

III. ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCE POTENTIAL

INTRODUCTION

GAI conducted background research to develop appropriate environmental and cultural contexts for the survey area, to identify previously recorded cultural resources within or near the project location, and to establish a basis for evaluating the archeological resource potential of the project area. Background research included a review of pertinent primary and secondary sources of information, as well as cultural resource inventory files and survey reports at the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office, the Hall of Records (Delaware State Archives), and DelDOT, Dover; the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.; and other local and regional historical societies and libraries.

PREHISTORIC SITES

A review of cultural resource survey files at the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office indicates that eight prehistoric archeological sites have been previously identified within 1.6 kilometers (1.0 mile) of the survey area (Table 1). Based on the inventory forms, these sites consist of small artifact scatters representing brief or transitory occupations. Each site is located in proximity to existing watercourses and most lie adjacent to water. While some of these sites are situated at stream confluences, this does not appear to be a critical factor in site selection. This pattern accords with analyses of settlement data for southwestern Delaware (Custer 1984; Custer and Millen 1989). The site file data further suggests that prehistoric populations used the immediate project vicinity for resource procurement rather than for residential activities. To date, the closest base camp to the project area consists of a Woodland I site located just over 1.6 kilometers (1.0 mile) downstream in the vicinity of Bethel. That such sites have also been identified upstream from the project area indicates the potential occurrence of a base camp or other residential site in the general survey vicinity.

TABLE 1
Previously Recorded Archeological Sites
Within 1.6 Kilometers of the Bridge 305 Project Area

SITE #	CHRONOLOGICAL PERIOD (AND REPORTED ARTIFACTS)	SETTING	INTERPRETATION
7S-H-28	Woodland I (Dames Quarter, Mockley ceramics, FCR)	low terrace of Broad Creek	processing camp
7S-H-31	Woodland I (cobbles, flake tool, gorget)	low ridge adjacent to Holly Ditch	processing camp
7S-H-32	Woodland II (Townsend pottery, FCR)	rise on upland flat adjacent to Broad Creek	processing camp
7S-H-33	Woodland II (Townsend pottery, flakes)	rise adjacent to Broad Creek	processing camp
7S-H-34	Unidentified (flakes, FCR, flaked tool)	bluff adjacent to Broad Creek and unnamed tributaries	processing camp
7S-H-35	Woodland I and II (Townsend pottery, biface, FCR, flakes)	bluff adjacent to Little Creek	processing camp
7S-H-36	Unidentified (flakes, tool)	bluff adjacent to Little Creek	processing camp
7S-H-37	Unidentified (FCR)	rise on bluff adjacent to Little Creek	processing camp

With respect to chronology, previous surveys suggest that Paleoindian and Archaic period sites are found infrequently in the region while Woodland I and Woodland II sites are more numerous,

suggesting more intensive use of this area during these periods (Custer and Millen 1989:28-31). The project area spans level bluff edges of both Broad Creek and Little Creek. Such settings have produced Woodland period prehistoric sites. Site types most likely to be found include sparse resource procurement/processing camps; however, evidence for a more intensive residential occupation might also be located in the general project area.

HISTORIC SITES

No historic archeological resources have been previously identified in the project vicinity. A review of archival and historic map data, however, provides a basis for evaluating the survey area's sensitivity for containing such resources. Orphans Court records, dated 1803, discuss the apportionment of land at the confluence of Little Creek with Broad Creek. An associated survey map illustrates two structures in this location (Figure 3). One of these structures, labeled "Big Mill," appears to represent a two-story structure with a gable roof. The second smaller structure to the east is simply described as a "grist mill."

The location of the above structures with respect to Little Creek is somewhat problematic (Figure 3). In 1803, the Orphans Court assigned the land to Thomas Townsend (Orphans Court Record I-J:7-9). By the second half of the nineteenth century, this location had developed into a small milling complex. The Beers Atlas of 1868 depicts a series of buildings along the road crossing at Little Creek, labeling the area "Big Mills" (Figure 4). Two of the illustrated structures are recorded as "S. Mill" and "G. Mill." These refer to a sawmill and gristmill, presumably the two buildings depicted on the 1803 Orphans Court Survey (Figure 3). According to Moore (1959:5), the sawmill employed 10 men processing 5,000 feet of lumber per day. A tannery is also depicted further to the east, east of Little Creek (Figure 4). The Beers Atlas clearly depicts a dam and millpond immediately south of the present bridge.

Little Creek Hundred contained a wealth of gristmills and sawmills during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Moore 1959:4). Prior to 1800, at least 30 ravines in Little Creek were dammed providing water power for no less than 50 mills. Scharf's *History of Delaware* (1888:1320) notes that Barkley Townsend prior to 1843 built Big Mills when the current owner of the property, William Ross, added a tannery to the mill complex (Figure 4). Scharf also states that a basket factory operated at the site in connection with the sawmill between 1881 and 1884. Moore (1959:5) notes that it was A.J. Horsey who used the water power from the millpond to operate the crate and basket factory. Horsey was also responsible for the operation of the tannery at this location.

Operation of both the sawmill and gristmill had come to an end by circa 1885 (Scharf 1888:1320). This decline is evident in the 1915 USGS topographic map, which depicts only a single structure at Big Mill (Figure 5). This structure lies on the west side of Little Creek, north of the road, in the approximate location of an extant brick foundation. None of the other previously documented structures are evident nor is the millpond extant. Finally, a set of 1948 highway construction plans suggest that the existing road alignment took shape during the mid-twentieth century. It should be noted that these maps also show a one-story frame house north of the road, which corresponds to a structure, illustrated on the 1915 map, west of the above noted brick foundation. The map depicts another dwelling, built after 1915, located directly south of the aforementioned frame house (State Highway Department 1948).

A review of Kennel's (1990) survey of historic millponds in the Nanticoke River drainage indicates that "Big Mills" contained a large pond in 1850. He also identified the existing brick foundation to the old mill downstream from the (existing) wooden bridge. Kennel (1990:17-18) states that the earthen dike that supports the present road and bridge could incorporate a dam. He suggests that the original road/bridge crossing of Little Creek was located approximately 183 meters (600 feet) upstream (south) from the existing structure. This is consistent with the depiction on the 1868 Beers Atlas (Figure 4) of a dam/millpond south of the present bridge. It should be noted that the existing bridge has been recorded as part of the Delaware Historic Bridges Survey and was recommended not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (A.G. Lichtenstein and Associates, Inc. 1996).

The above documentation indicates that the Bridge 305 project area served as a mill complex from the late eighteenth to late nineteenth- to early-twentieth century. In conjunction with the extant stone foundation identified directly northwest of the bridge, the project area exhibits a high potential for containing historic archeological resources. In particular, the stream crossing may contain evidence of a dam, race and/or sluiceway, while the stream banks and road margins could contain associated cultural deposits and features.