

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW STAFF REPORT

Before Dover Historic District Commission

September 19, 2024

<u>Application:</u>	Delaware Supreme Court Building Addition-Renovation HI-24-06
<u>Owner:</u>	State of Delaware
<u>Location:</u>	Southeast corner of the Green, east of South State Street.
<u>Addresses:</u>	55 The Green
<u>Size:</u>	3.92 +/- acres
<u>Present Uses:</u>	Delaware Supreme Court
<u>Present Zoning:</u>	IO (Institutional and Office Zone) SWPOZ (Source Water Protection Overlay Zone) H (Historic District Zone)

I. PROPERTY INFORMATION

The Historic District Commission will act on an Architectural Review Certificate for an addition to the Delaware Supreme Court Building. This application consists of a project for the construction of a 700 square foot addition to the Delaware Supreme Court building. The parcel of 3.92+/- acres also contains the Kent County Courthouse building addressed as 414 Federal Street, the Margaret M O'Neill Building at 410 Federal Street, and the Old State House at 25 The Green. The proposed addition will contain a new chambers room and 2 additional ADA compliant bathrooms. The property is zoned IO (Institutional and Office Zone) and subject to the H (Historic District Zone) and the SWPOZ (Source Water Protection Overlay Zone). The property is located on the east side of the Green to the east side of South State Street. The owner of record is the State of Delaware. Property Address: 55 The Green. Tax Parcel: ED-05-077.09-05-32.00-000.

Surrounding Land Uses

The subject area lies on the historic Green. The surrounding zoning is a mix of IO (Institutional and Office Zone), RG-O (General Residence and Office Zone), and ROS (Recreational and Open Space Zone). The area contains State offices and offices for organizations centered here in Dover. The Sykes building immediately to the right on The Green is zoned RG-O and contains the Public Defender's office. Also, in the RG-O zone on The Green is the historic John Bell House. To the left of the Delaware Supreme Court Building is the Old State House. Further to the left facing The Green are the offices of the Biggs Museum. Across from the subject property is the open space used for concerts and other public events.

Previous Applications

Staff searched for previous applications and did not find development applications. On file were a series of Fire Protection Permits and Building Permits relating to internal renovations and

replacement of an access ramp. According to the description in the National Register of Historic Places nomination there were renovations to the building over the years. The description is listed below.

II. PROJECT PROPOSAL

Scope of Project

The Building Addition will add a chamber and 2 bathrooms to the south side of the building. The area of the building that will be extended for the addition contains four windows that will be replicated on the new exterior wall (south elevation). The roof of this one story addition will be flat, like the addition from 1968. The exterior is shown as brick laid with the same Flemish bond as the original building. The brick cornice is carried into the new addition, as well as the stone keystone and lintels of the tall, rounded windows.

The interior renovation and layout of the space are not subject to this review process.

The brick sidewalk is noted to be removed where the Building Addition will be located. The sidewalk intersections will be squared off and terminate at existing building access/egress points. There are other segments of the sidewalk network to link from The Green to Federal Street along the Kent County Courthouse. The fenced off area between the building at 55 The Green and 410 Federal Street will remain, and the fence replaced after the work is completed.

III. HISTORIC PROPERTY INFORMATION

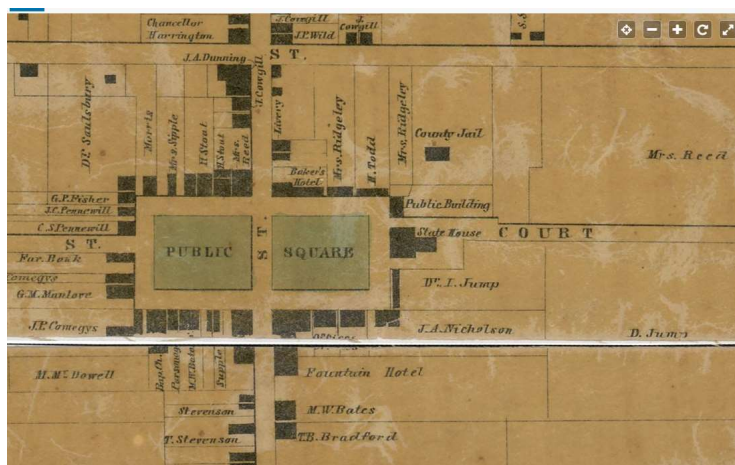
National Register of Historic Places – Dover Green Historic District

The subject area is located within the boundaries of a National Register Historic District, specifically the Dover Green Historic District. The National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Dover Green Historic District (K-394) was completed 1973-76 and amended in 1979 and 1984. This federal designation focuses on the area immediately around The Green and extends for several blocks to its south. The nomination recognizes “the significance of the evolution of Dover during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.” In the subject area, a series of contributing and non-contributing resources were listed in the inventory for the National Register nomination. The resources were predominately dwellings of the 19th century through mid-twentieth century. A more detailed architectural description is given in the nomination. For the Supreme Court Building at 55 The Green (K-394.70) see as follows.

