

## **2.1 PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE PROJECT AREA**

According to the *Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan*, the project area falls within the Upper Peninsula Zone. This zone is the largest of Delaware's geographic regions, stretching from the southeastern border of the Piedmont Zone through New Castle, Pencader, Red Lion, St. Georges, Appoquinimink, Blackbird, Duck Creek, Little Creek, Kenton, East Dover, West Dover, North Murderkill, South Murderkill, and Milford Hundreds to the Sussex County Line.

The soils in this area range from medium-textured to moderately coarse, with some areas being well-drained and other very poorly drained. The subsoil consists of sandy loam or sandy clay loam. Land contours range from level through gently rolling to steep... Originally the entire area was full of waterways. Many of the large creeks and rivers that flowed into the Delaware River were navigable by small boats for a fair distance inland. In addition, numerous small streams drained into the larger creeks. These streams have been subject to heavy silting and deposition over the past three centuries and in most cases are no longer navigable except by canoe or rowboat. The major streams that remain are the Christiana River, Duck Creek, Smyrna River, St. Jones Creek, Murderkill River, Little River, Leipsic River, Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, Appoquinimink River, and Blackbird Creek. The zone was also heavily wooded with a variety of trees: oak, hickory, poplar, walnut, and ash. Indian corn grew wild in many areas, and the land was inhabited by a large range of animals. At the present time, much of the zone is under cultivation for agriculture. Dover is the only large town in the zone, but there are many smaller communities (Ames, *et al.* 34).

The current geography of the APE reflects very little of its former agricultural land use. Today the area predominantly features buildings that date from the mid- to late- twentieth century, which places these resources in the Urbanization and Early Suburbanization (1880-1940 +/-) and World War II and Suburbanization (1940-1960 +/-) chronological periods.

## **2.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF REGION**

### **2.2.1 Exploration and Frontier Settlement (1630-1730 +/-)**

The earliest explorations of Delaware occurred during the sixteenth century when Spanish and Portuguese merchants charted portions of the state's coastline. Henry Hudson and Cornelius Hendricksen later followed them, the former in 1609 and the latter in 1614, establishing a Dutch presence in the southern portion of Delaware.

The earliest settlements in Delaware took place simultaneously at opposite ends of the state. The first recorded Dutch settlement occurred in 1631 near the present day city of Lewes in southern Delaware. Thirty settlers under the auspices of a Dutch East Indies trading company established a settlement named Zwaanendael on the west bank of Lewes Creek. However, Native Americans destroyed this settlement a year later in 1632, and European attempts at colonization ceased until 1658 when the Dutch erected another settlement in the same area called Hoerekill.

In the northern region of the state, Swedish settlement commenced in 1638 when a group of Swedish settlers established a colony in present day Wilmington. Located at the confluence of

the Christiana and Brandywine Rivers, this settlement was known as Ft. Christiana. After the construction of the log fort, the village of Christineham was established (Thomas, Regensburg and Basalik 1980: 1). Christineham was later joined to the village of Willingtown (Wilmington). Control of the area would vacillate between the Dutch and Swedish for the next seventeen years. In 1643, Colonel Johan Prinz was appointed as Governor of New Sweden by Queen Christiana

The territory between the North and South Delaware colonies was slow to be settled in the seventeenth century. The earliest Kent County settlers were farmers of English ancestry who began modest “plantations” along the navigable creeks and rivers, namely the Murderkill River, the St. Jones Creek, and Duck Creek. Because there were no towns in the middle region of the state, farmers were forced to use small boats, called sloops, shallops, and schooners, to gain access to the Delaware Bay which was the main avenue of commerce.

In 1651, Peter Stuyvesant purchased a tract of land from the Lenapi, which previously had been sold to the Swedes. Believing the land to be under Dutch ownership, Stuyvesant erected Fort Casmir and the village of New Amstel, presently New Castle. In 1654 the Swedish seized Fort Casmir, renaming it Fort Trinity. Though the Lenapi confirmed Swedish ownership of the west bank of the Delaware River, the Dutch sent Stuyvesant back in 1655 to recapture the fort from the Swedish. On 31 August 1655, Stuyvesant succeeded and Fort Casmir returned to the Dutch. In addition, the Swedes were driven from both banks of the Delaware River. Fort Christiana was captured two weeks later and the territory remained under Dutch control until 1663 when the Dutch East India Company transferred rights to land along the Delaware River to King Charles II of England. Charles then granted the tract, which extended from south of Christiana Creek to Bombay Hook to James, Duke of York. The Duke, desiring a British territory for British subjects, drove the Dutch from the regions and changed the name of New Amstel to New Castle.

