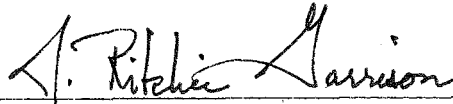


**THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC NEW CASTLE:
A STUDY IN PERCEPTIONS**

by

Kristen Laham Wildes

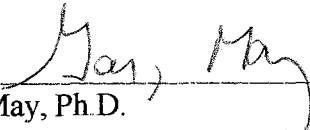
Approved:



J. Ritchie Garrison, Ph.D.

Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Master of Arts in Liberal
Studies Program


Approved:



Gary May, Ph.D.

Director, Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program

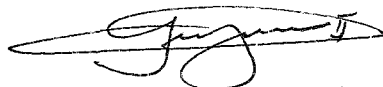
Approved:



Mark W. Huddleston, Ph.D.

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Approved:



Conrado M. Gempesaw II, Ph.D.

Vice Provost for Academic and International Programs

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Kristen Laham Wildes

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies.

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For a long time, I have loved the architecture and history of New Castle. During my research, I discovered I share that affection with those life-long residents whom I interviewed. Their reminiscences breathe life into the history of the old town. I wanted to provide a vehicle through which they could speak. I am indebted to Bob Appleby, not only for telling his story, but also for his enthusiasm and willingness to facilitate other personal connections. Joe and Sally Monigle are a wealth of information and made me regret that the scope of my work was not broader. To these three and all the other informants, Leona Galford, Anita Banks, Al Clayton, Ned Cooch, Anne Moore and especially Francis Haut and John Ryan, I thank you for sharing your experiences. I hope I have done them justice.

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I appreciate the assistance of archivist Donna Cooke and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Their archives made it possible to fill in some gaps in the New Castle storyline and provided a glimpse of what might have been. At the New Castle Historical Society, Director Bruce Daleo guided my interview efforts and President Richard Cooch provided thoughtful aid to my research.

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To Gregg.
Turn about is fair play.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the preservation of New Castle, Delaware. Because of its prominent history and remarkable architecture, several individuals set out to restore New Castle as a museum attraction in the 1940s and 1950s using Colonial Williamsburg as a model. The planners wanted to ensure the future of the town and use it for the patriotic education and inspiration of Americans. However, their extensive vision failed to become a reality.

During interviews, several long-time residents of New Castle talked about the proposed restoration plan. Their experiences reflect opinions that differ from the planners about how a comprehensive restoration would have impacted the town. Informants felt that the community was primarily responsible for the fact that the plan was never carried out. Instead, New Castle enacted zoning legislation to protect its historic properties. Residents expressed concern about preventing too much change in New Castle and reflected on many changes that have occurred since the time of the proposed restoration.

INTRODUCTION

Old New Castle came dangerously close to fame in the last century. A few Delawareans recognized the rarity and special nature of the historic community and, following the lead of Colonial Williamsburg, sought to preserve the town as a museum attraction. It was their hope that a restored New Castle might not only honor a notable past but also serve to educate and inspire future generations. Yet today New Castle appears little changed from what it has always been.

Researchers have written on the evolution of the restoration plan for Historic New Castle, but without the voices of those who personally experienced life in the community during the creation of the historic district, a key element is missing. Several current residents have spent the majority of their lives in New Castle. They have very distinct—if not always cohesive—opinions about the possibility of a famous New Castle and the idea of change in New Castle. Their recollections are important as part of the collective historic memory of the town's involvement in the proposed restoration project. Furthermore, because residents chose to remain a living community rather than become a museum, their past experiences reflect and contribute to the discourse on several ongoing concerns in New Castle.

THE MOVEMENT

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries left some Americans grasping for the past in the face of unprecedented societal change. As a reaction to industrialization, immigration, and modernization, the Colonial Revival movement

developed in the United States. In this wistful era, many people valued the trappings of colonial America and sought a nostalgic American identity. In particular, many desired to preserve certain architecture and design styles.

Colonial Revivalism began with the nation's Centennial in 1876. Philadelphia hosted a spectacular Centennial Exhibition. Although it was the second largest city in the United States and sixth largest in the world,¹ modern Philadelphia retained the vestiges of a colonial past. The Centennial Exhibition both glorified America's past and celebrated the nation's advancements. Many Americans were influenced by what they saw there as it was considered to be the "largest, best situated, best arranged, best managed and most successful [in terms of attendance and receipts] Exhibition ever held."²

But the evidence of progress could not mask all of the problems that had developed. Increased migration led to raised levels of urban overcrowding, pollution, poverty, poor working conditions and crime. A boom in manufacturing spread factories out into the surrounding countryside, devouring the rural landscape. Several traditional American sites were threatened by industrial sprawl or merely by neglect. As immigration to the United States reached unprecedented levels, Congress passed new restrictive legislation that limited the number of newcomers. There were also profound cultural changes. As the nation moved into the Roaring Twenties, there was a backlash against Progressive-era social constraints. Jazz music, rising hemlines and Modernism all flouted convention. Such bold changes made many people

¹ McCabe, *Illustrated History of the Centennial Exhibition*, 7.

² *Ibid.*, 294.

uncomfortable. A growing number of Americans sought to capture what they felt had been lost. They longed for a time when life was seemingly not so complex.

For some people, the restoration of traditional American villages promised a haven from factories, electrical wires, and modern architecture. Restored villages were a way to preserve and promote the values associated with traditional architecture styles and cultural practices. The restoration of traditional villages neatly coincided with the push to educate citizens on their American heritage. Advocates reasoned that restored historic places had the ability to communicate what was truly American to their visitors and to “glorify American achievement for the edification of all people.”³ According to historian David Glassberg in *American Historical Pageantry*, the images created in restored villages and historic festivals were “an opportunity to escape temporarily to a world depicted as different from the present, one where the emotional feelings of community had not been overtaken by a purportedly impersonal modern mass society.”⁴ Colonial Williamsburg, Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village and Sudbury, Massachusetts, as well as the annual festivals in New Castle, Delaware, and Natchez, Mississippi, all developed during this period.

THE PLANNERS

The Colonial Revival movement had diffused through the American psyche by the late 1920s. America had had its Sesquicentennial in 1926 and things “colonial” were still all the rage. What had begun for many as simply a desire to copy history was evolving into a deeper effort to research and preserve it. At this crucial

³ Harper, “The Gospel of New Castle,” 78.

⁴ Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 269.

moment in time, a handful of people began to focus their great interests on New Castle, Delaware.

Colonel Daniel Moore Bates led the preservation charge in the town and followed it through to the end of his days. Fittingly, Bates was born the year of the Centennial, 1876, in Wilmington, Delaware. He graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a degree in chemical engineering. It was during those school years that Bates made an enduring friendship with Andrew Hepburn, whom he called "Hep." Hepburn would later become an esteemed architect with Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn, the Boston firm that carried through the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. Bates joined the war effort as a major in the Army's Ordnance Department from 1917-1918 and eventually held the post of colonel in a field artillery reserve unit. In the early 1930s, Bates served as deputy governor-general for Delaware in the Society of Colonial Wars, a patriotic group. From 1928 to 1944, Bates was also president of Bates, Inc., an industrial management company, subsequently holding the post of vice-president until his death. From 1949 on, he was president of Historic New Castle, Inc., a corporation he formed for the preservation of New Castle, Delaware. He was on the board of directors for the Historical Society of Delaware, and a member of both the New Castle Historical Society (NCHS) and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Although he did not live in New Castle (his home, Selborne Farms, was located near Centreville, Delaware), his neighbors and associates were some of Delaware's wealthiest residents.

Philip Laird, conversely, was a homeowner in New Castle. In 1920, Philip and Lydia Laird bought their first New Castle property at 42 The Strand, known now as the Read House in honor of its first owner, George Read II. The couple fell in

love with the quaint town and set out to purchase many properties so that the town's atmosphere and history might be preserved. By 1941, Laird owned at least twelve properties in the current Historic Area of New Castle.⁵ He was, however, a relative newcomer. In contrast, Old New Castle had many families, i.e., the Janviers and Rodneys, whose predecessors had populated the town for generations.

Philip Laird was born June 29, 1888, in Brookeville, Maryland, and attended Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia. He moved to Wilmington to join his brother's investment banking firm, Laird and Company, in 1913. He was a first lieutenant in the Army Ordnance Department during World War I and married Lydia Chichester on June 3, 1916. Related to the Lee family of Virginia on his mother's side, Laird had memberships in several hereditary societies: Descendents of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, the Sons of the American Revolution, the Lee Society of Virginia and the Maryland Society of Delaware. He was also on the original board of directors of the organization that became the New Castle Historical Society. A well-to-do man in his own right, Laird moved in elite circles. His brother, William Winder Laird, married Mary Belin du Pont and Lydia's aunt, Mary Richard Chichester, had married A. Felix du Pont.

THE SITE

The New Castle about which Laird, Bates and others were so enthusiastic was truly worthy of attention. Located just down the Delaware River from a center of Colonial Revivalism in Philadelphia, it began in 1651 as a Dutch settlement, Fort

⁵ Annette Mason Bush to Dr. Leonard Carmichael, n.d. Read House Reports Box, Historical Society of Delaware (hereafter cited as HSD).

Casimir. Several years earlier, Swedish colonists had formed a permanent settlement upriver at the site of present-day Wilmington. By locating Fort Casimir where they did, the Dutch effectively gained control of the traffic on the Delaware River. A small community, called New Amstel, eventually developed around the fort to meet its needs. Peter Stuyvesant, a Dutch explorer, supposedly laid out the town Green in the 1650s. This area to be used as common space still exists. While the Swedes and the Dutch fought over control of the land for many years, the Dutch eventually lost control of New Amstel in a war against the English in 1664.

The English changed the town's name to New Castle. They built a new blockhouse fort on the northern end of the Green and eventually a new courthouse on the southern end.⁶ The town served as a busy port for shipping along the Delaware River. In 1681, New Castle and the entire area that became the state of Delaware were granted to William Penn. Thus, "the lower three counties on the Delaware," as it was then called, became part of Pennsylvania. When William Penn completed his maiden voyage to America, his first steps on American soil were in New Castle, where he likely spent the night.

After years under Penn's Quaker rule, the lower three counties were accorded their own legislature in 1704. New Castle remained the capital of Delaware during the colonial period and into the American Revolution. Even when the capital moved to Dover, a more central and safer location, New Castle remained important because its roads and eventually the railway connected the Delaware River to the Chesapeake Bay. As the town prospered during this early part of the nineteenth century, residents constructed many homes, taverns, and inns.

⁶ Mullin, "Read House Walking Tour," 2.

In the mid-nineteenth century, New Castle went into a decline, essentially for two reasons. First, New Castle had always been an active port where ships offloaded cargo onto freight cars bound for the Chesapeake Bay on the New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad. That status suffered when more efficient rail lines were built to move goods directly from Philadelphia to Baltimore, bypassing the port. The situation worsened when the county government moved from New Castle's Court House to Wilmington in 1880. New Castle no longer profited from the activities that once caused it to prosper as a center for government and transportation. Later, automobile traffic threatened the solitude in town when a car ferry offered service to and from Pennsville, New Jersey. This service lasted from the 1920s through to 1951, when traffic was diverted to the new Delaware Memorial Bridge. Those years of automobile access did increase public visibility of the small town, though merely in a transient manner.

The recounting of New Castle's history is necessary to understand its unique architectural makeup. The town has retained only a few of its colonial-era structures. The majority of the structures reflect post-Revolutionary architecture. New Castle prospered after the Revolution and that period of growth established the town's permanent architecture. People had either constructed new homes in that period's style or altered and added onto older structures in the latest fashion.⁷ Because of the town's economic decline after the mid-nineteenth century, relatively few people built Victorian structures and there was little money available to remodel the extant structures. When he arrived, Philip Laird found it easy to envision a restored New Castle since, as he saw it, "most of the buildings are in their original

⁷ Ibid., 5.

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⁷ Ibid., 5.

condition and have not been spoiled.”⁸ In other words, New Castle’s value (to Colonial Revival sensibilities) resided in its absence of Victorian and more contemporary buildings.

There were other concerns. As the number of factories south and north of the town center expanded, they threatened to eat up more of the open land. Many feared that, if the town was not able to expand into the surrounding area, it was increasingly likely that the town center would suffer alteration. A few civic-minded individuals, in true Colonial Revival form, envisioned factories belching smoke, polluting the river, and destroying the quaint and charming atmosphere of the old town. Laird and Bates, among others, believed that it was necessary to take action.

THE INSPIRATION

Bates and to Laird seem to have individually developed similar ideas about restoration. Both men recognized the distinctive historic legacy of Old New Castle and, each sought to make it accessible to a greater number of people and to preserve it for future generations. Their local attempts at preservation materialized just as nationwide efforts in historic preservation were gaining strength and becoming a recognized and organized movement. In addition, their civic-minded endeavors brought together a number of preservation professionals and other like-minded individuals.

The shining example of preservation in the nation at that time was Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. Quite significantly, pre-restoration Williamsburg

⁸ Philip D. Laird (hereafter cited as PDL) to Andrew Hepburn, 21 Dec 1939. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

was similar to New Castle. Each had served as the colonial capital for its state and later as the county seat. Both towns had experienced periods of notoriety and prosperity only to falter for a number of years. Those years of relative insignificance ensured that the landscape of each town changed very slowly. Relatively few new structures were put up during years of a stagnant local economy. At best, people were able to maintain their homes and places of business. At worst, they abandoned notable historic structures.

Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin was the visionary behind the Williamsburg restoration. For years he was the rector of Williamsburg's Episcopal Bruton Parish Church as well as a professor at the College of William and Mary. As in New Castle, the Episcopal church had been a prominent geographic, historic and social feature in the town. Like Laird, Goodwin had spent years trying to purchase and, as he saw it, "save" structures on his own. But, with his limited personal funds, the acquisitions fell far short of his grand dreams.

In 1924, Goodwin met John D. Rockefeller, Jr., at a New York meeting of the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society of which both were members. Most Americans at the time were aware that Rockefeller's father was the nation's first billionaire.⁹ After Rockefeller made several visits to Williamsburg, Goodwin managed to convince him to restore the town. Because of Goodwin's passion and Rockefeller's interest in educational causes, Rockefeller committed to "restore Williamsburg, so far as it may be possible, to what it was in the old colonial days and to make it a great center for historical study and inspiration."¹⁰ Thus, beginning in 1926, "the minister and the

⁹ Theobald, *Colonial Williamsburg*, 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

philanthropist” blazed a new trail together.¹¹ No one had attempted the restoration of an entire town before. In new territory, the two men felt their way along as best they could.

Rockefeller demanded that his name be kept secret as part of the initial agreement. Fear that property values would artificially skyrocket prevented Goodwin from revealing his benefactor for nearly two years. As a starting point, Rockefeller permitted Goodwin to purchase particular sites on a one-by-one basis. The two men hired Perry, Shaw and Hepburn—then a relatively unknown architectural firm from Boston—to carry out the restoration. Workmen overhauled the streetscape, burying utilities, unearthing foundations, and relocating traffic under the town in order to preserve the historic atmosphere. Researchers went on trips to other extant eighteenth-century sites and studied colonial wills, diaries, letters, newspapers and other documents. Overall, the original focus of the plan was the restoration of eighty-eight surviving colonial structures and the reconstruction of hundreds of others within the designated Historic Area.¹²

When Daniel Moore Bates was trying to fund the beginnings of a New Castle restoration, Colonial Williamsburg was still unfinished. By 1950, they had restored 82 of the desired 88 colonial-era structures, reconstructed 341 sites, and removed or torn down 616 post-colonial structures.¹³ Since the first exhibit building opened in 1932, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has continued work on the restoration of historic architecture and historic landscapes, conducted archaeology and

¹¹ Ibid., 5.

¹² Ibid., 12.

¹³ Ibid., 41.

conservation, expanded its collections, maintained the study of historic trades and developed new educational programs. The work done on Colonial Williamsburg became a paradigm for how to preserve a community.

THE PLAN

While Colonial Williamsburg was still in its infancy, Philip Laird was busy purchasing properties along The Strand, the street that parallels the Delaware River in New Castle. He wanted to—as he saw it—restore the structures but also update them as living spaces. While Laird was quietly pursuing his personal interests, Bates began probing for help from preservationists. In 1933, Bates attended a meeting of the General Assembly of the Society of Colonial Wars. Participants informally discussed the topic of New Castle. After returning to Delaware, Bates received a letter from Electus D. Litchfield, society member and architect from Madison Avenue, New York. Litchfield affirmed Bates's desire that New Castle “remain in occupancy and use” but be protected from the commercial interests that were encroaching. He encouraged Bates to approach the governor or state legislature to request further measures for protection.¹⁴ In later correspondence, Litchfield urged the formation of and described the method for incorporating a permanent organization for preservation in New Castle.¹⁵ Together Bates, New Castle resident Judge Richard S. Rodney, and

¹⁴ Electus D. Litchfield to Daniel Moore Bates (hereafter cited as DMB), 20 June 1933. Bates Collection, HSD.

¹⁵ Litchfield, “Recommendations,” June 1937. Bates Collection, HSD.

Governor C. Douglass Buck formed a committee to explore the matter and make recommendations to the state legislature.¹⁶

In a move that would have long-term implications, Bates also began a correspondence with Dr. Goodwin at Williamsburg. Goodwin's restoration dream was a decade underway when Bates asked for some "helpful suggestions based on your remarkable experience at Williamsburg."¹⁷ Their early correspondence is essentially exploratory and theoretical, but remarkable in that it documents the desire to build national standards for preservation. The men discussed the need for a conference to "try to formulate some national policy and program to study the preservation question and create...individual, public, official and legislative sentiment" in favor of preservation.¹⁸ Energized by the exchange of letters, Bates envisioned a "new epoch in the conservation of the relics of America's great past."¹⁹ He intended to maintain the correspondence as a resource during his preservation efforts in New Castle.

Over the next several years, Bates continued to study the New Castle question among his many other interests. In 1937, he became a member of the newly established Delaware Society for the Preservation of Antiquities, an entity that turned its assets over to the NCHS in 1948. The Society's original mission was for "the preservation, protection, improvement, and restoration of ancient and historic

¹⁶ DMB to Richard S. Rodney, 29 June 1933. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

¹⁷ DMB to W.A.R. Goodwin, 19 Mar 1934. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

¹⁸ Goodwin to DMB, 23 Mar 1934. Bates Collection, HSD.

¹⁹ DMB to Goodwin, 24 Mar 1934. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

landmarks for the use and benefit of the public.”²⁰ On Friday night, 21 May 1937, the society hosted a lecture by some key players in the preservation world, W.A.R. Goodwin, architect Andrew Hepburn and Electus Litchfield. Bates was the common denominator among the three speakers and had arranged for their visits. This lecture presented the general idea of a comprehensive New Castle restoration to a number of interested ears.

During essentially the same period as Bates’s endeavors, Philip Laird was conducting his own independent research. Laird was interested in the restoration of The Strand, not the entire town. Public enjoyment of New Castle’s historic treasures was his foremost consideration. The Lairds had no children and it was their wish that their historic properties remain and be made publicly accessible as their legacy. Laird cited Portsmouth, New Hampshire, as a prototypical ideal of his vision.²¹ He recognized that thousands of people each year would pass through New Castle on their way to the ferry connecting Delaware with Pennsville, New Jersey,²² and felt those travelers and all visitors could benefit from his restoration efforts.

Laird’s relationship with Hepburn began when the architect and Goodwin visited the Read House when in New Castle to speak in 1937. A few years after that visit, Laird reached out to Hepburn for help. Laird stated his case:

Since I moved to New Castle about 19 years ago, I have gradually acquired adjoining properties to mine and water front property on the Strand with the idea in mind that eventually I would like to see The

²⁰ Minutes of the Delaware Society for the Preservation of Antiquities (hereafter cited as DSPA), 17 Jan 1937, HSD.

²¹ PDL to Hepburn, 21 Dec 1939. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

²² *Ibid.*, 2.

