

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD

In the summer of 1997, when we first visited the Dawson Family Site, there was nothing to be seen there but dying grass, a couple of telephone poles, and some large woodchuck holes. U.S. 13, a four-lane highway running from Dover southwest to Salisbury, Maryland, bordered the site on the northwest (Plate 2). The road had been cut into the low hill where the site was supposed to be, and a steep bank, about 15 feet high, led down to the weedy shoulder. Across the highway were a muffler shop, a diner, and a veterinary hospital where dogs exercising in the outdoor pens kept up a steady barking all day—although they were usually drowned out by the roar of trucks. No signs of former habitation of the site were visible through the cover of grass. East of the site, where the grass was thinner, we could see low piles of gravel and asphalt, apparently left where some dumptruck drivers had cleaned out their beds. Fifty yards north of the site, a stream called Puncheon Run ran between the steep banks of a channel dug only a few years ago. Just beyond the stream was a major intersection where U.S. 13 met South State Street (Figures 1 and 2). There was nothing to indicate the presence of the farm where Thomas and Mary Dawson had lived 250 years ago. We checked our maps several times to make sure we were in the right place. This vacant, suburban roadside lot was indeed the site of the Dawsons' home, and we were to spend much of the next six months at this location.

The Dawson Family Site, 7K-C-414, was discovered in 1995 by investigators from Hunter Research, Inc. (HRI). Under the direction of Bill Liebkecht, HRI conducted an archaeological survey in the corridor of the Puncheon Run Connector, a new highway that will carry traffic from new State Route 1 east of Dover to U.S. 13 (Liebkecht et al. 1997). The area along U.S. 13 was covered with grass, and the archaeologists worked by digging shovel tests. Artifacts began to show up in the screens from the shovel tests dug on the grassy

hill. They were small fragments of redware, white salt-glazed stoneware, and creamware, types of ceramic used in the mid-1700s. The ceramics came from an area measuring about 160 by 275 feet. The site had been plowed, and all of these artifacts were found in the plowzone, the upper soil layer where everything had been mixed together by the plow.

While the HRI archaeologists excavated shovel tests along the highway, documentary researchers from HRI began investigating the history of the property at the Delaware State Archives. They traced the property back to a Thomas Dawson, who had purchased it in 1740 and lived there until his death in 1754. There was now a name to attach to the potsherds coming out of the ground, and a confirmation that the site had been settled in the middle years of the eighteenth century.

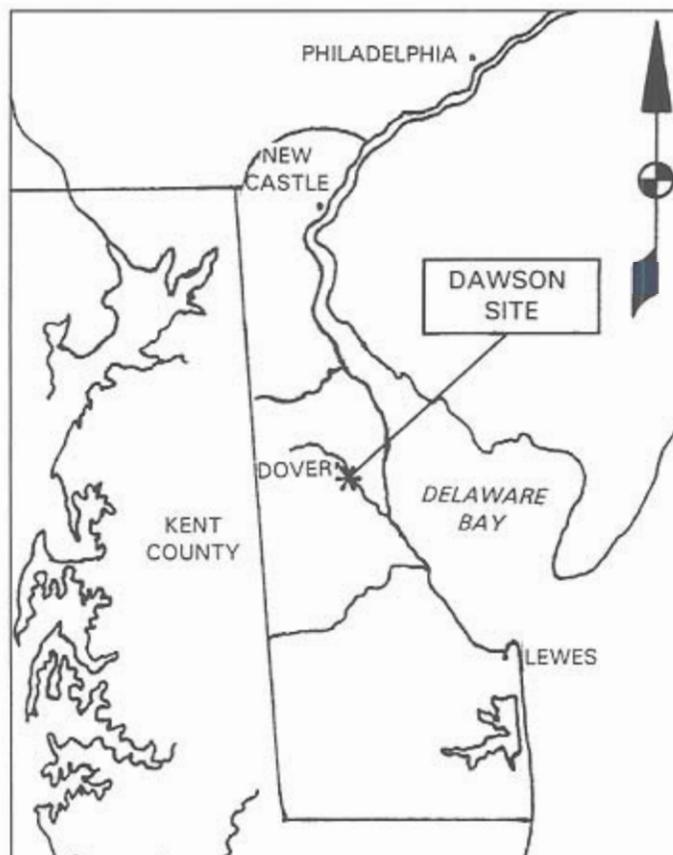


FIGURE 1: Location of the Dawson Family Site

Work on the site continued, culminating, in the winter of 1997-1998, in extensive excavations carried out by The Louis Berger Group, Inc. (Berger). Through these excavations, and the study of the artifacts, animal bones, and other objects found on the site, we have learned much about the Dawsons and their world. Written records have shown us that the Dawsons were the quite ordinary owners of a small farm, and were similar to many other farm families in Delaware. What we have learned about their lives, therefore, helps us to understand something about ordinary life in Delaware in the eighteenth century. By combining what we have learned about the Dawson Site with information from excavations at sites occupied by other ordinary eighteenth-century Delawareans, such as John Powell (Gretler et al. 1995) and Samuel and Henrietta Mahoe (Bedell et al. 1998b), along with research in written records, we can assemble a rich picture of daily life in colonial Delaware.

Our work at the Dawson Site was funded by the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). The Dawson Site will be paved over during the construction of the Puncheon Run Connector, and the archaeological excavations were intended to keep the destruction of the site from also destroying valuable information about the past. That the Dawson Site should experience this fate is somewhat ironic. The farm was originally built at this location partly, no doubt, because it was close to roads. The first major north-south road in Delaware, the King's Highway from New Castle to Lewes, ran along the east side of the Dawsons' property. This road,

