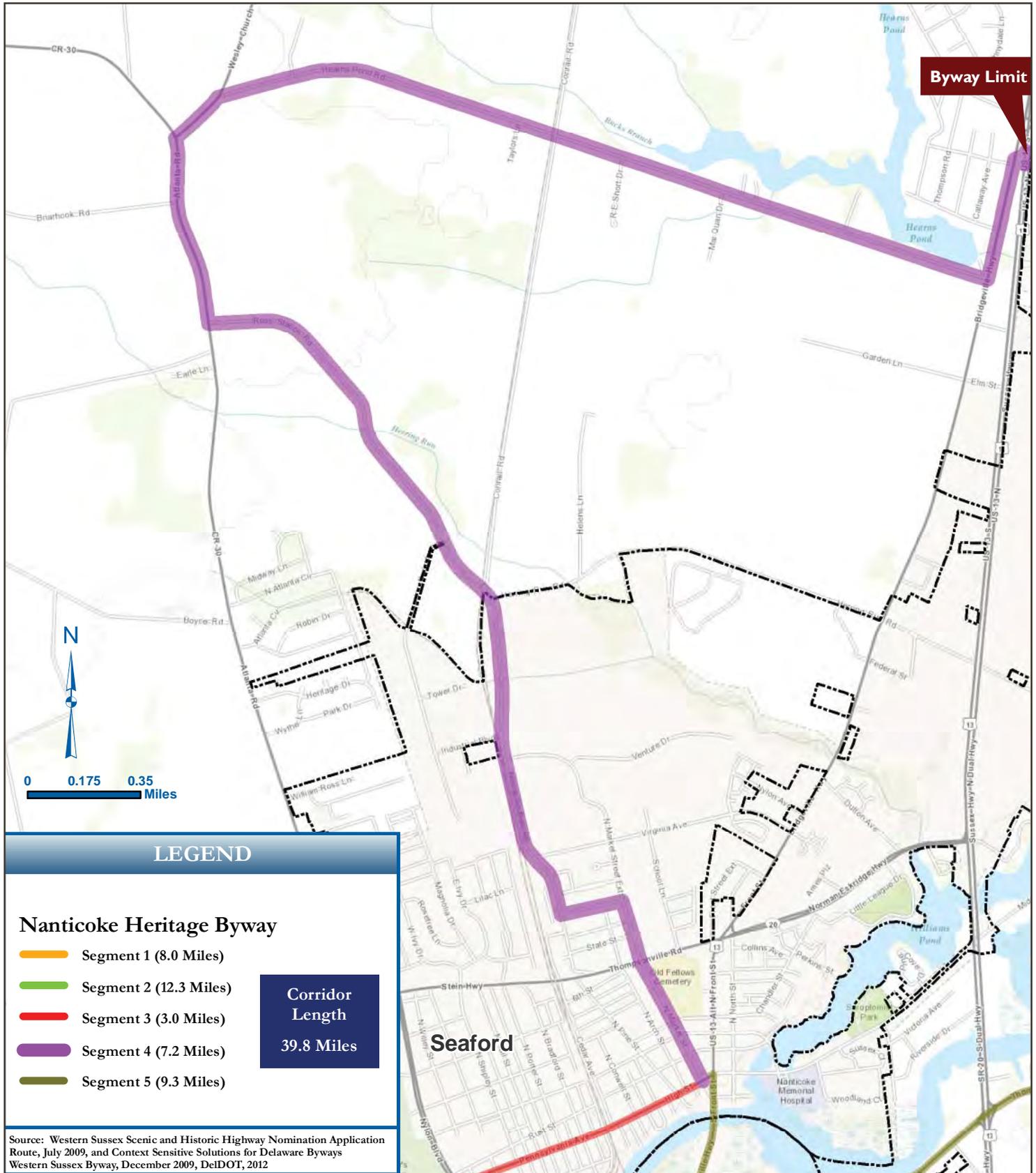
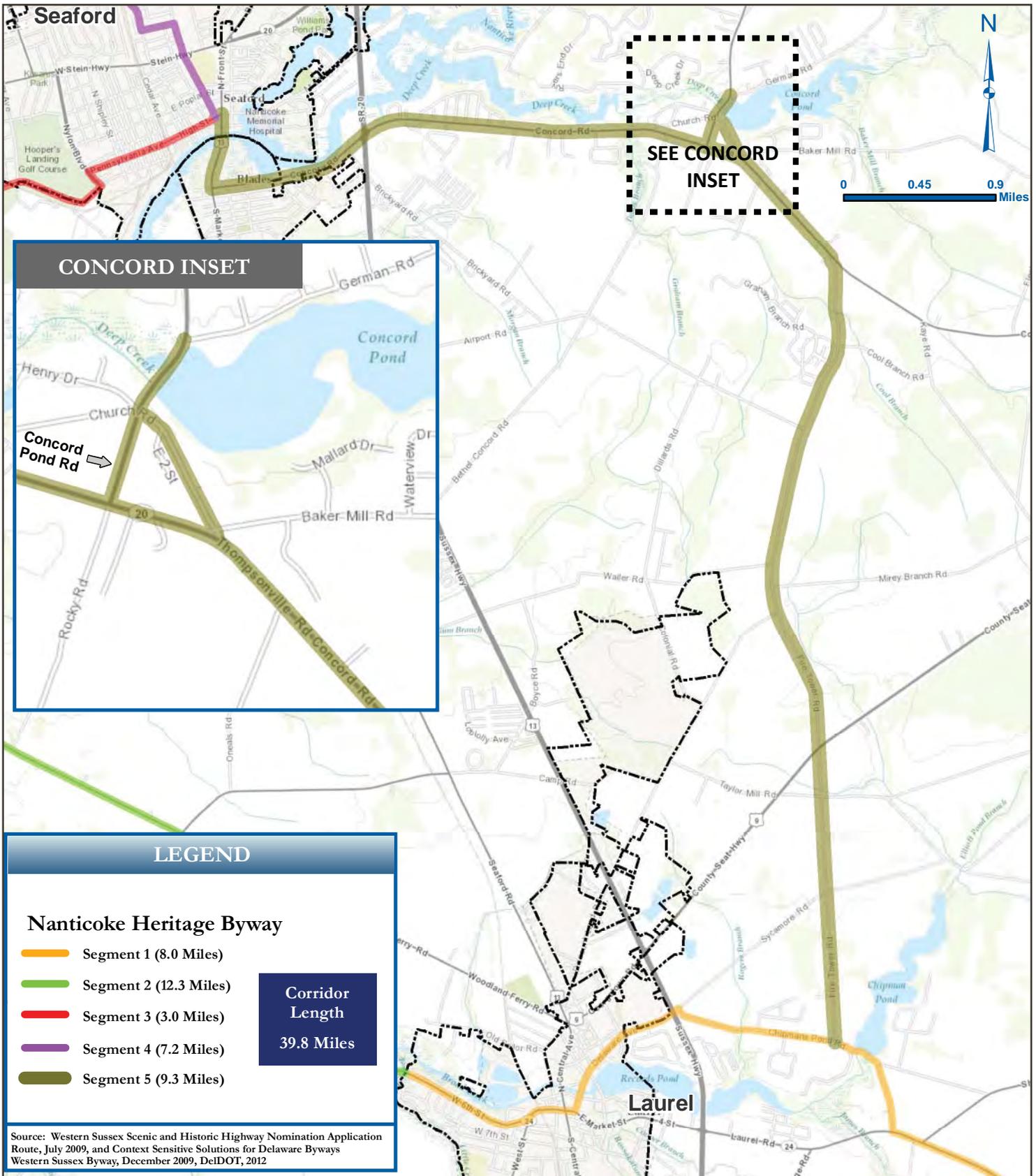