Strand restored as nearly as possible to its original state. This would require comparatively little money because most of the buildings are in their original condition and have not been spoiled, as was the case in Williamsburg.²³

He inquired as to how the Williamsburg plan had developed and if Hepburn would refer him to someone intimately involved in that plan. Laird inquired after John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s financial contributions to Williamsburg and the possibility of New Castle soliciting funds from Rockefeller.²⁴

In reply to Laird in January 1940, Hepburn referred him to Kenneth Chorley, then president of Colonial Williamsburg, for procedural questions. Hepburn emphasized the need for accurate historical research to precede any restoration projects. The architect attributed Williamsburg's success to its authenticity and urged Laird to "cover not only the historical background but investigation of local architectural details."²⁵

By the 1940s, Laird had reached the point at which he wished to put a larger plan into action. He had spent the past twenty years purchasing and "restoring" individual properties. Laird had bought the properties "at quite low figures" because, when he first moved to New Castle, it was "not considered a stylish place in which to live." He reckoned that his properties had doubled their value in time, as New Castle had become "a very popular place in which to live and extremely well-known."²⁶ In correspondence, he often expressed his wish that he could single-handedly fund a

²³ Ibid., 1.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Hepburn to PDL, 2 Jan 1940. Bates Collection, HSD.

²⁶ PDL to Kenneth Chorley, 6 Apr 1940. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

comprehensive restoration—what he considered “a rare privilege”—always stating that he did not have the money for the job. He pondered the time when, perhaps “some rich man” could provide the financing for a comprehensive restoration.²⁷ The purchase, and thus the safeguarding, of those certain properties was to be Laird’s contribution to the long-term restoration effort.

In 1938, there was one project that Laird pursued solo. The minutes from a meeting of the Delaware Society for the Preservation of Antiquities recorded that the group found it “desirable to have an attractive inn in New Castle” and that the majority agreed to have someone else “take up this idea rather than to expend the Society’s funds.”²⁸ Laird attended that meeting and, by 1939, had purchased the Federal-period Jefferson House along The Strand. The Jefferson House was named after an early owner, Elihu Jefferson, a relative of Thomas Jefferson. Since its construction, it had been utilized mainly as a hotel and for apartments. The Jefferson House property was fortuitously situated adjacent to the river, the wharf and Battery Park, which the town had recently acquired with Laird’s assistance. Laird felt that such an endeavor would be “a good paying venture,” and would allow “anyone interested in antiquities or a very attractive place to take guests” an opportunity to share in New Castle’s special atmosphere.²⁹ He formed the New Castle Improvement Corporation designed to turn the Jefferson House into a “Colonial Inn.”

To Colonial Revival sensibilities, it was irrelevant that the structure was post-Revolutionary. The term “colonial” was often applied to later Federal and even

²⁷ PDL to Chorley, 4 Jan 1940. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

²⁸ Minutes for DSPA, 16 June 1938, HSD.

²⁹ PDL to DMB, 26 Oct 1939. Bates Collection, HSD.

Greek Revival structures as well pre-Revolutionary ones. *The New Delawarean* magazine featured an article about the Jefferson House in October 1939, promising that the house would be “restored as nearly as possible in the spirit of the original” but that “the comfort and convenience of management and guests are more important in this case than an exact archeological reproduction of the original plan.”³⁰ The restoration of the Jefferson House even included the addition of a two-story portico (never a part of the original building) to lend an air of “southern character” and the “comfort and intimacy that southern influence brings.”³¹ In this way, guests were assured a quaint “colonial inn” without being spared modern conveniences. In 1939, these restoration practices would have been consistent with many of the town’s preservation projects.

Perhaps most importantly though, Hepburn’s correspondence finally brought together the two gentlemen with great interest in New Castle, Laird and Bates. After exchanging letters with Laird, Hepburn wrote to Bates of Laird’s interests. In response, Bates expressed worry that “some of the New Castle people are not very enthusiastic about Mr. Laird’s plans,” though he personally found them to be “very admirable and far-sighted.”³² Bates was thrilled that Laird had turned to Hepburn and Chorley for guidance, because their consultation would lend an air of credibility to Laird’s plans. In a candid observation likely not meant for New Castle ears, Hepburn conferred with Chorley about their assistance in the New Castle venture. Hepburn

³⁰ Lovinger, “The Jefferson House,” 27.

³¹ Ibid.

³² DMB to Hepburn, 10 Jan 1940. Bates Collection, HSD; DMB to PDL, 3 Feb 1940. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

was adamant that “the point is to get Laird to cooperate...and not go off on his own on a venture which might in the long run prove injurious to any restoration of New Castle.”³³ Laird’s and Bates’s visions were not in competition, but as Hepburn saw it, a combined effort would bring greater success.

Empowered by the possibilities of collaboration, Bates wrote to Laird what, in essence, was a mission statement for the undertaking. He felt that “a restoration through the years of Old New Castle can be achieved which will command the attention and seize the imagination of all patriotic American citizens.”³⁴ Subsequently, Hepburn stated his intention of visiting Delaware at the request of Mr. and Mrs. Bates and expressed his desire to also contact Laird when visiting. After addressing worries about “butting in” on each other’s visions, the men scheduled a gathering for 21 March 1940.³⁵ Laird promised to hold up the restoration of the Jefferson Inn until the group met.³⁶

The meeting took place at Bates’s home, Selborne Farms, with the Bateses, the Lairds, Kenneth Chorley and Andrew Hepburn in attendance. The central topic of discussion was the need to secure the extensive investment that any comprehensive restoration project would require. At the dinner meeting, Chorley

³³ Hepburn to Chorley, 19 Jan 1940. Restoration—New Castle 1940, General Correspondence, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Archives (hereafter cited as CWFA).

³⁴ DMB to PDL, 5 Feb 1940. Restoration—New Castle 1940, General Correspondence, CWFA.

³⁵ DMB to Hepburn, 10 Jan 1940, Bates Collection. HSD.

³⁶ PDL to Hepburn, 20 Feb 1940. Restoration—New Castle 1940, General Correspondence, CWFA.

reported to the group that after an early estimate of \$5,000,000, Rockefeller had since spent some \$25,000,000 toward Williamsburg's restoration. At that time, Chorley estimated the need for perhaps another \$7,500,000 more.³⁷ All told, Rockefeller was to spend more than forty million. Clearly, the vision for New Castle needed a major donor. Debate ensued as to who such a person would be.

In early correspondence, Philip Laird had proposed to approach Rockefeller himself with the idea. When Laird asked Chorley for his opinion on the strategy, Chorley summarily discouraged it.³⁸ He was sure that Rockefeller was not willing to undertake another comprehensive restoration. Locally, there were a number of wealthy du Pont family members. Henry F. du Pont, was considered as a likely source of funds. Of all the men in the family, the group believed that he was the most interested in "the early American period and was the most artistic and sympathetically minded in this connection."³⁹ Yet they recognized that he was deep in his own project of collecting early American furnishings and decorative arts at his home, Winterthur. So, it was reasoned that they would still pursue him for some form of investment, realizing that du Pont probably would not support the entire project. Years later, Bates made notations after a conversation with du Pont that his contributions would indeed be "nominal on account" of his "commitments for Winterthur."⁴⁰ The group

³⁷ DMB, "Notes on Talk." Bates Collection, HSD, 1.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁰ DMB, Handwritten notes, 11 Jan 1948. Bates Collection, HSD.

also determined to show “Mr. Pierre du Pont the great possibilities of the New Castle work.”⁴¹

The other name that surfaced as a possibility was Henry Ford. Ford had undertaken restoration projects in Sudbury, Massachusetts, and in Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. In 1940, the group considered it common knowledge that Henry Ford felt he had “missed a great opportunity in not backing the Williamsburg undertaking” when it was proposed to him before Rockefeller.⁴² As a counterpoint to Henry Ford, Mrs. Bates proposed Lamot du Pont. She felt that that du Pont might feel inspired to preempt any investment by Ford with one of his own because he was a major investor in General Motors, a competitor of the Ford Motor Company. Bates reasoned that du Pont might want to prevent Ford from “stealing the show, so to speak.”⁴³

After the March meeting, the various New Castle planners set out to “talk up” the investment possibilities among their circles of wealthy and influential friends.⁴⁴ Laird further brainstormed some of his own investment ideas. He contacted the manager of the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, Gerrish Gassaway, who offered to prepare a list of potential Wilmington investors. Gassaway added his concern that Delawareans be given the opportunity first. Gassaway also assured Laird that, should the local funding fall short, a meeting could be arranged with Henry Ford,

⁴¹ DMB, “Notes on Talk.” Bates Collection, HSD, 3.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁴ DMB to Rodney, 29 Mar 1934. Bates Collection, HSD.

since Ford and Gassaway apparently had some personal connection.⁴⁵ Laird also referred to “another source” who could arrange that meeting.⁴⁶ He formulated a plan for the establishment of a memorial fund named in honor of a relative or friend that might prove a strong enticement to investors—so strong, perhaps, to entice “some rich man who would not be inclined to do it otherwise.” In further conjecture, Laird pointed out the wisdom of incorporating the New Castle venture “so as to avoid taxes.”⁴⁷ As far back as 1939, Laird confessed to having spent “several years and a lot of time looking into the matter,” making assurances that “the tax situation may fit into this picture in such a way that it would not cost a rich man hardly anything.”⁴⁸ This possibility foreshadowed the establishment of Historic New Castle, Inc. years later.

At that point in the endeavor, global politics intervened and the challenges of World War II took precedence. Bates referred to the “tenseness under which we are all laboring,” when he proposed a hold be placed on their search for investors in May 1940.⁴⁹ Consequently, the outbreak of war also curbed progress on the Jefferson Inn restoration, a project destined never to be revived.

After World War II, Bates rekindled the flame for a comprehensive restoration of New Castle. As ever, the place to begin was with fundraising. Hepburn and Chorley recommended that Bates begin by finding a source to fund a

⁴⁵ PDL to Chorley, 6 Apr 1940, Read House Reports Box, HSD.

⁴⁶ PDL to Chorley, 29 Apr 1940. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ PDL to Hepburn, 21 Dec 1939, Read House Reports Box, HSD.

⁴⁹ DMB to PDL, 31 May 1940. Bates Collection, HSD.

comprehensive survey that would provide sketches depicting a restored New Castle. These sketches could then be used as a marketing tool with further investors. He was fearful of the "very limited financial support that could be realized from New Castle itself," but felt that the sketches could be used to tempt "others in the State of Delaware and perhaps further afield."⁵⁰ Indeed, Bates was not able to secure the necessary funding for the survey from among residents of New Castle, but by 1946, he did manage to convince his friend, Louise du Pont Crowninshield, to assist him. Crowninshield, a Delawarean and one of the founders of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, was very active in the preservation world. The two friends together put forth a sum of \$20,000 for the preparation of the long-awaited sketches.

Chorley, with Bates's consent, had Williamsburg's legal department draft a contract between Bates and Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, Architects. It was signed, ceremoniously, at Williamsburg in November 1946. Interestingly, the final contract merely took the form of a formal letter, following the precedent set at Williamsburg in the 1920s. With advisement from the Williamsburg legal people, Bates legally incorporated Colonial New Castle, Inc. on 13 February 1947. This corporation became the driver for the project and was finally able to secure a non-profit tax-exempt status—thus enabling any donations to the corporation to be tax deductible. Bates acted as president with New Castle residents Judge Richard S. Rodney as vice president and Horace L. Deakyne as secretary-treasurer. Mr. Deakyne's bank, the New Castle Trust Company, would handle the financial details.

⁵⁰ DMB to Hepburn, 10 Apr 1946. Restoration—New Castle 1946, General Correspondence, CWFA.

Andrew Hepburn moved into an apartment on Third Street to begin his measurements and drawings of New Castle structures, particularly the Court House.⁵¹ Hepburn's son, Andy, also took up residence in New Castle to help with the work. Perry, Shaw and Hepburn subcontracted with Albert Kruse, from the Wilmington firm of Pope and Kruse, as associate architect. At Bates's suggestion, a "ghost-writer" was also hired to flesh-out the architectural report with historical background making it more "interesting, gripping and effective for our purpose."⁵² Jeannette Eckman, a local historian and assistant librarian at the Wilmington library, was chosen to do the majority of the research that would accompany the architectural reports. She had already edited a revised edition of *New Castle-on-the-Delaware*, originally a Federal Writer's Project book published in 1936. Anthony Higgins, a contributing editor to the Wilmington News-Journal newspaper, was hired to weave the architectural and research elements together and provide the desired "pep and sparkle to enlist general interest" that Bates so desired.⁵³ Together, they all spent the next two and a half years preparing the preliminary report.

During that time, Philip Laird died of a stroke the day after Christmas in 1947. In a letter to Mrs. Laird, Bates generously recognized that it was Laird "who eight years ago got me thoroughly imbued with the possibilities of New Castle's conservation and, where necessary, restoration."⁵⁴ With Laird's death came the loss

⁵¹ Maynard, "The Road Not Taken," 39.

⁵² DMB to Chorley, 23 April 1947. Restoration—New Castle 1947, General Correspondence, CWFA.

⁵³ DMB to Hepburn, 11 May 1948, Bates Collection, HSD.

⁵⁴ DMB to Lydia Laird, Mar 1948. Bates Collection, HSD.

of a great advocate and supporter of a restored New Castle. Looking for a way to honor her husband's efforts in the town and aid in the preservation movement, Mrs. Laird searched for a suitable guardian for the Laird's historic properties. She consulted with lawyers and Bates about leaving the Read House to Historic New Castle, Inc. (formerly Colonial New Castle, Inc.) upon her death. Though enthusiastic about the possibility, the board of trustees for Historic New Castle allowed that they could only accept the Read House when they had built up a "substantial endowment." They further considered that it was not a good idea to "press this matter of securing an endowment" at that early stage in their formation.⁵⁵ In the end, Lydia Laird left the Read House to the Historical Society of Delaware along with an initial \$500,000 endowment for its maintenance.

The group finally unveiled the long-awaited plan at a public meeting in the historic Academy building in June 1949. Bates gave an introduction, after which architects Hepburn and Kruse spelled out the report's overall vision. Typical of the extensive and generous support given by the Williamsburg contingent over the years, Kenneth Chorley spoke at the gathering. His presence, along with Hepburn's, lent prestige. Chorley's remarks offered reasons why residents should go through with the plan. First, he observed that the residents had "a trust, an opportunity and, most important of all, a responsibility to preserve these historic structures for present and future generations." It was their duty as "custodians" of a unique heritage. Secondly, Chorley highlighted the economic benefit of such a plan. He felt that "the economic level of every citizen in the community" would be raised "without any question."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ DMB, "Notes Following Annual Meeting." Bates Collection, HSD.

⁵⁶ Chorley, "Remarks." Restoration—New Castle Corporate Matters, General Correspondence, CWFA. 1.

He emphasized his point with statistics from Williamsburg. From 1927-1940, according to his sources, the volume of business in stores had increased from 100-300 percent, bank deposits elevated 141 percent, postal receipts were up 160 percent and the number of telephones increased 313 percent. Citing the increased use of resources as a healthy sign of economic growth, he noted that electricity usage was up 85 percent and water usage was up 134 percent. He remarked that the money the state gained from the gasoline tax alone could “easily have paid for the undertaking.”⁵⁷ Chorley interpreted all this growth and change as a positive sign of progress for Williamsburg.

The group had prepared an attractive and extensive pamphlet that highlighted the essential elements of the report. It was, not surprisingly, identical in format to the brochure used at Williamsburg. After all, Chorley put Bates in contact with Williamsburg’s printers and supplied copies of the original brochure. According to the pamphlet, the plan was pursued “to prevent destroying the character of the town center.”⁵⁸ A map of New Castle highlighted the section, called Area A, which was to receive the main focus. This was the historic core of town bounded by The Strand, Delaware Street, Fourth Street and Harmony Street. The pamphlet explained the history of the old town, the various sites of interest, and the major components of the preservation plan. It justified efforts to thoroughly research the historic background of the structures along with the history of the town. It projected that the researched record of each building would include (as best could be determined) all owners’ names, their occupations, character and use of the structures, improvements, and

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁸ *New Castle, Delaware: Report* (pamphlet). Jeannette Eckman Collection, HSD.

original construction and purpose. The sources for research would be deeds, wills, court records, tax lists and other private and public papers and correspondence.⁵⁹

IN THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE

Working as Historic New Castle, Inc., Bates refined his vision. He was cognizant of the variety of issues that made the New Castle restoration different from Colonial Williamsburg. Primarily, he knew quite well that, though his vision shared features of Goodwin's, he lacked a single financial backer for the New Castle restoration. He set out to capitalize on the differences, rather than appear handicapped by them.

In lieu of a single backer, Bates placed the restoration possibilities in the hands of the approximately 6,000 residents of New Castle. Referring to them as "our New Castle friends" before the unveiling of the report, Bates was very optimistic that "once they can see the possibilities resulting from the conservation and restoration of the old town I believe the work will go along with constantly increasing support and approval."⁶⁰ New Castle, Philadelphia and Wilmington news articles addressing the plan's unveiling clearly describe the Report as property of the people. An article for the *New Castle Gazette* ensured that:

Of course, it is the hope of the sponsors of the report that the citizens of New Castle will accept and use it. However, the method of use depends on the desires of the citizens. Historical Research, Inc., in presenting the report to the people of New Castle, has no desire to

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ DMB to Chorley, 4 June 1949. Bates Collection, HSD.

overstep the bounds of its sphere of interest by attempting to direct the manner in which the report should be utilized.⁶¹

The articles report that “Colonel Bates said it is now up to the people to make what use of it they will.”⁶²

Realizing that a singular overarching restoration effort simply was not feasible, Bates set his sights on promoting one project at a time, though he still hoped fervently that a du Pont, Henry Ford, or “some other ‘angel,’” might step forward to pay the entire bill. Bates envisioned proceeding by “taking a part, perhaps a relatively small part at a time, and completing that part.”⁶³ After all, he reasoned, groups of citizens had worked together to institute the successful Day in Old New Castle annual festival, then in its twentieth year. Another concerned group had restored the Federal period Academy building as well. So, Bates set out to find individual donors or groups to fund specific projects. In October 1949, he prepared a letter describing the efforts of Historic New Castle, Inc. on behalf of the restoration plan. He explained his further desire to seek out certain hereditary and civic groups, like the Colonial Dames of Delaware and the Society of Colonial Wars, as well as governmental entities, like the City of New Castle and the State of Delaware.⁶⁴ The letter was widely distributed to solicit funds from the “Friends of Old New Castle” in order to pool contributions.

The report from Perry, Shaw and Hepburn delineated individual restoration projects and Bates had implored the architects to prioritize. He felt that

⁶¹ *New Castle Gazette*, “Historical Research,” 27 May 1949.

⁶² *Journal-Every Evening* (Wilmington), “New Castle Residents,” 16 June 1949.

⁶³ DMB to Chorley, 6 Nov 1946. Restoration—New Castle 1946, General Correspondence, CWFA.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

“not only setting up a list of projects but the placing of them in order of priority is most essential to the realization of the greatest possibilities of co-operation from those that may be interested in New Castle.”⁶⁵ The Strand, the Court House and the shops on Delaware Street all presented themselves, early on, as potential units that might attract support. Bates hoped that these smaller yet still prominent projects might be more marketable than a comprehensive commitment. To begin, Bates proposed “Project #1” be the Delaware Street shops for the “greatest effect and atmosphere... for the least expenditure of money.”⁶⁶ (The reason he anticipated lower costs was because Bates hoped that—in the spirit of things—the storeowners would pay for much of the restorations themselves.) Hepburn saw the scheme differently. He felt that “the obvious priority would be the Court House.” He was concerned that it would take too long to move on the restoration of the shops because it “would depend on the attitude of the shopkeepers.”⁶⁷ In addition, the restoration of the Court House could be completed just in time for the celebration of New Castle’s Tercentenary, hopefully bringing even more publicity to the effort.

