

5.0 ADDITIONAL
RESEARCH EFFORTS

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At the request of DE SHPO and DelDOT staff, additional research efforts were undertaken. These efforts addressed the potential for a district associated with the African-American Rural Community and a rural historic district within the APE. A summary of the results of each of the studies is included below.

5.1 African-American Rural Community Assessment

The purpose of this portion of the eligibility report is to provide sufficient information for the accurate assessment of the presence of a National Register-eligible African-American Rural Community in the U.S. 301 Project Development APE. This is a revision to an evaluation that was presented in the September 2005 *Determination of Eligibility Report* and was prepared to address subsequent comments provided by DE SHPO and DelDOT staff.

5.1.1 Background Research

To supplement the African-American Community context presented in the 2005 project historic context and to assist in the National Register evaluation of the presence of associated resources, documentary research and oral interviews specific to the African-American community in the APE were undertaken.

As a result of public meetings held for the project (June 20 and June 21, 2005), two elderly African-American community members who live within or in the vicinity of the APE were identified as potential interviewees. Mr. John Haman was identified as having attended the Mt. Pleasant duPont School (CRS No. N13536), and living in the vicinity of the Armstrong Corner area for all of his life. He presently resides at 5051 Summit Bridge Road (CRS No. N14329). The second knowledgeable individual, Mrs. Cordelia Ross, has lived in Summit Bridge for all of her 90 years and currently resides at 825 Bethel Church Road, north of the APE. Through the fieldwork process, other potential interviewees were also identified. Mr. Joseph Ashe (resident at 4652 Summit Bridge Road; CRS No. N14376) and Mr. Ellwood Ashe (resident at 4634 Summit Bridge Road; CRS No. N05240), live in residences located at the southwest corner of Old School House Road and Summit Bridge Road.

Two DelDOT staff members, Patrick Carpenter and Nathaniel Delesline, conducted interviews with members of the African-American community. A sample list of interview questions follows:

- How are the African-American settlements in Middletown, Armstrong's Corners, Mount Pleasant, and Summit Bridge distinguished from each other?
- What role did the churches play in the development of the AA communities?
- What are the traditionally accepted boundaries for each community?
- How did each community develop? Did each develop around a church? A school? An industrial enterprise? The surrounding farms?
- Are there African-American cemeteries that served/serve the black populations of Middletown, Armstrong's Corner, or Mount Pleasant?
- Besides farming, what other employment did residents in each community obtain?
- What types of school and church functions occurred within each community?

- Which of the schools did you attend in the area, and what do you remember about the school?

When interviews were actually scheduled in August 2005, Mr. Haman was not available, but the three other individuals were interviewed. Specifically, Joseph Ashe and Ellwood Ashe were interviewed on August 22, 2005. Cordelia Ross was interviewed on September 6, 2005. Joseph Ashe was driven along the project corridor to identify extant and removed African-American features in an interview conducted on September 6, 2005. A video of the interview was taken and is now housed in the DelDOT archives. A follow-up visit with Mr. Ashe to determine the age of the Ringgold Chapel was made on April 27, 2006 by A.D. Marble & Company and DE SHPO staff. The interviews were not recorded. The notes from the oral interviews with members of the local African-American community will be included in a future submission to the DE SHPO.

Historic maps were used to identify schools and churches historically under African-American use. Land records of the properties identified as having African-American associations were examined by DelDOT and A.D. Marble & Company to aid in the determination of land ownership for individual properties (Table 5). Twentieth-century road plans were also reviewed in an attempt to help identify resources that might have African-American associations, such as churches and schools and to understand the number of African-American resources that are extant today. During the review of road records, it was discovered that some of the houses were moved back from Summit Bridge Road ca. 1953. Education records, including the "Papers relating to Delaware social services, 1870-1954" were examined at the Hagley Museum. The New Castle County Board of Education files, available at the Delaware Public Archives, were also examined for further information on African-American Schools.

5.1.2 Description

Within the APE it appears that buildings or structures associated with the African-American community were largely oriented in a linear fashion, along present day U.S. 301/Summit Bridge Road and its crossroads, in the vicinity of employment opportunities. Interviews and discussions with African-American community members indicate that the boundaries of the rural African-American community were Frogtown Crossing to the south (located on the north side of the historic core of Middletown) and Summit Bridge on the north (just outside the APE). A large African-American settlement was also located in the City of Middletown (also outside the APE). The focus of this investigation is the community located between the southern end of Summit Bridge and the northern end of Middletown.

With the exception of two locations (the intersection of Old School House Road and U.S. 301 and Armstrong Corner at the intersection of Bohemia Mill/Marl Pit Road and U.S. 301), the dwellings of the African-American community were not necessarily clustered but were spaced out along the U.S. 301 corridor. Through the course of fieldwork, conducted in July and August 2005, and the initial interviews, the following resources within the APE were identified as having African-American associations and being 50 years in age:

Table 5. Properties Identified as Having African-American Associations.

CRS No.	Address	Property Type	Notes on history and integrity
N05240	4634 Summit Bridge Rd	Residence/Former Tenant House	Former tenant house; erected ca. 1860; property was conveyed to Caroline Saddler by Thomas Clayton in 1889 which indicates possible association with farm at CRS No. N05242
N05241	4644 Summit Bridge Rd	Residence	Previously identified as school in Skelcher study and 1979 survey form; frame dwelling and 1-acre parcel conveyed to Alfred Johnson by Henry Brady in 1921; 2-story dwelling shown in this location in 1930; Dwelling does not appear in present configuration until 1951
N13536	4648 Summit Bridge Rd	Former duPont school	Highly altered former duPont school; possibly in location of former school or A.M.E. church
N14329	5051 Summit Bridge Rd	Residence	.49 acre parcel conveyed to Ash family by John and Lettie Haman in 1955; current dwelling was erected ca. 1955
N14330	4634 Summit Bridge Rd	A.M.E. Church - Ringgolds Chapel;	Less than 50 years old; located on site of former Ringgold Chapel; .75-acre lot conveyed to Walter Bordley in 1930
N14331	504 Summit Bridge Rd	Cannery	Location of H.G. Cole Canning Company; 15-25 units of worker housing, industrial building and office have been removed
N14366	4579 Summit Bridge Rd	Residence	3-acre lot purchased from Henry Brady in 1930; Current dwelling was erected ca. 1940
N14376	4652 Summit Bridge Rd	Residence	.45-acre lot purchased by John Truitt from Brady family in 1947; current dwelling was erected ca. 1955
N14381	4638 Summit Bridge Rd	Residence	Originally part of 1-acre tract associated with N05241; former lakeside cottage moved here between 1965 and 1971 to replace structure on property that had burned

The location of these properties is shown in Figure 6.

After a follow-up interview with Mr. Joseph Ashe was conducted in April 2006, it was discovered that CRS No. N14330, the Ringgold Chapel A.M.E. Church is less than 50 years in age, although it is located on the site of the former Ringgolds Chapel. Removed buildings once associated with the African-American community include numerous residences, a church, a school, and a locally owned and operated African-American business. Thus, all that remains of the community today

Figure 6
Properties Identified as Having African-American Associations
 U.S. 301 Project Development African-American Rural Community Assessment
 New Castle County, Delaware



are the former duPont school and several residences, most of which are concentrated at the intersection of Old School House Road and U.S. 301. The narrative that follows details the history of the African-American community in the APE and the loss of historic fabric it has experienced in more recent years.

5.1.3 History of the African-American Community in the U.S. 301 APE

The history of the African-American community in Delaware began with the use of slaves for labor in the eighteenth century. A large-scale manumission of slaves occurred in Delaware between 1780 and 1830, and by 1840, free African-Americans accounted for 20 percent of New Castle County's total inhabitants. Following manumission, other labor arrangements, such as tenancy, sharecropping, and employment of wage-laborers, proved to be much more practical and profitable solutions and began to replace the institution of slavery. The freeing of the state's slaves directly resulted in the burgeoning of the free African-American population; by 1860, thirty-six percent of the inhabitants in St. Georges and Pencader Hundreds were of African descent (DeCunzo and Catts 1990:76).

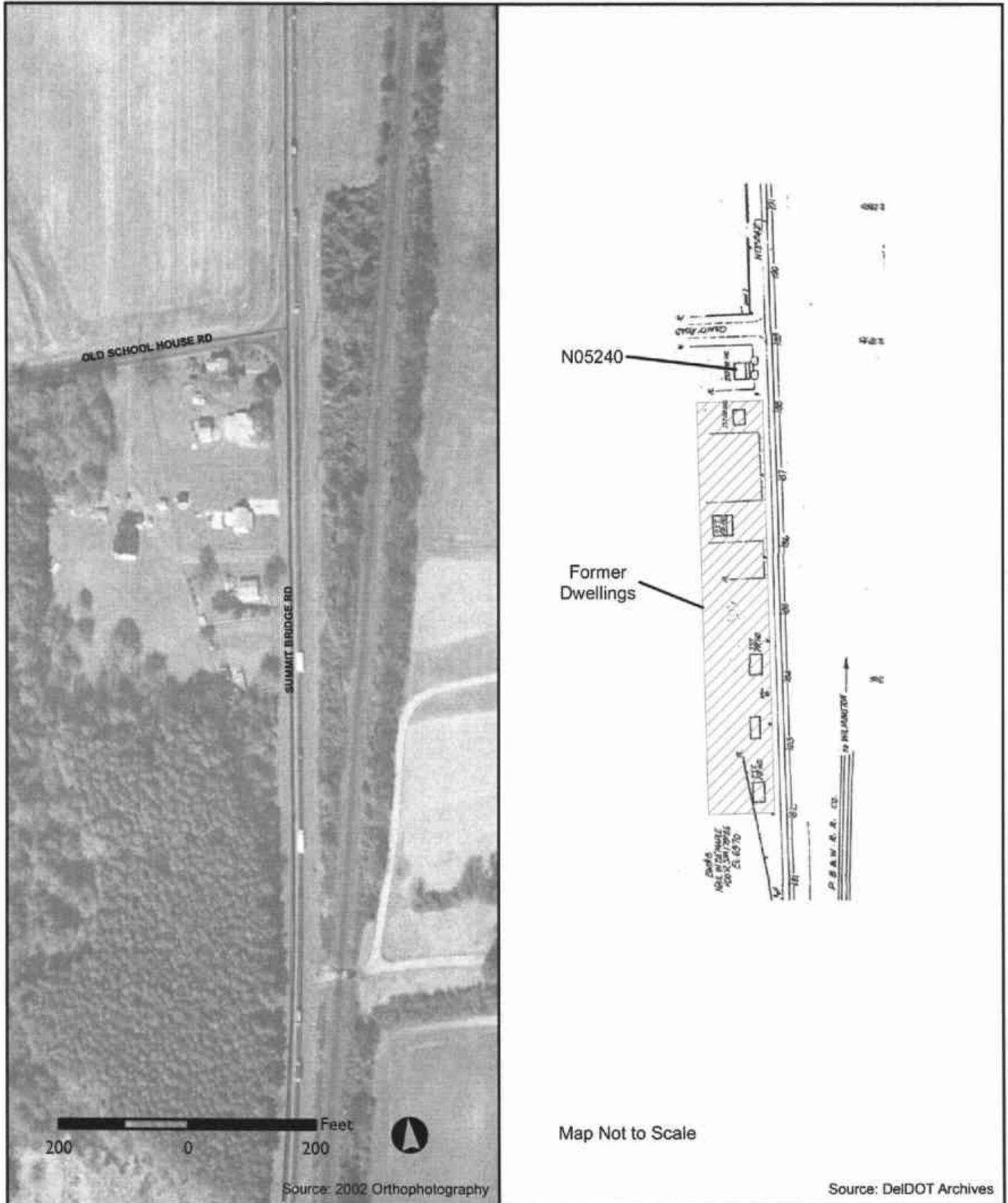
During the nineteenth century, free African-American men worked as farm laborers or in trades relating to the growing agricultural economy, such as milling, canning, and hauling. It was during the nineteenth-century period that rural outlying communities of African-American residents developed on the edges of towns and along roadways and railroads in the vicinity of employment opportunities.

