

A PICTURE
of the
REGION

PROPERTY OF
**CHESTER COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

REGIONAL PLANNING FEDERATION
THE PHILADELPHIA TRI-STATE DISTRICT
901 Insurance Company of North America Building

PRICE ONE DOLLAR

A PICTURE
of the
REGION

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REGIONAL PLANNING FEDERATION
THE PHILADELPHIA TRI-STATE DISTRICT
901 Insurance Company of North America Building

*“The judgment of an organization
is no better than its information.”*



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Why a Regional Plan?

PENNS'S "Greene Towne," a tiny settlement huddled on the banks of the Delaware, scarcely more than two centuries ago, was metropolis for the few hundreds of people who inhabited the 3000 square miles of fertile, picturesque land which today constitutes the Tri-State District. This same area now supports, on farms and in several score of cities larger than that early Philadelphia, a thriving population of 3,000,000 people increasing at the rate of two per cent. each year. This pyramiding of population, modern invention, new habits of living, have brought tremendous construction: highways, railroads, bridges, factories, homes, schools, parks, public utilities and countless other necessities and conveniences of modern life. All of this development has come without any coordinated plan—what is everybody's business has been nobody's business. Millions of dollars are spent each year in providing permanent improvements which will become the foundations of the cities, the working and living places of future generations. Streets may be widened here and there, small parks may be opened in crowded districts after the city is built up, but a city in its general plan remains much as it originally developed. Surely a city or a region having such permanency merits at least as well directed thought and careful planning as a modern factory.

The result of the cost of building without plan is evident on every hand. Indirect, disconnected and all too narrow highways and streets take a vast toll of money, time and energy. We pay in lives of children who must play in the streets because no playgrounds have been set aside for them. Highways are congested with people traveling to distant recreation, when parks should have been provided at their doors. Taxes are multiplied to pay for purifying drinking water that someone else has polluted. Our heritage of natural beauty is diminishing. Natural resources are squandered. And the cost to us of this unscientific development is trifling when compared with the price it will exact from future generations.

Nor can each separate community afford independently to plan its own future. The complication of modern life, the ease of communication and circulation, the inter-dependence among the people of any large area, have produced conditions and given rise to problems beyond the power of any single municipality to control. Townships, cities and boroughs have retained independent administrative powers, but their populations are inevitably bound together with common interests and common problems. The improvement of highways running through several political jurisdictions requires joint effort; the purification of streams and the preservation of stream valleys as parkways and recreation centers will need the agreement and co-operation of many communities; sewerage districts must be determined by natural drainage areas rather than by town or city boundaries; water supply, railroads, electric and bus lines, and other public utilities serving widespread areas, offer problems of extension and correlation requiring the joint action of many cities and towns. No longer can single communities, particularly those surrounding a great city, live unto themselves alone. Plans for their future must include all territory having or likely to have with them common economic and social interests.

The Regional Planning Federation of the Philadelphia Tri-State District believes that much of the waste, discomfort and loss inherent in present community development can be avoided by farsighted planning of the region as a whole and by the co-ordinated action of the many separate communities involved. The series of maps and charts presented in this

book, which portray some of the basic facts about the region, is a first step toward such a program. It is the hope of the Officers of the Federation that these may serve to stimulate public interest in and support for the principle of planned progress. Little can be accomplished toward improving upon our present plan (or lack of plan) of growth until the public recognizes the need of such effort. Under our form of government the hands of public officials and of technical authorities are tied until an informed public opinion demands what experts have long known is needed.

Working with a small staff and with limited time, in order that some picture of conditions existing in the region might be presented at an early date, it has been impossible fully to check in the field all information used as a basis for these maps. They are therefore subject to correction and expansion.

The program of the Regional Planning Federation may be outlined briefly as follows:

1st. *Know the Region.*

Find out the essential facts about existing conditions and the reasons for them. Discover the problems held in common by two or more communities.

2nd. *Seek out and Emphasize Critical Conditions.*

Appraise advantages and disadvantages of various localities and of the region as a whole.

3rd. *Investigate Factors Controlling Critical Conditions.*

Tradition, habit, economic necessity, ignorance or indifference are frequently at the root of apparently insurmountable difficulties, and thoughtful study will often disclose that previous efforts have been futile only because controlling or fundamental factors were not discovered or understood.

4th. *Propose Definite Remedies* specifically based on known facts and principles and comprehensively related to collateral factors and build a co-ordinated plan for the future expansion and development of the region.

5th. *Collaborate* with those authorities and agencies which, combined and supported, would be capable of rectifying critical conditions. The Federation aims to encourage and augment, but not to duplicate work already done.

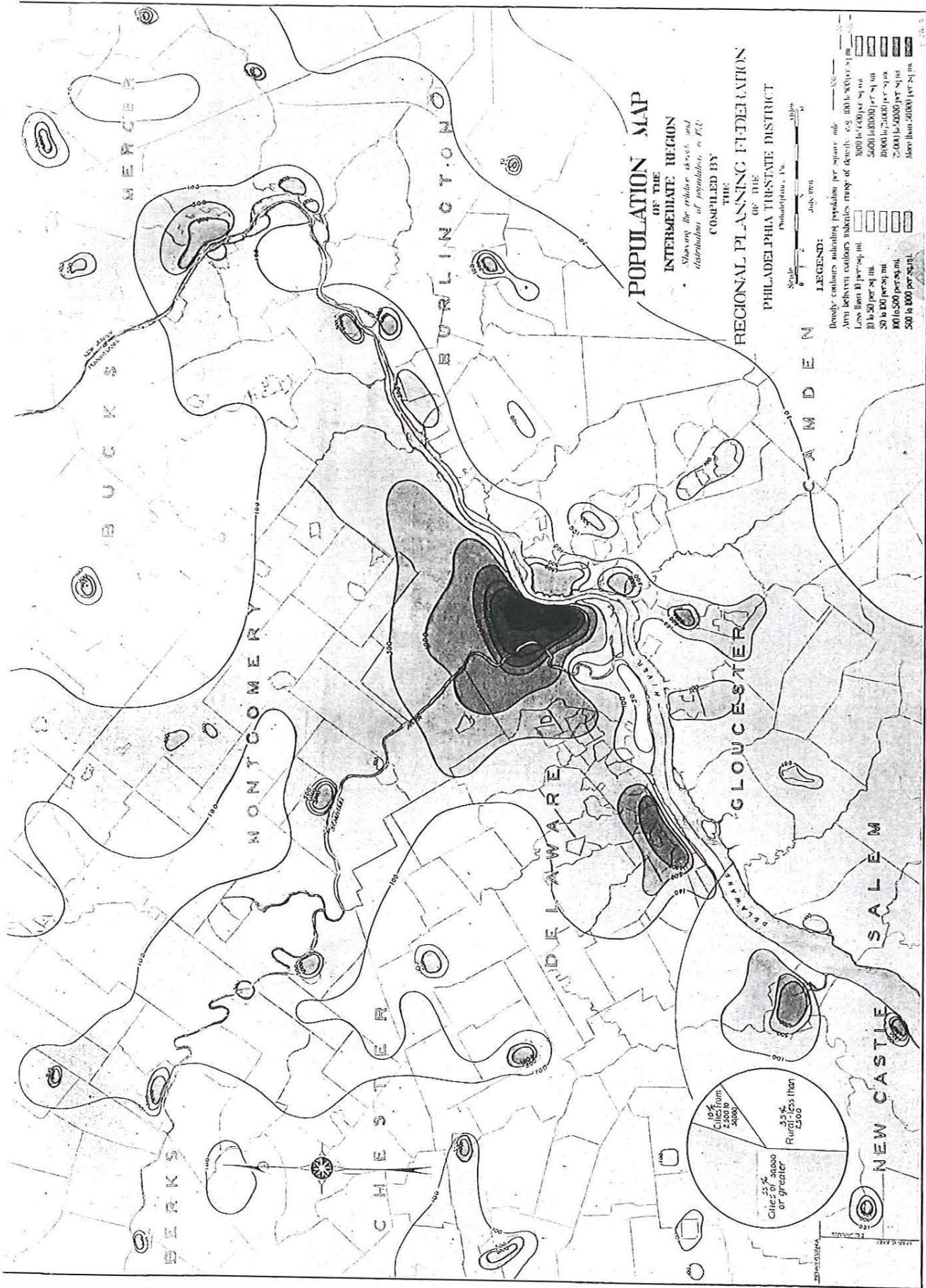
6th. *Recognize* and secure public recognition and encouragement of persons, groups and communities who farsightedly plan their progress and who are helpful in community, regional and national planning.

7th. *Rally Public Support* for scientifically planned projects and follow up consistently until realized.

8th. *Procure Financial Support and Practical Co-operation* for the Regional Planning Federation in the light of the service which it has rendered and is capable of rendering.

Such a program, based on constantly broader experience and skill and with ever widening contacts, should be carried forward until the old formula is transformed and we find that everybody's business is everybody's business, and that everybody is learning to mind it!

The Regional Planning Federation in this preliminary work has had the active co-operation and assistance of the public service companies, of the officials of almost every administrative unit in the portions of the three states included in the region, and of many organizations and individuals. It is only as such co-operation can be continued and extended, that the logical and wholesome development of the Philadelphia Tri-State Region can be assured.