.70 55 The Green - Supreme Court Building - 1912; built as a wing of the Old State House, the building was remodeled in 1968 and again in 1976. Originally built in a free form neo-classical style, the structure featured a two-story porch with columns and full entablature over the lobby section. This recessed wing had three semicircular arched doors with fanlights. Panels with swags decorated the lobby wing and main block facade walls between the first and second floors. A balustrade encircled the roof above a molded cornice. The 1968 remodeling removed the porch and the balustrade. The lobby wing was reduced to one story with a gable roof. A hip roof was built on the main block. The swag panels were removed, and semicircular arched central windows in the main block were refinished with flat arches. The result was a more severe Georgian style appearance. The 1976 remodeling was part of the Old State House restoration. The lobby wing was reduced by nine feet to separate the Old State House from the Supreme Court Building. The entrance was remodeled to accommodate this change while the main block retained its 1968 appearance. As it stands today, the Supreme Court Building has a brick, 2-story, 5-bay main block and a brick, 1-story, 1-bay lobby wing. Brick in the main block is laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers; a stone course delineates the water table. Windows are 15/15 and 9/9 sash and are finished with stone lintels and keystones. The central double-leaf door in the main block is framed by unfluted column pilasters and a pediment with partial return over a fanlight. The lobby wing is of brick laid in common bond. It retains the gable roof of the 1968 remodeling. It now has a domed porch supported on unfluted columns. The central double-leaf door is finished with a two-course transom and a cornice with pulvinated molding. (c)

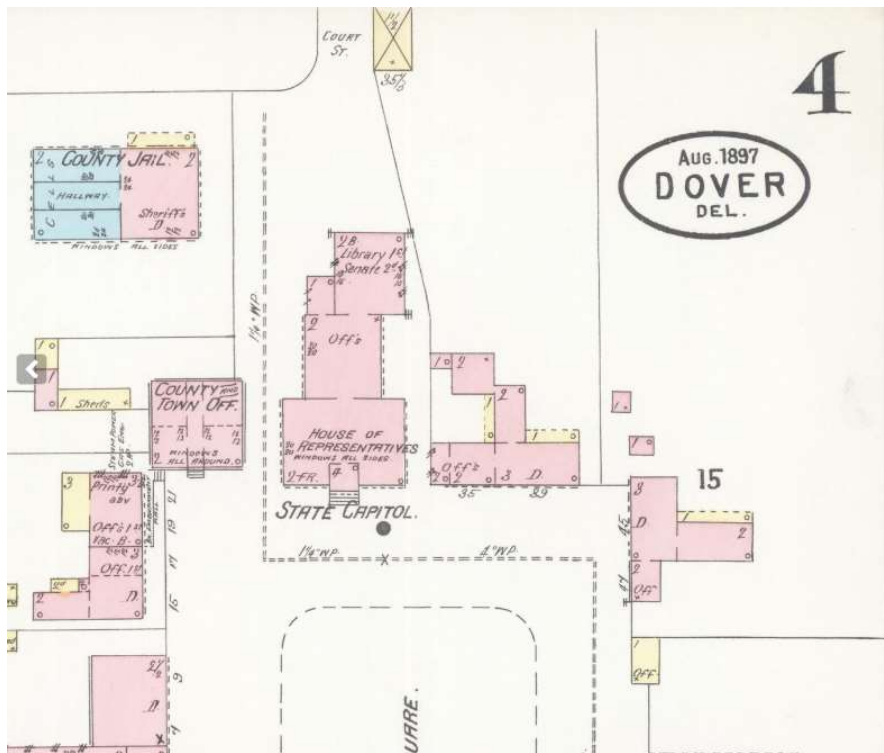
Review of Historic Maps

A series of historic maps were reviewed by Planning Staff for preliminary information on this east side of South State Street between North Street and East Water Street. The 1859 A.D. Byles Map of Kent County (Dover insert) shows The State House and different buildings around it, many still exist today.

