

SECTION 3.0 BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Background research was conducted to locate previously identified architectural resources and to evaluate previously unidentified architectural resources within an appropriate historic context. Research was conducted at the DE SHPO in Dover to identify architectural resources within the APE that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register, and to review previously conducted cultural resources surveys. Primary- and secondary-source research, including maps and atlases, and local and county histories, was conducted at the following Delaware repositories: the Delaware State Archives, Dover; Special Collections Department, University of Delaware, Newark; Hagley Library and Museum, Greenville; New Castle Public Library and New Castle Historical Society, New Castle; and the Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington Public Library, and New Castle County Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington. Additional information was gathered in the corporate offices of Wilmington Fibre Specialty Company in New Castle. Historic maps, atlases, and aerial photographs were also consulted through a variety of online resources, including the Hagley Museum and Library, the Delaware Geological Survey's Data Mapping and Integration Laboratory (DataMIL), and the New Castle Community History and Archaeology Program.

3.1 Previous Architectural Surveys

The APE includes two properties previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the New Castle Historic District and Stonum. Both properties are also National Historic Landmarks. The New Castle Historic District (CRS# N00349; NR: 12/24/1967, boundary expansion 11/8/1984; NHL: 12/24/1967) is significant under National Register Criterion A for its historical associations with early settlement on the Delaware River; its position as an early trading, shipping, and government center; and its role as a critical link in the regional transportation network. The district is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture for its collection of more than 500 well-preserved buildings erected over a period of almost three centuries (Jett and Cesna 1984). The APE is located within the southwest corner of the New Castle Historic District and contains 24 properties within the district boundaries, 11 of which have been previously identified as contributing resources.

Located at 900 Washington Street, Stonum (CRS# N00362; NR: 11/7/1973; NHL: 11/7/1973), is the eighteenth-century country house of George Read, American patriot and signer of the Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution. The two-and-one-half-story brick dwelling was constructed prior to 1769; a portion of the rear wing reportedly predates the main house. Stonum is significant under National Register Criterion B for its associations with Read, a

major political figure in Delaware (Post 1973). The dwelling was documented in 1936 by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS 1936).

Three additional properties within the APE have been previously surveyed. The Deemer Steel Casting Company/Triton Cotton Mill (CRS# N13374), on West Ninth Street at Washington Street, was documented with Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) recordation in 1994. The building has since been demolished and the site redeveloped as the Deemer’s Landing apartment community. Also previously surveyed were the row houses at 807-809 Washington Street (CRS# N00401). No recommendation was made regarding the eligibility of the two houses, which were built prior to 1868 (White 1972). Table 3.1 summarizes the previously surveyed properties within the APE for the current project.

Table 3.1: Previously surveyed properties within the APE.

CRS #*	Property Name/Address	Description
N00349	New Castle Historic District	Historic district containing more than 500 properties; 24 properties lie within the APE, 11 of which are contributing resources
N00362	Stonum (900 Washington Street)	Mid-eighteenth-century brick dwelling
N00401	807-809 Washington Street	Three-story brick row houses built in mid-nineteenth century
N13374	Deemer Steel Casting Company/ Triton Cotton Mill (West Ninth Street)	Brick mill building; demolished c. 1994

*CRS= Cultural Resource Survey

The southernmost part of the APE lies within the City of New Castle’s locally designated Historic Area, which is under the jurisdiction of the city’s Historic Area Commission (HAC). The HAC is responsible for reviewing new construction and the modification or demolition of existing buildings within the Historic Area (URS 2009: 39).

New Castle County has designated 34 Historic Zoning Districts (HZDs) throughout the county. These HZDs include both individual buildings and historic districts and are subject to review by the county’s Historic Review Board. The APE does not include any designated HZDs (New Castle County Department of Land Use 2005).

3.2 Historic Context

In accordance with state guidelines, the historic context has been divided into chronological periods as set forth in the *Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan* (Ames et al. 1989). The following historic themes were identified through research as applicable to the resources found in the APE for

the current project: Agriculture; Manufacturing; Transportation and Communication; Settlement Patterns and Demographic Change; Architecture, Engineering, and Decorative Arts; and Major Families, Individual and Events. These themes are discussed in the historic context.

Exploration and Frontier Settlement, 1630-1730 ±

The APE is located within the Coastal Zone geographic region of northern Delaware in the City of New Castle, which was one of the earliest permanent settlements in Delaware. The first permanent settlement in Delaware was established by the Swedes in 1638 on a point near the Christina River in present-day Wilmington. Fort Christina commanded a strategic location downriver from Dutch outposts on the Delaware River and developed into a small but stable colony. In response to this Swedish outpost, the Dutch constructed Fort Casimir in 1651 on a promontory that commanded a strategic position on the Delaware River. New Castle, the settlement that grew around Fort Casimir, was composed of 20 dwellings situated south of the fort along two parallel streets, The Strand and Fourth Street. In 1654, the Swedish colony to the north captured Fort Casimir and held the small settlement until it was retaken in 1656 by the Dutch, who renamed the settlement New Amstel. The community of New Amstel grew rapidly under Dutch control, and by 1658 contained 100 buildings and housed a population of 600 (Heintzelman 1974).

When the English seized New Netherland for the Duke of York in 1664, New Amstel was renamed New Castle. Under the Duke of York, New Castle's streets were resurveyed, areas of marsh to the north of the city were drained and filled, and a series of dykes was constructed to protect low-lying areas in the northeast part of the town from flooding. New Castle was administered by agents of New York until 1682, when William Penn was granted the Delaware area as part of his Pennsylvania patents. In 1704, Penn granted the citizens of Delaware a separate legislature, which named New Castle the capital of the colony (Ames et al. 1989: 45-46; DeCunzo and Catts 1990; Herman et al. 1989: 1-2).

No resources related to this earliest period of exploration and settlement were identified within the APE.

Intensified and Durable Occupation, 1730-1770 ±

During the mid- to late eighteenth century, the inhabitants of New Castle maintained the level of development and economic success they had achieved under the Duke of York, but were hindered by the growing urban centers of Philadelphia and Wilmington. Heavy siltation of the river at New Castle caused wharves built along the waterfront to be stranded at low tide. In the 1730s several new wharves were developed further out into the river; however, the siltation problem continued. By the end of the period, these wharves too were stranded at low tide, but economic stagnation in the area

prevented further efforts to extend the wharves farther out into the river. The fortunes of New Castle changed as the Revolutionary War caused a shift in shipping patterns and fostered new enterprises and industries (Ames et al. 1989: 43; DeCunzo and Catts 1990; Herman et al. 1989: 57).

The settled area of New Castle lay east of the APE during this period; however, the area surrounding the town was divided into large farms. To the northwest, the oldest section of Stonum (900 Washington Street) was reportedly constructed on Washington Street circa 1730.

Early Industrialization, 1770-1830 ±

During the late eighteenth century, New Castle played a key role in transatlantic shipping as the last safe harbor on the Delaware River. Stockyards along the New Castle coastline provided supplies and livestock to mariners bound for distant ports. New Castle remained a prominent economic and political center in the region until the seat of government for the colony was removed to Dover in 1777. Although the federal courts remained at New Castle, the town's regional influence waned after it ceased to serve as the capital.

New Castle residents did not accept the town's reversal of fortune without a fight, pursuing several initiatives intended to attract speculative ventures, such as the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, to the town. In the mid-1790s, the city erected ice-breaking piers in the Delaware River to enhance its role as a shipping center. In 1804, the town contracted with Benjamin Latrobe to survey the town and develop a plan for its street grid and expansion. Latrobe's hiring was a response to problems identified by the Town Commission in 1797, which included the street system's irregular dimensions and drainage, as well as chronic problems with structures that projected out into the streets (Cottrell 1991).

The Latrobe survey provides a detailed plan of the city as it existed in 1804-1805 (Figure 3.1). New Castle then encompassed an area that extended along the river from South Street to the Broad Dyke Canal and west to present-day Fifth Street. South Street extended two blocks east of its present terminus to the river's waterfront, with connecting cross streets at Pearl [present-day Third] Street, Vine Street [Fourth] and Union [Fifth] Street. Most development at this time was confined within the four square blocks of the town's center between Delaware Street and Harmony Street. Latrobe's ambitious plan called for filling the marshes on the town's periphery; constructing a retaining wall to extend Front Street to South Street and facilitate construction of additional wharves; and grading and paving of existing streets to assist with drainage and to provide sidewalks for the town. Unfortunately, public indifference and recalcitrance prevented most of the grading and paving work from being completed (Cottrell 1991).



