ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Blue Ball Tavern site is located in Brandywine Hundred in New Castle County, technically within the Piedmont Uplands physiographic province, but very near the Fall Line, which marks the transition from the Piedmont to the Coastal Plain. The tavern/house sits at the edge of a high, level hilltop at the headwaters of Alapocas Run, a tributary of the Brandywine River. Matson Run, a tributary of Shellpot Creek, lies across the Pike on the eastern side of the hill. The Soil Conservation Service has classified the soil at the site as Talleyville silt loam, a deep, moderately eroded soil on very gentle slopes. The lower subsoil is clay formed by *in situ* weathering of diabase rock. Much of the Blue Ball Tavern site is actually underlain by what appears to be aeolian sand (John Foss, personal communication, 1996) of the Bryn Mawr Formation (Figure 3), although the topsoil is the typical silt of the upper part of the Talleyville series profile. The Bryn Mawr Formation occurs in isolated patches in the Delaware Piedmont and is believed to date minimally to the Pliocene (Delaware Geological Survey Map Series No. 4).

Historic maps and deeds indicate that a roadbed in the location of the Concord Pike has been in existence since at least the early eighteenth century. A road in the location of Rockland Road, formerly the 'wagon road to Rockland,' has also existed since the middle of the eighteenth century. Most of the land in the area of the site was open fields or had shrubby growth typical of recently abandoned fields (Plates 1 and 2). The site area was dominated by a large sycamore tree growing to the north of the main excavation area. Historic documents, maps, and photographs all confirm that the wooded areas west of the site were farmed until recently. The field north of the site may have been an orchard in the early part of the twentieth century (Plate 3). At some time in the past few decades, a very deep layer of fill soil and large boulders had been spread over this field, giving the site area a much more level appearance. The tavern/house foundation is separated from this field by a high chain link fence set in cement.

Stone walls probably representing three construction eras surround the site. The most recent may be the stone wall that runs from the site north to the Concord Pike/Rockland Road intersection and along part of the south side of Rockland Road. This portion is topped by a chain link fence. The wall that surrounds the dairy barn and milk house begins at the southeastern corner of the tavern/house and follows Concord Pike to the south, turning west to enclose the two extant dairy buildings (Plates 4, 5 and 6). This is a nine foot high rubblestone wall covered with a layer of parget or stucco and topped with a cement cap. A portion of this wall between Concord Pike and the milk house has been destroyed, perhaps in connection with the demolition of the house. Low stone walls that may date from the nineteenth-century E. I. du Pont Powder Company ownership flank the farm entrance off Rockland Road. Similar walls can be seen running along both sides of Rockland Road today, and these are visible in a photo from the 1930's on file at the Historical Society of Delaware.