Figure 1-6: Corridor Segment 5



1.4 - The Delaware Byways and the National Scenic Byways Programs

The Delaware Byways Program was developed during the 2000 legislative session after the State of Delaware General Assembly passed Senate Bill 320, authorizing the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to develop and manage the program. Its purpose is to provide recognition to Delaware roadways possessing certain intrinsic qualities that create special visual experience to people traveling the roadways.

To date (January 2014), Delaware has six (6) state designated Scenic Byways:

- Brandywine Valley (also a National Scenic Byway)
- Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway
- Lewes Byway
- Red Clay Valley
- Delaware's Bayshore Byway (formerly Coastal 9 Heritage Byway)
- Nanticoke Heritage Byway (formerly the Western Sussex Byway)

A Scenic Byway in the State of Delaware is a transportation route, which is adjacent to, or travels through an area that has particular intrinsic scenic, historic, natural, cultural, recreational or archeological qualities. It is a road corridor that offers an alternative travel route to our major highways, while telling a story about Delaware's heritage, recreational activities or beauty. It is a route that is managed in order to protect its special intrinsic qualities and to encourage appreciation and/or development of tourism and recreational resources.

The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. The program is a grassroots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. Since 1992, the National Scenic Byways Program has funded more than 2,400 projects for state and nationally designated byway routes in 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways based on one or more archeological, cultural, historic,

natural, recreational and scenic qualities. (Source: <http://www.byways.org>)

Scenic Highways/Byways may be designated as either a National Scenic Byway (those that represent one resource category significantly at a national level) or an All-American Road (those that significantly represent two or more resource categories). All-American Roads are the top tier of Scenic Highways in the United States, with National Scenic Byways falling under them, and the State Scenic Byways falling next in line, in order of significance.

The National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) requires that a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) meet the following fourteen (14) points, plus an additional three (3) points for those Scenic Highways that are seeking All-American Road designations, which requires a total of seventeen (17) points. Throughout this CMP the colored boxes seen below will be utilized to denote the referencing of one (1) or more of the required NSBP points.

SAMPLE - NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY CMP POINT #X

This box displays the section of the CMP where one of the required NSBP points are referenced.

17 Points of the NSBP CMP Requirements

1. A map identifying the corridor boundaries, location, intrinsic qualities, and land uses in the corridor.
2. An assessment of the intrinsic qualities and their "context" (the areas surrounding them).
3. A strategy for maintaining and enhancing each of those intrinsic qualities.
4. The agencies, groups, and individuals who are part of the team that will carry out the plan, including a list of their specific, individual responsibilities. Also, a schedule of when and how you'll review the degree to which those responsibilities are being met.
5. A strategy of how existing development might be enhanced and new development accommodated to preserve the intrinsic qualities of your byway.

6. A plan for on-going public participation.
7. A general review of the road's safety record to locate hazards and poor design, and identify possible corrections.
8. A plan to accommodate commercial traffic while ensuring the safety of sightseers in smaller vehicles, as well as bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians.
9. A listing and discussion of efforts to minimize anomalous intrusions on the visitor's experience of the byway.
10. Documentation of compliance with all existing local, state, and federal laws about the control of outdoor advertising.
11. A plan to make sure that the number and placement of highway signs will not get in the way of the scenery, but still be sufficient to help tourists find their way. This includes, where appropriate, signs for international tourists who may not speak or read English fluently.
12. Plans of how the byway will be marketed and publicized.
13. Any proposals for modifying the roadway, including an evaluation about design standards and how proposed changes may affect the byway's intrinsic qualities.
14. A description of what you plan to do to explain and interpret your byway's significant resources to visitors.
15. A narrative on how the All-American Road would be promoted, interpreted, and marketed in order to attract travelers, especially those from other countries. The agencies responsible for these activities should be identified.

All-American Road Requirements/Points

16. A plan to encourage the accommodation of increased tourism, if this is projected. Some demonstration that the roadway, lodging and dining facilities, roadside rest areas, and other tourist necessities will be adequate for the number of visitors induced by the byway's designation as an All-American Road.
17. A plan for addressing multi-lingual information needs.

(Source: *Federal Register*: May 18, 1995 (Volume 60, Number 96, Pages 26759-26762)

1.5 - Benefits of National Scenic Byway / All-American Road Designation

Scenic Byways are roads that highlight and capture the significant cultural, historic, archeological, recreational, natural, and scenic features of an area. These significant roadways provide an enjoyable experience for travelers, while providing local communities with economic development opportunities, sustainability, and tourist revenue. Designating and protecting our country's scenic highways is a way to preserve and enhance America's beauty and heritage for future generations to experience and enjoy. For designation as a National Scenic Byway (NSB), a road must possess intrinsic qualities that are nationally or regionally significant. In addition, a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) must be prepared that identifies significant intrinsic resources, potential impacts to those resources, preservation, maintenance, enhancement strategies, and promotion/marketing plans. Benefits of National Scenic Byway designation include the following:

National Recognition

National Scenic Byway designation recognition carries with it not only a heightened awareness of the corridor as one of the premier corridors in the country, but also recognition of the entities, Stakeholders, agencies, organizations, businesses, and communities that worked so hard to achieve designation. Identification of the route on local, state, and federal maps can lead to more tourism opportunities for the area. It is also anticipated that the NHB corridor group will develop marketing and promotional materials in the future to continue the recognition and promotion of the corridor.

Increased Pride

National Scenic Byways are a source of local community pride and provide a chance for citizens to showcase the beauty and unique qualities of their region. This CMP provides a way for Stakeholders to determine what they prefer to highlight about their communities. It also identifies how to preserve these intrinsic resources while encouraging thoughtful and sustainable growth. National Scenic Byway designation is a means to a communal goal. It provides a network opportunity for like-minded individuals in all of the communities along the corridor to come

together and share a voice for the good of the corridor and its resources.

Increased Funding Opportunities

Becoming part of the Delaware Byways Program will offer the NHB increase opportunities for funding through a variety of outlets, including the services provided by DelDOT as part of the Delaware Byways Program. In addition, implementation of the CMP could result in economic development opportunities, increased business/customer traffic, tax revenue, and jobs.