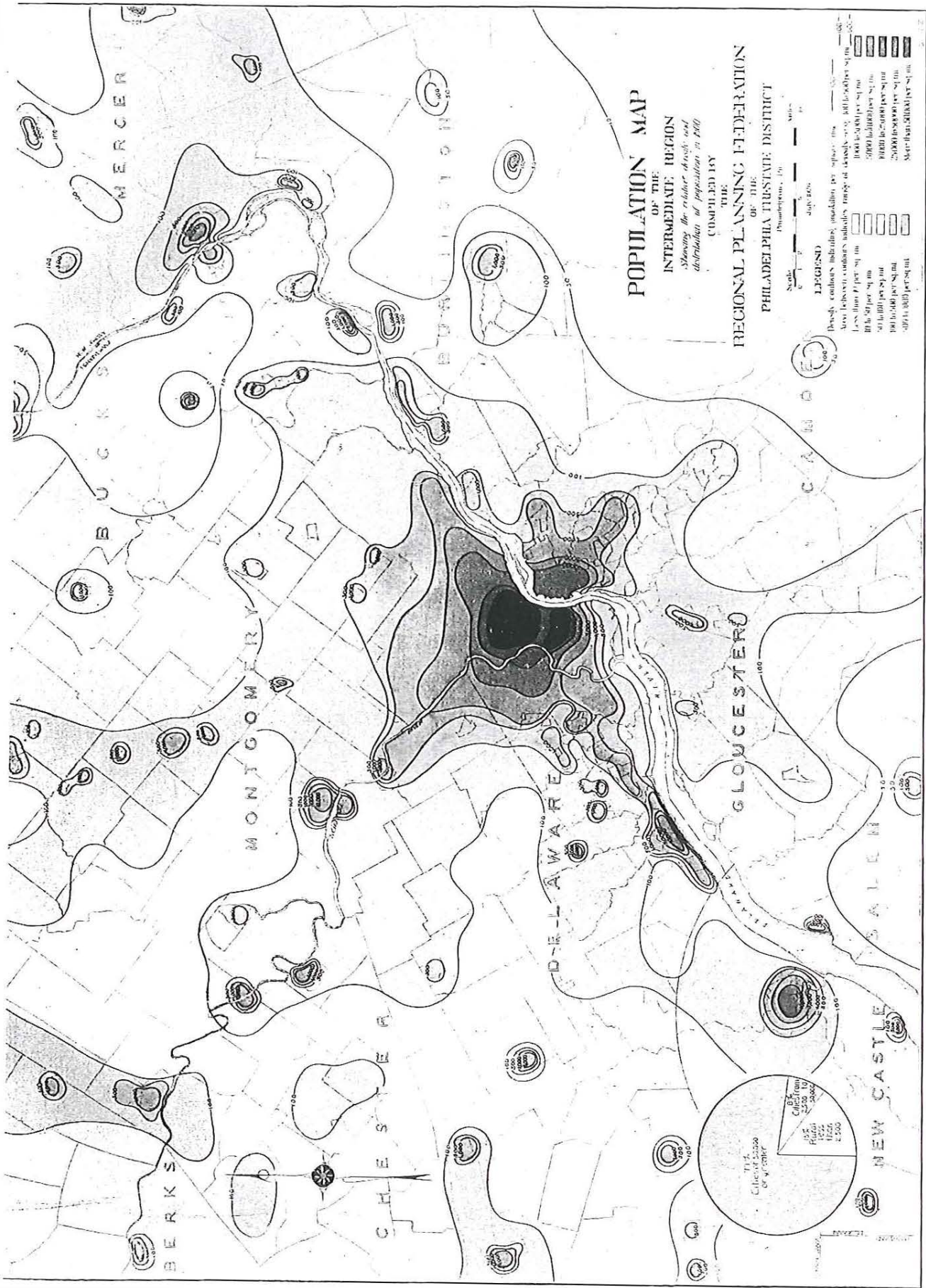
Population Distribution in 1870—Population well scattered—Agriculture increasing.

Population Growth and Distribution

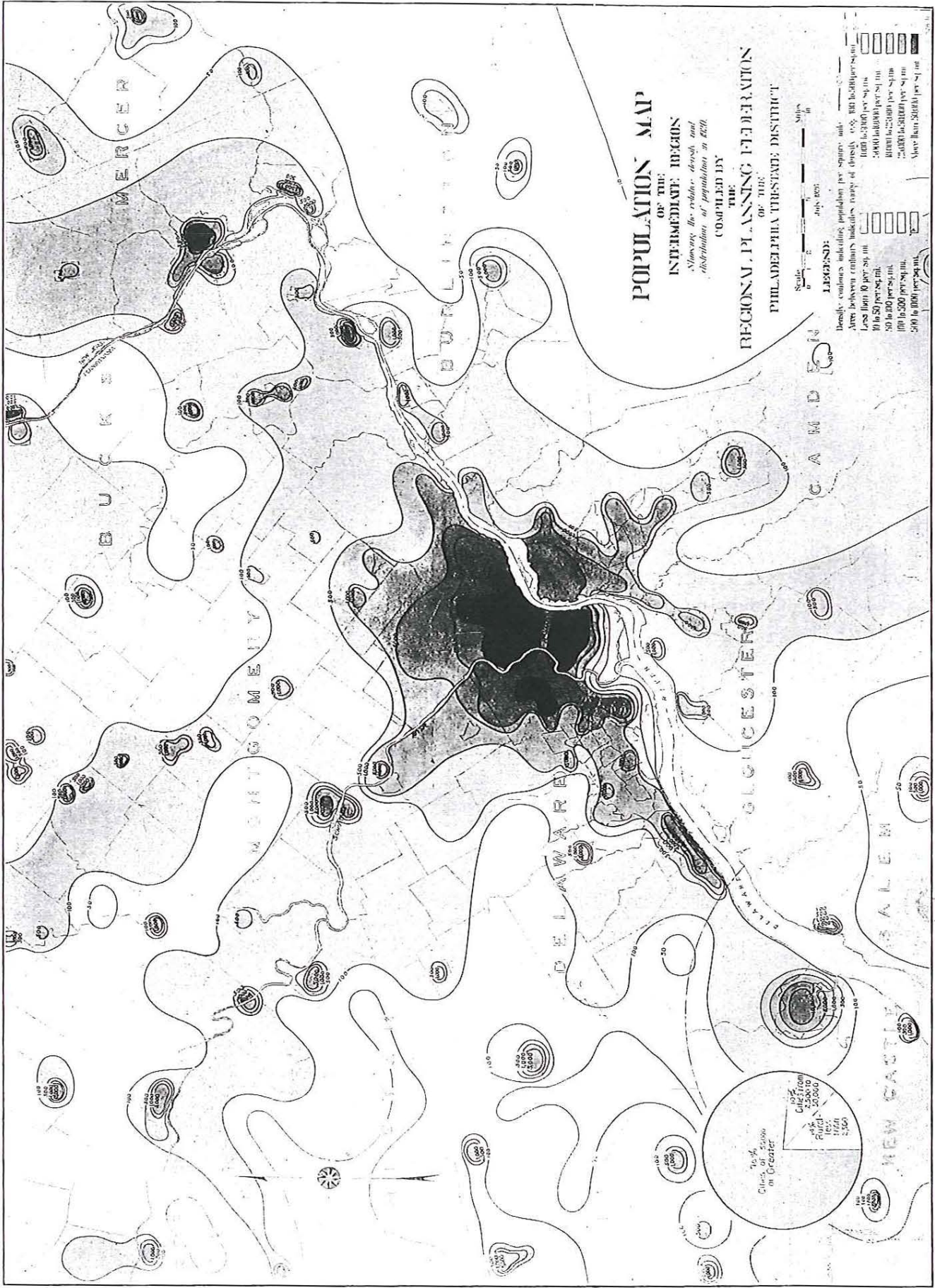
FARMING was still a principal business of the Tri-State District in 1870. Except for a few scattered and then widely separated cities, principally along the Delaware, population was fairly evenly distributed on farms or in small farming communities. But by 1900, population had begun to move toward the cities and along the principal radiating lines of transportation. In 1920 this movement was in full swing. A great metropolitan area had begun to take form with areas of dense population reaching out through the country like fingers from a many fingered hand. Between these areas of concentration were, and still are, stretches of comparatively open land given over to agriculture or held under speculation in anticipation of city expansion. These open stretches still afford great numbers of city workers ready access to open country. But improved highways and extended use of the motor bus and automobile are beginning to fill up these wedges of open country.

Is this movement to continue indefinitely until the whole central part of the district has become a solid city, or will it be found socially or economically desirable to decentralize, to shift more of the focus of activity from the great cities toward smaller outlying centers of population, and so maintain at least a portion of these wedges of open land for all time?

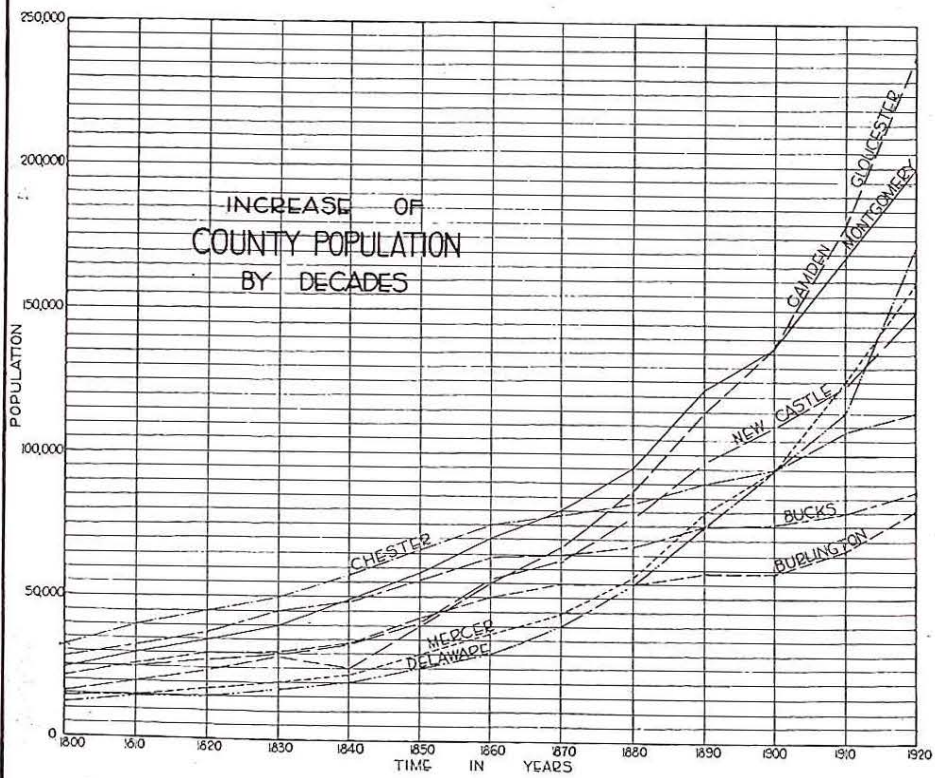
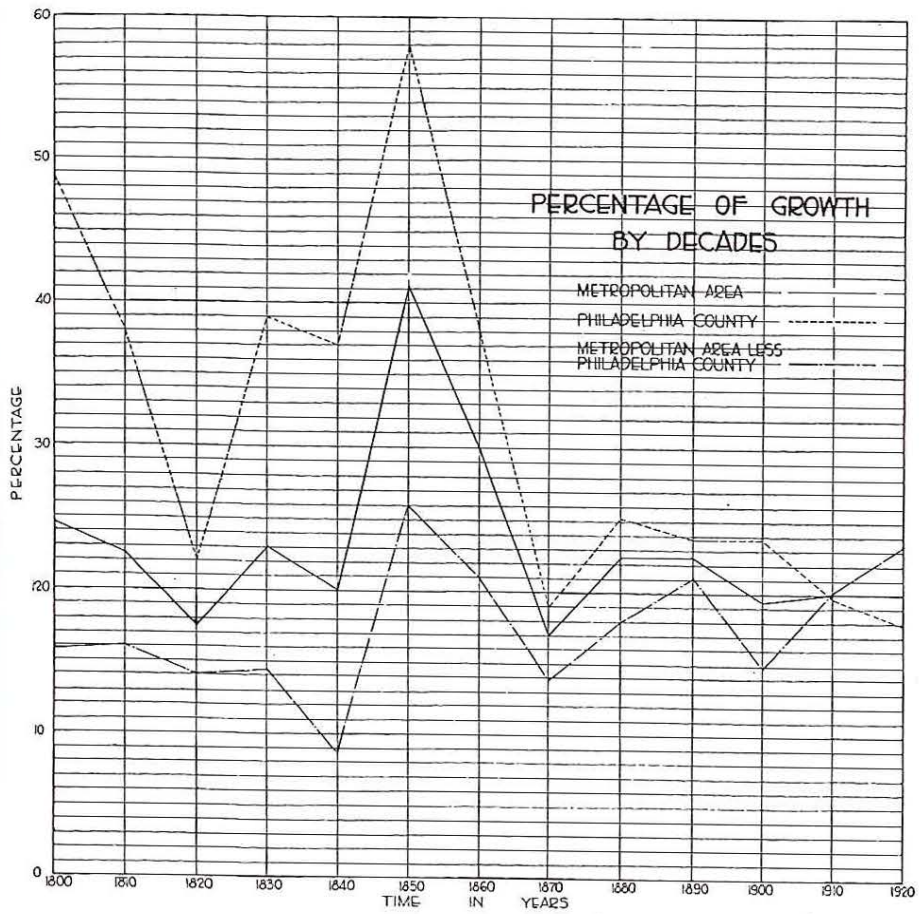
There is evidence that this decentralizing influence is already at work. The future may see the smaller cities of the region becoming more and more well rounded communities, industrially self-sufficient, but integral parts of the region rather than dormitory and way station adjuncts to the metropolis. In some such scattered distribution of population and industry, as opposed to infinite concentration, there lies hope for the solution of some of the social and economic problems of congestion.



