

## 6. INTERPRETATIONS CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Phase II Archaeological investigations of the Jackson-Griffith house and yard resulted in the identification of the basement and main foundations of that building, along with a number of other peripheral structural and associated sub-surface features, and produced nearly 1,000 historical artifacts. Testing also led to the delineation of a small prehistoric Native American occupation in ground adjacent to the house's northwest corner. Based on a critical analysis of these archaeological finds and the contexts from which they were identified it is KSK's opinion that no portion of this property contains cultural deposits that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or that warrant additional (i.e., Phase III Data Recovery) archaeological investigation.

The main focus of these Phase II excavations was the discovery of archaeological data related to the use and occupation of the Jackson-Griffith house through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Of the foundations and features identified during this investigation none significantly advance our current understandings of this site. While the house foundations and associated drainage features do offer some insight into the organization and physical construction of the property, these items are essentially utilitarian in nature and contain no data relating to either specific past functions of the house or the people who occupied it. In addition, these features contained precious little in the way of associated artifact deposits that could assist in the dating of structural and/or functional components, and thereby provide information relating to the developmental history of the property.

Although excavations in the yard areas around the house produced substantial quantities of historic artifacts, and ones that collectively span the period of occupation of the Jackson-Griffith house, these objects are also of little help because they represent highly mixed archaeological deposits derived from disturbed and/or re-worked stratigraphic contexts. Artifacts contained in these fills, and in particular the exceptionally dense concentration of construction rubble and hardware (nails), suggest that all of the strata overlying the plow zone relate to the demolition of the house, in the mid-1950s, and subsequent landscaping efforts associated with the creation of the present rest area/park. This interpretation is also supported by the fact that all identified features, with the exception of the recent utility trench found in unit (Figure 25), terminate at the top of the plow zone. That these fills represent mixed deposits, whose artifacts exhibit no coherent internal chronological/stratigraphic seriation, is supported by the regular co-occurrence in all layers of objects manufactured in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and by the fact that a coin dated 1963 was recovered from soils directly overlying the plow zone, in unit 6. While historic artifacts were identified within the underlying plow zone, these objects were few in number, predominantly non-diagnostic in nature, and showed no evidence of horizontal patterning that may be indicative of preserved spatially or chronologically discrete activity areas. Whereas it may be expected that any artifact deposits associated with the occupation of this property would have accumulated within the plow zone in the form of a sheet midden deposit, because this stratum would have represented the historic-period ground surface at the site, evidence from excavation units suggests that portions of the upper Ap horizon were re-worked in association with the creation of overlying fill layers.

Beyond this contextual data, very little in the way of domestic or other non-construction related artifacts were found to be contained within the yard fill soils. What domestic materials were present also tended to be of a decidedly utilitarian and non-diagnostic nature, and were represented largely by non-descript glass and ceramic vessel fragments that could have been manufactured at any time between the early nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Not more than a handful of artifacts of a more personal nature were recovered from any single portion of the site, and objects that could be positively related to the property's use as Hockessin's first Post Office, as a carriage stop, or as a General Store were found to be completely absent. Unfortunately, any privies, wells, or other more deeply intrusive features that may have escaped

disturbance, and that could reasonably be expected to contain a more representative sample of artifacts associated with the long occupation and use of the site, are reported to have been located in sections of the that have since been buried under the Route 41 roadbed, and were therefore inaccessible for archaeological testing.

Prehistoric materials recovered during this investigation were concentrated in a limited area next to the northwest corner of the house foundations and consist of small quantities of manufacturing debris, pottery, and bifacial tools. Based on the overall constricted size of the artifact scatter and low density of associated artifacts this site appears to represent a short-term procurement related encampment, portions of which may have been destroyed by the construction of the adjacent house. The presence of Native American pottery within the site, including a single sherd of possible Minguannan incised ware recovered in association with Feature 4, serves to tentatively date the site to the Woodland II Culture Period (A.D. 1,000 - ca. A.D. 1650). Although the identification of a probable Archaic/Woodland I Period (6,500 B.C. - A.D. 1,000) projectile point suggests that a second component dating to that time may also be present, however, the fact that this artifact was retrieved from disturbed contexts makes the identification of an earlier occupation somewhat provisional.

Given the limited number of artifacts collected, detailed interpretations of site function or of the specific activities performed in conjunction with this encampment must remain somewhat vague. The presence of quartz debitage indicates that the site's inhabitants were exploiting locally available lithic resources for the manufacture of bifacial stone tools and/or finished projectile points. This activity infers that some hunting of wild game may have been performed during the occupant's stay. In addition, the presence of Feature 4 associated pottery fragments suggests that hunted and/or gathered resources were processed for immediate or later consumption at the site as well. Charcoal and possible calcined bone within the feature may indicate that the feature may have been used, at least in part, in association with the cooking of animal foods. While no sign of a clearly defined hearth was identified during testing it is possible that any such near surface features were destroyed by plowing during the historic period.

In both form, content, and probable age this prehistoric site is similar to other known Native American occupations within the vicinity of the present project area, in particular the Mill Creek #1 and Manly #'s 1-7 occupations, and is consistent with the expectations of established models for Woodland Period settlement systems. Within these models, small temporary camps such as this are associated with excursions made by small numbers of individuals from centralized, often seasonally established base camps for the purpose of gathering locally available plant and/or animal resources. Within the immediate vicinity of the present project area known sites such as 7-NC-A-4 and 7-NC-A-5, located a short distance downstream along Mill Creek, may represent viable candidates for local base camp settlements, while the Manly #1-7 sites may be additional examples of satellite temporary procurement sites of like function as the Jackson-Griffith House prehistoric component. Unfortunately, the dearth of information recorded about these nearby sites prior to their destruction makes additional direct comparisons and other analyses between them and the Jackson-Griffith site impossible.

Despite the identification of a Native American component within the site these deposits are also not believed to justify additional archaeological investigation. This determination is based on the relatively low density and limited diversity of artifacts present, and on the fact that later plowing and landscaping activities have seriously disturbed associated site materials. Although the remnants of at least one sub-surface feature was identified and tested, it contained few artifacts or other information related to the occupation. Moreover, limited stripping and the completion of additional excavation units in this portion of the site produced no evidence of additional intact features and detected no indication of preserved horizontal artifact patterning that may be indicative of discreet activity areas.

Given the results of this Phase II investigation, and in particular the finding that the project area has been heavily impacted by activities associated with the demolition of the Jackson-Griffith house and the subsequent creation of the current Elsie Walker Rest Area and public park, it is KSK's recommendation that no further archaeological investigations be required for this site. It is further recommended that planned DeIDOT roadway improvements be allowed to proceed without further delay.