

## DESCRIPTION OF WORK

### Boundaries and physical features

The proposed right-of-way begins in a former gravel pit on the south side of Mudstone Branch, crosses the stream valley, and proceeds northeastward across the Peterseil (formerly Covington) farm to Denney's Road. In the valley of Mudstone Branch, it crosses the former Saulsbury (McKee) Road bridge site and a former borrow pit. In Peterseil's farm, the route crosses an eighteenth-century ditch line that drains a "spring" or swampy feature north of Denney's Road.

After crossing Denney's Road, the right-of-way passes along a sandy ridge that divides the "spring" bottom from the valley of Fork Branch. In the swampy valley, it will cross the point of confluence of Chance's Branch and Fork Branch.

East of the swamp, the right-of-way will cross formerly cultivated woodland until it reaches the railroad. East of the railroad, the route is congruent with an old fenceline that divides the Bush and Reichhold properties between Denney's Road and the railroad.

In addition to intensiver right-of-way survey, tjhe authors conducted reconnaissance-level study of the larger neighborhood (Figure 2).

### Cultivated flora

The author examined the hedgerow along the old division line in August. This line has been ditched since the eighteenth century, providing an outlet for a spring along Denney's Road. It was already ditched when it was the eastern boundary of the sale from Elizabeth Handsor to Nicholas Williamson in 1815. This hedgerow chosen as the principal sampling site because of its age and apparent stability.

No trees of any age are still standing in the hedgerow, but many species are represented. There is free water in the bottom of the ditch although it was stagnant and less than an inch deep. The southern end of the ditch lies approximately opposite the northern side of the square forest intrusion in the field to the west. At this point it is crossed by a small causeway containing a substantial culvert about twelve or fourteen inches in diameter.

Tree species found:

locust  
wild cherry  
sassafras

willow  
dwarf sumac  
maple  
persimmon  
ash  
gum  
beech

Herbaceous species found:

honeysuckle  
Virginia creeper  
solidago species  
pokeweed  
blackberry  
nightshade  
morning glory species  
poison ivy  
green briar  
kudzu  
soapwort

Within the ditch only wild shady wetlands species were observed, primarily fern species, jewelweed, and the like. These were not inventoried.

The only trees more than six to eight inches in diameter were wild cherries on the lip of the ditch. No evergreens were observed.

All of these species are either native wild plants or escaped domestic species. Kudzu is the most recent introduction. None of the herbaceous species have any particular cultural significance. The comparative youth of the trees indicates that the ditch has been maintained regularly.

The absence of Osage orange and other hedge trees popular with nineteenth-century scientific farmers may indicate that the several wealthy landowners did not introduce innovations on their poorer tenant farms away from their showplaces. Comparative material on hedgerows is lacking.

During spring flowering season, no domestic plantings were observed blooming in the right-of-way.

Cultural features

Little Union Church is a small frame building on brick piers with clapboard siding painted white. It stands on a bluff over the swamp which surrounds Fork Branch, on the north side of Denney's Road. The gable end faces the road. The eaves are decorated with a

simple moulding; cornices return to give the building a Greek Revival facade. Two small two-pane windows are set horizontally into the gable end, and a plate bearing the words, "Little Union M. E. Church." Entrance is through a vestibule that echoes the proportions of the facade. The entry is a modern double door with a large rectangular transom. The steps are concrete slabs. Around the building on three sides are graves. Some are marked by carved stones, but some have only uncarved fieldstone markers. An outdoor privy stands to the northeast, and on the west side is a low square mound that marks the remains of a house that stood within living memory. The churchyard is surrounded by second-growth forest but contains no elaborate landscaping features, such as dooryard or foundation plantings.

The cemetery was extended to a new lot across Denney's Road at about the turn of the present century. Most of the stones in the new cemetery are commercially carved, standard modern tombstones. Some seem to have been home made, and there is one wooden marker. The new cemetery is narrow and very deep, and is shaded by several large trees.

Just east of the cemetery is the former school lot, now the state police firing range. The range is fenced on all sides. The south end is a man-made berm which was built to stop bullets. Near the road on this lot is a set of steps that once served the "new" Fork Branch (duPont 145-c) school. Directly behind the steps is a patch of irregular soil that represents the remains of the school building. No evidence of the first Fork Branch school is directly evident in the ground surface.

East of the firing range a small rise has been deeply cut by Denney's Road. The east side of the rise was cut away for construction of the Delaware Rail Road in 1856. William McKee's store stood on the rise, and duPont station stood next to the tracks south of the road. The most recent station was a concrete shelter, described by local informants as being about ten feet square.

