2.0 CULTURAL BACKGROUND

2.1 ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Background research was conducted in August and September 2002. Phase I archival research consisted of a records search, review of historical maps, regional and local background research, and cultural resource survey site file review. Information concerning the historical development of the site vicinity was obtained from land use planning documents, deed, will, probate, orphans court, census and tax records, Acts of the General Assembly, Clerk of the Peace Records, and books, historic maps, and photographs. Repositories visited included the Sussex County Courthouse, the Delaware Public Archives in Dover, the U.S. Geological Survey Library in Reston, Virginia, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Previously identified archaeological or architectural resources in the vicinity of the project area were mapped onto a topographic map. Previously recorded archaeological resources within roughly one mile of the project area were noted.

2.2 ORAL HISTORY

During the archaeological survey, several local residents with information pertinent to the investigation approached Parsons field personnel. Mrs. Charles Carey stated that her husband's family has owned the property located northwest and southwest of the intersection of Sand Hill Road (SR319) and Gravel Hill Road (SR30) for approximately 200 years (Mrs. Charles Carey, personal communication, September 2002). Mrs. Carey also stated that a house was located in the southwest quadrant of the intersection, but the building was sold and relocated to the Greenwood vicinity after sale. The northwest corner of the intersection once contained several farm outbuildings, now non-extant.

During the on-site field consultation between Parsons, DelDOT and the Delaware SHPO, Mr. John Fleming of Milton stopped by the project area. He is a bottle collector, and stated that over a period of many years he had dug extensively in the southwest corner of the intersection of Routes 5 and 319 (Mr. John Fleming, personal communication, September 12, 2002).

2.3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.3.1 Sussex County

William Penn acquired Pennsylvania from King Charles II in 1681, and was granted the "Three Lower Counties on Delaware" the following year (Hancock 1976). The southernmost county was named Sussex County by Penn, and he instructed county magistrates to grant land warrants of 300 acres to married men and 100 acres to single men. Any land granted needed to be seated within one year and yearly rents were one penny per acre or an equivalent value in produce.

Sussex County was the location of the first attempted settlement by Europeans in what would become Delaware (Hancock 1976). Early settlements were concentrated along the coasts of Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, and near waterways. Lewes, on the Delaware Bay, was the first town in the county. One of the first grist mills in the county was built in Lewes in 1676.

A courthouse with a prison was built in the 1680s. The western portion of the county was less well-drained and settlement was delayed in this area, except for along Broad Creek and the Nanticoke River.

Sussex County was the most sparsely populated of the three Delaware counties, with probably fewer than 1,000 residents in 1700 (Hancock 1976). In 1704, representatives from the three Delaware counties began to meet in New Castle, Delaware, in a legislative assembly separate from the Pennsylvania colony assembly, although the Governor was still appointed by William Penn. A governing body called a Levy Court was established in each of the three counties in 1735. Delaware was the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution on December 7, 1787. Georgetown replaced Lewes as the county seat in 1791. By 1800, hamlets were established, with clusters of houses near grist mills, saw mills, ports, and fords.

Tobacco cultivation was an important part of the county's economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Hancock 1976). During the American Revolution, the local farmers supplied corn, wheat, and meat to the American army. Soils became depleted by the mid-nineteenth century due to repeated growing of the same crops and poor farming techniques, but by 1860, increased knowledge of fertilizers and cultivation methods helped keep farms productive.

The first newspaper in the county was established in 1831 (Hancock 1976). The construction of the Delaware Railroad in the 1850s encouraged the development of towns which functioned as market centers for the surrounding farmers. Industrial enterprises in the first half of the nineteenth century included the manufacture of salt along the Indian River and the Atlantic Ocean (Hancock 1976). Bog iron was extracted and shipped to bloomeries for iron production. Tanneries produced leather goods. By 1860, the leading enterprises in the county were grist mills (37 produced goods worth $179,000) and lumber mills (56 produced $90,000 in products). Six shipyards built vessels worth $63,000. Blacksmithing, and the manufacture of carriages, wagons, and tin, copper, or iron items were other industries. A total of 305 men were employed in manufacturing in 1860 in Sussex County.

