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**THE EVOLUTION OF FETTERSVILLE
AND THE ROLE OF ITS SACRED PLACES:
A CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY NEIGHBORHOOD**

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A THESIS

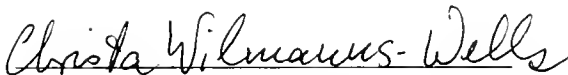
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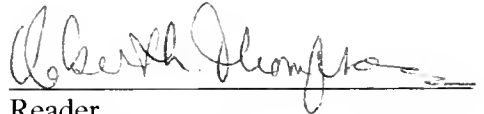
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◆ Introduction and Statement of Purpose ◆

Historically, urban working class neighborhoods tell the story of the settlement and movement of ethnic groups. This narrative is told visually through the built environment. The people construct homes and public institutions and form businesses. Reflecting the ethnic character of its founders, a community is formed. Inevitably, the religious institution is a principal protagonist in conveying this tale: its physical form and ornament speak about the cultural life and ethnic origins of its congregants.

Yet, not only did the sacred space convey the identity of the neighborhood, it also responded to the needs of the people; thus it served as the epicenter of the community. Extending beyond its spiritual endeavors, the house of worship often contained recreation and meeting spaces for the community. Furthermore, it offered a refuge and solace to a people battling the impediments of racism, poverty, immigration and general urban ills. In short, the religious institution represented a stabilizing force within a neighborhood through its physical presence as well as through its social gospel.

Today many of these grand edifices represent a magnificent architectural patrimony and remain in their locales. However, while the buildings remain constant, their urban neighborhoods have undergone major transitions. The 1950s and 1960s saw a gross shift in the demographic and economic forces within inner city communities. A confluence of minority populations, deteriorating housing and diminishing services dominate many urban neighborhoods. In the midst of rapid change and disinvestment, however, the sacred space retains its steadfast role within the community, physically and socially. In fact, their social functions have greatly increased in response to accelerated urban

declination as well as governmental deferment. For example, as the government increasingly turns to the private sector to mediate social problems such as poor education, inadequate housing or violent crime, religious institutions have continued to move to the forefront explicitly to establish faith-based agencies to tackle these maladies.

Consequently, if these buildings were to disappear, so too would the neighborhoods. These monuments offer a symbol of perseverance of a past people as well as a continued commitment to the present residents. Their continued existence is paramount. The goal of this thesis is to demonstrate the vital roles historic sacred places play within their past and present urban communities; specifically, to examine the functions of two churches located in the same neighborhood in Camden, New Jersey. Furthermore, initiatives founded on historic preservation principles will be suggested to stimulate revitalization within the neighborhood.

This thesis will examine a neighborhood in Camden, New Jersey, called Fettersville, which demonstrates the typical pattern of growth and decline within many urban working class neighborhoods. Fettersville today, in parallel to Camden, has experienced and continues to experience disinvestment. This study intends to examine the evolution of the neighborhood, paying close attention to the function of the church within each culture group, past and present. The thesis shall also explore the relatively new organization of the faith-based community development corporation and how this endeavor, properly executed, could initiate the revitalization of Fettersville.

Sharing its history with three primary culture groups, the Fettersville story is rich. Founded in 1833, the neighborhood housed a large contingent of free African Americans. By the turn of the century, Fettersville accommodated a large population of Italians in

response to Camden's industrial boom. Finally by the 1960's a large Latino population, primarily from Puerto Rico, settled in the locale.

While many homes are vacant and empty lots sprinkle the area, there remains a substantial representation of integrity from the extant original religious structures as well as samples of the old urban streetscape. Two historic churches remain in the area. Established in the 1830's, Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was the first religious institution founded in the locale. While Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima was established in 1903 to serve the Italian community, it now accommodates the present day Latino residents. Each serves a different populace; yet both recognize the need for their active role in neighborhood revitalization.

While the two are contained within the bounds of Fettersville the churches, at this time, are pursuing their goals independently. Macedonia AME has created the Macedonia Community Development Corporation, while Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima is pursuing the establishment of the Fettersville Restoration and Development Association. Discussions with each institution, however, has led to the discovery that both wish to utilize the past cultural landscape of Fettersville as the foundation for their planning initiatives. This thesis will actively encourage the development of a partnership approach and facilitate a dialogue between the two institutions using historic preservation as a tool. The goal is to utilize historic preservation in concert with community development to move forward to create a sense of place within the community while still remembering its past.

One ♦ An Introduction to the Landscape of Present Day Camden

Camden, New Jersey, analogous to most postindustrial American cities has been struggling for at least 40 years to regain a fraction of the economic base it previously enjoyed in the booming industrial age. Once an engaging and industrious city, Camden is now attempting to reconcile and overcome abandonment and decline, serious problems that ranks the city among the most distressed in the nation.¹ With the accelerated residential flight of the working and middle class following World War II, Camden lost much of its economic stability. The remaining residents that inhabited the city were the poor and predominately African American and Latino population. At this time, small local storefront businesses closed as cohesive neighborhoods dispersed. Large corporations left the city seeking cheaper land rents and a closer proximity to their newly re-located workforce. Manufacturing concerns became obsolete, thus demanding the elimination of production. As a result, a large expanse of the built environment once representing wealth and prosperity is now gone or in an advanced state of deterioration. Camden now symbolizes a derelict landscape.

Instrumental in inner city decline, with Camden being a primary victim, were a number of federal government programs. After World War II, when the federal government began to intervene directly in local affairs through single-purpose agencies, planning took on new dimensions.² Uncoordinated with local master plans, federal

¹ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier, The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 5.

² John A. Jakle and David Wilson, *Derelict Landscapes* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1992), 130.

planning was disorganized and piecemeal. For example, the Americans growing reliance on the automobile prompted the passing of the 1956 Highway Act, encouraging the construction of highways cutting directly through cities, thus displacing many residents and businesses. Because of the independent agendas of various government agencies, highway builders constructed roads with little concern for the destruction of neighborhoods, the erosion of tax bases, the decline of public services and the out-migrations of people to the suburbs.³ Today, Camden has three primary interstates and numerous connectors penetrating neighborhoods and creating accessible routes from the city to the suburbs.

Home financing arrangements developed by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) further propagated the flight from the central cities. Financial help through savings and loans and household banks offered superior rates and incentives to those seeking suburban locations as opposed to city dwellings.⁴ Further, the FHA standardized the ideal model eligible for financing by using the suburban archetype of a detached home on ample lots with driveways and garages.⁵ As a consequence, traditional row houses and other city type dwellings were consistently eliminated from eligibility for loan guarantees.

In addition to evaluating individual physical specifications, the FHA adopted the mapping prototype, developed by the HOLC, an earlier government loan program. The map included ratings not only of physical conditions, but also of social characteristics, producing the common practice of redlining neighborhoods containing poor and minority

³ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴ Anthony Downs, "The Challenge of Our Declining Big Cities," *Housing Policy Debate* 8 (1997): 376.

residents.⁶ In other words, neighborhoods inhabited by minorities were not likely to be eligible for loan guarantees. This furthered the deterioration of housing within the central cities. Turning to Camden specifically, the FHA did not have a mortgage on a single home in the city as late as 1966.⁷ This government program facilitated disinvestment in the City of Camden, thereby contributing to its rapid physical and economical deterioration.

Perhaps the most devastating public policy program was the Housing Act of 1949, despite its stated goal that every American family have decent, safe and sanitary housing.⁸ The federal Urban Renewal Program targeted slums for renewal, bought properties, blighted or sound, through eminent domain, demolished them to clear the land, improved the infrastructure, and offered –usually at 30 percent of the cost of all this- to private developers to rebuild it.⁹ Much of the older urban fabric in numerous cities was destroyed. In some cases, new, banal apartment structures and commercial development filled the void. However, the number of housing units demolished did not equal the number constructed by far.¹⁰ A principal reason for minimal construction was the failure of the government to see that there was little financial incentive for the private sector to invest in the city. As stated earlier, suburban sites were much more attractive and lucrative.

As a result, the new program that had promised much did little more than displace the poor who were primarily minorities. Those who did find homes in public housing

⁵ Jackson, 208.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 213.

⁸ Jackle, 130 and Jackson, 227.

⁹ Bettina Drew, *Crossing the Expendable Landscape* (St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1998), 11.

buildings soon found them to be a breeding ground for squalor. Intended to be a revitalizing program for American cities, Urban Renewal contributed to the downward spiral of urban life.

New housing construction in Camden between 1960 and 1974 amounted to 3,649 units.¹¹ Unfortunately, demolition records within those same years were not kept, although the barren landscape speaks volumes. Also, during the 1970s Camden experienced severe rioting, which further destroyed the built environment.¹² Certainly, this contributed to the need for demolition. The period between 1975 to 1988 reflect the demolition of 3,208 units and the erection of 751 new units.¹³

Today, the quality of life and economic conditions in Camden are very bleak. The poorest city in New Jersey, Camden suffers from “a dwindling tax base, a tax collection rate that is among the lowest in the state, double-digit unemployment and a deteriorating housing stock.”¹⁴ Plagued with a chronic inability to balance its budget, the State of New Jersey seized control of the financial management of Camden’s \$116 million budget by creating a review board appointed by Governor Christine Whitman in 1998. Currently the city relies on state aid for over half of its annual budget, the highest in New Jersey.¹⁵ Because of the decline in population, the continuing abandonment of private property,

¹⁰ Jackle, 132.

¹¹ Robert A. Beauregard and Nebahat Tokali, *Selected Twentieth-Century Historical Data: City of Camden, New Jersey* (New Brunswick, NJ: Department of Urban Planning and Policy Development School of Urban Planning Rutgers University, 1990), table 16.

¹² Jeffery M. Dorwort and Phillip English Mackey, *Camden County, New Jersey, 1616-1976, A Narrative History* (New Jersey: Camden County Cultural and Heritage Commission, 1976), 325.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Dwight Ott and Nancy Phillips, “Milan Getting Mixed Reviews for His Promises of Turnaround.” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 30 July 1998, South Jersey edition.

¹⁵ Nancy Phillips and Dwight Ott, “N.J. Sets Up Panel to Run Camden,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 July, 1998, Chester County Edition.

low-income levels and fleeing businesses, only \$22 million of the budget comes from local property taxes.¹⁶

Population statistics confirm the active movement of the middle class residents out of Camden, most likely facilitated by public policy and racial conflict. Between 1940 and 1950, the greatest addition to the population were a number of African Americans who came to the city seeking employment in local factories.¹⁷ Shortly thereafter, there was an exponential growth of over 91,000 in suburban Camden County between 1950 and 1960.¹⁸ During the same years, the population of Camden decreased for the first time. In April, 1959, a newspaper reporter counted 332 “For Sale” signs in North Camden alone.¹⁹ The suburban population expansion continued through the 70s, 80s and 90s while the city’s population decreased continually during the corresponding decades.²⁰ Today, Camden has a population of 87,492, an increase of 2,582 from 1980.²¹ This represents the first growth since the decade that marked its peak population at 124,555 in 1950.²²

Camden’s residential profile predominately consists of a minority population. Over 50 percent of the inhabitants are African American. According to the 1990 census, Hispanics make up approximately 25 percent, while white residents account for 19

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Dorwort, 281.

¹⁸ Beauregard, table 1.

¹⁹ *Camden Historic Survey*, v. 1 (Camden: Bureau of Planning, Office of Development, City of Camden, 1982), 50.

²⁰ 1990 U.S. Census Data and Beauregard, table 1.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

percent of the population. Also, there is a small, but rapidly growing, contingent of Asian residents.²³

According to census information, the 1989 median household income was \$17,386. Of the total population, 36.6 percent are below poverty level. Poverty status runs highest among the female householders, which accounts for 50 percent of the households in Camden. Census tract number 6005, an area in South Camden that encompasses a portion of Fettersville, has the lowest median annual income in the city at \$4,999.²⁴ The poverty level is among the highest in Camden and statistics additionally reflect the absence of homeownership within the area.²⁵

Contributing to the low-income status is the lack of jobs. In 1988, 28,230 were available in the private sector.²⁶ Comparatively, in 1954, at its employment peak, Camden offered 63,584 jobs.²⁷ Within the span of 35 years, Camden lost over 35,000 jobs, thus accounting for the double-digit unemployment. Currently, manufacturing concerns employ the majority of the working population.²⁸ However, because Camden houses three prominent hospitals, there are also a growing number of jobs available within the health-care industry.²⁹ The Campbell's Soup Company located in Camden since its founding in 1863, is one of the few primary businesses remaining in the city; however, its manufacturing plant has moved elsewhere.

²³ <http://www.hud.gov/cpes/nj/camdecnj.html>, *Camden NJ Consolidated Plan for 1995, Executive Summary*, 6 February 1999, 2.

²⁴ 1990 U.S. Census.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Beauregard, table 6.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Camden NJ Consolidated Plan, 5

Typical of New England and mid-Atlantic cities, the housing stock in Camden is a mix of brick row homes, twins and duplexes and small apartment buildings. The majority of the structures date from 1939 or earlier.³⁰ Only 1300 of the 30,138 housing units in the city were built between 1980 and 1990.³¹ Of the 26,626 occupied housing units in the city, just over 50 percent are owner occupied while the remaining properties are renter-occupied.³² According to the *1995 Consolidated Plan for Camden*, the median market-rate rent exceeds median affordable rent by 13 to 28 percent, depending on the size of the housing unit.³³ Further, the average housing unit sells for \$35,000 or lower.³⁴

Vacant properties and lots are a common feature of the landscape. Two years ago, a coalition of community groups inventoried the city's abandoned buildings creating a list of over 4000 properties to be boarded up or demolished.³⁵ Approximately 250 properties were demolished in 1998, while the remaining 3750 were sealed awaiting the next step in the process.³⁶ Officials are now seeking to turn over the salvageable units to non-profit housing agencies for rehabilitation.³⁷ Neighborhood residents and organizations are urged to keep a consistent account of newly vacated buildings.

Despite its dilapidated state, Camden recognized the importance and value of its extant physical resource and heritage. In response, the city developed a Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1983. Akin to other city's ordinances, Camden's primary

³⁰ 1990 U.S. Census Data.

³¹ Beauregard, table 16.

³² Camden New Jersey Consolidated Plan, 2.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Beauregard, table 14.

³⁵ Russell J. Rickford, "In Camden, Victory on Abandoned Houses," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 July 1998, South Jersey Section.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

intent is to “safeguard the heritage of the City of Camden by preserving that part of the city which reflects elements of its cultural, social, economic, and architectural history.” Further the ordinance seeks to maintain a harmonious setting, stabilize and improve property values, foster civic and neighborhood pride, educate and contribute to the general welfare of its citizens and encourage private investment within historic structures.³⁸ Unfortunately, the city has a poor track record of enforcement, tending to discard its cultural patrimony. For example, following nearly six years of negotiation and 18 months of planning, the vacant, neo-classical style Camden Free Public Library was slated to receive a badly needed new roof. Despite a signed contract the project was never implemented. As a result, the roof collapsed thereby exposing the interior to the elements. Currently, a collection of trees grows within the once vibrant structure.³⁹

In 1983, the Bureau of Planning and Office of Development produced an inventory of 200 historic properties within the city. The record identified architecturally and historically significant buildings, streetscapes and districts with the intent to be used as a guide to direct new development while retaining the city’s heritage and character.⁴⁰ Today, there are four designated historic districts. All are located primarily within the Central Business District with the exception of Fairview, which is situated at the southern end of the city across the Newton Creek. A number of properties within and around the

³⁸ Code of the City of Camden, Article XXXIII, Historic District Review, amended in 1995.

³⁹ Camilo Jose Vergara, “A Tree Grows in the Heart of Camden Public Library,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 18 April 1998.

⁴⁰ Camden Survey, 51

Central Business District utilized the 20 percent historic preservation tax credit.⁴¹ The 1983 Camden Historic Survey confirms the focal point of many of these efforts.

