DELAWARE

THE FIRST STATE *Became a state December 7, 1787 (1st)*

Delaware is the second-smallest state, but it was first in line. It was the first state to approve the United States Constitution, and it is less than 100 miles from one end to the other.



Why the First State?

After the Constitution was written in 1787, each state had to vote on it. On December 7, 1787, thirty men met in Dover and all thirty voted yes. That made Delaware the first state in the new country, five days ahead of Pennsylvania.



Sweden in America

In 1638, two ships from Sweden landed where Wilmington is today. The settlers built Fort Christina, the first lasting European settlement in Delaware, and called their colony New Sweden. They also brought a new way of building to America: the log cabin. Old Swedes Church, finished in 1699, still stands in Wilmington.



The Fighting Blue Hens

The story goes that during the Revolutionary War, a company of Delaware soldiers brought along chickens hatched from a famous blue hen. The birds were known as fierce fighters. The soldiers fought so hard in battle that people started calling them the Blue Hen's Chickens. The Blue Hen is now the state bird, and the University of Delaware's teams are the Fightin' Blue Hens.



Older Than the Dinosaurs

Every May and June, horseshoe crabs crawl onto the beaches of Delaware Bay to lay their eggs. More of them gather here than anywhere else in the world. Horseshoe crabs have been around for more than 400 million years, since long before the dinosaurs. They are not really crabs. Their closest relatives are spiders and scorpions.



The Peach State That Was

In the 1800s, Delaware grew more peaches than almost anywhere in the country. In 1875 its farmers shipped about six million baskets. Then a disease called peach yellows spread through the orchards and killed most of the trees. The peach blossom is still the state flower, and peach pie is the state dessert.



A Southern Swamp in the North

Bald cypress trees usually grow in the swamps of the Deep South. Trap Pond has one of the northernmost wild cypress swamps in the United States. The trees stand right in the water, with knobby roots called knees poking up around them. The pond was made in the late 1700s to power a sawmill.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 1 million (6th fewest)
Size	About 2,500 square miles, water included (2nd smallest)
Highest point	Ebright Azimuth, 448 feet
Counties	3, the fewest of any state
Neighbors	Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which state lies across the bay?
2. Which city is closest to Old Swedes Church?
3. How high is Delaware's highest point?

Answers: 1. New Jersey 2. Wilmington 3. 448 feet

DID YOU KNOW?

- Delaware is the lowest state on average. Its land is only about 60 feet above the sea.
- The ladybug became the state bug in 1974 after a class of second graders asked for it.
- The Woodland Ferry has carried travelers across the Nanticoke River since the 1740s.
- Fort Delaware sits on Pea Patch Island, named, the story goes, for a ship full of peas that ran aground there.