

nineteenth century to the present. Evidence for middens, privies, outbuildings, and other related features that one might expect to find around a typical nineteenth and early twentieth century farm and homestead was expected to be encountered during the subsurface testing.

The Phase I investigations, conducted in January and March of 1993, were designed to determine if intact archeological contexts were present and, if so, to determine their size, function, and chronological placement. The investigation resulted in the identification of an partially articulated stone foundation of unknown function and temporal placement.

The Phase II archeological investigations, carried out in April of 1993, were directed towards a determination of the potential National Register eligibility of the resources revealed during the Phase I. There was the possibility that the Phase II testing might reveal the presence of additional features which may have been associated with this foundation.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION**

The study area is located in New Castle County (Figure 1), falling within the Piedmont Uplands physiographic province just north of the Fall Line which marks the transition from the Piedmont to the Coastal Plain. The following summary of the environmental setting has been abstracted from Custer (1984).

The Piedmont Uplands of Delaware represent the northern portion of the Delmarva Peninsula and are characterized by a generally high relief topography cut by narrow and sometimes steep stream valleys of relatively small drainage systems, with isolated knolls rising above the general level of the landscape. Thornbury (1965) notes that, within the Piedmont Uplands, there are no large tributaries of the older incised river systems of the Susquehanna and the Delaware rivers, but that drainage systems tend to be of lower order. While some larger floodplains can be found along the higher order streams of White Clay Creek and the Brandywine, Elk and Northeast Rivers, those in this portion of the region tend to be rather limited in size. Elevations in the general study area range from 100 feet to 325 feet above sea level. The underlying geologic formations are folded Paleozoic and Pre-Cambrian metamorphic and igneous rocks. Soils are generally well-drained, although there are some poorly-drained areas in floodplains and upland flats.

The study area encompasses one and a quarter acres of level land bordered by Old Murphy Road on the west and Rockland Road on the south, to the front of the house (Figure 2). East of the property, the ground slopes slightly and adjoins a modern building complex containing medical offices associated with the Alfred I. DuPont Institute. To the north, the property gradually narrows to a wooded strip of land which borders Old Murphy Road. To the west of the property, across Old Murphy Road, there is an open field and a wooded area. South of the Murphy House, across Rockland Road, is the Alfred I. DuPont

Institute, a part of the 320 acre Nemours Foundation property. A nine-foot estate wall runs along Rockland Run, with gates located across from the Murphy House.

At the time of the survey, the Murphy House was the only standing structure on the property (Plates 1 and 2, from Taylor et al. 1989: 160). Concrete sidewalks run adjacent to the house along its east, north, and west sides. Close to the house, the yard was grassy, with scattered trees and shrubs. The currently used gravel driveway and parking lot were located to the back of the house, and there were a series of electrical terminals and underground utility boxes east of the parking lot. A few trees and a clump of ornamental grass were growing in the back yard next to the remnants of a low stone wall bordering Old Murphy Road. A short (30 foot) line of split rail fencing marked the back yard boundary. Small piles of rocks, metal debris, paint cans and other construction debris were observed on the ground surface in this area. In the 1989 photographs one can see a split-rail fence running along Rockland Road as well. This fence had been removed by the time of this survey. The 1989 photographs also show an outbuilding located east of the Murphy House; although this building was indicated on the project area maps furnished by DelDOT, it was no longer standing at the time of the Phase I and II surveys.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The Murphy House was built between 1841 and 1849 by George W. Murphy and occupied by the Murphy family until 1870. During this time, the house and associated acreage served as a small owner occupied farm at which produce was grown both for home consumption and for market. During the period from 1852 to 1870, the house served as a retirement home for William M. Murphy, who had purchased the property from his son in 1851. At his death in 1870, William Murphy left the house to his son, George. George Murphy and his family resided in Wilmington, so they did not occupy the house, but rather leased it to tenants. The house was sold to Henry DuPont at the time of George's death in 1881 and continued to be leased to tenants until 1916, when it began to be occupied by employees of the Nemours estate.

There were no obvious disturbances at the Murphy House back yard area, although the eastern side yard and that portion of the back yard closest to the house had been disturbed by the installation of various underground utilities and the addition of a gravel drive and parking lot. It seemed feasible to expect archeological remains relating to the early occupation at the house in the form of midden deposits and features such as privies, wells, and outbuildings to be present in the undisturbed portion of the back yard. These features would be of particular importance to the isolation of periods of different economic usage of the house.