1.6 Corridor Story

The Nanticoke Heritage Byway, part of the Delaware Byways Program, revolves around the pristine Nanticoke River and Broad Creek, a tributary, one of the mid-Atlantic's most preserved waterways and the Delmarva Peninsula's longest tributary to the historically significant Chesapeake Bay.

The Nanticoke River is 64 miles long, beginning in Seaford and meandering through the states of Delaware and Maryland before emptying into the Chesapeake Bay around the town of Nanticoke, Maryland. It is a river with a deep history and one that played a role in the formative years of the United States of America .

A 26-mile ecotourism (water based tourism) water trail running along the Nanticoke was set aside in 2011 by Delaware and federal officials, contiguous with a 37-mile water trail extending through Maryland to the Chesapeake Bay. With its deep history and its picturesque, unspoiled scenery, the Nanticoke is a true gem in the southernmost regions of the nation's First State.

It is the Nanticoke River that originally spurred life in this region, during a time when the world's rivers were lifelines of all civilized life. In what is now the Delmarva Peninsula, life began with the native Nanticoke Indians, originally called the Kuskarawaoks.

Translated to "people of the tidewater," the Nanticoke were excellent farmers and hunters who lived off of the land. Prior to 1745, they inhabited the area along the Nanticoke River, including what are now the towns of

Seaford and Laurel.

Today, they mostly live a few miles east of the area that encompasses the Nanticoke Heritage Byway, but their history and their influence on the areas of western Sussex County are indeed significant.

The very name of the byway comes from this tribe of Native Americans, who were here long before European explorers settled in present day America. The recorded history of the tribe, however, can be traced back to a day in 1608, or 23 years earlier than that when Dutch explorers formed the first settlement in Delaware, in nearby Lewes.

It was in the first decade of the 17th century when English Captain John Smith and 14 of his men came upon a gathering of Nanticoke during his exploration of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. This significant meeting between two cultures set the tone for later colonization in Sussex County.

That initial meeting, however, was anything but a friendly one, as Nanticoke originally fired arrows at the English explorers. But cooler heads eventually prevailed and the captain was taken to meet with the Indian chiefs for initial discussions between Europeans and Native Americans in southern Delaware.

This historic meeting between the Europeans and the Nanticoke Indian Tribe is believed to have taken place at or near Phillip's Landing, about five miles outside the limits of present-day Laurel. Today, a monument erected by the Delaware State Archives commemorates the event near the confluence of the Nanticoke River and Broad Creek, an important stop on the Nanticoke Heritage Byway and part of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

There are other reminders of the Nanticoke's influence on western Sussex County, an important one being the writings of a so-called Nanticoke "wading place" in the town of Laurel, a municipality that was plotted in 1802 after the sale of a Nanticoke Indian reservation. This reservation once spanned 3,000 acres on Broad Creek, between what are now the towns of Bethel and Laurel, and was created due to encroachment by European settlers on the Nanticoke's first reservation

at Chicone Creek near the town of Vienna, Maryland. The “wading place” is located on Broad Creek, just east of the Central Avenue Bridge that spans Broad Creek in downtown Laurel. At one time, the small municipality of Laurel was one of the most affluent towns in Delaware. This prosperity was largely due to the town’s large tracts of virgin timber, as well as access to the Nanticoke River, the Chesapeake Bay, and many years later, access to the railroad.

But long before the railroad was extended into Sussex County, largely due to the efforts of former Gov. William Henry Harrison Ross, the towns of Laurel and neighboring Seaford prospered because of the Nanticoke River and its tributaries. Seaford lies directly on the river near its headwaters while Laurel, along with historic Bethel, were both settled on the shores of Broad Creek, a tributary of the Nanticoke.

These towns thrived for decades because of their proximity to the river and are vital components, not only to the Nanticoke Heritage Byway, but also to the history of our nation’s First State. Crops and other supplies were important exports from the county along the Nanticoke, particularly because of the access the river provided to states up and down the eastern seaboard, via the access to the Atlantic Ocean by way of the Chesapeake Bay. Both early towns once teemed with ships whose captains exchanged products between western Sussex County and far away ports.

Prior to 1856, when the first rail line was opened by the Delaware Railroad Company, nearly all transportation between western Sussex County and towns to the north was provided by a patchwork system of stagecoaches and ships. This connected the merchants of Sussex County to markets in places such as Baltimore, Philadelphia and Wilmington. The railroad transformed the area’s agriculture, leading to a boom that can still be felt in Sussex County today, particularly as it relates to the architectural character in the historic district of Laurel.

In Harold Hancock’s “Slavery, Steamboats and Railroads,” Delaware Railroad President Samuel M. Harrington conveyed his skepticism with bringing the railroad to Sussex County when he was quoted as saying: “A railroad in Kent and Sussex! What could

be the use of it? These counties produce nothing but mosquitoes and bilious fevers; the people had no business to travel for, and slight means to travel on.”

But the rail line opened because of the persistence of Gov. Ross, who resided in Seaford and who pushed the railroad at every turn. When the line finally opened, it provided twice a day service from Seaford to Wilmington and vice versa. That rail line is today a very important aspect of the Nanticoke Heritage Byway, with the train stations in Seaford and Laurel both highlighted along the route, along with Gov. Ross’s mansion just north of the Seaford city limits.

The young, brash governor even had his very own train station, within a stone’s throw of his stately mansion in Seaford. Ross Station is long gone today, but the stories of it remain and are told in detail at both his personal mansion and at the Seaford Museum, also both important intrinsic resources along the byway.

Much of the land that is today western Sussex County was once very swampy, with freshwater wetlands once covering a large portion of the western half of the county. It is a big reason, along with the settlement of a boundary dispute between the Calverts and the Penns, why petitions were started that eventually allowed for the moving of the Sussex County Seat from the coastal town of Lewes over to the more centrally located Georgetown, in the middle of Sussex County.

Residents in Seaford and Laurel and other towns in western Sussex had a very difficult commute to the eastern half of the county any time they needed to conduct business, so they protested and eventually their voices were heard and the county seat was moved in 1791.

While many beautiful waterways exist in western Sussex County today, most of the former swampy areas have been converted into well-drained fertile farmland. The Nanticoke watershed, however, is still an extremely abundant resource in the First State, covering more than 700,000 acres and including extensive forests, thousands of acres of freshwater wetlands, the northernmost strands of bald cypress trees on the east coast and the highest concentration of bald eagles in the northeastern United States.

And by all accounts, the “liquid highway” of yesteryear is as pristine today as it was on that day more than 400 years ago when Captain Smith and his men first journeyed onto the river.

The Nanticoke watershed protects more than 100 rare and threatened species of plants and animals. Home to an eclectic collection of wildlife, including peregrine falcons, bald eagles, Delmarva fox squirrels, beavers, raccoons and white-tailed deer, the area around the Nanticoke River offers as pristine a location as can be found in today’s modern society.