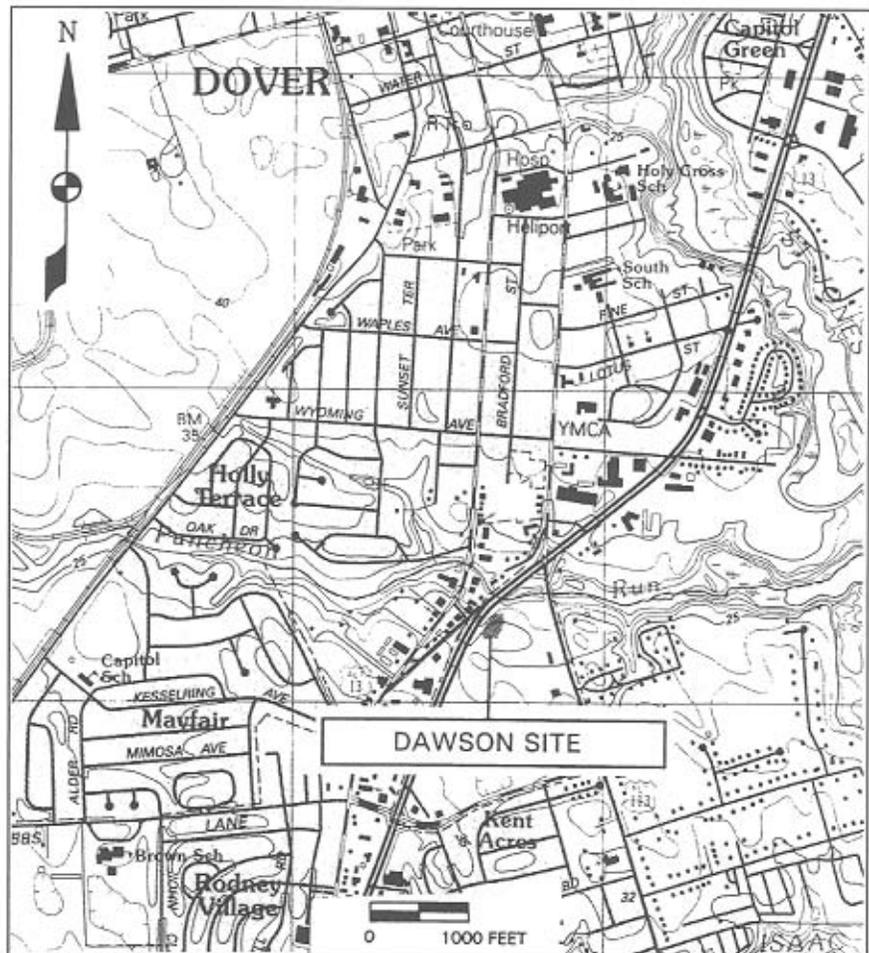


FIGURE 2: The Dawson Family Site SOURCE: USGS Dover Quadrangle

now called South State Street, is still there. The old road running southwest from Dover, called on the Dawsons' property deeds The Forest Road, crossed the western part of their property (Heite and Heite 1986). The intersection of these two roads, just north of the Dawson property, came to be known as Cooper's Corners (Figure 3). The Dawsons' farm therefore occupied a strategic spot, near the intersection of two major roads, and it was also close to a bridge over Puncheon Run, a stream that powered several mills.

The arrangement of roads near the Dawson property remained essentially the same until the 1950s, when DelDOT built a new road, now called U.S. 13, leading southwest out of Dover. Construction of this road destroyed part of the Dawson Site, and development along the road also

occurred. A house known locally as the Rudnick house was constructed just north of where Thomas Dawson's house had once stood. A horse racing track was developed just to the south, and some barns associated with the track were built within the Dawsons' old farm. In the 1980s South State Street was widened and Puncheon Run was channelized to protect the South State Street and U.S. 13 bridges. At that time the Rudnick house was torn down and heavy equipment was driven back and forth across the Dawson Site. Now, with the work done in the 1990s, the latest of Delaware's north-south roads will cover what remains of the site.

B. TESTING THE DAWSON FAMILY SITE

Archaeologists from HRI had discovered the Dawson Family Site in the spring of 1995, and in the summer they returned for more intensive, Phase II testing. Their fieldwork consisted of shovel testing and the excavation of square test units. The archaeologists dug 43 shovel test pits and 12 1x1-meter test units (Figure 4).¹ They

¹North American archaeologists usually excavate prehistoric sites using the metric system of measurement and historic sites using the English system. Prehistorians prefer the metric system because it makes their work comparable to work on similar sites around the world, while historians tend to employ the English system because it was used by the people whose remains they are digging up. Not knowing what they would find, HRI established the site grid using the metric system, and Berger continued using metric measurements. Rather than convert the measurements

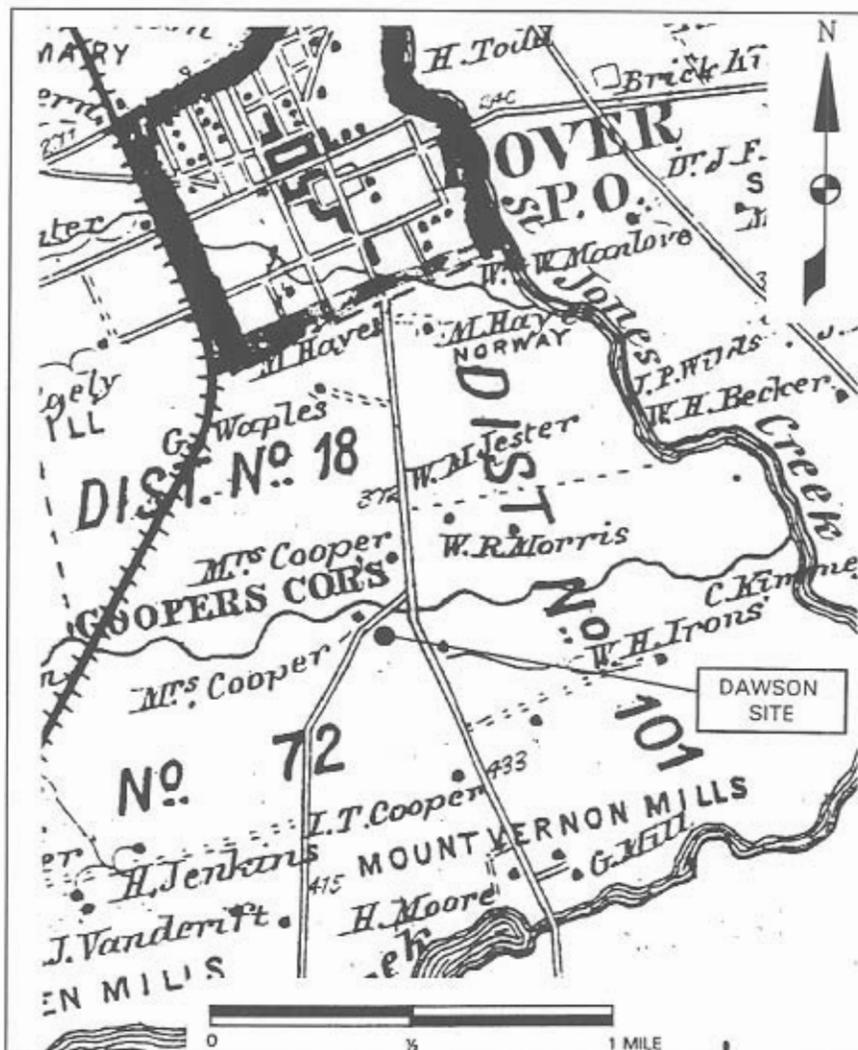


FIGURE 3: Map of the Dawson Site Vicinity Made in 1868 When the Nearby Roads Were Still Laid Out As They Were in the Mid-1700s
SOURCE: Beers 1868

found quite a few artifacts in several of these test units, including 153 in Excavation Unit (EU) 4 and more than 100 in five other test units. The artifacts included eighteenth-century ceramics, such as redware, creamware, delftware, and white salt-glazed stoneware, as well as handwrought nails and other colonial artifacts. HRI also found three cultural features. Two of these features, an apparent robbed foundation trench in EUs 1, 6,

of the excavation units to odd English figures, the metric measurements have been retained. One meter is about 3.28 feet.

