

SECTION 3.0 BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Background research was conducted to locate previously identified architectural resources and to evaluate previously unidentified architectural resources within an appropriate historic context. Research was conducted at the DE SHPO in Dover to identify architectural resources within the APE that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register, and to review previously conducted cultural resources surveys. Primary- and secondary-source research, including maps and local and county histories, was conducted at the following repositories: the Delaware State Archives, Dover; Special Collections Department, University of Delaware, Newark; the Hagley Library, Greenville, Delaware; and the Wilmington Public Library and New Castle County Recorder of Deeds, Wilmington.

3.1 Previous Architectural Surveys

The APE does not include any properties previously listed on or determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Although built in 1920, Bridge 1-100 was not included in the *Delaware Bridge Survey* because it was less than the minimum 20 feet. In 2006, an eligibility assessment by DelDOT Cultural Resources staff recommended the culvert not eligible for the National Register (see Appendix A). The DE SHPO later concurred with this assessment.

In 1989, the New Castle County Department of Planning published *The Red Clay Valley Scenic River and Highway Study*, which identified historic and natural resources in the Red Clay Valley for use in the county's land use and transportation planning for the region. The study included the APE in its entirety, and one resource, the dwelling complex at 1225 Snuff Mill Road (CRS #N-7653), was identified as potentially eligible for the National Register. The CRS form for this property is included in Appendix B. In all, 16 properties within a half-mile radius of the APE have been previously surveyed as part of planning or regulatory surveys in the area, as summarized in Table 3.1). Two of these – at 1303 and 1225 Snuff Mill Road – are located within the APE for the current project.

New Castle County has designated 34 Historic Zoning Districts (HZDs) throughout the county. These HZDs include both individual buildings and historic districts and are subject to review by the county's Historic Review Board. The APE does not include any designated HZDs (New Castle County Department of Land Use 2005).

Table 3.1: Previously surveyed properties within a one-half mile radius.

CRS #*	Property Name/Address	Description
N-280	Jackson House (Greenewalt Estate) 132 Center Mill Road, Christiana Hundred	Two-story stuccoed masonry farmhouse and fieldstone springhouse
N-1113	H. Cloud House Old Kennett Road, 0.2 mi. W of Center Mill Road intersection, Christiana Hundred	Pre-1849 house and barn ruin
N-1114	T. Vandever House Corner Old Kennett Pike and Snuff Mill Road	Two-story stone worker's house with two-story frame addition
N-1117	Ashland House (Greenewalt Estate) 134 Ashland-Clinton School Road, Greenville	Ca. 1798 fieldstone house with clapboard façade
N-1118	Hutchinson House Center Mill Road, 0.2 mi. W of intersection with School Road, Christiana Hundred	Ca. 1800 brick house with stone outbuilding
N-1119	J. Blair House 0.1 mi. NW of intersection of Center Mill and Snuff Mill roads, Christiana Hundred	Pre-1849 house with outbuildings
N-1133	Brown-Garrett House 1203 Snuff Mill Road, Christiana Hundred	Three-bay fieldstone cottage with gingerbread trim
N-4080	Snuff Mill Road	Data not on file at DE SHPO
N-4087	Sharpless Road, 0.5 mi SW of Route 82, Mill Creek Hundred	Fieldstone house with attached garage; also barn and springhouse on property
N-4314	State Bridge No. 99 Old Kennett Road over Tributary of Red Clay Creek, Christiana Hundred	Ca. 1930 bridge of steel I-beams supporting a concrete slab with rubble masonry abutments
N-7653	1225 Snuff Mill Road, Christiana Hundred	Ca. 1830 frame house with additions; also garage and barn/carriage house
N-7656	700 Center Mill Road, Christiana Hundred	Ca. 1933 Colonial Revival residence designed by Massena & du Pont; also tenant house, garage, and springhouse
N-7657	Tenant Dwelling (Carpenter Estate) Center Mill Road, Christiana Hundred	Two-story stuccoed dwelling associated with Carpenter estate and adjacent garage
N-7689	Ashland-Clinton School Road, Christiana Hundred	Ca. 1840 stuccoed masonry dwelling
N-12097	Lincoln A Site Kennett Road and Snuff Mill Road, Christiana Hundred	Site # 7NC-B-021, procurement site
N-12531	State Bridge No. 88 Snuff Mill Road over Tributary of Red Clay Creek, Christiana Hundred	Steel multi-girder span bridge with stone facing
N-12547	State Bridge No. 89 Snuff Mill Road over Waterway, Delaware Heights	Single span concrete slab bridge with semi-coursed rubble facing

*CRS= Cultural Resource Survey

3.2 Historic Context

In accordance with state guidelines, the historic context has been divided into chronological periods as set forth in the *Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan* (Ames et al. 1989). The historic

themes of Agriculture, Settlement Patterns and Demographic Change, and Architecture, Engineering, and Decorative Arts were identified through research as applicable to the resources found in the APE for the current project and are discussed in the historic context.