Figure 3.1:

1805 Latrobe, Plan of the Town of Newcastle.



The Latrobe survey included only the easternmost section of the APE along South Street. Only one dwelling, the DeShane residence, was located along South Street in the early nineteenth century, located on the south side of the street between Vine and Union Streets. A tannery and associated bark house was located on a northeast corner lot at Union and South Streets, the first of many industrial ventures to exist within the APE (Latrobe 1805). None of the land along South Street between Vine and Pearl Streets was developed at this time. New Castle's development was concentrated in the central and northern portions of the town, extending from the waterfront west to Fifth Street and from Delaware Avenue north to the Broad Dyke. The southern area of New Castle remained marshland into the mid-nineteenth century; the area around South Street was used as stockyards for the shipping-provisioning trade, with pasture for cattle extending down to the shoreline and both a slaughterhouse and tannery located nearby. Development was slow to occur in part because local leaders were lobbying for construction of the proposed Chesapeake & Delaware (C&D) Canal through the area to an inlet at the end of South Street (present-day Battery Park), which was promoted as a natural outlet for the canal's traffic (Cottrell 1991).

Beyond its urban core, New Castle developed in a dispersed residential pattern. The surrounding areas were agricultural, with farmsteads scattered around the city's perimeter. The property containing Stonum was acquired during this period by George Read, a lawyer who would later become an important Delaware politician of the Revolutionary War period and signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. Read owned the property from circa 1755 to 1769 (Post 1973).

In 1811, the New Castle Turnpike Company was established to develop what was then a stagecoach route between New Castle and Frenchtown, near the mouth of the Elkton River in Maryland. The New Castle Turnpike Company completed the section from New Castle to the state line between 1811 and 1813. A separate company, the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike Company, completed the section between the Maryland-Delaware border and Frenchtown by 1817. The two companies jointly operated the route as a toll road. Present-day SR 273 (Frenchtown Road/Delaware Street) follows the route of the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike, which forms the northern boundary of the APE.

Industrialization and Early Urbanization, 1830-1880 ±

In 1832, the New Castle & Frenchtown Railroad (NC&FRR), the first in Delaware and among the earliest in the nation, was completed to New Castle. Permission to build the rail line had been granted to the New Castle Turnpike Company and the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike Company in the late 1820s by the states of Maryland and Delaware; upon its completion, the two entities were merged to become the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike and Railroad Company

(Bower and Abbot 1991). The NC&FRR connected steamboat services on the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware River, thereby providing a continuous link from Baltimore to Philadelphia. The railroad was to parallel the turnpike's route and rival the C&D Canal, which had bypassed New Castle in 1824. The original route of the historic rail line passed through the APE, crossing Washington Street between Seventh and Ninth Streets and continuing in a southeasterly direction along present-day Umbrella Row to South Street near its intersection with Fifth Street. From there, the line extended toward the South Street wharf, where the inlet that had formerly existed at the end of South Street was filled for construction of the railroad terminal. As shown on Figure 3.2, the NC&FRR had constructed two spurs toward the terminal and wharf by 1849, through the area that today comprises Battery Park (Heite and Heite 1989:20; Rea and Price 1849).

The 1849 Rea and Price map of New Castle County (Figure 3.2) depicts an increased density in the settlement pattern in the City of New Castle, with the development of lots on Union and Vine Streets between South and Delaware Streets. A cluster of buildings is depicted at the NC&FRR crossing at South Street; this new development was accompanied by an abandonment of the planned streets southwest of this rail line (Rea and Price 1849).

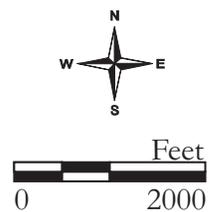
In 1839, the Delaware legislature chartered the New Castle and Wilmington Railroad (NC&WRR), which was to construct a new, five-mile rail line from New Castle to Wilmington. Construction was delayed, however, and the line was not completed until 1854, nearly a decade after the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad (PW&BRR) acquired the NC&FRR (Poor 1889:280). The NC&FRR and the NC&WRR together formed the New Castle Branch of the PW&BRR, providing access to the PW&BRR's regional network. As shown on Figure 3.3, the original section of the NC&FRR from a point just east of Washington Street to South Street was abandoned by 1868 and the line rerouted to the northeast, where it connected with the NC&WRR at Ninth Street. New tracks extended the NC&WRR from the Ninth Street junction southward along present-day Young Street to South Street, where it joined the original NC&FRR route to the terminal and wharf. A marshy inlet south of the city's wharf was filled to create a rail yard with six sidings, four of which terminated at the waterfront (Beers 1868).

The completion of the rail lines and connection to the larger regional rail network encouraged industrial growth in the city's southwestern section, through which both lines passed. South of the rail line, at the intersection of Union and South Streets, the Hicks Steam Engine Works occupied two buildings southeast of the railroad tracks. This industrial plant had its origins in 1833, when the New Castle Manufacturing Company opened a mill for the manufacture of cotton, woolen, and metal goods. The company expanded a year later with the addition of a foundry and engine shop on



Figure 3.2:

1849 Rea and Price, Map of New Castle County, Delaware.



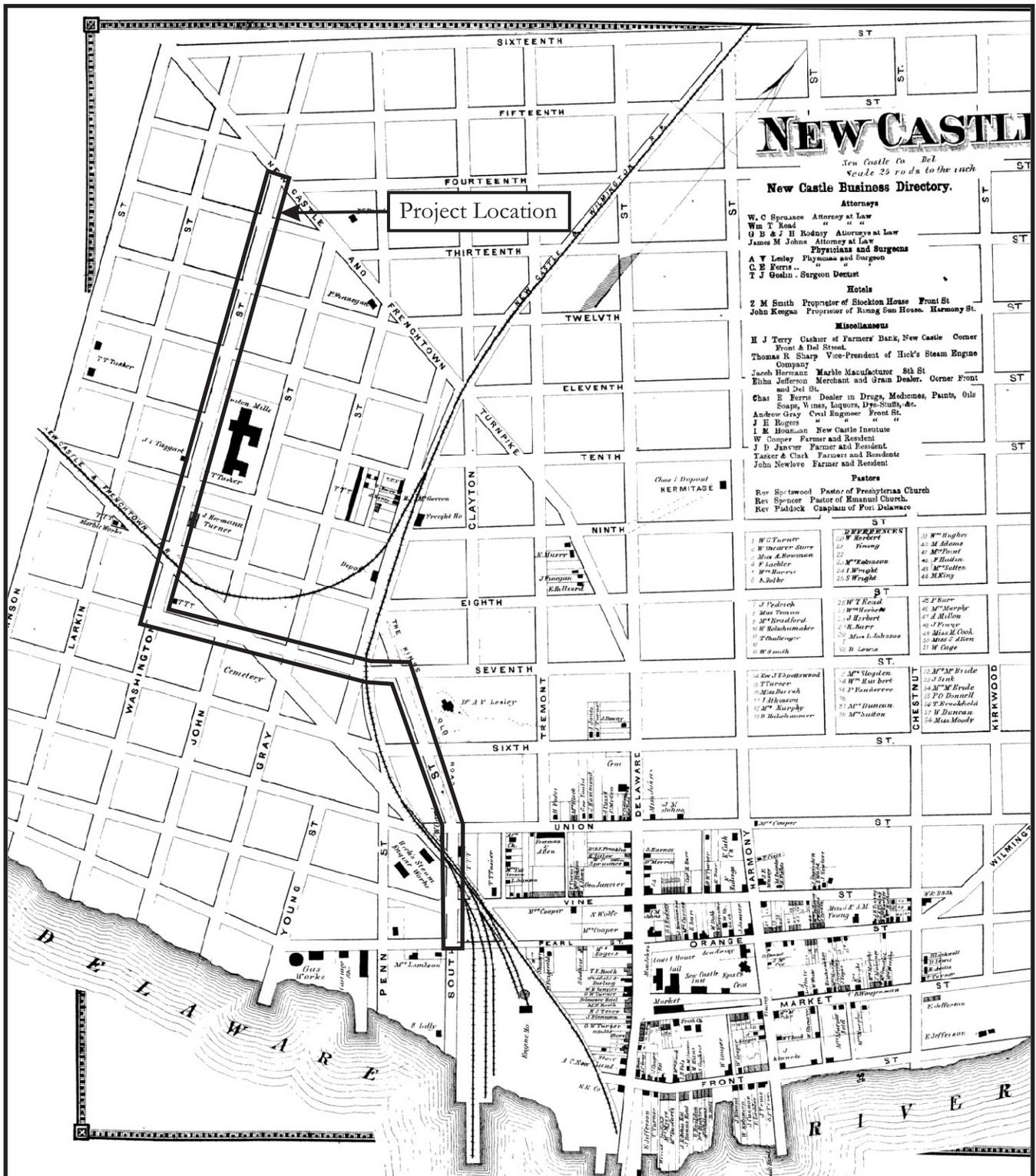


Figure 3.3:

1868 D.G. Beers, *Atlas of the State of Delaware.*



its South Street property and became one of the first locomotive engine manufactories in the United States. By 1868, the New Castle Manufacturing Company had been acquired by the Hicks Steam Engine Company, which continued the manufacture of locomotives until its closure sometime prior to 1885 (Cooper 1907:114; Heintzelman 1974; Scharf 1888).

