ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EXPECTED POTENTIAL FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The cultural landscape has achieved its present form largely as a result of processes that began during the period of Wilmington's industrial maturation. The Christina River channel is basically the only natural feature that reflects the natural landscape that would have been present during prehistoric and pre-industrial historic times. Although the river itself remains, it has been channelized and maintained primarily as a route for water-borne industrial traffic. The broad, low-lying wetlands that flanked the river until the mid-nineteenth century have vanished from the study area, except for a narrow band of wetland vegetation along the shoreline. Mill Creek, a tributary of the Christina River, has disappeared, transformed to an industrial drain in the late nineteenth century. The study area's present topography is largely a result of massive filling of the marshes that accompanied industrial development on the western side of the river and urban expansion on the eastern side. The archaeological record should be expected to reflect historical landscape development processes that occurred in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Absent urban development, the study area might be expected to contain evidence of Native American groups' use of the landscape. The mouth of Mill Creek in particular may have may have been used as a resource extraction area during the Woodland II period, but the ensuing industrial development has almost certainly obliterated any physical remains of a prehistoric site in that location.

On the western side of the river, the APE might contain archaeological features or deposits associated with the pulp mill or phosphate works, but this area has been redeveloped. All above-ground remains of the industrial landscape have been removed, save for the occasional railcar or crane, so the archaeological record would be limited to floors, foundations, or subterranean features, such as pits, vats, digesting tanks, water basins, or waterfront structures such as piers, wharves, or bulkheads. The eastern side of the river developed much later and then only after the introduction of massive fill deposits that raised the landscape. Prior to formal development, the landscape was a scene of "many dump heaps, dilapidated shacks and hovels" (Buck 1925:25), which may have left a transitory signature in the archaeological record. When development reached the eastern terminus of the APE, structures were concentrated along the street frontage.

RESULTS OF WALKOVER INSPECTION

On the western side of the river, the alignment begins at the intersection of Beech Street and Delmarva Lane, and for approximately 500 feet of the alignment, Delmarva Lane is beneath the deck of I-95 (Plate 1). Emerging from the shadow of I-95, the alignment follows Delmarva Lane past the Daniel S. Frawley Stadium and parking lots until it reaches the parking lots for the Shipyard Shops. Underground utility lines are present directly beneath (sanitary sewer) and immediately adjacent (gas) to Delmarva Lane (Plate 2).

PLATE 1: Delmarva Lane, Along I-95

PLATE 2: Repair Work to Gas Line Along Delmarva Lane, Near Frawley Stadium

The alignment leaves Delmarva Lane at the Shipyard Shops property and traverses a paved parking area toward the river. The last 450 feet of the alignment on the west bank of the river crosses an undeveloped building site associated with the Shipyard Shops. At the crossing point on the west river bank (Plate 3), the APE includes pedestrian and bicycle access ramps to the existing Riverwalk. Notable in the Shipyard Shops parking lot is a preserved brick smoke stack (Plate 4) associated with a successor to the Walton, Whann & Company superphosphate works, possibly the Dravo Corporation or the Wilmington Annex of the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.

On the eastern side of the river, the alignment crosses a vacant, 850-foot-deep tract extending from the river to a frontage on South Market Street. This parcel is currently open, with patches of asphalt pavement and scattered debris piles amid weeds (Plate 5). An overhead utility line and a subsurface water line indicate that this tract was formerly developed. At the eastern terminus the project will involve relatively minor reconfiguration of the intersection of South Market and Walnut streets. The largest area of open land that will be taken by the reconfigured intersection is currently in use as a construction staging area (Plate 6). The surrounding neighborhood contains a mix of light industrial and commercial properties.

Assessment of Resource Significance

The assessment of archaeological resource significance should explicitly address the NRHP evaluation criteria, which must begin with a consideration of the values inherent in the historic contexts and associated information needs or research topics that represent important knowledge about each context.

The types of resources most likely to be found in the APE would fall under the theme of Manufacturing and Trade, as identified in the state plan for historic archaeological resources (DeCunzo and Catts 1990). The state plan notes that manufacturing and trade are often studied at domestic sites but that opportunities exist at industrial sites to examine questions of technology, manufacturing processes, and workplace conditions. The time periods most likely to be represented in the archaeological record are Industrialization and Early Urbanization (1830 to 1880) and Urbanization and Early Suburbanization (1880 to 1940) as defined in the state planning documents (Ames et al. 1989; Ames et al. 1987; Herman et al. 1989). According to Guerrant's (1983) plan for Wilmington, the most applicable period would be Industrial Maturation (1860 to 1910).