Exploration and Frontier Settlement, 1630-1730 ±

The APE is located within the Piedmont region of northern Delaware, in Christiana Hundred west of the village of Centreville. This area of the state was settled in the early seventeenth century, when the first Swedish, Finnish, and Dutch settlers established homes near the Delaware River. William Penn made land grants in the area after 1680 to immigrants from England, Wales, and Ireland. Whereas the earliest settlers relied heavily on hunting and trapping, Penn's land grant colonists were farmers, and their settlement moved inland from the Delaware River along early roadways during the eighteenth century. Settlers in the vicinity of Centreville included Quakers and Presbyterians: both the Centre Friends Meeting and the Lower Brandywine Presbyterian congregation were established during this early period of settlement in the region (Ames et al. 1989: 45-46; Herman et al. 1989: 1-2; Centreville Civic Association, Inc. 2001: 11-12).

Intensified and Durable Occupation, 1730-1770 ±

This period in Delaware's history witnessed an increase in the clearing of land for agricultural purposes in the fertile Piedmont region of the state. Farmers planted crops and raised livestock not only for subsistence but also increasingly for sale at market. New roadways were constructed to carry produce to market in Wilmington, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Doe Run, the predecessor to the Kennett Pike, was one such route. Centreville was one of many small villages that began to appear along these transportation routes (Ames et al. 1989: 43; Herman 1989: 57; Centreville Civic Association, Inc. 2001: 13).

Early Industrialization, 1770-1830 ±

On the eve of the American Revolution, most of the land in the Piedmont region had been improved, primarily for agricultural uses. Mills appeared in increasing numbers along area streams, and new industries began to appear on the landscape (Ames et al. 1989: 47; Herman et al. 1989: 8-9). As with the earlier periods, road improvements continued to play a vital role in the development of the region, and the chartering of the Wilmington and Kennett Turnpike Company by the Delaware legislature in 1811 led to substantial improvements to the old roadway through Centreville (Centreville Civic Association, Inc. 2001: 14-15). Early maps of Delaware contain little detail in the APE and suggest the scattered development in the region (see Figure 3.1); however, by 1820 the road network was well-established (see Figure 3.2). As shown on Figure 3.2, Old Kennett Road had been laid out through Christiana Hundred by that date, as had Ashland-Clinton School Road and Center Mill Road (Heald 1820).

Most of the area comprising the APE for the current project was part of the Armstrong estate at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Archibald Armstrong, the grandson of an early Irish settler by the same name, acquired two parcels comprising more than 136 acres in Christiana Hundred in 1792. His home was located at the intersection of Ashland-Clinton School and Center Mill Roads (Centreville Civic Association, Inc. 2001: 33; J.M. Runk & Co. 1899: 478). Armstrong bequeathed the property, which lay primarily on the south side of Old Kennett Road, to his son Nathaniel at his death in 1829 (NCCRD 1852a).

Industrialization and Early Urbanization, 1830-1880 ±

Although increased industrialization and urbanization characterize the mid-nineteenth century in Delaware's Piedmont region, agriculture continued to dominate the local landscape, if not the economy. During this period, farm sizes decreased due to divisions of land among family members, and farmers by necessity paid greater attention to the care of the land, employing progressive agricultural methods to improve production. The arrival of railroads in the region enabled farmers to ship goods to market more quickly, and dairy products rose in prominence as a result (Ames et al. 1989: 49-50; Herman et al. 1989: 11-12).

The 1849 map of New Castle County by Rea and Price (see Figure 3.3), shows that the APE developed slowly during this period. Snuff Mill Road had not yet been laid out, and the entire area bounded by Old Kennett Road, Center Mill Road, and Ashland-Clinton School Road contained only two buildings, the home of T[homas] Vandever and an unidentified building at Ashland-Clinton School Road. Just beyond the APE, the home of C. Lamborn is depicted north of Old Kennett Road, on the west side of Burris Run (Rea and Price 1849; see Figure 3.3).