Farther west, the Triton Cotton Mills are depicted on the northeast side of Washington Street. James G. Shaw purchased a 174-acre farm owned by Chancellor Johns in 1857 and laid out the property as an addition to New Castle. In 1860-1861, Shaw built the Triton Spinning Mill for the manufacture of cotton yarn. Washington Street was reportedly laid out around this time to improve access to the area, which became known as Shawtown. The new street passed between the mill and Stonum, which by 1868 was owned by Joseph I. Taggart. Shaw sold the mills in 1864 to Thomas T. Tasker, but continued to direct their operation into the 1880s (Cooper 1907:114-117; Scharf 1888).

Although not depicted on the Beers atlas, a flour mill was erected in 1868 on Larkin Street, adjacent to the NC&FRR. Built by Tasker, the mill was sold in 1872 to the William Lea & Sons Company, which also operated flour mills in Wilmington. The William Lea & Sons mill continued to operate in New Castle to circa 1905 (Cooper 1907:118-119; Sanborn Map Company 1907).

As shown on the 1868 Beers atlas, development within the APE was sparse during this period. A small number of residences were scattered about the area; Stonum and a duplex attributed to J. Hermann Turner were the only residences on Washington Street, and the home of Dr. A.V. Lesley was the only notable dwelling on South Street. Occupying the block bounded by South, Seventh, Tremont, and Sixth Streets, the Gothic Revival-style mansion is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Several smaller buildings, including one belonging to W. Copely and two owned by Thomas T. Tasker, may have been residences, although their proximity to the railroad suggests alternate uses (Beers 1868).

An article about the City of New Castle published in 1873 described the city's attributes at the time, noting that significant industrial development had taken place in recent years. Public utilities then included a waterworks and gas works, and the town boasted two public schools, one bank, six churches, a public library, two building and loan associations, and four hotels. The development of the Tasker Iron Works received considerable attention as "by far the most important establishment of its kind on the American continent" (New Castle, Delaware 1873). Located southwest of New Castle's town center, in an area known as Dobbinsville, the Tasker Iron Works built a sizeable manufactory and company town. Other industries earning mention in the article were Shaw's cotton mill, Lea's flour mill, the woolen mill of James G. Knowles, and the brickyards of W.G. Guyer (New Castle, Delaware 1873). Knowles, formerly a partner with Shaw in the Triton Mills, established his

woolen mills on the south side of Washington Street, east of the NC&FRR, in 1873. Knowles operated the mill successfully for a number of years, despite fires in 1878 and 1884 (Scharf 1888:865). Knowles' complex was adapted for use as a vulcanized fibre plant by Wilmington Fibre during the twentieth century.

The substantial growth of industry in New Castle during the 1870s led to a doubling of the community's population between 1870 and 1880. This growth resulted in the incorporation of New Castle as a city in 1875 (Heintzelman 1974).

Urbanization and Early Suburbanization, 1880-1940 ±

Industrial activity continued in the southwestern section of New Castle in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The 1885 Sanborn insurance maps illustrate the industrial character of the area (Figure 3.4). By this time, the former Hicks Steam Engine Company had either closed or moved from its location near the intersection of South and Union Streets; the property was owned by the Tasker Iron Company, but reportedly not then in use (Sanborn Map Company 1885). The Delaware Iron Company, which was owned by Tasker, had its operations downriver, in the area known as Dobbinsville. The South Street property later became the site of the Booker T. Washington School in 1923.

Nearby, brothers James T. and Lewis E. Eliason opened a coal and lumber yard in 1882 on the section of the PW&BRR extending toward the wharf (Sanborn Map Company 1885). The yard extended along South Street at Union Street; both of the Eliasons lived nearby in Victorian-era houses on Union Street (Travers 2005: 121). By the early twentieth century, the company's focus had shifted from agrarian merchandise to building and construction materials (Johnson 1981).

Farther north, just outside the APE, South Street terminated at Eighth Street, where the PW&BRR depot was located. Additional rail-related resources, including a freight house and tool house, were located on the east side of the rail line between Eighth and Ninth Streets, and the United States Hotel was located west of the railroad, on Ninth Street. By 1901, a second hotel had been erected on South Street, south of its intersection with Eighth Street (Sanborn Map Company 1885, 1901). North of the railroad station, a neighborhood comprised predominantly of Italian-American immigrants developed during the early twentieth century (Meek 2008a).

West of the railroad station, both of the textile mills on Washington Street remained active in the 1880s and 1890s. The Triton Mills reportedly had 14,000 spindles in operation and employed 100 to 150 workers in 1888; the neighboring Knowles' woolen mills employed more than 200 workers

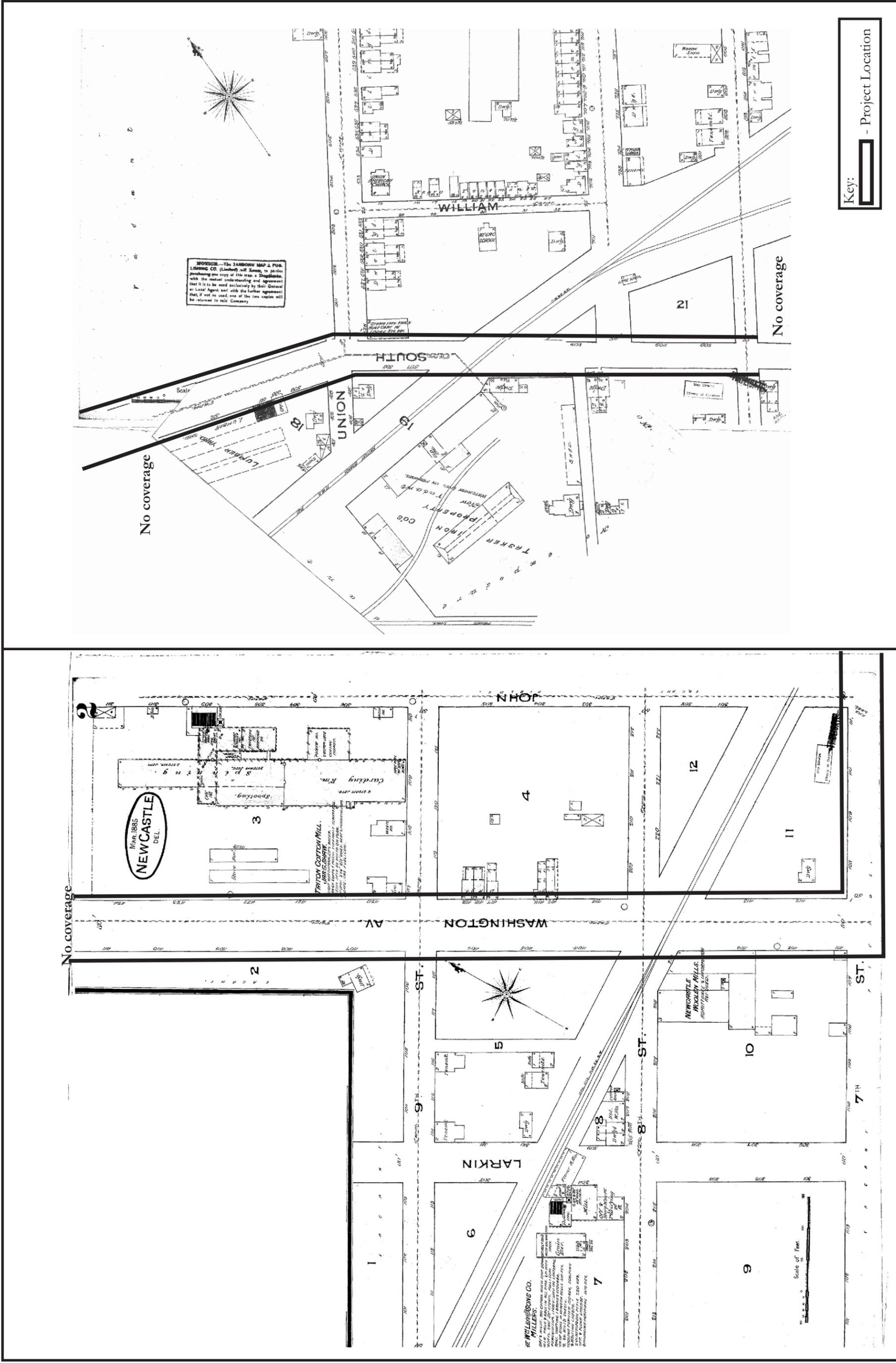


Figure 3.4:

1885 Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of New Castle, Delaware.