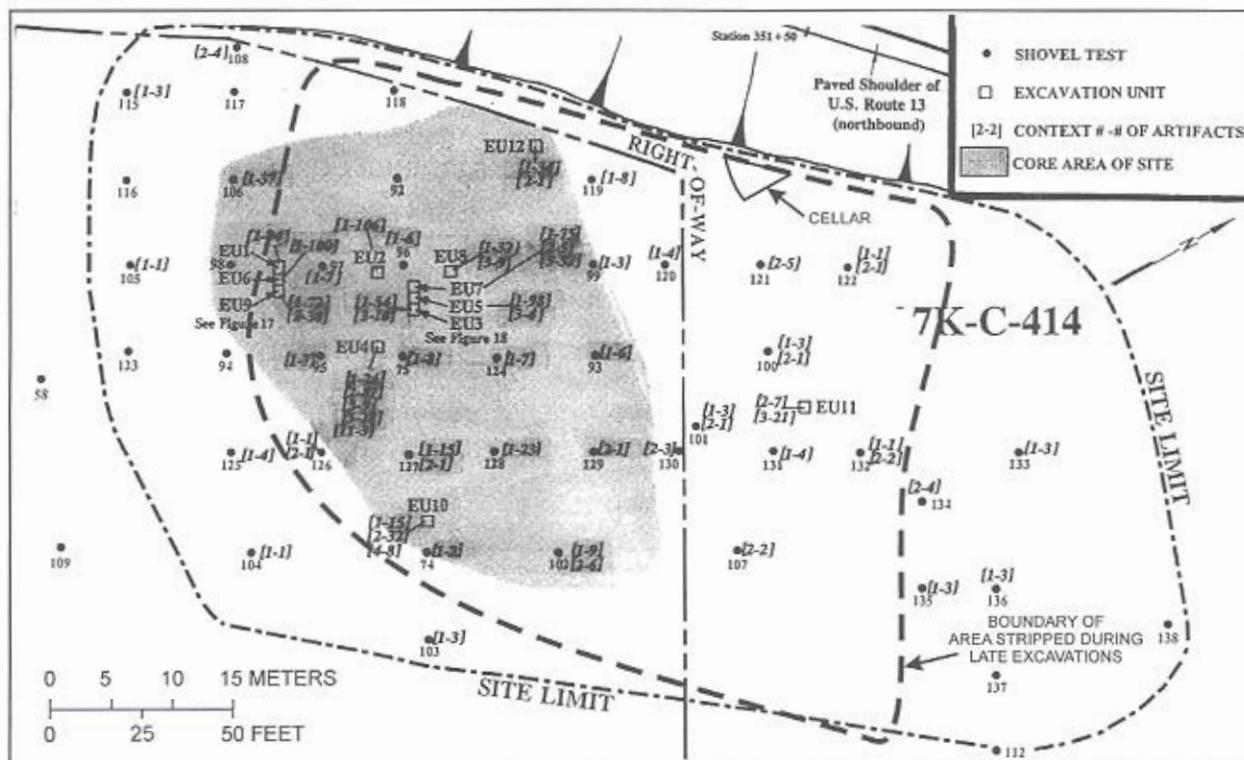


FIGURE 4: Plan of Initial Phase II Testing at the Dawson Family Site

and 9, and a charred ground surface in EUs 3, 5, and 7, were later identified by Berger as modern disturbances. The third feature, a pit, was later designated Feature 12 by Berger and was fully excavated. The Phase II testing allowed HRI to give more precise dates to the site's occupation, which they estimated to have been between 1740 and 1780.

In 1997, Berger began work on the Dawson Site. We thought that the amount of Phase II testing that had been carried out by HRI was small for such a large and early site. The most important question about the site had not been answered, namely, how much of it had survived the construction of U.S. 13 and other development in the area. Archaeologists who had participated in the Phase II work were divided, some believing that all remains of the Dawsons' house had surely been destroyed and others that some portions had probably survived. To determine how much of the site was intact, Berger carried out extended Phase II testing in the summer of 1997 (Bedell 1997). The testing began with the excavation of a 1

percent sample of plowzone across the site, using 1x1-meter test units on a regular 10-meter grid (Figure 5; Plate 3). This testing was intended to define the boundaries of the artifact scatter associated with the site, identifying all areas where the density of artifacts in the plowzone suggested the presence of features below the plowzone and giving a basic idea of any variations in the artifact distribution pattern. The most common colonial artifacts we found during this testing were sherds of coarse red earthenware, nearly 1,850 altogether. (Coarse red earthenware, or redware, was used throughout the colonial period and well into the nineteenth century.) We also found 143 sherds of creamware, a type of refined ceramic introduced by Josiah Wedgwood in about 1762 and very common in the 1770s and later. This material confirmed that the site had continued to be occupied after 1756, when Thomas Dawson's son, Richard, sold the property to a speculator. We found more material, however, from the Dawson occupation, at least 220 sherds of delftware, white salt-glazed stoneware, and other refined ceramics dating