Most of the APE remained in the possession of the Armstrong family during the first half of the nineteenth century. Nathaniel Armstrong died in 1839, directing in his will that the property be sold at public sale. The sale was held in January 1852, with David W. Taylor purchasing the 136-acre "farm or plantation and tract of land" for \$6,917 (NCCRD 1852a). Taylor established his farm in the eastern portion of the tract and sold off several smaller parcels in the years that followed. The first of these was a 5.5-acre tract on the north side of Old Kennett Road, which he sold to Caleb Sharpless in March 1852 for \$500. The metes and bounds reference a "new public road leading to Centreville," suggesting that the northern section of Snuff Mill Road was laid out around 1850 (NCCRD 1852b; Rea and Price 1849).

In 1859, Taylor sold a 1.19-acre parcel on the south side of Old Kennett Road to Michael Kane for \$75. The metes and bounds include a reference to a "post on the south side of a public road,"

suggesting that the southern section of Snuff Mill Road had been constructed by this date to connect to the snuff mill on Red Clay Creek at Yorklyn (NCCRD 1859). The road apparently ran through the center of the tract, on which Kane built a house (1303 Snuff Mill Road) by 1860. According to the federal census of that year, Kane, then 45 years old, was living on the property with his wife Mary and their two children, Alice and James. Kane reported his occupation as a laborer (U.S. Census 1860; Beers 1868; see Figure 3.4). Kane subsequently acquired an adjacent 11.5-acre parcel on the east side of Snuff Mill Road from Taylor in 1864, and in 1870 Kane reported his occupation as a farmer with real estate valued at \$3,000, up from \$250 in 1860 (NCCRD 1864; U.S. Census 1870).

The 1868 Beers *Atlas of Delaware* includes a map of Christiana Hundred (see Figure 3.4). The map shows both the northern and southern sections of Snuff Mill Road, confirming the construction of the roadway by this date. The map also shows the “M. Cain” [sic] house at 1303 Snuff Mill Road and the home of “J. Bugle,” which was formerly Vandever’s residence. North of the APE, a new house owned by “A. Brown” appears on the west side of Snuff Mill Road north of Burris Run, and the former residence of C. Lamborn had by this date been acquired by W.P. Passmore, whose property was known as “Stony Lonesome” (Beers 1868).

Urbanization and Early Suburbanization, 1880-1940 ±

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period of increased change in the Piedmont, as many industrial enterprises moved away from the waterpower of the area’s creek and rivers into the urban center of Wilmington. Without this source of employment, many of the communities that had grown up around the mills ceased to exist. Farming remained important in the region, although land closest to Wilmington was increasingly developed into urban and, later, suburban residential uses (Ames et al. 1989: 51; Herman et al. 1989: 15-17).

The 1881 *Atlas of New Castle County* clearly depicts the APE at the beginning of this historic period. As shown on Figure 3.5, the Michael Kane House, at the southwest corner of Old Kennett and Snuff Mill roads, was owned by “C. Cooney” in that year (Hopkins 1881; see Figure 3.5). Connor Cooney had purchased Kane’s property on both sides of Snuff Mill Road in 1874 and built a new dwelling in the eastern section of the property, nearly opposite the intersection of Old Kennett Road and the northerly section of Snuff Mill Road by 1881, as depicted on the map (NCCRD 1874; Hopkins 1881).

Another new dwelling appeared by 1881 on Snuff Mill Road between Burris Run and an unnamed tributary of Red Clay Creek. Attributed to “M. Kane,” this dwelling was probably built around

1878, when Michael Kane acquired the 5.5-acre parcel at the northwest corner of Old Kennett and Snuff Mill roads (NCCRD 1878). Census records suggest that “M. Kane” is probably the same Michael Kane who formerly owned the property on the south side of Old Kennett Road (U.S. Census 1870, 1880). North of Kane’s house, William Passmore’s grist mill had been erected on Burris Run by this date; both Passmore’s house and the former Brown house, then owned by Reuben Garrett, are also depicted on the map (Hopkins 1881).