5.1.3a Farming and Old School House Road

While a few African-Americans in New Castle County are listed as farm owners in the nineteenth century, most were employed as farm laborers or tenants. Farm owners sometimes erected housing for their laborers (Sheppard et al. 2001:E3). It appears that many members of the African-American community worked on farms and lived in houses located nearby or on the edges of farms during the mid-nineteenth century. Absentee landownership and the consolidation of large land holdings among the wealthy elite increased the rate of tenancy in St. Georges Hundred in the nineteenth century. In response to increased needs for tenant housing wrought by demographic pressures, changing farm practices, and the influence of agricultural reform writers, the "house and garden" plan developed. Under the "house and garden" plan, a farm owner leased to his laborer a small house and a small plot for raising garden crops and livestock as part of a formal contract. Tenancies were often clustered together along roadways or tree lines, and were usually within sight of the main farm complex. The size and quality of construction of tenant houses was not equivalent to the more permanent main dwellings; thus, few tenant houses remain on the landscape from this or later periods.

The 1868, 1881, and 1893 historic maps show three dwellings at the southeastern corner of the intersection of Old School House Road and U.S. 301 associated with the nearby Brady farm. Given the close proximity of these houses to the Brady farm to the southeast (CRS No. N00121) and their location at an intersection, it is likely they served as housing for farm workers. Today, the site of these three former dwellings is occupied by four resources identified as having African-American associations. Figure 7 shows the dwellings that occupied the Brady property at the southwest corner of the intersection of Old School House Road and U.S. 301 in 1930. By 1951, all of the former dwellings had been removed; only CRS No. N05240 (ca. 1860) appears to date to

Figure 7
Old School House Road and U.S. 301 Intersection, 1930 and 2002
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the period of ownership of the Brady family (Figure 8). By 1962, the parcels on which worker housing was once located had been sold to members of the African-American community who either relocated or erected new dwellings in the approximate location of the former housing (Figure 9).

As is the case at Old School House Road, farm owners usually sold or gave the house and a small lot to their tenants, particularly after 1860 (Sheppard et al. 2001:E3). The first mention of African-American property ownership in the deeds of the properties at Old School House Road is an 1889 deed in which Thomas Clayton conveyed the property at 4634 Summit Bridge Road (CRS No. N05240; shown as one of the Brady tenant houses in 1868) to Caroline Saddler, colored woman. Clayton had inherited the tract from his father Joshua Clayton who died the year prior. The Clayton family owned a large farm on the north side of Old School House Road (CRS No. N05242) which extended all the way to Churchtown Road. Members of the Clayton family also owned a number of tenant farms scattered throughout St. Georges Hundred (Brooks, et al. 1985:7-12).

Similar to the Clayton's, the Brady's were large land holders in the area. In the nineteenth century, George Brady owned operations in St. Georges, Red Lion, and Appoquinimink Hundred (Brooks, et al. 1985:7-12). Like the Claytons, the Brady's sold their tenant houses or tenant house sites to members of the African-American community in the twentieth century. In 1921, Henry S. and Grace Brady conveyed the property at 4638 Summit Bridge Road (CRS No. N14381) to Alfred Johnson, a trustee of the Ringgold Chapel. The property passed through the Johnson and Dickerson families until it was purchased by the current owner, Mr. Joseph Ashe, in 1972. According to Mr. Ashe, the current dwelling on the property is not the former tenant house but a replacement. The Brady's also sold the nearly half acre lot at 4652 Summit Bridge Road (CRS No. N14376) to John Walter Truitt in 1907, who then sold it to Wilson Haman. Both Truitt and Haman were members of the African-American community according to Mr. Joseph Ashe (Ashe 2005).

Although farming continued to be the economic mainstay of southern New Castle County in the twentieth century, census statistics from 1900 show that African-Americans owned only 1.7 percent of New Castle County's farms (United States Historical Census Browser, Year:1900). Following wider trends, African-Americans began leaving agricultural jobs during this period for work in industry. By 1920, a shortage of reliable tenants also developed, disrupting the long-standing labor relationships, and negatively affecting landlords' standards of living (Bausman 1933:165-166 in DeCunzo and Garcia 1992:188-190). In response, farmers began to increasingly employ laborsaving technology, including steam-powered and internal combustion engine-powered machines and tractors. They also employed itinerant or migrant laborers during periods of seasonal demands, primarily during harvest time.

5.1.3b Industry, Armstrong Corner, and Mt. Pleasant

It appears that African-American enclaves also began developing in the study area where the extension of the railroad and the related economic growth created agriculture-related employment opportunities. A large grouping of tenant/worker housing appears on 1868 mapping at the intersection of present-day Bohemia Mill/Marl Pit Road and U.S. 301 as under the ownership of Benjamin Armstrong. The Armstrong family, who operated a brick yard on the west side of the Delaware Railroad as well as farmed acreage in the vicinity, are believed to have employed

Figure 8
Old School House Road and U.S. 301 Intersection, 1951 and 2002
 U.S. 301 Project Development African-American Rural Community Assessment
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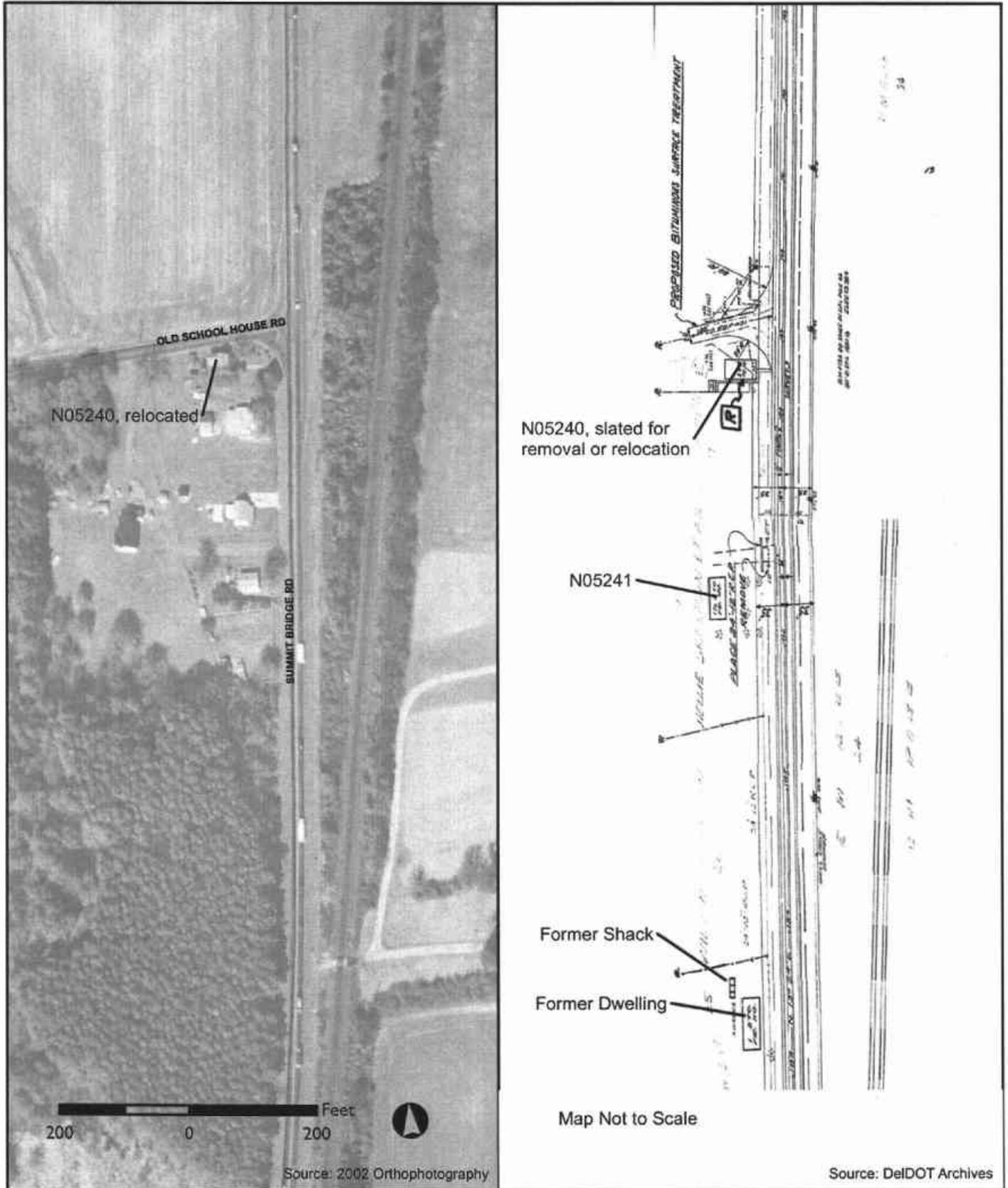
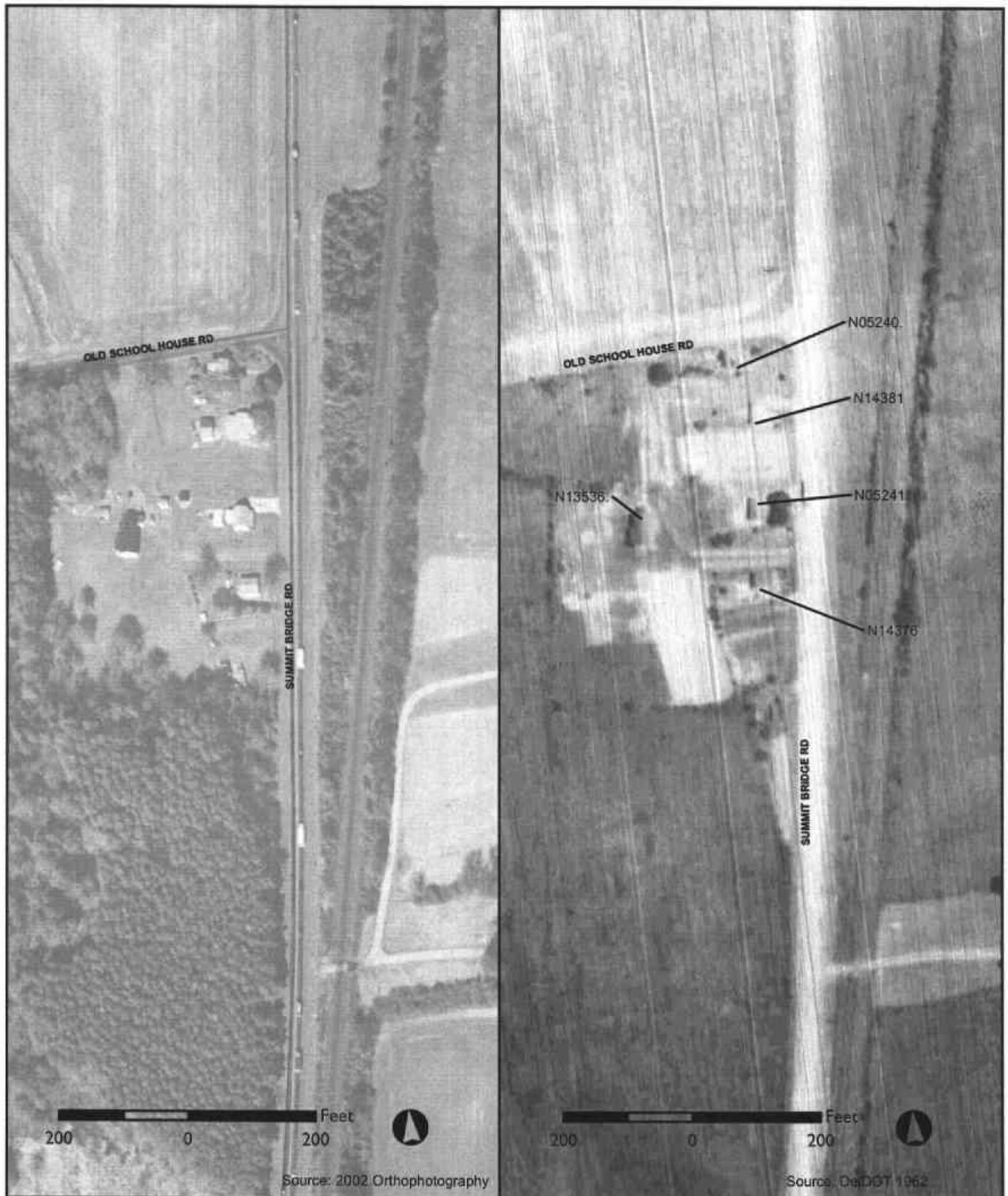


Figure 9
Old School House Road and U.S. 301 Intersection, 1962 and 2002
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members of the local African-American community. In the late nineteenth century, a store, the brickyard, a wheelwrights shop, a blacksmith shop, a school, and about 20 dwellings extended out from the crossroads and railroad in this area (Baist 1893). Historian Scharf also notes that Benjamin Armstrong's wife organized a Sunday school and church at Armstrong Corner in a private home under the auspices of the Forest Presbyterian Church in Middletown. The church building was erected in 1871 and used until 1886, at which time it became a mission school. In 1888 the Sunday School had 55 members but the church did not endure. No evidence of buildings or structures associated with the church or brickyard remain above-ground today.