Daniel Moore Bates would, however, die in 1953 having seen very little of his vision come to fruition. In 1949, the leaders of the Presbyterian Church began a project to raze their current Victorian-era house of worship and restore the earlier colonial sanctuary. Their efforts were outside of the report’s scope, but supported by Historic New Castle, Inc. Hepburn even consulted with the church on their plans. A

⁶⁵ DMB to Chorley, 23 Apr 1947. Restoration—New Castle 1947, General Correspondence, CWFA.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Hepburn to DMB, 7 Dec 1948. Bates Collection, HSD.

few individual Delaware Street store and homeowners became caught up in the spirit. Some removed the stucco treatment from the exterior of their buildings to reveal the old brick bond patterns underneath. By 1953, some individual restoration projects in New Castle were being attempted, but nothing like the comprehensive design Bates had worked so hard to bring about.

The most significant project stemming from the report came on the heels of New Castle's Tercentenary Celebration. In 1951, the town honored the three-hundredth anniversary of its founding by the Dutch, which brought a great deal of statewide attention to the town. Historic New Castle, Inc. sought to turn this publicity into support for their restoration plans. Almost two years after the report's unveiling, Project #1 on the priority list was successfully addressed—slowly, but surely. Delaware resident and du Pont relation, H. Rodney Sharp (sometimes referred to as an anonymous donor), put forth nine thousand dollars, one half the required sum to pay for a preliminary report on the restoration of the Court House. Bates convinced the Trustees of New Castle Common to supply the remainder.⁶⁸ Recognizing that something like \$350,000 would be required for this ambitious project, Bates intended to present the Court House report to the Delaware legislature and appeal for help. This work would continue successfully after his death. In 1960, Mrs. Bates "very generously provided the means for furnishing the former courtroom" in Bates's name when restoration work was complete.⁶⁹ The Court House was designated a National Landmark in 1963.

⁶⁸ DMB to Chorley, 29 June 1951. Bates Collection, HSD.

⁶⁹ New Castle Historical Society (hereafter cited as NCHS), comp., *"Behind the Times,"* 125.

As a lover and promoter of New Castle, Bates poured his energy into safeguarding the town for future generations. But at times, even Bates's ample enthusiasm wore thin, making him feel like "a traveler on a lonely road."⁷⁰ He was well pleased that the work on the Court House was progressing, but felt that "to one of my temperament the progress seems pretty slow."⁷¹ At age 65, Bates enjoyed extensive time traveling with his wife and was not always in the best of health. He had worked hard for many years on the restoration plan and was eager to step back from active leadership. In order to lessen his duties, he provided that "the Committee on Public Buildings will be in charge for Historic New Castle Inc., of the conduct of the Report on the old Court House."⁷² Speaking frankly with his dear friend, Louise Crowninshield, Bates expressed that he had been "endeavoring to get out of my various commitments and responsibilities" regarding preservation in an effort to "simplify my life."⁷³ Indeed, by February 1953, Bates was under doctor's orders to take a break from his responsibilities for an indefinite length of time.⁷⁴

Though sometimes frustrated by the slow pace, Bates trusted in the merits of the report and believed that the people of New Castle would share his vision. He tempered his enthusiasm with a sense of realism. He recognized from very early on, that his efforts might simply amount to a steppingstone. Bates wrote to Chorley that

⁷⁰ DMB to Mrs. George L. Callery, 18 June 1949. Bates Collection, HSD.

⁷¹ DMB to Chorley, 29 June 1951. Bates Collection, HSD.

⁷² DMB to Daniel F. Wolcott, James T. Eliason, Jr., Horace L. Deakyne, and Albert Kruse, 26 June 1951. Bates Collection, HSD.

⁷³ DMB to Louise du Pont Crowninshield, 11 Apr 1952. Bates Collection, HSD.

⁷⁴ George Benson to Robert Lillibridge, 4 Feb 1953. Bates Collection, HSD.

“if nothing further is done at this time after the preliminary report is made I shall feel that the report itself is a real milestone for the present or for future generations that may want to go ahead on this fascinating, this decidedly worth-while development.”⁷⁵ If indeed Bates’s goal had been to create a plan for the preservation of New Castle and deposit it in the hands of the people, then he was undoubtedly a great success.

FAILURE?

More than fifty years after its presentation however, most of the report’s provisions remain undone. A review of the literature attempts to explain the seeming failure from outsiders’ perspectives. In *Preservation Comes of Age*, Charles Hosmer broke it down into three problem areas. He perceived money at the root of all three. The first problem was the sum needed to pay for the sketches commissioned from Perry, Shaw and Hepburn.⁷⁶ At the 21 March 1940 meeting, the group discussed the initial outlay of funds for sketches depicting a restored New Castle. Chorley, then president of Colonial Williamsburg, announced that Rockefeller had made an initial commitment of \$25,000 for sketches of the Williamsburg project in 1928. Reportedly, these sketches so impressed Rockefeller that, upon viewing them, he committed himself to five million dollars for the project and Perry, Shaw and Hepburn were hired to begin restoration work.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ DMB to Chorley, 6 Nov 1946. Restoration—New Castle 1946, General Correspondence, CWFA.

⁷⁶ Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 67.

⁷⁷ DMB, “Notes on Talk.” Bates Collection, HSD, 2.

Because of the unparalleled success of the Colonial Williamsburg funding, the New Castle advocates chose to pursue the same course as had Goodwin. They believed that if it had worked for Williamsburg, then it should work for New Castle. Indeed, the 21 March meeting ended with the resolution that “the first step in the New Castle problem would be to get a fund of \$25,000 for this preliminary research and exhibit [of the sketches].”⁷⁸ At that point in the project, the group was so involved with long-term planning that the initial sum for sketches seemed only a small hurdle on the way to bigger things. In fact, Philip Laird believed that that amount would be an overestimate for New Castle. In his 2 April 1940 letter to Bates, Laird again pointed out the fairly pristine condition of New Castle, again noting that it would be easier to imagine a restored condition. So, Laird doubted that “it should cost anything like \$25,000 to show what could be done with the main part of the town.”⁷⁹ Chorley, who was copied on that letter, concurred that the amount “might” be less than assumed, putting the estimate at something like \$15,000.⁸⁰ That amount became the working goal. Yet, no one had obtained that sum during the early flurry of interest for the project; they had put plans on hold because of the war. It was supposed to have been a relatively simple first step—the “spark plug” to get the project moving.⁸¹ But in the long run, the sum had to come not only from within the ranks of the planners, thanks to Bates and Crowninshield, but also six years after first being proposed.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ PDL to DMB, 2 Apr 1940. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

⁸⁰ Chorley to PDL, 3 Apr 1940. Bates Collection, HSD.

⁸¹ DMB, “Notes on Talk.” Bates Collection, HSD, 4.

Hosmer followed the money trail to another impasse. By 1946, the success of Colonial Williamsburg was legendary. So, too, were the architects of that great success, Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, who had gained the reputation of heroes in the preservation world. They continued to be involved in high-profile projects and were sought out by many for advice and assistance. Hosmer pointed out that the New Castle project simply couldn't afford Perry, Shaw and Hepburn in the late 1940s. This was particularly true when the firm elevated their fee for the initial survey from \$15,000 to \$20,000.⁸² In a letter to Bates, Chorley reasoned that, when Perry, Shaw and Hepburn were working on Williamsburg, "we were in the depths of the depression and there was practically speaking no work for architects." Chorley even felt that they "were so short of work at that time that they were ready and willing to gamble."⁸³ Williamsburg was an untried project with an unknown funding source contracted to a relatively obscure architectural firm. The New Castle project was quite the opposite.

In addition to the firm's rising fees, the economy had taken a turn as well. Agreeing on money troubles, W. Barksdale Maynard pointed to the "inflationary post-war years" as yet another impediment to spending.⁸⁴ Perhaps, in the depression years of the 1930s, a restoration plan might have been viewed as an opportunity to boost the economy. Indeed, it was the restoration of Williamsburg—with Rockefeller's money—throughout the 1930s that kept Williamsburg "a beehive swarming with busy

⁸² Harper, "Gospel of New Castle," 91.

⁸³ Chorley to DMB, 27 May 1946. Restoration—New Castle 1946, General Correspondence, CWFA.

⁸⁴ Maynard, "Road Not Taken," 40.

workers.”⁸⁵ Immediately post-war, the familiar wartime problems of inflation and scarcity of labor and materials still plagued the country.⁸⁶ This was true in New Castle as well as Williamsburg where progress slowed considerably during the late 1940s. According to Hosmer, the restoration project might not have seemed so necessary by 1950 with the “heavy concentration on defense spending and physical expansion that characterized the first years of the cold war.”⁸⁷

Finally, Hosmer explained the failure of the New Castle plan as a size issue. He perceived a difficulty encouraging investors to New Castle because it was “never as big as a Williamsburg.”⁸⁸ Maynard agreed. Colonial Williamsburg had the College of William and Mary at one end of the long thoroughfare, Duke of Gloucester Street, and the reconstructed Capitol building at the other end. Crossing in the center was the Palace Green extending down to the Governor’s Palace. The streets were lined with historically important structures, like the town jail, the powder magazine, the courthouse, taverns, and homes of several prominent figures in American history. Old New Castle certainly had an impressive courthouse, Academy school building, arsenal and private homes, but in general, the scale of the whole was smaller, encompassing fewer structures and those of more pedestrian fare. New Castle was less enticing without a “Capitol or Governor’s Palace to be re-created and peopled with the pageantry of governors, councilors, and burgesses.”⁸⁹ Without that grandeur,

⁸⁵ Theobald, *Colonial Williamsburg*, 12.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸⁷ Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁸⁹ Maynard, “Road Not Taken,” 40.

it would have been harder to sell the New Castle restoration to potential investors and visitors.

In general, the literature agrees on one thing—the project foundered “without a Rockefeller” to finance it.⁹⁰ Harper felt it was “an issue that was to plague all of Bates’s efforts,” and of which he was well aware.⁹¹ Maynard points out that by 1950 people had become well aware of how much money Rockefeller eventually contributed to Colonial Williamsburg. While Colonial Williamsburg was wildly successful, it was also as wildly expensive. Henry Ford had spent perhaps as much as \$30 million toward restoration projects by the outbreak of World War II.⁹² These mounting sums put up red flags for many potential investors.

But there were other difficulties besides money. Maynard conjectured that “for all his enthusiasm, Bates could not match Goodwin’s charisma.”⁹³ Goodwin spearheaded the Williamsburg project with his passionate interest in history and made the plan a reality by his determination. Men like Laird and Bates undoubtedly had the drive. They sought out, consulted with, involved and hired some of the very best names in the preservation world who then made deliberate and thoughtful plans about how to progress. But in the end, Maynard suggests, none of the planners was the contagious force that Goodwin had been.

⁹⁰ Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 70.

⁹¹ Harper, “Gospel of New Castle,” 86-87.

⁹² Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 75.

⁹³ Maynard, “Road Not Taken,” 40.

There was also a problem with the slogan for restored Old New Castle. “Cherish the New Castle of 1830” was simply not as exciting as Williamsburg’s colonial offering. New Castle had reached its heyday in the 1830s and the majority of its architecture reflected that period. But, in celebrating the Federal Period, there would be no patriots, no struggle against tyranny, no fight for independence—nothing “as stirring as the days of 1776.”⁹⁴

One other point is important to note from a review of the literature: failure is not necessarily the end of the story. The authors report that the exploration of the late 1930s through the 1950s made a lasting impact on notions of preservation within and outside of the town of New Castle. Harper is the strongest in her statement that those years “of concentrated activity galvanized efforts to preserve the town.”⁹⁵ For example, when Laird purchased the Read House and other structures, it was a first step in saving them from further change or possible demolition. Eventually, the Read House, the Court House, Town Hall, Academy, Presbyterian Church and numerous other buildings were restored. Because important people like Chorley and the firm Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, were so interested in New Castle, many more eyes were opened to what a treasure the town was.⁹⁶ By the 1950s, the preservation movement had spread to many levels of the town. When residents agreed that “the town center should be protected from undesirable development,”⁹⁷ the town established a zoning

⁹⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁹⁵ Harper, “Gospel of New Castle,” 103.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 101.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

ordinance on the model of other historic towns like Williamsburg. No longer the plaything of only a few wealthy individuals, preservation in New Castle became law.

The attempted plan for New Castle became a small but important chapter in the evolution of the overall preservation movement in the twentieth century. Hosmer's *Preservation Comes of Age*, a key source for understanding the movement, describes the events in Old New Castle. Sandwiched among the stories of grander places like Williamsburg, Portsmouth and Charleston, the story of New Castle is important because it demonstrates the larger cultural influence of the budding preservation movement in the 1930s.

RESIDENTS' REACTIONS

In conducting interviews of ten long-term residents of New Castle, it was evident that, like the restoration planners, the residents have a real affection for their town. They also would have had the most at stake had a comprehensive restoration plan been implemented. While the interviews focused on the topic of Historic New Castle's plan, residents were eager to share their experiences on an even broader scale. In the interviews, their love for New Castle was often paired with a discussion of change. Residents are aware that the intended restoration of New Castle would have brought change to their cherished community. Furthermore, they recognize that it has not been the only alteration that New Castle has faced.

Residents speculated on the purpose of the proposed restoration plan, according to their understanding. The question was necessary because most of the residents did not attend the public presentation of the plan in June 1949. Seven of the informants did reside in New Castle from the late 1940s into the 1950s when the plan

received the greatest attention. Though not present at the public forum, they had had conversations with other residents and read newspaper articles and editorials. These seven felt that the purpose of the plan was to transform New Castle as Williamsburg had been transformed. Albert Clayton, a resident all his seventy-seven years, understood that the planners would “try to create an atmosphere of Williamsburg.” Ninety-seven year old, John Ryan, also a life-long resident, felt that they would “create a Williamsburg, where people could come on tours, there’d be money and they would be looking at something that could have been or might have been.” Francis Haut went further and explained the goal of such restored villages. She understood that the project was meant to “change it [the town] back to an era that it represents and not let that pass out of people’s minds.” Another life-long resident, Anita Banks, recalled this meant that the planners “came in and tried to buy out, so to speak, properties and were going to restore them to their liking.” (See transcribed interviews: Appendices D, I, H and A)

There were three informants who were not residents at the time of the plan’s presentation, although they were residents of thirty-five to forty-five years at the time of the interview. Their understanding of the plan is enlightening as it is a product of the town’s collective memory. Notwithstanding later personal research they may have conducted, these three residents were initially informed of the plan through their community interactions. Leona Galford learned about the plan from discussions, particularly with her neighbor, Eleanor Jordan. Galford understood that the plan would “restore what was called then the Colonial Period” to New Castle. Sally Monigle learned that “they were trying to make another museum town like Williamsburg.” Her husband, Joe Monigle, even remembers attending a gathering at

the Immanuel Parish House in town. The purpose of that meeting was to discuss the Perry, Shaw and Hepburn plan. He recalled that “they [Perry, Shaw and Hepburn] sent somebody down and it was viewed with interest...” He surmised that would have occurred in the mid-1950s. (See Appendices C and B)

Significantly, most of the residents felt ill informed about the plan’s specifics. They felt the plan first brought the spotlight on New Castle. It not only interested some important people in the preservation world, but also helped New Castilians to recognize the special nature of their town. For such a critical event, the citizens feel that the details were relatively unavailable to them. Despite the public presentation of the plan and at least another gathering recalled by Joe Monigle, Ryan believed that “there was no formal meeting or group that I knew of.” In lieu of any official presentation, the majority of interviewees recalled hearing little conversation on the topic—even immediately following the plan’s presentation. Joe Monigle noted that, though the idea was well known, it was not really discussed:

If there was ever conversation about this plan, you know pros and cons, at a social gathering, I never heard it. I suppose, you know, that some of the old families over dinner might have discussed it or people who lived on The Strand might have talked about it. But it was never anything, never cocktail chatter. Never heard anybody say a word about it.

Ryan further recalls there being “maybe half a dozen people talking about it, but other than that, there was no real strong movement.” Fifty-four year resident, Anne Moore, did not “remember hearing much about it...except all negative.” Though Bob Appleby has lived in New Castle all his life, he does not recall learning of the event until after he returned home from college in the 1960s. (See Appendices I, B, F and E)

This lack of direct knowledge by residents reflects the way of life in New Castle where neighborhood networking took precedence over the printed press. The *Wilmington Journal-Every Evening*, the *Wilmington Morning News*, the *Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin* and the *New Castle Gazette* all reported on the public presentation of the plan. The numerous articles were intended both to inform people of the event and, afterward, to report on the plan's progress. Flyers announced the public meeting and illustrative pamphlets of the plan were widely distributed. Yet, for residents, it seems the essential source of information came through fellow residents. One's source of information was slight if the neighbors with whom one interacted did not discuss the topic.

Some found the nature of such a restoration endeavor irrelevant to their daily lives. They reported that the meetings or news articles were bypassed in deference to the hard work of making a living and raising a family. Though Clayton remembers his parents discussing the topic, he noted that they did not get involved: "My father worked in a steel mill and my mother didn't have the interest to do it." He further perceived that "the majority of the people, which were working people in New Castle at that time..." would be difficult to influence because "...they didn't have the interest in Williamsburg or anything like it. That might have had a bearing on it [the plan's dissolution]." Haut was not able to invest a great deal of time in the project because she was a music professor at the Wilmington Music School and the University of Delaware and her husband was occupied by their electric appliance store on Delaware Street. Several interviewees felt that they were too busy raising children to be involved. Moore had four children involved in numerous activities and carpools to private school in Wilmington. Her husband was involved with the business he had

started. The Monigles had children early in that period, but then had careers outside of the town that monopolized their time. There were other interests in the form of local clubs, like the Arasapha Garden Club, and events, like Day In Old New Castle, to which people lent their minimal free time. The informants suggest that the restoration plan was often viewed as the project of certain individuals with more leisure to contribute to the project. (See Appendix D)

Francis Haut provided one very notable exception to this rule of uncertainty. She was the one interviewee most intimately involved with the plan. Haut and her husband, Henry N. Haut, were asked by Bates to visit with Chorley at Williamsburg. In the meeting with Chorley as well as a gathering with a group of citizens and merchants, they discussed the impact Colonial Williamsburg had on the town of Williamsburg. Back home, Francis Haut believed firmly that “if you lived in New Castle in those days, it was impossible not to hear” about the New Castle plan. Further affirming the importance of neighbor networking, Haut assured that “if you lived right in the town, you knew everything that was going on.” Bates visited the Hauts’ store several times to discuss how the plan was being received among the townspeople. Henry Haut would, in turn, report back to Bates after a City Council meeting had addressed the subject. Though part of the working community in New Castle, the Hauts were well informed about the plan because of their personal involvement with the planners and the key location of their business. (See Appendix H)

One detail of which the informants are aware is that John D. Rockefeller Jr. was somehow involved—or not involved, as the case may be. Residents know that he was the man who made Colonial Williamsburg possible. Since the same style plan

was going to be applied to New Castle, Rockefeller's name, as famous to Americans as Hollywood's elite, lent notoriety to the little town in Delaware. His name has since become interwoven with the story of the plan. In spite of the fact that Rockefeller was not connected in any fashion with the Perry, Shaw and Hepburn Report for New Castle, a number of the residents referred to it informally as "the Rockefeller Plan." Galford acknowledged that she was uncertain about Rockefeller's role because "either Rockefeller had been approached by someone in New Castle or that Rockefeller approached New Castle. I just heard both sides of it..." Edward Cooch, Jr. recognized that his understanding was "probably hearsay," but that Rockefeller "was looking for something to restore and New Castle was one of the places that was suggested to him." Ironically, Rockefeller's name has also become connected with the New Castle plan by virtue of his being personally uninvolved as well. Multiple sources have written about the lack of a single donor for the project and often referred to it—in Hosmer's words—as failure "without a Rockefeller."⁹⁸ Depending on the source in New Castle, the restoration plan might either be referred to as the Rockefeller Plan or the plan that failed for want of a Rockefeller. (See Appendices C and G)

Each of the residents interviewed had a firm opinion on the possibility of a restored New Castle. While most of the residents were resolutely against the idea, there were a few residents who, though generally opposed, expressed an intellectual sympathy for the plan. They felt that there was value in the attempt to preserve the important historic, architectural and cultural treasures of New Castle. However, they were uncomfortable with other possible outcomes if the plan were put into action.

⁹⁸ Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, 70.