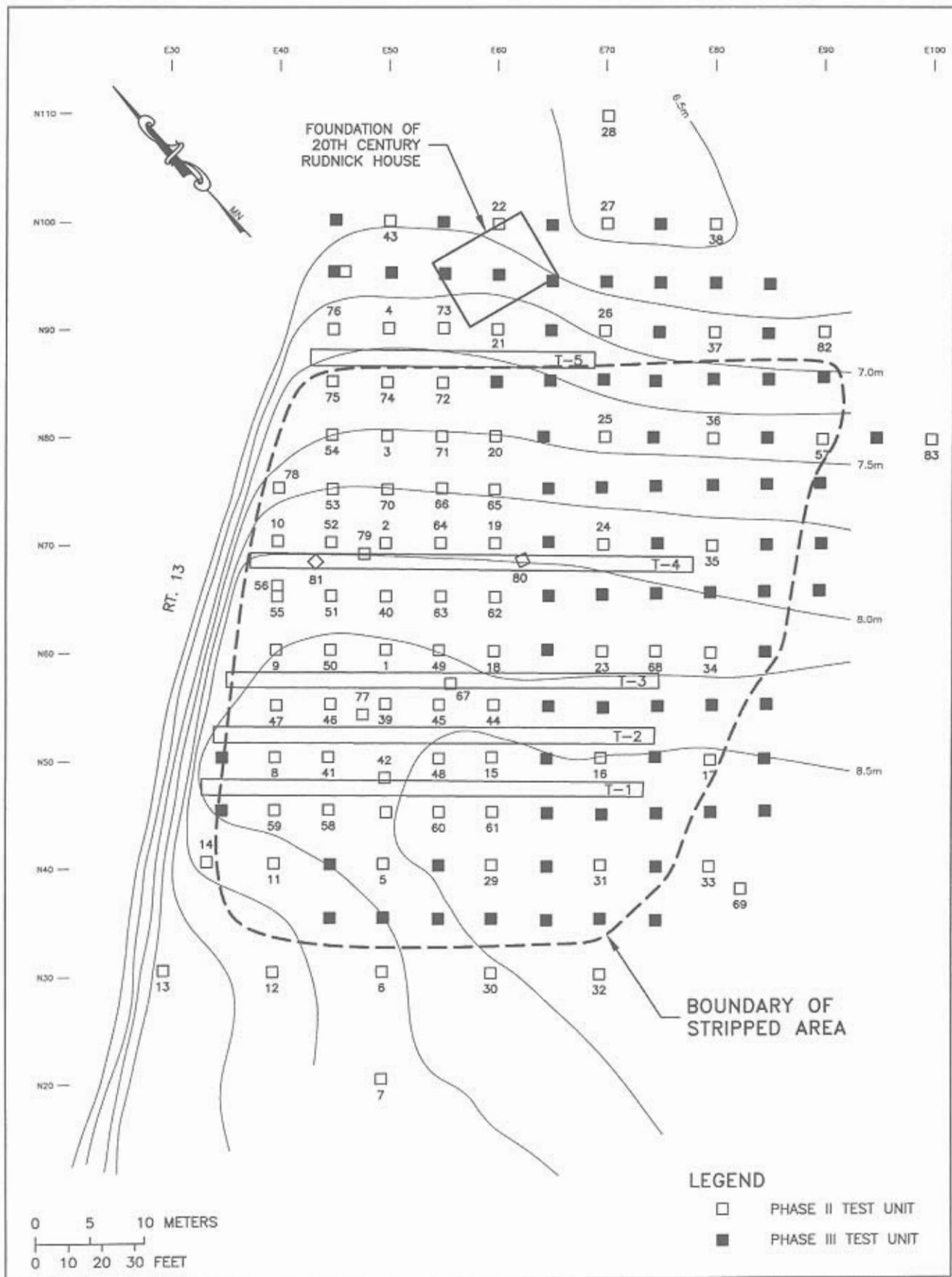


FIGURE 5: Plan of Extended Phase II Testing and Phase III Plowzone Sampling at the Dawson Site



PLATE 3: Excavating Test Units at the Dawson Site

to before 1760, and 56 tobacco pipe fragments. About 20 sherds of pearlware, whiteware, and ironstone—ceramics dating to after 1780—were also found. Our results therefore agreed well with those obtained by HRI during their testing.

The testing also showed us how much modern disturbance had taken place on the site. We found thousands of pieces of twentieth-century debris, such as asphalt roofing shingles, asbestos tile, electrical fixtures, wire nails, plastic, aluminum cans, and glass from machine-molded bottles. We also found evidence that earth-moving machines had been used on the site. In such a location we would expect the plowzone (the topsoil that has been disturbed repeatedly by plowing) to be about eight inches thick. On the Dawson Site it was sometimes as shallow as two inches and sometimes as deep as 20 inches. In a few places there was no plowzone at all, just grass growing across the top of mixed clay fill containing pieces of cinder block. However, on much of the site the soil seemed to be relatively undisturbed.

The excavation of test units in the plowzone, although useful, did not answer our main question about the site, that is, whether intact features, such as building foundations or wells, were present. To search for such features, we used two techniques—ground-penetrating radar and heavy excavating machinery. We employed Bruce Bevan of Geosight to survey the site using ground-penetrating radar (Plate 4). Radar waves bounce back differently from stones and bricks than from soil, and even a large pocket of disturbed soil may show up as a radar anomaly. Bevan had previously used ground-penetrating radar to locate at least one colonial cellar and a number of other building foundations and military earthworks (Bevan 1998), and we were hopeful that he could save us considerable digging by identifying a cellar hole or other major feature that would prove the site's integrity. As it turned out, however, Bevan found very little (Figure 6). He easily detected the concrete foundations of the modern Rudnick house, but the Dawson remains were more elusive. He did find one feature that had



PLATE 4: Bruce Bevan Using the Ground-Penetrating Radar

already turned up in one of our test units, and which we now know to have been the Dawsons' cellar; because it did not contain any radar-reflective material such as brick or stone, however, he thought it was probably a natural feature. We investigated the other anomalies he found by excavating more 1x1-meter test units. One anomaly turned out to be a pit full of coal and horseshoes, no doubt from the twentieth-century horse racing track; another was a buried pile of cinder blocks; and the last was a natural soil disturbance of some kind.

At that point, we were disheartened by the radar results, which had not told us anything we did not already know, and were ready to conclude that ground-penetrating radar was simply not useful on a colonial site. Knowing what we know now, however, we feel differently. The radar did locate the Dawsons' cellar hole, and that, as it turned out, was the only large feature on the site. The radar did not reveal any stone or brick foundations, or any deep wells, because there were none to be found. We believe that this

technique may still be useful for locating such features on future sites, although archaeologists must remember that some kinds of very interesting features, such as the many pits at the Dawson Site, may escape radar detection altogether.

Since the radar had not shown many features to investigate, we returned to digging, this time with heavy equipment. We brought in a backhoe with a smooth bucket to remove more of the plowzone. Our technique, which we first used at the Augustine Creek North and South sites (Bedell et al. 1998b), was to remove the plowzone from 4-foot-wide strips running across the site parallel to the site grid. In order to preserve most of the plowzone on the site for possible future excavation, these trenches were placed at least 5 meters (16.5 feet) apart, in the intervals between the plowzone sample units. We dug five such trenches, with a total length of 600 feet. In these trenches we found five substantial features, as well as several small postholes related to modern fences. One of the features was the pit identified by HRI in their EU 4, and because it had already

been tested, it was not further investigated. The other four, Features 1, 7, 8, and 9, were tested with units ranging in size from 1x1-meter to 50x50-centimeters. Feature 8 proved to be a modern disturbance. Additional excavation was carried out in Features 1, 7, and 9 during the Phase III work, and the results are described below. We found eighteenth-century artifacts in all of them. With the discovery of these features and their contents, we had answered the main question about the site: yes, enough of it did survive to make it worth excavating. We began to make plans for the final, Phase III excavations.

C. HISTORY OF THE DAWSON TRACT

It is one of the peculiarities of our colonial records that they make it much easier to determine the history of a piece of land than the history of a person. Births, marriages, deaths, and other events in a human being's life were only sporadically recorded, but the patents, sales, and legacies that make up the history of a property were noted with precision and detail. Researchers from HRI therefore had little trouble tracing the property on which the Dawson Site is located back to a

warrant for a 400-acre tract, known as Shoemaker's Hall, granted to Isaac Webb in 1698 (Kent County Deed Book M-1:87). The Webbs, for whom Webbs Lane and Webb Landing are named, are still major landowners in southern Kent County, but this particular property soon passed out of their hands. The Shoemaker's Hall tract was split up, and various parts of it were owned by a series of speculators and big planters throughout the early 1700s. In 1740, Thomas Dawson purchased a 50-acre parcel on the south side of Puncheon Run (Table 1; for more detail, see Appendix B).

