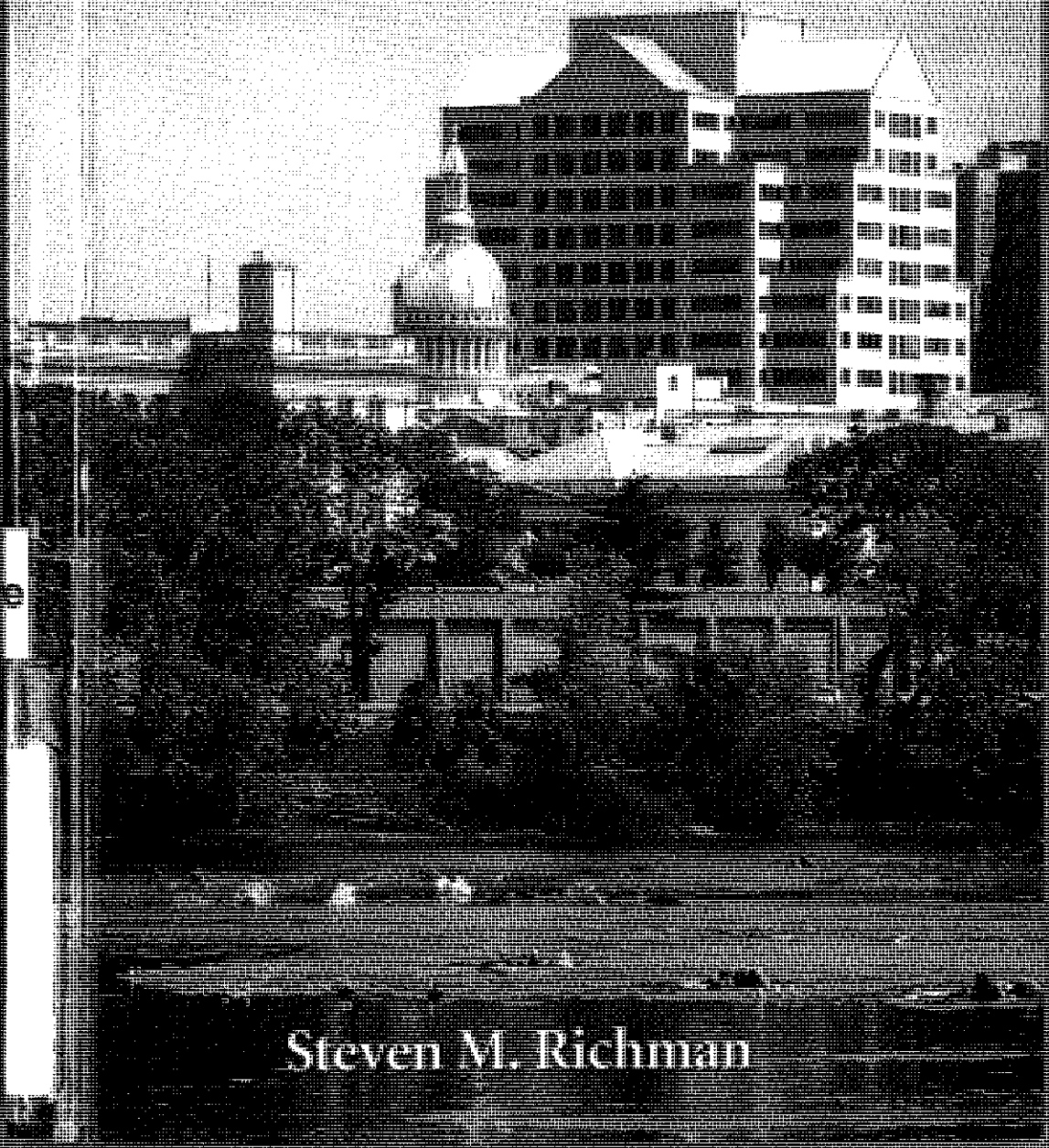
RECONSIDERING TRENTON

The Small City in the Post-Industrial Age



Steven M. Richman

Table of Contents

Preface

This is a book about a particular city and, at the same time, about the city in general. It is about Trenton, New Jersey, a one-time major industrial city along the East Coast, and about the generic post-industrial small city fallen on hard times. It is a photographic essay that seeks to capture the present-day essence of Trenton, as well as the patterns discernible in Trenton that transfer and resonate in other cities. It is a search for identity, not only what makes a city a city, but what attracts the affection and loyalty in those who stay, and variously, the opposite emotions in those who leave. In short, this is a meditation on *place*, and more particularly, urban place. By focusing on selected readings and classical works on aspects of the city, I have sought to place Trenton in a larger context without losing sight of its own uniqueness. In Trenton is every city, and in every city, Trenton.

It is useful to state up front what this book is not. It is not a definitive book on the history, politics or economics of Trenton, nor is it an extended sociological tract using Trenton as a case study. It does not attempt to make abstract arguments or fit Trenton into a particular school of thought. It is, however, a series of topical discussions using Trenton as a prism through which to extrapolate thinking about the place of the small city in contemporary America. It is an examination of the facets of a city, whether small, large or medium (however defined). To the extent there is an argument, or theme, that runs through the book, it is that most cities—as we think of *cities*—have certain common denominators. And while certainly Trenton is not New York, and Newark is not Shanghai, the interested observer may use his or her small, familiar, local city to increase understanding and awareness of the essence of urban existence, and find connections to cities around the country and the world. This is not to say every city is alike, or even contains every component on an element-by-element basis. Rather, it is to provide an introduction to the city, both as concept and reality.

In short, it is an effort to take one city as a prism for understanding why people stay in or leave a place, and what makes a city a city. What are the bonds

of attachment of a city? The history of the world has been one in which people kill and die in defense of place, of particular pieces of ground. What makes a city a city and worth dying for?

The subject is an important one. Cities are often the subject of stereotype, and the conversation often seems to fall into familiar routine. The photographer's eye—indeed, the eye of the *flâneur*, the urban wanderer—can provide a fresh look and consideration. If nothing else, anything that increases awareness and the need for continued and meaningful dialogue is important. Notwithstanding loss of industrial and population bases, the nation's cities remain and persist; dismissal is simply not a viable option or a desired mindset. They remain an essential part of societal restructuring as the world faces, together, environmental and economic challenges. We cannot and should not ignore the tangible and intangible assets of the city—its history, infrastructure, culture and society. A place like Trenton must not be dusted under the rug.

It is important to renew interest, beyond narrow artistic or scholarly endeavors, in the city as a city. Words like "scholar" or "amateur" or "journalist" or "professional" do not always suffice. One need only think of Jane Jacobs, an inspirational example of the enlightened and educated "amateur," and photographers or journalists such as Jacob Riis or Lewis Hine, to be able to argue effectively for points of view not necessarily the result of "expert" opinion or based on academic foundation. Like the boy in Hans Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes*, sometimes it takes the "uninformed" to expose a reality for what it is. As the United States seeks to come to grips with whether "American exceptionalism" can last through the 21st century, and whether its "superpower" status will be eclipsed by China, India and the European Union, it may well find that part of the solution to its economic and cultural survival is within the lost cities like Trenton, the post-industrial urban enclaves that retain certain tangible and intangible characteristics that warrant attention.

A city should be accessible. The curious and intelligent amateur should be able to sample the scholarship as a prelude to deeper readings and meditations. It is my hope that this book serves as appetizer.

Over a generation ago, in 1978, Temple University Press published *Gritty Cities*, subtitled as a "second look" at a dozen small to medium-sized cities in Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York and Delaware—more or less, the mid-Atlantic region. Trenton is one of the three New Jersey cities featured (the others were Hoboken and Paterson). What is striking is how much Trenton's visual nature has changed in those 30 years. A photograph of the Old and New Masonic Temples shows the sign for the Hotel Hildebrecht over the roof of the "new" temple; that hotel was demolished in 1984. A picture of North Broad Street shows large signage dominating the street, with the Battle Monument in the background; nothing like that is present today. Of the city itself, they write, "In a very real sense, Trenton today is an example of the post-industrial society. The major challenge the city faces is making those who work in

Trenton want to live in Trenton."[1] When they wrote their book in 1978, the population was falling dramatically—104,638 people reflected in the 1970 census, and a 12 percent drop to 92,124 as per the 1980 census—the most dramatic drop in population, percentage-wise, since the first census capturing Trenton itself in 1810. The city is even less populated in 2010.

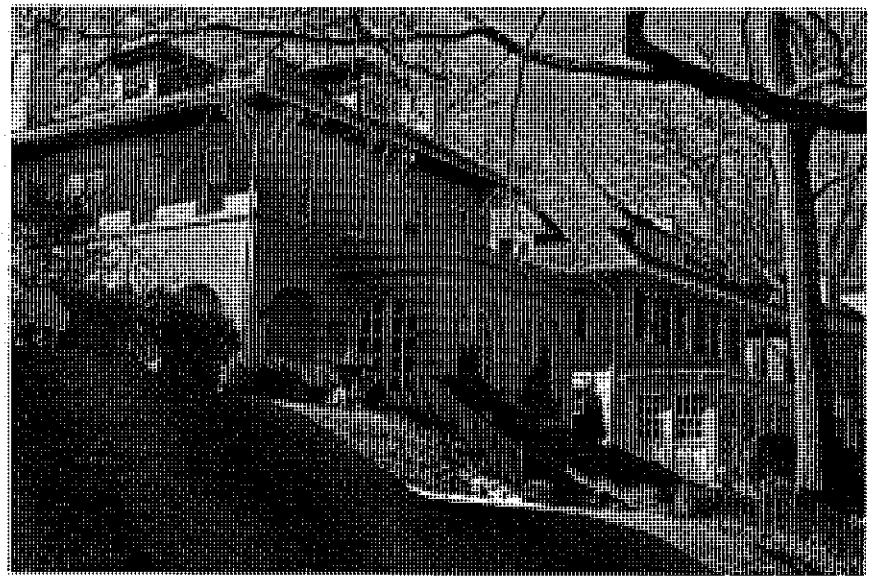
My photographs were made over an extended period, with regular visits to Trenton across seasons and times of day, in an effort to paint both broadly and deeply. Not every neighborhood is pictured; some will contain several images. Nor is every historic landmark or house the subject of its own photograph. An effort was made to make representative and aesthetic images, without manipulation of fact or judgment. This is the city as I have seen it.

In order to photograph, one must know the subject. Given my themes of connection and pattern, my readings sought out the common denominators of cities across a variety of thematic and topical subjects. I of course reviewed the classic works on Trenton's history, with particular attention (and gratitude) to the extensive websites maintained by the Trenton Historical Society and others with an interest in the city's past and present. To gain a deeper appreciation of critical thinking about cities in general, American cities in particular and their post-industrial fates, I explored the city through readings in sociology, urban studies and political science. I wanted my focus to be more a set of meditations and reflections, as if I were a tourist off the beaten path. To accomplish this, I sought a background sufficient to understand what I was seeing and experiencing, and provide resources for those interested in pursuing such areas in depth.

Primarily, though, I wanted to see if I could peel back the layers of Trenton and find its essence, and to see if it could still be considered a "city," and what that might mean. I sought to place Trenton within the broader theoretical, sociological and historical discussions, to provide a basis for induction, to move from the particular to the general, to make people see a place they deem familiar, like Trenton, in an unfamiliar way, to see it not as a "Jersey city" but as a place of importance that is not only real, but also symbolic and emblematic of deeper currents in the 21st-century dialogue. As photographer Dorothea Lange wrote in "Photographing the Familiar," discussing the need to accept the familiar without manipulation, we nonetheless need to be attuned to its nuances, so that "through familiarity the photographer will find not only the familiar but the strange, not only the ordinary but the rare; not only the mutual but, the singular."[2]

Such inquiries into the nature of the city in general have been the source of significant and voluminous commentary and study at least over the past century; I did not want to wade too deeply in those waters. Rather, I wanted to sample the discussion, dipping in and out, and provide a context for understanding what has happened to industrial America from ground level.

It is time for an honest conversation about our cities and, in particular,



Cadwalader Heights. **Designed by Frederick Law Olmsted (creator of Cadwalader Park) and Trentonian Edmund C. Hill (1855–1936), this hundred-year-old neighborhood remains a diverse mix of professionals. Trenton's residential areas expanded westward; beyond Cadwalader Heights and in the vicinity of the park are Parkside, Hillcrest, Hiltonia and Glen Afton.**

our smaller and medium-sized cities. To have that discussion, it is essential to walk the streets and understand them. One can have such a conversation and still believe in the possible. What does no good is to refuse to call things what they are. Trenton's commercial success, its ability to draw people in to a revitalized downtown or central business district, will be a function of dealing effectively with its crime (most notably, its gangs), its deteriorating housing stock, and its infrastructure. Whether money or political will exists, or can be found, is a question. But what is not a question is the importance and relevance of the attempt.

In the post-industrial world, in which service industries dominate and we live in the world of the intangible, of intellectual property, what happens to places like Trenton that bore the physical needs of 19th-century industrial America? What happens when their factories shut down or leave, when their populace flees, their houses deteriorate and their streets become unsafe? Do we enter the post-apocalyptic landscape of *Bladerunner?* Are we in the realm of Langston Hughes's deferred dreams? Do cities like Trenton just dry up like so many raisins in the sun? Or do they, as in his poem, explode?[3]

I would like to acknowledge the staff of the New Jersey State Museum, on whose board I have the honor to sit and serve as vice president, for their enthusiasm and input for things New Jersey. I also acknowledge the College of New Jersey, where I taught as an adjunct professor for several years, for access to library resources. A few kind words are offered to Small World Coffee, a highly individualistic coffee shop in Princeton, that doesn't seem to mind how much time one sits at the laptop as long as one drinks coffee. And finally, I acknowledge the city of Trenton — the city in which all four of my children were born, and in which I was first sworn in as a lawyer to commence my career.

Finally, every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy and correct citation, but mistakes happen. Errors are my own. If appropriate acknowledgment has not been made, please write to me in care of the publisher.

Introduction

What does it mean to love a city? To identify with a place? To feel loyalty to one's city? To live an urban existence? Do cities fit together? Does the citizen of Trenton have more in common with the citizen of San Francisco, some 3,000 miles away, than she does with the resident of the Borough of Princeton, in the same county and state? Can she found common ground with the urban inhabitant of ancient cities in Mesopotamia? Can the inhabitant of Trenton today identify with the Trentonian of one hundred years ago?

In a conference paper discussing peoples' affinities and loyalties, if not affection, for their city, Jeffry M. Diefendorf tried to get at the question of why people would love Cologne or any other city, and asked:

> What are the objects of this love? The buildings? The streets? The shops? Customs or food? Certain cultural institutions, such as theaters, museums, orchestras, or, yes, sports teams? Who loves which of these? Moreover, to make matters more complex, both the people who love the city and the objects of love change over time. Generations change, people move in and out, the ethnic composition of a city changes. And institutions and structures change too ... even in the normal course of events, buildings burn or are torn down.... Theaters close. Teams go into decline or move away. So what *is* the relationship between changes in the city—everyday changes and catastrophic changes—and the ways and degrees to which people love and identify with the city?[1]

He then compared three cities to reflect upon these questions: Cologne, Basel, and Boston. Although he evaluates these cities in terms of various factors, of interest to me are his comments on identity formation through public festivals. He notes that this is not an abstraction, and that significant monies were spent in the three cities under consideration "to create or reinforce the ways in which citizens understood their cities as well as to project images of the cities to outsiders."[2]

It would seem important, then, in seeking to define a city to consider not merely the physical elements of it, but the psychological, or intangible, elements of what is considered a city, and a particular city, by not only its inhabitants but also outsiders.

