

A TOWN AMONG CITIES:
NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE, 1780-1840

By

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PREFACE

Today, in the early 1980s, New Castle, Delaware is a quiet yet distinctive suburb of Wilmington. An hour's drive from Philadelphia and within easy reach of New York, Baltimore, and Washington, D. C., New Castle is now, and almost always has been, a town among cities. The town has actively preserved its late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century architectural heritage, much to the delight of those seeking refuge from the metropolis. Charming and soothing as they are, however, the buildings speak not of gentler days but of busier and more ambitious times when New Castle tried to be more than a town among cities.

Although founded in 1651, New Castle first developed a sustained sense of its economic and civic identity and potential in the prosperous days that closed the eighteenth century and opened the nineteenth. Optimistic and confident, New Castle seemed to be well on its way to becoming a small city that would rival Wilmington in importance. Between around 1808 and the late 1820s, New Castle worked with tenacious energy to fulfill its dreams. Economic, civic, and religious accomplishments did not come easily; realism and experience tempered earlier optimism, and aspiration and

frustration were in a creative balance. The balance tipped towards frustration in the 1830s as New Castle lost its hold on one major component of its economy and fought desperately with Wilmington to retain the county seat. Inertia and divisiveness assailed the town's churches, government, and organizations. The 1830s were a strenuous test of New Castle's economic and community life; by 1840, the town had discovered its limitations.

This segment of New Castle's history sheds light on several important themes in the history of the Middle Atlantic region and the early national period. The town's strategic location made it a living laboratory of the transportation revolution, affected by every new development. The same fact of location also placed New Castle in the midst of a regional urban network. New Castle did not exist in isolation; other places, particularly Wilmington, had a decisive effect on its fortunes. Within the town, the main emphasis is on community development and the complementary nature of religious, civic, and economic activities. Finally, this is the story of an old town that finds its limits in a new and apparently limitless nation.

The source material for this period of New Castle's history is impressive for both quality and quantity. Letters, newspapers, tax assessments, manuscript censuses,

petitions to the legislature, records of the town's churches, governments, and organizations, and even federal documents all help to tell the story. The town itself is a magnificent document. New Castle's people speak for themselves, with a little help from the author. Capitalization and punctuation in quotations have occasionally been changed to make them easier to read. New Castle Hundred's county tax assessments for 1798, 1816, and 1828; New Castle town assessments for 1798, 1804, 1810, 1815, 1820, and 1825; and federal manuscript censuses between 1800 and 1840 were all analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences on the University of Delaware computer.

Many organizations and individuals have aided me in the pursuit of this study. Within the town of New Castle, the Trustees of the Common, the city government, Immanuel Episcopal Church, the New Castle Presbyterian Church, and the New Castle Methodist Church allowed me to use their records. Although they do not have records from my period, Bethany U. A. M. E. Church and Saint Peter's Roman Catholic Church were helpful. I did a great deal of research at the University of Delaware Library, the University of Delaware Computing Center, the Historical Society of Delaware, the Delaware State Archives, and the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library. The University of Delaware and the Colonial Dames provided financial support that made this study

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN NOTES

Common	Minutes of the Trustees of the New Castle Common
Dover	Delaware State Archives, Dover, Delaware
EMHL	Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Wilmington, Delaware
HSD	Historical Society of Delaware Wilmington, Delaware
Town Commissioners	Minutes of the Commissioners of the Town of New Castle

CHAPTER 1

FORT CASIMIR BECOMES NEW CASTLE

We will observe before leaving Sand-hoek that it has always been the principal place on the South River, as well in the time of the English as of the Dutch. It is now called Newcastle by the English. It is situated on the west side of the river upon a point which extends out with a sandy beach, affording a good landing place, better than is to be found elsewhere on that account. It lies a little above the bay where the river bends and runs south from there, so that you can see down the river southerly, the greater portion of it, which presents a beautiful view in perspective, and enables you to see from a distance the ships which come out of the great bay and sail up the river.

From the Journal of
Jasper Danckaerts, 1679¹

Between 1651 and the late eighteenth century, New Castle grew from a straggling and struggling outpost of the Dutch West India Company into a pleasant and comfortable small town, county seat, and provincial capital. Once the political and physical rigors of the first generation had passed, the town developed slowly and quietly. From the beginning New Castle served as a port, market, government seat, and service center. It displayed the lack of civic definition and activity that characterized the Middle Atlantic region. New Castle was not a community in the New

England sense; it had neither boundaries nor self-government, and communal activity was restricted primarily to religion.² New Castle was firmly enmeshed in the regional urban network; its fortunes depended not only on its own assets but also on those of its neighbors. New York, Philadelphia, and Wilmington all had more to offer, so that New Castle was always important but always secondary. These conditions and characteristics appeared early in New Castle's life and formed the bases, but not the limits, of the new vigor and creativity that were to come in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

New Castle began as Fort Casimir, erected on a hook of land extending into the Delaware River. In its first generation, it was a pawn in the rivalries among the Swedes, Dutch, and English as they contended for control of the Delaware River valley. Settlement of the area began under the Dutch and the Swedes, neither of whom had great success. The Swedish venture lasted only from 1638 to 1655, hindered by a lack of support from home. In face of threats from both the Swedes and the English, the Dutch were not interested in settlement for settlement's sake, but in maintaining and solidifying their claim to the region.

The Swedes established their settlement in 1638 at Fort Christina, on the Christina River a few miles inland from the Delaware, where Wilmington was later located.

Although weak, the colony survived. Both the Dutch and the English regarded it as an encroachment on their property, but because the three nations were allied in the Thirty Years' War, officials at home did not want to disturb the intruder. Peter Stuyvesant, in charge of the Dutch West India Company's colony at New Amsterdam, chafed under the need for patience. He also knew that the Dutch did not have good access to the ocean or the interior in the Delaware area. He wanted action. In 1651, Stuyvesant built Fort Casimir, which was seven miles below Fort Christina and directly on the Delaware River.

In the early 1650s, Fort Casimir was merely an outpost consisting of the fort and about twenty houses.³ The Swedes tolerated its existence until mid-1654, when a more aggressive man, Johan Rising, took charge of Fort Christina. He invaded Fort Casimir, where he found nine soldiers and no cannon, and captured it easily. The settlement's name was changed to Fort Trinity, in honor of the day of capture, Trinity Sunday. Peter Stuyvesant wanted revenge, and by this time he no longer had to be gentle with Sweden. In September, 1655, Fort Trinity surrendered to him peacefully, and Fort Christina gave in after a brief siege, thus ending Sweden's aspirations on the North American mainland. Stuyvesant then moved the capital of the area from Fort Christina to Fort Casimir.

By 1655, the Dutch West India Company's short-lived desire to promote settlement had waned, and the Company was also deeply in debt to the city of Amsterdam. Amsterdam wanted its debt paid and was also interested in a New World colony that could provide needed imported products. In 1656, Amsterdam bought from the Dutch West India Company a strip of land that ran from the Christina River to Bombay Hook and included Fort Casimir, whose name was changed again. As New Amstel, the settlement served as capital of Amsterdam's colony, and began to grow, albeit fitfully.

The Dutch were not to retain their American possessions for long. King Charles II granted the land from the west side of the Connecticut River to the east side of the Delaware to his brother James, Duke of York, in hopes of dislodging the Dutch. In 1664, English soldiers captured New Amsterdam easily. Although the west bank of the Delaware was not included in York's grant, the soldiers went on to New Amstel, which, after all, was an outpost of Dutch authority. Alexander D'Hinoyossa, in charge at New Amstel, did not surrender peacefully, even though he knew that the English were more numerous and better armed. Instead, he put up a fight--briefly--and because he resisted, the settlement was plundered. After this transfer, New Amstel was called New Castle.

The English conquest of 1664 was not the town's last

political shuffle; in 1673, during the Third Anglo-Dutch War, the Dutch peacefully reasserted control over New Castle/New Amstel. At the end of the war, in 1674, it reverted to the English and remained under the Duke of York's proprietorship until 1682, when Delaware was included in William Penn's grant. After this final transfer, New Castle passed the rest of the colonial period under one flag, one proprietor, and one name.⁴

While the major powers swapped colonial possessions, the settlement on the Delaware--whatever its name and ownership--quietly went about the business of becoming a town. When Peter Stuyvesant built Fort Casimir, he also laid out two streets just to the south of it: the Strand along the river and Beaver (now 4th) Street, parallel but at some distance. By 1654, twenty-odd wooden houses had been built along these streets.⁵ The first settlers--mainly officers, traders, and soldiers--were not fresh from Holland, but had already spent some time in the New World. Some stayed at Fort Casimir permanently, some returned to Manhattan when the Swedes came, and others went back and forth.⁶ Only after 1656, when the settlement was sold to the city of Amsterdam and named New Amstel, did serious development begin.

The city of Amsterdam offered generous incentives to entice settlers, especially farmers: free land, tax

exemption for ten years, timber for building, seed and clothing for one year, deferred payment of passage, supplies at reasonable prices, participation in local government, and the services of a smith, wheelwright, carpenter and schoolmaster for the colony. Unfortunately, the incentives attracted traders and artisans.⁷ People did come, nevertheless, and by 1658, the population had increased from the twenty families there in the spring of 1657 to six hundred people. A year later, however, the population had declined to two hundred.⁸ Although no figures survive for the rest of the Dutch period, there probably was no great surge in population, for that surely would have been noticed and recorded.

The first years of New Amstel saw growth in areas besides population. Many buildings were erected: a guardhouse, bakehouse, forge, residences for clergy and other officials, a twenty foot square log building for city hall, and private dwellings. The fort was repaired. By 1658, the town had one hundred buildings.⁹ New Amstel was not formally planned, but grew unconsciously and naturally in a compact grid pattern. The fort remained on Sand-hoek, a point of land extending into the river, and some of the public buildings were within its walls. Buildings were made of wood and logs. Lots probably fronted towards the river, with houses close together and the gable end facing the

street. Most lots were long and narrow, about three hundred feet deep and fifty to sixty feet wide. Not surprisingly, New Amstel had a definitely Dutch appearance.¹⁰

New Amstel had its share of problems in its early years, some of which were caused by inept leadership. The head of the government was appointed by Amsterdam and was assisted by some locally-chosen officials. Under Amsterdam's regulations, three burgomasters were to be appointed by the common citizens and five or seven schepens or magistrates were to be chosen by the double nomination system. When the town had two hundred families, twenty-one councilmen were to be elected for life, forming a closed corporation. The first stage seems to have been put into operation; the second was not.¹¹ None of the Dutch administrators were fully able to command the people's loyalty and efforts.

Jean Paul Jacquet was in charge during the last months of rule by the Dutch West India Company and the transition to rule by Amsterdam, from December 1655 to early 1657. A council composed of two officials and two freemen assisted him. The council met more than forty times in fifteen months, handling small local matters like debt cases, martial discipline, selling liquor to Indians, and observances of the Sabbath. Jacquet also held two public meetings of the inhabitants at which they nominated fence inspectors and tobacco inspectors, discussed building a bridge, and agreed

on prices to be paid to Indians for furs and hides. By the last months of his tenure, however, people were dissatisfied with some of Jacquet's actions. Many left for Manhattan or Maryland, which reduced the population to twenty families.¹²

Jacquet's successor was Jacob Alrichs, the first director under Amsterdam's authority. He served from spring 1657 until his death in December 1659. Under his leadership, the population increased to six hundred and considerable building took place. Despite these developments, and Alrichs' care in exercising his office, New Amstel was plagued by the "goblins" that haunt all infant colonial ventures: disease, bad weather, bad harvests, and stingy provisioning from Amsterdam. Alrichs was also extremely strict in interpreting and enforcing the rules at a time when a little laxity probably would have been appropriate. All of these conditions led people to leave the colony. Finally, Alrichs provoked a near-fatal crisis in 1659 when he asked Maryland to return some Dutch soldiers who had deserted. Maryland replied by threatening an armed invasion, hoping to assert English claims to the area. The invasion never took place, but the scare that it caused all but ruined New Amstel.¹³

After Alrichs' death late in 1659, Alexander D'Hinoyossa took charge until the English conquest. He, too, had his faults. Arbitrary and heavy-handed, he dismissed officials whom he did not like, gave his friends special

treatment, and seized public and private property for his own use. Under his rule, nevertheless, conditions improved, although whether it was because or in spite of him is unclear. Trade, especially with Maryland, increased; shortages, disease, and deaths decreased; and the colony received more administrative privileges. Although New Amstel does not seem to have grown much, by 1663, it showed signs of both promise and permanence, which were not to be realized under Dutch rule.¹⁴

Dutch New Amstel was a rough, raw frontier settlement whose owners wanted it to serve as a center for trade, defense, and administration, and whose residents were interested primarily in their own lives. From the beginning, it shared many of the features that characterized the Middle Colonies. Its inhabitants represented a variety of ethnic groups, although the Dutch predominated. Swedes, Finns, and blacks were among the settlers. All sorts of people migrated through the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, so that there were probably people of other nationalities as well.¹⁵ Some were new to America, while others already had some New World experience. In addition to the variety of residents, the settlement was a port, which meant that it was not isolated from the rest of the world, but open to any person or idea that came along. New Amstel's people came and went as individuals; the radical fluctuations in population

suggest that they were not interested in enduring hardships for the sake of the community's future.

Like other Middle Colony settlements, New Amstel and its people had little sense of communal identity or responsibility, although there were some weak manifestations of civic life. In 1656, the government called two town meetings to elect minor officials and to transact other business, but the meetings did not become a regular practice. A Dutch Calvinist church had organized and erected a building by 1657. The next year, it had sixty members. Ministers, sent from Holland, came and went rather quickly. The church limped along and survived, but does not seem to have been a center of the community. New Amstel had a school with twenty-five pupils in 1657, but nothing is known of organized education after that date.¹⁶

New Amstel's varied economic functions met the needs of a frontier environment. Residents earned their livings as farmers, merchants, craftsmen, and government officials. New Amstel was the major port on the Delaware River; tobacco was the main export, and furs and grains were also shipped.¹⁷ The new land did not yet provide great prosperity or comfort; when the English plundered the area in 1664, they took one hundred sheep, thirty to forty horses, fifty to sixty cows, sixty to seventy Negroes, the year's crops, farmers' and artisans' tools, and a brewhouse, a stillhouse,

and a sawmill.¹⁸ Rough and poor as it was, New Amstel was nevertheless the major settlement on the Delaware River after the Swedes were ousted in 1655. It was not an isolated village, but the urban center of its region. The basic roles and sense of importance which emerged in these early years endured and formed a foundation for much of the town's late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century activity.

The English conquest of 1664 introduced still another language, culture, and authority to New Amstel, now called New Castle. The meeting of the two cultures carried the potential for tension and conflict, but the change was peaceful, unforced, and gradual. English ways won out, but New Castle retained a strong Dutch flavor throughout the seventeenth century. Looking back to the town's earliest days, the Swedish and Dutch conquerers were quite generous in their respective moments of glory. No one who took an oath of allegiance lost his land, and different languages and customs were not forced on people, but this did not prevent settlers from following their flag when it left Sand-hoek.¹⁹ Indeed, when the Dutch reasserted their authority in 1655, they knew that they had to treat the Swedes and Finns well, for the Scandinavians were more numerous, well settled, and moderately prosperous. Most of them lived north of the Christina River, and they were allowed to maintain their own way of life and their own

officials. The Dutch motivation was not kindness or enlightenment, but fear that the Swedes would revolt and perhaps try to drive the Dutch away. The Dutch fears were groundless, for the Swedes proved to be peaceable. With time, the tensions on both sides died down and the two groups gradually intermarried, although the Swedes maintained their own sense of identity well into the eighteenth century.²⁰

Similarly, the people of New Amstel accepted English rule calmly.²¹ Again, the English offered generous terms: upon taking an oath, the Dutch were allowed the trading privileges of any Englishman; liberty of conscience was established; there were no immediate changes in local government; and Dutch officials were allowed to keep their posts.²² The English seemed to realize that an abrupt, forced change would not win the allegiance of the Dutch, and they also did not pay much attention to their Delaware settlements. For example, the court at New Castle did not even have a copy of the laws it was to enforce until they had been in effect for several years!²³

Jasper Danckaerts, a Dutch Labadist missionary, visited New Castle in 1679, and his account of some of the leading citizens attests to the town's ethnic diversity. One Mr. Moll grew up in Amsterdam and then moved to Bristol, England where he was a merchant in the Holland trade. War between England and Holland destroyed his business, so he

went to America, first trading in Maryland and Virginia and then moving to New Castle. His wife was English, "a pious Independent," who had lived in a house with others of her religious persuasion before her marriage. Ephraim Herman was the oldest child of Augustine Herrman; Augustine's first wife was Dutch, his second English. Ephraim's wife came from Manhattan, and her father had served as governor of an island in the Dutch West Indies. She was of the Reformed faith. The final person described is Mr. Peter Alrichs, who originally came from Groningen in the Netherlands and was in charge of Amsterdam's trade on the Delaware River during Dutch rule. The English plundered his property, but he stayed and recovered, developing a trade with the West Indies.²⁴

The only major evidences of ethnic tensions involve the Scandinavians, who kept to themselves and maintained their own community and sense of identity. Unspecified discontent among them in 1669 erupted in an event known as the Long Finn's rebellion. Long Finn, the leader of the rebellion, and his confederates spread rumors that Swedish ships were on their way to recapture the area. The authorities stopped the rumors before they got very far, and the seventy-five people involved were tried by a special commission. The ordinary folk had to pay stiff fines, while Long Finn was branded and transported to Barbados to be sold

into servitude. After this, the Swedes gave no more trouble, but they also did not hold any high government positions, at least between 1676 and 1680.²⁵ A degree of prejudice against Scandinavians continued, for in 1675 an official writing to the New York government about the Dyke Riot said that,

. . . the Swedes and Fynnes being such a sort of people that must be kept under else they will rebell and of that nation those here are the worst sort as by instance the Long Fynne . . .²⁶

Danckaerts stated that in 1679 New Castle was not as prosperous as it had been formerly, and he described its appearance in this way:

What remains of it consists of about fifty houses, almost all of wood. The fort is demolished, but there is a good block-house, having some small cannon, erected in the middle of the town, and sufficient to resist the Indians or an incursion of Christians; but it could not hold out long.²⁷

Under English rule, New Castle continued to develop in a grid pattern with an open market area in the middle. Definite patterns of land use were emerging. Most of the landowners in the area between the market and the river were merchants or government officials; merchants also predominated in the next block upstream. Craftsmen tended to own land on the inland and upstream sides of town. The fortification was moved from Sand-hoek to the center of town in the early 1670s; with this move the central area became the site of

administration as well as commerce. New Castle was taking on the appearance of an English style market town, with a definite Dutch flavor.²⁸

Danckaerts had this to say about New Castle's economy and regional role:

Formerly all ships were accustomed to anchor here, for the purpose of paying duties or obtaining permits, and to unload when the goods were carried away in boats or barks, or by land in carts. It was much larger and more populous at that time, and had a small fort called Nassau; but since the country has belonged to the English, ships may no longer come here, or they must first declare and unload their cargoes at New York, which has caused this little place to fall off very much, and even retarded the settlement of plantations. . . . This town is the capital of justice, where the high court of the South River is held, having three other courts subordinate to it, from which appeals lie to it, as they do from it to New York, and from New York to England.²⁹

By 1679, New Castle had already lost status, for New York superseded it in importance as a commercial center. New Castle was now a secondary port whose international trade had to be routed through New York. The town's citizens were aware of this and attempted to improve their situation. In 1672, they asked the authorities at New York to make the town a port of entry. This request was denied. Six years later they asked to be allowed to trade with Maryland and to trade with other English ports without first going to New York. The decision on this is unknown.³⁰ This is but the first example of what was to be a chronic problem, and

a perennial response, for New Castle. The town was always in a secondary position, and its attempts to improve its condition--often through improving the status of the harbor--were never more than partially successful. The regional urban network and rivalry began early and would be a major influence on New Castle's later fortunes and behavior.

Lacking a major role in transatlantic or coastal trade, New Castle's economy was local, stable, and slowly growing. There was no mercantile or manufacturing specialty; general merchandising, geared to the needs of the immediate area, seems to have been the rule. Trade was carried out in a sophisticated barter system, for there was little hard currency. Grain, tobacco, pork, and furs were given specific monetary values. Both English and Dutch value systems were used, but the Dutch was more common and was used well into the Penn period.³¹

Land grants give a bit of insight into the economy. There was considerable ungranted land in New Castle throughout the Duke of York period, but some of the most attractive lots in the commercial area already had been divided into plots as small as twenty to thirty feet wide. Land on the outskirts of town was laid out in larger tracts, some as large as two or three acres. Much of this land was marshy and not suited for development. Some of it is still marshy. A survey taken by the Penn government between 1683 and 1686

indicates that most landowners had only one or two lots and that only two had more than six. Only two people seem to have been speculating in land, and few people drastically increased or decreased their holdings over the years, suggesting a stable if modest economy in which land in the central business area was the most valuable.³²

Even though New York assumed some of New Castle's commercial functions, the town remained a regional governmental center. The court at New Castle had jurisdiction over the area from Naamans' Creek to Bombay Hook, as well as the town itself. In other words, it was the seat of New Castle County. For a while at least, several other courts were subordinate to it, but after 1679 it was only the busiest of several courts on the river and had no appellate jurisdiction.³³

The change from Dutch to English forms of government was generally smooth and gradual. In 1668, three Swedes and two Dutchmen were appointed to advise Captain John Carr, in charge at New Castle, on local issues. The one major attempt at innovation came in 1672, when New Castle was incorporated under English laws. This was cut short when the Dutch recaptured their former possessions in 1673. When the English regained power, the incorporation was not restored, and the town returned to the jurisdiction of the court. After 1676, records were required to be kept in English, and

Dutch officials quietly transmuted into their English counterparts. What had evolved was English-style county government by a sheriff and justices of the peace.³⁴

Lack of interference from the authorities at New York was a major characteristic of New Castle's government. Governors Edmund Andros and Francis Lovelace each visited only once. A military commander for the entire river area was stationed at New Castle, but after 1676, there were no regular troops. The local militia had little to do; their job was to defend against Indians and rival European powers, not to be a local police force.³⁵

Civil authority was vested in the justices of the peace, who were appointed from New York. Besides having jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases within certain limits, the justices were responsible for taxes, dykes and roads, quitrents, and public debts. They had to report tax levies and expenditures to the governor and were the liaison with the officials at New York. Despite their broad authority, there was little opposition to the justices from either the people or the governor. This was not a popularly elected government, but people seemed to accept it most of the time.³⁶

There were, however, a few challenges to the government. One was the Dyke Riot of 1675. Under directives from

New York, the court ordered the citizens to give their labor to drain a marsh above the town and to repair a dyke that belonged to a private citizen. The assembled people did not like this, and a near-riot broke out, with the minister as one of the ringleaders. The government thought that it was making a reasonable request; the work was badly needed for it would provide easier access to the major town in the region, each person would have to give only about ten hours of labor, and laborers could earn good wages by working as substitutes. Also, some citizens, including the owner of the dyke in question, had promised to aid the project. On their side, the protesters felt that the request was poorly timed, for it came in early summer when their farms needed attention. They also felt that they would be working for nothing and helping a private citizen to drain his marsh when they had their own marshes to drain. The rebels were Dutch, English and Swedish; what they had in common was that they lived outside the town proper and felt that they would not benefit from the project. In the end, the dyke was built, and the leaders of the disturbance were sent to New York for punishment.³⁷

The only other major instances of dissatisfaction with the government occurred late in the Duke of York period, when rumors of governmental change were abroad and people were uncertain of what was going to happen. Only two such

incidents occurred, both of which involved allegedly seditious language and were handled through the judicial system. The first episode began as a normal debt suit, filed in March 1681, by John Moll, a justice of the court. Abraham Mann was the debtor's attorney. When the jury's verdict went against his client, Mann proceeded to impeach Justice Moll, saying that he was not fit to sit on the bench. The impeachment was tried at the Court of Assizes in New York. The jury found Moll guilty of some of the unspecified things that he had said both in and out of court, but the court reversed the verdict by throwing out the indictment. Abraham Mann was not content with this, for before long, two citizens swore that they had heard him challenge the legality of the laws and of some of the court's proceedings. Mann charged that all cases tried without a jury were invalid and that the laws had no standing because they had not been made by an assembly. The court issued a warrant for his arrest, but Mann eluded the authorities who were sent to seize him.³⁸

The other case, also in the spring of 1681, involved the Reverend John Yeo, a Church of England minister who had been preaching in the area for several years. Yeo knew that a political change was likely, and he challenged the legality of the New Castle court and also stated that he would not obey it. Such words brought him before the very same court. Several people gave evidence against Yeo, and he

acknowledged his words but pleaded innocent. A jury acquitted him.³⁹

These two incidents involving three citizens do not form a pattern of seditious libel or indicate any sort of organized effort to overthrow the government by means either peaceful or violent, nor is there any indication of long-standing grievances. For Mann, the trigger was the unfavorable verdict; Yeo's motivation is not known. Indeed, the fact that these matters were handled through the regular channels of the judicial system indicates that people in general were reasonably content with the government.

Life in this marketing and governmental center seems to have been basically stable and tranquil. The Long Finn conspiracy and the Dyke Riot were the only major civil disturbances. The Indians presented little problem; by 1680, the only issue was selling them liquor. Most court cases were for debt and there was little serious crime. In the twelve years of the Duke of York period for which there are good records, there were two cases of manslaughter, one of piracy, three or four recorded illegitimate births, two robberies, and one case of a stone concealed in a bag of feathers.⁴⁰

Diversity characterized New Castle's religious atmosphere: Lutherans, Anglicans, and Dutch Reformed lived

within the jurisdiction of the New Castle court, along with a few Quakers--George Fox held a meeting at New Castle in 1672--and an occasional Jew or Roman Catholic. The society accepted all of these views because freedom of conscience was established when the English took over in 1664 and was reaffirmed in 1674. Atheism was a capital offense, but no one religion was established. Ministers had to present their credentials to the court, and the court made some rules for the church and occasionally provided some funds for it, but the clergy was supported by private gifts. Any minister who had proper credentials and enough donations to support him could hold services.⁴¹ This arrangement shows that the government was concerned with the church as an institution, but left the particular theology largely up to the people. There are no records from the New Castle church, so any information is fragmentary. The year 1678 seems to have been an active one for the church, at least in areas where the government had a voice. The court asked Governor Andros for permission to hire an orthodox Calvinist minister who would be supported by donations. Men were appointed to take care of the church's accounts and maintenance, which was formalized with the appointment of wardens and elders late in 1678. After the Calvinist minister arrived, the court laid out lots for a glebe, minister's house, school, and church yard.⁴² All of these decisions indicate that the court had ambitious plans for the church that year.

The officials probably hoped that a Calvinist minister would spur interest in the church, since the population was still largely Dutch. This burst of activity implies that the church had been languishing and the government wanted to strengthen it.

By the early 1680s, New Castle was a diverse yet quiet and stable town with a mainly local focus and outlook. Lacking importance in the larger world, it served its region as a center for government, trade, and human contact and communication. In almost all its doings, New Castle was free from outside interference and was able to develop on its own. This may have been a small world for the New Castle residents, perhaps smaller than they might have wished, but at least it was their own.

William Penn's arrival in 1682 marks a major division in the colonial history of New Castle and of the entire Delaware Valley. The Europeans and English who began settlement of the area brought ethnic and religious diversity, developed peaceful relations with the Indians, farmed the land, raised their families, established churches and government, and opened routes of communication and trade. In short, they provided a firm basis upon which Penn and his settlers could build; they did not have to start from the very beginning--the first steps had already been taken. Penn's colony succeeded so dramatically that by 1700, the

English and largely Quaker culture dominated the Delaware Valley, at the expense of the earlier Continental settlers who had prepared their way.⁴³

When William Penn arrived at his property in the New World, he first touched ground at New Castle and was welcomed with appropriate ceremony and acknowledged as Proprietor. The actual fact of the transfer of ownership and authority did not change much in New Castle; life proceeded without a break. Over the next hundred years, the town grew in some ways and stagnated or declined in others. It became the capital of the Three Lower Counties when they separated from Pennsylvania, but lost trade to Philadelphia and then to Wilmington. New Castle grew in sophistication, but did so within Philadelphia's shadow. It was the center for Delaware's pre-Revolutionary agitation, but ceased to be the new state's capital in 1777. By the end of the Penn proprietorship, New Castle's role in the region had not changed; it remained a secondary town of mainly local importance operating in the shadow of larger places.

During the century under Penn, New Castle continued to grow more strongly English. As before, the English dominance was gentle; Pennsylvania and Delaware were tolerant places. One of Penn's first acts in America was to allow easy naturalization to the Swedes, Dutch, and Finns who applied for it.⁴⁴ Over the years, several new elements joined

the New Castle population: French Huguenots, Quakers, and Scotch-Irish who arrived mainly after 1720. A 1744 visitor noted that many of the houses were built in a Dutch fashion, an obvious reminder of the town's origin.⁴⁵ By this time, of course, the Dutch houses stood side by side with English style buildings.

The only concrete evidence of ethnic interaction is found in the history of the Dutch church, which gradually became Presbyterian. In 1684, the congregation argued over whether the minister should be Dutch or English. By this time, the Dutch were a minority, but they were reluctant to yield the pulpit to the English, who won the dispute. In time, the nationalities blended into a Presbyterian congregation. The lot on which the new church was built in the first decade of the eighteenth century was deeded to Roeloffe De Haes, Sylvester Garland, and Thomas Janvier--men of Dutch, English, and French background.⁴⁶ The nationalities had mingled--within the framework of the English version of the Calvinist faith.

The town's population can only be estimated, for there are no colonial censuses.⁴⁷ Two mid-eighteenth century visitors remarked that the town had about five hundred houses, which implies a population of 2,500 or more, but this figure is probably too high.⁴⁸ The first surviving United States census for Delaware, that of 1800, lists the

town as having 824 persons and 108 houses. Using the 1800 census and a 1782 census of whites in New Castle Hundred, the town's 1782 population can be estimated at about 500.⁴⁹

Earliest New Castle was a wooden town whose buildings were built in the Dutch fashion. Tile House, a substantial example of urban Dutch architecture, was built in the late 1680s and stood as a visible reminder of New Castle's heritage until it was razed in the 1880s.⁵⁰ The town's public buildings consisted of a wooden fort, replaced by a wooden blockhouse, and what was described in 1697 as "a small Ruinated Church."⁵¹ During the next century, changes in appearance marked New Castle's development as a more urban and sophisticated place. Brick was used widely in building and the architecture became more distinctly English. Several substantial public buildings were erected, all of brick: a Quaker meetinghouse (1705), an Anglican church (1706), a Presbyterian church (1707-1712), and a courthouse, complete with cupola (built 1689, rebuilt after fire in 1732). This development took place within the grid plan with central square that had been used from the beginning. With the exception of the Quaker meetinghouse, all of the public buildings were in or adjacent to the central area, which also contained the market, so that the town developed a central focus.

The waterfront was the oldest and most highly developed area of town. Its topography changed gradually over the years, the result of action by both man and nature. Fort Casimir had been built on a hook of land jutting into the river at the end of what is now Chestnut Street, and the town developed below it at first. The original shoreline was a high bank with a beach beneath it. The river channel came close to shore, so that ships could land easily, and there were few wharves in the early years. During the seventeenth century, the land along the river was not deeded, and most development was on the inland side of the Strand.⁵²

In 1701, Penn granted title to the land on the river side of the Strand to the owners of the property across the street, perhaps at their request. Each person's Bank Lot was as wide as his other Strand property and six hundred feet deep. In the late seventeenth century, the actual land area was fifty to one hundred feet deep. Over time, commercial development and the river's natural tendency to silt up caused the land area to grow, so that the modern shoreline is farther out.⁵³

Wharves became more numerous in the eighteenth century. There was a public wharf at the foot of Harmony Street by 1701, which may have existed earlier. By the middle of the eighteenth century, there were several wharves, all of which were dry at low tide. The river was at work;

this was another of New Castle's chronic problems. The wharves were lengthened after 1750. By 1790, at least three private wharves extended into the river.⁵⁴

During the Penn proprietorship, New Castle's economy was down more than up. The years between 1680 and 1700 were prosperous, as were the 1720s, but the town seems to have stagnated during the rest of the colonial period. New Castle continued to serve as a regional market, government center, and secondary port; it assumed no new functions. Philadelphia and then Wilmington limited New Castle's economic success.

The influx of settlers in the 1680s and '90s stimulated New Castle, at least for a while. As the major settlement in the area, New Castle was a source of supplies and information about life in the new land. Some of the immigrants stayed in the New Castle area, for the town had a Quaker meeting by 1684. Some people thought that the town land was a good investment; many new names appeared in the deed books in the 1690s, and the Bank Lots, prime commercial land, were patented in 1701. The infant Philadelphia did not immediately stifle New Castle; the two competed at first and in time complemented each other. Although Philadelphia was a much busier port, shippers found New Castle a good place to load and unload cargo bound for the lower Delaware Valley, while outward bound vessels stopped to pick up

passengers and food and water before the long ocean voyage. The first mention of the trade of supplying ships comes in 1697; this trade and the New Castle-Philadelphia relationship continued to be important into the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

Two Anglican missionaries give the best descriptions of the early eighteenth century economy. In 1708, the Reverend Philip Jenkins wrote that the town was "formerly a place of great trade and still has some vessels belonging to it most of the Inhabitants being Merchants here."⁵⁶ The Reverend George Ross, looking back from the mid-1720s, went into more detail, presenting a varied but modest economy. People living in the town itself were government officials, merchants, and craftsmen. The merchants dealt in rum, sugar, and molasses, along with some European goods, which indicates a lively West Indies trade. Farmers in outlying areas grew grains and livestock. Ross evaluated the general economic situation in this way:

They were generally low in their condition, but not indigent, having wherewithal to support themselves, but little to spare. . . . Few or none of them had Estates to support them without being obliged to their Trade Labour & Industry.⁵⁷

Neither observer gives a very promising picture. By this time, Philadelphia was the greater of the two towns and New Castle again suffered the consequences of being second. This time the larger town was much closer and exerted a greater influence than New York had. People in New Castle

were getting by, but they were not getting ahead. If the town were to grow substantially, there would probably have to be some sort of strong outside force.

By the mid-1720s, conditions had improved. George Ross described his 1727 flock in this way:

The present number of Inhabitants, professing themselves members of the Church under my care, are about 100 Families, & most of them much improved in their Fortunes & condition, having for the number of People as great plenty of Bread & provisions of all sorts, as Beef, Pork, Veal, Mutton & Dung Hill Fowl, as most other parts have in the King's Dominions, either at home or abroad.⁵⁸

Comfort had replaced sufficiency.

New Castle was a busy immigration port in the 1720s and 1730s. In 1729, reports in Philadelphia newspapers--probably exaggerated--claimed that thousands, mainly Irish, were landing at New Castle. There are two main reasons for New Castle's popularity as a port of entry. First, tolerant, prosperous Pennsylvania was a favorite destination for the Irish and Scotch-Irish, who, as British citizens, did not have to go to Philadelphia for processing and could end their long voyage at New Castle. Second, immigrants were a good return cargo for the ships that carried flaxseed from the Delaware Valley to Ireland. This was a substantial trade, for the Irish linen industry preferred to import its seed, instead of growing it.⁵⁹ Poor as most of the immigrants probably were, they stimulated the mercantile and

service sectors of the economy.

The economy faltered again at mid-century. War in Europe stopped the immigrant traffic between 1739 and 1765. Several outside observers remarked on the decaying buildings and lack of trade.⁶⁰ Another, passing through in 1749, noted that there was "no wharf but what is dry at lowwater Round it."⁶¹ By this time, the river had silted up considerably, and people had not lengthened their wharves to compensate. This suggests a quiet economy for which only partially usable wharves were adequate. It can also be taken as a sign of lack of hope and ambition among local businessmen.

In 1750, George Ross said that "this dying Condition is partly owing to an upstart village lying on a Neighboring creek which yields a convenient port to the adjacent Country."⁶² In other words, Wilmington. Swedish Fort Christina, built on the site of Wilmington in 1638, had never amounted to much. In the late 1720s, people lived in the area and had their own Swedish Lutheran Church, but there was nothing that could be called a town. In the early 1730s, however, some enterprising men in Pennsylvania saw the land between the Christina and the Brandywine Rivers as an excellent site for a town. The Christina was a convenient route to the Delaware River for southeastern Pennsylvania farmers, while the Brandywine offered a sure source of water power

for mills. The new town was founded in 1731 by Thomas Willing, who called it Willingtown. It grew slowly until William Shipley bought a great deal of land in 1735. Shipley and others who bought into the town were Quakers and astute businessmen, and under their leadership the town grew steadily. In 1739, when Willingtown had about six hundred people, the Crown granted it a borough charter and the new name of Wilmington. The town soon developed a market and foreign trade. Most importantly, the enterprising Quakers built flour mills along the Brandywine to process wheat grown in Pennsylvania and Delaware. The flour was of high quality; there was a good market for it in the colonies, Europe, and the West Indies.⁶³ With its combination of natural advantages and clever and ambitious entrepreneurs, Wilmington soon surpassed New Castle. New Castle's only unique offering was politics and government, which most people did not need often.

Being the seat of New Castle County and the capital of Delaware was a source of honor and activity, but these distinctions were limited and ultimately insecure. Danger from pirates in 1765 led to talk of moving the county seat. New Castle managed to ward off this threat; the records were moved to Christiana Bridge, but the courts remained in their usual location.⁶⁴ In the early nineteenth century, the location of the county seat would be a major issue.

Delaware, consisting of New Castle, Kent and Sussex

Counties, and also known as the Three Lower Counties, was an unusual colony. Although officially part of Pennsylvania, it had its own culture, identity, and problems, and was allowed to have its own legislature beginning in the early eighteenth century. The assembly met at New Castle, and the governor and other officials came down from Pennsylvania for the sessions, but being Delaware's capital involved little more. Without a resident governor and other high officials, New Castle was not the political, economic, and social center that a capital often is.⁶⁵

The 1770s brought both good and bad for New Castle's economy. In 1775, a regular line of packets was established between Philadelphia and Baltimore, with New Castle as the eastern end of the portage across the peninsula. The line was very successful, and New Castle again rivaled Wilmington as a port.⁶⁶ This was New Castle's first attempt to systematically provide for people and goods travelling up and down the coast; development of this route was to be an important part of the town's early nineteenth-century economy. The Revolution brought political excitement, but along with it came desertion, danger, loss of the capital, and decline of trade.

As with the economy, the transfer of ultimate authority from the Duke of York to William Penn brought no changes in the structure or functions of local government.

New Castle continued under the jurisdiction of the county authorities, and with one brief exception, had no government of its own. The citizens were not totally mute or unconcerned about their town, however. From time to time they petitioned the Proprietor or the Assembly of the Three Lower Counties, usually on issues related to land or what might be called civic housekeeping.

The question of defense was one issue that could arouse the citizens to action. In 1699, townspeople petitioned for defense against pirates. The year before, New Castle had barely escaped being raided, and in 1699 mutinous sailors took over a loaded ship in the harbor and sailed away without interference. The citizens felt exposed and defenseless and wanted the provincial government to do something. It did not.⁶⁷ New Castle again feared for its safety about half a century later, this time because of the Anglo-French rivalry. Their response was to build a battery, apparently financed in part by a lottery and an appropriation from the Delaware Assembly. They do not seem to have proceeded with dispatch on the project; the danger was over before the battery was completed.⁶⁸

The one major attempt to change the town's government came when Lieutenant Governor William Keith made it into a chartered borough in 1724. This action had more to do with proprietary politics than with New Castle's need and

desires. Keith was ambitious and took advantage of the confusion caused by the death of William Penn and the complicated Penn inheritance to rule Pennsylvania and Delaware without any regard for proprietary authority. He worked especially hard at ingratiating himself with the Lower Counties, perhaps with dreams of being their royal governor. The petition for the charter was submitted by New Castle citizens, but whether this was because they truly wanted this form of government or because Keith put them up to it is unknown.

The charter set up a grand design for the city of New Castle. Its area was about forty square miles. The city had a whole panoply of officials: mayor, recorder, six aldermen, six assistants, town clerk, treasurer, sergeant at mace, two constables, and two overseers of the poor. All offices except mayor and sergeant at mace were elective. The city also had its own courts and its own representatives to the Assembly. Officials were named, and the charter went into operation, but it lasted only as long as Governor Keith, which was not long at all. The charter was revoked, and, no longer a city, New Castle returned to county rule.⁶⁹

The town of New Castle was, and still is, blessed with a large tract of common land, known as the New Castle Common. Its origins are unknown, but it existed before Penn

came. The tract consisted of about 1,068 acres and was located on the western edge of town. The first definite mention of the Common came in 1701, when the Assembly was requested to have it surveyed. The survey was completed in 1704, and nothing more is heard of the Common until 1760, when citizens saw that the tract needed regulation. Some people were cutting down trees instead of merely gathering wood, and others, whose farms bordered on it, were enclosing bits of it in their fields. People petitioned to have a board of trustees set up to take care of the Common with legal authority to bring suit against violators. The Penns granted a charter in 1764 which set up a board of thirteen trustees who were to serve until they died or moved away. Vacancies were to be filled by election; people who had a freehold in town or paid an annual rent of forty shillings were eligible to vote. The land was to be used only as common. By 1775, the Trustees realized that the charter prevented the inhabitants from getting much benefit from the land, and they petitioned the Delaware Assembly for enlarged powers, but the Revolution delayed action on this issue. Aside from this, there is no record of the Trustees' activities between 1764 and the late 1780s.⁷⁰

There was one other move towards civic regulation and improvement in the decade before the Revolution. In the late 1760s, the question of the title to the market

square was brought before the Delaware Assembly, which in 1772 passed a law establishing boards of trustees to take care of the square in the middle of town. The plot was divided into four parts: one for public buildings, one for Immanuel Church, one for a school, and the remainder for market and public use.⁷¹

Perhaps not surprisingly, New Castle lacked many of the other usual signs of civic responsibility. The town had no fire protection or public water supply. It also lacked secular voluntary organizations. Only at the end of the colonial period were permanent organizations set up for the improvement of the town. The leading citizens must have been aware of all the civic activity in Philadelphia, mainly under Franklin's leadership, but they felt no need to do the same in New Castle at this time.

Education was a private concern, which meant that opportunities were limited and sporadic. In 1727, George Ross described the lamentable state of education in this way:

There are some private Schools within my reputed district which are put very often into the hands of those who are brought into the country & sold for Servants. Some School Masters are hired by the year, by a knot of Families who, in their turns, entertain him monthly, & the poor man lives in their Houses like one that begged an alms, more than like a person in credit & authority. When a Ship arrives in the River, it is a common expression with those who stand in need of an

Instructor for their children,--Let us go & buy a School Master. The truth is, the office and character of such a person is generally very mean and contemptible here, & it cannot be other ways 'til the public takes the Education of Children into their mature consideration.⁷²

Only in 1772, when the charter for the public square reserved land for a school, did the people take "the Education of Children into their mature consideration." By this time, the citizens were probably dissatisfied with the results of leaving education entirely in private hands. They also may have come to value education more highly than before. By reserving part of the central square for a school, they showed that they believed that education was a public concern. Finally, a school on the public square--in the center of town, right by the court house and market, where everyone could see it--would be an ornament for the town, a sign of civic pride and aspirations.

Most of colonial New Castle's ideological and organizational time and energy went into religion. When Penn arrived in 1682, the town had a floundering Dutch Reformed church. During a spate of ecclesiastical activity in the early eighteenth century, Quakers, Anglicans, and Presbyterians all built substantial brick houses of worship. By 1776, the Presbyterian and Anglican churches were well established, the Quaker meeting had lived and died, and townspeople had been exposed to both the Great Awakening and Methodism.