According to the deed (Kent County Deed Book K-1:220), the tract was already "in the possession of Thomas Dawson." Since most of the tract's owners had been speculators, Dawson may have lived on the property for several years before he purchased it. The area of Delaware where Dawson chose to live, around Dover, had already been settled by

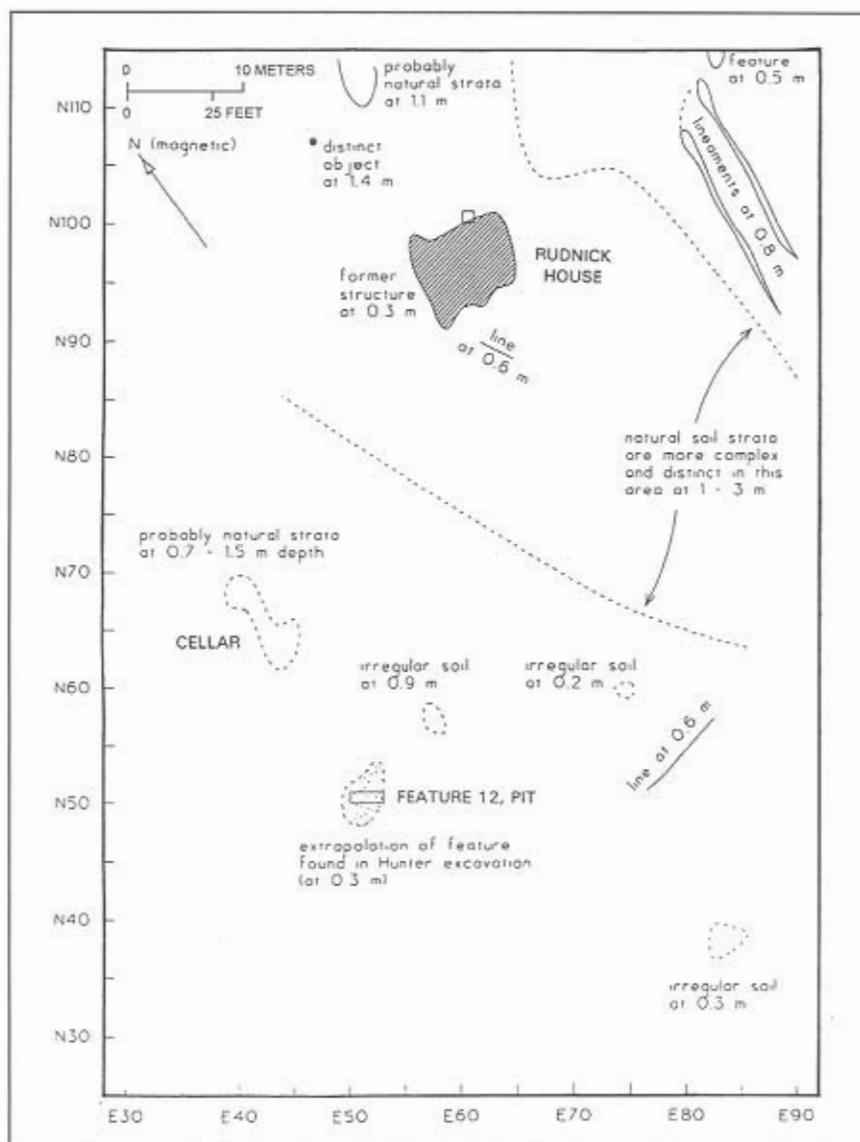


FIGURE 6: Results of the Ground-Penetrating Radar Survey

Table 1. History of the Dawson Tract

Date	Transaction
1698	Isaac Webb warrants 400 acres known as Shoemaker's Hall
1698-1740	Dawson tract belongs to five different speculators
1735-1740	Dawson Family Site established
1740	Thomas Dawson buys 50 acres from Philip Lewis; Dawson is already in residence
1745	Thomas Dawson has the property surveyed and it is said to measure 70 acres
1754	Richard Dawson inherits the tract from Thomas Dawson
1756	Thomas Nixon buys the 70-acre tract from Richard Dawson
1779	Letitia Nixon Vandyke Rogerson Coakley buys 234 acres from Thomas Nixon, her father
ca. 1780	Dawson Family Site abandoned
1794	Richard Cooper buys the property from Letitia Coakley
1794-1908	Property descends through the Cooper family, for whom Cooper's Corners was named
1908-1944	Several unrelated owners
1944	Jacob Rudnick buys the property, builds the "Rudnick house"

Europeans for about 80 years when he bought his farm. The first European residents were Dutch, who in the early 1660s patented land, and probably built houses, along the navigable reaches of the St. Jones River. To them the area was part of Whorekil, their colony centered at Lewes. Along with the rest of Delaware, Whorekil passed under British control in 1664. In 1680 the settlements along the St. Jones were separately incorporated as St. Jones County. The name was changed to Kent in about 1682, at which time a census listed 99 inhabitants in the new county (Scharf 1888:1030). The county court met at private houses until about 1697, when a courthouse was built near a landing on the St. Jones River in what is now Dover. In 1699 some of the residents, seeking a central place for their community, petitioned the Assembly to establish a town, to be called Canterbury, at the courthouse. The Assembly agreed to establish the town, but specified that it be named Dover. Little development took place in the new town, however, and in 1717, evidently in the hope of attracting new settlers, the residents petitioned the Assembly to refound the town. The Assembly

complied with the request and commissioners were appointed to lay out the land in lots and sell them. The town was set up with a central square at the intersection of the King's Road and a road called Long Street. Growth of the town was still slow, but by 1729 a number of lots had been purchased and houses built. In the surrounding area the growth was much more rapid, and farms began to spread across the countryside. Something of the way of life in Kent County during Dawson's lifetime can be gleaned from the written records now kept at the Delaware State Archives. Most of the settlers were farmers.

We can glimpse the farming practices of the day in probate inventories, documents which list a recently deceased person's possessions. Crops, whether in the field or in the barn, were considered possessions, and lists of crops show us that Kent County farmers practiced a mixed agriculture, with an emphasis on growing wheat and corn. Other grains, such as rye, barley, oats, and millet, were also grown, along with timothy grass, beans, peas, and tobacco. Flax, the plant whose fibers are used to make linen, is mentioned

in more than half of inventories in the 1740s and 1750s, and most farmers seem to have had a small patch of it. We can get an idea of the amount of land and effort Kent County farmers devoted to these various crops from Table 2, which shows the crops listed in inventories for three middling farmers. Values of the crops are given in shillings; one shilling equaled 12 pence, and 20 shillings made up a pound.

Table 2. Value of Crops in Three Kent County Probate Inventories

	Benj. David	Alen Delap	James Corbin
Date of Inventory	Jan. 2, 1748	Dec. 1, 1753	Aug. 21, 1760
Total Value	£115 12s	£96 8s	£142 19s
Value of Crop (shil.)			
Wheat	400	460	280
Corn	241	140	490
Rye	60	.	35
Oats	50	3	35
Flax	10	10	35
Tobacco	.	3	4

Source: Kent County Probate Records

Inventory takers also made note of animals, at least the larger ones, and we see from these records that most farmers owned cattle, pigs, and horses, and quite a few also owned sheep. Their herds were usually rather small. James Corbin, a farmer of above-average means, owned six horses, 10 cattle, nine sheep, and 16 pigs. Because pork was often smoked and stored, it figures more prominently in the inventories than beef or mutton, and some farmers had as much as 1,700 pounds of smoked pork on hand. However, archaeology tells us that beef was eaten at least as often. The produce of gardens and orchards was rarely listed in inventories, but other records tell us that they existed, and several of the richer farmers had cider mills. Other products of Kent County's farms were pine boards and shingles, honey, beeswax, wool, goose feathers, uncured hides, dried beef, tallow, hogs' lard, deer skins, turkeys, and venison ham.