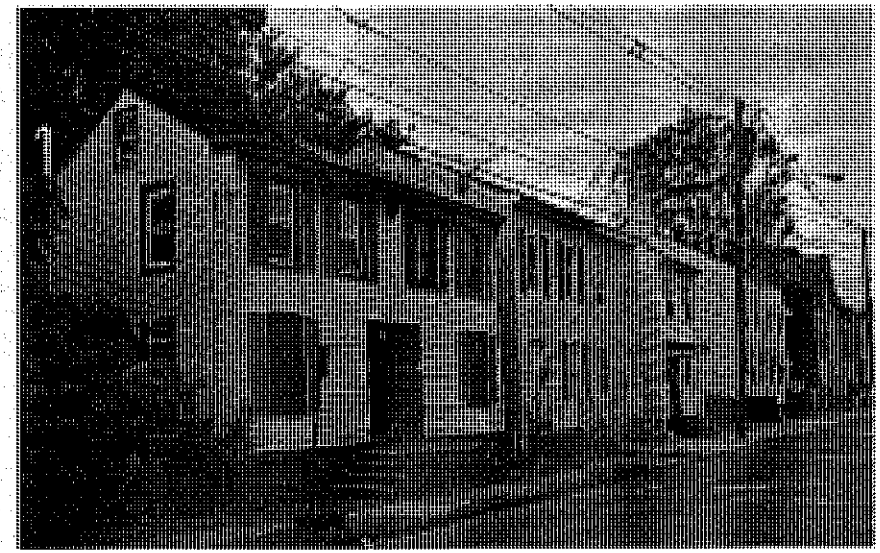
What about Trenton? Say the name, and all kinds of stereotypical images are conjured up. For many people, Trenton, Newark and Camden embody not only negative images of New Jersey, but also the worst of urban decay. And yet Trenton remains a city in fact as well as name, a member of the national and world community of urban places, that continues to have reason to celebrate its metropolitan existence.

It is useful to provide some context for Trenton's place in New Jersey. A municipality in New Jersey may be called a city as a legal matter based on certain historic issues, or based on certain population and other legal criteria, but that is not necessarily (and often is not at all) what we think of when we think of cities. Indeed, the 2000 census lists over 50 municipalities as "cities."[3] These include, for example, Somers Point, with 11,614 people, and Gloucester City, with 11,484 people, as well as Newark and Jersey City, with 273,546 and 240,055 people, respectively. Apart from the census, in New Jersey some municipalities are statutorily defined as a city; Trenton is one of them. On the other hand, various townships are listed in the 2000 census with populations that rival cities proper such as Trenton and Camden; in Mercer County, Hamilton Township with 87,109 people was more populous than Trenton, at 85,403. In Middlesex County, Woodbridge Township far outdistances New Brunswick in population by approximately double.

Trenton, like New Jersey, is perhaps much maligned these days, but there was a time when Trenton was the 50th largest city in the United States and boasted worldwide leaders in the iron and steel, rubber and pottery industries. Like many, if not most, cities of its comparative size and prowess that came of age in the Industrial Revolution, it diminished in the aftermath of World War II and was further buffeted by the social unrest that marked the 1960s and 1970s. It has become, for many, one of the lost cities, a place of reduced population, abandoned houses and factories—in short, just another aggregation of concrete and clay in the vast "Bos-Wash" network.

But if you rub away the dust and grime from the window, so to speak, might you see a different place? In 1860, New Jersey—the "Garden State"—fielded eight cities in the 100 largest in the United States; in the 1890 census, Trenton peaked at position 50, at the time having a greater population than Los Angeles, California, or Portland, Oregon. In the 1990 census, Los Angeles was second, and Portland 30th, in population in the country. So where did Trenton go?

Once upon a time Trenton was among the most important cities in the Western world. Not in the sense of Paris or London, and not in the sense of having been a "world-class" city (whatever that really means), but in the sense of having been one of the relative handful of cities in America and Europe that lifted up, shouldered, and carried the Industrial Revolution to the end, ultimately enabling post-industrial society. It was the site of the pivotal battle that inspired the Continental army and injected new life into the American War of



Passaic Street. **This is the beginning of Passaic Street, just past North Willow (which separates this street from its continuation, called Bank Street, which itself leads into Perry Street), and is in the heart of the Central West neighborhood. Across from these homes is 48-50-52 Passaic Street, one of the city's historic landmarks, and originally a barn, reflecting the rural nature of this part of the city at the time of the Revolution. Now the street is marked by rowhouses of both wood and brick. The Trenton Historical Society speculates that the street was named for either the county or city of Passaic in New Jersey. Barely visible at the extreme right are a group of people sitting on the stoop of one of the homes; Jane Jacobs, in *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, notes the importance of stoops as a means of knitting neighborhoods together and establishing a sense of watchfulness over the city.**

Independence. It was a significant point along the Eastern seaboard in the early years of the country, the site of great industrial breakthroughs, and the home of the men who built the Brooklyn Bridge. For a few moments, it was the capital of the United States, and almost the permanent capital of the country. Having done its duty, judgment was passed. Trenton, like its other New Jersey Industrial Revolution compatriots Camden and Paterson, became lost.

Driving into the city of Trenton southbound on Route 1 seemingly is to pass into a jungle reclaiming the vestiges of civilization. Inconsistent and incoherent trees and brush hide and surround the erstwhile factories of this erstwhile city. We feel, possibly, as if we are somewhere in the Yucatan Peninsula, glimpsing the remains of an ancient Mayan stronghold. Soon we see the city's modest skyline—the federal courthouse, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Labor Building, the Kingsbury Towers. The latter—twin apartment buildings—at 21 stories are Trenton's tallest buildings. They are also examples of Brutalist architecture, which in itself makes a profound statement about this

lost city. We see the rusting, graffiti-strewn water towers rising above the weeds and scraggly trees.

A leading urban scholar in New Jersey over a decade ago pronounced judgment that none of New Jersey's "Big Six" cities—Newark, Elizabeth, Paterson, Jersey City, Trenton and Camden—were built to last. They were essentially ephemeral, "company towns" built around the need of the factories. Once those factories vanished, the purpose of the city vanished.[4] Is that really so? Must we accept that?

As late as the 1950s, as with other such industrial cities, Trenton maintained a particular civic identity. If one flips through historical photographs, particularly those in the 1890 to 1920 range, one imagines this place as the kind of city with the kind of urban lifestyle indicative of a city. This is not a town or village. This is a concrete jungle, within the context of its size. Paved roads filled with traffic, a downtown shopping and office area with new skyscrapers and multitudinous offerings, factories in and outside the city center, civic buildings, elegant hotels, and a social stratification of the well-to-do and famous at one end, and immigrant factory workers at the other. A place where presidential candidates such as Wendell Willkie and John Kennedy passed through. A place that looked like a city, thought itself a city, and was a city.

Two "out of the box" sources have influenced this book. These are Italo Calvino's *Imaginary Cities* and Marco Polo's account of travels to China. The manner in which Marco Polo sought to relate, compare and contrast each new city to his experiences in Venice is helpful in creating the appropriate mindset. Similarly, Calvino's imagined Marco Polo, in describing different cities to the equally fictionalized Kublai Khan, pressed home the notion that there were connections and commonalities to all cities, despite their particularized differences and character. The overriding word is "connection." And sometimes we see best viscerally, rather than directly, and learn by metaphor and analogy.

This book, then, is at the same time neither paean nor condemnation. It is a series of observations and meditations, an attempt to get at the essence of a place through word and image. In some places we tread lightly, and in others, in more detail. A city is a place of infinite variety and depth. It is a place of human endeavor and commitment. In each city there is something of beauty and value, no matter how tarnished, rusty or worn.

The advantage of the camera is it makes you see in a certain way. Armed with a certain objectivity and empathy, I thought I could find the city beneath the city, or at least my interpretation of it. I thought I might do so in the form of meditating on the city, considering things such as *place*. Approaching the subject with a fair degree of humility and realism, I set out to see what connections I might make between Trenton, as a prototypical American city, and the post-industrial 21st-century. Perhaps I could approach it in the vein of a *flâneur*, a wanderer in the city, as the French poet Charles Baudelaire wandered around Paris, observing and absorbing. Maybe I could provide, as Walter Benjamin said of Baudelaire, for whom everything was allegory, "the gaze of the allegorist, as it falls on the city," the "gaze of the alienated man. It is the gaze of the flâneur, whose way of life still conceals beyond a mitigating nimbus the coming desolation of the big-city dweller. The flâneur still stands on the threshold—of the metropolis as of the middle class."[5]

Such an exercise elicits questions. What is it about a city such as Trenton that holds meaning for its citizens? How does a city look on a physical level? How does it feel to live in it, or visit, on an emotional level? What does it stand for, or contribute, on an intellectual and cultural level? If we can ask if androids dream, can we also ask about the personality, the living essence, of the city? And if so, are the questions any less legitimate if the city is small? More to the point, perhaps, can we even hope to define a city? Why is that relevant?

Such questions will be explored in this book in the format of a series of thematic chapters, making use of primary and secondary sources, exploring and synthesizing what others have had to say about "The City," as I filter it through a journey through Trenton. Part One sets the stage and seeks to establish context. The first chapter begins with a series of casual observations, much in the matter of someone wandering through a city, attempting to form initial impressions and place Trenton in context. I take the opportunity to touch briefly on two other of the state's cities, Newark and Camden, north and south, with Trenton in the middle. The mind flits from details to broader pictures and back again. It wanders and makes connections. We begin to tug gently at the fabric of the city. But we know we are not the first to engage in such an exercise. We pause in this chapter to consider three significant sociological frameworks that have underlain much of the discussion of how to view a city and its functions. In the second chapter, we move beyond initial impressions and look at how the city has been defined. This is done so that we can return to Trenton and see if it still functions as a city—if we can find the patterns of city existence in Trenton, and find elements of Trenton in other cities we may care to examine. Finally, in chapter 3, we contemplate the soul of a city, its persistent memories and ruins, and their impact on the city in its present.

In the second part I look for different elements of contemporary urban life in Trenton. Chapter 4 provides an overview of Trenton's history, and how that has shaped its ethos. In chapter 5, we find Trenton to encompass various of the architectural trends that prevailed across the country during the relevant time periods; Trenton becomes a kind of open-air museum for these styles. A former industrial city with world-class industry, Trenton is now, as we see in chapter 6, a city of lost factories. The abandoned or readapted buildings are physical reminders of the essence of what this city was; their persistence as part of the landscape helps define Trenton. Another component of city life, in addition to its history, architecture and industry, is the nature of its urban existence, as discussed in chapter 7. We move from that perhaps more intangible factor

to the concrete engineering achievements of Trenton, focusing on its infrastructure that in some instances achieves aesthetic and iconic status. Finally, in this part we look at the city's parks and cemeteries, in chapter 9, as we explore the landscaped city.

Whereas Part One lays out what it means to be a city as a matter of fact and theory, and Part Two focuses on more identifiable facets of the city's existence, in Part Three the discussion is oriented toward the way in which people react to the city in general and Trenton in particular. The place of the city in American life as an intellectual center has been the subject of controversy; chapter 10 looks at this and also notes Trenton's particular contributions to intellectual life, and the importance of the museum to the city and its surrounding region. Chapter 11 goes in the other direction and looks at the city in terms of territoriality, juxtaposing criminal and gang activity on the one hand, and the attempt of urban planners to find the city's legible points on the other. This provides a segue into how the city's territorial aspects can be made to work better; I discuss in some detail in chapter 12 the current master plan for Trenton, and its context in terms of the "new urbanism." Finally, in chapter 13, I discuss an aesthetic reaction to the city by the photographer, coming full circle to the original impetus for this work.

There is no conclusion as such, no final argument to be made. I have not focused on the city's contemporary politics, or other aspects, such as the religious life of the city. Trenton is reconsidered as we should be reconsidering other former manufacturing cities in the post-industrial age. They require our attention. Failure to understand them and pay attention to them is not a viable policy. If this book serves to cause attention to be paid, it will have done its job.

Part One
Establishing a Context

1. *The City of the* Flâneur

> I saw in my dream the great lost cities...—John Berryman, *His Toy, His Dream, His Rest* (Poem 197)

Consider a photograph of Trenton from 1915 showing the corner of State and Broad streets, the city's core. In those pre-mall, pre-shopping center days, the caption tells us that "residents who lived in the Mercer-Hunterdon region came to the city for everything from farm equipment to the finest clothing to a restaurant for a special occasion."[1] The image shows a four-story building, with United Cigar Stores Company on the ground floor, and three layers of signs: Coca Cola, The Baby Carriage Factory Store on South Broad, Keeler's Shoes on East State, Correct Millinery on South Broad, Howards on North Broad, Hutchinson's Storage Battery on South Warren, Sam's Shoe Shop on South Broad, and Combs & Reed Furniture on West Hanover. A large hand with an extended index finger points to Heroy on North Broad.

Almost 30 years later, in the mid–1940s, another picture of the corner of Broad and State streets shows another urban scene.[2] A bus, several automobiles, pedestrians on a crossed sidewalk (a well-dressed couple studying a map or flyer), and in a row on State Street: Woolworth, Grant's and Kresge's. A movie theater marquee shows current listings; a sign on the street pole points to the Soldier's Club. It could be the corner of 14th Street in New York, or any other central business and shopping district in any other major city.

And some 30 to 40 years after that, in the first decade of the 21st-century, the corner of Broad and State Street is a desultory affair. On a Saturday morning, perhaps a few people are waiting for a bus, or leaning against the side of a building. State Street has some pedestrian traffic, but there are not the jostling crowds of the faded images. Just small groups. During the week, the city usually is filled primarily with state employees, with no significant industry or shopping or private office usage downtown. Even South Warren Street, undergoing a bit of a renaissance, is dormant. On a typical Sunday morning, downtown is not

particularly busy. Not for Trenton are the touristic *flâneurs*, looking for endless possibilities around every corner.[3] In the past, this was a significant urban center. Today, it is one of the lost cities of the United States, yet it provides a place where connections may be made to all cities throughout time. Lost is not a permanent state. There are those who seek to reset the course. But there is no denying that the city is not what it was. That is not necessarily bad; the operative question is what it can, and will, become.

Trenton is not just part of the heritage of America. On one level, it can be considered the midwife of the country, with the First Battle of Trenton that birthing. And its vision as an industrial center, a world leader—and a cultural hub with an urbanist existence during its "Golden Age"—warrants capture, before those vestiges disappear into the post-industrial decades of the 21st-century.

Let us put Trenton in context more locally before proceeding more globally. It is situated in a compact state, in the central part, as distinct from the northern and southern parts. For those in New Jersey, this geography is meaningful. And so are the state's cities different. Newark is a north Jersey place, and Camden a south Jersey place. But there are similarities to these three cities that grew to prominence in the Industrial Revolution and came to symbolize New Jersey's industrial prowess.

New Jersey's cities are no longer among the nation's largest. They are small cities now or, at best, perhaps considered medium-sized. They have their own identities and character. And they have the same parabolic journey through rise, fall and (in Newark's case, at least) perhaps another rise.

Trenton, like the state's largest city, Newark, was established during the Colonial era, and helped not only to launch the nation, but also to carry it into industrial importance. In his study of the rise, fall and resurrection of Newark, Brad Tuttle notes the importance of understanding cities such as Newark to understand not only the rise of America as a superpower, but also how its cities were brought down in the latter half of the 20th century by political corruption, loss of manufacturing, and racial issues, among other things, calling it "Everycity, U.S.A."[4]

The same patterns and comments could be made, and were in fact so noted, regarding both Trenton and Camden. The fate of these cities may have had factual differences, but the essential social, political and economic causes and ramifications were the same. Howard Gillette, discussing comparable issues vis-à-vis Camden, writes in tandem with Tuttle and notes the nostalgia for Camden as its suburbs drained the city's population as its own manufacturing base evanesced.[5]

Trenton's fate was summarily similar. In his study of the city's steady fall from its so-called Golden Age, John Cumbler noted the decrease in workers in Trenton's stagnant industries, and the concomitant rise of its suburban working population. Unlike Camden and Newark, though, as a result of the location of state government, Trenton was shedding its industrial character and "was fast

Brunswick Avenue. **Brunswick Avenue is part of the original King's Highway, the colonial route enabling travelers to go from New York to Philadelphia by way of the Trenton ferry. The rowhouses of Brunswick Avenue are varied; the detached twin rowhouses here feature bracketed cornices and continuous stone bands, comparable, according to the Trenton Historical Society's North Ward Survey, to other such rowhouses built in the late 19th century along Brunswick Avenue.**

becoming a city of reports and forms and of clerks, nurses and waitresses. The new Trenton workers were white and held white-collar jobs, but the city was increasingly becoming populated with black migrants who lacked the skills and skin color to find employment in the new jobs."[6]

The comparisons and the same story played out in the state's northern, central and southern cities, whether in the New York or Philadelphia vicinity, or in between, as with Trenton. To use Tuttle's word, they are "Everycity."