Although the Dutch briefly recaptured the territory in 1673, the English regained control by 1681. The following year, the Duke of York granted the land to William Penn to annex to the province of Pennsylvania. The grant consisted of the counties of New Castle, St. Jones, and Deale. Together they were known as the “Lower Three Counties.” Soon after, Penn renamed St. Jones County Kent County, and Deale County was renamed Sussex County.

The first systematic approach to creating a town in central Delaware and providing some alternative to water transportation was taken by William Penn. Penn was anxious to establish a government for his citizens and it quickly came to his attention that the inhabitants of central Delaware were dissatisfied with having to travel to Lewes or New Castle to attend to their legal business. To remedy this situation, Penn ordered a town laid out at the head of navigation on the St. Jones River with a courthouse and road connections leading north and south. Acting on Penn’s orders, the Provincial Council purchased 200 acres in Dover from William Southbee between 1694 and 1695.

### **2.2.2 Intensified and Durable Occupation (1730-1779 +/-) to Early Industrialization (1770-1830 +/-)**

By 1775, Dover’s boundaries had expanded and the residential section was now bounded by North Street, South Street, High Street (presently Governors Avenue), and East Street.

Delaware continued to be the subject of territorial disputes well into the eighteenth century. A lengthy dispute had erupted between Lord Baltimore of Maryland and William Penn concerning

the boundaries of their respective Provinces. This dispute continued between their heirs until the Mason-Dixon Line was drawn in the 1760s. In 1776, Delaware declared its independence from England, and then separated from Pennsylvania to form its own state. During the Revolutionary War, the council moved the state capital to Dover from Wilmington to protect the government from English forces. Dover was formally established as the new state capital in 1777. In 1787, the U.S. Constitution was submitted to the states for ratification, and on 7 December 1787 at a convention in Dover, Delaware became the first of the thirteen original colonies to ratify the Constitution. Dover was first incorporated in 1829 under a charter granted by the General assembly. A President of Council and a Council of eight members governed the town until a new charter was approved in 1929.

### **2.2.3 Industrialization and Early Urbanization (1830-1880 +/-)**

Throughout the eighteenth century, Dover and the rest of Kent County remained primarily agricultural with an economy supported by sustenance farming. The invention of canning techniques on a mass scale in the mid-nineteenth century facilitated an expansion of the agricultural processing industry in Dover, as it did elsewhere in the country. Canneries were particularly drawn to Dover because of the abundance of farm products in the surrounding area. The founding of the Richardson & Robbins canning enterprise in 1855 was representative of the rise of industry in Dover. The company was located in a barn at the corner of State and King Streets, and its owners, Alden B. Richardson and James Robbins, were concerned with the welfare of the city and spent a considerable portion of their wealth to make internal improvements such as the city gas works, electric light plant, waterworks, sewer system, and fire department, and surfaced roads.

Although the agricultural and canning industries prospered, it was not until the coming of the Delaware Railroad in the mid-nineteenth century that Dover experienced a major economic surge. Chartered in 1854, the railroad was a subsidiary of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, & Baltimore Railroad. With the advent of the railroad, local farmers now had larger markets for their grain, produce, and livestock. As a result, the earlier sustenance farms gave way to larger production farms. In 1860, a depot was constructed in Dover and by 1868, the town's boundaries had expanded north to Division Street and south to South Street.

### **2.2.4 Urbanization and Early Suburbanization (1880-1940 +/-) & World War II and Suburbanization (1940-1960 +/-)**

Dover's industrial growth and rise in population necessitated the development of a waterworks in 1881, an electric plant in 1902, and a sewer system in 1936. In 1929 the town of Dover was incorporated into a city.

