

## Preamble

NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE

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Whether the City of New Castle is approached from the river or from the North or West as in the past, it is at once evident that it is an unusual town. The visitor is impressed by the number of old houses and buildings, still virtually unchanged from the time they were built, which give it its extraordinary atmosphere of the past. New Castle is far from being a stagnant town and in that lies its greatest danger. Already it and its lands are surrounded by factories and plants, and more are being built each year. The whole river bank south from Wilmington once farmlands, is being overrun by increasing commercial activity, with the attendant workers' houses, jammed together in a solid phalanx of mediocrity. It need hardly be said that there is a considerable likelihood that New Castle may not remain as it now is much longer, and if it is to be preserved, it is necessary to establish some means of preserving what exists in the town and restore what has been altered or destroyed. The purpose of the following report is to outline what can be done that New Castle may remain one of the most attractive old towns in the country.

In this report the Architects have considered two distinct areas: Area A, the city proper, or rather that part of it bounded by the waterfront on the east, Fourth Street on the west, Delaware Street on the south, and Harmony Street on the north, inclusive; and Area B, in which all other buildings of historical or architectural merit in the immediate vicinity of, but not in, Area A and in the nearby countryside, are included.

It is unfortunate that some of the oldest buildings have disappeared, but it is hoped that those that remain will be preserved.

This can be done if the citizens of the City realize that by their own efforts they can preserve this architectural heritage, but that unless a start is made there is danger that through lack of appreciation it may gradually disappear.

This study of existing conditions has been sponsored by generous individuals who hope to arouse sufficient interest in the citizens to undertake a program of preservation and, in some instances, of restoration. With this in mind the Architects have attempted to outline a program which is not a wild dream of impossible perfection, but a practical plan of procedure which will result in the preservation for all Americans of the physical appearance of a late Eighteenth Century town which embodies unusual architectural interest and charm,

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In Area A most of the buildings are contemporary and have been well preserved, some should be restored to a greater or lesser degree, a few should be removed, and others reconstructed on their original sites

The preservation of existing buildings can be assured only if they are protected by zoning ordinances. To accomplish this, a program of public enlightenment will be necessary for it is difficult to convince the average man that the protection afforded by zoning is to his own advantage in the long run.

Buildings in this area can be divided into three categories - private houses, shops, and public or semipublic buildings. The owners of private houses which have been injudiciously altered in the past might be convinced of the desirability of restoring the exteriors if they felt that their efforts would aid the common effort to preserve New Castle and that their property had permanent protection by zoning laws.

Most of the shops need restoration or reconstruction to a considerable extent. This is the greatest problem of all. An effort should be made to prove to the commercial interests that this preservation and restoration of New Castle is a good investment from a purely material point of view. The remarkable result in Williamsburg should go far to prove this point. In some instances it may be possible to improve shop fronts through gifts for the purpose, in which case it should not be difficult to convince the owners of the wisdom of acquiescence.

The public buildings and semipublic buildings are individually most conspicuous from the point of view of restoration. These restorations will require a great deal of research. There must be research both inside and out. The research item itself will cost a considerable sum, as brickwork, framing, etc., must be uncovered and examined if authentic restoration is to result.

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Drawings included in this report show the present appearance of all the street elevations. The plan of Area A indicates the groups into which buildings have been divided: First; those which need no restoration (preservation only); second, those which need minor or major restoration; third, buildings which should be removed; fourth buildings which should be reconstructed on their original sites cannot definitely be determined for the present.

It is desirable to plan a parking space near Area A. For this purpose property will have to be acquired. Obviously the property to be acquired should be that which would add to the appearance of the area by the removal of unsightly surroundings. The relation of the

parking space as planned to Area A and the main traffic lines is shown on the plan.

Available photographs of buildings which have been altered or destroyed in the past are included,

Careful measurements of the Court House have been made as a basis for further research,

In the Library of Congress, and available to the public, are measured drawings of the Town House and some other buildings in New Castle,

The drawings of the Presbyterian Church are included. This, by force of circumstances has become the first restoration, and it will perhaps establish a criterion by which to measure local reaction,

The question of priorities is complicated by many considerations, off-hand we believe that the improvement of the general appearance of a street, Delaware Street shops, for example, would accomplish the most at the least expenditure. The difficulty arises in carrying out such a project until the commercial interests are willing to cooperate. If the cooperation of the shopkeepers can be counted upon, this, in our opinion, should be the first priority. Removal of buildings however, is a difficult problem for the question arises whether it is wise to alter a building which is to be removed eventually. It may be impossible to remove any building unless a generous donor is willing to buy such property and have it removed,

A study of the reconstruction of the waterfront should be made after sufficient information has been found to justify it.

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Area B From the point of view of the archeologist it is unfortunate that New Castle has become so highly industrialized. The old houses in the surrounding countryside can hardly be recognized now as

having once been surrounded by lawns, fields and trees. In the future, it may be that some of these old places can be rescued and preserved. A report covering this area is included.

It is suggested that the Trustees of Public Property in New Castle give consideration to a plan for cooperating with County Commissioners so that the approaches to New Castle can be improved and that perhaps a broad program for future cooperation can be developed.

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Eventually the need for living accommodations for transients near New Castle will have to be met. It may be possible and the idea should be developed further, to build an hotel in or near the public park to the south of Area A.

The future development of the park might be a project in which a donor would be interested. It would be well to assure the cooperation of the City Fathers in such a project by convincing them, if necessary, of the advantages of a program should such a situation arise,

A study of sewage disposal and the silting of the shore front *are* both problems which will have to be faced in the near future.