

Old School New School

Thoughtful renovation of Pierre S. du Pont School in Wilmington returns pride to an architectural landmark.

Once you get past its size—the building alone covers five acres—you begin to notice details such as the Italian marble floor in the lobby, oak trim around windows, door frames and chalkboards, and the grand skylights that spill sunshine into Pierre S. du Pont School.

The Wilmington landmark, recognized immediately by its distinctive cupola, recently underwent

a \$44 million renovation to restore its previous glory. The result is a building that exhibits an old-school feel, but with all the modern amenities.

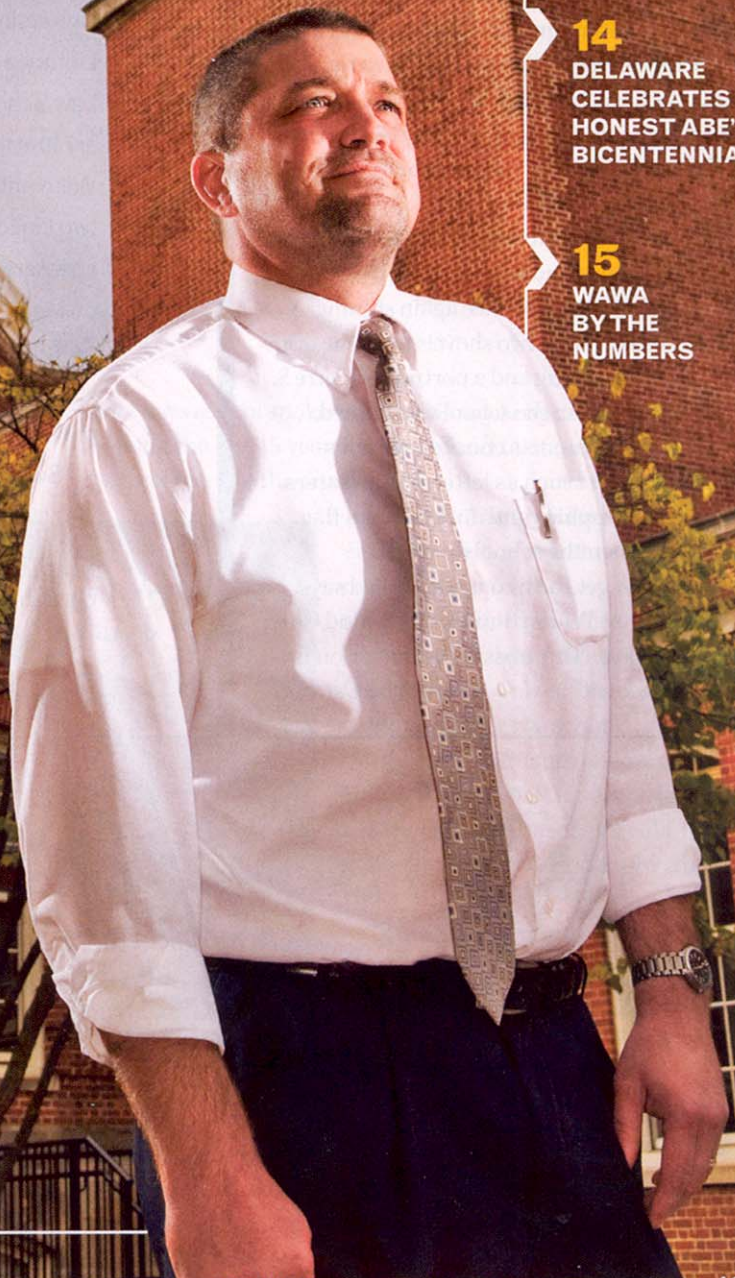
“Look at that stuff up there,” says John Skrobot, co-chair of the Brandywine School District’s renovation oversight committee. He points to the auditorium’s original chandeliers, decorative grates and >

Principal Lincoln Hohler and P.S. du Pont students are thrilled with renovations made to their school, which originally opened in 1935.

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› brass rails, all installed before the building opened in 1935. “Where do you get that kind of stuff these days?”

You don’t. The school was renovated to last, since taxpayers footed the bill. “We’re using debt money,” says construction project manager John Read. “We have to take the school 40 to 50 years out.”