The greatest incidence of adaptive re-use of historic structures occurs along Cooper Street . . . and in the immediate area of Cooper Hospital. At other locations in the city, there is an extremely high rate of vacant structures where commercial ventures once thrived.⁴²

This statement is also true for numerous housing units within neighborhoods of historical significance lying outside of the primary business district.

Historically, Camden was a city containing numerous cohesive ethnic neighborhoods, containing Polish, German, Black, Italian and Jewish populations.⁴³ The nucleus of each community was the church or synagogue. Present day Camden retains a similar landscape in that clear lines are drawn between neighborhoods. While the ethnic makeup has changed, distinct communities remain. Furthermore, many continue to draw upon a particular sacred space for their empowerment.

In Camden, neighborhood development corporations seem to work the best in combating the economic woes afflicting the city.⁴⁴ A primary reason for this approach is that the city itself has been working without a Master Plan since 1992.⁴⁵ Moreover, according to Robert Thompson, Camden's Historic Preservation Planner, the city government is seriously understaffed due to political mismanagement. As a result, there

⁴¹M. Scott Doyle, University of Pennsylvania Graduate Student, interview by author, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 21 February 1999.

⁴² Ibid. and Camden Survey, 45

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Robert Thompson, City of Camden Preservation Planner, interview by author, Camden, New Jersey, 2 February 1999.

⁴⁵ Charles E. Lyons, Jr., City of Camden Principal Planner, interview by author, Camden, New Jersey, 11 March 1999.

is no connection between planning and implementation at the local government level.

Neighborhoods have to and in some instances, do empower themselves.⁴⁶

Consequently, community groups and non-profit corporations representing different locales within the city have taken on development projects explicitly for the revitalization of their specific neighborhoods. In North Camden, the Concerned Citizens of North Camden, a group that was formed with the assistance of the Camden Lutheran Parish, acquires abandoned housing with the intent to rehabilitate it. Heart of Camden, a group affiliated with Sacred Heart Church in a particular area in South Camden, has also developed a housing rehabilitation program. Fairview Historic Society Inc. was created in response to the local designation of the neighborhood as a historic district.

However, the majority of the non-profit groups representing communities are solely in the housing development business. Again, according to City Planner, Charles Lyons, the non-profits tend to focus on individual housing projects as opposed to developing long-term neighborhood planning initiatives. Nevertheless, these groups represent a number of the neighborhood coalitions and non-profit corporations within the city that recognize the importance of preserving a sense of place and sustaining the built environment.

The Fettersville community, to be examined in this thesis, is an area in great need of revitalization. Although the entire neighborhood and several individual structures within the community were inventoried in the 1983 Historic Structures Survey, and were included in the newly updated survey, plans have not been developed to protect and revitalize the vicinity.⁴⁷ Row houses, typical of mid-Atlantic nineteenth century working

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Thompson, interview.

class neighborhoods, characterize the housing stock and storefront businesses throughout the neighborhood. Furthermore, two historic religious properties represent examples of faith-based organizations that continue to preserve the fabric of the community. Yet, the built environment, as with much of the city, is rapidly deteriorating.

Fettersville is located in the larger geographic area known as South Camden.

Encompassing an approximate twenty two-block area, its boundaries are east of Fifth Street, south of Line Street, west of Front Street and north of Chestnut Street.⁴⁸ At present the community is largely African American and Hispanic. The economic stability and infrastructure deterioration of Fettersville is parallel to Camden's overall state of despair.

Founded in 1833, the neighborhood housed the largest contingent of free African Americans, although native whites and a large number of immigrant residents defined the primary population.⁴⁹ Within the period of the 1860s through the 1880s, a small German population settled in the area. By the turn of the century and through the 1920s the Germans moved southeast, settling above Broadway, allowing for the entrance of a large population of Italians entering the city in response to the industrial boom. Finally, by the 1960's a Latino population, primarily from Puerto Rico, settled in the locale.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ These are the historic boundaries taken from the original real estate transfers from the Kaighn sisters to Richard Fetters. Some authors and accounts have indicated the boundaries extend as far south as Kaighn Ave, however for this study I will use the perimeters stated within the document entitled *Property Transfers from the Kaighn Estates to Various Camden grantees, 1812-1856*, located at the Camden County Historical Society.

⁴⁹ Spencer R. Crew, *Black Life in Secondary Cities: A Comparative Analysis of the Black Communities of Camden and Elizabeth New Jersey 1860-1920* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1993), 40.

⁵⁰ For general histories of Fettersville see Prowell, Dorwart, Boyer, Crew cited in the bibliography.

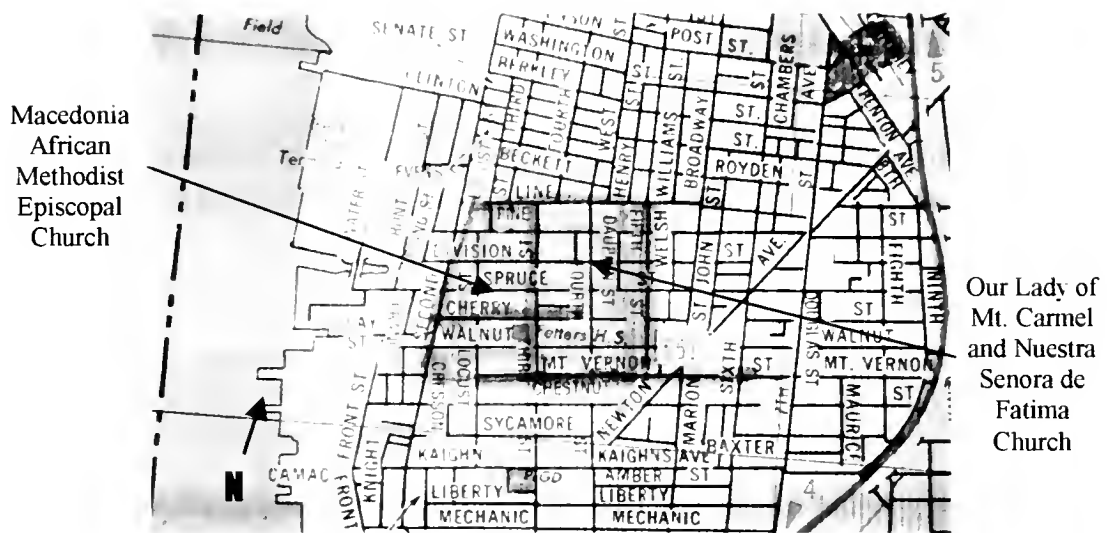


Figure 1: Boundaries of Fettersville with churches

As previously mentioned, and to be discussed in greater detail in Chapters Two, Three and Four, two historic religious properties mark the landscape in Fettersville representing crucial stabilizing elements within the community. Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the first black church of Camden, is situated on the corner of Spruce and Second Streets. Although, not currently serving the immediate Fettersville Puerto Rican community, Macedonia AME nevertheless offers numerous outreach programs for African American residents throughout Camden. The other historic religious property is the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Nuestra Senora de Fatima Roman Catholic Church complex which is well established on Ramona Gonzalez Boulevard (formerly Division Street) and Fourth Street. Originally founded to serve the growing Italian community around the turn of the century, the Church currently provides for the extant Latino population. In addition to fulfilling their spiritual needs, the Church extends outreach and community development programs aimed specifically toward Fettersville's Hispanic community. Both institutions are physical artifacts of the evolution of Fettersville. They exemplify the most important physical evidence of

religious and ethnic pluralism that, on a macro scale, defines national character as well as Fettersville's unique individuality. It is through this history, each institution intends to strengthen and revitalize present day Fettersville.

Two ♦ A Burgeoning Neighborhood: The African Americans in Fettersville

Before discussing the history and development of Fettersville, it may be useful to present a brief overview of the founding of Camden City for contextual purposes. In addition, as the history of the neighborhood progresses, relevant citywide trends will be discussed to maintain a link with the broader scope.

Primarily populated because of its proximity to the water, Quakers Arnold and William Cooper acquired Pyne Point, in 1681.⁵¹ Settlement of the area progressed slowly. In 1695 the General Assembly assented to the formation of the Township of Newton, within Gloucester County.⁵² Other small villages began to develop around this area that would later be included within the City of Camden. The Coopers became large stakeholders in Camden, eventually owning most of the land that is Camden's present day downtown commercial district. Other prominent pioneers involved in the acquisition and development of Camden's land in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were William Royden, John Kaighn and Archibald Mickle.⁵³ Their legacy remains as their surnames are lent to various street and place names throughout present day Camden.

Large land lots were passed through generations before division and sale. As such, the population of Gloucester County, and the area to be known as the town of Camden, grew slowly. In 1772, one year before the layout of the official town plan, the area possessed a few homes, a store, a post office and a schoolhouse located some distance

⁵¹ Dorwart, 11-13 and Crew, 7.

⁵² Paul F. Cranston, *Camden County 1681-1931 Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary: The Story of an Industrial Empire* (Camden, New Jersey: Camden County Chamber of Commerce, 1931), 55.

from town.⁵⁴ Although, the area was small and growing slowly, the New Jersey legislature recognized the potential for a successful city. In 1812, the government authorized the establishment of a state bank in the town of Camden.⁵⁵ It was not until 1815, however, that the village of Camden began an intensive development.

Increased maturation in the transportation sector, including ferry services, a stage coach line and the first railroad line, in 1835, insured Camden a position as a high stakes player in the business realm. Its sound transportation routes to Philadelphia and throughout Southern New Jersey attracted the attention of numerous businessmen.⁵⁶ As a result, population and business investments grew. In 1828, with 1,143 residents, the village of Camden seceded from Newton Township, becoming incorporated as the City of Camden.⁵⁷ Following incorporation the city grew rapidly. Within three years the population more than doubled reflecting 2,341 residents.⁵⁸ Because of rapid expansion, merely eleven years following the incorporation a new county named after the city was forged out of Gloucester County. Camden became the county seat of the newly formed Camden County.⁵⁹

In his diary, Isaac Mickle, the son of prominent businessman John Mickle, described the five distinct hamlets within the City of Camden in 1838. All were included in the act of incorporation.

⁵³ George R. Prowell, *The History of Camden County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: L.J.Richards & Company, 1886), 408-415.

⁵⁴ Crew, 22.

⁵⁵ Dorwart, 31.

⁵⁶ Dorwart, 30.

⁵⁷ Crew, 22.

⁵⁸ Phillip English Mackey, ed., *A Gentleman of Much Promise, The Diary of Isaac Mickle*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 24-27.

⁵⁹ Crew, 22.

Cooper's Point, the northernmost location of the five, represented the first settlement area and the location of a ferry port.

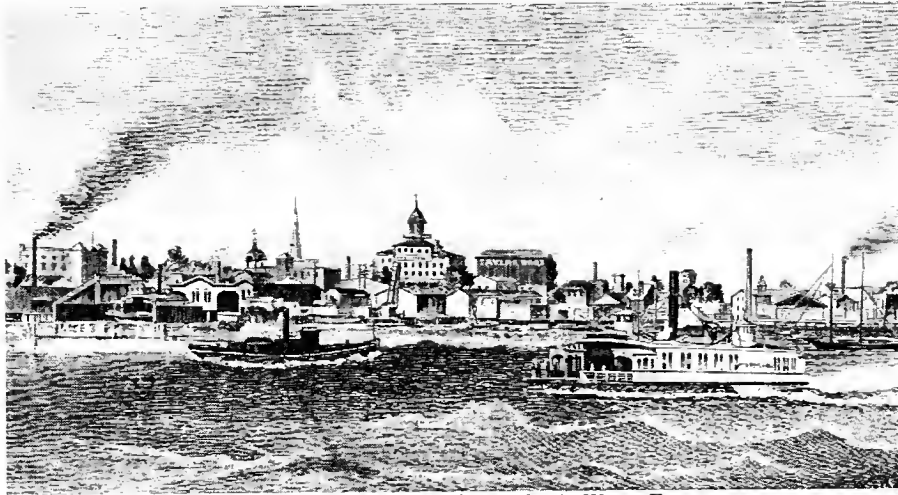


Figure 2: A Glimpse of Camden's WaterFront

The area accommodated twelve to fourteen dwelling houses. Midway between Cooper's Point and Camden, *Carmenville* contained a lumberyard, steam gristmill and extensive cap-factory and eight or ten dwellings. *Camden*, the principal part of the city, lying directly across from Philadelphia, was exceedingly metropolitan in comparison to the other sectors. The city's primary services, trades, public institutions, modes of transportation and entertainment were clustered around this central business district. *Kaighn's Point* was situated across from the Philadelphia navy yard and contained one ferry that ran to South Street. In addition there was a tavern, a schoolhouse, a coach manufactory, a tannery and several dwellings.⁶⁰ The fifth hamlet was *Fetterville*. Mickle describes the community that,

Fettertown,⁶¹ alias Hard Scrabble, is built on a bog between Camden and Kaighn's Point. There is a tavern, a homony (vide Walker) mill.

⁶⁰ Mackey, 24-26.

⁶¹ Mickle refers to this section as Fettertown and also Fetterville. All other research completed indicates the area was historically referred to as Fetterville.

a grocery, a garden for “the people of color” and thirty to forty houses, tenanted principally by that unfortunate race, “On whom Afric’s Sun has set his seal.”⁶²

As Isaac Mickle harshly described, the Fettersville neighborhood in South Camden, accommodated a high concentration of the free black population of Camden.

The name Fettersville was derived from its founder Richard Fetters. Fetters, a prominent businessman and civic leader, was a principal spirit in the rise of Camden City. Having moved to Camden in 1826, Fetters opened a store on Third and Markets Streets.⁶³

In 1828, the year of incorporation, Fetters was elected to the City Council, the beginning of his life as an illustrious civic leader. In 1863, upon his death, an editor of a newspaper pondered the accomplishments of Fetters relating, “Fetters is one of the pioneers of this city and has probably done more for the advancement and improvement of the place than any other single gentlemen.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, in *The History of Camden County, New Jersey*, Prowell states that he was a primary influence in the growth and improvements of Camden’s ferry operations as well as introducing a water supply into the city.⁶⁵

Demonstrating a businessman’s savvy, Fetters observed Camden’s rapid population growth and purchased large lots of land with the intention of establishing a planned settlement. In 1833, Fetters bought land from Charity and Grace Kaighn bounded by Line Street to the north, Cherry Street to the south, Third Street to the east and by the river on the west.⁶⁶ Divided into smaller lots, the land was offered for sale at low rates and easy

⁶² Mackey, 26.

⁶³ Prowell, 422 and *Walter’s Camden and Gloucester Directory* (Philadelphia: O. Durang, W. Hendman, H.Curtis. 1850).

⁶⁴ Prowell, 422.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Prowell, 421 and Property Transfers from the Kaighn Estates to Various Camden Grantees, 1812-1856. Camden County Historical Society.

terms, attracting large numbers of people of modest incomes, many being African Americans.⁶⁷ According to Charles Boyer, in *The Civil and Political History of Camden County and Camden City*, lots measuring 30 by 200 feet sold for \$50.00.⁶⁸



Richard Fetters

Figure 3: Richard Fetters

Due to the success of Fetters' original venture, he purchased additional land in 1835 from the Kaighn sisters extending the boundaries two blocks south to Mt. Vernon Street and two blocks east to Fifth Street. By 1836, within three years of its founding, lots now measuring 40 by 100 feet sold for \$125.00.⁶⁹ In consideration of Fetters intended ferry port on the Spruce Street waterfront, all housing fronted the east and west streets. The ferry port was never realized, but the plan remained as conceived.⁷⁰ J.C. Sidney's 1851 map confirms the configuration of the buildings.⁷¹ In addition, the footprints indicate the

⁶⁷ Ibid., 422 and Crew, 24.

⁶⁸ Charles S. Boyer, *The Civil and Political History of Camden County and Camden City* (Camden: Privately Published, 1922), 32.

⁶⁹ Prowell, 422

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *J.C. Sidney Map of the City of Camden* (Philadelphia: Richard Clark, 1851).

building of approximately 285 structures, demonstrating the exponential growth of a settlement founded merely twenty years prior.