The suburbanization that occurred in Delaware—and Dover—can be directly related to transportation improvements—particularly the movement for paved roads. In 1908, in an effort to illustrate the value of an improved highway system, T. Coleman duPont offered to construct a highway the length of the state. He was a member of one of Delaware's leading industrialist families, very active in the national Good Roads Movement, and a serious student of roadways. DuPont offered to bear the entire cost of construction, and turn the road over to the state upon completion, which took place in 1924. Today, the portion of the DuPont Highway through the project area is also known as U.S. Route 13.

Another catalyst for road improvements in Delaware was the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act in 1916. This act provided funds to states for road construction provided that they form a highway department with a professional staff. In 1917, the Delaware State Highway Department was created by the Delaware General Assembly. The highway department immediately made great progress in planning a system of state highways, focusing specifically on north-south routes. In 1925, the federal government established a system of U.S. numbered highways that followed major pre-existing routes across states. It was at this time that the DuPont Highway received the designation of U.S. Route 13. By the early 1930s, Delaware was considered to have the finest state highway systems in the nation with U.S. Route 13 north of Dover - the state's first dualized four-lane, median divided highway- as its centerpiece.

In 1935, the Delaware State Highway Department took over all roads formerly maintained by the individual counties. Despite pursuing an aggressive policy of paving, widening, and repairing state roads for the next several years, only 44% of Delaware's 3,390 miles of roads were paved by 1940. The years immediately after World War II were a period of transition for Delaware's roadway systems.

The postwar period was a time of prosperity and growth in Dover. During this time period, large industries such as International Latex Corporation, General Foods, and the National Cup Company, as well as the Dover Air Force Base, helped encourage population growth. The air force base was closed in 1946, but reopened in 1951 to support the Korean War effort. Much of Dover's industrial growth occurred outside of the city's historic core. The location of new employment sources coupled with the availability of the automobile spurred suburban development in the interwar and post-World War II eras. Because other industries, specifically agriculture, continued to decline, the city of Dover continued to annex former farmland in response to, and in anticipation of, increased suburban growth. Many farmers lost land to housing developments, and were forced to adapt to economic realities. For example, they gradually abandoned crops, such as strawberries, that required intensive and costly labor for harvesting. The number of farmers continued to decrease, but the size of farms grew due to the utilization of agricultural machinery. The Delaware Railroad terminated passenger service in 1965, increasing the region's reliance on such major roads as US Route 13.

### **2.3 PROJECT AREA NARRATIVE HISTORY**

The project area is situated in East Dover Hundred in the Upper Peninsula Zone. Within the geographic zone, several temporal and contextual themes have been established to aid in understanding its history and development. Most of the buildings in the APE fit within the State's World War II and Suburbanization (1940-1960+/-) chronological period. However, due to the project area's location on the outskirts of Dover's historic downtown core, it retained a rural setting devoted to agriculture until the conclusion of World War II. The history and modern landscape of the area has been shaped by the subdivision of land parcels from large farmsteads to suburban lots.

Historically, the land surrounding the project area has been described as

Mostly level or slightly rolling, having a loamy gravelly soil capable of a high state of cultivation. Peaches and pears are grown in great quantities, some of the peach orchards being very large and fine; wheat and corn are also grown successfully, while melons, sweet potatoes, and white potatoes are raised in abundance (Scharf 1888: 1077)

While most residences, businesses, and government activities were located inside the original boundaries of the town, Thomas Scharf indicates that “a number of lots lying outside of town were bought by citizens of Dover as out-lots for pasturage and other purposes” as early as the 1690s (Scharf 1888: 1049). The town limits continued to expand as large landowners gradually subdivided large lots into smaller parcels. An example is the “brother’s portion” plot owned by William Southebee in 1699. Originally 400 acres, the tract was divided through the years until it was laid out into lots “long and narrow” by William Killen in 1766.

This pattern of development with activity focused around the town and farmland on the periphery continued, with most development taking place to the south and north of town. As can be observed on the 1859 Byles Atlas and the 1868 Beers Atlas, the most densely settled area to the north of Dover was at the point where Silver Lake empties into St. Jones Creek (Figures 2 and 3). The paucity of settlement in the project area along present-day US Route 13 parallel to Silver Lake can also be observed from these maps. The owners of these outlying agricultural fields were generally wealthy men who owned several additional parcels of land in and around town and were engaged in various industries.