Sometime in the early twentieth century, the complex at Armstrong Corner came to include a cannery, which was operating as the H.G. Cole Canning Company by 1948. Historic road plans and aerial mapping from 1932 (Figures 10 and 11) show that by 1938 there were at least 10 frame dwellings, an African-American church, a store, a cannery office and several frame cannery sheds in the immediate vicinity of the intersection. Ms. Cordelia Ross, a 90-year old African-American resident of Summit Bridge noted that the cannery was critical to the local economy, employing about 250 people, a number that increased to 300 during the local vegetable season. On the 1979 survey form for the Armstrong House (CRS No. N05146) the owner, Mrs. Crossland, is noted as saying that Armstrong Corner was primarily a black community that grew up to serve the cannery with commercial services that also served the surrounding farm community. Mr. Joseph Ashe remembers working in the store at the northwest corner of the intersection as a boy. Mr. Ashe also recalls 15 to 25 buildings in the area including small, two- to three-room houses painted red in color in the vicinity and several long frame buildings located at the southeastern corner of the intersection. The long buildings were erected to provide housing for migrant workers from the south who served as supplemental help in the cannery when local potatoes and tomatoes were in season. The long buildings associated with seasonal housing appear in 1962 aerials (Figure 12).

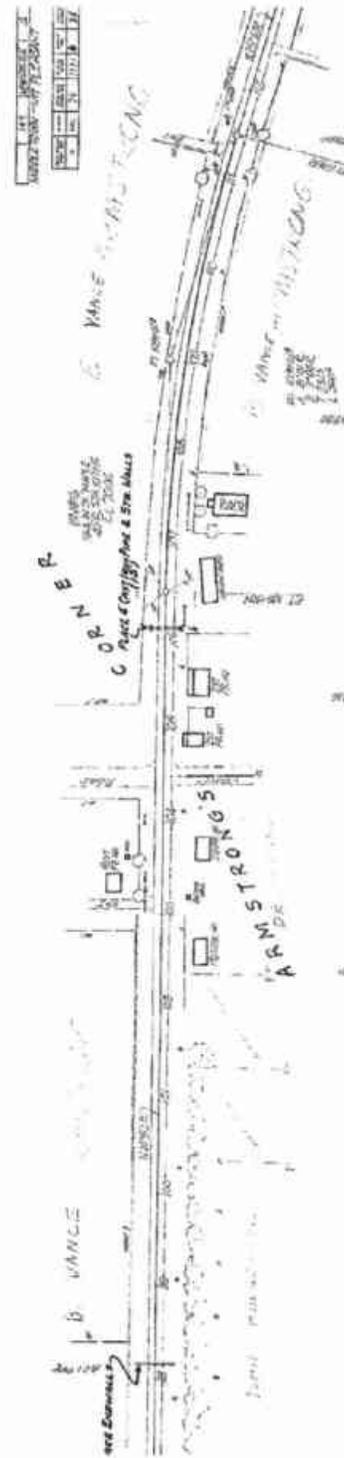
Sometime after the industrial operations in Armstrong Corner ended, the residential dwellings and the services (general store, church, school) located there were removed. One building, the Ringgold Chapel A.M.E. Church, was relocated to the south and subsequently removed. Today, all that remains of the community of Armstrong Corner (now known as Armstrong) are a few wood frame residences which front U.S. 301 (CRS Nos. N14329 and N14330) and two mid-twentieth-century industrial buildings on the west side of the Delaware Railroad (CRS No. N14331; now the site of a sand and gravel operation) (Figure 12).

According to Mr. Joseph Ashe, another prominent local industry that employed African-Americans was Crothers' Granary (CRS No. 12017), which dates to ca. 1913 and was located at the southeast corner of the intersection of U.S. 301 and Boyds Corner Road near the freight station in the crossroads community of Mt. Pleasant. The granary and Thornton's Store (CRS. No. N05182) to the north were removed some time after 1988, based on the survey form prepared for the store at that time (CRS No. N05182). During a drive of the study area, Mr. Ashe indicated that African-Americans lived south of the crossroads community of Mt. Pleasant (Ashe 2005). There were also tenant houses located on the west side of U.S. 301, south of and adjacent to the current airport property that were occupied by African-Americans. None of these residences are present today.

Figure 10
Armstrong Corner, 1930 and 2002
 U.S. 301 Project Development African-American Rural Community Assessment
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Note: All of this former worker housing has been removed



Map Not to Scale

Source: DelDOT Archives

Figure 11 Armstrong Corner, 1938 and 2002

U.S. 301 Project Development African-American Rural Community Assessment
New Castle County, Delaware

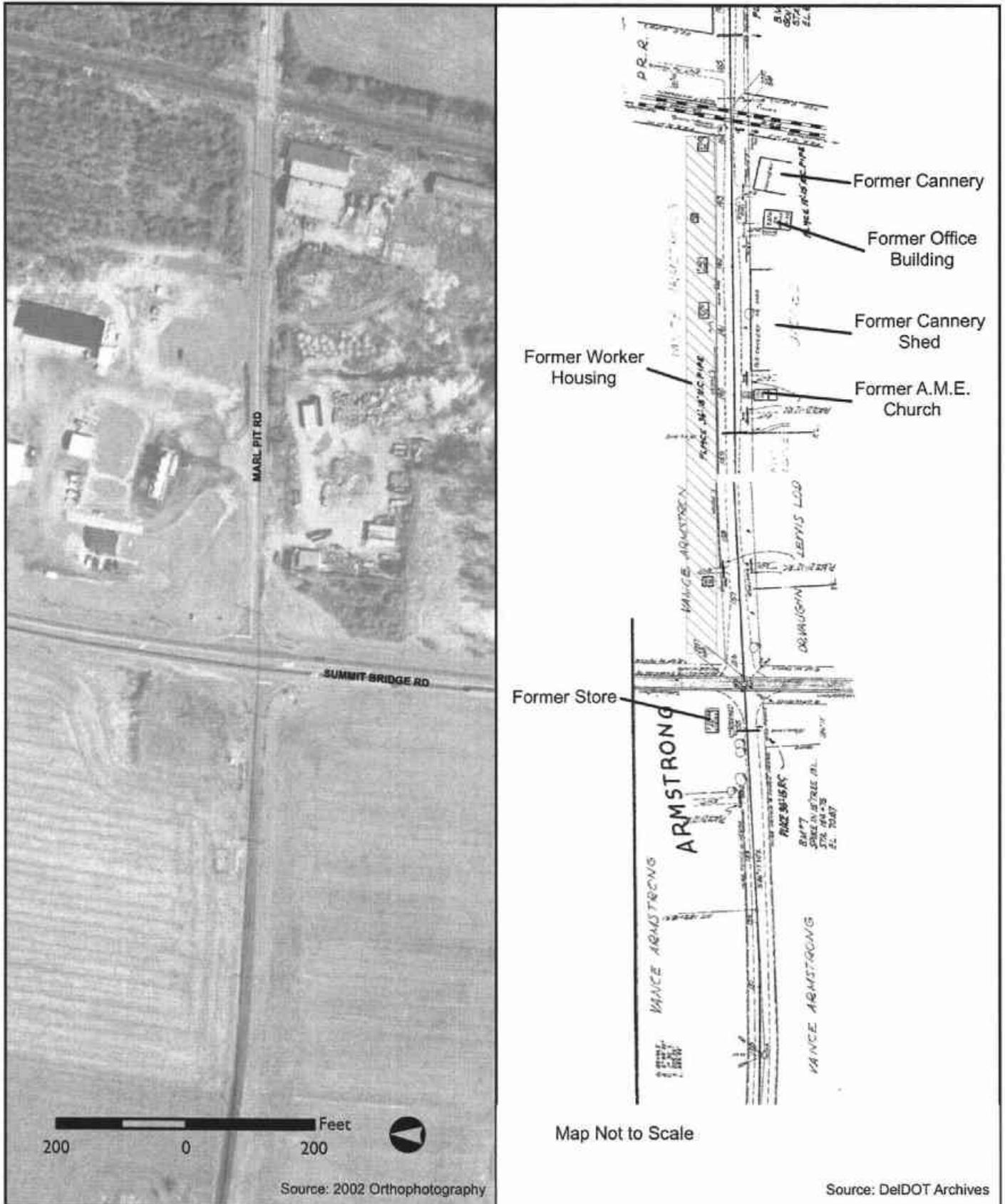
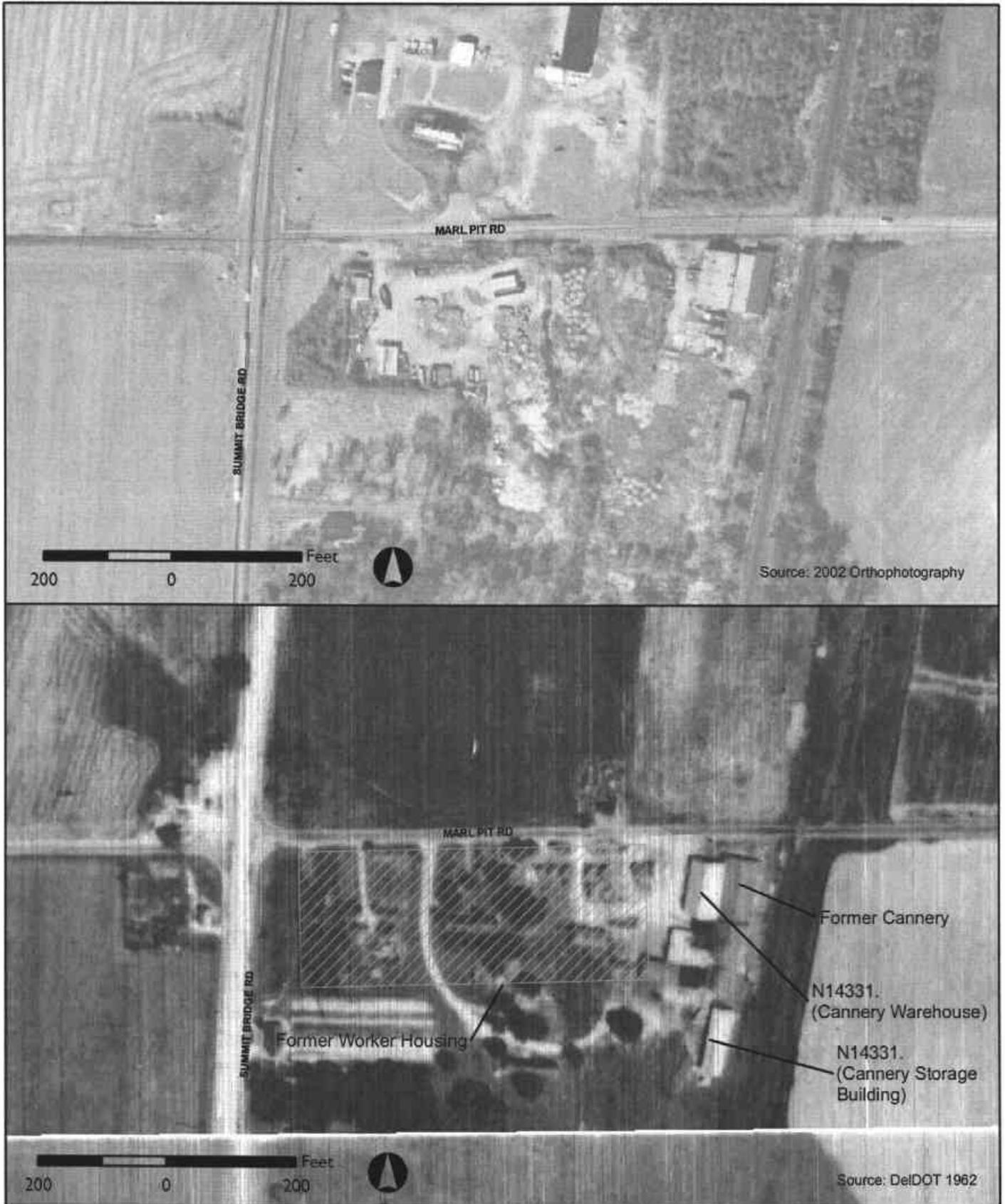


Figure 12
Armstrong Corner, 1962 and 2002
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While the men were generally employed as laborers in local industry or agriculture, the women either worked at home or provided services to local white families as washerwomen or housekeepers. Ms. Cordelia Ross recalls doing day jobs of laundry and cleaning at the Brady House in Middletown (CRS No. N00188 demolished; present site of a residential development).

