This was also a time of economic and technological transition. The landscape was shifting from an agrarian to a suburban one. It was no longer as important to be located near a transportation route in order to transport your products to market. Being located on a transportation route was important for transport of individuals and not of goods.

When the last piece of the Taylor farm is sold in 1936, it is not as agricultural farm land. Anna M. Taylor sold the property to the Rosemont Development Company, Inc., presumably for "development." In fact, the Route 273 project is a response to a need to upgrade the old Christiana/New Castle Road, which is no longer able to accommodate the increased traffic load resulting from the post-World War II suburban sprawl, typical of the current settlement pattern in the Eastern United States.

## THE BETHEL CHURCH SITE

### Introduction

During the Phase I portion of the project, the location of the Bethel Old School Baptist Church site was established and recorded with the Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (BAHP) in Dover, Delaware. Instead of being located near the center of the Route 273 project area, it was found to be approximately 2 miles east of the Route 7 junction and about 0.65 miles west of Hares Corner (Plate 2). Phase I archaeological testing located archaeological deposits and a cemetery relating to this site. Phase II testing was recommended.

### Background Research

The Bethel Church, referred to both as the Bethel Old School and as the Bethel Primitive Baptist Church was a fundamentalist church. At first the Bethel Baptist Church was only a "mission," or branch, of the Welsh Tract Church. Bethel Church was approximately 9 miles from its parent church, which was located at the foot of Iron Hill in Pencader Hundred. Those who attended Bethel Church in New Castle Hundred were listed as members of Welsh Tract until after 1839, when Bethel Church became a separate church with its own constitution and covenant. Until then many matters were referred back to the "Hill," as the Welsh Tract Church was known, for adjudication (Bethel Church Minutes 1821-1944).

Baptist churches are noted for being very particular about the individual beliefs, and often one group will leave another to form its own church. The separation of the Bethel Church from the Welsh Tract Church was, however, more a matter of geography than ideology.

Members of the Bethel Baptist Church believed in total baptismal immersion following a declaration of faith. This declaration, an account of a private spiritual experience, was made before church trustees. After this experience the initiate was transformed and was eligible for baptism. The church decided on the validity of the religious experience. Baptism and full admission to the church were not possible until a satisfactory declaration of faith was given.

PLATE 2

SITE LOCATION: BETHEL CHURCH SITE

One could be excluded from the church: this was also decided upon by church trustees. Exclusion could be enacted on the basis of the morality or beliefs of the one being judged or if the initiate's experience or declaration of faith was in question. This latter seems quite severe. Actually, the trustees of the Bethel Church excluded few and gave those charged ample time, sometimes years, to come forward in their own defense (Bethel Church Minutes 1821-1944).

The history of the Bethel Old School Baptist Church really begins with the history of the Welsh Tract Church, and that history begins "in 1701 with a group of Welsh Baptist from the Welsh counties of Pembroke and Caermathen who resolved to go to America" (Edwards 1885:48-49). The first Welsh Tract Church was a log meeting house built in 1701. The present-day brick church was built in 1746. Services continued to be held in Welsh until 1800 (Records of the Welsh Tract Baptist Meeting 1904:3-5). Reverend John Boggs was their minister during the last quarter of the eighteenth century (Edwards 1885:48). The membership of the Welsh Tract Baptist Church continued to grow until "between 1783 and the present [1885] it received large accessions of members by breaking new grounds; one was between Christiana and New Castle, about 9 miles east of this church" (Edwards 1885:53-54).

The church Edwards referred to was the Bethel Old School Baptist Church. In one colorful account of the founding of the church, Edwards wrote,

> About the year 1780, a certain Baptist by the name of David Morton came flying from the Indians and settled in the [sic] part; he invited Mr. Boggs to preach at his house. Mr. Boggs went, and continued his visits... (1885:53-54).

Actually David Morton came to own his farm in a considerably less sensational manner. Like most mortals, he bought the farm. The chain of ownership for the farm known to this day as the "Morvan" farm began on August 4, 1780, John Reed, Yoeman and speculator, of the town and county of New Castle, purchased several large parcels of land. He bought land in Pencader Hundred, White Clay Creek Hundred, and New Castle Hundred. These large tracts of land were purchased from an English firm, Allen Englander et al., of Alder Mills, Great Britain (Record of Deeds D2:314).

Morgan Jones the Elder and Morgan Jones the Younger, purchased 209 acres from John Reed the Elder and John Reed the Younger in 1790. This same tract of land, with the same meets and bounds plus a few more acres, was sold by the Joneses to Andrew Morton in 1810 (Record of Deeds B5:388).

According to various church histories, Andrew Morton was residing on this land by at least 1780. Regardless of whether he owned the land or not, David Morton did begin to hold meetings in his house:

> and the audience increased, so that the house could not contain them. One day, as Mr. Boggs was preaching out of doors, a storm arose and disrupted the assembly; this induced two wealthy men present (Messers. Porter and Lewden) to talk of building a meeting house on the place ... and a house was built in 1786 measuring 32'x 28' and denominated Bethel (Cook 1880:38-40).

On February 8, 1788, Andrew and Ebenezer Morton sold (Zelby 1947:43) or donated (Edwards 1885:53-54) a half acre of land along the southeast border of the Morton's Farm. This land was for the meeting house. A graveyard was also laid out (Zelby 1947:43). The title to the Bethel Meeting Church was made out to the trustees of the church (Record of Deeds 2I:303).

The Bethel Church building was "a log structure standing on stone piers." It measured 32 feet by 28 feet (Edwards 1885:53-54). No other description of the Bethel Church is found. In 1956, the stone piers were the only remnant of the church (Roberts 1978:3).

On Sunday, November 11, 1821, the Bethel Church trustees began to keep minutes of their business meetings. These records provide a detailed history of the Bethel Church. The record book spans 112 years, and there are entries for most of these years. The following summary account of the history of the church is taken from minutes of Bethel Church:

First Meeting. Held meeting after sermon by Brother Woolford from 2 Kings 5-13. Sister Sarah Bowen came forward and was received. First members: Catherine Rezoe, John McCrone, Sr. and Margaret McCrone, Sr., Isaac McCrone and Abraham Canner" (Bethel Church Minutes 1821).

1822: First mention of the sexton, John Bostick, who was black. He had a wife, Catherine, and two children, Peter and John. John, Sr. was among the early members that had come to Bethel from the Welsh Tract Church. The Bethel Church always seemed to owe him money. He resigned as sexton after five years, and Ann Gardner was elected in his place "to take care of the house and burying ground" for $6.00 per year. In May 1832 John Bostick was charged with adultery, found guilty, and excluded (Bethel Church Minutes 1820, 1822, 1825, 1832, 1832).

1822: In September Brother Thomas O'Daniels, a member of the Welsh Tract Church (Records of the Welsh Tract Baptist Meeting 1904:109-113), applied for membership at the Bethel Church. He presented his letter to the trustees for consideration. The trustees held his statement of faith for further consideration, and even referred the matter back to the "Mother Church." In November the verdict came back from Welsh Tract stating it would be "illegal to accept him ... as being contrary to discipline" (Bethel Church Minutes 1822).

1823: John McCrone sent a question to the "Hill" asking if it was proper to except members by letter. The "Mother Church" replied that the matter could be "left to discretion of Pastor, except in difficult cases" (Bethel Church Minutes 1823).

The McCrone family was prominent in the activities of the church. The following entries in the book of minutes, in which a McCrone is mentioned, provide a useful vehicle for telling the story of the Bethel Church.

John and Margaret McCrone, Sr. were mentioned as being present at the first business meeting (Bethel Church Minutes 1821). John McCrone, Sr. was born in Ireland in 1754 (United States Census 1850). By the time the minutes began to be kept for the Bethel Church, John McCrone would have been in his

late 60s or early 70s. Although he lived to be 90, it can be assumed, that the activities of the "John McCrone" appearing in the minutes are those of John, Jr. wherever John, Sr. is not specifically mentioned (Bethel Church Minutes 1844).

John McCrone, Jr. was also born in Ireland, in 1789. His wife, Elizabeth, was born in Delaware in 1795. In 1821 John would have been 32, and his wife 26 (United States Census 1850). The names "J. McCrone" and "McCrone" appear on the 1849 Rea and Price map of the area, the farm lying immediately north of Bethel Church. John, Jr. listed his occupation as farmer, and the value of his real estate was listed as $32,000 in the 1850 Census. Also included in their household at this time were James (31 years old, farmer) and Margaret (18) McCrone, Jane Farmer (70), Catherine Hearly (16, native of Ireland), and Joseph Emmeline (50 years old, laborer, born in France) (United States Census 1850).

John McCrone's name appeared more frequently in the minutes than any other. He was elected clerk and given the task of collecting the offering. He was elected to a committee which met annually. During the winter of 1822, he sold the church a half cord of wood for $1.00 (Bethel Church Minutes 1821, 1822, 1823).

When the Bethel Church was built circa. 1788, there was no public road where Route 273 is today. The existing private road was difficult to negotiate; therefore, in 1824 local residents asked the Court of General Sessions for a public road, saying that

> Divers Inhabitants ... for want of a public road from the New Castle and Frenchtown Road to the Village of Christiana Bridge, the private road heretofore used by them on suffrage having been so obstructed as to render in difficult and inconvenient to pass....

The petition was granted and various land owners were paid for their land (Court of General Sessions, Road Book Reel 1, 1824:368).

All but one of the names of those who were compensated when the road took their land are mentioned in the Bethel Meeting Book. This suggests that the Bethel Baptist Church ministered to a geographic neighborhood, and that doctrine was perhaps not so important as association.

1826: "...resolved ... Bro. Bee procure a suitable pitcher for the use of the meeting house" (Bethel Church Minutes 1826).

The Morton family was very large. When Andrew Morton died, it seems that the farm was left to all of them. The deed records are imprecise (P4:269), but during the 1820s at least some of the "Morvan" farm belonged to, or was leased by, a Mr. Rowan (Bethel Church Minutes 1824).

Now that the public road had been built between the New Castle-Frenchtown Road and Christiana, the people of the Bethel Church wanted a road between the meeting house and cemetery and the new road. They first approached Mr. Rowan in August of 1824, and he agreed "to give 10' width of road ... if the Church will ditch, fence and set the north side with quick" (Bethel Church Minutes 1824).

In 1827, the trustees met with Mr. Morton about the road, but nothing came of that meeting (Bethel Church Minutes 1827). Next they petitioned the Court of General Sessions, "humbly praying for the road which would run straight with the lines of land between Henry Rowan and the heirs of Andrew Morton." This request was granted the following year. The road was to be 40 feet wide and 432 feet in length, extending to the cemetery behind the church (Court of General Sessions, Road Book Reel 2 1827-28:40). The following year Bros. McCrone and Reynolds held a subscription to pay for the road and "grave-yard;" however, it was not until the following year that the road was paid for and opened (Bethel Church Minutes 1828-1829).

Delaware was very much a rural state at this time, still focused on agricultural pursuits. An entry illustrative of this was made in June of 1830: "...resolved ... repairs ... to the meeting as soon after the harvest as possible..." (Bethel Church Minutes 1830).

The zenith of the Bethel Baptist Church occurred between 1830 and the late 1840s. During these years many entries were made, and many new members were accepted (Bethel Church Minutes 1830-1850).

1831: Bro. Trott was the pastor. During the next two years, many new people were given membership, and never again were so many accepted. Bro. Ward was excluded for non-attendance. Sarah Robertson would have been excluded for intoxication if word of her death in Philadelphia had not arrived first (Bethel Church Minutes 1831-33).

1836: John McCrone's wife, Elizabeth, applied for membership. She was rejected, and the matter was "postponed ... for further consideration" (Bethel Church Minutes 1836).

Two months later, the church officials met and resolved to tighten controls pertaining to the acceptance of new members. Now applicants from other churches would have to be carefully examined "in order none may be admitted who hold opinions ... injurious to the Cause ... vs. Bible Missionary Tendency" (Bethel Church Minutes 1836).

In 1836, Bro. Robertson (variously spelled) began to chair the business meetings. (When a brother was asked to chair the business meetings, this is often a sign that Bethel Church lacked a Pastor.) Bro. Robinson agreed to "supply this Branch ... until the Lord in his [sic] providence shall send a preacher in his place." Bro. Robinson continued in this capacity for the next seven years (Bethel Church Minutes 1837, 1844).

1838: Bethel was still without a preacher; in June, Bro. McCrone was sent "to unite with ... Committee of the Hill for procuring supplies [spiritual guidance] during the vacancy in the church of a regular pastor.

It was during this year that John McCrone's wife, Elizabeth, was finally accepted for membership, having applied two years earlier. She not only submitted her letter of dismission from the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, but she also related "her experience" (Bethel Church Minutes 1838).

1838 was also the year in which Bethel Baptist Church ceased to be a branch of the Welsh Tract Church and became a separate church. This occurred

during a church meeting held on Monday, December 31, 1838. Several brothers spoke, among them Bro. Robertson. Bro. Thomas Smith read the Covenant and Articles of Faith. Now the 38 members of the Bethel Baptist Church "were duly constituted as a Church..." (Bethel Church Minutes 1838).

During 1839 nine entries were made, the most in any single year. The church was still without a pastor. They resolved to be more careful than ever in who was admitted, and a committee was appointed to get the deed for their "lot and house" from the Welsh Tract Church (Bethel Church Minutes 1839).

In 1840, Benjamine Booth owned the old "Morvan" farm. The trustees asked him for permission to enclose the meeting house lane "till trees can be planted ... and till they grow out of danger of cattle...." At another meeting during that same year, it was "resolved (that the) lane should be enclosed and planted with Mulberry and Locust trees." At another meeting it was decided that the school house should be repaired for the residence of the sexton. Jamima Knox, a black woman, was accepted as a member this year (Bethel Church Minutes 1840).

The troubling subject of Free Masonry came up in that same year. There had been agitation and suspicion that there were Free Masons in the congregation, which the trustees discussed and dismissed (Bethel Church Minutes 1840). One man, however, could not let the matter rest, and this was Thomas Smith.