Although most of Delaware's residents were farmers, not all were, and the inventories show us some of the other professions. The sample of 200 Kent County inventories we studied for this project included tanners, shoemakers, carpenters, storekeepers, one mason, one tailor, one lawyer, one bookbinder, and one sea captain. Some of these men were also small farmers, but some, including the lawyer, the bookbinder, and the mason, seem to have subsisted entirely from their

trade (see discussion in Chapter V). By the middle of the eighteenth century, mills had already been constructed along both Puncheon Run and Isaac Run just to the south (Mifflin 1935).

By 1740, when Thomas Dawson bought his farm, Dover was a county seat with several dozen permanent residents. The surrounding area was filling up with farms, and agricultural prosperity was beginning to support craftsmen and professionals. The main roads had been laid out, and mills had been constructed along Puncheon Run. The Dawsons were not exactly pioneers. They may have had to clear their land themselves, but they had many neighbors, they were within easy reach of mills to grind their grain and landings for shipping it, and they lived under a functioning government. Their world was still rough by our standards, but it was already much transformed from the landscape of 80 years earlier.

About Thomas Dawson himself we know little. The Dawsons were a prominent local family, and a Dawson had been one of the original petitioners for the founding of Dover. Thomas Dawson appeared as a witness on several family documents, from which evidence we know that he was literate. In 1748 he served as the administrator of the estate of John Dawson, a prosperous man who owned a gold ring and a pair

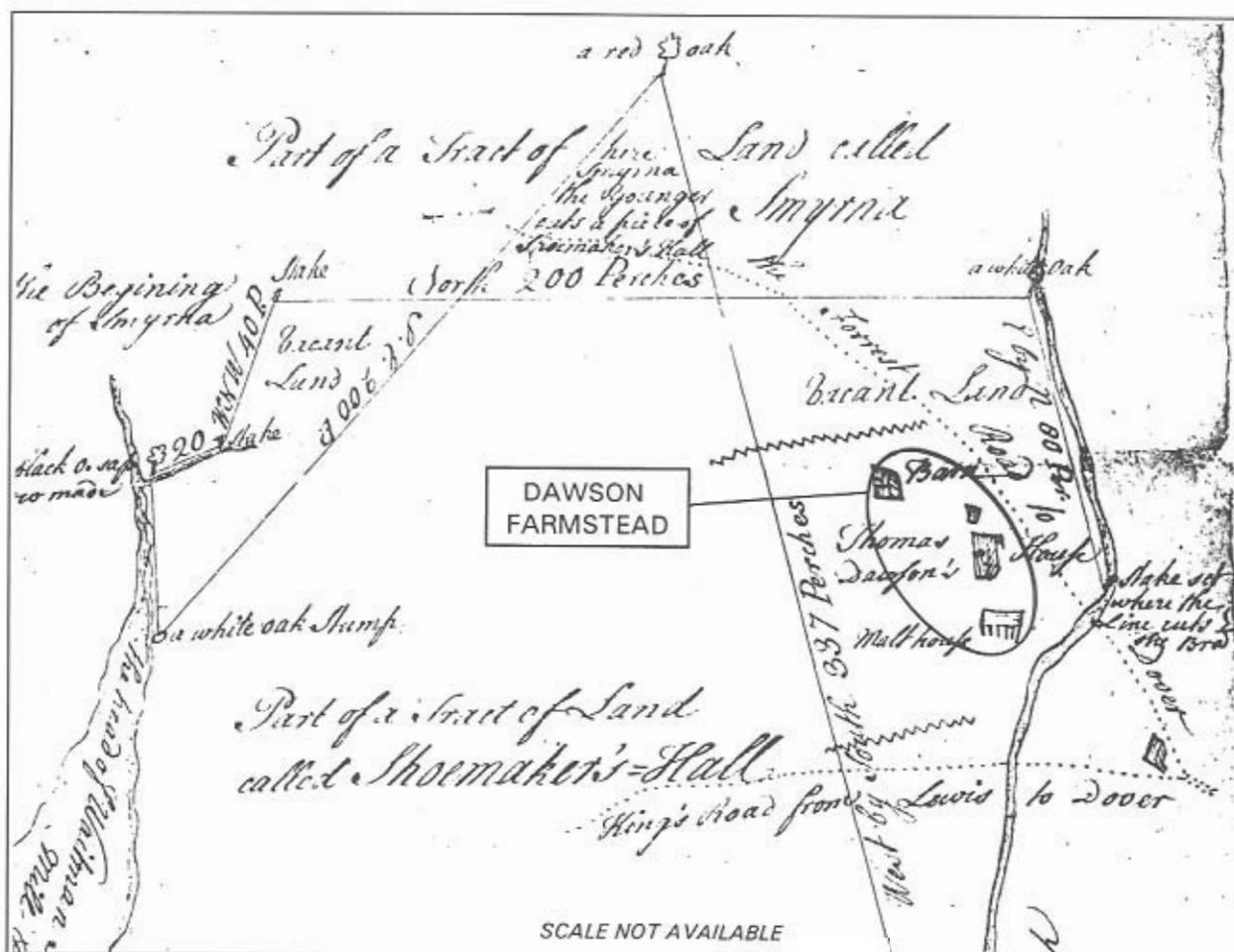


FIGURE 7: 1745 Survey of the Dawson Tract

of silver shoe buckles. We do not know the exact relationship between the two men, but it seems clear that Thomas Dawson had relatives who were richer and more prominent than he was.

The other members of the Dawson household have left even fewer traces in the records. In eighteenth-century English law, a married woman was considered under the care or protection of her husband, who made all legal arrangements on her behalf. Women could neither hold office nor serve on juries, and taxes were paid in the name of the "head of household," that is, the man. Married women are therefore quite unlikely to appear in the records, and Mary Dawson, as one might expect, appears for the first time in her husband's estate papers. We do not know her maiden name or anything else about her background, nor do we know what happened to her after her husband's

death. Underage children are even less likely to turn up in the records; the government left them entirely to their families. The sole mention of Thomas and Mary's children that has come down to us also dates to after Thomas's death, when his son Richard Dawson sold the family farm. The other known resident of the site was an African-American slave named Jenney. Although Jenney probably lived and worked in the household for many years, she appears in the records, not as a person, but as a piece of property listed in the inventory of Thomas Dawson's estate between the cows and the flax seed (Table 3).