Although George Fox held a meeting in New Castle in 1672, the town did not have a Quaker meeting until 1684, when Quakers were flocking to Pennsylvania. The New Castle meeting was under the authority of the Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting. At first, the Friends met in each other's homes, but in 1705 they built a meetinghouse at Vine (4th) and Williams Streets, several blocks from the center of town. It was a one story brick building, about twenty feet square, with a hip roof and one door. As Wilmington, with its strong Quaker orientation, grew larger, the New Castle meeting was drawn into its orbit. In 1750, New Castle and Wilmington joined in a monthly meeting. A bit later, in 1758, the New Castle Quakers were directed to join with Wilmington meetings for worship, and in 1763 all meetings at New Castle were discontinued.⁷³

The Presbyterian church grew out of the Dutch Reformed church of earlier days. Although New Castle had a sizeable contingent of Calvinists of Dutch, English, and French origins, the Dutch church was never particularly strong, even when it was the only church in town. As the English presence grew stronger, the Dutch Reformed version of Calvinism gave way to the English Presbyterian form. The change was in process by 1684, when the congregation had difficulties deciding which nationality should fill the pulpit. The English group won this dispute, and the

Presbyterian congregation may have been organized about this time.

The Reverend John Wilson was the first known Presbyterian clergyman in New Castle, first preaching there some time before 1703 and then staying permanently from 1703 until his death in 1712. Under his direction, the congregation bought land and built a brick church to replace the decrepit Dutch building. Located near the old building, the church was completed in 1707 and enlarged in 1712.⁷⁴

From the limited information available, it appears that the congregation's most distinctive feature was difficulties with ministers. During Wilson's time, another clergyman preached in New Castle. The people liked him so well that they gave him a call and were willing to let Wilson go. They lacked sufficient justification for this action, however, and were rebuked by the Presbytery. In 1722, the incumbent wanted to resign because he felt that his salary was too low, but he remained until he received another call in 1723. Gilbert Tennent's behavior upon being offered a call in 1726 was erratic. He did not give a definite answer, but continued to preach at New Castle for several months. Then he left suddenly, still indicating that he was inclined to accept the call. He was rebuked by the Synod and did not serve as pastor of the New Castle church. From 1728 to 1746 the pulpit was empty and the

congregation was served by supply pastors. This probably meant only occasional visits from a minister, for in 1745 the Anglican minister noted that the Presbyterian church was completely closed. Some years earlier, this same minister had noted that while the other Presbyterian churches in the area had the ability to maintain a minister, New Castle did not.⁷⁵ In 1756, the New Castle and Christiana Bridge churches joined together and shared a pastor.⁷⁶ He resigned in 1763, and naturally there were difficulties in filling the vacancy. The New Castle people (the majority) and the Christiana Bridge people (a large minority) fought over which candidate to call. The issue was brought before the Presbytery, which gave the right of choice to the New Castle faction. Their man soon resigned, and another had to be chosen. Only after several years of wrangling did the two congregations have a minister, who left in 1777 to become an army chaplain. The pulpit then remained vacant until 1791. Between 1703 and 1791, the congregation had several major problems with ministers and a total of thirty-two years without a regular pastor. The same situation persisted in the nineteenth century.⁷⁷

The Reverend George Ross dated the founding of Immanuel Church from 1703, although organized Church of England worship may have begun in New Castle around 1689. In 1703, New Castle Anglicans, seeing the Presbyterians growing stronger

petitioned the Bishop of London for a minister. Upon learning that their request was granted, they collected money and built a church on part of the market square, believing that since it was public land, there would be no problems with titles. Ross arrived around 1705, and the church was opened in 1706 with appropriate observances. The building was fifty feet long and thirty feet wide, made of brick with a cedar roof. By 1727, it had a gallery and a porch.⁷⁸

Ross' letters to his employer in London, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, offer a vivid picture of Immanuel's progress and of New Castle's religious atmosphere. He presents himself as a tireless and underpaid missionary for the Church of England. He was a good observer of his surroundings and blunt in his language. With one brief exception, he served New Castle and the surrounding area until his death in 1754. He was succeeded by two men who served only a short time. In 1767, Aeneas Ross, his son, took the parish and stayed at New Castle until his death in the early 1780s.⁷⁹

Over the years, George Ross' congregation varied in both size and enthusiasm.⁸⁰ He estimated that there were about sixty families under his care when he first arrived, which increased to about one hundred families by 1727. In 1710, about eighty to one hundred attended Sunday services.

The high point of enthusiasm seems to have come in 1729.

. . . Religion never appeared in this place in so shining and lively a state as it does at present. That generation is almost extinct who were my hearers at my first settling here, and those who succeed them are a set of very honest, Zealous Churchmen, whose lives adorn their Profession, and cool the hearts of those who are prejudiced against our grave and manly worship. We are blessed with peace and mutual love, and none among us are tainted with new and strange opinions.⁸¹

By 1732, however, the congregation was shrinking because the men in power encouraged the people to desert the Church. In 1745, the congregation was small in both size and wealth. Ross was quick to add that this was because the town was deserted and languishing, and not because he was languishing. Nevertheless, he had reason for both hope and pride. The Presbyterian church was closed, and the younger dissenters attended Anglican services and showed interest in the Church of England. By this time, Ross had served about forty years in New Castle. He had baptized and taught most of his congregation and believed they were as loyal to the Church of England as any in the colonies.

Ross was careful to maintain the practices and doctrine of the Anglican church at this mission in a land teeming with dissenters. He generally preached twice on Sundays and held prayers on Wednesdays, Fridays, and all holy days. The Holy Communion was administered regularly, with the number of communicants ranging from fifteen to forty. He

regarded instructing children in right doctrine as an important part of his job. Ross usually had more than one church to serve, so he did not preach at New Castle every week.

A strong sense of rivalry between the Anglicans and Presbyterians emerges from Ross' letters, especially through the 1720s. In 1703, the fact that the Presbyterians had a minister and were growing stronger was a major reason why the New Castle Anglicans asked for a clergyman. Until their church closed, the Presbyterians were always more numerous and aggressive than the Anglicans. Ross said that the Scotch-Irish who came during the 1720s were "the bitterest railers against the Church that ever trod upon American ground" and he wished that he "had better neighbours or keener weapons to stop their career."⁸² After the Presbyterians had fallen upon hard times, the rivalry died down; the Presbyterians had no minister to encourage them, and at least some of them attended Ross' services.

As a missionary, Ross wanted to win souls, but he also did not want to compromise the dignity or standards of the Church of England. His weapons against the Presbyterians were few and unsuccessful: tracts, instruction, the godly example set by his parishioners, and occasional extemporaneous preaching. He was willing to work with people who were interested in the Anglican faith, but he did not go

out of his way to stimulate interest where there was none. It is difficult to say who "won" in the rivalry between the two churches. The Presbyterians had their moments of noise and numbers, but also years with no minister and a closed church. The Anglicans maintained a minister at New Castle throughout the colonial period; although quiet, the Church of England was a stable and continuing force.

The Great Awakening touched New Castle, but its extent and influence cannot be known since no records survive for either the Presbyterian church or the New Castle Presbytery for the period. George Whitefield preached at least once in New Castle, and George Ross naturally had strong feelings about the man and his influence. In August, 1741, Ross reported that while his own church was at peace, the "flame of dissention scorches the neighbouring Meetings" because of "that wild enthusiast, Whitefield."⁸³ There was evidently some division of opinion among the New Castle Presbyterians, for Ross noted that the moderates among them attended the Anglican church frequently. By June, 1742, things had quieted down, for

their [Whitefield's partisans] appearing in Print has given their opponents a handle to expose their madness, and many who were carried away with their raging novelty, are now come to their sober senses.⁸⁴

Only a few of Ross' flock--some two or three "weak creatures"--had been carried away by the madness. One was a young woman

who "had such fits of conviction, or rather disturbed imagination, that she made the very bed whereon she lay to shake & tremble with her violent agitations."⁸⁵ She eventually recovered from her enthusiasm and stayed within the Anglican fold. If the Presbyterians had had a regular minister at the time, Ross' experience with the Great Awakening might have been much different.

Methodism, another part of the eighteenth-century revival, came to New Castle in the late 1760s. Although this faith spread rapidly in lower Delaware, its preachers had little success in northern New Castle County. Francis Asbury paid several visits to the town in the 1770s, but with little success; people heard him but did not respond. Asbury felt that they were too devoted to pride, vanity, and folly; the court house was open to dances and balls, but closed to Methodists. A Methodist society was formed around 1780, but it did not last long.⁸⁶

The American Revolution interrupted New Castle's peaceful course of development, bringing both excitement and stagnation. As capital of the three counties that became the state of Delaware, the town was the scene of some of Delaware's responses to Britain's provocative actions. Delaware was not a leader of the Revolution, but a follower, taking its cues from Philadelphia. The assembly discussed Britain's new taxes and policies and passed resolutions

asserting their insistence on their rights as Englishmen. In 1776, the Lower Counties' decision to break with the Crown was made at New Castle, and the town was the site of Delaware's first constitutional convention.⁸⁷ Real excitement came when independence was declared:

. . . the Declaration of Independence was read in form here in the presence of the House of assembly and 400 or 500 people the principle inhabitants of this county who gave three huzas, and immediately took the Kings Arms and burnt them with the constables staves, etc.⁸⁸

Revolutionary fervor proved to be costly for New Castle's political fortunes; Delaware's new status as a separate state and the threat of physical danger brought a call to move the capital to a safer and more central location. Dover, which met both qualifications, was chosen.⁸⁹

Between September 1777 and June 1778, another kind of excitement--and fear--touched New Castle. The war was practically on its doorstep, for it was during this period that the British occupied Philadelphia. They also held Wilmington for five weeks in September and October of 1777. British ships were in the river throughout this period and British troops frequently landed at New Castle to buy supplies. Despite its vulnerable location, New Castle escaped unharmed, but there were probably many tense moments.⁹⁰

Although New Castle was not physically destroyed, the war brought desertion and depression. Ambrose Serle,

secretary to Lord Howe, the British commander, visited New Castle in October 1777, and described the town in this way:

Landed at Newcastle, and walked about the Town & its Environs, which are by far the most pleasant and the most fertile Lands I have yet seen in America. The principal Houses, of wch there are few, are utterly abandoned by the Inhabitants on account of their Concern in the Rebellion . . . The Town is small, and its Buildings mean & scattered; yet, though inferior in Size & every other Respect to Wilmington, it is the principal Town of the County, where the Courts of Justice are held: and here are a Parish Church, a Presbyterian Meeting-House, a Court House, a Goal, a Pillory, a Pair of Stocks, one old Cannon for Signals or rejoicing Days, and a Pound for Hogs. The Inhabitants seem poor, and their appearance is by no means healthy, though the Country about them is pleasant. The Fever & Ague prevails here in Autumn, as in all the Low Lands of Delaware Bay & River. There being no Wharf or Dock, where Ships can ride out of the strong Current, it does not seem probable that this Town will ever grow (at least not grow rapidly) into Consequence.⁹¹

The Common's attempt to expand its power and the 1772 efforts to establish a school on the market square were temporarily halted, but the people's civic consciousness was not stifled. Instead, it was redirected. The collapse of public order and the inability of the normal channels of authority to deal with it led the townspeople to form a town meeting to try to solve the problems themselves.⁹²

By the end of the colonial period, New Castle was over a century old. Although substantial and well-established, it had never enjoyed great prosperity, nor was there much

hope for a more promising future. Almost from the beginning, New Castle's fortunes depended on other cities in the region, and New Castle always came in second. Its colonial economy focused on the river and courthouse and was oriented to providing services rather than trade or manufacturing. Although New Castle looked like a town, with its central square and streets arranged in a grid pattern, it had little formal corporate sense of identity. For the most part, colonial New Castle lacked vigor and a sense of direction. In the 1760s and '70s this began to change as a new economic and civic energy emerged, only to be stopped by the Revolutionary War and subsequent depression. After the hard times had passed, New Castle regained its energy and entered a period of increased creativity and activity during which it would build on, grow beyond, defy, and almost lose various parts of its colonial heritage.

CHAPTER 1 NOTES

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The 1782 state census lists 1,243 whites in New Castle Hundred.

35% of 1,243=	435	whites
20% of 435 =	87	blacks
	512	total estimated population of the town of New Castle in 1782

Sources: Second United States Census, 1800
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CHAPTER 2

A STATE OF CHURNING STAGNATION

New Castle is one of the most healthy and flourishing towns on the continent There is not, at this time, one house to be rented in this place; and the number of applications for houses, make it an object for persons to improveThe malignant fever has never made any progress, and the Ague scarcely known. The number of children in this place, is convincing proof of the healthiness of it.

Delaware Gazette, August 30, 1799

But one complaint have I to make of the state of society [in the town of New Castle], celibacy now prevails in every rank of life. The streets are crowded with bachelors, and the houses with ladies who have refused good offers, and are never likely to receive any for the future. I would advise the fair sex as things stand at present, to get husbands as fast as they can.---There is nothing more deplorable than a lady in the virgin bloom of SIXTY-THREE, or a battered unmarried beau, who squibs about, from place to place, showing his clean white stockings and his glossy hair.

Delaware Gazette, October 24, 1820

Although neither description was intended to convey objective information--the first is from an advertisement for building lots, while the second is from a tongue-in-cheek newspaper account of a visit to the town--each contains a bit

of truth about New Castle's population and general situation. New Castle was indeed flourishing around the turn of the nineteenth century; its economy and civic life were vigorous and its population increased nearly a quarter between 1800 and 1810. The growth did not continue, however; New Castle's opportunities were limited, and its population remained much the same between 1810 and 1840, although constant movement lay under the surface. In rural New Castle Hundred, the population was essentially the same in 1800 and 1840, although it too was continually changing.

The same combination of movement and stability also marked the ways of New Castle Hundred's households and families, whether rural or urban, black or white, for this period saw the gradual beginnings of a major transformation of domestic life. The "demographic transition," in which the high birth and death rates of earlier times slowly declined, was underway, and the modern affection-based family began to replace the older traditional, patriarchal family. New Castle Hundred's white households experienced both developments. Blacks' lives also changed. As slavery declined, the free black population grew rapidly, and an increasing number of blacks lived in their own households, rather than with whites. For people of both races, the changes were slow and partial, probably more visible to historians than to contemporaries.

Coming, Going, and Staying

Although the nation's population grew at the rapid rate of about 34 percent each decade in the early national period, Delaware, with a decadal growth rate ranging from 14 percent to zero, was one of the most slowly growing states. To cite the most extreme example, Delaware's population increased by only seventy-five people between 1800 and 1810. In percentage terms, the nation's population grew as much in one decade as Delaware's did in the fifty years between 1790 and 1840. The state's population did not behave in a neat, predictable fashion; Wilmington and Sussex County had the most growth, while Kent County and the rest of New Castle County either declined or grew very slowly.¹

Table 1: Population of New Castle Hundred, 1800-1840

Year	Entire Hundred		Town of New Castle		Rural New Castle Hundred	
	Pop.	% of Change	Pop.	% of Change	Pop.	% of Change
1800	2,427	.....	823	.....	1,604	.....
1810	2,370	- 2%	1,021	+24%	1,352	-16%
1820	2,651	+12%	1,023	0%	1,628	+20%
1830	2,458	- 7%	996	- 3%	1,462	-10%
1840	2,706	+10%	1,061	+ 7%	1,643	+12%
1800-1840		+12%		+29%		+ 2%

New Castle Hundred grew even more slowly than the rest of the state; its population grew only 12 percent

between 1800 and 1840. The town of New Castle was disproportionately responsible for most of the gain, as Table 1 shows; it contained only about 40 percent of the hundred's population, yet contributed about 85 percent of the long-term increase. New Castle's population grew 24 percent between 1800 and 1810, then stagnated and even declined for twenty years, and grew modestly between 1830 and 1840; in forty years it increased 29 percent, or at a rate nearly equal to the state's. In contrast, rural New Castle Hundred's population was only 2 percent greater in 1840 than it had been in 1800; moreover, this stagnation was accompanied by substantial fluctuations of 10 to 20 percent between censuses. Approximately 60 percent of the hundred's population was rural, yet it contributed only 15 percent of the long-term population gain.

Tables 2 and 3, which divide the population racially, bring the fluctuations into sharper focus. Overall, the white population increased by forty-eight people, or 3 percent, contributing 17 percent of the hundred's long-term increase. After a large increase in 1810, the town's white population changed only slightly in 1820 and 1830, while the rural white population bobbed up and down almost symmetrically between 1800 and 1830. In 1840, both town and country recorded slight but proportionately similar increases. In forty years, the town's white population increased 29

percent, while it declined almost 12 percent in rural New Castle Hundred.

Table 2: Population Distribution According to Race
New Castle Hundred, 1800-1840

Year	Total Pop.	Whites Number	Percent of Total	Blacks Number	Percent of Total
<u>All of New Castle Hundred</u>					
1800	2,427	1,880	78%	547	23%
1810	2,370	1,788	75%	582	25%
1820	2,651	2,033	77%	618	23%
1830	2,458	1,745	71%	713	29%
1840	2,706	1,928	71%	778	29%
<u>Town of New Castle</u>					
1800	823	663	81%	160	19%
1810	1,021	796	78%	225	22%
1820	1,023	787	77%	236	23%
1830	996	776	78%	220	22%
1840	1,061	852	80%	209	20%
<u>Rural New Castle Hundred</u>					
1800	1,604	1,217	76%	387	24%
1810	1,352	995	74%	357	26%
1820	1,628	1,246	77%	382	23%
1830	1,462	969	66%	493	34%
1840	1,643	1,074	65%	569	35%

Table 3: Percentage of Population Change According to Race
New Castle Hundred, 1800-1840

Year	Whites			Blacks		
	All	Town	Rural	All	Town	Rural
1800	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
1810	- 5%	+20%	-18%	+ 6%	+40%	- 8%
1820	+14%	- 1%	+25%	+ 6%	+ 5%	+ 7%
1830	-14%	- 1%	-22%	+15%	- 7%	+29%
1840	+11%	+10%	+11%	+ 9%	- 5%	+15%
1800-1840	+ 3%	+29%	-12%	+42%	+31%	+47%

The black population grew much more rapidly than the white; Tables 2 and 3 show that it increased 42 percent in forty years and provided 83 percent of the hundred's population gain. The proportion of the population that was black increased from about 23 percent in 1800-20 to about 29 percent in 1830-40. Again, there were differences between town and country. While the town's black population increased 31 percent overall, most of the growth came between 1800 and 1810, and a slight decline began after 1820. Blacks' share of the population was about 21 percent throughout the period. After an initial decrease, the rural black population increased 59 percent between 1810 and 1840, with the largest jump coming between 1820 and 1830. The black proportion of the rural population increased from 25 percent in 1800-20 to 34 percent in 1830-40. Rural blacks were responsible for both the increase in the percentage of blacks in the total population and much of the numerical increase in the hundred's population.

Americans have long been a highly mobile people; between 1800 and 1970, the decadal persistence rate of males has been between 40 and 60 percent in both rural and urban settings.² The people of New Castle Hundred were slightly more mobile than Americans in general. Between 1800 and 1840, an average of 27 percent of rural households stayed for ten years; the town's population was slightly more

stable, with 32 percent staying from one census to the next. For the hundred as a whole, slightly under a third stayed long enough to be counted in two successive censuses. These figures correspond with the pattern of movement found in Odessa, Delaware, a small inland port farther south.³ The persistence rate of white surnames, however, was nearly 50 percent, which suggests a greater degree of continuity. Families continued to live in the hundred although specific individuals died or moved away.

New Castle's town assessment lists, sampled at five to six year intervals between 1798 and 1825, not only confirm the mobility figures drawn from the censuses, but also show that out-migration was heaviest during the first interval after a taxable appeared on the list.⁴ An average of 49 percent of the resident taxables on any list were present on the next list; thus, within five or six years New Castle's people had already reached the decadal mobility rate. If this also applies to the rural population, allowing for the difference between the two shown by the censuses, about 44 percent of the rural people may have stayed for five years. The town lists show that wealthier people were more likely to remain than poorer people; of those with an assessed value at or above the median, an average of 67% were present five years later, while only 41 percent of those with a value less than the median remained.

Table 4: Persistence of Town Taxables*

<u>Year Percentage Present on the Next Tax List</u>						
<u>Year</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>Residents</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>At Or Above Median</u>	<u>Below Median</u>
1798	...	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
1804	56%	48%	58%	56%	66%	41%
1810	55%	48%	56%	54%	62%	46%
1815	60%	51%	61%	60%	72%	47%
1820	52%	44%	57%	52%	69%	35%
1825	52%	49%	58%	55%	68%	35%

* Example: 48% of residents on 1798 list were on 1804 list;
52% of males on 1815 list were on 1820 list.

As Table 4 shows, the mobility of the town taxables varied subtly but suggestively over the years. The highest rate of persistence for all groups came in 1815, while the lowest for many groups was in 1820. The 1815 peak may represent optimism and jobs generated by the construction of the turnpike to Frenchtown, while the 1820 trough probably reflects hard times. Those on the bottom part of the list, for whom New Castle must not have offered much in a depression year, showed the greatest decline in persistence between 1815 and 1820. In contrast, 1820 was not the low point for those on the top part of the list; they either were not affected by hard times, or they knew that they could not do better elsewhere. For many subgroups, the 1826 persistence level was essentially the same as that of 1820, which hints that economic conditions may not have improved very much.

Thus, many came, many went, and a few stayed. From a purely demographic point of view, the high mobility, the short-term fluctuations, and the slow long-term growth rate suggest that New Castle Hundred was not a lodestone of opportunity. This was truest for whites, while the black population grew rapidly, especially in rural areas. New Castle Hundred may have lacked the opportunities that whites sought, such as buying or renting land on good terms or starting a business, and offered instead many more chances for blacks, such as unskilled or semi-skilled labor or tenant farming on terms that whites would refuse.

Origins and Destinations

Just as in the colonial period, it is nearly impossible to know exactly where people came from and where they went. Except for racial tensions, there is no indication that any ethnic or regional identification affected town life or politics; such feelings, if they existed, remained at the level of private prejudice rather than public consciousness or conflict. Nevertheless, there are bits and pieces that offer some hints about people's comings and goings.

Heavy Irish and Scotch-Irish immigration continued in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; between 1793 and 1805, ships from Ireland carrying a total of

4,500-5,000 passengers are known to have docked at New Castle, and there may have been others as well.⁵ Some of the newcomers probably settled in the town, contributing to the population increase between 1800 and 1810, but most moved on. They did not settle in rural New Castle Hundred, whose population declined 16 percent between 1800 and 1810.

There was only one other major influx of foreigners, and it was temporary rather than permanent. After the revolution on Santo Domingo in the early 1790s, many of the island's whites, along with their slaves, fled to the United States. About seventy refugees, twenty-five of whom were slaves, came to New Castle, probably in late 1793. For the most part, they were incomplete families: mothers and children, single men, brothers. While some had adequate funds, the majority were poor and dependent on the town's charity, which seems to have been minimal and provided by only a few. At least some of the French remained in New Castle through most of 1794, still in straitened circumstances, for one woman wrote in August that she feared the prospect of spending the winter there with four sick children and no means of support.⁶ For these people, New Castle was a temporary stop rather than a new home.

Petitions sent to the state legislature in the late 1790s by four New Castle men provide a glimpse of the success that an immigrant could achieve and of the question of

citizenship in the new nation. Delaware had restrictions on aliens owning land, and these men, until just before they petitioned, had not been aware of the law, nor of the fact that they were aliens until naturalized. Once they learned that they were not citizens, however, they hastened to be naturalized and to legitimize their ownership of property.

William Aull, a merchant, came to America from Londonderry, Ireland, in 1784. His brother John also came to America. Before moving to New Castle around 1794, William lived in Cecil County, Maryland, St. George's Hundred, Delaware, and Philadelphia. He owned 116 acres in St. George's Hundred and a house and two lots on the Strand in New Castle. He married a Delaware woman of good family, and George Read, one of the state's most famous men, attested to Aull's honesty based on an acquaintance of six years. Lack of citizenship did not seem to hurt Aull's standing with his neighbors, for he was elected a Trustee of the Common in 1795, the year before he became a citizen. He served on the Common until his death around 1804, as well as four terms as town commissioner. John Aull also did well, serving four terms as town commissioner and leaving considerable real estate in town at his death.⁷

John Mundall came from Edinburgh, Scotland in 1788 or earlier. He, too, owned a house and lot on the Strand.

He was on the town tax list in every year between 1798 and 1825, and was in the top quintile on the 1798 and 1816 county assessments. He served as town commissioner in 1810.⁸

Thomas Magens, a native of St. Thomas in the Danish West Indies, came to America in 1790 or earlier and had lived in Delaware for five years. He owned about ninety acres in New Castle Hundred and, through his marriage to a Delawarean, two houses and three lots in New Castle. In 1798, he was in the top ten percent on the county tax list, while in 1816 he was in the top quintile. He too was active in the community, after he became a citizen, serving as Trustee of the Common from 1809 to 1819, town commissioner in 1800 and 1810, and vestryman at Immanuel in 1803 and 1804. In his will, he called himself a storekeeper, and his personal property bequests indicate that he lived very comfortably.⁹

William Armstrong did not provide much information about himself, but he did own two houses and lots in New Castle, one of which was on the Strand. He also did not participate in local affairs. In 1798, he was in the top quintile on the county tax list.¹⁰

While these four men were probably not typical, they show that immigrants could prosper and become respected members of their community. Their ignorance of the need for naturalization shows that the general population probably

did not worry too much about legal technicalities or ethnic origins, at least in the 1790s. Indeed, if these men of substance, presumably well aware of the requirements of society, did not know of the need to be naturalized in order to enjoy all the benefits of American residence, there must have been many others in the same condition.

The membership records of the Presbyterian church give an indication of the comings and goings of a small part of the population.¹¹ Nearly three-quarters of the migrating Presbyterians moved within a small area consisting of Philadelphia, New Castle County, and nearby Maryland. Only one person transferred in from Wilmington, while fourteen New Castle people changed their membership to a Wilmington church. However, all fourteen made the switch in 1837 and after, which may reflect the New School/Old School controversy within the denomination rather than people actually moving to Wilmington. The lack of new members from Wilmington may indicate little movement in that direction, or perhaps Wilmingtonians who moved to New Castle did not change churches. The remainder of the migrants went to or came from more distant places, including Baltimore, other locations in Pennsylvania, Ireland, Missouri, the District of Columbia, and Ohio. Only one couple transferred in from Ireland, in 1835, which suggests that the town did not receive a major infusion of Irish Presbyterian immigrants

between 1813 and 1840. In all, thirty transferred into the New Castle church while forty-four transferred out. If these figures are taken at face value, they represent a net loss for New Castle, but if some transfers to Wilmington were for reasons other than moving, then the numbers balance.

While these bits and pieces do not provide a detailed picture of people's origins and destinations, they offer several suggestions. First, they show that while immigrants could do well, New Castle Hundred was not a magnet that attracted them. Ethnic tensions among whites may have been absent because there were few foreigners to upset the natives, and what immigrants there were fit in well. Although the census and town tax records show that many people moved, the Presbyterian membership list suggests that most migrated within a small geographic area; few moved directly to the growing West.

Household and Family Patterns

Coming, going or staying, the people of New Castle Hundred lived in households and families of varying shapes and sizes. Life was communal rather than solitary; single person households were rare. The 1800-1840 censuses provide a good deal of basic information about households, such as age and sex distribution, household size, number of children,

and differences between blacks and whites, but they also have severe limitations. Only the head was listed by name, and his or her age can only be guessed, although it is usually evident. All other household members were listed simply by age, sex, and race; they lack names and any indication of their relation to the head or to each other. It is difficult to know who was family and who was household. Before 1830, the age categories were very broad, and there were no age or sex designations for blacks until 1820. Between 1800 and 1820, the age divisions for whites were 0-9, 10-15, 16-25, 26-44, 45 and above. In 1830 and 40, the ages under 20 were divided into five-year intervals, and above 20 the division was by decade. For blacks, the 1820 intervals were 0-13, 14-25, 26-44, 45 and above; in 1830 and 40, the groupings were 0-9, 10-23, 24-35, 36-54, 55-99, 100 and above. Despite their shortcomings, the censuses provide a glimpse of domestic life and how it was slowly changing.

White Households

Table 5: Median Size of White Households

<u>Year</u>	<u>Entire Hundred</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Rural</u>
1800	7.6	6.3	8.3
1810	6.1	5.7	6.6
1820	6.7	5.7	7.5
1830	6.4	5.9	7.1
1840	6.6	5.4	7.7

Table 6: Percentage of Households of Various Sizes

<u>No. of Members</u>					
<u>Entire Hundred</u>	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840
1-3	10%	18%	19%	16%	14%
4-6	27%	36%	31%	35%	35%
7-9	31%	26%	24%	26%	28%
10+	33%	19%	26%	23%	23%
<u>Town</u>					
1-3	17%	24%	26%	16%	23%
4-6	35%	36%	34%	43%	39%
7-9	26%	27%	21%	24%	25%
10+	23%	14%	18%	18%	13%
<u>Rural</u>					
1-3	5%	13%	13%	15%	6%
4-6	22%	36%	30%	29%	32%
7-9	34%	26%	26%	29%	30%
10+	39%	25%	32%	27%	31%

Household size, shown in Tables 5 and 6, declined gradually and fitfully from a median of 7.6 to 6.6. The distribution of households of various sizes, the number of children, and the presence of persons other than nuclear family members all contributed to the change. Town households were always about one to two persons smaller than rural ones; in 1800, the median town household had 6.3 members, declining to 5.4 by 1840, while the median rural household shrank from 8.3 in 1800 to 7.7 in 1840. Throughout the hundred, the percentage of households with six or fewer members increased and the percentage with ten or more persons decreased. The town, however, always had more smaller households and fewer large ones than the country.

Over the years, the white population was fairly evenly balanced between the sexes, although there were a few exceptions. First, in 1820, rural New Castle Hundred had an oversupply of men; in both the 26-44 and over 45 age groups, the population was about 60 percent male. In the younger group, the soldiers stationed at Fort Delaware, who were counted in New Castle Hundred that year, caused the imbalance. The imbalance in the older group is more difficult to explain, but it appears that nearly a third of the men had spouses in the 26-44 age category; there was not a large group of older men without wives or older men who were not heads of households.

The town had the opposite problem on several occasions. In 1820, about 60 percent of the people aged 16-25 were female. This imbalance at the age when people were likely to be leaving home suggests that New Castle's young men sought their fortunes, or at least their vocational training and first jobs, elsewhere, and that New Castle did not attract young men from other places. The trend was even stronger in 1830, when the town's population was 43 percent male and 57 percent female. Although there was an excess of females in almost every age group, the disparity was strongest in the late teens, twenties, and thirties, precisely the years when people begin careers and families. This was accompanied by a rise in the proportion of households

headed by women. New Castle in 1830 was not retaining its own men or attracting new blood; instead, it was apparently more attractive to widows and spinsters, who probably sought a pleasant, respectable, and reasonably priced place to live rather than a gold mine. By 1840, however, the population came into better balance, although there was still a slight preponderance of females.

Table 7: Percentage of Whites in Each Age Category

<u>Year</u>	<u>0-9</u>	<u>10-15</u>	<u>16-25</u>	<u>26-44</u>	<u>45+</u>
<u>Entire Hundred</u>					
1800	30%	20%	17%	22%	10%
1810	33%	13%	20%	22%	12%
1820	30%	15%	20%	22%	13%
1830	24%	14%	23%	26%	13%
1840	28%	10%	20%	29%	12%
<u>Town</u>					
1800	29%	15%	21%	26%	9%
1810	33%	12%	20%	24%	11%
1820	29%	13%	21%	24%	13%
1830	26%	13%	22%	26%	14%
1840	29%	8%	18%	30%	14%
<u>Rural</u>					
1800	31%	22%	16%	20%	11%
1810	32%	14%	20%	21%	13%
1820	30%	15%	20%	22%	13%
1830	23%	15%	23%	26%	13%
1840	28%	11%	21%	28%	12%

The most significant change in the age distribution among whites, shown in Table 7, is the decline in the

proportion under sixteen.¹² In 1800, 50 percent were children and adolescents; in 1840, only 38 percent were. Among townspeople, the decline was only seven percentage points, from 44 percent to 37 percent, while in rural New Castle Hundred, the decline was from 53 percent to 39 percent, a much greater drop. By 1840, town and country were at the same level. The source of the decline is the decrease in the number and percentage of people aged 10-15; the youngest group remained quite constant. This decline mirrors a national trend, although it seemed to be happening slightly faster in New Castle Hundred than in the nation as a whole.¹³ Even though the proportion of children and young adolescents shrank, there was no great change in the other age groups. The truly elderly were rare; in 1830 and 1840, only about 4 percent of whites were sixty or older.

Tables 8 and 9 give more details on the decline in the proportion of the population that was under sixteen. The median number of children per white household declined from 3.2 in 1800 to 1.9 by 1840. Town households had fewer children and registered less of a long-term decline; the 1800 median of 2.3 fell to 1.7 by 1840, compared with a decline from 3.6 in 1800 to 2 in 1840 for rural households. The same pattern occurs with children under ten, the proportion of households with 0-3 children, and the number of children per woman aged between fifteen and forty-four.

Table 8: Children in New Castle Hundred

a. Median Number of Children Aged 0-15 per Household

Year	Entire Hundred	Town	Rural
1800	3.2	2.3	3.6
1810	2.3	2.1	2.5
1820	2.5	1.9	2.8
1830	2.0	2.0	2.1
1840	1.9	1.7	2.0

b. Median Number of Children Aged 0-9 per Household

Year	Entire Hundred	Town	Rural
1800	1.7	1.3	2.0
1810	1.5	1.3	1.6
1820	1.3	1.0	1.5
1830	.9	1.0	.9
1840	1.0	1.0	1.1

c. Percentage of Households with 0-3 Children

Year	Entire Hundred	Town	Rural
1800	56%	67%	48%
1810	70%	73%	66%
1820	68%	72%	65%
1830	75%	76%	74%
1840	75%	73%	76%

Table 9: Number of Children Aged 0-9 per Woman Aged 15-44

Year	Entire Hundred	Town	Rural
1800	1.6	1.3	1.7
1810	1.6	1.5	1.6
1820	1.4	1.3	1.5
1830	1.0	.9	1.0
1840	1.1	1.1	1.2

While census figures cannot tell the number of children born to a family throughout its life cycle, or even whether the children counted in a household were indeed the offspring of its head, they document the nationwide decline in fertility which began in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The national birth rate declined from 278 per 1,000 women 15-44 in 1800 to 222 per 1,000 in 1840. It has been estimated that women of the colonial and early national periods bore an average of eight children, compared with 5.4 in the 1860s-70s. This "genuine demographic revolution" is easier to describe than to explain, however. It was not caused by urbanization and industrialization, for it began while the nation was still overwhelmingly rural. The figures for rural New Castle Hundred certainly attest to this. Robert Wells believes that the decline in fertility was caused by the change from a traditional orientation in which people believed that they had to powerlessly accept whatever happened to them to a more modern outlook in which people felt that they could, through their own efforts, make better lives for themselves. Part of this was a deliberate reduction in family size. Although a specific connection cannot be documented, fertility often declined where land was scarce. This was the result of choice, rather than chance or biology. People apparently felt that it was better to have fewer children in such an economy. This reasoning might well apply to New Castle Hundred, where as

early as 1798 only 38 percent of the taxables owned land.¹⁴

Carl Degler bases his explanation of the decline in fertility on one specific part of the emerging modern outlook, individualism and self-interest. These concepts originally had applied only to men, but at the end of the eighteenth century women tentatively began to assert their individuality and carve out for themselves an autonomous sphere within the family. Growing more aware of their needs, women, who bore and raised children, saw that it was in their best interest to limit their offspring. There were several reasons: economic, the physical strain of pregnancy, the desire to give each child a good upbringing, and the women's desire to maintain her own peace of mind. Thus, in Degler's view, women bore much of the responsibility for the nineteenth century decline in fertility, for having perceived that fewer children would benefit both themselves and their families, they used the available means of birth control to achieve this goal. British publications on birth control circulated in the United States as early as the 1820s. Robert Dale Owen's Moral Physiology (1830), the first American book on birth control, was advertised in the Delaware Free Press in 1831, and the paper also published a letter referring to the controversy over the book, so that information on birth control was available in the New Castle area, or at least to those who kept up with more advanced ideas.¹⁵

Although fertility was declining, childlessness was not increasing, either as a goal or a reality. Bearing and nurturing children was woman's expected role, and not being able to fulfill it could be a source of physical and emotional anguish and pain. Mary Black Couper expressed it well in this passage from a letter to a friend who was also childless:

I know you may think it strange, but I think it [having children] would be of service to your health & would conduce materially to your & your husbands happiness. Gentlemen are generally fond of children & the love of offspring seems to be deeply rooted in their breasts. A family circle is more varied & cheerful when there are children than when it consists but of husband & wife-& a wife has many lonely hours which her children cheer & enliven. . . . I suppose we shall never know either the joys or care of parents. Indeed my sufferings at particular times rather increase than diminish in spite of all the prescriptions which have been made for me. I have been confined to the house for some time, part of the time to bed, but am now pretty well again.¹⁶

Along with parents and children, white households often included others. Because of the limitations of the censuses, the number and position of whites in this category can only be suggested; they might have been relatives, servants, employees, or boarders, and could have been of any age. About one-fifth of the adult white population lived in the households of other whites.¹⁷ For whatever reason, these people, at the time of the census, were not the head of a household or the wife of a head. Some younger

people, especially those in their teens and early twenties, may also have been residing with people other than their parents. From about the age of ten or twelve, people were expected to contribute to their family's support, which often meant living and working away from home.¹⁸ Roughly one-quarter of white households contained white adults besides the head and his wife, but if the unknown number of households which had non-nuclear family children and youths is included, the figure is probably higher.

In contrast to this nearly invisible segment of the white population, the fact of race makes it easy to identify the presence of blacks in white households. Over the long term, about 40 percent of white households had black members. The nature of the black presence changed, however, and by 1840 the custom of having blacks reside in the household of their employer or owner emerged as a predominately rural phenomenon. In 1800, nearly equal proportions of both town and rural white households had black members, but by 1840, only a scant quarter of town households included blacks, while nearly 60 percent of rural ones did.

The percentage of households owning slaves was small and decreasing, reflecting the gradual withering away of the peculiar institution in Delaware. In the town of New Castle, 22 percent of white households owned slaves in 1800, but after this, only 6-9 percent did. Rural slaveholding varied

much more, with a decline in the middle decades followed by a large increase in 1840, although it was still below 1800 levels. By 1840, the gap between town and country was larger than ever, reflecting not only the greater concentration of blacks in rural areas but also that rural whites found slavery more economical and practical and perhaps less emotionally and intellectually disturbing than townspeople did.

Table 10: Percentage of White Households with Black Members

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Entire Hundred</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Rural</u>
<u>Slave or Free</u>	1800	46%	43%	47%
	1810	40%	35%	45%
	1820	38%	29%	44%
	1830	40%	32%	46%
	1840	42%	24%	58%
<u>Slave</u>	1800	27%	22%	30%
	1810	11%	6%	16%
	1820	15%	9%	20%
	1830	11%	9%	12%
	1840	15%	6%	23%
<u>Free</u>	1800	28%	27%	29%
	1810	34%	31%	36%
	1820	32%	26%	36%
	1830	37%	28%	44%
	1840	34%	19%	47%

The proportion of white households with free blacks also changed, but in a different way. In town, percentage stayed between 26 and 31 percent through 1830, and then

dropped sharply to 19 percent in 1840. Town dwellers did not increase the number of live-in black workers to compensate for the decrease in slaves; instead, they were moving away altogether from the practice of having blacks in their households. In rural areas, the percentage of households with free black members gradually increased from 29 percent to 47 percent, so that slaves were being replaced by live-in free blacks. The majority of racially mixed households had only one to three blacks, whether slave or free. However, this trend was stronger in town, where 78 to 94 percent of mixed households fell into this category, in comparison with 61 to 75 percent of rural mixed households. In 1840, the gap between town and country was greatest, still another indication of the divergence between them. During the forty years under study, however, only eight households had ten or more blacks, so that even in rural New Castle Hundred the large holdings were still not very large. Finally, the blacks living in white households represent only a portion of the black population. An ever-increasing proportion of blacks lived in their own households, so that by 1840, only about 43 percent of blacks lived with whites, as opposed to 73 percent in 1800.

Census figures provide the skeleton of personal and family life, but they cannot by themselves make any statement about the quality of life. This period saw important changes

in the human nature of family life as well as in the purely quantitative aspects; the traditional family was giving way to a more modern pattern. In the traditional world, the family was the central institution of society. The individual farm or craft shop was the mainstay of the economy; every member of the family worked to the extent of his or her ability and non-family employees usually lived in their employer's household. The family was also a major source of religious and secular education and social welfare. The husband and father was the undisputed head of the household; his wife worked alongside him but was not necessarily an intimate companion, and children were small-scale adults rather than people to be nurtured and cherished. The goal of family life was survival and continuation in an uncertain world, rather than personal happiness. The emerging modern family was different. Roles were more separated and clearly defined; men went out into the world to work, women presided over home and children, and children were carefully watched and guided. Individual happiness and romantic love were more important. Home and family were a refuge from the world rather than the center of the world.¹⁹

Mary Couper, the New Castle woman introduced earlier, lived in the "woman's sphere" that encompassed home, husband and family. Woman's role was to create a home that was an oasis of morality, calm, and comfort away from the clamor

and tawdriness of the world. Here her husband would return for rest and solace after his day's work, here her children would learn how to remain untainted by the world even as they lived in it. Husband and wife were, ideally, intimate friends and companions, sharing hopes, concerns, decisions, and a common Christian faith, as well as providing emotional support for each other.²⁰ Mary Couper, who was perceptive, overly sensitive, and articulate, knew that such was not always the case.

Sophie, I sometimes doubt (to you I may say it) whether married life is as a general rule the happiest. Under favourable circumstances it certainly is but under most it has very great trials.²¹

Mary's voluminous correspondence with Sophie duPont reveals some of her trials. Never is there any hint of dissatisfaction with her husband, Dr. James Couper, as a human being-- although she does not always approve of his behavior--nor is there any questioning of her expected role. Instead, her problems arose from ways in which her health and her husband prevented her from fulfilling her role. One major trial was her inability to have children and the attendant gynecological problems that were mentioned earlier. Mary's health was never particularly robust. All of her doctor husband's remedies were of no use, and he found her medical problems, and probably his inability to help her, so painful a subject that they did not speak of it often.²²

Religion, a major topic in the letters, also caused problems in the marriage. Mary was extremely religious and James was not. She earnestly prayed for James' conversion, and asked for Sophie's prayers as well. This was another area in which there was little communication. James was so busy, even on the Sabbath, that they did not have time to speak of it, and when they did, he turned discussions into disputations.²³

Servants were another trial. If Mary ever had a skilled, trustworthy servant who stayed in her employ for any length of time, she never mentioned it. Most of her comments on servants were negative, as this example illustrates:

I have taken a little girl who is very good but of course not well instructed. I would keep her so as no longer to be plagued with the blacks but she goes in a few weeks to live with her sister in Bordentown--but enough of the household.²⁴

Being without a servant was just as bad, for that meant that Mary had to do all the work herself, which she found tedious and tiring. A good servant was hard to find.

In an extremely depressed and candid moment, Mary had this to say about her life:

I spend my days alone, evenings alone & often nights alone & eat my meals alone. And all this because James will not give up a practice which he promised me a year ago he would. As to domestic comfort for

a month past I have not even been able [illeg] what it means. I have lain in bed & sick hour after hour with not a creature to speak to. But I must stop though tis a comfort to pour my troubles into such a sympathizing ear. When I see James breaking down his health & [illeg] little home comforts we once had & for what! I can scarcely bear it.²⁵

Mary did not find fault with her husband's personality or qualities; she simply wanted him to spend more time with her in domestic harmony, to reestablish the rapport and communication that must have existed previously, and which she hoped was again possible. Mary Couper did not challenge her position in life, she only wanted to live it more fully.