It does not appear that the residents in the local community were generally business owners, although there is one exception. The Runsom's owned a diner that was once located at the current site of Logullo's Country Market (CRS No. N14320); no evidence of African-American occupation of this property remains today. Anne Runsom, wife of the diner owner, was employed as the teacher at the Mt. Pleasant School (Ashe 2005).

5.1.3c Social Life, Churches, and Schools

During the oral interviews, Mr. Joseph Ashe and Ms. Cordelia Ross noted that they did not necessarily term the area to be an African-American community. They stated the African-Americans and Whites were largely integrated, and favorable relationships existed between the farm owners and those people who worked for them. Despite living and working side by side, it should be acknowledged that the two races attended separate schools and churches and seemed to frequent different social circles.

Social life for the African-American community was largely centered on the church and school which seems to have provided members with a sense of place. Trips were also made to Middletown for shopping and socializing, and recreation and socializing occurred in individual homes. A network of paths and trails enabled members of the local community to visit between houses, go to work on farms, and go to Middletown. Based on field work and oral interviews, there does not appear to be any remnants of this former circulation network on the landscape today.

Although it is not known exactly when a school was erected to serve the African-American community of the APE, Skelcher notes that by 1874, African-American schools were operating in Middletown, Mt. Pleasant, Summit Bridge, and Odessa. These schools are not shown on nineteenth-century maps of the area (Skelcher 1995b:213). Muller's 1919 map of New Castle County shows "Colored School No. 119" at the southwest corner of the intersection of Old School House Road and U.S. 301. A review of "Papers relating to Delaware social services, 1870-1954" at the Hagley Museum confirmed a school was in operation for the benefit of Mt. Pleasant's African-American population by the early twentieth century. Papers describing the 1904-1905 school year indicate Miss Olive R. Tennyson taught 143 days of school at Mt. Pleasant during that time period (Hagley Library, Papers relating to Delaware social services, 1897-1954, 712/22, "Colored Schools - School Year 1904-05"). During the late 1910s and early 1920s, as part of DuPont's education movement, numerous new schools for African-Americans were constructed within Delaware. This seems to be the case at Mt. Pleasant. A typed sheet that appears to date to March 9, 1920, indicates a committee had selected a site at Mt. Pleasant for a new school. However, unlike other sheets describing proposed school locations, the Mt. Pleasant sheet did not mention extant buildings or current landowners (Hagley Library, Papers relating to Delaware social services, 1897-1954, 712/32 "Schools-Colored School Sites 1920"). It is possible that the old school was replaced by the duPont school, which remains today at 4648 Summit Bridge Road (CRS No. N13536).

A comparison of a twentieth-century photograph labeled “Mt. Pleasant Old Colored School” to that of other resources in the vicinity seems to indicate that the pre-duPont school was removed from the southwest corner of the intersection, as it is shown in the Mueller 1919 map (Figure 13). The building at 4644 Summit Bridge Road (CRS No. N05241) was previously identified as a schoolhouse in a survey form dated 1979 and possibly in the Skelcher school study (identifies CRS No. N05341 as Mt. Pleasant School, which appears to be a mistype of CRS No. N05241) (Skelcher 1995b). However, based on the research conducted for this study, the building at 4644 Summit Bridge Road does not appear to have served as an African-American school. While the building is located in close proximity to the school indicated on the 1919 map, there is no documentary evidence of the building having ever served as a school. An examination of deed of ownership for the property made no reference to the buildings’ use as a school. Nor is the school similar in appearance to a twentieth-century photograph of the “Old Mt. Pleasant Colored School”, on file in the New Castle County Board of Education records in the Delaware Public Archives; the dwelling in question has a different orientation, chimney placement, and lacks the returns shown at the gable ends of the schoolhouse (Figure 13). Finally, inquiries of current local residents revealed no known use of the property for educational purposes.

Between 1920 and 1931, the Auxiliary Association, created by Pierre DuPont, completed 89 schools for African-American children, including the structure that remains at 4648 Summit Bridge Road, identified as CRS No. N13536 (Skelcher 1995b:144). In 1922 the widow Oka Warren sold two acres of land in St. George Hundred to John Nields of Wilmington, who subsequently conveyed two lots of land with “the school building thereon erected”. The Mt. Pleasant Schoolhouse (CRS No. N13536) is a highly altered example of a duPont school. A comparison of the current structure to a photograph of the school taken January 30, 1923 shows the significant amount of change the structure has undergone (Figure 13).

By the early 1930s, some rural African-American schools were being closed due to declining population, lower enrollment, and consolidation: the African-American school in Odessa closed by 1932 (Skelcher 1995a:115). Still, the Mt. Pleasant School remained open through the mid-twentieth century, reflective of the continuing need of education for an African-American populace. The school was attended by students who resided as far north as Summit Bridge and as far south as Frogtown. Mr. Joseph Ashe attended the school from 1945-1951, walking here from Armstrong Corner.

The school, along side the church, served as the focal point of the community. The first mention of an A.M.E. church in the record of deeds is an 1891 conveyance for the property at 4634 Summit Bridge Road (CRS No. N05240). The deed mentions an A.M.E. church as the adjacent property to the west. Based on this description, the church would have been located in the current location of the DuPont School. Ms. Cordelia Ross also indicated that an A.M.E. church was once located on the south side of Old School House Road in this approximate area. However, no evidence of an A.M.E. church on the west side of U.S. 301 was found when related deeds and historic maps were examined. Given the subsequent use of this location for the erection of the duPont school and the known historic association between African-American churches and schools, it is possible that this was the former site of the A.M.E. church. It is also possible that the church and school may have shared a site.

Figure 13
Early Twentieth-Century Photograph of former
"Mt. Pleasant African-American School" and
2005 Photograph of Proported School at 4644 Summit Bridge Rd.
U.S. 301 Project Development African-American Rural Community Assessment
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In the 1910s, a group of blacks residing in and around Armstrong Corner formed the Ringgold Chapel A.M.E. Church (CRS No. N14330). It is also possible that this congregation was created from or replaced the A.M.E. church on Old School House Road. Ringgold Chapel was named for the Reverend Isaac Ringgold from the Wilmington District, the first circuit-elder to serve the church. The original church was located on the south side of Marl Pit Road, east of U.S. 301 by the canning factory (Figure 11). According to Mr. Joseph Ashe, the frame church was moved to its current location on the east side of Summit Bridge Road, south of the Marl Pit Road intersection, in 1944. The parcel where the church now stands was acquired by African-Americans Walter Bordley and Henry Ashe in 1929. A 1940 inventory of church archives in Delaware described the church as a one-story frame structure with single siding and a corrugated metal roof. Alfred Johnson was listed as the Trustee. In 1951 the land was sold to the Trustees, and the deed mentions a church building.

According to Mr. Joseph Ashe, a reverend of the church, the current concrete block structure that occupies the parcel at 4634 Summit Bridge Road was erected for use as a social hall about 20 years ago, adjacent to and on the east side of the relocated frame church. Notably the two structures were similar in form based on a photograph taken by the WPA in 1938 (Figure 14). The plan was to erect a new church in the location of the former structure, adjacent to the roadway. However, the new church was never constructed, and the congregation continues to meet in the building that was erected to serve as a social hall. All that remains of the former church is the datestone which reads: "Ringgold A.M.E. Chapel Founded 1917, Remodeled 1944" (Ashe 2006).

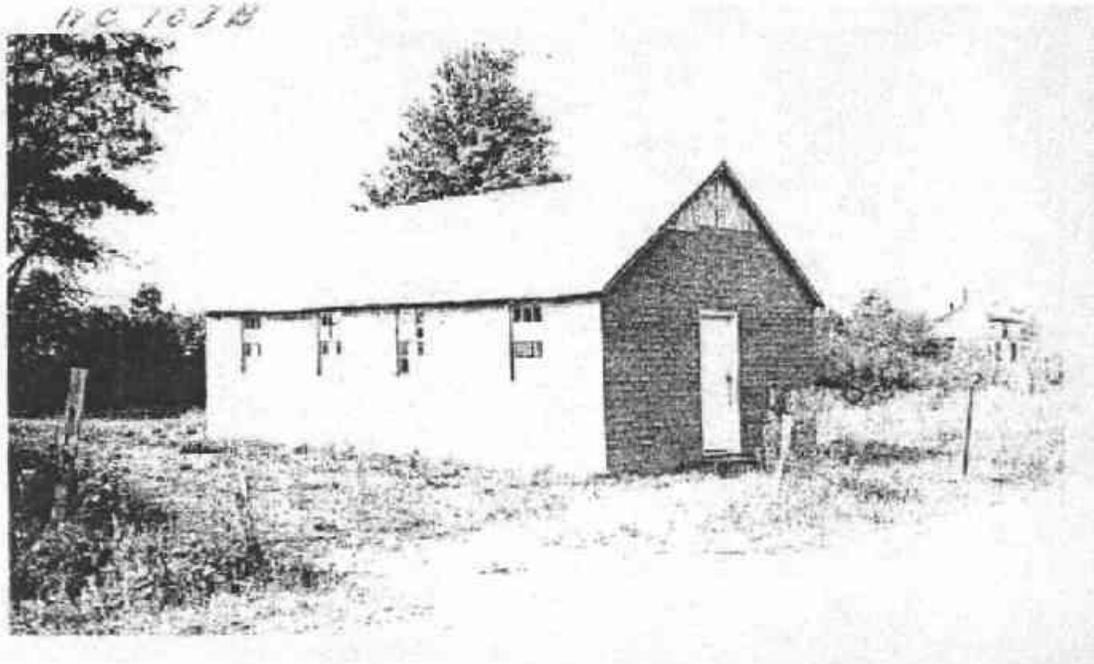
The church played an important role in African-American social life, and camp meetings were held in this location every year according to local resident Ms. Cordelia Ross. An interview with local residents revealed no mill pond (where baptisms were conducted) or cemeteries associated with Ringgold Chapel. African-American cemeteries used by the community include Mt. Pisgah UAME Church in Summit Bridge, and a cemetery in downtown Middletown (both outside of the study area).

5.1.3d Twentieth-Century Changes

While the rural African-American population in New Castle County held steady in the late nineteenth century it began to experience declines by the 1920s and early 1930s (Skelcher 1995a:114). Still, during this period African-American population concentrations could be found around Summit Bridge, Mt. Pleasant, Middletown, Odessa, and Port Penn (Skelcher 1995a:131). According to Skelcher, this was largely due to poor economic conditions and limited opportunities.

As they were usually located adjacent to prominent transportation corridors, some rural black communities were displaced by infrastructural improvements in the twentieth century. For instance, the African-Americans living along the C&D Canal at Summit Bridge, north of the APE, were forced to relocate when the canal was expanded in 1937. Other groups were displaced by the construction of the DuPont Highway in the 1920s (Skelcher 1995a:112-113). Others lost homes when Summit Bridge Road was widened ca. 1953 (Delaware State Highway Department 1953:49). Within the APE, at least one structure associated with the African-American community (4634 Summit Bridge Road (CRS No. N05240 appears to have been relocated as part of proposed improvements to Summit Bridge Road (U.S. 301).

Figure 14
1938 Photograph of Ringgold Chapel and
2005 Photograph of Modern Church
U.S. 301 Project Development African-American Rural Community Assessment
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The proportion of African-Americans in rural parts of the county decreased in the mid- to late-twentieth century, especially as upscale residential developments began encroaching into former agricultural areas. Most of the African-American residents in the study area appear to have moved to Middletown to work for the railroad or related businesses or left from the area all together (Skelcher 1995a:135). By the late twentieth century, African-Americans constituted 20 percent of the population of the town (Vanasse 2000).

The general finding from the interviews of area African-American residents is there is no longer a viable African-American rural community in the U.S. 301 study area. Mr. Ashe remarked that now there is simply “nothing left”. The interviewees, who remembered the more recent history of the study area, indicated that the local area has changed rapidly in recent years, resulting in a loss of nearly all African-American related resources. Many dwellings had been removed from the rural enclaves that formed the community, including 15 to 25 dwellings at Armstrong Corner and numerous dwellings north and south of the Mt. Pleasant intersection. The number of members in attendance at Ringgold Chapel is low, a reflection of the decline in the local African-American population.

