

# Benjamin Latrobe

## An 1804 Snapshot of New Castle

### PBS documentary "America's First Architect"

PBS: What he did in Philadelphia and Washington

Why did he live in New Castle?

About his 1803 work on the C&D Canal

What he did in New Castle in 1804-5

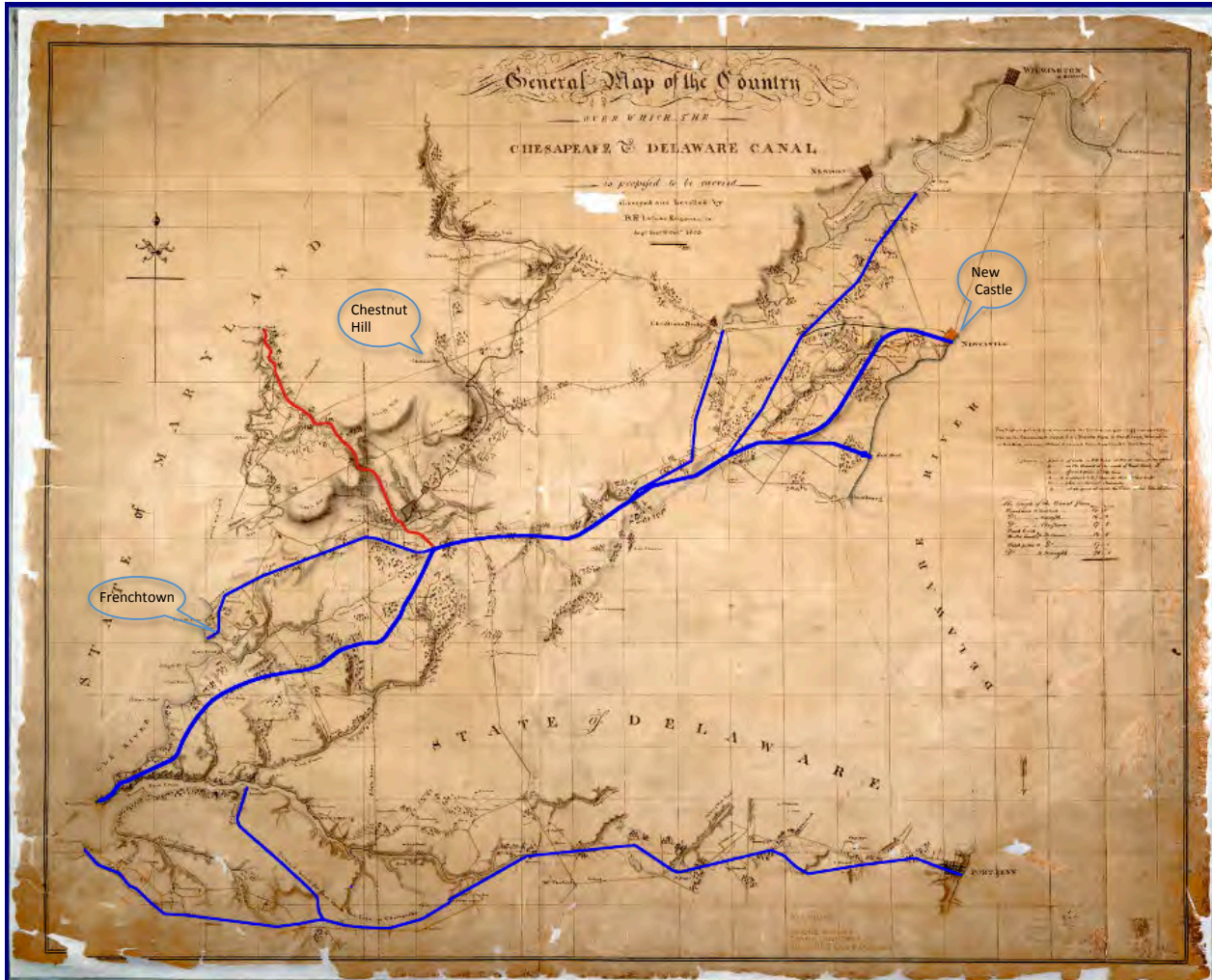
Survey and drawings

Snapshots of buildings through his eyes

His diary and what he thought about

New Castle & its citizens





General Map of the Country  
 -- over which the --  
**CHESAPEAKE & DELAWARE CANAL**  
 ---is proposed to be carried---  
 Surveyed and Levelled by  
 B. H Latrobe Engineer, in  
 in Aug<sup>t</sup>. Sep<sup>r</sup> & Oct<sup>r</sup>. 1803

Proposed routes including from Welch Neck/Back Creek or Frenchtown, MD to Port Penn, Christiana, New Castle or Christiana, and the feeder (shown in red) from Elk Forge to near Aikentown (Glasgow). The feeder was nearly completed in 1805 when the company closed due to lack of funds. The proposed feeder from White Clay Creek starting at Newark was never started.