Leona Galford confessed to being “ambivalent” about the possibility: “It would have been nice to preserve some things, but I liked the town as it was....I also like the idea of keeping it as a residential town” as opposed to a museum town. Joe Monigle understood the ideology of the plan but agreed with Galford’s notion of a residential town. He affirmed that he would:

... hate to see the abuse of buildings. I would like to see some of them brought back. But I think that it was going to be a hobby of these people to do over the town and step back and admire it and probably still not live there.

Haut was also struck by the opposing forces at work in the restoration project. In visiting Williamsburg, she truly believed that they were transforming the town “back to the beauty and importance and sophistication of an era long past.” She referred to the transformation as a “miracle” which left she and her husband “with tears in our eyes at what had been accomplished there.”⁹⁹ The Hauts were inspired to return home and remove the stucco from their shop building, revealing the coveted Flemish Bond brick beneath. They were supportive of these types of restoration projects for New Castle because they envisioned the result would be an improvement in the overall character of their town. But when it came to the Perry, Shaw and Hepburn Report, Francis Haut confessed that “of course it was such a new thing to think about” and worried about several of the plan’s details, like the loss of several small businesses on Delaware Street. She recalled that she “had seen and talked to so many people” on her trip to Williamsburg. She remembered well that “we got the word of dissention mainly through older women who had gone through the fire and

⁹⁹ Haut, “Trip to Restored Williamsburg,” 22 May 2002.

[from] listening to people who could barely express themselves who were the ones who were mainly against it.” She was told of meetings in which “many of the middle class property owners would get so angry they would demand that the ‘damned Rockefellers’ should be thrown out bodily and sent back to New York where they came from.”¹⁰⁰ Bates and Chorley were open and straightforward with the Hauts because they were convinced that the positive aspects outweighed the negative. Bates did not attempt to gloss over the reality of the situation in order win their approval and support. In turn, the Hauts, like others in New Castle, struggled with the fact that it was possible to intellectually support the idea, but still wonder at the toll it might take on the community. (See Appendices C, B and H)

Like those who were ambivalent, the residents who were against the restoration plan all expressed a fear of change. Clayton was certain that “New Castle is New Castle and proud of it. We don’t need to copy after Williamsburg.” Appleby has felt “all along that we have a real gem here and want to keep it that way.” His feelings reflect those of other residents who expressed fear that the restoration plan would have ruined the cherished atmosphere of their town. Banks remembered her father and uncle, prominent citizens in the town, conversing over dinner and speculating, “What would they want to do that for?” Moore remembered her initial reaction that it was an “awful” idea and that “it would ruin the town.” Ryan remembers being “immediately opposed” to such an idea from the start. Happy with what they had, residents did not want to risk any loss. (See Appendices D, E, A, F and I)

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

One of the reservations that most interviewees shared was the artificiality they thought the plan would produce. Several residents related a common local maxim: New Castle is “the real thing.” Appleby elaborated that:

... you wouldn't be the real thing if someone came in and put that plan into effect. Because what they were going to do is... like rebuilding the Tile House. You know, everybody's sorry that the Tile House was gone, but you're making a museum... We wanted to keep what we had... What we have is the real thing, so why would you fake it with a lot of buildings that were added later?

Moore was also “pleased of the town that it was not a reproduction. It was the real thing. That's what echoes in my mind from the various old timers here...” Ryan agreed that “New Castle is the same as it was 300 years ago and not man-made or added to or anything taken away.” Places like Sturbridge Village and Williamsburg reminded Sally Monigle of “a stage setting. It's not reality. I think that's the thing that's very appealing about New Castle is that it is [reality].” Joe Monigle concurred that “the cliché is very applicable which you always hear about New Castle: It's not Williamsburg, it's just a real town.” (See Appendices E, F, I and B)

As in Williamsburg, the plan called for a thorough overhaul of the historic area. Fifty-seven structures were slated to be razed, sixty-four preserved and twenty-eight to be altered or destroyed.¹⁰¹ Perry, Shaw and Hepburn estimated that twenty-four percent of the buildings in the central historic district would be removed. Maynard calculated the total to be more like forty percent. The idea of removals and reconstructions still disturbs the residents as it surely did when the plan was presented. Haut, perhaps the most enthusiastic of the group, remembered her “first feeling was ‘Oh my God, there's going to be an awful lot of chatter about this, you know if they

¹⁰¹ Maynard, “Road Not Taken,” 39.

have to remove certain properties.” Appleby recalled that “there was a lot of people that was upset that they were going to tear down houses.” Ryan knew he could not have supported a plan that would have “tore buildings down and put new ones up in their place.” (See Appendices H, E and I)

Some informants felt that the intentional alteration of the buildings to present a certain image would have ruined the organic nature of what already existed. For Sally Monigle, “the thing this is special about New Castle is that it is a continuum of history in terms of the kind of housing that’s represented here.” Galford’s sentiments concur. She quotes her friends as saying that New Castle has “evolved” over the years: “The Victorian houses are part of New Castle. The modern houses are a part of New Castle... It’s a progressive thing.” She, like other residents, valued the historic, architectural and utilitarian aspects of individual structures higher than the overall appearance of the cityscape. Even back in March 1950, an article in the local paper expressed one resident’s opinion that “the fact that New Castle is a town of brick, stucco, stone, and wood in which various colors were used, makes it more interesting than would be the case if it were of a single type.”¹⁰² (See Appendices B and C)

The Monigles were concerned about some of the more notable structures that would have been removed because they dated from too late in the late nineteenth century. According to Sally Monigle, the demolition of the Gothic-style Presbyterian church in the 1950s in favor of a reconstructed Colonial version might have alerted some residents to the dangers of restoration projects. She was also concerned that the town would have lost the Old Library “which is incredible because that’s an

¹⁰² NCHS, “*Behind the Times*,” 54.

absolutely fabulous building.” Though they fell out of vogue in the Colonial Revival period, the Victorian structures are once again appreciated and admired. Perhaps some New Castilians felt that way all along. Certainly many are pleased that the buildings were never demolished. (See Appendix B)

Residents expressed another fear: the tourism that a successful restoration project might have brought. Though not included in the interview questions, tourism was on the minds of all those interviewed. Beyond her intellectual sympathy for the idea of restoration, Galford was adamant that “that’s what I didn’t want—a tourist attraction.” Moore believed that the plan was not accepted by the town because “we thought how it would become a tourist attraction,” and she recalled wistfully that it “was hardly a tourist town” back in the 1950s. Banks stated succinctly, “You know it would have been a completely tourist town [with the restoration].” Cooch believed that “one of the things that concerned the people of New Castle was that it become a tourist attraction.... There was a pride in the town and I don’t think they particularly wanted it to become a... tourist attraction.” He felt that residents valued the quiet and tranquil nature of town and that he too “would not like to look out on the Green and just see it covered with people, overrun with tourists, traffic problems....” Speaking from their residential (rather than commercial) perspective, anything that would have increased tourism was unwelcome. (See Appendices C, F, A and G)

In essence, the residents interviewed and perhaps those present during the time of the proposal simply did not want to become Williamsburg. Though Colonial Williamsburg had set new standards for historic preservation and interpretation, New Castle residents had witnessed too many undesirable and unintended changes in the quality of living in that town. The problems of tourism and the alteration of the look

of the town were symptomatic of a greater predicament—the loss of their sense of community. As Appleby explained, Colonial Williamsburg “was a success if you didn’t live there.” The fact that people were bought out of their homes seemed impossible to New Castilians. Initially, Galford appreciated the idea of Colonial Williamsburg and visited it often when passing through beginning in the late 1930s. However, she was disappointed “to see what has happened over the years to Williamsburg....But it’s just so crowded and so commercial...it’s lost it’s charm and I’m afraid New Castle would have lost their charm.” Ryan was also concerned that Williamsburg was no longer “a real town,” a sentiment he perceived when speaking with Williamsburg residents on several visits. According to the *New Castle Gazette*, Chorley “explained how the idea of the Williamsburg Reconstruction had to be ‘sold to the people’” when he spoke at the report presentation.¹⁰³ In both circumstances, people were wary of how it would affect their community. (See Appendices E, C and I)

The residents feel the town avoided a mistake when the restoration plan failed to materialize. They much prefer their situation to that of Colonial Williamsburg and take pains to distinguish the two experiences. Galford illustrated the point with an encounter she had when she first moved to New Castle. In conversing with her neighbor:

I said something to her about, ‘I love New Castle because I had always loved Williamsburg and, um, it was like Williamsburg.’ She was very indignant, she said, ‘No it isn’t.’ She said, ‘Williamsburg is a restoration: New Castle is a preservation.’ I’ve heard that quite a few times. So that’s the way people who were the older people when I came felt about the area.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 71.

Banks's pride in New Castle has led her to believe that people in Williamsburg might even feel envious of New Castle. "Now Williamsburg does not want to hear that you're from New Castle, Delaware," she stated. She recalled telling someone there that she was from New Castle and that "they weren't very happy with me. We have what many of the people would like to have." None of the interviewees would have relished the idea of switching places with the residents of Williamsburg. (See Appendices C and A)

The residents appreciated that the plan never emerged and their responses were fairly consistent as to why that was the case. There is a broad understanding among New Castilians that the plan did not go through because it did not receive the support of the townspeople. This explanation seems highly plausible when one recalls that Bates purposefully entrusted the fate of the plan to the people of New Castle.

From the beginning, Bates earnestly pursued multiple ways to spark the community interest, an approach very different from the process at Williamsburg. His first post-war correspondence eagerly requested a meeting so that "some of those who live in New Castle and have been devoted to the old town throughout their lives could get the picture of what was done at Williamsburg."¹⁰⁴ Unlike some New Castilians, Bates considered Colonial Williamsburg a great success. Again later, he wanted the architects to come meet with "those residents of New Castle and vicinity who have for years been enthusiastic over these possibilities [for restoration]."¹⁰⁵ Even before the report was complete, Bates planned to have Hepburn and Chorley visit New Castle to

¹⁰⁴ DMB to Chorley, 21 Feb 1946. Restoration—New Castle 1946, General Correspondence, CWFA.

¹⁰⁵ DMB to Chorley, 7 Aug 1946. Restoration—New Castle 1946, General Correspondence, CWFA.

“meet a few of the most interested New Castle residents to answer questions... and reassure any who are doubtful.”¹⁰⁶

Certainly, during the plan’s formative years, Bates kept his endeavors quiet. He could not have afforded to raise the suspicions of the townspeople until he had a solid plan that could address their concerns. Early on, he included a select few residents for their interests, influence, investment potential and ability to network the idea among the other residents. As in Williamsburg, Bates attempted to avoid the artificial elevation of real estate prices that could accompany disclosure of his plan. He was wary of those who might “try to get possession of it [New Castle real estate] on a speculative basis.”¹⁰⁷ When Bates and Crowninshield extended an invitation to meet with Chorley and Hepburn, it was to a select group of New Castle residents who were asked to “kindly keep this matter confidential.”¹⁰⁸ Maintaining confidentiality would help to avoid the appearance of a hostile takeover of sorts. Even the name of his corporation changed in deference to public perception. The certificate of incorporation established Colonial New Castle, Inc. as the proper title. However, the document’s first provision stated that the firm be known as Historic Research, Inc. while the restoration plan was being prepared. As Bates explained to Crowninshield, work would progress more smoothly “under a name which would not attract attention until the report is completed.”¹⁰⁹ By the 1950s, after the public announcement of the

¹⁰⁶ DMB to Rodney, 27 Sept 1946. Read House Reports Box, HSD.

¹⁰⁷ DMB to Anthony Higgins, 18 Nov 1946. Bates Collection, HSD.

¹⁰⁸ DMB and Crowninshield to Newlin T. Booth et. al., 3 Oct 1946. Bates Collection, HSD.

¹⁰⁹ DMB to Crowninshield, 27 Oct 1948. Bates Collection, HSD.

report, Bates officially changed the name to Historic New Castle, Inc., a title which “would not tie the program down to any one [historical] period,” unlike Colonial New Castle, Inc.¹¹⁰

But once the report was complete, it was Bates’s intent to make it very public and accessible. Perhaps already aware of some residents’ aversion to the Williamsburg experience, Bates addressed the issue directly in an article for the *New Castle Gazette*. He is quoted as saying that “while the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg gave the impetus to the idea which culminated in the report, it, beyond that, has no resemblance to that project.”¹¹¹ Those who prepared the Report were cognizant of the fact that New Castle, with all its history, “is of the present in full measure, livable and lived in.”¹¹² They anticipated residents’ concerns in the introduction for the full report, noting that “there has been no calculated exploitation of New Castle. The people of the town have no wish to be doorkeepers of a museum.”¹¹³ Additionally, the pamphlet on the restoration plan describes Bates’s desire for community inclusion. “An urgent plea,” is made in the pamphlet, “to the citizenry of New Castle to hold on to what they already possess,” because they “hold it in trust for future generations.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ DMB to Crowninshield, 21 June 1949. Bates Collection, HSD.

¹¹¹ *New Castle Gazette*, “Historical Research,” 27 May 1949.

¹¹² *New Castle, Delaware: Report*, Jeannette Eckman Collection, HSD.

¹¹³ Perry, Shaw and Hepburn, Architects and Pope and Kruse, Associate Architects, *Report; New Castle, Delaware* (Unpublished report). 1949. Bates Collection, HSD, 1.

¹¹⁴ *New Castle, Delaware: Report*, Jeannette Eckman Collection, HSD.

The report writers stated their concern for the future of the town and broadened their focus because “what happens to New Castle is of concern not only to its citizens, but to the people of the state and of the nation.”¹¹⁵ The planners and architects for the comprehensive plan did not feel that what they proposed would exploit the town. They sincerely believed that restoration and the livable nature of the town could coexist—that, in fact, it was vital the plan be pursued to maintain that special livable character. For the planners, preserving the past was the only way to protect the future for New Castle residents and also for posterity.

According to the interviews, residents took Bates at his word. They accepted his sincere and forthright appeal and did, in fact, follow the “desires of the citizens” when deciding how to use the plan. Residents declined to follow the comprehensive plan. The perceived amount of intentionality varied among those interviewed. The plan failed, according to Anita Banks, because “citizens didn’t want to sell property and they didn’t think it was the right thing to do....I think losing control [did not appeal to them] more than anything else.” Cooch guessed that there were two difficulties. First he felt that “the townspeople probably were not very enthusiastic about it” and that it probably did not have the support of some of the influential citizens at the time. Ryan was “quite sure that they [the planners] met with ninety-percent opposition.” Galford agreed that the fact that “it wasn’t well accepted by the people” was to blame. Joe Monigle figured that “these blue-collar people, I’m sure, really were not enthusiastic about it—the big-wheel types turning this into a Colonial Williamsburg and pushing them away....” Furthermore, Monigle believed

¹¹⁵ *New Castle, Delaware: Report*, Jeannette Eckman Collection, HSD.

that even the “group of old aristocrats in New Castle” who intellectually supported the idea still weren’t willing to have the town changed. (See Appendices A, G, I, C and B)

Appleby and the Monigles paired their beliefs of a resistant community with the explanation that there was “no Rockefeller.” Sally Monigle thought that “he [Bates] didn’t have the money himself and he tried to raise funding...there was not money in New Castle, not much.” The difficulty of timing further plagued the fundraising efforts, according to Appleby. He believed that “that was the problem with Bates. If he would have been back in the ‘20s or ‘30s, he probably would have been able to raise the money,” particularly in his pursuit of the du Pont wealth. Though conceding the generosity of the earlier generation of du Ponts, Appleby felt that the generation Bates approached was simply not in a position to fund the project. He explained that their money was divided among more and more people as the years passed. To compound matters, “the people in New Castle didn’t have that kind of money.” In the end, Appleby ascribed the plan’s failure to “money and the lack of interest from the people in town.” After all, he reasoned, “Who wants to come in and put a whole lot of money into it if, really, the town fathers aren’t interested in it?” (See Appendices B and E)

As residents asserted their relief that the plan never materialized, many could see reasons why “it was even better because it failed,” as Appleby described. Foremost, the proposal for a restoration helped residents recognize the blessings they already had. Appleby believes that “it really brought people to the realization that they had a gem here. Because I don’t think that, before Laird came in and before the surveys were done, that New Castle really thought about it.” For Joe Monigle, it was “pretty well known, I guess, there was a sense of pride that this could possibly, you

know our little town could be this much appreciated.” Haut feels strongly that what the plan did accomplish was to instill pride in the town and that that pride has passed on to other generations. She realized that “it brought people into town who knew the value of the buildings they were living in, for the first time in a long time. And who appreciated that and who had a little pride.” (See Appendices E, B and H)

Beyond pride, residents described a tangible legacy from the plan: the Historic Area with zoning regulations and the Historic Area Commission. In early 1951, the New Castle City Council’s Zoning Commission met expressly to consider the issue of composing an ordinance. The following month, a city council meeting was called “for the purpose of the Zoning Commission, Council and the City Solicitor discussing the proposed Zoning Ordinance with Mr. Pope and Mr. Kruse, Architects of Wilmington.”¹¹⁶ As associate architects on the preservation report, Pope and Kruse brought to the discussion specific concerns that would be in accord with the report’s plan. The willingness of the Zoning Commission to consult with Pope and Kruse is significant because the two entities represented different sectors of the community. Whereas Pope and Kruse operated through Historic New Castle, Inc. (and the report that had been submitted to the NCHS as trustees), the Zoning Commission was acting on behalf of the residents and the city council.

Incidentally, one particular concern addressed by the combined group was the future of the businesses along Delaware Street. Kruse noted that the new zoning ordinance would be at odds with the report. He wished to encourage certain businesses to grow outside of the Historic Area, where residential development was

¹¹⁶ Minutes of the Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the City of New Castle, 15 May 1951, New Castle, DE.

also spreading. In this way, the zoning commission could carefully control the type of businesses located along a restored Delaware Street. In addition, Pope asked that the nature of “objectionable businesses be specified [in the ordinance],” that way they could “be ruled out because of noise, odors, etc.”¹¹⁷ Commissioners noted that city council—who wished to encourage commercial interests in the heart of town—would decide the matter. The city solicitor considered it “a policy question...whether aesthetic [sic] or commercial values are to be considered.”¹¹⁸ These were the same questions that troubled people like the Hauts who owned a business on Delaware Street.

The council met again in September, October, November and December of 1951. Through many revisions and three public readings of the proposed ordinance, a final product was enacted on December 5, 1951. The ordinance established an Historic Area in the oldest section of town, including the Green, the Delaware Street businesses and the Court House. The Historic Area was later expanded so that more structures would be protected by the ordinance. Another significant element of the New Castle Zoning Ordinance was the formation of a Board of Architectural Review. This board was to consider building permits applicable to structures within the newly designated Historic Area. In 1968, the town’s current Zoning Ordinance was ratified and a new New Castle Historic Area Commission was formed to replace the old Board of Architectural Review. According to the city’s informational material, the Historic Area Commission [HAC] was created to “safeguard the heritage of the city by protecting and preserving buildings and sites

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

within the Historic Area which represent elements of New Castle's cultural, social, political, and architectural history; and to promote the educational, cultural, and economic value to the public by maintaining said Area as a landmark of the city's history and architecture."¹¹⁹ HAC operates as a commission of five members: an AIA-member architect with preservation experience, a resident, a member of the NCHS who is also a resident, a planning commission member, and a city council member.

The interviewees recognized the importance of such protective measures for New Castle. Banks feels that "putting New Castle's Historic Area on certain blocks has been the salvation for New Castle because we're not going to build some ultra-modern structure downtown." She further believes that HAC is very influential in New Castle today. According to Appleby, "HAC really came out of that plan. That's the best thing that's happened to New Castle." Joe Monigle, himself a long-term member of HAC, affirmed that "even though the plan may have failed, the residue is the Historic Area Commission...." Moore recognized that, in lieu of the plan, "we have finally zoning and the Architectural Committee, HAC," to regulate the direction of the town. Though these measures might not be perfect solutions—and residents have numerous suggestions on what could improve them—the Historic Area and HAC are considered welcome safeguards among those interviewed. (See Appendices A, E, B and F)

¹¹⁹ City of New Castle, "New Castle Historic Area Commission," May 1990.