Although the majority of the buildings are not indicated by use in the Sidney Map, three structures denote a particular function. Thomas Dodamead established a brass foundry worth \$3500 on the eastside of Fourth Street between Cherry and Walnut Streets. Furthermore, he owned more property on the corner of Pine and Third Streets. According to the 1850 census, Mr. Dodamead was a “mulatto” from England, who represented an early and rare example of a successful black businessman.⁷² The Washington Hotel was established on the corner of Fourth Street, between Spruce and Cherry Streets. Finally, a Baptist Church was located on the southeast corner of Fourth and Division Streets.



Figure 4: Fettersville in 1851 J.C. Sidney Map

⁷² Bureau of the Census. *Seventh Census of the United States, Population, Camden County, 1850* (Camden County Historical Society Co. #432, Reel #445).

Established in 1848, Prowell states that this was the Second Baptist Church, which later sold the property to St. Peter and St. Paul Catholic Church, a German congregation.⁷³ Subsequently, this is the same property that Our Lady of Mt. Carmel purchased in 1907 to establish its Italian parish.

Although it is known that by 1838 the Macedonia AME congregation had constructed their church, the building is not identified on the Sidney Map. Similar to the absence of black residents in the Walter's 1850 City Directory, it becomes evident that black institutions were also eliminated from primary citizen identification documents.

William Murtagh best describes the basic dwelling house forms of Camden in his definition of the bandbox house, a small building of economical means.⁷⁴ Although Murtagh's description discusses a Philadelphia prototype, it is not surprising to find a similar housing type in Camden.⁷⁵

Typically two or three stories, the gabled roof domicile consisted of one room per floor, with a plan rarely larger than sixteen feet on any dimension. This is mostly likely because lot sizes of 30 feet often dictated a dwelling of such small measurement, especially modest worker row houses. A winding staircase situated along the party wall allowed for access to the upper floors. It was lighted and ventilated by a front door and one window on the first story and two windows on subsequent stories. The rear elevation

⁷³ Prowell, 478.

⁷⁴ William Murtagh, "The Philadelphia Row House," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 16 (1957): 9.

⁷⁵ It should be noted that a number of local lumber merchants, with no connection to Philadelphia, built many of these houses. Furthermore, there is an ongoing discussion between Philadelphia and New Jersey historians as to whether West New Jersey were cultural satellites of Philadelphia. Philadelphia historians

usually contained one to two windows per story and had a first floor door leading to the back yard. Akin to the bandbox description, early Fetersville dwellings primarily represented a two-story frame structure and units generally reflected a post medieval-English architectural style. By city ordinance, all structures after 1853 were to be of brick construction, thus drawing as end to frame construction in the city.⁷⁶



Figure 5: Fetersville Housing Typology
Courtesy of the Camden County Historical Society

As stated earlier, Fetersville accommodated a substantial population of free-blacks. A large constituency of free-blacks inhabited Gloucester County, of which Camden was a part. In contrast, in Essex County in East New Jersey, the number of slaves far outnumbered those found in Gloucester County. For example, in 1820 Essex County

believe their city has had an influence on the aesthetic and cultural development of Camden, whereas Camden historians believe that this is not the case.

accommodated 659 slaves, while Camden retained 74 slaves.⁷⁷ By 1830 Camden, now a legally separate entity, completely eradicated slavery, while Elizabeth, New Jersey, located in Essex County, still counted 13 slaves living within its boundaries.⁷⁸ In large part, the presence of the Quakers and their anti-slavery beliefs contributed to the free black population growth within Camden. Between 1830 and 1840, black citizenry increased nearly sixfold from 67 to 380 peoples.⁷⁹ By the 1860s and early 1870s most African Americans lived in Fettersville, constituting the location of 89 percent of the of the city's black population.⁸⁰

However, while a considerable number of African Americans lived in Fettersville, a large white population occupied the area as well. Although the majority of the blacks living in Camden settled in Fettersville, they represented approximately only one fifth of the entire population of the neighborhood. To illustrate, according to the 1850 census there were a total of 3, 486 white persons and 626 black persons residing in Fettersville.⁸¹ It was not unusual during these times for blacks and whites to live in the same community as neighbors.⁸²

Mild clustering did occur. For example, George Wharton, John Height, Solomon Bean, Jacob Carter, Nathan Geges, and Curtis Tumes, all African American, lived next to

⁷⁶ *Act of Incorporation of the City of Camden and the Supplements Thereto: Together with the Ordinances of City Council* (Camden, New Jersey: J.H. Jones, 1857), 141.

⁷⁷ Crew, 13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 40. By this time the population had begun to spread across Broadway to Kaignsville, largely as a result of the work of Dempsey Bulter, a prominent black businessman. Kaignsville is another black settlement that will be addressed in Chapter Three.

⁸¹ 1850 U.S. Census Data.

⁸² Emma Jones Lapsansky, "South Street Philadelphia, 1762-1854: A Haven for Those Low in the World" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1974), 89.

each other.⁸³ A concentration of black residents resided around the areas of Second, Third, Spruce, and Pine Streets, presumably due to the location of the AME Church.

Although blacks and whites lived together, they were not considered equal. African Americans tended to dominate the labor employment sectors, while their native white counterparts represented the storeowners and skilled laborers in the neighborhood.⁸⁴ Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the Walter's 1850 City Directory of Camden does not include "African Americans" among categories in its listing of residents.⁸⁵

As a source of stability and refuge in an environment of racial tensions and perceptions, the church represented an important institution in the lives of African Americans.⁸⁶ Du Bois has called the building of these black churches the "first form of economic cooperation" among black people.⁸⁷ From the beginning, the AME church was concerned with providing social service relief to those in need along with quality education.⁸⁸ In Fetersville, the institution that provided such sanctuary was the Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church. Macedonia AME should, in fact, be included as one of the pioneering congregations in contributing to the growth and strength of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination.

An outgrowth of the Free African Society, a mutual aid organization for benevolent purposes, the establishment of the first African Methodist Episcopal Church dates from

⁸³ Bureau of the Census, *Sixth Census of the United States, Population, Gloucester County, Cape May County, Salem County, 1840* (Camden County Historical Society Microfilm Co. #704, Reel #252).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Walter's Directory, 1850 and 1850 U.S. Census Data. The information was based upon comparing the persons indicated as "Black" from the 1850 Census to the names listed in the Directory. Persons identified as black in the census were not listed in the directory.

⁸⁶ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 7.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 8.

1787 in Philadelphia.⁸⁹ Richard Allen and Absalom Jones and other black worshippers withdrew from St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church after being pulled from their knees during worship in an area restrictive to black Christians.⁹⁰ Although remaining under the leadership of white Methodists, African Americans obtained their own places of worship of which Mother Bethel AME in Philadelphia was the first. In 1816, when five mid-Atlantic congregations came together in Philadelphia concerned over the white Methodists' domination over ownership of property and assignment of ministers, the African Methodist Episcopal Church was officially organized.⁹¹ Richard Allen was elected bishop and adopted a similar book of disciplines originating from Wesleyan principles.⁹² In doing this, the black Methodists officially seceded from the white Methodist establishment.

The membership of the newly organized denomination grew rapidly. Within two years of its founding membership increased from 1,000 to nearly 7,000.⁹³ Furthermore, four years after the official organization, 43 missions grew from the original five. Authors Lincoln and Mamiya state that, Rev. Morris Brown, a principal player in the founding of Macedonia AME, was eminent in much of this early rapid development.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 50-51.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁹¹ Ibid., 52

⁹² Ibid., and E. Franklin Frazier and C. Eric Lincoln, *The Negro Church in America, The Black Church Since Frazier* (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1974), 33.

⁹³ Lincoln, 53.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 53

Rev. Brown traveled from South Carolina to Philadelphia in 1822, after the burning of his church by whites that were enraged by a monumental slave insurrection involving members of his congregation. He soon established residency in Philadelphia.⁹⁵

Presumably recognizing the growing black population in South Camden and the residents desire to construct a gathering place, Rev. Brown purchased land for such a purpose. According to deed information, Richard Fetters sold a 30 by 200 plot of land to Rev. Brown and his wife Maria in 1835. Situated on the north side of Spruce Street, 60 feet from Third Street, Fetters stipulated the mandatory erection of a house of worship or the price of the land would increase from \$100 to \$130. Lot number 68, the site of the church, was the third plot from the corner of Spruce and Third Streets.⁹⁶ A man by the name of Mitchell owned the corner lot, number 66. The owner of lot number 67 is unknown and lot number 69 was owned by Lydia Truitt. According to a mechanics lien the construction of the church was complete in 1838.⁹⁷

Furthermore, in 1840, Rev. Brown sold, for the consideration of \$100.00, one half of his lot number 68, measuring 30 by 100, to Perry Wilson, Miley Butler and Joseph Anderson, Camden NJ Trustees in Trust. As such, Macedonia AME Church was established almost simultaneously with the development of Fettersville, defining it as the first black institution in Camden.

The black population of Fettersville and Camden continued to grow. As a result, the need for a larger edifice became evident. In 1883, contractor and builder James Aspen entered into an agreement with the Trustees of Macedonia, to "furnish, erect and finish a

⁹⁵ Ibid., 52.

⁹⁶ Deed Book O-3 (Woodbury, Gloucester County, NJ), 273.

two story brick church on a lot on the north side of Spruce Street, west of Third Street in Camden.” for the amount of \$8000.⁹⁸

As such, the contract stipulated that the windows on the sides and rear would emulate those of the Scotts ME Church located in Camden’s Centerville, built by Aspen. The glass, however, would differ. Further, the façade was to replicate that of the Fifth Street ME Church in Camden using the best Philadelphia pressed brick and marble for the openings.⁹⁹ All three churches represent the so-called Romanesque Revival style of architecture.

Designed in a rectangular/central aisle plan, the interior was comprised of a front parlor area, an auditorium and a raised basement.¹⁰⁰ Although the Church had 240 communing members and 155 pupils in Sunday school at the time, the new church had a seating capacity of 800, anticipating continued growth.¹⁰¹ Fortunately their ambitious foresight proved correct since the Church continued to grow in size and stature during the following years. By 1920, Macedonia had become one of the largest and most influential black institutions in Camden and remains the oldest black congregation in the city.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Mechanics lien located at the Camden County Historical Society.

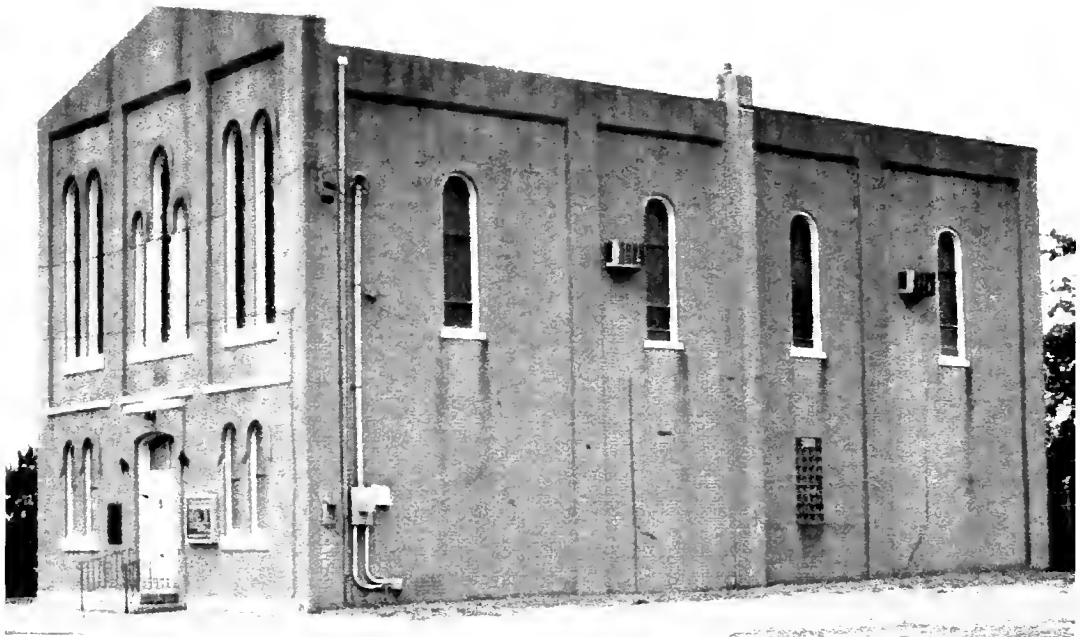
⁹⁸ Macedonia AME Church Building Contract, 1883, Camden County Historical Society, New Jersey.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Prowell, 475 and Building Contract.

¹⁰¹ Prowell, 475.

¹⁰² Crew, 151.



*Figure 6: Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church
265 Spruce Street*

As previously discussed, in the eighteenth century African American churches provided more than mere spiritual guidance; it was a center point of social, educational and economical development. Traditionally the African Methodist Episcopal Church had been deeply involved in racial solidarity and abolitionist activity.¹⁰³ Intrinsically, Macedonia AME has played a crucial role in the anti-slavery movement.

Long believed to have been a stop on the Underground Railroad the physical location of the church also lends credence to the story, since an established line led slaves across the Delaware Bay into South Jersey and then northward through Camden, Burlington, Bordentown and Mount Holly.¹⁰⁴ A particular incident involving a captured fugitive slave put Macedonia directly in the heart of the situation. In 1847, congregants apprehended a slave catcher, forcibly preventing the abduction of a fugitive slave by surrounding his wagon and verbally assailing him. The catcher surrendered to the crowd and the slave was freed to continue his flight to freedom.¹⁰⁵

In addition, Macedonia supported developing institutions and organizations before they were able to erect and meet in their own buildings. For example, black fraternal organization, Aurora Lodge No. 9 of the Free and Accepted Masons, met in the rear of Macedonia for nearly 25 years before the construction of their own building, Newton Hall.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, formal schools for African American youth did not appear until the fifth decade of the nineteenth century. To fill the void, Mr. Holland of Fettersville

¹⁰³ Lincoln, 52.

¹⁰⁴ Crew, 25 and Dorwart, 50.

¹⁰⁵ Crew, 26.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 27.

opened an informal school in Macedonia in May of 1840.¹⁰⁷ It was not until 1860 that a school, explicitly for black pupils was constructed with funds collected by black parents in South Camden.¹⁰⁸

Macedonia AME Church, like numerous AME churches established in urban environments, significantly contributed to the growth and endurance of the black inhabitants of Fetersville. Not unlike the Catholic or Protestant churches serving immigrant populations, the AME church offered the black community a spiritual solace in addition to secular support. Historically, these sacred spaces were the spine of their particular communities.

¹⁰⁷ Mackey, vol. 2, 273.

¹⁰⁸ Crew, 128.

Three ♦ The Evolving Landscape The Italians and the Latinos

From the 1860s onward, through the turn of the century, the rise of Camden as an industrial center facilitated a large and diversified population. Contemporaneous with the birth of its industrial landscape, the growing society of Camden encompassed a developing landscape of heterogeneity. Immigrants from Germany, England and Ireland first entered the United States, travelling primarily to urban centers in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s. Because of its rapid development as a manufacturing center, Camden became a destination of opportunity for the first wave of immigrants.

Following the early newcomers were the Italians and Eastern Europeans, principally peoples of Polish, Jewish and Russian descent. They entered the burgeoning cities in the 1890s, 1900s, 1910s and 1920s in search of employment and fortune. Again, Camden was a recipient. As a result, the city, like other urban centers, demonstrated a correlation between industrialization and a vastly expanding population.

Immigration, however, was not the sole reason for Camden's expanded population. In 1871, the boundaries of the city grew to six and a half square miles with the annexation of the two southern communities of Kaighnsville and Stockton.¹⁰⁹ Kaighnsville, located east of Seventh and south of Chestnut Streets, was a thriving black settlement founded in the 1840s. Essentially, it was the southern line of demarcation of Fettersville. The Stockton community was an outgrowth of the Kaighn's Point Land Company development of the early 1850s.¹¹⁰ Bounded by Broadway between Ferry Avenue and

¹⁰⁹ Dorwart, 55.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Jackson Street, the neighborhood extended south of Kaighnsville. As a result of the annexation, Camden's wards changed from North, Middle and South to eight numbered wards.¹¹¹ Fettersville occupied in the Fifth and Sixth Wards.