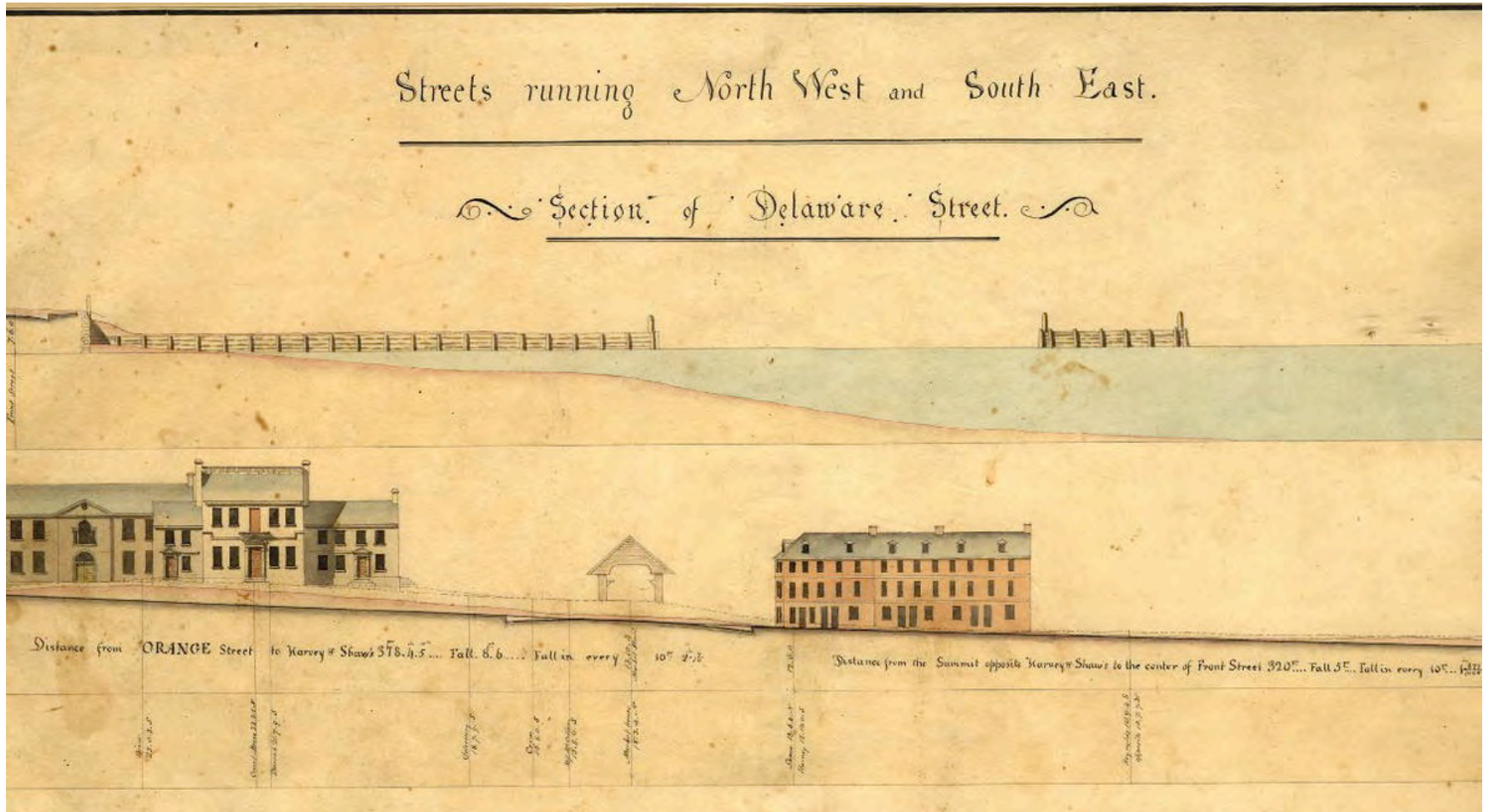


55, 53 The Strand

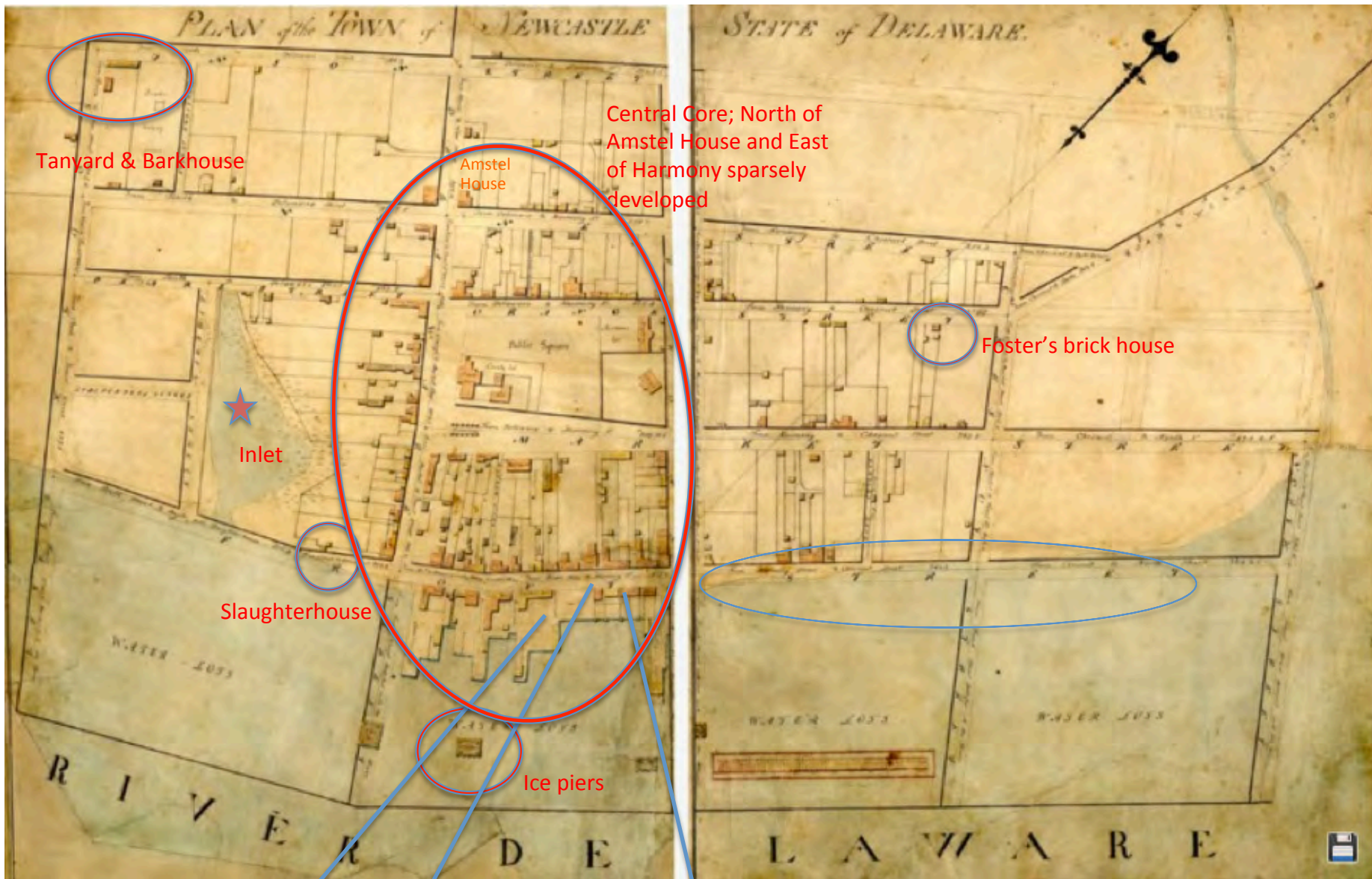
The Latrobe family's introduction to New Castle was not positive:

“We arrived here about 11 o'clock [and] found the house shut up. I was obliged to go in search of a key while my family waited in the carriage in the street, surrounded by the idlers and blackguards of the neighborhood ... The furniture of both parlors was covered with white mould, the beds wet. One of the mattresses and almost all of the carpets rotten. “

In New Castle he was hired to survey the streets to plan for regrading to improve drainage



