

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

The intensive level survey of Wilmington's Waterfront Analysis Area (Waterfront Survey Intensive Level) involves a methodology and research design composed of three components: Fieldwork Survey; Historic Research and Criteria Development; and Evaluation. The fieldwork survey component focused on a preliminary examination and review of the previous Reconnaissance Level Survey in order to confirm its conclusions and guide in an appropriate research design. Resources previously determined not eligible received scrutiny in order to ensure a proper determination. Subsequent fieldwork recorded architectural information regarding the integrity and appearance of all buildings for future evaluation purposes. This fieldwork also provided information outlining the distribution and types of resources present in the study zone for later inventory on color-coded maps.

Site visits confirmed most findings of the earlier reconnaissance level survey. Discrepancies arose concerning the total number of resources and complexes surveyed however. Originally 112 buildings spread among 17 complexes were supposedly identified by the reconnaissance level survey. Only 16 complexes were identified; 17 complex numbers were assigned during the early portions of the reconnaissance survey but only 16 numbers were used. In order to avoid confusion, Complex 17 (the City Yard complex) from the reconnaissance level survey has been renumbered Complex 10 which went unused during the earlier study. Also, final tabulation of the buildings identified by the reconnaissance level survey revealed a total of 129 resources among the 16 complexes. All 129 resources were examined during the Intensive Level Survey.

The second component, historic research and context and criteria development, endeavored to form a basis for the evaluation of the buildings identified in the reconnaissance level survey. Detailed historic research served to meet three objectives: to aid in building identification; to provide sufficient information for the formulation of historic contexts and subsequent evaluation and determinations of eligibility; and to provide data for statements of historic significance. Research included primary and secondary sources. Periodic fieldwork confirmed new building-specific data gathered through research.

Historic research informed on the development of appropriate historic contexts and criteria for evaluation. In conjunction with the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan the context delineated property types and expected rates of survival along

Wilmington's waterfront.¹ Chapter II outlines the developed historic context. In addition, the context outlined the relative significance of the resources to the evolution of Wilmington and explored expected levels of integrity. Criteria for evaluation of National Register of Historic Places eligibility then established levels of significance and integrity identified through the historic context.

Although five historic eras were outlined in the context, the 129 buildings and 16 complexes reflect only two historic eras (see Figure 2, p. 3). Five resources date to the period of Industrialization and Early Urbanization (1830 - 1880 +/-). All but two of the remaining resources reflect developments during the period of Urbanization and Early Suburbanization (1880 - 1940 +/-). These findings help illustrate two facets of the waterfront area's history: that the riverfront properties were valuable as manufacturing sites and often rebuilt upon, and that economic and community decay during the last forty years resulted in the demolition of many historic resources. Despite these trends, Wilmington's riverfront still reflects its historic early twentieth century appearance. The final two resources reflect developments after the year 1940, after the cut-off date for National Register consideration under most circumstances.

The 129 resources identified reflect 12 broadly-defined property types reflecting the industrial and manufacturing activity that occurred at the complex or building (see Figure 3, p. 4). Resources associated with shipbuilding and repair (42) far outnumbered the next closest property type in terms of total number of resources, machine manufacturing with 25. Dravo's 30 buildings accounted for the majority of the shipbuilding resources however. Railcar manufacturing resources represented the third highest group followed by chemical storage facilities and hose manufacturing. This hierarchy of resources reflects the historic character of Wilmington's waterfront during the early twentieth century as well. Five resources document transportation related property types and are not actually manufacturing associated resources. Three resources, one park and two of unknown function, were not illustrated on Figure 3.

The third component, the evaluation of the 129 buildings, entailed the application of the previously determined criteria to the individual buildings and/or complexes. Discussions concerning the evaluation of the resources focused on issues of integrity for individual resources versus complexes. Although most resources retained much of their fabric, many of the resources would not have

¹ David L. Ames, Mary Helen Callahan, Bernard L. Herman and Rebecca J. Siders, Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan (Newark, Delaware: Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, 1989).