Indeed, the blunt tops of factory buildings and puffing smokestacks dotted Camden's developing skyline, a characteristic of any growing industrial city. While census takers had counted 80 manufacturing concerns in 1860, there were 125 in the same area in 1870.¹¹² By the 1930s, while the city ranked fifth in industrial output, Camden was truly New Jersey's most highly industrialized city, leading the entire nation in the proportion of its population engaged in industry.¹¹³

Numerous small industries and several large companies contributed to Camden's manufacturing profile. The first primary manufacturing firm to establish itself in Camden was the Esterbrook Steel Pen Company.¹¹⁴ The first of its kind in America, it opened in 1858 with 15 employees. By 1886, the Company retained 300 workers, 250 of them women.¹¹⁵ Further, in 1867, Joseph Campbell and Archibald Anderson founded a small canning and preserving plant at 41 North Second Street. By 1930, the Campbell's Soup Company plant covered five city blocks.¹¹⁶

Between 1880 and 1900, big business entered the city. An integral manufacturing enterprise facilitating the rise of Camden was the RCA Victor Company, originally known as The Victor Talking Machine Company. Founder, Eldridge Reeves Johnson, had invented the talking disc and what soon became one of Camden's most profitable and

¹¹¹ Prowell, 404.

¹¹² Dorwart, 57.

¹¹³ Cranston, 60.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 62

¹¹⁵ Dorwart, 56 and Prowell, 510.

renowned products.¹¹⁷ At its peak in the 1930s through the 1950s, the company employed approximately 14,000 workers, and its physical plant spread across ten city blocks.¹¹⁸

The last important industry founded in the late nineteenth century was the New York Shipbuilding Corporation. Ultimately becoming the United States largest shipbuilding enterprise, it sprawled over 100 acres at the intersection of Newton Creek and the Delaware River in South Camden.¹¹⁹ Employing approximately 4,000 people, New York Ship constructed virtually everything from scows and concrete barges to cruisers, battleships and great merchant vessels.¹²⁰

Indeed, Camden became a city renowned for the establishment of pioneering enterprises. Many were touted as being the first or largest of its kind in America. In the 1880s, old and new manufacturing enterprises would contribute over \$7,500,000 to the economy.¹²¹ Continued industrial growth in the 1930s was reflected in its \$211,000,000 in manufacturing output.¹²² While a quarter of Camden's population was employed by industries in skilled or professional positions, the majority of the remaining workforce consisted of general unskilled labor.¹²³ Artisans and businessmen served the needs of the neighborhoods. Proprietors of groceries, bakeries, shoe repair shops, butchers shops, watch repair shops, taverns and restaurants, established themselves in communities.

¹¹⁶ Cranston, 67.

¹¹⁷ Dorwart, 76.

¹¹⁸ Cranston, 64.

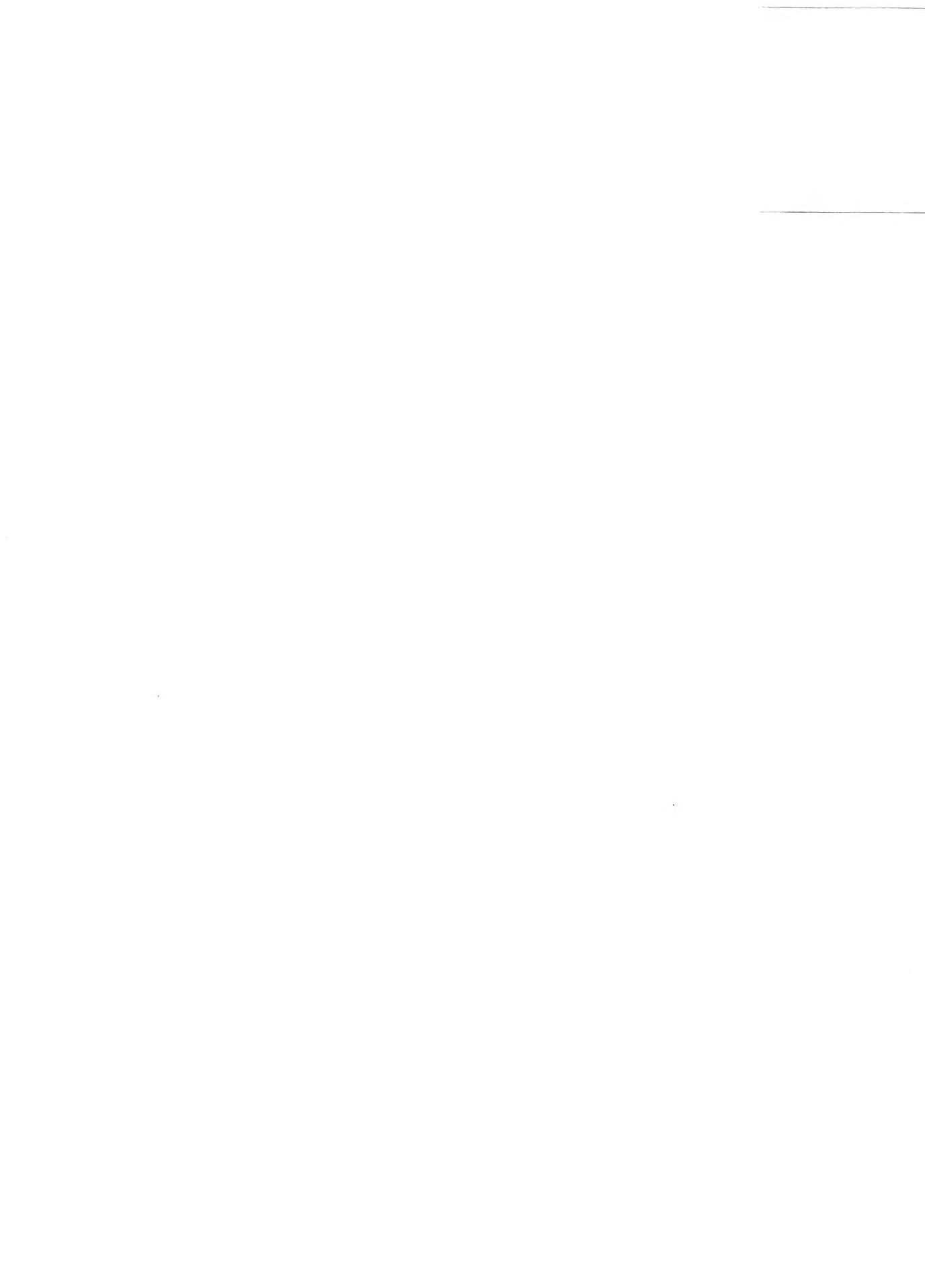
¹¹⁹ Dorwart, 166.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹²² Cranston, 59.

¹²³ Crew, 81.



The community of Fettersville became a self-contained enclave within the larger city, rapidly establishing necessary services and accommodating an ethnically diverse and working class citizenry. Similar to numerous neighborhoods within large industrial cities, it began to develop an urban landscape of density and concentrated ethnic enclaves. In the early stages of its development the land housed free blacks, Irish, English and native white residents.

During the mid 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, as Fettersville grew in congruence with industrialization and immigration, it attracted a fair contingent of Germans. Building their own housing or residing in existing structures, they took up residence in the neighborhood. Two story brick, flat roofed row houses with wooden cornices, flat stone lintels and sills with two windows punctuating each story sat adjacent to earlier frame structures. Soon, Fettersville's housing stock contained a large number of this two-story brick workingman's cottage. Large industries specific to the Fettersville neighborhood during this period was the American Dredging Company located near the waterfront.¹²⁴

Census documentation indicates German immigrants settled in and around Third, Fourth, Spruce and Chestnut Streets.¹²⁵ There was also a small concentration around Second and Mt. Vernon Streets.¹²⁶ Subsequently, there is no strong evidence of intense clustering. Germans were very likely to have Irish, English, black or native white neighbors.¹²⁷ This is very different from the profile that will be drawn of the later Italian

¹²⁴ *City Atlas of Camden, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1877).

¹²⁵ Bureau of the Census, Ninth Census of the United States, Population, Camden County, 1870. (Camden County Historical Society Microfilm Co. #8, Reel#216); Tenth Census of the United States, Population of Camden County 1880 (National Archives Microfilm T-9, Reel 774).

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

immigrants. Many of the German residents were proprietors or laborers, in keeping with the working class profile of the neighborhood.

Typical with new nineteenth century settlements, churches were among the first established institutions representing the ethnicity and beliefs of the neighborhood. The settling prompted the founding of two German churches within the confines of Fettersville. In 1856, the cornerstone for Emanuel United Brethren Church was laid on Line Street above Fourth Street. According to Prowell,

In 1854 a small number of the German population living in the southern part of Camden conceived the feasibility of organizing a German Emanuel Church; a little Sunday school had been started, the meetings being held in the house of Mrs. Louisa Moushe, on Cherry Street, above Third.¹²⁸

In addition, St. Peter's and St. Paul's German Catholic Church, founded in 1867, held worship services in the house of Anthony Kobus at 419 Spruce Street. In 1868, the purchase of the Second Baptist Church for \$4,000 on Fourth and Division Streets solidified the German Roman Catholic presence in Fettersville.¹²⁹

As the German population became more acculturated and economically established, they moved above Broadway to a more affluent area as evidenced by the relocated St. Peter and St. Paul Church and census records.¹³⁰ Initially, the Italians show their presence in Camden as early as 1880.¹³¹ In 1900, however, only 10 percent of the foreign born population of Camden were from Eastern and Southern Europe. Twenty years later

¹²⁸ Prowell, 493.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 497.

¹³⁰ Ibid. and Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, Population, Camden County: 1920* (National Archives Microfilm T-625, Reel # 1022).

¹³¹ 1880 U.S. Census Data.

that number would increase to 60 percent.¹³² Furthermore, most of the foreign-born resident's settled primarily in African American neighborhoods, allegedly competing for their jobs.

In Fettersville, it appeared that the Italians occupied the former housing units of the African Americans as well as moved in among them. A good example is the block of Division Street between Third and Locust Streets to the east. In 1900, the south side of the block was predominately black, while in the 1920s many of the same dwellings gave way to Italian residents. In the same year, however, Italians located on Second Street did have black neighbors.¹³³

More frequently the Italians moved into housing left by previous ethnic groups or native whites, or to a lesser extent, built their own housing.¹³⁴ For example, according to the 1900 Census the north side of the 200 block of Pine Street between Third and Locust Streets showed eight native white and two Italian residents. Yet, in 1920, the same block reflected a 100 percent Italian occupancy.¹³⁵

Although new construction was infrequent, activity on Third Street between Division and Spruce Streets demonstrates the erection of a row of two-story brick row houses and stores occupying the eastside of the block.¹³⁶ Therefore, in the years between 1900 and 1920, the Italian population flourished in Fettersville. Black residents did remain; however, they were even more compressed into the area of Second and Locust Streets

¹³² Dorwart, 164.

¹³³ 1920 U. S. Census Data.

¹³⁴ Dorwart, 90; Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Population, Camden County 1900* (National Archives Microfilm T-623 Reel #959); U.S. Census, 1920.

¹³⁵ 1900 and 1920 U.S. Census Data.

¹³⁶ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, City of Camden*, vol. 2 (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926).

between Cherry, Spruce and Pine Streets. In earlier years, black residents occupied housing as far east as Third Street, yet rarely would they reside above Fourth Street.

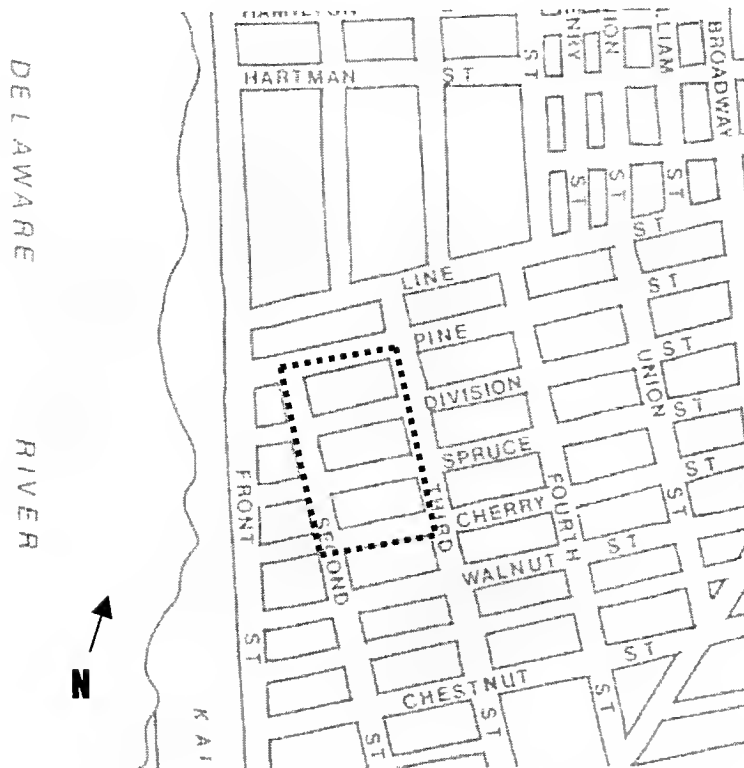


Figure 7: African Americans located below Third Street
 (Union Street is now Fifth Street and Locust Street is now located between Second and Third Streets)

The Italian population, along with Eastern Europeans, supplied the increasing need for unskilled labor in a growing industrial town. While many of the new residents were employed as laborers at the shipyard, RCA, the Coke plant or the Campbell's Soup Company, many founded their own small businesses within the community.¹³⁷ Italian run restaurants, groceries, masonry and roofing companies and bottle distributors could be found in Fettersville in the early to mid 1900s.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ 1900 and 1920 U. S. Census Data.

¹³⁸ *History of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish, Golden Jubilee Program* (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, 1953), 65.

Antonio Mecca, the first Italian American to establish a funeral and embalming business in Camden, was a prominent figure in the Italian community.¹³⁹ On the corner of Division (now Ramona Gonzalez Blvd.) and Fourth Streets, Mecca erected his funeral parlor and business offices in the style of an Italian Renaissance Villa. Constructed of Italian marble with a smooth ashlar beltcourse, the two-story structure exists today as a unique form of architecture representative of the Italian population in South Camden.¹⁴⁰ Mecca's contribution to the Italian-American patrimony continued, as he was an original member of the committee to erect the city's first Italian Roman Catholic Church, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.¹⁴¹

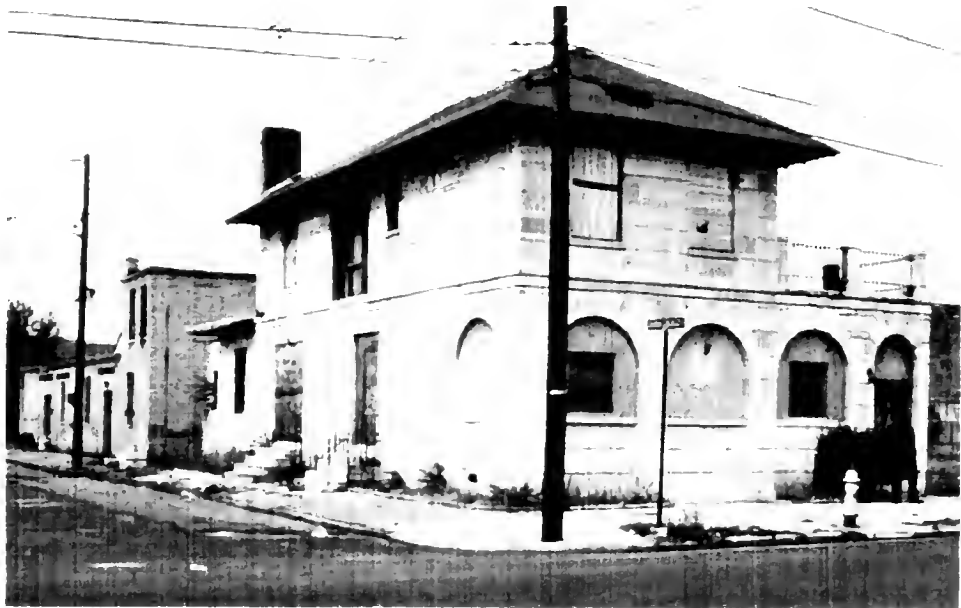


Figure 8: Antonio Mecca White House

In response to the colonization of the Italian community in Camden, the need for a sacred place became evident. The first Mass of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Roman Church

¹³⁹ Joseph William Carlivale, *Americans of Italian Descent in New Jersey* (Clifton, NJ: New Jersey Press, 1950), 425.