In their now somewhat-dated book on New Jersey's urbanization, Bebout and Grele note the phenomenon of the extended city, and comment that "Newark, Jersey City, Elizabeth, and Paterson have become satellites of New York, just as Camden may be called a satellite of Philadelphia."[7] What is interesting about that remark is that it excludes Trenton. In the 21st century, the trains to Newark and New York run from Trenton as an express during the early morning rush hour, with Trenton and neighboring Hamilton contributing sizeable numbers. The trains stop at Princeton Junction, where they virtually fill, and proceed to Newark and New York. Perhaps at present they might conclude that Trenton is a satellite of both Philadelphia and New York. Or, perhaps, Trenton has sufficient geographic and political distance from both of those

cities to do what neither Newark nor Camden can do—establish itself as the only viable, "real" city in a particular region.

What Tuttle writes about Newark may well have been said about Trenton: "The manner in which Newark had grown—in piecemeal, haphazard fashion, with a factory here, tenements thrown up there, various trolley lines strewn about almost randomly—was traditionally blamed for many of the city's mid-twentieth century problems."[8]

Interestingly enough, Trenton began as a more populous place; it took Newark at least two decades to catch up and surpass Trenton. In 1810, the United States Census reflected Trenton as 42nd of the 46 largest urban places in the United States.[9] Newark was not on the list. Elizabeth was, at 43rd place. No other New Jersey city made the 1810 list. Trenton had 3,002 people; New York, in first place, had 96,373. Newark was still not there in 1820, when Trenton was 46 out of 61; Elizabeth had dropped to 52nd. By 1830, though, Newark sprang to 21st place with 10,953 people, and Trenton was in 71st place out of 90, with 3,925 people. In 1840 Newark, in 23rd place out of 100, had 17,290 people, and Trenton fell off the list. Newark continued to climb, and in 1850, with Trenton still off the list, Newark placed at 19 with 38,894 people. However, by 1860 Trenton had experienced a significant decade of growth, returning to the list at 53rd place, with 17,228 people, compared with 11th place Newark and its 71,941 people.

In 1860, just before the Civil War and its need for industrial product to fight the war, Trenton's place as a leading American city would not have been questioned. It ranked just ahead, populationwise, of Nashville, Tennessee, and well ahead of 99th place Atlanta, Georgia. Newark remained in front of Trenton. In 1890 Trenton peaked at 50th place with 57,548 people. In 1950, the last census report in which Trenton remained in the 100 largest American cities, it placed at 80 with 128,009 people; Newark was in 21st place with 438,776 people. The Census Bureau's estimate of Newark's population for 2008 was 278,980; Trenton's was 82,883.

Trenton's history also has been one of acquisition. To an extent, it grew by acquiring neighboring independent towns. What if neighboring Ewing and Hamilton Townships, with populations of about 37,000 in 15.6 square miles, and 87,000 people in 40.4 square miles, were part of the city? Trenton today would be about 64 square miles, with a population of about 207,000 people. At present, Vineland, a small "city" in South Jersey with 58,164, is the largest geographic area in the state, at 49 square miles. In other words, if Trenton's area had expanded in the way of some other cities that acquired not only land but also population, what would, or could, it be?

By way of comparison, Port St. Lucie, Florida, with a comparable population to Trenton of 88,769 (2000 Census) has 75.5 square miles. Jonesboro, Arkansas, with 55,515 people (2000), has 79.6 square miles. Knoxville, Tennessee, has 92.7 square miles. California, with a massively larger geographic

area than New Jersey and many times the population, has 480 municipalities, ranging from Vernon (population 95) to Los Angeles (population 4,045,873). Issues of consolidation of municipalities remains a controversial topic in New Jersey, and is usually considered regarding a smaller municipality surrounded completely by another. New Jersey's cities are relatively compact, geographically.

The abiding uniqueness of Trenton among New Jersey's cities stems in part from its position as the state's capital. Notwithstanding one writer's comment about certain state capitals being sent to "cow towns" so that the largest city in a state could remain an uninhibited economic engine,[10] Newark does not appear to have been in serious contention for the state capital of New Jersey. Perth Amboy had been the capital of East Jersey, and Burlington of West Jersey; Trenton did not become the state capital until after the Revolutionary War, in 1790. After its failed effort to become the national capital, the city's leaders pushed for state capital status; a significant factor appears to have been its geographic location.

While New Jersey may have begun as East and West Jersey, it is known today more in terms of North and South Jersey. There is no definitive line between the two. Some might consider a line from Trenton to Asbury Park as a suitable dividing line. Others refer to a third area, Central Jersey, that includes an amorphous area from Trenton to Lambertville to Woodbridge to Asbury Park and back across. So if Newark is representative of "north" Jersey, we might think of Trenton not of "central" but even of "south" Jersey, more like Camden than Newark.

These "regional" differences do not seem to have affected the demographics; Trenton remains comparable to the state's northern and southern cities. Together with Newark and Camden, Trenton has most of the principal accoutrements of a city as we think of it, though of the New Jersey cities, Newark probably comes closest to the contemporary city image. Newark has skyscrapers that are actually tall buildings, and not just historical curiosities. It has a subway system, a monumental train station in the classical tradition and a city hall to match, and a nationally renowned art museum. Like Trenton, Newark has an Olmsted-designed park. Unlike both Trenton and Camden, Newark features an international airport, as well as hotels, business centers, and professional hockey and basketball teams. In 2000, it placed 63 out of the 75 largest cities, in the company of Buffalo (58), St. Paul (59) and Louisville (66).

Per the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 population estimates, Newark has about 24 square miles and a population of 278,980; Trenton has an area of about 8 square miles and a population of 82,883.[11] If Trenton were three times as large and had three times its population, would it be the virtual equivalent, population-wise, of Newark?

Demographically, the 2000 Census reports Trenton as having a white population of 32.6 percent and a black population of 52.1 percent. Newark's numbers were 26.5 percent and 53.5 percent, respectively. Camden's white

population was 16.8 percent; its black population 53.3 percent. The New Jersey statewide percentages were 72.6 percent and 13.6 percent, respectively. Trenton's Hispanic population was 21.5 percent; Newark's, 29.5 percent and Camden's, 38.8 percent. Newark's population grew by 3.3 percent from 2000 to 2006; Trenton's declined in the same period by 1.7 percent, and Camden's declined by 0.7 percent. In 1999, Trenton had 21.9 percent — over a fifth — of its population below the poverty line. Newark was 28.4 percent — over a quarter. Camden, one of the poorest cities in the country, had over a third — 35.5 percent. Trenton's median household income (1999) was $31,074; Newark's was $26,913 and Camden's $23,421. The home ownership rate in Trenton in 2000 was 45.5 percent; in Newark, 23.8 percent, and in Camden, surprisingly, 46.1 percent. New Jersey's was 65.6 percent.

So we have Trenton, with a higher median household income, losing population; Newark, with a significantly lower median household income, gained population. And Camden, leading (barely) only in home ownership.

Numbers never tell the entire story. There are analogous histories to the state's northern, central and southern cities, and that analogy is based in manufacturing. New Jersey's cities, exemplifying the vision of Alexander Hamilton observing the Paterson Falls, were about industry. Physical things you could touch. Whereas Trenton's post–Revolutionary industry was steel, Newark's began with shoes. If Trenton had John Roebling, Newark had Seth Boyden and a burgeoning leather industry. Boyden then moved into iron, and established a malleable iron foundry in the 1820s. Through the decades leading up to the Civil War, Newark grew, aided in part as was Trenton, by a canal. In Newark's case it was the Morris Canal; in Trenton, the Delaware and Raritan Canal. Both cities were part of the great Canal Age of America, transportation and industrial centers that were part of the Anthracite Trail from Pennsylvania to New York — America's answer to the great Silk Road of Marco Polo.

By the closing decades of the 19th century, Newark was as diversified as Trenton in factory and industry production. In 1872, the year of the Newark Industrial Exhibition, it ranked third in industrial output and was the 13th largest city in the country. Trenton, per the 1870 census, ranked 58th in population among the country's 100 largest cities, and was about one fifth the population of Newark. Camden placed at 69th. During this time Newark also diversified beyond manufacturing, and its banking, insurance, retail, utility, entertainment and education sectors expanded. The city further proved attractive to Thomas Edison, who established himself there prior to relocating to nearby Menlo Park.

In the antebellum era, regardless of its political classification, Newark had typical and contemporary "city" problems: "crime, poverty, housing shortages, general filth."[12] It shared these with larger cities, such as Boston and New York. Interestingly, in this period, Newark lost territory, areas that became some of the wealthier towns in the area. This may be contrasted with Trenton and its growth by acquisition of abutting towns.

Camden also saw its position deteriorate in the 1950s. Unlike Newark and Trenton, Camden did not have a particularly separate Colonial identity. It was an adjunct to Philadelphia, known originally as Cooper's Ferry for its transportation role. Like Newark and Trenton, early European settlers were Quakers. Between 1800 and 1840, the three settlements around three principal ferry sites consolidated into the city of Camden. Like Trenton and Newark, its industrial growth was facilitated by its proximity to rivers. In Camden's case, two rivers — the Delaware and the Cooper — together with stage coach service, were foundations upon which Camden's businesses could be built.

Trenton, along with New Jersey's other principal cities, experienced three major population shifts at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century: between 1890 and 1910 (1) the beginnings of post-industrial society were established by the emerging class of technicians, managers and white-collar workers, (2) commuters coming in by rail from outside the city, and (3) the shift from mainly northern European immigrants to southern and eastern Europeans, as well as African Americans.[13]

So Trenton, like New Jersey's other cities, is compressed and dense, ethnically diverse, a 19th-century magnet for immigrants and with a history of manufacturing. Until World War II, Trenton went hand in glove with other of the country's East Coat powerhouses that built things. On the other hand, its distance from New York and Philadelphia has helped shape its unique historical identity.

The perception after World War II, was that Trenton had lost its luster. In 1957 Trenton was an object of national ridicule. *House and Home* magazine described a University of Pennsylvania study that "described Trenton as old, decaying, and suffering from multiple ills: obsolescence, overcrowded housing, antiquated schools, lack of planning, and inadequate transportation."[14] Efforts at urban renewal in the 1960s and 1970s might be considered a response to this. However, the problems of Trenton as a post-industrial city are deeper than simply its politics. Much broader forces were at work. In the case of Trenton, it was not simply a question of short-sightedness, or individual greed; the best efforts of its civic leaders were not sufficient to stem the tide of the nationalization of corporate life as a much more universal phenomenon.[15] As companies nationalized, and local industries were acquired, the influence of the venue waned. Decisions were made by people who no longer lived in Trenton. However, to blame the city's political leaders is, on a certain level, like blaming Canute for not being able to hold back the ocean. There were forces at work that affected many of the nation's small- and medium-sized industrial cities as the post-industrial, automobile-driven, service-oriented economy took hold.

We have looked at Trenton in a particular context — that of a New Jersey city — and briefly compared it with two of its companion cities in both the

northern and southern parts of New Jersey. This overview has been brief and contextual. I now want to act more like the *flâneur* and explore the concept of the city in a purely visual manner. We will do this through reference to a particular artist. To help provide a way of looking at Trenton in a pictorial context to examine the notion of the visual city, we turn to one artist's attempt to capture his own city, "between the wars," in the course of a single day. It is a way of placing Trenton, of connecting it and other cities like it, in a common frame of reference. As such, we move toward the meditative exercise on the nature of a city and what we may make of Trenton. The parallels, or connections, are often not hard to find. More to the point, we can start to see Trenton as a prism for the urban scene.

Frans Masereel (1889–1972) was a Belgian woodcut artist who created *The City*, a collection of 100 woodcuts published in Germany in 1925. Without his own words, it nonetheless tells the story of this anonymous European city through macro and micro scenes, ranging from the estrangement and loneliness of the prostitute in her room to the massed crowd getting on or off a train. The only text is the quote from Walt Whitman: "This is the city and I am one of the citizens, Whatever interests the rest interests me." It is a quote from *Song of Myself*; the full sentence reads: "This is the city and I am one of the citizens, Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars, markets, newspapers, schools, The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships, factories, stocks, stores, real estate and personal estate."[16]

An industrial city, in which people's individual lives are drawn against the background of skyscrapers and smokestacks. The book opens with an image of a well-dressed man, back to us, standing on a hill and overlooking the smokestacked buildings of the city. In the foreground and background are trains billowing smoke. Factory stacks belch black and white smoke. The city is a compact, dense, defined set of buildings, with the empty distance beyond the skyline. Next image is a railroad station, trains coming and going, with more smoke. We move after another image of trains to the streets of the city, with mostly men, all hated, in black, moving through the crowded streets. And then — a woodcut of mostly men, with a woman peeking between them, staring at a supine man in the street. Dead? Dying? Attacked? The skyscrapers form a border of over half the space behind them. A man peers through the rear window of an automobile.

> [Interlude]
> *A city man has been indicted for the brutal stabbing death of his girlfriend in March. Brian Carlos Oliver, 40, is charged with murder, theft and a weapons offense in the death of 38-year-old Lisa Glennon, the mother of his daughter. Prosecutors say Oliver brutally beat and stabbed Glenn 23 times before stashing her body under the basement steps of a Melrose Avenue home.*[17]

Masereel's City is a mass of buildings, automobiles, businessmen, elegantly dressed women, crowds, desperation. A city of one's imagination, of another

time and place — an observed reality, or an unobserved unreality? Scenes of workers wielding shovels, the builders of the city, cranes and pickaxes. The music hall, jammed, culture spewing forth and spilling out. A city overflowing with culture, with intellect. A city where a man, his face a grotesque, contorted mask, stands over a secretary at her typewriter, her head bowed: the 20th-century city of industry, of business, of money and power and — in these woodcuts — dominated by men. Monocled and spectacled men in their clubs, beneath triangular lights. Women looking from shuttered windows, between hanging laundry; children surrounding the legless beggar on his cart in the street. A bowler-hatted man leaning back on his cane, studying the pane glass window filled with corsets. It is a city of advertising billboards, of financial dealings, of public squares and displays of military prowess, of the elegance of the grand ball and the squalor and sordidness of lonely people in small rooms, of churches and weddings, of suicides and deathbed scenes. A city of hope and despair, of a shared daily experience but a mass of people strangely disconnected.

> Interlude, Trenton: "A lovers' quarrel led Arthur Laster to fatally stab a woman he claimed to care for after she called out another man's name while they were having sexual relations."[18]

Lives of the city. Trenton, Berlin. Across time and oceans, there are patterns and connections. Size is not necessarily relevant. We can find in contemporary Trenton the same raw emotions and humanity that Masereel captured in Berlin. Every city has its stories, as they say.

Back to Masereel.

Of vast paintings in the grand hall of a museum, and of the haggard woman alone in her bed, a crooked picture of a man (husband? father?) above her bed. A city of laws (there is a courtroom woodcut) and of lust, of birth and death, of oratory and murder, of food and hunger. A scene with a young mother holding a forlorn child, outside the window of a posh restaurant, confronted by the Lurch-like doorman. Of factories and workers in crowded streets and bars. Of black smoke seeping into the black night from the incessantly operating factories. The lone woman at night, head in hands, running down steps against a background of Precisionist-cut buildings. And the drunks carousing in the street.

Reportedly, Masereel was inspired by Georg Heym's poem "Die Stadt" ("The City"), with one translation:

> Very much this night. Clouds and light
> Rend before the moon fall.
> And thousand windows along the night stand
> And blink with their eyelids, red and small.
>
> How Aderwerk go through the city streets,
> Countless people wash in and out.
> And ever a dull dull sound of his
> Monotone matt comes out in silence.

Give birth, death, knitted monotony,
Babbling of labor, long Sterbeschrei,
Change is in the blind by muffled.

