

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Settlement within the vicinity of the North Street project area occurred during the eighteenth century. At that time, the project area along North Street, just west of the Town of Dover, was the site of Eden Hill, a farm built by Nicholas Ridgely in 1749. During the second half of the nineteenth century, farm property along North Street began to be subdivided into smaller residential lots. In 1868 Thomas Slaughter subdivided his 204-acre farm into lots of 50x150 feet, which he sold to various individuals over the next few decades. Eventually, three new streets, Minima, Clarence, and Lincoln, were formed. Like much of west Dover during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, census records from 1900 and 1920 show that many African-American families lived within the Slaughter subdivision.

The architectural survey of the North Street project area identified nine individual resources 50 years of age or older and one potential historic district within the area of potential effect. Only Eden Hill (K-125) has been previously listed or determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Potential West Dover Historic District (K-6972), with North Street as its southern boundary, includes three of the eight individual resources documented in this survey. The district was identified by the DE SHPO as potentially meeting National Register criteria for its association with the African-American settlement of west Dover. Historical research confirms that this area includes a significant concentration of extant buildings associated with African-American occupancy during the early twentieth century. Known source material and historical maps reveal that the area was part of a larger community that included an African-American-associated church and school, which state contextual guidelines mandate must have been present at one time for the area to be considered eligible for the National Register. Although modern development has occurred along North Street and elsewhere within the district, the district still maintains a significant concentration of historically associated properties and therefore meets National Register criteria. The boundaries for the district as proposed in previous DE SHPO documentation should be slightly revised on the eastern side to include the Purnell House (K-6942) and the Annie Miller House (K-6941), two properties along North Street in the project's area of potential effect that have African-American associations but that are not presently included within the DE SHPO boundaries for the Potential West Dover Historic District. Three other individual resources documented in this survey, the Miller House (K-6983), the James America House (K-6773), and the Levy House (K-6943), were all found to be contributing resources within the West Dover Historic District because of their association with the African American settlement of the area. The three remaining properties within the area of potential effect, the Arthur Brown House (K-6944), Sockum House (K-6945), and the Collins House (K-6946), have no documented historical associations with the circa-1900 Potential West Dover Historic District, and therefore do not warrant inclusion in the district. These three resources also all fail to meet any of the criteria for individual listing in the National Register because they lack other significant associations with history or architectural distinction.

The context *African-American Settlement Patterns on the Upper Peninsula Zone of Delaware 1730-1940±* (Skelcher 1995) was utilized in determining the eligibility of the African-American-associated resources within the project area. Among its strong points, the context was extremely useful in delineating the themes and time periods under which properties with African-American associations could be classified as significant. Research conducted for this survey contributed to confirmation of historical information about the west Dover area presented in the context. Census data confirm that the area of west Dover, including the portion of North Street within the project area, contained a significant concentration of African-American residents, many of whom were tenants and worked as farm laborers and servants. Among its weaker points, the historic context is not sufficiently clear on how to determine what constitutes significant African-American settlements. The context states that minimum requirements for all significant African-American settlements must include a school, church, and residential buildings (Skelcher 1995:146-147). Subsequently,

however, the context notes that significant settlements must have documentary evidence concerning the location of an associated school and church, with African-American ownership or tenancy of properties within the vicinity of the school and church. This tends to suggest that an eligible district does not necessarily require the physical presence of the church and school. The context's treatment of integrity was also somewhat unclear. It states briefly that eligible districts must retain sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, and association, with definitions of each; however, the context also states that integrity standards should not be as stringent for African-American resources, without providing concrete guidance on how sufficient integrity should in fact be measured for such resources (Skelcher 1995:145). Regarding historic districts, the context notes that highway projects and other modern development have frequently altered the appearance of African-American communities, and that any judgments of the integrity of the community needs to take this into account (Skelcher 1995:144). Again, no guidance is provided for determining the point at which the nature and extent of modern infill results in loss of integrity. The line between having integrity and not having integrity is frequently difficult to draw; however, whether or not a resource has African-American associations, the emphasis placed by the historic context on the issue of integrity warrants more specificity.

The research and field survey program undertaken for this study has been sufficient to accomplish the stated objective of identifying historic properties within the area of potential effect of proposed improvements on North Street.