Much like the Indian tribe that bears its name, the original name of the river was Kuskarawaok. It runs through much of what is today the Nanticoke Heritage Byway, permeating and lending its identity to the towns of Seaford, Laurel, Bethel and Woodland.

The 39.8 mile long Nanticoke Heritage Byway, which pays tribute to this historic area of the nation’s First State and is the only access point in Sussex County to the Chesapeake Bay, is designed to take visitors on a scenic and historic journey through the towns, the attractions and the waterways that encompass the areas around the Nanticoke.

The northernmost tip of the byway can be found at Hearn & Rawlins Mill, on the shores of Hearn’s Pond, with the southern end located at Trap Pond State Park just east of the town of Laurel.

Between the two points, the byway loops through the towns of Seaford, Laurel, Concord, Woodland and Bethel, highlighting many points of interest and telling the story of years gone by on the Nanticoke River.

Along the route, there are many opportunities for recreation, including hiking, bicycling, boating and bird watching. But there are also countless opportunities to learn about history and about how life used to be in this very special part of the country.

These opportunities, and the byway itself, are broken up into five distinctly unique “discovery zones,” beginning at the northern tip of the byway and extending southward.

These unique zones are: North Seaford, Seaford Proper, Woodland/Bethel, Laurel and Concord. Each “discovery zone” has its own unique characteristics and is steeped in local history and tradition.

North Seaford Discovery Zone

A logical starting point along the Nanticoke Heritage Byway is to begin from the north, just outside the city limits of Seaford. Before entering Seaford proper, there are several stops along the byway that provide for entertaining and educational experiences.

Some of these include:

Hearn & Rawlins Mill

Built in 1880 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, the Hearn & Rawlins Mill is the northernmost stop along the Nanticoke Heritage Byway. It is a historic gristmill located on Hearn’s Pond, built on the site of a previous mill that was built in the 1820s.

It provides a look into yesteryear in Sussex County, when mills and the industry they provided ruled the area. In many respects, the mill is a palpable testament to the area’s once-thriving industry, an industry so popular in Sussex County that it even gave name to a nearby town (Millsboro).

At the peak of the milling industry in the 1860s, there were more than 100 grist and saw mills in Sussex County, and the Hearn & Rawlins Mill was just one of those that was strewn about on the waterways of western Sussex.

Ironically, it was the leading industry of today’s Delmarva region that ultimately led to the demise of many of the area’s mills.

One of the last real niches for the gristmills was producing animal feed for use by local farmers. But when the poultry industry started in southern Delaware in the 1920s, chicken farmers began buying feed on such a large scale that feed mills that were powered by electricity began springing up all throughout southern Delaware.

They were able to produce feed much cheaper than the gristmills, so the growth of the poultry industry and

the establishment of the numerous poultry feed mills eventually led to the demise of the milling industry. Though most of the mills are long gone today, their legacy remains at places like the Hearn & Rawlins Mill, one of nine mill ponds on the byway, where the industry can be visibly seen and remembered.

Gov. Ross Mansion and Plantation

Located just north of the Seaford city limits, the 20-acre plantation is a mere 1 percent of the size it used to be, but its historical significance to the area cannot be overstated. One of the northernmost stops along the Nanticoke Historic Byway, the grounds feature one of the area's only remaining slave quarters, a granary, a smokehouse, stables and a so-called "honeymoon cottage," built for the governor's son to live in while a nearby mansion was constructed for him and his wife.

The Italian villa-style mansion is owned by the Seaford Historical Society and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. William Henry Harrison Ross was one of the area's major landowners during his day and was the youngest man ever to serve as governor of Delaware, serving from 1851 to 1855. His crowning achievement was extending the railroad to Sussex County, which visitors to his plantation are easily reminded of via the tracks that run just to the west of the property, on land formerly owned by the governor.

While "Ross Station," the governor's former private train station, is long gone, the stories of how Ross used the station to escape the bounty placed on his head during the Civil War are still told on a regular basis. Indeed, if not for Ross bringing train service to Sussex County, he likely would not have survived the War Between the States.

Ross never hid his affection for the Confederate cause during the war and was even rumored to be involved in smuggling arms to the South. One of the governor's own sons lost his life while serving in the Confederate Army and, as one of Sussex County's largest slave owners, Gov. Ross simply could not hide his disdain for the Union.

The governor knew he would be a target when Union troops began cracking down on men who they

considered to be traitors. So instead of waiting around to be captured, as the legend goes, his slaves packed him in an old apple crate, loaded him on the train and allowed him to escape to New Castle County, and eventually England, where he remained for most of the Civil War.

When the former governor did return to Delaware, it was a much different place than when he had left. The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution ending slavery forced Ross to free his slaves and erode his financial standing, already terribly damaged due to the war, declined even further.

His former mansion today offers a unique glimpse into what life was like in the mid-19th century in western Sussex County. It has been furnished with period antiques and many mementos from the Ross family.

Cannon-Maston House

Referred to as a "Maryland Hall and Parlor House", it was granted to James Cannon by the Lord Proprietor of the Colony of Maryland in 1696. It is one of the oldest surviving residences in Southern Delaware. Construction on the home began in 1727.

It is one-and-a-half stories tall, much like the well-publicized "tents" that used to adorn all the religious campgrounds in the area. It is believed to be the only example in Delaware of a home known as a "Resurrection Manor," which is an example of early brick architecture in the United States dating from about 1660 to 1720.

The home was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 and sits on a 60 acre parcel of land that includes farmland, a working mill, woodlands and sites that are believed to have been used by the area's Native American tribes.

St. Luke's Protestant Episcopal Church

This historic church, one of many that dot the landscape in Sussex County today, dates back to 1843. It is a two-story brick church built in Gothic Revival style, with a one-story chancel and three-story tower, featuring stained glass lancet windows.

Former Delaware Gov. William Henry Harrison Ross was buried in the churchyard after his passing in 1887. The church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.

Edgar and Rachel Ross House

Constructed between 1894 and 1897 for the son and daughter-in-law of Gov. William Henry Harrison Ross, the Edgar and Rachel Ross House is a historic home located just across the street from the governor's plantation. Built with Colonial Revival-style columns, the home is now a private residence adjacent to the city's industrial park.

At the time the home was built, the Ross family owned a huge amount of land in Seaford, from the Nanticoke River to High Street, bounded by Market Street and Spring Alley. The land acquisitions the family had made over the years resulted in them becoming the largest landowners in the area, as well as one of the largest slave owners.

The turn of the century brick home was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997.

Seaford Discovery Zone

The once booming city of Seaford has had its share of challenges in the last couple of decades, primarily due to the closure of the DuPont Nylon Plant, for years the largest employer in Sussex County. Today, the massive plant on the shores of the Nanticoke River is just a shell of its former self, but the fact that Seaford has become a leading municipality in Sussex County is due, in large part, to the DuPont Company.