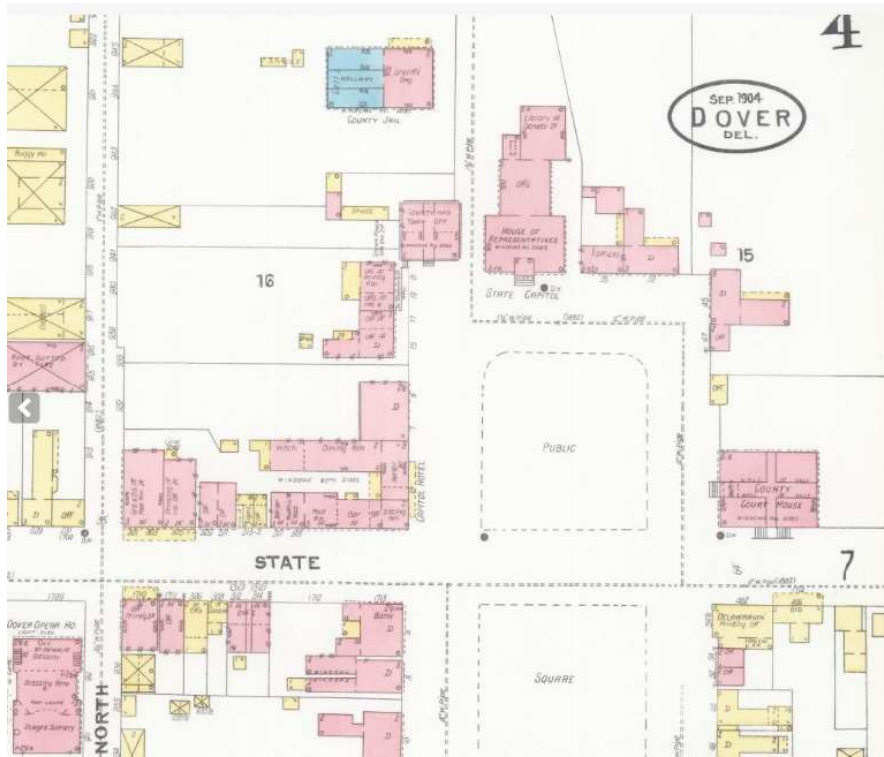


- Philadelphia : Published by A.D. Byles, 1859.

The series of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps would also be a reference source for information on the buildings which occupied the subject area over time. For Dover, the Sanborn Maps date from 1897-1944. The 1919 Sanborn Map shows the beginnings of what is there today, with a squared off front on the left entrance porch. According to the description in the 1979 for the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Dover Green Historic District, the Building's domed entrance was added prior to the 1979 nomination application.



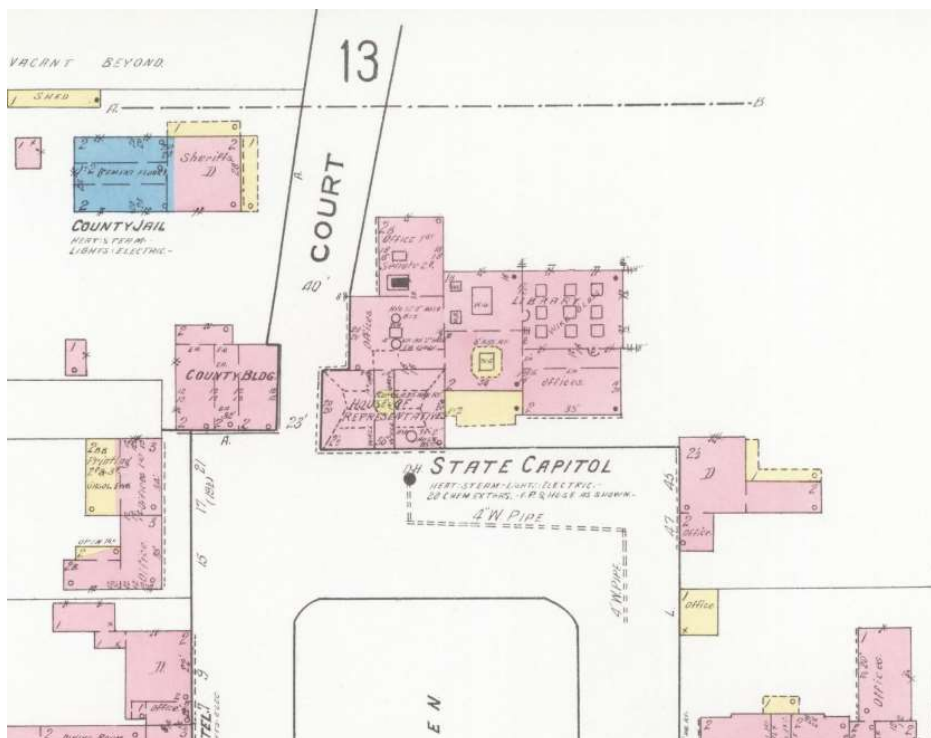
Sanborn Map 1897 1



Sanborn Map 1904 1



Sanborn Map 1910 1



Sanborn Map 1919 1

IV. ZONING REVIEW

The entire project site is located in the H (Historic District Zone) and subject to the provisions of the *Zoning Ordinance*, Article 3 § 21 and referenced sections. *Zoning Ordinance*, Article 10 § 3.2 outlines the review process for Architectural Review Certification and related building height, bulk, and setback standards.

