The Staffordshire Pottery Towns, late 18th century

The famous six towns of the Staffordshire Potteries were Tunstall, Burslem, Hanley, Stoke, Fenton and Longton (all now part of Stoke-on-Trent) and until the introduction of the Clean Air Act in 1956 were characterised by the polluted, smoke-laden air arising from some 4000 kilns. The industry flourished due to an abundance locally of coal as a source of fuel for firing the kilns and the development of transport links, particularly the network of canals. The factories were labour intensive, unhealthy and extensive use was made of child workers. Mechanisation was slow and limited. The factories turned out pottery, porcelain, tiles, and starting in the Victorian period, a few specialised (like Twyford) in sanitary ware: water closets, baths, washbasins and sinks.
Hanley: Century Street, about 1905
(City of Stoke-on-Trent Museum & Art Gallery)

Stoke: an early postcard (Shaws of Wolstanton)
Longton: Marl Hole, Daisy Bank (thepotteries.org)
Longton: an aerial view during holiday week when the factories were not firing (A J Cope)

Burslem: a view of the potteries (thepotteries.org)
Fenton: Foley China Works of E Brain & Co, pre-1978
(Staffordshire Past Track)

Stoke-on-Trent: Anchor Road, Longton
(thepotteries.org)
The Potteries: General view and close-up showing the relatively smoke free atmosphere during the 1960’s after the introduction of the Clean Air Act