Seaford was changed forever when the plant opened in the late 1930s, just like it was again changed forever when it closed. The city is adapting and is welcoming new business at its industrial park across town. But the DuPont plant is a glimpse into the Seaford of old, which still holds the claim of being the largest year-round municipality in Sussex County. This is largely because of the square mileage of Seaford, in comparison to beach resorts like Rehoboth Beach, which is only one square mile in size.

Seaford, known as Hooper's Landing until around 1800, is located along three important routes – the Nanticoke River (aquatic), the historic DuPont Highway (Route 13) and the tracks of the Delaware Railroad. Each route was significant to the growth and development of the city.

Seaford is also home to the annual Nanticoke Riverfest Festival, a summertime gathering that brings people together to celebrate the picturesque river and what it means to the city.

Held in early to mid-July each year, the Nanticoke Riverfest is one of the highlights of the western Sussex County festival season. Featuring live entertainment, craft and food vendors, a carnival, a children's area and much more, the event is held in the downtown area not far from the river that bears its name.

The highlight of the three-day event is undoubtedly the float-in, where hundreds of festival goers take to the river on boats, inner-tubes, rafts – really anything that floats – and meander their way down the river en masse dressed in some of the craziest outfits imaginable.

At the core of Seaford is the downtown area, which revolves around historic High Street, so named because merchants and ship owners would, in days of old, leave the dock area and walk up the hill to the “high street” to shop and to socialize.

The downtown area is not what it once was, and suffered a major setback in 2012 when the historic Burton Brothers Hardware Store, opened in 1893, suffered a catastrophic fire and could not be saved. It was the anchor of Seaford's downtown area for more than a century before it was lost, and the store's once proud location today is just an open lot.

The downtown area is also the backdrop for one of the county's best fine dining experiences (Bon Appetit Restaurant), a beautiful local art gallery (Gallery 107) and a building housing a small collection of antique fire trucks. But the unquestioned jewel of Seaford's downtown today is the Seaford Museum, housed in the city's historic post office on the western end of High Street, just before the bridge going over the railroad tracks. It is a must see for any traveler along

the byway.

Seaford also has a darker history, particularly as it pertains to the shenanigans of the infamous slave runner Martha “Patty” Cannon, who for years ran a ragtag gang of hooligans just west of the city. Suffice it to say, she was feared as much as any woman, or man for that matter, could have possibly been feared during her days raising hell in Sussex County.

Her home has long since been destroyed, no longer standing as a visible reminder of the horrific crimes that the area’s most famous villainess committed on residents of and visitors to southern Delaware. The home and tavern of her son-in-law, however, is still adorned with a Maryland historic marker incorrectly identifying it as the home of Cannon, one of the most infamous slave runners the United States has ever known.

The former tavern, now a private residence, is located in Reliance, a few miles west of Seaford on the Maryland state line.

To its credit, the state of Delaware recently erected a historic marker on the First State’s side of the state line correctly stating the history of Patty Cannon and her notorious gang of criminals and miscreants. Hers is a story that is as fascinating as it is evil, and it’s a story that has stood the test of time.

It’s hard to imagine there ever being a woman more wicked, more hated and more feared than Cannon, the ringleader of probably the largest kidnapping gang ever to roam the lands of the First State.

At its peak, Patty’s gang was more than two dozen strong. Kidnapping free blacks from throughout Delaware, Maryland and parts of Pennsylvania and delivering them to traders in the south was what they did, and they did it well.

Operating out of her home on the Delaware-Maryland line, Patty and her partners in crime often kept their captives chained for up to several months at a time while seeking out potential buyers. Their location in Johnson’s Crossroads – renamed to Reliance in 1882 to purge any bad feelings caused by Patty and her

gang’s infamous misdeeds – was a perfect place to conduct an illegal business.

The location made it easy for the county’s most notorious resident to avoid capture – when Delaware authorities came to confront her, she would step across the state line into Maryland and vice-versa. Capturing free blacks by several different methods, including luring them with promises of work and/or free passage to the north, Patty kept many a future slave shackled in her basement, in her attic, in the woods behind her home and in secret passageways inside Johnson’s Tavern.

But it’s also believed that she kept some of her victims shackled to trees on a small island somewhere along the shores of the Nanticoke River, or one of its tributaries. Though its location is not known, nor has it been definitively proven that it even exists, it’s rumored to have been along Broad Creek near present day Phillips Landing, outside of Laurel.

Patty Cannon’s home is not along the byway because it no longer exists, but her story is told in great detail at the Seaford Museum on High Street and is an important one to the history and texture of the Nanticoke Historic Byway. The Cannons were an extremely influential family in the Seaford area at one time, and is a family name that permeates the very fabric of the byway.

The Woodland Ferry, once run by the Cannons and originally named Cannon’s Ferry, the Cannon-Maston House, Cannon Hall and even the nearby town of Cannon are all important historic elements along the Nanticoke Heritage Byway.

The Cannons were an eclectic bunch, some liked and some anything but, but the history and significance of one of western Sussex County’s founding families is not to be ignored in the area.

While Patty Cannon and her ties to slave running in Delaware is well documented, it wasn’t until recently that it was learned of Seaford’s ties to another well-known figure during the days of slavery – the famous slave advocate and humanitarian Harriet Tubman.

A sign marking her journey through Seaford in 1856 has now been placed in the city's Gateway Park but her story has only recently come to light thanks to the hard work and research completed by elements within the Seaford Historic Society.

Through this research, Tubman's connection to a young slave referred to only as "Tilly," and her journey through western Sussex County, was indeed verified and designated as a Harriet Tubman Escape Site by the National Park Service's "Network to Freedom" program.

In October of 1856, Harriet and Tilly spent the night at the long gone hotel where the park is now located, dodging slave traders the next morning before continuing on their way upstate and eventually to freedom.

It was Tubman's only known route through Sussex County, but it provides a stark contrast with the area's infamous Patty Cannon and also illustrates the power slavery once had in southern Delaware, though officially not a member of the Confederacy during the Civil War. But there were many slave owners in Sussex County, and they wielded much power for many decades.

In fact, southern Delaware was so in tune with the plight of the southern states that at least two of the Confederate Army's original battle flags included 15 stars, one each for the states of Maryland and Delaware, who the Confederacy had fully expected would join the cause.

As for the stories of Patty Cannon and Harriet Tubman along the byway today, travelers will need to either visit the Seaford Museum or view the historical markers that have been erected to both ladies and their infamous tales.

Seaford Museum

Located on High Street in the city's restored 1930s post office building and opened by the Seaford Historical Society in 2003, the Seaford Museum features exhibits ranging from early Native American life and the infamous activities of slave runner Patty Cannon, to a once thriving maritime commerce and a timeline and

artifacts highlighting the DuPont Company's long and storied presence in the "Nylon Capital of the World." In essence, the small brick building nestled in Seaford's once thriving downtown area largely tells the story of the Nanticoke Heritage Byway, at least the northern component of it. The Nanticoke Indians, Gov. William Henry Harrison Ross, Patty Cannon, DuPont's influence on the city and much more, the museum is like literally taking a walk through western Sussex County history.