5.1.4 African-American Contexts

In 1995 Bradley Skelcher of Delaware State University prepared a context entitled “*African-American Settlement Patterns on the Upper Peninsula zone of Delaware, 1730-1940+/-*”. The context identifies and provides guidance for identifying markers of African-American communities on the landscape, including schools and churches, as well as a history of the development of Delaware’s African-American communities. The context also identifies associated property types. With regards to the African-American Rural Community property type, the context states:

The definition of an African-American Rural Community is a district or a more or less definitely circumscribed place containing African-American members that is located remotely from the nearest Euro-American community, usually found at a crossroad in the country side. The African-American community had a core or nucleus that contained a concentration of African-American populations. The core area also contained a concentration of contributing elements such as dwellings and various outbuildings. Also within the core, there were concentrations of institutions such as churches and schools. The aerial extent of African-American rural communities is expected to be one and one half mile in radius.

The context also provides minimum requirements for the subtype which, in summary, includes retention of:

- African-American institutions, including a church and school;
- Retention of rural setting;
- At least two residential dwellings with documented association with members of the African-American community; and
- Some other associated features, such as a mill pond used for baptisms, agricultural outbuildings, agricultural landscapes, buildings that served commercial or social functions, and/or a cemetery (Skelcher 1995a:145-146).

The context also states that in order for a rural community to be identified as African-American in origin, documentary characteristics must be found in the form of 1) historic maps indicating a historic church; 2) documentary evidence of a school for African-American children and; 3) documentary evidence of ownership or tenancy of property in the vicinity of the church and school by African-Americans. Oral history is noted as possible supplemental documentary information.

The context states that a community must possess the qualities of location, design, setting, and association to be considered eligible (Skelcher 1995a:149-150). The context also recognizes that buildings in rural African-American communities are generally highly altered and may have been relocated. Due to the changing nature of African-American communities, loss of integrity of location and some contributing features is expected. Still, the community must retain some integrity from the period of significance and historic association (Skelcher 1995a:144).

5.1.5 National Register Evaluation of African-American Rural Community in the U.S. 301 APE

The African-American Rural Community within the U.S. 301 APE was initially based on the location of proximity to work on farms and later on the industry that was located along the railway. The school and churches were erected in close proximity to existing enclaves and served as community centers as long as the African-American population continued to reside in the area. While this pattern of development is reflective of African-American community development in Delaware, as discussed below, the community lacks sufficient integrity to be considered eligible under Criterion A in the areas of community development, ethnic heritage, and agriculture. In regards to Criterion B, background research revealed no association with notable African-Americans of historical importance. Under Criterion C, the community would need to retain notable examples of construction types or forms of dwellings associated with the African-American community or represent a unified significant and distinguishable entity to be considered eligible; none of the properties identified as having African-American associations within the APE are notable architectural examples and the community lacks sufficient integrity to convey cohesion. Finally, under Criterion D, to be eligible a community would need to have the potential to convey information about a topic related to local African-American history, including agricultural tenancy, industrial labor, and social life. Based on the background research conducted for this study, it does not appear that the African-American community in the U.S. 301 has the potential to yield new information. Recommendations for future research efforts are included at the end of this document.

Overall, the community lacks integrity of location and design. Most notably, the pre-DuPont School, A.M.E. Church on Old School House Road, and Ringgold Chapel A.M.E. have been removed from their historic location at the center of the community, affecting the community's historic layout. The only community resource to retain its historic location is the DuPont School. Additionally, the school lacks integrity of design and materials, detracting from its ability to convey its historic function as a duPont school. Numerous dwellings associated with the African-American community have also been removed from the landscape, affecting integrity of design. Finally, the network of paths and trails that once connected the community has also been lost.

The setting of the community has been somewhat altered by recent commercial and residential development along U.S. 301. These changes in land use have resulted in some loss of the rural nature of the area. The retention of the Clayton and Brady farms (CRS Nos. N05242 and N00121)

on which African-Americans were employed enhances integrity of setting. However, many of the industries that led to the establishment and growth of the rural African-American community in this area (Armstrong Corner cannery and brick yard and Crothers' Granary at Mt. Pleasant) have been removed from the landscape, resulting in a loss of those resources that were directly related to the development and location of the community. Finally, few of the extant houses retain their immediate setting of small sheds for sheltering a few animals or family kitchen gardens, both historically important features for African-American dwellings. Integrity of materials and workmanship of most of the dwellings has been compromised by alterations in the form of replacement windows and siding.

Regarding integrity of association, through research efforts seven 50-year-old buildings in the APE have been identified as having African-American associations, and thus retain integrity of association with the African-American community. The community resources that would have enhanced integrity of association of the community, such as a school and church, either no longer remain or have been so significantly altered they lack the features associated with their historic function. Overall, due to loss of integrity of setting, location, design, the community lacks integrity of feeling. Thus, due to a loss of integrity, the linear African-American community between Summit Bridge and Middletown cannot be considered eligible for listing in the National Register.

At Old School House Road, a former school and four dwellings remain. Although documentary research did not locate a clear reference to the properties at this location being used as tenant houses, the fact that deed research shows them being conveyed to members of the African-American community by nearby land holders seems to provide significant evidence that the area at Old School House Road likely contained tenant farms. This suggests that this complex may be potentially eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A within the contexts of tenant farming and the African-American community; however, the community lacks sufficient integrity to be eligible, as outlined below.

The House and Garden in Central Delaware context has established that retention of integrity of setting is important for the tenant house type (Sheppard 2001 et al.:F48). While the grouping is located at the edge of a roadway in proximity to the farms that dwellings in these locations historically served, the loss of all but one of the associated tenant houses detracts from integrity of setting. Additionally, the small scale features associated with tenant houses and rural dwellings, such as small sheds for the housing of poultry and vegetable gardens, no longer remain, resulting in a loss of immediate setting. The retention of the farms on which the residents of these tenant houses worked enhances integrity of setting, although, it is unusual that the cluster of dwellings are not visible from the farms which they served.

This grouping lacks integrity of design, feeling, and association, as only one of the five resources located in this area (4634 Summit Bridge Road; CRS No. N05240) appears to remain from the period in which these houses were erected by land owners for farm laborers. The remaining dwellings are not present in road plans dating to 1930 and appear to have been erected or moved here by members of the African-American community between 1930 and 1962. The network of paths and trails that connected these components of the tenancy landscape is gone, detracting from integrity of association of the tenant grouping with nearby farmsteads. Thus, due to a loss of

tenant houses and a lack of connection to the associated farms (either visually or through a circulation network), the grouping at Old School House Road is recommended not eligible for listing in the National Register as a cluster of agricultural tenant houses.

Although only one tenant house (CRS No. N05240) remains, it is interesting to note that the other dwellings are located in the location of the former tenant houses and were erected by African-American residents who are not known to have been tenant farmers. While this is a notable phenomenon that is alluded to in previous tenancy contexts that warrants further study, it does not appear to constitute National Register eligibility.

The grouping at Old School House Road is also recommended not eligible as an African-American community due to an overall lack of significance. While the cluster retains four dwellings with established African-American associations and a former duPont school, this small grouping does not accurately convey the extent of the associated African-American community that this cluster was a part of and cannot, therefore, be considered as eligible.

5.1.6 Recommendations for Future Work

Regarding the context guidance for evaluating African-American Rural Communities, while character-defining features are useful for grouping property types based on their common physical or associative characteristics, the context needs to recognize that the qualification of a property for the National Register should not be limited to a list of characteristics. It is important to determine how a community developed and to identify vernacular patterns of land use, circulation networks, and architecture which can be used to convey unique aspects of a community's development, social order, or regional trends. The context should also more strongly emphasize that an eligible community would continue to reflect an association with those activities that were directly related to the location and development of the community.

To assist users, the character-defining features should be applied within the context of other examples of surveyed properties possessing similar physical or associative characteristics, and eligible examples of the identified property types should be discussed. This would enable individuals evaluating related property types to accurately assess the qualities and condition of existing related properties. Additionally, the characteristics that define the rural community property type should be more directly related to historic significance under each of the National Register Criteria. Also, while the context identifies the broad patterns and stages in African-American history in Delaware, it could more clearly relate these to the National Register criteria and areas of significance.

Regarding recommendations for future research efforts, as part of this study, a trend towards occupation of former tenant parcels by members of the African-American community was identified at Old School House Road. This later expression of an earlier settlement pattern should be further explored in future contexts. To better understand the community within the APE, more detailed research (outside the scope of work for this project) such as examination of census data, should be conducted. Additional research, including oral interviews, could possibly help determine the historic location of the pre-DuPont School and the A.M.E. church on Old School House Road.

5.2 Rural Historic District Investigation

The landscape of the U.S. 301 Project Development APE includes some of the richest and most productive farmlands in Delaware, and farm complexes are a predominant property type. The historic structures survey recognized that most of the farm complexes on the landscape date to the 1830-1880+/- period and were generally built for, or adapted for, the purposes of field crop agriculture, dairy farming, or vegetable farming. Many of these farmsteads have been determined eligible or listed in the National Register individually. At the direction of the DE SHPO, these farmsteads and the associated land were examined collectively as a rural historic landscape.

The focus of this investigation is an examination of the integrity of the existing rural landscape within the APE for the Alternatives Retained for Detailed Studies. This investigation does not include an examination of the Red or Blue alignments, as these alternatives were not advanced for study as part of the intensive level investigation. This investigation is limited to an identification of areas in the APE where a rural historic district may exist and those farmsteads that may contribute to the potential district. It is not within the scope of research and documentation efforts for this project to define the boundaries of the rural historic district and potentially contributing and non-contributing features are outside the APE.

5.2.1 Previous Documentation of Rural Historic Districts in the APE

In the 1980s, a group of farms located within “The Levels,” an expanse of flat land around Levels Road toward the southeastern end of the intensive level APE, were considered for nomination as a potential rural historic district. The potential district was composed of farms with a related agricultural heritage.

The nominated area, measuring over 6,700 acres in size, was defined on the north and west by U.S. 301 and the Delaware-Maryland border, respectively. The towns of Middletown and Townsend were excluded from the district. The Levels included 32 farmsteads as contributing, some of which were located within the intensive level APE for U.S. 301 (Figure 15). However, meetings with property owners indicated a strong objection to this designation, and the nomination process was subsequently discontinued (Brooks, Jicha and Herman 1985).

No other areas of the intensive level survey area were previously documented as rural historic districts, although the 1993 U.S. 301 investigation also suggested that the large number of agrarian properties identified in the study area could possibly form a rural historic district but did not indicate in which portion of the APE this district might be located (Siders et al. 1993:33).

5.2.2 Guidelines for Evaluating Rural Historic Districts

The Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes (former National Register Bulletin 30) (NPS 1999) defines a rural historic landscape as:

. . . a geographical area that historically has been used by people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possesses a

Figure 15 Proposed Levels Historic District, 1985 (N10304)

U.S. 301 Project Development
New Castle County, Delaware



Source: USGS 30'x60' Topographic Quadrangles (Dover and Wilmington, DE)

significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features” (NPS 1999:2).

The significance of the rural landscape of the study area was outlined in the 2006 *Historic Context and Reconnaissance Survey Report* which related the results of background research and field survey to the area’s historic contexts. The context report also included direction on the evaluation of rural historic districts using National Park Service guidelines (A. D. Marble & Company 2006). The context report states:

Should a potential rural historic district be identified within the APE, a critical assessment of integrity will be required. In order to be seen as significant as an example of a rural historic district, a potential district must possess the following, as well as integrity, from the period of significance:

- Land reflective of agricultural use that was historically under agrarian use;
- Farmstead clusters comprised of:
 - Historic house and/or barn with or without additions;
 - Historic agricultural and domestic outbuildings exclusive of the main barn (at least two historic outbuildings must be present if the barn or house are modern);
 - Circulation network connecting the parts of the farm, including farm lanes and paths.
- Limited boundary demarcations, including fencelines and streams;
- Pattern of farmstead clusters;
- Circulation network that serves the rural community and connects it to the surrounding area;
- Visual continuity;
- Feeling of an agrarian landscape;
- Tenant houses;
- Cemeteries that served the rural communities; and
- Small-scale features related to agricultural land use.

