

**Southbridge
An Historic Context for a Neighborhood
in Wilmington, Delaware, 1870-1996**

**Center for
Historic Architecture and Engineering**



**University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware**

**Sponsored by the
Colleges of Urban Affairs and Public Policy,
Arts and Science, and Engineering**

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An Historic Context for a Neighborhood
in Wilmington, Delaware, 1870-1996**

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Historic Theme of Demography

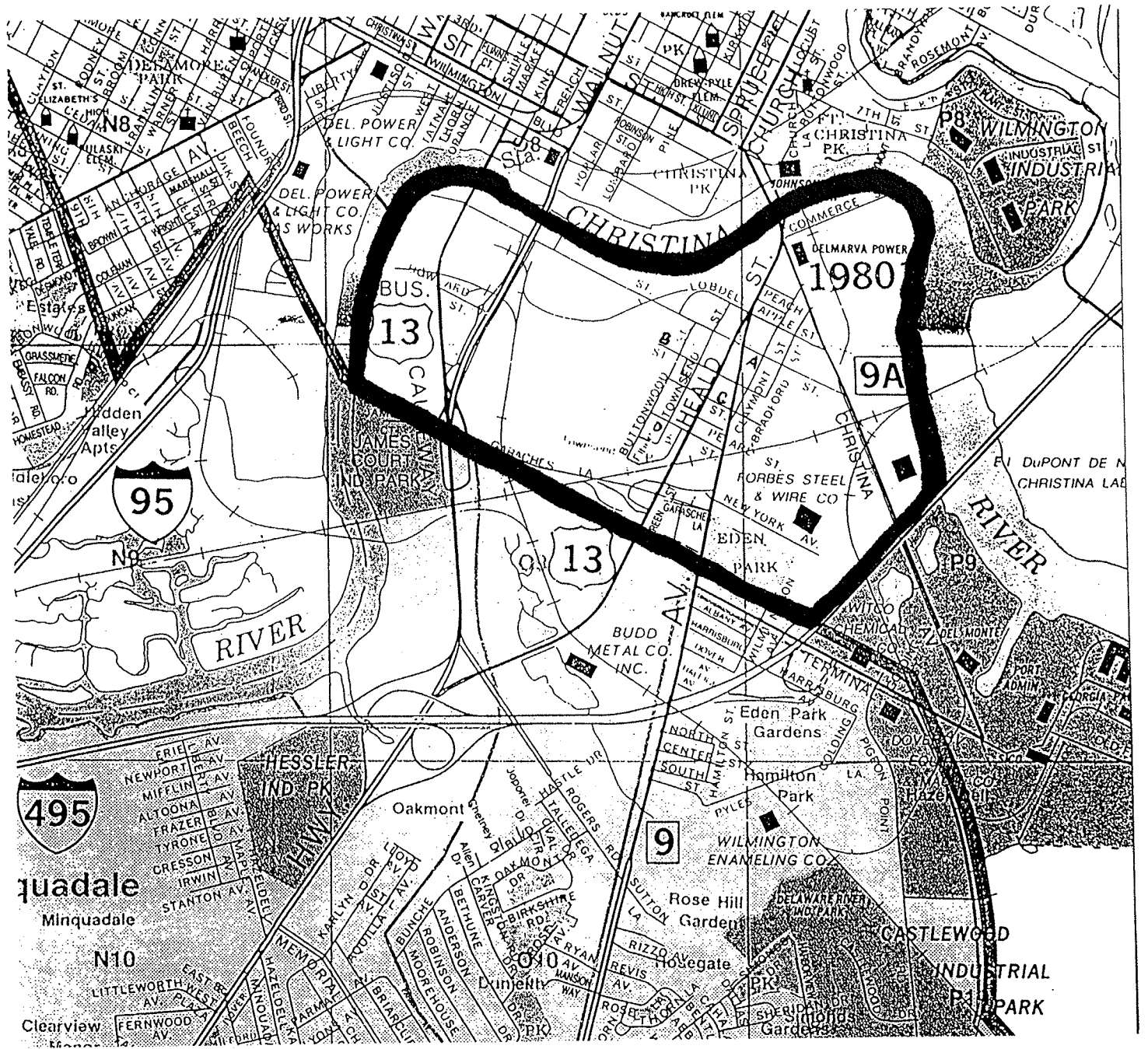
We developed a pattern of population change from two sources. We used a base of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and overlaid them with data from three population census manuscripts. In manuscript form, population censuses list each address, the names and relationships of its inhabitants, and among other information, each inhabitant's race, birthplace and ancestry.