Largely considered one of the nicest small town museums in the mid-Atlantic, the Seaford Museum includes a changing exhibit gallery, a presentation room, a general information area and a museum store, as well as several exhibits unique to Sussex County's largest year-round municipality.

It is a must-see when touring the Nanticoke Heritage Byway.

DuPont Plant

First time travelers along the Nanticoke Heritage Byway are almost certain to notice a theme when driving along the prepared route in the Seaford area. It's nearly impossible to miss the city's claim to fame on a national stage – and that would be polyhexamethylenedipamide, known to the world as "the miracle fiber," or nylon.

With signs welcoming passers-by to the "Nylon Capital of the World" and with a main road aptly named Nylon Boulevard, which incidentally runs very close to the Nylon Capital Shopping Center, Seaford's ties to one of the world's most famous fibers is front and center for all to see.

Nylon was not invented in Seaford, rather at the company's research facility in Wilmington, but it was on the DuPont Company's 609 acre site along the Nanticoke River where nylon was first mass produced, following its introduction at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City.

The reason the hierarchy at DuPont chose the city of Seaford for their sprawling plant was simple – the site met the three criteria that 1) it must have a good water supply, 2) it must have good transportation potential

and 3) it must have a good and readily available workforce.

The Nanticoke River fulfilled the first two of those criteria, with the third generated by the excitement that DuPont's decision generated in an area that, throughout history, had been dominated by agriculture.

Nylon was originally created as an alternative to silk, which had become hard to come by due to deteriorating relations with the Empire of Japan, in the days leading up to World War II. The first strands of the new fiber were spun on a bobbin at the Seaford Nylon Plant on Dec. 12, 1939, a bobbin that is now permanently on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

The impact on the plant to the Seaford area was impressive – in its first year, the plant produced enough nylon to make 64 million pairs of nylon stockings. At its peak in the 1960s, more than 4,600 workers were employed at the plant, making it the largest employer in Sussex County.

Those days are, of course, long gone. The sign outside the plant no longer bears the DuPont name, but to long-time residents of Seaford, the sprawling facility will always be the DuPont Plant.

Today, it is easily the largest structure along the Nanticoke Heritage Byway. For hundreds of acres along the Nanticoke River, the plant dominates the skyline, with its towering smoke stack and its decades-old industrial façade.

It is a visual reminder of an economic boon time in western Sussex County, a glimpse into the “good old days” of the Nylon Capital of the World.

First National Bank of Seaford

A historic structure located on Pine Street in downtown Seaford, the First National Bank of Seaford was built in 1868 and is the oldest standing bank building in town. Today, it has been converted into an apartment complex but its Italianate style with hipped roof and dormers makes the generations-old structure an important addition to the Nanticoke Heritage Byway.

It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

Woodland/Bethel Discovery Zone

The areas of Woodland and Bethel are connected along the byway by the historic Woodland Ferry, which has been transporting people and vehicles across the historic waterway between the two municipalities for many decades and provides an important link to the area's unique history.

The history of Bethel dates back to 1728 when the colony of Maryland granted approximately 500 acres of land on the east side of the Nanticoke River to John Caldwell. After the land was sold in 1795 to Kendal Lewis, the town became known as Lewisville, though that was later changed to avoid confusion with the town of Lewes, then the county seat and the center of commerce in Sussex County.

While today Bethel is a mostly quiet village, known for its serene setting and its small town America feel, it was once a thriving area that was dominated by the shipbuilding industry.

Tales are still told around the town, especially in the historic Bethel Store, of the proud and prestigious “sailing rams” that were once built in the town along Broad Creek, and shipped to areas near and far.

But that industry has long since disappeared and Bethel is today a small hamlet complete with its small town churches, stores and museums, all situated along the banks of one of Sussex County's most historically significant and scenic waterways.

The Woodland/Bethel segment of the Nanticoke Historic Byway is a naturally beautiful and picturesque stop along the route, one that is to be cherished and enjoyed at a slow and steady pace.

Some of the stops along this segment include:

Woodland Ferry

When motorists travel today across the modern “Tina Fallon,” the latest in a series of vessels that have transported vehicles across the Nanticoke River for generations, they likely don't give a thought to the colorful past of the historic Woodland Ferry.

Most merely want to get from one side of the waterway to the other, which is exactly the reason the ferry was put into service in the years that long predated even the formation of the United States.

The ferry that today transports motorists from Woodland to just outside Bethel has a colorful and sordid past. Yet it's that history that makes the ferry such a wonderful tale for anyone who cares to listen.

The Woodland Ferry's recorded history dates back to as early as 1734, but evidence suggests that a ferry crossing may have existed at the site long before then. It was originally constructed to be in accordance with a state law passed in 1658 that required all counties in the colony of Maryland – yes, Woodland was not part of Delaware at the time – to maintain ferry services over rivers, creeks and even swamps.

The exact date of any such crossing has not been determined, but it's clear that the infrastructure for the Woodland Ferry which operates today was created somewhere between 1734 and 1748 by members of the Cannon Family.

The State of Delaware assumed ownership of the Woodland Ferry in 1935 and it is today operated by the Delaware Department of Transportation. It is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, ferries in continuous operation in the United States and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Cannon Hall

This historic property on the banks of the Nanticoke River in Woodland is being restored and remains on the National Register of Historic Places.

It has a unique and colorful history, revolving around the generations-old ferry that also used to bear the name of the Cannon family.

Cannon Hall was built by Jacob Cannon in the early years of the 19th century. The local businessman, his brother Isaac and most of the Cannon family were not at all liked by residents of Sussex County and the surrounding areas, having accumulated a considerable fortune by loaning money to locals and acquiring land through questionable foreclosure practices.

In addition to their financial endeavors, Jacob and Isaac Cannon also earned part of their fortune from the merchant and shipping business they had established in present day Woodland. By 1816, the brothers owned more than 5,000 acres of land on Delmarva, as well as land in Baltimore and ships that conducted trade between Delaware and “Charm City.”

As for the home that today still rests just a feet away from the picturesque Nanticoke River, albeit a little the worse for wear, legend has it that Cannon built the two-story frame home in 1810 in one of the few waterside hamlets in Delaware that remains as peaceful, quiet and serene as it was hundreds of years ago.

As is the case for thousands of men throughout centuries of history, he built the residence for a woman who he had fallen in love with and planned to marry. But, in a cruel twist of fate, Cannon's fiancée jilted him just before the wedding, leaving him with a new home but with no one to share it with. As the story goes, Jacob's heart was shattered to the point where he could never move into the new home he had worked so hard to build.

Tales persist that Jacob, in fact, visited the residence on multiple occasions over the years, but never once did he lay down his head and spend the night at the home that was meant for him and his beloved.

So the home Jacob Cannon had worked so hard to build was essentially left vacant for several years, welcoming guests only on a few occasions and for never more than very short periods of time. It still stands today, a visible reminder of the Cannon family and their colorful local history.