In 1745 the Dawsons had their property surveyed, probably as part of an effort to obtain a clear warrant to it (Kent County Warrants and Surveys D6 73). According to the survey, the property then included 72 acres. The surveyors took the time to

Table 3. Probate Inventory of Thomas Dawson

January 15th Day 1754 An Inventory of the Goods & Schtles of Tho. Dausons Late of Kent County in Murtherkill Hundred Deceased Taken & Aprased By us The Subscribers Who was Lawfully Qualleified So To Do.

	£	s	p
To 1 old Cote & old Thece (?) old Shurtes & 2 pair Bricketes of Lether & 1 pair of Shoes & 1 pair of old Stockings & 1 old fine hat	1	- 0	- 0
To 9 harrow Teeth made of Iron	0	- 6	- 0
To 2 old axes & Three old hampers old hand Sasyeadge (?)	0	- 7	- 6
To 1 old Drawing Knife & 3 old Bridles & 2 old Howes [hoes]	0	- 6	- 0
To 2 old Books	0	- 1	- 0
To a parsell of old Iron Lumber	0	- 1	- 6
To 1 pair of old Iron Trapes & old post hoocks	0	- 2	- 6
To 1 Flat Handled Sword & 1 old hone & Strap	1	- 0	- 0
To 2 old Iron Kittles & 1 Small Spinning Whele	0	- 14	- 0
To 1 old Beed Beedsted & furniture	2	- 10	- 0
To 1 pol Pichfork & a parsell of old Boocks	0	- 1	- 6
To 2 old Kidles [kettles] & 1 old Sifter & 1 old Chist & 3 old Chares	0	- 4	- 0
To 1 warned [worn?] Chist & 1 old Cubbard	0	- 3	- 0
To 2 old Barrells & 1 Tubb & more wooden lumber	0	- 4	- 6
To 1 old putter Dish & x plates & 1 old Candilstick	0	- 6	- 0
To a parsell of old Irkenware [earthenware] & Lumber on the Shelves	0	- 2	- 6
To a parsell of flax in the Shelves	0	- 4	- 0
To 1 old negro woman Cald Jenney	3	- 0	- 0
To 2 Cows & 2 yerlens & 1 Bull 2 years old 1 heffer 1 year old	4	- 17	- 0
To 1 old hackell & a ___ To 2 old Chairs	0	- 8	- 0
To 1 old Grindstoon	0	- 2	- 0
To a small parsell of Rye in The Shelf	0	- 8	- 0
To 1 gray mare & bay mare Deto	7	- 10	- 0
To 1 small Feild of Ienden [Indian] Corn Standing on the Stock	2	- 5	- 0
To 2 small stacks of Fodor [hay]	0	- 7	- 6
To a small parsell of Lime Slacked	0	- 12	- 0
To 1 old Hogsed & about forty feet of Plank	0	- 4	- 6
To about Twelve acres of wheat groing very pore wheat	6	- 0	- 0
To 14 Chairs att 2s per chair	1	- 8	- 0
To 2 old Chistes & 2 old Tables	0	- 10	- 0
To 1 Broad ax & three iron weges & Sum old Iron	0	- 10	- 0
To 1 Box Iron & heeters To half dozen knives & forkes	0	- 6	- 0
To 1 old Iron pot (?) & 1 frying pann	0	- 4	- 6
To 2 old brass Candlesticks & snufers	0	- 6	- 0
To 2 old puter Dishes & 6 old plates & 1 old Irken Dish	0	- 10	- 0
To 2 old Teeports & 1 old Tee Kittell & 7 Sasers [saucers] & 5 cups	0	- 8	- 0
To three punch Bowles & 2 nib (?) & 1 Gill Pot & whit mug	0	- 6	- 0
To 2 flaskes & 1 old Canester & 2 Night Looocking Glases	0	- 1	- 6
To 1 Glass Bottell & 1 old Tennett Saw (?) & 1 old Bell	0	- 12	- 0
To 2 Small Looocking Glases & 1 old ax	0	- 5	- 6
To old Iron & Thred & 1 old pair of sadle Baggs & old wallet	0	- 10	- 0
To 1 old Beed 2 old Sheets & 1 old Blanket & 1 old Counter Pinn (?)	1	- 5	- 0
To 1 old Beed & 2 sheets & 1 old Blanket & 1 Old Rugg & 1 old Counter Pinn (?)	2	- 0	- 0
To 1 Rum Hogsed with about 20 gallons of Rum in it	2	- 10	- 0
To 2 old Barrells & 1 old poudren [powdering] Tubb & 1 old Barrell with some Mackrell in it	0	- 9	- 0

Table 3. Probate Inventory of Thomas Dawson (continued)

	£	s	p
To 1 Butter Tubb with Sum Butter in it	0	- 6	- 6
To a parsell of Beeff in Pickell	0	- 15	- 0
To 1 old Plow & Irons & 1 old Erken Pot	0	- 5	- 6
To 1 old Cow att	2	- 5	- 0
To 1 mans Sadel & Sum Tand Lether	1	- 2	- 0
	£ 50	- 4	- 6

Transcriber's Note: This inventory employs spelling and orthography unusual even by eighteenth-century standards and is illegible in several places. Questionable items are indicated in the text. The money is probably Pennsylvania pounds. As in English money, twelve pence made up one shilling, and twenty shillings made up one pound.

draw a small sketch of the Dawsons' farm on the plat, and the sketch shows a house, a malthouse, a barn, and an unidentified structure (Figure 7). This sketch, like others on similar documents, is probably not accurate in detail, and it would be a waste of time to search for these buildings by plotting out their drawn locations. The surveyors were paid to find the boundaries of the property, not the exact locations of the house and the barn. However, there is no reason why they would have made up buildings that were not there, and since the drawings of the various buildings differ, the sketch may even be able to tell us something about how they looked.

The malthouse structure is particularly interesting. Malting involves allowing grain to germinate and then roasting the sprouted grains. It is part of the process for brewing beer and for distilling whiskey. Written records tell us that malting was sometimes done by brewers and distillers, but it was also sometimes done by specialists who then sold their malt to the makers of the final product.

The Dawson Site, it seems, was not just a farm, but the site of a small-scale industry. If the Dawsons were brewers, or maltsters, they presumably sold their products in the growing town of Dover.

The most detailed record of the Dawson household is the inventory of Thomas Dawson's estate made after his death in 1754 (see Table 3). His possessions were appraised at £50, placing him at the bottom of the middle class. Dawson left behind a variety of items, many of which are

described as "old," which would account for the relatively low valuation. Among the items listed are two old beds, each with an old blanket and old counterpane, three old candlesticks, two old tables, one old bed, bedstead, and furniture, 19 chairs (five of which are described as old), along with chests, hampers, clothes, and an old cupboard, as well as several old pewter dishes, at least six old plates, two old teapots, an old tea kettle, and a parcel of old earthenware. Dawson's slave, Jenney, is described, not surprisingly, as an "old negro woman." The number of old objects may mean that the Dawsons' fortunes faded as they aged, so that they could not afford to replace objects that were wearing out, or perhaps they were simply careful householders. The inventory also lists two horses, a saddle, books, a sword, seven head of cattle, and four looking glasses. No items specifically associated with malting or brewing are listed, which suggests that the Dawsons were out of the malting business by this time. (Several barrels are mentioned, but barrels were a normal part of the equipment of a farm.) Dawson owned a number of farm tools, including a plow, harrow teeth, a grindstone, a pitchfork, axes, wedges, and two hoes. His crops included a "small feild of Ienden [Indian] Corn Standing on the Stock," valued at 2 pounds 5 shillings, and "about Twelve acres of wheat groing very fare," valued at £6. Since some of Dawsons' neighbors had crops worth as much as £50 or even £100, his farm would have been a rather small one.

