

RESEARCH DESIGN

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the survey was to determine if the area of potential effect of the road improvements project area for North Street from West Street to Mifflin Road contains architectural resources listed in or previously determined eligible for the National Register or meeting National Register criteria. Particular attention was given to determining significant associations of extant architectural resources in the project area with the African-American settlement of west Dover. The state historic context, *African-American Settlement Patterns on the Upper Peninsula Zone of Delaware 1730-1940±* (Skelcher 1995), identifies North Street as being associated with the African-American settlement of tenant farmers and farm laborers near Eden Hill during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The DE SHPO has identified a neighborhood, designated the Potential West Dover Historic District (K-6972), as potentially meeting National Register criteria because of its African-American associations. Because the North Street project's area of potential effect encompasses district properties on the northern side of North Street, Berger focused its historical research on determining whether any of these North Street properties had historical African-American associations. Berger also sought to identify any significant associations between architectural resources in the project area and Eden Hill, a National Register-listed property.

METHODS

Background research was conducted at the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office, the Hall of Records, the Kent County Tax Assessor and Recorder of Deeds Offices, and the Dover Public Library, all located in Dover. Census material was found at the National Archives and historical maps at the Library of Congress, both located in Washington, D.C. Historical investigations focused on determining if any of the extant buildings within the North Street project area were associated with the African-American settlement of Dover during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The intent of the research was to use land records, city directories, and historical maps and atlases to identify owner and tenant occupants of these properties, and then use census data to identify the race, ethnicity, and occupation of the residents who lived in the project area during this period. The research effort, however, was hampered by lack of documentary evidence. For example, there are no city directories for Dover prior to 1940. Historical map information was also extremely limited, as only one map, *Map of Town of Dover, Kent County* (Roe 1887), identified property owners or residents. It was therefore impossible to construct a record of residential occupation during the entire late nineteenth and early twentieth century with a series of useful historical maps. In the end, researchers relied upon ownership information acquired through deed and probate records and resident information acquired through the Roe 1887 map for the names of individuals associated with the surveyed properties in the project area. These names were then located in census schedules to determine race and occupations.

Historical investigations also sought to determine whether any of the existing structures located on the northern side of North Street were in any way associated with Eden Hill, a National Register property on the southern side of North Street. Sources on this subject were limited to land records likely to yield information on whether the owner(s) of Eden Hill were somehow associated with the development on the northern side of North Street.

An on-site survey of architectural resources 50 years of age or older within the project area identified nine resources. During the field study, information was collected concerning the type, style, and condition of each

resource. The age of each building surveyed was initially classified by visual assessment or owner information. Information as to the date of construction was later obtained from the tax assessor's office as supporting evidence. All relevant survey forms were completed for the nine resources and are included in Appendix A. Black-and-white 35-millimeter photographs were taken of each resource.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The North Street project area is known to contain one resource already listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Eden Hill, which was constructed in 1749 by the Ridgelys, a prominent local family. In addition, based upon known historical settlement patterns for Dover, the area on the northern side of North Street was considered at least potentially part of the African-American settlement of the city during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was expected that five to 10 resources 50 years of age or older in this area would require documentation and evaluation and would constitute residences formerly occupied by African-American households.

In order to be considered eligible for listing in the National Register, resources 50 years of age or older identified within the project area must retain integrity of location, setting, design, material, and workmanship, and possess architectural distinction and/or important historical associations. Properties significant under the themes of agriculture and settlement patterns and demographic changes through Criteria A or B require documented association with an event or trend that was important in the history of the area or county, or with a person or persons who made significant contributions to the history of the area or county. Significance of properties under the architectural theme for the project area would likely derive from Criterion C. Significance under Criterion C would depend on the ability of the resource to convey clearly a specific use, function, and/or type or style of construction.

An eligible property type under the agricultural theme would include the farmhouse, the principle resource, and related outbuildings. However, the lack of historic outbuildings should not limit the eligibility potential of the property if the house is an outstanding or rare example of a type or style of construction of its period that would meet Criterion C. Nor would its eligibility be diminished if the property is associated with a significant event that played an important role in the historical development of Dover or the state of Delaware. The property also could meet Criterion B if the property is associated with a prominent individual or family who played an important role in the historical development of Dover or the state of Delaware.

Eligible resources related to the demographic changes theme (specifically African-American Settlement Patterns) would meet National Register criteria as districts, a collection of resources sharing some associated relationship or linkage important with regards to the historic development of a particular area. An eligible district related to the demographic and settlement patterns theme often includes many different functional property types linked together through some shared association. In the example of African-American settlement patterns, it has been deduced that African-American communities included not just residences but also schools, churches, and cemeteries, all of which played an important role in the development of the community. Therefore, a district eligible for the National Register for its association with African-American settlement would have to demonstrate that the community at one time included a church, school building, and residences all displaying African-American associations (Skelcher 1995:146). An eligible district often contains buildings that, although lacking individual distinction, collectively constitute a distinctive collection of inter-related resources. As such, eligible districts must convey a visual sense of the overall historic character of the environment. A district may contain buildings, structures, and objects that do not contribute to the historic character or association of the district. How noncontributing resources affect the eligibility status of a district depends on their number, distribution within the district, and extent to which they diminish the district's ability to convey its historical association or character.

An eligible property under the architecture, engineering, and decorative arts theme would derive its significance primarily under Criterion C, as a distinctive or rare example of style, type, or method of construction. Such a property could be an outstanding example of a type or style reflective of an important trend in regional or national architectural development. Properties eligible under Criterion C also include distinctive works of a master architect or craftsman.

All of the property types documented in this study also must retain a sufficient degree of integrity regardless of significance. Integrity is defined in *National Register Bulletin 15* as “the ability of a property to convey its significance” (United States Department of the Interior 1995:44). There are seven aspects of integrity, defined as location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Integrity is dependent upon how these seven aspects relate to significance. Those features or associations from which the resource derives its significance must be clearly identifiable and not significantly compromised. Integrity of association and location would therefore be crucial for those properties that meet Criteria A or B because of their associations with a historic event or individual, whereas integrity of design, workmanship, and materials would be more critical for properties deriving their significance from design factors specified under Criterion C. In particular, integrity standards may be less stringent for resources associated with African-American communities. The statewide historic context, *African American Settlement Patterns on the Upper Peninsula Zone of Delaware 1730-1940±* (Skelcher 1995), states that because African-Americans were members of a poor economic group, their dwellings were often of inferior construction. Many have been demolished and those that have survived have been altered to various degrees. The historical character of African-American communities is therefore likely to have been altered over time due to the poor socioeconomic status of the group, and the reason for these changes must be taken into account when evaluating historical integrity. The context concludes that alterations should be expected for resources associated with African-American communities and that such alterations should not detract from the communities’ historical significance (Skelcher 1995:145-146).