The records of the Presbyterian church show that other families had more serious problems. In 1801, Jean Barr, wife of John Barr, confessed to the elders that she had committed adultery, and repented of it. She was re-admitted to church privileges after a statement of her transgression was read in church. The elders dealt with a more complex case in 1803. James Barr stated that he had stayed away from church because a report was circulating that he was the father of an illegitimate child. He declared himself innocent. The child's mother, who remained nameless, swore before a magistrate that Barr was indeed the father. The elders suspended Barr until his innocence was proved or he confessed guilt and fully repented his action.²⁶ These are almost the only such cases that the churches

handled; admittedly, they give no suggestion of the extent of such problems or how most people dealt with them.

As the town's economy changed subtly, Mary Couper's husband was not the only man who left home to earn his living. The town's transportation industry, and in the late 1830s, the New Castle Manufacturing Company, required workers who were away from home all day. At its peak, the Manufacturing Company had 150 employees, which represents a substantial part of the town's work force.²⁷ All of these people worked for someone else, collected their pay, and returned to their own homes and lives when work was over. Economic and family life were separate. In contrast, rural New Castle Hundred, with its small-scale agricultural economy, retained the traditional identity of family and business.

By 1840, the white household had experienced subtle quantitative and qualitative changes, with significant differences between town and country. Households had shrunk, both in absolute size and the number of children. Town households were the smaller, although the number of children was similar in both town and country. The "demographic transition" was underway. Town and country came to differ most sharply in the presence of blacks in the household; in town, this declined sharply, while it remained strong in rural areas. Finally, traditional roles were giving way to

more modern ones, especially in town, as Mary Couper's correspondence so graphically shows.

Black Households

Delaware was an unusual slave state. Although slavery was legal, the number of slaves was continually declining; although slavery was dying, Delawareans could not quite bring themselves to abolish it entirely. There were several reasons for this. The state's farmers grew mainly grain and livestock, and not labor-intensive Southern staples like cotton or tobacco. Northern New Castle County, with Wilmington and New Castle, had a large urban area where slavery did not flourish. Ideologically, Quaker and revolutionary ideals of freedom for all appealed to Delawareans. The state's laws reflected these factors. Although those working for abolition did not succeed, a 1787 law outlawed the interstate slave trade, which condemned slavery to a slow death by removing the profit motive. Slaves in Delaware were valuable only for the labor and status that they gave their owner, and not as a commodity; slaves for whom there was no work were liabilities, rather than assets to be sold when the price was right. Rather than leave owners stuck with slaves that they could not dispose of, the law also made it easy to free blacks. In general, owners could free slaves who were between the ages of ten or eighteen and thirty-five simply with a written document registered with

the Recorder of Deeds.²⁸

Because of the favorable conditions created by whites, the status of Delaware blacks changed dramatically. In 1790, the state had 8,887 slaves and 3,899 free blacks; by 1860, there were 19,289 free blacks and 1,798 slaves. As Table 11 shows, New Castle Hundred participated fully in this change. Although the percentage and number of slaves declined in both town and country, the town was more favorable for freedom; after 1810, the number of slaves in town was tiny. In 1840, the number and percentage of rural slaves increased; this may reflect only the particular group of whites living in the hundred at the time, or it may indicate a hardening of attitudes after Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion.

Freedom also meant the possibility of living in a household of one's own; New Castle Hundred's free blacks increasingly availed themselves of this opportunity, so that by 1840, a majority of them lived independently, as Table 12 shows. Generally, a larger percentage of town blacks lived independently. The one anomaly is the small proportion of town blacks living independently in 1800, which probably reflects a housing shortage. By 1830, the differences between town and country were narrowing, although a slightly greater proportion of town blacks lived independently. Yet even though more and more free blacks lived in black households, a substantial minority still lived with whites, which

Table 11: Status of Blacks

	Year	Total	Slave Number	Percent	Free Number	Percent
<u>Entire Hundred</u>	1800	547	244	45%	303	55%
	1810	582	153	26%	429	74%
	1820	618	150	24%	468	76%
	1830	713	64	9%	649	91%
	1840	778	128	17%	650	84%
<u>Town</u>	1800	160	59	37%	101	63%
	1810	225	25	11%	200	89%
	1820	236	34	14%	202	86%
	1830	220	24	11%	196	89%
	1840	209	17	8%	192	92%
<u>Rural</u>	1800	387	185	48%	202	52%
	1810	357	128	36%	229	64%
	1820	382	116	30%	266	70%
	1830	493	40	8%	453	92%
	1840	569	111	20%	458	81%

Table 12: Percentage of Blacks Living in Black Households

	Year	Percent of All Blacks	Percent of Free Blacks
<u>Entire Hundred</u>	1800	27%	50%
	1810	34%	46%
	1820	40%	52%
	1830	57%	63%
	1840	51%	61%
<u>Town</u>	1800	24%	39%
	1810	48%	54%
	1820	52%	62%
	1830	60%	67%
	1840	64%	70%
<u>Rural</u>	1800	29%	55%
	1810	24%	38%
	1820	32%	46%
	1830	56%	61%
	1840	46%	57%

appears to be a function of their life cycle more than anything else.

Table 13: Median Size of Black Households

<u>Year</u>	<u>Entire Hundred</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Rural</u>
1800	7.8	8	6.5
1810	3.8	4.3	3.4
1820	3.9	3.8	3.9
1830	4.4	3.9	4.9
1840	4.2	3.9	4.4

The large size of black households in 1800, as shown in Table 13, in comparison with later years, suggests that conditions were unusual then. The 1799 newspaper advertisement at the head of this chapter spoke of a housing shortage in New Castle, which must have been worse for those who were poor and black. The free black population was at its lowest in 1800, and some may have been waiting for relatives to be freed before establishing homes of their own. Under these circumstances, free blacks probably crowded into whatever housing was available and affordable. This explains why so many town free blacks lived with whites in 1800; there probably was no alternative. The large drop in household size in 1810 and its subsequent relative stability indicates that the conditions of 1800 were only temporary.

Once its size stabilized, the median free black household contained four persons and thus was notably smaller

than the median white household. The 1820-40 censuses suggest that about 60-75 percent of black households were nuclear families or couples. Only about 3-11 percent were single parent households. The other households consisted of unidentifiable groups of people; they may have been extended families or households which took in lodgers. Between 1810 and 1840, 92-98% of black households were headed by males. The high proportion of nuclear families and couples suggests that this was the norm for blacks, corroborating the trend in current scholarship which emphasizes the strength of the black family.²⁹ This, however, is only part of the black population, whether slave or free. Many of the free blacks living independently may have had kin who were still slaves or who were free but in jobs requiring them to live with their white employers.

The age distribution of the sub-groups of the black population, shown in Table 14, gives a good indication of at least part of their life cycle pattern. The slave population was extremely young; 70-75 percent were under twenty-three or twenty-five, as compared to 55-60 percent of free blacks and whites. Conversely, there were few middle-aged or elderly slaves. The concentration of slaves in the younger age groups reflects manumission laws and practices; slaves were generally freed in their late twenties or early thirties, although some gained freedom as early as eighteen.³⁰ Masters

thus had the labor of their slaves during some of their prime years and were able to divest themselves of their property before it became a burden, and while the freed people were still young enough to have some future of their own. Slaves over thirty-five had almost no hope of freedom, for their owners had to post bond that the freed persons would not become charges on the state.

Free blacks were not subject to the same constraints that slaves were, so that their age distribution represents their own ways rather than those of whites. In all years and in all areas, a disproportionately large segment of the free blacks living with whites were adolescents or young adults, and a similarly small portion of the independent black population was in these groups. Many young free blacks, of both sexes, must have spent these years living and working in white households. Such an environment was a mid-way point between childhood and adulthood, offering a chance to learn vocational and personal skills and an opportunity to contribute to family finances or save for one's own future. Parents also benefitted from this practice, for it removed young people from crowded homes during the tense years when they were growing quickly both physically and emotionally. Free black youths in New Castle Hundred thus followed a pattern similar to that which Joseph Kett found for New England whites in the same period.³¹

Table 14: Percentage of Blacks in Each Age Category

a. Slaves

1820	Age Categories				
	0-13	14-25	26-44	45+	55 and Over
Entire Hundred	38%	33%	11%	17%	
Town	35%	32%	9%	24%	
Rural	39%	34%	12%	16%	
	0-9	10-23	24-35	36-54	55 and Over
Entire Hundred					
1830	25%	48%	13%	6%	9%
1840	31%	44%	16%	2%	8%
Town					
1830	13%	58%	8%	4%	17%
1840	29%	47%	6%	6%	12%
Rural					
1830	33%	40%	15%	6%	5%
1840	31%	43%	17%	2%	7%

b. Free Blacks Living in White Households

1820	Age Categories				
	0-13	14-25	26-44	45+	55 and Over
Entire Hundred	26%	41%	22%	11%	
Town	27%	34%	25%	14%	
Rural	26%	46%	20%	8%	
	0-9	10-23	24-35	36-54	55 and Over
Entire Hundred					
1830	22%	47%	20%	7%	4%
1840	19%	43%	26%	9%	4%
Town					
1830	25%	36%	23%	9%	6%
1840	17%	36%	33%	7%	7%
Rural					
1830	21%	51%	18%	6%	3%
1840	19%	45%	24%	9%	3%

c. Free Blacks Living Independently

1820	Age Categories				
	0-13	14-25	26-44	45+	55 and Over
Entire Hundred	46%	9%	21%	24%	
Town	50%	6%	20%	24%	
Rural	42%	12%	22%	24%	
	0-9	10-23	24-35	36-54	55 and Over
Entire Hundred					
1830	32%	20%	18%	19%	12%
1840	36%	16%	21%	21%	6%
Town					
1830	28%	20%	19%	21%	13%
1840	35%	18%	19%	21%	8%
Rural					
1830	34%	19%	18%	18%	11%
1840	36%	15%	23%	22%	5%

Within the black population, both in its entirety and its component groups, the basic pattern of sex distribution, as shown in Table 15, was a slight to moderate majority of males in rural areas and a similar preponderance of females in town. While the imbalance was often slight, it was usually persistent. The greatest disparities occurred among blacks whose lives were most strongly controlled by whites, namely rural slaves and blacks living in white households in both town and country. The rural population of both of these groups was heavily male, reflecting agricultural labor needs. Most of the free blacks living with whites in town in 1830 and 1840 were females, who probably worked as domestics. In contrast, the trend among free blacks living

independently was towards an equal sexual distribution, in both town and country.

Table 15: Distribution of the Black Population by Sex

	1820		1830		1840	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
a. All Blacks						
All	51%	49%	52%	48%	54%	46%
Town	48%	53%	46%	54%	44%	57%
Rural	54%	46%	54%	46%	58%	42%
b. Slaves						
All	50%	50%	55%	45%	58%	42%
Town*	47%	52%	54%	46%	47%	53%
Rural	51%	49%	55%	45%	60%	41%
c. All Free Blacks						
All	52%	48%	51%	49%	53%	47%
Town	48%	53%	45%	55%	43%	57%
Rural	55%	45%	54%	46%	58%	42%
d. Free Blacks Living With Whites						
All	57%	43%	57%	44%	58%	42%
Town	51%	49%	42%	58%	31%	69%
Rural	61%	39%	62%	38%	67%	34%
e. Free Blacks Living in Black Households						
All	47%	53%	48%	52%	50%	50%
Town	46%	54%	46%	54%	49%	52%
Rural	48%	52%	50%	51%	51%	49%

* The actual number of slaves in town was so small that these percentages are misleading. In 1820, there were 34 slaves, 16 males and 18 females; in 1830, 24 slaves, 11 male and 13 female; in 1840, 17 slaves, 8 male and 9 female. This population was essentially evenly balanced sexually.

For blacks, the quality of life was affected first

of all by legal status. A slave was a piece of chattel property, subject, at least in theory, to the owner's will and with no rights of his own. A slave could not control his own time or labor, possess property, or marry. In practice, conditions were often not quite as harsh and degrading; current scholarship emphasizes the strength of the slave community and slaves' ability to assert themselves in small ways within the system.³² Nevertheless, the fact of being a slave could not be denied.

Freedom meant the right to own property, marry, live independently, and pay taxes. It did not bring equality, either before the law or in society. Blacks could not vote, hold office, or testify against whites in court. They were punished by lashes or sale outside the state for crimes for which whites would receive prison terms; they could be sold into servitude for debt after the practice had ended for whites. Petitions from New Castle's white citizens asking for laws restricting the assembling of blacks and Mary Couper's preference for white servants show that blacks were seen as a disruptive and uncomfortable force in society, to be regulated and avoided when possible.³³

Whether blacks lived with whites or other blacks also had a major impact on their lives. Those who lived with whites had little privacy, free time, or control over their accommodations. Since most racially-mixed households in New

Castle Hundred had only one to three blacks, these people lacked the safety in numbers that existed on large plantations, where the slave quarters, isolated from whites, provided them with their own culture and community. In these small groups, many may have also been separated from their families, although at least the free persons among them could probably travel easily. In contrast, free blacks with their own households could choose where and how they lived, within the limits of available housing, income, and white prejudice. A home of one's own had many advantages, among which were privacy and more control over one's life.

The Robert VanJoy family is well enough documented to provide a glimpse of black family life. The family first appears in the marriage register of Immanuel Church, where Robert VanJoy, a free black, married Dinah, a slave belonging to Stewart Thompson, on February 16, 1792.³⁴ Even if Dinah had an iron-clad promise of freedom from a trustworthy master, they were taking a risk in marrying. Was Robert saving money to buy her freedom? If Stewart decided to move elsewhere and take Dinah with him, would Robert have been willing and able to go along? Their hopes were well-founded, for Dinah was free by August 1794 and the family stayed in the New Castle area at least until 1839.³⁵

The marriage lasted thirty-one years, until Robert's death in 1823.³⁶ The couple had at least five children.

Anna was born in spring 1793 and was baptized at Immanuel in August 1794. She may have died, for the eldest of the four children who were baptized at the Presbyterian church in 1806 was also named Ann. She was six, and thus was born around 1800. The other children were Liza, age five (born 1801), Caleb, age four and a half (born 1802), and Harriet, age two (born 1804).³⁸ In the years between the first and second Anns, there may have been miscarriages, stillbirths, or children who died in infancy. There is one other possibility: Robert may have been sowing wild oats. In his will, he left the bulk of his property, including his house, to Robert VanJoy, Jr., his natural son.³⁹ The other children were not mentioned; they may have already received their portion, or quarrelled with their father, or died. Whether Robert, Jr. was born before or after his father's marriage to Dinah, or what she thought of this, is unknown. Robert's illegitimate child was not the only problem that this marriage endured. In 1818, The Presbyterian church disciplined Robert for "the impropriety of his conduct and illicit intercourse and connexion with a woman of color in the Town of New Castle."⁴⁰ Robert admitted his guilt, expressed his sorrow, and was suspended from membership for an unspecified time. After his death, Dinah did not remarry and continued to live in New Castle, for she was listed by that name on the 1839 membership list of the Presbyterian church.⁴¹

The churning stagnation of New Castle Hundred's population is both a reflection and a partial cause of the problems that underlay and eventually cut short the promising development of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Despite its attractiveness and energy, the town of New Castle did not draw large numbers of ambitious people; a stable population limited economic and social opportunities. In this demographically stagnant area, whites must have felt some deep unarticulated uneasiness as the black population grew and became more independent and as whites began to limit the size of their families. The people of New Castle, however, were not truly aware of what the historian with hindsight can see; their statistical ignorance helped give them the confidence to pursue their dreams.

CHAPTER 2 NOTES

1. J. Potter, "The Growth of Population in America, 1700-1860" in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley, ed., Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 665-6; the hundreds sampled were Christiana (Wilmington), Pencader, St. George's, and Appoquinimink in New Castle County, Duck Creek and Little Creek in Kent County, and North West Fork, Little Creek, Broad Creek and Cedar Creek in Sussex County. Unless otherwise noted, census information in this chapter is drawn from the Second through Sixth Censuses of the United States (1800-1840) for Delaware in both manuscript and aggregated forms. Information from each household in New Castle Hundred in each census was coded, entered into the B7700 computer at the University of Delaware, and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.
2. Stephen Thernstrom, The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis 1880-1970 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 221-228; Peter E. Knights, The Plain People of Boston, 1830-1860: A Study in City Growth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 53-54.
3. Sally Schwartz, "Cantwell's Bridge, Delaware: A Demographic and Community Study," Delaware History 19 (1980): 28.
4. Town tax lists from 1798, 1804, 1810, 1815, 1820 and 1825 are found in the Minutes of the Town Commissioners, pp. 1-172 passim. There are no lists between 1826 and 1840. Minutes of the Town Commissioners are hereafter referred to as Town Commissioners.
5. Delaware Gazette, April 27, 1793, Aug. 30, 1794, May 3, 1797, July 1, 1797, Aug. 2, 1797; Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, July 19, 1794, Sept. 3, 1794, Sept. 6, 1794, Oct. 31, 1795, Sept. 12, 1796, Nov. 24, 1796, Nov. 2, 1797, Sept. 19, 1799; Mirror of the Times and Daily Advertiser, July 4, 1801, Aug. 28, 1802, July 27, 1803, Sept. 25, 1805.
6. William T. Read, Life and Correspondence of George

Read, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence with Notices of Some of his Contemporaries (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1870), pp. 552-4; "A Statement of the French late Inhabitants of St. Domingo residing at Newcastle, on Delaware," 1794, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, Historical Society of Delaware (HSD).

7. . . . Petition from John Aull to the State Legislature, 1797 and "Bill to vest title to certain lands in Wm. Aull," Legislative Papers, Dover; Minutes of the Trustees of the Common, pp. 36-6, 54-5; Town Commissioners, pp. 4-129 passim, New Castle County Probate Records, Dover. Minutes of the Trustees of the Common are hereafter referred to as Common.

8. . . . Petition from John Mundall to the State Legislature, January 2, 1798, Legislative Papers, Dover; Town Commissioners, pp. 1-172 passim.

9. . . . Petition from Thomas Magens to the State Legislature and draft bill enacting his petition, 1798, Legislative Papers, Dover; New Castle County tax assessments, 1798 and 1816, Dover; Common, pp. 65-6, 109-110; Town Commissioners, pp. 13, 85; 1710 Vestry Book Immanuel Church, pp. 67-8; New Castle County Probate Records, Dover.

10. . . . Petition from William Armstrong to the State Legislature, Jan. 10, 1799, Legislative Papers, Dover; New Castle County tax assessment, 1798, Dover.

11. . . . 1791 Session Book, passim, New Castle Presbyterian Church.

12. . . . In 1830-40, the population figures were adjusted to fit as closely as possible into the 1800-1820 groupings and maintain a constant basis for comparison.

13. . . . In 1800, 50.2 percent of the nation's population was under 16; by 1840, 43.7% was. United States Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D.C., 1960), p. 10.

14. . . . U. S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics, p. 23; Wilson H. Grabil, Clyde V. Kiser and Pascal K. Whelpton, "A Long View," in Michael Gordon, ed., The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), pp. 374-5, 383-6, 392; Robert V. Wells, "Family History and Demographic Transition," in Michael Gordon, ed., The American Family in Social-Historical Perspective 2d ed., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), pp. 519-25; New Castle County tax assessment, 1798, Dover.

15. Carl N. Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 192-6, 216; Delaware Free Press, March 19 and May 21, 1831.
16. Mary Couper to Sophie duPont, Feb. 6, 1834, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, Eleutherian Mills Historical Library (EMHL).
17. "Adult" means anyone 26 or over in 1800-1820, and anyone over 30 in 1830-1840.
18. Joseph F. Kett, "The Stages of Life," in Michael Gordon, ed., The American Family 2d ed, pp. 170-1.
19. Peter Laslett, The World We Have Lost: England Before the Industrial Age (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), Chapters 1, 3, 4; Peter Laslett, Family Life and Illicit Love in Earlier Generations: Essays in Historical Sociology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Chapter 1; Degler, At Odds, pp. 3-86 passim.
20. Nancy F. Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 69-72; Degler, At Odds, pp. 26-51.
21. Mary Couper to Sophie duPont, Sept. 28, 1835, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, EMHL.
22. Mary Couper to Sophie duPont, March 3, 1834, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, EMHL.
23. Mary Couper to Sophie duPont, March 3, 1834 and May 1, 1835, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, EMHL.
24. Mary Couper to Sophie duPont, Feb. 21, 1834, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, EMHL.
25. Mary Couper to Sophie duPont, April 2, 1836, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, EMHL.
26. 1791 Session Book, Nov. 2, 1801, Aug. 8, 9, 11, 1803, New Castle Presbyterian Church.
27. Delaware State Journal, March 27, 1840.
28. John A. Munroe, Federalist Delaware, 1775-1815 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954), pp. 158-65; John Gary Dean, "The Free Negro in Delaware: A Demographic and Economic Study, 1790-1860" (M. A. thesis,

University of Delaware, 1970), pp. 9, 23-6.

29. See John Blassingame, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

30. New Castle County Tax Assessment, 1816, Dover.

31. Joseph F. Kett, "The Stages of Life," in Gordon, ed., The American Family 2d ed., pp. 166-191.

32. See Blassingame, The Slave Community or Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll.

33. Ira Berlin, Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), pp. 91, 183, 225-6; petition from citizens of New Castle to the State Legislature, Jan. 24, 1809, and "An Act to Incorporate the Commissioners of the Town of New Castle" Legislative Papers, Dover; Mary Couper to Sophie duPont, Feb. 21, 1834, Winterthur Manuscripts, Group 9, EMHL.

34. 1710 Vestry Book, p. 47, Immanuel Church.

35. 1710 Vestry Book, p. 41, Immanuel Church.

36. 1710 Vestry Book, pp. 106-7, Immanuel Church.

37. 1710 Vestry Book, p. 41, Immanuel Church.

38. 1791 Session Book, Oct. 11, 1806, New Castle Presbyterian Church.

39. New Castle County Probate Records, Dover.

40. 1791 Session Book, April 3, 1818, New Castle Presbyterian Church.

41. 1791 Session Book, 1839, New Castle Presbyterian Church.

CHAPTER 3

AN ECONOMY SHAPED IN THE URBAN WEB

It will moreover be remembered in favor of New Castle that the daily intercourse to, and through that place is immense when compared with its population. Here we see deposited all the merchandize passing between the cities of Philadelphia and Baltimore.--Stages for the conveyance of innumerable travellers, and heavy waggons all center here. Which together with the Court-House, Jail, public county offices of every description, and a contemplated turnpike gives this place present, and the prospect of future advantages, which at [sic] the farming interest of New-Castle county, far transcends any thing, that Wilmington, together with her pigmy draw-bridge can in justice boast of.

American Watchman, August 16, 1809

Nature has placed this town [New Castle] in a peculiar situation, in which, without the aid of powerful artificial causes, it can never arrive to anything of consequence; and the leaders of the people of that place are determined to stop at nothing in order to support it in a rivalry with Wilmington.

American Watchman, August 26, 1809¹

These quotations from the 1809 battle in the long war between New Castle and Wilmington accurately summarize New Castle's position between 1780 and 1840: did it truly have the potential to grow and prosper, or was it resourceless and doomed to either oblivion or attempting to advance by

underhanded means? New Castle based its hopes on two apparently permanent features, the river and the courthouse. With its Delaware River location, New Castle was a convenient transfer and service point for goods and people travelling up and down the eastern coast and overseas, while as the seat of New Castle County, it provided government services. The prosperous 1790s augured well for the future, and during the lively early nineteenth century New Castle dreamed of and worked toward the goal of being a small but bustling city. As the years passed, however, New Castle learned its limitations; that which nature and the past had provided could be threatened and even taken away, and resources adequate for a pre-industrial commercial town were not sufficient for great growth and success in the urbanizing and industrializing Philadelphia region.

New Castle fought for prosperity and status from a position in the middle of the remarkably stable regional urban hierarchy. Philadelphia was at the top; although losing its position as the nation's premier city to New York by about 1810, it remained first in the region. As the nation's economy changed in the early nineteenth century, Philadelphia declined in importance as a port and began to develop as a manufacturing center, serving primarily the intraregional market.² Wilmington, Delaware's largest city, came next. Like Philadelphia, its port declined,

but unlike its northern neighbor, Wilmington did not industrialize heavily until after 1840. Also, the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal and the New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad bypassed it.³ Although Wilmington certainly grew in the early nineteenth century, it felt trapped; it resented Philadelphia but was unable to do much about it, and continually scrapped with New Castle, its small but pesky Delaware neighbor.

New Castle, older than Philadelphia and Wilmington, nevertheless ranked below both in size and importance. In the 1790s, New Castle developed for the first time a strong and lasting sense of economic and civic identity and acted upon it. The burst of activity changed the town in many ways and involved it in fierce competition with Wilmington, but despite the striving and fighting, by 1840 New Castle was in the same position that it had been in fifty or sixty years earlier. What was different, however, was that by 1840 New Castle was firmly entrenched in its place and knew that it had no hope of advancing; earlier, it had hoped to improve its station.

Newport, Christiana Bridge and Stanton occupied the lower rungs of the urban ladder. Newport was a grain shipping port on the Christina which served both local and southeastern Pennsylvania farmers. In 1806, two forty-five ton vessels carried about 45,000 barrels of flour and a large

amount of unmilled grain to Philadelphia. The grain traffic increased substantially during the next twenty years; when the town peaked around 1825, a daily packet went to Philadelphia. Christiana Bridge was also a grain port, with four vessels plying the Philadelphia route in 1806. Around that year, its annual trade included 20,000 bushels of flour, 2,000 hogsheads of tobacco, 1,000 hogsheads of meal, 150 tons of iron and about 50,000 bushels of wheat. This town peaked around 1830. Stanton, on a neck between two creeks, developed into a local manufacturing center in the early nineteenth century. By 1814, it had seven grist mills, six saw mills, and two cotton mills, among others.⁴ While these three towns prospered in the early nineteenth century, they lacked New Castle's drive and ambition. Their reaction to their neighbor's ambition was petty jealousy and anger rather than outright competition; when New Castle began talking about building the turnpike to Frenchtown, all the other towns talked of moving the courts, in retaliation. As one writer said, this faction "cannot bear that any town should raise its head above the insipid level of its fellows."⁵ Although New Castle did not compete with these three towns, each filled economic roles that New Castle could not, for it was neither a grain port nor a milling center. Each also offered shops and taverns to serve the local population. In developing their own advantages, they limited New Castle's possibilities. After around 1830, as the region's transportation

and industry changed, Christiana Bridge, Stanton, and Newport faded into quiet villages. By 1840, the regional urban hierarchy was essentially what it had been in the late eighteenth century, but each city, town and village was now more firmly locked into its place.

Moving from the region to New Castle itself, Table 16 shows property ownership among townspeople between 1798 and 1828.⁶ Two trends shaped landowning patterns: the proportion of residents who owned land gradually increased while the proportion of town land that they owned fell. For both residents and outsiders the amount of town land per owner decreased, suggesting the subdivision of larger tracts since the town's legal boundaries did not change. Most of the change occurred between 1798 and 1816, which includes some of New Castle's most prosperous years and its only period of population growth. Outsiders must have found town land an attractive investment, while subdivision of large tracts allowed people of modest means to buy. Even though outsiders held about one-half of town land by 1828, landowning among residents was more broadly based than in 1798.

Despite this trend, even in 1828 only a minority owned land; over the years about one-half to two-thirds of residents lived in rented housing or a room-and-board employment situation. Table 17, based on the 1816 assessment, shows that tenants were less likely to own taxable property and were

Table 16: Property Ownership Among Townspeople

a. Land	<u>1798</u>	<u>1816</u>	<u>1828</u>
Percentage owning land	34%	40%	45%
Percentage of land owned by townspeople	66%	47%	49%
Mean number of lots owned by townspeople	2.1	1.6	1.7
Mean number of lots owned by outsiders	1.7	1.3	1.4
b. Other Forms of Property			
Percentage owning livestock ^a .	55%	39%	26%
Percentage owning slaves	21%	17%	8%
Percentage propertyless	41%	39%	44%
c. Wealth Distribution by Quintile			
1 (wealthiest)	66%	88%	78%
2	17%	8%	12%
3	8%	2%	5%
4	6%	1%	3%
5	3%	1%	2%

a. 1798--category is personal property rather than livestock.

poorer than non-tenants.⁷ Tenancy did not automatically mean poverty and mediocrity, however; about a quarter of tenants were among the wealthiest forty percent and some were very active in town affairs. For most, tenancy was the only way to acquire living or working space, but for a few, it was a chosen use of their resources. New Castle's tenants were not at the mercy of a small group of landlords, for most land-owners had only one or two units.⁸

Table 17: Comparison Between Town Tenants and Non-tenants, 1816

	<u>Tenants</u>	<u>Non-tenants</u>
Percentage owning land	25%	58%
Percentage owning livestock	36%	50%
Percentage owning slaves	16%	18%
Percentage owning silver	21%	30%
Percentage propertyless	46%	23%
Total assessment		
mean	\$959	\$5462
median	\$170	\$1258

Changes in two areas reflect social rather than economic trends. The decline in the percentage who owned slaves is consistent with slavery's gradual demise in Delaware. The decrease in the proportion who owned livestock suggests that New Castle was becoming more urban. By 1828, only a few kept animals in town; the rest depended on shops, markets, and livery stables for animal food and transportation. Although buying was easier than growing, people were more vulnerable in times of depression, shortages, or high prices.

At the bottom of the scale were the approximately 40 percent who were propertyless, a proportion that remained remarkably stable. They owned no taxable wealth, and hence none of the means of survival: land, housing, livestock, to say nothing of extras like slaves or silver. They had to acquire everything in the marketplace. As with tenancy, this condition does not automatically mean poverty--these

people may have owned taxable wealth elsewhere--but most of them were probably poor and insecure. Poorer residents were always much more likely to move on within about five years than their more prosperous neighbors.⁹

The concentration of wealth increased substantially between 1798 and 1816 and eased slightly thereafter. Although the rich indeed became richer, and the town's stagnant yet fluid population bespeaks limited potential, the increasing proportion of landowners and the stable segment of property-less suggest that everyone else did not become as poor as the wealth distribution figures alone indicate.

While New Castle focused its sights primarily on Wilmington and Philadelphia, it also sat firmly in the middle of an important agricultural area with easy access to foreign and domestic markets. New Castle County's farmers grew a variety of crops and livestock, although grains were the major product. By 1840, however, they were beginning to specialize in market gardening, dairying, and livestock fattening. According to the 1850 federal agricultural census for neighboring Christiana Hundred, almost all farmers grew wheat and corn and almost all owned cows, horses, and pigs; specialized crops supplemented, rather than replaced, the traditional grains and livestock. Nearly all farmers produced butter and hay, 42 percent reported orchard products, and 5 percent reported market gardens.¹⁰

Table 18: Property Ownership Among Rural People

a. Land	<u>1798</u>	<u>1816</u>	<u>1828</u>
Percentage owning land	24%	18%	19%
Percentage of taxables with more than 125 acres	13%	11%	8%
Percentage of landowners with more than 125 acres	54%	71%	60%
Median holding--landowners	128	145	150
	acres	acres	acres
Number with 300 or more acres	7	4	6
Percentage of land owned by residents	55%	36%	39%
b. Other forms of property			
Percentage owning livestock ^a .	66%	50%	40%
Percentage owning slaves	28%	15%	8%
Percentage propertyless	32%	47%	51%
c. Wealth Distribution by Quintile			
1 (wealthiest)	63%	85%	71%
2	17%	7%	10%
3	10%	3%	7%
4	6%	3%	7%
5	4%	2%	5%
a. 1798--category is personal property rather than livestock.			

As Table 18 shows, few of New Castle Hundred's rural people could take full advantage of the available opportunities, for the proportion who owned land shrank from one quarter in 1798 to one fifth in 1828.¹¹ Small to moderate sized holdings were the rule; the median ranged between 128 and 150 acres and few owned 300 or more acres. As a point of comparison, James Lemon estimated that 125 acres were sufficient for an average family farm in late eighteenth century southeastern Pennsylvania, while in 1850, the average farm

in Christiana Hundred had 93 acres.¹²

Between 1798 and 1816, the proportion of rural land owned by residents decreased dramatically, leaving 45-60 percent of the land to be worked by tenants or hired men and a large supply of people to fill these roles. In 1816, about 15 percent of the rural taxables were identified as tenants, renting about 40 percent of the hundred's acreage. Three-quarters of them rented 125 acres or more. About one-third of the 1816 rural taxables had access to land, through either owning or rental, while about 20 percent of the total number of taxables met Lemon's late eighteenth century standards. In a society whose values and economy were based on land, few had the means to match the dream, to say nothing of passing it on to their children.

Although more easily acquired than land and equally essential for agricultural life, livestock ownership declined steadily; by 1828 only 40 percent of rural taxables owned animals. Table 19, based on estate inventories, gives an idea of the holdings of area farmers. To put these figures in perspective, Lemon estimated that it took seven cattle, three or four horses, ten sheep, and eight swine to stock a 125 acre farm in the late eighteenth century.¹³ In 1850, Christiana Hundred farmers owned an average of three horses, six milk cows, seven other cattle, and six swine. Forty percent owned oxen and 11 percent had sheep; almost all owned

the other types of animals.¹⁴ New Castle Hundred livestock holdings are compatible with these figures, but the declining percentage of taxables owning animals shows that this level was becoming harder to reach.

Table 19: Livestock Owning in Rural New Castle Hundred

	<u>Cattle</u>	<u>Horses</u>	<u>Sheep</u>	<u>Pigs</u>
<u>1780-1807</u>				
Number of cases	77	77	38	65
Number of animals	1076	382	644	582
Largest herd	68	18	50	38
Mean herd	14.1	5	16.9	9
<u>1809-1827</u>				
Number of cases	70	65	28	60
Number of animals	946	286	747	590
Largest herd	49	15	94	45
Mean herd	13.5	4.4	26.7	10.7 ^a
<u>1828-1840</u>				
Number of cases	24	25	9	20
Number of animals	342	101	614	168
Largest herd	115	11	494	20
Mean herd	14.2	4	68.2	8.4
(Mean herd omitting largest herd)	(9.9)		(15)	

a. Mean figured with 55 owners, eliminating 5 for whom the number of pigs is unknown.

With these patterns of land and livestock owning, it is not surprising that the portion of rural residents who were propertyless increased substantially; by 1816 about half had no taxable wealth. It was difficult, if not impossible, to be a substantial farmer in New Castle Hundred; those who owned

120 acres were among the wealthiest 20 percent. Although the distribution of wealth among rural residents did not differ markedly from that of townspeople, its meaning did, for the other figures show that rural New Castle Hundred was not a land of opportunity. Demographic statistics support this; the white population fluctuated violently and by 1840 was little different from its 1800 level, while the black population increased dramatically after 1820. Tenant farming and wage labor were the main choices. A white man with any agricultural ambition probably would not stay long unless he happened upon the right circumstances.

In town and country, slavery and freedom, blacks' major contribution to the economy was their labor. Even as they left bondage and increased in number, their economic role did not change. Only 7-11 percent owned land, and they held houses and lots in town, never acreage. In 1800, nearly three-quarters of blacks lived in white households; by 1840, about half still lived with whites, lacking a home of their own. About one-fifth to one-third owned livestock. Sixty to seventy-five percent were propertyless, and some blacks were themselves property and incapable of owning anything.¹⁵ Nevertheless, a few achieved modest prosperity. Augustus Jamot operated a hairdressing shop in 1804, probably the only black business between 1780 and 1840.¹⁶ In 1816, one black rented 150 acres and several unnamed blacks leased

a 611 acre tract, so that a few farmed on the same scale as white tenants. Although some blacks rented houses in town, others made their home in stables.¹⁷

Robert VanJoy's life again provides the best documentation of black experience and probably represents the highest success possible for a black in rural or urban New Castle Hundred. He bought a 35 by 340 foot lot with a frame house on credit in 1796, four years after his marriage.¹⁸ That he was able to obtain credit suggests that VanJoy was respected. In 1804, he leased two small--five to ten acres--Common lots, which he sublet to a white.¹⁹ The next year he sold part of his lot in town, keeping the portion with the house for himself.²⁰ By late 1812, he no longer held the Common lease.²¹ He also rented out his house in 1816. VanJoy had no specialized occupational skills; in the 1796 deed, he was listed as a "labourer" and he served as sexton of Immanuel for at least six years.²² In the 1821 deed conveying another part of his town land to the same man who had bought the first section, VanJoy was labelled a "farmer."²³ VanJoy left a signed will at his death in 1823, in which the main property listed was the house and lot in New Castle.²⁴ VanJoy's participation in the mainstream economy shows that he had middle class values, aspirations, and behavior, but the best that he or any black could hope for was to rise to the top of the margin of society. The wealthiest blacks were on a level with

very modestly prosperous whites.

Women too played a quiet role in the economy; most spent their lives in the world of home and family. A few ran businesses or headed households or owned taxable property. Indeed, in 1798 the hundred's wealthiest taxable was a woman, and there were always a few women in the top quintile. Between 1800 and 1840, 7 to 15 percent of white households had female heads, which meant that 5 to 8 percent of white females over fifteen were in charge of a household. The percentage of female-headed households was always higher in town, ranging from 11 to 19 percent, while in rural areas the range was 3 to 11 percent. Only 3 to 5 percent of women were taxables; all except two were white.²⁵ The only known businesswomen were two tavernkeepers, one ferrykeeper and one who may have taught little girls.²⁶ Others may have run boarding houses or worked as dressmakers or servants. While the number of women who worked outside the normal confines of woman's activity was probably greater than the available information indicates, their role was still limited.

In 1798, New Castle Hundred's taxable property was proportionately divided between town and country, but after 1816, the town was wealthier. With only one-quarter of the taxables, the town controlled about 45 percent of the wealth, and the mean assessment for town residents was over twice that of rural people.²⁷ In 1828, 90 percent of male rural

taxables were listed as laborers, second class farmer, second class journeyman, or third class merchant, while only about half of their urban counterparts were in that group; the rest were in categories representing more skill, wealth, or prestige.²⁸ Even though the town of New Castle had severe limitations, it offered more opportunity and prosperity than did the surrounding countryside.

I. Awakening: 1780-1808

The Revolutionary War and subsequent depression killed the fragile economic and civic vigor of the 1760s and early 1770s, leaving New Castle depressed and unpromising. An early 1780s visitor saw New Castle as "a little insignificant town," with few "seemly buildings." The town had "no trade" and "the inhabitants seem[ed] not to be active." He suggested that Philadelphia's proximity prevented New Castle from prospering. In contrast, Wilmington was "a vastly better place, large and busy," with vigorous commerce, a good market, and many new houses under construction.²⁹ By 1787, conditions had not improved; as one man wrote, "I apprehend Nothing will be saved by keeping the Houses & Lots in New Castle for a Market, as I imagine their value will rather decrease than otherwise."³⁰

Even during the bleak years, New Castle's people were not totally without hope and spunk, for in 1786 they

made two requests of the state legislature. One was for legal town government to replace extra-legal town meetings of the war years. New Castle apparently suffered the social consequences of unemployment and poverty; the citizens hoped to "discourage Immorality, and to promote the Order, Sobriety, and Interest of said Town."³¹ The legislature did not grant this petition. The second request, supported by others in the county as well, was that New Castle and Wilmington be made free ports with advantageous conditions for trade. The petitions cited New Castle's assets: a pleasant healthy location, an extensive backcountry, and a deep harbor navigable almost all year. In addition, New Castle's people had raised money to place protective piers in the harbor and awaited only legislative permission before beginning construction. The hope of attracting more trade to Delaware and freeing the state from dependence on Pennsylvania motivated the request for free port status. The request became law but was shortly superseded by the new national Constitution.³²

The depression began to lift after 1789, but the nation's prospects appeared limited because it was approaching the bounds of a pre-industrial, predominately agricultural economy in which expansion depended on outside factors. The wars of the French Revolution, however, gave the new nation a final period of hectic prosperity within the

traditional pattern, lasting from 1793 to 1807. Although France and England caused tensions for the United States, the disruption of normal trade and shipping patterns was a golden opportunity for the American economy.³³ In New Castle, vigor, growth, and optimism replaced the gloom and poverty of the war and depression. The population grew substantially, at least in terms of Delaware, outsiders commented favorably on the town's appearance and activity, and real estate advertisements described its prospects in glowing terms. Under favorable economic conditions, New Castle recaptured its thwarted civic identity and aspiration and turned some of its deferred dreams into reality.

The harbor was the major economic focus. With few exceptions, ships stopping in 1797 or before came from Irish ports laden with hundreds of passengers. Some of the other vessels were in the American coastal trade while one came from Jamaica.³⁴ Between 1801 and 1805, the harbor was busier and the ships travelled a wider variety of routes. Although West Indian ports dominated, a few had continental European ports and a few still plied the Irish route.³⁵ The increased volume and changed patterns of trade reflect opportunities generated by the European wars.

Townpeople saw the harbor as the source of prosperity and worked to improve its facilities. The long awaited piers were erected in the mid-1790s. An 1802 law authorized

the appointment of a harbormaster, suggesting that the harbor was busy enough to need supervision, or that New Castle aspired to such a level of activity and in the meantime wanted a symbol of that status. Finally, townspeople petitioned Congress, unsuccessfully, to be made a port of entry, although they succeeded in having the piers placed under federal control and funding. Much of the drive for harbor improvement had the moral, but probably not financial, support of Philadelphia merchants who saw New Castle as a non-competitive auxiliary to their own harbor.³⁶

New Castle's primary function in the web of commerce was not buying and selling goods but servicing ships. As the last safe harbor before putting out to sea and the northernmost port to stay relatively free of ice in the winter, New Castle was a refuge, especially for ships bound to and from Philadelphia. The piers erected in the mid-1790s were structures placed in the water at the harbor's edge to provide protection from ice and storms. The town's mercantile specialty was providing supplies for outbound ships. Nearly every contemporary observer commented on it, while saying nothing about New Castle as a general commercial center.³⁷

Newcastle is the true point from which all the Philadelphian ships take their departure. When they are laden, they drop down thither with their pilot, and take in their poultry and vegetables, where the captains who remain at Philadelphia to settle their accounts at the custom-house join them by land, and from

whence they sail with the first fair wind.³⁸

The trade, an adjunct to general merchandising, was slightly specialized, but not so demanding of capital and skills that many would have been excluded.³⁹ It could be small or large in scale, one item or many, and was an outlet for local agricultural products. Many of the goods were also in normal household use; the merchant who sold meat or rope to a ship probably would also sell it to anyone else.

In the end, however, the harbor's prospects were limited. When applying in 1789 to be the state's first federal customs collector, James Booth presented New Castle as favorably as possible, but still had to admit that almost all of Delaware's foreign trade originated in Wilmington.

It must be confessed that almost all the foreign commerce carried on by the citizens of this State is from the borough [of Wilmington]; but I can allege, with as great truth, that as great and perhaps a greater number of vessels enter during the summer and fall season, at New Castle--generally those in the Irish trade and those bound to Philadelphia, where parts of their cargoes belong to Baltimore, stop by New Castle; these, taken, together, are at least equal to the number of vessels trading from Wilmington.⁴⁰

New Castle was neither an owner or builder of ships, nor was it a major commercial center. In the late eighteenth century, New Castle owned two vessels in foreign trade and five in coastal shipping, compared with Wilmington's fifteen ships in foreign trade and seventeen coasting vessels on the Christina.⁴¹ New Castle was primarily a refuge and a supply

center, which Philadelphia merchants saw as a non-threatening auxiliary to their own harbor. Vessels often stopped at New Castle, but the real business was done elsewhere.