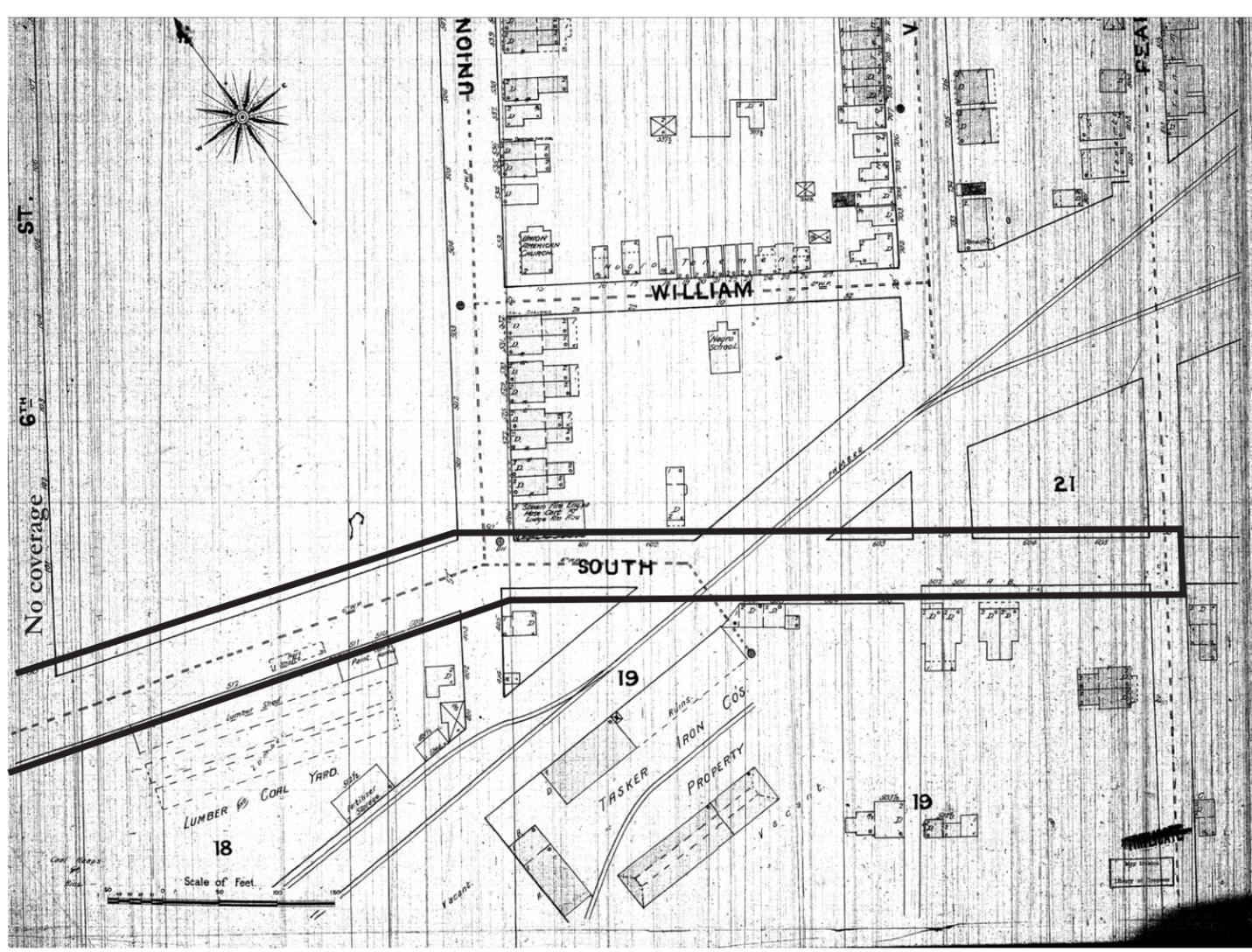


around the same time. The latter mill was described in 1888 as “one of the largest and probably the best arranged and most thoroughly equipped [mills] in the State” (Scharf 1888:865). By the turn of the century, however, both mills had fallen upon hard times: the Triton Mills closed by 1901, and the neighboring Knowles mills were sold at public auction in 1905 (Equitable Guarantee and Trust Company [1905]; Sanborn Map Company 1901). The neighboring William Lea & Sons flour mill had also closed by circa 1905 (Sanborn Map Company 1901, 1912).

The closure of the textile and flour mills was a temporary setback for New Castle industry, as new uses were soon found for the all three of the former factory buildings. By 1912, the Triton Mills had been acquired by the Deemer Steel Casting Company, and the Lea & Sons flour mill had been refurbished as the Edgar Allen American Manganese Steel Company. The latter company built a new factory beside the old flour mill and expanded its plant considerably in the decades that followed under the name American Manganese Steel (Dallin Aerial Survey Company 1925d; Sanborn Map Company 1912).

Despite the presence of the rail line and the industrial nature of the neighborhood, a number of dwellings were constructed in and around the APE during the mid- to late nineteenth century. The greatest concentration was located near the New Castle town center. On the southwest side of South Street, near present-day Battery Park, a small number of semi-detached dwellings were erected prior to 1885 (see Figure 3.4). Also located in this area was a fire station at Union and South Streets, with lodge rooms on the second floor (Sanborn Map Company 1885). By 1891, several more dwellings had been erected in the area, as shown on Figures 3.5-3.6 (Baist 1893; Sanborn Map Company 1891). Residences erected near the mills on Washington Street during the same period were likely worker housing. These included several on the east side of Washington between Eighth and Ninth Streets and a row on the south side of Ninth Street, west of Stonum and outside the APE (Sanborn Map Company 1885, 1891).

The growth and prosperity of New Castle around the turn of the twentieth century led to the construction of trolley lines to the city. In 1896, construction began on the Wilmington & New Castle Electric Railway, which was to extend from Wilmington to the PW&BRR depot, near the intersection of South and Eighth Streets in New Castle. Plans to extend the line to Smyrna were stymied, but in 1899 a new company, the New Castle & Delaware City Railway, was chartered to extend the line along the river as far as Delaware City. Regular service began on this southern route, which ran along Seventh Street from the PW&BRR depot to Dobbinsville, in September 1900 (Cox 1991:61-63).



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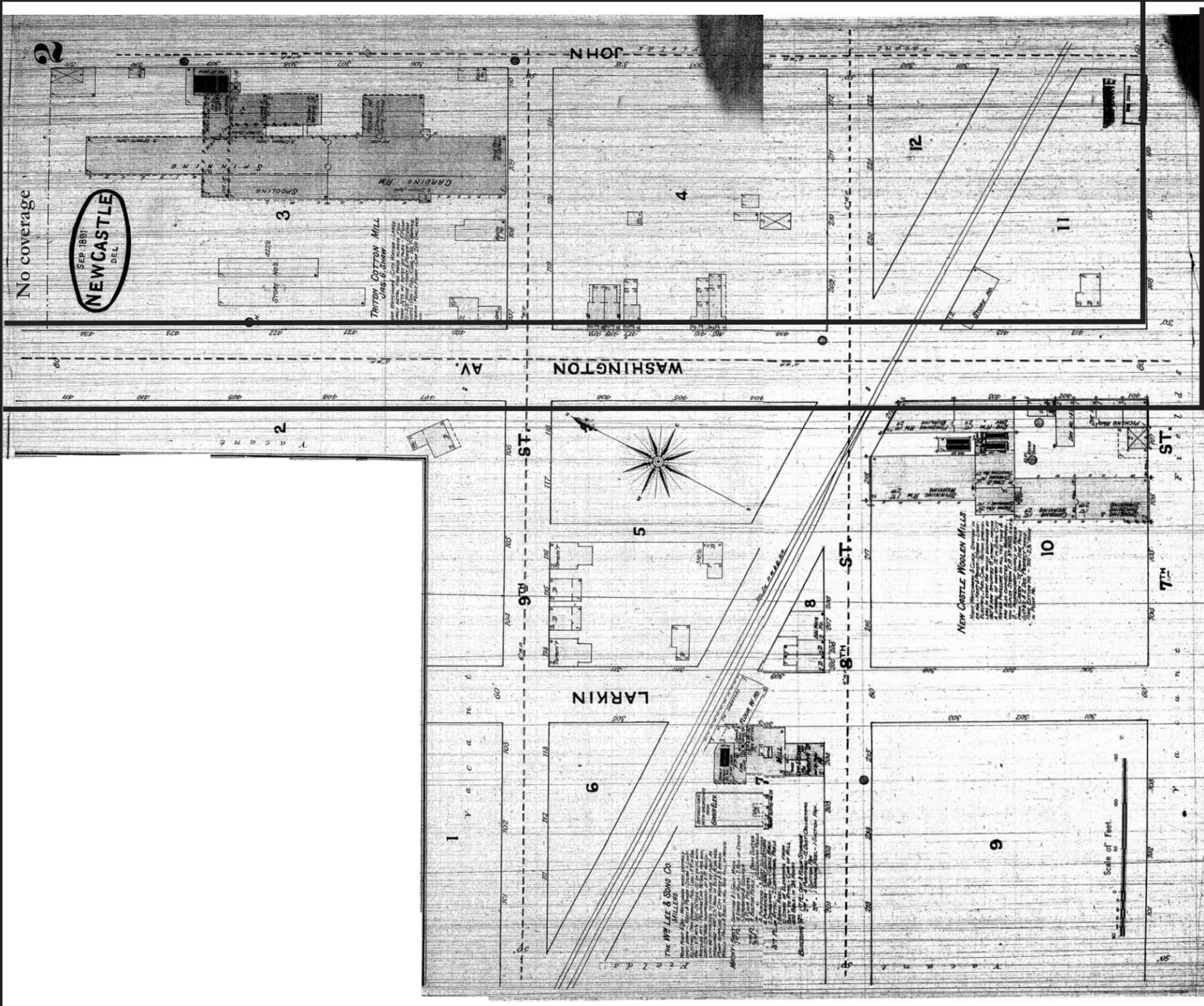
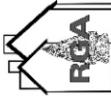


Figure 3.5:

1891 Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of New Castle, Delaware.