From this data we can make several general statements:

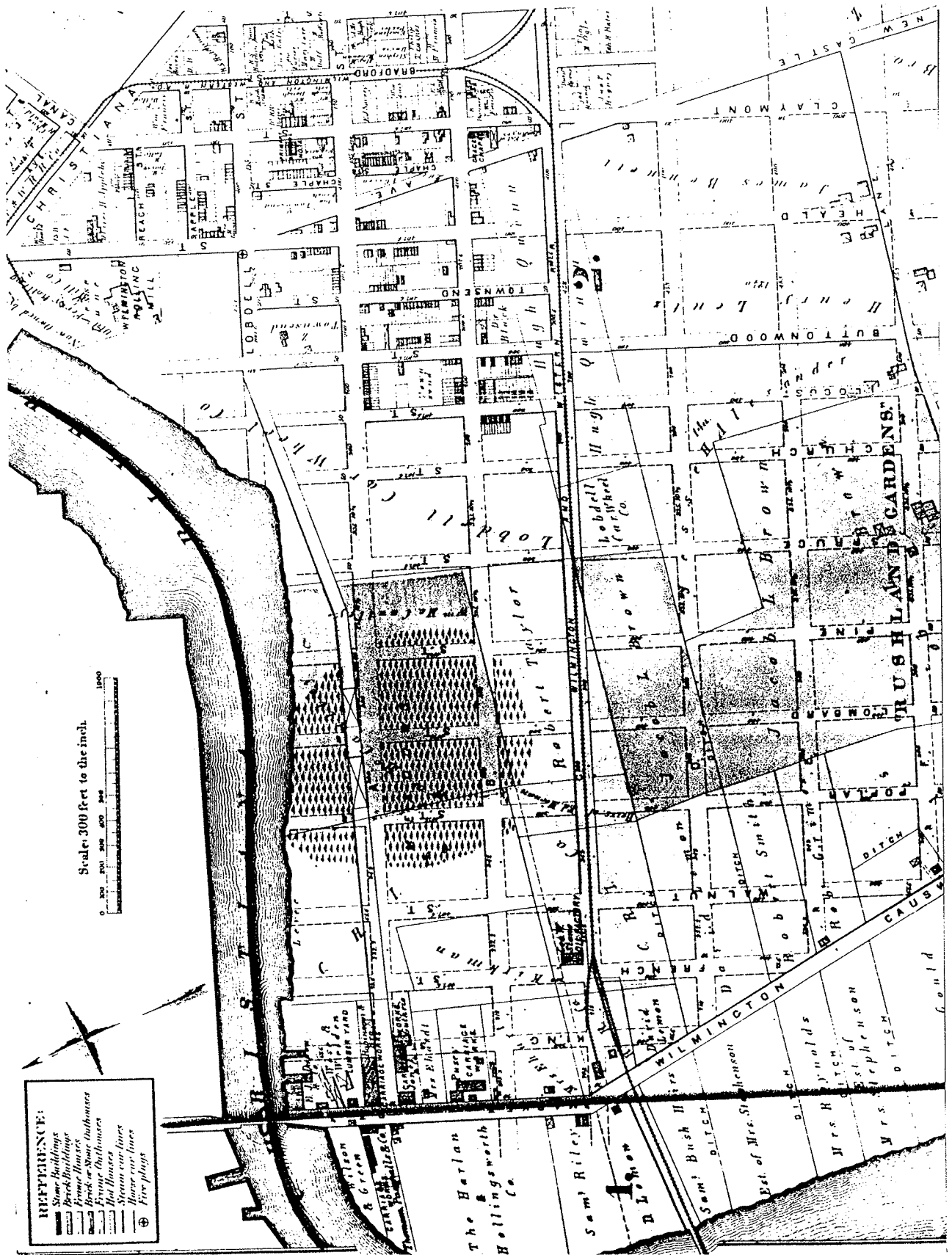
- The proportion of African-Americans in Southbridge remained steady at 20 percent to 25 percent, while the proportion for Wilmington was about 10 percent.
- The proportion of Caucasian-Americans slowly decreased as the size of the immigrant community increased.
- The ethnic origin of the growing immigrant community shifted from Irish to Eastern European.
- The net population increased through World War II.