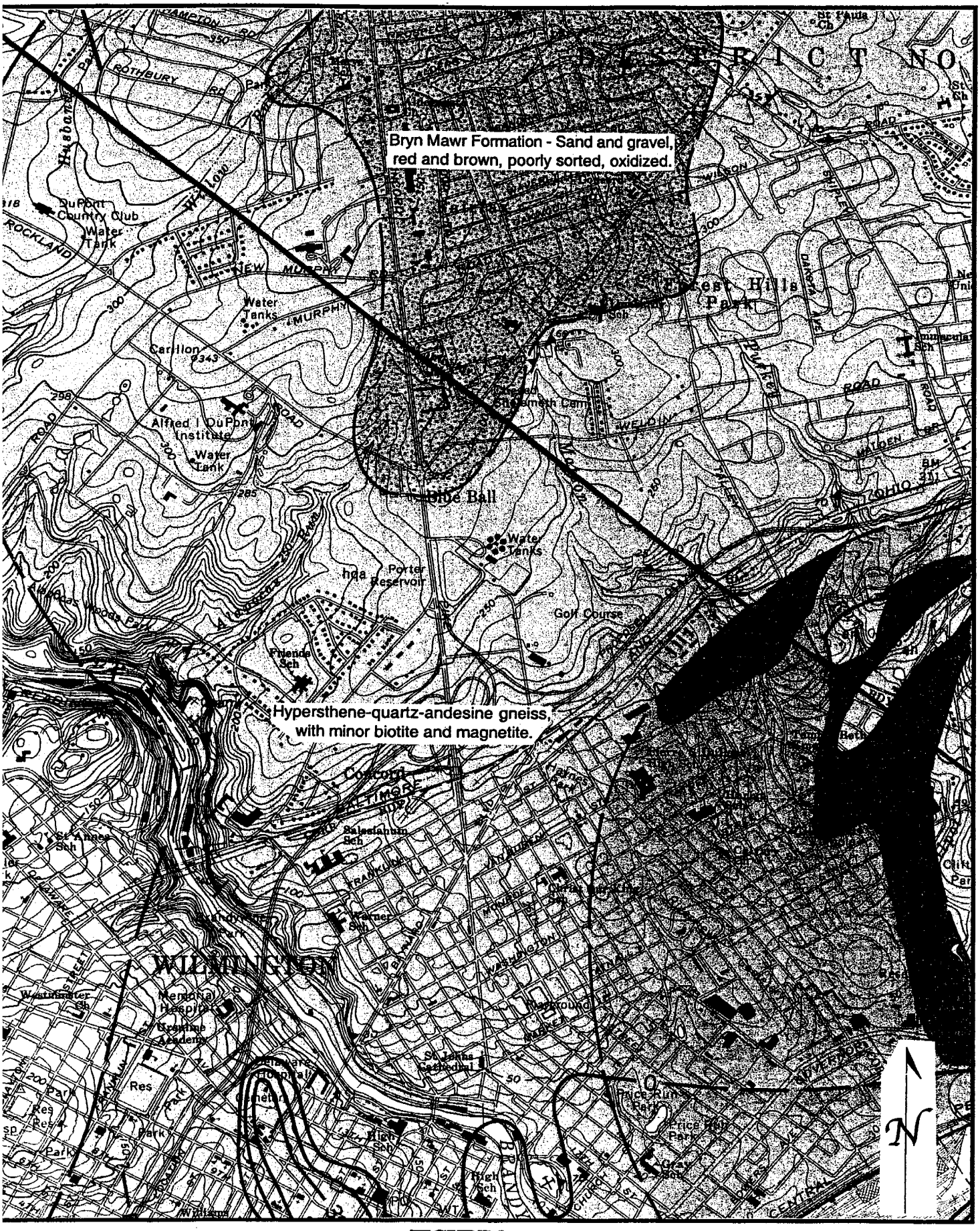

FIGURE 3

Portion of the 1975 Map of the Geology of the Wilmington, Delaware Area, Showing the Geologic Formations Within the Vicinity of the Project Area

Scale: 1" = 2000'

The only other eighteenth or nineteenth-century commercial development at this general location is a smithy shop that appears across Concord Pike from the Tavern site on Rea and Price's 1849 "Map of New Castle County" (Figure 4). The Weldin Plantation, a large family run dairy operation, was established around 1864 on the east side of Concord Pike at the site of the former Peterson farmstead. A tollgate may have been present at the intersection of Concord Pike and Rockland Road circa 1827.

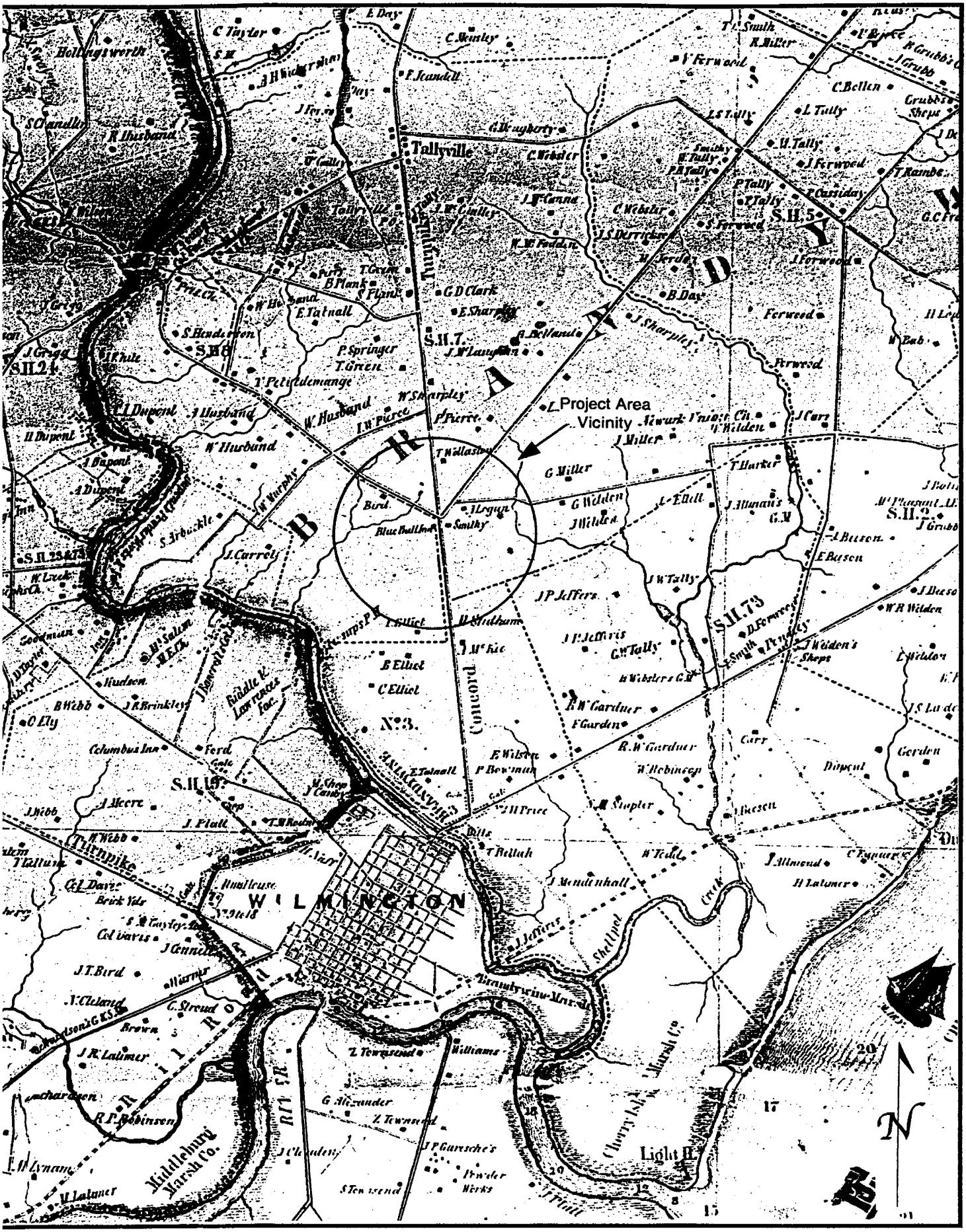

FIGURE 4

Portion of Samuel M. Rea and Jacob Price's 1849 Map of New Castle County, Delaware, Showing the Vicinity of the Project Area