Asbestos and lead were removed. A sprinkler system was added. Slate from locker room showers was turned into window sills, and wooden shelves from closets were repurposed throughout.

The renovation cost \$180 per square foot. Construction of a new school would have cost more than of \$310 million—seven times more than renovating.

Students and teachers now enjoy modern comforts such as air quality monitoring, a telephone-intercom in classrooms, and a cheerful cafeteria with piped-in jazz music and booths instead of fold-up tables. The shiny technology is tempered by the warm feel that comes from the classrooms’ original oak floors and wooden desks.

Impressive features such as the original skylights, which had been covered by tar and plywood for years, are once again shining. A display case houses two shovels from the original groundbreaking and a portrait of Pierre S. du Pont, for whom the school was named.

An archive room is chocked with historical artifacts such as lettermen sweaters, yearbooks, trophies and an American flag that flew when the school opened.

But don’t get the wrong idea, Read says.

“We’re not Winterthur or Longwood Gardens,” he says. “Our mission is education first, history second.” —Drew Ostroski

The Lincoln Log

This month marks Abe’s 200th birthday. Hence, local Lincoln lovers offer some very cool ways to celebrate. Honest.

David Swayze gets excited when he thinks about how Delaware will recognize the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial this year.

Swayze is a 30-year member and president of the Lincoln Club of Delaware. He also serves on the state commission formed to oversee Lincoln-related happenings.

Larger events include a major exhibition of Lincolniana at the University of Delaware’s Morris Library, a symposium at Delaware Law School, a dinner on February 10 at the Chase Center in Wilmington that features two Lincoln experts as speakers, and Law Day on May 1, when attorneys, including Swayze, visit schools to sing the praises of you-know-who.

Swayze’s love of Lincoln began when he first read about

the War Between the States. “If you have an active interest in the Civil War, you cannot help but be led to the doorstep of Abraham Lincoln’s greatness,” he says.

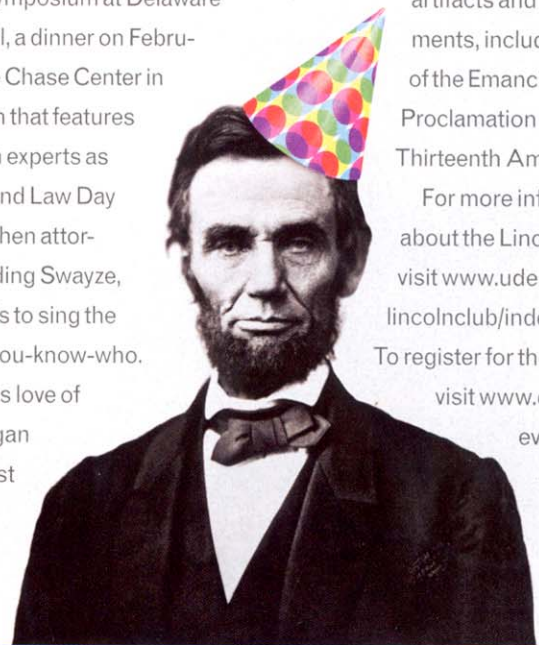
Swayze says a visit to the UD exhibit or a smaller collection at the university’s Goodstay Center in Wilmington is a fine way to commemorate our 16th president. The UD exhibit contains more than 2,000 books, pamphlets, photos, artwork,

artifacts and documents, including a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment.

For more information about the Lincoln Club, visit www.udel.edu/lincolnclub/index.html.

To register for the dinner, visit www.delcfc.org/events.php.

—Drew Ostroski



BIDEN TIME A MONTHLY REVIEW OF THE VEEP.

👍 Marching bands from the Delaware Volunteer Fireman’s Association, University of Delaware, Delaware State University and Alexis I. du Pont High School boogied in the 56th Presidential Inaugural Parade last month. Joe’s doing?

👎 The Bidens picked out a puppy after the election, a German shepherd from a breeder in Chester County. Why not the SPCA or a shelter? Why not in Delaware (or at least Scranton)?

👍 Before the inauguration, the Obamas stopped the party train in Wilmington to pick up the Bidens. News flash: Joe rides Amtrak to D.C. Isn’t this administration about change? (Kidding, Joe. Keep on trackin’.)