

THE HISTORY OF SECRETARIAT

For over 67 years, Secretariat has been considered Wilmington's premier wedding and event planning firm. Originally founded as a social service for Wilmington's elite and affluent, the company successfully handled thousands of events, both large and small. After years of exclusive Cotillion dances, Holly Balls, Bachelors Balls, Commonwealth Awards, and numerous high society weddings, Secretariat was contracted to work with the du Pont family's 200th Anniversary party.

Kathryn "Dit" Buchan and Mary Hynson opened their doors in 1948, and Secretariat was the place Delaware's social elite called when it came time to plan their weddings, debutant balls, and holiday parties. Secretariat catered to the state's aristocracy by organizing the first successful debutant ball, and then a decade later, assisted Mrs. R. R. M. Carpenter, Jr. with the tradition of the Holly Ball—an annual charity dance held at the Hotel du Pont.

Nancy Crowe bought the business in 1983. Although located in Montchanin, Secretariat began to shed its strictly pink and green social image, and solicited corporate accounts within the growing city of Wilmington. By adding corporate event planning to its list of services, and producing meetings of all sizes across the region, Crowe led the business into a new era, when the number of ladies who lunch had dwindled, flower children scoffed at the debutant balls and ostentatious weddings, and many of their clients now had full-time jobs.

In 1997, Secretariat reinvented itself yet again by merging with The Breakthrough Communications Group, a full-service marketing and communications company. Under Breakthrough's leadership, Secretariat managed to maintain its loyal Greenville clientele, but emphasized corporate meetings and events instead of the traditional private affairs.

Samantha Diedrick, known as "Bo" to close friends, bought the business in August 2002, with hopes of restoring Secretariat to its original luster. Energetic and full of ideas, she began her career at Secretariat as an Account Executive and quickly moved up the ranks to Vice President. When the opportunity to buy the business emerged, Samantha was ready for the challenge. Born and raised in New York City, Samantha had 14 years of event planning experience, and was well suited as the new owner of Secretariat. Moving the office onto North Union Street gave Secretariat increased visibility and better access for clients, plus it gave the then 55 year-old company a much-needed face-lift.

Her entrepreneurial spirit is genetic. Samantha got her start working part time for her mother, a successful event planner in Manhattan, when she was just 16 years old. Both her mother and father own their own business, as do her three siblings. She came to Wilmington prepared to make her mark - not to mention throw some unforgettable parties - in the community of her new home town. Samantha possesses a rare mix of characteristics that make her appealing to the new, young generation of Wilmington professionals, the traditional social elite, and simply anyone interested in having a memorable event.

After two years with the storefront, Samantha made the choice to become a home-based business, in order to focus the attention on the client's event planning needs, rather than the retail side. The business continues to thrive with a focus on weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs, and not-for-profit events, and everyone at Secretariat very much enjoyed celebrating 65 years in business in the fall of 2013!