Thomas Smith was a 29 year old farmer born in England. His wife, Jane, seven years older than Thomas, had been born in Ireland (United States Census 1850). Nine months after the trustees had dismissed the matter, in June, 1841, they had to put Thomas under censure for disorderly conduct. In August, three brothers went to see Thomas. In October the three brothers reported that they had "waited on him" and that he was sorry and wished to be forgiven for speaking so hastily before the church but that he was of the same mind concerning Free Masonry. They failed to convince him of the error of his ways, and Thomas Smith was excluded. His wife, Jane, was still listed as a member in 1862 (Bethel Church Minutes 1840-41,1862).

This episode illustrates the method used by Bethel Church. When a member had been absent, or when a complaint had been lodged, a committee of two trustees were appointed to "wait on" the member and to report their findings at a later business meeting.

Major repairs were made to the meeting house in 1842:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| lumber | $26.25 | |
| nails | 2.10 | |
| carpenter work | 30.00 | |
| posts and rails | 1.55 | |
| Service of 2 men planting trees | 1.10 | |
| | --- | |
| | 60.00 | |
| by so much subscription | -2.00 | |
| | ----- | |
| | $58.90 | account paid in full to John McCrone, Jr. |

(Bethel Church Minutes 1842)

In 1842, the church was still without a pastor. Bro. Robertson had been filling this vacancy for years, yet at a meeting in December, 1842, at which he was not present, the trustees asked William Clark to be pastor. Clark declined. In February of the following year the trustees called a special meeting to write a letter to Bro. Robertson, inquiring if they "had hurt his feelings in any way." Sometime later Robertson replied that he was offended that the church had appointed a committee to call a pastor [without him] (Bethel Church Minutes 1833-1843).

John McCrone was not a universally well-liked person. In 1843 he was charged by Bro. Robertson with attempting to get Bro. Clark called to the pastoral to the detriment of Bro. Clark [?]. The church ruled that John McCrone was innocent of this charge (Bethel Church Minutes 1843). The same year, Mrs. Catherine Cloughtsen (also Cluckstone) charged John McCrone of telling untruths. The church came to the conclusion that this charge was untrue as well. The trustees tried repeatedly to get Mrs. Cloughtsen to come before them to make a statement. This episode began in June, and by the following March, she had still not come forward. Usually she stated it was inconvenient. She was excluded in March, 1844, for not coming forward (Bethel Church Minutes 1843, 1844).

In 1844 Aaron Stoops owned the "Morvan" farm west of the church. In 1847 he apparently remarked to a friend that he doubted the honesty of John McCrone. The church appointed a committee of three to talk with Aaron Stoops "in a friendly manner" (Bethel Church Minutes 1847). The out-come of this matter is not recorded.

From time to time, members of the church gave gifts of money or left the church money. Catherine Rezoe, who had been present at the first business meeting, died in 1841, leaving the church "$180.00 to be invested at 6%." In the same year Mr. William Welsh of Philadelphia gave $50.00 to assist in the repairing of the meeting house (Bethel Church Minutes 1841).

The year 1844 was an important one for the Bethel Church. First, a preacher had finally been located. By a unanimous vote of the trustees, Joseph Smart was chosen:

> To all whom it may concern whereas our Bro. Joseph Smart has been sometime among us, having brought with him, Credentials from our Sister Church of Oxford, Warren County New Jersey, as a licensed Preacher, and having labored with us for some time in the Gospel, and we being satisfied with his moral Character, Soundness in the faith and call to preach. Therefore we have this day by an act of the Church Solemnly set apart said Joseph Smart to the Gospel Ministry, by ordination and do hereby acknowledge him clothed with full authority, in full or in all functions in the Ministrations of the Gospel of Christ.
>
> By order of the Church
>
> Sept. 9, 1844 John McCrone, Jr. Clerk"

Second, Anthony Lumkins was appointed as sexton. He was one of the original members at Welsh Tract and joined Bethel in 1838. Apparently one of his duties was taking the collection, for in 1846 he was allowed to keep $1.00 for every $6.00 he collected for the church. Anthony Lumkins remained the sexton until his death in 1864 (Bethel Church Minutes 1844, 1846, 1864).

The Bethel Church began to decline after 1844, and the new preacher, Bro. Smart, did not last as long in his capacity as Anthony Lumkins did in his. Suddenly membership began to decline. In February of 1845, Bros. McCrone and Smart were appointed to "wait" on Sister Fauensen to find out why she had not been attending meetings. Sister Fauensen told them she did not want to join the "New Religion," but she no longer wanted to be a member of Bethel. She was excluded (Bethel Church Minutes 1845). In December Bros. Spencer and Smart "waited on" Sister Craynor concerning her absences. Nothing more was recorded concerning this issue; however, in 1851, Sister Craynor, who came to Bethel Church from the Welsh Tract Church, requested and was granted a letter of dismission (Bethel Church Minutes 1845, 1851). The only recorded event appearing in the minutes book the following year was that a fence had been erected around the cemetery. John McCrone purchased the fence posts (Bethel Church Minutes 1846).

The cemetery had always been a very important component of the Bethel Church, and it was often mentioned in the minutes. The chief concern seemed to be that the cemetery was filling up. Furthermore, the people filling the cemetery were neither associated with nor supportive of Bethel Church. Most entries are as follows:

Jan. 1822: "Grave-yard filling up fast. Thus non Church supporters will have to pay $2.00 for a grown person, $1.00 for a child, and colored Brethren have the northeast corner."

Mar. 1822: "Grave-yard charge raised to $4.00 for a grown person, $2.00 for a child and Colored ... have northeast corner."

Mar. 1832: "The Grave Yard filling up fast ... for the future all persons who do not aid in support of the Church ... shall pay $2.00 for a grown person, and $2.00 for a child ... also ... that the colored People have northeast corner of the yard for their burying place."

Oct. 1839: "... hereafter we will charge for every single person buried in the graveyard $2.00...."

Apr. 1840: "... the church will charge to strangers ... $6.00 each adult; for a plain grave $2.00 will be charged for the section, and for a case grave $3.00 ... children under 13 ... half price."

Aug. 1840: [Prices were again changed and stated.] "... Money must be paid before breaking ground."

Nov. 1866: Benjamine Booth who owned the old Morvan farm, gave the church "an 18 ft. square". The land the lane had occupied was also converted to cemetery land. A proposition was made to "lay off

lots ... along lands belonging to New Castle Commons ... in ... tenure of George Morrison" and to sell such lots for $20.00, for which the Church will issue deeds. This is signed by E. Rittenhouse, Pastor."

1910: The new City-County building was being erected in downtown Wilmington. This land was associated with the Wilmington Primitive Baptist Church. Those buried in the cemetery were moved to the cemetery of the Bethel Old School Baptist Church. These graves were placed in the southwest corner of the cemetery (Bethel Church Minutes 1910).

During the year 1848 there was a change in the relationship of the Pastor Joseph Smart and the congregation of the Bethel Church. Because so many members had died or moved away, Bro. Smart proposed that the church accept new members from other churches without letters (Bethel Church Minutes 1848). In October the trustees of the church met to consider Bro. Smart's idea of receiving members without the customary letter. Bro. Smart was not at this meeting, and a committee of three was appointed to visit Bro. Smart. They were to find out if it were true that Bro. Smart and his wife had "utterly renounced all communion" with them as a church and whether it was true that Bro. Smart would not associate not only with Bethel Church, but with all churches called "Old School Baptist."

Bro. Smart lived in Philadelphia; the committee traveled all the way there, only to find that he was not at home. The committee did not succeed in communicating with Bro. Smart and his wife, Mariaha, until the following April 1849. When the committee asked him his views,

> he declared very emphatically and decidedly that he had no connecion [sic] whatever with an Old School Baptist Church or Association an unauthorized by scripture ... and that the giving and receiving of Church letters was like Bulls from the Pope. "Bro. Smarts wife was present and concurred with everything her husband said. "Whereupon it was resolved unanimously that Bro. Smart be excluded ... Sister Smart ... also ... excluded. And a person from the Bethel Church was appointed to inform the Association (Bethel Church Minutes 1849).

The one positive occurrence of 1849 was the gift given by Mary McCulloug, a widow with three children, to Bethel Church of approximately four more acres of land. This land was in front of the church and continued southeast to the Christiana-New Castle Road (Deed books G2:274, D6:366). The Widow McCulloug had inherited the land from her former husband, William Coulter.

Historic maps still showed only one structure, presumably the church, in 1849 (Rea and Price 1849). Almost 20 years later, the 1868 Beers Atlas showed two structures in front of the church close to the lane.

The 1850s were not, however, "growing" years for the church. The black man, Anthony Lumkins, continued as the sexton and was often owed money by the church. Many of the older members died during these years including Elizabeth

McCrone, wife of John, and, another member of their household, Jane Farmer. Several members requested and were granted letters of dismission; some to join different churches and others because they moved away. Also, some were excluded (Bethel Church Minutes 1850-1860).

An entry was made sometime between 1855 and 1858 saying, "From this time on Church ... distitute [sic] of a pastor and without regular supplies for a long time, and so no regular church meetings for business held." (Bethel Church Minutes n.d.). The next entry states,

> About the beginning of ... 1858 the members having become somewhat acquainted with Elder E. Rittenhouse of Kingwood Church in ... New Jersey ... arrangement was made ... to preach for the church the 2nd Sunday in each month. This ... continued satisfactory for a while."

By December 1858, the Bethel Old School Baptist Church and the Wilmington Primitive Baptist Church, in conjunction with other Baptist Churches in the area, unanimously agreed to call Ephrim Rittenhouse to the "pastoral charge." The fact that he was to preach once a month at the Bethel Church, suggests that his was a circuit ministry.

Here, although the record is unclear, it seems that Bethel Church offered Rittenhouse and his family a place to live, for the minutes state, "This call was accepted and Rittenhouse with his family an [sic] the parsonage lot belonging to the Church the latter part of March 1859." This implies that the congregation of Bethel Church were planning to have a parsonage ready for Elder Rittenhouse the following year (Bethel Church Minutes 1858).

In November of 1860, Elder Rittenhouse and his wife Harriet "presented letters and were received by Deacon John McCrone" (Bethel Church Minutes 1860). The 1860 Census included the Rittenhouse family. Ephrim Rittenhouse listed his profession as a "A.S.B." Clergyman. Besides his wife Harriet, the household consisted of Sarah (10), Katura (8), Alonso (6), Autor (3), and Emily (1). Also living with the Rittenhouse family was a 24 year old school teacher named James Vanarsdale. Ephrim listed the worth of his property at $2,000 (U.S. Population Census 1860).

In the same census John McCrone, farmer, was recorded as having property valued at $21,000. His wife, Elizabeth, had died the previous year. But the following year, John age 72, remarried a woman named Margaret, who was 29 years old (U.S. Population Census 1860). George McCrone, a farmer, aged 52, who lived southeast of the Christiana-New Castle Road, was elected a trustee in 1862. John Moore was elected a trustee in 1869.

The church continued to decline in members. The number of entries of business meetings during the 1860s, declined as well. Only 7 or 8 members remained in 1862. John McCrone died in 1863, and the sexton, Anthony Lumkins, died in 1864. Only Sarah and Katura Rittenhouse were baptized and accepted into the church during this decade. By 1864 even the Rittenhouse family had moved to Wilmington (Bethel Church Minutes 1860-1870).

The church histories of Baptist churches in Delaware all concur that the Bethel Old School Baptist Church ceased to exist early in the next decade. Roberts reported that on June 3, 1871, the five remaining members wanted to dissolve the Bethel Church and to reunite with the Welsh Tract Church (1958:3). The last time the minutes of the Association mentions Bethel Church is in 1871 (Cook 1880:38-40).

Sometime during this period, the remaining Bethel members wrote a letter to the Welsh Tract Church, describing their plight with few members and proposing a reuniting of the Bethel Church with the Welsh Tract Church. The Bethel members were concerned about the eventual fate of their "church property, and cemetery, and also the parsonage, with all the deeds and title papers thereto...." They wanted the Welsh Tract Church to assume responsibility for "keeping in repair the place of worship ... using the funds that had been willed to the Bethel Church for that purpose." The letter was sent to the Welsh Tract Church with every expectation that this arrangement would be accepted. The letter was signed by Elizabeth Moore and Jane Smith, who had been members since the early days. The remainder of signers were members of the Rittenhouse family, including Sarah, Katura, and their parents, Harriet and Elder Ephrim Rittenhouse (Bethel Church Minutes n/d).

The ultimate fate of the Bethel Church building remains a mystery, as does the date of the building's demise. There is no documentation, and even interested members of the Wilmington Primitive Baptist Church do not know what happened to it (Mrs. Roach, personal communication).

The next entry was 50 years later, in 1922. A meeting was called at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Wood on State Road, Delaware (Route 13). The purpose of the meeting was to formulate a corporation that would incorporate all the Bethel Church property, papers, and funds. Although the secretary avows that a corporation was formed and duly recorded with the State of Delaware, no record of it could be found in the Record of Corporations (Records of Deeds and Corporations).

The events leading up to this meeting were as follows: Apparently the former members of the Bethel Church had joined the Welsh Tract Church. On November 5th, 1904, Alonso Rittenhouse (son of Ephrim) called a meeting at the Welsh Tract Church. Alonso called to the attention of the church, the agreement that had been made between the Welsh Tract and Bethel churches. That agreement stated that a separate board of trustees should be chosen to manage the affairs of the Bethel property. Undecided at this meeting, the matter was referred to a later meeting (Edwards 1978:20).

Welsh Tract's board of trustees met again over the matter in February, 1905. It was brought forward that Bethel had "surrendered" all property, including the cemetery, the parsonage, and all deeds and funds to the Welsh Tract Church in 1871. Alonso consented to settle the matter by having a committee look over the Bethel assets. The committee included Alonso Rittenhouse, David Hyde, and two others (Edwards 1978:21).

The issue concerning the Bethel Church assets must have been settled, for it was not mentioned again; however, once again, in 1922, Alonso Rittenhouse and David Hyde differed with the Welsh Tract Church over a question of policy. This time Rittenhouse and Hyde were excluded (Roberts 1978:35).

Rittenhouse and Hyde were "crushed." They applied to the Wilmington Primitive Baptist Church for membership and were accepted. Meanwhile, they had organized a society for the purpose of holding religious services at "State Road Chapel."