The Dawsons occupied the property until after Thomas's death. In 1756 Thomas's son, Richard Dawson, sold the tract to Thomas Nixon, who was



PLATE 5: View of the Site from the Visitor's Parking Lot, Showing the Kiosk

in the process of amassing a 500-acre property in the vicinity (Kent County Deed Book O-1:343). Nixon held the property until 1779, when he sold 234 acres to his daughter, Letitia Vandyke (Kent County Deed Book W-1:181). Based on archaeological evidence, especially the limited amount of pearlware recovered (pearlware was manufactured after 1775), the Dawson Site may have been abandoned by the time Letitia Vandyke acquired it, and it had certainly been abandoned by the time she sold the property in 1794. In 1816 the property passed into the hands of the Cooper family, for whom Cooper's Corner (now the U.S. 13/South State Street intersection) was named. The Cooper family houses are known to have been in other locations.

The location of the Dawson Site was therefore vacant throughout the nineteenth century, and was probably plowed and planted more than a hundred times. In the twentieth century, a new house was built at the north end of the site and the site was again occupied. The area south of the site was developed into a racetrack and horse farm, with a number of buildings. These structures were still

standing when the 1956 USGS Dover Quadrangle was mapped, but were torn down in the 1970s and 1980s. The Dawsons' farm remained hidden until archaeologists rediscovered it in 1995.

D. PRESENTING THE PAST

This report is only one of several means through which the archaeology of the Dawson Family Site has been interpreted and presented. Because of the site's prominent location, on U.S. 13 near its intersection with South State Street in Dover, it was decided to make public outreach an important part of the excavations conducted at the site. Large road signs reading "The Dawson House Dig—Visitors Welcome" were placed on U.S. 13 and South State Street (see Plate 1). A kiosk was constructed near the designated parking area to display interpretive material, and posters were prepared for the kiosk (Plate 5). A brochure was also prepared (Appendix A); some copies of the brochure were mailed out by DeIDOT and others were placed in a box on the kiosk for visitors to take away. Crew were briefed on how to guide visitors around the site. Local newspapers were

contacted, and stories on the site appeared in the *News Journal*, the *Delaware State News*, and the *Dover Post*, and on WBOC TV.

The outreach effort appears to have been successful. No count of visitors was kept, but we estimate that at least 200 people toured the site during the month after the signs went up. Visitors included parents with small children, retirees, and working people (Plate 6); two boys who viewed the excavations said they were going to be archaeologists when they grew up. Two people who stopped by stayed to work as volunteers and were still working on the last day of the dig. Attendance was highest on holidays, especially January 2 and Martin Luther King Day, when the crew was working but many other people were off work and had the time to come out. Each day, one member of the crew was designated to talk to the visitors and answer questions about the site, and this method seemed to work well.

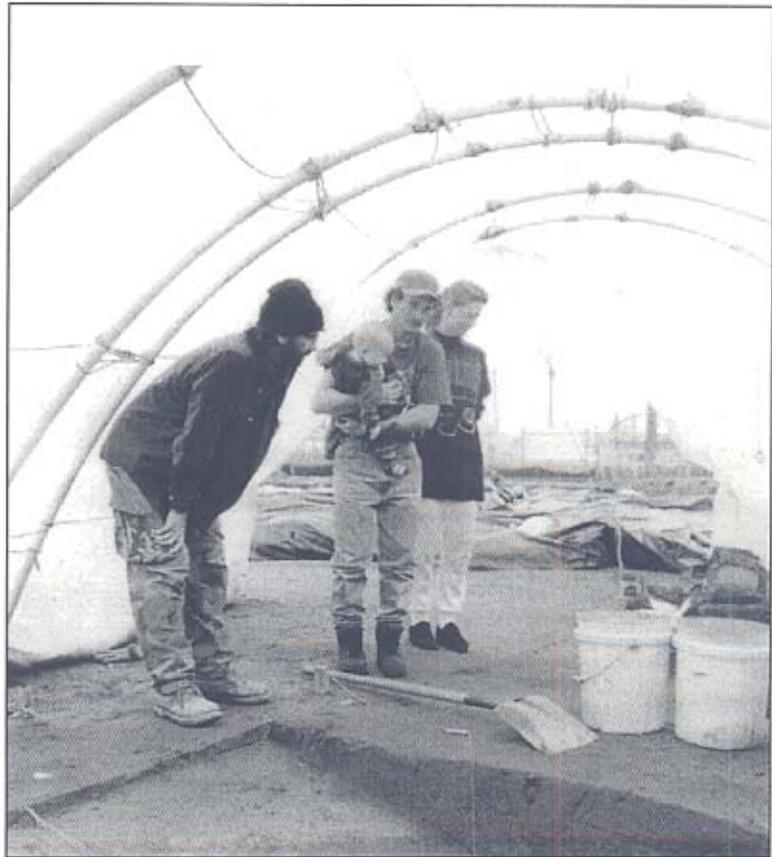


PLATE 6: Family Touring the Site

As a longer-lasting means of involving the public in archaeology, a popular booklet was also written as part of the project. This document, *Digging for Old Delaware: The Archaeology of Country Life in the 1700s*, which is about 20 pages long, is illustrated with color photographs and drawings, and describes in non-technical language both the way archaeologists investigate colonial life and some of their findings. Talks were also given at libraries and historical societies about the archaeology of colonial Delaware.

Although this project has focused on the Dawson Family Site, it reminds us that archaeologists need to pause from time to time to take stock of the work that has been done in one area or on one kind of site. By comparing findings from different sites, we can better understand the broad patterns of life in the past and also identify those areas where we still have the most to learn. This information can then be used to plan future

excavations. The third document produced for this project is intended to assist in these tasks. It is titled *Historic Context: The Archaeology of Farm and Rural Dwelling Sites in New Castle and Kent Counties, Delaware, 1730 to 1770 and 1770 to 1830*. This document describes all the sites of these types that had been professionally excavated in northern and central Delaware when it was written, summarizes the findings, and makes recommendations about future research directions. This study also led to the preparation of a journal article describing the archaeology of eighteenth-century archaeology for professionals (Bedell 2001), calling attention to the wealth of archaeological data on colonial life that now exists in the state. The use of the different media—television, newspapers, brochures, site tours, the popular booklet, the historic context, journal articles, popular lectures, and this report—allows us to reach many audiences, and to bring Delaware's past to life for people of different backgrounds and interests.