¹⁴⁰ Camden Survey, 54.

¹⁴¹ Mt. Carmel, 8.

was celebrated in 1903 under the guidance of the Rev. Michael Di Ielsi. It was held in the residence of a German family situated at Third and Line Streets.¹⁴² Shortly thereafter, the priests and trustees bought a property on the northeast corner of Fourth and Cherry Streets, formally incorporating the congregation as the first Italian church in Camden.

Rapid growth forced the congregation to seek other quarters. As previously discussed, the property of SS. Peter and Paul German Catholic Church on the corner of Fourth and Division Streets relocated to its present site on Spruce Street above Broadway. The congregation of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel purchased the property formerly occupied by SS. Peter and Paul consisting of a wooden church, a rectory and church hall, in 1907 for the amount of \$9,700.¹⁴³

Immediately following the demolition of the wooden structure that occupied the site, the trustees of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel commissioned Camden architect, Thomas Stephen, to design a new church building.¹⁴⁴ Designed in the so-called Romanesque Revival style, the exterior wall fabric is of a red brick in stretcher bond accentuated by a continuous limestone stringcourse running horizontally just below the arched transoms of the three front doors. In 1945, funds were donated for the construction of the campanile, located south of the main entrance.

The Church's interior plan is rectangular. Materials utilized demonstrate a congregation of moderate economic means. Marble tiles set around the windows and

¹⁴² Ibid., 7

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ "Parish Miracles." *Inspired* (winter 1995): 3.



Figure 9: Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and Nuestra Senora de Fatima Roman Catholic Church

wood wainscoting adorned the original interior.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the ceiling of the nave and sanctuary was equipped with pressed metal, a decorative ornamentation popular during the time of construction. In addition to its economical advantages, trade catalogs claimed its acoustic properties were superior to those of plaster or wood; therefore, pressed metal was often installed in movie theaters and churches.¹⁴⁶

Over the years, as the Church was updated, remnants of the original architecture were removed to create a more modern appearance. At present, the pressed metal ceiling remains, however, the wood wainscoting has succumbed to plaster and the marble tiles were changed to late twentieth century ceiling tiles. In addition, the original altar rail was removed and the confessionals were remodeled.¹⁴⁷

A primary extension of the Roman Catholic Church is the parish school. Hence, in 1908, Father Di Ielsi succeeded in obtaining three sisters from the School Sisters of Notre Dame, who were initially organized in the area to serve the SS Peter and Paul School. Their quarters were on the corner of Spruce and Dauphin Streets. Opening with 319 students, the first classes were held in St. Michael's Hall at Division and Dauphin Streets.¹⁴⁸

As school attendance grew, the need for additional accommodations became a necessity. Between 1923 and 26, Father Shea, then pastor of the Church, purchased six additional properties on the square block between Fourth, Division, Dauphin and Spruce

¹⁴⁶ Joanna Doherty, "Pressed Metal Ceilings in America: Their Manufacture and Use," working paper, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 1998, 7.

¹⁴⁷ Parish Miracles, 3.

¹⁴⁸ Mt. Carmel, 7.

Streets, producing the religious complex typical of the Roman Catholic faith.¹⁴⁹ Built upon the newly acquired properties were a brick convent for the Sister of Notre Dame and an educational building.

Following thirty years of use, the walls of the Spruce Street School were showing symptoms of deterioration. As a result, in 1951, planning began for the design and erection of an eleven classroom building, situated on the corner of Fourth and Spruce Streets. The school was opened and dedicated in 1953.¹⁵⁰ In 1972, St. Mary's Cathedral and Mt. Carmel schools were consolidated and comprised grades one through six. Seventh and eighth grades were housed at the same facility under the name Center City Catholic.¹⁵¹ Although unused for several years, in 1997, Mt. Carmel's former school building returned to its original use when it became the home of San Miguel School for Boys.

Today, a new population resides in the Fettersville neighborhood. As previously discussed, almost simultaneous with the influx of poor Latinos and African Americans seeking manufacturing positions in the mid-twentieth century, the white population of Fettersville found the opportunity to leave the city, seeking their "American Dream" in the newly emerging suburbs. Money for the maintenance of the urban housing stock was funneled out of the city and concentrated on new construction in Pennsauken, Delaware Township (now Cherry Hill), Collingswood, Haddonfield and other suburban communities.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 12 and 17.

¹⁵¹ Rev. Msgr. Charles J. Giglio, ed., *Building God's Kingdom: History of the Diocese of Camden* (South Orange New Jersey: Seton Hall University Press, 1987), 227.

¹⁵² Dorwart, 281.

Also, beginning in the 1950s, numerous small industrial enterprises began to leave the city in search of more space and cheaper land in the suburbs. However, Camden's three primary concerns, RCA, Campbell's Soup Co., and New York Ship remained.¹⁵³ Most big industries stayed on for another decade. On the other hand, shopkeepers along the prominent business strip of Broadway boarded up windows and left the city due to increased crime and vandalism.¹⁵⁴ Property values began to decline. Camden was experiencing the beginning of the disinvestment in its building stock and a major shift in its demographics.

Akin to the African Americans seeking employment in the 1940s, a Latino population attracted by Camden's industry entered the city in the 1950s. It is difficult, however, to account for the exact number of Latinos living in Camden at the time because the United States Census did not offer a category for Hispanics until the 1970s.¹⁵⁵ Initially Latinos, principally of Puerto Rican descent, settled in North Camden; however, as the white population continued to move out of the city in the 1960s and 1970s, Latinos moved into other neighborhoods left behind.

Fettersville was one of those neighborhoods. According to the U.S. Census, 261 Italians lived in the Fettersville neighborhood in 1990.¹⁵⁶ A new community of Puerto Ricans currently resides in the area. By 1970, Puerto Ricans comprised 10 percent of

¹⁵³ Ibid., 312.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 315.

¹⁵⁵ Jay P. Dolan and Allan Figueroa Deck, *Hispanic Catholic Culture in the US: Issues and Concerns* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 6.

¹⁵⁶ Fettersville fall directly in the middle of two census tracts, 6004 and 6005. Most Italians (250) were recorded as residing in tract 6004 which is bound by east/west streets Pine and Atlantic and north/south streets Third and N. South Freeway. Only eleven Italians lived in tract 6005, which is bound by the east/west streets Arch and Atlantic and north/south Third Street to the Delaware River shore. See appendix for map of the general census tract boundaries.

Camden's population.¹⁵⁷ Today, 30 percent of Camden's citizenry are Latinos primarily of Puerto Rican heritage.¹⁵⁸

Fettersville, like Camden, experienced severe neglect and disinvestment of its built environment. The 1977 Sanborn Map indicated the largest number of vacant small factories, stores and dwellings in Fettersville's history. Every block accommodated at least one vacant property, the most prominent being the service enterprises and light industrial buildings. Furthermore, the label "fire ruins" marked the property that formerly contained the Camden Mill Works Co, situated at 327-35 Pine Street. Directly across the street, a storage warehouse at 316-322 Pine Street, also read "fire ruins."

While the majority of the housing units remain occupied, the word vacant or the letter "v" dots the map. In most instances, whole rows remained in use, yet some blocks reflect almost total abandonment. For example, the 925-957 block of Third Street indicates there are five vacant dwellings out of thirteen, and the restaurant on the corner was also abandoned. Moreover, eleven out of the sixteen units situated at 826-865 Second Street were uninhabited.¹⁵⁹

Despite the frequency of vacant structures, new construction did occur. In comparing the 1951 Sanborn Map to its 1971 counterpart, a primary addition to the landscape was the Ulysses S. Wiggins School. Demolishing the C.R. Bergen Public School along with the entire block of Walnut, Mt. Vernon, Fourth and Fifth Streets, the architecture of the new school reflects a cold, institutional appearance. Also, a playground on the corner of

¹⁵⁷ Dorwart, 327.

¹⁵⁸ Camden, NJ Consolidated Plan, 2.

¹⁵⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps City of Camden, vol. 3 (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1951); Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps City of Camden, vol. 3 (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1977). All map information contained in this paragraph was gleaned from the two maps.

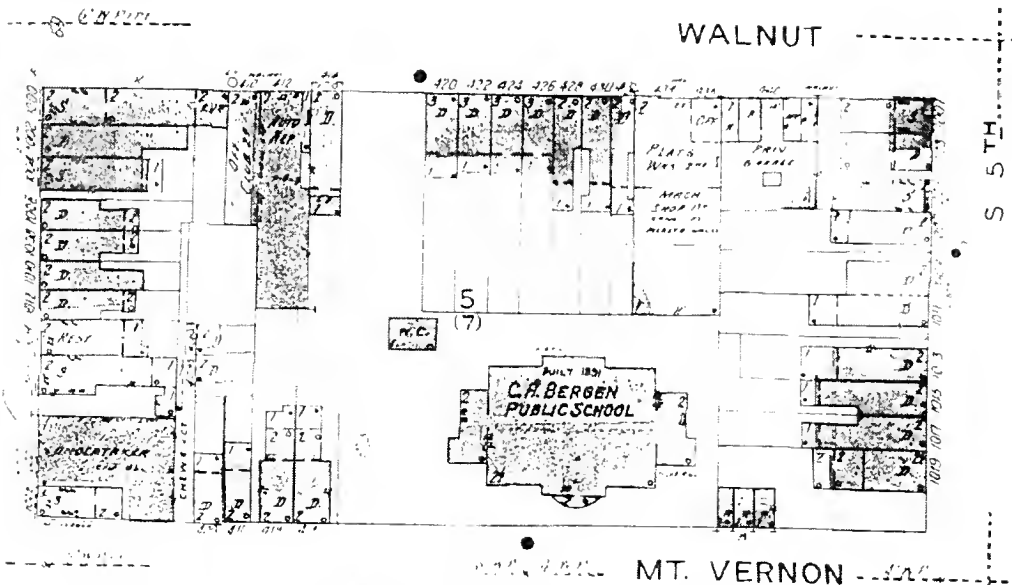


Figure 10: The block of Walnut, Fifth, Mt. Vernon and Fourth Streets in 1951

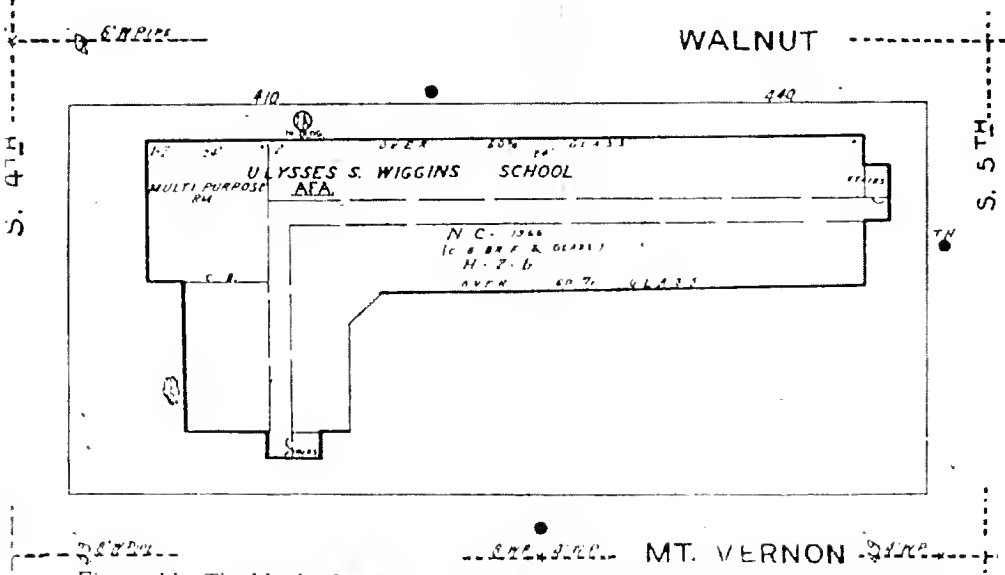
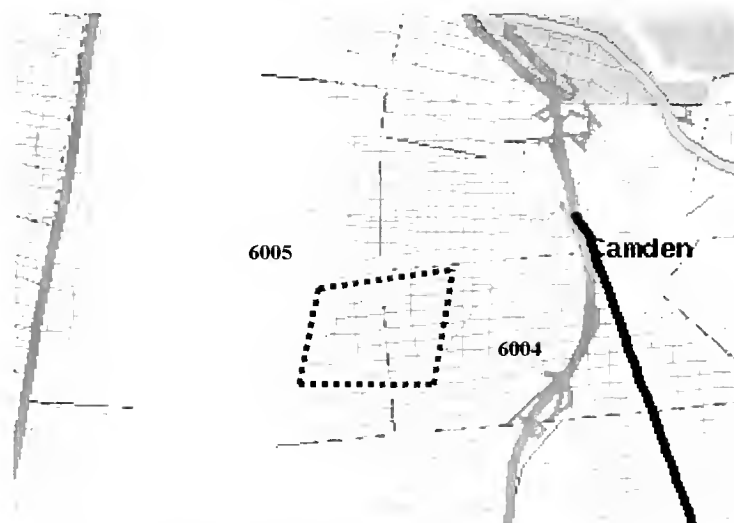


Figure 11: The block of Walnut, Fifth, Mt. Vernon and Fourth Streets in 1977

Walnut and Third Streets was developed following the demolition of the I.S. Mulford Public School. Slowly, the dense urban fabric of Fettersville was coming undone.¹⁶⁰

Since then, the pace of destruction has accelerated. According to the 1990 data of census tracts 6004 and 6005, which contains Fettersville, there are approximately 2119 housing units. Over 60 percent of the units were built earlier than 1950.¹⁶¹ Both tracts, however, extend beyond Fettersville's physical boundaries; therefore there is a smaller number of housing units within the neighborhood.



*Figure 12: U.S Census Map showing tracts 6004 and 6005
Fettersville Boundaries indicated by dashed line*

A windshield survey of Fettersville reveals the absence of housing construction after 1950. In other words, Fettersville contains the majority of early housing stock found within the two census tracts. For the most part, the structures that remain are the Bandbox and the larger, London row homes built before or just after the turn of the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

century. The London type row house exhibits a similar plan as the Bandbox; however, it is a two-room deep design that typically occupies the entire long narrow plot.

The sharp decrease in the density of housing is due in large part to neglect, which often resulted in demolition. Whole blocks have been demolished, such as the Cherry, Spruce, Fourth and Third Street section. Another area, just below the Macedonia AME Church was taken down within the past two years; however, the debris from the lost buildings remains.



Figure 13: View from Third Street looking west down Cherry Street.

¹⁶¹ 1990 U.S. Census Data. As indicated in footnote number 156, Fettersville falls within the census tracts numbered 6004 and 6005. However, because the neighborhood does not reflect the precise bounds of the census tract, the numbers should be considered a close approximate representation of the community.