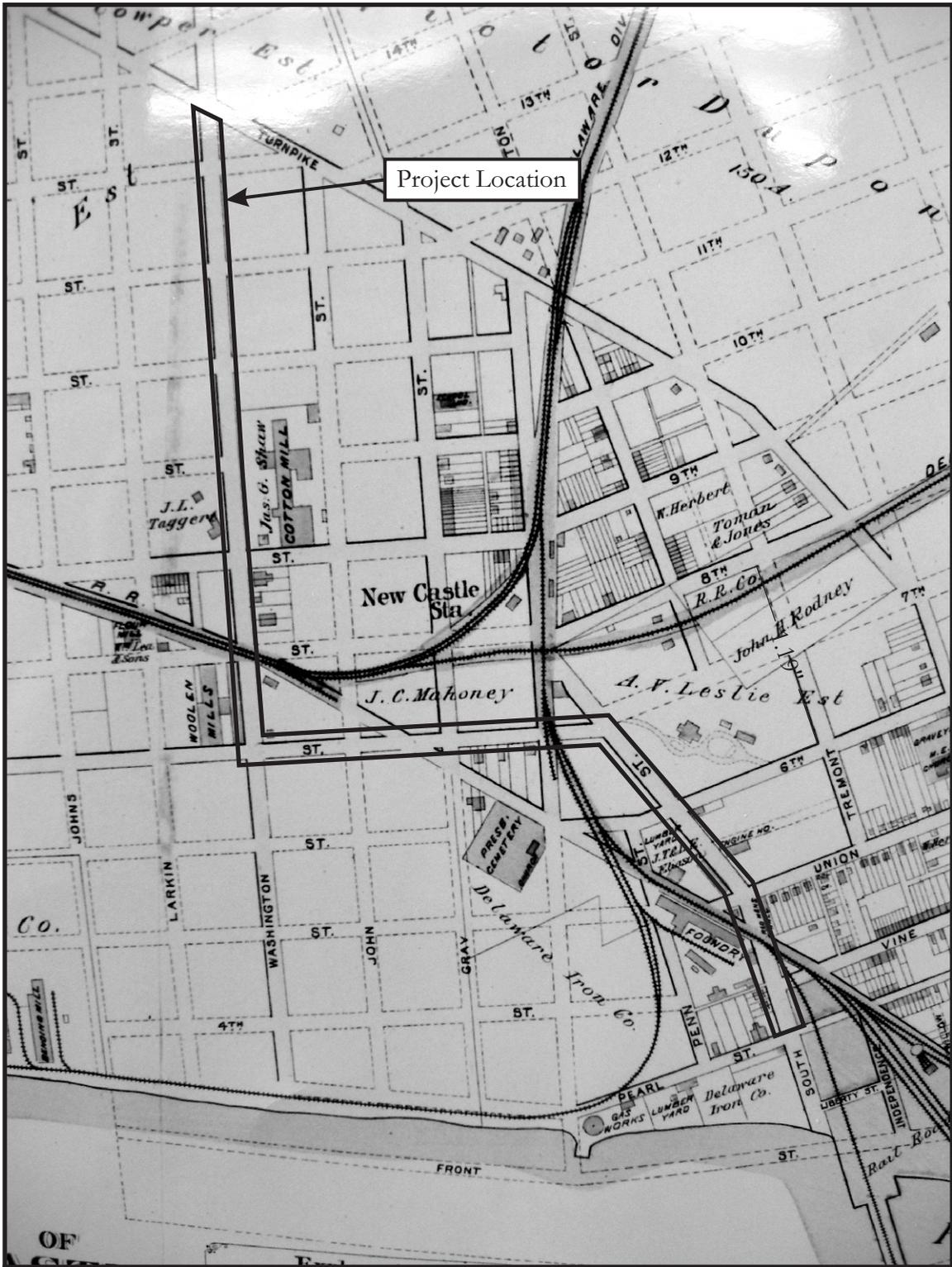


Figure 3.6:

1893 G. Wm. Baist, *Atlas of New Castle County, Delaware.*

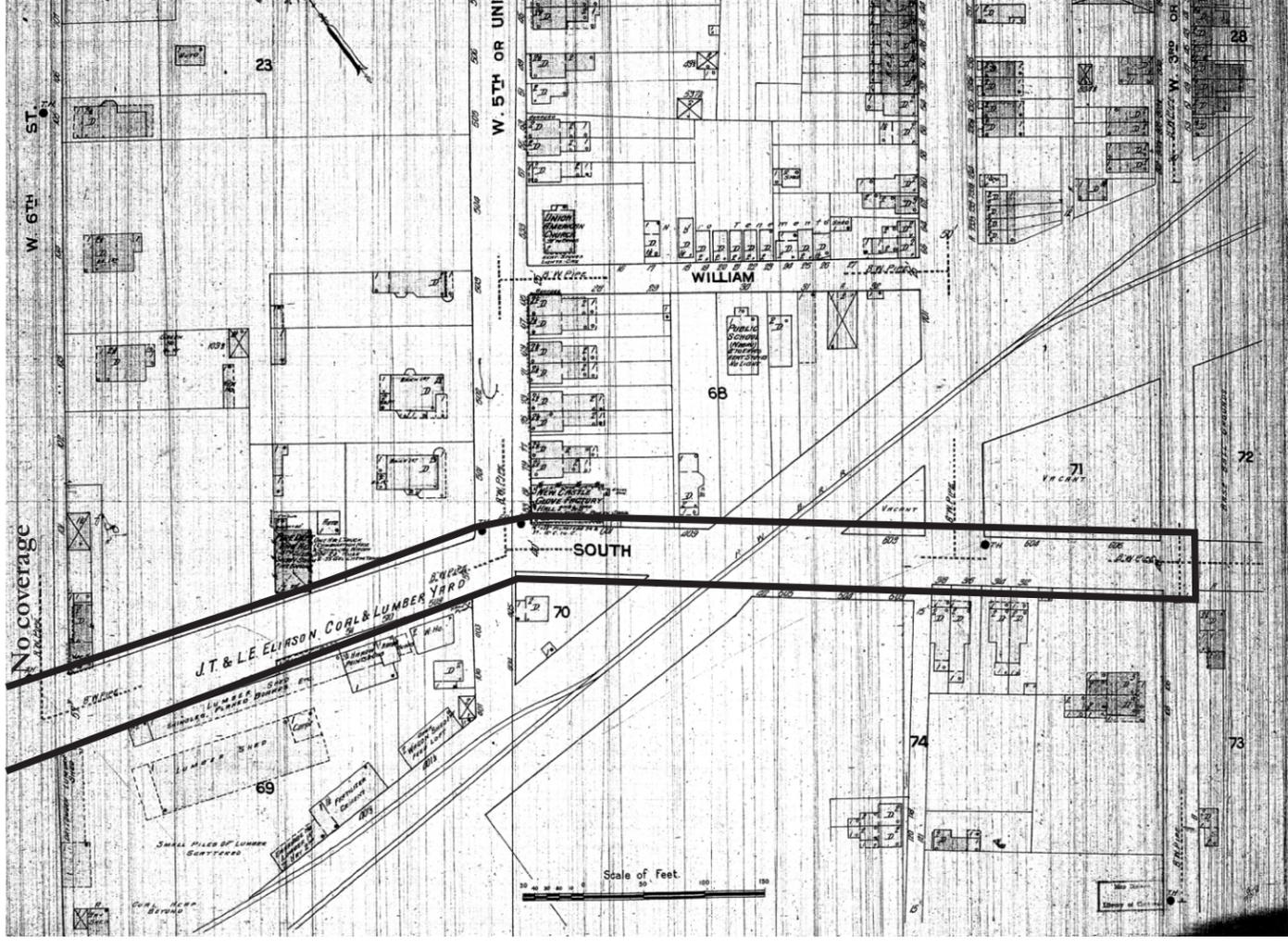


The 1901 Sanborn insurance maps of New Castle illustrate the steady development of New Castle's center with a noticeable increase in the number and density of dwellings (Figure 3.7). The J.T. and L.E. Eliason Coal & Lumber Yard expanded around this time, and a new store with attached residence was erected across the street, at the intersection of South Street and Sixth Street. The former fire station was converted into a glove factory by this date; the factory continued operating into the 1910s (Sanborn Map Company 1901, 1912). New houses were also built at several locations, including four dwellings on West Seventh Street, southwest of the railroad. No significant new construction occurred along Washington Street during this period (Sanborn Map Company 1901).