The Benjamin Durham homestead stands on another rise just east of the railroad. Like the church, it is a simple frame structure on piers. Although they may have originally been brick, the piers now include stone. The house is L-shaped, with the main section oriented away from Denney's Road. The main section is a two-story, three-bay structure with an asphalt shingle roof and a shed addition where one might expect a porch. The ell is a story and a half, two-bay structure with a corrugated metal roof. The two sections appear to be of different ages.

The house is small but typical of nineteenth-century Delaware vernacular architecture. It has one chimney on the east end, away from the ell, and another between the two sections. Both are stove chimneys, too small to have accommodated fireplaces.

No farmstead support buildings survive, since the house now stands in an industrial complex. The orientation away from the road suggests either (1) that the house is considerably older than Denney's Road, or (2) that it may have been built to conform to landscape features no longer evident, or (3) that it was oriented to accommodate the Victorian taste for assymetry. The absence of farmstead buildings makes it impossible to determine which explanation is most likely. Such evidence could, however, be derived archaeologically. A blacksmith shop stood nearby, closer to the road, during Bender's ownership (Figure 13).

Both the deep cut of Denney's Road and the documentary evidence show that the present road configuration is quite old, possibly dating to the eighteenth century. While dating of Delaware vernacular architecture by style is at best inexact, the house seems to be of mid-nineteenth-century origin.

Without archaeological investigations, the date of this toft cannot be determined. Nehemiah Handsor, Jr. was living on this part of the property when he inherited it in the late eighteenth century. His great-grandson, Benjamin Durham, had a house here. A house in this location is shown a few years later in the Beers' atlas map.

East of the church is a building lot, where a house stood. Its outline may still be seen in the ground on the crest of the bluff overlooking the bridge. West of the church there were at least two houses, the sites of which can be discerned. The Greenage toft, farther west, stands on a lot that was carved out of the Smith farm; this lot is separated from the main settlement by a deep ravine and the spring mentioned as being next to Angelica Handsor's house.

## Excavation Narrative

On November 16, after the corn had been harvested, the investigators began field testing on the Austin Smith farm north of Denney's Road. A first series of six shovel tests, labelled "first transect" (Figure 10), was opened to determine the nature of soils in the field. The tests revealed that the sandy ridgetops contain very little topsoil, never extending below the plow depth. The "spring" bottom adjacent to Denney's Road contains a dark, sticky topsoil over gray silt. At the toe of the ridge, this soil is overlain by a thick layer of brown sandy soil that has washed down from above. There is a zone of gravelly soil on the slope above its toe.

Once the field was disked, the investigators set a row of ten stakes, fifty feet apart, northward from the road to the hedgerow at the edge of the swamp. The intervals between these stakes were used as rough control for surface collection of the right-of-way. On the sketch map, these zones are labelled "surface zones". On November 30, after a hard rain, the investigators walked the field and made a surface collection, separating finds by zone.

On December 7, the authors returned to this field to conduct an intensive examination of the documented locality where "Hugh's old cabin" stood before 1835. An artifact concentration, noted on the sketch map, produced a scattering of early nineteenth-century ceramics and brick fragments that could have been associated with the cabin.

Nearby, a narrow roadway is cut through the brow of the hillside, leading to a causeway that meets Chance's Branch opposite a gentle slope on the east side of Fork Branch. Because of its location, the authors suspect that this road cut is the "path" mentioned in the 1835 deed that describes the site of Hugh Durham's old cabin.

On December 12, a test unit (test one), five feet square was opened in the field edge near the head of this roadway. Evidence for both historic and prehistoric activity was found here. The topmost layer of soil, which contained few artifacts, was loose and probably had been cultivated recently. Below was a hard-packed layer of brown sandy loam that contained artifacts from several periods. An orange-yellow sandy subsoil below revealed no features.

Test 2, between the swampy spring bottom and the sandy hill in the Austin Smith field, contained a layer of brown Sassafras-like topsoil over the characteristic gray and black swamp soil typical of the spring bottom. A unit two feet square was opened to apparent subsoil. The authors concluded that the topsoil here had washed from the hill above, encroaching on the original area of the spring bottom.

Test 3, opened December 17, was fifty feet east of the test 2; it also was two feet square and was opened to apparent subsoil. Here, the homogenous brown plowzone soil was 11" deep, resting upon bright yellow subsoil. This location is near the toe of the slope. Brick fragments and coal were noted throughout the soil in both tests 2 and 3.