The county's residents had divided opinions on the Civil War. Both armies received recruits from the area, although the Union Army was the more common choice. Branch railroads were constructed after the Civil War, and vegetables, fruit, and berries were transported for sale in non-local markets. The county was the leading producer of peaches in the state by the 1880s. Northern settlers were attracted to the fertile farmland and a number of canneries were built in the county. The county was the nation's leading strawberry producer by 1900, and had orchards with over 1.5 million peach trees.

Population grew slowly after the Civil War, with 31,000 residents in 1860 and 43,000 by 1920. Electric lights illuminated Milford by 1887 and Georgetown by 1905. The county built 34 miles of macadam roads between 1903 and 1917. T. Coleman duPont sponsored the construction of a concrete highway spanning the length of the state. The first 20 miles of Route 13 were finished by 1917, and the remainder was completed by 1924.

The American holly (*Ilex opaca*) was adopted as the Delaware state tree in 1939 (Taber 1995:183). Also known as the Christmas holly or evergreen holly, the species was more

common in the southern portions of Delaware than the northern. The harvesting of this species for Yuletide decorations was a cottage industry in Delaware, employing local residents of all ages in the fall.

The county's population doubled between the 1920s and 1970s, to over 90,000 (Hancock 1976). Eighty-five percent of Sussex County residents were rural by 1970, with over one-half of the state's farms and roughly one-half of the state's cropland.

2.3.2 Milton Project Area

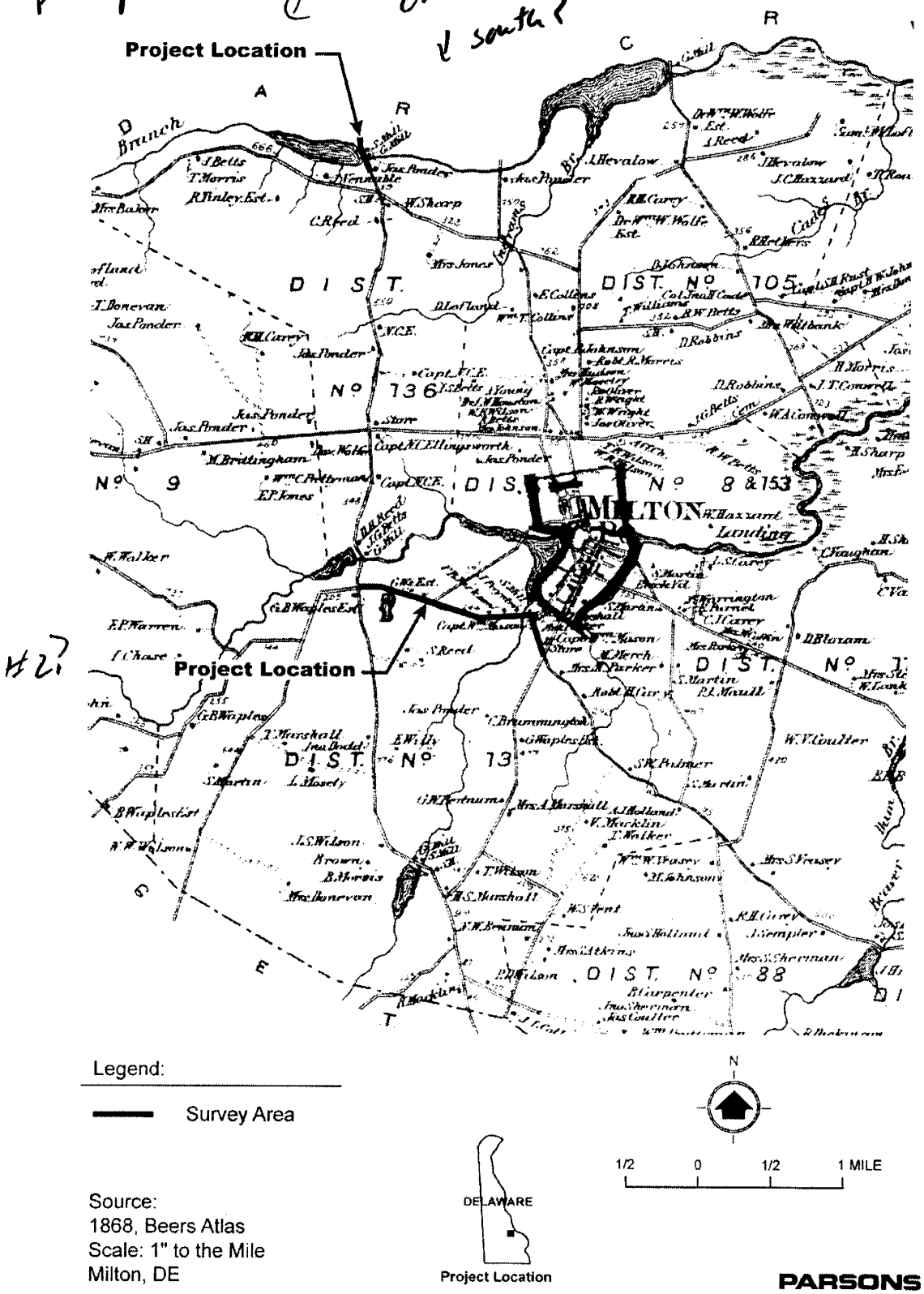
Both roads within the project area appear in maps as early as 1868 (Figure 2). Property owners along the project area in 1868 are noted on the Beers Atlas maps. Beginning at the southern end of the project area, Captain William Mason owned three buildings, presumably residences, on the southwest side of Route 5, at the T-shaped intersection with present-day Route 319 and Federal Street (Figure 2). Two buildings appear to remain in this location in 1914 (Farm Journal Farm Directory 1914) (Figure 3). Captain Mason was a merchant dealing in general merchandise; in 1868, his store and another building were southeast of the three buildings near the junction of Route 5 and Chestnut Street.

