

AREA B

Part IV

Sites - Buildings - Land Use

Four maps - the air map of the New Castle County Regional Planning Board, the Land Utilization map of the University of Delaware Agricultural Experiment Station, the earlier rail survey map by this Station in cooperation with the U. S. Bureau of Soils, and the Franklin survey map showing ownership of plots in the environment of New Castle - together with the latest State Highway map give an ample picture of present land use and transportation routes in the town and the rural areas adjacent.

The land utilization map shows the limited residential and industrial areas within the long two-mile wide strip of land along the Delaware River from Pigeon Point to Tom's Creek - the area historically centered at New Castle. This picture has changed since the map was made, and more extensive immediate alteration of land use and traffic routes are indicated by present conditions.

Several of the major changes are:

Wilmington's industrial expansion, underway and definitely planned for the near future, the effect of which, because of the acute housing shortage already existing in and near that city, is to enhance the value of New Castle and areas between the two towns as places of residence;

The building of the Delaware River bridge at Pigeon Point, plans for which are ready to go into operation in April of this year. Completion is set for 1951. To take care of through traffic between Washington and New York using this bridge, a new road is being considered to run direct from near the intersection of the Glasgow road and the Wont Highway up between the duPont Highway and the River road, passing to the west of New Castle and crossing the latter road near Lander's Lane and from there northeast to the bridge. At the beginning, the present duPont Highway will carry the traffic between the "State Road" intersection and the Lander's Lane section;

The ferry service from the end of Chestnut Street, supplanted by the river bridge, will leave that pier and its adjoining land for new use (the ferry company will be bought out under state highway procedure as authorized by law, any has agreed to cooperate, the amount of the award to fixed by a commission appointed under the law.);

Federal permits for scheduled passenger service at the New Castle County airport west of New Castle have already been granted to several national and international air lines and the Levy Court has authorized the erection of additional hangars. The air line companies will erect passenger stations and other buildings for the accommodation and entertainment of passengers waiting for planes;

Many tracts of land within and outside the town boundaries of New Castle are now for sale or have recently been sold. Land is already being bought by individuals along the proposed site of the new road to the river bridge. This may be in cooperation with the State Highway Department to ease the securing of rights of way and control the type of concession that comes along the road - or it may be speculative real estate investment.

Long Hook:

Beginning at the north of the strip of river land historically connected with New Castle, "Long Hook" just south of Wilmington area and to the west of the State Road, now belongs to the Delaware Society for the Preservation of Antiquities. The kitchen wing of the large house on this site - now "Kent Manor Inn" - is so old in mode of construction that in addition to what light can be gained from surviving records, the architectural features seem to indicate the 1660's, as the date of construction. The main part of the house was built in 1763 by Peter Jacquet, a descendant of the first Dutch director after the Dutch took over the whole river in 1664. The outside walls of the kitchen are made of vertical headed boards or planks; then is a brick fireplace and even in one corner; floor boards are from 15 to 22-1/2 inches wide, the ceiling only 6-1/2 feet high.

Crane Hook:

This site is north of Lambson's Lane on the side of the State Road. Bear the road was the common - a woodland stretching out west behind the "home lots" which ran down to the river shore. At the west end of the home lots near the woodland was the site of Crane Hook church. The historic marker is three fourths of a mile from the church site as determined by later study of the land grants and court records. No old buildings of merit are left on the Crane Hook site. The roads to the bridge over the Delaware will run through parts of it. Building developments will soon crowd the area at the present rate of their growth, and at least a park in connection with the new bridge approaches might be left in memory of the earliest life on this soil, by settlers whose names appear in the annals of New Castle.

Regency House:

Near the River Road end of Lauder's Lane, is an unusual house of French design, believed to have been built by Jean P. Garesche in 1820, who may have been the architect as well as the owner. The house has been bought recently by a physician, who had removed the distinctive porch, and partly plastered over the iron fret work band course which divides the house into a high lower story and a low top story or attic.

Swanwyck Village Area:

All of the land owned by the Lukens Steel Company (which includes the site of the early village of Swanwyck and the several plantations with houses and barns of the 1700's and early 1800's, on or near the Swanwyck site) is for sale - both the part within the town of New Castle boundary and that outside. The part of this property on the river may be on the market for some time. The value of the land was included in the stock sold for industrial development, and has to be held at a "fancy price" to take care of the investors.

The site of Swanwyck, the village with large plots of orchard and vegetable garden, and pasture land with salt hay and also sweet grass behind for the cattle, that supplied the owners of town lots in New Castle with much feed, has never been built up; relics from the households of the first settlers have been found in the soil. No house of that early period remains. Where the early houses once stood is open land of the former Battenwoods estate, preserved (but not kept in repair) and leased by the Lukens Company. A small part of this house is very early, the main part and the large brick barn of excellent design are of 1831, the house with later additions.

The Battenwoods is one of the places, house and barn, that is an important survival of the best of its period - one that helps to tie the environment to the town of New Castle as it was in the best period of both. Some arrangement with the Lukens Company and with the purchaser might be made to protect and restore the barn, the only one of several like it in the region that survives.