By 1912, Sanborn insurance maps depict a few notable changes within the APE, particularly along Washington Street (Figure 3.8). The redevelopment of shuttered industrial properties at the former Lea & Sons Flour Mill and Triton Cotton Mills resulted in the construction of two new sidings from the PW&BRR into these industrial complexes. The Knowles' Woolen Mills were then in the process of being redeveloped as the Wilmington Fibre Specialty Company (Sanborn Map Company 1912). By 1923, all three companies had expanded their plants (Sanborn Map Company 1923).

The Wilmington & New Castle trolley, which also controlled the New Castle & Delaware City line, struggled from its inception, resulting in a series of reorganizations and restructuring efforts between 1904 and 1913, when it was acquired by the Wilmington, New Castle & Delaware City Railway. In order to increase traffic on the line, the new company leased a 10.5-acre tract of land in Battery Park from the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1913 and proceeded to build a dance pavilion, beach houses, and a carousel on the site. The company renamed the area Ocean Beach Park and sponsored band concerts and other entertainment during the summer months. The park became popular with Wilmington residents, and park facilities were expanded in 1914. Despite the apparent success of Ocean Beach Park, the Wilmington, New Castle & Delaware City trolley struggled, and by early 1915 it had given up its lease on the park. Later that year, the line was purchased by the Wilmington & Philadelphia Traction Company, which continued to operate streetcars on the line until 1932 (Cox 1991).

The Dallin Aerial Survey Company produced aerial photographs of New Castle in 1925, including overviews of the city and some of New Castle's key industries (Figures 3.9-3.12). These photographs include the portions of the APE on South Street near Battery Park, as well as along West Seventh and Washington Streets. The photos illustrate the residential character of South Street near Battery Park (Figure 3.10) and the continued presence of the PW&BRR line through the



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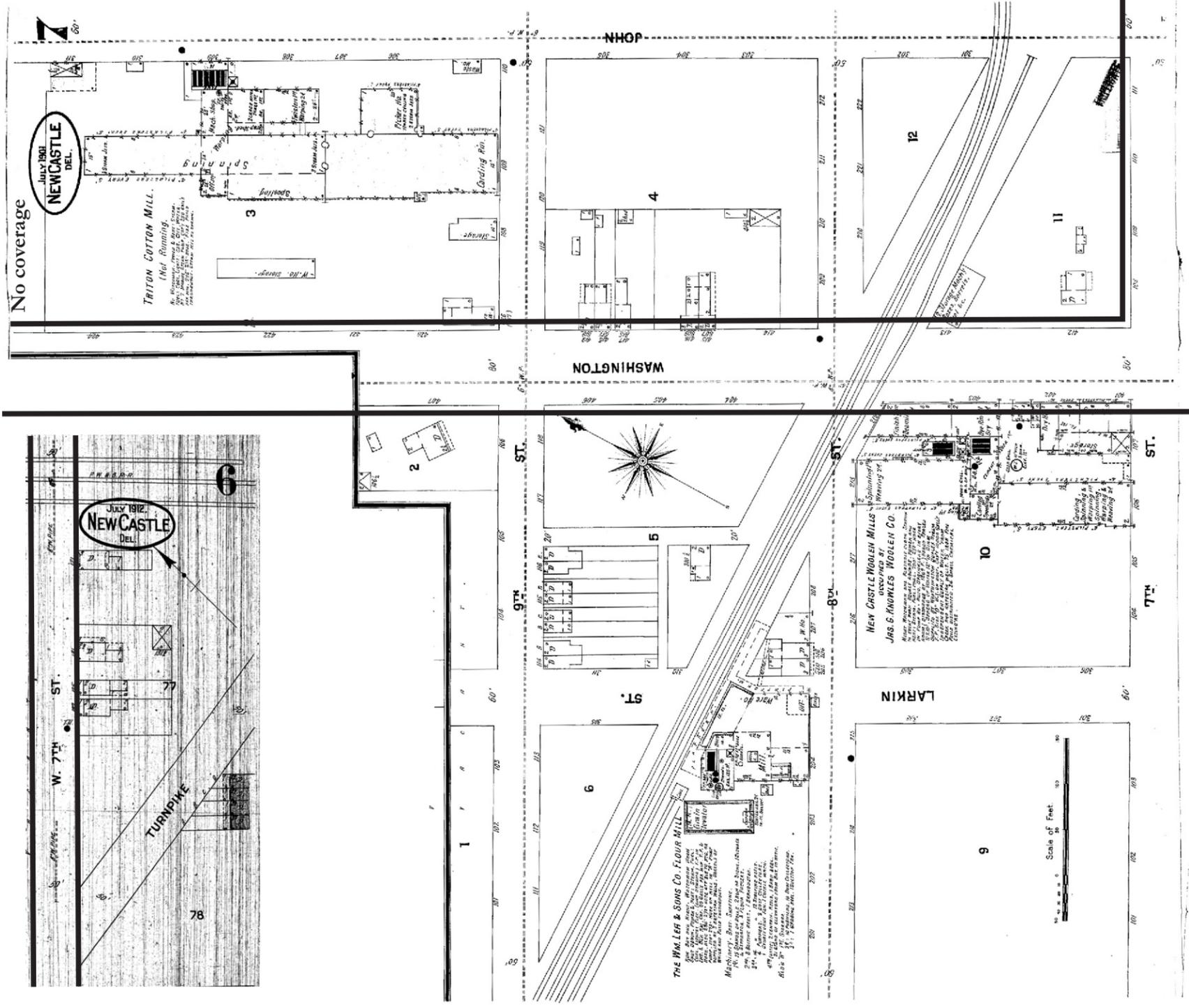
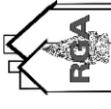
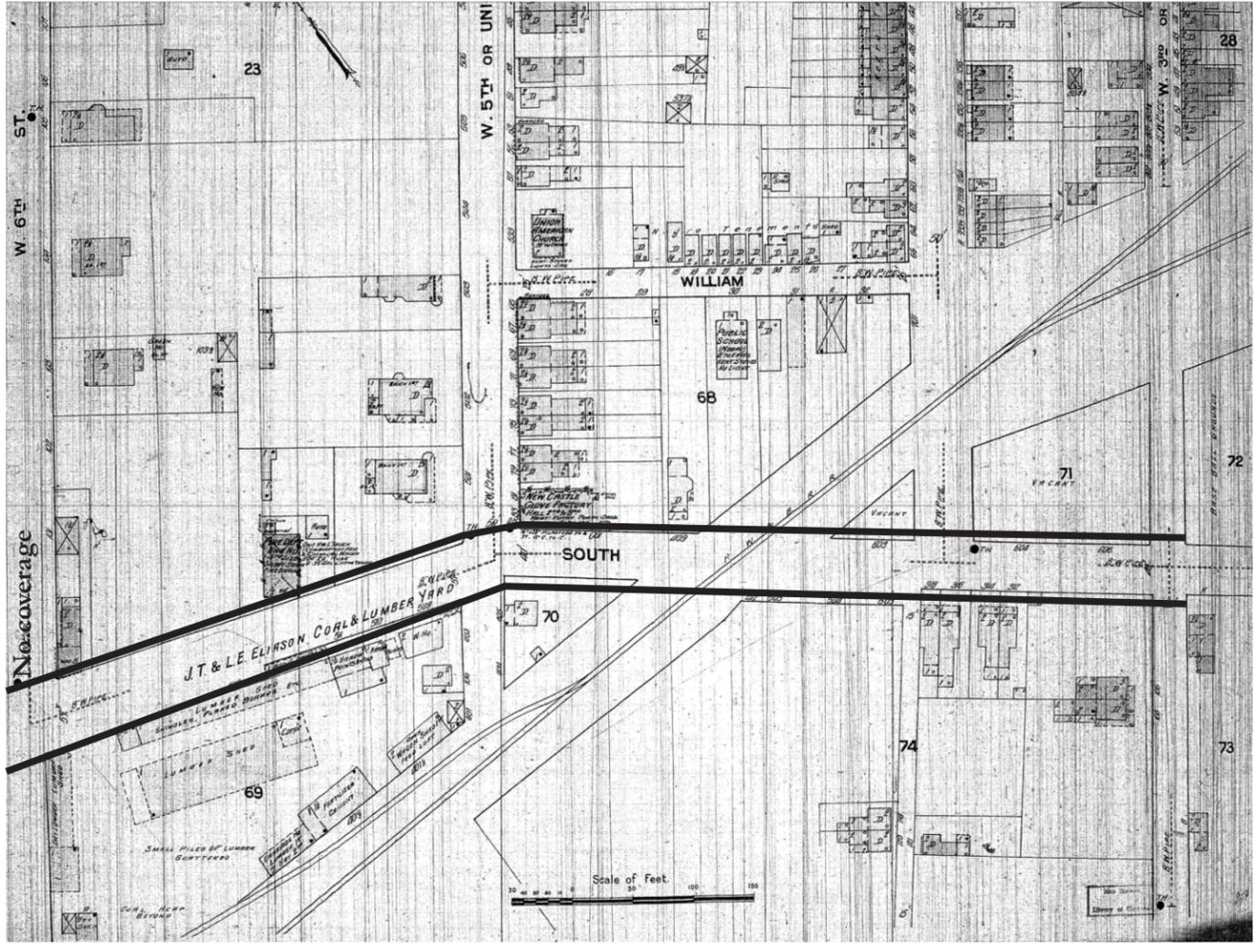
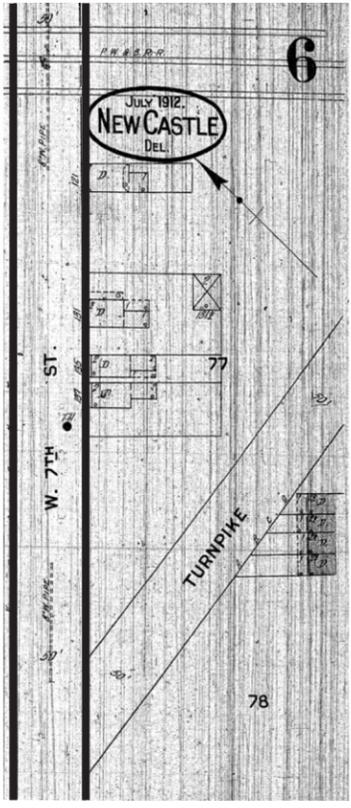
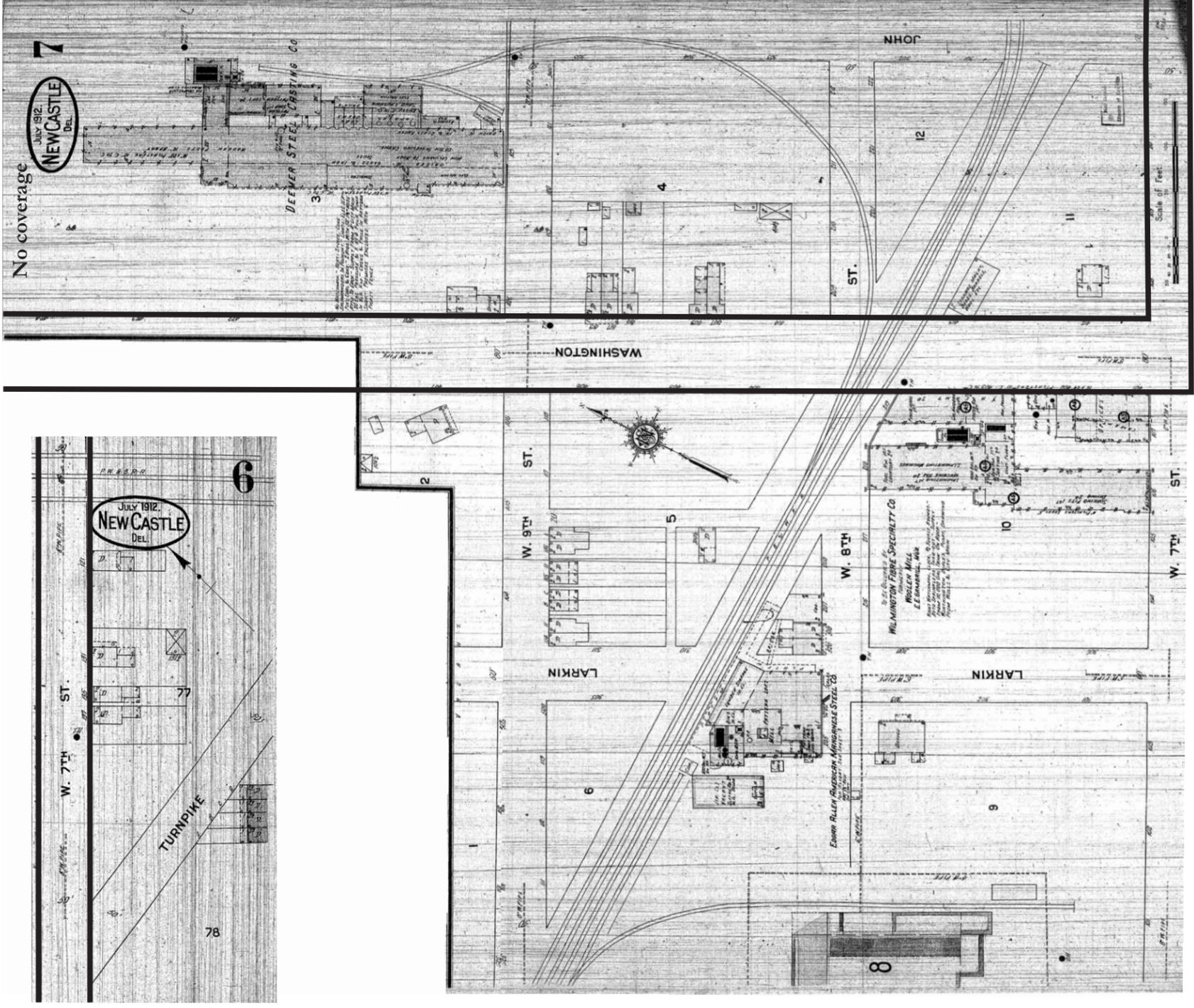