An anomalous projection of woods into the corner of the western field on the Peterseil tract was noted during the earlier work at the site (Heite 1984), but was outside its scope. Because of its shape, the projection could be interpreted as an old dwelling site or other building site. It was therefore investigated carefully. On December 5, the authors dug ten shovel test pits in this area and examined the area for structural evidence. Some red earthenware and a few bricks were the only evidence, apart from surface trash.

The second transect, in the western field of the Peterseil tract, was opened at the same time. The tests were carried out by two people. The first person dug the test pit to subsoil and noted soil depth, color and other conditions. He then proceeded ten paces to the next location, while the second person backfilled the hole with a trowel, carefully examining the soil for artifacts. It turned out that the topsoil along this line was remarkably uniform with 9" to 13" of topsoil over yellow sand, regardless of the test's location. A total of sixteen shovel tests were placed along this transect.

The third transect of eleven test pits was opened along the north edge of the proposed right-of-way between the railroad and Fork Branch. Again, ten-pace intervals with trowelling of the test pits was the field method. Near the railroad, the soil gave evidence of having been cultivated, with up to ten inches of topsoil over the yellow sand subsoil. Near the branch, the last three test pits revealed a very thin topsoil, indicative of land that never has been plowed.

The fourth transect, about ten yards south of the third one, began on a point overlooking Fork Branch and extended to the railway clearing. It contained sixteen pits. Thick topsoil, indicating agricultural activity, did not appear until the thirteenth test along this line.

The fifth transect, opened December 17, stretched along the east bank of the swamp from the west end of the fourth transect to the railroad clearing. Immediately inland lies an old borrow pit that has destroyed any cultural remains that might have existed. In the eight tests along this transect, the topsoil is generally thin and full of organic material, typical of uncultivated woodlands.

Additional tests were authorized in order to explore the possibility that an undisturbed prehistoric site might exist between the cultivated field edges and the swampy valley. Accordingly, tests 4, 5, 6, and 7 were excavated.

Test 4 was located fifty feet north of test 1. At least three old field boundaries were observed in the brush between the currently cultivated ground and the brow of the bluff (Figure 11). The unit was placed as close to the edge of the hill as possible. It intersected an old fence alignment which was visible as a gap between the trees. Directly downhill towards the swamp lay an old pathway which had been worn into the hillside, parallel to the hedgerow. Such side-hill paths are typical of cattle trails in steep ground.

The unit was located as far as possible from the cultivation in hopes of finding uncultivated soil. This hope did not materialize, however. The field has at one time been larger; the hedgerows have encroached fifteen to twenty feet into the arable land. Unit 4 contained a relatively shallow tan sandy plow zone over yellow sandy subsoil. The upper level of the plow zone contained an unworked chip of milky quartz cortex, a piece of window glass, and a piece of sandstone. The lower level of the plowzone, which was appreciably harder, contained a piece of burnt glass, more broken sandstone, a piece of clear vessel glass, brick fragments, charcoal fragments, iron wire, slip-decorated red earthenware, white refined earthenware, one sherd of prehistoric pottery, and flakes of cryptocrystalline silicate.

Test 5 was placed fifty feet south of test 1. A windrow of downed trees overgrown by briars rendered the brow of the hill inaccessible, so the unit was placed just inside the present hedgerow on land that is known to have been recently cultivated.

This unit contained the same kinds of material as had the other units in the field, including brick fragments, red earthenware, and a range of stone fragments. However, it contained a rather greater concentration of material than had the other units. It also contained a bowl and a stem fragment of a white clay pipe. It is possible that this test lies near trash deposits associated with Angelica Hansor's occupancy of this tract.

This completed testing on the west side of Fork Branch. The final two tests, 6 and 7, lay on the east side, on south-facing high ground overlooking the swamp (Figure 12).

Test 6 was placed at the end of a finger of high ground that extended into the swamp roughly opposite the old road at Test 1, and near the end of the fourth transect. The knoll faces south and is surrounded on the south and west by swamp and on the east by a wet-weather drain. Its top is a fairly level area about 20 feet in diameter. It affords an excellent view of Fork Branch.

This test location was chosen deliberately to give the best possible chance of finding evidence of prehistoric people.