CHANGE AND COMMUNITY

Nick McIntire was a life-long resident of New Castle from 1915-1983. He was also the co-founder and owner of the local *New Castle Gazette*. For thirty-six years he wrote a weekly column about the happenings in town and covered so many of the changes he witnessed. His view of the potential restoration stood in opposition to what the interviewees expressed. Back in 1950, he imagined that Historic New Castle would be the means to *prevent* change in New Castle. He opined, "It is often remarked that New Castle does not change. This is not quite true."¹²⁰ Like those interviewed, he reminisced about the loss of many prominent citizens in town as well as the loss or alteration of some favored buildings. But he envisioned that:

...the trend of changes is slated to be reversed if plans of restoration are carried out here as Historic New Castle, Inc. hopes, for in that event some of the buildings will look considerably more as they did 50 years ago than they do now, but most will be changed but little.¹²¹

Although current residents have the benefit of hindsight to inform their recollections of the restoration, at the time, McIntire was not sure what the future would hold for New Castle. Unlike many residents who feared ill effects from an overarching preservation approach, he hoped that the plan would be the vehicle to restore and protect his community from change.

The idea of change is a slippery subject in New Castle. Unlike McIntire, the residents interviewed were gratified by the dissolution of the restoration plan.

¹²⁰ NCHS, "*Behind the Times*," 115.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

They felt it would have brought too many undesirable changes to their beloved New Castle and believe that current residents share that protective sense with their forebears. Joe Monigle does not think “there would be any more enthusiasm today for this plan, even if a Rockefeller were in the wings.” The process of sharing their thoughts during the interviews caused a revelation for some residents. As they reflected on the past, many, like McIntire, realized that change has happened in spite of efforts to resist it. In fact, they were surprised to recall just how much change has taken place. (See Appendix B)

A loss in the sense of community was the informants’ overriding concern. Specifically, this concern developed because of changes in tourism, the business district and neighbor relations. Some residents agreed that a successful restoration project would only have exacerbated the problem of tourism—or at least hastened its onset—but then acknowledged that tourism has become a problem in New Castle without the restoration plan. The Monigles, who will proudly jest that they moved to New Castle “before tourism was invented here,” echoed the community frustration that “we’ve already had it with tourism down here and if we got any more popular, ... it would ruin life here.” Banks believes strongly that “right now we have enough tourists. We don’t need any more.” Tourism has also contributed to the parking problem in New Castle. Because New Castle’s street plan was established hundreds of years ago, it lacks the parking to accommodate a big tourist trade. A special parking area was designated outside the Historic Area for tour busses, but the spaces within the Historic Area are still in high demand. This situation can make life difficult for residents. Appleby feels that “the biggest problem you have on The

Strand is parking” which is only made worse on holidays, special events or even a busy night at the town’s few restaurants. (See Appendices B, A and E)

Furthermore, Appleby joked that New Castle is lacking in the number of good restaurants to chose from, but that “on the other hand, if there was a good place to eat, you wouldn’t be able to park!” Parking would indeed be an even bigger problem if New Castle had not all but lost its central business district. Not only are there few restaurants, but residents related the loss the multiple and varied neighborhood businesses New Castle once had. The utilitarian establishments like butcher shops and doctor’s offices have been replaced by antique and specialty gift shops. Ryan noted the loss of so many of the businesses he remembered fondly like the Stoops and Biggs stores in the Opera House and the Farmer’s Bank. “It’s not Old New Castle today that doesn’t have a corner grocery store, the barber, the country doctor and all that stuff,” he reminisced. Moore remembered “two drug stores, an old country store with Mr. Platt with his big apron and chopping block, and the florist,... the Chinese laundry.” Sally Monigle recognized that New Castle has “lost its commercial downtown...the shops...they’re not relevant to everyday life.” Her husband declared, “Of course we had a movie house. We had grocery stores. We had drug stores and soda fountains. When we moved here it was a neat little town. Now all that is gone.” Being able to transact all one’s daily business and leisure among neighbors fostered a feeling of togetherness that residents miss. “The town was so different than it is today in my book,” stated Moore. “It’s not façade-wise—it’s been kept beautifully... But it was a *town*. A little community where everybody, we didn’t need to go out of town for anything.” Galford also reminisced about a time when “you could stay in New Castle and never go out.” (See Appendices E, F, B and C)

As in many other towns in America, the business of everyday life has moved out to strip malls and shopping malls outside the center of the older community. Haut explained that “our entire system changed, our entire system of business. There was no such thing as a mall.” By way of explanation, Haut described that “the businesses couldn’t grow the way the town is laid out. There wasn’t anyplace unless you would divide up the school green which couldn’t have been done.” It was even more than space that challenged the local businesses. Moore confessed that “some of us are to blame too because when big supermarkets started cropping up, gosh, you could shop for the whole family and prices were much less and you could get it all done” in one place. For those who have spent decades living in New Castle, the difference is significant. (See Appendices H and F)

The arrival of more tourists (and their pocketbooks) would aid a depressed central business district, but residents question at what cost. Residents love the special history of their town, but they also love the community that has grown among the historic buildings. New Castle still struggles with the relationship of tourism, publicity and community. Francis Haut noted that in 2002 two groups were again meeting to discuss “whether efforts should be made to bring more tourists or more businesses to the town without interfering with its history and charm.”¹²² Residents fear commercializing the community while trying to keep it alive.

New Castle has lost many of the other industries and traffic that once kept it so bustling with activity. Haut remembers that:

New Castle was still a busy city in my best years there. There were three steel mills and a fiber plant and the wharf was a busy busy

¹²² Haut, “Trip to Restored Williamsburg,” 22 May 2002.

industrial wharf. And New Castle, in my best growing up years, had eight trains a day coming through and eventually going to New York and, the other side, Norfolk, Virginia. And then you think of that many trains coming a day, you also had two boats a day from Philadelphia coming into that wharf....And at night, another boat came in, plying from Philadelphia to Baltimore.

Ryan detailed the activity on the wharf. He recalled the peach and tomato boats, as well as the shad fishermen and oyster boats that used to dock at the wharf, package their wares in ice and ship the crates off by railroad car. Not all of the traffic was for industry: people also came into New Castle for leisure activities. For example, today's Battery Park was once home to a skating rink, a dance hall and an enclosed baseball park, according to Ryan. None of these features have withstood the test of time. When the ferry was still in operation, "people of every strata would stop there for lunch or dinner" and lent interest to the social atmosphere of the town. (See Appendices H and I)

As Nick McIntire noted in the *Gazette*, "...one of the greatest changes over any given period is in the very people themselves. It is enivtable [sic], of course, that time erases many prominent names."¹²³ Some cherished neighbors passed away. Others moved out. New families moved in. These accumulated passages have been meaningful in a community where neighborhood networking is so important. Haut finds New Castle to be very lonely now because all the people she knew are gone. Clayton recalls a more familiar time when he "was a kid, and I'm not kidding a bit, I had a relative on every block." He remembers when "everybody knew everybody." Clayton finds that now there are "a lot of retirees, a lot of people come from other states. It's been happening so much, unless you make a point to know your

¹²³ NCHS, "*Behind the Times*," 115.

neighbors....” that sense of community is not there. Joe Monigle is disappointed with the lack of interaction by some newer residents. He noted that “there are a lot of people living in these new very expensive homes in New Castle who have really little participation in the community idea.” (See Appendices H, D and B)

A couple of residents were disappointed that HAC’s authority has taken over a role once played by neighborhood networking. Galford remembers that, when she first moved to New Castle, “neighbors told you what you were supposed to do... You sort of, then, did not do anything that your neighbor did not want you to do. I mean you all kind of worked together to keep things like they were.” For Haut, “there was an idea that permeated the people moving into the town... Once they were there and meeting people who had in mind to preserve what we had.” Traditionally, neighbors watched out for and educated each other on the New Castle way of life. While neighbors still hold some sway and may attend meetings and petition decisions, the official directive now resides with HAC, a governing agency. (See Appendices C and H)

Many of the residents interviewed would agree with these sentiments of ninety-seven year old resident John Ryan: “I don’t realize it until we get to talking about it. I guess it’s a far cry from what New Castle was a hundred years ago.” Though each may not have had the benefit of quite so many years, they all have witnessed some significant changes in the way of life in Old New Castle. Moore realized that what many residents feared about the restoration plan “in my books, has happened without Mr. Rockefeller... property [costs elevated], tourism, the busses, the shops going, the gift shops and antique business.” (See Appendices I and F)

Yet, oddly enough, not one of those current residents expressed a desire to leave. They are willing to live with the changes that have come because enough of what they love about New Castle remains. Perhaps some of the changes were made more bearable because, as Ryan noted, "it's one of those things that quietly and slowly developed into something else without anyone noting the passage of time." In addition, not all the change has been bad. For example, Moore sees a good side to the influx of newer younger residents in recent years. She feels that they have made "tremendous contributions... from caring about it [the town], learning about the town and so on." Life experience came full circle when Moore also recalled being told when she moved in fifty-four years ago, "Oh, you don't really know what New Castle is like. It's all changed since you young people have come." For all residents' attempts to prevent it, change is not a new thing to the town. In Old New Castle it is somehow possible to change and yet remain the same. Appleby's sentiments on change speak for many others. He feels that, regardless of what has been lost, "When people look at a place to live, I don't think they are really concerned about where they're going to get a newspaper. They're concerned more about the quality of life. And I think we have a good quality of life here." (See Appendices I, F and E)

CONCLUSION

With protective measures like the zoning ordinance, historic area commission and the individual preservation of many key structures in New Castle, Moore observed that, "a great deal that Rockefeller wanted to do has been achieved." Residents may not have used the blueprint provided by Historic New Castle, but their accomplishments were not entirely different in focus. Indeed, the planners of Historic

New Castle and the residents of New Castle both shared a love of the distinctive town and an appreciation for what it represented. The planners wanted to ensure the future of the town and the residents wanted to ensure the continuity of their community. The two groups simply differed as to how those goals might be accomplished. (See Appendix F)

Bates's motivation, founded in the Colonial Revival movement, held that:

By spreading throughout the nation... the fame and wonderful history of old New Castle..., patriotism will be fostered in our young people in these perilous times, and this beautiful region and its possibilities will be known more and more as a delightful remunerative vacation spot. And increasing prosperity will flow into our beloved state.¹²⁴

He felt that a comprehensive restoration would call attention to the town and work to its advantage. In his vision, visitors would come to be inspired by the past. A famous New Castle would boost the local economy and draw outsiders to admire and, perhaps, even envy those who were lucky enough to live there. With Colonial Williamsburg as a role model and valued adviser, Bates assembled a group of like-minded individuals, both from among residents and beyond, who planned to work with the town for its preservation.

But most residents shared a different perspective. Whereas the planners saw increased exposure as a benefit, residents were wary that overexposure might spoil the very experience that they treasured and tourists sought. The residents were not opposed to the preservation of the structures that made their town so exceptional. After all, those beloved landmarks served as the backdrop to their life-long memories. Yet there were elements of a comprehensive restoration that would simply change too

¹²⁴ NCHS, "*Behind the Times*," 3.

much of what they loved. In addition, they realized that their community would become frozen in time, unable to grow organically as it had for the past three hundred years. Too much change was as dismal a prospect as none at all.

New Castle did not become a restored museum village, but it faces many of the same challenges that residents feared would come with a comprehensive restoration. The difference is that residents have maintained control of their community rather than let it operate as a museum town. Although residents may have supported certain provisions, they felt that following the comprehensive restoration plan would not have been in their best interest. Instead, they enacted legislation to protect their remarkable town while striving to maintain a viable community, much like in Annapolis, Maryland, and Charleston, South Carolina.

Appendix A:

M. ANITA BANKS INTERVIEW

What is your association with Old New Castle? How long have you lived in/been associated with New Castle?

I'm a long-time life-long resident. I've lived in the same house in which I was born. So, ah, and as I told you before, I am a member of the Trustees of New Castle Common and the only woman to have served on the Board in all these years... I'm a token so to speak. I'm on my second twelve-year term. I was elected in 1983.... And I've been Secretary to the Board since 1984 and I succeeded my father and he had been elected in 1939 to the Trustees—Donald C. Banks. I was Daddy's shadow, so that's how I knew what was going on, so to speak.... My grandparent's bought it [their home] in probably in 1890 or so. My father and his brothers were born there and stayed. My father still stayed after he and Mother were married and then I came along and so I've been there.

When did you first become familiar with the 1940s Williamsburg-style plan intended for Old New Castle?

I would say in the mid-'40s anyhow, possibly when I was in high school.

According to your experience, what was the intended purpose of this plan?

Just that they came in and tried to buy out, so to speak, properties and were going to restore them to their liking. And what happened, my understanding, was that the citizens didn't want to sell property and they didn't think it was the right thing to do....I think losing control [did not appeal to them] more than anything else.

Originally, what were your impressions of the plan and how it would impact Old New Castle?

Well, right now we have enough tourists. We don't need any more. You know, it would have been a completely tourist town. Now Williamsburg does not want to hear that you're from New Castle, Delaware. 'Cause I've been there, oh in the last 15 years, and somebody said, "Where are you from?" And I said, "New Castle, Delaware." And they said, "Oh." So they weren't very happy with me. We have what many of the people would like to have....Probably discussion over dinner or something or between my father and my uncle and they said, "What would they want to do that for?"

Describe any involvement you (or a family member) may have had in town meetings, debate, and/or voting on the project.

Daddy was an architectural engineer, so he...done many plans for restoration in the town—since then, not prior to then—and, um, done a few communities, um, basic plans on a few of the communities. So he has a lot of, he left a lot of very nice colonial legacies behind.

Why do you feel the plan failed to become a reality?

I just don't think New Castle was ready to sell out.

Can you think of anything further that could have been done to achieve a more positive/even better outcome?

I wouldn't have that much knowledge of the particulars of it. Well, I think the, putting New Castle's Historic Area on certain blocks has been the salvation for New Castle because we're not going to build some ultra-modern structure downtown. Of course, there's not very much space left. I think that has been the main guide—that you are in the Historic Area and you must do certain things. They're pretty strict about sidings and... they require certain types of wood on windows and things like that. They're pretty strict on it.

Who do you feel were the key groups or people with an investment in the proposed project? Who would benefit the most?

I think just the homeowners. Many of the homes at that particular time were passed down through the generations. There's hardly anybody left that would have owned homes then in New Castle.

Which individuals/groups do you feel were most influential in shaping the direction of Old New Castle back in the 1940s and 1950s?

and Dutch House and the Old Library, of course, are actually lived in. And they're a life maintained in there.

No, I just think that the people in New Castle, and of course I've been involved in A Day in Old New Castle, so they have been very generous with their homes, opening them. Because they don't get anything for that and they open their homes and the hospitality for that is outstanding.

Appendix B:

SALLY AND JOSEPH MONIGLE INTERVIEW

What is your association with Old New Castle? How long have you lived in/been associated with New Castle?

[JM] We are married. Before tourism was invented here, we used to walk the streets around town here at night and there was no other tourists. Really—believe me! It was just wonderful to look in the windows of The Strand houses. I was having a newspaper printed and the town paper was the Gazette, I think, with Nick McIntire. I was recalled, as I told you, for the Korean War and I was stationed over here and one of my duties was to put out a base newspaper. And Mr. McIntire used to print it here in his wonderful little shop. He lived on The Strand and his shop was down near the wharf. So that's how we began to hang around New Castle. We were living in Wilmington and we decided to move into town.

[SM] We were living in an apartment in Wilmington and I was working in Wilmington. Joe had been recalled and we had not been married that long and decided that we would buy this house here. Then we bought another one in the same day. Well, anyway, they were both kind of a wreck.

[JM] We've owned four old houses—this one [on Harmony Street], the one on The Strand, the one down the street [Second Street], and a wonderful farmhouse out in Chester

County where we lived for ten years, so that our children could get a chance at a country life we never had—that I never had. That was a great success.

[SM] Joe was the original person on HAC, for what, six or seven years.... It was a battle. And I'm the chairperson now. I've been on maybe five years or something like that. It doesn't get any easier.

When did you first become familiar with the 1940s Williamsburg-style plan intended for Old New Castle?

[SM] I do not remember ever hearing about it during the first—we lived here, what eight or nine years before we moved to Chestertown. And then, let's say, I don't remember hearing it or I was not conscious of it with three young children and whatever on The Strand at the time.

[JM] It was not a topic of conversation because I think it was presented by a few people and they were sort of above the—there wasn't any widespread interest in the idea.

[SM] I don't ever remember hearing about it until we came... we moved back here in '74 and moved into a house that we had renovated in the mean time up the street here. We sold the house on The Strand when we moved to Chestertown and when we came back. In the mean time we had bought a house up the street which we rented out for a while before we moved into it. And even at that point, you [Joe] got on HAC right away after that... I got on the Day in Old New Castle thing.... Even while I was chairing the Day In Old New Castle and he was on HAC, at that time until maybe up to 1980, I don't really remember it being in our consciousness. If we knew about it, it was just peripherally.

[JM] Well, if the plans had been well received and enthusiastically, they probably would have ended up with HAC years before it really showed up. In other words, the planner would have wanted something like that.

[SM] You know, at some point...they tore down the Presbyterian Victorian Gothic church down the street here and restored the little old church. At that point, I'm wondering if people began to think, "Oh, if we're gonna make this a Williamsburg, then we're gonna lose." There were some other targeted buildings, the Old Library, which is incredible, because that's an absolutely fabulous building.

[JM] We lived across from Packet Alley, the middle of The Strand, for ten years or something. Anyway, don't you remember how enamored the Deakynes were of Williamsburg and how the façade of their house was done over?... They did it the Williamsburg style...

According to your experience, what was the intended purpose of this plan?

[SM] My impression would be that they were trying to make it another museum town like Williamsburg. That's very simplistic, but...

[JM] They couldn't find a Rockefeller to do it. But I think Rockefeller would have had a little harder time here in New Castle if he tried to buy up—maybe not, money does great things I guess—but, I don't think he would have made out as easily as he did in Williamsburg to convert this into (sic)... We knew Mr. Kruse quite well. We were here, I guess, for a Perry, Shaw and Hepburn Report. Weren't we down at the Parish House one time?... Well, I'm pretty sure they sent somebody down and it was viewed with interest, but seemed really not (inaudible).

[SM] But the other thing I wanted to say. When we moved backed here, first era, we had little kids. The second era when we came back, I was back working a very busy career at the YMCA...I did get drafted to be the Day in Old New Castle Chairperson and worked through those chairs. You know, you're on for three years and the third year you're the chairperson. But, you know besides that, I was not really involved in the town business on a day-to-day basis. You don't pick up things. You know, you go to work somewhere else. Joe got more involved, I think because of his museum work, he was immediately drafted to be on the Historic Area Commission....

[JM] If there was ever conversation about this plan, you know pros and cons, at a social gathering, I never heard it. I suppose, you know, that some of the old families over dinner might have discussed it or people who lived on The Strand might have talked about it. But it was never anything, never cocktail chatter. Never heard anybody say a word about it. Except it was pretty well known, I guess, there was a sense of pride that this could possibly, you know our little town could be this much appreciated. Nice to see you and now let's forget it!

Why do you feel the plan failed to become a reality?

[JM] It seems to me that this group of old aristocrats in New Castle had a view—they were probably intellectually supported of the idea—but I guess again, they probably really didn't want the town changed. Of course, neither do I. When they had just New Castle Day, which is 79 years old I think, once a year the town would gussy up and people would come and so forth. And now, you know you can't get a parking space on any holiday weekend or whatever.... They were an element, I would think.... I can't think that they would have really

wanted the town tampered with... These blue collar people, I'm sure, really were not enthusiastic about it—the big wheel-types turning this into a Colonial Williamsburg and pushing them away or making real estate more expensive. Which, of course, even though the plan may have failed, the residue is the Historic Area Commission and the tremendous increase of property costs here. You know I bought this house and one on The Strand in one day. They were nothing [in the 1950s]. Yes. Yes. The house I had bought for \$11,000 is on the market now—and this I think is proof of something that's really out of whack—it's \$540,000. It's still a basic house.... [After Sally uses John Munroe's term of a 'bifurcated' town] It still exists, a rather strange mixture. There are expensive houses up the street and across from them lives my plumber and, you know, the blue-collar people that were there when we came. And there's really never a total blending of people. Well, I guess that happens all over, but it seems to be more pronounced... I bet you also that there was an influence of the Catholic church or Italian. My father was in the leather business, so I'm not being, ah, "blue-collar" is not pejorative. Anyway, but they were more blue-collar and they went to the Catholic church and, as far as I know, there was no one of substance—Catholic—in this Williamsburg plan, the whole thing.

