

Delaware State Police Unveils Historic Legacy of Troop 5: A Century of Service

On April 28, 1923, the Delaware State Police was founded. At its inception, there were four initial stations established throughout Delaware. These four stations were located in Wilmington, New Castle, Dover, and Georgetown. In 1925, the need for an additional facility to patrol the western side of Sussex County was quickly realized, and the State Highway Police were authorized to build a fifth facility. Station 5 was temporarily established at the Seaford Bridge while a permanent structure was being built approximately one mile south of Greenwood. In 1926, Privates Norman Purnell, Frank O'Neal, Charles Knox, Joseph Holt, Malcolm Orr, and Norman Voshell were assigned to Station 5 under the command of Corporal Oscar James.

By the mid-1930s, all stations within the State were providing 24-hour service. In 1935, for the first time in the history of the State Police, the Highway Department purchased a patrol car for each of the five troops. Between 1937 and 1938, the old wood frame building, temporarily serving as Station 5, was replaced with a new brick building designed to accommodate the growing force and its fleet of patrol cars and motorcycles. The featured image, taken circa 1937, depicts the original Station 5 and the following personnel (from left to right): Lieutenant Norman Purnell, Sergeant Jim Wood, Corporal George Shockley, Privates Joe West, John Blizzard, Malcolm Orr, John Joseph, Frank O'Neal, Joe Holt, and George Minner.

The Department underwent significant changes during the 1940s due to America's involvement in World War II. Many uniformed members of the department were drafted into military service during this period, resulting in significant personnel

shortages and the closure of Station 5. During that time, Station 4 serviced the residents of Sussex County. On April 20, 1944, the Highway Commissioners changed the designation of Station 5 to Troop "E," and it was also agreed that future Privates would be referred to as Troopers. Troop E was reopened on May 1, 1947, after the war had ended. Following its reopening, the troop no longer used a letter designation and was instead referred to as Troop 5. It was under the command of Sergeant Horace Hickman, who was later promoted to the rank of Captain in November of that same year. By the end of the 1940s, 18 troopers were assigned to Troop 5.

Expansion work of Troop 5 was completed on April 22, 1961, to create additional workspace for assigned troopers. The new expansion included staff offices, interview rooms, a detention area, an indoor pistol firing range, an inter-troop intra-state teletype system, and a garage for minor repairs. This expansion doubled the space of the original building.



In 1990, a truck driver was traveling northbound on US 13 when his truck veered off the roadway and demolished the south side of Troop 5. Although two troopers were present in the building, there were no serious injuries resulting from the collision. Due to severe structural damage, troop operations were moved to Troop 4, located north of Georgetown. After repairs, operations were moved back to the newly renovated Troop 5 in 1991.



In October 2005, Troop 5 relocated from north of Bridgeville to a newly renovated Visitor's Center on 5 acres of land just south of Bridgeville along US 13. This land also allowed for the construction of a separate building for Sussex County Paramedics Station #107. The facility was renamed the Adams-Ewing Public Safety Complex to pay tribute to former Delaware State Senator Thurman G. Adams Jr. and retired Delaware State Police Lt. Colonel and former Representative J. Benjamin Ewing

Jr., who played a crucial role in bringing this project to fruition. From its humble beginnings of being staffed by 7 troopers to its current complement of 41 troopers and civilian staff under the command of Captain Jon Wood, Troop 5 personnel continue their mission to enhance the quality of life for all Delaware citizens and visitors by providing professional, competent, and compassionate law enforcement services.