# Plan of the Town of Newcastle State of Delaware by Latrobe, Strickland, Mills 1804-5



Tanyard & Barkhouse

Amstel House

Central Core; North of Amstel House and East of Harmony sparsely developed

Inlet

Slaughterhouse

Ice piers

Foster's brick house

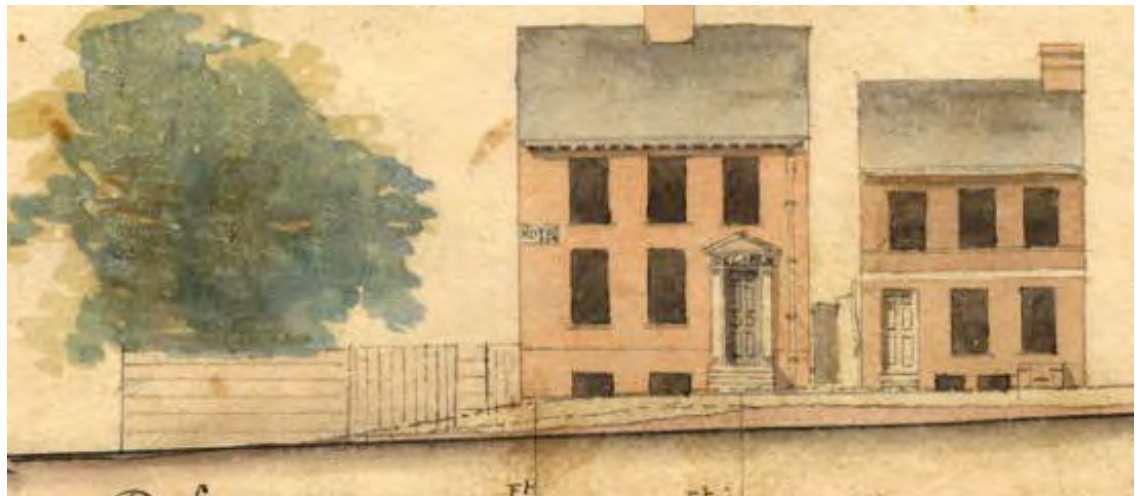
Color code: Wooden (yellow) vs Brick (orange) buildings

House Latrobe rented

<http://nc-chap.org>

Now: Farmers Bank, Dunn/Gunning Bedford,  
Day/McWilliams

Then: "Burnt Lot, Bennett & De Hotel,  
McWilliams





## The Strand

Dutch Tile  
House site  
and  
adjacent  
brick wall



Arch, water table, glazed header flemish bond



Oct, 1878





224 Delaware,  
Judge Booth message,  
Later candy & cigar stores,  
Then Hotel Louise,  
and David Finney Inn



Mary Robeson, c1900





Delaware Public Archives, Dover, DE



Distance from ORANGE Street to Harvey & Shaw's 378.4.5... Fall 8.6...

Orange Street 22.0.0

22.0.1.5

22.0.2.5

22.0.3.5

22.0.4.5

Section of M



From Delaware Street 325' --- Rise 3'.5.6 --- Rise in every 10' ---  $\frac{1138}{1000}$