And sham and fire torches and red fire
To threaten in the distance with a drawn hand
And seem to be high with dark clouds.[19]

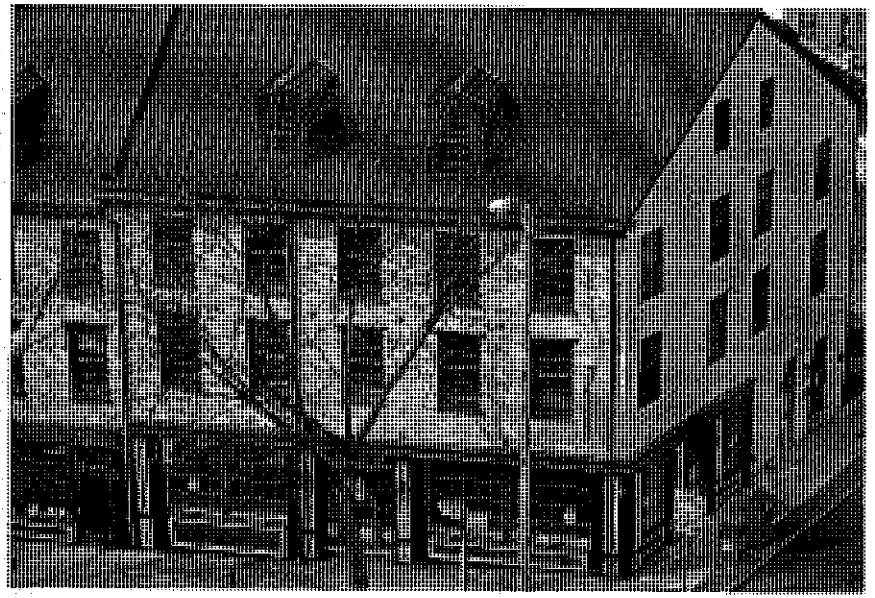
The city is imagistic. The city is the composite of its lives. The city overwhelms our senses.

Another way to approach the city is through the sounds it makes. Not just the sounds of the traffic and voices, but the creative sounds by those who imagine the city in music. Music also provides an introduction to the essence of the city, its neighborhoods and pulsing life. To note but a fraction of what is out there—listen to Dmitry Shostakovich's *The Golden Age*, Opus 22. A ballet in three acts, with six scenes, it takes as its subject a Soviet soccer team's visit to a Western city ("U-town") at the same time that the Western city features an industrial exhibition, sometime around 1930. Captions of the various movements reflect, as Masereel's images do, different facets of the prototypical city. Another composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams, seeks to capture London in his eponymous Symphony No. 2. The first movement begins slowly, quietly, as day breaks over the city; the sound of Big Ben leads to a frenzy of activity in the streets off the Strand as the city comes to life, and so on. And of course, George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, to my ear, is the essence of urbanism, and the night life of a city. Listen to *Rhapsody in Blue*, then look at Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*, and contemplate the city. As you wander Trenton, or other seemingly familiar cities, listen to them.

Contemplate Trenton. And cities of its ilk. The movie *The Full Monty* opens with a promotional film clip of the English city of Sheffield, and then moves to its present scene of abandoned factories and desolation. The popular English series *The Office* was set in Slough, and its American counterpart was set in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The post-industrial city remains a piece of contemporary Western culture. Trenton is an industrial city. Therefore....

There is something about a city: the sound of footsteps echoing on old streets, the connection of walking over a place that hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of people have walked across the centuries, observing a detail in a building previously unnoticed. These tactile sensations are not discernible from the ether. They are not found in the telephone line–riddled roads of the suburbs. Cities are valuable places, the ballast of civilized society. They are open-air museums and testaments to what we can be. We let them decay and vanish to our considerable loss.

The city is a singular human creation that marks our aspirations as communal beings. It provides connection, and grows out of a human need for connection. In the virtual age, companionship still matters. We remain descendents of the extended tribe. There are those who argue definitionally



101 to 107 South Warren Street. **This building on South Warren stands where the Golden Swan Tavern stood. A plaque on the side of the building reads, "Built about 1815. An inn 1826–1857. 'The Daily True American' published by the Naar family 1857–1872. Subsequently housed various industrial and commercial activities." The signing of the ratification of the United States Constitution occurred about 100 yards from the site. Such markers identify the physical ground that has historic connection and helps anchor us with the city.**

that the city is a place of strangers, but my point is different. As in a movie theater, the strangers share a common experience, and there remains a connection. You may never have seen someone from your city, but when you encounter that same person in a foreign city and learn of the connection, that connection proves powerful. Suddenly the person is a friend. You have a connection.

Society provides the political parameters of a physical infrastructure in which a group of people live and work. The city itself has stayed with us through the centuries as the epitome of social organization. Constantly changing in its demographics and population, as well as physical shape, it is also a function of its intangibles—its history, culture and personality. Whether we think in terms of primitive bonds driven by a need for safety in numbers, or more sophisticated economic relationships to drive efficiency and survival, or even a transcendent, psychological need for tactile human contact, the city is a collective identity within a finite space. The vaster the space, the more attenuated that connection and possibly identity; too large an area, and the city breaks down into its component regions. Similarly, the fewer the people, the less there are to be con-

nected. Nations have come and gone, borders have shifted, but the city seems to have remained, and survived, in one form or another.

The city is palpable, sensory. Despite the present digital age of the avatar, where people live "second lives" in the photonic ether, people remain drawn to the physical city. There is something about knowing a city, becoming familiar with it. Embracing the familiar, knowing which streets lead where. Understanding a city. It provides a comfort; it is *home.* We need a sense of place, of belonging. In an era of isolation, of communion over computers instead of in person, of an ethic that sacrifices friendship for work, a familiar city provides a kind of comfort. We may take particular pleasure in visiting a foreign city for a third or fourth time, when we've gotten to know it a bit, and no longer need a map, when we recognize what I remember. A city is a living thing, a thing made by people for people.

Can a city, like a person, be clinically depressed? Is it also capable of moments of sheer happiness? Can we find pieces of Trenton in every city in the industrialized United States? Can we find pieces of America in the broken streets of Trenton?

If a city sleeps, does it dream? Does Trenton dream?

We have, by way of introduction, now glanced at Trenton in the context of New Jersey, and briefly compared it with Newark and Camden. We have moved farther afield to explore a city, as one artist has done, through visual images that purport to capture a "day in the life." The broader question remains: how does Trenton "measure up" in terms of defining the city as a city?

The poet Wallace Stevens once suggested "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." Are there 13 ways of looking at a city? How do we define "the city?" How does it shape us? Sociologists attempt to define a city and get at a theory of a city. Wander through the streets of Trenton, and try to understand the place. Ultimately, the task of definition may be impossible, as historian Blake McKelvey noted; the inability of scholars to agree "reflects the fact that [cities] are human aggregates and historic experiences, not abstractions."[20]

Architect Spiro Kostof, in *The City Shaped,* asks what a city is, and offers nine (as opposed to Wallace Stevens' thirteen) ways of looking. More particularly, he suggests nine glosses on the premise of the city as a place of a large and concentrated population. He calls the city a place (1) "where a certain energized crowding of people takes place"; (2) that is clustered near other cities; (3) that itself is physically circumscribed; (4) with specified differentiation of work; (5) "favored by a source of income"; (6) that relies on written records; (7) "intimately engaged with" the surrounding countryside that provides food; (8) "distinguished by some kind of monumental definition" encompassing public buildings and landmarks; and (9) "made up of buildings and people."[21]

Today, perhaps, "countryside" might be replaced with "suburbia" or "sprawl," although food would still come from outside the city, even if shipped

in from across the country, but otherwise this presents a working set of concepts or parameters with which to think about Trenton.

Essentially, though, whatever anyone says, the city begins and ends with its people, and generally the focus is on the interaction or result of the concentration of people within a finite space.

We are, for the moment, on a casual stroll. One way to begin is to look at different sets of viewpoints, or three theoretical prisms reflecting certain "schools" of thought as to approaching the city. They provide something to think about as you wander your way through the post-industrial streets of Trenton or cities like it. That is, more ways of looking at the blackbird, and meditating more broadly upon the urban existence as a reaction to the impressions of Trenton. Put another way, can we take a mini-course in urban studies, with the broadest of brush strokes, to allow us to think about a place we may have taken for granted, with a fresh mindset?

The three broad ways of looking at the city, three hypotheses attempting to define the City, have been denoted as determinism, compositionalism, and subcultural theory. We need not go into all the intricacies of such theories or variations; the purpose here is to note three principal viewpoints, and some of the main works articulating them, as a starting point for reconsidering Trenton in the 21st century.

Regarding determinism, or the view that the city fosters estrangement and isolation, we turn first to socialist Louis Wirth. In his 1938 essay "Urbanism as a Way of Life," Wirth argues that "for sociological purposes a city may be defined as a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals."[22] Size alone is important but not determinative, and is also relative. The features of urbanism may be reflected in those areas surrounding the city. The city itself encompasses other factors apart from simply size; communication, transportation, cultural and government functions are present within the city. One feature of Wirth's analysis has particular applicability to determining Trenton's continuing place as a city — that is, to the extent that the city exerts influence over the surrounding "rural" areas based on its aggregation of economic and cultural institutions. In the case of Trenton, it could be just as easily stated that the surrounding suburban areas have become dominant in terms of all but government — certainly economic, cultural and transportation centers have migrated outward.

Wirth's writings borrowed from another "Chicago school" sociologist in the opening decades of the 20th century, Georg Simmel.

In 1903 Simmel published an essay titled "The Metropolis and Mental Life." He opens that essay by saying, "The deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and of the technique of life."[23] He argues that the

city fosters an intellectualization of the person, as opposed to the emotional behavior of those living in rural areas. The relationship between urban existence and the "money economy" leads to an impersonal, objective approach by anonymous urban citizens toward one another that is steeped in matter-of-factness that links justice with hardness; it is the result of purely economic calculations and ego that have no fear because personal relationships are not deep or, as Simmel puts it, they are "imponderable."[24]

Ultimately, the effect of urban existence, the hardness and anonymity of relationships, leads to a "blasé attitude" that ultimately has a destructive effect:

> In the blasé attitude the concentration of men and things stimulate the nervous system of the individual to its highest achievement so that it attains its peak. Through the mere quantitative intensification of the same conditioning factors this achievement is transformed into its opposite and appears in the peculiar adjustment of the blasé attitude. In this phenomenon the nerves find in the refusal to react to their stimulation the last possibility of accommodating to the contents and forms of metropolitan life. The self-preservation of certain personalities is brought at the price of devaluating the whole objective world, a devaluation which in the end unavoidably drags one's own personality down into a feeling of the same worthlessness.[25]

This causes a reserve among the various groups that act in self-preservation. In other words, one seeks to distance one's self in the city for survival rather than seeking the assistance of others to achieve survival.

These works, among others, denominated "determinist" suggest the destructive effects of the city. The concentration of people causes a particular psychological result on urban inhabitants. Stated differently, the city itself is the causal factor, with an across-the-board application. The conclusions were challenged by Herbert Gans (among others), in what is referred to as compositionalism, that is the city itself and its concomitant population is *not* in and of itself the determining factor. Rather, the city is not homogeneous, and we need to recognize the city's disparate parts and their reflection of these factors.

Gans criticized Wirth's view as not taking into account the entirety of the metropolitan area. In "Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life: A Reevaluation of Definitions," Gans broadly criticizes Wirth's theory in part on the grounds that it is based on society as being completely urban, and does not distinguish between lifestyles as reflected in different kinds of communities in contemporary society.[26] More specifically, he challenges Wirth's analysis on three bases. First, one cannot apply general conclusions based on the inner city to the broader urban region. Second, he specifically disputes the conclusion that number, density and heterogeneity are sufficient to generate the consequences described by Wirth, based on the variable evidence (or lack thereof). Third, he contends Wirth did not take into account other "social structures and cultural patterns" that affected the city's inhabitants.[27] Gans divides the urban population of the city into five types: cosmopolites (students, artists, writers, musicians, entertainers, professionals, intellectuals), unmarried or

childless (temporary and permanent), ethnic villagers (isolated nationalities), the deprived (emotionally disturbed, handicapped, poor white), and the trapped (those who can't leave their neighborhoods due to economics, including the old).[28] Consequently, the inner city is different from the outer city, and both are distinct from the suburbs; there are different types of people in and out of the urban environment, as well as physical differences.[29] These conclusions render a sociological definition of the city impossible; "the sociologist cannot, therefore, speak of an urban or suburban way of life."[30] Thus, in contrast to Wirth's urbanism definition of the city, Gans offers the non-definition in a compositionalism format. The city is a diverse place, with specific groups that have their own rules and codes, and who are not necessarily isolated or estranged.

Let us pause a moment to think about this in the context of Trenton. Has it become the "hard" place of Wirth and Simmel? Does it retain, on the other hand, a more empathetic, "small town" atmosphere despite its city-sized population and density? Considering it in terms of what Gans has to say, we can note that Trenton retains considerable diversity, despite migration to the suburbs by a sizeable portion of its population. It has neighborhoods with varying

Taxis. **Although taxis frequent suburban venues, the image of the taxi goes hand in hand with urban identity, as in this image of West State Street. Long before the automobile, rented transportation included ferries and animal-drawn coaches. With the advent of the automobile in the 1890s, electric-powered cabs made their appearance in certain American cities. In 1900, the New York Taxi Cab Company brought over 600 French-made, gasoline powered, red and green cars. In England, the first gasoline cabs appeared in 1903. The name "taxi" is derived from the taximeter, invented by Wilhelm Bruhn in 1893, From the French "taxe" (price) and Greek "metron" (measure); the device measured both distance and time. The word "cab" derives from cabriolet, a horse-powered carriage.**

economic and nationality components. As noted above, the Census Bureau reports in the 2000 census a city population that is 32.5 percent white and 52.1 percent black; 21.5 percent of the city's residents reported themselves as Hispanic or Latino, which could include either race.[31] So arguably Trenton retains diversity reflective of its immigrant history as well. For example, the Italian-American community accounts for just over 7 percent of the city's white population.[32]

It is not my intention here to engage in a full-blown case study of Trenton in terms of these schools of thought, or to seek to apply them in detail to Trenton. As *flâneurs,* we are strolling and wandering not simply through the physical space of Trenton, but through the intangible. And simply providing some things to think about by reconsidering Trenton in view of what some urban sociologists have had to say about cities in the abstract.

But these are not the only theories of the city for our consideration. A third perspective, offered by subcultural theory, is mainly attached to Claude Fischer, and offers perhaps a "middle ground" between Wirth and Gans. I agree with Fischer that the city itself has a significant influence in shaping social life; he does not, however, view it as destructive or isolationist, but rather as producing particular subcultures. Fischer questions Wirth's conclusions that disorganization and alienation were the inevitable result of urban living, and sets out to determine the effects of population concentration.[33] He posits that Wirth's "higher rates of 'deviance and disorganization' in cities are not accounted for by such factors as alienation, anonymity, and impersonality, but instead by the congregation of numbers of persons, 'critical masses,' sufficient to maintain viable unconventional subcultures. It is the behavioral expressions of those subcultures which come to be called 'deviant.'"[34] He rejects the notion that concentrated population in and of itself produces an urban phenomenon or that that is the definition of "urban."

If Wirth viewed all who live in a city as affected in the same manner, and Gans challenged that by pointing to groups that nonetheless thrived without such estrangement in the urban environment much as others in non-urban environments, Fischer notes that at a minimum, "urban residents do differ significantly from residents of nonurban places, and they differ to a degree insufficiently accounted for by the individual traits each group brings to its locale. They are more likely than rural residents to behave in ways that diverge from the central and/or traditional norms of their common society."[35] In short, cities produce *unconventionality*, which Fischer defines to include "unusual, divergent, idiosyncratic, nonglobally normative."[36] Unlike Gans, though, Fischer views the unconventionality of urban existences as more than incidental to urban life.

Setting out his premises, he defines urban "solely in terms of population concentration — the greater the number of persons aggregated at a place of settlement the more urban the place," and a "subculture" as "a set of modal beliefs, values, norms, and customs associated with a relatively distinct social subsystem."[37] He posits several propositions; I am omitting the quotations for ease of reading. Essentially, the more urban a place, then (1) the greater its subcultural variety, (2) the more intense its subcultures, (3) the more numerous the sources of diffusion and the greater the diffusion into a subculture and (4) the higher the rates of unconventionality. Ultimately, Fischer provides his own self-critical analysis and concludes that work remains to be done to test his propositions.[38]

So consider Trenton as the laboratory for a class in urban sociology.[39] As students — or as *flâneurs* — we may ask ourselves: which of these views of the effects of urban existence better explains or applies to Trenton? These are attempts to understand urbanism and social organization within the city. Whether or not any of these views provides a meaningful prism for viewing Trenton as such is less important than thinking about Trenton on a broader theoretical plane in order to place it with other cities. It is to facilitate looking at the familiar through a different set of analytical eyes, and attempt to understand the larger importance of a place like Trenton. The way people live in Trenton, view Trenton, and view other Trentonians has relevance. Can it be explained? Accounted for? One can conduct interviews and surveys: will that help us *understand* the place better? Trenton is a place of good and bad, light and dark, like any city. The thing about theory is that it is abstract. Trenton is real. However, when we think about Trenton, and walk its streets, we may bear in mind these approaches to the city and consider how Trenton fits in — or not.