Population Distribution in 1900—Population beginning to leave the country and concentrate in cities.



Population Distribution in 1920—Population definitely thinning out in country districts and concentrating in cities and along main lines of transportation. Metropolitanism in the ascendancy.



POPULATION GROWTH CURVES 1800-1920

REGIONAL PLANNING FEDERATION OF THE PHILADELPHIA TRI-STATE DISTRICT

NOVEMBER 1926.

Population Growth

POPULATION increase in the Tri-State district for the past half century has held almost constantly at 2 per cent a year. Until 1910 the percentage of increase was considerably higher for Philadelphia County than for the metropolitan area outside the city. Since 1910 the metropolitan area, less Philadelphia, has increased in population faster than the city itself, the rate in 1920 for the 10 year period being for Philadelphia 18 per cent and for the region, 23 per cent.

An analysis of population growth by counties from 1800 to 1920 shows population increasing at a much faster rate in some counties than in others. Camden and Gloucester* in New Jersey and Delaware in Pennsylvania, were up until the 1920 census, running far ahead of most other counties of the region—Camden-Gloucester having grown in the last decade 34 per cent and Delaware 46 per cent, as compared with Philadelphia's 18 per cent.

A population forecast would probably show continued acceleration of growth in the areas adjoining the larger cities; a continued slumping off of percentage of growth in Philadelphia County; and the rapid increase of population in many of the smaller outlying cities.

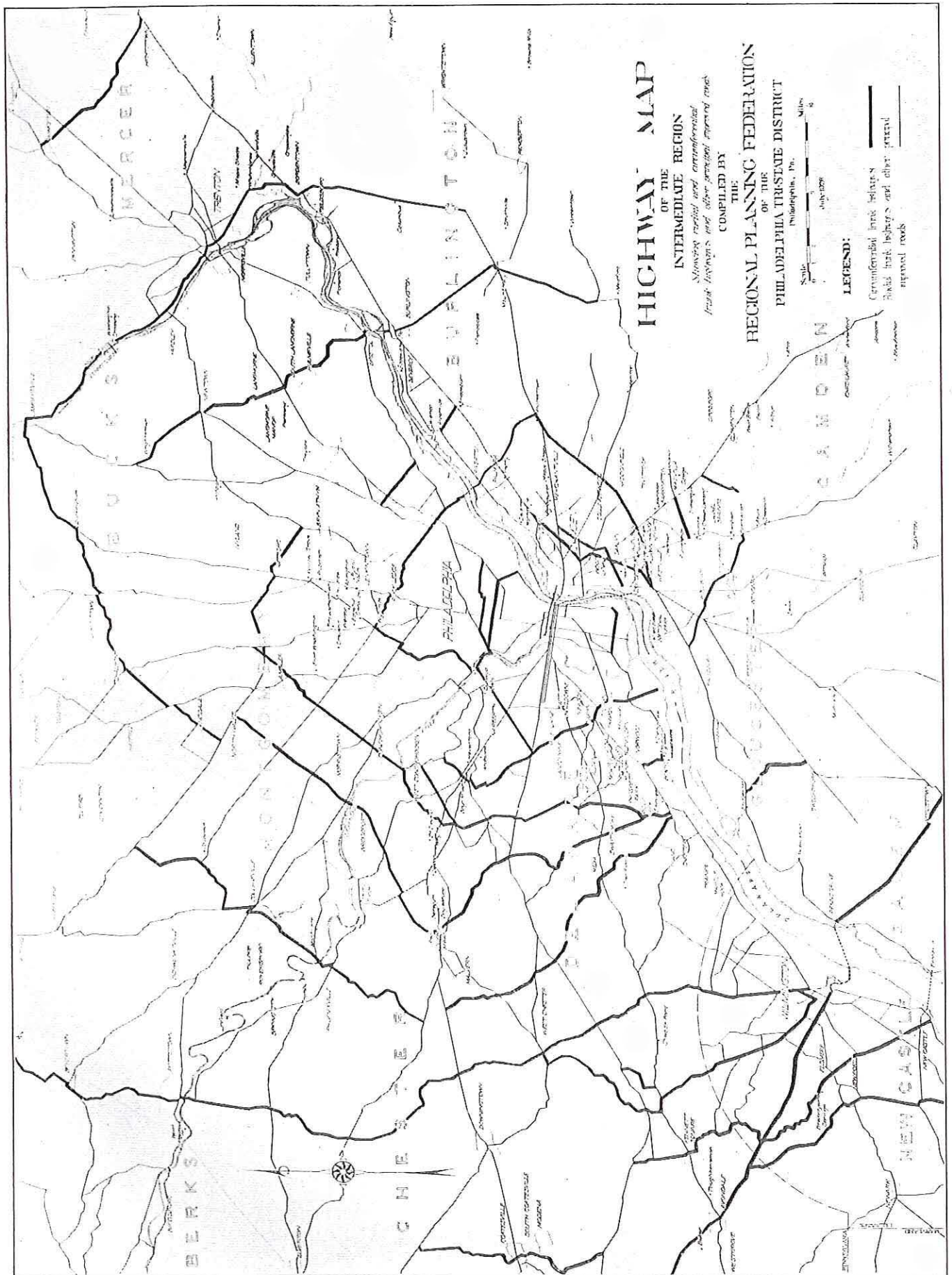
* Camden and Gloucester, during part of the period covered by these figures, constituted a single county—the chart therefore gives their figures in combination.

Political Subdivisions

A GREAT metropolitan area of over 3000 square miles, bound together by common interests and problems, but with its affairs administered by 357 different political subdivisions, exclusive of school districts—such is the region. Here in portions of three states are all or parts of 14 counties, 211 townships and 129 incorporated cities and boroughs classified variously in each state and operating under greatly differing legislative powers.

Without machinery for joint action between these many administrative units, it is difficult, if not impossible to carry out major development projects. The physical problems of the region do not align themselves with its political boundaries. Population spreads without regard for these. Highways, parks, public utilities and other improvements attend population, likewise irrespective of political lines.

There are three methods usually suggested for carrying out plans for co-ordinated development. One is annexation—a doubtful remedy in view of the vast size already reached by our great cities and the complexity of their present administrative methods. The second is through an official metropolitan district and commission similar to those of the Miami, Ohio, Flood Control District, the New York Port Authority and the Boston Metropolitan area. The third means is through a non-official citizen body with purely advisory powers depending upon joint agreements for executing regional projects. Which of these three methods will ultimately prove most effective in the Tri-State region remains to be determined.

