

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The study area is located in the Piedmont physiographic province, just above the Fall Line which marks the transition from the Piedmont to the Coastal Plain. The project area is about a mile north of the City of Wilmington, in Brandywine Hundred, New Castle County. The area includes a high, level hilltop and land on either side of Alapocas Run, a tributary of the Brandywine Creek. The soil type has been classified by the Soil Conservation Service (1972) as Talleyville silt loam, a deep, moderately eroded soil on very gentle slopes. The lower subsoil is a clay formed by *in situ* weathering of diabase rock. Alapocas Run, which joins the Brandywine about a mile southwest of the survey areas, runs through the proposed Rockland Connector road alignment and is adjacent to wetland mitigation sites A2 and B. These areas are noted as being high probability locations for prehistoric sites, given the high correlation between the occurrence of prehistoric sites and the presence of fresh surface water.

Most of the land in the vicinity of the study areas is either open fields or areas of shrubby growth typical of recently abandoned fields. Historic documents, maps and photographs all confirm that many of the wooded areas were farmed until recently. Based on the Price and Price 1917 Map of Nemours, the field at the intersection of Rockland Road and Concord Pike may have been an orchard in the early part of this century; however, from the 1930s to the 1970s, there are only a few trees shown there, and at some time in the past few decades, a very deep layer of fill soil containing large boulders and chunks of cement sidewalk curbing was spread over the field, giving the area a much more level appearance. The DuPont Dairy Barn stands to the southwest of this field, and is an important local landmark. Its architectural features and structural dimensions have been described in detail by Brizzolara (1989) and in the 1994 HABS survey form No. DE-283-A (Kise Franks & Straw). The Dairy complex is part of the agricultural development within the urbanization and early suburbanization period of Wilmington, 1830-1940, defined within the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan (De Cunzo and Garcia 1992).

Stone walls probably representing three construction eras border the northern portions of a section of the project area. The most recent may be the stone wall that runs along the west side of Concord Pike near its intersection with Rockland Road and along part of Rockland Road where it is topped by a chain link fence. The second wall surrounds the Dairy Barn and milk house, beginning at the southeastern corner of the Blue Ball Tavern Site (7NC-B-22) and following Concord Pike to the south, then turning west to enclose the dairy buildings. This wall is nine feet in height, and was constructed of stone covered with a layer of parge or stucco topped with a cement cap. The third set of stone walls, which may date from the 19th century E. I. DuPont Powder Company ownership, flank the farm entrance off Rockland Road; similar walls can be seen along both sides of Rockland Road as well (HABS No. DE-283-A). A keystone arched stone culvert was built where these walls cross Alapocas Run.