If we move beyond the stereotypes and the stale jokes, can we reexamine Trenton and its value as a living place within the broader theoretical discussion?

But Trenton is not theory. It is a real place. A pragmatic place. And so, on a more pragmatic level, we can join urban historians who look to more tangible factors. Urban sociologist and historian Lewis Mumford, in noting the cooperative nature of the city, the evolution of order from chaos and allowing human contact in a physical space to facilitate cultural growth and expand upon civilization's heritage, nonetheless looks to the city's concentrated power, and the negative result was aggrandizement, slavery and other evils that have persisted even into the 20th century. At its core, though, the city began with human beings and needs to return to classical conceptions of the city. As Mumford writes: "We must now conceive the city, accordingly, not primarily as a place of business or government, but as an essential organ for expressing and actualizing the new human personality — that of 'One World Man.'"[40] Beyond theoretical abstractions, the city is a place where there are real consequences to real people.

The city may be considered the achievement of humanity, replete with shattered dreams. Trenton is the city of industrial prowess and significance, and is also the industrial city in the post-industrial world abandoned factories and rowhouses.

[Interlude]
NEW JERSEY DAILY BRIEFING; Condom Plant to Close
By Susan Jo Keller (New York Times, *May 19, 1995)*
Carter-Wallace, one of Trenton's largest private employers, confirmed yesterday that it will close its plant here, which makes Trojan brand condoms. That means 500 fewer manufacturing jobs in a city that once boasted "Trenton makes, the world takes." Carter-Wallace's other New Jersey operation, a research and manufacturing plant in Cranbury, is not affected.[41]

A city has a soul. This is another way to think about Trenton and what makes a city a city. Let us draw another completely different connection in this opening chapter, this *flâneur*-like meandering in and about Trenton. This one takes us to the cutting edge of what is, or is not, acceptable.

In his controversial and far-reaching writings on the *Gaia Hypothesis*, scientist James Lovelock writes of the interconnected system that comprises both animate and inanimate objects to form a complex life unit. Like Lovelock's vision of "our planet as something possibly unique in the universe, something alive,"[42] each city is unique and, in its way, alive. It is more than metaphor to Lovelock; the Gaia theory is that "the Earth behaves like a living system."[43] It is not a reach to apply Gaia in a more microcosmic way. In short, the same kinds of interrelationships that led Lovelock to view the planets as a living system are applicable to the city.

Lovelock speaks of *Gaia*, and the "living" nature of the planet, the admixture into a living system of animate and inanimate components. Philosopher Mark Kingwell acknowledges that while cities "are not biological entities ... they exhibit certain organic features, such as growth, disease and decline."[44] However imaginative or fantastic we become in our thinking, we need to look at the city — the post-industrial American city — as something more than a physical thing. To do so, in many cases, is to see only wreckage. We need to look beyond the detritus and find the beating heart. We need to look at its history, its physical components, its parks, its dead, its neighborhoods and downtown, its pulse, its good and its bad.

I mentioned in the Introduction that two "out of the box" sources inspired the approach to this book. In Italo Calvino's speculative *Invisible Cities*, the emperor Kublai Khan felt it imperative to send a fictionalized Marco Polo to describe the cities of the empire. Khan needed to know and understand these cities. Ironically, despite the series of individual descriptions of individual cities, Marco Polo observed that "traveling, you realize that differences are lost: each city takes to resembling all cities, places exchange their form, order, distances, a shapeless dust cloud invades the continents."[45] Marco Polo has a series of conversations with Kublai Khan in which the explorer seeks to identify the few core characteristics of each, in inductive fashion, moving from the particular to the general. It is suggested that all are really facets of one city, which was

Venice. (As an intriguing historical aside, Trenton was actually compared to Venice in an article in the *New York Times*, noting, "It is remarkable that an island town should have so many waterways running parallel with the streets and avenues. Trenton has one-fourth as many bridges as Venice, and it has just one-third the population...."[46])

Is Trenton Venice? Is Venice Trenton? Posing the question seems ridiculous in 21st century eyes. But that is part of our purpose here — to pose the questions no one would even think to ask. And to transcend current time and space, and reshape our paradigms.

Are all cities Venice?

The city is a home.

In photographing Trenton for this book, I came upon two different people, in two different neighborhoods, on two different days, doing something I hadn't seen people do for decades: they were sweeping the street and sidewalk in front of their homes. One, in the Ewing-Carroll area near the federal courthouse, and the other, in South Trenton on Center Street. I was struck by these very urban moments. Both lived in rowhouses. There was a sense of pride in their actions. They were determined to keep their particular pieces of the city — of the universe — tidy.

The city is its secrets.

Trenton is a city with architectural and historical jewels. Like an old man or woman who hears a few bars of a song or catches a whiff of something in the wind, and is immediately transported to another place by a recovered lost memory, a long-forgotten image of something thought irretrievably gone, so Trenton continuously sees bits of its past in its present. The mansions of West State Street still continue to impress, if now in converted offices rather than residences. The eyebrows on rowhouse windows on Grant Avenue or the cupola on the decayed New Berkeley Hotel on Brunswick Avenue or a weed-covered statuette of a drunk man clinging to a pole in the Berkeley neighborhood — all compel a smile of recognition of some deeper layers of aesthetic concern and sense of place. Details form part of the mosaic and concomitant personality of place. Historical markers on the sides of buildings, ignored and unread, nonetheless state unequivocally, desperately: *Look at me. This was here, on this spot. You are connected. I still exist. I live.*

As on the corner of West State Street and North Warren Street, the former site of the Abraham Hunt House: "Colonel Rall was entertained on Christmas night 1776 in the house owned by Abraham Hunt which stood on this spot." Rall was killed during the First Battle of Trenton, and was buried in Trenton. Here he was, on this spot, over two hundred years ago. Someone considered this important enough to go to the trouble and expense of preparing this marker. Look at it.

We have introduced the city in general and the city of Trenton but barely scratched the surface. Wandered a bit here and there, not delving too deeply, suggesting. Letting our minds flit about — just as we do when we walk in a city. Connections, meditations and reflections, photographic images — all are part of the inquiry into the cognizable character remaining in this lost city, like others of its kind, and all the more unique for that.

Trenton matters. The small lost cities of the Atlantic seaboard, tracing their roots back to the formation of the country deserve, if not demand, our attention.

2. *The City Defined and Considered*

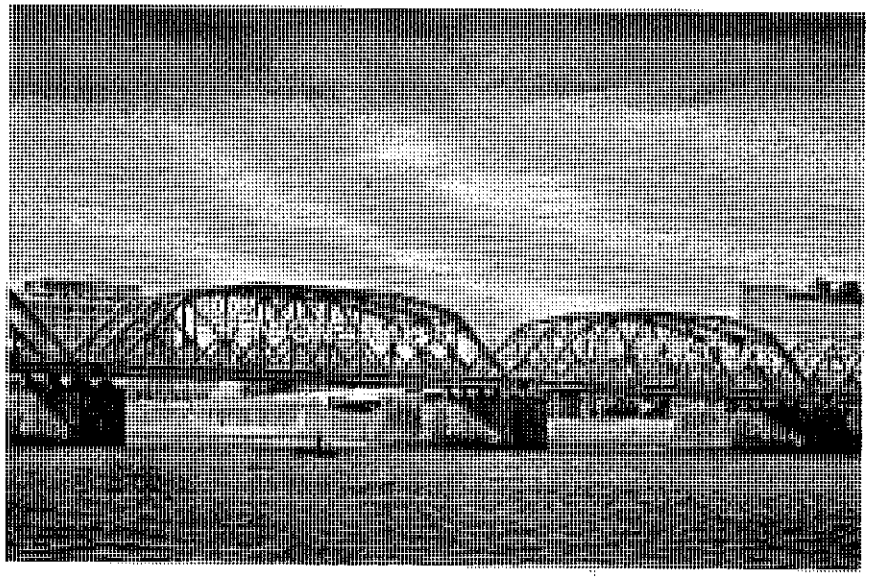
I have written of connections, the taking off from one point and proceeding to another, even if the reason is not immediately transparent — like a Rorschach response to the images of the city. We considered, preliminarily, different ways of viewing a city generally, and of viewing Trenton particularly. In this chapter, we look more broadly, thinking about Trenton in the broader context of how people think about cities in general, and seek to define them to get at their essential characteristics. We move beyond the abstract theories to the more particular and concrete aspects of defining and considering a city. We will seek to place Trenton in this context, or at least provide a set of "reading glasses" for looking at Trenton — or any other such city, for that matter — through those lenses. We move beyond the three theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter One, and beyond the census data, and demographics. We consider different ways that people have defined a city and what it means to be in and of a city.

The first cities were in Mesopotamia.[1] They developed from a combination of commercial, security and religious reasons. Early Mesopotamian cities were often dominated by the ziggurat, the large stepped towers of the ancient communities that served as temples. One can also note this combination of functions not only in ancient world cities, but also in the formation of American cities in particular, which began with a core admixture of religion and social concern.[2] Various New Jersey cities — Newark and Trenton among them — began with Quaker roots and a search for religious freedom, coupled with a desire to take advantage of the commercial advantages of the particular locale. The Industrial Revolution was such that at mid-19th century, the development of the city — of urbanized America — was seen as a "phenomenon," and one for which political leadership was not prepared. Indeed, the chaos generated by the unmet social needs of the burgeoning populations was viewed as a threat to American democracy itself.[3] However, led by such as William Ellery Channing, founder of the Unitarian Church, and American transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson

and Walt Whitman, the city was seen as a noble human pursuit, something that could, and should, be properly planned to give voice and vision to that which was most ideal in the human condition.[4]

Cities need a sense of place that is greater than the sum of its parts, and to that end they provide physical elements of place. A city comprised primarily of office and residential space, and limited public spaces and monuments, will be deficient: "People tend to select something prominent, something that has played a role in the life of their city, for a landmark: a town hall, a market cross, fountains, monuments, theaters, church porches, and the like."[5] They provide a sense of cultural identity, but equally important to these civic symbols is the sense of "place," the "territory within which important personal memories are inscribed and which also provides windows of opportunity to sustain hope for the future."[6] Every city has at least one fundamental icon that proclaims to the world, like a brand logo, its identity and its essence. It may be a skyline, a plaza, an iconic building—but there is something that becomes the face of the city.

For the city of Trenton, that symbol is a bridge. Crossing the Delaware River at virtually the same location as the earliest bridge crossings of that river, the Lower Trenton Bridge is more affectionately and locally known as the "Trenton Makes" bridge, derived from the slogan "Trenton Makes, the World Takes" emblazoned across it. The first bridge on the site opened in 1806, and was a



Trenton Makes Bridge. **The iconic bridge, reflecting Trenton's motto, "Trenton Makes, the World Takes," stands on the site of its 18th-century predecessor bridge that was an engineering wonder of the time across the Delaware River.**

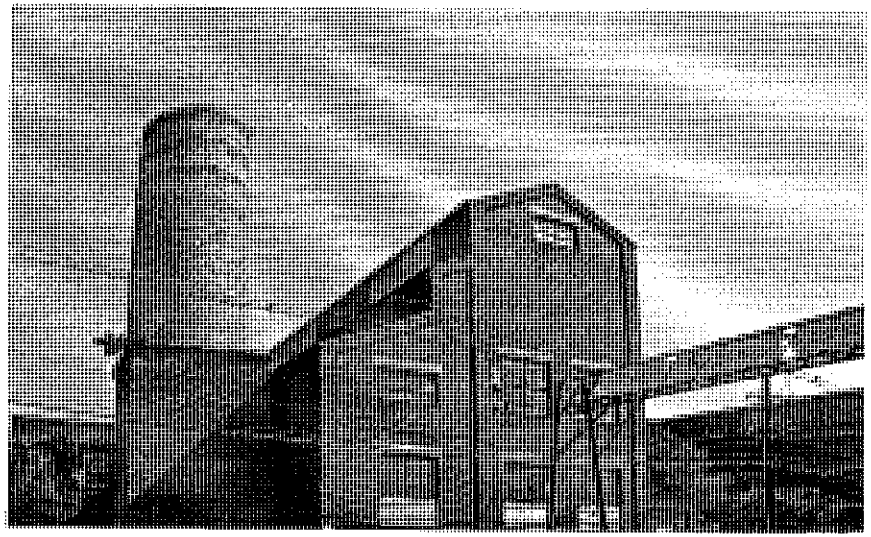
wooden covered bridge that was internationally known for its engineering. The current bridge dates to 1928; the slogan's letters, testifying to Trenton's industrial heritage, were placed on the bridge in 1935. It is, perhaps, difficult for those outside of the city itself and the surrounding area to understand the emotional resonance of the sign and the bridge.[7]

To be sure, there are other iconic symbols in the city—the War Memorial Building, the golden-domed Statehouse, the mansions of West State Street, the Roebling steel factory, the Battle Monument, the Old Barracks, even Cadwalader Park, designed personally by Frederick Law Olmsted—but it is this bridge, with its bold statement that defies and denies current economic and commercial reality of the city, that remains the symbol of the city.

If the "Trenton Makes" bridge is the most visible physical structure to capture the spirit of the city, there is other physical evidence of Trenton's "city-ness" that establishes Trenton's sense of urban place. When one looks at the pictures of Trenton from half a century ago, or even a full hundred years ago, there is no question of its *urbanness*. It *looks* like a city. Today, even with its decreased population and commercial activity, its *footprint* is still that of a city. While other cities have grown, both physically, architecturally and economically, Trenton has not, but the definition need not be a comparative one. Trenton remains a city, and it is important to retain that definition in considering its present and its future.

Cities matter, and not just economically. They matter because of what has

War Memorial Building. **One of the great monumental buildings of the city, the War Memorial Building was constructed in 1931-1932, another example of American Renaissance architecture and neo-classicism. Dedicated to the fallen of World War I, it was refurbished in 1999 and serves as Trenton's premier performing arts venue.**

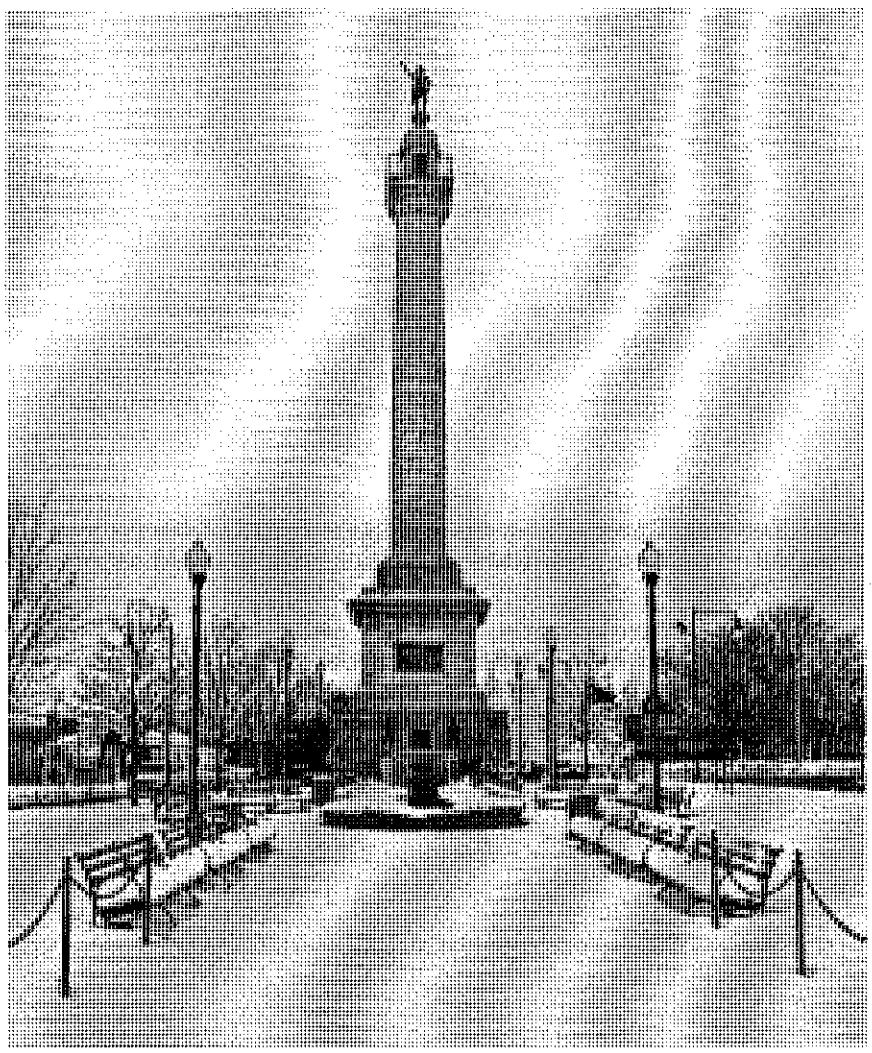


Roebling Factory. **Among the most famous Trenton factories was the steel wire factory of the Roeblings. Shown here is Building 104. John A. Roebling opted for Trenton in part on the recommendation of his friend, Peter Cooper, whose Iron and Steel Works was already in the city (and is now a restaurant/bar). He bought land in 1848 on South Broad Street and by 1849 began production. Advantages of the city included its location on the Eastern seaboard, accessible water and rail transport, and nearby related industries.**

gone into them and what is lost if they are gone. A place like Trenton would be missed. We think *city* and, at least in the United States, we think concrete and skyscrapers. We think population. We think things. But a city is more than that. A city may need a physical composition to be a city, and all that it connotes, but a city is something more.

