

## Establishment of Delaware Day

Seventy years ago, residents of Delaware--men, women, and students--signed petitions requesting that the Delaware General Assembly establish a special day commemorating Delaware's ratification of the federal Constitution. A petition initiated by Mr. E. Paul Burkholder, Chairman of the Delaware Day Committee for Georgetown Rotary Club, circulated copies of his petition throughout the state in 1933.

On October 27, 1933, Mr. Burkholder forwarded a letter addressed to the Honorable C. Douglass Buck, Governor, State of Delaware, and officially requested consideration of a petition **"regarding the proper observance of December seventh on account of its significance in the history of Delaware."** He provided Governor Buck with copies of the petition signed by 6,025 citizens, suggestions as to proper observance, a list of statewide organizations that endorsed this movement with letters affirming their action, and a list of various community organizations that cooperated in circulating the petition.

The General Assembly passed a Joint House Resolution establishing December 7 as "Delaware Day" on November 29, 1933. The Senate and House of Representatives authorized and directed Governor Buck to, **"issue a proclamation calling upon all citizens...to display State and national flags of December 7, of each year."** The resolution also invited, **"the people of the State of Delaware to observe the day in schools, churches and civic organizations with appropriate celebrations commemorating December 7<sup>th</sup> in honor of our State being the first state of the Union."** Thus, the first Delaware Day was established on Thursday, December 7, 1933.

Community organizations that cooperated in circulating Mr. Burkholder's petition included:

Rotary Clubs:	Dover, Georgetown, Harrington, Laurel, Lewes, Middletown, Milford, Selbyville, Smyrna, and Wilmington.
Schools:	Bridgeville, Claymont, Delmar, Delaware City, Dover, Georgetown, Harrington, Lewes, Middletown, Milford, Millsboro, Milton, New Castle, Rehoboth, Seaford, Selbyville, Smyrna, and Wilmington.
Kiwanis Clubs:	Rehoboth, Seaford, and Wilmington.
University of Delaware:	Students and faculty
Women's Clubs:	Blue Rock Community Club, Bridgeville Women's Club, Clayton Women's Club, Delaware City Women's Club, Felton Women's Club, Garden Century Club, Georgetown Women's Club, Laurel Women's Club, Lewes Women's Club, Milford Women's Club, Milton Women's Club, Newark Women's Club, New Castle Women's Club, Newport Women's Club, Rehoboth Women's Club, Richardson Park Women's Club, Rising Sun Women's Club, Selbyville Women's Club, Washington Height Women's Club, and the Wilmington Quota Club.

Patriotic & Service Organizations: Daughters of the American Revolution, Delaware Citizens Association, Delaware Department of the American Legion, Delaware State Education Association (E. Paul Burkholder – Treasurer), and the State Federation of Women's Clubs.

The Executive Papers Collection, housed at the Delaware Public Archives in Dover, contains the original petition and supporting documents forwarded to Governor C. Douglass Buck by Mr. E. Paul Burkholder in 1933.

A transcription of the typed petition initiated by Mr. E. Paul Burkholder in 1933 and his suggestions for proper observance of December 7 follows:

**"WHEREAS; Delawareans are rightfully proud of the fact that their State is known as the first State of the Union.**

**WHEREAS; she has attained this position officially by being the first to ratify the constitution of the United States of America.**

**WHEREAS; this ratification took place on December 7, 1787, we the undersigned hereby petition his excellency, the Governor of the State of Delaware, to designate the date of December 7th to be known as "Delaware Day", and to be observed in such a manner as the various institutions and communities of the State see fit.**

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR PROPER OBSERVANCE OF DECEMBER SEVENTH.**

- 1. We do not advocate a holiday.**
- 2. National and State flags might be displayed.**
- 3. Special programs might be held in schools and churches.**
- 4. Civic organizations might take the lead in staging celebrations for their communities.**
- 5. Citizens might be urged to observe the day as they see fit.**
- 6. The Governor or our State might issue a proclamation two weeks prior to December seventh." (Executive Papers Collection, Delaware Public Archives)**

A transcription of the letter of endorsement prepared by the American Legion dated October 12, 1933, written by George D. Hill, Adjutant, and sent to Mr. E. Paul Burkholder of Georgetown, Delaware, follows:

***The American Legion  
Department of Delaware***

***"Kindly be advised that at the Fifteenth Annual Convention of the American Legion of the Department of Delaware, held at Rehoboth on September 9 of this year, a resolution was adopted that a movement be launched petitioning the Governor ... to designate by annual proclamation December 7 as a day to be appropriately observed in commemoration of the ratification of the United States Constitution by the State of Delaware." (Executive Papers Collection, Delaware Public Archives)***

A transcription of the letter of endorsement prepared by the Delaware State Federation of women's Clubs dated October 11, 1933, written by Mrs. William H. Beacom, President, and sent to Mr. E. Paul Burkholder of Georgetown, Delaware, follows:

**" The State Federation of Women's Clubs, at its annual convention in May, 1933, approved December 7<sup>th</sup> being celebrated as 'Delaware Day' and expressed the hope that it might be established as a regular and permanent affair."** (Executive Papers Collection, Delaware Public Archives)

A transcription of the letter of endorsement prepared by the Delaware State Education Association dated October 10, 1933, written by George T. Macklin, President, to Mr. E. Paul Burkholder, Treasurer, Delaware State Education Association, follows:

**"This it to notify you that the Executive Committee of the D.S.E.A. at a meeting on September 29 endorsed the movement to have December 7 set aside as 'Delaware Day'."** (Executive Papers Collection, Delaware Public Archives)

A transcription of the letter of endorsement prepared by the Delaware Citizens Association dated October 10, 1933, written by Etta J. Wilson and sent to Mr. E. Paul Burkholder of Georgetown, Delaware, follows:

**"A motion endorsing the effort to have December 7<sup>th</sup> designated as Delaware Day was unanimously passed by the Board of Directors meeting June 5<sup>th</sup>."** (Executive Papers Collection, Delaware Public Archives)