In addition to farmsteads, potential contributing resources would include:

- Ruins associated with resources that served the agricultural community;
- Buildings that service the agrarian community:
 - Occasional church;
 - Occasional small, one-room school.

According to *National Register Bulletin 30*, the historic integrity of the rural landscape is threatened by:

. . . single major changes such as large scale farming practices that obliterate historic field patterns, flatten the contours of the land, and erase historic boundary markers, outbuildings, and fences. Integrity may also be lost due to the cumulative effect of relocated and lost historic buildings and structures, interruptions in the natural succession of vegetation, and the disappearance of small-scale features that defined historic land uses (NPS 1999:23).

The following changes, when occurring after the periods of significance, may reduce the historic integrity of a rural landscape:

- Changes in land use and management that alter vegetation, change the size and shape of fields, and erase boundary demarcations;
- Introduction of non-historic land uses that are visually intrusive;
- Loss of vegetation related to significant changes in land uses;
- Deterioration, abandonment, and relocation of historic buildings and structures;
- Substantial alteration of buildings and structures so that they are no longer visibly recognized as dating to the period of significance;
- Replacement of structures such as dams, bridges, and barns;
- Construction of new buildings and structures;
- Loss of boundary demarcations and small-scale features;
- Abandonment and realignment of roadways; and
- Widening and resurfacing of historic roadways (NPS 1999:23).

The report also provides the following guidance with regards to integrity:

Farms and rural resources that make up a [rural historic] district must possess integrity of feeling, setting, association, and location to convey their association and the period of significance. Farms or other landscape features cannot contribute to a potential district if they have been so substantially altered that they no longer appear to date to the period of significance or they do not share in the historic association of the district. . . . Historic mapping should be consulted when evaluating integrity of location in potential rural historic districts. Critical elements of setting include large-scale features such as bodies of water, vegetation, fields, meadows, and woodlots. It is important that the location of farm complexes within the landscape generally reflect the period of significance (A.D. Marble & Company 2006).

5.2.3 *Integrity*

To delineate those areas of the APE that retain sufficient integrity to be considered potential rural historic districts a number of steps were undertaken. An examination of historic aerial mapping (Figures 16 and 17) and current land aerial and land use mapping (Figures 18 and 19) assisted in the identification of continuations or changes in patterns of land use. Using the context guidelines for contributing status of individual farmsteads, each farmstead was assessed for level of integrity and potential contributing status. The assessment was based on information collected during intensive level survey. Retention of small-scale features and circulation networks associated with agriculture was examined during a driving tour of the APE.

5.2.3a *Agricultural Lands*

In an effort to determine the integrity of the APE's agricultural landscape, historic and current aerials of the project area were analyzed. The earliest aerials, collected from the University of Delaware's Spatial Analysis Lab website, date to 1932 (Figure 16). Aerials of the study area from 1962 (the cut-off date for survey work) (Figure 17) were also utilized. A field examination to confirm the integrity of the current landscape was conducted in January and May of 2006. The most recent aerials (2002) were used during the field investigation.



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Project APE

Source: 1932 Aerial Photography

Figure 16
1932 Aerials

U.S. 301 Project Development
New Castle County, Delaware



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Project APE

Source: 1962 Aerial Photography

Figure 17
1962 Aerials

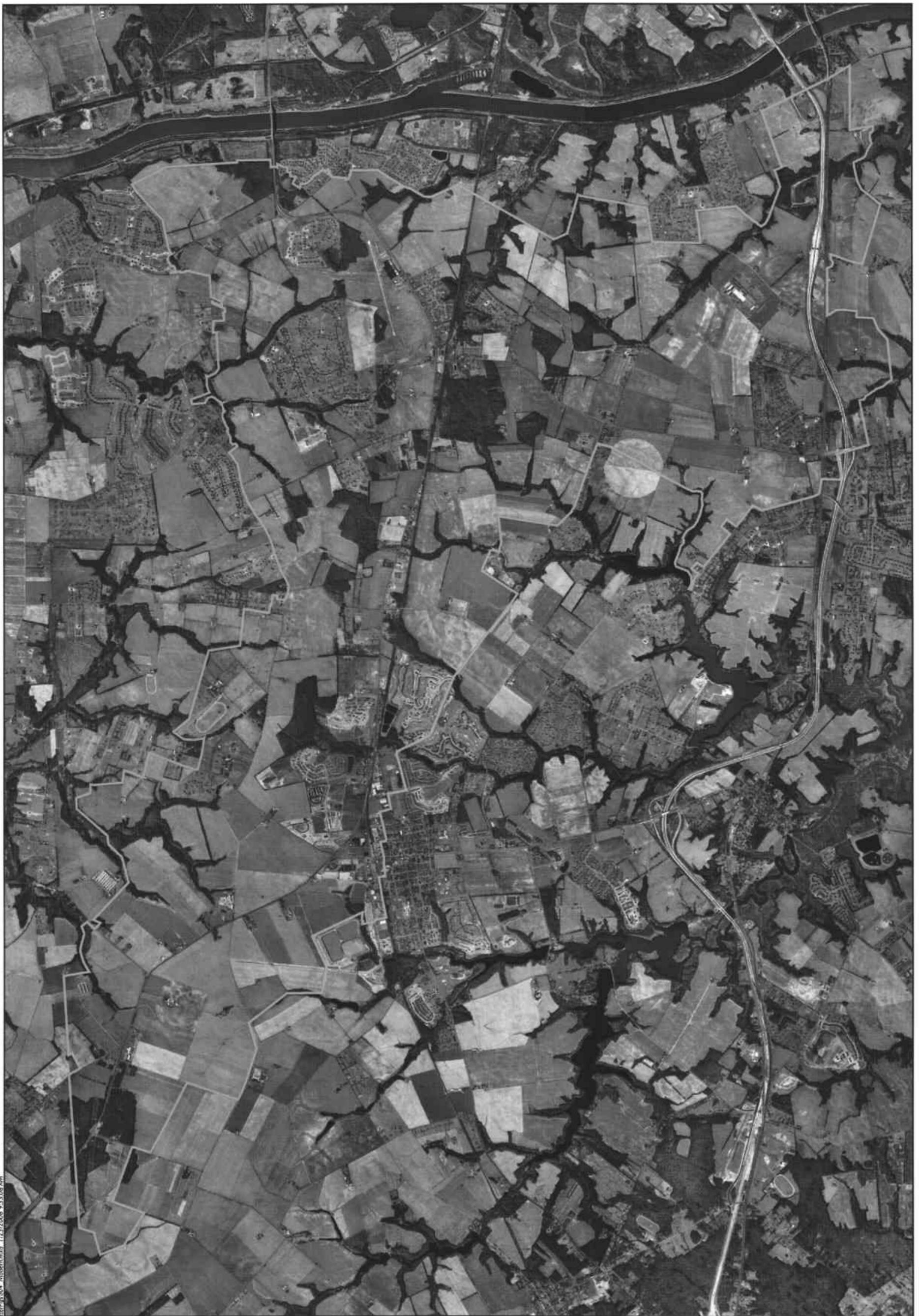
U.S. 301 Project Development
New Castle County, Delaware

Over the 30-year period between 1932 and 1962, the land retained its open vistas due to the continuation of agricultural land use in most of the APE. The pattern of farmsteads on the landscape remained the same. There was a limited amount of residential and commercial development of former farmland along U. S. 301 and its associated side roads. Overall, while the amount of land under cultivation appears to have remained nearly consistent, there was a general trend toward an increase in the size of crop fields between 1932 and 1962, as more land was devoted to the cultivation of cereal crops. Tree lines and woodlots in the areas of creeks and in wetlands remained intact.

A comparison of the 1962 aerials to the 2002 aerials (Figure 18) and current conditions reveals that the trend to increase field sizes and loss of fencing as a boundary demarcation has continued. These changes can be attributed to an increase in large-scale custom farming (crop-farming operations paying rent to lease large agricultural tracts, often from multiple landowners). This has resulted in some loss of integrity of the agrarian landscape in the APE, as historic field patterns have been lost in certain locations.

More recently, there has been a significant change in the use of former farmlands in the APE due to residential, commercial, and industrial development. Using current tax data made available by New Castle County, 182 tax parcels within the study area are identified as being in agricultural land use. These parcels comprise 60.8 percent (10,710.5 acres) of the 17,621.7 acres in the intensive level APE. An examination of the 2000 Major Investment Study conducted for the U.S. 301 corridor (which encompassed a slightly larger area than the existing study) states that 65 percent of the study area was under agricultural use (VHB 2000). This data indicates that for the past five years agricultural land use in the area has been declining at the average rate of approximately 1 percent per year.

Figure 19 illustrates non-agricultural land use within the study area, as provided by the New Castle County Department of Planning and Land Use. The recent growth of residential and commercial land use can be attributed to expanding local populations and declining futures in agricultural enterprise. As noted in the historic context, changes in land use that affect open space would significantly detract from the integrity of setting, feeling, and association of a rural area. Areas with large amounts of non-historic land uses that are visually intrusive are not considered potentially eligible as rural historic districts. Significant concentrations of residential and commercial development are located in and around the city of Middletown and along U.S. 301 to the north of Middletown. Once-expansive stretches of farmland, unobstructed by buildings beyond the occasional farmstead, are now interrupted by dense residential developments and related support services. This new construction detracts from the overall feeling of being located in the midst of an agrarian landscape and introduces visual intrusions. Due to recent development, the area in the Middletown vicinity and on the west side of U.S. 301 north of Middletown can no longer be considered to be a predominately agrarian landscape. Thus, due to the loss of a significant number of farmsteads, alongside the introduction of non-agrarian land uses, this area cannot be considered to contain a potential rural historic district.



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Project APE

Source: 2002 Orthophotography

Figure 18
2002 Aerials

U.S. 301 Project Development
New Castle County, Delaware



- Project APE
- Non-Agricultural Primary Land Use by Tax Parcel
- Proposed National Register Boundary for Rural Historic District
- Rural Historic District in APE
- CRSPoints**
- Extant Farm Complex, Retains Sufficient Integrity to Contribute to Rural Historic District (2006)
- Extant Farm Complex, Does Not Retain Sufficient Integrity to Contribute to Rural Historic District (2006)
- Farm Complex Abandoned (2006)
- Farm Complex Demolished (2006)

Figure 19
Existing Land Use and
Rural Resources
 U.S. 301 Project Development
 New Castle County, Delaware

Source: 2002 Orthophotography

Although much of the farmland in the APE is planned for development, there is a notable exception to the trend of development of agricultural lands within the APE: the A. Crockett House (Clay Property) located at 1038 Middletown Warwick Road (U.S. 301) (CRS No. N05224 in Figure 19). This property includes 435 acres of active agricultural land. Based on a data layer received from the New Castle County Department of Planning and Land Use, the Clay Property is the only property within the APE under active agricultural use that is enrolled in an agricultural lands preservation program.

5.2.3b Landscape Features and the Circulation Network

A rural historic district should retain historic landscape features and a circulation network related to agricultural use. National Register guidelines state: “Boundary demarcations, small-scale elements, vegetation, and the evidence of responses to the natural environment all add to location and setting as well as design” (NPS 1999). Wood, wire, or stone fencing as boundary or field demarcations has largely disappeared in the district, as cropland that was formerly fenced now extends to the edges of roadways and property lines. Where fencing is not present, farmers generally use natural landmarks, such as streams, trees and other natural features, or remnants of earlier demarcations of land use, such as ditches and fence posts, to delineate their lands. Historic vegetation associated with agriculture, including trees demarcating property boundaries, front-yard allees (alleys) leading to the main dwelling, and crop fields, has been lost in those areas where farmsteads have been removed and replaced by non-agrarian development (Figures 18 and 19). Additionally, new landscape features, such as earthen berms, ponds, and landscaping associated with residential developments, have been introduced.

Based on the criteria for the evaluation of rural historic districts presented in the context report and the NPS guidelines, the circulation network that connected farmsteads and served the rural community should also remain intact within areas of potential rural historic districts. While the majority of roadways in the study area are based on historic roads that served to connect the farming community historically, the introduction of modern roadways has compromised the historic circulation pattern in areas of planned or constructed residential development, as presented in a comparison of Figures 17-19.