New Castle's riverfront location also made it a vital link in the regional and national transportation network. The Delmarva Peninsula was a major obstacle to travel between Philadelphia and Baltimore; all land or all water routes were expensive and inconvenient, so the bearable compromise was a combination. Travellers went by boat from Philadelphia to some point on the Delaware side of the peninsula, by land across to the Chesapeake, and again by water to Baltimore. Development of the route was an important part of New Castle's thwarted pre-Revolutionary spurt; when travel and trade revived after the 1780s depression, this route did too.

Médéric Louis Elie Moreau de St. Méry, a visiting Frenchman, described his 1794 journey from Baltimore to Philadelphia in detail. The boat left Baltimore at eight-thirty one morning and reached Frenchtown, New Castle's western counterpart, at one o'clock the next morning. The passengers were not allowed to land until nearly five o'clock. Frenchtown consisted of one large house, its outbuildings, and a warehouse. Two stages and a wagon for luggage left Frenchtown at half past five for the four hour trip to New Castle. After an hour and a half in New Castle, during which he explored the town and ate lunch, Moreau boarded the

packet to Philadelphia. Four boats sailed the New Castle-Philadelphia route. Two were considered to be the fastest on the river, making the trip in less than three hours under favorable conditions. Moreau's trip took five hours, plus waiting another hour to land in Philadelphia's busy harbor. The entire trip took about a day and a half.⁴²

Until the introduction of new transportation innovations in the early nineteenth century, the journey did not change much, but the business end did. In 1775, Joseph Tatlow of New Castle owned and operated the route from Philadelphia to Frenchtown, while another person or firm ran the boats on the Chesapeake.⁴³ Whether Tatlow continued to be involved in the 1790s is unknown, but several other New Castle men owned packet boats then, in connection with other economic activities.⁴⁴ In 1806, William McDonald and Andrew Henderson, both Marylanders, owned and operated the entire Baltimore-Philadelphia route, while Edward Trippe had a rival line running between Courthouse Point on the Maryland side and Port Penn on the Delaware.⁴⁵ The 1808 Gallatin Report estimated that before the rival line was established, the "old line" took in \$30,000 per year, while the two together earned \$50,000 per year. Each had three boats on the Delaware and four on the Chesapeake. On land, twelve two-ton wagons and four coaches were used every day. Depending on the weather, service was offered six days a week.⁴⁶ Although both lines

were doing well, the situation was not necessarily good for New Castle; the rival line went to Port Penn and outsiders owned the New Castle line.

A long-dreamed of canal across the peninsula, with possible benefits for New Castle, promised to become reality with the formation of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company in 1803. The project was a regional venture; the company's directors were divided equally among Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware. Among them was New Castle's Kensey Johns. Great debate arose over the canal's eastern end point; Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who did the surveying, favored New Castle, but stock sales and politics did not. New Castle's hopes were dashed when the directors decided to terminate the canal in the Christina, which would give Wilmington the major benefit. In the end, however, no one profited, for the company ran out of money soon after beginning to dig and the project was abandoned.⁴⁷ If only briefly, the promise of the canal must have added to New Castle's optimism.

Providing government was the other major component of New Castle's economy and urban identity. Although no longer the state capital, it was still the seat of New Castle County and the site of Delaware sessions of federal courts. Until 1811, the entire county voted at New Castle.⁴⁸ Some townspeople, such as lawyers, public officials, and those who provided goods and services to the county, profited directly

from the presence of government. Government business brought outsiders to town, especially on election day and during court sessions, who might shop or stop for a drink or a meal before returning home. Thus, government contributed to the economy both directly and indirectly. While townspeople could not dream and scheme to promote this feature, they would learn through hard experience that they had to fight to keep this source of profit and prestige.

The port, transportation services, and county seat were New Castle's means to profit and status, but the town also had the other normal features of an urban economy: taverns, craftsmen, merchants, and, after 1807, a branch of the state's bank. New Castle's craft sector provided mainly the skills and products needed in daily life. Except for a few cabinetmakers and one clockmaker, there were no luxury trades, but such items were easily available in Wilmington or Philadelphia. Shipbuilding was conspicuously absent. Nevertheless, between 1796 and 1799 and again in 1804 and 1805, the town had a printer, a sure sign of urban aspiration and promise. In 1804 and 1805, it even had a newspaper, the New Castle Argus.⁴⁹

Taverns were naturally an important feature of an economy based on moving goods and people and providing government services. They ranged from John Darragh's "Sign of the Ship and Pilot-Boat," advertising the "GENTEELEST

ENTERTAINMENT," to unlicensed houses serving "itinerant merchants, apprentice boys, negroes and mulattoes of both sexes, and rogues and blackguards of every description."⁵⁰ In 1799, New Castle Hundred had twelve licensed houses, second in the county only to the Christiana Hundred's (Wilmington) seventeen; the next highest hundred had seven.⁵¹

Although New Castle was not a major commercial center, its mercantile sector was vigorous and ambitious. At least a dozen firms of small to intermediate size dealt mainly in dry goods and groceries at various times during the period.⁵² They sold cloth, sewing supplies, dishes and kitchen utensils, shoes, stockings, a bit of ready-made clothing, groceries, and liquor.⁵³ In addition, the town boasted a drug store and a book store.⁵⁴ Bond and Lees, operating between 1789 and 1794, was the largest firm and fit into the mold of the undifferentiated eighteenth century merchant. The firm bought and sold a wide variety of items and owned ships in the coastal trade, at least part of the New Castle-Philadelphia packet, and valuable property in New Castle and the surrounding countryside. Although the firm apparently did not trade directly with Europe, it did have an office in Philadelphia.⁵⁵ The patterns of New Castle's trade are obscure. Most merchants probably bought their stock in Wilmington or Philadelphia. They obviously sold to townspeople and the ship supply trade, but how far their market

extended into New Castle County is unknown. New Castle merchants certainly aspired to a wider market, for they advertised in Wilmington papers; whether this brought any business is an unanswered question.

New Castle's new vigor and ambition led to struggle with Wilmington. Rivalry between them was not new, but it took on a new form in the early nineteenth century. It became institutionalized, using, at various times, the press, state government, political parties, and even the federal government, whereas earlier rivalry had been more informal and private, or at least expressed itself in ways which left few traces. A powerful emotional element accompanied the competition for trade and profit. By 1800, New Castle was an old and venerable town which had seen its place usurped first by New York, then by Philadelphia, and finally by the new neighbor merely a few miles away--and it hurt. As John Munroe so aptly expressed it, New Castle was "nurturing its pride and its grudges beside the river."⁵⁶

The first battle in the interurban war began in 1801 with Wilmington's plan to build a drawbridge over the Christina. By 1802, much more than a bridge was involved. Wilmington men had heard that New Castle was petitioning against the bridge and planning to open a new road, while closing another, which would hurt the bridge. And, even though New Castle Hundred Republicans had pledged not to

make the bridge an issue in the 1801 election, they broke their word and worked to have anti-bridge John Bird elected to the state senate, which also deprived Wilmington of one of its usual seats in the legislature. Wilmington men claimed that their town had never stood in New Castle's way in the legislature.⁵⁷ "We now think ourselves at perfect liberty by their breaking the truce, to oppose them hand to hand and foot to foot."⁵⁸

Six months later came fresh examples of New Castle's perfidy. Not only did New Castle men--or, four or five of them--have the duplicity to give Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin false information about their town's commercial status, but they also nominated anti-bridge John Bird for the post of customs collector, so that he could divert trade to New Castle. The Wilmington men said, "we wish only to enjoy our natural advantages over N Castle. . . ."⁵⁹

In 1803, the bridge charter passed in one house of the legislature and debate spilled over into the press. The bridge's effect on county politics was one topic, for despite pleas for party unity, the Republicans had pro-and anti-bridge tickets, motivated by pressure from New Castle Hundred. It was suggested that the Federalists were behind this. Another question was whether New Castle had been actively lobbying against the bridge at Dover, under the guise of promoting a new road. New Castle claimed that the lobbyists

only asked for permission to open a new road to Frenchtown, which was granted, and never mentioned the bridge. Another writer claimed that the two towns had agreed not to interfere with each other's projects. Several threatened New Castle with the loss of the county seat if it did not mend its selfish ways. The final accusation was that Philadelphia was egging on New Castle in order to hurt Wilmington.⁶⁰ Speaking from the peak of the mountain of pride and grudges, one pro-New Castle writer made this sweeping statement:

Nature having placed us in an enviable position; and the great beneficent creator of the universe having been pleased to bestow upon us, some of his particular blessings, which our neighbors do not always enjoy. This hath planted in the bosom of those neighbors a rankling thorn, which produces a spirit of envious inquietude. But their religion, their morality ought to teach them better; and I pray God, that he will be pleased to remove these unhappy spirits, and bestow upon them those of brotherly love and good neighborhood.⁶¹

The issue faded for about a year but flared up again in 1805-1806 with a large petition drive on both sides. The surviving pro-bridge petitions state merely that since the bill passed only the House in the last legislative session, it should be brought forward again.⁶² The anti-bridge petitions go into great detail, no doubt representing the underdog's last ditch effort. The petition claimed that the bridge would impede navigation of the Christina and hurt a profitable carrying trade, that the road leading to the bridge would be redundant for it went close to two existing roads,

and that the bridge would ruin the ferries at Newport and Wilmington, on which considerable public money had been spent. Finally, Wilmington was accused of promoting the bridge from purely local interests:

This measure of most mischievous tendency is strenuously persevered in by some people of Wilmington, not, your Memorialists believe, from Public, but Local Motives, from an opinion, that it will have the direct effect, of dispelling by diverting from the other Towns all travellers, and the business of transportation to the intermediate road leading to Wilmington, which instead of dividing and interchanging as it now does, reciprocal benefits with those Towns would appropriate them exclusively to its own advantage.⁶³

The newspaper debate consisted of variations on the usual themes of party unity, threats to move the county seat, and accusations of New Castle's selfishness and deviousness. This time the threat of moving the county seat figured more largely in the debate because it seemed to be on the verge of becoming reality. Petitions to have the courts moved to a safer and more central location because of the growth of population and the threat of war were circulating. The county buildings were in bad condition, but the Levy Court appropriated only fifty dollars for repairs, pending the decision on the location. Finally, New Castle Hundred was petitioning for permission to open several new roads in other parts of the county.⁶⁴ This was not motivated by a desire to promote the public good, but perpetrated by the "No-Bridge Junto,"

men hostile to the necessary improvements in other parts of the county. Men whose objects are to stop at no sacrifice of the rest of the county, provided New Castle can be aggrandized thereby. Men who while making an uproar about burdening New Castle hundred with a road to Clark's Corner, think nothing of directing the traveller, across soft marshes, through the little hundred of Red Lion, (leaving that ancient stand, Red Lion Inn, aside) perhaps as a punishment for past disobedience to orders.⁶⁵

Not only were their motives selfish, their means were underhanded. The purpose of the new roads was

not to travel straight through the state to and from Philadelphia, but crooked, by going through New Castle. Here then is the secret: New Castle is not content to have the county tributary to her for justice, for records, for suffrage, &c, but even the state must pay the tribute of respect, and give her a passing bow, if not a toll; and the lower hundreds must open new roads, destructive of farms, and at an enormous tax, and the county build a dozen new bridges not wanted.⁶⁶

The legislature finally passed the charter for the Wilmington Bridge Company in 1807; New Castle had lost the battle, but the war had only begun.⁶⁷

By 1807, New Castle, no longer run down and depressed, had experienced nearly a decade and a half of sustained prosperity and success. Quite a few new houses had been built, including some on Speculation Alley.⁶⁸ George Read's mansion overlooking the river was the epitome of elegance. The handsome Academy took its place on the green, while the Episcopalians and Presbyterians undertook major improvements and the Roman Catholics began to build their church. The

dreams of town government and piers in the river became reality in the mid-1790s. The ambitious town fathers commissioned Latrobe's elaborate survey and planned major street improvements. The Trustees of the Common began to fulfill their goal of using their land to benefit the town, with the funding of the Academy as their first major project. Economic energy and success bred civic spirit.

In comparison with what was to come, and what had been, New Castle's success between around 1793 and 1807 came easily. The town had exploded into life and felt confident that it could achieve further success in the future. Real estate advertisements included glowing descriptions of New Castle's advantages and prospects for the only time in the sixty years of this study.⁶⁹ To give just one example:

The whole of this property is nearly opposite that new wharf lately completed by Dr. James M'Calmont, and contiguous to the public pier lately erected at New-Castle, in addition to which there are three others to be erected the summer next ensuing, . . . which when finished will form the most commodious and safe harbor in the river Delaware.---The public Seminary lately erected in this town for the education of children of both sexes is superior to any on the continent, being immediately under the direction of preceptors eminent in the profession of literature. The rising value of real property here has been very considerable, and the public spirit and improvements so generally displayed must to every person be a convincing proof of the eligibility of the situation of this property for mercantile business, in which this town has been for some time past rapidly encreasing.⁷⁰

The Wilmington Bridge battle brought a taste of reality; New

Castle's men learned that they could not entirely control their world, that they could not always have their own way, and that enacting their dreams of being more than a sleepy village would often require hard fighting. The combination of prosperity and initiation into rough-and-tumble urban warfare provided New Castle with a secure base for more difficult times ahead.

II. Well-tempered Optimism: 1808-1828

The buoyant prosperity of the 1790s and opening years of the nineteenth century, based on traditional economic patterns, was not to last. New Castle had little control over many of the forces and events that were to shape its world: the Embargo of 1808, the War of 1812, post-war economic adjustments, beginnings of regional industrialization, the transportation revolution, fire, and mud. Although New Castle had urban aspirations, it had to work them out within the context provided by Philadelphia and Wilmington; it was not an urban leader. Between 1808 and 1828, the town strived and fought with mixed results. Positive achievements included the drawbridge at Newport, steamboats on the river, the turnpike road to Frenchtown, a secure county seat, the beginnings of railroad development, and many signs of civic and religious vigor. Underneath lay problems. Astute townspeople probably sensed the growing gap between rich and poor and the swirling yet stagnant population that are revealed by

quantitative data. In correspondence, people often said that New Castle was dull; no one commented on its prosperity and glowing prospects.

Many external factors limited New Castle's port: the Embargo of 1808 and ensuing war, Philadelphia's loss of commercial hegemony to New York, the relative decline in the importance of foreign trade in the nation's economy, and the gradual shift in the region's economic orientation from foreign trade to industrial output for intraregional use. Gone were any hopes or pretensions of being even a small commercial center; gone too, at least from extant sources, is any indication of an active ship supply trade. New Castle, however, continued to function as a refuge; in January and February, fourteen to seventeen vessels might anchor there.⁷¹ In effect, the harbor may have been busiest during the off-season.

New Castle's citizens did not see the harbor as a focal point in this period; instead, it gradually filled with mud. As early as 1811, James McCallmont, who held the ferry franchise, described the situation at his wharf, erected only about ten years earlier and extending at least 130 feet into the river:

By the Alluvion of the Waters of the Delaware in some degree occasioned by the Erection of the public Piers &c--a large mud-flat has been formed in front, and along side the sd wharf and slip extending into the River Delaware, so

that the Ferry Boats, which subsequent to its Erection, could at all times come to, and lay alongside of Sd Slip or landing place, cannot now come within fifty feet of it at low water to the great inconvenience and dissatisfaction of passengers, consequently occasioning sometimes an unavoidable detention of hours before the Horses and Carriages can be embarked or landed--and so rapid has been the accumulation of Mud that it is now elevated several feet above the foot of the Slip below which at the time of its Erection was four feet water at low tides, making a depth of Mud since, of near seven feet and, every attempt at removal, by digging, has only been the Remedy of a few days.

McCallmont planned to extend his wharf sixty feet, and would make it longer if necessary.⁷³ The mud continued to accumulate; in 1817, McCallmont and the Common jointly built a new public wharf that was 310 feet long.⁷⁴ By the mid-1820s the harbor was nearly unusable, if some writers are to be believed; indeed, the question of the harbor's safety and accessibility led to a brief skirmish in the war with Wilmington.⁷⁵ Finally, in 1827, Congress appropriated money for harbor improvements.⁷⁶ If the port had been busier and more important to the economy, people probably would have made efforts to improve it earlier.

Continuing to capitalize on the flow of people and goods up and down the coast, New Castle's men put most of their economic energy into developing the regional transportation network, building on existing packet and stage lines. The major problem at the turn of the nineteenth century was that transportation facilities were wretched; during the War

of 1812 it took seventy-five days for a four-horse wagon to go from Worcester, Massachusetts to Charleston, South Carolina.⁷⁷ Closer to home, the trip from Philadelphia to Baltimore took a miserable day and a half. The needed improvements --turnpikes, steamboats, canals, and railroads--came in such quick succession that the early nineteenth century has been labelled the "transportation revolution," and each affected New Castle. Francis Lieber vividly described the changes that occurred in the area within a short period:

When I first came to this country, I went from the Delaware to the Chesapeake in a confounded and confounding stage coach. A few years later, I had to go again to Washington and found a canal cut through Delaware. . . , and a year or so later, I crossed the same state on a railroad; now I wait impatiently for a passage over the state, for aerial navigation is the next in order, all other means being exhausted.⁷⁸

New Castle did not accept its defeat in the Wilmington Bridge battle as final and responded in 1808 with a plan to bridge the Christina at Newport, a few miles downriver from Wilmington.⁷⁹ The Trustees of the Common were deeply involved in the project. In 1812, they solicited plans for the bridge, and the next year they appointed a "Draw Bridge Committee" and paid the expenses of a lobbyist sent to Dover. Three of the five commissioners named in the bridge's charter were Trustees.⁸⁰

The campaign to obtain a state charter touched off a fight similar to that over the Wilmington Bridge. Arguments

against the Newport Bridge were similar to those against the Wilmington Bridge: there were already other roads in the area, navigation of the Christina would be impeded, the bridge would be useless if the county seat were moved, and the existing ferry at Newport was not heavily used--in short, there was not enough traffic. As with the earlier battle, this one involved more than bridges. In 1809, bridge supporters were accused of resorting to shady tricks to insure that they would have a strong voice in the legislature. Their ploy was to nominate, on the majority Republican ticket, a New Castle Hundred man who would run, win and, resign, so that the vacancy could be filled by a special election. The first part of the stratagem worked, but the second did not; bridge supporter John Crow was defeated in the special election and the charter was not granted until 1813. Again, connivance with the Federalists was suspected. Another holdover from the first battle was an 1809 movement to change the county seat. The strongest language was reserved for moral judgments; New Castle was accused of being selfish and unethical, of promoting the Newport Bridge solely to strike back at Wilmington and to provide a profit for a few.⁸¹ As one writer eloquently expressed it, after the Wilmington Bridge became reality,

the New-Castle leaders were left to suffer
the contempt of their betrayed confederates,
and, like debauched gamblers, already ruined
at play, instead of turning their attention to
industry and economy, to plunge madly into new

excesses, to divert the attention of the public from their past enormities and to drown the recollection of lost confidence.⁸²

As with the Wilmington Bridge, the opposition only caused a delay; the Newport Bridge Company received its charter in 1813.⁸³

The Newport Bridge battle coincided with the heyday of turnpike construction in the area, and New Castle's men were involved in this as well.⁸⁴ In 1809-1810 the Delaware and Maryland legislatures chartered the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike Company, authorized to improve the busy but terrible road to Frenchtown.⁸⁵ The proposed turnpike apparently aroused the envy and anger of New Castle's neighbors and again threatened county Republican unity.

What is this political sin which is to bring the fire and brimstone of the county upon the devoted Sodom?--a road, a turnpike road from New Castle to French Town, to facilitate the communication from Philadelphia to Baltimore! . . . Is then the prosperity, the public spirit of a town to become the signal for its ruin?⁸⁶

These feelings were premature, however, for the company failed to raise enough capital to organize and then fell dormant. Undeterred, New Castle men organized a more modest venture in 1811, a two mile turnpike from New Castle to Clark's Corner, which succeeded. Stock ownership was evenly distributed; fifty-six people bought five shares each and one bought ten. Many were local men, investing in hopes of helping their town's overall prospects rather than for direct

private profit. The road was finished by late summer, 1812 and began to pay dividends in 1813.⁸⁷

The Newport Bridge Company also became involved in turnpikes. Since tolls could not be collected until the road from the bridge to New Castle had been improved, and since both bridge and road were too much to handle, the company arranged for the New Castle Turnpike Company to build the road. The bridge company owned two-thirds of the additional stock issued for this purpose, or about 30 percent of the turnpike company's total stock. The road from the Newport Bridge to Clark's Corner was finished in 1816; presumably the bridge was completed by then, too.⁸⁸

Meanwhile, the Union Line, a consolidation of the two rival firms that had earlier provided boats, wagons, and coaches on the route, brought another of the era's innovations, the steamboat, to New Castle around 1813. Although the firm took in New Castle's John and Thomas Janvier as partners around this time, most of its owners were not local. With its new-fangled steamboats and heavy use of the road to Frenchtown, this outside organization would be a potent force in New Castle's transportation developments.⁸⁹

Although the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike's charter had lapsed, the need for an improved road had not disappeared. No one was more aware of it than the Union Line,

which played an important role in persuading the turnpike company to renew its charter in 1813. By now, conditions were more favorable: the New Castle Turnpike set a successful precedent, traffic was increasing, and the Union Line promised a high volume of business. The Union Line backed its wishes with money; men associated with it bought at least one-sixth of the turnpike's stock. Both Janviers were officers, although only until 1816. This time the company succeeded; the turnpike was finished in 1816. After the road was completed, the Union Line continued to play a major role in its fortunes, for the line's wagons and coaches provided a great deal of traffic and income. During the first years of operation, there was considerable haggling over the Union Line's tolls, but in 1820, the companies made an arrangement which lasted until 1830 and ultimately favored the Union Line.⁹⁰

Despite battles and setbacks, by 1816, New Castle's links in the regional transportation network were complete and up-to-date, and the town could regard its accomplishments with pride and hope. That so much had been accomplished during the national disruptions of 1808-1815 which destroyed the trade that previously had been the source of New Castle's prosperity shows the town's strength, confidence, and optimism. The turnpike companies, with the help of heavy Union Line traffic, did reasonably well, usually breaking even and often

paying dividends. They did better than many turnpikes and were the basis for the railroad built in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The Union Line also did well, although it had to combat competition. The Newport Bridge was a flop; by 1827 the company was deeply in debt and the New Castle Turnpike Company abandoned the turnpike to Newport.⁹¹

Two new developments of the 1820s, the canal boom and the railroad, all too soon challenged New Castle's facilities. Philadelphians revived the dormant Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Company in the early 1820s in hopes of providing easier access to the Maryland market, thus expanding the city's hinterland and strengthening its position in relation to New York. This time the canal was primarily by and for Philadelphia rather than a regional venture.⁹² Neither New Castle nor Wilmington liked the idea since the canal would be cheaper and more convenient than existing routes and its eastern end would be at Delaware City. New Castle was especially concerned lest the Union Line forsake it for the canal. As the canal showed signs of actually becoming reality, both New Castle and Wilmington investigated railroads as a way of offsetting the threat. Although there was some talk of a joint venture, each in the end acted on its own--indeed, the idea of Wilmington-New Castle cooperation seems preposterous in light of previous history. With the encouragement of the Union Line, New Castle decided to build its railroad along

the New Castle and Frenchtown route and received its charter in 1829, before Wilmington. New Castle had bested its rival, or so it seemed.⁹³

It is almost impossible to gauge the effects of transportation development on New Castle's economy in terms of dollars or jobs; the records do not exist. The turnpikes probably did not make anyone's fortune, while much of the Union Line's profit went to outsiders. Travellers obviously spent money in New Castle's shops and taverns. Many of the jobs generated by transportation required few specialized skills, and would not attract upwardly mobile people who might someday have capital to invest in the community. The only extant figures suggest that the volume of traffic was volatile: in 1827, Union Line coaches made 2,853 turnpike trips; in 1828, 5,216; in 1829, 4,438; and 2,934 in 1830.⁹⁴ The last figure probably reflects traffic diverted to the newly opened canal. Such fluctuations obviously affected profits and employment. Nevertheless, the town was busy, even if it did not generate great wealth, as this traveller's account shows.

It is a perfect treat to sit in the upper story of the tavern, and see the steamboats arrive and depart twice a day, loaded with passengers, from forty to an hundred, and how often at night I cannot say. Also the stages coming from Frenchtown, eight to ten, heavy laden with passengers-- these get out of the stages directly under the window and walk to the wharf. Some dozen porters wheeling the baggage to the wharf to proceed on in the steamboat. Others again, are wheeling the baggage, trunks piled on trunks, bandboxes

and valices from the wharf to take the same stages back to Frenchtown.

These are hardly out of sight till hear comes the other steamboat foaming down the river from Philadelphia, and the stages again meeting them from Baltimore. The stages receive the passengers from the boat, and the boat receives the passengers from the stages, and each set off again, turning back to back.

The novelty of the passengers, their different figures, dress, age, country and movements, are very amusing; and such droves, it appears to be an army in full march--every one walks as fast as if his life were forfeited if he did not get first to the stage, or first to the boat. But their figures and phizes--here a little nimble Frenchman trips like a partridge and carries his valice under his arm, for safety--another (American) follows, with his valice in his hand, which his looks show he is unwilling to trust in the hands of the porters. There you see a great broad red-faced Irish woman, waddling along, puffing and blowing, perhaps an old chest, as cumbersome as herself, fastens her eye to the barrow, and never was a boat yet, but there was a broad red-faced Scotchman on board, and a pock-marked Paddy.⁹⁵

New Castle's hold on the county seat was secure after the Newport Bridge battle was over, but its governmental role was diminished in another way. In 1811, the state was divided into election districts; people no longer had to travel to their county seat to vote but cast their ballots in their own hundreds. To add insult to injury, New Castle Hundred's polling place was no longer the court house, but a tavern about two miles from town. New Castle lost the excitement, status, and economic benefit that came from hosting elections

and the 1,700-2,400 electors. In 1823, however, the hundred's polling place was moved back to the courthouse.⁹⁶

The town's craft and mercantile sectors also faced up to limitations between 1808 and 1828 which can be summed up in one fact: before 1808, merchants and craftsmen advertised fairly regularly in the Wilmington papers; after 1808, they did not. The growing specialization of the economy is one cause, but there is more to it; specialization does not preclude advertising. New Castle's market had shifted; while earlier businessmen competed with Wilmington for trade, their successors had to be content with mainly local custom.

At least a few local men were involved in the more profitable end of seafaring. Of course, how many boys ran away to sea is unknown. In 1813, Captain Lockyer sailed for Lisbon with a cargo of flour to be sold to English agents. Another local man was at Canton in 1814 and not expected home for two years. George McCallmont and Captain Reilly did very well with two schooners that they sent out in late 1813. The Hope, sent to Havana, returned with a cargo of dry goods and money taken from a small English sloop, while the Ellen returned from Matanzas laden with sugar and coffee and successfully repelled a British attack on its way home.⁹⁷ Captain John Sword, who died in 1810, had apparently been in the China trade, for his inventory included household furnishings from China and the East Indies. Captain David Ross, who

died in 1818, owned a tantalizing list of imported goods: nine boxes of marble, three complete fireplaces, a trunk containing twenty-six pictures "in ruff state," damask curtains, carpets, yards and yards of fringe and tassels--all evaluated in Italian lira. Perhaps he planned to create a Renaissance palace in New Castle Hundred. Each man owned large amounts of silver. They must have lived in sophisticated comfort. Both were also farmers, owning substantial amounts of livestock and several slaves.⁹⁸ At the time of their death, they may have been retired from the sea, or they may have relied on farming as a supplement to their income and as insurance against the uncertainties of the sea. Neither inventory listed shares of stock or part ownership of vessels; the lure of the sea may have been strong, but these two found their economic security in the land.

New Castle's experience between 1808 and 1828 was punctuated by three of the great calamities of life: war, depression and fire. The Embargo of 1808 and the war that eventually followed destroyed the active foreign trade that brought prosperity to New Castle, but the town did not crumble into depression. Instead, energy and money were invested in the development of regional transportation facilities. What might have happened otherwise is anyone's guess, but a major reorientation of the town's economy coincided with the War of 1812. War brought fear, loss, and trauma, but the town was not

attacked or damaged and its economy was neither made nor unmade.

Although the nation enjoyed a chaotic but profitable boom for about three years after the end of the War of 1812, Philadelphia and its region did not share in it. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, the city permanently lost its position as America's primary port to New York, and then began to develop its manufacturing potential, producing for the intraregional market. The end of the war and the influx of British goods depressed the young industrial sector before it was firmly established. Philadelphia prices fell from late 1815 until 1821.⁹⁹ One observer noted in fall 1816 that people were not able to pay their debts, goods were not selling, the land market was tight, money was loaned at 18 to 30 percent per year, some were bankrupt, and many more tottered on the verge of ruin.¹⁰⁰ The city experienced widespread urban unemployment for the first time; in parts of the city's manufacturing sector which had employed 9,799 in 1815, only 2,100 were working in fall 1819.¹⁰¹ When the Panic of 1819 "officially" arrived, Philadelphia had already experienced several bad years, caught in the vulnerable transition between a commercial and a manufacturing economy.

Detailed information is unavailable for Wilmington, but its condition was probably similar, for it too had manufacturing and commercial sectors. In late 1817, one newspaper writer said that although the city had many natural

advantages and the potential to be active and prosperous, it was currently stagnating. He blamed Philadelphia for Wilmington's situation.¹⁰²

Why then, it may be asked, since we possess the primary means for its support, do we not possess commerce? My answer is, that it is because it is the interest of Philadelphia to prevent our becoming any thing more than a place of depot for her--to collect the produce of the country together and send it to her; thus to take her goods, send them over the country, collect the money for them, pay it to her, and then to be very particular about the kind she is paid in. . . . We may remain a kind of runners and collectors--a kind of hewers of wood and drawers of water for her, and she will deign to consider us dutiful servants: but if we deviate from this course, we must expect to be punished as vile offenders.¹⁰³

The town of New Castle apparently shared in the region's post-war stagnation, but the signs and effects of hard times can be detected only indirectly. In early 1818, the author of a scheme to unite Delaware with Maryland said that "it would give life and animation to the place [New Castle] such as it has hitherto been stranger to."¹⁰⁴ Demography offers the strongest hints: in 1820, the population was almost exactly what it had been ten years earlier. Something had stopped the growth trend of the previous decade. The decline in foreign trade may have contributed, although transportation improvements were a sign of economic vigor and a source of employment. Since New Castle was not a milling center or grain shipping port, it would have benefited only

tangentially from the high prices and high demand enjoyed by area farmers. Hard times had their greatest effect on poorer people. While the poor were always more mobile than the prosperous, between 1815 and 1820, only 35 percent of those whose town assessment was below the median remained, compared with 41 to 47 percent in earlier years. The figure was similar between 1820 and 1825, suggesting that conditions were not improving quickly. In contrast, the mobility pattern of wealthier people did not change; about 70 percent remained between 1815 and 1820.¹⁰⁵ Wealthier people had economic and personal commitments to the town as well as the means to survive hard times; poorer people lacked both commitments and resources. They needed work, and when they could not find it in New Castle, they moved on.

The story was different in rural New Castle Hundred. While the prices of many goods fell after the war, agricultural prices rose until early 1817. High European demand and a short 1816 corn crop kept prices up. With high crop prices and relatively low prices for other goods, farmers prospered, until prices collapsed quickly during 1817 and continued to decline until 1821. The total decline was 40 to 60 percent.¹⁰⁶ The rural population increased about 20 percent between 1810 and 1820, probably lured by high prices and easy access to market. When prices tumbled, the people were trapped. Their cash income shrank drastically, debts remained the same, and

plans to improve their lives had to be deferred.

People responded to hard times in several ways. Some formed organizations devoted to promoting the cause of manufacturing, such as the Delaware Manufacturing Society, formed in early 1817, and another similar group formed in New Castle County in mid-1819.¹⁰⁷ Others wrote multitudinous newspaper articles on banks, money, economic philosophy and causes of hard times, often expressing hostility towards Philadelphia for dictating the terms of Delaware's financial life. To remedy the situation, the writers and organizations urged hard work, thrift, using fewer imported luxuries, and improving agriculture and industry. Farmers were castigated for laziness; although the farmers blamed the fly, cut-worm, and drought for recent crop failures, Pennsylvanians working under similar conditions rarely had failures.¹⁰⁸ A final approach was to petition the legislature. As early as 1815, New Castle County people asked for measures to help debtors. Petitions were sent to Dover again in January 1819; the committee appointed to investigate reported that nothing should be done. Delawareans weathered the storm on their own.¹⁰⁹

On April 26, 1824, fire destroyed over half of Water Street, or the Strand, New Castle's waterfront street and main commercial center. The fire broke out around two or three in the afternoon in James Riddle's stable at the south

end of the street and soon spread to an adjoining lumberyard. With the aid of a strong south wind, the fire raced up both sides of the street, destroying homes and businesses in its path. Everyone, including women, fought the flames, carrying water and trying to save what they could. Furniture was stashed in the Market House, the Arsenal, the Presbyterian Church, and the street. Fire engines and about 400 men from Wilmington rushed to New Castle's aid; without their help, the fire would have been worse. By midnight, the flames were nearly subdued, but the wind then switched to the northeast and again the alarm went out. Rain the next afternoon finally extinguished the fire.¹¹⁰

Never have we seen a spectacle more distressing, than this once beautiful town now presents.-- From the north to the south end on Water Street, little is to be seen but tottering walls and solitary chimneys, and this section of the place, which was once the theatre of business, is now abandoned, and left a solitary heap of ruin and desolation.¹¹¹

Twenty-three families were homeless, with little more than the clothes that they wore. Eight craftsmen, eight merchants, and three innkeepers lost their businesses. The loss was estimated at \$100,000-\$200,000. Even so, the tragedy could have been greater, for no lives were lost.¹¹²

New Castle's people immediately set about rebuilding their lives and their town. A town meeting held on April 28 set up a fund to raise money to help the victims. Donations came from Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, New York, and

Baltimore, as well as Delaware towns. Even in this time of need, the New Castle-Wilmington rivalry continued; despite pleas for generosity, Wilmingtonians contributed only \$572 of the \$7,630 that was raised. The fund covered only a small portion of the loss; people depended mainly on their own resources.¹¹³

By July 1824, reconstruction was progressing quickly. As one newspaper put it, probably with exaggeration:

New Castle has recently been visited by an extensive conflagration, but by the benevolent contributions of other citizens, and the spirit of her own, she has risen, more than Phoenix like from her ashes; the houses burned, have been rebuilt, and the town improved, in appearance at least.¹¹⁴

Even though people rebuilt quickly, they built conservatively, taking their cues from two surviving Front Street buildings, George Read II's house and Charles Thomas' hotel, that were out of style when erected in the early years of the nineteenth century. At a time when it was possible to make changes, people chose the safe and the familiar. The need of the moment and emotional attachments make their conservatism understandable, but even so, New Castle's people betrayed a lack of confidence in themselves and an unwillingness to take risks.¹¹⁵

Despite their conservative rebuilding after the fire, New Castle's people handled their economic situation between 1808 and 1828 with persistence, vigor, and moderate success.

They switched from foreign trade to transportation and were not afraid to use new innovations. These years were also marked by continuing civic and religious development. Especially in religion, New Castle's people widened their horizons to include women, children, and blacks more fully in the community. Nevertheless, the accomplishments did not come easily or quickly and success was not overwhelming. Already there were hints that New Castle would not grow to rival Wilmington: population stagnation, mud in the river, threats to the county seat, the feeling that New Castle was a dull place. Yet on the whole, New Castle did well, especially considering that the general economic situation between 1808 and 1821 was not good and the region was in the beginning of a major transition. Whatever their secret doubts, New Castle's men faced the world with outward confidence at the end of the 1820s--after all, they were about to build a railroad.

III. Digging In: 1828-1840

Between 1828 and 1840, New Castle had some of the appearance, promise, and reality of prosperity and increasing stature, but the final result was stagnation. The railroad and the New Castle Manufacturing Company, one of the nation's first makers of locomotive engines, were New Castle's last new ventures. Their success was brief and New Castle was increasingly on the defensive, trying to preserve its assets from what it saw as Wilmington's greed. In the late 1830s,

the town lost its advantages as a transportation center and barely retained the county seat. The world was closing in; New Castle was learning its limitations, trying hard to combat them, and getting nowhere fast.

The New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad was the centerpiece of the town's economy. Having received legislative permission to build a railroad across the peninsula, the New Castle Turnpike Company and the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike Company set out to raise capital. The first attempt failed, but after obtaining charter revisions which made the stock a more promising investment, the second attempt, in March 1830, succeeded. New Castle people invested heavily, as did men in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Immediately after this, the companies merged, calling the new entity the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike and Railroad Company. Ten of the fourteen directors were New Castle men, with two each from Frenchtown and Baltimore. New Castle's John and Thomas Janvier, deeply involved in the Union Line, were on the board. By the next annual meeting, in May 1831, Philadelphia stockholders were dissatisfied with the project's management and slow pace. Four Philadelphians were elected directors. They increased the speed and efficiency of construction, hoping to complete the railroad by 1832 in order to compete with the canal, which had opened in 1829.¹¹⁶

Except for the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, the railroad was the largest project undertaken in Delaware up to that time; by April 1831, 1,100 men were employed and more were needed. As work progressed, the directors faced problems of bad weather, obtaining supplies, ever-increasing costs, and doing something that had rarely been attempted in America. There were also disputes among the directors. As with the turnpikes, the Janviers were a major source of friction; by November 1831, both had sold their stock and resigned from the board. With the Janviers out, two Philadelphia men, William D. Lewis and S. Nevins, became the strongest voices on the board. They had doubts about New Castle; as one of them wrote from the town, "I rejoice that I remain here, I am afraid to trust too much to N Castle men."¹¹⁷ Finally, the problems were surmounted and the railroad opened in late February 1832, albeit with horse power rather than a steam locomotive. The first train arrived safely at Frenchtown after a trip of about one hour and twenty minutes, considerably faster than the stagecoach.¹¹⁸

The Union Line, a strong force in promoting the idea of a railroad, succumbed to competition before the project was finished. In 1826, a new company, the Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland Steam Navigation Company, had been chartered to traverse the Philadelphia-Baltimore route. During the earliest railroad negotiations and investigations, the

new line seemed willing to cooperate with Wilmington or a joint Wilmington-New Castle effort. When Wilmington failed to obtain a railroad charter in 1828, it was believed that the new line would use the canal. This threat and the likely loss of the Union Line if no railroad were built at New Castle spurred the New Castle companies to action. The New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad was begun with the intention of cooperating with the Union Line. Meanwhile, in 1829, when the canal first opened and the railroad was merely a charter, both lines ran boats through the canal. By the end of 1830, the Steam Navigation Company had absorbed the Union Line, and the New Castle and Frenchtown made its arrangements with the new firm, also called the Citizens Union Line.¹¹⁹

At the end of 1832, the first year of railroad operation, the directors were pleased: passenger and freight business was good, two steam engines had replaced horses, and their arrangement with the Citizens Union Line was fairer and more advantageous than the old turnpike arrangements. Even in 1832, however, potential rivals nipped at the company's heels. The Wilmington and Susquehanna Railroad, one of the four lines that was to form the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore, was chartered that year and a new steamboat line, which, it was feared, intended to build a railroad, was to be chartered in 1833. To counteract these threats, the New Castle and Frenchtown, after considerable political fighting,

obtained permission to own steamboats as well as a monopoly on railroads between the Appoquinimink and Christina Creeks, except for the Wilmington and Susquehanna.¹²⁰

The railroad wanted the ability to own steamboats also because it had no chance of success without the boats and it was not sure that the Citizens Union Line or any other firm would always be amenable to dealing with the New Castle and Frenchtown. To remedy this, the railroad approached the Citizens Union Line and the two merged in April, 1833. Now, the entire Philadelphia-Baltimore route via New Castle and Frenchtown was under one ownership, with Philadelphia and Baltimore more important than New Castle.¹²¹ New Castle played an increasingly less important role in the management of its route.

During 1833, competition between the New Castle and Frenchtown and the People's Line, the new firm, was intense; steamboat races, rate wars, service and courtesy, advertising and the ideology of monopoly all played a part. Both lines apparently did well, but by the end of the year the railroad wanted to calm the situation and increase fares and volume. The railroad and the canal company made a deal: by paying the canal company \$15,000 a year, the railroad would have a monopoly on passenger traffic, while the canal would carry all the freight. The canal therefore refused to deal with the People's Line; in retaliation, it ran stagecoaches

across the peninsula, which failed, and began to consider building its own railroad. This frightened the New Castle and Frenchtown into defending its monopoly and spurred a fusilade of newspaper articles, mainly in support of the People's Line and against the monopolistic New Castle and Frenchtown. The New Castle and Frenchtown won this round, for the People's Line was dead by 1835.¹²²

The New Castle and Frenchtown flourished between 1834 and 1837, although not without forebodings of future problems, namely the construction and uniting of the Wilmington and Susquehanna and its three companion roads. The New Castle and Frenchtown did what it could to thwart the competition. When the Wilmington and Susquehanna made its second and successful attempt to raise capital in 1835, the Wilmington papers accused the New Castle and Frenchtown of working in Philadelphia to discourage investment. Nevertheless, the stock sold quickly. A little later, in July 1835, the legislature held a special session to enact a law repairing defects in the Wilmington and Susquehanna's charter. The New Castle and Frenchtown's opposition was so strong and venomous that it was totally ineffective; the law passed unanimously in both houses.¹²³

Once the Wilmington and Susquehanna, and hence the through railroad between Philadelphia and Baltimore, approached reality, "citizens of Delaware"--really citizens of New Castle

--petitioned the legislature in September 1836 for permission to build a railroad from New Castle to join the Wilmington and Susquehanna. Although Philadelphia men supported the project, Wilmington of course did not, accusing New Castle of greedily attempting to take advantage of its neighbor's hard work.

The application is peculiarly modest, as proceeding from a company which has already secured to itself a monopoly of more than half the County of New Castle--the whole distance between the Christiana and the Appoquinimink being deprived of the privileges of making a railroad for twenty years, to prevent competition with the New Castle and Frenchtown railroad.¹²⁴

The battle continued for several years, ending with the chartering of the New Castle and Wilmington Railroad Company in 1839. The short road, however, was not built until 1854.¹²⁵

Meanwhile, the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad opened in late 1837, providing, for the first time, direct transportation between Philadelphia and Baltimore, and ending the New Castle and Frenchtown's dreams of success and domination of peninsular transportation. In February, 1839, a "large amount" of New Castle and Frenchtown stock was transferred to the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore and in 1843 the two companies received permission to manage their affairs jointly. The New Castle and Frenchtown maintained its name but not its independence; New Castle was truly a town among cities. Although New Castle fought long and hard in the transportation battle, its dominance was never secure, it

never fully controlled the means of using its route, and in the end it was vanquished by a more creative use of new technology and the money, power, and more favorable locations of its larger neighbors and associates.¹²⁶

The railroad, plus the increasing practicability of steam power, pushed New Castle's economy in a new direction: for the first time, it turned to manufacturing for a market greater than purely local needs. The product was railroad engines. The New Castle and Frenchtown had facilities for repairing its rolling stock and also the good fortune to hire an extremely talented engineer in 1832; the next step was to make entire engines. Five were completed in the railroad's shops in 1834 and 1835. Meanwhile, a group of active citizens successfully petitioned the legislature to charter an enterprise, imaginatively called the New Castle Manufacturing Company, in January 1833. Neither petition nor charter mentions railroad equipment, but it must have been in the men's minds. The company appears to have been operating by summer 1835. In 1836, it produced eight engines, and one each in 1838, 1839, and 1840. The depression of the late 1830s was hard on the company; production and employment fell sharply and it had severe money problems.¹²⁷ This newspaper article gives the fullest description of the firm:

The capacious buildings; the powerful and ingenious machinery; the order, regularity, and neatness throughout the establishment are highly creditable to the judgment and

enterprize of the company and its super-intendants. We feel emotions of pride, in knowing that such a large manufactory of steam engines exists in our State. The loco motives [sic] built by this company have been proved by constant and heavy duty to be of most superior workmanship and the best materials; and wherever they are used they give the fullest satisfaction. A vast amount of work has been executed in this establishment, which at one time gave employment to one hundred and fifty workmen; but at present not much more than one-third of that number are engaged; the dullness of the times has stricken this house of industry and enterprize, and many a wheel is stationary and many a hammer silent.¹²⁸

With a peak work force of one hundred fifty, the New Castle Manufacturing Company must have been a large and impressive establishment at a time when factory production was still new. The firm continued to produce into the late 1850s. Its records do not survive, a great loss for both New Castle and the history of American industry.