There are also a number of abandoned structures nestled within contiguous rows of homes. Moreover, nearly 80 percent of the dwellings that are occupied exhibit a high level of deterioration and are in need of maintenance. In addition, many of the facades have been altered with the placement of stucco, vinyl siding, a brick veneer or paint. A good example is on the 300 block of Spruce Street. The facades of the three two-story homes in the foreground exhibit a pale yellow vinyl siding, a khaki color stucco and a red brick veneer. Dwellings to the west demonstrate a similar colored and textured landscape.

Yet, amidst the rubble and boarded up housing examples of care exist. In the neighborhood, one could observe the backyard of an Italian resident of the neighborhood. Designed in the fashion of an Italian garden, there were lush roses, a trellis overflowing with greenery and a sitting area to enjoy tranquil surroundings. While the fabric of the neighborhood may be in decline, there remains a reflection of hope within and among the people of Fettersville.

Unfortunately, services to the community have nearly vanished. Gone are the numerous corner stores and restaurants that once flourished in the neighborhood. Businesses that do remain reflect the former Italian presence as well as the present Latino community. For instance, the Italian owned Giambrones Bros. Meat Shop remains at the corner of Fifth Street and Ramona Gonzalez Boulevard. The Nunez Bros. Supermarket is located at the corner of Walnut and Fourth Streets and a Latino run Dollar Store is established on the adjacent corner. On Spruce Street, V. Biasi & Sons Roofing is currently in operation.



Figure 14: View of Macedonia AME Church and adjacent rubble looking west.



Figure 15: Streetscape showing facade alterations.



Figure 16: Giambrone Bros. Meat Shop on the corner of Fifth Street and Ramona Gonzalez Blvd.



Figure 17: Nunez Bros. Supermarket on the corner of Walnut and Fourth Streets

As previously noted, Fettersville contains a significant Puerto Rican population. The current economic situation for Latinos is grim. Author, Jay Dolan postulates that Puerto Ricans are considered not only the poorest of the Hispanic subgroups, but also perhaps the worst off among ethnic groups in the US.¹⁶² Further, a study completed in 1994 by Maria E. Enchautegui corroborates Dolan's statement. Enchautegui found,

Of all tracts, Puerto Rican tracts are the poorest with 48 percent of the Latino population living in poverty. They have lower male and female labor force participation than other Latino tracts and more than half of the households are headed by women. Puerto Rican neighborhoods are more likely to contain rental and vacant units, and their households are less likely to own a car than other neighborhoods.¹⁶³

In 1990, census data for tract numbers 6004 and 6005 indicated a total population of 5,314 people. African Americans accounted for 3,729 of the population, while Hispanics made up 1,204 and whites numbered 355 of the remaining persons.¹⁶⁴ The table reflects the yearly income of the 393 Hispanic households located within the two census tracts that contains Fettersville.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Dolan, 445.

¹⁶³ Maria E. Enchautegui, *Latino and Latino Neighborhood Poverty* (Washington DC: The Urban Institute, 1994), 16.

¹⁶⁴ 1990 U.S. Census Data. The heaviest concentration of the Hispanic population occurs within tract 6004, which contains the location of Our Lady Mt. Carmel/Fatima Church. African Americans make up the largest contingent of inhabitants in tract 6005, which contains Macedonia AME Church

¹⁶⁵ 1990 U.S. Census data, Tracts 6004 and 6005. Although, this is fairly dated information the economic status of the people in Camden has not changed drastically. Use this information as a representation, not an exact quantitative measure of the neighborhood.

Number of Households	Yearly Income
78	Less than \$5,000
73	\$5,000 - \$9,999
51	\$10,000 - \$14,999
120	\$15,000 - \$24,999
19	\$25,000 - \$34,999
32	\$35,000 - \$49,999
20	\$50,000 - \$74,999

Table 1: 1989 yearly income of Camden's Latino population

Approximately 50 percent live below the poverty level. Consequently, approximately 75 percent of the Hispanic householders are specified as renters. The average monthly cost for the renter is \$442 which, for the majority, is 30 percent or more of their monthly income.¹⁶⁶ Wages are primarily generated through blue-collar positions. Four of the occupations most commonly engaged in are within the service sector, retail sales, manufacturing or general labor.¹⁶⁷

As a refuge from their harsh environ, the Latino population of Camden finds its solace within the walls of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and Nuestra Senora de Fatima Roman Catholic Church. There is no doubt that the majority religion among United States Hispanics is Catholicism; 90 percent of the nation's 20 million Hispanics are baptized Catholic.¹⁶⁸ In a 1990 survey by the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs, twelve dioceses disclosed that more than half of its members were Hispanic and another 27 were more than one-fourth Hispanic.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, at the parish level, reorganization was taking place. Over the course of a few years many multi-ethnic parishes became almost

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

exclusively Hispanic. Though the pastors of these parishes were not always Hispanic by ethnicity, they were “hispanos de corazon”—a distinction due not only to a better appreciation of what Hispanics had to offer the Church but also to the great emphasis given to Hispanic ministry.”¹⁷⁰

Established in 1974, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and Nuestra Senora de Fatima is the result of a consolidation. Originally organized in 1958, Our Lady of Fatima had served its Hispanic people from its facilities on Benson Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets, located in South Camden, just a few blocks north of Fettersville.¹⁷¹ Both the vicar and the parish priest were Italian, but very Puerto Rican in custom, language and practice.¹⁷² As the Italian population of Fettersville began to leave the neighborhood as well as the parish, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel became the spiritual haven of the newly arriving residents of the locale -the Puerto Ricans. Typical of urban Catholic churches, the new ethnic groups moving into the city did not build their own edifice, but simply moved into structures left behind by exiting Euro-American parishioners.¹⁷³ Therefore, in November of 1974, the diocese moved to consolidate the two parishes; thus the establishment of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and Nuestra Senora de Fatima.¹⁷⁴ This largely Puerto Rican parish was under the direction of an Italian priest.

¹⁶⁸ Frank Ponce, “Hispanic Community,” in *Tomorrow’s Church: What’s Ahead for American Catholics*, Edward C. Herr, ed. (Chicago: The Thomas More Press, 1982), 181.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 161.

¹⁷¹ Giglio, 227 and Ralph Franco, “The Influence of the Puerto Rican Family on its College Bound Youths in Camden, New Jersey” (Ph.D. diss, Penn State University, 1975), 62.

¹⁷² Franco, 62.

¹⁷³ Dolan, 297.

¹⁷⁴ Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Nuestra Senora de Fatima will be referred to as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima for the duration of the thesis. This is the name that appears on the letterhead of the Church.

According to Father Salvatore Scuderi (Father Sal to his parishioners), the current priest of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima, the Church was organized as the National Parish with its mission specifically set forth to serve the Latino community.¹⁷⁵ As a result, weekly mass is conducted in Spanish and the outreach programs are explicitly focused toward Latino empowerment. The Pastor since 1993, Father Scuderi believes “an ethnic parish must be community-based and oriented; it must respond to the needs of the particular community it serves.”¹⁷⁶

Presently the church is heavily involved in expanding its educational resources within the community. Housed in the Church’s former school building, the Family Development Center offers courses for adult education and employment, with a particular focus on the mastering of the English language for Spanish speaking participants. In addition, in 1997, the church partnered with the De LaSalle Christian Brothers by establishing the San Miguel School. Sharing the building with the Family Development Center, the school is located on the second and third floors where 30 middle school boys, primarily Latino, attend sixth and seventh grade at the cost of ten dollars a month.¹⁷⁷

In addition to educational programs, the Church organizes a summer recreation program for youth and opens its doors for various social and community meetings. Moreover, plans are being set forth for the establishment of the Fettersville Restoration and Development Association, an organization designed to initiate neighborhood revitalization.¹⁷⁸ It is apparent that as a representation of a past and present community,

¹⁷⁵ Father Salvatore Scuderi, Pastor, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima Church, Camden, New Jersey, interview by author, 3 March 1999.

¹⁷⁶ Parish Miracles, 11.

¹⁷⁷ Monica Rhor, “Tiny School Fills a Void in Camden,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 October 1998.

¹⁷⁸ As a primary focus of this thesis, a full discussion of the Association will be addressed in Chapter Four.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima serves as a community focal point and neighborhood resource fulfilling its purpose from its inception in 1903 to its rebirth in 1974.

Four ♦ Sacred Places and Community Economic Development: A Profile of Macedonia AME and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Nuestra Senora de Fatima

Sacred spaces serve as the cornerstone of communities. The African Americans, Italians and Latinos identified a need for a central physical space to represent the beliefs of their communities and to serve as a sanctuary amidst the formidable, even hazardous, environment of the poor and working class. The importance of a sacred space within a struggling community is evidenced by the roles that Macedonia AME Church, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Nuestra Senora de Fatima Roman Catholic Church historically and presently fulfill. In *Sacred Places at Risk*, authors Robert A. Jaeger and Diane Cohen suggest that historic religious properties, “built over decades and centuries expressed a community’s deepest yearnings and aspiration. Today these buildings maintain their power, transcending barriers of culture and belief to bring beauty and wholeness where needed most.”¹⁷⁹

In Camden, symbols of beauty and wholeness are needed. Certainly, as these structures endure over the years their presence becomes a familiar symbol of stability in the face of deteriorating neighborhood conditions. Whether or not the people in the community are members of either congregation, the continued presence of Macedonia AME and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/ Fatima are symbols of a continued commitment and investment to the people of Fettersville. In a video produced by Partners for Sacred Places, titled *After Sunday*, the Youth Minister of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima, Richard Dow, ponders the consequences if the church were to disappear. “Our Lady of

Mt. Fatima represents a sense of family, if it was not here you would feel a certain death in the area.”¹⁸⁰ Representing perseverance and longevity, Macedonia AME and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima are the foundations on which the community may be rebuilt.

While the physical visibility of a sacred space can stabilize a neighborhood, it is its role as the center of community life that can empower the community. Historically, houses of worship have maintained outreach programs. These programs fell under the rubric of “non-business or non-development human services such as health care or education.”¹⁸¹ However, it has been a relatively recent action among religious institutions to become involved in community economic development (CED) which is defined in this thesis as, “community-based development involved in housing and business development, as well as capital provisions.”¹⁸²

The majority of religious institutions have traditionally focused on philanthropy and social service welfare, such as daycare centers, food pantries and homeless shelters. Today, they are increasingly becoming engaged in community economic development activities, viewing it as an extension of their social work services.¹⁸³ As a result of their heightened involvement, the National Congress for Community Economic Development has integrated a “Faith-Based Network” into its program repertoire. The objective of the Network is to “promote and facilitate faith-based community economic development; engage in research and training on faith-based development and expand collaborations

¹⁷⁹ Diane Cohen and A. Robert Jaeger, *Sacred Places at Risk* (Philadelphia: Partners for Sacred Places, 1998), 27.

¹⁸⁰ *After Sunday*, prod. Frances McElroy and dir. Glenn Holster, 25 min., Partners for Sacred Places, 1998, videocassette.

¹⁸¹ Jeremy Nowak et al., *Religious Institutions and Community Renewal* (Philadelphia: Pew Charitable Trusts, 1989), 1-18.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

between religious institutions and the agencies of community development."¹⁸⁴

Furthermore, NCCED regularly organizes training sessions all over the United States on faith-based development for religious groups and CED practitioners.¹⁸⁵

The community development corporation, a component of CED, is an outgrowth of an approach to neighborhood planning that tackles a problem or set of problems identified by the neighborhood through the use of advocacy or self-help efforts.¹⁸⁶ Primarily in response to the public policy decisions of the 1950s and 60s, community based projects developed at the grass roots level in predominately poor, economically depressed, urban and rural areas focused on social service provisions, housing and economic development, advocacy and direct relief.¹⁸⁷

In *Religious Institutions and Community Renewal*, author Jeremy Nowak outlines six basic characteristics of the community economic development process:

- 1) it focuses on the revitalization of low and moderate income areas;
- 2) it emphasizes citizen control over the development process;
- 3) it concentrates its efforts on either housing development, capital provision, or business development;
- 4) it is carried out, at least in part, through locally-based institutions, such as community development corporations and community-controlled financial intermediaries;
- 5) it usually views a specific geographical area as a planning unit for economic revitalization; and
- 6) it attempts to integrate a diversity of constituencies into the renewal process and thus views development as a community building process.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ www.ncced.org, *National Congress for Community Economic Development*, Washington D.C. 06 April 1999.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Jennifer Lynn Baskerville, "Churches as Effective Partners in Community Revitalization: New Initiatives for Building Restoration and Community Involvement" (Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1994), 59.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 60.

¹⁸⁸ Nowak, I-8.

The involvement of sacred places in community development projects seems a natural partner or leader, as they are often the strongest and most organized institution within a community. Further, for many congregations, involvement in community development activities is part of their ministry on a theological as well as a social level. Put another way, "the theological and civic connection between community-based efforts and the religious community is strengthened by the self interest of religious institutions in seeing neighborhoods preserved and developed, as well as by interests in evangelism."¹⁸⁹

Religious organizations within the Delaware Valley that retain an established development corporation are generally sponsored by one of three religious institutions: traditional African American Protestant churches, mainline Protestant churches, and Catholic churches.¹⁹⁰ In reference to the black church, a 1990 survey conducted by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya suggests that 70 percent of the urban black churches are involved in community outreach programs, with 40 percent directed toward Civil Rights organizations.¹⁹¹ Only ten percent of the urban black churches surveyed were involved in housing problems.¹⁹² In contrast, another survey conducted by Jeremy Nowak, et. al., for *Religious Institutions and Community Renewal*, of the traditional African American denominations within the Delaware Valley, which include the Baptists and the African Methodist Episcopal Churches, the Baptists tend to be more involved in organizing local community development corporations.¹⁹³ Ironically, although the Baptists organize development corporations, a large number of the congregants reside

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., I-14.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Lincoln, 151.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Nowak, I-45.

outside the community. Slightly more than 50 percent no longer live in the neighborhood targeted for revitalization. Moreover, Lincoln and Mamiya conclude that the black Methodist denominations tend to be more solidly middle class, therefore, they would generally not reside in a poor inner city neighborhood.¹⁹⁴

Conversely, other churches, particularly the Catholic denomination, demonstrate a higher percentage of parishioners residing in the neighborhood.¹⁹⁵ Because of its high proportion of poor, working class congregants, in addition to the parish concept of community organization and neighborhood planning, community development corporations seem a natural mechanism to carry out the mission of the Catholic Church. Yet, while a seemingly ideal candidate for an abundance of community development corporations, many parishes do not consistently enjoy strong support from the Archdiocese, particularly within the Delaware Valley.¹⁹⁶ Despite their weak endorsement, two parishes in Camden, the Sacred Heart Catholic Church and St. Joseph's Church provide two good examples of Roman Catholic churches with active community development corporations.

As previously stated, the church as a central institution, represents a key stakeholder in the context of community economic development. Drawing from the resources of its congregations and secular connections, the church is able to commandeer potential partners and to organize like constituencies. Moreover, religious institutions are coalition builders—an important function in community economic development.¹⁹⁷ Corresponding

¹⁹⁴ Lincoln, 138.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, I-45 and I-52.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, I-53.

¹⁹⁷ Baskerville, 63.

to the CED process, they also can become managers of particular projects such as housing development, mortgage lenders and small business ventures.

However, development specific initiatives generally necessitate the establishment of a separate non-profit corporation that takes over the management responsibilities. For example, in 1985 St. Joseph's Church founded the St. Joseph's Carpenters Society, a non-profit housing development corporation that purchases low-cost, deteriorating housing for rehabilitation and tackles new construction projects as well.¹⁹⁸ While lay people and clergy sit on the board, the corporation is administered as a separate entity from the parish.

Although it is not feasible to calculate the number of religious based community development corporations, according to the Lilly Foundation they are involved in hundreds of projects across the country, and the number is growing.¹⁹⁹ As government funding decreases for numerous social programs, religious institutions are looked upon to fill the void. In addition, the general acceptance of CED's among state and local governments, private foundations and financial institutions increase the likelihood of religious communities to organizing in the CED movement. As a result, religious institutions are facilitating new partnerships with the constituencies discussed above as well as with preservation organizations, community organizations and other local religious establishments.