- INDUSTRIALIZATION AND EARLY URBANIZATION
1830 - 1880 +/-
- URBANIZATION AND EARLY SUBURBANIZATION
1880 - 1940 +/-
- POST 1940

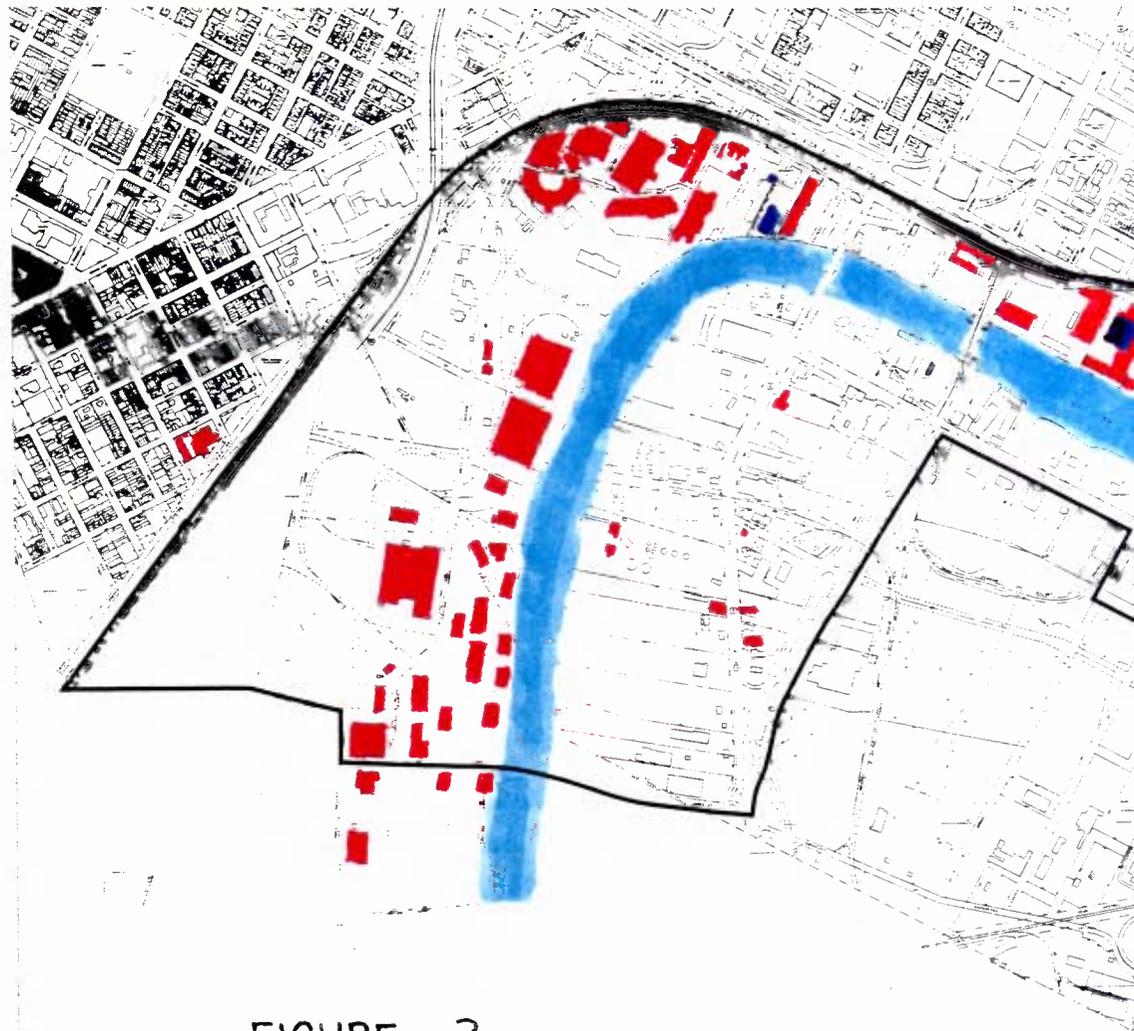
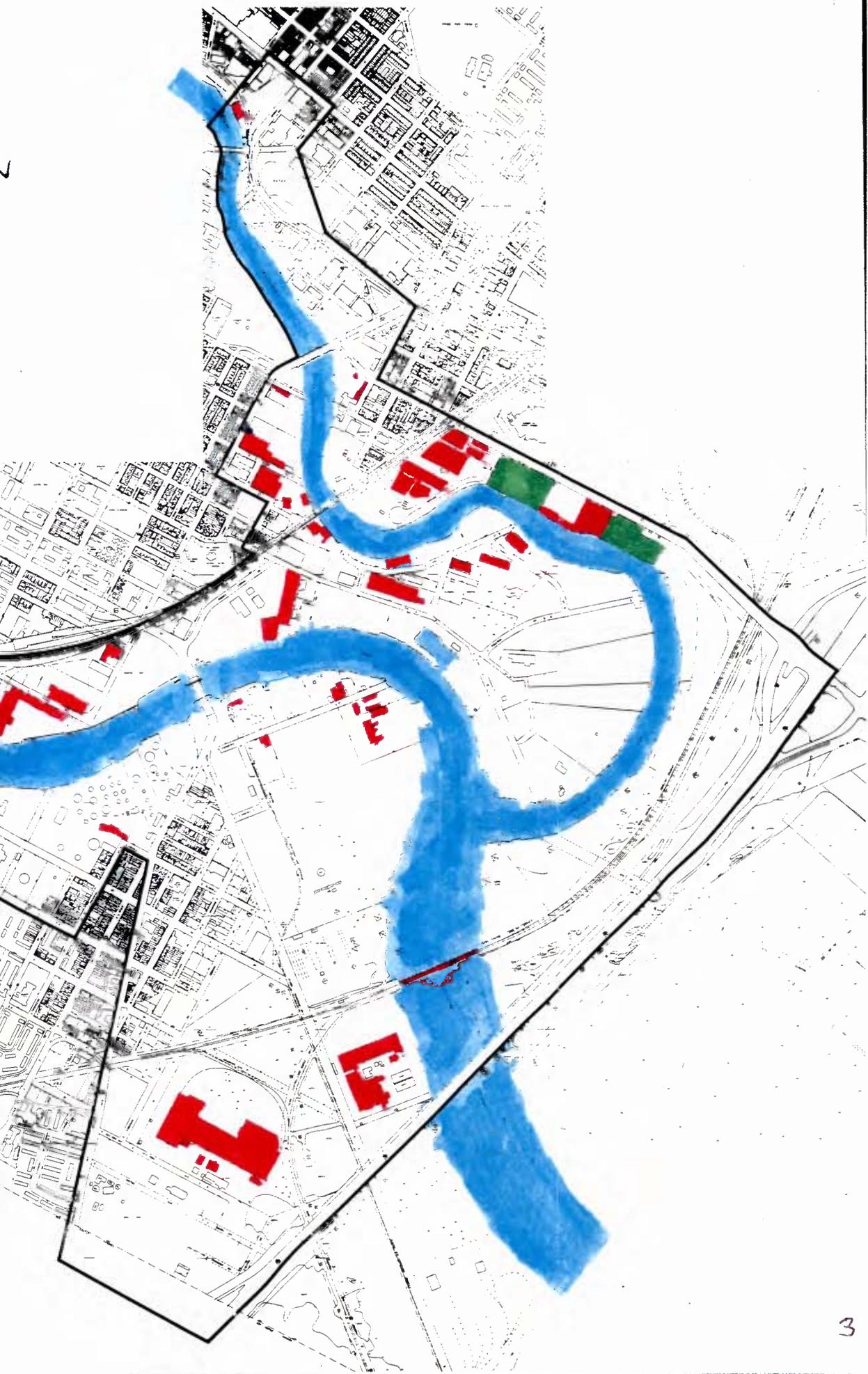