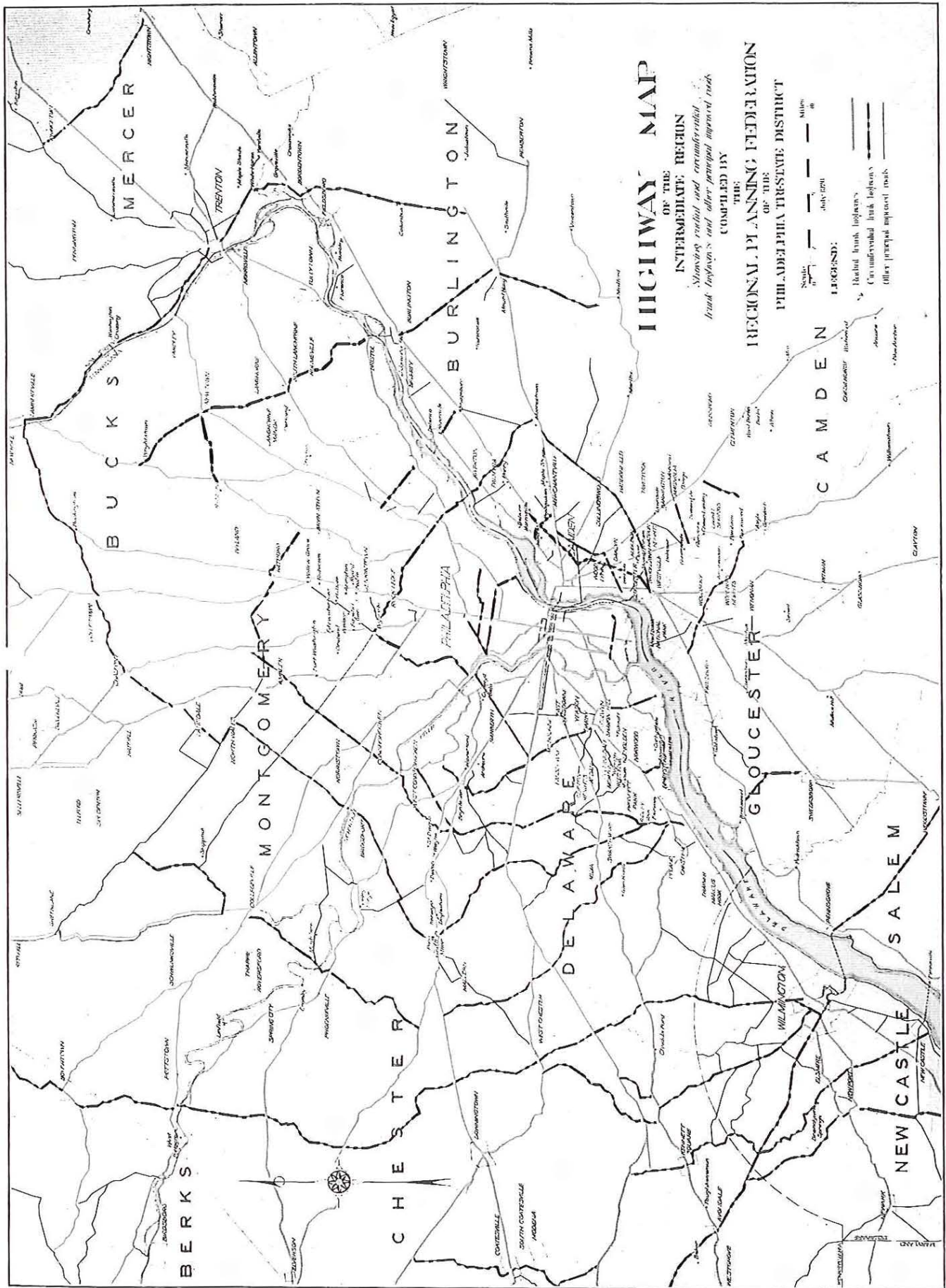


The few existing ways around the congested center are so broken and tortuous as to require experienced pilotage.

Circumferential Highways

INDIRECT, broken, incomplete and poorly marked by-pass motor routes now force a tremendous volume of unnecessary traffic to flow into and through the congested centers of the larger cities of the district, particularly Philadelphia and Camden. This additional burden upon already overcrowded streets wastes time for the motorist and takes up street room which might otherwise be occupied by shoppers, city workers, visitors and others who have a real interest in being there. Business is interfered with and the cost of delivery and other activities is materially increased.

New ways around the congested centers—north, south, east and west—must be provided and present routes must be completed and improved to carry increasing through traffic, and to meet the certain demands of the future. These new highways, many of them in all probability forced through open farm land to avoid costly destruction of existing improvements, serving the multiple purpose of by-pass routes, ties between outlying cities, and as a means of opening new lands, will become large factors in the orderly progress of the region.

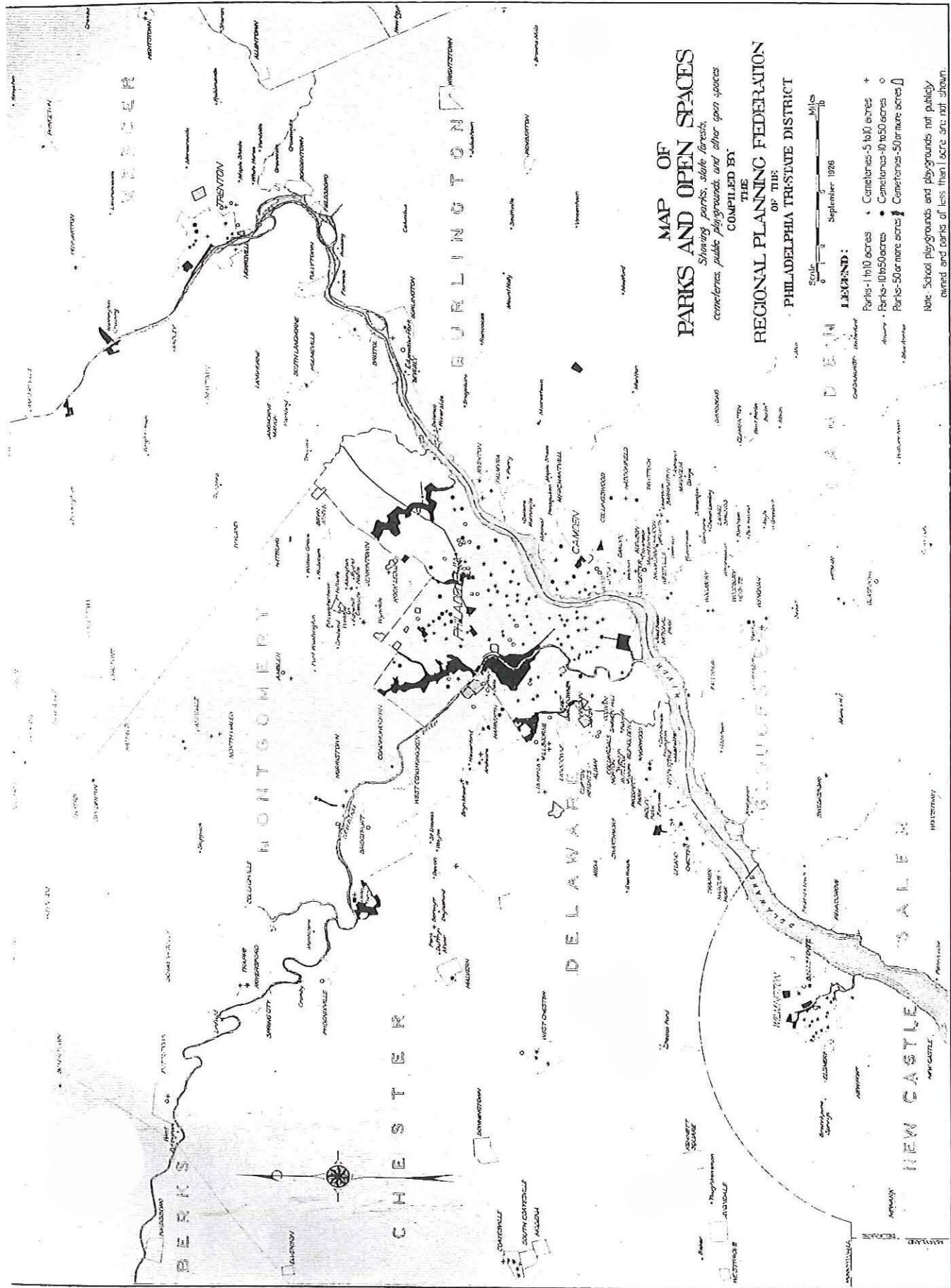


Many good ways into the cities but few satisfactory ways around. Wasteful of time and money and cluttering up unnecessarily already overcrowded city streets.

The Highway System

IN THE first moulding of the region when all land travel was by horse or oxen, slow, and never to be indulged in unnecessarily, all trails did in fact lead to Philadelphia, where produce might be sold or exchanged and friends might meet. It was the age of the Conestoga wagon bringing produce from frontier settlements along dusty roads into the city, and disappearing into the wilderness again laden with necessities for the settlers. These early travelers in their journeys from home to market largely determined the present highway system of the Tri-State District. All travel being to and from the central city—highways were built from all points of the compass toward the center, giving our present excellent fan shaped system of radial roads—now great trunk highways carrying immense traffic in and out. Not until much later and after the country was further developed, did intercourse between the outlying towns justify the building of cross connections. These later roads built around the center, a link at a time, are irregular, disconnected and tortuous and are far from adequate to present-day needs. The whole system of highways must be built up and improved to meet new and changing demands. Great express and freight highways are close upon us. Highways must no longer be permitted just to grow, but must be designed and laid out expressly for the purpose which they are to serve—residential, business or main thoroughfare. Only in this way can be avoided the tremendous economic losses that come from placing unexpected burdens upon streets—and from unduly shifting uses of property.

To build up an adequate system of roads is now no easy task. It is no longer a matter of blazing a trail and clearing a way through the wilderness. Fertile farms and thriving communities lie in the logical paths of these new roads. The only way to extensive accomplishment is to take advantage of inevitable growth—plan new highways far ahead of spreading population and allow expansion to absorb them.



Three or four cities well sprinkled with parks and playgrounds, but dozens of communities without a single one.
No great regional parks as in many metropolitan areas.