Monk Barn

The O'Toole Real Estate Company has bought the Janvier estate on the west of the River Road opposite the Globe House, and next to the waterworks. This is a farm running back into the country - not intended for a housing development. On the road at the corner of the estate nearest New Castle is the "tenant house", not particularly attractive from the road, except for the old and beautiful evergreen vine that covers part of the wall.

of the latart-built section of the house. But the original small house, the back section of the present building, is built in the early 1700's, and is of sufficient architectural interest to be worth preserving and restoring. It has a stone cellar, brick superstructure, two and a half stories, with steep shingled roof. With the awkward later section removed, this small house, restored, would represent a rare survival, of arresting charm - an authentic portrayal of the simple and tasteful dwelling on one of the plantations intimately connected with the life of the colonial town,

The Glebe:

Across the road from "Monk Barns" and running to the river, the Glebe farm of Immanuel Church also represents an equally important tract historically. It was an island of several hundred acres of rich farm land between the tom marsh and the Swanryek marsh, high enough for both view and agriculture, with its bordering meadows of reit hay and with sweet grass and rood-land to the north and west. It was a prize for successful persons of importance in New Castle, and came finally into possession of Richard Halliwell, who in the late 1600's and early 1700's was an outstanding citizen and merchant of New Castle. He owned and operated several large farms in the New Castle area and had a plot and wharf on the river, along the Strand, nearly opposite the Dutch Church. Jean Paul Jacquet had the Glebe land in his term as director, 1656; and later traded it for his plantation on the Christina where he kept the ferry. Previous to Halliwell's acquiring it, it had belonged to Alexander Boyer, Anthony Bryant, Captain John Carr, Edmund Cantwell. The importance of all these men in New Castle history gives the site great interest.

In 1719 Richard Halliwell gave the land to the Church for a glebe, and a few years later the present glebe house was there built, it is believed, from a lottery fund. Later, land in front of the house became the cemetery of the church.

The part of the Glebe land between the graveyard and the river could probably be leased from the trustees of the church as land of the common has been leased for other than agricultural purposes. Sufficiently protected on the north and west by border planting and left open on the east and south for its view of the river, it is one of the ideal sites about New Castle; and as a recreation area would balance Battery Park. The walk to it from the end of Second Street would be on the line of the "Foot Dyke" that led up the river to Swanryek.

One of the Main Entrances to New Castle:

On the east of the River Road between the canal and Chestnut Street, part of the marsh has been bought by an American Legion Post; this is to be filled in and built upon for a "Legion Home." With sufficient encouragement the Legion Post might be interested to make its development in a character to harmonize with the history of the site. This was the "Windmill Lot" granted to Arnoldus de la Grange in 1681 on condition that he go ahead with the building and operation of the mill immediately. He started it, but ~~was~~ ill, and also more interested in other property, so the site was granted to a group of men, including the son of Andries Hudde, the first surveyor and secretary of New Castle.

corners where the Wilmington road enters Chestnut Street, now present a far from impressive entrance to the town - or exit for those taking the ferry out of it. This site, where the market stands in a small plot constituting a memorial to the "end of the Horse Dyke" - or Broad Dyke, from which the radius of the "12-mile circle" about New Castle was first determined, is of sufficient historic importance, and importance of location, now and after the ferry service is abandoned, to warrant developing an adequate plan for a pleasing and interesting entrance to the town. A detour through this site from the river-bridge route in both directions may mean a tourist trade sufficient to overcome any reluctance of town council and property owners to spend the necessary money.

The garage owner on the northwest corner owns a considerable plot that could be well laid out and the present building architecturally improved. The other corners are similarly improvable, preferably by a major plan, but could be made more fitting by even minor changes especially by good grading and planting.

Hotel Sites of historic interest and present attractive qualities:

On the Strand, between Harmony and Chestnut Street is a site that can be joined to the Chestnut Street pier and its adjacent land. Here, south of the site of Fort Casimir, with the same view that had to those early descriptions the "Key to the River as one" a good hotel would take advantage of the importance of the River and the life on it as an attraction; and the pier and wharf after the ferry is discontinued could be a center for yachts and yachting and other water sports.

Near the center of this block was the old Cave Inn, and the history of the location is the history of the very founding of New Castle. Such rich detail could be incorporated in the development of a hotel and grounds here; that it would out-rival all other historic hotel sites and establishments in the original states.

To the west of the town, if an inland land site must be chosen, the "Hermitage", on part of the ground of which the William Penn Public School is built, has house, ground and land, adequate for hotel and grounds, for work shops, office, recreation park, all in one tract. There are 80 acres of improved tillable land and 40 acres of wild land or marsh. The large field behind the armory east of the ferry road also belongs to this site. From the highway past the Hermitage estate, leading into town along Delaware Street, the Port Office is convenient and the converging roads in the general area make it a center convenient to traffic. History of the estate and its buildings provide adequate interest. (See New Castle on the Delaware, pp 96-97.)

Other sites of interest for consideration in protecting and improving the environment of New Castle:

Bellanca: The whole of the Bellanca plant with its adjoining land on the river, is for sale. Use of this land, if undesirable, could injure many plans for New Castle's environment.

National Tube Company land mouth of the Battery Park along the shore is also for sale. The trustees of the Company have about concluded the purchase of a small section of this tract next to the park. The remainder is held for a high prism. If the trustees could secure the Bellanca field south of it, they might finally be able to buy the balance of National Tube holdings - and insure an adequate recreation area.

Grantham House: Lighthouse Lane - south of New Castle to the right of the road.

Perhaps no other house in the environment of New Castle expresses so effectively the amenities of mid-eighteenth century life as that life is revealed in a study of the written records of the period. Plain, sturdy, individual in its whole effect, generous, with sufficient suggestion of native refinement and taste in details. This house, restored, preserved, its immediate grounds landscaped in keeping with the original life in the house and on the farm, the sand pit, a bathing pond or lake for water sports or other useful and attractive use, the Grantham House could become an historically authentic survival of the period that tied it and similar estates and home closely to the life of New Castle.