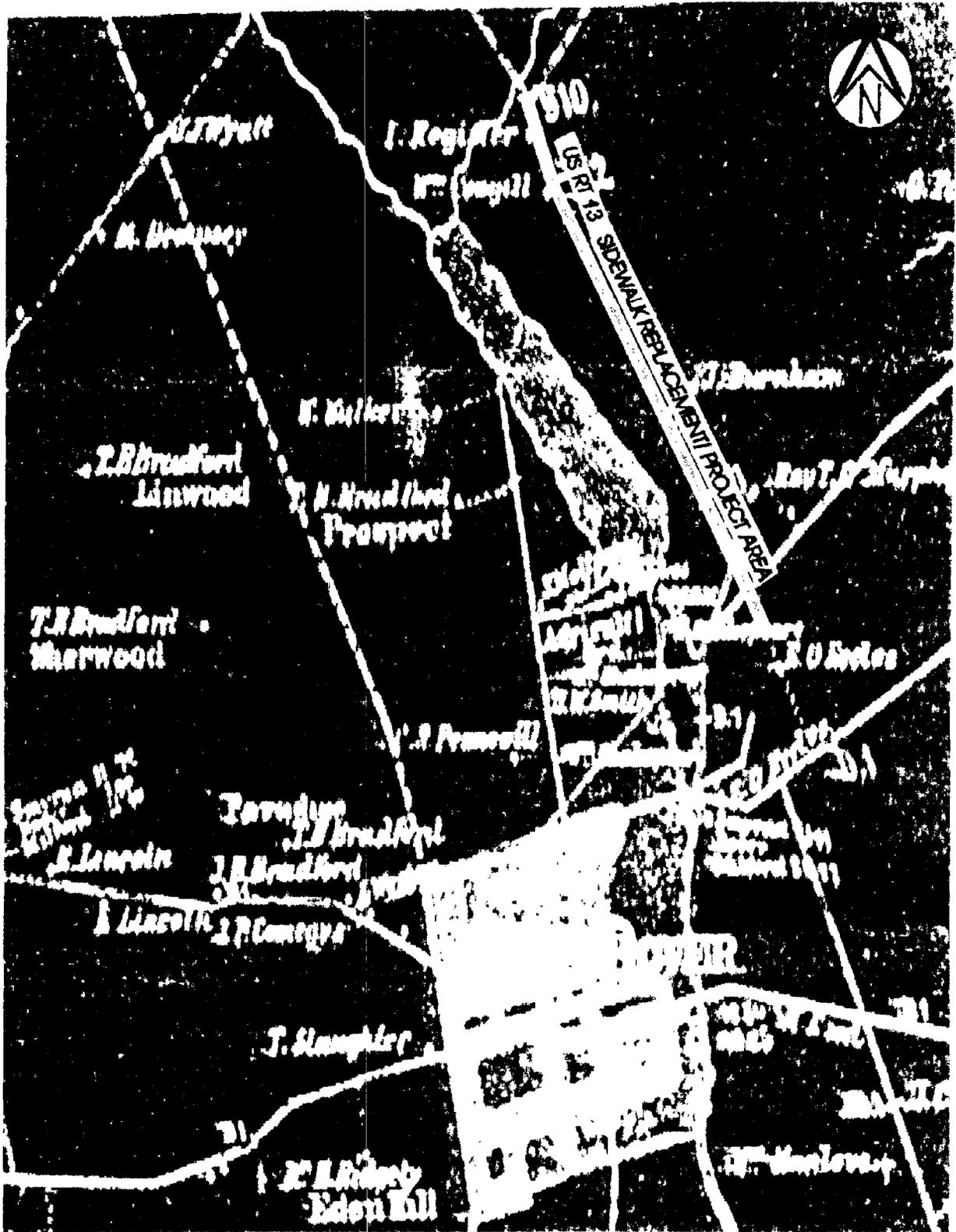
Most prominent among the wealthy landowners of the area were Reverend Thomas B. Bradford, William Walker, Reverend Thomas G. Murphey, and William McIntire Shakespeare. These individuals were influential in the government, economy, and society of mid-nineteenth century Dover.