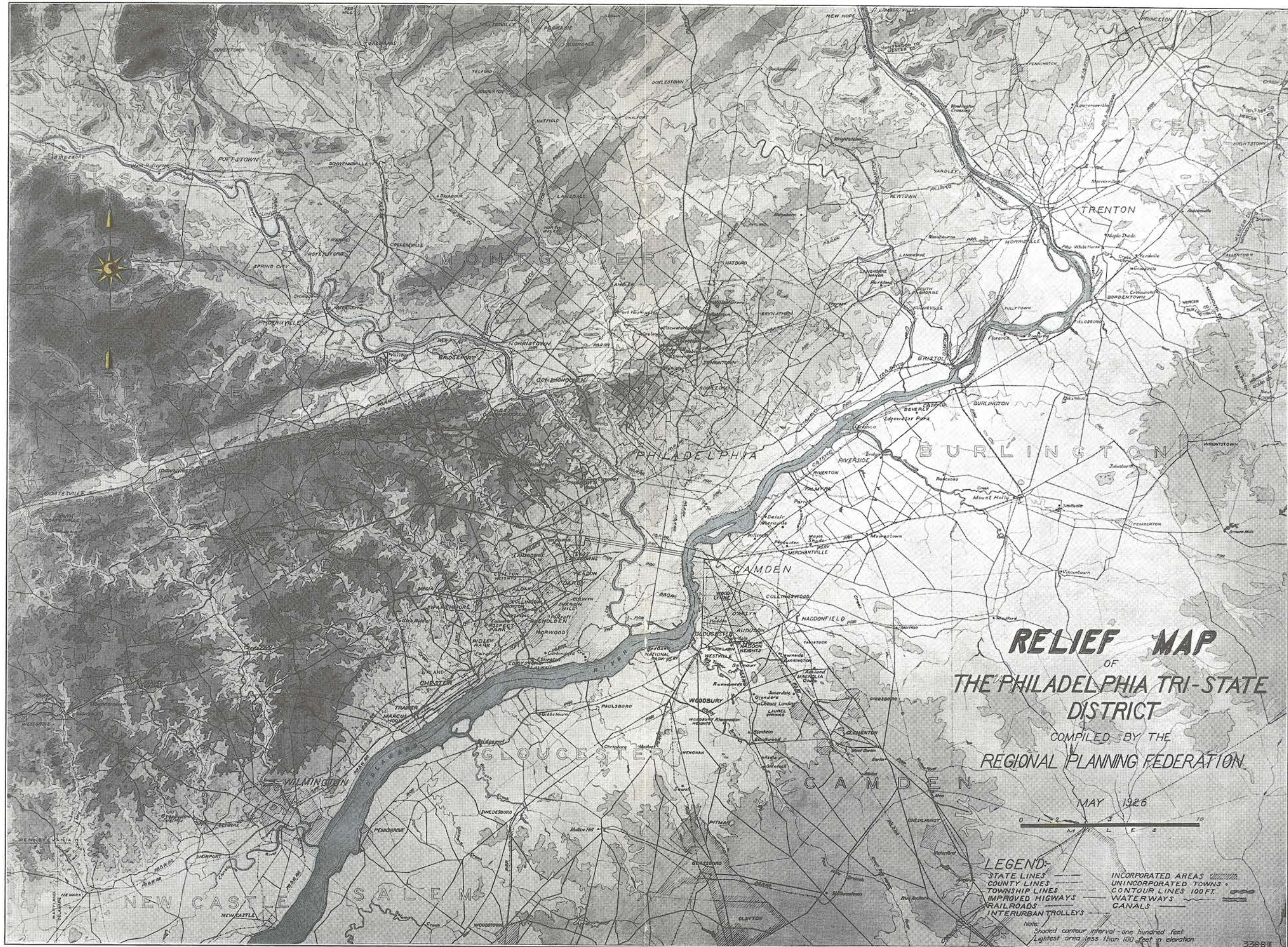
Parks and Playgrounds

PLAY places for all the people, little folks and grown-ups, are no longer looked upon as luxuries or fads but are an accepted responsibility of cities, states and nation. Cities are tearing down blocks of buildings to provide at great cost playgrounds which could have been gotten for almost nothing if planned for at the beginning. They are going to distant places to provide recreation camps for their people. States and the nation are setting aside thousands of acres of forest reserves and parks as great public playgrounds. These perhaps are the antidotes for the tension of modern living.

The Tri-State District is not as well served with parks as most other great metropolitan areas. Some cities of considerable size have no parks whatever, but to offset these communities are others which have shown notable vision in providing park and recreation facilities. Most communities, however, have not yet reached the accepted standard of one acre for every 100 or 200 people. In many instances existing but privately owned woodlands, meadows or creek banks, temporarily available for public use, have been regarded as fixtures. When population increases and such lands are most needed, they are almost certain to be withdrawn.

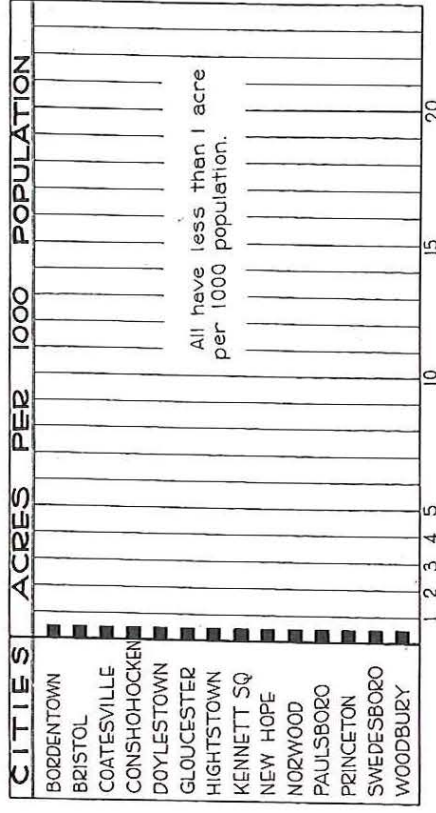
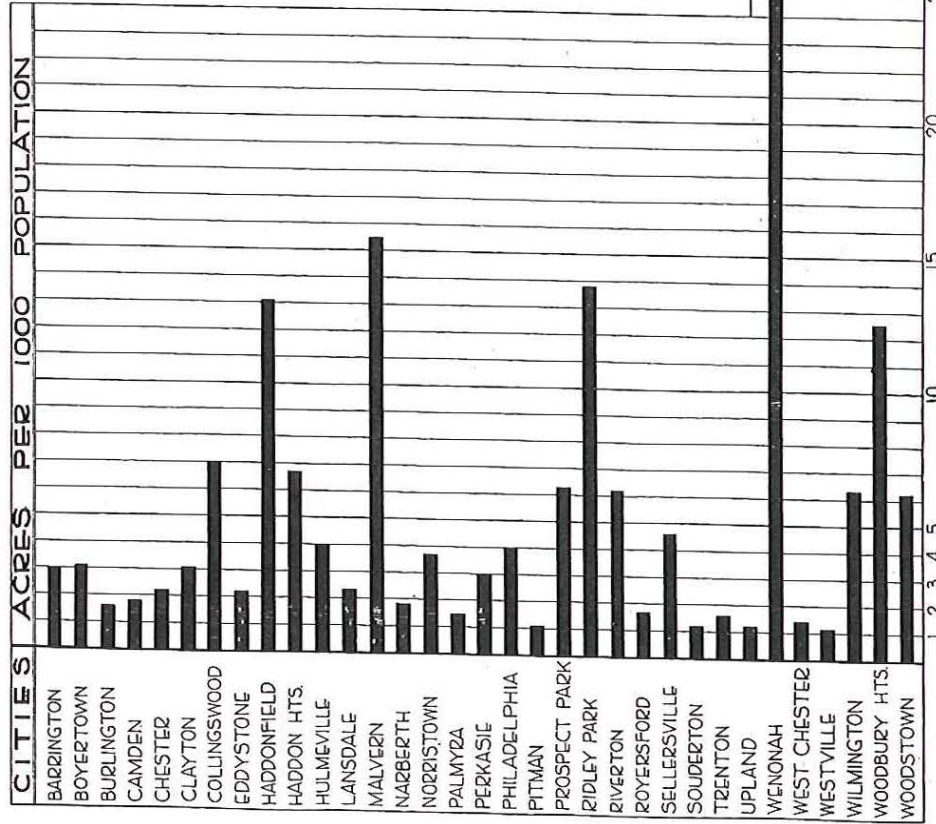
Few regions are as rich in possibilities for public recreation lands as this. The expanse of New Jersey pine land with its streams, lakes, wild life and flora; the creek valleys and wooded ridges of eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware; the river banks and ocean front—all offer a wealth of opportunity and all of them are in momentary danger of despoilation and exploitation.

Carefully selected areas should be acquired as great regional playgrounds while they are yet available.



Marked contrast is evident between the old ocean bed that is now New Jersey, which seldom rises more than 100 feet above sea level, and the irregular but low lying hills of Pennsylvania and Delaware, generally ranging from 300 to 500 feet. One point only, near Boyertown, rises to the height of 1100 feet.

PUBLIC PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS ACREAGE PER 1000 POPULATION IN INCORPORATED PLACES OF THE TRI-STATE DISTRICT



Note: Figures are exclusive of school ground acreage.

81 Incorporated places in the region have no public parks or playgrounds.

Accepted minimum national standard
5 Acres per 1000 population

REGIONAL PLANNING FEDERATION OF THE PHILADELPHIA TRI-STATE DISTRICT

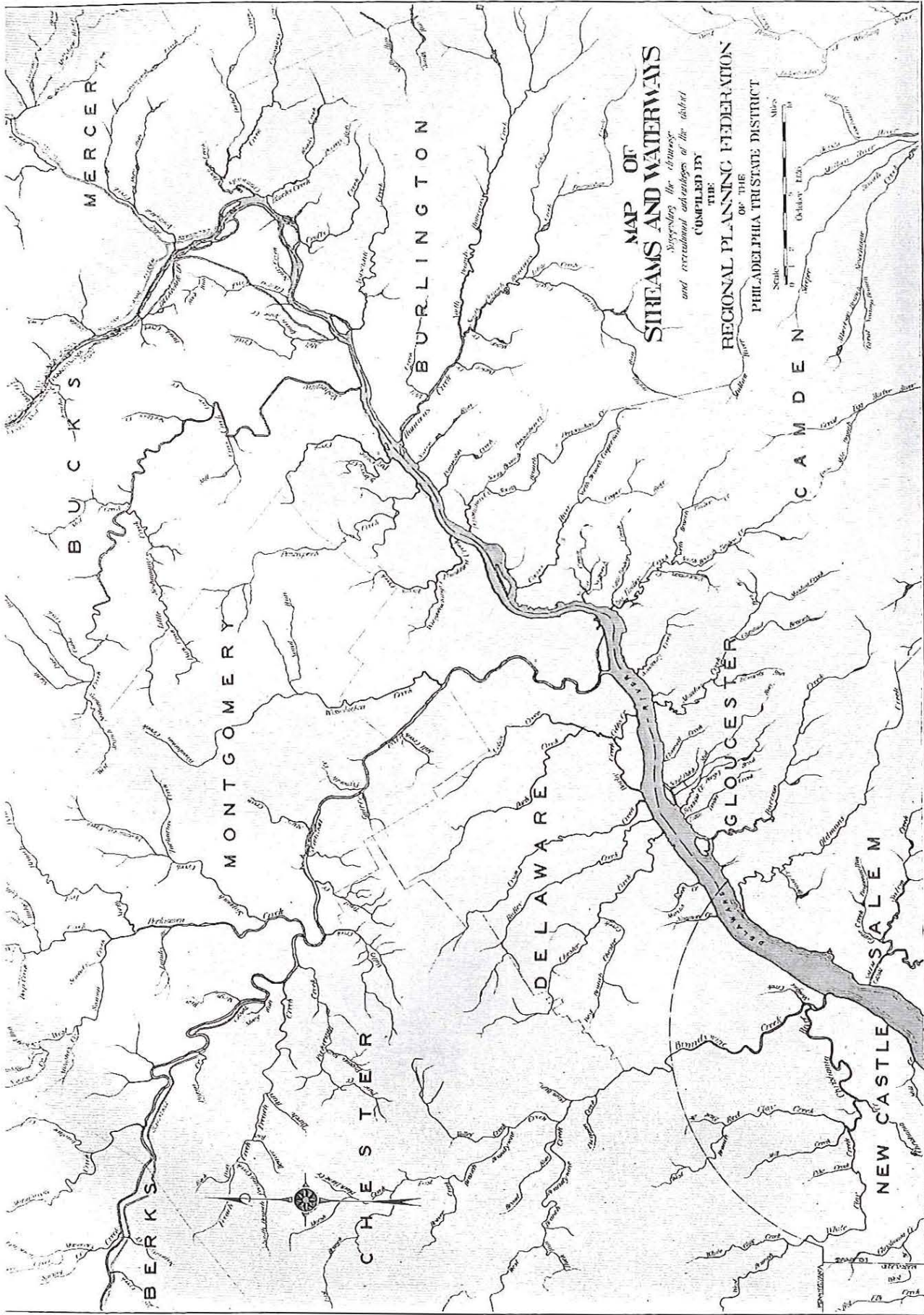
NOVEMBER 1926.