A map of New Castle County published just over a decade later (see Figure 3.6), indicates that little change had occurred in the APE during the 1880s. On the north side of Old Kennett Road, Michael Kane remained in possession of the house on Snuff Mill Road near Burris Run. On the south side, “J. Budge” [sic] remained in possession of the house set back from Old Kennett Road, and the old Michael Kane House on the southerly branch of Snuff Mill Road is depicted but lacks an associated name. The house built by Connor Cooney around 1874 is attributed to “M. Lyons” (Baist 1893; see Figure 3.6). Cooney had sold a 17-acre parcel containing the latter two houses to Daniel Lynch in 1884 (NCCRD 1884). The 1890 census schedules do not survive, but the 1900 returns indicate that Margaret Lyons and Daniel Lynch were both farmers and apparently neighbors; it seems possible that Lynch was living in the Kane House by that date (U.S. Census 1900).

The turn of the century brought significant change to the area, as both the Connor Cooney House and the second Michael Kane House were removed by 1901, at the time a U.S.G.S. survey was conducted in the area. Published in 1904, the map shows neither of these houses (see Figure 3.7); however, a building is depicted at the intersection of Old Kennett Road and the northerly section of Snuff Mill Road. This house still stands at 1225 Snuff Mill Road. The Vandever-Bugles house is also extant on this map (U.S.G.S. 1904).

No subdivisions of the land or significant new construction occurred in the APE until after World War I. Christiana Hundred as a whole began a transformation during this period, as the American country house movement took hold in the area. Builders of American country houses represented the wealth of the industrial age, and they erected show places that utilized technology to improve their comfort and convenience. The properties were designed with an emphasis on leisure, featuring amenities like tennis courts, swimming pools, and horse riding rings. Gardens and conservatories were also common hallmarks of the country houses of the period, and many estate owners developed model farms on their properties (Kise Franks & Straw 1992: 17).

Locally, the American country house movement was led by the du Pont family and their business associates, who had enjoyed increased wealth resulting from the Du Pont Company’s diversification

and reorganization in response to government anti-trust suits. Their new country houses were large, architect-designed buildings employing the latest technology and incorporating amenities for entertaining residents and guests. Built in the Beaux Arts, French Eclectic, and Colonial Revival styles, the houses represented the wealth of the owners and often bore names – Nemours, Chevannes, and Granogue, to name a few – reflecting their ethnic heritage (Maynard 2008: 19-20, 62; Chase et al. 1992: 22; Kise Franks & Straw 1992: 17-19).

The transformation of Christiana Hundred from a region of farms to country estates was nearly complete by the 1940s. This fact is illustrated by a map created by Howard Robertson depicting estates with a minimum size of 40 acres. This map, included as Figure 3.9, clearly shows that Christiana Hundred was overwhelmingly populated by American country houses, although the acreage of the estates varied substantially in size: four property owners had landholdings of more than 450 acres each, while an equal number had estates containing less than 50 acres (Robertson n.d.). Although the estate map does not include properties smaller than 40 acres, several were located on the south side of Old Kennett Road in the vicinity of the APE, including the Ives-du Pont House (ca. 1928), Allen L. Lauritsen House (ca. 1928), and Foxhill (1932).

The subdivision and sale of property in the APE for development of country estates began in 1928, with the purchase of the 26.5-acre Vandever-Bugles property between Center Mill and Snuff Mill roads by Allen L. Lauritsen and Albert Ely Ives (NCCRD 1928). Lauritsen was a contractor with a successful construction business in Wilmington. A description of his company in the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce magazine in 1931 noted:

For ten years the firm of Allen L. Lauritsen Company has been in business in Wilmington, building fine residences, industrial construction and attractive buildings of practically every conceivable nature...The company specializes in erecting the higher type of residential construction and have built homes for H. F. du Pont, Frank Otwell, Crawford Greenewalt, S. Dodd Shuster, [et al.] (Wilmington Chamber of Commerce 1931: 20).

An advertisement that accompanied the description shows another Lauritsen project, Mitchell Hall at the University of Delaware (Wilmington Chamber of Commerce 1931: 20).

Ives was an architect and frequently worked with Lauritsen on projects. A native of New York, Ives was educated at the New York School of Fine and Applied Arts and the New York School of Fine Arts in Paris. After working for Theodate Pope and Delano & Aldrich in New York and Trainor & Fateo and Addison Mizner in Florida, Ives moved to Wilmington, where he established a successful architectural firm working primarily for the du Pont family (Lidz 2006: 2-4; Tatman 2006a).

