

Parker's Dairy Palace in New Castle, Del. added to the National Register of Historic Places

(DOVER, Del.—Oct. 28, 2019)—Patrons of Parker's [Dairy Palace](#) can now have a designated slice of history with their soft ice cream as the 1950s-vintage ice cream stand has been listed in the [National Register of Historic Places](#), the U.S. government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects deemed worthy of preservation.



Parker's Dairy Palace at dusk with its neon sign blazing

Located on Route 141 across from the New Castle Airport in New Castle, Del., the Dairy Palace was originally built in 1954 as a Dairy Queen franchise licensed to Ernest Overby. In 1956, it was acquired by Vince and Joyce Parker and has remained a family enterprise ever since. After learning that Dairy Queen corporate officials wanted to modernize their existing buildings, the Parkers chose to purchase their franchised property in 1970 with an eye toward preserving its original appearance.



Joyce Parker at the Dairy Palace in the 1950s

Today's Dairy Palace retains the Dairy Queen enterprise's original characteristics including a modern-looking one-story building with a façade characterized by a large plate-glass

window wall, a flat roof featuring overhanging eaves, an iconic neon sign featuring a tilted ice cream cone with a swirl on top, a parking lot and walk-up customer service windows. After severing ties with Dairy Queen, the Parkers replaced the word “Queen” with the word “Palace” on the building’s main signage.



Parker’s Dairy Palace.
Photo courtesy of the
University of Delaware
Center for Historic
Architecture and Design

The history of the Dairy Palace correlates with the story of suburban development in America as well as with increased interest in transportation during the post-World War II era and the emerging popularity of roadside food stands. Travelling motorists and residents moving into suburban developments desired additional dining options. Thus commercial ventures such as family-style and dine-in restaurants as well as drive-ins emerged on the landscape. Parker’s Dairy Palace is the best-known surviving example of a 1950s drive-in/walk-up soft serve ice cream stand remaining in New Castle County, Del.

Parker’s Dairy Palace National Register nomination, listed on Oct. 15, 2019, was prepared by the University of Delaware’s [Center for Historic Architecture and Design](#). Funding for this preservation project was provided by the National Park Service through a Historic Preservation Fund sub-grant awarded to a [Certified Local Government](#) (New Castle County) and managed by the [Delaware State Historic Preservation Office](#). The nomination was recommended for listing in the National Register by the [New Castle County Historic Review Board](#) and Delaware’s [State Review Board for Historic Preservation](#), and then forwarded to National Park Service which approved the

listing.

The [Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs](#) is an agency of the State of Delaware. The division enhances Delaware's quality of life by preserving the state's unique historical heritage, fostering community stability and economic vitality and providing educational programs and assistance to the general public on Delaware history. The division's diverse array of services includes operation of five museums which are [accredited by the American Alliance of Museums](#), administration of the State Historic Preservation Office, conservation of the state's archaeological and historic-objects collections, operation of a conference center and management of historic properties across the state. Primary funding for division programs and services is provided by annual appropriations from the Delaware General Assembly and grants from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, a federal agency. However, the contents and opinions expressed in the division's programs and services do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of the Interior.

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