

Preface

Welcome to *Delaware: From Freeways to E-Ways*, a survey of the First State's multifaceted twentieth-century history. The title might seem like an odd juxtaposition; nonetheless, freeways and digital ways do have a purposeful connection to each other.

Early twentieth century, people aspired to travel at what was the era's epoch light speed. Thus, the book opens with T. Coleman du Pont's pioneering highway project. The freedom of the freeway epitomized this titan's engineering ambition.

"E-Ways," meanwhile, short for "digital ways," harks back to the late 1990s. During that time, companies started adding an "e-" prefix to capitalize on the emerging world of e-commerce. This was done in an effort to comport with the rapidity of our changing world—to convey a sense of being on the cutting edge of technology.

The book ends by acknowledging Delaware's input to the building of these manifold digital ways. The University of Delaware's groundbreaking efforts have contributed several building blocks to the Internet's physical infrastructure. The school has also played a role in the commercialization of what the 1990s nicknamed the "information superhighway."

Between the two bookends of freeways and e-ways, I offer up stories of heroism, resilience, and innovation that define the Delawarean spirit. *Delaware: From Freeways to e-Ways* paints a nuanced portrayal of Delaware's complex twentieth century identity, from war heroes like James Phillip Connor, to enduring communities like the Nanticoke Native Americans.

The far-reaching influence of the du Pont family is central to Delaware's unfolding story. Numerous sectors felt the impact of their combined legacy. Du Pont heir Edmund H. "Ted" Harvey, for example, spearheaded environmental conservationism. DuPont Company chemist Wallace Carothers invented nylon. Wilmington Trust Company, owned by the family, pioneered Delaware's role in attracting myriad companies seeking incorporation.

I hope you acquire two takeaways by the end of your reading. First, a clearer understanding of Delaware's twentieth-century contributions. Second, an appreciation for how localized customs and stories are woven into the broader tapestry of our national narrative.