The creation of the corporation made it possible for them to regain management of the Bethel Church property and funds. A letter was written to the Welsh Tract Church requesting the return of the Bethel Church assets. A resurrection of the Bethel Church was planned (Edwards 1978:35-37).

In 1923 another meeting was held at the "Chapel at State Road" where it was unanimously agreed to reorganize the Bethel Church. Of the 15 people present, many were relatives: Elder William Alexander (moderator), Decon John W. Brimer [?], Bro. Alfred Merredith, Emily Reed, Bro. Charles Hamilton-clerk, Sis. Alice Hyde Hamilton, David Hyde, Rose Hyde Rambo, Rose Rambo, Bro. A.E. Rittenhouse, Bro. John R. Rittenhouse, Sis. Etta Frazier Rittenhouse, Sis. Katura Rittenhouse, Sis. Sarah Rittenhouse.

Eleven years later an entry began, "February 14, 1934 Report State Road Delaware...." The entry described the situation of the Bethel Baptist Church, as recorded by one of the two remaining trustees, Charles W. Hamilton. (The other trustee was H.C. Dance.) Bro. Hamilton summarized the eleven years which had passed since the previous entries of 1922-23 had been made. He stated that there have been regular monthly worship services "under the Pastorate of our faithful beloved Elder Wilm. S. Alexander" (Bethel Church Minutes 1934). In all that time the trustees of the Welsh Tract Church had never returned the money due them for the maintenance of their cemetery, but it was hoped that soon they will be "moved by our Heavenly Father to act" (Bethel Church Minutes 1934).

Once again Bro. Hamilton provided a list of members now reduced to himself, his wife, a daughter-in-law, and a married daughter living in Vermont. He did, however, list seven people (two his relatives and three belonging to Cow Marsh Old School Baptist Church, 30 miles away in Wyoming, Delaware) who were interested in the Bethel Old School and "in our locality" (Bethel Church Minutes 1934).

Bro. Hamilton seemed discouraged as he wrote of the lack of assistance from the Welsh Tract Church and the lack of members for the Bethel Church. He mentioned the church records, letters, deeds, business meetings, which were gathered in a safe deposit box in a bank in Wilmington. He charged the Welsh Tract Church with responsibility for the condition of the Bethel Church property and cemetery. Some of the concerns that required attention were listed:

1) There is an open well in the front toward the highway dangerous to visitors.
2) The driveway to the cemetery has no closing fence.
3) The frontage lot facing the highway is allowed to be the resort of bootleggers and drinking people.

4) The Cemetery gate from the front lot has no padlock to keep [out] vandalism and auto parties... (Bethel Church Minutes 1934).

Finally, in June of 1939, Bro. Chas. Hamilton, counting himself, listed four members. They were all members of the Hamilton family, one living in Vermont. Once again, Bethel Church was dissolved, its few members taken by the Wilmington Primitive Baptist Church. Hamilton stated that many of the deplorable conditions had changed, some due to the care of Welsh Tract, and that

> as to drinking and auto parties they have practically ceased due changes in laws and the rapid real estate and home development taking place close to the cemetery region.

The final entry made in the Bethel Old School Book of Minutes concerned the disinterment of Charles Hamilton's son, Carl. He had died in October of 1914, aged 17. In 1944 he was taken to Greenlawn Memorial Cemetery in Farnhurst, Delaware, for reinterment.

## Field Research

Phase I Testing. During the Phase I portion of the project, the location of the Bethel Old School Baptist Church site was established and recorded with the Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (BAHP) in Dover, Delaware. The site was found to be approximately 2 miles east of the Route 7 junction with Route 273 and about 0.65 miles west of Hares Corner.

Mr. Walker, owner of the old "Morvan" farm west of the Bethel Church site, Faye Stocum, and Alice Guerrant from the BAHP in Dover, mentioned that there had been an historic marker near the road in front of the Bethel Church site. Mr. Walker remembered the marker, but told us that twice it had been knocked over by DelDOT grass mowers and was no longer there.

We were unsuccessful in locating any trace of the historical marker. In the Bethel Church Meeting House Records (Bethel Church Minutes 1821-1944) the last clerk, Mr. Charles W. Hamilton, copied the marker, verbatim:

[Arms of the State of Delaware]
Bethel Church

Site of Bethel Church, a branch of the Welsh Tract
Baptist Church, at the foot of Iron Hill,
Organized about 1780, by Rev. John Boggs at
the house of David Morton.
Church erected 1786 at the insistence of
Messrs Barton and Lewden.
Land donated by Andrew and Ebenezer Morton
Services discontinued about 1871.

Historic Markers Division 1933
N.C. 56

This property, at 100 Christiana Road, was not aligned to true north and south. Instead, it was aligned 37 degrees east and west of north. This configuration is probably due to the original boundaries of the New Castle Commons, which abutted the Bethel Church site along its eastern boundary. The land north and west of the church site, belongs to the "Morvan Farm." Members of the Morton family originally provided the southeast corner of the farm for the church; therefore, during most of the life of the church, they held the deed to the half acre on which the church stood. In addition, bequests by members added a total of three acres to the holdings of the Bethel Church. Today, the original deed is in the possession of the Wilmington Primitive Baptist Church (Mrs. Roach, a member of that church, exhibited that deed to the writer).

The meeting house and any other structures associated with it are no longer extant. At the time of the survey, a gray frame house and garage of 1950-1960s vintage occupied the lot fronting Route 273. Dr. Valdez, a member of a "Doctor's Group," used the house to see patients. A gravel drive lead into the property, and a split rail fence surrounded part of the land. There was an open well in the southeast part the front yard; most of the well's cement cap had crumbled fallen into the well.

North of the Valdez' backyard there was a wooded area primarily of wild block locust trees, thorn bushes, and poison ivy. In the summer, the lot was practically impenetrable because of the thickness of the underbrush. Many of the trees were broken during a summer storm in the previous year.

Beyond these woods was the cemetery associated with the Bethel Baptist Church. The oldest grave marker found was that of Francis Lowen Cooch, who died on August 27, 1791 (Zebley 1947:366). The latest stone found dated to the 1940s. This cemetery also contained members of the Wilmington Primitive Baptist Church. These graves were moved from Wilmington when the City-County Building was to be built on their cemetery. Traces of the road that led to the church and cemetery were still out-lined by trees along the northwest boundary of the site, and the gate to the cemetery was still there, although most of the fence was not.

During Phase I subsurface testing, 4 shovel tests were conducted in the right-of-way, and Test Unit 1 was placed near the open well in the front yard of the property. All but one shovel test, N66a, yielded artifacts that were in a mixed temporal context. Approximately half of the artifacts dated to the mid and late nineteenth century, including cut nails, pearlware, whiteware, and slip decorated redware. Most of the artifacts were recovered from Stratum A.

The cemetery at the northern portion of the site was inspected. It was noted that vandals had broken off or smashed most of the tombstones. The cemetery is also overgrown with poison ivy and other vegetation. No subsurface tests were conducted in the cemetery.

Methodology. All testing in both Phases I and II was conducted between the cemetery, on the north, and Route 273, on the south. No testing was conducted in the cemetery. The cemetery was subjected to a pedestrian survey and was found to have been extensively vandalized. Neglect had resulted in overgrowth so thick as to make any attempt to penetrate it in the summer virtually impossible.

Before Phase II subsurface testing at the Bethel Church site began, a grid was established along which the shovel tests would be conducted at 20-foot intervals. Each test was approximately 1.5 feet in width and extended to sterile subsoil. All soils were passed through quarter-inch screens; artifacts were collected; and soils were recorded. Initially six transects were established following the configuration of the property, which meant that they would not be aligned on a north-south axis. Subsequent testing was expanded to 12 transects, and, in all, 157 shovel tests and 13 test units were excavated (Figure 20).

Field Data. The soil at the Bethel Church site is Butlertown silt loam with a typical upper stratum consisting of 1.0 feet of brown to dark brown silt loam. The subsoil is described as a stratum 3.3 feet in depth comprised of yellowish brown silt loam or light, silty loam over a lower fragipan (Mathews and Lavoie 1970:13). Subsurface testing showed that much of the site conformed to this stratigraphic description and was undisturbed. Only four areas on the site exhibited any soil anomalies.

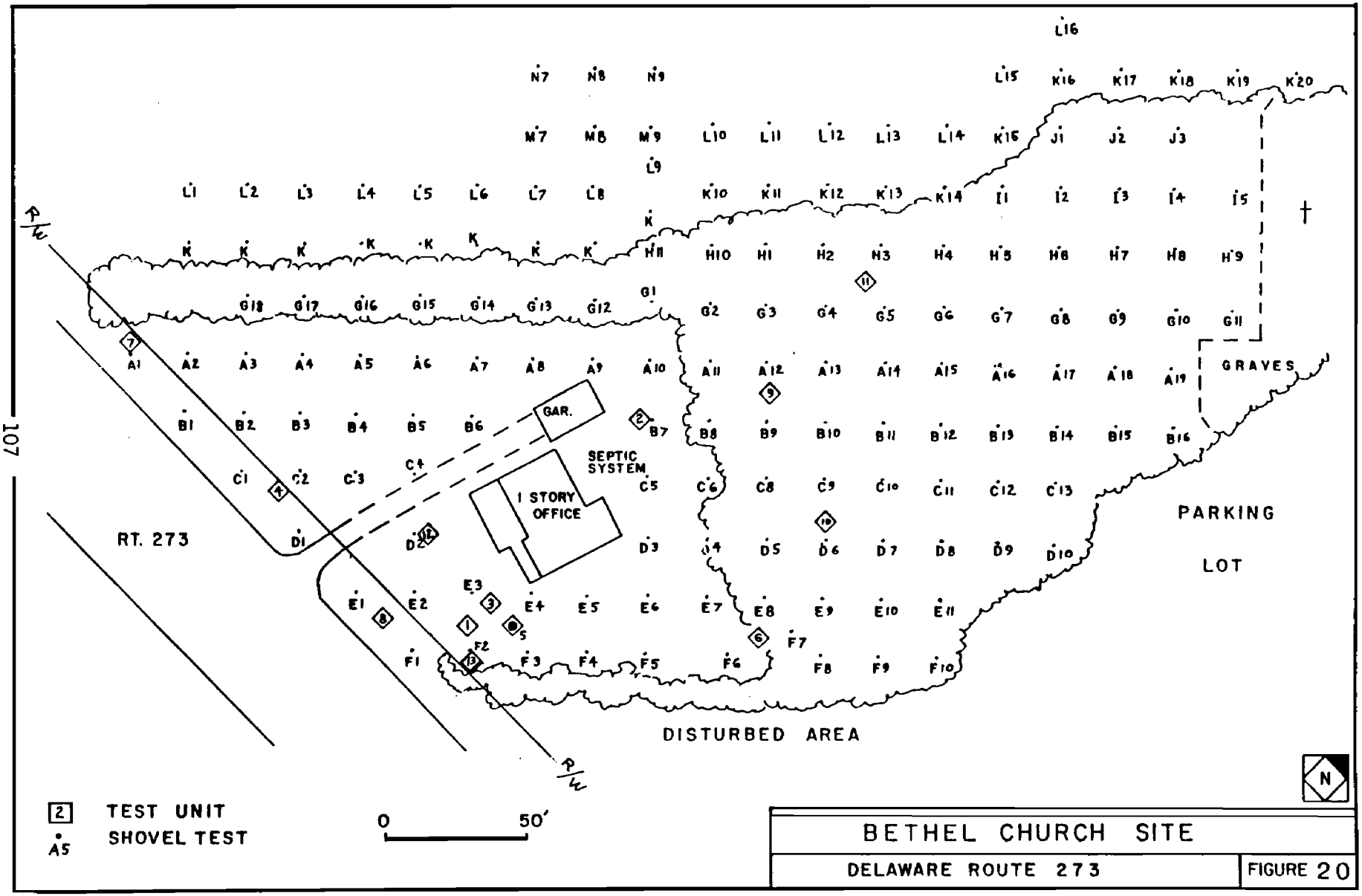
One of these disturbed areas was in the northwest corner of the site adjacent to the cemetery. Several of the tests (tests J1, L14, L15, H5, H6, and G8) lacked the upper level of dark brown silt loam. One shovel test (I5) in this corner contained burned material. The artifacts in these tests were scant and no different in nature or pattern than those on the rest of the site, except in Shovel Test I3, where an 1816 coin was found in context with asbestos tile. No subsurface features were found.

Testing revealed more disturbed soils just inside the woods on the southeast side of the site. Here, Stratum A was deeper, and sometimes, as in Shovel Tests D4, D5, E8, E9, E10, and F10, buried. More artifacts were recovered here than in the northwest corner; however, these artifacts were the same in kind and period as those found on the rest of the site. No subsurface features were present.

South of this area near the edge of the property, more disturbed soils were located. Shovel Test F4 uncovered reversed stratigraphy with a brownish yellow silt loam over a mottled brown and yellowish silt loam. Artifacts were recovered in the second, mottled level. Beneath this level the soil was "brown" (brown as the Munsell Book has assigned this color is really grayish brown, possibly indicating a high water table) and culturally sterile.

The area behind the Valdez' house and garage also displayed disturbed soils. Mottled clays were found in Shovel Tests A8, A10, and B7. Shovel Test B7 contained a subsurface feature. Small amounts of brick and a metal object were found under a large rock 1.5 feet below the datum. It was later established that this disturbance was related to the septic system on the Valdez' property.