In the initial instance it might seem that to ask what is a city is in part a fool's errand; definitions abound, objective and subjective, real and surreal. Still, we are a naming people, and we need to name this thing we are observing, and are part of. We attempt a definition. But do we focus on the physical? The emotional? The intellectual? The city is all of these things. Perhaps like Justice Potter Stewart's definition of obscenity, we simply know it when we see it. Mark Girouard, in *Cities and People*, expressed a similar thought: "There is a certain stage of cosmopolitanism and complexity at which a town becomes a city; everyone is aware of it, although the border between the two is inevitably imprecise."[8]

Trenton provides a basis to consider three interrelated things: first, the definition of a city, and how we think of cities; second, what it means to have a sense of place; and third, what the industrial city looks like through the lens



Battle Monument in Snow. **The blizzards of February 2010 blanketed the city. The Battle Monument seems a more vivid reminder of the actual battle in this setting.**

of Trenton. The scholars send us to the abstract and the theoretical, and the streets and life return us to the reality of Trenton. We make connections. To understand them, it is helpful to have some background and framework. In the first chapter we discussed broad themes and schools of thought as to the impact of the city. We can now look a bit more closely at particular ways in which some have sought to define a city.

Defining the City

At present it is estimated that nearly half of the world's people live in cities, and by 2030, the figure will be two-thirds; this should be compared with about 10 percent living in cities in 1800.[9]

In the context of metropolitan world, what remains of the city identity itself? The world is becoming urbanized, with more people living in urban environments. What may seem a self-evident statement should not be taken for granted or dismissed too quickly. This is a relatively recent phenomenon. Throughout the eighteenth century, the population was primarily rural, and towns were the norm as opposed to large cities. With the 19th century and the movement of rural populations towards burgeoning industrial centers, this began to change, and European cities' boundaries expanded beyond medieval walls. In the Western Hemisphere, the "New World," there were no such walls to break, so in the alternative, cities often expanded by aggregating outlying towns. So it is worth reflecting on the impact that this has on the way we look at ourselves in the twenty-first century, and what it means culturally, intellectually and otherwise to be an urban society as opposed to a rural society. And since, at the heart of urban existence are the cities, in one form or another, it warrants attention.

The cities of the world continue to grow significantly, at the expense of rural areas.[10] A standard metropolitan statistical area is not the same as a city.[11] The city itself is less easily defined, or perhaps even intuitively known. It has tangible and intangible assets. However we define it, primarily the city is a physical place, not simply a census measuring device. Forget the "virtual" city or the temptation to look for the characteristics of a city in the digital byways of the Internet. Put aside notions of suburban "cities," or "sprawl," or complex sociological theories as to what the city of the twenty-first century is, has been or will become. Leave Joel Garreau's "edge cities" aside for the moment—that notion of a vast geographical blob that may have replaced the core functions of the city in the new extended sprawl. The physical American city remains, even if it has shrunk and withered, as Trenton. Its footprint remains.

America's urbanization has been continuous and accelerated. Paradoxically, in the post–World War II era, the urbanization of the country increased while simultaneously many of its smaller and medium-sized cities—including those that once were among the nation's hundred largest—diminished. The standard metropolitan statistical area skews our concept of city.[12] We are interested in the city *proper*, the thing we seem to know without having to necessarily define it. Once we understand its physical contours, we can get at its intangible being, its essence, its soul, its *urbanity*.

Municipalities, particularly in New Jersey, where there are 566 of them, may often run together, bleeding borders. Most are not, have never been, and frankly, will not become, cities. The city proper is a particular thing. New Jersey still has a few of them—the East Coast cities, the Colonial towns that grew up and, like Carl Sandburg's Chicago, had broad shoulders.

We tend to think today of cities with skylines, filled with skyscrapers, drawn by the image of New York. This is an Americanism; many of the larger cities of Europe lack these tall buildings in their city centers, though one finds them sprouting on the peripheries. Even Paris, sprawling and medieval Paris, sprouts one essential central skyscraper (apart from the Eiffel Tower and the domino-like fringe of Defense), the gray finger pointing up from Montparnasse. The American cities, visible from the great Eisenhower-spawned interstates, seem like cut-outs stood on end. A few, many—it doesn't matter. To the American, tall buildings define the city. Even Trenton, with its handful of skyscrapers generally between fifteen and twenty stories, sports a discernable skyline from across the Delaware River. It can be a city by appearance, still.

But looks are not enough. It is time to shift our focus, to think about one of the questions of this book: What makes a city?

It cannot be just a matter of population, though population itself must be the starting point for determining a city. It is counterintuitive to refer to a city of, say, 1,000 people, in the contemporary world, no matter how concentrated they are. However, there are suburban areas with more people than many other "traditional" cities, and yet we do not think of them, either anecdotally or in scholarly fashion, as cities. Let us consider this more in the context of Trenton.

Trenton is hemorrhaging people. The city now has a population of less than 90,000 individuals. Surrounded by suburban communities, those New Jersey townships with housing developments built over farmland, it no longer dominates merely by its number of people. We might note in passing that the "downsized" city may not necessarily be a bad thing, and that a constructive view of that may lead to a more positive use of resources, as suggested elsewhere.[13] There are other places, of much smaller populations, such as Venice, Italy, with even less people than Trenton within its city limits,[14] that we nonetheless still consider to be cities. As we look at the geopolitical structure of the United States and Europe, we may well wonder what it means to be a city in the 21st century. More particularly, at what point does a city cease to exist and turn into something else—part of suburban sprawl, an "edge city," or just a large town? Conversely, at what point do we think of a place as a city instead of a town or village, or something else? The words themselves are not determinative, but they have impact, as words carry connotations. When we hear "city," we, at least in the United States, tend to think of something different than when we hear "town" or "village." Beyond nomenclature and definitions, though, we have a sense of what makes a city a city.

As made evident by the prior discussion that population is the starting point, ultimately population in and of itself does not the city make. Aristotle refused to identify a particular number, but rather qualified it as the number

sufficient to establish the "good life;" Plato quantified the number at 5,040.[15] Put another way, Aristotle felt the size of a society was a function of citizens to recognize each other, and Plato looked for 5,000 citizens.[16] We do not think of a city without sufficient numbers of people, whatever that is, but population is only an initial factor, if that, and by no means the end. Numbers are numbers. They are not *place*.

In considering Trenton, now a small city, and discussing whether it may even still be deemed a city, we can turn to some of the classical analyses on the subject. It provides a starting point. Dictionary definitions are tautological. For example, the *American Heritage Dictionary*'s first definition is "a center of population, commerce, and culture; a town of significant size and importance."[17] Clearly, we cannot leave it at this. There are a wealth of definitions and attempts to define the city, ranging from the physical to the more abstract. Consider the following non-exhaustive survey.

German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920), in his posthumously published *The City*, rejected size as the defining factor; such would rule out smaller, successful cities. He started with an economic definition: "The city is a settlement the inhabitants of which live primarily off trade and commerce rather than agriculture," though he acknowledges that this, too, is insufficient, since economic versatility can come through both a market and a permanence to exchange.[18] Put more specifically, Weber wrote, "We wish to speak of a 'city' only in cases where the local inhabitants satisfy an economically substantial part of their daily wants in the local market, and to an essential extent by products which the local population and that of the immediate hinterland produced for sale in the market or acquired in other ways."[19] Cities may be divided into producer, trade and consumer cities.[20] The notion of "city" is complex; in part, it inhabits a place between the rural and household economy on the one hand, and the national economy on the other.

Weber rejected the thought that understanding the conceptual city cannot end with identification of its "merchants and tradesmen" living and working in a crowded place to meet the daily needs of the citizens.[21] Other non-economic factors are relevant to defining and understanding the composition of the city, such as governance—the "politico-administrative concept"—and security—"fortress and garrison."[22] The city fuses the "political fortress and the civil economic population," and this combination has critical importance for the institutionalization of the city.[23] Weber distinguished the Western city as having another relevant factor: community. An essential feature of an urban community is the "relative predominance" of trade and commerce, "displaying the following features: 1. a fortification; 2. a market; 3. a court of its own and at least partially autonomous law; 4. a related form of association; and 5. at least partial autonomy and autocephaly, thus also an administration by authorities in the election of whom the burghers participated."[24] So while Weber's city has clear economic underpinnings, the analysis moves far beyond simply population concentration, and looks to factors that, while also common to other types of communities, nonetheless in combination with the other factors move the community into the realm of "city."

Gideon Sjoberg calls a city "a community of substantial size and population density that shelters a variety of nonagricultural specialists, including a literate elite."[25] The city is further defined "as a residence of specialists, has been a continuing source of innovation."[26] This definition notes population and density, but also the need for diversity. Implicitly, this recognizes that unlike the small town, the city will embody a degree of anonymity.

This point picks up on another way of defining the city in terms of its citizenry and their relationship to each other. Once we accept a certain population base—whatever it is—do we then define a city less in terms of the other components identified by Weber, or look to a more psychological approach? For example, sociologist Lyn Lofland in *The Public Realm* accepts a definition of the city as "a permanently populous place or settlement."[27] However, earlier, in her 1973 *A World of Strangers*, she noted that a city is "many things"—a physical space, a political entity, a simultaneous magnet for "ambition and hope" and repellent filled with "inconvenience and fear," a place of work and recreation, and *apart from size*, those characteristics might be found as well in what we consider small towns.[28] Size, though, remains a critical definitional component of the city not so much for its quantitative number, but because it mandates that the citizens of the city are essentially strangers to one another, and therefore, "the city then, among all the other things that it may be, is also a world of strangers, a world populated by persons who are personally unknown to one another."[29] Numbers breed anonymity. To some extent, the notion that the city must by definition be a place of strangers—and therefore be large enough to accommodate that—has resonance in a variety of formulations.

For Lofland, the city as a unique social-psychological environment is a place of strangers, of people who do not know each other, and this is of importance.[30] The "urban settlement," that is, the *public realm*, is the city—and regardless of where that city is, the experience of the city dweller is unique from that of the village dweller. In other words, the city dweller in Chicago has more in common with the city dweller in Buenos Aires, she argues, than the Chicagoan does with someone from a small town in Illinois. The public realm is urban public space.[31]

Public space has meaning, and its misuse, or denigration, has consequences. The city is a place of public as well as private space, and the use, or non-use, of that space in the city has consequences that form a part of urban, or city, existence. Eamonn Canniffe observes that "whereas Modernism had inverted the urban fabric of the traditional city into a landscape of isolated objects, the void between them, the 'dead public space' ... might now be deemed to have meaning by virtue of its potential privatization.... Space is treated as a commodity from which it is necessary to deter the undesirable, and the surest

way to effect this deterrence is to introduce an economic barrier. We therefore have the phenomenon that the most common form in which to enjoy public space in the city is to be engaged in commercial activity."[32]

In thinking about how we define a city, therefore, we need to think of those places that are common and public, the backdrop for a multitude of use by persons connected solely by the physical space they share.

The city and its composition of strangers reflect a change in human existence; tribal existence and villages developed around a knowing of one's compatriots. Lofland in particular notes that being strangers, as opposed to being familiars, "has been the exception, not the rule."[33] What are the consequences of this for defining a city? If tribes, and then early settlements, were composed of those who knew each other, were familiar with each other, and the city is no longer defined as the exception, but rather the rule — that is, where *estrangement* and anonymity are defining characteristics — then what does that say about where we are as a species in our development?

Archeologist V. Gordon Childe uses ten criteria to determine whether a place is a city: size, composition and function, taxation, public buildings, a ruling class, systems of record keeping, writing, artistic expression, trade, and craftsmen.[34] Once again, while we may start with size, there are other components — some if not all of which may be found in communities we do not necessarily consider a city. One could apply all these factors — except size — to a small college community in the United States, but we would probably not consider such to be a city.

The American urban sociologist Robert Park understood that size alone was not the defining factor, but also even all of the composite factors, in and of themselves or even in combination, were not enough to capture the essence of a city. The city is not just its physical space; it is its ethereal space as well. He calls the city

> something more than a congeries of individual men and of social conveniences — streets, buildings, electric lights, tramways, and telephones, etc.; something, more also, than a mere constellation of institutions and administrative devices — courts, hospitals, schools, police and civil functionaries of various sorts. The city is, rather, a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition. The city is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it; it is a product of nature, and particularly of human nature.[35]

In the twilight of the twentieth century, Edward L. Glaeser discussed whether cities were dying, and provided a definition rooted in economics: "Conceptually, a city is just a dense agglomeration of people and firms. All of the benefits of cities come ultimately from reduced transport costs for goods, people and ideas. The positive impact of agglomeration that comes from reducing the costs of moving goods lost most of its importance over the 20th century as transportation costs fell and large-scale manufacturing declined."[36] Again we

have a city's definition stated in terms of population and density, with economic functions that could be found in smaller places, but are of sufficient scale to be something else, something more akin to what we consider a "city."

Douglas Rae is a writer who focused on the city of New Haven, Connecticut to get at the nature of the city in general. In his book on that city, he remarks that during the time frame covering the latter decades of the 19 century through the 1920s, the urbanist city consisted of five essential elements: concentrated industrial activity that drew people into the city, a diverse and concentrated economic base, centralized housing, multiple and concentrated civic organizations, and political integration.[37] A city is not just a physical place, but an emotional place as well. Certain elements were necessary to come together, but in the end, what defines a city was the conflation of these elements into a particularized self-vision of the city's inhabitants.

Notwithstanding a sociological analysis of population, density and heterogeneity as Wirth posited in terms of defining a city, does Trenton remain as an idea? Can the question of a city be as much a state of mind as a physical state? Can the idea of a place come to it over time, if it was not built in accordance with it? Do Trentonians have an urban self-vision?

Architect and writer Witold Rybczynski also has developed this theme, and considers the semantic difference between "town" and "city" to be of little significance, particularly when one crosses language barriers, and concludes that what distinguishes a "city" is as much a matter of perception and connotation as any physical criteria:

> Today, to call a place a town implies that it has close economic and emotional ties with the surrounding countryside. A city, on the other hand, while it may appropriate natural areas for weekend recreation, is considered self-sufficient.... Thus, to say one place is a large town and that another is a small city is to insinuate that while their population sizes may be similar, their character is not."[38]

In short, *character* becomes a defining element of what makes a city a city.

