

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Before Europeans and Africans arrived in Delaware, the Bowman property was a tract of woodland through which Indians sometimes passed as they hunted deer and turkeys and gathered wild plants. Once in a while a small group of hunters or foragers camped for the night near the banks of Scott Run. They left behind a few stone tools that we can date to between 5,000 and 2,000 years ago. At that time no one lived on these acres, at least not in the sense that the word has today. But ancient Native Americans were hunters and gatherers who did not build permanent villages. When asked where they live, modern people who live in the same way point to the whole territory through which they roam—the whole landscape is their home. For the people who lived in Delaware 3,000 years ago, their homes stretched from the oyster beds to the cedar swamps, from the oak forests to the salt marsh.

In the 1660s European settlers moving west from the bay and its tidal rivers began to claim land in Delaware's interior. In 1684 one of them claimed 500 acres where the Bowman farm would one day stand. Some time after that, people moved to the property and began to clear the land. They cut down trees, planted crops, and built houses. In that era Delaware's settlers were a highly mobile group, often staying in one place for only a few years before moving on in search of better land or more generous terms. Around 1760 one tenant farmer built a log house along the banks of Scott Run and lived there for a decade or so. We know little about the family, except that they drank tea and kept cows. Then they moved on.

In 1794, 200 acres of the old 500-acre claim was sold to Peter Bowman. He moved there and lived with his family in a small house, which they may have built. The house was on the north side of Hyetts Corner Road, where the St. Georges Technical High School now stands. The house was small but the Bowmans had a separate kitchen, a barn, and an orchard. The Bowmans seemed to have a bright future, but in 1797 Peter Bowman died, leaving his land to his wife and five young children. They probably leased the land to others to farm.

Around that time another house was built, in what was then a damp, wooded part of the property. This house was inhabited by tenants who probably helped the Bowmans and other farmers work their land. The tenant house stood until after the Civil War, eventually collapsing into the mud as its occupants moved on. The artifacts they left behind tell us that these tenants, although poor, may not have lived bleak lives. They had brightly decorated plates, teacups, and other dishes; they used patent medicines; they had glass windows in their house.

The last home built on the Bowman property was built around 1840, probably to house tenant farmers to whom the Bowman were leasing around 200 acres of land. At that time many Delaware farmers were replacing their old log dwellings with new, larger frame houses, with iron stoves for heat and big windows to let in light, and the new house seems to have been built in this style. The Bowman family kept the land down to 1943, and the house remained standing until the 1960s. Automobiles and electricity came to rural Delaware in that time, changing country life forever.

Even though the archaeological sites on the Bowman property were in the end judged not important enough to be excavated, in their way they still tell the story of this land, which is one small part of the story of America.