Figure 3.7:

1901 Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of New Castle, Delaware.





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Figure 3.8:

1912 Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of New Castle, Delaware.



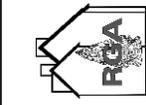


Figure 3.9:

1925 Dallin Aerial Survey Company, Bellanca Airfield and New Castle [HagleyID 70.200.04342]. The Deemer Steel Casting plant is located at left center in photo; Wilmington Fibre Specialty Company is located at the intersection of West Seventh and Washington Streets, adjacent to the American Manganese Steel plant (Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware).

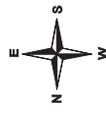
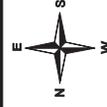




Figure 3.10:

1925 Dallin Aerial Survey Company, General View of New Castle [HagleyID 70.200.00971]. The area northeast of the South Street/Third Street intersection is presently occupied by tennis courts (Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware).



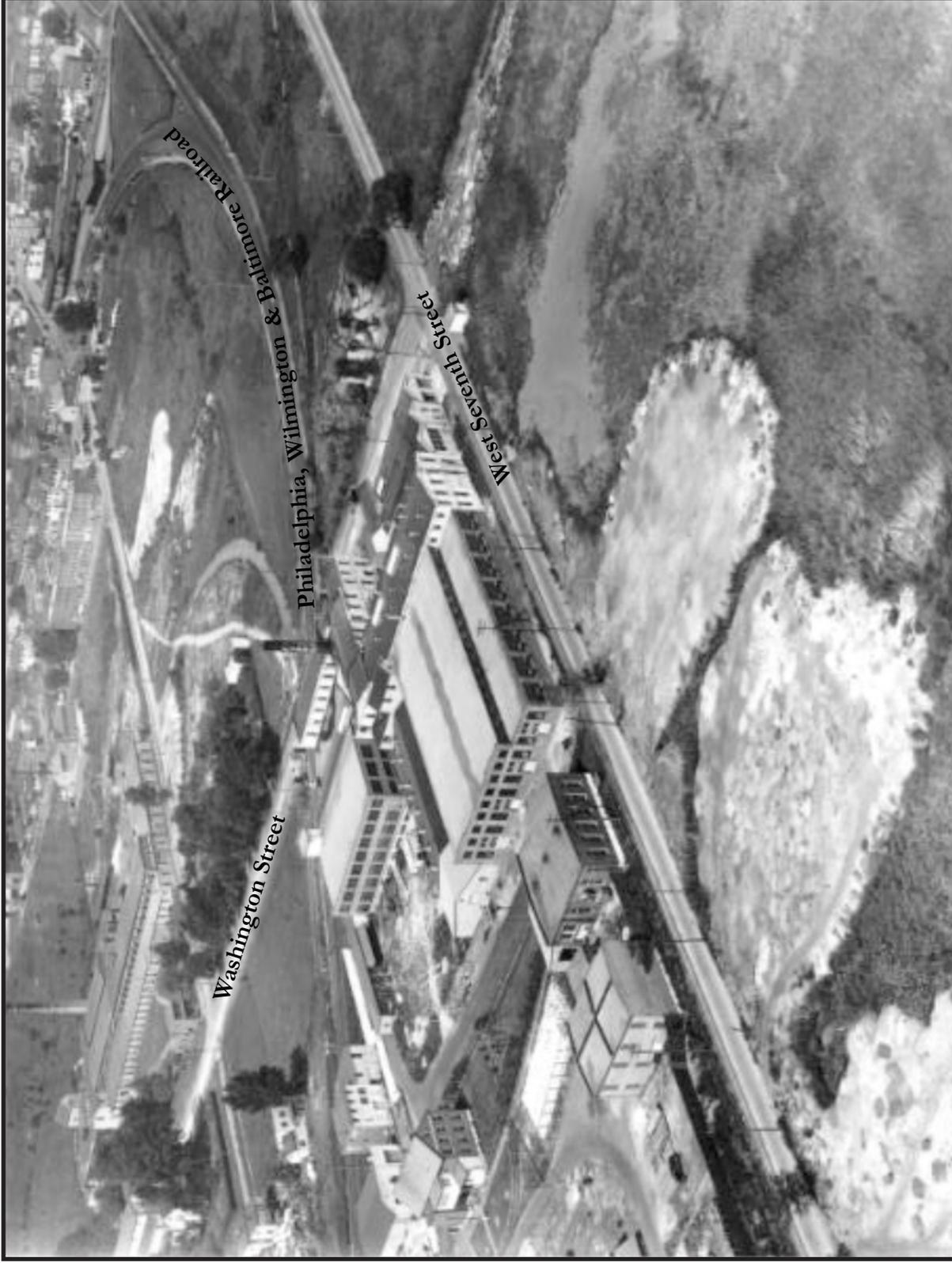
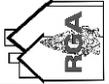


Figure 3.11:

1925 Dallin Aerial Survey Company, Wilmington Fibre Specialty Company [HagleyID 70.200.00961]
(Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware).