In addition to a mansion house, Bradford owned 540 improved and 410 unimproved acres divided among two farmsteads on the west side of Silver Lake. According to Thomas Scharf, Bradford was a prominent Presbyterian minister, and inherited a substantial amount of land and wealth upon the death of his mother, Elizabeth Loockerman-Bradford (Scharf 1888: 1049). The 1860 Delaware Agricultural Census lists Bradford as owning 40 cattle, 18 swine, 12 horses, 9 sheep, 8 oxen, and 5 milk cows. His agricultural production for the same year included 700 bushels of wheat, 3650 bushels of Indian corn, 50 bushels of oats, and 40 pounds of wool. These numbers indicate that Reverend Bradford was a member of Delaware’s rural elite.

Other prominent landowners in the area include William Walker and Reverend Thomas G. Murphey. Walker is another example of a landowner whose property had been carved out of larger parcels. His property on the west side of Silver Lake was originally a portion of “the Range,” 600 acres warranted to Simon Irons in 1686. The property changed hands numerous times over the years. In 1723, it was sold to Nicholas Loockerman, a prominent figure in Delaware’s history.

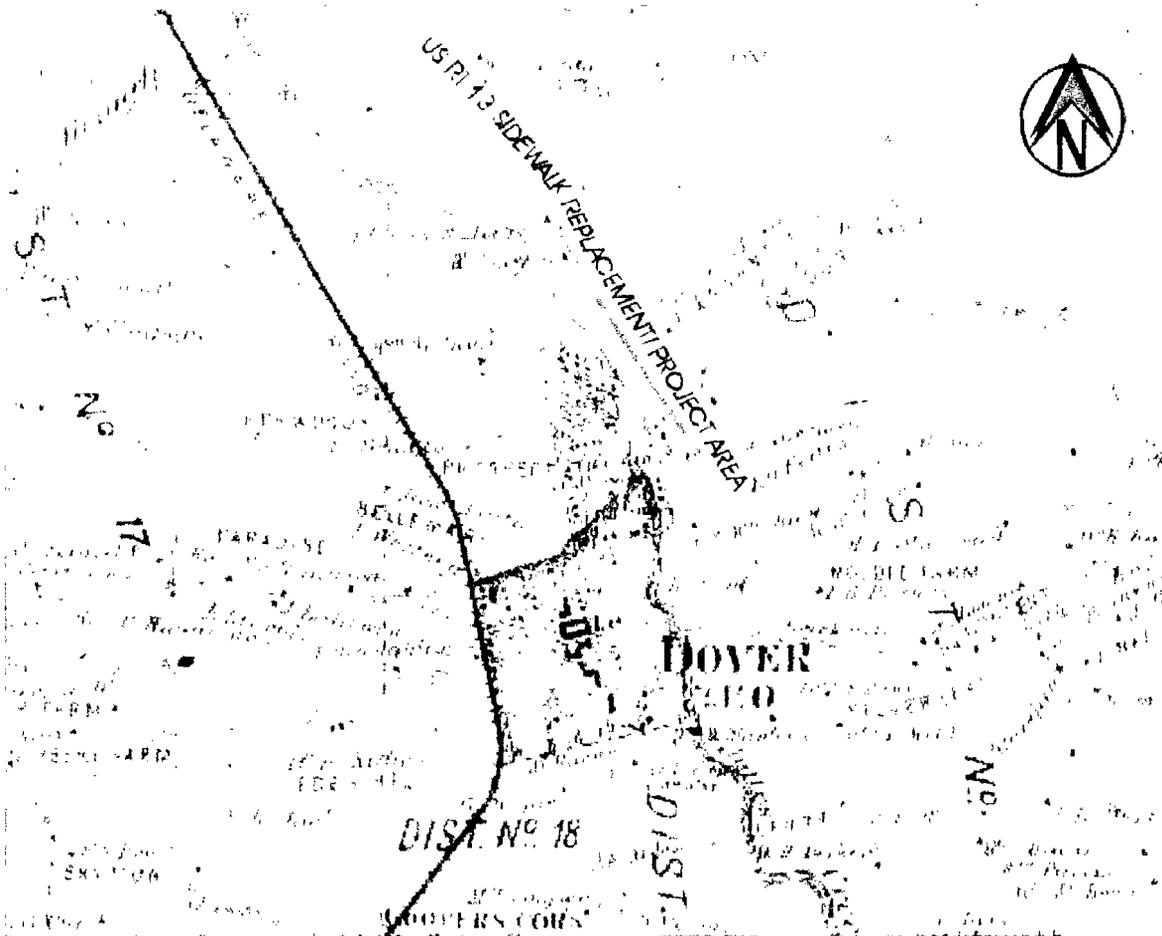
Loockerman later built a dam and a saw-mill at the head of St. Jones Creek. By the 1750s, portions of the “The Range” had already been subdivided and transferred to other farmers in the area. During the mid-1850s, William Walker acquired approximately 206 acres of the larger tract and by 1860 owned three farms consisting of 675 improved and 200 unimproved acres valued at a total of \$49,000. In addition to substantial livestock, Walker’s farm produced 1,500 bushels of Indian corn and 1,000 bushels of wheat in 1860. It is unknown if Walker’s portion of “The Range” contained Loockerman’s mansion house.