Ives and Lauritsen subdivided the parcel on Old Kennett Road and built homes for themselves on the lots, with Ives designing and Lauritsen building the residences. Both were French Eclectic-style mansions with stuccoed exterior walls and tile roofs surrounded by elegant grounds. Ives' home was on the same location as the former Vandever-Bugles house; it is unknown whether the building was still standing at the time Lauritsen and Ives acquired the land. Lauritsen included photographs of both houses in a promotional catalog of his company's work, published circa 1930 (Allen L. Lauritsen Co. 1930[?]).

On the opposite side of Snuff Mill Road, Frederika and William Lobdell Springer purchased a 12.62-acre lot in 1932 for construction of their new home (NCCRD 1932). William Springer was a banker and the son of a prominent local surgeon; his mother's family owned and operated the Lobdell Car Wheel Company in Wilmington. The Springers hired architect G. Morris Whiteside, II, to design their Colonial Revival-style stone residence, which they named "Foxhill." Whiteside was among the most prolific architects in Wilmington in the first half of the twentieth century; his firms designed more than 1,000 buildings over his 50-year career (*The Evening Journal* 1963). Like Ives, Whiteside worked with Lauritsen on some residential commissions; however, it is unknown if Lauritsen built Foxhill (Allen L. Lauritsen Co. 1930[?]).

North of the APE, the former property of William Passmore was acquired by Harry G. Haskell in 1938 (Louis Berger Group, Inc. 2000: 12). Haskell was a Du Pont Company executive who served as director of the high-explosives operating department during World War I and later as a member of the company's board of directors and vice president (*New York Times* 1951). He built a Colonial Revival-style stone estate house on the property in 1941. Known as Shadowbrook, the estate included the Brown-Garrett House on Snuff Mill Road, which served as a gatehouse (Centreville Civic Association, Inc. 2001: 122; Louis Berger Group, Inc. 2000: 11-25).

The Piedmont Since 1940

The Piedmont region since 1940 has experienced a continuation of suburban growth sprawling outward from the urban center of Wilmington. This trend began before World War II but accelerated with the introduction of postwar tract housing. In Christiana Hundred, the large estates of the du Pont family and other wealthy residents have, in some cases, preserved the low density development that has characterized the area since the early nineteenth century.

The greatest change to the APE since 1940 has been the transformation of the formerly open, agricultural landscape by the growth of trees and other vegetation. Lisa Moseley, the current owner of the Ives du-Pont House and a lifelong resident of the area, recalled the open agricultural landscape of her youth, which her family and other local residents utilized for fox hunting (Lisa

Moseley, personal communication, 19 November 2008). The popularity of the area as fox hunting country is reflected in the Springers' naming of their estate Foxhill, which was reportedly a gathering place for the Springers and their friends for hunting (Rockport Harbor n.d.). An aerial photograph of the APE in 1937, included as Figure 3.9, shows the relatively open nature of the landscape, particularly at the Ives-du Pont property, as compared with a current aerial (see Figure 1.3).

Relatively little change has occurred within the APE since World War II, with the exception of additions to the existing houses and construction of new support structures. In 1940 Albert V. and Marcella du Pont, who had acquired Ives' home after he retired to Hawaii, purchased the two-acre parcel at the southwest corner of the Old Kennett-Snuff Mill road intersection containing the circa 1859 Michael Kane House, adding the property to their estate. The du Ponts may have built the gatehouse, a semi-detached residence, on the property; it was certainly constructed prior to 1960, as a deed in that year references the "twin houses" on the tract (NCCRD 1960). It is unclear when the Michael Kane House ceased to be used as a residence, but the current owner indicated that she mothballed the property sometime after acquiring it in 1974 (Lisa Moseley, personal communication, 19 November 2008).

The Springers, who had expanded Foxhill with the addition of two-story wings in 1941, continued to live there until their deaths in the 1980s. Richard C. Porter II acquired Foxhill in 1988 and made minor changes to the property, including construction of a detached three-car garage (NCCRD 1988). The present owners made an addition to the house in 2000 (NCCRD 1990). Similarly, the Kane-Chandler House was enlarged by the present owner in 2007; the addition more than doubled the square footage of the house (NCCRD 2009).