[On same subject, later in the interview]

[SM] Well, I just think Mr. Bates kind of gave out. Don't you think? Isn't that the information you have? He didn't have the money himself and he tried to raise funding and he just—there was no money in New Castle, not much. Therefore, I suspect it was more money than anything else.

[JM] Mrs. Crowninshield's energies were always, well, she had a lot of things going. She had five homes: one was in New England, one in Virginia and one was in Florida. During the year she was constantly visiting from one to the other. Eleutherian was in the springtime. I

don't think, therefore, that she was set in Delaware like a lot of these people were. You know I think her interests waned as she moved from other parts of the country all year 'round.

Can you think of anything further that could have been done to achieve a more positive/even better outcome?

[SM] No, I think the thing that is special about New Castle is that it is a continuum of history in terms of the kind of housing that's represented here.

[JM] Of course, the cliché is very applicable which you always hear about New Castle: It's not Williamsburg, it's just a real town. I think there's a lot to be said for that. In fact, I don't think there would be any more enthusiasm today for this plan, even if a Rockefeller were in the wings. I don't think really people would want, and they've seen...I guess when Mr. Rockefeller was doing over Williamsburg, he probably had no concept of the tourism that was going to be generated and what it was going to do to his dream setting. I think we've already had it with tourism down here and if we got any more popular, you know and the State promoted us any more, it would ruin life here.

[SM] The other thing is that, it seems to me, there's something—it's like Sturbridge Village analogous to Williamsburg—it's a stage setting. It's not reality. I think that's the thing that's very appealing about New Castle to people is that it is, even though it has lost its commercial downtown...The shops...they're not relevant to every day life. The visitors might poke in and out of them.

[JM] Of course, we had a movie house. We had grocery stores. We had drug stores and soda fountains. When we moved here it was a neat little town. Now all that is

gone.... That's because of the malls. Little businesses all over the country cannot compete.... It was out of Dickens really... paper stores, liquor stores...

Who do you feel were the key groups or people with an investment in the proposed project? Who would benefit the most?

[JM] I think, more than any, to the people who proposed it. They were not residents. There's part of me that would be sympathetic to it, in a way. I hate to see the abuse of buildings. I would like to see some of them brought back. But I think it was going to be a hobby of these people to do over the town and step back and admire it and probably still not live here.

[SM] There were a couple, I guess like Mr. Eliason who was so key to taking down the gothic church. There must have been a few of them that were very pro, but very few I would say. And that's a hunch, we don't really know...

Which individuals/groups do you feel were most influential in shaping the direction of Old New Castle back in the 1940s and 1950s?

[JM] Mr. Eliason particularly, he was president of the bank and held our mortgage, lots of people's mortgages. I beg your pardon, Horace Deakyne, he was president of the New Castle Trust, which is now Wilmington Trust... But Eliasons were certainly tremendous forces to be dealt with.... They were pillars of the Presbyterian church...

Who do you feel shapes the direction of Old New Castle today?

[JM] My wife, for one. Well, seriously you [Sally] are very active in the town.

[SM] Well, I would hope that the Historical Society....Now we have more staffing, Bruce Dalleo is not quite full time. But, and then we have a curator. I think we have a greater presence in the community, particularly since we wrote a new long-range plan, strategic plan a few years ago and I was on that committee. We created a preservation outreach committee. It's under that umbrella that we're trying to work on saving the hangar and some other issues that have come about....Trustees of the Common are a very important group in the town because, again coming back to money, their money really and their contributions financially to the town avoid a tax increase. So the other group, the Board of Water and Light provides, is the municipal source of water and electricity. So that's an important one too. And they're controlled again by this board

[JM] There are a lot of people living in these now very expensive homes in New Castle who have really little participation in the community idea. We don't know them. We used to know everybody on The Strand. They are really not involved, as my wife is too much, in all the various things that lots of people, women particularly maybe and men, should be involved in. They really don't play.

[SM] The big players are the Municipal Services Commission, which is water and electricity, the Trustees of the Common...the Town/City council, which is five people. And, as far as influencing the town, you may think this is silly, but I think the Garden Club is a player. We do have a membership in the Arasapha Garden Club of about a hundred people.

[JM] I would still give credit to the minister across the street, I mean as far as influencing the probably the best-educated group of people in town. And the Catholic Church which has a large membership; it's the most active one in New Castle. The Presbyterian

Church is sort of in-between. Those people have a large influence. And the Methodist Church.

[SM] We have a planning commission which has a lot of influence in the sense that they have a lot to do with the approvals for subdivisions and industry coming and going and whatever. Their purview is the whole city limits....Those groups, I guess you would have to say, are still sort of the backbone of the community as far as influence. But there are a lot of people who, as Joe said, I mean I'm sure they're great people, but we don't know them. But, there is a lot of movement, among buying and selling houses, which is just reflective of the whole society....There are still a fair number of rental houses...I would say that, as far as influence is concerned, you would think in many communities that the schools would be influential. I don't sense that here, particularly as they move out. Because the public school thing has been so mishy-mash. And many children, our own children, all went to private school.

[JM] When Miss Carrie Downie was around, and so forth, and of course the town's school where lots of people still talk about going is the Arsenal across the street.

Looking back over the 54 years that have passed since the plan's proposal, what are your current reflections on what transpired? Is there anything else you would like to share about what we've discussed or that my questions haven't addressed?

[On the topic of HAC...]

[JM] Well, see some of the residue of the problem you mentioned, about the plan here in New Castle, people would be restricted in their fixing up their house—you know, big

brother. And that still exists today because there are a lot of people who wish HAC would disappear....

[SM] It's kind of the American philosophy: It's my house—I want to do what I want to do with it.

[JM] Of course, realtors are supposed to inform these folks ahead of time if they are in an area with special restrictions.

[SM] Actually, I believe they have an ordinance to that effect in Newark, where there are some areas that are restricted in terms of what people can do for renovations and so on, materials they can use and so on. And we need that ordinance here,... We've recently had a process, called Review of the Comprehensive Plan, for the city, which all cities have to do now in the state every five years. And we've been going through that process and at the end of it, which is almost upon us I hope, we are going to then get into a review of ordinances and an update of some of the ordinances. And I would hope that we could have some kind of ordinance regarding an advisory to people who have moved into the Historic District that there are some kind of guidelines about what they can do with their houses. One is that we require natural materials. Wood replacing shutters and all kinds of elements on the house, gets to be expensive, harder to maintain and, therefore, we get into the certain amount of resistance.

[JM] And the resistance ranges, of course, from the really nasty to the people that "I didn't know I had to get a permit," and then they do.... Some of the problems go actually to the point of the court. There's one, at least, at the moment.

[SM] We had to allow an appeal from the Historic Area Commission finding the other night. The next step is the Board of Adjustment, which is a little court if you will, made up of the city, ah, of the mayor and the city attorney and the city engineer. And there was a lot of

citizen opposition to what we recommended. Other people in the neighborhood were resenting or resisting what we were recommending because we were allowing the prospective owner to go farther to the rear yard, you know in other words, to reduce the rear yard setback to a minimum so he could put in some garages in the back. And we approved his architectural plan, but the neighbors don't like it. They don't like what he's doing. So they have petitioned and they come to meetings.... And we're getting a lot of infill. You know getting new houses, which is all right, being built in open space and there's certain resistance to that kind of change too, even though that's a good way to use. Population has to move somewhere. Instead of subdividing onto one-and-a-half to two-acre lots out in on Route 40 and ruining the whole countryside, we should have clusters of housing. But it's whatever you want for yourself, you're going to oppose the other person.

[Later on the topic]

[JM] The atmosphere of HAC in my time was pretty much the same as it is now. There was always antagonism. It was not always a happy job....

Appendix C:

LEONA GALFORD INTERVIEW

What is your association with Old New Castle? How long have you lived in/been associated with New Castle?

Resident since 1968.

When did you first become familiar with the 1940s Williamsburg-style plan intended for Old New Castle?

Early in being here and talking with people, especially my neighbor, Eleanor Jordan. She told me a lot of the history of New Castle.

According to your experience, what was the intended purpose of this plan?

I can't really answer too much about that other than what I remember. Since it didn't come about, it didn't impress me that much... Either Rockefeller had been approached by someone in New Castle or that Rockefeller approached New Castle. I just heard both sides of

it, so I don't know. And that he just planned to restore what was called then the Colonial Period [using quote gesture] or what it was and there was not a whole lot more discussion.

Originally, what were your impressions of the plan and how it would impact Old New Castle?

Well, I was a little ambivalent about it. It would have been nice to preserve some things, but I liked the town as it was. Having seen Williamsburg from its beginning, practically...I drove through there...going to Norfolk. We'd always stop in Williamsburg for lunch or just stop and see what all they had done. And that would have started in the late '30s, I think. Then, as I say, I also like the idea of keeping it as a residential town. This is our town and we, you know, you start restoring things, doing all that and making a tourist attraction out of it. That's what I didn't want, a tourist attraction.

Eleanor Holden told me one day, when I said something to her about "I love New Castle because I had always loved Williamsburg and it was like Williamsburg." She was very indignant, she said, "No it isn't." She said, "Williamsburg is a restoration, New Castle is a preservation." I've heard that quite a few times. So that's the way people who were the older people when I came felt about the area...I say it every now and then.

Why do you feel the plan failed to become a reality?

I really have no idea because I didn't know that much about it. I would say that it wasn't well accepted by the people who...didn't want it to become a tourist attraction because basically it was their hometown and not a tourist attraction.

Can you think of anything further that could have been done to achieve a more positive/even better outcome?

Well it would be, you would consider what, in New Castle's idea, is a better outcome. Because the New Castilians may feel that the outcome was good, if you didn't want the town changed.

Who do you feel were the key groups or people with an investment in the proposed project? Who would benefit the most?

Businesses. I really don't know, because I haven't seen the plan or don't know exactly how much they were going to do or how much the way of life here would be disturbed....In my readings, I understand that Delaware Street, the downriver side of Delaware street, was always businesses.... When we came here, in '68, it was all businesses, except Dr. McGuire's house, businesses in that there were antique shops. At the time we came to New Castle, you could stay in New Castle and never go out. They had several doctors...newsstands, antique stores, bakery, everything. But, um, I guess the business would improve. I just can't think of who would really profit that much by it except that it would be something in history that was preserved. There would have been a lot more of New Castle preserved then there has been. See when I came here, there was only a very small historic area. It ran from the river to the Third Street and from Harmony Street, the downriver side of Harmony Street, to Delaware Street. That little section in there, it was the oldest section. My personal thoughts on it is that the town would have been much better off if they would have stuck with trying to look after a small area instead of stretching out because you cannot expect people that don't have historic

property to put a cedar shingle roof on and to do all that that you have to. But that was the area and that started changing. They moved out and out until it's a large area now. There's problems of people not wanting to adhere to the codes. In my own personal opinion, we would have been better of having left it a very small area that we could have had more control over—or that the city could, well not the city, but I'll use the word HAC. There could have been more control with that. Of course there were a few houses outside that area...Amstel House.

Which individuals/groups do you feel were most influential in shaping the direction of Old New Castle back in the 1940s and 1950s? Who do you feel shapes the direction of Old New Castle today?

This is my opinion, when we came to town, the neighbors told you what you were supposed to do and you knew, or we did when we moved here, that it was an historic town and that you could not change the outside. Now I had come to A Day in Old New Castle when we first came. We were in Claymont for two years. I fell in love with New Castle in '66 and was told, when we came down here looking for a place to live, that there was no rental property and we didn't want to buy at that time. The mistake we made was the realtor we went to did not know. Now there was plenty of rental properties.... You sort of, then, did not do anything that your neighbor did not want you to do. I mean you all kind of worked together to keep things like they were. We planned when we looked at the house to put a master bedroom and a bath over the kitchen, the kitchen's a leanto. When we mentioned it, Eleanor, I guess the Jordans, said, "We wouldn't approve it 'cause it would cut off our view of Second Street." So we didn't fight it. We just lived with a small bedroom and one bathroom. But you were more

considerate of what your neighbors thought. They sort of worked it out. Now I'll have to say that the city wasn't much help as far as telling what you could do and what you couldn't do... There could have been more help with the realtors to tell you.

Looking back over the 54 years that have passed since the plan's proposal, what are your current reflections on what transpired? Is there anything else you would like to share about what we've discussed or that my questions haven't addressed?

Now I guess it would be... I don't know.

Appendix D:

ALBERT CLAYTON INTERVIEW

What is your association with Old New Castle? How long have you lived in/been associated with New Castle?

I've lived here all my life and enjoyed it all my life [77 years]. I still do.

When did you first become familiar with the 1940s Williamsburg-style plan intended for Old New Castle?

I seem to remember my parents talking about it, late '30s or early '40s, I think that's what it was. They objected to it, very much so, probably more so than I did or would. I still feel the same way: New Castle is New Castle and proud of it. We don't need to copy after Williamsburg.

According to your experience, what was the intended purpose of this plan?

To create an atmosphere of Williamsburg, New Castle like Williamsburg, from what I gathered.

Describe any involvement you (or a family member) may have had in town meetings, debate, and/or voting on the project.

They were not. My father worked in a steel mill and my mother didn't have the interest to do it. My Dad died—I was 16 when he died—so my Mother definitely wouldn't be interested in participating in it and then I went into World War II. When I come home, I heard talk of it, but very little...

Can you think of anything further that could have been done to achieve a more positive/even better outcome?

No. It's the way it turned out and I'm glad.

Who do you feel were the key groups or people with an investment in the proposed project? Who would benefit the most?

I really don't know.... I would assume that it was the same people, ah, that more or less turned it down, were the same people in the Historical Society of New Castle.... The New Castle Historical Society is proud of New Castle and wanted to keep it that way.

Maybe the businessmen might have benefited but, other than that, I don't know any. And I'm sure there was people like the shadmen, or the fisherman, who were objecting to it. They wanted to go on with life, as they know it.

and raised my family and, at that time, that wasn't part of my interests. My interests was making money to send my kids to college.

Back in the '30s, early '40s, New Castle was a fishtown, but steel mills. You had a lot of workers in the steel mills, including my parents, my father. They didn't have the interest in Williamsburg or anything like it. That might have had a bearing on it. And if you're going to take the majority of the people, which were working people in New Castle at that time, of course now it's changed, tremendously changed. In those days, everybody knew everybody....A lot of retirees, a lot of people come from other states. It's been happening so much, unless you make a point to know your neighbors....When I was a kid, and I'm not kidding a bit, I had a relative on every block.

Appendix E:

ROBERT APPLEBY INTERVIEW

[In preliminary discussion on the attempted restoration]

[Daniel Moore Bates] couldn't get the du Ponts interested and he couldn't get the local people interested. I read somewhere that he only raised a thousand dollars.... And there was a lot of people that was upset that they were going to tear down houses. I think the fact that my father, not only wouldn't sell [his property on The Strand] but he was upset. He was not happy about Phil Laird buying up houses. So, that's an indication that there weren't a lot of people in favor of what they were trying to do.

What is your association with Old New Castle? How long have you lived in/been associated with New Castle?

I've lived here all my life. I was president of the Historical Society from, oh, the early 70's to 1982 or '83, something like that.... My grandfather had a farm on Rt. 9 right outside of New Castle. That's where my Dad was raised and where we actually used to go out and ride horses out there on Du Pont Highway which you can't do anymore with traffic. And then he moved, he went to work on the farm with my grandfather, and he finally decided that life on the farm wasn't to his liking and then he, actually, got into construction. Been in New Castle

practically all his life...It [the construction company] was actually in the Delaware Trust building... George and Lynch...

When did you first become familiar with the 1940s Williamsburg-style plan intended for Old New Castle?

You know, I guess it was after I got out of college and I got involved with the Historical Society which was, I think I came on in the '60s. That was the first I heard about it.

According to your experience, what was the intended purpose of this plan?

I guess the purpose of the plan was to make it just like Williamsburg, make New Castle like Williamsburg. Really, I guess the only difference at the time in Williamsburg was that Williamsburg didn't have that many people living in that area. I don't think until today they really do. They have a lot of units they built for rentals and things like that. I assume that what they were going to do here was to have people live in the houses that they didn't tear down... They stressed income—the amount of money that the city would make by having tourists coming. I guess Williamsburg generates all their income from tourists... Evidently, the guy at Williamsburg, I guess the head of the church, did a real snow job on him [Rockefeller]. I mean, that's a lot of money in those days. The du Ponts have been very generous in what they've given away. But I think you'll see that most of their money the du Ponts gave away was in the early 1900s. I don't see a whole lot, in the '50s era... Coleman du Pont built the highway downstate. Pierre built the schools. But the next generation really haven't. That was the problem with Bates. If he would have been back in the '20s or '30s, he

probably would have been able to raise the money. I guess the du Ponts, as they die, their heritage, their money is split up between more and more family.... So now the du Ponts just don't have that kind of money.... I think money was a real problem—money and the lack of it. Even the people in New Castle didn't have that kind of money.... Laird probably had as much money as everybody in the town put together.... Nobody had a business that really made a lot of money.... When you have a fundraiser, you've got to get the board of directors. Everybody has to contribute. If they don't—if you can't get the board of directors to buy into it—how are you going to get anybody else? That's probably the way in New Castle. Nobody was contributing. Who wants to come in and put a whole lot of money into it if really the town fathers aren't interested in it? I think money and the lack of interest from the people in town.... It's the same way today. The biggest problem you have on The Strand is parking. We live on Third Street which is good because we have the Green in front of us. Even so, if the David Finney has a busy night... We're sitting there saying, "God, I wish there was a good place to eat in New Castle." On the other hand, if there was good place to eat, you wouldn't be able to park! I don't think we've changed in all these years. I think I feel the same way my father did and my children, if they lived here, would probably feel the same way.... Times have changed.... When people look at a place to live, I don't think they are really concerned about where they're going to get a newspaper. They're concerned more about the quality of life. And I think we have a good quality of life here.

Originally, what were your impressions of the plan and how it would impact Old New Castle?

Well, I've felt all along that we have a real gem here and want to keep it that way. You know, we always say that we're the "real thing." And you wouldn't be the real thing if someone came in and put that plan into effect. Because what they were going to do is...like rebuilding the Tile House. You know, everybody's sorry that the Tile House was gone, but you're making a museum. I guess, that's what they did—Williamsburg was all new buildings.... We wanted to keep what we had.... A lot of people have added onto the back [of their houses], but I think the people in New Castle feel that as long as you keep the front—you don't change the front—then it's all right to make the house livable by adding onto the back. I think that that was everybody's feeling. What we have is the real thing, so why would you fake it with a lot of buildings that were added later?

Describe any involvement you (or a family member) may have had in town meetings, debate, and/or voting on the project.

I know my father might have been very active in the town. I know he was on the school board one time. But I never saw their names come up in anything I've written, rather, read about it. I know I talked to my mother about it, but I can't remember anything specific. So anything I said would be pure conjecture.... The only thing I remember about it is my Dad saying about Phil Laird trying to buy up everything [on The Strand].

Can you think of anything further that could have been done to achieve a more positive/even better outcome?

Well, I think the big plus from the plan was that they really—and Laird was instrumental to it—it really brought people to the realization that they really had a gem here. Because I don't think that, before Laird came in and before the surveys were done, that New Castle really thought about it. So, I mean, it was a big plus. The Court House was in terrible shape. The Court House was in the same shape it's in now, terrible shape. The State is getting ready to spend money. But, they eventually got that going, that whole movement. The Amstel House, I guess, was about 1930 or around there.... When did Laird come? He came in the '20s. So, you know, I think he started, when he moved in and started fixing up the Read House, I think people started to think that and realize what they had here. So that's the good that came out of it. A lot of good came out of it.... It was even better because it failed!