Reverend Thomas G. Murphey, a native of New York State, served as pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Smyrna, Delaware from 1846 until October 1859. He owned a 150-acre farm just north of present day Townsend Road. The 1860 Agricultural Census indicates that his farm was valued at \$15,000 and produced wheat, corn, oats, butter, buckwheat, potatoes, and hay.



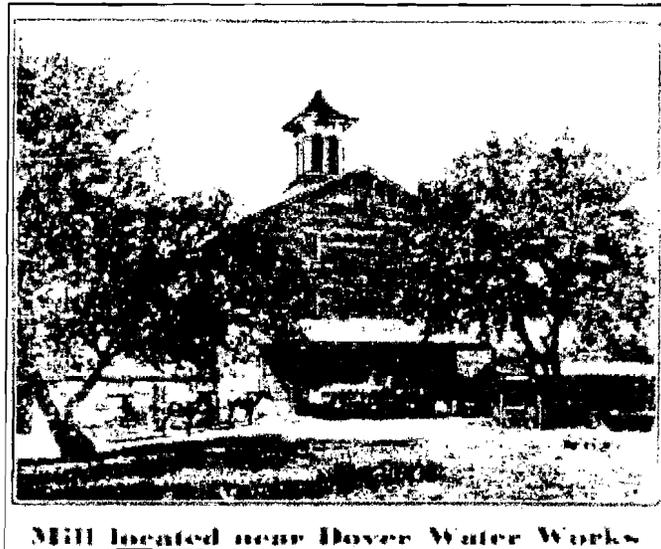
|   |      |  |  |
|---|------|--|--|
| Delaware Department of Transportation     |      |  |  |
| US Route 13 Sidewalk Improvements Project |      |  |  |
| Contract No. 2001-01-0001                 |      |  |  |
| Scale                                     | 2000 |  |  |
|   |      |  |  |

|                                 |                   |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1859 BYLES ATLAS OF KENT COUNTY |                   |
| <b>URS</b>                      | Page No. <b>2</b> |



|   |        |                              |                 |
|---|--------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| AGENT Delaware Department of Transportation   |        | 1868 BEERS ATLAS OF DELAWARE |                 |
| PRJ US Route 13 Sidewalk Improvements Project from Townsend Boulevard north to State College Road |        | <b>URS</b>                   | PROJ NO         |
| SCALE   | CR BY  |                              | FIGURE <b>3</b> |
| TITLE   | CHK BY |                              |                 |

One of the most prominent and wealthy landowners in the area was William McIntire Shakespeare. Born in 1819 in White Clay Creek Hundred, he was the son of a landed proprietor in the area, and after he received his education, began purchasing his own property. His purchases included a farm, a grist mill, and saw mill in Pencader Hundred, New Castle County. By 1854 the water-power of these mills was no longer sufficient to meet the constantly growing demand of his purchasers for larger production, so he sold this property, and purchased the Dover Mills.