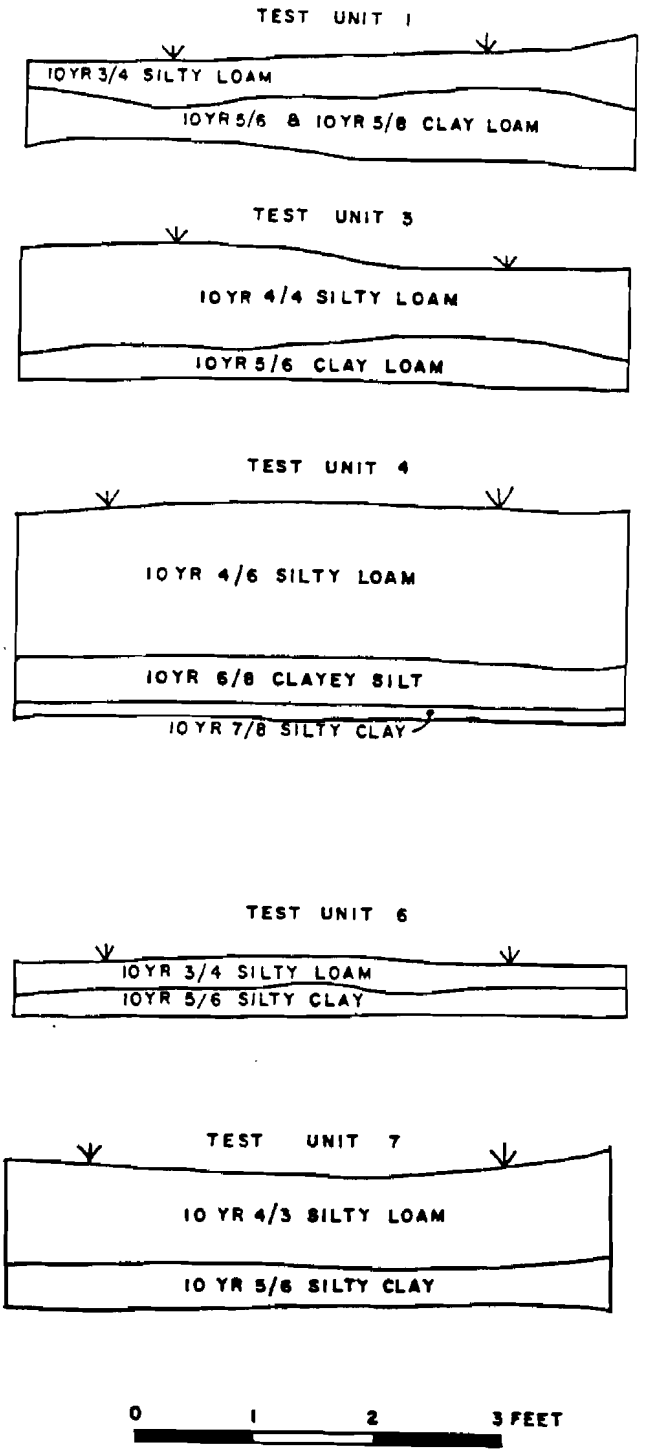
On the Bethel Church site, Test Unit 1 was excavated during Phase I testing along Route 273 (Figure 20). TU-1 was placed in the southeast corner of the yard near the well. Bethel Test Unit 1 had a shallow Stratum A of brown silt loam, which was laid over yellowish brown clayey loam in Stratum B (Figure 21). Among the 134 artifacts recovered were redwares, whitewares, plastic, aqua glass, and 2 pieces of pipe stem.




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

DELAWARE ROUTE 273

FIGURE 20




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

PROFILES OF TEST UNITS 1, 3, 4, 6, & 7 | FIGURE 21

Test Unit 2 was placed behind the Valdez' house where shovel testing had revealed disturbed soil with possible features (Figure 20). The unit was excavated to an average depth of 1.3 feet. Four strata were present as well, as two features; it was evident that the strata and features were caused by modern disturbance associated with the construction of a septic system. Nearly 1,000 temporally mixed artifacts were found. This unit departed so far from the norm, that it had to be excluded from subsequent analysis concerning the site to prevent skewed results. Its artifacts are, however, listed in Appendix A.

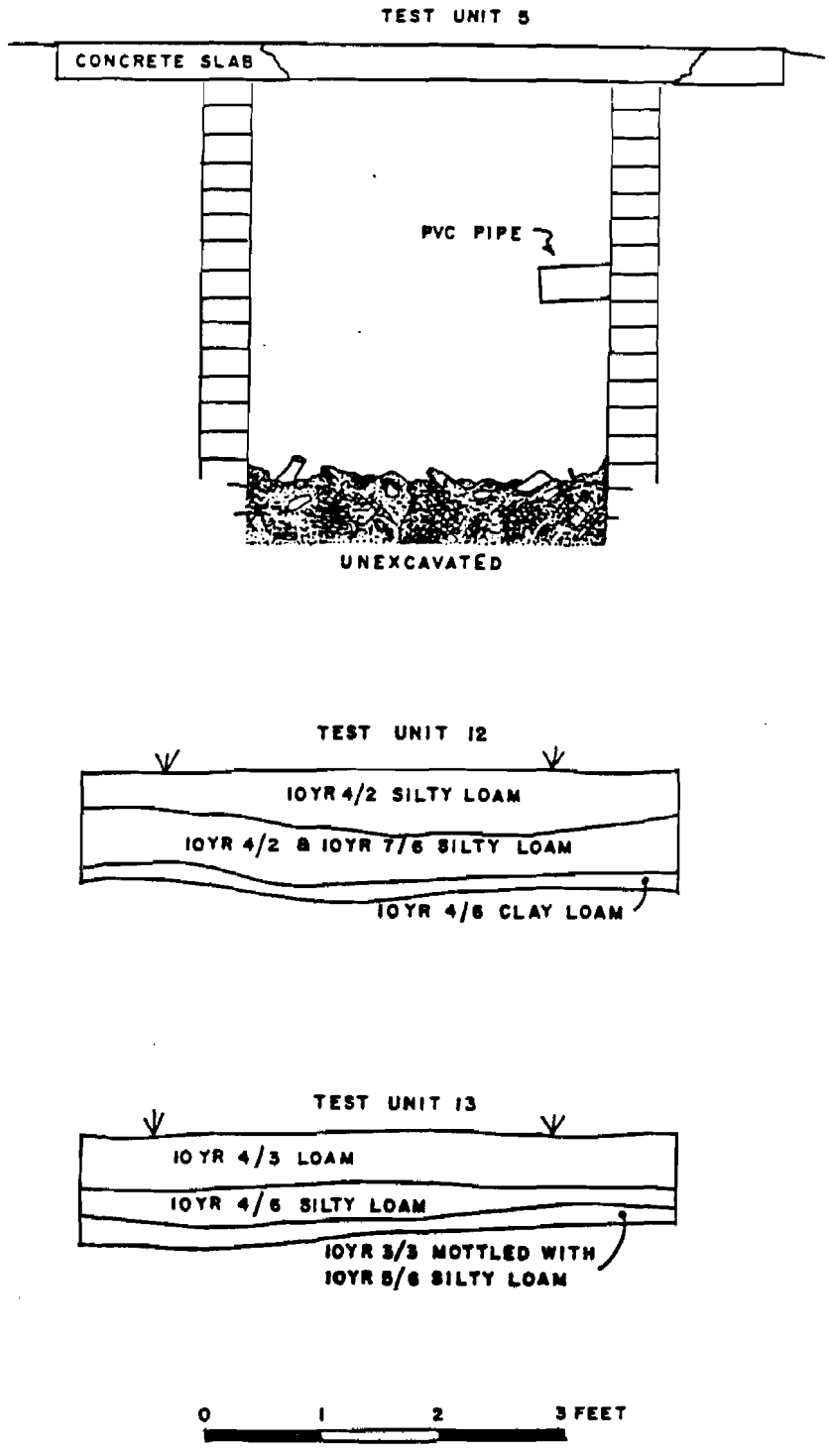
Test Unit 3 was excavated 5 feet north of TU-1 and 5 feet west of the well in the front yard (Figure 20). The soil sequence, which appeared undisturbed, was as follows: 0.6-0.9 feet of 10YR4/4 dark yellowish brown silty loam over 0.2-0.4 feet of 10YR5/6 yellowish brown clay loam. Strata A and B both contained artifacts, and the subsoil encountered at a depth of about 1.2 feet below datum was sterile (Figure 21). All but 11 of the 600 artifacts were found in Stratum A; among them were redware, pearlware, a metal coat hook, various glass shards of different colors, and nails. Test Unit 3 contained more artifacts than any other unit on the site with the exception of Test Unit 2.

Test Unit 4 was located on the northwest side of the gravel driveway (Figure 20). This was an area in which a relatively high concentration of artifacts had been located during the shovel testing. The stratigraphy of the soils began with 1.1-1.3 feet of 10YR4/6 silty loam, followed by 0.3-0.4 feet of 10YR6/8 clayey silt; these were, in turn, underlain by 0.1-0.15 feet of 10YR7/8 silty clay. Stratum A gave evidence of disturbance probably due to its nearness to both the main road and the driveway (Figure 21). In all, 462 artifacts were collected. In Stratum C, artifacts abruptly ended.

On the southeast side of the site, Test Unit 5 was placed around the well in the front yard (Figure 20). The well, designated as Feature 1, was 3 feet in diameter and lined with brick. Apparently this well has been a nuisance in the past. It was mentioned as an uncapped and dangerous well, in the 1939 minutes of the Bethel Church. Mr. Irvine Walker, owner of the "Morvan" farm, told a story of a man and his horse falling into the open well. The man was saved, but the remains of the horse, which was shot, were said to be in the well. The use of the property for "automobile drinking parties" was also mentioned in the Bethel Church minutes. This activity was reflected by the large number of modern liquor bottles, many of them intact, found in the well.

Excavation was halted at 3.7 feet below datum (Figure 22) when it was ascertained that great air pockets and the smell of sewage were present. The well had no stratigraphy per se, as it was filled with bottles and trash and not with soil. The fill was returned to the well. Among the whole bottles found in the well were 51 square Manischevitz, 16 whole Thunderbird, 2 Richards Wild Irish Rose, 2 Miller beer, 3 juice, and 16 Gallo Wine. This account does not include the many broken bottles that were also present. It should be noted that no horse skeleton was found.

Test Unit 6 was positioned on the southeastern side of the site (Figure 20), where many artifacts had been found during shovel testing. This shallow unit (0.3 feet yellowish brown silt loam) yielded no artifacts below Stratum A. Only 93 artifacts were recovered. Whiteware, redware, glass (both vessel and window), and nails were among the recovered items. The yellowish brown silty clay of Stratum B was culturally sterile (Figure 21).




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

PROFILES OF TEST UNITS 5, 12, & 13 | FIGURE 22

Test Unit 7 was located within the proposed project right-of-way on the southwest corner of the site (Figure 20). The soil was disturbed and consisted of mottled fill containing large patches of clay, clay loam, and sandy loam with cobbles. It is likely that this unit was disturbed due to its proximity to Route 273 on the southeast and/or to the position of an old road to the Bethel Church on the northwest. A dark feature was recorded in the northwest corner of the unit. The soil from this feature was screened separately. The artifacts it contained were not notably different than the other 52 artifacts found in the unit. The artifacts were primarily redwares, whitewares, glass, and a plastic comb. It was later established that the feature was a tree root (Figure 21).

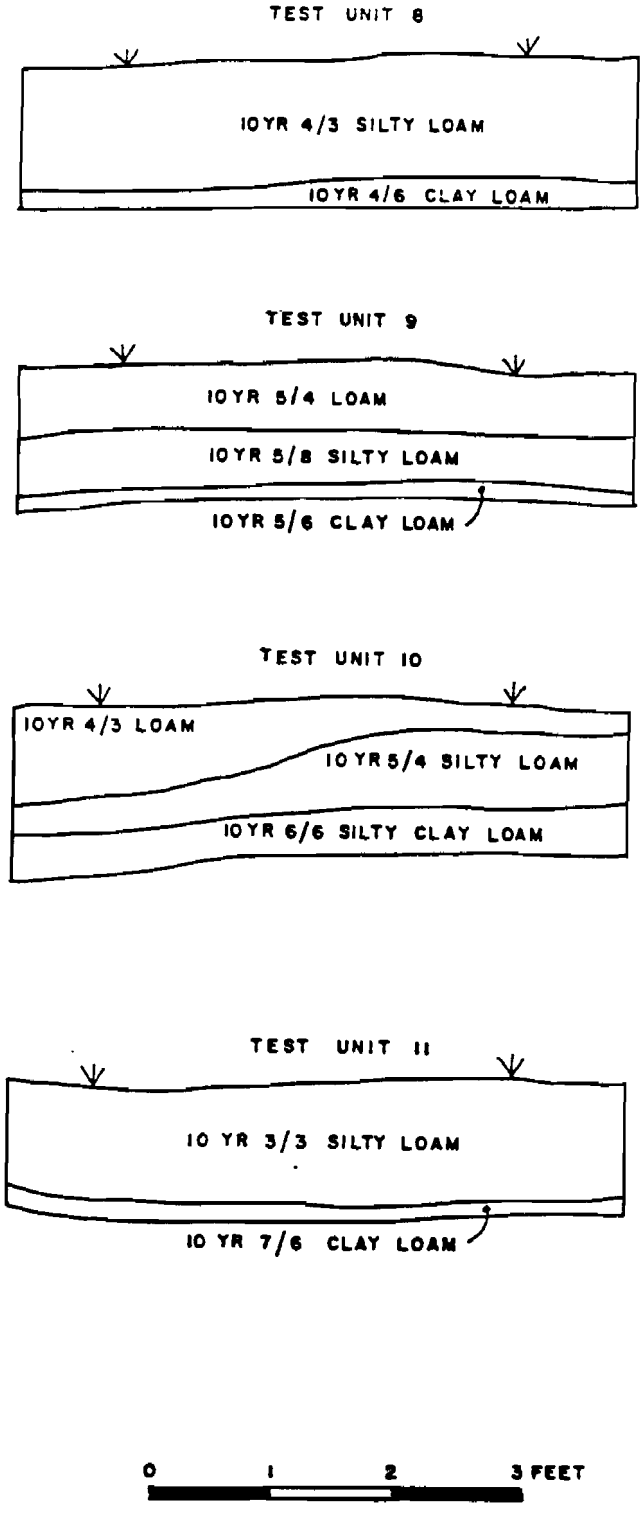
Test Unit 8 was also placed in the right-of-way, southeast of the driveway (Figure 20). Stratum A, a brown silty loam, contained the vast majority (418) of the artifacts recovered in this unit. In Stratum B, a dark yellowish brown clay loam, the number of artifacts dropped sharply to only 52. The artifacts discovered included redwares, pearlwares, whitewares, vessel glass, nails, 1 Kaolin pipe bowl, and 2 pipe stems. No features were present (Figure 23).