A good example of a sound partnership is Project Nehemiah begun in a neighborhood in Washington D.C. The undertaking joined a religious organization with a preservation

¹⁹⁸ Kenneth Lelen, "Society Rehabbing Housing in Church Neighborhood," *Philadelphia Business Journal* 11-17 March 1991.

group. Brown Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church, a beacon in the midst of a deteriorating neighborhood, felt charged with the responsibility to renovate four deteriorating Queen Anne style row houses located near the church. Rehabilitating these houses would fulfill a two-fold purpose: to transform the community and to provide affordable housing for persons of low and moderate income.²⁰⁰ Brown Memorial established the Brown Memorial Homes, Inc., a separate non-profit organization designed to purchase and sell properties. Because the buildings were contributing elements within an historic district, the church worked in conjunction with the Historic Preservation Society to rehabilitate the houses following the guidelines set forth by the Secretary of Interior's Standards. The final collaborative venture produced four renovated housing units in keeping with the historic character of the district while simultaneously preserving and improving its extant community.²⁰¹

Another illustration is the ecumenical collaboration of the East Brooklyn Churches (EBC). Founded in 1977 by seven pastors representing a mix of small, black, evangelical congregations and traditional Protestant and Roman Catholic parishes, the organization had a vision of offering affordable housing to low income people in East New York and the surrounding neighborhoods, a project called the Nehemiah Plan. Following an intensive fundraising campaign and monetary pledges from the Catholic and Episcopal dioceses, EBC raised enough capital to begin housing development. Now, with a core of

¹⁹⁹ Baskerville, 64.

²⁰⁰ Henry Y. White, "Project Nehemiah: Preparing A Black Urban Church to Engage in Community Revitalization Through Housing Renovation" (Ph.D. diss., United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, 1997), 26.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

50 congregations and over 50,000 members, EBC has completed and sold more than 1,000 single-family town houses affordable for family incomes of \$17,000.²⁰²

These partnerships were successful and will continue to be a model for new faith-based community development corporations. However, further expanding the types of stakeholders at the table could undoubtedly strengthen a community's goals of revitalization and ensure the continued presence of the religious property. In response to these assumptions, Partners for Sacred Places, a national organization based in Philadelphia concerned with the sound stewardship and use of older religious properties, has developed a training program to better equip religious, community and civic leaders in building their capacity to make their sacred places true neighborhood assets.

The Partners for Sacred Places training program entitled *Institute for Properties at Risk* instructs city teams consisting of participants such as clergy and congregants as well as leaders from the government, for-profit and non-profit sectors. In doing this, *The Institute* guides these stakeholders through a visioning process identifying the shared vision for their communities and properties.²⁰³ Plans created by the city teams identify ways in which the congregations could care for their buildings, use their space for community programming and, finally, tie their individual action plans to larger city and community-wide efforts to effect change in their neighborhoods.²⁰⁴

Because the first training program was initiated in the summer of 1998, it is difficult at this time to assess the successful execution of their long-term neighborhood and building

²⁰² The Lilly Endowment/SEEDCO, *Religious Institutions as Actors in Community Based Economic Development* (New York: The Religious Philanthropy Program of the Council on Foundations, 1988), 115-117.

²⁰³ Partners for Sacred Places, "Institute for Properties at Risk," Philadelphia, 1998. Mimeographed.

plans. However, in the four months following *The Institute* the three participating city teams, Baltimore, Maryland; Kansas City, Missouri; and Camden, New Jersey,²⁰⁵ have demonstrated successful implementations of some their short term goals as well as strengthening partnerships.

In Fettersville, Macedonia AME and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima are both seeking to restore their edifices and revitalize their community as well. Although they are both within the confines of the Fettersville neighborhood, each church is working independently to initiate revitalization. Macedonia AME has recently developed the Macedonia Community Development Corporation, Inc., which purchased approximately 5.5 acres of land surrounding the Church in May 1998, with the intent of development.²⁰⁶ At this time no development activity has taken place. Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima is also in the process of founding the Fettersville Restoration and Development Association, an organization designed to revitalize the community with an eye toward the built environment.²⁰⁷ Moreover, both institutions view their buildings as essential cornerstones in the strengthening and redevelopment of the neighborhood.

The following section will profile further each church as it operates today, setting the framework for the final chapter which will, for one, propose a partnership initiative between the two churches and establish a common ground for their revitalization goals through the collective memory of and interest in their cultural landscape.

²⁰⁴ Allison Garwood, "Institute for Properties at Risk: A Progress Report," *Partners for Sacred Places Update* (fall 1998): 1.

²⁰⁵ The Camden, New Jersey Team will be discussed in greater detail in the later portion of this chapter.

²⁰⁶ Macedonia AME Church 1998 grant application, Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia Religious Properties Program, Philadelphia, PA.

²⁰⁷ Father Scuderi, interview.

Presently, Macedonia AME has a membership of approximately 300; close to 170 congregants actively attend services. The Church has a predominately suburban congregation; only a small percentage of the congregation lives in Fettersville or Camden.²⁰⁸ Yet, while the congregation is small, they are actively pursuing the restoration of their edifice and implementing a number of local history and historic preservation based programs to recall the African American heritage within Camden and, more specifically, within Fettersville. Lincoln and Mamiya have noted “that relatively few institutional histories of local black churches have been written or preserved, but a number of these churches, urban ones in particular, have created their own archives and museums.”²⁰⁹

This is precisely what Macedonia AME intends to accomplish. Dorothy Lipscomb, the Church Secretary, has been charged with the responsibility of researching and developing an extensive history of Macedonia and the significant role the Church played in the lives of African Americans in Fettersville and Camden. In accordance with its investigation of local heritage, the Church is in the processes of developing a number of history based outreach programs. In the works is an educational series for school students, which includes a tour of the site with particular emphasis on its role in the Underground Railroad. In addition, a unique program for a religious institution to host is called the Genealogical Society of Macedonia which is proposed to meet the first Tuesday of every month. The curriculum will offer lectures, seminars and workshops to promote the study of genealogy and assist members in the methods and practices of

²⁰⁸ Dorothy Lipscomb, Secretary, Macedonia AME Church, interview by author, Camden, New Jersey, 13 January 1999.

genealogical research. Finally, the Church is on course in seeking the placement of their building on the National Register of Historic Places, citing its significance as the first black religious institution in Camden.

While much of the building's integrity was compromised in 1985 due to the placement of brickface on the façade and unsympathetic interior alterations, Macedonia is attempting to reverse the damage. In 1998, the congregation sought funding for the restoration of their edifice from the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia's Historic Religious Properties Program. It was the first time the Church sought funding from an outside source. The congregation understands that caring for and investing in their building will insure its continued presence as a beacon within a community that has experienced continued disinvestment. Macedonia's Rev. Ronald Miller opines, "In order to shore up our position in the community (with this historic structure as the core for meetings and development) there are improvements that are required to our structure so that we may weather and withstand (and measure up to) the pending construction that will occur around it."²¹⁰ Indeed, Macedonia is a landmark within the community both physically and historically. While the edifice tangibly evokes strength, the services provided by the Church also seek to stabilize and uplift a community through housing development and the identification of a heritage.

Similarly, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima seeks to initiate economic development; however, the Latino heritage of Camden does not find its roots in Fettersville. Merely three blocks east of Macedonia, the Catholic complex of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima,

²⁰⁹ Lincoln, 139.

²¹⁰ Macedonia AME grant application.

as previously discussed, serves a primarily Latino population. According to Father Scuderi, the annual membership represents 4000; however, an average Sunday service usually accommodates approximately 850 families.²¹¹ Although the congregation is predominately Latino, Father Scuderi related that many former Italian parishioners, who presently reside in the New Jersey suburbs, are renewing their relationship with the Church. As a result, once a month he delivers a mass in Italian.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima also applied for and received funding from the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia Historic Religious Properties Program in 1995 and 1996 to restore and replace part of the deteriorating brick on its façade and tower. Furthermore, over the years, unsympathetic alterations have compromised the integrity of the sanctuary. For example, the original altar rail was removed and the wood wainscoting was replaced with painted plaster. With the help of a 1930's wedding photograph, Father Scuderi wishes to restore the Church close to its original splendor.²¹² It is his desire to offer the congregation and community a place of worship that they can be proud of. Analogous to Macedonia's point of view, Father Scuderi contends that "it is well known that the stability of our neighborhood depends on our presence and ability to respond to the needs of the community."²¹³

Chapter Three of this study briefly outlined the Church's response to the social needs of the community including their present educational and youth recreation services. At

²¹¹ Father Scuderi, interview.

²¹² Parish Miracles, 3.

²¹³ Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima Church 1995 grant application, Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia Religious Properties Program, Philadelphia, PA.

this time, a further examination and evaluation of the proposed Fettersville Restoration and Development Association and its goals and philosophies will be attempted.

The Fettersville Restoration and Development Association (FRDA) is the product of the Camden City Team's visioning strategies as participants in the Partners for Sacred Places, *Institute for Properties at Risk*. Team members consisted of Father Scuderi; Robert Thompson, City of Camden Historic Preservation Planner; Bro. Michael Anderer, teacher at San Miguel School; Michael Stern, Director of the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia Historic Religious Properties Program and Aladino Velez, a congregation and community member. The basic mission of the FRDA is similar to other development corporations, which is to serve as an economic development mechanism that will facilitate new business opportunities and housing development through rehabilitation and new construction.

The goal is to reweave the social and material fabric of the community. According to Father Scuderi, "there is a need for people who live here and we will focus on what used to be and what could be." This is the key phrase – "what used to be and what could be."²¹⁴ FRDA sees a vision for Fettersville, and it is based on historical precedents. In an interview with Father Scuderi, he discussed the need to take stock of what remains in Fettersville. He posits that, "to its advantage, the neighborhood was largely ignored by the city. Consequently, there was not a substantial amount of destruction to the built environment."²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Father Scuderi, interview.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

A primary project for FRDA is the rehabilitation of Antonio Mecca's White House, discussed in Chapter Three, as an early twentieth century Italian Renaissance villa style structure formerly used as a funeral parlor. The structure has stood vacant for many years and Father Scuderi envisions its new use to be a youth retreat house. Presently a National Register nomination is pending. He went on to consider the need to dig through the rubble, physically and metaphorically, to find a positive past and put it out where it can be appreciated.²¹⁶ FRDA is looking to the broad patterns of history, both socially and physically, in order to initiate the revitalization of the Fettersville.

In examining the goals of Macedonia AME and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima, parallel objectives and approaches are evident. The final chapter will discuss how these two churches may work together, through common goals, in affirming a sense of place and maintaining the patrimony of the neighborhood while respecting the heritage each cultural group brings to the table.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

Five ♦ Conclusion

Community, Sacred Places and Preservation: Sharing the Cultural Landscape

As discussed in Chapter One, Camden has approximately eleven active non-profit development corporations. The majority is focused on housing development. Better than half of these non-profit development organizations originated from the efforts of a religious institution attempting to fill the need for improved housing among the lower to moderate-income residents of their respective communities.

While these groups have contributed largely to fulfill housing needs, according to Camden's City Planner Charles Lyons, the organizations do not model their efforts according to a neighborhood plan.²¹⁷ The actions to combat their particular neighborhood's dire state are viewed and executed as individual projects with no connection to a long-term vision. Put another way, the groups are reactive as opposed to proactive. Lyons is attempting to change this by bringing the city into the planning process and assisting in the development of individual neighborhood plans which will be incorporated into Camden's year 2000 Master Plan.²¹⁸

Fettersville will be a part of this plan. However, unlike Camden's other development corporations, the pending FRDA wishes to develop a neighborhood plan before the execution of projects. Robert Thompson, Camden's Historic Preservation Planner, in accordance with this thesis and two other research projects,²¹⁹ is assisting in the process.

²¹⁷ Charles Lyons, interview.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Two students in the Urban Studies program at Rutgers University in Camden are focusing a semester long research project on the Fettersville area. One student is tracing the genealogy of various African Americans who lived in Fettersville, tracing them back as attendees of Macedonia AME. The other student is researching the origin of the original Fettersville wood frame housing typology.

While this thesis will, by no means, produce a comprehensive neighborhood plan; however, it will submit strategies in which the exploration of cultural heritage can be integrated into a preservation plan specifically for Fettersville.

The first three chapters have laid the historical foundation upon which these recommendations will be based. The challenge is to identify the landmarks that represent the various layers of the community's history while recognizing the extant Latino community's needs to create their own sense of place, that is, imprint their own identity on an historic locale. In addition, the collaboration of the two churches is important for successful revitalization. Both community landmarks should be recognized as primary connectors between the past and present, which offer new possibilities for Fettersville. In Richard Longstreth's essay titled "Taste Versus History," he states, "The past is the most powerful instrument preservationists have, for it possesses enormous capacity to move and motivate people of differing persuasions."²²⁰ Therefore, by acknowledging and respecting Fettersville's diverse heritage, the African Americans, Germans, Italians and Latinos can each find their individual voice that will collectively contribute to the rebirth of the neighborhood.

Institutional Partnerships and Mutual Goals

As previously discussed, each church seeks to preserve its building and utilize historic preservation as the definitive tool in neighborhood revitalization. Macedonia AME, however, is looking specifically at the black experience and the cultural significance of their religious institution. On the other hand, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima wishes to identify, on a broad basis, the positive elements of Fettersville's historical story that will

empower its extant community. While both efforts are valid, the success of the neighborhood will depend on a joint undertaking because the geographical bounds encompass both churches and, more importantly, the ultimate goals are mutual.

In Kenneth B. Smith's essay entitled "Caring For Our Communities," he discusses Karl Barth's three conditions for truly human action.

First: Is the eye to eye relationship. We have to see one another in order to be human in relations to one another.

Second: We have to engage in mutual speech and hearing.

Third: Is mutual assistance. None of us can exist by our own efforts alone.²²¹

Perhaps Barth is speaking of the individual; however, his philosophies can be applied to the interaction of various groups. He could be speaking of the African Americans and Latinos, Inner City residents and Suburban residents, or Catholics and Methodists. Regardless of the particular group, Barth's statement "that we can not exist on our own efforts alone" speaks to the relevance of a partnership for the revitalization of Fettersville.

Ecumenical collaborations are not unusual. In fact, the number is too high to acknowledge every such partnership although the East Brooklyn Churches (EBC), discussed in Chapter Four, is a premier example of a sound alliance. Interracial collaborations, however, are generally not as common. Lincoln and Mamiya state that less than ten percent of black churches form ecumenical partnerships with non-black institutions.²²² There continue to be exceptions to the norm though. To illustrate, the newly formed collaboration between a suburban Jewish synagogue, Beth Shalom, and Christ Church, an inner city African American Pentecostal congregation located in

²²⁰ Richard Longstreth, "Taste Versus History," *Preservation Forum* 8 (1994): 45.

²²¹ Kenneth B. Smith, "Caring For Our Communities," *Past Meets Future, Saving America's Historic Environments*, ed. Antoinette J Lee (Washington DC: The Preservation Press, 1992), 100.

Kansas City, Missouri is useful. Christ Church purchased the synagogue left by Beth Shalom, who built a new edifice in the suburbs. However, a fundraising collaborative was formed between the two religious institutions, along with two secular partners, to assist in the stabilization and restoration of the deteriorating domes of the former synagogue. As such, the former inhabitants of the edifice have demonstrated a continued connection to their building, and more broadly, a responsibility to the surrounding neighborhood. Although this partnership is not a community development corporation, it nevertheless demonstrates a successful example of an interracial, ecumenical collaboration. Religious and ethnic differences can be allayed with the focus of a common goal.

The Preservation of Two Sacred Places

In examining the historical layers of Fettersville's built environment, it is evident that physical artifacts remain that characterize each primary cultural group. The most visible monuments are the two religious institutions, Macedonia AME and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima. More than any other relic, these historic religious properties embody the cultural, ethnic and religious pluralism within the neighborhood. In their absence, the story of Fettersville would be a difficult one to tell.