A few smaller towns of the region are advanced far beyond the accepted minimum national standard for ratio of parks to population—but the average is very low, and there is little evidence of adequate provision for the future.

Recreation Areas, Parks and Playgrounds

COMPARATIVE park acreage in proportion to population shows a few of the smaller cities well above the accepted standard which ranges from 5 to 10 acres per 1000 population. But with one exception, all the larger cities of the district are considerably below this standard and more than half of the communities of the region have no public parks and playgrounds.

This desirable proportion of park acreage to population is based upon present needs and does not take into consideration future requirements. With population spreading as rapidly as it is and with property values soaring, parks and playgrounds are increasingly difficult to get as the city grows. They must be acquired far in advance of the spread of population—before prices become prohibitive and natural beauty has been destroyed. The Tri-State District has an immediate and important task ahead in the field of public recreation.

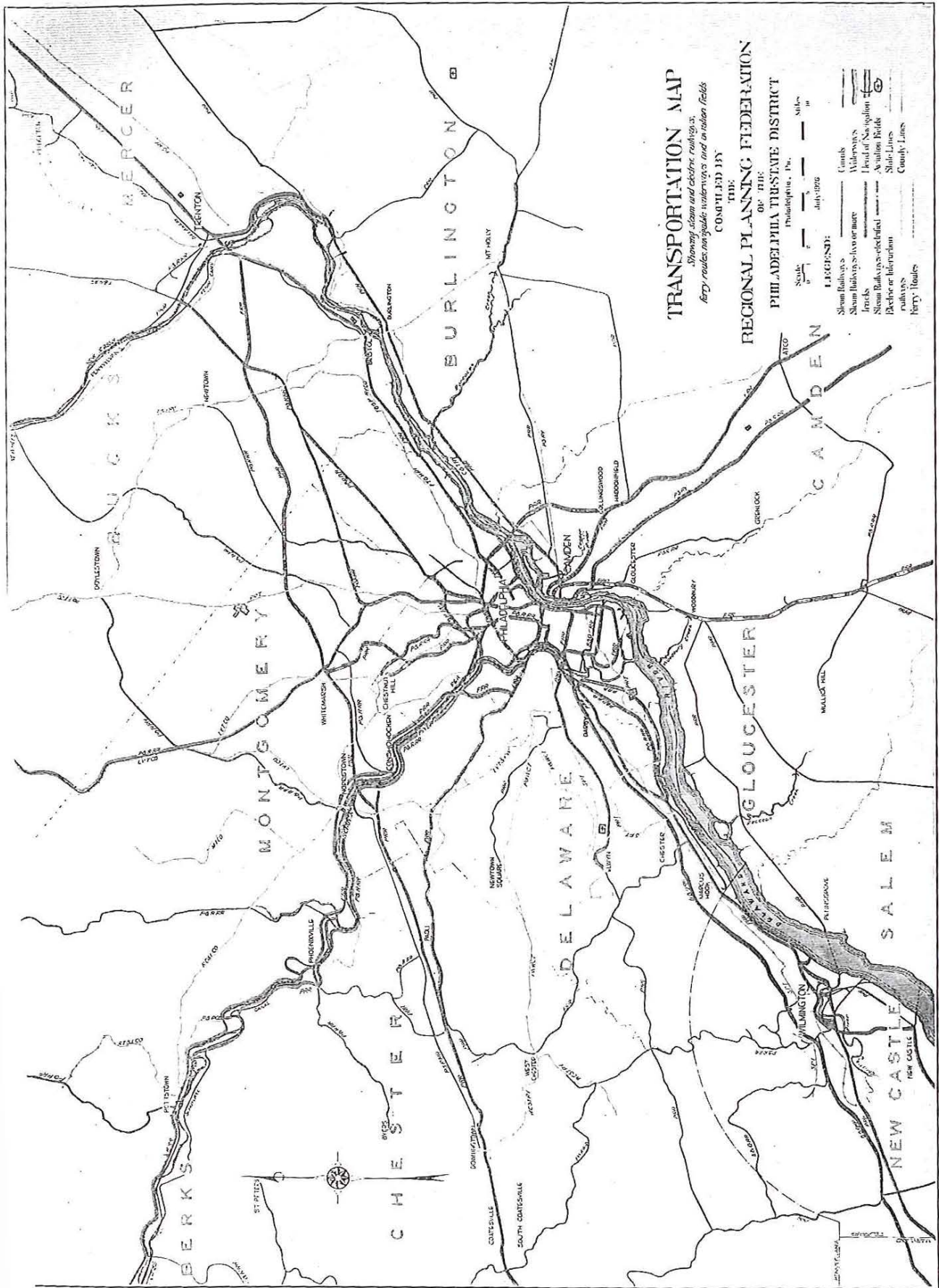


A network of streams—now too generally polluted—offers rich opportunity for economic use and recreational development.

Streams and Waterways

FIFTY sizable streams and their innumerable territories—the great Delaware, with its commerce, the historic Schuylkill, tumbling creeks from the Pennsylvania and Delaware hills, and the placid waterways of the Rancocas and other New Jersey streams, thread a network over the whole region. Many of these streams have been inexcusably polluted by sewage and industrial waste, but all of them hold vast economic or recreational opportunities. They afford means of natural and effective drainage. Some are valuable water supplies, others have power possibilities. Their courses are still generally marked by strips of woodland. Many are used for boating, bathing, fishing, skating, picnicking and other recreations.

A far-sighted populace will purify these streams, save them from further despoilation, develop their power resources, take advantage of the easy grades of their valleys for parkways and highways, and reserve portions as parks and play places for present and future generations.



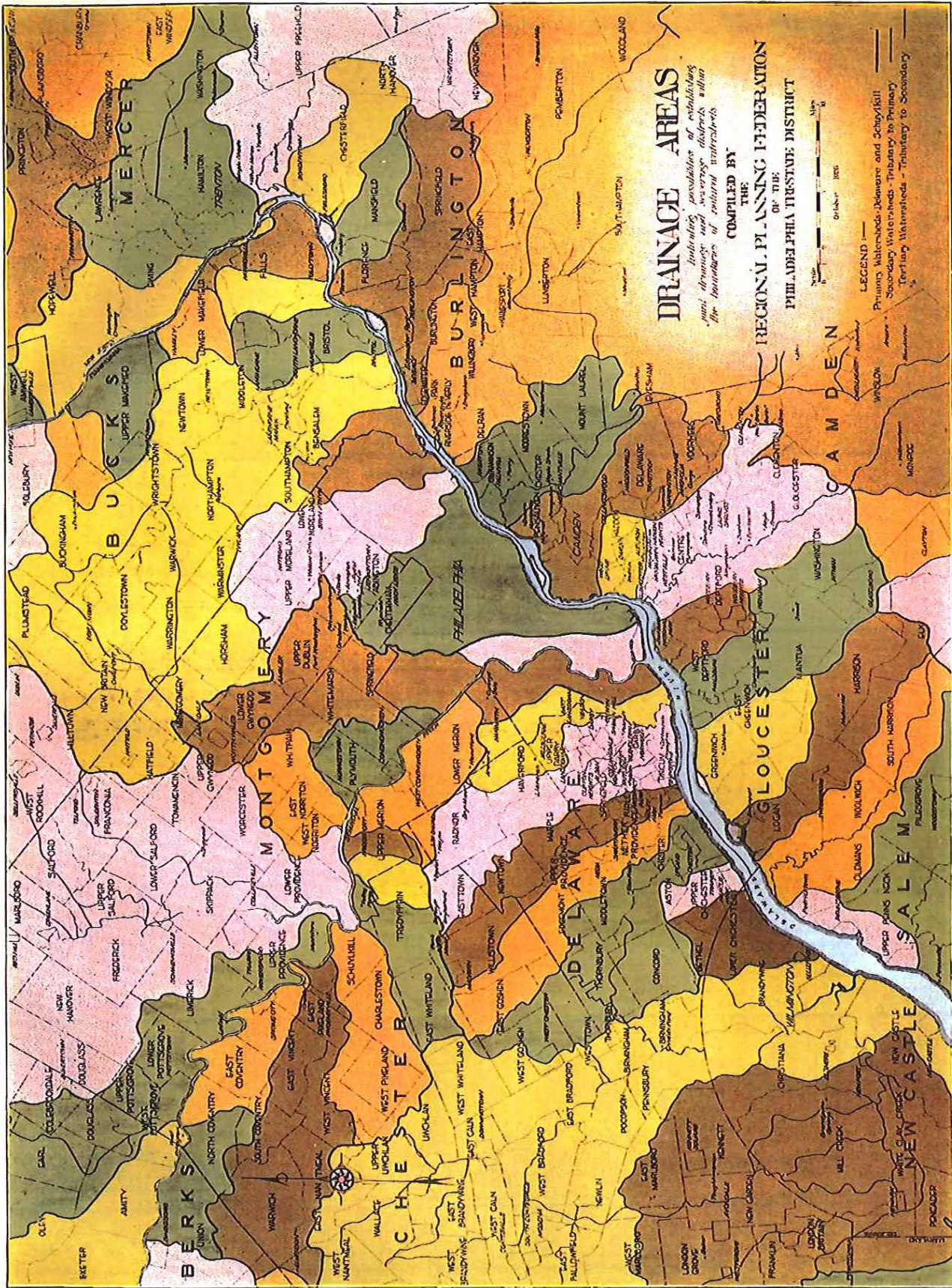
Railways like the highways, are principally radial from the central cities with little provision at present for by-passing freight and passengers.

Transportation

RAILWAYS, steam and electrified, and electric interurban, have spread freely out through the region in the absence of physical barriers, serving pretty much the entire area. Like the highways, however, most of the construction has been radial. There is little provision for getting around the central cities. Freight is by-passed to some extent, but passengers find it generally necessary in going by rail from one part of the district to another to make the journey into a Camden or Philadelphia terminal and out again. A co-ordination of railways and cross-country bus lines would do much to remedy this situation and is receiving serious consideration.