All the previous tests had been located in the right-of-way and in the yard of the Valdez' house. No cultural subsurface features had been located in these tests. Thus, testing was next conducted in the woods between the Valdez property and the cemetery. It was expected that any remaining trace of the Bethel Church and the other structures mentioned in the background research would be found here.

Test Unit 9 was positioned in the center, southwest portion of the woods (Figure 20). Strata A and B contained the same number of artifacts, 111. Stratum A was a yellowish brown loam containing some charcoal and coal and the usual assemblage of cultural material. Stratum B, a yellowish brown silty loam, contained more charcoal and coal. Samples were collected. Artifacts found included redware, whiteware, pearlware, vessel and window glass, nails, and a button. Stratum C was a yellowish brown clay loam. A shovel test 0.9 feet in depth was conducted in the center of the unit to verify the culturally sterile nature of Stratum C (Figure 23).

Test Unit 10, located southeast of TU-9 (Figure 20), was placed within the range of high artifact concentration as identified during the shovel testing phase. Most of the 211 artifacts recovered from TU-10 were in Stratum A, a brown loam. These included redware, pearlware, Bennington/Rockingham fragments, vessel glass, and a large number of window glass fragments. Fewer artifacts were found in Stratum B, which was a yellowish brown silty loam, and Stratum C, a brownish yellow silty clay loam, contained no artifacts. No subsurface features were found (Figure 23).

Test Unit 11, was situated on the northwest side of the woods, in the vicinity of ST-I3, in which an 1816 coin was found (Figure 20). The dark grayish brown silty loam contained 128 artifacts, including whiteware, pearlware, clear vessel glass, and window glass. All the artifacts, which were comparatively low in number (119), were recovered from Stratum A. Stratum B was a mottled dark grayish brown and dark yellowish brown silty loam. Stratum C was dark yellowish brown clay loam and was culturally sterile. This unit was near the northwest corner of the site, where shovel tests had found disturbed soil. No subsurface features were located (Figure 23).




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

PROFILES OF TEST UNITS 8, 9, 10, & 11 | FIGURE 23

Test Unit 12 was placed in the right-of-way, 10 feet east of the driveway and 35 feet south of the house (Figure 20). Approximately twice as many artifacts were found in the dark grayish brown of Stratum A (281), as in Stratum B (111). The soil in Stratum B was a mottled dark grayish brown and yellow silty loam. The dark grayish brown clay loam was culturally sterile (Figure 22). This unit produced the second highest number of artifacts (392) found on the site.

Test Unit 13 was also placed in the right-of-way, 20 feet south of the southwest corner of Test Unit 5 (Figure 20). Stratum A was a brown loam. Stratum B was a dark yellowish brown silty loam. The unit was closed in Stratum C, which was culturally sterile. In all, 152 artifacts were found in Stratum A, 87 in Stratum B, and 6 at its interface with Stratum C, a brownish yellow silty loam. The artifacts recovered were consistent with those found in the other tests and included redwares, whitewares, vessel glass, nails, and half a horse shoe. No subsurface features were present (Figure 22).

Analysis. Following the completion of the shovel testing phase, the data were analyzed in the same manner as that of the Taylor site, i.e., from the whole universe of data, certain components were extracted, separated into categories, and compared with other data concerning the site. First, edaphic factors were considered. Next, the physical data were examined, quantified, qualified, and separated into functional and temporal groupings. Lastly, the physical evidence and the documentary evidence were combined in an effort to understand the nature of the archaeological deposition.

The Bethel Church site is located on land previously used for agriculture. The soil series is Butlertown silt loam, moderately eroded. The upper stratum is described as brown or dark brown silt loam (10YR4/3). Beneath this, Stratum B consists of a yellowish brown heavy silt loam (10YR5/6). Mathews and Lavoie state that this soil type, when used for agriculture, is subject to considerable erosion (1970:13); indeed, the elevation of the Walker farm land adjacent to the Bethel Church site was noticeably lower than was the Bethel Church site.

Soil profiles on the Bethel Church site were studied and recorded during all subsurface testing. They indicated that the natural stratigraphy on the site was almost wholly undisturbed. A brown silt loam over a yellowish brown silt loam was typical. Four areas of soil anomalies were located, the northwest corner of the site, two areas on the southeast corner of the site, and the back yard behind the garage on the Valdez' property. The yard behind the Valdez' house was found to be abnormal because of the construction of a modern septic system. The other three areas appeared to have been the product of landscaping: the northwest corner lacked its upper stratum, while the southeast corner exhibited evidence of buried soils.

Background research had found that the original Bethel Church was built of logs on stone piers. At least one more building was present on the site during the life of the church, perhaps two. The other building[s] served as a church school and/or as a residence for the sexton and/or parson. The amount of land associated with the church varied throughout time. The original Christiana-New Castle Road (Route 273) has shifted over time. Plans for a road, approximately 400 feet in length and 10 feet wide, were made as early as 1824.

This road extended from the Christiana-New Castle Road up to the church and cemetery, which was an important component of the activities associated with the church.

On the Bethel site 106 shovel tests were excavated. The total number of artifacts recovered from the shovel tests on the site amounted to 1,186. Of this number 45% were made up of brick, mortar, and coal. Removal of brick, mortar, and coal from the shovel test artifact inventory resulted in a reduced total of 536 artifacts.

Excluded from analysis were Test Units 2 and 5. Test Unit 2 was found to be disturbed by the installation of a modern septic system. Test Unit 5 was the open well in the yard of the Valdez' property. Excavation of this well stopped when it was found to contain several feet of modern liquor bottles.

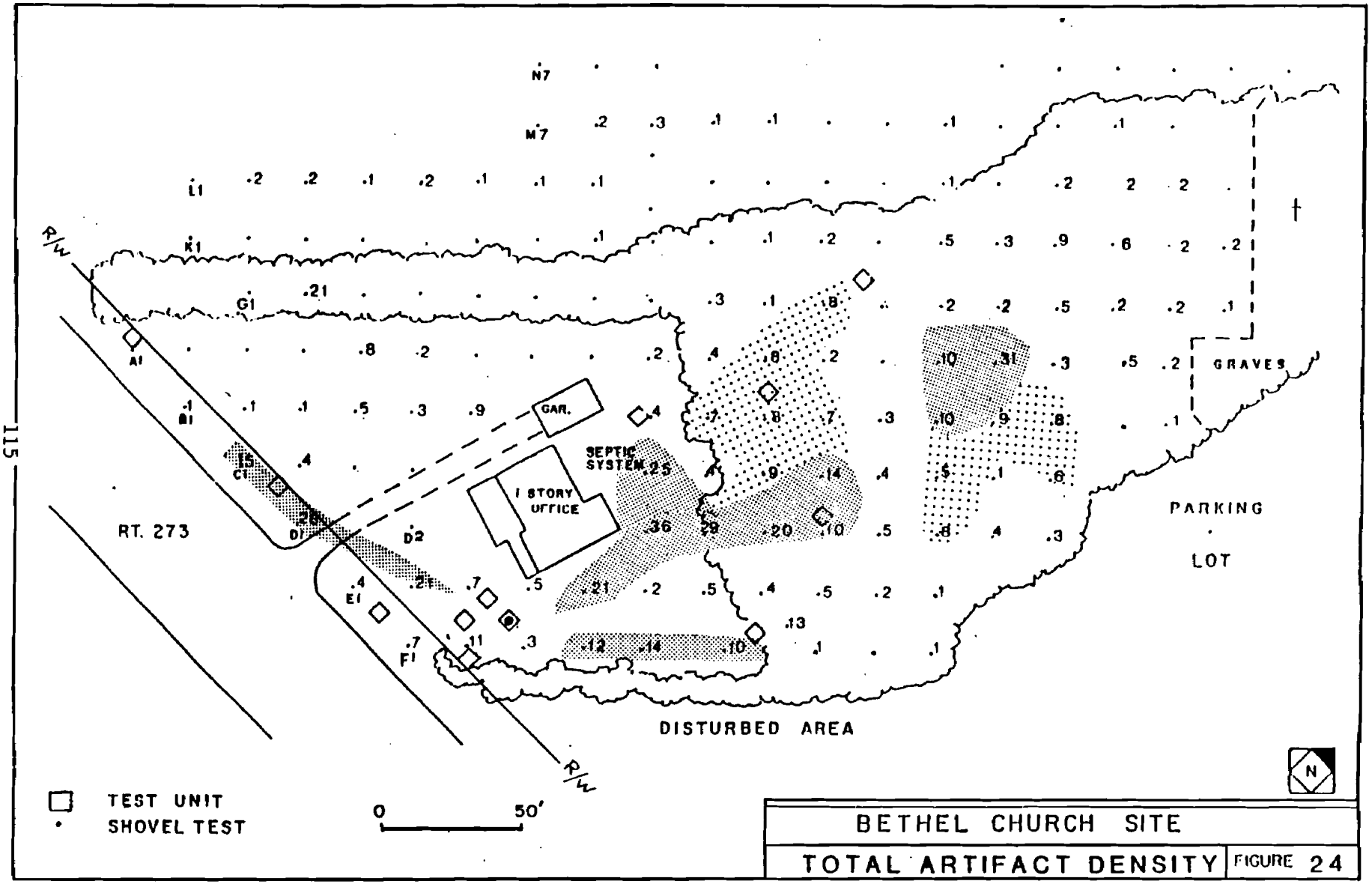
The data recovered from the shovel tests were analyzed using the following categories:

(1) Areas exhibiting soil anomalies,
(2) Areas of artifact concentrations,
(3) Concentration of kitchen related items,
(4) Ceramic distributions,
(5) Concentration of architectural related artifacts,
(6) Temporal distribution,

Unlike the Taylor site, only four areas of soil anomalies were present on the Bethel site. One of these was in the northwest corner of the site where the upper natural soil stratum was absent in some of the shovel tests. The area of disturbance behind the Valdez' house was associated with the septic system. In the southeast corner of the property, some filling or landscaping activity was in evidence.

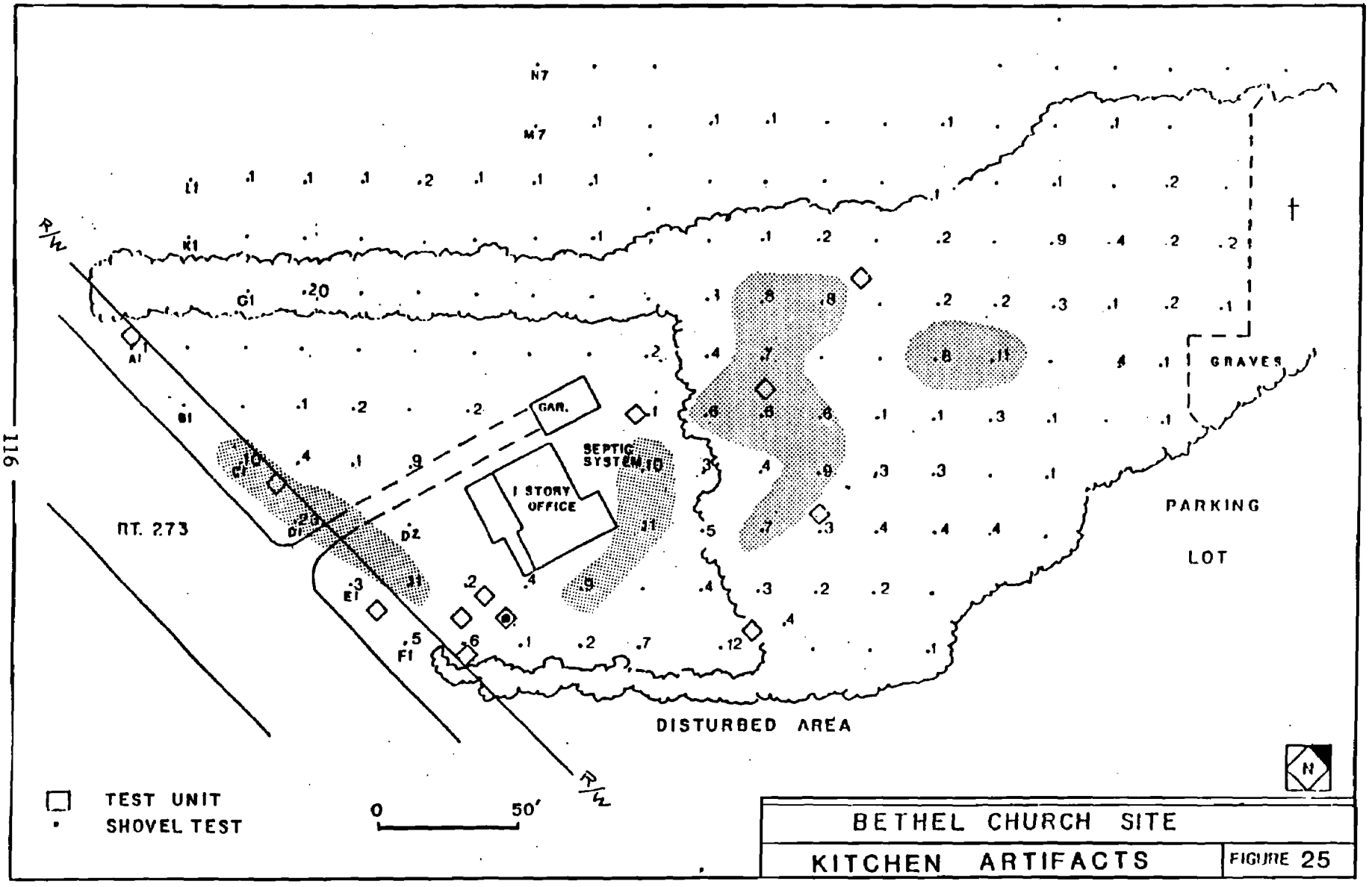
Plotting the frequencies of groups of artifacts revealed similar horizontal distributions. Overall, more artifacts were present on the southeast side of the site than anywhere else. Artifact density fell as the testing moved north and west. Three areas of concentration were noted. One area is located north and east of the Valdez' house. This area, forming a roughly north-south band including Shovel Tests E5, D3, D4, D5, D6, C5 and C9, consists of tests where 10 or more objects were found. Another area of artifact concentration is located at Shovel Test A16. The third area of concentration lay along Route 273 and was comprised of Shovel Tests F2, E2, D1, and C1. An area of relatively gradual fall off in density was found just west of the first area, and just east of the second and third areas (Figure 24). The area of density along Route 273 may be related to modern disposal practices relating to highway discard and to the present use of the site for periodic professional services. It seems likely that the other areas would relate to the parsonage and church respectively. It is interesting to note that a zone of low artifact density is found between these two high density areas at the rear of the property. This low density area may represent an historic boundary (i.e., fence line, wall location, etc.) between the buildings on the site.