**Figure 4: Shakespeare's Mill on Silver Lake circa 1914.**

Located where Silver Lake empties into St. Jones Creek near the southern boundary of the project area, the Dover (Shakespeare's) Mills (Figure 4) provided an important industry for the town. Their presence can be traced to 1787 when Charles Hillyard built a grist mill, known variously as Sipple's Mill and Cowgill's Mill, on St. Jones Creek. Shakespeare purchased the mills in 1854, and "manufactured large quantities of oak lumber and in the saw-mill." He expanded his enterprise in 1870 with an addition of another grist mill. Shakespeare

prosecuted his affairs with such energy and success that he soon became one of the largest and widest-known ship-timber manufacturers of the Atlantic coast...the profits of his business were usually invested in farms in the near vicinity of Dover; and these he took great pride in bringing up to a high standard of productiveness and attractiveness. He also now became one of the largest peach-growers in the county (Scharf 1084).

The 1868 Beers Atlas (Figure 3) illustrates Shakespeare's numerous landholdings, particularly the mills at the southern end of Silver Lake and Bloomfield Farm in the northern boundary of the project area. In addition to his industrial and agricultural pursuits, Shakespeare was active in "religion, charity, and public interest." (Scharf 1888: 1084) Sometime after 1870, Shakespeare sold the mills to Alexander Law, who refitted them with three sets of rollers, giving the mill a capacity of fifty barrels of flour a day by 1888. A feed store and meal store were also located on the premises. Although elected to the State Senate from 1873 to 1877, Shakespeare was faced with financial failure due to the paralysis of maritime interests after the Civil War. He died in May of 1881. The mill passed to Robert E. Lewis and then to Russell McNeil, who was the last owner of the property when the mill closed in 1942 (Munroe 1959: 58). The mill building is no

longer extant. The site of Shakespeare's Mill, shown on the 1868 Beers Atlas, is located outside the US Route 13 Sidewalks Improvement Project APE.

The State College for Colored Students (now Delaware State University) was established on May 15, 1891 by the Delaware General Assembly by which land-grant colleges for Blacks came into existence in states maintaining separate educational facilities. Five courses of study leading to a baccalaureate degree were offered: Agricultural, Chemical, Classical, Engineering, and Scientific. A Preparatory Department was established in 1893 for students who were not qualified to pursue a major course of study upon entrance. A three-year normal course leading to a teacher's certificate was initiated in 1897. The College graduated its first class of degree candidates in May 1898. The normal course of study was extended to four years in 1911 and the Bachelor of Pedagogy degree was awarded to students on satisfactory completion of the curriculum. In 1947, the name of the institution was changed to "Delaware State College" by legislative action. On July 1, 1993, Delaware State College turned another chapter in its history, when Governor Thomas Carper signed a name change into law, thus renaming the College to Delaware State University. A portion of the college campus lies within the US Route 13 Sidewalks Improvement Project APE, although no built resources associated with the College are located within the APE.

Dover continued to expand slowly around the town nucleus during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The project area remained unaffected by urban development, save for the completion of the DuPont Highway in 1924, until the conclusion of World War II (Figures 5 and 6). A housing shortage was evident immediately following the end of the war and developments were begun in Dover and the surrounding area. Growth was accelerated by the reactivation of the Air Force Base in 1954, expansion of International Latex, and the coming of General Foods in 1963. Houses, apartments, and shopping centers sprang up in outlying areas. Evidence of this is seen in the project area in the form of small single-family residences on individual properties along US Route 13. The lack of distinct zoning practices in these outlying areas of Dover after World War II is seen in the parallel development of US Route 13 as a commercial corridor with restaurants and strip shopping centers. More intensive suburban residential development after World War II is seen along the perimeter of Silver Lake, where Ranch-style residences were built on medium to large-sized properties. Even with this sudden surge of growth, the city limits had only expanded as far as present-day Townsend Road, the southern boundary of the project area, by 1959 (Figure 7).

However, the early 1970s appeared to be a turning point for this section of Route 13. A pamphlet produced in 1969 indicates that the area north of Dover was beginning to be developed more intensively:

North of Dover along Route 13 is the site of Dover Downs—an all-season sports complex, featuring thorough-bred horse races, auto races, conventions, and other activities... On March 8, 1969, Dover Downs officially opened its thorough-bred racing season.