The railroad and manufacturing company never occupied all of New Castle's attention; older concerns and activities continued to be important. By now, New Castle's harbor was firmly established as a winter auxiliary for Philadelphia, although still plagued with the traditional problems of mud and Wilmington. During the mid-to-late 1830s the harbor received a great deal of attention. There was even a rumor that the Navy Yard would be moved to New Castle. By early 1835 the harbor was again so filled with mud that ships could not anchor, and townspeople asked the federal government to build

still more piers. About a year later, some Wilmingtonians suggested that the Christina be made Philadelphia's winter harbor, claiming that New Castle was unsafe and that no amount of money could cure the mud problem. In the end, New Castle remained Philadelphia's refuge and new piers were authorized in 1836.¹²⁹ The planned railroad to Wilmington was also a harbor improvement, for ships stopping at New Castle could unload and send the cargo to Philadelphia by rail rather than awaiting favorable sailing conditions. Philadelphia merchants gave the project strong moral support, but the fact that the road was not completed until 1854 suggests that they did not put their money into it.¹³⁰

In the mid-1830s, New Castle again campaigned to be made a port of entry with the same customs authority as Wilmington. New Castle argued that it would be more convenient for both Delaware coasting vessels and ships taking winter refuge to do their customs business there rather than Wilmington. The campaign was well-organized: New Castle sent petitions and committees to the nation's capital, as well as using the services of William T. Read, a local man working in the Treasury Department. Both Philadelphia and other Delaware towns gave their support. Although the government considered New Castle's request unusual and unorthodox since most customs districts had only one port of entry, it also felt that New Castle had a legitimate grievance and decided

to station a deputy collector there, who had assumed his duties by 1839.¹³¹

The harbor was indeed busy during the winter. In the first three months of 1839 over one hundred vessels sought refuge. The next winter, ninety-four visited the port; about one-third stayed one day or less, but one-fourth stayed one week or longer. If the harbor were improved, even more would stop, for in 1840, the harbor offered only partial protection.¹³² What this meant for New Castle's economy is a difficult question. A full harbor would give the appearance of activity and prosperity during the bleak winter months, but ships staying only a day or two would not spend much money in town. The harbor's activity depended on the volume of trade being done at Philadelphia as well as that city's wishes and support; New Castle was at its neighbor's mercy.

The Newport Bridge continued to be a dead weight. The company frequently tried to persuade the county to buy the bridge, but without success. The county had reservations because of the company's debts, the bridge's bad condition, and doubts of the sale's legality. Even after the bridge company had a law passed confirming the sale's validity, the county refused. When prices were mentioned, the company's was always much higher than the county's. The issue was briefly an important concern in New Castle Hundred. Late in 1831, ninety-five signed a petition requesting that the

hundred be incorporated, mainly so that it could buy, repair, and operate the bridge, since the county seemed unwilling to do so. Fifty-six signed a petition against the proposal. The last glimpse of the bridge comes in 1836, when the county again declined to buy.¹³³

Along with the railroad, the biggest issue of the 1830s was the prolonged battle over the county seat. Inter-urban rivalry was at its height: New Castle naturally wanted to keep the courts, Wilmington wanted to acquire them, and the rest of the county took sides. The decision was to be made through a special county election. Since it took four attempts to pass the enabling act in the legislature, followed by the election itself, meetings and propaganda flourished.¹³⁴

From a practical, reasonably objective point of view, Wilmington's supporters had a strong case. Both demography and economics made the city more convenient, they claimed, and facts were in their favor. About two-thirds of the county's adult white males lived north of the Christina, and Wilmington, larger and busier than New Castle, offered better opportunities for combining errands. New Castle had been off the beaten track for thirty years in their estimation. The public buildings at New Castle were a disgrace: parts of the court house were leaky and drafty, the jail was notoriously insecure, and government records were stored in garrets. Something needed to be done; since Wilmington had offered to

provide some of the needed facilities, a move would not be expensive. Taxes would not be raised and the county would profit from selling the old buildings. Although such changes in basic institutions should not be made often or quickly, in this case public opinion and convenience justified the move. The people's wishes should be followed; seats of government had been changed in other states and even in Delaware's Sussex County.

New Castle supporters' arguments naturally were the opposite, and had, in truth, less factual support. Those who favored New Castle's location came from less densely populated areas. Also, New Castle simply lacked Wilmington's shops and business facilities. While not denying the sorry state of the court house and jail, New Castle supporters doubted the sincerity of Wilmington's offer and predicted increased taxes. Repairing existing buildings would be less expensive; it was even suggested that the Common be asked to pay for the renovations. New Castle supporters claimed that the people did not want the courts moved, at least not before a selfish minority in Wilmington stirred up the issue, yet an 1835 petition campaign yielded 2,300 signatures in favor of a change and only 1,100 against. The county seat had always been at New Castle and it should remain; a few essentially said that it was divinely ordained.

Emotional, speculative, and moral arguments proliferated and intertwined. A favorite theme was the potential effect of the move on New Castle. A change would be harmful, as the following quotation, admittedly extreme, so graphically shows.

To the town of Newcastle this measure is fraught with utter desolation. To sum the evils in one brief and sad catalogue of calamity--besides the immediate loss to all property-holders by the depreciation of real estate--the certain effect, would be to blight the prospects of the merchants and tradesmen, to ruin our Hotels, or leave them to depend upon the miserable casualties of a precarious custom; to render altogether valueless the most extensive public library in the State: to cut off the operations of one of the most successful and useful of our Banking institutions, in which the State itself, is largely interested: to impair the support of one church, and to consign another, the most venerable and creditable among us, to silence and decay: to desecrate the Halls which have re-echoed the eloquence of those patriots and orators whose reputation is our chief boast: and hopelessly and wantonly to destroy and depopulate an ancient and flourishing town; and it may be to drive into unmerited exile, some of your most valuable citizens, whose prosperity this legislature is bound to protect and cherish.¹³⁵

The economic speculations were confined to New Castle. Wilmington's motivation for wanting the county seat was not primarily, or at least not overtly, economic; rather, it was a matter of convenience, prestige, logic, and local rivalry. The next question was, which place deserved the distinction. Wilmington supporters felt that the courts naturally belonged in the county's largest and busiest city; New Castle should give up gracefully rather than clinging desperately

to its last vestige of former importance. New Castle was seen as a parasite; one author even said that losing the courts would be good for New Castle, for its people would have to work and prosper through their own efforts rather than depending on public business. New Castle supporters felt that the courts should stay where they were; Wilmington already had so many advantages and was selfishly trying to deprive its smaller neighbor of one of its few assets. New Castle was the underdog fighting the large grasping city.

Both sides fought hard, with petitions, meetings, printed propaganda, and lobbyists. New Castle even established a newspaper in 1835 to provide ammunition. It did not last long and only one issue survives.¹³⁶ The Common funded lobbyists on three separate occasions.¹³⁷ New Castle's efforts helped to postpone passage of the law authorizing the election until 1839, and some contended that the procedures favored New Castle. The day of reckoning came in May 1839; when it was over, New Castle had retained the county seat by the skin of its teeth.¹³⁸

In this difficult period, the general economic climate was favorable until the Panic of 1837 and the subsequent depression arrived during the throes of the county seat battle and when the town was face to face with the new and damaging Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad. The emotional impact must have been tremendous; the actual effect

is almost impossible to assess. New Castle's population grew slightly between 1830 and 1840, probably because of the railroad and manufacturing company. By the late 1830s, both enterprises were in trouble, and New Castle probably had a high rate of unemployment.

Rural New Castle Hundred also suffered from hard times. Prices for agricultural products, which had risen between 1830 and 1836, fell 19 to 44 percent between 1837 and 1840.¹³⁹ The rural population increased 12 percent between 1830 and 1840. Some of the people may have been attracted by good conditions before 1837, while others may have been Wilmington or New Castle people returning to their rural origins when urban opportunities shrank.

In 1835, the New Castle Gazette published an editorial lauding the town's advantages--its improving spirit, Delaware River location, easy communications with the rest of the nation, easy access to raw materials, markets and surrounding agricultural areas, and the harbor with federally-funded improvements--and ending with this optimistic prediction for the future:

Under the guidance of judicious enterprise, and with such advantages and others which might be enumerated, New-Castle cannot fail to become, ere long, what Nature evidently intended she should be--the seat of large and successful Manufacturing business.¹⁴⁰

Appearances can deceive, however, and New Castle's people must

have known that their town was not going to rival Wilmington. As one man wrote, also in 1835, "the manufacturing company George mentioned as about going into operations will I hope help our town"--hardly an enthusiastic vote of confidence.¹⁴¹ Activity abounded during the 1830s, but with little long-term or substantial effect. The railroad flourished only briefly; even in its best days, local people did not fully own and manage it. The Newport Bridge was a continuing irritant. The harbor was busy, but mainly during the winter and at Philadelphia's behest, while the manufacturing company foundered on the rocks of general hard times after a promising beginning. In the civic realm, town government and the Trustees merely maintained what they had and did not initiate any new ventures; churches and religious organizations remained active, but in ways that emphasized differences and barriers rather than overcoming them. Interurban rivalry reached its peak during the lengthy county seat battle. At one point, a newspaper even suggested that Wilmington and New Castle might someday be one city!¹⁴² Buffeted on many sides, New Castle turned inward to defend and protect what it had; by 1840 it had fought many a hard battle and learned a hard truth: New Castle was destined to be only a town among cities.

CHAPTER 3 NOTES

1. American Watchman, Aug. 16 and 26, 1809.
2. Diane Lindstrom, Economic Development in the Philadelphia Region, 1810-1850 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 23, 29-40.
3. Carol E. Hoffecker, "Nineteenth Century Wilmington: Satellite or Independent City?" Delaware History 15 (1972): 4-7.
4. C. A. Weslager, Delaware's Forgotten River: The Story of the Christina (Wilmington: Hambleton Company, Inc., 1947), pp. 147-165.
5. Delaware Gazette, July 22, 1809.
6. Table 16 is based on data from New Castle County assessments for 1798, 1816 and 1828. In all 3 cases, the group of townspeople is composed of those who appeared as resident or absentee on the corresponding town assessment (1798, 1815 or 1825) and as resident on the county assessment. In 1798, n=124; 1816, n=104; 1828, n=115. People assessed as "Estates" have been eliminated because they did not actually live in town. In New Castle Hundred as a whole, estates or absentees owned 23-31% of the taxable wealth. New Castle County Tax Assessments, Dover.
7. Of 84 people listed by name as tenants of town properties in 1816, 67 had entries of their own in the assessment.
8. In 1798, 91%; in 1816, 87%; and in 1828, 89% of all house owners had 1 or 2 houses.
9. On town tax assessments 1798-1825, 62-72% of those assessed at or above the median stayed 5 years or longer, compared with 35 to 47% of those below.
10. Lindstrom, Economic Development, pp. 140-1; Anne E. Mayer, "Agriculture in New Castle County, Delaware, 1850-1880: A Geographic Comparison" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1975), pp. 80-126 passim.

11. Table 18 is based on data from the New Castle County assessments for 1798, 1816 and 1828. Rural residents are those who were not on town tax lists and not assessed as estates. In 1798, n=234; in 1816, n=286; in 1828, n=373.
12. James T. Lemon, The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania (New York:W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972), p. 152; Mayer, "Agriculture in New Castle County," p. 58.
13. Lemon, Best Poor Man's Country, pp. 152-153; New Castle County Probate Records, Dover. Inventories are biased in favor of older and more prosperous people and tend to present a more optimistic view.
14. Mayer, "Agriculture in New Castle County," pp. 80, 87, 96.
15. Property owning among blacks:
- | | 1798 | 1816 | 1828 |
|--|------|------|------|
| Number of cases | 19 | 54 | 80 |
| Percentage owning land | 11% | 7% | 9% |
| Percentage owning livestock
or personal property (1798) | 37% | 26% | 20% |
| Percentage propertyless | 63% | 72% | 74% |
16. Mirror of the Times, April 21 and Dec. 15, 1804.
17. Sarah Black to Ann Ridgely, April 1, 1840, Ridgely Papers, Dover.
18. New Castle County Deeds, Book 0-2, pp. 434, 495, Dover.
19. Minutes of the Trustees of the Common, pp. 84-6. Minutes of the Trustees of the Common are hereafter referred to as Common.
20. New Castle County Deeds, Book D-3, p. 68, Dover.
21. Common, pp. 86-8.
22. 1710 Vestry Book, pp. 79-80, 85, 95-6, 105, Immanuel Church.
23. New Castle County Deeds, Book W-3, p. 530, Dover.
24. New Castle County Probate Records, Dover.
25. In 1798 and 1816 there were 3 women in the top quintile in each assessment; in 1828, there were 7.

Statistics on females drawn from censuses and tax assessments.

Percentage of white females who head households

	<u>No. of white females over 16</u>	<u>Number who head households</u>	<u>Percentage who head households</u>
1800	472	27	6%
1810	469	23	5%
1820	540	31	6%
1830	558	42	8%
1840	599	36	6%

Percentage of white households headed by females

	<u>All</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Rural</u>
1800	10%	11%	9%
1810	7%	11%	4%
1820	9%	11%	9%
1830	15%	19%	11%
1840	11%	17%	6%

Women taxables

	<u>Number of taxables</u>	<u>Percentage of white females</u>
1798	18	4 (1800 census)
1816	18	3 (1820 census)
1828	29	5 (1830 census)

26. Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, April 24, 1797; Mirror of the Times, May 11, 1805; American Watchman, Nov. 29 and Dec. 27, 1825, July 4, 1826; Delaware Gazette, Sept. 11, 1795.

27. Proportion of taxable wealth owned by town and rural residents.

	<u>Town</u>	<u>Rural</u>
1798		
Percentage of wealth	38%	62%
Percentage of taxables	35%	65%
Mean assessment	\$ 844	\$ 738
1816		
Percentage of wealth	44%	56%
Percentage of taxables	27%	73%
Mean assessment	\$2884	\$1349
1828		
Percentage of wealth	45%	55%
Percentage of taxables	24%	76%
Mean assessment	\$2384	\$ 902

28. Classification list is in New Castle County Levy Court Minutes, Feb. 1828, Dover.

29. Johann David Schoepf, Travels in the Confederation, Alfred J. Morrison, trans. and ed. (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1911), pp. 376-7.
30. Curtis Clay to George Read, Oct. 29, 1787, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
31. Petition, citizens of the town of New Castle to the state legislature, June, 1786, Legislative Papers, Dover.
32. Petitions, citizens of New Castle County to the State Legislature, Jan. 1786 and draft bill, "An Act to establish certain Free-Ports within the Delaware State, and for the Encouragement of Commerce," 1786, Legislative Papers, Dover; John A. Munroe, Federalist Delaware, 1775-1815 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 133.
33. Curtis P. Nettels, The Emergence of a National Economy (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), pp. 60-3, 121, 232-236; James Henretta, The Evolution of American Society, 1700-1815: An Interdisciplinary Analysis (Lexington Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1973), pp. 188-92.
34. Information on shipping at New Castle is sketchy; there are no customs or harbor-master's records, so the major source is occasional listings and advertisements in Wilmington newspapers. Because of this, I have probably underestimated the harbor's activity.

Year	Number of ships reported	Source
1790	2	<u>Delaware Gazette</u> , Feb. 6 and Nov. 20, 1790.
1792	1	<u>Delaware Gazette</u> , Nov. 10, 1792.
1793	3	<u>Delaware Gazette</u> , April 27, Sept. 5, 1793.
1794	5	<u>Delaware Gazette</u> , May 3, Aug. 30 and Sept. 13, 1794. <u>Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser</u> , July 19 and Sept. 3 and 6, 1794.
1795	1	<u>Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser</u> , Oct. 31, 1795.
1796	5	<u>Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser</u> , Sept. 12 and Nov. 24, 1796.
1797	4	<u>Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser</u> , Nov. 2, 1797; <u>Delaware Gazette</u> , May 3, July 1 and Aug. 2, 1797.

35. Ships at New Castle 1799-1807

Year	Number of ships reported	Source
1799	1	<u>Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser</u> , Sept. 19, 1799.
1800	3	<u>Mirror of the Times</u> , June 11, Sept. 10, 1800.
1801	4	<u>Mirror of the Times</u> , July 4, 1801; <u>Monitor</u> , Aug. 8, 1801.
1802	6	<u>Mirror of the Times</u> , June 5 and 9, Aug. 14 and 28, 1802.
1803	4	<u>Mirror of the Times</u> , July 27, Sept. 3, 1803; <u>Federal Ark</u> , Sept. 24, 1803.
1804	8	<u>Federal Ark</u> , Feb. 1, 8 and 11, June 9, 1804.
1805	9	<u>Mirror of the Times</u> , Sept. 25, 1805; <u>New Castle Argus</u> , May 11 and 15, June 4, 1805.
1807	1	<u>Museum</u> , Jan. 3, 1807.

36. George H. Gibson, ed., The Collected Essays of Richard S. Rodney on Early Delaware (Wilmington: Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Delaware, 1975), p. 225; Laws of the State of Delaware, 3:223-228; William Read to George Read, Feb. 24, 1798 and June 11, 1802, George Read to James A Bayard, Jan. 23, 1803 and Bayard to Read, Jan. 31, 1803, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD; "Report of the Committee of Manufactures . . . to whom was also referred, on the eleventh instant, a motion 'for the appropriation of ----- dollars for the erection and repair of piers in the River Delaware,'" (n.p., 1802); petition, citizens of the town of New Castle to the State Legislature, Dec. 31, 1802, Legislative Papers, Dover; U. S. Congress, House, Port of Entry at New Castle, Delaware, American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation, 1:621-2.

37. Robert C. Smith, ed., "A Portuguese Naturalist in Philadelphia, 1799," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 78 (1954): 75-6; Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, ed. and trans., Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1947), pp. 86-7; Joseph Scott, A Geographical Description of the States of Maryland and Delaware; also of the counties, towns, rivers, bays, and islands (Philadelphia: Kimber, Conrad, and Co., 1807), pp. 177-8.

38. Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Travels through the United States of North America, the country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the years 1795, 1796, and 1797,

2d ed., 4 vols. (London: Printed by T. Gillet for R. Phillips, 1800), 3:539.

39. Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, Sept. 15, 1796, Aug 1 and Sept. 19, 1799; Mirror of the Times, Feb. 5, 1800, Sept. 15, 1802 and Aug 31, 1803.

40. Quoted in Harold B. Hancock, "Loaves and Fishes: Applications for Office from Delawareans to George Washington," Delaware History, 14 (1970):137.

41. "A Statement Shewing the names, Ports, and Tonnage of Vessels belonging to the District of Delaware, and the Trade employed in--and distance from Port of Entry," undated, but probably late 1790s, Dover.

42. Roberts and Roberts, Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey, pp. 82-9.

43. William F. Holmes, "The New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike and Railroad Company, 1809-1838" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1961), p. 27.

44. Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, June 28, 1794, Oct. 25, 1794, Oct. 24, 1796; Delaware Gazette, July 2, 1791, May 11, 1793.

45. Holmes, "New Castle and Frenchtown," p. 28.

46. U. S. Congress, Roads and Canals (Gallatin Report), American State Papers: Miscellaneous, 1:758.

47. Ralph D. Gray, "Delaware and Its Canal: The Early History of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal 1769-1829" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1950), pp. 3, 32, 34-35, 42-57.

48. David Paul Peltier, "Border State Democracy: A History of Voting in Delaware, 1682-1897" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Delaware, 1967), pp. 130-8.

49. Information on craftsmen comes from newspapers, estate inventories and town tax records; Charles G. Dorman, "Delaware Cabinetmakers and Allied Artisans, 1655-1855," Delaware History 9 (1960): 111-217; Harold B. Hancock, "Furniture Craftsmen in Delaware Records," Winterthur Portfolio 9 (1974): 175-212; Evald Rink, Printing in Delaware, 1761-1800 (Wilmington: Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, 1969), p. 24; Clarence S. Brigham, History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1920, 2 vols. (Worcester, Mass.:

- American Antiquarian Society, 1947), 1:78; Ruthanna Hinds, Delaware Silversmiths, 1700-1850 (Wilmington: Historical Society of Delaware, 1967); Dudley C. Lunt, The Farmers Bank: An Historical Account of the President, Directors and Company of the Farmers Bank of the State of Delaware, 1807-1957 (The Farmers Bank of the State of Delaware, 1957), p. 3.
50. Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, June 24, 1795; New Castle Argus, May 28, 1805.
51. New Castle County Tavern Petitions, Dover.
52. Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, July, 1795-September, 1799 passim; Delaware Gazette, 1786-1796 passim, Mirror of the Times, February, 1800-October 1804 passim.
53. Estate inventories of Thomas Smith (d. 1800), William Van Leuvenigh (d. 1800), Matthew McNight (d. 1805), William McClenahan (d. 1793), New Castle County Probate Records, Dover.
54. Delaware Gazette, Dec. 3, 1796, July 12, 1797; Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, Aug. 22, 1796.
55. Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, Aug. 27, 1794, Sept. 3, 1794; Delaware Gazette, 1789-1784 passim.
56. Munroe, Federalist Delaware, p. 22.
57. Petition, citizens of Wilmington to the State Legislature, 1801, Legislative papers, Dover; James Lea, John Warner, John Day and others to C. A. Rodney, Jan. 26, 1802, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
58. Lea, Warner, Day and others to C. A. Rodney, Jan. 26, 1802, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
59. James Lea, John Warner, Hez. Niles to C. A. Rodney, July 9, 1802, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
60. Mirror of the Times, March-May, 1803 passim.
61. Mirror of the Times, April 20, 1803.
62. Petitions to the State Legislature, Jan. 1806, Legislative Papers, Dover.
63. Petitions to the State Legislature, 1804, 1805, 1806, Legislative Papers, Dover.
64. Mirror of the Times, March-May, 1806 passim.

65. Mirror of the Times, July 23, 1806.
66. Mirror of the Times, July 23, 1806.
67. Museum, Jan. 24, 1807.
68. Mirror of the Times, Dec. 25, 1802.
69. Delaware Gazette, Aug. 30, 1799; Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, Oct. 24, 1796; Mirror of the Times, Dec. 25, 1802, March 15 and May 14, 1803, April 7, 1804, Jan. 15, 1806.
70. Mirror of the Times, Dec. 25, 1802.
71. American Watchman, Feb. 20, 1813, Feb. 26, 1822; Delaware Gazette, Jan. 4 and 8, 1822, Jan. 5, 1827
72. Petition from James McCallmont to the State Legislature, Jan. 16, 1811, Legislative Papers, Dover.
73. Petition from James McCallmont to the State Legislature, Jan. 16, 1811, Legislative Papers, Dover.
74. Common, pp. 105-106.
75. Delaware Gazette, June 13, 1823; American Watchman, June 7 and 10, 1825.
76. Petition, citizens of the town of New Castle to the State Legislature, Jan. 1835, Legislative Papers, Dover.
77. Edward Pessen, Jacksonian America: Society, Personality and Politics (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1969), p. 126.
78. Quoted in Pessen, Jacksonian America, p. 126.
79. Petitions against bridge at Newport, 1808, Legislative Papers, Dover.
80. Common, pp. 86-90; Laws of the State of Delaware, 4:650.
81. Delaware Gazette, July, 1809-Jan., 1810 passim; American Watchman, Aug.-Sept., 1809 passim; J. Clayton to George Read, Jan. 30, 1811, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD; Petitions for removal of county seat, 1810 and against Newport Bridge, 1811-1813, Legislative Papers, Dover.
82. Delaware Gazette, July 26, 1809.

83. Laws of the State of Delaware, 4:650-662.
84. Ralph D. Gray, "Transportation and Brandywine Industries, 1800-1840," Delaware History 9 (1961): 310-11.
85. Holmes, "New Castle and Frenchtown," pp. 32-34.
86. Delaware Gazette, July 22, 1809.
87. Holmes, "New Castle and Frenchtown," pp. 34-7, 160-1; two-thirds of the 57 investors can be found on the 1810 federal census for New Castle Hundred.
88. Holmes, "New Castle and Frenchtown," p. 38; petition from the Newport Bridge Company to the State Legislature, April 5, 1813, Legislative Papers, Dover; Laws of the State of Delaware, 5: 28-36.
89. Holmes, "New Castle and Frenchtown," pp. 28, 39.
90. Holmes, "New Castle and Frenchtown," pp. 39-46, 51-6, 60.
91. Holmes, "New Castle and Frenchtown," pp. 48, 69, 120; John H. K. Shannahan, Steamboat'n' Days & The Hammond Lot (Baltimore: The Norman Publishing Co., 1930), pp. 12-3; Levi Hollingsworth to George Read, Oct. 24, 1818 and Richard L. Howell to George Read, Dec. 12, 1818, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD; petition from proprietors of Union line of Steam boats and packets to the state Legislature, Jan., 1820, Legislative Papers, Dover; New Castle County Levy Court minutes, March, 1827, Dover.
92. Gray, "Delaware and Its Canal," pp. 75-6.
93. Holmes, "New Castle and Frenchtown," pp. 71-81.
94. Several memoranda regarding Union Line traffic 1827-1830 are with the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike and Railroad Company papers, HSD.
95. Mrs. Anne Royall, Mrs. Royall's Pennsylvania, or Travels Continued in the United States, 2 vols. (Washington: n.p., 1829), 1: 36-40.
96. David Paul Peltier, "Border State Democracy," pp. 130-138; Mirror of the Times, Oct. 11, 1800, Oct. 10, 1801, Oct. 9, 1802; American Watchman, Oct. 7, 1809, Oct. 13, 1810; Laws of the State of Delaware, 6: 299.

97. John D. Bird to Kensey J. Van Dyke, Dec. 15, 1813, Jan. 8, 1814, March 8, 1814, Longwood Manuscript Group 4, EMHL.
98. Estate inventories of Captain David Ross and Captain John Sword, New Castle County Probate Records, Dover.
99. Anne Bezanson, Robert D. Gray, and Miriam Hussey, Wholesale Prices in Philadelphia, 1784-1861 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936), pp. 151-2.
100. Bezanson, et al., Wholesale Prices in Philadelphia, pp. 173-4. The observer is economist Matthew Carey.
101. Murray N. Rothbard, The Panic of 1819, Reactions and Policies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 15-6.
102. American Watchman, Dec. 1817-Feb. 1818 passim.
103. American Watchman, Dec. 27, 1817.
104. American Watchman, Jan. 28, 1818.
105. This information is from New Castle town tax assessments.
106. Bezanson, et al., Wholesale Prices in Philadelphia, pp. 173-8, 394-5.
107. American Watchman, Feb. 19, 1817, May 5, June 26, Sept. 8, and Dec. 25, 1819.
108. American Watchman, Aug.-Sept. 1818 passim, Jan.-Feb. 1819, passim, May 26, June 26, Sept. 22 and Oct. 2, 1819.
109. Petition, citizens of New Castle County to the State Legislature, 1815, Legislative Papers, Dover; Delaware Gazette, Dec. 30, 1818; American Watchman, Jan. 2, 1819; Rothbard, Panic of 1819, pp. 32-3.
110. Wilmingtonian, April 29, 1824; Delaware Gazette, April 27, 1824; [Maria Booth Rogers] to James Rogers, [April 28, 1824], Boothhurst Collection, HSD.
113. Delaware Gazette, April 30 and July 20, 1824; W. T. Read, "Fire at New Castle, 1824," Oct. 13, 1864, Appendix C., HSD.
114. The American Farmer, July 23, 1824.

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138. Delaware State Journal, May 24, 1839.
139. Bezanson, et al., Wholesale Prices in Philadelphia, pp. 394-5.
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CHAPTER 4

THE RISE OF CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Mislaid--or Stolen,

From the Office of Information, in Newcastle, THE LATE LAW, for ascertaining and fixing the boundaries of the said town. The retention of it from the usual place of deposite is at present a loss; it can be of no service to any person but to those whose pleasure-gardens, fences, or marsh may be subject to retrenchment. It is strongly suspected, that a large, hungry, big-headed Dog, of the spaniel breed, had carried it off. About the time it was missed, this spaniel was observed lounging about the Office, and met with several rebuffs from the toes of the keeper's shoes; but it is supposed he could not resist the scent of the musty parchment bindings, watched an opportunity, and seized on it. It is much feared, he has worried it in some hole, not far distant from the Office. For the good of the Commonwealth, all well-meaning citizens are charged to bring what information they may collect, that first search may be made, if possible, to return it.

Delaware Gazette, March 18, 1797¹

During the period of this study, New Castle developed, for the first time in its already long history, a strong and continuing sense of civic identity and responsibility which followed and reflected the pattern of its economic life. The first phase was devoted to the establishment of institutions and the general direction of town development, the second to

the construction of physical improvements, and the third to combatting external threats. Like the economy, New Castle's government experienced the cycle of aspiration and frustration, of dreams and limitations.

The official governing body of five town commissioners was only part of the machinery that managed New Castle's corporate affairs. The Trustees of the Common were equally important, for they were the major source of funds for capital improvements. New Castle's powers depended on the state; while the town decided what powers and authority it wished to have, the legislature decided what it would have. Also involved in the process of government were the county and federal governments, town meetings, petitions to the state legislature at Dover, and personal connections. New Castle's government was the total of all these agencies, people, and activities.

After unsuccessful attempts to charter New Castle in 1672 and 1724, sustained civic consciousness began to emerge in the 1760s and 1770s. The first sign of it was the 1760 petition with twenty-nine signatures asking for a board of trustees to regulate the Common. The Common's charter, granted by the Penns in 1764, appointed thirteen trustees whose main responsibility was to keep people from encroaching on the land. The land could be used only as open common and was subject to a quit-rent, so the Trustees' power was limited.

In time, however, they came to believe that the land would be more beneficial to the town if used differently and in 1775, they asked that their powers be enlarged. Although the specifics of the request are unknown, the Trustees probably asked for clear title to the land and the right to lease it and use the revenue for civic purposes.²

In 1772, the legislature of the Three Lower Counties confirmed and set down in law the assumption that the central square was public property for the use of all. The law also established separate boards of trustees for the public buildings, the school lot, Immanuel Church, and the remainder which was used for fairs, markets, and other public purposes. Although the boards were established as distinct units, overlapping membership essentially made three of the four into one organization, at least at first. The three Immanuel trustees were entirely separate from the others. On the other boards, nine men shared the seventeen positions available.³ No records survive from any of these groups. The incorporation of the Common and the regulation of the central square both show a developing sense of identification with and responsibility for the town of New Castle. No longer satisfied with tradition, people wanted to be sure that these two tracts of land would continue to be available for their stated uses under appropriate supervision.

While the Revolutionary war thwarted the Trustees' desire for increased power in regulating the Common, it also led New Castle's people to formal, self-imposed town government. As expressed in a 1786 petition to the legislature,

The Licentiousness which originated from Idleness and the Relaxation of Civil Authority during the War, and all the Vices and Immoralities which flow from this Source can only be restrained by domestic Regulations.

Sensible of this your Petitioners associated under the form of a Town Meeting to cause the Laws to be executed in all Cases where they would apply, to devise means to redress Evils not comprehended by them, to discourage Immorality, and to promote the Order, Sobriety, and Interest of said Town.⁴

During the colonial period, people seemingly had been content with the regulation provided by the county government. War, however, had destroyed the usual civic order. Since the threat was so great, and since the normal authorities were unable to deal with it, the citizens took upon themselves the job of governing their town.

Although circumstances had forced the townspeople to rule themselves, they learned quickly and wanted their self-rule to be permanent. Sixty-one signed the 1786 petition, in which they noted that although they had benefited from the regulations set up by the town meeting, they also knew that the meeting did not have the full legal authority necessary to be truly effective. They asked the legislature for a charter of incorporation which would establish a

government consisting of two burgesses, one constable, a town clerk, a treasurer, an assessor, and a common council of five men.⁵ The legislature did not pass the desired bill.

Economic issues also received corporate attention in the mid-1780s. Focusing their hopes on the river, New Castle's people raised money to build protective piers at the edge of the harbor and petitioned for free port status. The piers were not built, and the free port proposal, enacted into law, was soon superseded by the federal Constitution.⁶ Thus, New Castle's efforts of the mid-1780s combined economic and civic concerns. Although unsuccessful, they brought experience and kept alive New Castle's still weak sense of civic identity and responsibility.

In 1780, the Trustees of the Common renewed their attempt to enlarge their powers. A 1790 petition to the Penns, who still held the title to the land, explained their intention:

That this limitation of the grant to the use of a Common only without affording any benefit to your honorable family prevents the inhabitants from deriving any considerable advantages from it. That the wood being destroyed, a part of the tract appropriated to the purposes of a Common would produce equal advantages and were the rest cultivated and the annual rent arising from it applied to charitable and useful purposes within the said Town the grant would be rendered much more beneficial to the present and future inhabitants.⁷

After leisurely but amicable negotiations, the Penn family

relinquished their claims to the land in July 1791. In 1792, the Trustees obtained a state charter which gave them the power to manage the land as they pleased, provided only that they sell no part of it and make no lease lasting longer than thirty years.⁸

The very first entry in the Trustees' minute book, for February 20, 1791, shows that they took their new responsibilities seriously. They offered the New Castle County Trustees of the Poor up to one hundred acres of the land for a poor farm. The Trustees of the Common were willing to let the County's poor into their world, perhaps hoping that the produce of the farm would be sold in New Castle's market. The county did not accept this offer. Except for this, until 1798 the minutes record only infrequent meetings, concerned with the details of leasing the lands and the internal workings of the organization.⁹

The Trustees' new power was the first sign of the civic energy that accompanied the prosperity of the 1790s and opening years of the nineteenth century. In New Castle, economic success and civic development complemented each other, rather than conflicted. With renewed confidence and optimism, New Castle's citizens established their basic system of government and determined the general direction of town development.

In 1794, the state legislature authorized a lottery to raise money to build the long awaited piers in the harbor "for the security of shipping; which will have a beneficial tendency in promoting the commercial and agricultural interests of this state."¹⁰ The law named seven men to manage the lottery and supervise construction. At the end of the project, the managers were to report to a committee appointed by a town meeting.¹¹ Since the managers were ultimately responsible to the citizens, the project was of a public nature.

The citizens again petitioned the state for town government in early 1796, after holding several town meetings to develop and obtain support for their proposal. The petition said that a majority of the inhabitants approved; sixty-three men signed it, which is about one-half of the one hundred twenty-four white male taxables on the 1798 town tax assessment. This time, the legislature approved.¹²

Before the new government took office, however, a minor problem had to be solved: somehow, the town fathers had lost their copy of the law. The strange story that opens this chapter is an exaggerated, satirical view of the episode, and might be seen as an early thrust in the New Castle-Wilmington rivalry. In May 1797, New Castle's citizens sheepishly told the legislature that they had lost their copy of the law and asked the legislature to do what it thought

best. The lawmakers obliged, and the official records of New Castle's town commissioners begin on July 14, 1797.¹³

The 1797 law vested town government in five commissioners. The first ones were named in the act; after the first year they were to be elected annually for one year terms by freeholders and taxable inhabitants. The clerk of the market was also elected, while the commissioners appointed the treasurer. The commissioners' responsibilities were mainly in the realm of civic housekeeping. Their first major task was to have a survey made of the town's streets and boundaries. Continuing responsibilities included laying out pavements and gutters which were to be built at property owners' expense, regulating partition fences, removing obstructions and nuisances in the streets, and laying out party walls upon request. They also had authority to set the rentals for stalls in the market house. To pay for these activities, the commissioners could levy taxes.¹⁴ They had no judicial function or responsibility for social order or welfare. In the mid-1780s, New Castle had dreamed of being an incorporated town with a free port; ten years later it had to settle for government with limited powers and an improved harbor with no special privileges.

The town commissioners immediately began on the survey, which took from August 1797 to May 1798. The survey defined the town's boundaries and assigned official names to the

streets.¹⁵ Before, street names and town boundaries had been haphazard. Like earlier dreams of the town's powers and the port's privileges, New Castle's physical size shrank. In the 1786 petition, the town was defined as

beginning at the Wharf of Messrs. Stockton and Alexander in the middle of Front St. and running down the Delaware One Mile, thence a North West course untill it strikes the Common Line, then along said Line around the Western and Northern boundaries of said Common untill it shall intersect a Line that runs a North West course from the River beginning One Mile above the Wharf aforesaid thence along said line a South East course untill it strikes the River then down said River to the place of beginning.¹⁶

The 1786 town thus would have had about two miles of river frontage and have extended about two and one-half miles inland to include the Common. In the 1780s, much of this land was agricultural or undeveloped, and not used in an urban manner. In contrast, the 1798 reality of New Castle was measured in blocks and street names. The law also limited the town to existing streets and boundaries; expansion was not allowed. This is either what the townspeople wanted, or what they knew they had to do in order to get at least some self-government. Perhaps they had become more realistic over the years. The 1798 town had five major vertical streets and five major cross-streets. The boundaries were the Delaware River, North Street, Union Street, and South Street.¹⁷ Even this small area was not completely developed, for a good deal of open space still showed on the 1804 survey.

New Castle citizens continued to work on their other main concern, an improved harbor. They held the lottery authorized by the legislature, and two piers, one at the foot of Harmony Street and the other at the foot of Delaware Street, were constructed in the second half of 1795. Although the managers proceeded with dispatch in building the piers, the workmanship was not good; within five years, both piers needed repairs. The managers were also slow to publicly settle their accounts. In January 1799, forty-one signed a petition to the legislature asking for a law to require the managers to present the accounts upon the request of a town meeting. After a delay of nearly two years, caused by the machinery of government rather than the pier managers, the townspeople finally received the managers' report in late 1801. The managers' decisions, enacted into state law in 1802, were to use their remaining funds to repair the piers and to build a new one and to place the piers and harbor under the jurisdiction of the town commissioners. The town commissioners could levy wharfage fees, make rules for the use of the harbor, and appoint a harbor master. The repairs were made and a new pier was built off Alexander's Alley.¹⁸

The New Castle harbor involved Philadelphia merchants and the federal government as well as the town and the state. On February 24, 1798, William Read in Philadelphia wrote to

George Read II in New Castle,

I have heard of the purchase made by you of the House belonging to the Estate of Uncle Bedford--probably Property may rise in your Town as the Merchts here are seriously determined to have a safe harbor at your place-- a Committee from the two Insurance Companies is to go down in a few days to make an estimate of the Cost & Congress are now well disposed to assist.¹⁹

In 1798, some Philadelphia merchants sent memorials to Congress recommending that the federal government build five piers at New Castle, as well as improvements at other ports in the Philadelphia area. Treasury Secretary Oliver Wolcott was willing to spend \$60,000 for the entire project, but Congress did not take immediate action. After several years and more petitions, Congress again considered the issue in 1802.²⁰ On June 11, 1802, William Read in Philadelphia wrote this to George Read II in New Castle:

As to the progress that is making in the business of the Piers, it is very slow; but the probability, as it respects your place, of improvement I think is very great--the report of the surveyors is more favorable than towards any other harbour but your dependence must be on the government. The merchants here who have Capital are very narrow minded, and those who would be likely to further the improvement and prove public spirited are poor--the mode proposed I am afraid will not meet the approbation of all your Inhabitants--it is to Contract the former Plan and build two Piers off the Packet Work--one outside of the Pier opposite Doctr. McCallmonts Wharf and a large Center Pier--the improvements will go on first and immediately at the Island, your place will be left until the next year.²¹

Congress appropriated \$30,000 for improvements on the Delaware,

including \$12,000 for piers at New Castle. The law required that the sites of new and existing piers be ceded by the state to the federal government. Forty-two New Castle men signed a petition to the state asking that this be done. The request was granted, and in 1803 ownership and management of the piers became the responsibility of the federal government. In 1802, the citizens had also unsuccessfully petitioned Congress to make New Castle a port of entry.²²

The school dreamed of in the 1770s became a reality in the last years of the eighteenth century through both private and governmental effort. In March 1798, a committee of the Trustees of the Common recommended using their revenues to support a school, although they made no appropriation at that time. During the next year, the school's promoters made plans and cultivated public support. In April 1799, the infant institution was named the New Castle Academy and placed in the care of six trustees. Sixty-nine people pledged enough money in June 1799 to erect a building and begin operation. In January 1801 a town meeting decided to ask the legislature to incorporate the Academy. The twenty-two men who signed the petition wanted the school to be on a formal, legal, and permanent footing. The charter was granted. Also in 1801, the Trustees made their first appropriation for the support of the school, giving money to help pay for an addition to the building as well as

operating expenses. They also agreed to repay a loan of up to \$1500. Although the Academy and the Common were theoretically separate institutions, there was so much overlapping membership among the trustees that the school was in many ways the creature of the Common.²³ The creation of the school is a good example of New Castle's web of government involving the Trustees of the Common, the town meeting, petition to the legislature, legislative act, creation of a new institution, and private efforts.

By early 1800, the government established in 1797 had been tried and found wanting. In the opinion of thirty-nine men who signed a petition to the state legislature, the town commissioners needed more authority. In the words of the petition,

But the said Town, having since considerably increased in Buildings and population-- the powers granted to the commissioners by the existing law have been found inadequate to the attainment of many of the objects contemplated therein, and additional regulations having in the lapse of time occurred to your Petitioners. . . .²⁴

Unfortunately, the draft bill which they submitted has not survived. New Castle, however, was not united in favor of these changes, for thirty-six signed another petition stating that the changes requested were "premature, and at present very unnecessary, and that the Town Meeting mentioned in the former Petition, was very partial indeed."²⁵ They asked the legislature to defer action until another town meeting had

been held. This group not only disapproved of the proposed expansion of town power, but also felt that their opinions had been disregarded. The legislature did not grant the requested changes.

The debate over whether the government's authority should be expanded represented two points of view of the course of New Castle's development, held by men of different economic groups. Table 20 summarizes the economic characteristics of supporters and opponents of the changes.²⁶ Those in favor of the changes were ambitious for their town, wanting New Castle to grow and prosper and become more urban. They felt comfortable with government and were willing to delegate authority to elected officials. Although there were substantial men on both sides, this group was more prosperous and included New Castle's leading lawyers. Those who opposed the changes felt that New Castle's development should be more modest and cautious; they preferred a quiet small town to an aspiring city. They also distrusted formal government and delegated authority, preferring a system in which all opinions were heeded and town decisions had the approval of nearly everyone rather than a mere majority. Members of this group were not as well off as those who supported the changes.

Table 20: Economic Characteristics of Supporters and Opponents of Proposed Changes in Government, 1800

	Supporters	Opponents
Propertyless	19%	39%
Own land	63%	31%
Own slaves	41%	23%
Own personal property	82%	54%
Mean total assessment	\$1430	\$961

Although thwarted, the desire for increased powers did not die. In 1803, eighty-four signed another petition making the request; the supporters of the changes had done their work well. The petition stated that their 1800 petition had never completed the legislative process and asked that it be considered again. The townspeople wanted regulation of pavements and gutters and street lighting. This time, they also requested permission to have a ground plan made so that they could know the topography of the streets and thereby regulate the levels of the ground floors of buildings and the gutters and sewers. This bill was passed in January 1804, and the commissioners' powers were extended.²⁷

This episode gives an idea of how much--and how little--is known of New Castle's government. While it again demonstrates the town's dependence upon the state, it also shows that there was much more to town government than is recorded in the official minutes of the town commissioners. None of the town's several attempts to acquire more powers

is ever mentioned in the official records; the petitions to the legislature always came from the people of New Castle.