5.2.3c Farmsteads

The spacing between farmsteads is determined by the minimum amount of land that it is possible to cultivate using the technology available at the time of initial construction. Until recently, the farmstead spacing in the study area largely reflected the pattern that was present by the preparation of Baist’s 1893 map. Only a few farms, generally associated with dairying and truck farming, were added in the early twentieth century. Due to recent declines in agriculture and rises in residential and commercial development, many farm complexes have been removed from the landscape or allowed to deteriorate through neglect. The demolition and abandonment of farmsteads detracts from the overall pattern of farmsteads on the landscape, resulting in a loss of integrity of location, feeling, and setting. Figure 19 illustrates those farm complexes in the APE that have been demolished or abandoned since 1962. Of the farmsteads that were located in the APE by 1962, 23 have been demolished and four have been abandoned.

The National Register guidelines state the following with regards to rural historic districts:

Continuity is essential. Historic landscape characteristics should predominate and occur throughout. Peripheral areas having a concentration of nonhistoric features should be excluded, while the impact of centrally located ones on historic integrity should be considered. If, because of their density, distribution, and predominance, nonhistoric features seriously fragment the overall historic integrity of large-scale properties, smaller properties having integrity should be identified for listing. This applies, for example, to individual farmsteads in an agricultural community that is experiencing rapid and widespread suburbanization . . . The initial step in selecting the boundaries of a rural historic landscape is to determine the extent to which properties at the smallest scale, such as a single farm, are intact and form larger properties that may be listed as large and cohesive historic districts. (NPS 1999).

Thus, using National Register guidance, areas of potential rural historic districts were identified in the APE through the identification of clusters of farmsteads with sufficient integrity to be considered contributing to a potential rural historic district.

Based on the guidelines for the evaluation of rural historic districts outlined in the 2005 *Historic Context and Reconnaissance Survey Report*, to be considered contributing to a rural historic district, a farmstead would need to retain sufficient integrity or the character defining features that convey its historic use. Contributing farmstead clusters would be composed of a historic house, barn and one outbuilding or a historic house and/or barn, and at least two outbuildings that retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic function and period of use. Figure 19 identifies the farmsteads in the APE by CRS number and notes if they retain or lack sufficient integrity to be considered contributing to a rural historic district. For additional information on each of the resources identified in Figure 19, please consult the individual survey forms included in Appendix C of this report.

5.2.4 Determination of Eligibility Report.

This farm-by farm assessment showed that many extant farmsteads lacked sufficient integrity to be considered contributing. Some intact farmsteads lacked integrity of setting, association, and feeling as their associated former farmlands are now occupied by residential development. Several farmsteads retained their agricultural setting and farm house but lacked a sufficient number of buildings and structures to reflect local trends in agriculture. Other farmsteads contained agricultural buildings and structures in such a state of decline that they could no longer convey their historic function.

Of the farmsteads historically located in the APE, only 31 retain sufficient integrity to be considered contributing to a potential rural historic district. Two portions of the APE contain a concentration of contiguous farmsteads that could contribute to a potential rural historic district: 1) seven adjacent farms in the vicinity of Boyds Corner Road at the northern portion of the APE and 2) eight adjacent farms located along U.S. 301 at the southern portion of the APE (Figure 19). These areas were further examined to determine if they are large enough to be considered “large and cohesive districts” as directed by the National Register guidelines and to determine if the collections are historically significant and retain integrity as a grouping.

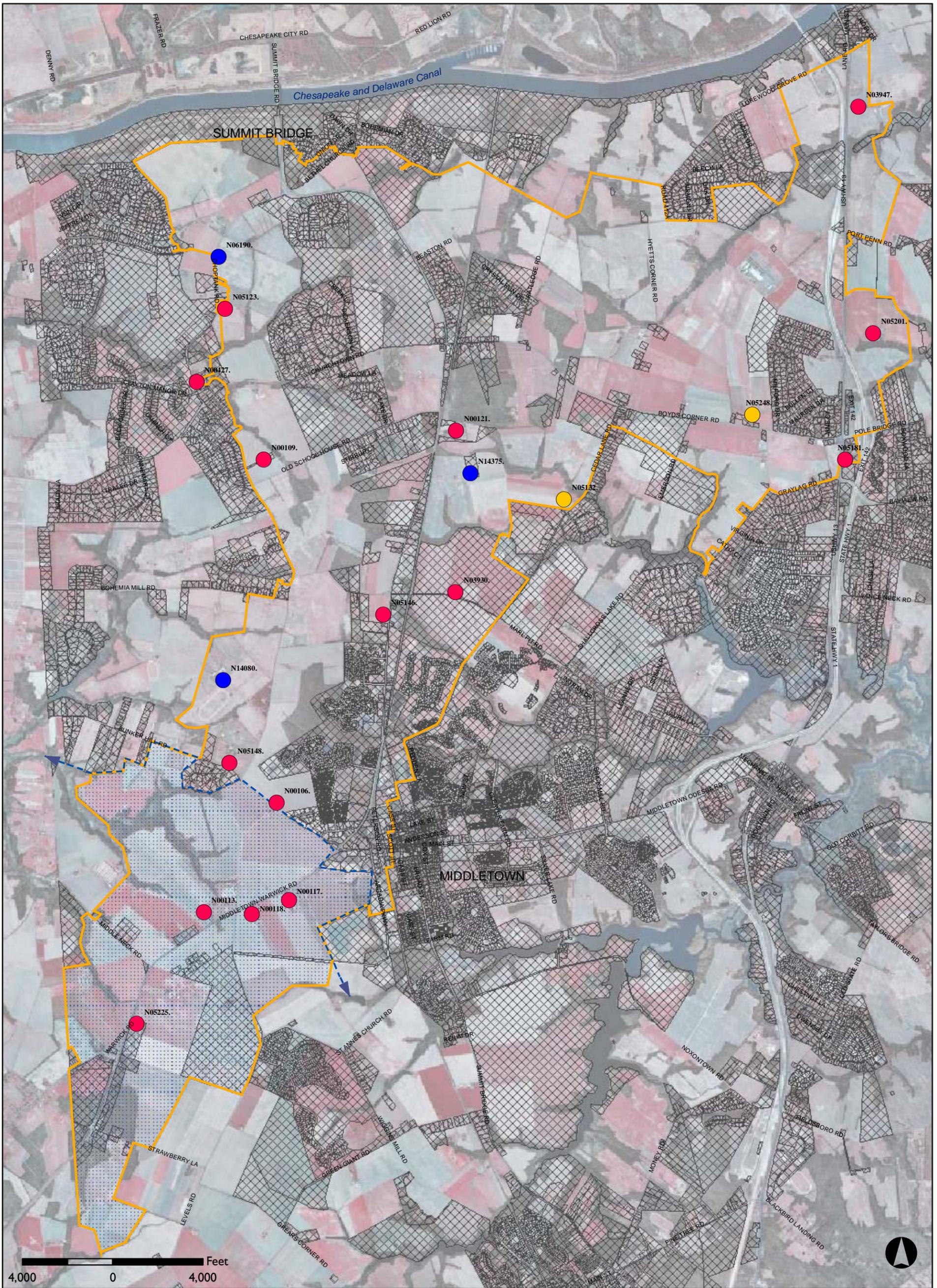
The Boyds Corner Road area contains seven adjacent farmsteads (N00121, N05184, N05185, N05195, N05242, N14348, and N14379) that retain the character defining features for contributing farmsteads. This cluster of farmsteads is small in size and is bounded by non-agricultural land uses in the location of former farmlands. Residential developments are located along U.S. 13 to the east and Cedar Lane to the south. Residential and commercial development is to the west along U.S. 301. Residential development and the canal are located to the north.

While these farms meet the character-defining features of contributing farmsteads located in a rural historic district, six of these farmsteads lack agricultural or architectural significance and/or integrity and have been determined individually not eligible for listing in the National Register (Figure 20). One notable exception is CRS No. N00121, which was listed in the National Register as part of the *Rebuilding St. George's Hundred* nomination form. Additionally, based on the research conducted for this project, these farmsteads do not appear to have been historically related, nor (except for CRS No. N00121) are they associated with individuals of known historical importance. Thus, while the pattern of farmsteads and the associated field patterns and circulation network generally survive in this area, collectively, these farmsteads lack sufficient agricultural and/or architectural significance and integrity to be considered eligible for listing in the National Register. A better preserved expanse of rural historic landscape exists in the southern portion of the APE.

At the southern end of the study area along U.S. 301 there are eight contiguous farmsteads that meet the character-defining features for contributing farmsteads in rural historic districts. This cluster of farms is bounded by abandoned farmsteads and commercial development along Bunker Hill Road to the north, abandoned farmsteads and residential development to the east and by extant farmsteads to the south and west (located in Maryland). This district has the potential to be of a significant size, as it could extend to include the extant farms to the south and west, outside of the APE.

This area contains a collection of historically and architecturally significant farmsteads. Four of the eight farmsteads are listed in the National Register (CRS Nos. N00113, N00117, N00118, and N05225). Three of the farms have been recommended eligible for National Register in the areas of agricultural and architectural significance listing as part of the U.S. 301 Project Development study (CRS Nos. N00112, N05221, and N14388). The one farmstead that has been recommended not eligible is the Crockett House/Clay Property (CRS No. N05224). This farm, which contains the only preserved farmland in the APE, continues under active use and as a result has some large modern agricultural buildings. It can still be considered to contribute to the rural historic district as these additions are not of adequate size and scale to detract from the integrity of a larger rural landscape.

Overall, the contiguous area of farmsteads along U.S. 301 represents a significant concentration of agricultural land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roadways, and natural features that convey the historic agricultural prosperity of the area. The farmsteads retain their historic pattern, set off the main highway, amidst open vistas of agrarian lands that have been under intensive cultivation since the mid-nineteenth century. The farms are connected to each other and the surrounding area by a historic road network that has been in relatively the same location since the late nineteenth century. Visually, many of these farmsteads are united by tree lined allees which



- Project APE
- Non-Agricultural Primary Land Use by Tax Parcel
- Proposed National Register Boundary for Rural Historic District
- Rural Historic District in APE
- Eligible
- Listed
- Ineligible

Figure 20
National Register Eligibility Determinations
for Extant Farm Complexes
 U.S. 301 Project Development
 New Castle County, Delaware

Source: 2002 Orthophotography

lead from U.S. 301 to the farmstead complexes. The farmsteads in the area also share a common topography of level lands. This area of contiguous farmsteads can be said to retain a higher level of integrity of design, materials, and feeling than the collection of farmsteads located along Boyds Corner Road.

Due to its historic significance and high level of integrity, this area could be considered to be part of a rural historic district that is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the areas of agriculture and community development and Criterion C in the area of architecture for a period dating from ca. 1830 (the date of the earliest farm in this portion of the APE) to 1962.

Under Criterion A, the farmsteads in this location reflect the agricultural prosperity that the fertile and well-drained soils of the area known as the Levels engendered. Three of these farmsteads were historically related, being under the ownership of the Cochran family, and demonstrate patterns of family ownership under Criterion A. Generally, districts are not considered eligible under Criterion B for the accomplishments of specific individuals; eligibility for association with prominent residents would more likely be based on a broad pattern of agricultural and community development. Thus, the prosperity of the farm owners in this area would be better characterized under Criterion A. Under Criterion C, in the area of architecture, the district contains several notable examples of architectural styles (Greek Revival, Federal, and Italianate and combinations thereof), unique forms (threshing barn at Cochran Grange, CRS No. N00117), and methods of construction (brick barn at Cochran Grange, CRS No. N00117). The district also includes a significant number of examples of the architectural rebuilding and modification that took place in St. George's Hundred in the nineteenth century. Under Criterion D, additional primary research into the history of resources in the district is required before the potential to yield new information on land use patterns, such as tenancy, can be established.

A National Register Boundary for the portion of the rural historic district contained within the APE was delineated using current tax parcel lines and right-of-ways (Figure 19). The boundary separates historic agricultural areas from lands that are no longer under agricultural use. Although some of the lands in the northern portion of the district lack historic farm complexes, these areas continue under agricultural use and retain landscape features associated with agriculture (tree lines along streams and field demarcations). These properties thereby enhance the integrity of feeling and setting of the rural historic district and were included within the district boundary. This rural historic district also includes some commercial development located along U.S. 301. This development is small in scale in comparison to the potential size of the rural historic district, as discussed in the National Register guidelines:

Large rural districts may be able to absorb new development and still maintain their overall historic integrity, provided large-scale intrusions are concentrated in a relatively few locations and cover a proportionately small percentage of the overall acreage (NPS 1999).