Of navigable waterways, the Delaware River is increasing steadily in importance. But a number of the smaller streams and canals are falling into disuse. Air transportation facilities and terminals are limited and probably have not kept pace with future demand.

Better co-ordination of the transport facilities of the region—rail, water, air and highway—is a recognized necessity. In the development of a program to this end, the deflection of traffic, both passenger and freight, from congested population centers, should be a chief consideration.



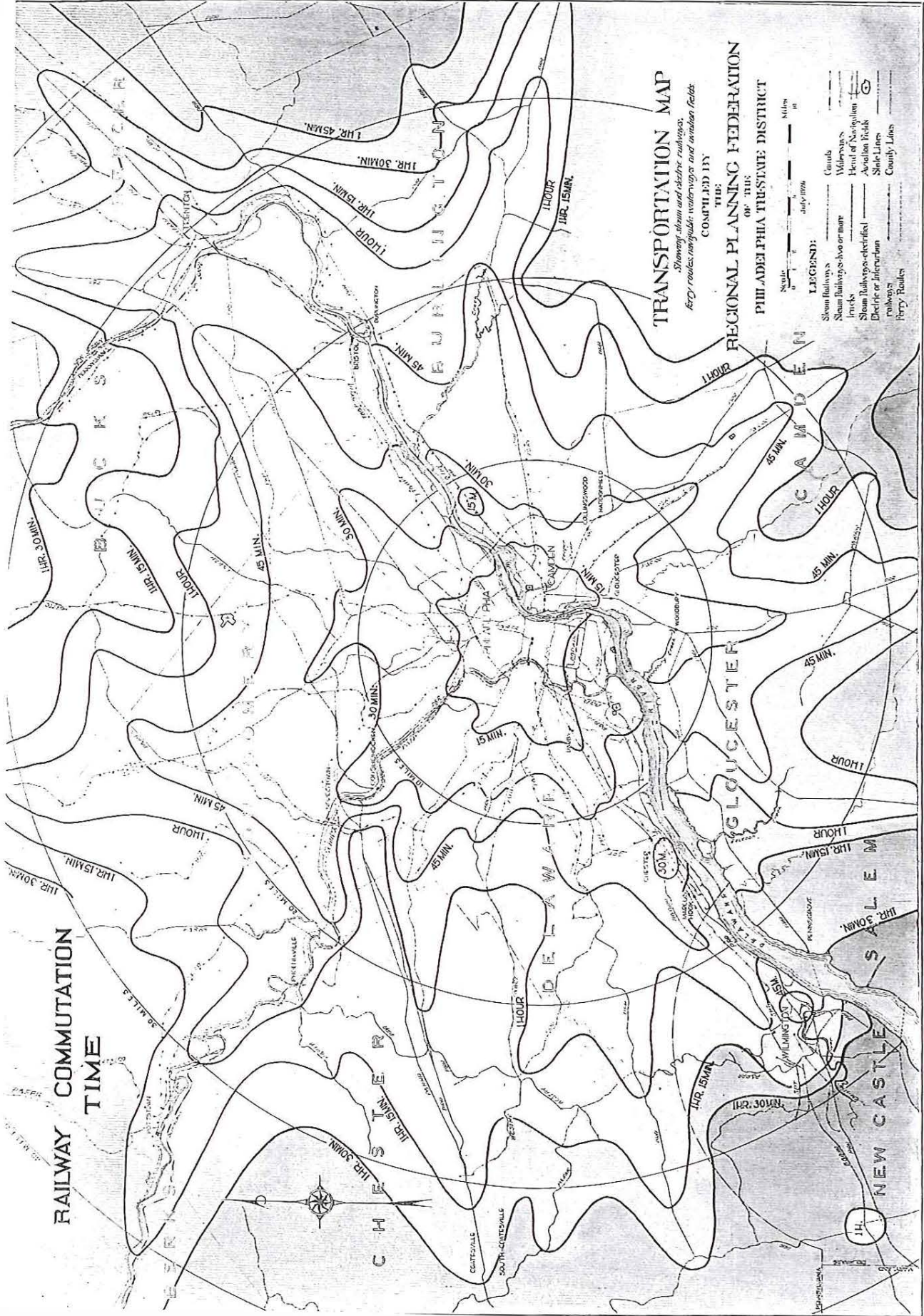
The region is comprised of many natural drainage areas or watersheds, the communities of which may advantageously organize or unite to form joint sewerage and drainage districts.

Sewerage and Drainage Districts

THE TRI-STATE region is roughly divided into two drainage areas, being parts of the basins of the Schuylkill and the Delaware. These two areas are broken into many smaller watersheds drained by the various streams and their tributaries flowing into the two larger waterways. Many of these smaller watersheds or drainage areas offer opportunity for several political subdivisions to co-operate in an economical and thoroughly satisfactory solution of their sewerage and drainage problems.

It is futile for one city to treat its sewage if a city on the same stream next above it continues to pollute the water. Frequently the cost of proper sewage treatment is prohibitive for a single small community, but by pooling construction and maintenance cost, it becomes possible for a group of municipalities within a single watershed to gain relief through a common plant. When natural drainage districts are broken by city lines joint action is frequently imperative.

The solution of the sewage disposal and drainage problem of the Tri-State region, therefore, appears to be in group action. This is already being urged by state authorities and is being effected in Pennsylvania in the Cobb's Creek and Tacony Creek watersheds, in the Chester area, and in a few other places.

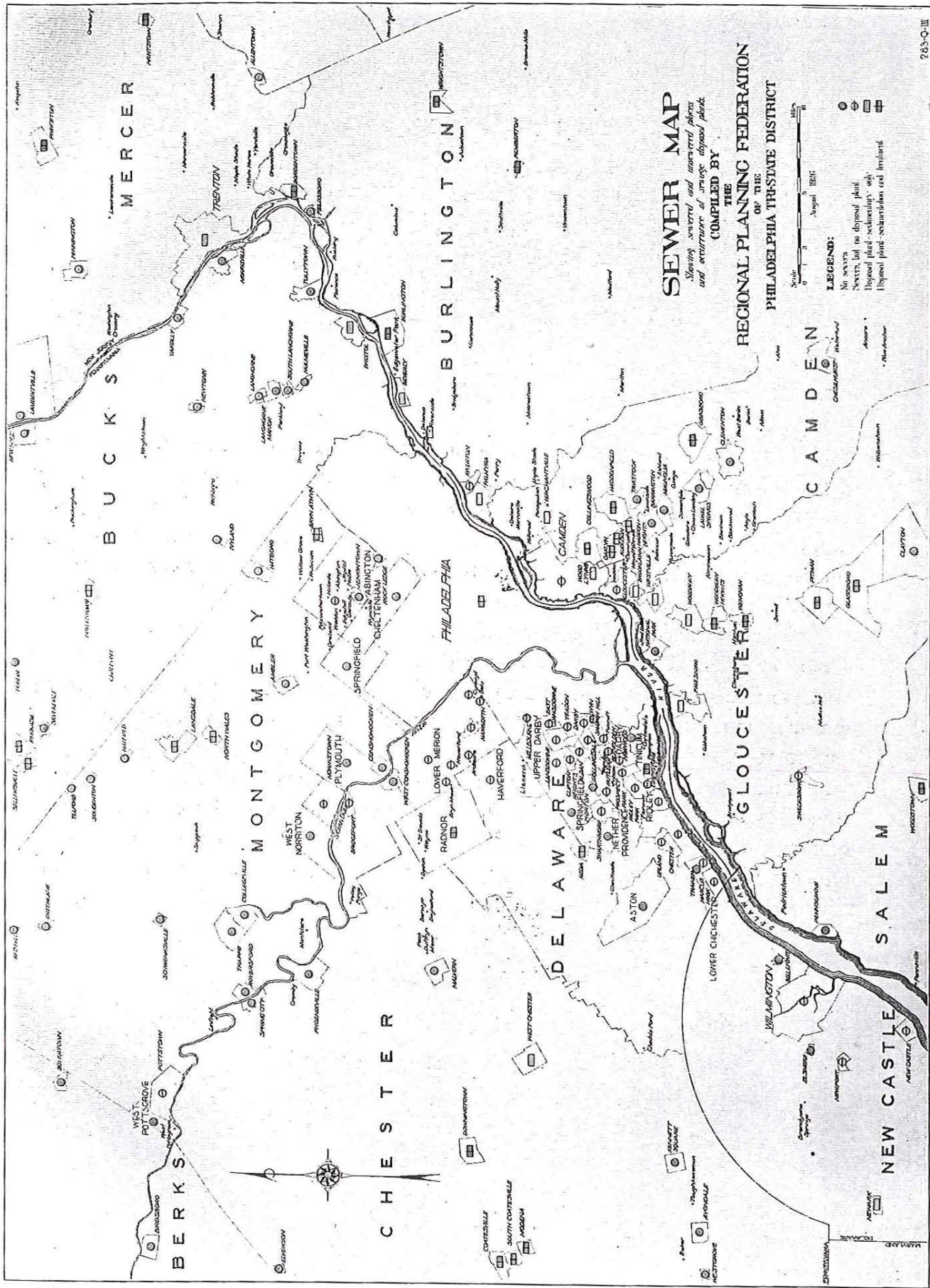


Low commutation time and areas of dense population go hand in hand, each probably more or less the product of the other.

Commutation—Time

POPULATION may bring good commuting facilities or good commuting facilities may bring increasing population. However that may be, it is a fact that the densely populated areas reaching out from the central cities in the Tri-State District follow along the well established lines of transportation, both highway and rail. Where electrification has offered improved service, development has been intensified. Comparatively open country can be reached in almost any direction in fifteen or twenty minutes by means of radiating railroads leading directly from the heart of the city.

The resultant metropolitan structure with its strips of densely populated areas separated by wedges of open country, offers foundation for an ideal regional development, with more or less independent and separate communities strung along radial trunk lines of communication leading into the central cities, flanked close on either side by open country—public reserve or agricultural land. These communities would grow less and less dependent upon the central cities and more socially and industrially self-sufficient, looking to the metropolis only for that social and business interchange which can be carried on in no other way. Tie these radiating highways and railroads together with cross highways, bus lines and possibly railways, and foundation will be laid for a splendidly co-ordinated region—economical, efficient and livable.

