

## HISTORY OF PACKET ALLEY AND #25 THE STRAND

Packet Alley was the main thoroughfare for all travelers between Philadelphia and Baltimore. From the early 1700's to the late 1800's many thousands of people and tons of goods moved through this lane between the Delaware River and the street. Transported on the river in small boats known as "packets" for the mail bundles they carried, commerce and travel was extremely busy. Imagine both famous and everyday people on foot and heavy materials in wagons passing by these walls on their journeys. Sailors and passengers, cargo of all kinds moved through here. Over time various wooden wharves were built into the water. Remains of the last one are very visible at low tide. Walk to the shoreline of the alley to see.



PACKET BOAT, LATE 1800s. Rigged like a schooner, this small packet boat plied the Delaware River between New Castle and Philadelphia throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Boats like this operated on regular schedules and transported passengers, goods and mail. Castle's Packet Alley, located between the river and The Strand, was named for

Among the many people who passed through here include the Marquis de Lafayette and Louis Napoleon of France, politicians Andrew Jackson, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Sam Houston, native Americans like Osceola and Black Hawk. Then there are our locals of New Castle who helped create the beginnings of our nation. George Read signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and was elected governor of Delaware. Two other New Castle residents also signed the Declaration of Independence.

The building now called 25 The Strand began over two hundred years ago as a series of taverns for travelers' sustenance and refreshment. Known variously as *Delaware Hotel*, *State Tavern*, *Indian King* and *Ship Tavern*, business must have been thriving! Perhaps troops of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 passed by or stopped in for a while.

The Great Fire of 1824 was a tremendous tragedy when this entire side of the street burned to the ground. There is no record of anyone losing their life then but few household possessions were saved. Even across the street half of the buildings were lost.

Rebuilding began quickly and our alley-side location was restored along with the adjoining buildings initially as a group of warehouses.

In 1866, what is now #25 The Strand was bought by merchant David Boulden and converted to a store serving ships, travelers and local townspeople. It is known to this day as "Boulden's Store". He even scratched his name on one of the front window panes where it is still seen today. Look for it! He became a well known merchant with a thriving business that lasted until his passing in 1929. This building over the years is one of the more photographed places in Historic New Castle. Purchased in 1930 by Lydia and Phillip Laird, it was converted into the dwelling you see now.





Photos around 1890



Upper: 1880's, David Boulden with mustache. Same bay windows.  
 Lower: 1928 - Note shelves and double doors still here.



The iconic advertisement on the Packet Alley wall of “Ivory Soap” has become a bit of a landmark for its unique location, style and time. Done for David Boulden somewhere around 1900 - 1910, guessing from various old photos, it remains a semi-permanent but fading example of notice to the public. The store offered many cleaning items by Proctor & Gamble. Ivory Soap was the company’s very first successful product created in 1879 and is still widely used today. The photo showing the store interior displays several P&G products. (Note that behind the counter, the original wooden shelving is still there as well as the large, heavy doors.) The wooden hoist bar high in the middle of the brick wall was Boulden’s means of storage on the second floor. Moving heavy goods, probably for ships, required special care. The beams supporting both first and second floors are two feet by two feet from one foundation side to the other. Sturdy stuff!



Circa 1910 viewed from Delaware Street wharf - note “SOAP”



House here on Packet Alley not in previous photo!

Enjoy Historic New Castle on the Delaware River!