The town commissioners were involved in this process as individuals rather than officials. In 1800, the Trustees and the commissioners generally, but not unanimously, supported the expansion of government. Since all of the commissioners that year were also Trustees, the Trustees' positions portray the leadership's feelings on the issue: eight supported the changes, four were opposed, and one Trustee signed neither petition. Three commissioners were in favor of the changes, one was opposed, and one did not sign either petition.²⁸

The idea gained public approval and support through the town meeting and petitions to the legislature. The town meeting was not an official or regularly scheduled part of the government--it was not mentioned in the 1797 act--but its decisions were accepted as the town's will. In 1800, those who signed the counter-petition were dissatisfied with the way the town meeting had gone; they probably felt that the measure had been pushed through hastily and abruptly by a small clique without full debate. If the signatures on the petitions--thirty-nine for and thirty-six against--reflect the sense of the meeting, then only a bare majority approved the proposed changes. Many other petitions to the legislature were signed by fifty to eighty people, so the usual

practice may have been to win nearly unanimous approval for most major issues.²⁹ If so, then the dissenters in 1800 had reason to be upset.

It is difficult to say what effect, if any, the issue had on the elections for town commissioners. While the names of the winning candidates and how many votes each received are recorded, nothing else is known about the elections between 1799 and 1804.³⁰ As noted before, the commissioners in office when the petitions were sent to Dover in January 1800, did not present a united front on the issue. They had been elected in May 1799 by a small and apparently unanimous vote. This could indicate a small turnout and lack of opposition, or it could mean that there was also another slate of candidates who attracted fewer but equally united voters.

Table 21: Town Commissioner Elections, 1799-1804

	<u>1799</u>	<u>1800</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1802</u>	<u>1803</u>	<u>1804</u>
Lowest number of votes	35	45	44	39	38	24
Highest number of votes	36	60	71	62	64	44
Commissioners favoring 1800 changes	3	4	0	2	1	2
Commissioners opposing 1800 changes	1	1	4	1	3	3
Commissioners with no opinion in 1800	1	0	1	2	1	0

Between 1800 and 1804, elections were apparently more open, with greater voter participation, more candidates, and less unanimity of feeling. In 1800, four of the five commissioners again favored the changes. At least sixty men voted in this election, scattering their votes among the candidates. The next year, all five commissioners were replaced in an election with a higher turnout and even greater scattering of votes. This time, four of the men had signed the opposition petition and four were elected to the post for the first time. This election indeed might have been a referendum on the question of whether the town government should have more powers. It could also mean, however, that the men who had been serving wanted a year off, or that the new men elected had been in town and active long enough to gain sufficient public recognition and support.

The elections of 1802, 1803, and 1804 are less clear-cut. Voter participation appears to have declined, and the commissioners were a mixture of old and new men, supporters and opponents of the changes. In January 1803, eighty-four signed the petition requesting increased powers for the government, so that the wounds had healed and many more had come to believe that the changes would be beneficial. Indeed, three of the men elected in 1804, who would be responsible for implementing the changes, had signed the opposition

petition in 1800.

As requested, the law passed on January 20, 1804 authorized a ground plan, street paving, sidewalks and gutters, street lighting, and two new appointed officials, the wood corder and flour inspector.³¹ The main goal again was the physical improvement of the town. The commissioners' first action under the new law was to hire Benjamin Latrobe in June 1804 to do the survey and ground plan. Latrobe, a leading architect and engineer, usually based in Philadelphia, was living in New Castle at the time because he was doing engineering work for the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. He promised to have the New Castle survey done by August 10, 1804; it was finally completed in mid-August 1805.³²

The completed survey is an ambitious document. The first part is a map of New Castle showing all the streets and the distances between them as well as all the houses, labelled with the name of the owner or tenant. Detailed drawings, which include sketches of some of the houses, show how the street level was to be graded, in anticipation of paving and better drainage. The survey concludes with an essay in which Latrobe made recommendations for New Castle's future expansion. This was the most elaborate town planning effort that either New Castle or Delaware had seen up to that time.³³

While this survey was unique in Delaware, the idea of town planning was not foreign to early America. For New Castle, the most relevant example was probably Philadelphia, although that city had often diverged from Penn's plan. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the new national capital was elaborately planned, New York City underwent considerable planning, and many new towns were laid out in both old and new sections of the country. While there does not seem to have been a self-conscious town planning movement in these years, enough was being done so that New Castle's effort was in the mainstream.³⁴

The survey is a tangible indication of the town's desire to improve itself. All of the changes authorized by the 1804 law would both make New Castle look better and make it a more convenient place in which to live and do business. People also believed that the town was going to grow. On the map, extensions of existing streets were indicated, and Latrobe's essay was concerned mainly with physical expansion. Finally, these improvements would be done in an organized and orderly manner, with public financing and support. They would not be left to chance or to private, individual efforts. With this plan, New Castle in effect announced that it aspired to be an up-to-date small city rather than a sleepy county seat and local market overshadowed by Wilmington.

Even before the survey was completed, the commissioners began to work on street improvements. They first asked the Trustees of the Common to appropriate money to pay for paving and lighting the streets. On the day that the survey was approved, the commissioners issued specifications for sidewalks and curbs. People were to have the sidewalks and curbs built at their own expense, and those who did not comply within ninety days would be prosecuted. In October 1805, the commissioners made plans to erect street lamps at fourteen locations and began to grade Delaware and Front Streets.³⁵

Once plans were made, work proceeded slowly between 1805 and 1811. The street lamps were not installed until late 1807; only then did the Common appropriate money for them. The grant was only for operation and maintenance and not for the lamps themselves. Much of the work done during these years was sidewalks and street grading under the supervision of the town commissioners; very little street paving was done.³⁶

New Castle's people continued to petition the state legislature on matters of town administration that were beyond the commissioners' powers. In 1806, they asked that their market days be changed because both Wilmington and New Castle had their markets on the same days, an obvious disadvantage from New Castle's point of view. A year later,

another petition, complaining especially about forestalling, asked that the town commissioners assume responsibility for the market. Both petitions were granted.³⁷

The petition sent to the legislature in 1809 gives a glimpse of the social problems of that particular moment. The first request was that all wood sold be measured by the wood corder, in hopes of regulating what must have been a major source of consumer fraud. Townspeople also wanted to change the procedure for handling swine running at large, from the current custom of shooting the trespassing animals to having the clerk of the market sell them for damages. People were also concerned with controlling their less than respectable neighbors. As the petition expressed it, the present provisions against

Trading, dealing and Bartering with Servants and Slaves without the Consent of the owner thereof within the limits of the Town have not been Sufficient to Restrain that evil practice to the great injury of many of the Inhabitants of the Town as well as the Neighborhood.³⁸

The petitioners wanted the penalty changed from a fine to a limited period of hard labor in the workhouse. They also felt that

the Assembling of Free Negros, Mulatos and Slaves within the Limits of the Town of New Castle without any lawful Business to the great disturbance of the peaceable Inhabitants of the Town requires some further provisions by Law to regulate and prevent such disorderly meetings.³⁹

Quiet and order were the goal, with both people and animals in their proper places. No law was passed in response to this petition.

Thus, by 1810--about the same time as the end of New Castle's first period of economic development--the town had attained a strong sense of its civic needs and identity and the means to reach its goals. With the establishment of the town commissioners and the expansion of the Trustees of the Common's powers, New Castle's civic institutions were in place, while the town meeting and the petition to the legislature were accepted as the voice of the people. Also established, after some conflict, was New Castle's general goal of being a small, aspiring city rather than a large, sleepy village. New Castle was well on its way to obtaining some of the signs and amenities of urban life and during the next two decades would continue in the same outwardly confident direction.

Between 1811 and 1817, New Castle made repeated requests for incorporation.⁴⁰ While their proposal shows that the citizens' requests were an outgrowth of what they already had, it also reveals an optimistic, ambitious, and expansionistic vision of what the town government ought to be. The town was to be expanded from the existing boundaries to include the Common and all the land in between. This new

land was apparently undeveloped or used for agriculture, for it was not to be subject to town taxes until it was laid out in streets and improved with buildings. This move was in anticipation of future development rather than an annexation of current growth.

The new government would also have more officials. Five commissioners, two aldermen, two constables, a treasurer, a clerk of the market, and a town clerk would all be elected annually. The aldermen were to have the powers of a justice of the peace within the town, and the constables were to have the power of a New Castle County constable. New Castle wanted more control over its internal social order.

The long list of the commissioners' powers gives a good indication of what this aspiring town thought its government ought to do. Unlike the 1797 and 1804 laws, this bill says relatively little about physical improvements; most of the provisions are for protecting the citizens or regulating commerce. While such an explicit concern for the citizen and the economy is new for New Castle, it is also a summation of the changes in the townspeople's thinking on government over the years.

Concern for the citizen fell into several categories. In the area of health and safety, the town had the power to make regulations during contagious diseases; provide pumps,

street lighting, and a night watch; and remove "Nuisances" from the streets. Social order was another major concern. Trading with slaves or servants without their master's permission was forbidden, as was the assembling of Negroes and mulattos. There were penalties for the illegal sale of liquor, hogs running at large, vandalizing fences, hedges, or street lamps, and shooting a gun except on days of militia drill or public rejoicing. The two new items on this list are the night watchmen and the penalties for illegally selling liquor, which suggest the presence of a rowdy, criminal element roaming the streets at night, making it unsafe for the respectable.

The town also assumed responsibility for protecting the citizen as consumer in several ways. Uniform weights and measures were to be used, and the commissioners had the power to appoint officials to regulate the weight of bread, size of bricks, cordage of wood, as well as the weighing of hay, coal, lime, grain, or any other product sold in town. Chimney sweeps were also subject to town regulation.

While the measures for the protection of the consumer were obviously designed to keep merchants honest, the town also assumed responsibilities which showed that it wanted to promote commerce and see itself as more than a local market. The town continued to maintain and regulate the market house and added the new responsibility of appointing

and regulating auctioneers. Also, the town was to build and maintain public wharves and regulate the harbor. Finally, the law provided for the appointment of gaugers (revenue officers who inspect bulk goods subject to duty), a type of official that a minor port probably would not need or think of having.

The motivation for the attempt to obtain incorporation is nowhere stated. It is never mentioned in the minutes of the town commissioners or the Trustees of the Common; the only surviving statement of public support is an 1814 petition with seventy-five signatures.⁴¹ The charter campaign coincided with New Castle's first ventures into the transportation revolution and also played a role in the continuing struggle with Wilmington. Optimistic and confident, New Castle wanted more control over its own affairs and the prestige of being an incorporated place. If the legislature had approved this request, New Castle would have been the first town in Delaware to receive a state charter; although Wilmington had been incorporated in colonial times, it did not receive a state charter until 1832.⁴² The legislature did not accede to New Castle's wishes; the town again had to forego its dream.

While the attempt to gain incorporation was pending in Dover, the town government continued its usual activities and the townspeople continued to send petitions to Dover.

An 1813 petition asked for a new law to regulate swin running at large, noting that three years earlier a bill on the subject had passed one of the houses, but was not enacted into law because the session adjourned. This time their request was granted.⁴³ In 1816, a petition requested that the commissioners' powers be extended to deal with "the Tippling Houses kept up in the said Town," the "frequent Riotous assemblages of disorderly people particularly negroes" and of the need to regulate the sale of hay and lumber.⁴⁴ This petition was not granted. The requests in both 1813 and 1816 were for items also included in the incorporation request. New Castle was using its usual tactic: dreaming big, talking big, and settling for less.

The decade and a half between 1811 and 1826 mark the Common's high point as a source of civic improvements. The organization provided major support for the Academy, financed and supervised street paving, built a public wharf at the foot of Harmony Street in 1816-17, installed a town clock in the tower of Immanuel Church in 1822, and paid for the Town Hall erected between 1823 and 1826.⁴⁵ Because of the Common, heavy taxes or voluntary contributions were not needed. The public did not pay for public improvements. Civic improvements in New Castle do not necessarily represent strong civic spirit; they represent wishes come true through the generosity

of a charitable trust.

In addition to financing improvements, the Common was involved in other activities during this period. In 1810, the Trustees paid the expenses of a delegation sent to Dover, at citizens' insistence, to lobby against the removal of the courts and to promote the town's interest in other ways. The same year, they also discussed whether to buy stock in the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike Company. The vote on this was tied. Such activities aroused the concern of some, for in 1810 the Trustees received a memorial with fifty-seven signatures protesting the use of Common funds for things other than the improvement of the town. The petition has not survived, so the exact grievances are unknown. The Trustees' response is also unknown. In 1812-1813, the Trustees were deeply involved in the Newport Bridge project, although they did not buy stock. In 1812-1813, they also discussed, and rejected, the idea of seeking permission to issue longer leases. Finally in 1815, they considered, and rejected, loaning money to the federal government for the construction of Fort Delaware on Pea Patch Island.⁴⁶ Many of these issues raised the question of the limits of the Trustees' discretion in using their resources; all in all, they took a conservative stand.

In comparison with the Trustees, the town commissioners were inactive during these years. They went about their usual

business of civic housekeeping; once the Common began to fund street paving, that task was no longer the commissioners' responsibility. Indeed, the town government kept almost no records between 1818 and 1822.⁴⁷

New Castle's last major physical improvement was a joint venture involving the Trustees of the Common, the town commissioners, and the Masons. The Trustees and Masons built a brick building with a fire house below and a town hall and meeting room for the Masons above, fronting on Delaware Street. Attached and extending behind it was a new market house, built by the commissioners. Planning began in 1823 and the structure was completed in 1826.⁴⁸ Simple yet substantial and attractive, and located next to the courthouse, the town hall was a visible sign that New Castle thought of itself as an important place.

After the completion of the town hall, New Castle undertook no new major physical improvements before 1840; it was a time for consolidation and maintenance rather than new ventures. One reason was financial; the Common had borrowed heavily to pay for earlier projects and had reached the limits of its resources. By this time, the town fathers had apparently reached the limits of their ideas on town improvements, too. More important, however, was New Castle's economic position. Throughout the decade, the possible loss of the county seat to Wilmington threatened to become reality.

No sooner had the New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad opened than construction began on the four lines that became the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad and destroyed New Castle's transportation advantages in 1837. Finally, New Castle's harbor continued to fill with mud and was subjected to Wilmington's insults. The war with Wilmington was at its height. New Castle was a town beseiged and had to use all its energies in its defense.

Faced with these threats, the Trustees and commissioners used their official resources to support lobbying on the town's behalf. Before 1826, they did this only twice: once in 1810 to protest the possible removal of the courts and again in 1813 to promote the Newport Bridge. Between 1826 and 1837, the town used this technique six times, a marked increase. In 1826 and 1827, the commissioners twice authorized men to present the town's position on new roads under consideration. The Common sponsored and financed the other four lobbying efforts. In 1832, 1835, and 1837, the Trustees sent men to Dover to protest against the possible change in the county seat. Again in 1832, they sent men to Washington to represent the town on an unspecified issue and in 1837 they provided money to support New Castle's application to Congress for harbor improvements and designation as a port of entry.⁴⁹

Although the Common did pay the expenses of lobbyists, most of New Castle's activity in the county seat battle took place in the unofficial yet fully accepted channels of town meetings, petitions, pamphlets, and letters to newspapers. The question was to be decided in a special New Castle County election. For whatever reason--New Castle's persuasiveness or a general reluctance to tamper with tradition--it took from 1832 until 1839 to pass the law authorizing the election. In order for the courts to be moved to Wilmington, a majority of the county's qualified voters had to approve. According to unofficial results, a little over 1,500 voted for the change in May, 1839. Since about 1,800 votes were necessary, New Castle retained the county seat.⁵⁰

In the face of mud and taunts from Wilmington, the harbor received a great deal of governmental attention in the mid-1830s. An 1835 petition to Dover stated that the harbor was so filled with mud that vessels could not anchor and asked the state's assistance in persuading the federal government to erect more piers. Wilmington took advantage of New Castle's mud and tried to convince people that New Castle's harbor was beyond hope and that the Christina would be a better winter refuge. Wilmington lost this skirmish; new piers were authorized in 1836 and New Castle remained Philadelphia's winter refuge.⁵¹

In addition to physical improvements, the citizens of New Castle also wanted the town to be made a port of entry. The pursuit of this again shows the interplay of various types of government. As George Read III wrote to his brother, William, in Washington, on January 22, 1836:

Our citizens are bustling about our Harbour and the Port of Entry--they had a Committee at Washington, some of whom I suppose you saw, and if you did know all about it. I learn the Memorials are most extensively signed by the mercantile men of Philadelphia, &c and are referred to the Committee of Ways and Means. Mr. Buchanan took charge of them in the Senate. I think both will succeed if, the clangor of men drowns not all civil measures.⁵²

This one passage alone mentions petitions from citizens, lobbying, the federal government, and personal connections. William T. Read, working in the Treasury Department, kept the people at home informed on matters that interested them and also gave government officials information on New Castle.⁵³

Treasury Secretary Levi Woodbury asked Read for his views on this issue and also gave him an off-the-record statement of what he thought ought to be done. Woodbury said that it was against government policy to make New Castle into a port of entry, since there was only one in each district. He suggested that the problem could be resolved by appointing a deputy collector at New Castle, which could be done easily by applying to the collector at Wilmington. Or, legislation could be passed to have both places included in the port of entry for the district. As William T. Read told his brother

George, Woodbury said,

This concluding suggestion is, it seems to me, just what the people of New Castle ought to push for, and the best mode of doing so would be to have a committee here to operate for them on Congress. . . . You will be careful to use this information so as not to commit me; to get it in such a way as to authorize its use as the basis of further action in the business by the Town I would suggest the asking to be informed by one of our Senators what has been done by the Senate U S on the Memorial, and, particularly if any and what communication has been made in regard to it by the Treasury Department to its Committee of Commerce.⁵⁴

The townspeople apparently took Woodbury's advice, as transmitted through William T. Read to his brother George in New Castle, for on January 28, 1836, the Trustees appropriated \$150 to be spent in this cause. On March 1, Woodbury wrote to T. Stockton, James Booth, and others about their request to have both Wilmington and New Castle as ports of entry. While he noted that the precedents that they cited did not really apply to this situation, he also said that if Congress passed it into law, he would not object.⁵⁵ A few days later, James Couper asked William Read where the memorials to Congress had been filed, in case they were needed again. Read replied that the petitions from Christiana Bridge, Milford, Lewes, Cantwell's Bridge, Milton, Camden, Frederica, New Castle, and the masters of vessels on the Delaware Bay had been filed in the Treasury Department, showing that New Castle had been sure to gather expressions of

support from all around the state.⁵⁶ On March 5, Senator Arnold Naudain wrote to Stockton, Booth, Couper Jr., William H. Rogers, and Andrew C. Gray, apparently the committee in charge of the matter. Naudain basically supported New Castle's desire, but hoped that it could be achieved without legislation. Legislation took time, and in the meantime the problem would continue as before.⁵⁷

The issue was not resolved in 1836, for it was included among the concerns of the Committee of Safety in 1837. Although the group's name recalls the rhetoric of the Revolution, its purpose was to work for the improvement of the town. On January 3, 1837, the members set up committees to go to Dover to protest the removal of the courts, to write a memorial to the legislature on some unspecified subject, to ask the Postmaster General for a daily mail during the months when the navigation of the river was closed, and to work towards improving the harbor and having New Castle made a port of entry.⁵⁸ The Committee of Safety was a coordinated effort to deal with some of the problems facing the town, but was not part of the official government. It reached two of its goals in 1839 when the county seat election went in New Castle's favor and a deputy customs collector was stationed at the town.

Thus, between 1790 and 1840, New Castle's complex web

of government, both official and unofficial, had been established, provided substantial civic improvements, and faced outside threats. While it is easy to trace this story, it is more difficult to know what was happening within the town itself. The surviving records give little sense of discussion or conflict within the government or among the citizens. John Crow was secretary of both the Trustees and the commissioners for many years, and his notes were usually brief.

A key question is the relationship between the Trustees and the commissioners, two theoretically separate bodies. The source and amount of money controlled by each provides one insight. Taxes, the town's major source of income, were levied according to the town's need, rather than automatically and inevitably. The commissioners made assessments only twenty times between 1798 and 1840. This sporadic taxation indicates that the commissioners did not see taxation as a means of asserting their authority, or perhaps they feared complaints and defeat at the polls if the citizens found themselves assessed when there was no need for it. It also reflects the era's preference for economical government. The commissioners worked with small sums of money. Each tax brought in between \$300 and \$900, and over the years the commissioners took out four loans for similar amounts. Between 1798 and 1840, the town raised about \$9000 by taxation.⁵⁹

In contrast, the Common operated on a much larger scale. Its income came from rents on its land and financed the projects described in this chapter, especially between 1815 and 1835. During these years, the Trustees spent \$22,000 on town projects and borrowed \$13,700.⁶⁰ The Common's large expenditures naturally eased the tax burden or the donations that people would have made if the improvements had been done by voluntary organizations.

Thus, in terms of financial resources and functions, the Common was the larger of the two. It was responsible for many of the town's major capital improvements, while the commissioner's responsibilities were more in the realm of civic housekeeping. The town, however, had coercive powers of making and enforcing rules and levying and collecting taxes that the Common lacked. The commissioners did not abuse their taxing power, and their minutes record few cases of their being called in to enforce the rules that they made. Problems may have been settled informally by peer pressure or off-the-record mediation before they became large enough to receive official notice. Or, perhaps the commissioners kept no records of these matters.

The records give little indication of the close communication that must have existed between the commissioners and the Trustees. Between 1798 and 1840, the commissioners' minutes report only eleven instances of messages from

them to the Trustees, usually requests for money.⁶¹ Most of the interaction between the groups was unofficial, perhaps even unspoken. A substantial minority of the men who served in these bodies were members of both, often simultaneously.⁶² They were of similar economic and social class and probably had many opportunities to talk outside of official meetings. The Common and commissioners operated in harmony within their spheres defined by law and custom.

Citizens participated in town government in several ways. Both the Trustees of the Common and the town commissioners were elected, but there is little information on the elections, especially for the Trustees. Most of the time, only the names of the winning candidates are given. For the Common, only once, in December 1832, were the names of all the candidates and the number of votes recorded. Sixty-nine voted for eight candidates to fill four positions. The four winners received between sixty-four and sixty-nine votes each, while the losers polled only one to three votes.⁶³ In this case, public sentiment was nearly unanimous. The franchise for Common elections was open to inhabitants of the town who owned freeholds or paid forty shillings in rent per year. The charter does not define the town's boundaries. Since Trustees served until they died or moved away, they did not have to worry about pleasing the voters after their initial election.⁶⁴

Town commissioners were elected annually on the first Tuesday in May by freeholders and inhabitants who were taxables.⁶⁵ The extent of voter participation varied greatly, as Table 22 shows. In 1806, one candidate polled 110 votes, while in 1809 it was possible to win with only 14 votes. Based on the highest number of votes for any given year, participation ranged from 61 percent of white male taxables to 14 percent, with a mean of 33 percent. These figures are low, since there were probably other candidates in the elections whose votes were not recorded.

The first election attracted about a third of the electorate, hardly a reassuring show of support for the infant government, especially since many more had signed the petition requesting its establishment. Participation increased substantially the next two years, perhaps because of the conflict over extension of the government's powers, and then returned to previous levels for the next three years.

The highest recorded participation came in 1806, when the winning candidates received between 71 and 110 votes. All of the men elected were incumbents. This was the first election after Latrobe's survey and the beginning of the street improvements; voters were probably enthusiastic about these developments and showed it by a high turnout and a vote of confidence in their commissioners. There were probably other candidates who wanted to go about the improvements in a

different way, or not at all.

Just a few years later, in 1808, 1809, and 1810, voting dipped to its lowest known point. A man could become commissioner with thirteen to thirty votes. During these years, the commissioners transacted their normal business, but began no new ventures, so there were no major issues to excite the voters. Finally, in 1814, participation increased to 32 percent; although still low, it is a great increase over the previous years, and a return to the town's normal level of voting. This increase may reflect the heightened civic awareness spurred by the incorporation attempt which was pending.

Table 22: Size of Town Electorate

<u>Year</u>	<u>Highest Number of Votes</u>	<u>Percent of White Male Town Taxables</u>
1799	36	28
1800	55	43
1801	71	56
1802	62	34
1803	64	35
1804	44	24
1806	110	61
1808	31	16
1809	26	14
1810	30	16
1814	53	32

Town meetings were another way for citizens to participate. The town meeting was not an official, continuing part of New Castle's government, but the occasional gathering of the citizens to discuss some extraordinary matter that

affected the entire town. Even though it had no existence in statute law, the meeting's decisions were accepted in the town, and by the state legislature who received their petitions, as true statements of New Castle's corporate will.

Town meetings served two major purposes. First, they were the ultimate source of town authority. New Castle's government was originally created and legitimized by the town meeting; the unsuccessful 1786 petition for government grew out of meetings held during the Revolution, while meetings also developed and approved the 1796 request. After government had been established, authorization to change it also seems to have come from town meetings. The 1800 changes were authorized at a town meeting, and the disgruntled opponents asked the legislature to defer action until another meeting had been held. Even though this is the only specific example of the town meeting being used for this purpose, it is likely that they were held to discuss and ratify other governmental changes.⁶⁶

Meetings were also a forum for the discussion of unusual issues and situations. Although the actual operation of town government was entirely in the hands of the commissioners, they called three town meetings: in 1802, when a ship with a contagious disease was in the harbor; in 1839,

to discuss the Commons land; and in 1840, to consider whether to deed part of the public square to the county for a court house addition.⁶⁷ Other occasional meetings dealt with large issues that did not fall under the purview of any governmental body or existing organization: during the War of 1812; in April 1824, to deal with the devastation caused by the fire; in September 1824, to make plans for Lafayette's visit to the area; twice in 1828, to begin plans for the railroad; and in 1839, during the struggle over the removal of the courts.⁶⁸

Little is known of the meetings's procedure. Except for those called specifically by the town commissioners, the initial impetus for meetings probably came from leading citizens who had a specific proposal or point of view on the issue at hand. Leading men served as officers and committee members at meetings. A common practice was the appointment of a committee to draw up a resolution to be discussed and voted on or the immediate presentation of a drafted resolution for consideration. The extent of citizen participation or the freedom of debate is unknown. The 1800 complaint that the meeting which had approved the changes was "very partial indeed" is the only sign of dissatisfaction with the meetings' procedures. If the number of signatures on petitions is any indication, the 1796 and 1800 meetings attracted about half of the white male taxables. The meeting

held just after the 1824 fire and the 1839 meeting on the removal of the courts probably drew large crowds.

Signing petitions to the legislature at Dover was yet another way in which citizens could participate. The number of signers ranges from twenty-two to eighty-four, or from 12 percent to 59 percent of the white male taxables. The highest percentages are on petitions dealing with major changes in the government. Petitions for other purposes had lower percentages of signers, and probably did not need as large a demonstration of public support to carry weight at Dover.

New Castle's citizens thus had several means of taking part in town affairs, but usually only a minority chose to do so. Just as there is little evidence of widespread and enthusiastic support for the government, there are also few cases of overt, intense dissent. One is the opposition to the changes in government proposed in 1800. Only two examples survive of open dissatisfaction with the Common. An anonymous writer in the New Castle Argus in 1805 liked the idea of the Common paying for street improvements because it would reduce taxes, but also hoped that the project would not end up like the Academy. In his opinion, the Academy had been a well-run, well regarded school before the Common assumed financial responsibility for it; after, the quality of management and education declined.⁶⁹ In 1810, the Trustees

received a petition protesting that Common monies were being used for things other than the town's benefit. Neither the exact wording of the petition, nor the Trustees' response, is recorded. Fifty-seven signed the petition, a large number for New Castle, so feelings must have been strong at this point. These, however, are the only major incidents of dissent.⁷⁰ New Castle's citizens probably grumbled privately more than they protested publicly.

Within the region, the urban frame of reference ranged from the great commercial city of Philadelphia to the small villages of downstate Delaware, and New Castle's leaders continually faced and answered the unspoken question of whether their community ought to be a large contented village or a small aspiring city. By their decisions, the leaders showed that they saw New Castle more as a city than a village. New Castle first showed its urban orientation and aspirations in its 1786 request for incorporation. Although the petition spoke most strongly of the need for government to maintain civil order, the citizens must have also been aware of the autonomy and privilege conferred by incorporation, which Philadelphia and Wilmington had long enjoyed. It was a logical accompaniment to the request for free-port status of the same year.

New Castle, however, had to settle for a form of

administration that could execute the necessary duties but lacked the status, autonomy, and privileges of incorporation. This too reflects the general climate of the times and the region. During the 1790s, reformers assaulted Philadelphia's charter. Debate centered on whether a borough charter was an inviolable grant of rights, or whether the state legislature could alter it without the corporation's consent. In 1796, the Pennsylvania legislature enacted the reformers' desires, thus violating the sanctity of the charter. This is an early example of what was to be a common practice, and New Castle's citizens may have reduced their dreams because of it.⁷¹

Even though New Castle was not incorporated, within Delaware its government was second only to Wilmington's in age and complexity. During the first third of the nineteenth century, Milford (1807), Smyrna (1817), Lewes (1818), St. Georges (1825), Laurel (1827), and Dover (1829) acquired a degree of local control. These governments followed the same basic pattern as New Castle's, but were simpler. Villages in Delaware lacked any regulation beyond that provided by infrequent town meetings, hundred and county officials, and occasional legislative acts.⁷²

New Castle's civic activities between 1780 and 1840 changed the town's appearance and organizational structure, made it a more comfortable and convenient place in which to live, and showed that it aspired to be a city among cities.

Uncomfortable realities lay beneath the dreams and accomplishments, however. The body of concerned citizens was small, despite ample opportunities for participation. The Common, rather than public spirit and contributions, paid for most of the major capital improvements. New Castle's people enjoyed the benefits of urban life without paying the organizational and financial price, all the while maintaining the era's preference for small government and low taxes. New Castle without the Common might have been a much different place. One woman aptly characterized New Castle's civic spirit in 1822:

I have heard that great improvements have taken place in New Castle. Is it so? For the inhabitants of that spot when I resided there talked of plans of alteration &c &c. But owing to a spirit I suppose of Procrastination those projected improvements never took place. I do not mean to insinuate anything respecting the Gentlemen in particular but you will agree with me that such unfortunately was the case.⁷³

Finally, by 1840, economic and regional realities, rather than paved streets and the impressive town hall, defined New Castle's status. It was a town among cities, but a much more attractive town than it would have been without its urban dreams and the Common's generosity.

CHAPTER 4 NOTES

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38. Petition, citizens of the town of New Castle to the State Legislature, Jan. 24, 1809, Legislative Papers, Dover.
39. Petition, citizens of the town of New Castle to the State Legislature, Jan. 24, 1809, Legislative Papers, Dover.
40. An Act to Incorporate the Town of New Castle and for other purposes therein mentioned, Legislative Papers, Dover. While no date is given in the text of the bill, notations on the outside indicate that the legislature considered it in

1811, 1814, 1815, 1816, and 1817. All descriptions of the powers of the proposed incorporated government are drawn from this draft bill.

41. Petition, citizens of the town of New Castle to the State Legislature, Legislative Papers, Dover. The document is incomplete, but notations show that it was presented to the legislature in 1814 and 1815.

42. Carol E. Hoffecker, Wilmington, Delaware: Portrait of an Industrial City, 1830-1900 (Charlottesville: Published for the Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation by the University Press of Virginia, 1974), pp. 46-8.

43. Petition, citizens of the town of New Castle and vicinity to the State Legislature, Jan. 11, 1813, Legislative Papers, Dover; Laws of the State of Delaware, 4:699-71.

44. Petition, citizens of the town of New Castle to the State Legislature, Legislative Papers, Dover. Petition is undated, but outside notation indicates that the legislature "read and referred" it on Feb. 10, 1816.

45. Common, pp. 95-136.

46. Common, pp. 66-7, 71-3, 86-90, 97.

47. Town Commissioners, pp. 135-46.

48. Common, pp. 125-36; Town Commissioners, 149-55.

49. Town Commissioners, pp. 173, 179; Common, pp. 66, 90, 160-2, 168, 172, 176-7.

50. Delaware Journal, Feb. 14, 1832; Delaware State Journal, Jan.-Feb., 1835, Jan.-April, 1837, Feb.-May, 1839; Laws of the State of Delaware, 9:284-8.

51. Petition from citizens of the town of New Castle and others interested in the navigation of the Delaware to the State Legislature, Jan., 1835, Legislative Papers, Dover; Delaware State Journal, March 11 and 22, 1836.

52. George Read III to William T. Read, Jan. 22, 1836, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.

53. William T. Read to George Read II, Jan. 22, 1836, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.

54. William T. Read to George Read II, Jan. 22, 1836, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.

55. Levi Woodbury to T. Stockton, James Booth, et al., March 1, 1836, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
56. James Couper, Jr. to William T. Read, March 4, 1836, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
57. Arnold Naudain to Thomas Stockton, James Booth, et al., March 5, 1836, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
58. Report of a meeting of the Committee of Safety, Jan. 3, 1837, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
59. Town Commissioners, pp. 1-210 passim.
60. Common, pp. 178-9.
61. Town Commissioners, pp. 42-204 passim.
62. 64% of the men who served as Trustees of the common also served as town commissioners, 55% of the men who served as Trustees held both offices simultaneously. 40% of the men who served as town commissioner were also Trustees, 34% of the commissioners who held both offices did so simultaneously.
63. Common, pp. 160-2.
64. Trustees, New Castle Common, p. 17.
65. Laws of the State of Delaware, 2:1368-76; Town Commissioners, pp. 1-120 passim.
66. Petitions, citizens of the town of New Castle to the State Legislature, June, 1786, Feb. 8, 1796, Jan. 18, 1800, Jan. 20, 1800, Legislative Papers, Dover.
67. Town Commissioners, pp. 31, 203, 206-10.
68. Proceedings of the New Castle town meeting, March 17, 1813, War of 1812 Papers, HSD; American Watchman, April 30, 1824, Sept. 10, 1824, Feb. 26, 1828; Delaware Gazette, Sept. 10, 1824, March 4, 1828; Delaware Journal, March 4, 1828; Delaware State Journal, April 30, 1839.
69. New Castle Argus, May 28, 1805.
70. Common, pp. 71-3.
71. John C. Teaford, The Municipal Revolution in America: Origins of Modern Urban Government, 1650-1825 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 79-85.

72. E. Dallas Hitchins, "Development of Local Government in Delaware, 1776-1831" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1941), pp. 222-243.

73. Mary Brade to Dorcas Van Dyke, Jan. 9, 1822, Longwood Manuscripts, Group 4, EMHL.

CHAPTER 5

FAITH AND FRUSTRATION

We have no facts connected with our little Society that would be particularly interesting to communicate; but we must indulge the hope, that the Scriptures we have been, or may be, the means of disseminating, will not be lost; but like good seed, though hid from our view, and "buried long in dust," shall be found, in the great harvest day, to have produced fruit that shall glow in resplendent beauty to deck the immortal paradise.

New Castle Female Bible Society
April 5, 1823¹

The Episcopal and Presbyterian churches were so much older that their antiquity gives them strength; that there was a greater amount of aristocracy in New Castle than in any other town on the Peninsula and that our church is not so well suited to aristocracy as some others and that the location of the Methodist Church was inconvenient being far from the center of town.

Reasons given in 1849 by the
Methodist minister for the
weakness of Methodism in New
Castle²

People moving into New Castle after about 1820 could choose among a variety of denominations and organizations which met the religious needs of young and old, men and women, blacks and whites. There were churches of the

Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, Union American Methodist Episcopal (UAME), Roman Catholic, and Baptist faiths, while church-related organizations included Sunday schools, the Female Bible Society, the Female Benevolent Society, and the Haydn Society. Together they created a level of vigorous activity much different from the late eighteenth century, when New Castle's religious life was straggling. By 1840, most of the organizations and churches of the 1820s remained, but defensiveness and particularism had replaced the optimism and good-will of the earlier period. In its outline, New Castle's religious history reflects the broad national pattern for the period in which late eighteenth-century lethargy was followed by religious renewal characterized by inter-denominational harmony, a harmony which had fragmented by the mid-1830s.

Conformity to the broad national pattern is only part of the story, however, for each locality participated in the Second Great Awakening in its own way and for its own reasons.³ New Castle's story is one of aspiration and frustration; developments in the secular and religious spheres complemented each other. The two quotations at the head of the chapter convey a strong sense of great striving with limited success, but in different ways. While the Female Bible Society deprecated its small efforts, its members were ultimately optimistic; their labors were part

of God's plan and the "good seed" which they had planted would come to fruition eventually. These words were written in 1823, during New Castle's years of creative frustration, when success and failure in the drive towards urbanity were in a stimulating balance. In contrast, the 1849 quotation blames the Methodists' lack of success on other churches, "aristocracy," and an inconvenient location--all earthly factors-- and does not express any expectation of ultimate reward. Although written in 1849, the quotation reflects the fragmentation and defensiveness that characterized both the town and its churches by the mid-1830s. By then, New Castle had been so buffeted in the struggle for place and profit that the level of frustration was much higher and people grimly protected what they had rather than move in new directions.

Organized religion in America faced severe problems in the first years of independence. Churches had to recover from the war and learn to think and act as Americans, rather than colonial outposts of English and European churches. This required organizing at national and local levels, gathering scattered congregations, repairing buildings, calling clergy, and raising funds. Some religious leaders, especially New England Congregationalists and Presbyterians, were alarmed by many things, including low attendance, lack of respect for the clergy and the Sabbath, lack of religion

among young people and in newly settled areas, and the rise of Deism.⁴ In short, they felt that organized religion was losing its accustomed position in society. The Reverend John Latta, minister of the New Castle Presbyterian Church, described the years of religious lethargy this way in an 1809 sermon:

A few years since, a combination was formed in Europe for the destruction of all civil order and government, and for the extirpation of every species of morality and religion. This combination rapidly increased, till it extended itself, not only into every nation in Europe, but also over into America. Infidelity, assuming the specious and imposing names, of philosophy and human reason peculiarly enlightened, came forth with boldness and with a menacing aspect, assailed every thing that was sacred. For a while it appeared to triumph. Zion clothed in sackcloth, mourned.⁵

New Castle shared in the doldrums, although in this case it was not a lapse from previous standards, but a continuation of normal conditions, for the town's religious life had not been intense in the colonial period. During the war years, the Presbyterians were again without a pastor, since their minister became an army chaplain in 1777, so they probably had services only sporadically.⁶ At Immanuel, the Reverend Aeneas Ross served until his death in 1782, so that a clergyman was in residence and services were held during the war.⁷ During the remainder of the eighteenth century, Immanuel continued its custom of ministerial

stability. The Reverend Charles Henry Wharton, the first Roman Catholic priest received into the American Episcopal ministry, was rector between 1784 and 1788, and the Reverend Robert Clay succeeded him, serving until 1824.⁸ The Presbyterians finally hired the Reverend Samuel Barr to be their pastor in 1790; he stayed until 1796, and the pulpit was again vacant until Mr. Latta accepted their call in 1800.⁹ Two other groups appeared before 1800. In 1784, several Lutherans petitioned to use the court house for worship when their itinerant minister came to New Castle, but nothing more is known of them.¹⁰ Bethel Baptist Church began around 1786 as a mission of Welsh Tract Baptist Church in Pencader Hundred. The small rural congregation bought land about three miles west of town and built a log church in 1788.¹¹ Except for the formation of Bethel Baptist, organized religion did little more than survive during the late eighteenth century.

At different times, in different ways, and for different reasons, Americans awoke from their religious lethargy during the early nineteenth century to such an extent that Alexis de Tocqueville was impressed by the religious aspect of American society immediately upon his arrival in 1831, and wrote that "there is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America."¹² Revivals,

camp meetings, and voluntary organizations were the outward means of this transformation. Revival preachers, chief among whom was Charles Grandison Finney, developed a variety of ways, such as the anxious bench, protracted meetings, and praying publicly for sinners by name, to bring the sinner to God, mainly through crowd psychology and peer pressure. A wide range of voluntary organizations and other activities gave enthusiastic Christians ways of putting their faith into action by serving causes ranging from the distribution of tracts to temperance to abolition. The Second Great Awakening changed American Protestantism. Theology emphasized the availability of salvation to all and the individual's capacity to choose whether to be saved or damned, instead of focusing on predestination and the belief in human depravity of earlier Calvinism. Clergy, laity, and churches were busier and more active than before, with classes, organizations, and other activities in addition to Sunday services, rites of passage, and private devotions. Living in accordance with God's ways was no longer a matter of being ethical in business and raising one's children in the faith; there was a new urgency, a sense that the millennium was coming, if all Christians did their part to help it along. While individual denominations participated in the changes with varying degrees of enthusiasm, the ideas and practices of revived religion became a common cause and frame of

reference for the entire nation.¹³

The renewal of religion was both a part of and a response to the rapid changes of the early national period. By mid-century, mechanized factories employing large work forces coexisted with craft shops, trains and steamboats with horses and wagons. Cities grew rapidly, as did slums and the attendant social problems. The nation's wealth increased, but it was distributed less equally; the "Age of the Common Man" was also a time of class distinctions. Many natives and foreign visitors deplored Americans' devotion to the pursuit of the almighty dollar and their equally strong impulse to spend their money on luxuries. Interpretations of the religious response to these changes include a variety of possibilities, ranging from coercive efforts by the middle and upper classes to mold the masses into hard-working docility to a necessary and beneficial adaptation of old ideas and values to fit new conditions. Some historians focus on the approaching millennium, others emphasize the proliferation of organizations. For the individual, conversion and participation in religious activities offered spiritual resources, discipline, companionship, and a sense of belonging which would help one to live in an ever more uncertain world.¹⁴

Looking around in their region, New Castle's people

could see that Philadelphia and Wilmington were experiencing the effects of rapid growth and industrialization and expending a great deal of effort on religious and benevolent activities. In Philadelphia, efforts to aid the poor, which began with late eighteenth century Quaker women's organizations, became so numerous that the Union Benevolent Association was formed in 1831 to coordinate their work. The Philadelphia Bible Society was founded in 1809 and the Female Bible Society in 1814. Philadelphia's major activity, however, was the Sunday school; Episcopal Bishop William White's First Day Society, the first Sunday school in America, began operating in 1790. In 1817, ten Philadelphia Sunday schools formed the Sunday and Adult School Union, which became the American Sunday-School Union in 1824. Revivals in the city, including preaching by Finney in 1827-1828, however, were not as successful as those in smaller places. Nevertheless, Philadelphia was one of the centers of the benevolent empire; "Ecclesiastical Week," with its annual meetings of denominations and groups, was the high point of the year.¹⁵

Closer to home, Wilmington was another early supporter of societies. The earliest was the 1794 Society for the Suppression of Vice and Immorality, although it is not known if it promoted republican or evangelical virtue. In 1800-1801, the city had a female society to aid the poor,

a Sabbatarian campaign, and a free Sunday school for blacks. Sunday schools, Bible societies, music clubs, and organizations to provide education for blacks, as well as other groups, appeared over the years. The revival came early to New Castle County; the first newspaper announcements of camp meetings date from 1804. In the city itself, the Hanover Street Presbyterian Church was a center for revivals; it had a two-year revival in 1814-16, another in the winter and spring of 1827, and Finney preached there in 1827-28.¹⁶

As a town among cities, New Castle suffered not from the strains caused by rapid urban growth, but from the frustrations and disappointments caused by only partial success in the urban sweepstakes. The same thing happened again and again. After solid growth between 1790 and 1810, the population stagnated; New Castle offered opportunity for only a limited number of people. The turnpike and railroad returned profits, but the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal and the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad killed the town's hopes of continuing to be a transportation center. On the waterfront, the harbor tended to fill with mud and several attempts to make New Castle a port of entry came to nothing. New Castle's hold on its most ancient distinction, the county seat, was precarious and had to be fought for, almost desperately by the mid-1830s. New Castle competed fiercely with Wilmington, that "upstart

village lying on a Neighboring creek," but almost always from a defensive position.¹⁷ New Castle and its citizens had enough pride, sophistication, and ambition to participate in the regional urban rivalry, but lacked the advantages necessary for success. The town shared its hinterland with Wilmington and small villages on the Christina, while the river on the east and marshes to north and south meant that New Castle could expand and extend transportation routes only to the west. The town also lacked a source of water power for manufacturing. In short, New Castle was hemmed in. Instead of accepting this condition placidly, New Castle's citizens tried to make their home a small city rather than a large village, but their achievements were never as great as their dreams. New Castle fell as Wilmington rose.