The boundaries of the district are not delineated to the south, as this area includes adjacent farms that were not located in the project APE.

5.2.5 Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Work

As discussed above, most of the study area has recently experienced a significant amount of development and no longer retains sufficient integrity to be considered a rural historic district. Using the guidelines developed in the 2005 *Historic Context and Reconnaissance Survey*, which were based on NPS guidelines, in order to be eligible as a rural historic district a landscape must retain: land under agricultural use; a historic pattern of farmsteads; farmsteads with sufficient integrity to convey their historic use; a historic roadway network to connect the farmsteads; boundary demarcations, small-scale features and landscaping related to agricultural use; visual continuity; and the feeling of an agricultural landscape as well as historic significance and integrity. While there are still some large areas of land under agrarian use in the APE that retain historic farmsteads, only one area appears to be of sufficient size and to retain sufficient integrity to convey the historic prosperity of agriculture within the U.S. 301 APE. This area is located at the southern end of the APE along U.S. 301.

As aforementioned, the focus of this investigation was an examination of the integrity of the existing rural landscape within the APE in order to identify areas where a rural historic district may exist. Recommendations for future work efforts related to the rural historic district, which were not within the scope of this project, are included herein. Future documentation of the rural historic district should include a more detailed study of the historic landscape characteristics (four processes and seven physical components) used by the National Register which may further assist in the identification and description of the rural historic landscape. Future efforts should also include a description of each contributing resource, a historic narrative, and a more elaborate statement of historic significance. The historic narrative and statement of significance should build upon the information presented in the 1988 Levels draft National Register documentation and the 2005 context report prepared for this project. Finally, the limits of the rural historic district that are outside of the APE should be defined and justified, and contributing and non-contributing features should be identified as part of future investigations.

5.2.6 Results of DelDOT and DE SHPO review

Subsequent to this investigation, DelDOT and DE SHPO staff reviewed the results of the rural historic district investigation presented herein and provided the comments which are included below. The figures for the rural historic district investigation that are included in this report were revised to reflect DelDOT and DESHPO comments.

DelDOT Comments on Rural Historic District, June 30, 2006

Concur with approach and addressing comments for write-up. No further work is needed and recommendations for future research work are worded appropriately. Marble is concluding that something may exist as a potential rural district & if there is, a number of properties would contribute towards that evaluation/nomination.

However, for the record and for any future consideration, DelDOT does not think that portions recommended as a potential rural historic district within in the APE will ever become part of a recognized rural historic district with contributing

elements. In fact, we don't even believe that portions within the APE have the potential. If further work is needed out of US 301 we will seek FHWA Washington's guidance. Details below.

Much of the area within the APE recognized as part of a potential rural historic has issues with integrity – now and into the future. Moreover, its relative significance and in effectively delineating a proper study area to support a statement of significance can not be fully defined or ratified. Continued land use development and contemporary practices of farming (with the APE) and differences in land use controls between Maryland and Delaware has compromised a case for defining or identifying significance.

For instance, the roads and land uses along the main line have changed. US 301/SR 299, like others surrounding it, were once a rural roads 14 feet wide +/- in the 1930's. This road (US 301) is now an arterial highway approximately 44 feet in pavement with a 4 lane divided highway section continuing in Maryland. In fact, SR 299 leading to Warwick is the original rural road until US 301 was extended to meet Maryland's improvements in 1955-56. The US 301 roadway in its current status is really a new and contrasting surrounding road within the APE. The nature and function of US 301 compromises in any potential rural historic district within the APE. Driveways leading to farms have been altered as seen evident with the Skelly and Loy report on the US 301 truck weigh station.

Please also note that the farm property, N-5226 Brady Farmhouse with all missing outbuildings, is not noted in Figure 5. To DelDOT this property/resource would receive an orange dot within the APE. This dwelling/property does not retain sufficient integrity that will contribute.

After the spur road for US 301 was constructed, developed land uses beginning at the state line have occurred. This resulted in altering the surrounding environs. They include gas stations (some abandoned), ice cream drive-in and liquor store (now a large pavement scar), truck stops/restaurant, veterinary clinics, pleasure house riding facilities, a number of residential strip properties, and a large lawn care/tractor center that is subdivided off a National Register listed property. Although a produce stand (Money property which is a portion of N-5233) and the I. Hooper farm and tractor center support agriculture and rural agricultural related themes, they are also the more recent developments and business of the area less than 50 years.

According to Figure 5, Summerton, N-112, is also listed as extant farm complex and contributing. DelDOT begs to differ as this large area been radically subdivided off for residential homes and a business center in the APE. The main dwelling remains operable as a sales center and recommended eligible only under Criterion C for its period architecture. The surrounding area (farmed fields & in APE) are hardly rural or agricultural in nature. Stormwater management ponds and

sidewalks are evident near and along this area of US 301. Water towers and housing is seen in the background.

The anticipated US 301 Truck Weigh Station could also occur in the near future as well. More importantly, during the time of this evaluation, Super Wal-Mart facility fell under site and survey work (vacant agricultural lands and held up in court) and the Appoquinimik High School and large subdivision known as Southridge broke ground. These areas are situated south of Bunker Hill Road and consume large amounts of former farm land in the APE. Their developments also eliminates one of the purple dots on Figure 5 and consume a significant amount of open space within the rural agricultural district APE.

Additionally, Levels Road was a 9 feet wide concrete surface in 1929. Its is now over 24 feet of pavement with tar and chip shoulders. This road, like others, in the APE or within a future and established study area are slated to be upgraded or realigned by developers, DelDOT, and the town of Middletown by virtue of mutual agreements. Although roadway upgrades should not be taken into consideration until present in the landscape, but future roadway conditions, marked and altered by suburban and urban development, will compromise the historic circulation patterns.

Middletown's city limits are also recently extend into the APE's proposed portion of Marble's recommended rural historic district to the north. This area is marked by utilities, sidewalks, and new parkland servicing some recent large-scale developments. The developments are currently in the beginning stages of residential homes and planned business centers, including an automobile sales mall and Home Depot. For sale signs, survey stakes, stormwater management ponds, and signs for anticipated and on-going development has compromised the visual continuity and connectivity of a potential rural historic district in many parts of the APE.

Many buildings, agricultural related or rural supportive, identified in the 1962 aerials are not evident as they continue to decrease. Visual background and view sheds of urban, suburban, and deteriorated/abandoned former farmsteads create a clear transitional change in the landscape for most of the APE.

Extremely large power and transmission lines are evident in the APE area. Taken altogether, all the context clues have conveyed that much of the area has changed or is changing and not primarily rural and functional as rural in character.

While the proposed improvement plan of US 301, such as the yellow, green, purple, or brown option, or an upgrade of existing US 301 is evident, this has yet to occur. However, any potential of a rural historic district is even more remote with major highway and toll related improvements planned.

Lastly, in a small sample viewing of archive road plans (at DelDOT), hedges and wired fencing are widely evident along the roadside. They delineate a separation of

fields and property lines. However, those rural context factors are barely recognizable today in the landscape. Multiple large land owners in single family ownership are now smaller farms since they have been subdivided off. Utility overheads and poles are oversized, too.

From a deeds and operations perspective, land ownership from agricultural families has changed as well as the types of farming practices. The remaining farms and fields represent modern tenant practices in order to compete and remain in existence. The active farms and lands are large-scale agri-businesses and not localized by agricultural families as they once were. Of the active farms in the area within the APE, modern warehouse buildings widely support the active agricultural operations; not the original outbuildings.

Although an important building and historic in its own right, the Cochran Grange (N-117), is more of a house and farm museum. It serves as an outlying preserved property to the past. However, it visually rests within Middletown's developments whereby its setting and feeling (beyond the remaining property itself) is compromised from surrounding or continual rural environment – i.e. visual continuity. Much of the original Cochran family farm & landholdings have been sold to development.

In DelDOT professional assessment of the APE, from Figure 5, only 7 out of 15 total qualified properties (47%)-less than half-- within the APE would retain sufficient integrity to contribute to a rural historic district. Please note that Summerton (N-112) was not included or the Brady Farmhouse (N-5226) since the dwellings more appropriately receive an orange dot (according to the map key). They are not farm or active farming complexes.

Also, it is estimated that close to 1/3 of the total land area in the APE is not in agricultural use. Please note that a 2002 aerial was illustrated in the write-up and not 2006 conditions. Additionally, some of the open space farm land in the APE is planned is used as part of a spray irrigation system, which despite its agricultural visual appearance, fails to qualify as a worthy rural agricultural practice.

If anything, farms in permanent agricultural use and agricultural easements would be best qualified as potential worthy candidates of a rural agricultural district. This would include lands and farms along Strawberry Lane to the north and south leading east. Also lands and farms along Middle Neck Road might qualify to the north and south leading west. This, however, is a discontinuous area, leading to the overall analysis that the potential of a rural historic district hardly exists in the APE. Alternatively, a rural agricultural district might begin at the southern corners of the APE but only at these two junctures.

In DelDOT's opinion and taking into account the entire big picture of all land uses in the overall setting, feeling, and association of what remains as contiguous and rural within the APE, it appears that the property type of agriculture and

agricultural complexes seems to best justify the area. Property evaluations for the National Register in the APE seem to be best judged individually for their intrinsic qualities and not collectively as a potential rural agricultural district.

Should future research be conducted and a formalized evaluation is undertaken, it is evident that the many areas with the APE that are recognized as a potential rural historic district would be subject to significant scrutiny and challenge. Changes within the APE and areas south & west of Middletown are ongoing. In future research, one may question the entire validity of a potential rural historic district and whether or not it really applies, exists, or might be evident elsewhere. In essence any potential investigations as a rural agricultural district within the US 301 APE might be deemed as a random selection of farmland because they are simply undeveloped lands and open spaces with no particular preservation pattern. Finally, the most difficult measure in the research would be actually justifying, delineating, and nominating the proper study since it could stretch for miles and miles with incompatible land uses and small towns in both Maryland and Delaware dispersedly mixed in. Perhaps a multiple property resource nomination of various representative farms seems more appropriate, rather than a collective or contiguous area.

In summary, the preparation of a formal rural historic district evaluation with formal boundaries is a large undertaking, but at the same time, DelDOT cannot concur to the area within the APE as part of such rural historic district (based on level of identification/evaluation), due to the rather significant implications for project development. We agree that there could be a potential rural historic district in the region or multiple property representation, but formalizing this eligibility, necessitates further evaluation of the contributing resources in the APE and elsewhere.

If the potential for rural historic district stays at a hypothetical level, then this investigation is adequate, but for a formal eligibility determination, the implications are too great not to discuss further between agencies.

DE SHPO Comments on Rural Historic District, August 11, 2006

Concur with DelDOT – no eligible district within APE

The revised supplemental document addresses the substantive comments we previously provided. The report still needs to clarify whether or not a contributing element does or does not need to be individually eligible for the National Register, as the consultant seemed to apply different standards to the Boyds Corner Road area and the southern, potential district area. It's also unclear why for the potential district, the boundary could be extended far from the other resources to include A00236, but a similar standard was not applied to the Boyds Corner Road area (apparently, see technical comment on list of CRS nos.).

We have reviewed DelDOT's comments. Some valid points were raised, but we disagree with some points, particularly the suggestion that fields used for spray

irrigation (which still produce crops, just not for human consumption), or field patterning related to large scale agriculture no longer have an agricultural function. Change in type of agriculture does not negate an agricultural connection. Also, in our view, a large animal veterinary facility could be viewed as agriculture-related.

Nevertheless, after conducting a field visit to review the consultant's proposed contributing elements, we agree with DelDOT's conclusion. The elements within the APE would not contribute to an eligible Rural District, as the connectivity among the resources and sense of environment does not survive. Viewsheds among the resources are interrupted by housing subdivisions and other inappropriate uses. The overall sense is that the area doesn't hang together as a potential district any longer.

There are also still some technical issues that should be addressed:

- All figures: cite sources of info (particularly the 1932 aerial?; we only know of the 1937s, and would like to know where to get the '32s);
- Figure 5: cite date of NC Co.'s information; why is Achmester property shown as not being in agricultural use?
- As Patrick previously suggested, identify the individual NR eligibility determinations for the extant properties (perhaps on a different figure);
- Page 7: note whether or not any of the properties found to be lacking sufficient integrity to be contributing were in fact found NR eligible under other themes.
- Page 7: a duplicate CRS no. (N-5195) was given for group of 8 properties in the Boyds Corner Road area, so it's not clear which was the 8th property considered.