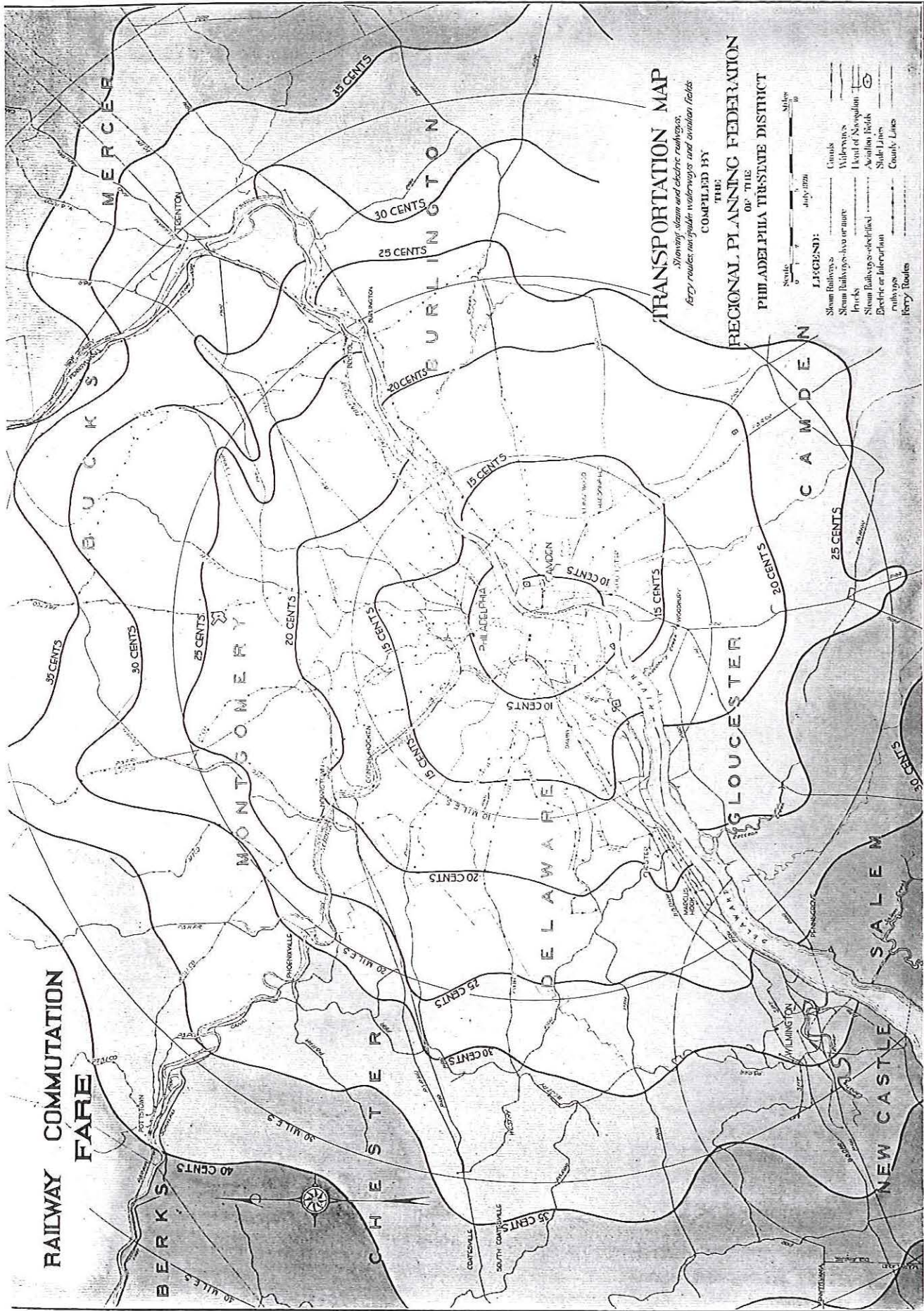


Few cities of the region have adequate sewage treatment plants. Most of them dump their raw sewage into the nearest stream, a constant source of discomfort and an increasing menace to health.

Sewage Disposal

UTTER lack of any public sewers or sewage disposal facilities whatsoever, is found in fifty-six municipalities of the region. Thirty-six have sewers but no disposal plants. Thirteen have disposal plants but no treatment, while twenty-six have disposal plants providing both separation and treatment. In a number of instances existing disposal plants are inadequate, and discharge incompletely treated sewage into neighboring waterways.

Where streams of sufficient variety and volume of flow have been accessible, it has been general practice, particularly in Pennsylvania, for communities to dump raw sewage into them. As a result, most of the streams of the region are seriously polluted. From these same streams we obtain most of our water supply and to them we look for much of our recreation, boating, bathing, fishing, picnicking. Their condition is rapidly becoming a menace to the health and general welfare of the region. With increasing population, septic tanks and primitive methods of handling sewage become less effective and more threatening to public health. Forward looking steps must be taken toward sewerage the many communities now unprovided for, and toward more general and adequate sewage treatment and disposal.



Since rates are based strictly on mileage, direct radial routes into the center of the city result in low cost for a majority of the population.

Commutation—Fare

THE cost in time and money of getting to and from work is necessarily great in every large metropolitan area. It is lower than usual in the Tri-State District, because of directness of commuting lines and especially fortunate distribution of population. Electric interurban lines have somewhat lower rates than railroads and in a few instances supply service where railroads do not. In rare instances they parallel each other. But the great bulk of commuting for distances greater than six or eight miles from the center of the city is handled by steam or electrified steam railroads.

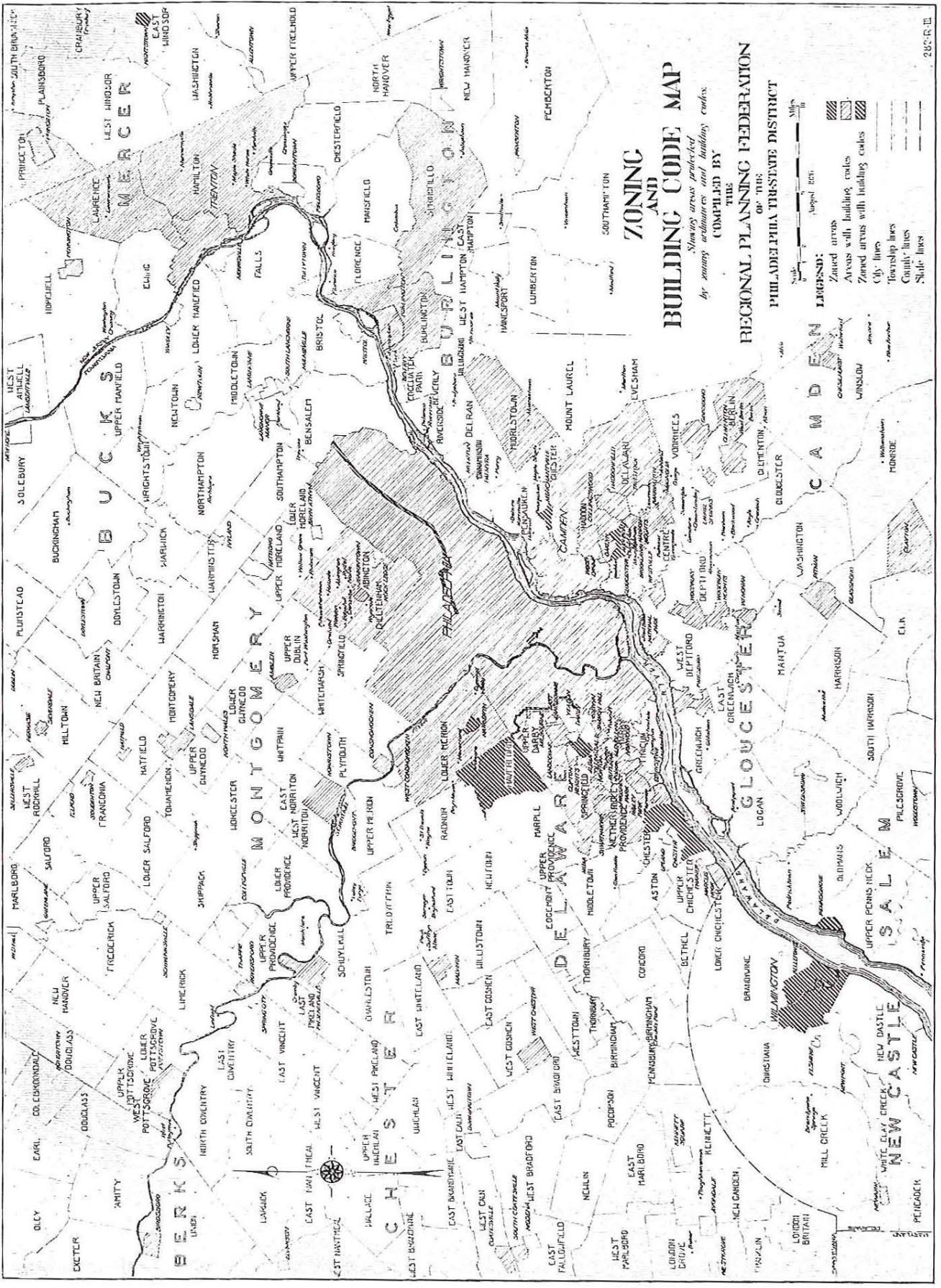
All railway fares, both commutation and standard rates, are based strictly upon distance. No one region, therefore, is favored above another in this respect.

The only means of relief to the worker from high time and transportation costs is to place his home nearer his work or bring the work nearer his house. This can be accomplished through a better relation between factories and business and residential districts.

Water Supply

EXCEPT for the larger cities, most of the water used in the Tri-State District is supplied by private companies. Much of it comes from the same larger streams into which we handily dump more or less untreated sewage. In some instances, unsewered communities still depend upon local well water, which of course is in constant danger of pollution from neighboring vaults and septic tanks. In spite of this situation the region has managed, through treatment, to maintain a water supply, generally of good quality. But increasing population, while demanding additional supply, will at the same time further contaminate and so reduce present sources.

A time will come when many communities of the region must join hands in seeking an adequate supply at some distance, such perhaps as the Upper Delaware, or the pineland streams of New Jersey. Can this time be foreseen and plans made to anticipate that step?



More or less effective building codes protect most parts of the region where building is being done. A few communities have zoning.

Building Codes and Zoning

BUILDING codes of a sort govern all house, factory, public building and other construction in most of the residential, business and industrial districts of the region and so protect the majority of the people from slipshod and dangerous work. Some of these codes are excellent. Others are entirely inadequate and in need of revision or replacement by more modern regulations. This is now being brought about in a number of places. Building conditions both as to materials and climate are much the same throughout the region. A standard code, modified to meet the requirements of varying size and any special local conditions might well be put into effect throughout the whole territory.

Zoning has been less accepted in the Tri-State District than in any other great metropolitan area in the country. Eight or ten communities in this region have adopted the principle.