FIGURE 2

PROJECT AREA SHOWING HISTORIC ERAS



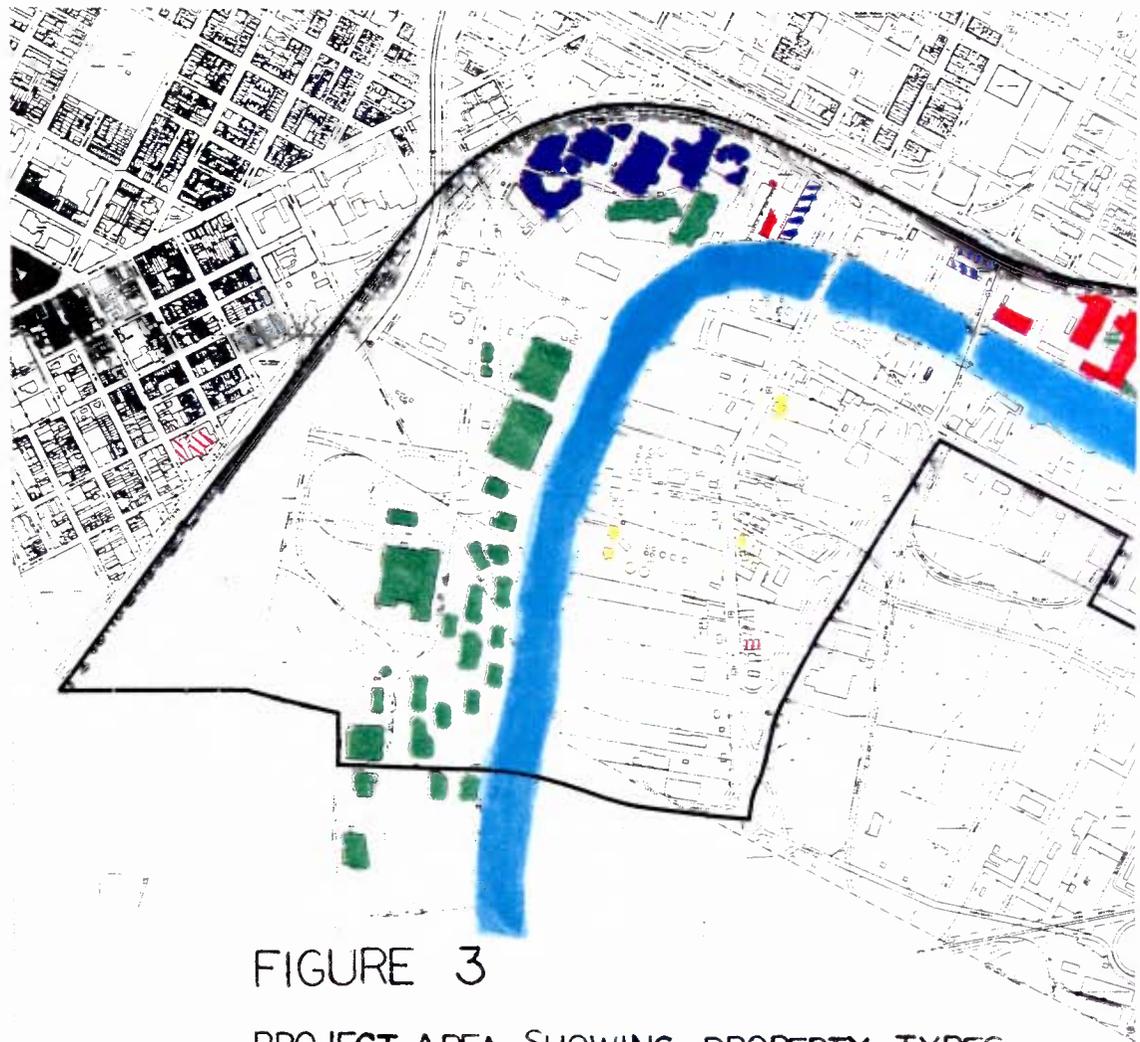
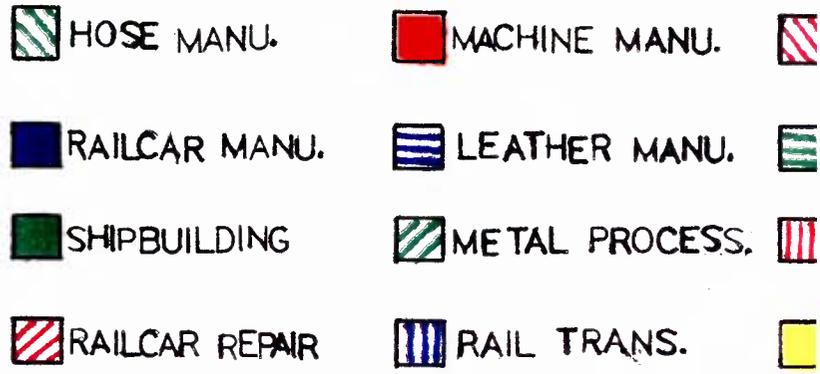
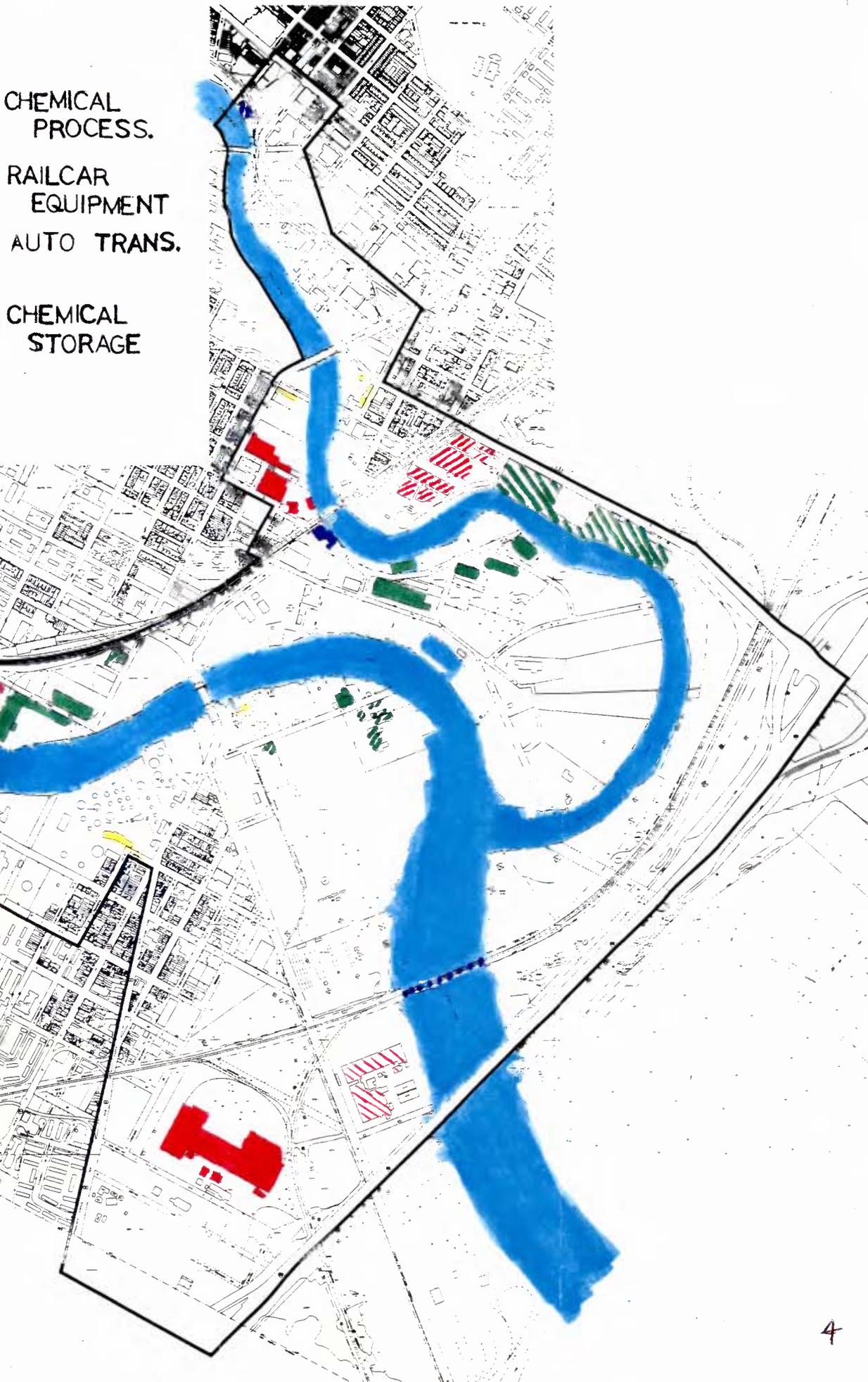


FIGURE 3
PROJECT AREA SHOWING PROPERTY TYPES

CHEMICAL
PROCESS.

RAILCAR
EQUIPMENT
AUTO TRANS.

CHEMICAL
STORAGE



necessarily met integrity requirements as individual buildings. The existence of a coherent historic complex of associated manufacturing buildings helped reveal the building's significance more effectively than as an individual resource divorced from much of its context. Since many of Wilmington's riverfront industries experienced periods of growth and physical expansion during the early twentieth century, the integrity of historic groups of buildings was considered separately. This notion also respects the resources as documents through time reflecting layers of use and reuse. The levels of historic significance and integrity were applied and National Register eligibility determined based upon the integrity and the historical significance of the resource. Chapter III discusses the development and application of eligibility criteria. Upon completion of the determination of eligibility, detailed architectural descriptions and statements of historical significance using National Register historic themes were prepared. Chapter IV contains these statements of significance and architectural descriptions.