Another writer from academic circles, Daniel Monti, in *The American City*, makes a comparable point; the American city is defined as much by its motion and sense of *business* as by anything else:

> City dwellers occupy a world filled with spontaneity and, yes, sometimes a lot of scurrying around.... There really is something different about the way city folk live and make sense of their world. It is seen in their willingness to embrace some new ideas or neighbors even as they run away from strangers. It is apparent in the obedient way they follow some rules while willfully violating others. And it is found in their insistence to be whomever they like and still go to church, declare their fidelity to an ancestral people, buy the same items their neighbors do, and pay their taxes.... Not everyone who lives in cities has to act this way for cultural practices to work their special magic on us."[39]

The notion of a city is also the notion that there are certain common denominators and patterns to the definition of the city, or at least the Western

city, regardless of size. Writing in 1935, Walter J. Matherly of the University of Florida stated that "externally, every city, especially in America, resembles every other city. Urban development has tended to follow a single pattern. Little distinction of any kind has been achieved.... They differ from each other only in that some are constructed more of reinforced concrete than of brick and others more of brick than of reinforced concrete.... In outward form the American city is standardized. When a traveler sees one he has seen all."[40] His is a view that might resonate with Italo Calvino's Marco Polo. Mark Kingwell identifies a city with its airport and observes an "increasingly spectral" relationship to cities entered as such.[41] Others seek to redefine the city as an area, based on functionality and other concerns.[42]

If we start looking for patterns in the least common denominators, we can find a consensus that while population, and population density, are generally accepted as essential to defining the city, it is also apparent that other elements are critical components of discernible patterns in the development and institutionalization of the city, and which distinguish it, if even on a visceral level, from communities or towns or settlements that are *not* cities. And the importance of the discussion seems to be that understanding what makes a city helps understand how its citizens view themselves. Ultimately, self-vision would seem relevant to efforts to transform a city, or otherwise adapt it to the current needs of the 21st century and post-industrial life.

Or maybe not. Maybe the core functions remain the same, but the technology and desires that are met by those functions have changed. Joseph Rykwert, in *The Seduction of Place*, notes that little seems to have been transformed in the functions of the city for the past hundred years or so: "That the nineteenth-century city was confusing, congested, and unhealthy, as well as dangerous, is a truism. Action to remedy the defects was constantly stymied by an underlying belief in the liberal concept of the free-floating value of money and the ultimately benevolent, 'natural' working of industrial development. *Nor has this changed.*"[43]

This is but a sampling of various writers who have sought to define the city; such efforts are as varied as the number of writers attempting it. Perhaps we need to change our notion of "the city." Perhaps we need a new paradigm for the concept of city that recognizes its function in the post-industrial world. Perhaps we simply need to pause and reflect, and let our minds wander, as we sift through what may be relevant and important to understanding a place like Trenton.

A Sense of Place

We have been looking at a variety of efforts to define a city in terms of its tangible (or at least measurable) and intangible components. I want to return

to the subject of sense of place, one of the more intangible ways of defining a city. A sense of place is not confined solely to a city, but we may look to the city to see if it can be defined in terms of place. Whether objectively others might not view a place as a city, it does seem that a city can be a city to its inhabitants because they believe it to be so, and because for them, it functions as a city. At the very least, it functions in a conventional sense of how a city ought to function, and ought to be perceived. In *Cities*, journalist John Reader comments that "the integral role of the city in human affairs runs deep — well beyond the streets and buildings and into the realms of conscious and sub-conscious awareness that makes us who we are."[44] Cities provide a sense of cultural identity, but equally important to these civic symbols is the sense of "place." Urban scholar and historian Lewis Mumford has referred to "a more general truth about cities: their marked individuality, so strong, so full of 'character' from the beginning that they have many of the attributes of human personalities."[45] Joel Kotkin in *The City: A Global History* speaks of the commonality of cities, whether ancient or modern, Eastern or Western, and notes, "There is the visceral 'feel' of the city almost everywhere — the same quickening of pace on a busy street, an informal marketplace, or a freeway exchange, the need, to create notable places, the sharing of a unique civil identity."[46] The urban writer Lewis Mumford refers in *The City in History* to "a more general truth about cities: their marked individuality, so strong, so full of 'character' from the beginning that they have many of the attributes of human personalities."[47]

A city provides identity, a sense of community, of belonging, of place. We return to this. We need something physical to anchor us. The city streets provide a sense of place. In virtually every city there is one street, or one intersection, synonymous with the particular city. Hollywood and Vine define Los Angeles, Fifth Avenue for New York, Piccadilly Circus in London. Kotkin adds: "In the end, a great city relies on those things that engender for its citizens a peculiar and strong attachment, sentiments that separate one specific place from others."[48] Say its name, and we have an identity that fits within a more global identity.

Cities are the stuff of songs, of movies, of books and poems. Edward Hopper's painting *Nighthawks* conjures up the quintessential city at night. We are strangers on the street, peering in through the plate glass window, looking at strangers. And yet we share a moment in the city, and are connected.

Cities matter in part because *place* matters. We know that intuitively. We feel safe in a known place, a familiar place. At home, comfortable. But what exactly is place? More particularly, a sense of place? Place is important. It grounds us. We speak of home, not simply housing. The sum is greater than the parts. It encompasses memory, experience, sensory perception. A place fills us. We meet someone, a stranger, from our home in a faraway place, and we feel an immediate kinship. There is a pleasure in the identification. If we can't define it, we certainly miss it when it is gone, and envelop ourselves when within it.

So what exactly is *place*? Can we even use such a word as exactly to discern meaning in something so gossamer-like?

Mark Kingwell wrote in *Concrete Reveries* that cities are places, and readily admits "that may sound obvious ... but the ostensible obviousness of the concept belies a depth of challenge." For him, place "is an area of significance, a physical staging ground. But it is more than that. It is somewhere that matters, where we find or lose ourselves, where understanding good and bad is forced upon us. Places are environments, sites of action, horizons of concern. They are infused with our aspirations and beliefs, reflecting and shaping them both."[49]

One writer has devoted an entire book to discussion of place. In *The Experience of Place*, Tony Hiss has argued for the intimacy of this bond with place in terms of both environment and personal experience, and the need to be sensitive to this as we make changes to our places. He writes, "Paying careful attention to our experience of places, we can use our own responses, thoughts, and feelings to help us replenish the places we love."[50] It is an extra sense, a "simultaneous perception," that he suggests generates a profound, often unconscious, association with place. Like a painting whose colors have darkened unrecognizably through centuries of neglect and are then realized with an appropriate restorative cleaning, so "the fading and discoloration of places has been going on around us for generations."[51] The environment provides experience, but Hiss's concern is that as we expand our urbanization, if we are not attentive, we will lose the experiential relevance of place.

In recounting sensory perception, he uses Grand Central Station as an example, and describes that experience in terms of sight, touch, sound, and his overall reaction to the simple act of walking across the concourse. With appropriate concentration, simultaneous perception can "pick up what we could call cross-sensory, or multisensory, patterns of information — things or events we can recognize only when information from two or more senses is taken all together."[52] It allows us to aggregate an experience that, like the sum, is greater than the individual parts. It helps provide an interconnectedness and awareness that gives us more information about our surroundings that we absorb, even if on a subconscious level. And, when some of that information is cut off, we eventually reach our limits of tolerance — in short, there is a certain amount of experience we must have, regardless of our overt awareness. To that extent, "people are often drawn to places that offer rich experiences.... But changes made over the years to such places which fail to consider the experiential impact produced by physical alterations can turn pearls into past and convert the real into a mirage."[53]

Another writer has taken a somewhat different approach to getting at the importance of place. Lucy Lippard, in *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*, says simply and evocatively that "place for me is the locus of desire."[54] Instead of "sensory perception," she writes of multicentered-

ness: "Every time we enter a new place, we become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity, which is really what all 'local places' consist of."[55] And unlike Hiss, who (at least to my reading) intimates that we are all aware of place on a variety of levels, Lippard proclaims that "few of us in contemporary North American society know our place."[56] However, like Hiss, she recognizes the importance of sensory perception; it is that perception, together with physical space, that constitutes *place*.[57] Regarding the city, she notes that "where the city dweller may revel in her daily anonymity and freedom from self within crowded spaces, she also struggles to find an emotional community that will offer the intimacy for which Americans pine, even after we have made the choices that make it less and less likely."[58]

The city is backdrop and foreground. The city permeates. Place envelopes is. We are more connected — rooted — to place than we may think. But, like Dorothy in Oz, the knowledge is useless unless we want it. We need to want to be home.

We have considered defining a city in terms of quantitative measurements and immeasurable *gestalt* qualities. The city becomes part of our individual character as well, and our experiences in the urban environment shape our moods and being. This was explored intensely in an atmospheric novel by Georges Rodenbach. In 1892, Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-Morte* ("Bruges the Dead") was published in France. Its plotline consists of a widower who sees a woman who resembles his deceased wife, and follows her around the city of Bruges, ultimately establishing a relationship with her and then, in a fit of passion and rage, killing her. Throughout, the deadness of *fin de siecle* Bruges becomes a metaphor for his life and, apparently, many of the inhabitants. As that author wrote in his essay *The Death Throes of Towns*, "how many who not so long ago were handsome and wealthy towns, suffer an abandonment at their life's end; poor ancestors who grow stiff with an air of fallen grace, preserving at the most a few monuments; coasts of arms in stone, armorial bearings which alone attest to their ancient and authentic nobility."[59]

Over a century later, a popular film is made, *In Bruges*, also threaded with murder and estrangement, and yet oddly celebratory of place. In that film, a criminal sends two of his hitmen to Bruges, with the intention that one of them kill the other for the latter's bungled prior job. Being a man of some "compassion," the criminal wanted the intended victim to share the experience of Bruges and experience that place as a final treat.

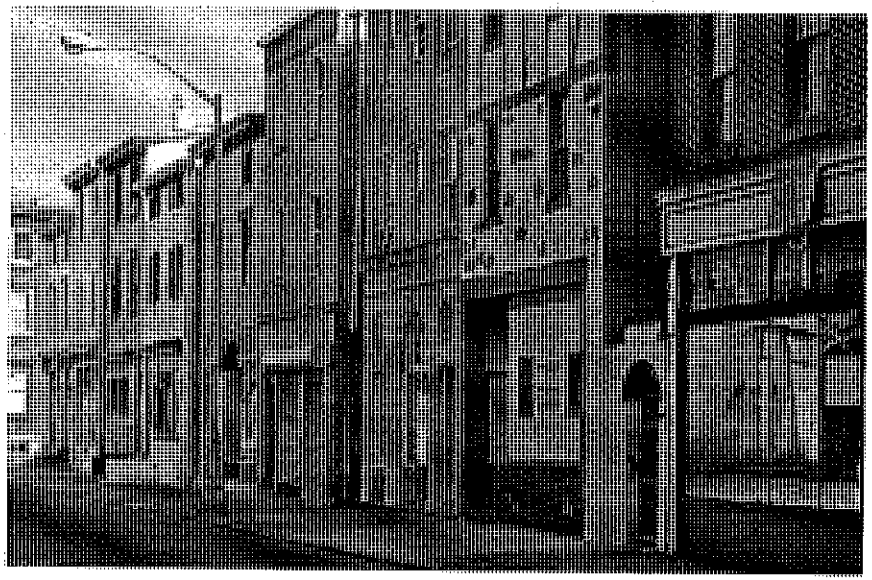
Yes. Place matters. Urban space matters.

A place has familiarity and comfort. When I lived in Hoboken in 1980, I walked most nights to the overlook by Stevens Institute of Technology that faced Manhattan. When I lived in London, it was Trafalgar Square that always drew me, and whenever I return to London, no other part of that city so establishes place for me as that square. It has pieces of my personal history, as well as the city's, and it is a point of connectedness for me. In New York, it is the

area around the United Nations, where I had spent a lot of time as a student. In Washington, D.C., it is the Jefferson Memorial. Each of these spots is intertwined with my personal experiences, and no matter how long it has been since I visit any of these cities, when I go to the particular spot, I feel a sense of belonging. This is my city, still. I am a cell in this great life force that is the city.

In Trenton, I am always drawn to West State Street, and in particular, the section between Stockton Street and Calhoun Street, covering the heart of the Revolutionary-era city, with its reminders of the city's industrial greatness in the mansions lining the street. Nearby is the War Memorial Building, where I was sworn in as a lawyer. I participated in the state spelling bee championship in the State Museum auditorium. Within the city are the hospitals in which my four children were born. The Statehouse building—among the oldest in continuous use in the United States—personal and historic ghosts travel with me. There is no other place in New Jersey, or the world for that matter, that looks just like this or carries the catalysts of resonance for me. Trenton has a sense of *place* for me.

But place is not unique to the city, though a city carries its own sense of place. The city carries with it, though, a separate kind of sense—that of being an urban place. Urban identity should not be confused with living in an *urbanist* way, that is, in the sense of being part of the culture, work and leisure,



North Montgomery Street. **Originally known as Quaker Lane for the Friends Meeting House at the corner of Montgomery Street and Hanover Street, the street was renamed for Richard Montgomery, a Colonial naval officer who died in 1775 at Quebec as part of the American invasion of Canada.**

of a city. (Indeed, if suburban sprawl is irrevocable, it may be that urbanist principles need to become part of such an "extended" city.[60]) In the United States, small and medium-sized cities could still boast, into the 1950s, urbanist lifestyles, in which people of a city lived, worked and played in that city. There was still a sense of identity of place, of culture, of a civic sense, if not pride, before the era of sprawl, "Edge City,"[61] and so forth. To be urbanist is to have a sense of place, an identification with one's city, and be part of its personality. It is different to live and work in a city than it is to live and work in a small town. We understand that on an intuitive level.

Trenton is a *place* and has a sense of place. It seeps history. It is a haunted place, a place where over two hundred years ago English and Hessian soldiers bled into its ground. It is a place where virtually every significant figure of the American Revolution stayed or passed through. It is a place that, like ancient European cities, still bears the footprint of its original settlement.

The Post-Industrial City

In our explorations of defining the city, we have noted the importance of population in a concentrated area, with the physical accoutrements of a city, and the anecdotal references to city. Timing is a factor; the city of the 19th century may well be a very different, if not unrecognizable place, in the present. Much of Trenton's identity, though, was tied to Trenton's manufacturing stature. As that vanished after World War II, what of Trenton's contemporary urban identity? Consider Trenton now as a post-industrial city. In other words, do we need new definitions and parameters in the post-industrial world to define the "traditional" city? Arguments have been made as to what may or may not be a city based on function. What of the traditional city, the urban footprint, and its contemporary relevance? Indeed, the title of this book compels us to reconsider Trenton, the industrial large city of its time, as the post-industrial small city in the 21st century.

The post-industrial city has been categorized as the third of three historic stages of city development, following the traditional or historical, and the industrial.[62] What has been missing from the discussion has been the ethical component, which has been under-represented, as argued by Eammon Canniffe: "Commercial values prevail which ultimately serve the need of only a minority of citizens. The motivations of the democratic representative system remain disconnected from the populations they are intended to serve. The views of citizens have to be actively sought, and their individual aspirations addressed for them to be able to endorse any shared shaping of the city."[63]

Daniel Bell, in his prophetic *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, decades ago identified the primary characteristics of the new paradigm of nations that had gone through pre-industrial and industrial societies and become "post-

industrial." The economic sector moved beyond the primary (extractive) and secondary (goods producing) stages to include tertiary (transportation and recreation) and quaternary (trade, finance, insurance, real estate). A professional class is predominant over a semi-skilled worker class. Information replaced energy as the primary technology. Abstraction replaces empiricism, and what he calls the "time perspective" shifts toward the future as opposed to ad hoc adoptions. Centralization and codification of theoretical knowledge becomes the axial principle as opposed to economic growth.[64]

Put another way, the evolution of American cities in the 21st century has led to "a new form of American urbanism: the festival city has replaced the service city, which itself replaced the industrial city nearly a century ago."[65] One definition proposed for the "prototypical" post-industrial city defines it as "a city in which traditional industry maintains a significant but decreasing share of economic activity, replaced as an engine of economic growth by the production of various types of services, from producer services, to medical, educational and governmental services, to consumer services."[66] The loss of manufacturing has led to the departure of a strong middle class; "thus the broad middle of urban societies may be shrinking, while the income gap between the well paid and the working poor widens. The post-industrial city, then, is also likely to be a dual city, in which rich and poor draw further away from each other spatially within the urban region, as well as in terms of differential access to economic resources."[67]

The post-industrial city reflects population loss and increased class disparity. While central business districts still provide the commercial core of most American cities, they are generally surrounded by poor, inner city areas.[68] Spatially, the post-industrial city can be envisioned as a series of concentric circles: at the center is the central business district core, surrounded by its frame, and that itself is within the low income inner city. Next come the inner, middle and outer suburban fringes, with rising income levels from lower-middle to middle. The outer suburban ring comes next, with the rural-urban fringe and ultimately, the exurban area.[69] The city is marked by older housing stock, often pre–World War II. There is often an identifiable, even if small, skyline and coterie of tall buildings.[70]

Post-industrial cities embody these characteristics and may be marked by "edge city" characteristics, with office parks on the outskirts, and within the city, dramatic class differences. They reflect the loss of an industrial manufacturing base, and with it, sizeable portions of a middle class.

