



THE WELL WOOD BLUES

CRM CONSERVATION EFFORTS OF WELL CRIBBING FROM NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE

Over a ten-month period, Dovetail Cultural Resource Group (Dovetail) conserved intact well cribbing that was retrieved from five historic wells associated with the Houston-LeCompt and Armstrong-Rodgers archaeological sites. These sites were excavated as part of the larger Route 301 project completed through the Delaware Department of Transportation. Conservation of this material posed a number of challenges including lack of space and proper equipment, and limited experience conserving a large collection of sizable organic objects.

Conservation efforts began in the field, where the well wood was stabilized, wrapped in towels, and stored in large contractor bags for transport back to Dovetail's lab. Based on research into organic conservation techniques and with guidance from the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory (MAC Lab) on how to temporarily stabilize the remainder of the large wooden pieces, Dovetail purchased a used bathtub and several storage bins to keep the wood submerged in water and stored in a cool, dark place. Weekly, Dovetail staff changed the water and cleaned the wood to keep bacteria from growing. Dendrochronological samples were taken for further analysis. The wood is undergoing conservation at the MAC Lab.



Representative pieces of the well cribbing were removed mechanically and by hand.



Washing of the well cribbing was done weekly to prevent bacteria growth.



Dendrochronological samples were taken by Michael Worthington from Oxford Tree-Ring Laboratory. Once complete, the wood was transported to the MAC lab for conservation.