The distribution of kitchen related artifacts formed a pattern similar to that of the overall artifact distribution, tending to create an S-curve beginning at the southeast corner of the site, curving around the Valdez house and continuing into the woods behind the house (Figure 25). Architectural




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

TOTAL ARTIFACT DENSITY FIGURE 24




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

KITCHEN ARTIFACTS

FIGURE 25

material was found in a similar pattern as that for kitchen artifacts: however, architectural material was found to cluster in three areas. Two of these concentrations of architectural material, one in the southeast corner and the one in the center of the woods, relate well to the overall kitchen group artifact distribution. The third area of concentration, located adjacent to the western edge of the current drive near the modern garage, consisted primarily of wire nails and may be related to the construction of current buildings on the site (Figure 26). It seems likely that the two other areas relate to the parsonage and church respectively.

The best temporal indicators at the site are the ceramics. The plotting of the distribution of ceramics reveals no strong temporal pattern. There appears to be a slight clustering of whitewares just north and east of the existing building (Figure 27). There is also a faint suggestion that the pearlware may be more widely distributed to the rear of the property (Figure 28). If the interpretations of these distributions were true it would correspond nicely to the periods of use for the parsonage and the church respectively.

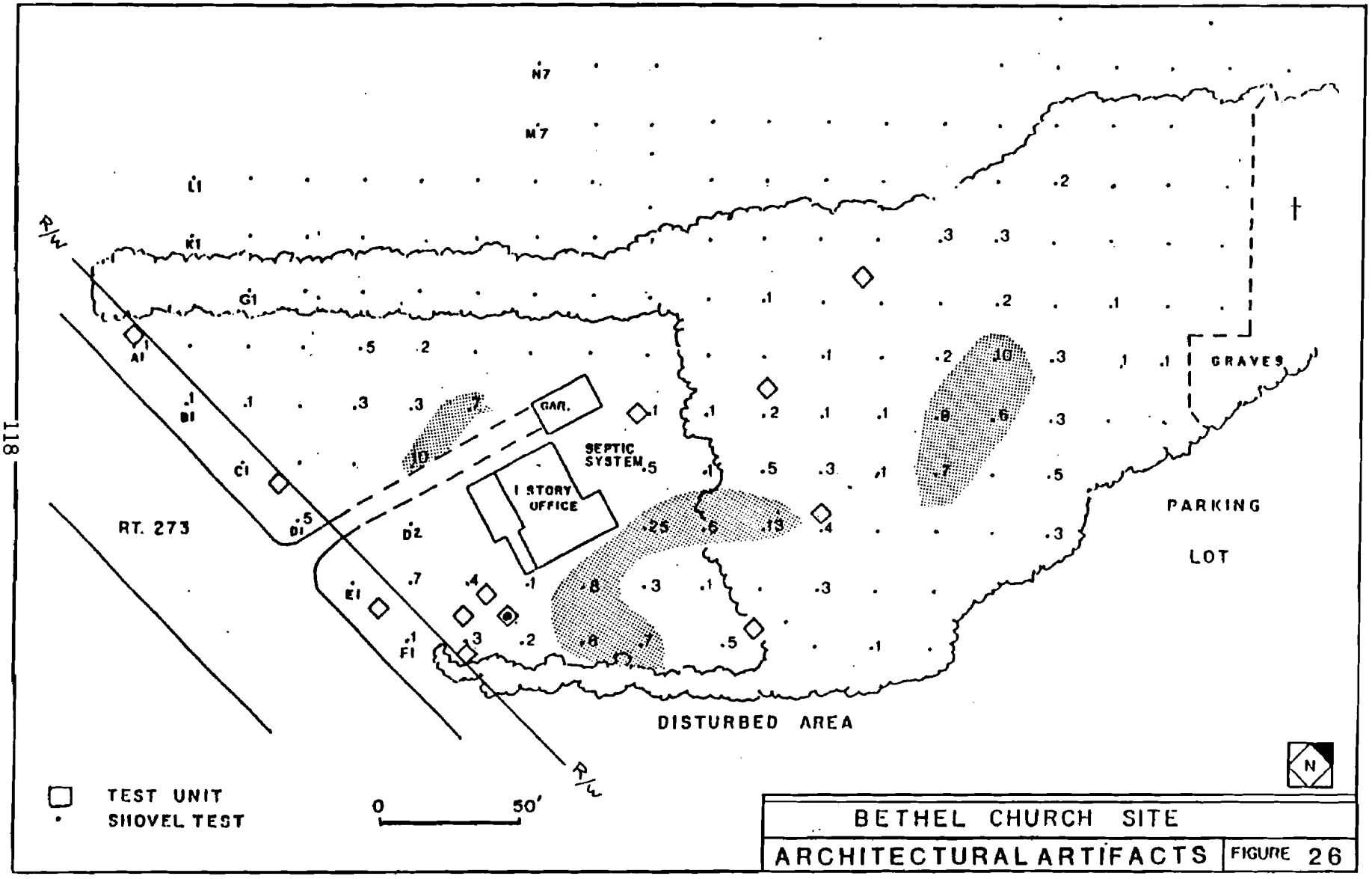
Ceramics may also be a good indicator of site activities or functions. Utilitarian ceramics such as redware and stoneware are usually related to food preparation and storage. Refined ceramics such as whiteware and pearlware are usually associated with food serving and food consumption. High status ceramics, such as porcelain, may indicate more formal food related activities such as teas and formal dinners, which, in turn, may indicate higher economic standing. Overall ceramic distribution loosely followed that of the total artifact assemblage (Figure 29). Some slight patterns were, however, noted in certain ceramic classes.

Redware was scattered horizontally across the entire site, but, as with the other groups of artifacts, frequencies dropped on the northwest side of the site (Figure 30). In contrast the stonewares found at the site were limited to the area around the existing buildings and primarily behind the office, suggesting a limited area of use and/or discard (Figure 31). The higher quantities of redware in this vicinity would support this notion and may reflect an area of food preparation and storage associated with the mid to late nineteenth-century parsonage.

The distribution of whitewares and pearlware also appear to be limited to the areas north and east of the existing building (Figures 27 and 28). If these deposits can be associated with the parsonage and the church, they suggest that food serving activities can be associated with both structures.

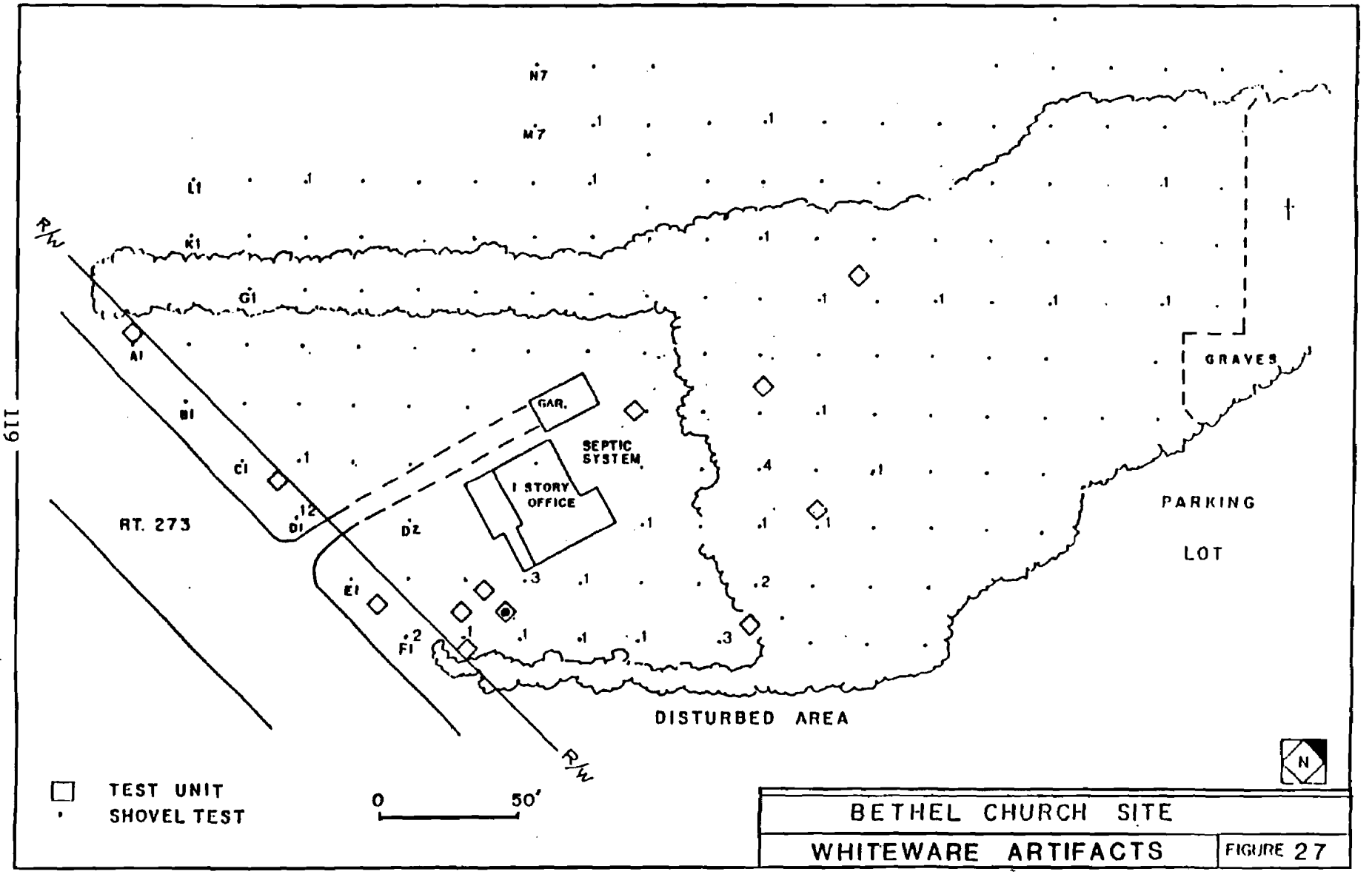
Porcelains appear to be the most restricted in distribution (Figure 32). Although porcelain is found in small quantities, seven of the nine tests in which porcelain was found are located in the northern portion of the site, near the cemetery. This would seem to indicate discard from activities associated with the church building and reflect a different functional focus between the church and the parsonage.

The artifacts recovered from the Bethel Church site were also organized into categories based on the functions they represented as designated by Stanley South (South 1977). Although his scheme was originally developed for eighteenth-century historic sites, the categories were deemed sufficiently broad as to permit site-wide organization for any period historic site. Minus