Who do you feel were the key groups or people with an investment in the proposed project? Who would benefit the most?

I assume that what they were going to do was form a corporation and so really, at the corporation, nobody would. I guess the people that would benefit would be the people that their house would be worth more value, Williamsburg-type. That would help. But as far as the corporation, the only people that would benefit out of that would be the people that have the top jobs. Individual property owners would have benefited.

Which individuals/groups do you feel were most influential in shaping the direction of Old New Castle back in the 1940s and 1950s?

Well, I think Judge Rodney was one. He was the first President of the Historical Society of New Castle and was President, I don't know, for thirty years. His grandson is President now, Dick Cooch. So, he would be one. I don't know, whether, how active Dan Wolcott was. I think Nick McIntire was certainly, knew more about the city than anybody else.... Horace Deakyne was good and Newlin Booth, who owned Deemer Steel, I think, was active in it. And you get the first Board of the New Castle Historical Society. I think everyone else pitched in there.... A lot of the people who were involved, like Horace and my father, were on the Trustees. But the Trustees, I never remember them getting involved in the restoration...

Who do you feel shapes the direction of Old New Castle today?

I think probably the New Castle Historical Society is doing as much as anybody. They're really becoming very active. They're becoming activists, which I think is good.... They really are concerned about what's happening here. The Trustees are still a force, because they have all the money.... HAC is, you know, they do the best they can... We need a strong mayor. So, the Historical Society is doing their best and HAC is doing their best, but it's a struggle.

Is there anything else you would like to share about what we've discussed or that my questions haven't addressed?

[Williamsburg] was a success if you didn't live there. I mean, they bought up a lot of properties down there. There were people that lived there, sold their house and moved out. I don't know if they left the town or what. Can you imagine doing that in New Castle?

I think HAC really came out of that plan. That's been the best thing that's happened to New Castle. It's kept, ninety-five percent of the people that do anything in New Castle, do it according to HAC. I've always been of the feeling that, you know, if you get ninety-five percent, that's pretty good. They have a long-range plan now that they just worked out. What they really need is to change the code enforcement. The code is behind the times. They spent all this time on the plan and they should have been working on the code.

Appendix F:

ANNE B. MOORE INTERVIEW

What is your association with Old New Castle? How long have you lived in/been associated with New Castle?

My husband and I moved here in, to Delaware from Florida actually, after the War because he started a new business with his Uncle. That was the early days of car rentals and truck rentals and his uncle had one in Baltimore. So he was coming to open up a company here in Wilmington, where he lived. So we poked around in North Wilmington and various places and so forth. We came here on recommendation of my parents who lived in Elizabeth, New Jersey and the Keith Rodneys lived there that went to our church there. They said, oh, we must look at New Castle. The Rodney family has been there for years and my uncle said, "Yes and our family are also descendents of the first Rector of Immanuel Church." And, we took the ferry because the bridge hadn't been completed yet and with our two girls and, I guess around two and four/five and three. We came to look at New Castle and we fell in love with it immediately and I said this is where I want to live as long as I have to come to Delaware! Not that we weren't ready to.... Really it was too far from family. The whole change—we were looking forward to it—and the whole question of finding a house. So we were fortunate enough to get on the waiting list for the Packet Alley house. I think we were on the waiting list

while we were seeing if we passed. It was funny though because the realtor who was showing us around town said, "Well, I understand that there is a waiting list and I'll be glad to put you on it." He said, "Do you have children?" Actually, we didn't have the girls that day and we said, "Oh, two little girls. This is so sweet." So anyway, a long story, we were able to get the house.... In order to get here—the house wasn't going to be available for the fall of '49—we spent a year in College Park just outside of New Castle in a new development which really at that time was very very nice. It's sort of gone down hill through the years.... September of '49. This will be 54 years.

When did you first become familiar with the 1940s Williamsburg-style plan intended for Old New Castle?

I frankly don't remember it well enough. It's your reminding me that it was that far back, because I wasn't sure when you first asked me about it on the telephone. I thought about it some more and I guess it was very soon after we moved here. But I don't remember hearing much about it... except all negative, you know.

According to your experience, what was the intended purpose of this plan?

Well, preservation was what I recall we talked about. Because we all were so proud and pleased of the town that it was not a reproduction. It was the real thing. That's what echoes in my mind from the various old timers here, the Deakynes, the Quillens, and the Lairds and so forth was that Rockefeller's was an entirely different concept. We thought how it would become a tourist attraction. Tourists do strange things to places, don't they?... We

had—the town was so different than it is today in my book. It's not façade-wise—it's been kept beautifully—some of the improvements in paint jobs are too many colors for my taste, but nobody asked me. But it was a *town*. A little community where everybody, we didn't need to go out of the town for anything. When I think back to the shops we had: two drug stores, an old country store with Mr. Platt with his big apron and chopping block, and the florist, the planers (sic), the Chinese laundry. Then we got a bigger grocery store. Later on we got an Acme before the bank was turned into, I mean the building was turned into a bank. And of course, the Dutch House, the Amstel House and then the Court House was always a come-on for people that came visiting, but not tourists, per say. I mean it would be school groups and such. It was hardly a tourist town. But that's happened all over I guess....I don't know why, but somehow, shops have really not done well in New Castle.... Well, some of us are to blame too, because when big supermarkets started cropping up, gosh you could shop for the whole family and prices were much less and you could get it done. And then we'd say, "Now we'll go to Mr. Platt's or Mr. Tobin's and get a delicious roast beef." And you know that that wasn't really supporting them.

Originally, what were your impressions of the plan and how it would impact Old New Castle?

I'm not entirely knowledgeable about what exactly his plan was to be. So I can't answer that really. I'd like to know!...Off the top of my head, when you say what do I remember of it, I say, "Oh how awful! It would ruin the town." That's what is in my memory....'Cause see we were the newcomers, don't forget. So we were just learning what the town was all about. It was who was married to whom, and why, and what happened.

People living in different houses. You know there was a lot to get to know. Although there was everything, there was garden clubs and the kids' school activities and Day in Old New Castle was a big to-do. May Market. All the energy went into these projects of town. So we were interested in what was going to happen to the town.

Why do you feel the plan failed to become a reality?

I couldn't answer it with knowing so little about what was happening at the time. I wanna do it over again! Ask some of these people!

Who do you feel were the key groups or people with an investment in the proposed project? Who would benefit the most?

I suppose the shopkeepers to some extent. I suppose the value of properties would have. But that's happened anyway. It's interesting what you're saying now, in my books, has happened without Mr. Rockefeller...property, tourism, the buses, the shops going, the gift shops and antique business.

Which individuals/groups do you feel were most influential in shaping the direction of Old New Castle back in the 1940s and 1950s?

Well, I think the Historical Society has been very active, I thought that. And I thought the Trustees of the Common had bearing on it. And the Old Guard. Well, they'd show up and

say, "Oh, you don't really know what New Castle is like. It's all changed since you young people have come." We were the outsiders. But I always had an ancestry.

Who do you feel shapes the direction of Old New Castle today?

The same...I think now we have finally zoning and the Architectural Committee, HAC, I think. I don't think they have had as much power as I wish that they had had over the years and it should have been, in my books, done a long time ago. I was too busy playing tennis to get on those boards.... Well, with four children too and many of our children all went to school in Wilmington so we had carpools. My husband wasn't into it: he was busy with his new company. And he didn't have much desire to get into the local politics...

Looking back over the 54 years that have passed since the plan's proposal, what are your current reflections on what transpired? Is there anything else you would like to share about what we've discussed or that my questions haven't addressed?

New people. New people, very definitely and by this I mean fairly recently like ten to fifteen years rather than way back, have made tremendous contributions, I think. From caring about it, learning about the town and so on...and fixing up their places and Garden Club. Garden Club has definitely turned into quite a very active group of people that are doing some really nice (sic).... There's a committee now for beautification of the town.... See, it used to be, when we first came here, it was a town-city. All the outlying areas were still the old, some very run down and all, but they were the old farms and the beautiful old homes. But they're

going to rack and ruin... Urban sprawl has just come up to our doorsteps... I think a great deal that Rockefeller apparently wanted to do has been achieved... I often say to people, when they come off of the bridge and look across the river... and I say, "New Castle is an *oasis*." And I've often thought, even with air pollution all sorts of things, that when you take the turn into the town and get down The Strand and we pull into Packet Alley, I've always thought, "It's quiet. It's peaceful. It's an oasis." And the atmosphere...

Appendix G:

EDWARD COOCH, JR. INTERVIEW

What is your association with Old New Castle? How long have you lived in/been associated with New Castle?

I courted a New Castle girl, Sarah Rodney, the daughter of Judge Rodney for a considerable time during the War. We were married in June of 1946. I went to live at Charlottesville, Virginia, where I went to the University of Virginia, which I started right after I got out of the service in December of 1945. I started Law School in Virginia in February of '46. New Castle became my home after we were married and I lived there for 25 years after I finished law school.... My son now lives in the Rodney House in New Castle. It faces the Green. To the right of the house, as you live in the house and come out the front door, are law offices. And the occupant of the house, which were Rodneys from when it was built I think in 1831, practiced law there and would just have to walk across the Green to the Old Court House to practice law.... As you face it from the street, the door on the left of the house is the entrance to the law office.

I lived there really from 1946, although I studied at the University of Virginia. I took up residence in about June of 1948.... In 1969 my mother died and then the place at Cooch's Bridge, family place, came to me and, after doing some work, moved out there in 1971. So I

lived in New Castle maybe about 25 years....My father was Lieutenant Governor.... Well, he had a general practice in New Castle County, Delaware from the time he was admitted to the bar, I believe in 1899, until his death in 1964. But, of course, the later years were not particularly active when he retired.

When did you first become familiar with the 1940s Williamsburg-style plan intended for Old New Castle?

Well, my father-in-law was Judge Richard S. Rodney and he was President of the New Castle Historical Society and was very interested in history. He wrote quite a number of articles. History was really one of his avocations and writing. Well, I'm sure I heard about it then, after I married his daughter or maybe even before, about the Perry, Shaw and Hepburn plan.

According to your experience, what was the intended purpose of this plan?

Well, this is probably hearsay, but it was my understanding that John D. Rockefeller was looking for something to restore and New Castle was one of the places that was suggested to him. The purpose of the Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn study was to consider the feasibility of that project.

Originally, what were your impressions of the plan and how it would impact Old New Castle?

I think really by the time I finished law school, I kept pretty busy as you might expect in law school, then I took the bar examination. I don't think that I was getting too much involved. I think it was almost a done deal by the time I became a resident of New Castle.... I think one of the things that concerned the people of New Castle was that it become a tourist attraction. It was a small residential river town. The people lived in their homes. They restored them at their own expense. They loved the town. There's a deep affection of the people of New Castle for the town and the river, The Strand—a beautiful place—the Read House, the Old Court House, the Immanuel Church. Those things are landmarks, the likes of which you won't find. You go around the cemetery of Immanuel Church, you find names of people who were really the highlights, the main people in Colonial Delaware, except for a few from downstate, for example Caesar Rodney. There was a pride in the town and I don't think they particularly wanted to become a tourist trap... tourist trap is not right—tourist attraction.

Describe any involvement you (or a family member) may have had in town meetings, debate, and/or voting on the project.

Well, the immediate family member would have been my father-in-law, Judge Richard S. Rodney. He was President of the New Castle Historical Society. He was, I believe at the time, the Senior Warden at the church. He was, although a judge, he was very much interested in New Castle and it's history. He was a unique person. He loved history. He loved to write about history. There are any number of articles that are extant that he wrote. So I'm sure he would have been very influential in the ultimate decision, though I cannot say that with first-hand knowledge. He was great friends with a number of people who'd been involved with it. We've mentioned the name Philip Laird, who lived on The Strand in the beautiful Read House.

Daniel Moore Bates was also a great friend of his and there was a Mrs. Crowninshield that, I think, probably was very instrumental in any ultimate decision on the matter. Judge Rodney was President, I said, of the New Castle Historical Society. Whether they or the members actively took a role in its ultimate defeat, I do not know. But, undoubtedly, that could have happened.

Why do you feel the plan failed to become a reality?

Well, it would be more of a guess than first-hand knowledge. But I would say that, first of all, the townspeople probably were not very enthusiastic about it. That would be number one. Secondly, I doubt it had the support of people like Judge Rodney and Philip Laird who lived there and were important citizens there at the time. That they, as I said before, they loved the town. I don't think they wanted it to become a tourist attraction, have the town overrun with tourists. That would just ruin so much of the privacy and the quiet atmosphere. It would lose so much of its ambience. That would be my guess.... Do people want the Green in front of the Read House overrun with tourists? I doubt it.... I don't think the townspeople really were enthusiastic would be the impression that I would have.

Can you think of anything further that could have been done to achieve a more positive/even better outcome?

Well, I think the best outcome in looking at it... was the fact that it was defeated. They went on to Williamsburg. So as far as a better outcome, I would support as it is more today than if it were a Williamsburg. The outcome was all right.

Who do you feel were the key groups or people with an investment in the proposed project? Who would benefit the most?

Undoubtedly, those people who would benefit from having a thousand people visit on a regular basis. The food places, the restaurants, maybe gift shops, maybe antique stores. I think it would be more of a commercial benefit, for the commercial, than for the residents....I can remember there was a Mr. Platt's store. It was just an old-time country store. And the Tobin's Meat Market. If Herb Tobin were around today, Herb could tell you exactly who was there, who spoke against it, who helped defeat it. But unfortunately, he's gone....Herb Tobin spoke one time to the New Castle Historical Society and he sort of reminisced about New Castle.... probably 12 years ago.

Which individuals/groups do you feel were most influential in shaping the direction of Old New Castle back in the 1940s and 1950s?

Well, some time after the county adopted the zoning plan, New Castle adopted the zoning plan. So that, of course with certain progress, established the New Castle Historic District, put that down so that certain limitations of housing and fencing were established for the first time. I believe that was about 1960. That, of course, determined a lot. They have an Historic Review Board now. We're talking about the period from that time on. That has a great deal of influence on the direction the town is headed. If you're talking about an earlier, there was of course no zoning, no Historic Review Board. People could pretty much do as they wanted. The people we talked about before, the Historical Society, Judge Rodney and Philip Laird,... The committee, I happened to be a member of it, called the Trustees of Market

Square that had custody of the Green, the area between the cobblestone street in New Castle and Second Street and custody of the Sheriff's House and custody of the Old Court House. The legislation was passed, I'd say, about 1960. The old Trustees of Market Square was absorbed by a larger state commission that was charged with the duty of responsibility for the Green and, in particular, the restoration of the Old Court House. And, literally, we did that: it had no foundation under it. And in restoring it we put in two or three feet of foundation over here and then you go to the other side and put in the foundation over there and you gradually worked around. Some people said that it had cracks in it that cats go through. That was a fascinating thing. H. Rodney Sharp was chairman of that commission. As I recall I was Secretary. But people like Daniel S. Walker who later became Chief Justice of Delaware were very influential on it. Robert Quillen was a member of that. Leon DeValenger, who became the State Archivist at the time, was on it...

The Trustees of the New Castle Common, a group of respected citizens, I'm sure had influence or were certainly consulted or certainly had a part in the ultimate decision.

Who do you feel shapes the direction of Old New Castle today?

Today? Well, I think the Trustees of New Castle Common greatly do that. The Old Court House now is a state museum under the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs....I think the Historical and Cultural Affairs have now the control that the old commission, eleven people that replaced the Trustees of the Market Square. They pretty much control the Green and the Sheriff's House. Certainly Town Council is very influential....The residents are very much interested. People who have invested many dollars in their homes and the restoration, of course, are interested in it. The Historical Society of Delaware owns the Read House and they

are very much interested in all of this. The Immanuel Church, one of the real historic treasures of Delaware (sic)...

Looking back over the 54 years that have passed since the plan's proposal, what are your current reflections on what transpired? Is there anything else you would like to share about what we've discussed or that my questions haven't addressed?

As one who lived in New Castle for twenty-five years after this event had been decided, I'm just as glad it failed. I lived there. I would not like to look out on the Green and see it just covered with people, overrun with tourists, traffic problems. New Castle was a quiet tranquil town. I would much prefer, were I to be a resident there, to have it that way... I'm not disappointed that it failed and they went on to Williamsburg.

Appendix H:

FRANCIS HAUT INTERVIEW

What is your association with Old New Castle? How long have you lived in/been associated with New Castle?

With Old New Castle? In every facet! [95 years old at time of interview]

And you lived there your whole life?

Until we came here. [The Methodist Country Home, sixteen years ago]

And you were born there?

Yes. Except for the five years that I was away studying music and I never intended to go back there, but in the mean time I met my husband.

When did you first become familiar with the 1940s Williamsburg-style plan intended for Old New Castle?

If you lived in New Castle in those days, it was impossible not to hear. If you lived right in the town, you knew everything that was going on... Because then Williamsburg was just the name of a small town... He [Bates] had broached the subject to Henry [about having the Hauts visit Williamsburg] when he first started stopping in [the Haut's store]. And, so I knew a little of it and Henry said, "Did you ever hear the name of Colonel Daniel Moore Bates?" I said, "Just in the newspaper." I knew nothing of his background... He [Bates] had a long yearning, you know once he had gone down to Williamsburg, to change New Castle. Of course, he had countless little squibs that they had paid people to imagine what this looked like from the river and, of course, always the Read House was there and always the wharf and its importance. So we saw everything that they had amassed before we went down.

According to your experience, what was the intended purpose of this plan?

Well, to change it back to the era that it represents and not let that pass out of people's minds. That I think has been accomplished—that, but um, only that. Because now then, I don't know anybody in New Castle... But the people that we all knew are gone. It's very lonely, with all the people I know here... I grew up at 24 The Strand. There's an alley... It's across from Packet Alley... I was twelve years old when my Grandmother bought it from the Presbyterian Church. Uncle Howard Wilhelm went to the Presbyterian Church and had married [inaudible] daughter and he came home from the meeting one night and she had said that she just had to have a bigger house. Because two of her daughters still lived at home. Then my mother and myself, because my mother had not divorced but separated from my father—one was a devout Catholic and the other was a devout Methodist. But I grew up with my Grandparents... We lived on Sixth Street [when back from school]... at the house near what

was your [Bob Appleby's] business....It was only the second house on that block....It was built in 1898.... We were only the second owners.

Originally, what were your impressions of the plan and how it would impact Old New Castle?

Of course it was such a new thing to think about. Remember I had been away from New Castle for five years. Once you left New Castle to study music, you were in a different world. So to come back and listen to this, my first feeling was, "Oh my God, there's going to be an awful lot of chatter about this, you know, if they have to remove certain properties that would be in the way." Of course, the first plans that they showed did away with a lot of some of the business on Delaware Street, some of the small businesses, you know getting rid of them. For instance there was a tailor shop....Another thing I wrote about New Castle was about 1918, the year 1918 when the First World War stopped. And there were thirty-two places of business on the main street, counting both sides of the street, out to the first railroad tracks...

Describe any involvement you (or a family member) may have had in town meetings, debate, and/or voting on the project.

Well, we saw him [Chorley] mostly in the morning, however he did take the time to come all the way back in the afternoon when he knew we were about to leave [Williamsburg]. We had gone back up to the inn to have a drink because we were really tired at that time. We had seen and talked to so many people. I'll tell you, we got the word of dissention mainly

through older women who had gone through the fire and listening to people who could barely express themselves who were the ones who were mainly against it. Mr. Chorley got them together for Mr. Bates. I have a feeling that he was a person who kept busy to keep interest... The thing about this that surprised me most is that Lydia Laird refused to talk with Kenneth Chorley. She'd never been there [Williamsburg]. Philip Laird had died and they asked her if she would have him [Chorley] up, perhaps, to the Read House and so she said she didn't want to get involved. When we moved here, we knew a gentlemen and his wife who lived across the hall from us.... He lived on the next farm to Lydia Laird and to Sally [Cooper, her sister]. Knew every one of them. He was in Lydia Laird's one room schoolhouse for the only only education she ever had....