Historic Bethel

No longer does shipbuilding rule the tiny town of Bethel, nor is there much business or industry to speak of in the small municipality – but the historical significance of the town once known as Lewisville cannot be ignored.

In its day, the town on the shores of Broad Creek played quite the influential role in the First State, cranking out sailing rams by the dozens and contributing significantly to the financial coffers of the area. These

majestic ships were often 100 feet long or more and took about three months to complete – they also put tiny Bethel on the map in southern Delaware.

The sailing rams had three masts, a flat bottom with a centerboard and straight sides. They were also able to dock at many more ports with shallow water, which was a great advantage over the large deep-keeled schooners of the day.

Along with neighboring Laurel, Bethel was once known for its affluent residents and for the industry that put it on the map during a time when agriculture and farming ruled the day in western Sussex County. Encompassing less than two miles of land in the southernmost reaches of Delaware, Bethel was founded in the late 1700s and even today features white clapboard homes lining streets that were once made of crushed oyster shells.

In fact, the entire waterside community is listed in its entirety on the National Register of Historic Places, the only Sussex County town to hold such a distinction. Residents are well aware of this fact, and they protect and embrace their history with passion and with fervor.

Many homes in Bethel feature Victorian and Italian architecture. There are only about 200 residents who call the municipality home today, but the town situated on the north bank of Broad Creek, tributary of the Nanticoke River, is the very personification of what small town America used to be.

Bethel didn't incorporate until 1880, though the reason why it took so long to make things official is not clear. Perhaps the residents were just too busy putting out ships to attend to such civic matters – it was the shipbuilders, after all, who built the clapboard houses for the sea captains.

Originally called Lewisville, Kendall Lewis began the process of forming the town in 1840 when he laid out 12 building lots. With incorporation came a post office and a name change to Bethel, presumably to avoid confusion with the town of Lewes, according to James E. Marvil in his book, "Sailing Rams."

The incorporation of the Lewisville Marine Railway Company in 1871 elevated the community's reputation as a center for ship repair and construction. By then, the town had become famous for the development of a uniquely designed schooner that could pass through the locks of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal and enter the Chesapeake Bay.

The ram had no topmasts or jib booms, and could be sailed with one or two fewer crewmembers than other boats. Most historians believe that the Bethel shipyard crews could turn out a ram every 90 days, and records show that 40 sailing rams were built at the Bethel shipyard, along with barges, tugboats, skiffs and other vessels.

The "Edwin and Maud," the last remaining Bethel-built sailing ram, is still sailing off the coast of Maine, though it has been renamed "Victory Chimes." The ship is proudly displayed on the back of Maine's state quarter.

Bethel's shipping industry died with the 20th century, with the last two ships built in the once thriving town constructed during World War I. A big reason for the transition away from sailing vessels was the fast growing railroad industry, which was extended into Sussex County in the mid-1800s and progressively gained a foothold in the area as the preferred method of transportation.

Nowadays, the tiny sleeping hamlet is little more than a quiet picturesque village. Two-lane back roads serve as the entrances to town, located about two miles west of Route 13.

With its old buildings, its historic waterways, its larger than life characters and its unique preservation efforts, the whole of Sussex County provides a literal glimpse into the past, and Bethel is certainly no exception.

Bethel Store

Built in 1900, the Bethel General Store is a throwback to the commerce of yesteryear, with an architecture and ambiance that recalls days gone by and town characters that tell larger than life tales of a long gone era. It is a true treasure in a town that is very much in touch with its unique history.

Constructed as a resource for the thriving shipbuilding industry of its day, residents and visitors alike can still stop in for lunch or to sit and watch the now modern world go by. But it also harkens back to its unique history – the store’s pillars are actually salvaged masts from old sailing ships that were designed and constructed in the town.

The store is located in Bethel’s downtown historic district.

Bethel Heritage Museum

Housed in an old schoolhouse, the Bethel Heritage Museum preserves much of the history of Bethel in a repository of the shipbuilding activity that gave the town its life. It houses a collection of ship models, paintings, furniture, china and records of shipbuilding enterprises.

During a day trip, visitors to the museum can learn all about the techniques used in the 1800s to build three and four masted schooners and the regionally infamous Bethel Rams.

Laurel Discovery Zone

What is today a small Delaware municipality like many others surrounding it, the town of Laurel was once a thriving area of commerce that boasted some of the wealthiest residents in the First State, including several governors.

There are over 800 structures which together contribute to the area that made up the Laurel Historic District nomination. It should not be interpreted to mean that each of the 800+ structures was independently nominated to the National Historic Register. It simply is the largest historic district in Delaware based on the total number of structures included.

Laurel was incorporated as a town on April 13, 1883, but its roots go back much, much further to a time when Native Americans first settled in what they termed a “wading place” near present-day Broad Creek.

Plotted in 1802 after the sale of an Indian reservation, the town was named by settlers for the beautiful native laurel trees growing along the creek. But throughout its history, there have always been two important

ingredients essential for Laurel’s survival – the river and the railroad.

Broad Creek once teemed with ships whose captains exchanged products between Laurel and other, more distant, ports. For many years, the waterways here were the lifeblood of the town.

Then along came the long-awaited expansion of the Delaware Railroad, which opened up much more distant markets to the area’s farmers when tracks were put down in 1859.

The combination of the river and the arrival of the railroad made Laurel a desirable place to live and conduct business, and the town soon became known as one of the wealthiest in Delaware.

In downtown Laurel, nearly every home can be traced back at least 100 years. There are Victorian homes, Colonial homes and Federal-period homes, all well-maintained as part of the Laurel Historic District.

There’s nowhere else in Delaware where you can view as many examples of turn-of-the-century architecture as in Laurel. It’s no longer one of the wealthiest municipalities in the state, far from it, but Laurel provides residents and visitors alike with a unique view into the way townspeople lived more than 150 years ago in western Sussex County.

Rosemont

Possibly the oldest house in Laurel, Rosemont was built by James Mitchell, father of former Gov. Nathaniel Mitchell (1753 - 1814). A Georgian structure, it was later adapted to the Greek Revival style, evidenced by the addition of a two-story porch. For many years, Rosemont was the seat of a plantation holding that stretched from Broad Creek to what is now Bethel.

Spring Garden

This house is an excellent example of both Victorian and Federal style construction and was built over two centuries. The original brick section boasts a center door three bay façade with dormer windows. The western addition is an example of Victorian woodworking skills found in Laurel at the time. This is the only remaining early brick building in Broad Creek Hundred.

Hearn-Cook House

Built around 1860, this Delaware Vernacular style structure has been occupied by only two families during its 150-year history. The last remaining family members donated the building to the Laurel Historical Society for use as a center point for its member's activities. Today, the site houses the extensive collection of artifacts, documents and photographs amassed by the society in its 35-year history.