New Castle's citizens left behind no explicit statements about their town and its prospects, but they knew that New Castle's reality was far from their dreams. The few letters that express any opinion say that the town was lovely but dull. William T. Read summed it up well in an 1825 letter to his wife, who was visiting in Baltimore: he imagined her "running about Baltimore," gazing,

as we country folk are wont, at all the pretty things in the shopwindows. See, if you can, everything--and be quite a little yankee in asking questions.¹⁸

Knowing dimly that their town was far from being a city, and

that geography and surrounding urban areas played so large a role in shaping New Castle's fortunes led to frustration among active citizens, even though they never said so directly, a frustration which intensified and found different expressions over the years.

The growing and changing frustration in civic and economic areas affected New Castle's religious life as well. After the spiritual doldrums of the 1780s and early-to-mid 1790s, the town had three periods of religious activity which complemented concurrent secular developments. The first and smallest period came roughly between the late 1790s and 1805, years of still unalloyed growth and optimism. By the years between around 1815 and 1827, New Castle's experience of both success and struggle cast aspiration and frustration into a creative balance whose religious expression was vigorous and two-sided: optimism and confidence stimulated new organizations and building and the involvement of new groups of people, while frustration was one factor leading people to put their energies into religion. When earthly rewards failed, heaven offered other compensations. The third period occupied most of the 1830s, when the balance between aspiration and frustration had tipped towards frustration. The town was on the defensive against many threats to its prestige and economy; the religious complement was fragmentation and denominational separateness.

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People were intent on protecting what they had; they had no energy or inclination for new ventures. New Castle's development thus went through three distinct phases in roughly forty-five years: undefined, bustling beginnings, giving way to a harmonious, optimistic flowering tempered with realism, followed by a grimly defensive fading.

The very end of the eighteenth century and the first few years of the nineteenth were a time of growth and optimism for New Castle. The town finally had government, Latrobe's survey was done in 1804-1805, and people dreamed of street lights, sidewalks, and paved streets. The handsome Academy had been built and was functioning, financed by Common rents. Piers had finally been placed in the harbor in the mid-1790s, and as the new century began a campaign was underway to have New Castle made a port of entry. The population was growing, and newspaper real estate advertisements expressed optimism and confidence in the town's future prospects.

The Presbyterian Church experienced solid growth, spurred in part by the fact that Mr. Latta was an able pastor and was going to stay. In late 1801, soon after his arrival, a new gallery built in the church added eighteen pews to the thirty-three on the ground floor, substantially increasing seating capacity. The addition was needed, for the

thirty-five pew renters of 1790 had increased to sixty-five by 1802, an 86 percent increase.¹⁹ The rate of increase was greater than that of New Castle's population, reflecting perhaps the type of people moving into town, or perhaps Latta's leadership and inspiration.

St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church began life in the early nineteenth century as a monthly stop on a travelling priest's circuit. In 1803, the congregation bought a lot on Harmony Street and began to build a church. Funds were short, however, and by 1808 the building was still unfinished and debts were mounting. To solve their financial problems, the parish held a lottery; twenty-one men, many with Irish names, signed the petition to the legislature requesting permission.²⁰

The energy and optimism of the Presbyterians and Roman Catholics were lacking at Immanuel; conditions there were so dismal that in 1802 Mr. Clay made this statement to the congregation, as preamble to a proposal for a loan from his own funds, which was really a gift, to pay for repairs:

Whereas the condition of the Protestant Episcopal Church, called Immanuel Church, in the town of Newcastle is such, that unless timely repairs are made, it will become inconvenient as well as dangerous, for the inhabitants to assembly for public worship,--and whereas the mode of raising money by subscription has been hitherto found ineffectual towards making the necessary repairs, which gives the melancholy prospect, if some other mode

is not adopted, of the house and brick wall that surrounds the burial ground, going to decay,--and the consequent dissolution of the society belonging to the afsd. Church, . . .²¹

In short, Clay feared the worst. His leadership policy apparently had been to remain quiet, leaving most of the initiative in the congregation and vestry, and trusting in their common sense and commitment to the church. He was mistaken; the building fell into near-ruin and the people did not care enough to keep it in repair. The neglect of the purely physical manifestation of their faith probably also reflects the parishioners' spiritual commitment and zeal. After rejecting Clay's first offer of a loan of \$1,000, the congregation accepted his second offer of \$1,600 and made the needed repairs.²² Only Clay's prodding and generosity kept the parish from collapsing, although if he had been habitually more assertive, his heroic action might have been unnecessary.

For all three denominations, heightened religious activity was most visible in their buildings. The Roman Catholics' unfinished church represented the optimism and difficulties of a new congregation; the Presbyterian's gallery met a need for more room resulting from substantial growth; and Immanuel's repairs insured survival and respectability. The appearance of the Roman Catholic church suggests that some of New Castle's new residents were Irish

Catholics, while the Presbyterians' and Episcopalians' situations may reflect both demographic and spiritual conditions. No patterns of behavior were yet evident, perhaps not unusual for a town in the first heady stages of discovering and implementing its role and identity.

New Castle's second, and most intense, period of religious growth occurred roughly between 1815 and 1827, when the town had been striving long enough to have experienced both success and failure and could look forward to more of the same. Aspiration and frustration were in a balance that favored optimism and creativity. On the positive side, the town had not been damaged in the War of 1812 and the county seat was secure, at least for the moment. A number of improvements had been completed or were well begun: street lights, sidewalks, paving, the turnpike to Frenchtown, and the Newport Bridge. The Common had come into its own as a provider of improvements, paying for the town clock and half the cost of a public wharf as well as financing the Academy and paving. The elegant town hall and adjoining new market house, built between 1823 and 1826, were the visible climax of New Castle's drive for civic identity and status.

Struggle accompanied these accomplishments, however. The drawbridge at Wilmington, a campaign to move the county

seat, and the War of 1812 threatened the loss of prestige, profits, and safety between 1803 and 1815. The Newport Bridge, New Castle's answer to the Wilmington Bridge, was unprofitable, while the attempt to have the town incorporated around 1814 failed. No longer did real estate advertisements laud New Castle's future prospects. By 1810, the population had reached its level of churning stagnation, while the distribution of wealth was becoming less equal. New Castle offered only limited opportunities. The depression of the late-teens and early 1820s did not help, nor did the 1824 fire or the mud that was filling the harbor. While some dreamed their dreams, others wrote of the "spirit of procrastination" that characterized the town fathers.

These were the years of New Castle's greatest participation in the Second Great Awakening which was spreading across the nation. New denominations and organizations were formed, different groups of people became involved, and new or remodelled churches changed New Castle's appearance. The revival, that other manifestation of the awakening, also appeared, but almost clandestinely. New Castle partook of the general religious enthusiasm, but it did so selectively and with a degree of reserve.

Religion fit into the pattern of town life in several ways. Substantial, attractive churches and a variety

of denominations and activities were signs of energy and modernity and helped draw respectable, enterprising residents as well as contributing to the approaching millennium. New Castle's churches also shared in the town's frustration. Extant records convey an impression of dogged hard work by a fairly small group with limited rather than spectacular success, tenacious commitment rather than exuberant enthusiasm. Several churches had crises in which survival was at stake. Religion was also a refuge from the conflict and competition, transitory success and disappointment encountered in other areas of life. People learned, in ways that were not unduly challenging, that earthly strife and struggle did not matter, while apparently small success in religious ventures was still an acceptable offering to God and part of the working out of His plan. If Newport Bridge stock did not pay dividends on earth, teaching Sunday school would reward one in heaven.

The two churches which served minorities fared differently. Some of New Castle's blacks began meeting for worship in each other's homes in 1815. From this grew Bethany Union American Methodist Episcopal Church, which in 1818 bought land at Vine and Williams Streets and erected a frame building. This represents an enormous amount of faith and sacrifice by people who had little worldly wealth.²³ In contrast, St. Peter's building was still unfinished, bills had

not been paid, and creditors naturally wanted their money. Lacking other resources, the building itself was sold in 1820 to pay the debts. Two of the church's trustees bought it, so the congregation kept its place of worship, but just barely.²⁴ Bethany probably succeeded where St. Peter's foundered because the black population, although poor, was growing and the congregation built a frame church rather than the more ambitious brick building which the Catholics chose.

The Methodist minister in Wilmington began to preach in New Castle as well in late 1819, and from this grew Nazareth Church.²⁵ This is a rather late start in view of the denomination's great growth in the early nineteenth century, especially in Delaware, but the 1849 quotation at the head of the chapter may be as good an explanation as any. By September 1820, this group of nearly forty people felt stable enough to buy land, on Delaware Street between Union and Vine, and began to build. This must have been almost more than the young organization could bear, for in February 1821, "after due consideration of our circumstances," the church decided to continue the project.²⁶ While details are lacking, the phrase speaks volumes. The future obviously was not sure; the church may have lacked money, enthusiasm, or members, and the decision to continue may have been a choice of living rather than dying.

The Presbyterians remodelled the interior of their church and enclosed their cemetery in 1818-1819. The most important part of the project was removing the old box pews and installing new ones in three ranges of single seats facing the "new-modelled" pulpit.²⁷ When the work was finished, the trustees presented it to the congregation as being based on "the most approved plan of modern-built churches," thus showing their awareness of the current fashion and their desire to follow it.²⁸ Adequate facilities were not enough; they also wanted a bit of style and sophistication.

The remodelling project suggests a mood of prosperity, optimism, and ambition that did not last long. About ten years of ministerial instability, the church's chronic problem, followed Mr. Latta's death in 1824. In 1827, the incumbent, the Reverend Joshua Danforth, tried to resign. The congregation, fearing that it would not be able to attract a good minister, protested strongly. Mr. Danforth told the members bluntly why they had the problem: the minister's salary was not paid regularly. He pointed out that a man should be able to pay his bills and that a minister should be able to practice what he preached.

I was told out of the Congregation there would be a deficiency before I was settled, but I did not believe it, for I knew there was wealth enough in the Congregation, if they respected and valued their Pastor, to pay the small salary of Six Hundred Dollars.²⁹

John Latta must have been a patient man.

Immanuel too experienced the joy of success and the suspense of near-collapse. In December 1817, Mr. Clay again despaired for the church's future, and expressed himself strongly in a letter to vestryman Kensey Johns:

I feel an interest in the church, as the remains of many of my nearest relatives lie in the burial ground. You, and some other gentlemen have still a deeper interest in it--having not only considerable property in the town, and in its vicinity, but rising families, individuals of which may settle and continue here during life. It is then absolutely necessary if we wish to preserve the church that some steps should immediately be taken towards repairing it. The congregation at St. James have it in contemplation to erect a new church. Near Smyrna, I am told they are about putting in complete repair an old & decayed Episcopal church. At Dover, their church has undergone a thorough repair, and at Lewes town the congregation have erected a new one

The roof of the church is so decayed that it will require a new one--the north east end of the brick wall is in such a situation, that the first violent storm may level it with the ground, and the interior of the church wants a great deal done to it I would propose to borrow \$500 and to secure the lender, give a mortgage on the glebe, and the interest of the sum loaned, I bind myself to pay annually out of the rents.³⁰

Clay felt that if repairs were not made, there would not be an Immanuel for even the children of current members, to say nothing of future generations. The fact that Mr. Clay had to make such an appeal and such a generous offer a second time during his tenure is a sign of continuing apathy in the

parish and a willingness to rely on the rector for leadership and a handout.

In spring 1818, the parish accepted the rector's proposal and exterior repairs were finished by the next year. Plans for the interior moved slowly; that part of the project is not mentioned again until August 1820. After several months of discussion, during which ambitions grew, the vestry approved a plan in October 1820, for expanding and improving the church prepared by architect William Strickland, who donated his services.³¹ Relatively simple repairs and improvements thus grew into a major rebuilding and transformation; once awakened from their lethargy, the parishioners discovered that, like the Presbyterians, they too wanted style and sophistication.

The grand and expensive plans almost came to nothing. By March 1822, funds were short and construction had halted. Dissolution of the parish was again possible. The report of the meeting which dealt with the crisis vividly describes the situation and feelings:

This meeting was called to take into consideration the present gloomy situation of the Church, which fills the mind of every one with despondency, who is interested in its welfare in New Castle. The repairs of the Church had ceased. No progress had been made in them for upwards of two months for want of funds. . . . In addition to this the zeal of several who had been active in their exertions for the completion of the Church

seemed to subside: creditors to whom the Church had become largely indebted were urgent and importunate in their demands for the payment of their claims, and no prospect existed of raising funds adequate to discharge them. The affairs of the church were reduced to that deplorable condition, that some with keen regret, had predicted its downfall, and the dissolution of a congregation, which although small in number had maintained and supported a constant succession of Protestant Episcopal Ministers for one hundred and twenty years: and during that long period had from time to time assembled within the venerable walls of Immanuel Church, for the performance of Divine service. Under these circumstances the present meeting convened. The liberal subscriptions made this evening for completing the Church, quickly dispelled the gloom which surrounded us, and gave the assurance of the dawning of a brighter day on the prospects of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Town of New Castle.³²

Again, survival was the issue. The unfinished building, lack of money, and people's increasing indifference contributed to the feeling of gloom. At the crucial moment, people contributed enough to finish the work. The seventeen donors listed were New Castle's elite: eight esquires, one doctor, several prominent businessmen. A few were Presbyterian. There were three Reads, two Booths, two Rogerses, and two Janviers.³³ By this time, the Booth and Rogers families had intermarried, so that they were all related to Mr. Clay, whose sister had married James Booth, Sr., and in effect were helping out their kinsman. Although others may have contributed, it certainly appears that Immanuel's survival in 1822 was the will of the town's upper class. The report's

wording suggests that preserving an old familiar institution was more important than spreading the Gospel, although allowances should be made for characteristic Episcopalian reserve.

When the project was finished, the simple thirty foot by fifty foot rectangle of 1705 had become a cruciform church with a tower, a steeple, and two transepts. The town clock was in the tower, and a gilt cross, ball, and weathervane topped the steeple. Inside, the chancel was moved to the west end, at the joining of the nave and transepts. New pews and a gallery were at the east end. Near the pulpit and chancel were four tablets painted in gold with the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, and scripture passages, while two Philadelphia women gave an "ornament worked with gold thread and spangles on the drapery in front of the Pulpit between the two festoons, called 'the glory.'"³⁴

Mr. Clay retired in 1824, not long after the completion of the building. Under his successor, the Reverend S. W. Presstman, the parish quickly embarked on several new activities. The first was a theological library, formed in 1826 to advance Christian religion, especially the Episcopal variety. With forty members, the library had a good beginning. The next year, Episcopalians withdrew from the interdenominational Sabbath School Society and started their own

school at Immanuel. In 1826, the vestry agreed to let the New Castle Haydn Society provide service music for three months, but more importantly, the parish bought an organ in late 1827, apparently the first in a New Castle church.³⁵ Despite the crises, the decade between 1817 and 1827 was a vital and active period for Immanuel.

In addition to bricks and boards, religious renewal manifested itself in new organizations which would further the cause of God and humanity in interdenominational harmony. The first was the Female Benevolent Society, founded around 1811. Open to women of all Christian faiths, its purpose was to maintain charity schools for poor white children. The Sabbath School Society began in 1820, with separate societies and schools for males and females. It joined the Philadelphia and Adult School Union, which became the American Sunday-School Union. The Female Bible Society, founded in 1822, was an auxiliary of the American Bible Society and provided Bibles for individuals and organizations in the town. Several men were active in the Delaware Bible Society, based in Wilmington. A final effort was the apparently short-lived Haydn Society of 1826, a choral group which provided music for both Episcopal and Presbyterian churches.³⁶

All of the organizations were interdenominational, although in reality this meant that most members were

Episcopalians or Presbyterian. Interdenominational harmony is further shown by the fact that several men rented pews in both the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches, as a way of showing civic and spiritual support for their brethren. Elizabeth Booth, who kept a record of the many sermons that she heard, was Presbyterian, but also listened to Episcopalian and Methodist preachers.³⁷ Both formal organizations and informal contacts provided ways for people to work together within the town and to have contact with similar activities and organizations in the larger world.

In addition to the spirit of cooperation and harmony among religious groups, a sense of wholeness characterized the community at large. In the secular realm, ownership of stock in the New Castle and Frenchtown Turnpike was widely distributed, mainly among New Castle people, who invested more for civic benefit than private profit.³⁸ The town clock in Immanuel's tower is the best example of community concord. Upon receiving a petition from townspeople, the Common agreed to purchase and maintain a clock for the town. Since the tower of Immanuel church, then under construction, was the best place for the clock, the vestry agreed to house it, even though it required expensive changes in the tower's design and the church's only compensation was the exclusive use of the bell to call worshippers to service.³⁹

Even though the extant records of churches and organizations never mention it, New Castle had a revival in 1822, for the indefatigable Elizabeth Booth recorded the texts of a week of sermons by one Mr. Ludlow, which ended with an exhortation to converts and anxious inquirers.⁴⁰ New castle people, however, had little to do with camp meetings; "Vindicator," defending them in the Delaware Gazette, noted that only one New Castle family had attended the meeting at Middletown.⁴¹

The years between about 1815 and 1826 were the high point of religious development and activity in New Castle, characterized by organizations and building rather than outward emotion and by harmony and wholeness within the community, best symbolized by the town clock in a church tower. In both religious and secular spheres, aspiration and frustration were in an energetic, creative balance. There had been enough struggle and failure in both spheres to teach the people that success did not come easily and was not permanent, but also sufficient accomplishment to fuel continued hope. In this atmosphere, New Castle's citizens formed new churches and religious organizations that provided ways for working together among themselves, gave new opportunities to blacks, women and children, helped others in their town, brought contact with the larger world, and at the same time offered a degree of protection from the world's stresses.

The 1830s were a decade of disappointment and frustration. New Castle fought and fought with little success. The Common and town commissioners sponsored no new civic projects. Instead, the Common realized by 1830 that it had overextended itself and borrowed too much to pay for improvements. The New Castle and Frenchtown Railroad, briefly a source of pride and profits, was not locally owned and controlled, but had a great deal of outside capital and management. Attempts were underway to have New Castle made a port of entry, but the harbor was so full of mud that few vessels could stop there. Rivalry with Wilmington continued unabated. Almost anything was fair game for controversy, but the most important fight was over the location of the county seat. After about five years of agitation, the county voted in 1839. New Castle barely retained its ancient distinction. There were even occasional comments that New Castle and Wilmington might soon be one city, and there was no doubt as to which would be in charge.

As the town fought grimly to maintain its position, fragmentation and consolidation characterized religious activity, so that by 1840 each denomination stood alone and the clock in Immanuel's tower was a symbol of controversy rather than unity. As in the secular sphere, the basic approach was to protect what one had, rather than venturing forth into new types of activities that would involve

different groups of people or promote community harmony.

Among the organizations, the Haydn Society apparently died soon after its birth and the Female Benevolent Society disbanded in the early 1830s, after the state public school law went into effect. The Female Bible Society continued to function, and a Temperance Society had been formed by 1839. The major change was in the Sunday schools; in 1827, the Episcopalians withdrew from the interdenominational group to start their own, and from 1834, the Methodists also had their own school, leaving the Presbyterians on their own almost by default.⁴² By 1840 fewer organized ways existed for people, especially women, to reach across the religious barriers that separated them.

In late 1832 or early 1833 another officially unacknowledged revival took place, although at the time it must have been exceedingly visible. This passage from a letter written by Louisa Dorsey Read, an Episcopalian, speaks volumes:

I suppose M.A. told you what an excitement we had here. I do not know that many have been converted, some who were before serious joined the church such as Mr. John Janvier, and one or two others, but I believe many of the Presbyterians were opposed to the measures, which were sometimes very extravagant. Sally Ritchie abandoned our church, and has joined Mr. Knox. I hope she is sincere--but these changes, are no proof of stability, or serious reflection upon a most important subject.⁴³

This revival was by and for Presbyterians, and apparently

did not benefit other churches. In Mrs. Read's mind, the "sometimes extravagant measures" did not produce good results. She was skeptical of the validity of conversion under these circumstances and doubted that many had been converted, except people who were already serious about religion. Mrs. Read notwithstanding, the Presbyterian records list twenty-nine new members in 1833, the highest recorded before 1840. John Janvier and Sally Ritchie were among them.⁴⁴ The revival also divided the Presbyterian congregation during the throes of the denomination's New School-Old School controversy. Finally, by saying that Sally Ritchie had "abandoned" the Episcopal faith, Mrs. Read shows that denominational boundaries were not to be taken lightly. The revival probably sharpened, at least temporarily, her loyalty to the Episcopal church.

The division of the Sunday school effort and Louisa Read's perception of the revival are good indicators of the insularity of New Castle's churches, all of which were of faiths that tended to stand alone, had distinctly different approaches, and appealed to different types of people. The segmentation fits in with New Castle's 1830 defensiveness and also with the national trend of the mid- to late 1830s as the dreams of an interdenominational march to the millenium began to fade.

The isolation of two denominations is easily explained. St. Peter's, whose building was finally completed in 1831, was a Roman Catholic outpost in a Protestant world. Even after nearly thirty years, it remained a mission with only monthly visits from a priest.⁴⁵ Bethany U.A.M.E. ministered to blacks, the essential yet unwelcome racial minority. For obvious reasons, neither group would have sought contact with other churches, and other churches would not have sought contact with them.

Bethel Baptist was the most explicit in its isolation. Its location, three miles from town, kept it out of the way, although the distance was not unreasonable. Nevertheless, its membership consisted almost entirely of rural people. The congregations' covenant and statement of faith, composed in 1838 when Bethel broke its ties with the Welsh Tract Church and became independent, would have pleased a seventeenth century Puritan. The members pledged to watch over each other, to work and worship together for God's glory and to contribute financially according to their ability. The Declaration of Faith and Practice asserted that original sin made man corrupt and that Christ became man and died for man's sins. Salvation came through God's grace, not man's works and free will, and was available only to the elect.⁴⁶ Just as it did not accept the theological modifications of the day, the congregation also had nothing to do with the

voluntary organizations spawned by the Second Great Awakening. In 1836, the congregation resolved to examine prospective members carefully,

in order that none may be admitted who hold opinions and are attached to institutions injurious to the Cause and Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and derogatory to his honour, as King in Zion: Viz. Bible, Missionary, Tract, Sunday Schools, and Temperance Societies, and all other institutions of a similar nature and tendency.⁴⁷

While this position is consistent with predestinarian theology, it may also reflect tension or resentment felt by plain but independent people against their well-meaning but patronizing betters. Bethel was a Particular Baptist church as opposed to General Baptist, which accepted the new theological and institutional developments.⁴⁸

If it is possible to read backwards into the 1830s from the 1849 comment by the Methodist minister, members of that denomination also felt a twinge of class resentment. Hardly any of the names on the 1820 membership list appeared on documents that give any idea of who they were or what they owned, but the reference to "aristocracy" suggests that Methodism in New Castle appealed mainly to people who saw themselves as solid, hard-working, and unpretentious.⁴⁹ Few were active in town affairs. Methodism's theology and emotional appeal put it in the forefront in the Second Great Awakening, but the emotion made it suspect to the older, more staid,

Presbyterian and Episcopal churches in New Castle. Just as the denomination as a whole tended to stay away from inter-denominational organizations, New Castle's Methodist women did not participate in the Female Bible Society. No Methodist names were among the Society's founding members in 1822, and only four of the church's sixty-six white female members belonged to the Bible Society in 1838.⁵⁰ Several factors were probably at work: Methodists may have not been able to afford the dues, the Female Bible Society may not have approached them, and the Methodists may not have been able to approach the Society, either from feelings of social inferiority or because all their energy and money went to their own denomination.

According to earthly standards of age and prestige, the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches stood at the top of New Castle's religious hierarchy. Their members included the town's "aristocracy" as well as others of more moderate means. In 1816, the mean tax assessment for members of these churches was just over \$6400, while that of all other taxables was a little over \$1700.⁵¹ Episcopalians and Presbyterians were active in local, state, and even national activities.

A decade of ministerial instability--five pastors in ten years--between late 1824 and 1834 did the Presbyterians no good, as they themselves realized. When the Reverend John Dickey asked to resign in 1831, the congregation, requesting that he remain with them, stated that the church had been

in an unsettled state since Mr. Latta's death and needed a minister who would stay long enough to accomplish something. Dickey showed signs of being the man they needed, for many were showing interest in religion, many were anxious for their souls, and the church was coming to life again. If Mr. Dickey left, the work would stop and the church would again decline.⁵² Despite this entreaty, Mr. Dickey stayed only about a year longer.

The three years of the Reverend James Knox's pastorate, 1832-1835, were a time of activity. In 1833-1834, the congregation built a session house and refurbished the church with stucco, new doors and windows, whitewashing, and even gilt numbers on the pews. The largest contribution on the subscription list was \$100 from the ladies of the congregation. This effort may have absorbed some of the energy freed by the demise of the Female Benevolent Society, but it was an effort which helped only their own church.⁵³

Between 1833 and 1835, the church was deeply involved in a local skirmish of the denomination's New School-Old School controversy. Those who favored union with the Congregationalists, departures from the Westminster Confession's positions on predestination and man's ability to save himself, revivals, and participation in interdenominational benevolent organizations were labelled "New School," while those who wanted to maintain Presbyterian identity and integrity in

matters of church polity, doctrine, and associational affiliations and avoid the excesses of revivals were called "Old School."⁵⁴ The dispute became more than an abstract debate for the New Castle Presbyterians in 1833, when their church was removed, without their consent, from the New Castle Presbytery and placed in the newly created New School Wilmington Presbytery. For two years, the church fretted and fumed and protested, and was heartily relieved when it could resume its usual affiliation upon the dissolution of the Wilmington Presbytery in 1835.⁵⁵ Although the church's records make no comment on the denomination's 1837 split, the New Castle church without doubt was on the Old School side.

At Immanuel, the 1830s were quiet but not inactive. The Sunday school and library became permanent parts of the parish's life. The library operated under rather heroic conditions in an unheated room where some of the church's furnishings were stored. Perhaps with this in mind, the vestry decided in 1833 to erect a building for the Sunday school and library. Moving at their normal pace, the building was actually constructed in 1836. The parish grew quietly in the early 1830s, for the annual report to the diocese in 1836 reported a "considerable" increase in regular attendance, but the number of communicants and Sunday school students gradually declined over the next five years.⁵⁶

Immanuel's withdrawal from the Sabbath School Society

in 1827, the first example of the religious particularism of the 1830s, was not surprising, for even at its most Protestant, the Episcopal church remained aloof and was perceived as cold and formal by other bodies. Like some other denominations, the Episcopal church had two major parties. Early nineteenth century High Churchmen emphasized the importance of bishops and the apostolic succession and strict adherence to the Book of Common Prayer. Distrusting the emotionalism of revivals and quick conversions, they preferred lifelong, gradual spiritual development within the context of the institutional church. Deeply concerned about the integrity and identity of the Episcopal church, High Churchmen did not participate in interdenominational groups like the American Bible Society or the American Tract Society, although there were similar Episcopal organizations. The Low Church or Evangelical approach was more compatible with the trends shaping other Protestant bodies. Evangelicals had revivals, non-Prayer Book services, conversions, and belonged to the interdenominational organizations. Even so, Episcopal revivals were not as excessive, Episcopal preaching not as flamboyant, and Episcopal participation in reform and missionary efforts not as great as that of other denominations.⁵⁷

It is nearly impossible, however, to pigeonhole individual parishes as High or Low; Immanuel's activities and style included elements of both. Both Mr. Clay and Mr.

Presstman had understated personalities, not suited to dramatic revival preaching. The cross on the steeple and the choir which chanted at the church's consecration suggest High Church tendencies. Mr. Presstman is said to have loved preaching at Immanuel "because there was a quiet, a solemnity and attention to services he had never seen elsewhere."⁵⁸

Immanuel had its own Sunday school and library and donated to specifically Episcopal causes, all signs that they valued their denominational identity. Finally, in their statement in the bell-ringing dispute, the vestry strongly stated that "the Church and religious societies in juxtaposition to her" related best when they all left each other alone.⁵⁹ Even in nineteenth century America, with voluntary religion, acceptance of religious diversity as a positive good, and no state church, Immanuel was part of "the Church," and all other bodies were "religious societies," not churches. On the other side, Immanuel had evening lectures, which were informal, non-Prayer Book services, and members belonged to some interdenominational organizations. On the whole, Immanuel's tendencies were more High than Low.

The bell-ringing controversy, beginning in 1840, is the best symbol of the disintegration of civic and religious concord. The bell in question was the bell of the town clock located in Immanuel's tower which was a symbol of harmony in the early 1820s. In 1840, the Common asked that

the bell be rung three times on Sundays, to accommodate several churches. Immanuel's vestry unanimously refused, for several reasons. First, the request violated Immanuel's exclusive right to use the bell to call people to worship, its only compensation for agreeing to house the clock. The church felt that it had done the town a favor, for the clock had forced expensive and unattractive changes in the tower's construction. The vestry claimed that the bell was too heavy, so that the tower was under constant strain. Ringing the bell three times every Sunday would be an inconvenience to townspeople and promote discord among the churches. The vestry said that only one or two congregations, or "but a fraction of the whole community," would benefit from the change, which suggests that New Castle had many residents who did not attend church.⁶⁰ On the subject of Christian harmony, the vestry had this to say:

Your Committee. . . are persuaded that the common use of this bell by our Church and the several religious societies of this town must produce collusions that would issue in the interruption of the harmony happily subsisting among them. Experience has conclusively established that the harmony of the Church and religious societies in juxtaposition to her can only be preserved by each pursuing the even tenor of its way, true to its distinctive tenets, and without interfering with those of others: while all schemes of union; from patch-work and piebald summaries of faith to attempted coalescences in minor matters, being based on the mutual sacrifice of principle, have only resulted in exacerbating bitterness they were meant to allay, and in widening the breaches they were meant to close.⁶¹

In other words, God helps those who mind their own business.

New Castle residents left behind comments on the meaning of religion in their own lives and their sense of the town's religious climate which fit into the patterns observed in the town as a whole. Statements from the years before about 1815 suggest a lukewarm religious climate. The Reverend Charles Henry Wharton, at Immanuel in the mid-1780s, is said to have thought that "these people are good in their own way," a phrase which evokes all sorts of possibilities.⁶² A woman who had moved to England around 1798 remembered Immanuel of the mid-1790s in this way in an 1806 letter: "[Robert Clay], I suppose, still attends the tingling bell, where young and old meet together, some from devotion, others because it is the custom."⁶³ Unfortunately, no comments survive from Roman Catholics or Presbyterians of the period; they might have said something different. Religion was at a low point in 1813 shortly before the renewal began:

I am sorry to hear that religion is so much on the decline at New Castle. The town has long been highly favored in gospel privileges. They have had "line upon line, and precept upon precept," with little apparent advantage.⁶⁴

Remarks and observations made after 1815 bear witness to a much livelier religious scene. For some reason, things started happening in individual lives in 1815. In that year, Mary Van Dyke rejoiced that her husband, Nicholas, had finally

joined the Presbyterian church. He had been active before, being elected trustee in 1800, 1805, and 1810, but only in 1815 did he become a full-fledged member.⁶⁵ A comment from a house guest, written soon after Van Dyke's conversion, suggests the intensity of his new commitment:

Your good father is quite a zealous Christian. When there is no preacher he comes forward and reads a sermon. I consider this act as taking up the cross in an eminent degree. Between you & me I think your Papa will yet be in the pulpit.⁶⁶

The cousins John Johns and Kensey Johns Van Dyke were apparently key figures in New Castle's revival. K. J. Van Dyke led Johns and others to the Lord around 1815 during what Johns recalled as a golden period of Christian community.⁶⁷ Johns, "a young man of warm, devoted piety," held weekly meetings in private homes for prayer and exhortation, which, according to Elizabeth Booth, who probably attended as often as she could, were popular and beneficial.⁶⁸ William T. Read gave a more reserved testimonial in 1825. Writing to his absent wife, he said that he read his chapter at night and remembered her in his prayers, grateful to providence for "having given me a wife whose good example and gentle and judicious exhortations brought me to a sense of the awful ingratitude of a prayerless man."⁶⁹

Not everyone found New Castle's religious climate satisfactory even during its liveliest years. In the early 1820s, one former female resident, looking back at New Castle

with perspective of time and distance, recalled the spiritual atmosphere as oppressive, repressive, and almost compulsively active.

New Castle I suppose still continues the same as ever. I suppose visiting is carried on in the same style. They have their societies and meetings at different houses. I never much liked them attending almost every evening and injuring a person's health by going out all weathers. I think you may fulfill your duty (or at least as much as is in our power) without carrying religion to such an extent and I am sure it was never intended to render us unhappy for our Blessed Saviour himself sets us an example far from making us miserable. My ideas on that subject are very much changed since I left New Castle, and can assure you feel more contented than I did before, for who could feel happy when you fancied everything in yourself sinful. Certainly we all are by nature so, and no one is free from sin but we have encouragement to hope for the best and the assurance of forgiveness if we sincerely repent.⁷⁰

She remembered Mr. Latta as a meddlesome killjoy. He had apparently written to Mary's correspondent, Dorcas Van Dyke, on the evils of dancing; Mary told her friend that it was all right to dance, if one's motive was innocent. Furthermore, she felt that Mr. Latta had overstepped his bounds, since Dorcas' parents set high standards for her behavior. Mary had this to say about the minister and his ideas:

I cannot say you surprised me when you mentioned Mr. Latta having written to you in such style. I could have almost believed he would from the manner in which he exercised the duties of his office before I left New Castle. To tell you my mind I cannot enter into his way of thinking at all, if I

had I am convinced I should have only rendered myself miserable. . . . Certain it is we all do wrong, but the Sacred Scriptures do not forbid innocent amusements.⁷¹

For individuals as well as the town, religion was a source of both faith and frustration.

Mary Black Couper provides the most intense view of the role of religion in an individual's life. Extremely sensitive and troubled by loneliness, the inability to bear children, sickly health, and a too busy and unconverted husband, she sought solace in religion and poured out her soul in letters written to Sophie du Pont during the 1830s. Mary wrote of the religious implications of births, deaths, and afflictions; her marital advice to Sophie was couched in religious terms; and she wished that her doctor husband would find the Lord and entrust his patients to God, instead of worrying about them. This passage shows how affliction, husband, faith, and friend were intertwined in Mary's mind:

Oh what should I be without you & your Christian counsel. Oh dearest pray for me! I am cumbered about many things. Afflictions seem not to be improved by me. I do not [illeg.] but I am so cold & lifeless about spiritual things. I do not realize how near I am to the Eternal world--pray for me dearest--for indeed I need both my afflictions & your prayers. My body is still in a suffering state. I recovered from my attack pretty well but am still suffering from the general follower of these attacks--no head is made against that by any treatment & at such times my spirits fail me so completely that it makes me more anxious for some relief as it depresses

my husband to see me suffering and depressed. Dearest Sophie how my heart sympathizes in your joy & thankfulness at the hopes which you entertain for your husband! I would bless the Lord for his great goodness in giving you such a consolation as would make all suffering but as dust in the balance! I have no such comfort no such hope & is not the fault in me? If my labours & prayers had been as diligent & as zealous as yours would not a [illeg.] God have blessed them in like manner? Oh pray for me dearest that the path of duty may be made plain & that grace may be given me to walk therein. I cannot plead for him with that believing prayer that I once could. I am so faithless & unbelieving pray for him dearest oh when you look on your own husbands growing interest in the things of eternity--may the prayer arise that Marys husband may seek that God in whose favour is life. He has so much care & anxiety about his patients that his mind seems always preoccupied--we are never sure when he sits down with me of being uninterrupted for five minutes & his Sabbaths are not days of rest. And yet God can overcome all these difficulties which to mortal eye seem so great & can lead him to the Lamb of God by a way that we know not of.⁷²

Mary's concern extended beyond her own life to the cause of foreign missions. She enjoyed reading about missionary efforts, but making even a small personal contribution pleased her even more. In 1835, when some missionaries and their friends were staying at New Castle just before sailing to their assignment, the Coupers accommodated four of them, one of whom was recovering from illness, in their home. Of this experience, Mary said,

and though I had much fatigue, having twelve to dine the next day I was glad to be able to make those comfortable who

were leaving home & country to carry the gospel to the heathen.⁷³

A few years later, news of the death of one of the women in the group shocked Mary and triggered these thoughts and intended action:

When I read the remark "that perhaps God was permitting such things as the described, that his people might not forget the heathen" it struck me that she being dead yet spoke to us all ever more forcibly than in life. I thought I had thought [sic] this year done as much as I could for missions but the reflection came has Christ given himself for me & shall I not deny myself while the heathen are perishing for lack of tracts which I might aid to supply them with? I sent Mary Morris the papers to read & I hope some two or three of us may be able to send our mite with our prayers to⁷⁴ Mr. Winslow for tract & Bible Distribution.

Above all, Mary was a seeker; she often lamented her coldness of heart and lack of faith, looking back longingly on the livelier faith of an earlier day. She craved her friend's prayers and counsel and looked up to Sophie as a spiritual guide. Mary presented herself as the junior partner in the friendship, the one with greater needs and fewer gifts, yet she gave Sophie a great deal of support and advice. This passage is typical of this part of Mary's spiritual life:

Oh Sophie my heart is so dead so cold & so easily affected by the trifles of this world. Pray for me beloved friend oh pray that this world & this worlds blessings may not prove a snare to my soul. I do not feel as once I did. Would that I could be with you that your counsel might guide & strengthen me! How

little Christian intercourse exists in this world--it seems as if except with you it was a forbidden subject. Oh what a blessing what an unspeakable blessing it must be to have our earthly guide & counsellor, one who would lead us on to holiness of heart & life--who would feel the value of the body as trifling in comparison with the immortal soul. May such a companion be yours dearest & your cup of bliss will indeed overflow.⁷⁵

Seeking a deeper, more intense emotional experience, her soul strained to break through walls of sin and indifference. Such thoughts do not dominate all the letters, but they occur often enough to be the major tone of her Christian journey; if Mary ever experienced great breakthroughs or transports of joy, she did not write of them to Sophie. Nevertheless, her faith helped her to live with her frustrations.

New Castle's secular and religious worlds complemented each other in a cycle of youth, maturity, and decline. A lack of definition and pattern characterized the first stage, realistic, creative, and outgoing optimism the second, and defensive particularism the third. Just as New Castle participated only partially in the social and economic changes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it also experienced the concurrent religious ferment in a reserved manner. New Castle's limitations were spiritual as well as economic.

CHAPTER 5 NOTES

1. New Castle Female Bible Society to the Rev. S. S. Woodhull, April 5, 1823. The Female Bible Society's records are in the collection of the New Castle Presbyterian Church.
2. The Rev. Andrew Manship, quoted in Frank R. Zebley, The Churches of Delaware (n.p., 1947), p. 169.
3. Two recent studies on this topic are Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-37 (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978) and Anthony F. C. Wallace, Rockdale: The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).
4. Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River: the Story of the Great Revivalists and their Impact upon Religion in America (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), pp. 4-12.
5. The Rev. John E. Latta, A Sermon delivered on the 24th Day of August, 1809, a day recommended . . . to be set apart for Solemn Thanksgiving and Prayer (Wilmington: Peter Brynberg, 1809), pp. 22-3.
6. The Rev. J. B. Spotswood, D. D., An Historical Sketch of the Presbyterian Church in New Castle, Delaware (Wilmington: Bross-Willard Printing Co., 1905), p. 33.
7. Thomas Holcomb, Sketch of Early Ecclesiastical Affairs in New Castle, Delaware, and History of Immanuel Church (Wilmington: Delaware Printing Company, 1890), p. 128. The parish register lists baptisms and marriages during the war, and Ambrose Serle, Lord Howe's secretary, attended service in October, 1777 (Edward H. Tatum, Jr., ed., The American Journal of Ambrose Serle, secretary to Lord Howe, 1776-78 [San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1940], p. 259).
8. Holcomb, Immanuel Church, pp. 128-9, 134.
9. Spotswood, Historical Sketch, pp. 33-5.

10. Petition, Israel Israel, Jacob Colesberry and John Stockton to the Court of Quarter Sessions, Feb. 17, 1784, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
11. Zebley, Churches of Delaware, p. 172.
12. Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. Phillips Bradley, 2 vols. (New York: Vintage Books, 1954), 1:314.
13. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River and Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965) give good descriptions of the means and methods of the revivals.
14. The literature on the Second Great Awakening includes Weisberger, They Gathered at the River; Miller, The Life of the Mind in America; William G. McLoughlin, Jr., Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1959) and Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in America, 1607-1977 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Paul Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), Johnson, A Shopkeeper's Millennium; Wallace, Rockdale; Clifford S. Griffin, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control, 1815-60," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 44 (1957): 423-444; Lois W. Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation," Journal of American History 60 (1973): 23-41; Keith Melder, "Ladies Bountiful: Organized Women's Benevolence in Early 19th-Century America," New York History 48 (1967): 231-254; Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," American Quarterly 21 (1969): 23-43.
15. Melder, "Ladies Bountiful," p. 239; Charles I. Foster, An Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 94-254 passim; Marion L. Bell, Crusade in the City: Revivalism in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1977), pp. 18-20, 49-67.
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CHAPTER 6

THE ORGANIZED COMMUNITY

The public Seminary lately erected in this town for the education of children of both sexes is superior to any on the continent, being immediately under the direction of preceptors eminent in the profession of literature. The rising value of real property here has been very considerable, and the public spirit and improvements so generally displayed must to every person be a convincing proof of the eligibility of the situation of this property for mercantile business, in which this town has been for some time past rapidly encreasing.

Mirror of the Times,
December 25, 1802

The dull, uninteresting Village which we inhabit affords nothing within my knowledge worthy of communicating to you--beyond the common intelligence that your friends and acquaintances, remain I believe pretty much in the same situation as when you left them
.....

1816¹

When I was last in New Castle the family were all well and every thing going on in its usual quiet way throughout the town. If possible, I think it is even more dull than usual, but I acknowledge that the possibility of that statement admits of a doubt.

1825²

New Castle's organized and recorded community life fits into the same pattern of aspiration and frustration that characterized other areas of the town's experience. After the enthusiasm of the first years of civic development wore off, the dominant tone was one of bustling activity with an underlying sense of boredom and provinciality, despite increasing opportunities for social involvement and interaction. In the same 1825 letter in which he characterized New Castle as a country town, William T. Read recounted some of his leisure time activities: one day, guests stopped in for a few glasses of wine; the next evening he went to a lecture at church; and the following evening was the Lodge meeting.³ Admittedly, New Castle's life was not as busy or as exciting as Philadelphia's or Wilmington's, but it offered many sources of religious, social, and intellectual stimulation, especially for whites of comfortable means.