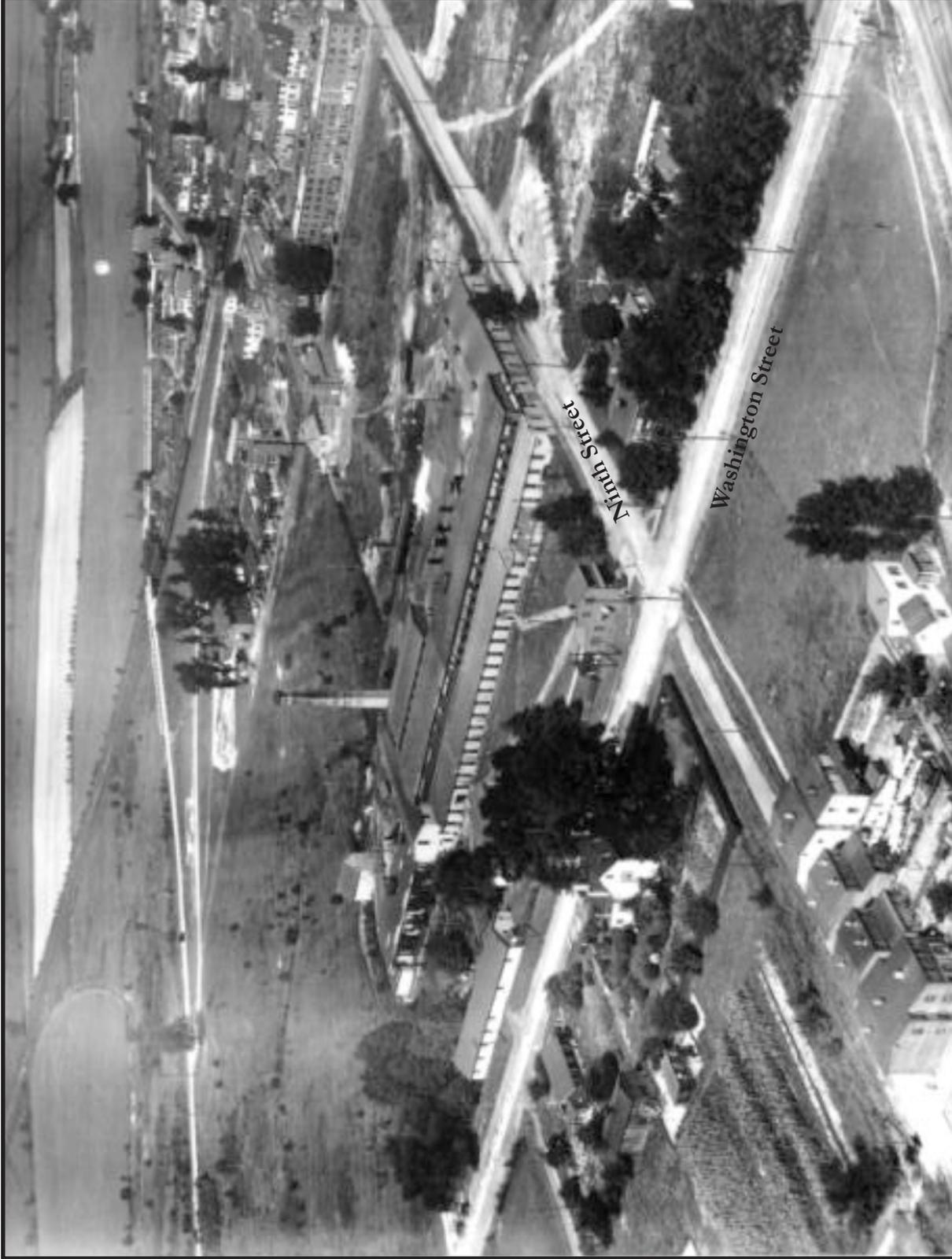
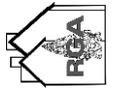


Figure 3.12: 1925 Dallin Aerial Survey Company, Deemer Steel Company [HagleyID 70.200.00964]. Stonum is visible at left in photo, at the intersection of Ninth and Washington Streets (Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE).



project area (Figures 3.9-3.11). The major industrial plants are prominent, but the aerial views also indicate that the outlying areas remained sparsely developed and even agricultural in character, as evinced by the corn field immediately west of Stonum (Figure 3.12).

The late 1920s and 1930s brought additional change to the APE and vicinity. West of the APE, Giuseppe Mario Bellanca and Henry B. DuPont built the Bellanca Aircraft Plant and Airfield on SR 273 in 1928 (Friends of Bellanca Airfield 2005). On Seventh Street, another Italian immigrant, Giovanni Gambacorta, constructed a garage around 1930, and in 1937 opened a used car business on the lot. In 1938, Gambacorta acquired a Willys-Overland Motor Company franchise, which he held through the 1950s (Gambacorta Motors, Inc. 2009). Gambacorta's original auto garage, with multiple additions, survives to the present.

New Castle Since 1940

The settlement pattern evident in the Dallin aerial photographs remained relatively unchanged through the 1930s. After 1940, the undeveloped land between the Bellanca Plant and Deemer Steel was developed as housing, presumably related to the nearby New Castle Army Air Base (Figure 3.13). This temporary housing was replaced by new tract housing around 1960 (Nationwide Environmental Title Research [NETR] 1940, 1954, 1963). Known as Washington Square, this neighborhood was developed by builder Guido DeAscanis. Similarly, the subdivision of Lesley's former estate after World War II led to the construction of a row of 14 garden townhouses on the east side of South Street, between Sixth and West Seventh Streets, in 1948-1949. The South Street Garden Townhouses were built by DeAscanis and Aldo Gibellino (New Castle County Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington, Delaware [NCCRD] 1948:Deed Book [DB] I-48:25, T-47:598, M-48:75).

Opposite the South Street Garden Townhouses, the Brosius-Eliason Company continued to operate as a building supply warehouse. The company merged with rival firm Brosius & Smedley Co. in 1966 to form the Brosius-Eliason Company, which operated at this location until 2008 (The News Journal 2008). Gambacorta Motors also thrived for decades on West Seventh Street, expanding the dealership in 1956 to sell Chryslers and in the 1970s for a Buick franchise. Around 2000, the company vacated its West Seventh Street property, moving a new location on the DuPont Highway (Gambacorta Motors, Inc. 2009).

In 1939, the Trustees of New Castle Common acquired "the large tract on the River front, known as the Battery, for a park and public playground" (Trustees of New Castle Common 1944:99). The railroad had owned the property since the mid-nineteenth century, but had slowly decreased the number of tracks through the area during the early twentieth century, from three in 1906 to only one



Project Location

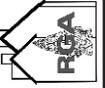


Figure 3.13:

1945 Aerial Survey of New Castle (University of Delaware Spatial Analysis Lab).



in 1923 (Sanborn Map Company 1923; U.S.G.S. 1906). The Trustees' acquisition of the land followed the railroad's complete abandonment of the tracks to the wharf. After purchasing the property, the Trustees turned it over to the City of New Castle for park development. The area was filled and the park developed circa 1950 (Heite and Heite 1989:35; Jett and Cesna 1984).

For the most part, New Castle's industries maintained their production in the postwar period. The Bellanca Plant was sold by Giuseppe Bellanca in 1954 (Friends of Bellanca Airfield 2005). Deemer Steel and American Manganese continued to operate their plants until 1986-1987, when both closed (Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control 2002:4). The Deemer Steel plant was demolished in 1994; townhouses have been constructed on the site in recent years. The largest buildings comprising the American Manganese plant had also been demolished by 2002, although several smaller buildings survive near Larkin Street (NETR 2002).

Wilmington Fibre Specialty Company is the lone surviving industrial plant in the southwestern section of New Castle. During the 1970s, the buildings that had comprised the old woolen plant were demolished and production consolidated into the buildings constructed during the 1920s on the western half of the lot (Morris 2010). The company celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2004 and will mark a century at its Washington Street location in 2012.