Trenton is situated in an almost prototypically defined post-industrial area dominated by Princeton University. Nearby are the Princeton Plasma Physics Lab, various pharmaceutical companies, and other research and development companies. It remains a transportation hub on the Northeast Corridor train route between Philadelphia and New York or, more broadly, Washington and Boston. It is in the neighborhood of some of the wealthiest communities in the country. Trenton, in the post-industrial age, is an island

in Einstein Alley, the high-tech rubric applied to Princeton and its swollen and figurative boundaries.

The Failure of Cities

We read occasionally of a once-great city unearthed in an archeological find. Beyond the dust, dirt and foundations of buildings, we try to imagine the life-force and look of the place. While Trenton and other such post-industrial, "gritty" cities have not been reduced to rubble in an apocalyptic vision, one wonders whether, in a few centuries, such places will also have vanished. What is unthinkable or unimaginable is often the prelude to reality.

In this last section of this chapter, I want to comment on another defining characteristic of the city — its soul. Soul is obviously an intangible and amorphous concept, particularly when applied to the city, but as we will see, it has figured in some of the discussion as to what makes, or does not make, a city. It may even mean the difference between success and reinvention on the one hand, and failure on the other.

Cities have lifespans, some exceptionally long, others less so. But cities, like people, can and do reinvent themselves. Sometimes the entire civilization fails and the city with it. Peoples like the Aztecs and Mayans built and sustained great cities; such are cases in point. On the other hand, there are a handful of cities some 2,500 to 3,000 years old — Rome, Damascus, Jericho, Jerusalem, Benares — that continue to thrive.[71]

I previously referred to one contemporary writer on cities, journalist John Reader. He has identified three principal factors by which to gauge the failure of cities — "economics, politics and religion — have been the primary motivating forces of urban history.... Most cities contain elements of all three categories, and their relative significance is blurred.... But in the modern world, even where the determinant factors of a large city's origin and rise are quite obvious, their relevance has long since been rendered subservient to the practical expediencies of everyday life."[72] He does not address natural disasters, which of course eradicated Pompeii. What he explains is that the city thrives to the extent it serves diverse interests; when it ceases to provide such means to an end, the particular city ceases to be relevant.

Reader cites Edward Gibbons' *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* and its factors including a decline in morals and values, public health, political corruption, unemployment, inflation, urban decay, inferior technology, and military spending. Gibbons comments on the decline of Sumerian cities — among the world's oldest — as a result of the inability of their agricultural systems to sustain cities that ran out of space and resources.[73]

The city as physical community is engrained in the ethos of those who live in it, whether by birth or later choice. The city, like a living organism, depends upon its varied parts to achieve something greater, something that in turn is given back in the form of identity, of satisfying a human need for community. In his *The City in History,* Mumford is more abstract: "The chief function of the city is to convert power into form, energy into culture, dead matter into the living symbols of art, biological reproduction into social creativity."[74] In other words, the intangible qualities of what makes a city are no less real than the tangible characteristics we see, smell, hear and touch.

The institutions of the post-industrial city have changed. Mumford identified the factory, railroad and sum as the principal elements of the city of the Industrial Revolution, though complained that while this may have been a "city," it was not sociologically mature and even lacked the elevating factors of a stone-age city.[75] As these industrial-era cities emerge, shaken and battered, into the post-industrial world, do they have the capacity for institutions to enable the sociological maturity in this new world? It is important to understand where they have been in order to understand where they can go.

If cities began with agricultural roots, it was industry that formed the backbone of the new city of the 18th century. New Jersey cities were no different, and although some may have had religious roots, such as Elizabeth, they became commercial centers at the height of the Industrial Revolution. Critical to the success of the rise of the American city at the height of the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century was, as exemplified by New York, not merely industrialization but the ability for upward social mobility. Culture could take root in such an economic environment, and the physical shape of the city interacted with the citizens' images of their city. The skyscraper rose not merely literally but figuratively, and relevant to New Jersey's cities, even smaller cities like those in New Jersey sought to define their skylines. Down in the streets, though, the 19th century was as grim for many as it was inspirational for some.

If the practical expediencies of everyday life in Trenton are measured by numbers, the story is grim. According to the 2000 census, its family median income was $36,681, compared to the overall (and surrounding) Mercer County median income of $68,494. In 1990, the figure for Trenton was $48,490. If Trenton has lived as a city, and once having had the potential for greatness, has it now been rendered — to use Read's word — subservient? Has it become irrelevant? Does it no longer serve the ambitions of its citizens?

Rae refers to the "accidents of urban creation" that began in the mid–19th century that were the result of a confluence of six major factors: the rise of stream-driven manufacturing, an agricultural revolution, an integrated railroad system and automotive and truck transportation — both facilitating national markets — sustained immigration and its concomitant increase in labor, and technological developments (such as electricity) that shrank distances.[76] With the increased urban density and the development of outlying agricultural areas to feed the city,

the ability of the American city to grow increased. The country moved from a relatively limited number of "large" cities to what Rae calls a "middle tier of industrial cities" between 1880 and 1910 — which included New Jersey's Newark and Jersey City.[77] The "rail-before-trucks-and-cars period" facilitated growth in cities such as New Haven (Rae's focus) but also, for example, Trenton.

Trenton, like Camden, Reading and other East Coast industrial cities identified with the 19th-century manufacturing prowess of the United States, was a victim of and participant in the 20th century's economic mugging of its factories, and the social upheavals as the country came to grips with its post-war social upheavals. Some of the smaller cities, like corks in the ocean, road the waves. Others went under.

The fate of Trenton can be viewed through, if not completely explained by, the common experience of other post-industrial medium and smaller cities. New Jersey's cities experienced at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries as a result of significant population changes, brought about as a result of an emerging technician middle class, the advent of the automobile, and the development of commuter lines and commuting as a lifestyle choice, the proliferation of layers of government over overlapping geographic areas, and the changing demographics as earlier European groups left the cities in the latter 20th century that their forebears had entered in the 19th, and African Americans and Latinos accounted for larger percentages of the city's population.[78]

Where did Trenton go? The *flâneur* wandering Trenton is the *flâneur* of the lost city. It is Trenton and Everycity. It is the city lost to the suburbs and amid the suburbs and yet it persists as a *place.*

In the 20th century the "suburban model" took root, exemplified by Los Angeles. Not only in the United States but worldwide, the downside of industrialization, the increase of crime in the city and the "universal aspiration" for an idealized better life outside the city streets facilitated the demise, and ghettoization, of the 20th-century city. Of course, the emergence of the automobile as an indispensible factor in American life in the post–World War II era made the suburbs an option, even for those still working in cities.[79] The expansion of the interstate highway system under President Dwight Eisenhower is another contemporary recognition of the primacy of the automobile in the 1950s, with the concomitant development of office parks to accommodate the "road" mindset. In New Jersey, housing developments sprang up on the state's farms to feed the growing demand of relocated New Yorkers. Beginning in the 1970s, parking passes at train stations such as nearby Princeton Junction became valuable commodities as potato farms were ground up and developed into housing. New York was "the city" for these transplants; Trenton, something else.

To define the nature of the contemporary post-industrial city is also to understand the relationship of violence to the nature and character of a city,

or at least certain aspects of the city. We find that such characteristics are not new; particular issues and stakeholders may change, but the relationship of violence to defined urban conditions remains the same. The violence that engulfed various cities after World War II in the United States had complex causes, some of which were the product of socio-economic changes after World War II and others may well be endemic to American life. But we can look back to Alexis de Tocqueville, who viewed the American cities of the 19th century with concern: "In towns men can hardly be prevented from assembling, getting overexcited together, and adopting sudden passionate resolutions. Towns virtually constitute great assemblies with all the inhabitants as members. In them, people wield astonishing influence over their magistrates and often carry their desires into execution without the latter's intervention."[80] "Cities may be looked upon as large assemblies, of which all the inhabitants are members; their populace exercise a prodigious influence upon the magistrates, and frequently execute their own wishes without the intervention of public officers."[81]

De Tocqueville also wrote, "I look upon the size of certain American cities and above all the nature of their inhabitants as a genuine danger threatening the future of the democratic republics of the New World and I do not hesitate to predict that that will be the source of their downfall unless their government succeeds in creating an armed force which will remain under the control of the majority of the nation, but which will be independent of the town population and thus able to repress its excesses."[82] Architect and author Witold Rybczynski similarly notes de Tocqueville's predictions of the need for armed bodies to suppress mob excesses in commenting on the more individualistic nature of American city life, compared with more communalistic European cities.[83]

Trenton in particular, and New Jersey's cities in general, may be viewed against this background. They are, after all, representative urban centers. Newark and Jersey City, in the past, have been among the nation's largest cities, and the state's other cities certainly fall within the scope of small and medium-sized cities. And like others of the nation's urban centers, New Jersey's cities exploded in the 1960s. It is apparent that simply the creation of an armed force under control of the majority of the nation is not sufficient to prevent the downfall of a city. As the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the "Kerner Commission") concluded,

> A study of the aftermath of disorder leads to disturbing conclusions. We find that, despite the institution of some post-riot programs: Little basic change in the conditions underlying the outbreak of disorder has taken place. Actions to ameliorate Negro grievances have been limited and sporadic; with but few exceptions, they have not significantly reduced tensions.
>
> In several cities, the principal official response has been to train and equip the police with more sophisticated weapons. In several cities, increasing polarization is evident, with continuing breakdown of inter-racial communication, and growth of white segregationist or black separatist groups.[84]

Certain New Jersey cities were of course among those that were reviewed by the Kerner Commission. What de Tocqueville identified more than 150 years before the riots came to pass.

After New Jersey's cities exploded in the 1960s, the prophetic nature of Freidrich Engel's comments also became apparent. The definition of the city in terms of its characteristics were a cauldron for violence a century before the events of the 1960s. For class and social causes, we only need read Engel's "The Great Towns" in his *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844.* He wrote of "the turmoil of the streets," of "hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other," and "of all great towns," that "everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and one can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together."[85]

We may still find particular relevance in these words today as we consider the status of post-industrial Trenton.

The fate of Trenton, like other lost post-industrial cities, was the result of specific and general causes. Specific to New Jersey is the unique governmental structure, the position of the state between two great cities (New York and Philadelphia), and the particular demographics. General factors would include the post–World War II change in the American economy, the nationalization and globalization of industry and the transformation of a goods-based to service-based economy in the 1970s, and the near-institutionalization of gangs. It would not be fair to attribute the decline of New Jersey's cities to the racial disturbances of the 1960s alone. Underlying causes, not least of which economic and a seismic shift in societal priorities, factored. With the growth in the 1950s of the interstate highway system and the movement out of the city for residential purposes while maintaining a working relationship in the city, as well as the sprouting of the "office park," fostered exurban movement.

Wander the more desolate streets of East Trenton and think about Friedrich Engels. And think about Uruk, the "mother of cities," located in Mesopotamia (now Iraq) that had not only the architecture and public spaces of the contemporary physical city, but also a functioning centralized bureaucracy, relocated rural population, law and order issues, but also a venue in which changing attitudes toward sexuality (if not urban liberalism) developed.[86] Three thousand years later, Uruk—a major urban center of its times—is no more than an archeological dig.

Three thousand years from now, what will archeologists make of Trenton?

Cities have come and gone, and the ancient cities of Mesopotamia and Egypt are not the cities of the contemporary world. But the cities that were born in the United States all still survive, in some form or another. There have

not been enough centuries for them to vanish. And they are the product of America, and Americans. They are not hyphenated or ethnic. They are composites, living systems whose whole is by definition greater than their parts. The city, even in deterioration or the apparent downward arc, is a place worth saving. In its way, each city is a living museum to its citizens. It is a collective memory and a mentor to its future self.

Indeed, Patsy Healey posited the city as a "shared collective resource," with a focus that "could encompass an everyday-life perspective on urban conditions and experiences, along with an economic and environmental one."[87] She argues that the current challenge "is to mould multidimensional conceptions of 'city' which both reflect and interrelate the rich diversity and complexity of contemporary urban life, while generating a discursive public realm within which people can argue about what their city is and should be."[88] She faces the same questions as the rest in trying to define the city. The city to the geographer and planner was a "physical artifact,"[89] but "the economic and social relations of the city keep escaping these definitions."[90] She notes that "the social space of what we take to be the city is thus a complex layering of the time-space rhythms of multiple time-space relations, some of which are narrowly confined to a particular part of the city, others of which spread across many places near and far from the city.... It is the density and mixity of these relational layers and multiple identities which, for some commentators, create the key qualities of a 'city-type' ambience, of 'citiness.'"[91] Cities are also, of course, economic entities; "in this conception of the city as a container of economically exploitable assets, the ambition of some policy-makers is to position 'their city' in a wider landscape of competing cities."[92]

She writes:

> I have so far argued that cities are not just material artifacts, although we experience the materiality of urban life. Still less is a city a material subject which can 'act.' Cities are neither people nor technologies with the power to act locked in them. What is 'city' lies beyond these specific existences and materialities, although as conceived, cities are full of people, technologies and power relations. But yet cities do exist and have material effects. Their existence and their power to act lie in the way they are imagined and brought to life, and in how these imaginings then become mobilized to shape politics, public policy and projects.[93]

And so this is the point, and what we have been exploring in this and the first chapter. We are trying to move beyond the physical, the tangible, into what makes a city a city — because, as Healey argues, it matters — not in some esoteric sense, but to conceive and implement sensible policy. We still maintain free will. A place like Trenton must understand itself, engage in self-reflection as to the kind of city it has been, is, and will be. Without vision there is simply rote action. Soul matters.

Mumford traces the history of the city as a progression of the loss of soul.

As cities became exploitive and class-oriented, the poor compressed inward, while the more wealthy spread out to the country. He writes of the acceptance of, if not complacency toward, the permanent existence of poverty and an underclass. What he calls "Coketown," the industrial city of the 19th century, became an accepted utilitarian and ugly creation.[94] To a large extent, he seems to argue, we have never recovered.

The concept of the city with a soul finds resonance among other writers on the city. I have mentioned Monti's comments in terms of seeking to define the city. He writes in *The American City:*

> The heart and soul of our decline, and possible resurrection, remains in cities, just as many persons have said over the years. That is where social critics and reformers have been telling us to look for signs of our discontent with public life. It also is where the impulse to reconstitute a community of believers around religious beliefs and morally upright practices has been expressed most fully. The city has been the place where our civic culture will be reclaimed, if it can be salvaged at all.[95]

If it can be salvaged at all. But the point is that, like the Tin Man in *The Wizard of Oz*, you need heart. Vision without faith and money produces an unattainable desire. Faith provides the staying power, but without vision and money, will be unchanneled. Money without faith and vision will be sidetracked and ineffective. It is important to understand what a city is, and what Trenton is, and how it fits in within the urban framework, to be able to take the city to the next century. This is not to ignore the reality of street crime and the need to put food and health care into the hands of the city's families that need it, or to address urgent educational needs. But without the triad of factors, the future becomes sacrificed to the present.

Soul is what keeps a city from becoming a failed city. As long as Trenton retains its soul, it will survive, and remain a city. Beset with poverty and violence, the city nonetheless remains intact and viable.

In this chapter I have noted a sampling of writers who have attempted to define the city, and we have seen that population and density, while perhaps predicate, are not enough. I have suggested that the inquiry is important not only to those in the city, but to those in the region, since the city provides a sense of place that is important to us. It is not simply of academic interest, because we need to have an analytical framework, or at least analytical awareness, of what we are talking about if we are to understand the potential of the small city — of a place like Trenton — in the post-industrial era. We have seen that various writers on the city have recognized the intangible aspect of what makes a city a city in general, and a particular city a particular city. I have also suggested that it is possible to place Trenton as part of the overall pattern present in consideration of the city. What we can do is view Trenton as a prism that reflects the elements of the city in history and the city in theory.