Old Christ Church

Old Christ Church near Laurel remains almost entirely as it was when it was built more than 235 years ago to this day, there is no plumbing, no electricity and no heating in the historic structure. Stepping through the doors of the 18th century chapel is like stepping back into time, or as Colonial Williamsburg architectural historian Carl Lounsberry once said, "like walking into 18th century England." Made almost entirely from heart pine, the chapel continues to stand majestically as it has for generations in western Sussex County.

Originally built as a chapel of ease for Stepney Parish in Maryland, Old Christ Church was constructed in 1772 and is believed to be one of only a dozen or so churches along the eastern seaboard to survive unaltered from pre-Revolutionary War days.

After being closed for services for many years, Old Christ Church now plays host to church services on the first Sunday of every month from June through September.

It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Laurel Heritage Museum

Located in the town's historic train station, the Laurel Heritage Museum is a collaborative effort between the Laurel Historical Society and the Delaware Division of Historic and Cultural Affairs. It features an extensive collection of documents and objects from the history of the town, including a sample of the Society's large photo collection and other memorabilia collected by the Laurel Historical Society throughout the years.

Trap Pond State Park

Trap Pond State Park was created by the United States Department of Agriculture in 1939, when engineers

began eyeing the area for recreational use and built a dam across the creek that ran through the land. But the history of what is now a beautifully maintained Delaware State Park actually dates back much farther than that, to the 18th century when the actual pond was created to power a sawmill during the harvest of bald cypress trees, particularly in the areas in and around the Great Cypress Swamp.

One of the oldest state parks in Delaware, Trap Pond offers plenty of recreational opportunities for travelers along the Nanticoke Heritage Byway, including disc golf, nature trails, pontoon boat tours and wildlife viewing, all in a setting as serene and beautiful as any you will find in western Sussex County. Trap Pond State Park is home to the northernmost collection of bald cypress trees in North America, including one tree that is estimated by forestry officials to be about 750 years old.

The scenic park, with its abundance of ponds and creeks, was created shortly after the American Revolution to power a sawmill. Purchased by the American government in the 1930s, Trap Pond officially became one of Delaware's first state parks in 1951.

Wooden walkways throughout the park provide the perfect atmosphere for exploring or bird watching or simply taking a walk with the family or with that special someone. There are also bike and horse trails, in addition to wetlands and forests to explore at this hidden treasure in Delaware's southernmost and most scenic county.

The park is home to great blue herons, owls, hummingbirds, pileated woodpeckers and even the occasional bald eagle. Spending a day here, surrounded by nature, is like immersing yourself in a picture postcard, one that just gets more enjoyable and remarkable the longer you stay.

Trap Pond State Park is also home to the Baldcypress Nature Center, which features a variety of displays and programs. There are also picnic areas, volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, a playground, a camping area, a boat launching ramp and so much more.

St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church

St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church was established in 1848 on what is today Central Avenue in downtown Laurel, largely due to the emergence of the railroad industry in southern Delaware.

Until its construction, most parishioners attended Old Christ Church outside of town, but the proximity of the railroad line made it easier to attend Sunday services in the town of Laurel, and St. Philip's blossomed.

Today, it is one of many old churches in the downtown historic area of Laurel and easily one of the most historically significant.

Concord Discovery Zone

Known originally as Deep Creek and later as Partnership, the town of Concord existed and thrived because of the now long-gone bog iron industry. Dating back to the 1700s, the name of the town is thought to have originated because the word "concord" was a term used frequently around the turn of the 18th century to express a state of harmony between English settlers and the Native Americans of the area.

As early as 1763, deeds show a gristmill and a furnace at Partnership, long before the name Concord took hold in the area. Some records indicate that the town's roots could go back as far as the mid 1600s.

Like much of Sussex County, Concord once held a great deal of political clout in the state. One of Concord's most revered residents, one Thomas Laws, was a signer of the United States Constitution on Dec. 7, 1787, a moment that is remembered in the state every year on "Delaware Day," or the day when the small colony of Delaware officially became the First State.

But while the town has a storied history, including many dealings with the local Native Americans and several well-known and influential political figures, the history of the town today, as it pertains to the Nanticoke Heritage Byway, is all about the once-thriving industry that drove the local economy and the local workforce.

in Concord – the Pine Grove Furnace, whose site is included on the byway, and the Deep Creek Furnace were the industry of the day in the town, just to the east of Seaford.

With its roots dating back to 1764, the Deep Creek Furnace, according to Kirk Cannon in his book "Concord Story," was perhaps the largest business ever formed in the Concord area. At one time, the company that owned the furnace boasted nearly 7,000 acres of local land, and it prospered until the beginning of the Revolutionary War, when the men who worked at the furnace left to join the Continental Army.

After the war, the town became home to grist and saw mills, which existed throughout much of Sussex County at the time, as well as a distillery, a tan yard and at least one shipyard. The competing Pine Grove Furnace has a storied history of its own, which is told later in this document and is included as an interpretive site along the Nanticoke Heritage Byway. While it has a long, storied and impressive history, there is sadly little that remains in Concord today of the once thriving industry that made its mark on Sussex County and in the whole of Delaware. The manmade dam and lake are visible reminders of these glory days, as are the foundation of the mill and store that once existed in Concord. But for the most part, the town today is a quiet little hamlet where residents tell stories of days gone by and remember the giant bog iron furnaces and the influential local residents who once played such an important role in the early days of the First State.

Still, its historical significance to Sussex County is not to be ignored during a trip along the Nanticoke Heritage Byway. Some important stops in this segment of the byway loop include:

Pine Grove Furnace Site

Dating back to 1750, the storied Pine Grove Furnace had contracts for iron ore from other parts of Delaware, as well as from Maryland, and had an incredibly successful business going until the British Navy blockaded the Chesapeake during the Revolutionary War.

Like its competing furnace across town, many

employees of Pine Grove Furnace left their jobs to join the fight against the British Empire during the war, and the furnace industry's days were numbered. But before its demise, the furnace was a 24-hour a day operation and employed hundreds of Sussex Countians. Young men would come to the furnace, serve their apprenticeship and then enter into ventures of their own.

The natural resources of the Delmarva Peninsula made it possible to produce iron in large quantities, and the industry thrived for a time. Charcoal, oyster shells and lime deposits were all readily available and could be poured into the furnace, where waterwheels furnished power for the bellows. Melted iron ran out of the bottom onto a sand floor every hour of every day.

The furnace operated until 1799, and its legacy remains today as a reminder of this once thriving southern Delaware industry.

The site of the old iron furnace was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

Concord Pond Dam

The dam that today identifies Concord was constructed in 1752 as a way to harness the water and use its power. Its original use was for the area's mills, but the town's furnace companies eventually utilized it as a way to power their equipment.

With nearly 40 miles filled with interesting sites, recreational opportunities and countless history lessons, the Nanticoke Heritage Byway is a true gem on the Delmarva Peninsula for travelers and history lovers from throughout the mid-Atlantic.

It is one of only two state-sanctioned byways in Sussex County and is not to be missed during any trip to Southern Delaware.