Fortunately, at the time when they could be the most influential, there were people—oh, I could name several—who could weigh the value of what could happen to New Castle under those circumstances. But, there again, you had the people who had very little education who were not interested in what somebody in the future was going to do or live by. And their minds were absolutely closed and it was the same as what they ran into down in there [Williamsburg]. But once you proved, once they had businesses started in Williamsburg, he said after a year that they, for instance the drug store, things like that, after a year, when they showed a different value to the properties that they were putting in place, then they stopped hearing. Then everybody was grabbing for the money.... There was great deal still left to do when we went there [Williamsburg], maybe whole streets. We could just see the layout of what was going to be there and you could also see the pictures...

When we, before we went down, Colonel Bates said that we have a feeling that there are a great many buildings in this city, in New Castle, that were built with Flemish bond brick.

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When we, before we went down, Colonel Bates said that we have a feeling that there are a great many buildings in this city, in New Castle, that were built with Flemish bond brick.

And he said, "Would you be willing...?" Since I think the first date they have of that house was 1728—it was always a business, the family lived above the business. He said, "Would you be willing to take off part of the brick that was covered in stucco?" So was Dr. McGuire's lovely home, that's the next home above the Gilpin House. So Henry said yes. So he called Bruce Gordon, old Bruce, and he went around in back of the house and removed a place, I think, about that big. And, sure enough, it was Flemish bond brick. So Henry was the first one to remove the brick [sic] and then he talked Tom McGuire to remove his. And all of the sudden, it made a world of difference. Then they took it off of the Court House....Exactly the places that Crowninshield and Bates said they had thought were Flemish bond turned out to be that. They think it had been brought over here originally when we were under the Dutch.

Why do you feel the plan failed to become a reality?

Of course, I don't know. We were not, I was not as interested as I might have been because I had my own business. I was busy every single minute with the music in this area. It was just listening to what had gone on. Henry would go to the meetings of the council and then listen and then pass it on to Colonel Bates. But I think, for instance, people like Lydia Laird who might have been, ah, someone who could have influenced, but she was not that type woman. And I understand a lot more about it having heard what her background was, you know, how they lived....But, he [Laird] was the one who would have been whole-heartedly in back of it. Because he did a lot for buildings all along The Strand, didn't he? I mean, even houses, all those houses on the riverside had had a basement kitchen...

When I was in high school, he bought the house, the Read House. And nobody'd ever heard it called the Read House. It was just a vacant house. And the yard was so overgrown.

My cousin, Ogden Wise and I and Jimmy Challenger and Ed, we used to play in that yard...and it was a quagmire, you know, everything was grown together....You knew, I suppose, that Phil Laird paid about \$12,000 for that property....One time, when the Laird's first moved in and they would have the parties. They were real parties, you know, and all of the beautiful cars, you know from Wilmington, the low-slung cars. And one Halloween night, Jimmy and my cousin Ogden and I let the air out of all the tires. And they set the dogs on us and we just barely got inside. We were all hardly thirteen years old....I was in that pool a lot....They had a miniature night club in the basement. And they would call George Madden and George Madden would call me and we would go there and entertain....They did considerable entertaining because they were both still young. And then they had the yard completely redone and built the swimming pool. It was a beautiful estate at one time.

He [Laird] was a man who was into everything in the city. He himself did a lot to get the people he was seeing and talking to interested in what Colonel Bates wanted it to eventually be and I think that's the reason he bought up so many properties on The Strand, particularly on the river side.

What was the town's impression of Philip Laird?

It was much better than you would have thought. The people who really were not interested in history, of course, most never really go to know him. But they were impressed with what he had done with the properties that he owned. And they sort of stood in awe, I think.... Those who would have screamed loudest did not, because they saw what he had done to The Strand.

Can you think of anything further that could have been done to achieve a more positive/even better outcome?

No, at the time, we were not in, yet, we had just barely passed bad years with the economy. Eleanor Holden... his parents [the Applebys], and Isabel Booth and people like that did a lot. They did a lot—they really did—to forge a better feeling of acceptance for what you're talking about.

Who do you feel were the key groups or people with an investment in the proposed project? Who would benefit the most?

It's hard to say, because after the depression, businesses did not flourish for a while.... The parking areas were not available to any business. Our entire system changed, our entire system of business. There was no such thing as a mall. If anybody had told you you could go outside of town and find some kind of a store right next to each other, you would have thought they were nuts.... For the reason I've just said, the businesses couldn't grow the way the town is laid out. There wasn't anyplace unless you would divide the school green which couldn't have been done.

I think the school system would have benefited. It did because it brought people into town who knew the value of the buildings they were living in, for the first time in a long time. And who appreciated that and who had a little pride.

Which individuals/groups do you feel were most influential in shaping the direction of Old New Castle back in the 1940s and 1950s?

Well, certainly, the Rodney family....It just wasn't one family. I mean, there was an idea that permeated the people moving into the town....Once they were there and meeting people who had in mind to preserve what we had. I can name them: the Applebys; not at first the Quillens, but through the people they later came to know; certainly Mrs. Janvier, who was the one who founded A Day in Old New Castle. That did a great deal. And the people who would open their houses were the people who knew the value of their houses and what they had to show. They were the ones who kept a feeling of pride....The Monigles; Newlin Booth; particularly Isabel, I mean she was a guiding spirit in getting the women in town to jog up their husbands to meet with people who could give some substance to what should be accomplished there. It changed everything...

Looking back over the 54 years that have passed since the plan's proposal, what are your current reflections on what transpired? Is there anything else you would like to share about what we've discussed or that my questions haven't addressed?

[Regarding trip to Williamsburg] I felt that early that day, around noon, we knew their problem from both sides, I mean the people who were funding it, the Rockefellers, and the people who were agin' it. We met some of them and Mr. Chorley had really done a wonderful job. Because he asked a couple of women to come in and just sit in that meeting and then to talk to us about...they were talked in and then talked to their husbands into stop wrangling. All of this happened that day. It was fascinating. We simply turned it [information from trip] over to Colonel Bates. I was very busy because I was teaching at the University of Delaware and at the Music School, the Wilmington Music School at the time, and I couldn't get too

involved in taking the time to talk to these two people who just wanted to talk. So I told him, I said, "Why don't you ask Colonel Bates to come here today, one day, and have lunch with us and then I'll stay as long as I can and you can tell him what else you remember." That was the way we did it.

Of course when you reach ninety-five, you have very little interest in what's going to happen next. Your main interest every day is getting through the day.... I have a feeling that right now in New Castle there are so very many people.... New Castle was still a busy city in my best years there. There were three steel mills and a fiber plant and the wharf was a busy busy industrial wharf. And New Castle, in my best growing up years, had eight trains a day coming through and eventually going to New York and the other side, Norfolk Virginia. And when you think of that many trains coming a day, you also had two boats a day from Philadelphia coming into that wharf. One at 10:00 in the morning in which every businessman had a rolling thing, like you see in most train stations, for the produce that he had bought. And it was cheaper to come by boat than it was by train. So the wharf was a busy place. And it meant a lot to the town. And at night, another boat came in, plying from Philadelphia to Baltimore. So, it wasn't a little town with no access to the outside world. It had a very real access.

It did a lot [the plan]. I'll tell you, what it did mostly was pride in the town.... There was a tea room. It was in the Court House and it brought a lot of people through there. And there was a ferry that connected in New Jersey and people of every strata would stop there for lunch or dinner on their way to Washington. [When the ferry service stopped,] there was not the traffic through town anymore. It was really, it was progress. I think it has preserved what had been done to upgrade what was about to pass out of (sic)—for instance, the houses along

The Strand and the houses on Third street, what is the very nub of New Castle. So the pride in the town has passed on to other generations....It [the plan] brought a lot of interesting people.

What worries me is what's going to become of the Academy, what's going to become of the Arsenal...but the Court House....I can't see the business people in the town, what little we have of that, interested in doing anything further than has been done. That's hard to say that this too will pass.

I'll tell you this, it was a very nice town to grow up in. There were always people there for you.

Appendix I:

JOHN RYAN INTERVIEW

What is your association with Old New Castle? How long have you lived in/been associated with New Castle?

Nothing other than I was born and raised here....In, we call it, Shawtown, the west end of the city.

How long have you lived in this house?

Since 1923...my Mother bought it. I guess there were at least four...my sister, Elizabeth, my brother, Jim, Harry...Hugh had married and Bill was in the service....My Mother lived to be 91. By the time she was 91, the rest of them were all married and so was I....

When you moved here [this house], how old were you?

In 1923? I was 17. I guess that about sums it up! For about, what'd I say? I was 17 when I moved here? I'm 97 now.... 80 years.

When did you first become familiar with the 1940s Williamsburg-style plan intended for Old New Castle?

Oh, that kind of got started and that would have spoiled the whole thing... a hardened opinion.

How do you remember hearing about it?

Oh no, not directly, I don't. There wasn't any club meetings or anything like that. But, my own opinion is that New Castle is the same as it was 300 years ago and not man-made or added to or anything taken away. And as a result, the buildings have been kept and lived in all of those years. So, I think it has its own—it's New Castle to me.

According to your experience, what was the intended purpose of this plan?

Well, I can only guess, and I could be wholly wrong. To me it was to create a Williamsburg, where people could come on tours, there'd be money and they would be looking at something that could have been or might have been. This way they see the real thing. They would have tore buildings down and put new ones up in their place, all that kind of thing. This house here is over 130 years old, I guess. So, they fair pretty well when taken care of.... No, I think New Castle is ideal the way it is. The trolley tracks are gone from the streets, of course, and the cobblestones are gone, partially covered on Market Street. Other than that, why... well, the grocery stores are gone. So, I guess there's been some change, but for the most part, it's still Old New Castle. Until talking to you, I didn't realize how many

changes there've been. I guess the trolley car was the first thing to go. Then the ferry came in and went. I guess the real change [with the ferry] was in the amount of traffic going through town. I thought I'd never see the day when so many cars come in. Now they've got that new shopping center down there. I can't believe New Castle would see the amount of traffic we have go through this town.... I'm speaking right down here on Delaware Street by the railroad tracks. That went up a few years ago. Who ever believed it would be successful? Traffic conditions and the number of cars we have here in Delaware. God, they're coming through town up here to go down Route 9 and so they're trying to make the lights down there. And there's so many developments south of New Castle that getting home from work and what not, it's easier to go down through New Castle than it is to go out on the highways. So, this is a far cry from the day when they had the horse and dump cart, the ice wagon and the hucksters. Oh, they [the hucksters] had a horse and wagon and they went around with vegetables. Anybody who was selling anything was a huckster. They [the ice wagons] had Dad King had an icehouse down there on Harmony Street near The Strand. I said icehouse: it was quite a large wooden building and it looked like about maybe fifteen to twenty feet deep and that's where the ice was stored. He had horse and wagon and scale hanging out the back. He had a block to get a 10-cent piece of ice that was so big or a 25-cent piece. No one had much use for anything larger than that except the grocery stores. Because at home, we had a refrigerator and you could put a block of ice in there and it had a pan underneath it to catch the melting water--which, quite often, overflowed. But that was the first preservation of food, other than the windows. Almost everyone had a box in their kitchen window where they would put butter and things like that...

I should remember what year the last trolley went out. 'Cause I had an uncle come down from Philadelphia purposefully to ride the last trolley out. Said he rode the first one in. Now I don't know whether that's true or not, but that's his story. Course it was the only transportation you had. If you wanted to go to Wilmington or anywhere else, it was the trolley car. Well, when they first started, when I can first remember them, you could get into Wilmington in about twenty minutes. But the traffic pattern developed and more service, it was a good forty minute trip to Wilmington.... Well, I think there were four boxes with red or green lights in them and they changed. If you came to the switch, it was a single track at the end, and you have the switch which would put you out here. If the green light was on, it meant the guy in Wilmington was coming out. If the red light was on, we could keep on going until we hit the next one. The lights was what it was: we had to wait. The other guy might be running behind time, so you had to wait until he got to the switch. If you were there ahead, he had to go around the outside.

Of course, Delaware Street wharf, when we were kids, had peach boats and tomato boats.... There were all kinds of boats. We'd stop at the wharf and, oh, the ice breaker. They'd cut the channel open with this big iron ship that'd ride up on the ice and break it through and the tides would keep it moving. That's how they kept the river open. Well, the sailing ships were gone. But I think the water was a lot cleaner and I think it froze a lot faster. I'm quite sure that that's the reason. John Weaver was the name of the ship. They had a diver suit on the bow that they'd use occasionally. I had no idea why, but it was interesting for us kids. Of course, what we refer to as the gashouse, now is not even a foundation. Well there is some of it left, but that's where all the kids from the west-end came down and went swimming. And there was a large rock, well not a rock but the components of a big stone, that had been

cemented and laid, and we put our clothes up on that rock and we went swimming—most of the time in the nude. Then Battery Park Beach. If you came home from work in the evening and it was high tide, you guys could hardly find a place to get over to it. It started right at South Street and spread on down there to Joe Hood's cabin. Joe Hood, an old colored guy, had a cabin down there. It wasn't very large: it was from South Street for us down to the gashouse. But it was sure crowded.

Originally, what were your impressions of the plan and how it would impact Old New Castle?

Oh, about the same as I'm telling you: Immediately opposed to such an idea. I was willing to listen, but I wasn't too willing to (inaudible). Had there been a meeting anybody called or tried to group up, I would have been opposed to it from the start, I'm quite sure.

Why do you feel the plan failed to become a reality?

I'm quite sure that they met with ninety-percent opposition. Like I said, there was no formal meeting or group that I knew of. Maybe half a dozen people talking about it, but other than that, there was no real strong movement. Not in my time.

It would be like a group now on The Strand or Third Street or whatnot, that would be gassing and would come up with the idea that we ought to do this. And we have made big kind of changes. Before—when, I don't know the era—if you wanted to paint your house yellow or blue or if you wanted to put something out front or you wanted to keep a pigsty in the yard or a chicken, that's the way it was. And that all disappeared and brought the city all

up-to-date in modern living. They had the huckster, and the iceman, and the coal man, and the ash man.

I gave a talk up at the Court House a year or so ago and I took them for a veritable walk up Delaware Street. There have been quite a few changes up Delaware Street...for the Historic Society.

Can you think of anything further that could have been done to achieve a more positive/even better outcome?

Well, if I was wholly opposed to it, I didn't think it could have turned out better, that's for sure. Well, if you wanted to live in New Castle, this is New Castle. And everytime you speak to anybody at Williamsburg—which is where I've been a couple times, it may have been once—but it was rebuilt. They could have put back anything they wanted. New Castle is real, everything in it and I think it's quite colonial. Certainly different than any other town you go in. In fact, I was coming home last night riding up from the wharf past the Court House and whatnot, and I thought, "It's a real pleasant town."

And life's stages was quite different too.... The Dyke... well, up there at the sluice gate, if you were going up to Wilmington on the trolley car, you looked up the Dyke and you'd see about twenty kids up there swimming in the nude. If you went nude in today, you'd be right in public. That was put a stop to, of course. And that Dyke used to freeze. Oh really a lot of ice skating on that thing. It doesn't just ever seem to freeze where you can skate on it. I don't know why that is. I think it got a lot shallower from filling in. But the old Pennsylvania Railroad used to go from New Castle station up to Farnhurst. That puts you out on Basin Road... Well, that's where the Dyke started, those two big tubes. You could skate from there

clean down here to the river. All you had to do was put your skates on up there and open your coat and the wind blew you down. Ah, but those things have gone. And, every kid had a little spool that he got at the store with a hook and a bobbin to go fishing with. And you could catch fish, mainly catfish and small perch and oh sunfish and everything else. With that little line, it was the thrill of a kid nine, ten, maybe eleven years old. I remember, mentioning sunfish, when we skated out here on the Dyke, you could see the sunfish under the ice. I often wonder what happened to them.

Who do you feel were the key groups or people with an investment in the proposed project? Who would benefit the most?

I think, oh maybe the city coffers might have got a few dollars from tourist groups. And I'm quite sure they would have wanted to put the sales shops back and the blacksmith's shop. Which, I understand, The Strand, all it was was stores and sales shops and, I guess, a tap room or two for the sailors....I know they would have had to have had some sales and mending and blacksmith shops and tin shops and all those kind of shops in that day. And probably would be on the waterfront. So, that's it.

Which individuals/groups do you feel were most influential in shaping the direction of Old New Castle back in the 1940s and 1950s?

I don't really recall any particular person or people making New Castle what it is because New Castle has always been. But, I only recall that most people certainly didn't want any changes made in what we have....There were no groups with a great deal of strength or

pop. It's more of city today than it ever was. I think it's a lot more city than we need. But, I don't want to get involved with the police and the mayor and the council and all that.

Who do you feel shapes the direction of Old New Castle today?

We have a pretty good council right now, college graduates....For the most part they are people who can think and do things and we are doing things with the new police station and the new city maintenance crew groups and things like that....A lot more capable. Well, the Trustees of the Common, they've done a commendable job in doing what they're supposed to be doing. A lot of properties have been sold, contracts drawn that have been under discussion for years, why and who, and that sort of thing. Like the airbase: the government took over the airbase during the War. Why didn't New Castle get it back when they gave it back to New Castle County? There's arguments pro and con and the government did offer to give it back but we're incapable of handling the airport. Those idiotic decisions or reasons always had to do with our manager. And there was no airport there other than the army....But, just as far as I can see, they have preserved the city and some of the buildings outside of the city that were colonial and kept it pretty good. Which I imagine is a pretty tough job today with developers all screaming to do this....I don't know what year the Historical Society was formed, but it hasn't been very many years ago. But you get a lot of arguments on the Historical Society. People want to do something and have to get permit to do it and that rankles with a lot of old-timers....But, I suppose if we keep the permit idea all in tact, it's preserve the property much longer and give it better appearance. As you drive down the street now, it's in fine shape and the homes are more or less a colonial color. But then you get into argument on that....It's one of those things that quietly and slowly developed into something else without anyone noting

the passage of time. Now, heck there's not even a barbershop left in town. And Stoops and Biggs were in the Opera House up here on Delaware Street. The hardware store and the men's clothing were in there. The bank at the corner of Strand and Delaware Street was the Farmer's Bank as far as I understand. I can remember how the steps went up and down, the brownstone steps, both sides on Delaware Street. But they've been removed and the old building, still they're putting an addition to it now. I don't remember exactly when it was a bank, only slightly. Of course the barbershops are gone. It's not Old New Castle today that doesn't have a corner grocery store, the barber, the country doctor and all that stuff. So we're not as much New Castle as we think we are. But, we like it. It's a cleaner and brighter city.

Looking back over the 54 years that have passed since the plan's proposal, what are your current reflections on what transpired? Is there anything else you would like to share about what we've discussed or that my questions haven't addressed?

Oh, I suppose there have been changes offered and discussed by groups, but at the present time I can't recall a single one of them. But I only know that anything that sought to change was going to be defeated for the most part. Oh, I think the State took over buildings like the Court House that they keep it. I don't know why that was done unless they wanted to make sure that New Castle stayed here. Now, we used to have the Armory down here and the boys would be in camp now down at the rifle range. And all that sort of life has disappeared. I don't realize it until we get to talking about it. I guess it's a far cry from what New Castle was a hundred years ago. Because there were farmers' stalls along Delaware Street in front of the Court House at one time. Of course, I told you, the oyster boats used to come into the

wharf. And the shad fishermen, they come in with their catch. If you wanted to buy a shad you could literally buy one. But the building on the wharf is where they packed the fish in big boxes of ice and put them on the railroad car that just run down almost to the wharf. Send them off to New York and Philadelphia and places like that. There were at least ten or twelve shad skiffs around the wharf. Well, when you look back at it, there have been changes galore, but it don't seem to have hurt us. It's quite different than it was a hundred years ago....Like Battery Park at one time had a skating rink and a dance hall on it, bath houses along the South Street side and enclosed baseball park. It is quite different today than what it was then. Yah, the water was clean and the bathhouses were there.

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