The presence of these two institutions may be the sole reason why the neighborhood has not been totally enveloped by crime and mass destruction. Historically, they represented the core of the community and continue to engage in that role. "The buildings themselves –many historic and built to be visual landmarks on their streetscape

²²² Lincoln, 157.

–helps create a sense of rootedness.” predicates Cohen and Jaeger, authors of *Sacred Places at Risk*.²²³ Therefore, it is essential for these sacred places to remain rooted in Fettersville as a stabilizing element. Furthermore, if these religious institutions were to disappear, the active preservation movement within the Fettersville neighborhood would most likely cease. Not only do these institutions represent the primary landmarks of the community; they are the vehicles through which the revitalization of the neighborhood will be accomplished. Partners for Sacred Places has indicated three primary obstacles, which need to be addressed and conquered in order to facilitate the support and care for religious institutions. They are:

1. constraints that limit government support for sacred places;
2. real or perceived limitations on the ability of private foundations and corporations to support 1) the public community service role of congregations and 2) their accompanying capital repair needs;
3. inexperience of congregations in approaching potential outside supporters and in meeting expectations for financial and administrative accountability.²²⁴

As Partners for Sacred Places and other organizations throughout the United States seek to stimulate a new national public policy for older historic religious properties, local partnerships with philanthropic or governmental institutions can foster the development of a key model to be utilized by the federal government and national organizations.

Fettersville Restoration and Development Association

It is imperative for the Macedonia Community Development Corporation and the Fettersville Restoration and Development Association to unite under the auspices of one organization. Each institution needs to broaden their vision and definitions of Fettersville

²²³ Cohen. 21.

²²⁴ Cohen. 34.

and its cultural heritage. This union and cooperation is in line with Jeremy Nowak's sixth characteristic of the community economic development process, which is "the attempt to integrate a diversity of constituencies into the renewal process and thus view development as a community building process."²²⁵ Certainly there will be differences in opinions and strategies, and this fact should indeed be recognized through an open dialogue between Macedonia and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima.

Because each religious institution resides within the geographic boundaries of the planning area, the need for collaboration is vital. Moreover, through this partnership each church will broaden their resource pool in identifying and securing private monies, as well as increasing the likelihood of grant and foundation funding for the betterment of the community as a whole. Furthermore, the centralized organization should retain the name of Fettersville Restoration and Development Association, as it wholly reflects the intentions of both institutions. The organization should be seen as a mechanism to bring people together and identify the common neighborhood goals.

As a result of the collaboration, leaders from both institutions as well as within the community should constitute the board. Furthermore, Robert Thompson, Camden's Historic Preservation Planner and Michael Stern, the Preservation Alliance of Greater Alliance Religious Properties Director, should procure a position on the board as they both have worked with each institution relating to preservation and planning issues.

Re-Building Bridges Through Landmarks

In "Taste Versus History," Richard Longstreth stated, "...preservation's greatest contribution to society is enabling people to gain insights on the past that are real, and to

²²⁵ Nowak, I-8.



do so in ways that written, pictorial and other forms of communication cannot duplicate.”²²⁶ Macedonia AME understands this as their preservation efforts are chiefly organized to bring forth a more complete reality of the past and understanding of the African American experience in Camden.

Furthermore, another strategy for the revitalization of Fettersville could be through the identification of landmarks within the community that are able to speak to the former residents of the neighborhood. According to Robert Thompson, many of the residents who fled the city for the suburbs in the 1960s and 1970s reject a connection to the city, and hence are ambivalent to its demise. However, the renewing of emotional ties to Fettersville through the built environment could facilitate the transformation of attitudes towards the neighborhood they left behind. For example, as previously discussed, Father Scuderi wants to restore the Antonio Mecca’s White House, a definitive landmark of the Italian-American community. While its primary purpose would be to serve as a youth retreat center, the restored structure could be an historical vehicle to reconnect Italian Americans living in the suburbs back to their former neighborhood. It offers a view of what Camden, or Fettersville, was and what it could be.

In *Nearby History*, David Kyvig suggests, “The emotional rewards of learning about a past which has plainly and directly affected one’s own life cannot be duplicated by any other type of historical inquiry.”²²⁷ Therefore it is the strategy to re-introduce former residents to the physical vestiges of their past, with the intent of inducing the desire to contribute to the preservation of the community. As discussed in Chapter Four, the

²²⁶ Longstreth, 45.

renewed interest of former Italian parishioners at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima already demonstrates an interest in rebuilding the relationship with the community.

Suburban/Urban Congregants and Funding Possibilities

Past and present suburban congregants can be valuable partners. Both Macedonia AME and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima have a substantial percentage of suburban, middle class congregants from which they can draw monetary or volunteer support. A church in Camden already employs this strategy. Sacred Heart Church continually relies on support from congregants outside of the city. The estimated 250-300 suburbanites who attend the Church on Sunday supply most of the food given to the poor, assist in rehabilitation projects and keep the school running with a steady infusion of money.²²⁸ Therefore, establishing a suburban/urban partnership has been proved to be a viable funding strategy.

The Latino Community and the Built Environment

“A heritage is something to be preserved and understood, but also to be modified to meet the needs of a changing world.” says David Lowenthal in *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Indeed, the restoration of Fettersville is not to be viewed as a static approach, isolating its past memory and overlooking the identities to be forged by the extant Latino community. Certainly it is difficult for a people who are coping with tremendous personal and economic problems to have an attachment to a deteriorating historic fabric, most of which they have merely inherited. Therefore, for the revitalization of Fettersville to be successful it is imperative for the Latino community to come to appreciate and

²²⁷ David E Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982), 12.

understand their inherited architecture as well as the historical story of the development of the neighborhood. More importantly perhaps, it is essential to produce physical contributions in shaping their very own place.

In her keynote address at the November 1997 workshop titled, “Latinos in Historic Districts,” Arleen Pabon, former State Historic Preservation Officer for Puerto Rico, suggests striving to accomplish two primary goals.

The first goal is to educate newcomers about the historic importance of the places they inhabit, even if they look quite different from the cultural landmarks they are used to. The second goal is to convince Latinos to invest emotionally into their new historic environment, to make them realize that – in the final analysis-it is all one culture: the culture of humanity.²²⁹

Education

To be sure, this is a very difficult process. However, a portion of this education could be extended through the curriculum at the San Miguel School for Boys. Because Bro. Michael Anderer, an instructor from the school, was a team member at the *Institute for Properties at Risk* and has a stake in the revitalization of the community, he undoubtedly could facilitate a regular conversation about local or community history. Furthermore, prominent community landmarks could be revealed and discussed through a walking tour of the neighborhood.

²²⁸ Eils Lotozo, “Announcing the Impossible,” *Applause* 17 (1991): 18.

²²⁹ Arleen Pabon, “Thoughts on Puerto Rican Culture, Pennsylvania Latinos and Historic Preservation,” paper presented at the Latinos in Historic Districts Workshop, Philadelphia, PA, November, 1997, 13-14.

For example, four structures located on Spruce Street between Third and Fourth Streets are believed to be original Fettersville frame houses.²³⁰ A discussion could revolve around their typology, builder or former occupants. It could also be suggested that students attend a session of Macedonia AME's special history programs that were discussed in Chapter Four.



Figure 18: Speculated original Fettersville housing

While the above suggestions focus on the education of children, it is also critical to broaden the cultural heritage of adults. Perhaps we should look to the Churches. Already existing is the interconnection of Catholicism between the Italians and Latinos, not to mention a shared building. Conceivably, to integrate the African American experience we could look to a technique employed by public historians, a neighborhood exhibition. Profiling the three primary layers of Fettersville's history, the exhibit could be displayed

²³⁰ A full research program is currently underway by a Rutgers University student.

at one of the Churches. This could be developed with the help of the Camden County Historical Society, or History or Urban Studies students from Rutgers University in cooperation with representatives from the FRDA.

Contributions

Yet, while the Latino community learns about the neighborhoods' past, being the current residents of the neighborhood it is essential to allow and encourage their interpretation and implementation of their own *genius loci* upon Fettersville. Philadelphia architect Luis Vicente Rivera suggests the implementation of signage that suggests "You are Here" in a very special place.²³¹ At present there is some indication of this strategy. For example, Division Street, the east/west connector that is the location of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima has been changed to Ramona Gonzalez Boulevard. Certainly the addition of "Nuestra Señora de Fatima" to "Our Lady of Mt. Carmel" also achieves a similar goal.



Figure 19: Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and Nuestra Señora de Fatima Roman Catholic Church marquee

²³¹ Luis Vicente Rivera, "Latino Heritage and the Built Environment," paper presented at the Latinos in Historic Districts Workshop, Philadelphia, PA, November, 1997, 7.

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel/Fatima also assists in the establishment of identity through spatial expressions. For instance, as a project for his Eagle Scout badge, a local teenager created a patio and a small pond as a setting for the statue of Our Lady of Fatima.²³² As such, this example of an enduring designed contribution solidifies the presence of the Latino upon the place. Another technique may be to implement an event showcasing community identity. The Catholic Italians were famous for their festivals, so too could the Latino community develop a festival celebrating their culture.

Protection of the Built Environment

Finally, the FRDA should pursue the implementation of protective measures upon the physical aspects of the neighborhood. This step may be achieved within the next five to ten years, in order to allow the FRDA to fully establish itself as an effective community development corporation. Because of the neighborhood's lack of architectural integrity as a result of numerous unsympathetic alterations of the housing stock and demolition, it would be inappropriate to suggest the attainment of a National Register Historic District nomination. Nevertheless, at the local level a designation may be appropriate due to its historic local significance as the location of Camden's first black settlement. However, as an alternative Fettersville could be designated as a conservation district.

Included in Robert E. Stipes article titled "Conservation Areas: A New Approach to an Old Problem," is a working definition of the term which originated from a North Carolina ordinance. It defines a conservation district as one that "possesses form, character, and visual qualities derived from arrangements or combinations of topography,

vegetation, space, scenic vistas, architecture, appurtenant features, or places of natural or cultural significance, comfort, local identity, and livable atmosphere.”²³³ Fettersville, indeed, qualifies under this very broad definition. Conservation districts offer less restrictive design guidelines than a designated historic district, a primary reason for this choice of management. Furthermore, it allows the community to develop its own design guidelines, which inevitably are more flexible than those of historic districts.

According to a study conducted by Carole Zellie, she found “in areas where there is a pattern of low maintenance and unsympathetic exterior alterations, conservation districts with limited design review are less effective at the preservation of neighborhood character.”²³⁴ Therefore, it is important for the Fettersville community to develop strong design guidelines.

Conservation district guidelines do adhere to strict demolition and new construction regulations.²³⁵ Thus, a conservation district seems to be a suitable choice in maintaining Fettersville’s neighborhood character. The responsibility of a conservation district, however, falls most heavily upon the local government itself rather than the local property owners.²³⁶ At this time, it seems that Camden’s government would not welcome this as an additional responsibility. However, this type of ordinance could be included in the Camden’s new Master Plan. As mentioned in Chapter One, the plan is still in the

²³² Parish Miracles, 3.

²³³ Robert E. Stipe, “Conservation Areas: A New Approach to an Old Problem,” *Cultural Resources Partnership Notes* (Washington DC: National Park Service, 1998), 3.

²³⁴ Carole Zellie, “A Consideration of Conservation Districts and Preservation Planning: Notes from St. Paul Minnesota,” *Cultural Resources Partnership Notes* (Washington DC: National Park Service, 1998), 14.

²³⁵ Zellie, 12.

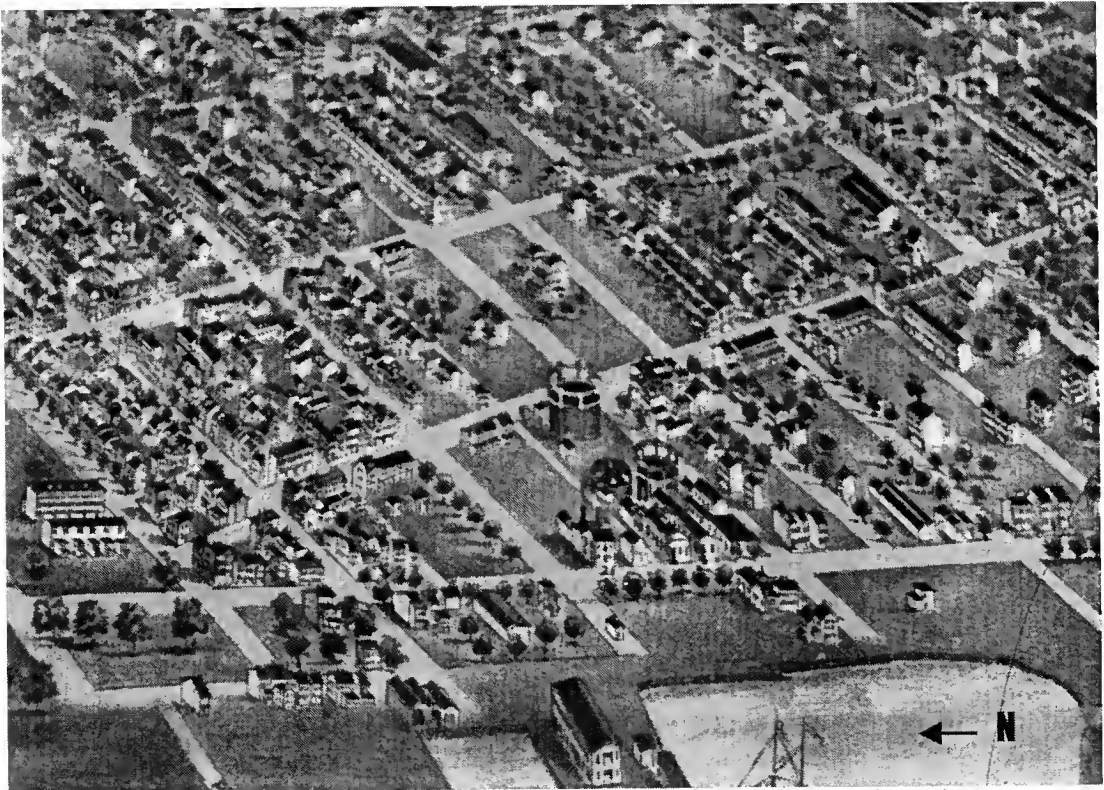
²³⁶ Stipe, 3.

²³⁶ Charles Lyons, interview.

development stages and should be completed by the year 2000. Furthermore, the recommendation of a conservation district is based upon the fact that Charles Lyons, Camden's Principal City Planner, forecasts that there will be a dramatic upswing in Camden's economic condition as well as a strengthening of its government policies by the year 2005.²³⁷ This date corroborates with the suggested implementation date for the designation of Fettersville as a conservation district, at which point the government may be able take on the responsibility.

Certainly all of these recommendations warrant a large degree of time, cooperation and persistence. However, while the suggestions are quite optimistic they do not appear to be unrealistic. The initiatives already being pursued by each institution demonstrate a determination to improve the quality of life in the small historic neighborhood of Fettersville in Camden, New Jersey. It is hoped this study may contribute towards this goal.

Appendices



*Figure 20: Isometric Map of Fetersville in 1876 Bird's Eye View of Camden
Courtesy of the Camden County Historical Society*



Figure 21: The inscription of "R. W. Fetters Allot" in 1886 Baist Atlas
Courtesy of the Camden County Historical Society



Figure 22: Streetscape showing façade alterations.



Figure 23: View from Walnut Street looking north down Fifth Street.



Figure 24: Richard Fetters School on the corner of Walnut and Third Streets

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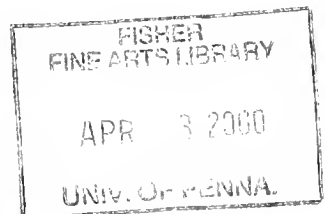
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