

**BOYD'S CORNER INTERSECTION
IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT
ST. GEORGE'S HUNDRED,
NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE**

**DATA RECOVERY AND
CONTEXTUAL RESEARCH
BOYD'S STORE AND HOUSE SITE
[7NC-G-169; CRS N-12742.002]**

**PARENT AGREEMENT 1415
TASK 10**

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Planned improvements to the intersection of U.S. Routes 13 and 896 in St. George's Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware adversely affected the Boyd's Store and House Site [7NC-G-169; CRS N-12742.002], the archaeological site of a 19th- through 20th-century farmstead and store at Boyd's Corner. After a program of evaluation had confirmed the National Register eligibility of the site, further archaeological and historical research was undertaken as treatment of the adverse effect.

The research was able to draw on a substantial existing body of information on late Colonial and Federal-era stores in Delaware. Two sites in particular, the Darrach store in Kent County, and the Dickson store in northern New Castle County, had already been the subject of detailed and fully reported archaeological and historical research. Additionally, a number of documentary and architectural studies of stores and store owners, notably in St. George's and Odessa, had been completed and published. This work had in turn been synthesized and set in context by Dr. Lu Ann De Cunzo in her 2004 study *Historical Archaeology of Delaware: People, Contexts, and the Cultures of Agriculture*.

A number of approaches were considered for the historical research once the basic ownership history of the property had been established. Research concentrated on contextual aspects of the project. A substantial body of documentation was identified in the Delaware state archives relating to a state law requiring store operators to obtain licenses for the sale of imported goods, and their associated tax returns on the value of those goods. The data from St. George's Hundred in the years 1822 to 1835 was analyzed in various ways to throw new light on the location and character of stores and their operators in the hundred during this time period. Concurrently, research and fieldwork was undertaken on surviving store buildings in order to provide additional comparative data for the Boyd's site. A third major component of the research was transcription and analysis of two store inventories from the 1820s: those of Robert Gordon and of William Dickson of Odessa. These documents were found to contain a wealth of relevant economic and material culture information.

Archaeological excavations at the site itself were undertaken in two stages. The Phase II evaluation of significance investigations entailed the excavation of 18 excavation units throughout the Area of Potential Effect, and located house foundations, a brick drain and other substantial features. Data recovery excavations comprised a series of excavation units and the exposure of much of the southern portion of the site within the APE, comprising the dwelling house and store sites.

Despite the absence of hoped-for, store-related artifact-bearing horizons or features, the work identified numerous features relating to the store, dwelling and farmstead, and a phased model of site development was derived from the data.

A number of prehistoric artifacts in secondary contexts demonstrate the use of the site back to at least the Woodland I period. A range of artifact types was identified and it is hypothesized that the occupation here was related to a springhead located to the east of the site on the opposite side of U.S. Route 13.

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

Deed research had shown that before 1756 the predecessor of U.S. Route 13 had been located to the west of its present position. The earliest identified feature, context 209, is a north-south wall feature that may have been a boundary wall alongside this earlier alignment. No other features could be related to this 18th-century phase.

In the early 19th century John Boyd constructed a frame dwelling with a detached post-in-ground store building to the south. A barrel privy, and at least one outbuilding (also of post-in-ground construction) and numerous other features were placed in the rear/side yard to the south and southwest of the house.

At an uncertain point in the second or early in the third quarter of the 19th century a new single-pile, fully basemented I-house was built adjoining the original frame house on its eastern side. The house had a stone basement surmounted by brick masonry that probably supported a frame superstructure. The original house was left standing and became an ell to the new house.

The southern gable wall of the new house was probably built against the northern wall of the original store building, but the latter was rebuilt soon after. In several cases the post pits and postmolds of this store were overlain by distinct stone and mortar pier settings that probably supported the sills of a new store building roughly 21 feet square in external dimensions. A brick drain ran beneath the building, between the piers, to drain into a brick-lined well in the yard. At least one post-in-ground structure in the rear/side yard was replaced in the same manner as the store.

The earlier 20th century saw the addition of a full-width porch to the front of the house and the construction of lean-to features against the south side of the ell, evidently partly intended to cover the cellar bulkhead. At this point the farming functions of the property appear, from documentary evidence, to have been concentrated to the north in areas where archaeological integrity had been lost by the time of the investigations.

Artifact studies comprised full cataloging of the material from the site and a limited range of analysis. Ceramics from the store area were examined to identify store-related items that shown no use-wear. A small number of pieces were identified in this way, but there was no clear signature of store items such as had been noted at the Dickson store (though not at Darrach).

An alternative approach to material culture analysis was through examination of the two store inventories from the 1820s. The items in these documents were characterized by the degree to which they could be expected to survive as archaeological items: ceramics and glass for instance having the best chance of survival while cloth and clothing is virtually absent from most archaeological collections. On this basis it was estimated that only between about 10 and 20% of store items, by value, are likely to find their way into the archaeological record. Cloth and made-up clothing formed almost 50% of the value of the Gordon store inventory, with food and drink

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

items making up a further 30%. The Dickson store inventory is dominated by grains and lumber. Ceramics and glassware form small percentages of the store inventories by value: about 7% at both the Gordon and Dickson stores. While such low numbers do not negate efforts to study and understand these materials, they are perhaps a confirmation of the findings from the Boyd site that artifacts diagnostic of store operations do not always readily stand out. It is also in some way a quantification of what proportion of the material possessions of early 19th-century Delawareans we are actually recovering archaeologically.

The architectural and architectural corpus of late 18th- and earlier 19th-century stores in northern Delaware and adjacent Maryland was reviewed in some detail. Several stores remain, chiefly as standing structures in nuclear town/village settings. Two “traditions” can be observed: the house and store duplex plan (often of brick construction), in which the store is attached directly to the house and shares a common roofing structure, and the detached free-standing store, often of timber. The Boyd’s store appears to move from the free-standing to a version of the duplex type.

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