Normally, archaeological resources are considered significant, i.e., eligible for the NRHP, under Criterion D, which states that resources are significant if they have integrity and if they "have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory." For historic archaeological sites it is also appropriate to consider significance in broader terms than those in Criterion D. For these sites significance may be defined with regard to Criteria A, B, or C, which define significant resources as those "that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history" (Criterion A) or "that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past" (Criterion B) or "that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction" (Criterion C). NRHP eligibility

PLATE 3: River Shoreline at Orange B Alignment, West Bank of Christina River

PLATE 4: Base of Brick Smoke Stack Preserved in Shipyard Shops Parking Lot

PLATE 5: Orange B Crossing, East Side of Christina River

PLATE 6: Construction Staging Area, Intersection of South Market and Walnut Streets

assessments must also consider the level of physical integrity embodied in historic and archaeological properties. Integrity criteria should also be flexible, especially with regard to the number of previously documented sites of a particular type. Integrity requirements should be relatively high for a property type that is common and for which many examples have already been documented. On the other hand, integrity requirements should be relatively low for property types that are rare.

There is no basis to expect that archaeological resources in the APE have a strong association with historically significant events (Criterion A) or persons (Criterion B), notwithstanding the association of the Jessup & Moore Paper Company with Clarence Bloomfield Moore and the general importance of heavy industry in Wilmington's economy. Shipbuilding is often cited as one of the Wilmington's most important industries, and the study area was the location of a brief episode of shipbuilding during World War II, but by the mid-twentieth century shipbuilding had been eclipsed by other industries in Delaware. NRHP-eligible industrial properties associated with the Early Urbanization (1830 to 1880) and Urbanization and Early Suburbanization (1880 to 1940) periods should be expected to have a high level of integrity, given their relatively recent age and relative abundance in comparison to industrial properties from earlier periods. Surviving foundation remnants, floors and other subterranean industrial features may be present in the archaeological record along the APE, but this level of integrity would be insufficient to merit NRHP eligibility, particularly when so many above-ground structures have already been documented in the Wilmington Riverfront area. A similar argument can be made with regard to Criterion C: surviving archaeological remnants such as floors and foundation remnants from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would not embody enough distinctive characteristics of Wilmington's late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century industrial properties to merit NRHP eligibility.

With regard to Criterion D, under which most archaeological resources are evaluated for NRHP evaluation, the information potential of sites can be considered. The most relevant research questions or information needs include technology, industrial processes, and workplace conditions. It is expected that archaeological remains that may be preserved in the APE would consist of floors, foundations, footings for machinery, and specialized features that embody the technology of paper making or production of fertilizer. Other features should be comparable to those documented in the Market to Orange Street archaeological district (a boat slip, dock, road bed, rail spurs, piers, and shoring), which were not considered NRHP-eligible (Thomas 1999a). Information pertaining to paper and fertilizer technology and the associated industrial processes is well represented in the documentary record, so there should be virtually no need for archaeological documentation of these features. Dozens of paper mills have already been documented in the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER). A few properties associated with phosphate production have also been documented in the HABS/HAER archives. Workplace conditions are also best understood from the perspective of extant, above-ground properties, although consumption patterns in the workplace is a research topic that can be addressed with archaeological data. In the APE the potential for preservation of archaeological deposits that represent workplace consumption is considered low.

The potential for prehistoric archaeological resources must also be considered, given the proximity of the Christina River shoreline and its tributary, Mill Creek. This marsh environment may have been attractive for prehistoric populations, especially during the Woodland II period, but it was too low-lying for long-term settlement. Even if short-term camps were established in the APE, it is almost certain that the subsequent industrial development would have obliterated the landscape to such an extent that the archaeological resources would have no integrity.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION

Some features associated with nineteenth- and twentieth-century industries may be present in the APE, particularly on the western side of the Christina River, but these resources would not be expected to retain sufficient integrity or information potential to warrant archaeological documentation. This study concludes that there is little, if any, likelihood that significant archaeological resources are present in the APE, so there is no need for further work.