

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND DOMAINS, CONTEXT AND CONSIDERATIONS

The research perspectives employed to interpret the Buchanan-Savin Farmstead included both historical and archaeological components. Indeed, these categories are interrelated, and information generated from one relies on the other to achieve the highest possible level of understanding. The historical and archaeological perspectives should be viewed as the framework of topics and issues related to the study of a single homestead that help define the over-all interpretation of larger historical processes.

Archival research suggested that the site be divided into three historical occupations, each with the potential to address different historical issues. The first episode was a short probably tenant occupation in the first half of the nineteenth century. The second occupation was one of an owner-occupied grain, livestock, and orchard crop farm from the 1850's to 1921 by two related families, the Buchanans and the Armstrongs. The second period lasted from 1921 to 1969, and was marked by a modern dairy producing farm owned, operated, and occupied by the Moffett family. A new complex of concrete block and frame structures, away from the dismantled nineteenth-century farm, were constructed as a part of this change to dairy farming. The third and final period is that of a tenant household from 1969 to 1991 by the Savin family. The Savins were not farmers and the agricultural buildings were used as storage for farm machinery used on other properties.

A determination-of-eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places and a data recovery plan were prepared to provide an overall research framework for the Phase III excavations at the Buchanan-Savin Farmstead (Appendices II and III). The primary goal of the data recovery program for the Buchanan-Savin Farmstead was to obtain archaeological data related to the changes in the social and economic landscape of central Delaware during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Transportation developments, economic and agricultural change in the development of large scale fruit, truck produce, legume, and dairy industries and increased transportation and the expanding regional urban markets, and changing agricultural labor and tenancy patterns are three key issues related to these changes that could be investigated at the Buchanan-Savin Farmstead.

The two most important transportation developments in mid-nineteenth-century Delaware were the completion of the Delaware railroad trunkline through to Seaford in 1856 and the increased use of steamboat transportation on the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. The Buchanan-Savin Farmstead was located within two miles of Smyrna, a railroad and water transportation center that serviced the agricultural, fruit processing, and light manufacturing industries of central Delaware (Heite and Heite 1986). Transportation improvements and the presence of large, nearby urban markets stimulated the commercial production of perishable, but

potentially very profitable, agricultural goods. The demand for Delaware milk, peaches, fodder, and truck produce in Wilmington and Philadelphia fueled commercial production throughout the state.

An additional goal of the data recovery investigations of the Buchanan-Savin Farmstead was to examine changes in spatial organization, food preparation and consumption, and material culture of the site's inhabitants as these altered over time, from both intra- and inter-site perspectives. Other sites in New Castle County with similar temporal periods of occupation, site function, or inhabitants were consulted for comparison. These sites include the Wilson-Slack Agricultural Works Complex (Coleman et al. 1985), the William M. Hawthorn site (Coleman et al. 1984), and the Thomas Williams site (Catts and Custer 1990). The comparative data generated could be used to investigate questions about rural cultural change such as:

1) Are changes present in refuse disposal processes and techniques? Can changes be observed in the patterns of artifact and soil chemical distributions and are these changes indicative of varied spatial utilization at the sites? Furthermore, can such changes in patterns be related to historically documented economic and social changes in the surrounding area or to regional changes?

2) Are there changes in the presence/absence, or frequencies of certain artifact classes among the various historical sites? Can these changes be related to the socio-economic position of the site's occupants or to local and regional economic conditions?

3) Can changes in either of the above categories of data be analyzed for meaningful covariance?

The research goals of the data recovery investigations of the Buchanan-Savin Farmstead were based on the research questions presented in the Route 13 Archaeological Research Plan (Custer, Bachman, and Grettler 1987). In addition, the results of Phase III investigations were incorporated into the broader statewide research program in the Management Plan for Delaware's Historical Archaeological Resources (De Cunzo and Catts 1990). The State Plan is organized along three parameters: time, space, and research domain. The time periods spanning the occupation of the Buchanan-Savin Farmstead are 1830-1880 and 1880-1940. Spatially, 7NC-J-175 was found within the southern most reaches of the High Coastal Plain. The research domains applicable to the Buchanan-Savin Farmstead are Domestic Economy and Landscape.

## **DOMESTIC ECONOMY**

The reconstruction of the household domestic economy offers a view into the central core of the household, the basic unit of production, reproduction, and consumption. De Cunzo and Catts (1990) specify elements of domestic economy: 1) composition and occupational structure of the household; 2) home production of food, shelter, clothing and other basic necessities as well as marketable surplus; 3) consumer behavior, broadly defined to include the households participation in the local barter and/or cash economy; and 4) investment in land, architecture, tools and equipment, livestock, and domestic furnishings.

Reconstruction of the Buchanan-Savin households consisted of archival investigation of the occupants of house, their occupations, and the archaeological investigations of the material culture remains. Investigations of the economic network of George W. Buchanan from the debts of his probate records, inter-site architectural comparisons and economic indexing of ceramic vessel remains also illustrate the household domestic economy within the regional economic and social system.

## **LANDSCAPE**

The Delaware Management Plan suggests that archaeological studies of changing farm practices and land utilization for domestic occupation require site-specific consideration of the entire landscape of the

farm. Changes in farm size, changes in the pattern of agricultural outbuildings and fencelines, changing farm equipment, and changing usage of farm land are all factors that must be investigated (De Cunzo and Catts 1990).

The Delaware Management Plan calls for the study of the landscape and changing settlement patterns through the following research questions: 1) How does the shift in the agricultural economy and farming practices effect settlement patterns? 2) What role does the transformation of the transportation system via the canal and emerging railroad networks play in the changing of settlement patterns? (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:157).

## **SOCIAL GROUP IDENTITY, BEHAVIOR AND INTERACTION**

As the Management Plan points out, the study of social groups intersects with the other research domains, but inspires new directions of research. Family and kinship, ethnic identity and behavior, religious beliefs and associations, community ties, and political, social, economic, and occupational status groups may be investigated to a certain extent at the level of the family/household residential site (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:22).