Topsoil in Unit 6 was extremely thin. It consisted of a layer of decaying vegetation about an inch thick over a three-inch layer of dense black organic sandy soil. Apparently undisturbed sandy yellow subsoil lay below. At a depth of about a foot, the subsoil was bright, almost brick, red gravelly sand. The topsoil and the sandy yellow soil were trowelled and sifted.

Cultural material occurred in the black topsoil and in the upper half of the yellow subsoil. A straight-stemmed point and a broken point of indeterminate type were found in the thin topsoil layer. In the yellow sand was a solitary oyster shell. Finally, the yellow soil contained several large pieces of broken sandstone.

Test 7 was placed 50 feet north of Test 6. The soil was also unplowed. One or two inches of leaf mold overlay about three inches of dark topsoil. The subsoil here was again yellow and sandy, and pockets of the dark orange or red soil lay at a depth of five or six inches. The soil was trowelled and sifted.

This unit lay on a south-facing slope below the crest of the rise. The location was chosen because it is somewhat sheltered from the wind, and because it might demonstrate the degree of erosion that has occurred. The thinness of the yellow sandy layer suggests that erosion has taken place. The excavation yielded only a few stone chips; these may have tumbled down from the crest of the rise.

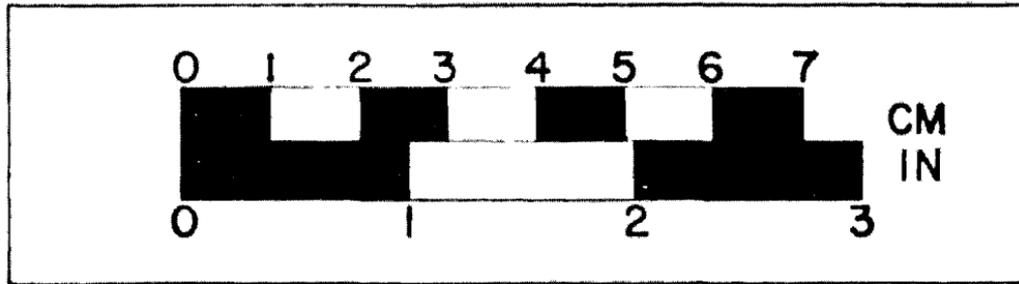
Upon completion of the seventh test, the project was further reviewed by the staff of the State Historic Preservation Officer. Further testing was called for in the vicinity of tests 6 and 7. An additional agreement was then executed, and the authors opened ten test units on the site, which are detailed in Appendix 7 to this report.

The site was formally designated 7K-C-113 and was given a separate accession number at Island Field Museum, 85-12.

When excavated, the site proved to be a very small procurement site, with no evidence of cooking and little evidence to suggest toolmaking. Finds included a large number of chips and flakes, as well as parts of two more points. One part was a projectile point tip of indeterminate origin, and the other was the stem of another straight-stemmed point like the one found in the sixth unit of the first survey.

The presence of one piece of pottery suggests that the site was used into Woodland times. Only the small promontory at the

PLATE 4  
Artifacts from Test 6



south end of the site proved to be undisturbed and uncultivated; about a quarter of the undisturbed portion was removed.

#### Artifact description and analysis

Artifacts from the initial tests are listed and described in appendix 3. Artifacts recovered during the detailed examination of 7K-C-113 are tabulated and described with that site report, Appendix 7.

The sparse scattering of prehistoric artifacts consists almost exclusively of small flakes of "flinty" cryptocrystalline materials and quartz or quartzite. Only two points were found, together with one prehistoric potsherd. Broken cobbles, some of which bear signs of heating, complete the prehistoric record.

Flakes commonly are interpreted as evidence of stoneworking, especially where usable cobbles occur naturally. At Fork Branch, a wide variety of cryptocrystalline silicates can be picked up in the fields. Most of these naturally-occurring pieces are small and therefore inappropriate for toolmaking. Such pebbles may, however, break naturally, producing flakes and "potlids" of cortex that resemble toolmaking waste. In order to qualify as being certainly of human origin, a flake must share characteristics typical of flakes found on known toolmaking sites.

All artifacts from 7K-C-113 were weighed and measured. Patterns emerged among the statistics, which are discussed at length in Appendix 7. Some of the tentative findings from this site may be useful in future tests, where it often is necessary to extract maximum information from minimal excavation and small collections. In particular, site typing on the basis of debitage statistics should be further explored as part of survey.

The only sizable concentrations of historic artifacts in or near the right-of-way were in the field near where Hugh's old cabin probably stood, and in the hedgerow nearby. These concentrations are consistent with documented early nineteenth-century occupations.