In 1880, Southbridge was home to 1883 people in 374 households. This means the average household had about five people. Scattered among them were 96 boarders, making up about 5 percent of the population. About 400 African-Americans lived in the neighborhood, constituting around 20 percent of the population. The 300 European immigrants, almost all from Ireland, constituted about 15 percent. This means that the population was almost two-thirds Caucasian-American. Most of the African-American population lived on the west side of Southbridge, while the European and Caucasian-American populations settled in the center.

By 1900, the population of Southbridge had grown to 2887 people distributed among 580 households. Average density had fallen to four people per household. The 273 boarders constituted 9.4 percent of the population. The African-American population had grown to 671, but only made up 23 percent of the population. The 2216 Europeans and Caucasian-Americans mostly had Irish, English, Welsh or German ancestry. The few Eastern European immigrants came mostly from Poland. The African-American community focused on the west side of the central residential area, mostly in cohesive blocks of settlement. In some cases, Irish or other Western European immigrants share the blocks with them. The Caucasian-American population spread throughout the remainder of the residential core, focusing on the center of the neighborhood. The Irish community stretched across the northern section of the residential area, however it appears to have been fairly well integrated with both Caucasian- and African-American communities. The Eastern European population appeared mainly in the southern section of the residential area.



Map of Southbridge Neighborhood, 1988

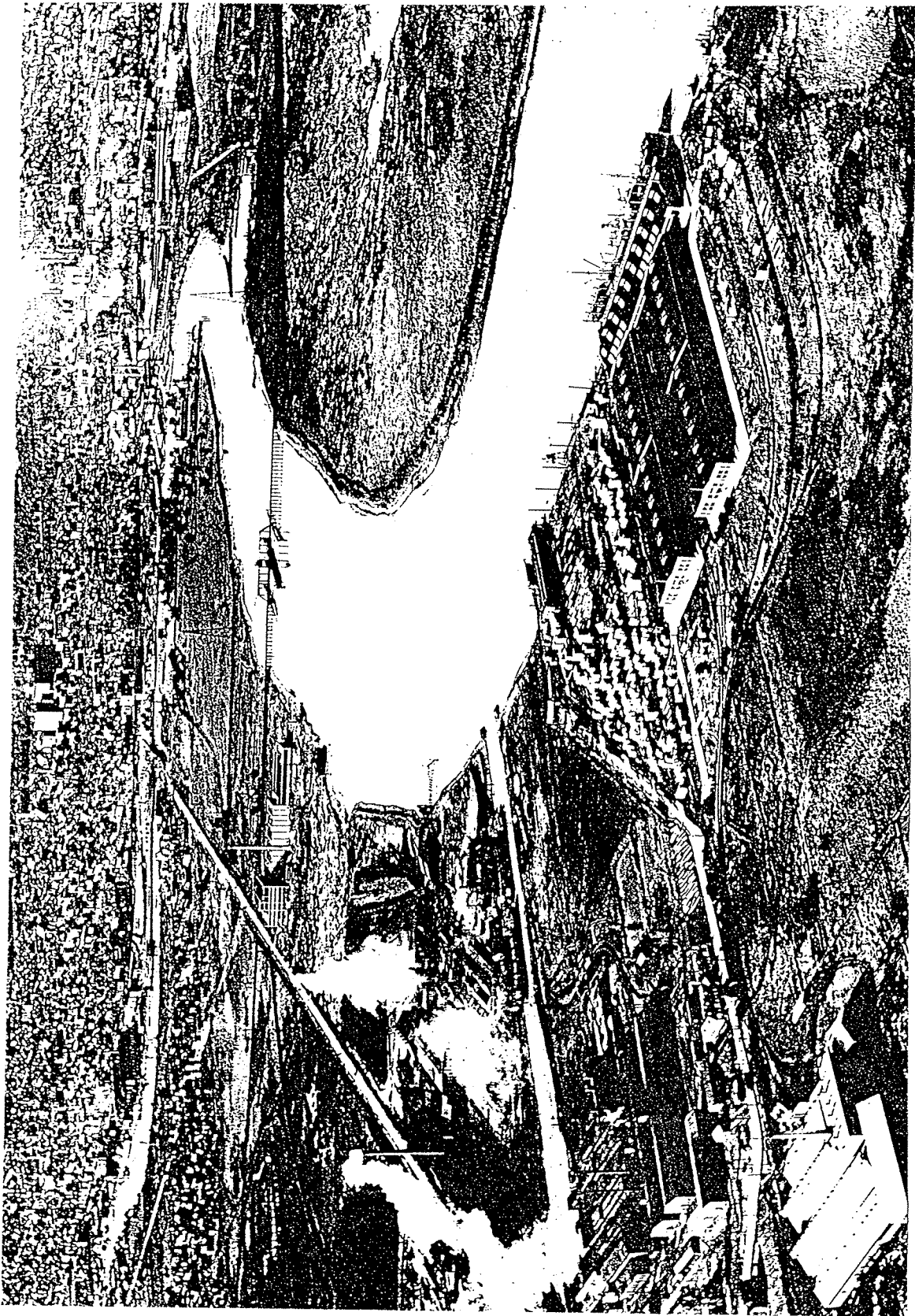


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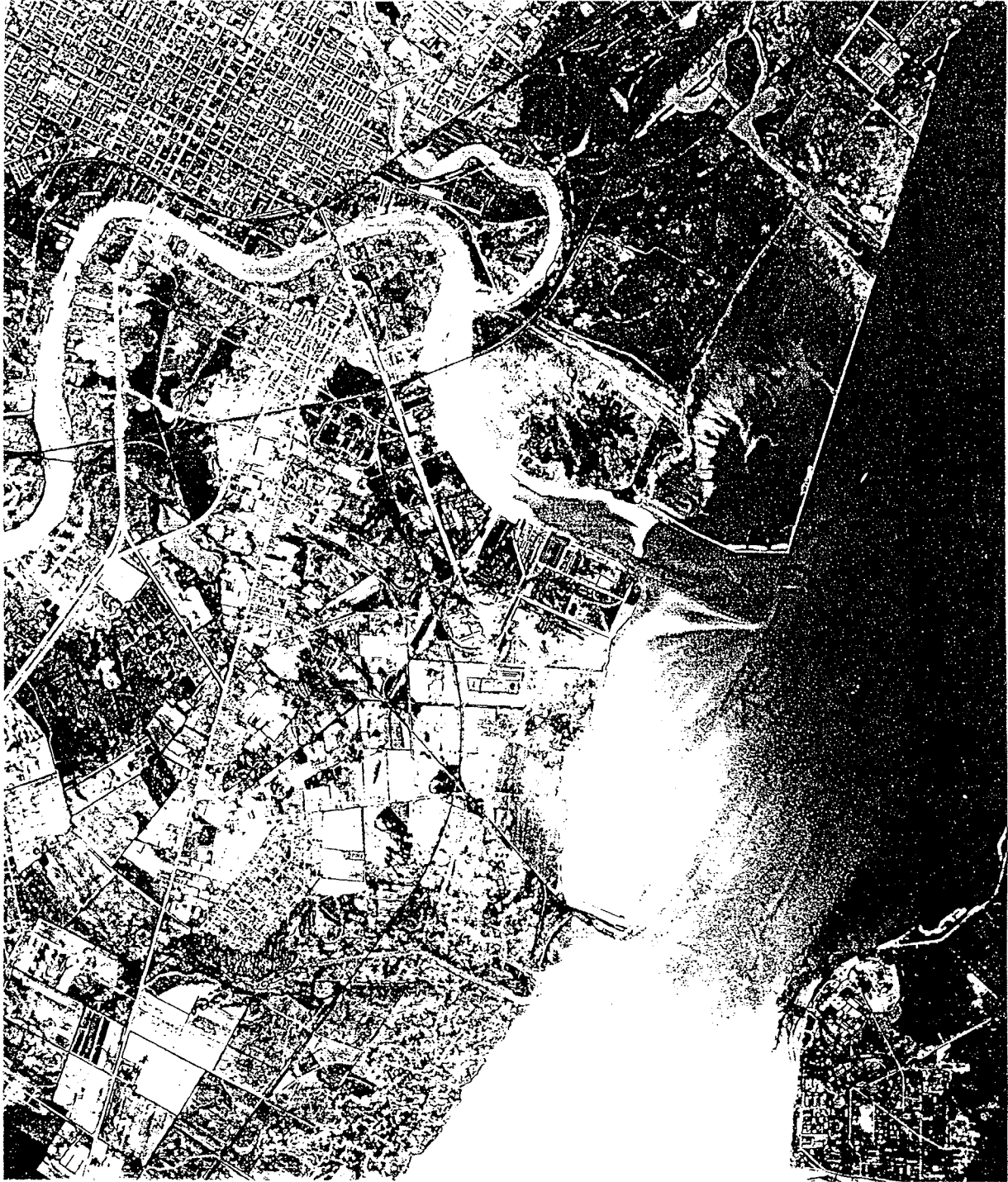
	Stone Buildings
	Brick Buildings
	Frame Houses
	Brick or Stone Dwellings
	Frame Dwellings
	Stone Dwellings
	Stone or Brick
	Fire plugs