Delaware Street  
13.10.4

Rail  
18.3.3

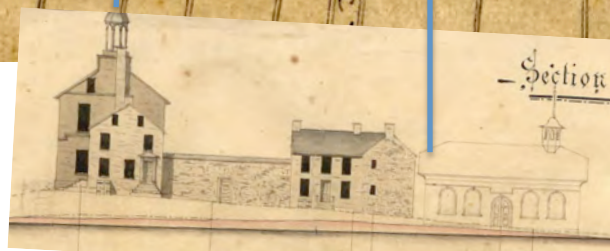
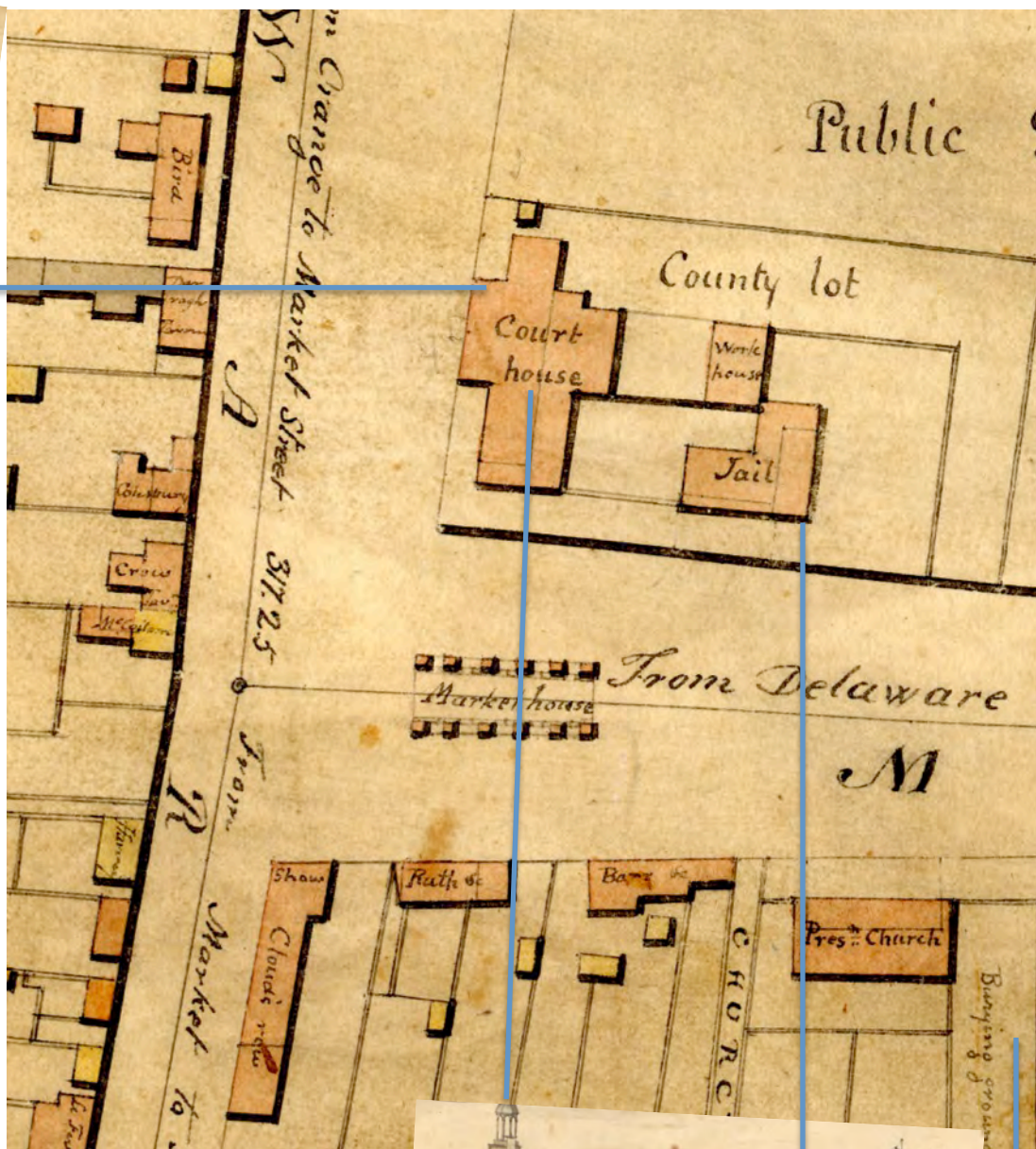
Bay  
18.10.9.8

Arch  
19.2.2.4  
18.10.1.7.1

Roof  
19.2.2.5

17.0.0

18.4.3



# Latrobe Meets GIS

Differences between contour maps from 1805 and 2012

Brown: earth removed

Blue: earth added

Major earth removal:

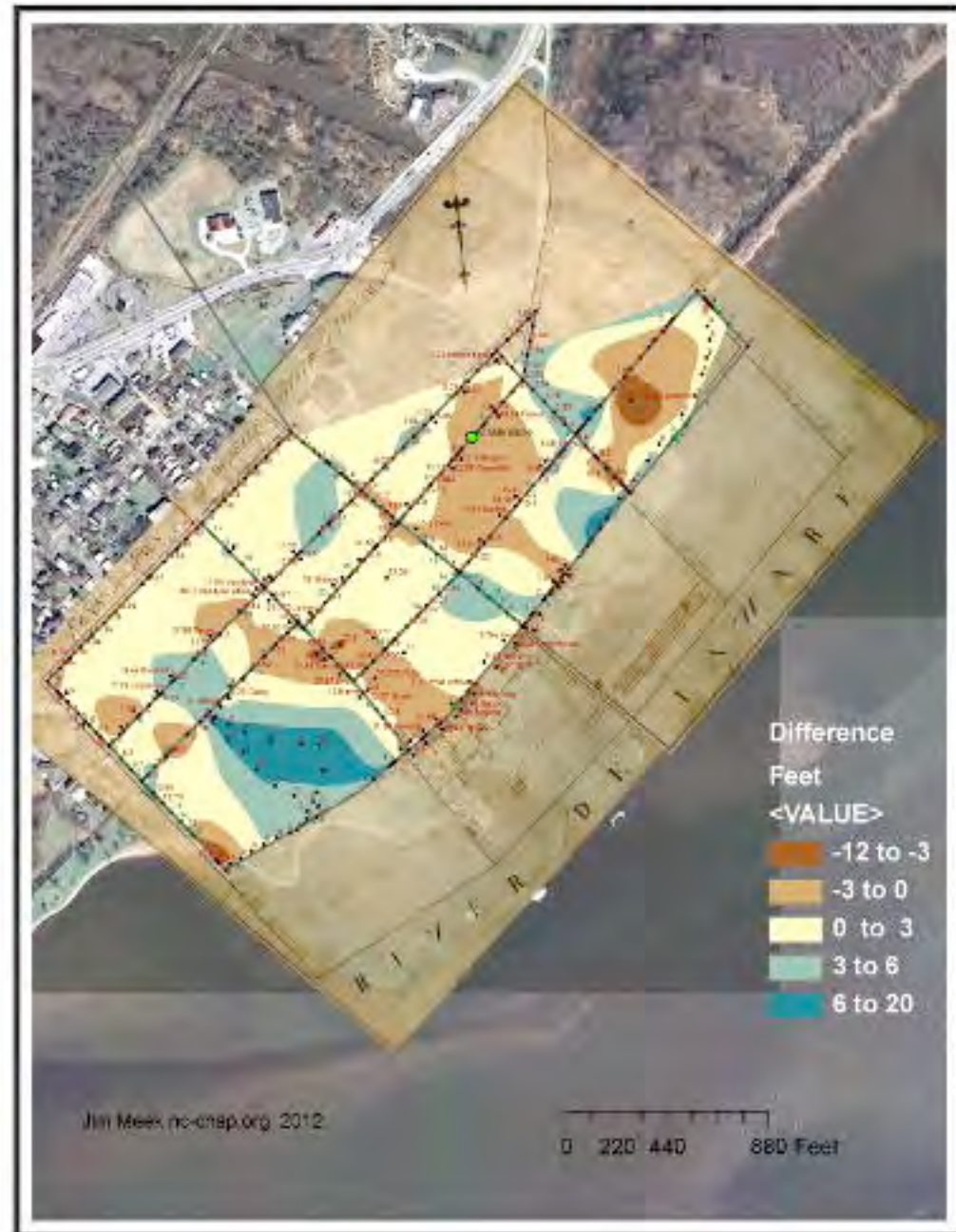
Cemetery area in Bull Hill

Near Courthouse

North of E2nd

Major earth addition:

Battery Park



## Latrobe's diary on Caleb Bennett (Aug. 3, 1806)

"I have several acquaintances in this place. The first of them [Bennett] is a tavernkeeper, and he is also the worthiest. He is an old soldier of the revolution, and besides being six feet 4 inches high, he wears as a relic an enormous Cocked hat fore and aft. He is a good man, a great politician, a flaming democrat, and an adorer of Buonaparte. His understanding is infinitely inferior to his heart, which is made of the kindest stuff. He is loved and laughed at by every body, and though he keeps a very bad tavern, he makes money in it, and much good may it do him. He is the only man, who, during the inconvenient, and on account of my constant absence from hence often very distressing residence of my family here, ever did us a kind office. And with him it was never necessary to solicit kindness, nor was it humiliating to accept it."

The Journals of Benjamin Henry Latrobe 1799-1820. From Philadelphia to New Orleans, Vol 3  
E.Carter II, J. Van Horne, L. Formwalt. Md. Hist. Soc, 1980

There are half a dozen good natured men ....

Physicians, storekeepers, lawyers and a divine or two. None of them were ever suspected of giving away anything in charity, or acquiring any thing by their genius. But to do no wrong in Newcastle is praise worthy.

It is no wonder indeed that talents and worth should be rare here. Newcastle cannot be a commercial town while Philadelphia exists. As soon as a merchant acquires capital, the field of Newcastle is too small for him and he removes to Philadelphia. Two exceptions exist however in the houses, of Riddle and Bird, and of Bond, who are supposed to have grown rich by supplying ships with Stock for their Voyages, a business in which they still continue and on a large Scale.

I will not stay a moment longer in the place than I can help.