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

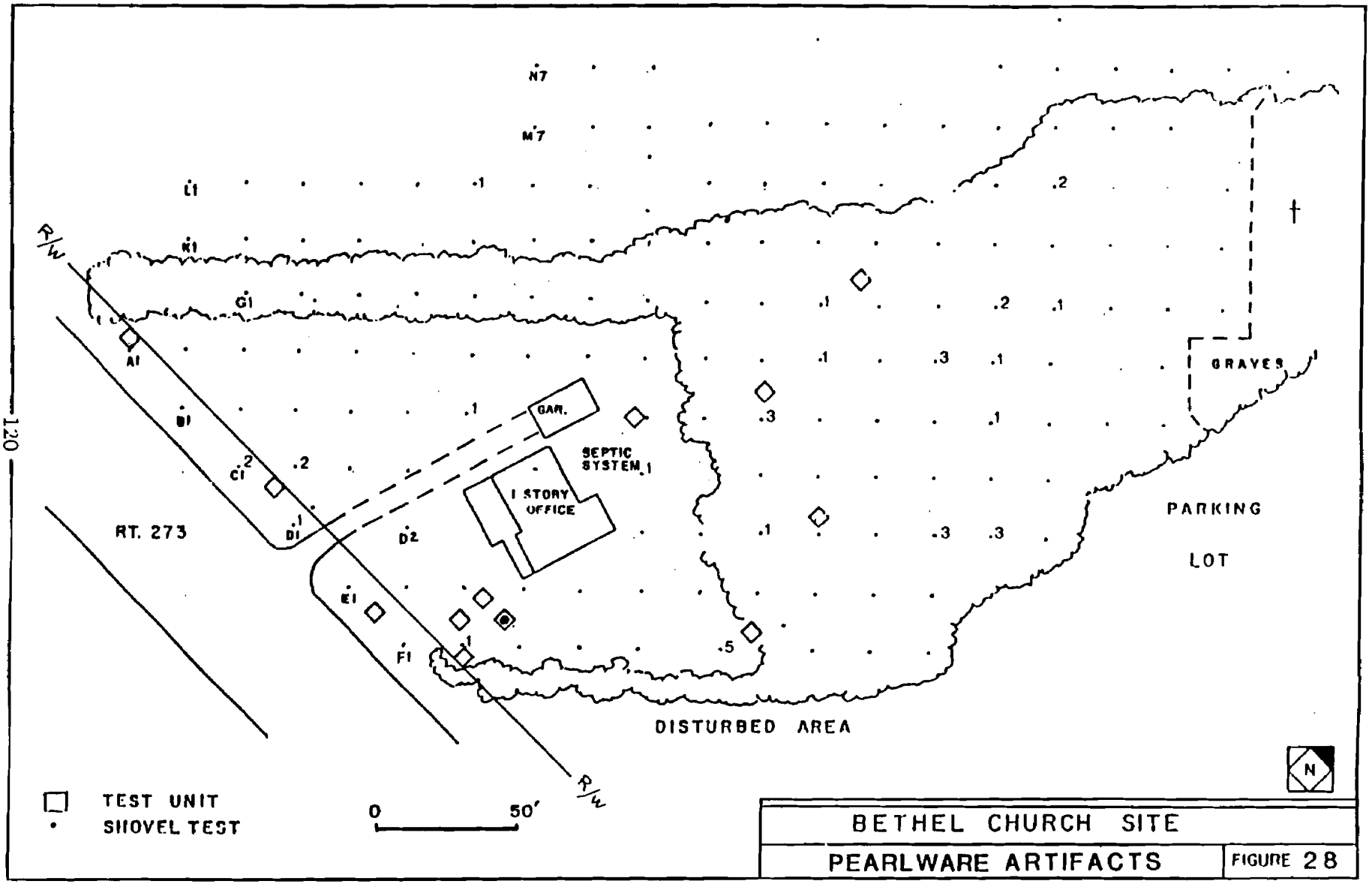
ARCHITECTURAL ARTIFACTS FIGURE 26




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

WHITEWARE ARTIFACTS

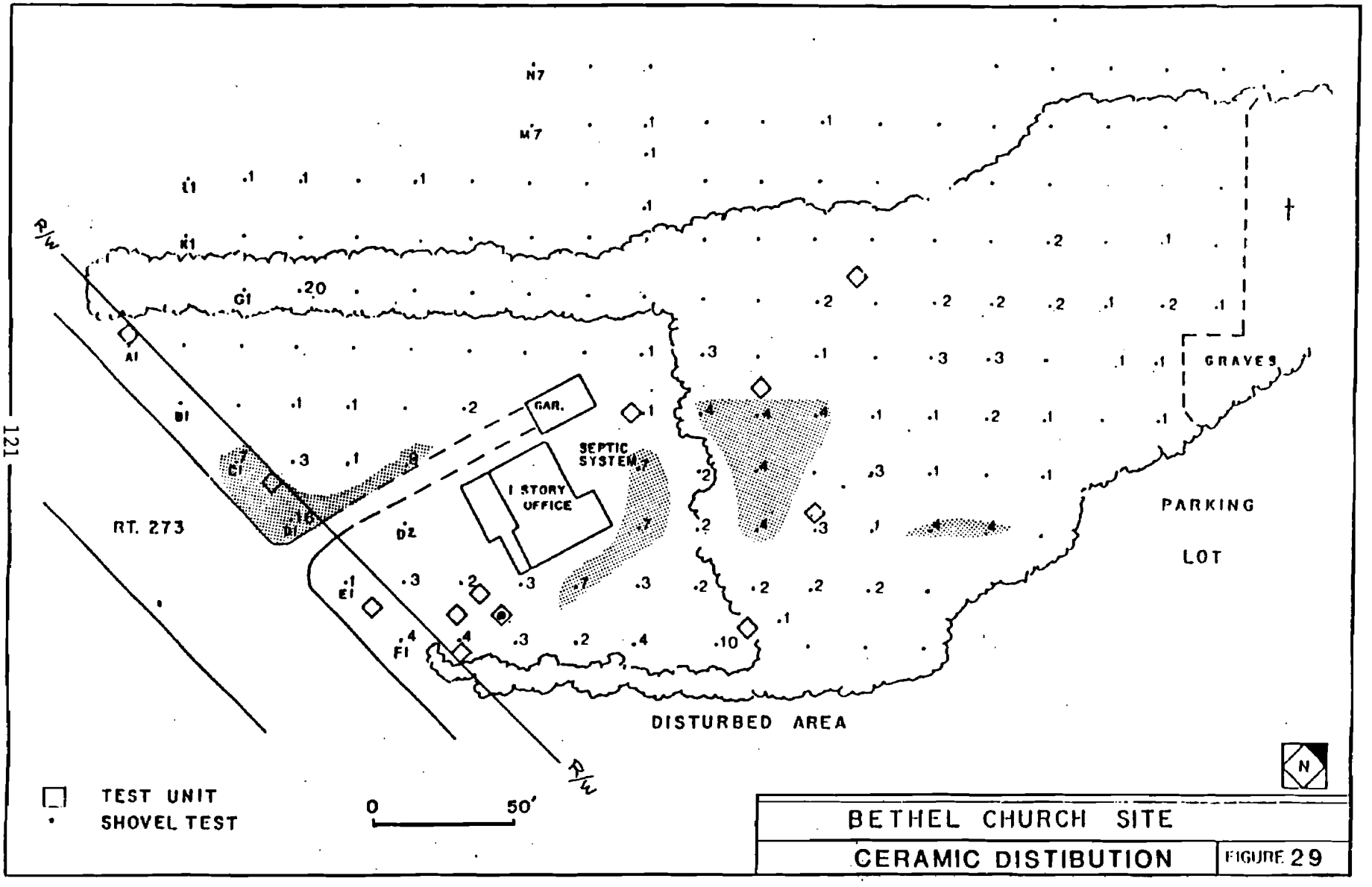
FIGURE 27




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

PEARLWARE ARTIFACTS

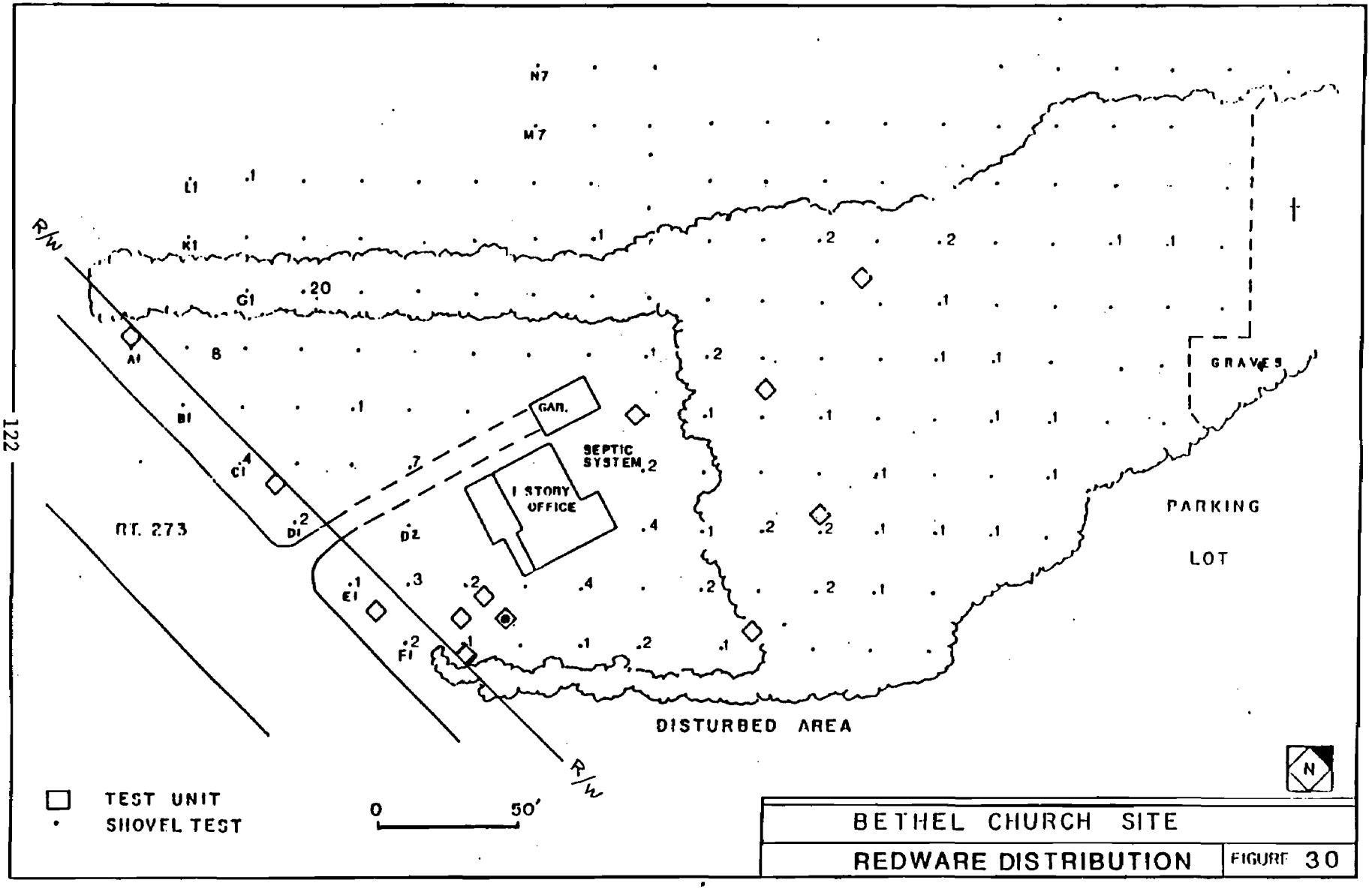
FIGURE 28




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

CERAMIC DISTIBUTION

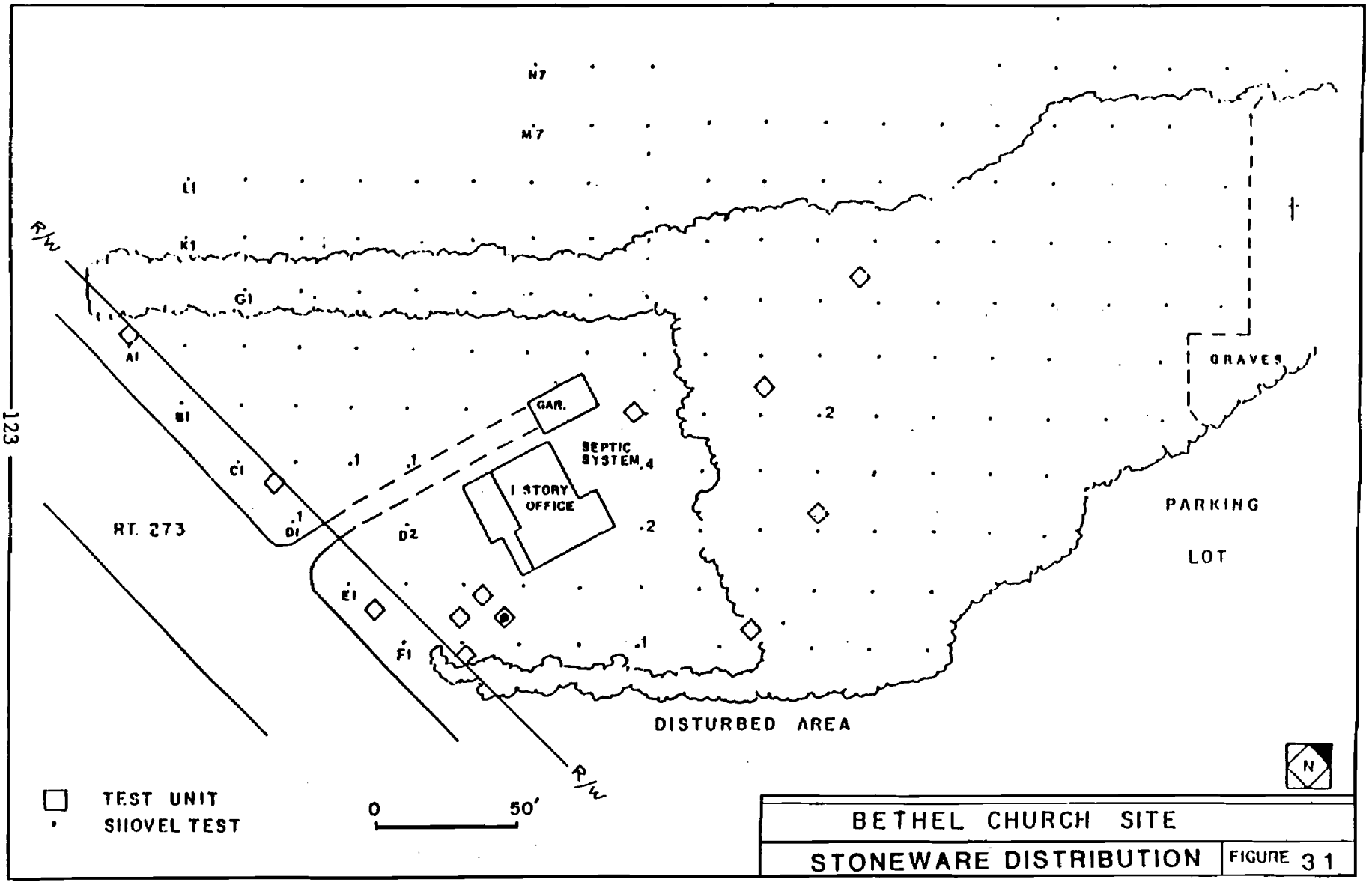
FIGURE 29




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

REDWARE DISTRIBUTION

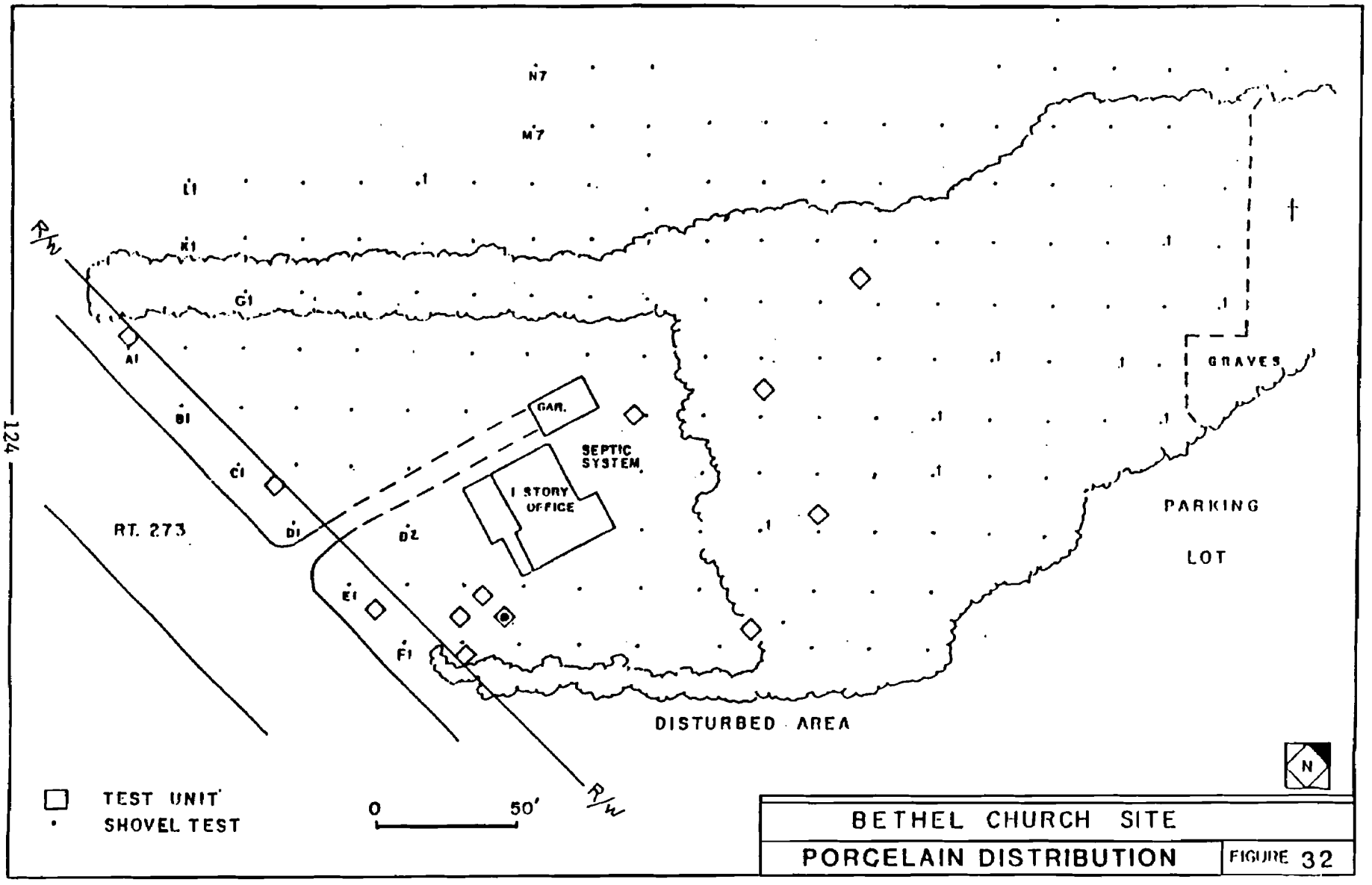
FIGURE 30




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

STONEWARE DISTRIBUTION

FIGURE 31




BETHEL CHURCH SITE

PORCELAIN DISTRIBUTION

FIGURE 32

brick, mortar, and coal, a gross total of 2,861 artifacts were found on the Bethel Church site. The placement of these artifacts in South's categories demonstrates that the overwhelming number of artifacts fit into just two groups: kitchen and architecture. A comparison was made of the percentages of artifact types recovered in the shovel tests and the percentages of those found in the units. This was done in order to combine artifacts from both the shovel tests and test units. Another rationale was to see if the shovel tests had correctly predicted the material and percentages recovered in the test units.

Table 6
Bethel Church Site
Comparison of Percentages of Artifacts from Shovel Tests and Test Units

| | Shovel Tests (603) | | | Test Units (2258) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Category | # | % | | # | % | |
| Kitchen | 356 | 59.0 | >98.1 | 1,479 | 65.5 | >98.6 |
| Architecture | 236 | 39.1 | | 748 | 33.1 | |
| Furniture | 0 | 0.0 | | 3 | 0.13 | |
| Arms | 0 | 0.0 | | 0 | 0.0 | |
| Clothing | 3 | 0.5 | >1.99 | 8 | 0.4 | >1.4 |
| Personal | 0 | 0.0 | | 1 | 0.04 | |
| Tobacco | 3 | 0.5 | | 14 | 0.6 | |
| Activities | 5 | 0.9 | | 5 | 0.2 | |

Table 6 verifies that almost all the artifacts found at the Bethel Church site fit into either the kitchen or architectural group. In addition, the data suggest that the shovel testing at this site was providing a representative sample of the artifacts present as the percentages and the nature of artifacts are close to those found in the test units.

The relationship of kitchen related items to architectural artifacts in the assemblage would suggest that domestic activities predominated in the history of site use (compare Wise 1980). Only two units contained a higher percentage of architectural artifacts than kitchen artifacts in any of their strata: Test Unit 7 and Test Unit 13. Test Unit 7 displayed disturbed stratigraphy along with an atypical artifact distribution. It is probably the position of Test Unit 7, which was located in the northwest corner of the site, which accounts for these factors. Test Unit 13 displayed a higher number of architectural artifacts than kitchen artifacts in Strata A and B, and the same number of artifacts in Stratum C. The ratios however are not great.

Since horizontal patterns of artifact distribution appeared to be in evidence, it was important to know if there were any vertical manifestation as well. If so, this might indicate an arrangement of significant deposition. This was expected to be evident stratigraphically, as the soils on the Bethel Church site had been found to be largely undisturbed. No such pattern was discerned.

A final word relates to the nature of deposition within the proposed right-of-way. Test Units 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8 lay either in or adjacent to the proposed right-of-way. The assemblages of these units reflected similar percentages when structured using South's categories (i.e., circa 70% of the assemblage falls into the kitchen group and circa 20% of the material is architecturally related). In a similar fashion the percentages of ceramic classes also are very similar (i.e., refined ceramics constitute almost exactly 75% of the ceramic assemblage, and utility wares 25%). These figures suggest a fairly regular distribution of artifactual data along the portion of the site that is adjacent to Route 273.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Bethel Church has a long and interesting history, beginning with its founding as a "mission" of the Welsh Tract Church at the foot of Iron Hill, near Newark, Delaware. As early as 1786 a log church was built on land provided by a neighboring parishioner and farmer, David Morton.

In 1838-1839 Bethel Church was established as a church in its own right. Church officials had regular business meetings, of which careful records were kept. The book containing the minutes of these business meetings is the primary reason that such a consummate history of the Bethel Church is possible.

The church reached its apex in the mid-nineteenth century. It was then that the church contained the most members, most of them quite active in church affairs. Members of the church included blacks, as well as whites, which suggests an especially enlightened attitude on the part of the parishioners, particularly for that time.

The cemetery behind the church had always been a very important component of church business. Not only were church members buried there, but others as well. The original half acre with which the church started increased to three acres through donations. A school was planned to be converted into a house for the sexton. Later a parsonage is mentioned. Maps show as many as three structures on the site in 1868.

Church membership declined during the last third of the nineteenth century. After 1871 Bethel Church ceased to send a representative to the Baptist Association; however, the church attempted a resurrection in 1922. The handful of new members met in a private house and tried very hard to keep the church going. They even tried to incorporate. No record of an incorporation has been found.

The most important research question concerning the work done on the Bethel Church site was whether or not it would be possible to recognize, from the archaeological record, the type of site it had been. On this site regular religious assemblies had occurred for about 150 years. The only physical clue

remaining was the cemetery that had been located behind the church: cemeteries, however, are not always associated with a particular church, as there are both family and commercial cemeteries.

The only similar site, where people would assemble for a specific purpose, in the area was a site called the Welsh Tract School site. This site was reported by Catts and Cunningham (1986:43-57). On this 1-acre site prior to 1939, stood a school called the Welsh Tract School. It burned in 1906. After 1939, extensive renovations were made to the "new" school, including modifications to the interior, the addition of exterior rooms, the excavation of a cellar, all in an effort to convert the building into a dwelling. In addition the out-buildings were removed, the building's orientation was shifted, and a great deal of landscaping was performed, including the addition of about 1 foot of fill to the yard (Catts and Cunningham 1986). Despite extensive testing performed on that small traffic island, the investigators admitted that they could not identify anything in the archaeological record that was recognizable as representative of the years when the school house had stood on that site. This is not surprising given the tremendous amount of the disturbance the site endured.

Although the Bethel Church meeting house and the other two structures between the church and Route 273 are gone, this site is relatively undisturbed. This is most likely due to the fact that, unlike the Welsh Tract School, the Bethel site was abandoned. Until sometime in the 1930s, the cemetery was cared for. In subsequent years, no one cared for the cemetery, and today it is in poor condition due to extensive vandalism.