The subject project area is zoned IO (Institutional and Office Zone) and portions are located within the SWPOZ (Source Water Protection Overlay Zone – Tier 3: Excellent Recharge Area). The IO zone allows the use for a Supreme Court as a type of public and institutional building and makes the development subject to provisions of regulations the IO zone.

Review of DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The subject project site is located in the Dover Historic District Zone within The Green Historic Context. The Green Historic Context is described on pages 2-3 through 2-5. Location within the Dover Historic District Zone requires proposals for demolition, new construction, additions, and certain renovation or rehabilitation activities to existing buildings to receive an Architectural Review Certificate.

As stated in the *Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone*, an Architectural Review Certificate will be granted “if it is found that the architectural style, general design, height, bulk and setbacks, arrangement location and materials affecting the exterior appearance are generally in harmony with neighboring structures and complementary to the traditional architectural standards of the historic district.” In accordance with Article 10 § 3.2, the Historic District Commission will take action regarding the project’s compliance with the architectural review standards.

This proposal must be reviewed for conformity with the design criteria guidelines found in Chapter 4: New Construction, Additions, Demolition and Relocation. Information on the review considerations is given below.

New Construction, Additions, Demolition and Relocation

The *Design Standards and Guidelines* for New Construction, Additions, Demolition and Relocation (Chapter 4: pages 4-1 through 4-10) provide the design criteria and development guidelines. The guidelines specify the following individual considerations additions to existing buildings to be considered in the review by the Historic District Commission of the project for Architectural Review Certification:

- Siting (*location of building on lot and in relation to street*)
- Scale
- Elevation of the First Floor
- Floor-to-Floor heights
- Massing (*relationship of solid-to-void*)
- Orientation (*location of primary façade*)

- Proportions (*comparison of height to width of building and elements*)
- Materials
- Forms (*shape of building and roof to be complementary*)

The proposed project must also be reviewed for compliance with the standards established by the *Zoning Ordinance*. The standards include items such as setbacks from property lines, lot coverage, height, etc. This Proposal for the Delaware Supreme Court Building Addition conforms to most of the bulk requirements of the IO Zoning District, except for parking which is legal non-conforming. Parking for offices and Capital Complex is addressed through a campus parking plan. The *City of Dover Zoning Ordinance* authorizes the Historic District Commission to waive certain bulk standards when taking action on for Architectural Review Certificate if necessary.

V. STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are Staff comments and recommendations for this application regarding project activities and Architectural Review Certification.

- 1) Staff recommends conditional approval of the Architectural Review Certificate for the Delaware Supreme Court Building Addition based on the criteria set forth in the *Design Guidelines and Standards*, this project conforms to the regulations outlined. The overall design is consistent with the building as it was originally designed in 1912 and how it has evolved into what it looks like today including the massing, style, windows, heights, proportions, and materials.
 - a. The Building Addition is setback from the main massing of the Building and placed in a secondary position.
 - b. The exterior finishes of brick for walls and detailing and the window form and trim work detailing are compatible with the existing building. The use of brick continues the primary exterior material for buildings in this area of The Green and nearby Capital Complex.
- 2) The following conditions/considerations are recommended by Staff to improve project's compliance with the recommended guidelines of the *Design Standards and Guidelines*:
 - a. Clarify material for keystone of arched window openings and the window sills in new addition.
 - b. Clarify type of window and grid work (mullions and mutins) i.e. format of simulated divided light windows.
- 3) The project will be subject to Administrative Site Plan application review process for a Site Development Plan (*Zoning Ordinance*, Article 10 Section 2). This review is underway.
 - a. Additional technical items for compliance with the *Zoning Ordinance* and other regulations may be identified during the Administrative Plan Review Process.
- 4) In the event of major changes and revisions are proposed to the Site Plan design, you are required to contact the Planning Office to discuss prior to implementation. These changes may require resubmittal of the plan/drawings for review by agencies making recommendations or acting regarding the application.

- 5) The applicant should be aware that Final Plan approval does not represent a Building Permit and other associated construction activity permits.

Historic District Commission Action Required

The Historic District Commission shall consider the proposal and take action regarding the Architectural Review Certification for the Delaware Supreme Court Building Addition with Site Improvements. The recommendation should reflect consideration of the *Design Standards and Guidelines*.

Attachments:

- Application Submission Letter
- Site Plan Set (6 pages: T-10-01, T10-02, T-10-03, C1-01, A1-2, A2-1)