This intensive development connected with the opening of Dover Downs is seen today in the predominance of mid- and late-twentieth century commercial structures along US Route 13, including gas stations, convenience stores, and shopping centers. Several original residences located along US Route 13 have been altered and converted to commercial use, further transforming the project area from one characterized by agricultural use in the nineteenth





|        |   |  |  |
|--------|---|--|--|
| CLIENT | Delaware Department of Transportation   |  |  |
| PROJ.  | US Route 13 Sidewalk Improvements Project from Townsend Boulevard north to State College Road |  |  |
| SCALE  | DR BY   |  |  |
| FILE   | CHK BY  |  |  |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 1923 AERIAL VIEW OF DOVER & OUTLYING AREAS |           |
| <b>URS</b>                                 | PROJ. NO. |
|  | FIGURE 6  |

century, to suburban residential in the early- and mid-twentieth century, to overwhelmingly commercial during the mid- and late-twentieth century period.

## **2.4 RELEVANT HISTORIC TIME PERIODS IN THE US ROUTE 13 SIDEWALKS IMPROVEMENT APE**

This information is presented according to the *Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan* (Ames et al.) and provides information on historic contexts that assists in assessing the significance of various property types.

**Geographic Zone:** Upper Peninsula

**Chronological Periods:** Urbanization and Early Suburbanization (1880-1940 +/-)  
World War II and Suburbanization (1940-1960 +/-)

### **Historic Themes and Property Types:**

- Settlement Patterns and Demographic Change
  - Urban Sites- Form-Grid Plans
    - Urban Sites-Districts-Residential Districts-Single
    - Rural Farm Sites-Farmhouse
- Architecture, Engineering, and Decorative Arts
  - Architecture and Building
- Retail and Wholesaling
  - Stores
  - Repair Shops
- Transportation and Communication
  - Transportation Routes-Land-Road and Highways
  - Interstates

## **2.5 URBANIZATION AND EARLY SUBURBANIZATION (1880-1940 +/-); WORLD WAR II AND SUBURBANIZATION (1940-1960 +/-)**

The periods “Urbanization and Early Suburbanization” and “World War II and Suburbanization” for the Upper Peninsula Zone links a substantial period of population growth to the expansion of standardized building forms which were built on the periphery of urban areas. These suburban settlements were often situated near major transportation corridors. As automotive travel became the favored means of transportation in the early twentieth century, an outer ring of suburban residential and commercial building types evolved in response to this new mobility. Previous separations of distance were bridged by the automobile. Agricultural goods could now be transported to urban markets more quickly and urban residents could now easily commute to outlying residential developments.

The Upper Peninsula region especially experienced a transformation in both the agricultural economy and the residential community. “The advent of the automobile and accompanying road improvements intensified the markets for truck farming, enabling many farmers to carry their own goods to street markets in Wilmington and Philadelphia, bypassing commission merchants” (Herman 1989: 35). Although truck farming offered increased advantages to individual farmers,

it also signaled the rise of a fundamental change in land-use patterns for Upper Peninsula cities such as Dover, which were proximate to both major transportation routes and urban areas. Early suburban residential development paralleled a fall in agricultural land values. In 1930, the newly incorporated City of Dover annexed outlying areas as demand for suburban residences increased. Early peripheral town growth and the remnants of agricultural properties would both be subsumed by the tide of post-World War II suburban development.

As agricultural lands declined in value, or were unable to compete with rising residential land values, larger tracts of farmland were divided into smaller parcels and sold to developers for residential use. Early pre-World War II suburbanization is usually marked by subdivisions, a collection of planned residential property types laid out in a deliberate pattern. The growth and evolving form of suburbanization would parallel the rise in automotive travel. In the first stage, suburbanization was relatively modest in scale. Early residential subdivisions served as precursors for the larger interwar and postwar settlement. The first stage of Early Suburbanization, from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s, was marked by the development of belts of proximate but lower density residential communities dependent upon urban development.

As the automobile became more affordable and therefore more accessible by the middle class, infrastructure improvements continued to shorten the distance and distinction between urban and rural space, the earlier suburban building boom of the early 1900s continued to expand on previous development forms and property types.