The works of Rowland Berthoff and Stuart Blumin are especially helpful, in opposite ways, for understanding New Castle's communal life. In An Unsettled People, Berthoff states that during the period of this study, ". . . American society still hung in the balance between the hierarchic communal order of the eighteenth century and the egalitarian individualism of the nineteenth. . . ." ⁴ Nineteenth century people were so totally devoted to the pursuit of profit and individual freedom that they disregarded and destroyed

anything that stood in the way. The secure social structure of the traditional world--family, village, church, social hierarchy--was swept aside and little replaced it. The nineteenth century suffered from a deep and harmful social instability. Communities were not composed of people committed to each other by any common bond, but rather,

the social groups that coalesced in every community, consisting of individuals unrelated before their arrival and likely to break off their stay at any time, were defined mainly by the circumstances of the moment.⁵

In contrast, Stuart Blumin's study of Kingston, New York, during the early and middle years of the nineteenth century offers the opposite conclusion, at least for areas outside New England. When Kingston was a small country village, its people knew each other, but had no bond beyond that of neighbors; they had little sense of their identity as citizens of the same place. As the town grew and became more complex, losing its agricultural focus and turning to manufacturing and commerce, its people formed a variety of organizations which forged links and identifications that had previously been lacking.⁶ Although New Castle never attained Kingston's size and complexity, it experienced a similar pattern of development.

Indeed, Berthoff's concept of nineteenth century communities as collections of individuals who happen to live

in the same place applies very well to colonial New Castle, which lacked both a strong sense of its identity as a town and a dominant church. For well over a century, New Castle's residents made little sustained effort to define and organize their community, apparently satisfied with conditions as they were. During much of this time, economic conditions were not promising. Only as the economy revived in the 1770s did people begin to take responsibility for their communal life as the Trustees of the Common began to envision a more productive and controlled use of their land, control of the central square was vested in boards of trustees, and plans were made for a permanent public school.⁷ In New Castle, increased economic activity stimulated civic and community consciousness and responsibility.

Although the Revolutionary War and depression following deferred these dreams, they also contributed to the development of civic identity. Town meetings held during the war brought people together to accept responsibility for regulating town affairs. Their experience with self-created town meetings taught them that such an informal organization, with no formal legal authority, was insufficient. In 1786, New Castle petitioned the state for a highly structured town government with full legal authority. About the same time, the town also wanted harbor improvements. Even though neither government nor harbor improvements became

reality at this time, they show that by the mid-1780s, New Castle's people had developed a sense of what they wanted for their town and the ability to work towards their goals.

With the blessings of sustained prosperity and bright prospects from the mid-1790s through the opening years of the nineteenth century, civic responsibility and community feeling revived and finally became firmly established. During this period, New Castle's community life was mainly of, by, and for prosperous white males. Absent were emotion, women, children, blacks, and a sense of obligation towards the less fortunate. The activities were typical of the eighteenth century; Benjamin Franklin would have felt quite at home, although he probably would have chided New Castle's people for waiting so long to take care of their town.

Order, security, and an improved physical environment were a major concern. Much of the activity was of a governmental or semi-governmental nature: establishment of town boundaries and government, Latrobe's survey, enlargement of the Common's powers, the financing and construction of piers in the river, and the establishment of a fire company. Although all would benefit from the improvements to be provided, and all would pay town taxes, the propertied and ambitious would gain the most.

Education was the other major focus of civic activity. Schools were held between 1779 and 1785 and again between 1796 and 1799, but the long-awaited school on the green did not become reality until 1798-9 when the Trustees of the Common allocated funds and sixty-nine people signed a subscription for its support. The handsome, symmetrical, light-filled building was a fitting representation of the eighteenth century's rational outlook. Incorporated in 1801, the New Castle Academy was run by an elected board of directors. Many of the directors were also Trustees of the Common, which provided a large portion of the school's funds. In time, the school lost even the appearance of independence and full control passed to the Trustees of the Common. The directors of the Academy administered the building and hired teachers; actual conduct of the school was left to the teachers.⁸

The New Castle Academy was a public school insofar as it admitted all white children who paid tuition and made some provision for poor children, but it did not educate all of New Castle's young people. Between 1799 and 1802, about two-thirds of the pupils' parents or guardians were from the wealthiest 40 percent of taxpayers and about 45 percent of the parents and guardians were active in town affairs. While the Academy served mainly the prosperous, children of lesser means were not excluded. Nearly half of New Castle's

white families with children used the Academy. The charter stated that poor children would be educated without charge if excess funds were available, but whether this ever happened is unknown. Approximately equal numbers of boys and girls attended the school for approximately the same length of time.⁹ Each sex was taught separately; girls probably learned the basics, while boys received a sound classical education. In addition to the Academy there must have been other schools in the area, for in 1813, 93 percent of the men who joined the New Castle Blues signed their names.¹⁰

Most of New Castle's social activity was for men only. A number of organizations provided male camaraderie and appealed to a variety of interests. The Masonic Lodge and a literary society were for the better sort. The Lodge was chartered in 1781 and until 1797 met in both Christiana Bridge and New Castle. After 1797, all meetings were in New Castle.¹¹ The New Castle Literary Society was organized in 1801 "to receive and communicate useful information, by the reading of Essays, and the discussion of Questions of a Moral, Political, Philosophical, Agricultural, and Literary nature."¹² The only evidence of the organization's existence comes between May and October 1801; its exact duration is unknown, but it probably was not long.¹³ The Union Fire Company, organized in 1796, and militia units drew members from a wider spectrum of the population.¹⁴

There were purely social activities, too. Patriotic observances offered a ready cause for celebration. In 1797, Citizen McCullough held a dinner at his inn in honor of Bastille Day. Also in 1797, the Fourth of July was celebrated with day-long activity, beginning with a flag raising at sunrise. Then, there was an oration in the Presbyterian Church, attended by both men and women. About one hundred forty dined at the courthouse, including the governor and four military companies. About twenty toasts were raised and the party did not break up until six in the evening.¹⁵ For those seeking less structured activities, New Castle offered a variety of taverns, ranging from the refined to the rowdy.

State and county organizations offered further opportunities. Organized political parties developed early in Delaware. The Democratic-Republican party began in 1794 as the Patriotic Society of New Castle County and the Federalists began to organize the next year.¹⁶ Political parties were not town activities; town elections were non-partisan and the lowest unit of formal party organization was at the hundred level. Revolutionary officers could join the Society of the Cincinnati, doctors could join the state medical society, and enthusiastic farmers could join the county agricultural association.¹⁷ Since New Castle had such easy access to larger cities and other states, a local

man could have been quite cosmopolitan if he so desired.

New Castle's organized community life excluded not only women, children, and blacks, but also some white males. About half of the white males participated in some way, ranging from voting and signing petitions to holding office.¹⁸ More could have joined in, at least in a small way, for the town franchise was open to freeholders and taxable inhabitants.¹⁹ Access to the officeholding group was fairly easy; in 1800, 22 percent of adult white males, or nearly half of the active citizens, held office.²⁰ A man who did not hold office probably knew some who did, and if he had any aspirations and abilities probably stood a good chance of success. Stringent rules or a deeply entrenched ruling clique did not limit the size of the active group as much as individual choices.

Even though basic participation and office holding were theoretically available to many, there were important economic differences among leaders, active citizens, and non-participants, as Table 23 shows. Not surprisingly, leaders were wealthier than the other groups.²¹ Fifty percent were in the wealthiest 20 percent of taxables and three-quarters were in the top two quintiles on the 1798 New Castle County assessment.

The differences between active citizens and non-participants are more interesting. These figures are based on a comparison of those who did and did not sign the 1796 petition requesting town government.²² At first glance, the distinction is obvious: those who signed owned taxable property and non-signers did not, apparently confirming the conventional wisdom that those who have a stake in society are more likely to be active in running the society. The mean assessed valuation, however, gives the first hint that this is not a clear-cut dichotomy, for non-signers appear to be wealthier than signers. The answer to the paradox lies in the distribution of property. While signers were more likely to own property, non-signing property owners had more of it, as Table 24 shows.

The signers appear to be a fairly homogeneous group of men of modest means whose economic lives were focused on the town of New Castle. Two clues show where their commitments lay: only one was taxed as an absentee and only one owned rural land in New Castle Hundred, while all of the other landowners had only property in town. These men hoped to make their lives and fortunes in New Castle; their concern with the town's fate is natural and logical.

Table 23: Property Owning Among New Castle's Male Citizens
1798

Type of Property	All Males	Leaders	Signers	Non- Signers
Percent owning land	40%	77%	50%	32%
Percent owning slaves	17%	52%	26%	11%
Percent owning personal property	49%	83%	78%	30%
Percent propertyless	38%	6%	18%	51%
Mean assessment	\$1,052	\$1,900	\$919	\$1,142

Table 24: Differences between Propertied Signers and
Propertied Non-signers, 1796

Type of Property	Signers	Non-Signers
Mean value --real estate	\$1,029	\$2,388
Mean value --slaves	\$ 72	\$ 195
Mean value --personal property	\$ 59	\$ 164

The non-signers were a more varied and problematical group. About half were propertyless men who were probably highly mobile, lacking skills and education, and with no commitment to the town. The other half were prosperous men whose holdings more than made up for the others' lack. A significant minority were assessed as absentees, and another small group owned large tracts in rural New Castle Hundred.²³ Thus, some propertied non-signers had more than one economic focus; their fortunes were not totally tied to the town of New Castle. While it is easy to suggest why some members of this group behaved as they did, there are others whose motives remain a mystery. Perhaps they opposed town government, did not care, were not asked to sign, or were not available when the petition was circulated. Not signing the petition does not automatically mean that a man was not interested in the town.

By the opening of the nineteenth century, New Castle's prosperous, active, and concerned white males had created a variety of organizations to provide government, service, education, and sociability for their town, which meant mainly for themselves. Although respectable white males never lost their dominance, they soon had to make room for new people and new ideas as America's culture changed and women, children, and blacks began to play a more active

role in the organized community.

During the early nineteenth century, romantic emotion and sentiment replaced cool Enlightenment rationalism, and God was seen as a living presence rather than a distant clockmaker. The importance of the individual increased as new theology taught people that they could choose whether to be saved or damned, and the Romantics focused their intense attention on the often tragic, always unique, plight of the individual. At the same time, people became more fully aware of the needs and problems of the less fortunate for a variety of reasons ranging from faith that the world could be perfected to fear that society was about to fall apart. Meanwhile, as the economy became more complex, the population grew, and people moved around, many Americans craved connections and stability in an uncertain world. All of these factors resulted in a great outpouring of activity as Americans formed a multitude of voluntary organizations that included and reached out to many more people than before.

These developments first affected New Castle as it began to focus on domestic transportation rather than foreign trade, so that social and organizational change coincided with economic transition. People must have sensed that the world was challenging but not hopeless, which gave them the strength to act in an outward-looking, compassionate, and

creative manner until the mid-1820s. After the mid-1820s, however, as the world grew even more complicated and New Castle's prospects declined, defensiveness and indifference replaced charitable confidence.

Before New Castle could fully embrace the vigor and new ways of the nineteenth century, however, it first had to survive the War of 1812. As in the Revolutionary War, New Castle escaped attack and destruction, but it was in a highly vulnerable location. The war first became reality in early 1813. In late January, fifty men were stationed at the town for eleven days, while in late February, the arrival of a captured British ship was a cause for universal rejoicing.²⁴ These, however, were mere flirtations with the glamour of war. March brought unpleasant realities. The British blockade of Philadelphia went into effect, cutting off most foreign trade. The blockade was a success; in 1814, the nation's legal trade was but 11 percent of what it had been in 1811.²⁵

March 16 was the fateful day. The British asked the people of Lewes, in southern Delaware, to sell them supplies, with the threat of destruction if they did not comply. The citizens of Lewes firmly refused, and news of the imminent attack spread quickly. The very next day, March 17, New Castle had a town meeting to plan for defense. The committee

of leading citizens appointed to draw up plans called for a special session of the legislature to devise a defense plan for the state, enrollment of men willing to defend the town, and the appointment of a commandant and six assistants until a regular militia organization was set up.²⁶ A battery was soon partially constructed, and the specie in the bank was moved to Philadelphia, but county records remained in the courthouse until May.²⁷ In April and early May, the British did their damage, attacking Lewes and several towns in Maryland, including Frenchtown.²⁸ Danger and privation surrounded New Castle:

Our Town has been in a State of Alarm, and Will I suppose continue to be so. We have sent off almost all our Furniture. Mrs. McMecken has given us an assylum in case We should be obliged to fly--I feel very Unsettled and Unpleasant--Our Markets are Miserable. I Believe Verily the Country People are keeping there Cattle for the Enemy--I do assure you it is a Fortnight since our Butcher has supplied us with a Joint of meat--Allen got Me a Supply at Wilmington Yesterday and to day We have a Dinner to sit Down to.²⁹

Even in the midst of this grave situation, journalistic controversy arose, questioning the loyalty of none other than George Read, the United States District Attorney for Delaware. The American Watchman carried this charge, surrounded fore and aft by appropriate rhetoric:

It is affirmed that the District Attorney of the United States for the District of Delaware did in public, in the face of his neighbors

and fellow citizens in the town of New-Castle, give his advice that no resistance should be made, but that the town should pay to the British such sum or sums as they might in their wisdom, think proper to levy as the price of their safety. We understand that the name of the District Attorney is GEORGE READ, and that he has built a large and handsome Brick House on the Bank of the river.³⁰

Read defended himself in print against this accusation and went on to discuss some recent activities of New Castle's military council, to which he belonged. On May 1, the council decided to ask the state for \$5000 to complete the partially erected battery. Three men, including Read, were appointed to convey this information to the governor in what amounted to a state-wide wild goose chase. They first went to Dover, forty miles away. Since the governor was not there, they went to his home in Sussex County, twenty-five miles further south, only to find that he had left for Lewes two hours earlier. They left their papers with the governor's wife, who promised to give them to her husband when he returned. As Read pointed out, a man willing to run such an errand, leaving his family in perilous times, can hardly be accused of disloyalty.³¹

Since the British seemed in no hurry to leave the Chesapeake and the Delaware, defense preparations continued. In mid-May, troops camped at Stanton, Delaware, about six miles from New Castle, where they remained until early June.

The New Castle area provided two military units, the New Castle Blues and the Union Guard, together containing about 130 men. Several times during the next two months, British attack was reportedly imminent but nothing ever happened. British warships sailing up the river proved to be barges, and British plans to blow up the DuPont powder mills were rumors. By the end of July, all was calm.³²

After this, New Castle enjoyed about seven months of peace during the remainder of 1813 and early 1814. During the lull, two men profited, both financially and patriotically, as ships that they had sent to the West Indies returned. One had captured a small British ship and returned laden with additional cargo, while the other effectively fought off a British attack.³³

The interlude was interrupted in March, when British ships again appeared in the Delaware. As usual, the rumor mill was in full operation; what was said to be four ships was in reality only one. New Castle was not in great danger, but the town seemed negligent of its safety:

. . . we are in no fear of the enemy at this place not even so much as to keep a Guard out at night which I think ought to be done as they might surprise us here some night while in Bed which I do not think would be very pleasant.³⁴

This condition continued throughout the month of March.³⁵

The quiet ended in August when the British burned Washington and attacked Baltimore. Would Philadelphia or Wilmington be next? An army camp was established at Kennett Square, just inside Pennsylvania, and Delawareans again took up their arms. In mid-September, the troops at Kennett Square moved to new quarters just north of Wilmington near the Brandywine. A detachment was also stationed two miles below New Castle on the road to Frenchtown.³⁶ In mid-November, the military commander feared an attack from the British, who had been lurking at the mouth of Delaware Bay for several months. Six hundred troops were moved to the camp near New Castle. Once in camp, the soldiers watched and waited; again, the expected attack never came. Instead, the weather seems to have provided the most excitement. A cold, heavy rainstorm on November 28 forced the troops to evacuate to New Castle, where they were quartered in a church, the courthouse, and a private home. The soldiers maintained good discipline and the townspeople were hospitable. This event marked the end of the war for New Castle, for the troops were discharged in December.³⁷

Thus, New Castle's involvement in the War of 1812 spanned a wide range of experiences and emotions. Several times, the town was on the edge of danger, but it always escaped. Civilians suffered from fears and shortages. Although there is no evidence of disloyalty, war and danger certainly

did not forge a unanimity of opinion. As George Read said,

that a difference of opinion has existed and does exist among the citizens of New-Castle as to the most suitable measures of defense, there can be no doubt and this diversity of sentiment is by no means unusual.³⁸

In the end, however, the most vivid image of the war's effect on New Castle is tragic. The following letter, dated April 4, 1815, is in a scrawl which lends authenticity to the writer's emotions.

I have just stolen a few moments to write you to inform you that I have safely arrived, but oh! what changes have taken place since I last saw N. Castle so many have taken place that I can scarcely believe myself awake everyone I meet is in mourning for some friend or relative who I know not I am afraid [to ask] for any person for fear of hearing of their death reviving painful recollections painful to them. . . . I go on tomorrow morning for Washington where I hope that I may get orders for the fleet going to the Meditteranean there midst the roar of cannon to forget recollections but too painful I feel as tho I was delirious I know not what I write, I cannot believe myself awake, would to God it were but a dream, war with all its horrors could not have made more havoc Adieu my Dear cousin and excuse this crazy scrawl as I am very nearly crazy myself.³⁹

Intrusion and danger that it was, the War of 1812 did not significantly interrupt the activities and organizations established in earlier peaceful and prosperous times. Indeed, the minutes of both the town commissioners and the Trustees of the common make no mention of the war, nor did either group suspend operations during the war. New Castle took care of

the war's problems through town meetings and specially appointed groups; other aspects of public life went on much as usual.

The male world of government, Lodge, politics, and taverns continued to function. A new organization began in 1813 when twenty prosperous and active men formed a club called the Atheneum. The group's avowed purpose was to be well informed. Each was to subscribe to a different newspaper, and the papers would be kept in a special room, for which the members would share the expenses. The group was still alive a year later, holding forth in a coffeehouse at Mr. Crow's.⁴⁰

John Crow, who provided the home for the Atheneum, was a pivotal figure in the male world. He kept one of the better taverns, a natural gathering place for both local and visiting gentlemen. He was also a compulsive joiner; between about 1795 and his death in 1826 he belonged to almost every organization in town, county, and state--except those of a religious nature--and was almost always the recording secretary. He knew everyone and everything that mattered. Whether he had any real power is unknown--he was probably too busy taking notes--but he certainly was important.⁴¹

In addition to these continuing opportunities, men were also affected by the new forces of emotion, faith, and

benevolence that brought women, children, and blacks into community life. Indeed, men's correspondence was often as flowery, emotional, and unrestrainedly religious as women's. New Castle men joined the Delaware Bible Society and in 1820 formed the New Castle Sabbath School Society.⁴² With quarterly election of officers and election of members, the Sabbath School Society appealed as well to the same needs that led men to flock to fraternal organizations not very much later. Men also continued to express their religious feelings in more conventional ways by serving on the governing boards of churches and by erecting and improving church buildings. Despite heightened religious feelings, there is no evidence of an organized temperance movement in New Castle until the late 1830s.⁴³

Table 25: Property Owning Among New Castle's Citizens
1814-16

Type of Property	All Residents	Leaders	Active Citizens
Percent owning land	40%	72%	50%
Percent with tenants	24%	38%	26%
Percent owning livestock	39%	60%	46%
Percent owning slaves	17%	37%	21%
Percent owning plate	26%	43%	28%
Percent propertyless	39%	17%	28%
Mean assessment	\$2,884	\$5,551	\$1,029

In many ways, the active male population in 1814-16 was similar to what it had been earlier in size, access to leadership, and economic characteristics.⁴⁴ Table 25 shows patterns of property ownership among the different groups.

There is one major difference, however. The great gap in mean assessment between leaders and concerned citizens, along with the change in wealth distribution between the 1798 and 1816 assessments, suggests that the men at the top were getting richer and the men in the middle were hurting.⁴⁵

Religion, benevolence, and education brought women into organized community life, sometimes in their own groups and sometimes in conjunction with men. The active women were mainly the wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers of the men who ran the town.⁴⁶ They were fulfilling their traditional, socially acceptable roles of nurturing and teaching, yet they were also venturing into new territory. Organizing, raising money, and affiliating with similar groups in other places were new skills for women in the early nineteenth century. One cannot help but wonder how New Castle's men felt about their wives' and daughters' new activities.

Of the women's organizations, the Female Bible Society, with fifty to sixty members, was the largest. This may have been because its minimum requirements were so slight; one only had to pay annual dues of one dollar. The Society's work was done by a small core of active members. The Female Benevolent Society and the Female Sabbath School Society were much smaller--fifteen to twenty members each--perhaps because

more was demanded. In the early 1830s, the only time when there are membership figures for all three groups, seventy-one women participated, or about one-third of New Castle's adult white women. When one considers the newness of women's organizations, and that only one-half of the men were active citizens, this figure seems quite respectable.

The Female Bible Society gives an insight into the patterns of officeholding among women. Between 1822 and 1840, sixty-nine women served as officers and managers. Of these, 72 percent served one to four years, 13 percent served five to nine years, and the remaining 14 percent held office for ten years or more. This is reasonably close to the pattern for male leaders, 61 percent of whom held office for less than five years, and is not surprising in a highly mobile society.

The schools provided by the Academy and the Female Benevolent Society, which represented both old and new ways of community activity, made education available to a wider spectrum of New Castle's white population than before. The New Castle Academy continued to give the children of the prosperous a sound classical education. Poor children attended the charity school conducted by the Female Benevolent Society, which was funded in varying degrees by donations, the Common, and state appropriations. The town needed such

a school; in 1829-1830, nearly fifty children of both sexes were enrolled, and their families were truly poor.⁴⁷ The fifty children represented about 25 percent of New Castle's white children aged five to fourteen and came from about one quarter of the white households with children. About three quarters of the families were without taxable property of any kind; the mean assessment for all the families was \$312, compared with \$2,377 for all town taxables.

Delaware's public school law was passed in 1829, and the Female Benevolent Society apparently disbanded a few years later since their schools were no longer so necessary. The school law's effect on education in New Castle is unclear. The town was at first divided into two districts, with the boundary running through the hallway of the Academy, although the districts were united by 1837. One secondary source says that New Castle did not participate in the public system, but continued to fund its schools through tuition and Common appropriations. New Castle, however, participated in the 1839 New Castle County School Convention, and its school was listed as having eighty-five boys and forty girls. This represents about 70 percent of the town's white children. All of the boys were enrolled, but only 40 percent of the girls. Thus, education of some sort was available to most white children.⁴⁸

The Sunday schools blended education and religion and affected the greatest number of people. At first, students of all denominations studied together, although segregated by sex. After 1826, the Sabbath School Society fragmented along denominational lines. Unfortunately, no early enrollment figures survive, but from the mid-1830s on, over two hundred students were enrolled annually in New Castle's three Sunday Schools, more than the total number of white children aged between five and fourteen in either the 1830 or 1840 census.⁴⁹ Children from outlying areas may have been enrolled, and there were sometimes separate classes for blacks, which probably accounts for the extra numbers. Theoretically, children from many backgrounds could mingle with each other at Sunday school and learn common middle class information and values. In reality, attendance was much lower than the enrollment.⁵⁰

Two other organizations also attest to the era's faith in the power of education. The New Castle Library Company, organized in 1811, was an informal source of continuing education for the well-off. Nicholas Van Dyke aptly recorded the organization's beginnings.

We have made an effort in this Village to establish a Library, which it is hoped by furnishing books to the young will give them a Taste for literature and promote the general improvement. A library Co. is formed, the stock divided into shares of 20 Dls. and the subscription has been so general & liberal

that near seventeen hundred are promised-- one fourth of which is placed in the hands of the Directors who are now in Phila. purchasing books. I have taken five shares one of which will enable you to enjoy all the advantages of the plan, when you return to New Castle.⁵¹

Two weeks later, Van Dyke wrote this:

I have now the pleasure of adding that our directors have already placed upon the shelves near five hundred Vols. & every body appears impressed with the importance of the plan. There is little doubt of our success. The effect it is hoped will be to improve the literary Taste and Character of our Village.⁵²

By 1813, the Library had ninety-seven members, but despite this promising start, only one hundred thirty-six of two hundred shares of stock had been sold by 1826. The library was open on Wednesday and Saturday and use was restricted to members.

Unfortunately, the directors spent more money than they had, and by 1818 the library was foundering. Until the early 1830s, it limped along with limited funds and periodic financial crises. Even so, the library was a lively source of knowledge and entertainment with 1,700 books in 1819. Between 1829 and 1833, twelve to sixteen people visited the library at each semi-weekly opening and about 2,500 volumes circulated annually.⁵³

The Female Bible Society distributed Bibles to individuals and organizations who needed them. Those who

were able paid for their books; the Society felt that people had more appreciation for something they had purchased, and the funds so raised would enable the Society to give the Scriptures to those unable to pay. Between 1823 and 1839, at least seventy-six Bibles or Testaments were distributed to individuals of both races. Eighty percent of the recipients were women. The members of the Female Bible Society probably felt more comfortable dealing with women than men.⁵⁴ Five families who received Bibles also had children in the charity school in 1829-30.

New Castle's new organizations focused almost exclusively on the intellectual and spiritual growth of whites. Conspicuously absent were attempts to alleviate physical poverty, although poverty was not lacking. In 1830, the Female Benevolent Society felt that New Castle had a large number of poor children in proportion to its population.⁵⁵ Scraps of evidence suggest that very little organized relief was available. The churches kept their almsgiving quiet. The Female Benevolent Society may have provided some help, but this too is unrecorded. The last resort was public assistance offered by the Trustees of the Poor, an arm of county government which ran the county poor house and also provided help for those who continued to live in the larger society. In 1804, New Castle had a poor house, but nothing is known of its operations or residents.

Between 1822 and 1840, thirty to fifty people per year from New Castle Hundred found refuge in the county poor house. They were indeed desperate folk; the poor house served as both nursing home and children's home.⁵⁶ For those not destitute enough to need public aid, there were two other possibilities: private charity and moving elsewhere. The extent of private aid is unknown, but it is known that the poor were more likely to move than those in better circumstances.

Even though blacks joined the expanding community, it was not by virtue of full inclusion in the whites' educational and spiritual activities. While blacks did receive Female Bible Society books and could sometimes attend separate Sunday school classes, whites generally saw them as a threat to public order and safety.⁵⁷ Blacks therefore created their own institutions. In 1815, they organized Bethel U.A.M.E. Church, although blacks also continued to worship in New Castle's other churches. Around 1830 some of the black men organized the Sons of Benevolence in the Town of New Castle. Aware of their poverty and lack of standing in the community, their goals were to suppress vice and immorality, cultivate habits which could improve their condition, and raise money to bury the dead and care for the sick and poor. Not only did they organize, they also asked for a charter of incorporation, which was denied. Seven

men's names are on the petition; only one actually signed.⁵⁸ There is no other evidence of this group's existence, but even this one appearance shows the constraints within which blacks had to operate, and the desire of some to improve their lot in life.

New Castle's vigor and sense of its identity changed the town's physical appearance, revealing urban aspirations and the interconnections of town life. The town clock, purchased by the Trustees of the Common, was placed in the tower of Immanuel Church in 1822. The town hall built between 1823 and 1826 is small but graceful and elegant. Built of red brick and topped with a cupola, it blends in well with the neighboring courthouse and academy and shows that New Castle's leaders had pride and sophistication. The Trustees of the Common provided most of the money for the town hall and the town commissioners built a new market house extending directly behind it. The fire company stored its engines in the ground level and the Masons also contributed to the cost and used the building.⁵⁹ Thus, one building combined governmental, economic, service, and social functions.

As New Castle was enjoying its full civic flowering, stagnation, discord, and tragedy mingled with success and tested the community's strength. By 1840 the town faced

civic and economic torpor. The 1816 and 1826 letters quoted at the head of the chapter are typical expressions of people's feelings towards the town. From around 1815, no one ever exclaimed over New Castle's excellent prospects or vibrant atmosphere. Discontent and a lack of confidence underlay the visible bustle and vigor.

The fire of April 26, 1824 which destroyed the homes and businesses of twenty-three families in the main commercial area threatened the very physical survival of New Castle and its people. Everyone--women included--fought the flames and tried to save what they could. The fire was barely extinguished when a town meeting on April 28 established a fund to aid the victims. Three refused money from the fund, thus leaving more for the others. Beyond this, little is recorded of the town's response to the fire. Most assistance was probably private and personal: food, shelter, and clothing to meet immediate needs and money, labor, and materials for rebuilding. Reconstruction was well under way by mid July, so both victims and their fellow townspeople responded with energy and courage.⁶⁰

Town organizations had their share of troubles. The Sunday School divided along sectarian lines in 1826 and the Female Benevolent Society went out of existence in the early 1830s because the state common school system assumed

its functions. In both cases, however, the work continued even though the outward forms changed.

The Masons were not as fortunate. In 1825, a dispute over the choice of a speaker for a Washington's birthday oration led to a schism and the formation of a new lodge. Two lodges now existed where only one had been, and relations between them were not cordial. By 1828, neither lodge was active, falling victim to the Antimasonic movement. New Castle did not have Masonic activity again until 1848. The gap left by the Masons' demise was at least partially filled by the Odd Fellows' Lodge chartered in 1833.⁶¹

The Library Company also had problems, but it was able to survive. The 2,500 volume annual circulation of 1829-1833 dropped to 460 in 1834, during which the library was closed for six months. No directors' minutes were kept between 1832 and 1837. A new slate of officers took over in 1839. The library was again closed from May 1839 until August 1840 to reorganize the institution and the collection. The problem was not a lack of books--the 1840 catalog listed about 3,300 volumes--but a lack of interest. The Library's doldrums continued until the 1870s.⁶²

Party politics provides further evidence of social tensions in the late 1820s. One ritual of New Castle County electioneering was for each party to hold an open

meeting at the hundred level shortly before an election to recruit a Committee of Vigilance. The committees, whose ostensible purpose was to get out the vote, were large and probably included nearly everyone who attended the meeting. In 1827, forty-five men were on the pro-Administration committee and one hundred were on the Jacksonian, corresponding roughly to the factions' actual strength and representing about half the total electorate. About 70 percent of New Castle Hundred's adult white males voted at this time and half of the voters were on Committees of Vigilance.⁶³

Major economic differences distinguished the supporters of the two sides. Over 80 percent of the men on the 1827 Committees of Vigilance were also on the 1828 tax assessment. Table 26 summarizes the economic differences between those who were not politically active and the members of the two factions. Since the proportion belonging to each party was similar in both town and country (although the pro-Administration side was slightly stronger in town), the figures for the entire hundred are also valid for the town. The result is clear: Administration supporters were prosperous and Jackson men were not. Indeed, in some respects, the Jacksonians were not as well off as the politically inactive. In terms of the continuing debate over the second party system, these findings suggest strongly that there was an economic difference between the parties, although the

assessments do not tell how people actually thought and felt.

New Castle's internal community life was stuck on a plateau during the 1830s. Most of the existing activities continued in some form, but few new ventures were begun. Instead, as the railroad era dawned and the controversy over the county seat intensified, people had to devote themselves to these concerns and had little energy for further social development. New Castle was fighting for its profits, purpose, and prestige. The battle was long and hard and grim. New Castle lost more than it maintained.

Indeed, the story of New Castle's community development between 1780 and 1840 ends on a sour note. In 1840, after the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad had bypassed New Castle, after the location of the county seat had been settled, and after the town had survived the battles of the 1830s, internal discord broke out in the form of a controversy over the use of the bell of the town clock. Town and church were at odds with one another, as were the several denominations. The earlier harmonies and interconnections had collapsed in petty squabbling. The situation suggests a variant on John Demos' hypothesis about seventeenth century Plymouth, where the need to maintain peace in large families cooped up in small houses led people to spar with their neighbors.⁶⁴ In New Castle, it seems that the need to present a united front to the

Table 26: Economic Characteristics According to Political Persuasion

<u>Type of Property</u>	<u>All Residents</u>	<u>Politically Inactive</u>	<u>Jackson Men</u>	<u>Administration Men</u>
Percent owning land	25%	22%	29%	48%
Mean value of real estate	\$911	\$994	\$685	\$2,520
Percent owning livestock	37%	34%	46%	70%
Mean value of livestock	\$ 74	\$ 63	\$105	\$ 188
Percent owning slaves	8%	5%	11%	33%
Mean value of slaves	\$ 13	\$ 7	\$ 18	\$ 54
Percent owning plate	8%	7%	7%	25%
Mean value of plate	\$ 5	\$ 5	\$ 2	\$ 9
Percent propertyless	49%	52%	46%	18%
Mean assessment	\$1,251	\$1,395	\$1,178	\$2,308

outside world contributed to internal bickering, at least at this time. The ways and meanings that had worked in the past were no longer adequate.

Between 1790 and 1840, New Castle sought and developed a sense of its identity as a town and community. The course of this progress holds few surprises; New Castle fits in well with the general currents of the times, and its civic, economic, and religious growth were all reasonably consistent. All went well until the mid-1820s, when fire, internal bickering, and outside pressures strained the harmonious community. In 1840, New Castle had a sound basis of charitable, religious, and governmental organizations, but needed to accept and adjust to its diminished dreams. New Castle was only a town among cities.

CHAPTER 6 NOTES

1. Nicholas Van Dyke to Mrs. Delia Stockton, Nov. 7, 1816, Accession 298, EMHL.
2. Dorcas M. duPont to Alfred W. Van Dyke, Jan. 15, 1825, Longwood Manuscripts, Group 4, EMHL.
3. William T. Read to Sally Read, Oct. 13, 1825, Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.
4. Rowland Berthoff, An Unsettled People: Social Order and Disorder in American History (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 271.
5. Berthoff, An Unsettled People, p. 225.
6. Stuart M. Blumin, The Urban Threshold: Growth and Change in a Nineteenth-Century American Community (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 49, 220-2.
7. See Chapter 3 for detailed discussion of this and all other issues involving town government that will be mentioned in this chapter.
8. George H. Gibson, ed., The Collected Essays of Richard S. Rodney on Colonial Delaware (Wilmington: Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Delaware, 1975), pp. 77-82.
9. Quantitative information on students and their families is based on the New Castle Academy Treasurer's Book, 1799-1802, in the Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD. The book lists names of parent or guardian, names of students, and how long they attended school.
10. Muster roll of the New Castle Blues, May 10, 1813, War of 1812 Papers, HSD.
11. Gibson, ed., Essays of Richard S. Rodney, pp. 93-4.
12. Mirror of the Times, May 13, 1801.
13. Mirror of the Times, May 13, July 18, Oct. 31, 1801.

14. J. Thomas Scharf, History of Delaware, 1609-1888, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Co., 1888), 2:863; Delaware Gazette, Sept. 28, 1793; Delaware and Eastern Shore Advertiser, May 19 and June 20, 1796.
15. Delaware Gazette, June 8 and July 12, 1797.
16. David Paul Peltier, "Border State Democracy: A History of Voting in Delaware, 1682-1897" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Delaware, 1967), pp. 89-101.
17. Scharf, History of Delaware, 1:433.
18. Sixty-seven men, about 50 percent of the 127 1798 white male town taxables, signed the 1796 petition requesting town government. Between 1800 and 1803, 47-56 percent of the 1798 white male town taxables participated in town elections. The 1796 petition is in Legislative Papers, Dover; town government voting and tax lists are found in the Town Commissioners' minutes.
19. Laws of the State of Delaware, 2:1371.
20. Thirty-four men held town office 1798-1802; they represent 22 percent of the 158 white males over 21 on the 1800 census and 48 percent of the 71 voters in the 1801 town election. A leader is any man who held town office, however minor, served as a Trustee of the Common, or held office in the Episcopal or Presbyterian churches.
21. Fifty-two of the seventy-three men who held town office 1780-1808 were on the 1798 New Castle Hundred assessment.
22. Fifty of the sixty-seven signers were on the 1798 New Castle Hundred assessment. The assessment had 124 white male town taxables.
23. Non-resident taxables are included in this comparison because it appears that town residence was not required for voting if one were a freeholder. Nearly 20 percent of non-signers were taxed as absentees and about one-sixth of non-signers owned rural land in New Castle Hundred.
24. Order signed by Thomas Stockton, Jan. 31, 1813, War of 1812 Papers, HSD; American Watchman, Feb. 20, 1813.
25. Charles Lee Reese, Jr., ed., "A Brief Sketch of the Military Operations on the Delaware During the War of 1812," Delaware History, 3 (1948):80, which is an account of the

war drawn from A Brief Sketch Of The Military Operations On The Delaware During the Late War (Philadelphia: Robert P. McCulloh, 1820); Marshall Smelser, The Democratic Republic, 1801-1815 (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 263.

26. Proceedings of the New Castle town meeting, March 17, 1813, War of 1812 Papers, HSD.

27. Reese, "A Brief Sketch of Military Operations," pp. 80-81; Court Order signed by James Booth and Kensey Johns, Dec. 1, 1813, War of 1812 Papers, HSD.

28. Scharf, History of Delaware, 1:291.

29. Maria Read to William T. Read, March 29, [1813], Rodney Collection of Read Papers, HSD.

30. American Watchman, May 8, 1813.

31. American Watchman, May 8, 1813.

32. Reese, "A Brief Sketch of Military Operations," pp. 84-89; Muster Roll of the Union Guards, June, 1813 and Muster Roll of the New Castle Blues, May 10, 1813, War of 1812 Papers, HSD.

33. John D. Bird to Kensey J. Van Dyke, March 8, 1814, Longwood Manuscripts, Group 4, EMHL.

34. John D. Bird to Kensey J. Van Dyke, March 8, 1814, Longwood Manuscripts, Group 4, EMHL.

35. John D. Bird to Kensey J. Van Dyke, March 8 and March 31, 1814, Longwood Manuscripts, Group 4, EMHL.

36. Reese, "A Brief Sketch of Military Operations," pp. 89-91.

37. Reese, "A Brief Sketch of Military Operations," pp. 91-3.

38. American Watchman, May 8, 1813.

39. John D. Bird to Kensey J. Van Dyke, April 4, 1815 Longwood Manuscripts, Group 4, EMHL.

40. The following plan of an association. . . , March 4, 1813, HSD; John D. Bird to Kensey J. Van Dyke, March 8, 1814, Longwood Manuscripts, Group 4, EMHL.

41. Crow was secretary of both the Town Commissioners and the Trustees of the Common for many years and his name frequently is listed with many other organizations.
42. American Watchman, Oct. 23, 1819.
43. The only evidence of temperance in New Castle is a reference to the New Castle Temperance Society in the Delaware State Journal, Sept. 24, 1839.
44. The groups involved in this comparison are all town residents, leaders, and signers of the 1814 petition requesting town incorporation. The petition is unusual because many of New Castle's most active and affluent men did not sign; therefore, the category of non-signer is not used. About 45 percent of New Castle's 1815 white male taxables signed the 1814 petition. Between 1808 and 1812, 28 percent of the adult white males held office and about 20 percent held office between 1818 and 1822. Sixty percent of the men signing the 1814 petition were on the 1816 New Castle Hundred assessment. Three quarters of the leaders were in the wealthiest forty percent.
45. In 1798, the leaders' mean assessment was \$1900, signers' was \$919.
46. Membership information on the Female Bible Society and Female Sabbath School Society is contained in the records of the organizations; membership information for the Female Benevolent Society is found in petitions to the State Legislature, 1817 and Jan. 1830 Legislative Papers, Dover.
47. Petitions of the Female Benevolent Society to the State Legislature, Dec. 31, 1829, Jan. 1830, Dec. 21, 1830, Legislative Papers, Dover. The children came from 29 families, 19 of which were listed on the 1828 New Castle County assessment.
48. The last mention of the Female Benevolent Society is in the Common minutes, June 26, 1832; Gibson, ed., Essays of Richard S. Rodney, p. 83; Delaware State Journal, Jan. 25, 1839.
49. New Castle County Levy Court minutes, 1834-1840 passim; in 1830, New Castle had 191 white children, in 1840, 178.
50. Sabbath School Society Minute Book, 1827-1829.

51. Nicholas Van Dyke to Nicholas Van Dyke, Jr., June 2, 1811, Longwood Manuscripts, Group 4, EMHL.
52. Nicholas Van Dyke to Nicholas Van Dyke, Jr., June 16, 1811, Longwood Manuscripts, Group 4, EMHL.
53. Richard L. Mumford and Rodney F. Allen, "The New Castle Library Company: The Founding and Early History of a Subscription Library, 1811 to 1850," Delaware History, 11 (1965):282-295.
54. Records of the Female Bible Society, passim.
55. Petition of the Female Benevolent Society to the State Legislature, Dec. 21, 1830, Legislative Papers, Dover.
56. The poor house in New Castle appears on Latrobe's 1804 survey; Admittance and Discharge Record, New Castle County Alms House, 1822-1850, Dover.
57. Petitions and draft bills dated 1809, 1814 and 1816 included restrictions on blacks, Legislative Papers, Dover.
58. Petition, colored persons in the town of New Castle to the State Legislature, 1830, Legislative Papers, Dover.
59. Gibson, ed., Essays of Richard S. Rodney, pp. 98-9; Minutes of the Trustees of the Common, pp. 127-36.
60. W. T. Read, "Fire at New Castle," Oct. 13, 1864, HSD; Delaware Gazette, April-July, 1824, passim; American Watchman, April-August, 1824, passim; [Maria Booth Rogers] to James Rogers, [April 28, 1824], Boothhurst Collection, HSD; The American Farmer, July 23, 1824.
61. Gibson, ed., Essays of Richard S. Rodney, pp. 99-101; Scharf, History of Delaware, 2:871-872.
62. Mumford and Allen, "The New Castle Library Company," pp. 295-300.
63. The lists appeared in the Delaware Gazette, Sept. 28, 1827 and the Delaware Journal, Sept. 25, 1827. In 1828, 293 votes were cast in New Castle Hundred (American Watchman, October 14, 1828) and there were 414 adult white males on the 1830 census.
64. John Demos, A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 49.

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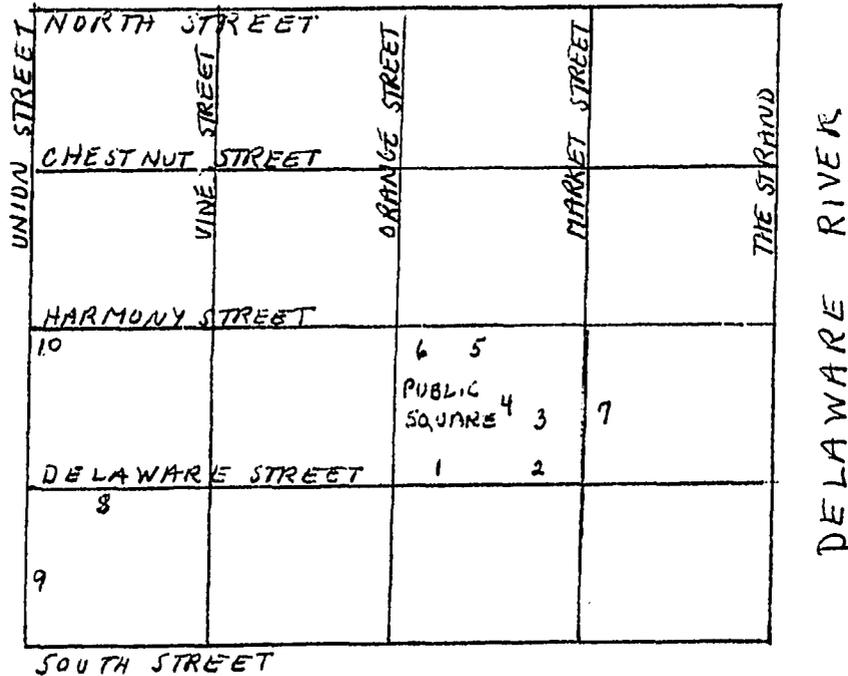
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APPENDIX

Map of the Town of New Castle

Map of New Castle and Its Region

THE TOWN OF NEW CASTLE



Key

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Courthouse | 6. Academy |
| 2. Town Hall | 7. New Castle Presbyterian Church |
| 3. Market House | 8. New Castle Methodist Church |
| 4. Arsenal | 9. Bethany U.A.M.E. Church |
| 5. Immanuel Episcopal Church | 10. St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church |

NEW CASTLE AND ITS REGION