In all, 157 shovel tests and 13 tests units were conducted on the Bethel Baptist Church site. The soil appeared to be undisturbed except for some leveling probably related to landscaping. None of the tests contained any subsurface features other than disturbance related to the modern septic system and the open well filled with modern debris. The shovel tests did identify concentrations of types of artifacts and their horizontal patterns of deposit across the site. Analysis of the cultural material noted that this material was differentially distributed, suggesting relatively separate deposits for the church and the parsonage.

While it was known that the Bethel Church was constructed on stone piers, it had been hoped subsurface features associated to the other two structures, if not the church, would be present. Whether such features are still extant is unknown, but it is possible that the parsonage and sexton's house may also have been built on stone piers. The archaeological material recovered was generally domestic in nature probably relating to the sexton's dwelling and the parsonage; although, the ceramic distributions, particularly of pearlware and porcelain, suggest that evidence of some church activities may also be represented.

Using the format of the State of Delaware's Historical Context Plan (see Ames et al. 1987), the Bethel Church site can be viewed as an historical site within Delaware's Upper Coastal Plain. This land is flat, and when transportation began to convert from waterine transportation to road and rail transportation, the interior coastal plain, so far removed from waterways, began to see the establishment of "interior" farms. This trend is evident on historic maps; earlier period maps exhibit clusters of settlement in towns, with scattered farmsteads along the rivers.

To a degree, Bethel Church was ahead of its time. It appears alone on the landscape early in the habitation of the region. There was no road from Hares Corner to Christiana, only a dirt path skirting the fields. Perhaps it is this lack of ease in transportation that is the factor for the establishment of the church in this locale. The early members were members of the Welsh Tract Church, some 9 miles inland, but they lived in the vicinity of the Bethel Church.

The life of the Bethel Church spanned approximately 150 years, beginning at the end of the Revolutionary War and continuing to World War II. It must be said, that this period in history probably saw the greatest transformation of any era in the western world. Transportation evolved repeatedly. This affected settlement patterns nation-wide. Technology altered what people did and how they did it. Agriculture changed from a subsistence-oriented, family business to a market-oriented industry.

As technology evolved, industry developed, and these industries employed people. Not only were new emigrants employed, but agriculturalists had the opportunity to leave rural life for city life. It was a time when American society was in a state of flux. Beginning in and about the mid-nineteenth century, immigrants were flowing in, and the population in the east was moving west. This was mirrored in the drop-off of those attending the Bethel Church, as reported in the Minutes "From this time on Church ... distitute [sic] ... " (Bethel Church Minutes 1855).

Bethel Church really never did recover from this loss of members. The remaining members reunited with the Welsh Tract Church around 1871, when there was a regular road between Hares Corner and Christiana and travel was easier. The land on both sides of the Christiana-New Castle Road maintained its rural character well into the twentieth century, when the project area began to become increasingly suburban. Thus, the site spans the history of northern Delaware from its "Transformation from colony to state," through "Industrialization and capitalization," to "suburbanization" (Ames et. al. 1987).

References of locally important families and individuals appear in the minutes. Additionally, the Bethel Church admitted black members, which was unusual for the time; however, it must be remembered that the members stipulated that in the cemetery the "colored Brethren have the northeast corner for their burying place" (Bethel Church Minutes 1822). The documents of the church also seem to contain indications about community organization in that the Bethel Church functioned as a focus of community organization.

The Bethel Church site possesses the potential to add to our understanding of a variety of public and private activities spanning the nineteenth century. Archaeological remains at the site include an historic cemetery and artifacts associated with the nineteenth-century occupation of the site. The osteological remains have the potential to provide an in-depth study of nutrition and pathology of the local community through several periods of growth and change. The existence of church records and the remains of tombstones would allow for socioeconomic and socio-cultural data to be gathered for the interred individuals, thereby providing an historical base within which the osteological data can be examined. The artifactual data at the site has suggested that spatially segregated activity areas exist which could potentially reveal information concerning the function of the church

site. Little data of this kind is currently available (see Catts and Cunningham 1986). The clerical domestic occupation of the site provides a relatively rare opportunity for comparison with other types of domestic occupations in the immediate area (Basalik et al. 1988, see also Custer and Cunningham 1986). Documentary evidence suggests that evidence of ethnic variations may exist in the archaeological record; these could be explored, both within the site (between the sexton's house and church) and between this and other sites in the Middle Atlantic (see Schuyler 1980). The data collected has suggested that a number of research questions can be addressed:

1) Are changes in artifact distribution present, and do they indicate changing spatial utilization? Can such changes in patterns be related to historically documented economic and social changes in the surrounding area?

2) Are there changes in the presence or frequencies of certain artifact classes through time that can be related to purchasing and consumption habits of the site's occupants?

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

4) Can distinctions be made between the nature of the artifact assemblage of the Bethel Church site (quality of goods, origin, cost, relative proportions) and those of more rural or more urban sites in northern Delaware? Are these distinctions covariant with time or structure function? Can they be explained through site placement or socio-economic status?

5) Can changes in spatial utilization be observed within and around the Bethel Church site? How do these compare with nearby sites? What temporal factors can be discerned?

6) Can the occupation of the grounds by the black sexton be spatially segregated? Is there a significant variation in the nature or type of cultural assemblage associated with this occupation?

7) What nutritional and pathological anomalies existed in the community? How did these change through time? Is there a correlation between local social and economic transformation and the health of the local community?

On the basis of the data available, the site is likely to provide information important in history and appears to meet the criteria for eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (36CFR60.4(d)). In addition, the significance of the Bethel Church site can be found in its association with lives of persons significant to northern Delaware's past (36CFR60.4(b)).

Although the site does appear to meet the criteria of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, Phase II work within the proposed project right-of-way indicated a relatively even distribution of cultural material, much of which may be related to modern disposal along the shoulder of Route 273. Testing in and adjacent to this right-of-way has resulted in a