In 1897, the “Great Consolidation” took place in the zinc industry creating the New Jersey Zinc Company (NJZ). The Lehigh Zinc and Iron Company, the Passaic Zinc Company (with the Bergen Point Zinc Company and the Bertha Mineral Company), the Mineral Point Zinc Company, and a predecessor New Jersey Zinc Company merged. This merger resolved decades of litigation about the mining and mineral rights in Franklin and Sterling Hill, NJ. Several other companies were acquired shortly thereafter. NJZ decided to close the many separate and inefficient zinc smelters and to construct a new large modern facility in rural Palmerton, PA, near the anthracite coalfields. The company also built a modern town to house and meet the day-to-day needs of its employees. It was incorporated in 1912 and featured many of the paternalistic features of modern company towns of the day, including a large central park, schools, hospital, community center (Neighborhood House), etc. The headquarters of the NJZ subsidiary, The New Jersey Zinc Company of Pennsylvania, and a research laboratory were also constructed. Production from 1899 to 1986 is estimated to be 5.2 million short tons of zinc metal and 2.9 million short tons of zinc equivalents as zinc oxide. (Bleiwas and DiFrancisco, 2010) In 1983, the smelter and related plants were designated as a Superfund site. Extensive demolition, cleanup, and revegetation projects have been completed. There is now an American Zinc Recycling (AZR) plant on part of the East Plant Area.

(Clockwise from the top) Aerial view of Palmerton today showing the locations of the two plant sites. (Google Earth, Kaas’ annotation)

The original 1897 plan for the development of Palmerton. The downtown central park can be seen in each of the photos. (PennDOT)

1931 view from east to west when the plants were in operation. Sulfur dioxide fumes from the plants devastated the slopes and hilltops of Blue Mountain. Reclamation and revegetation began in the 1980’s and is still in progress. (Hagley Museum, Kaas’ annotation)
1930 HISTORIC VIEWS OF THE NEW JERSEY ZINC COMPANY OF PENNSYLVANIA, PALMERTON, PA, PLANTS

The two New Jersey Zinc Company plant sites shown below included the West Oxide Plant, East Oxide Plant, Slab Zinc Plant, Rolled Zinc Plant, Spiegeleisen Plant, Lithopone Plant, Sulfuric Acid Plant, and Chestnut Ridge Railroad.

West Plant Complex.

East Plant Complex

1965 HISTORIC VIEWS OF THE NEW JERSEY ZINC COMPANY OF PENNSYLVANIA, PALMERTON, PA, PLANTS

West Plant Complex (1899-1986).

East Plant Complex (1911-1986). An American Zinc Recycling (AZR) plant is now on part of the East Plant site.

HISTORIC POSTCARD VIEWS OF PALMERTON, PA (ca1911-1970)

Sacred Heart Catholic Church
St. John's Episcopal Church
N. J. Zinc Research Lab

Stephen Palmer High School
Palmerton Borough Park
N. J. Zinc Co. of Pennsylvania
General Offices

N J Zinc Neighborhood House
(Community Center) and First
Reformed Church
Delaware Avenue Business
District
Delaware Avenue Business
District

Horsehead Zinc Slab.
N J Zinc Hospital

Images courtesy Ebay.com,
Vatican.com, and ZINC
(Digitized by John Park).