Southbridge, or Ward 2, of the City of Wilmington, Delaware, 1876

The industrial base of Southbridge continued to decline after 1940, particularly after World War II, in a pattern similar to that of many industrial cities in the northeast. While a few new businesses emerged, including Budd Metal Company, Forbes Steel, Diamond State Oil Refinery, and Delmarva Power, the overall pattern in Southbridge was one of loss of its industrial base. As Southbridge was entirely dependent on this manufacturing and industrial base for its economic livelihood, the loss of much of this base has had devastating affects on Southbridge as a whole.



Dallin Aerial Survey Photograph # 3244
Port of Wilmington Marine Terminal in foreground; Southbridge neighborhood
located within bend of Christiana River, September 22, 1927

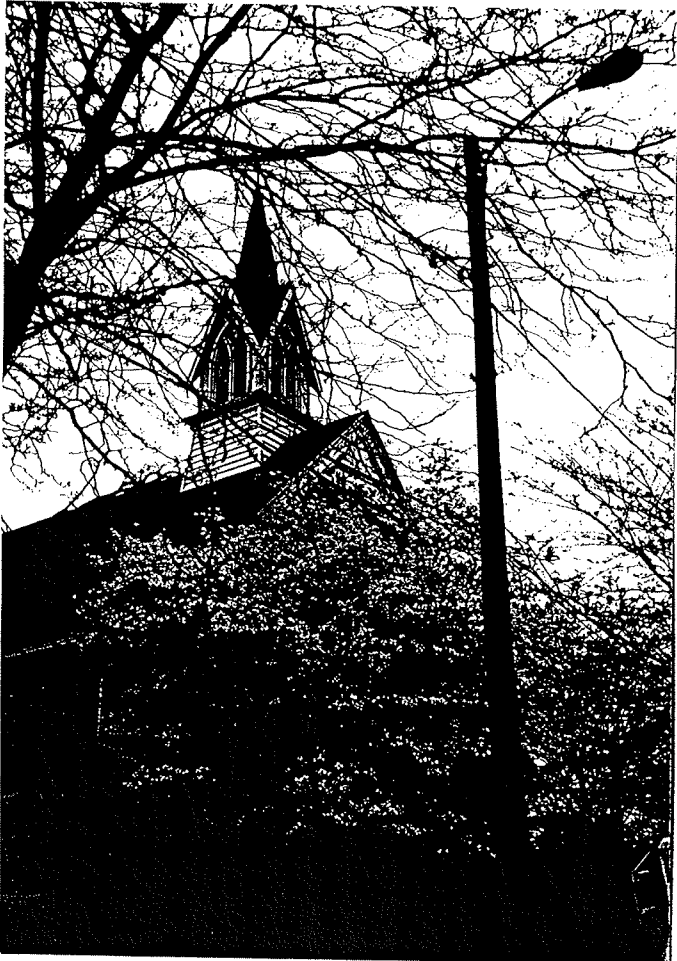


Dallin Aerial Survey #D-2-10
View of Delaware River and Christiana River Confluence
and City of Wilmington, April 1940

The Churches of Southbridge:



The New Calvary Baptist Church
608-610 South Heald Street



Mount Joy United Methodist Church
455 Townsend Street