A sawmill stood in the southern portion of the project area in 1868, just beyond the town limits (Figure 2). The mill was on the west side of the stream that flowed northward into the Mill Pond, and on the north side of Route 319. The sawmill and a residence on the west of the stream and north of Route 319, were both owned by J. Paynter. The residence was probably the miller's house, since the mill operator usually lived in close proximity to his workplace. Caleb R. Paynter inherited the sawmill and residence in 1853 from Samuel R. Paynter, according to a plat filed in the Orphans Court Records (Sussex County Orphans Court Records 1853) (Figure 4). The one-acre tract containing the residence also included a bark mill, on the northwest side of the bridge crossing the mill pond (Lot A, No. 4). This bridge appears to correspond to the present-day location of Route 319 in the project area. In 1878, Paynter's sawmill was still in operation but the bark mill was a ruin (*The Delawarean* 1878 in Hancock and McCabe 1982). By 1914, neither mill building is shown on a map of the area, and a single large pond (Mill Pond) still extends from west of the town of Milton southward to south of the Route 319 bridge. However, the residence appears to still be standing in 1914 on the north side of Route 319.

By 1944, Mill Pond (then called Paynter's Pond) ended north of the railroad crossing of the stream. A second pond had been formed south of the Bridge 3-806 by 1944, and was called Sawmill Pond (Figure 5). By 1955, Paynter's Pond had become Wagamon's Pond, and the Sawmill Pond was Diamond Pond (USGS 1955). By 1992, a public boat ramp was located at the north end of Diamond Pond, near Bridge 3-806 (USGS 1992).

The next two buildings on the north side of Route 319 west of J. Paynter's were both owned by P.B. Hickson in 1868 (Figure 2). Neither appear on a map from 1914 (Figure 3). In 1868, the neighboring property to the west was owned by the estate of G.B. Waples. The building was west of an intersecting road leading from Route 319 to Lavinia Street in Milton. The Waples house appears to be missing by 1914, although another structure may have been added to the west.

possibly proj. Location #1 for clarity
or North
↓ south?



Source:
1868, Beers Atlas
Scale: 1" to the Mile
Milton, DE

Figure 2. 1868 Map of Project Area, Milton, Delaware
(Beers 1868)

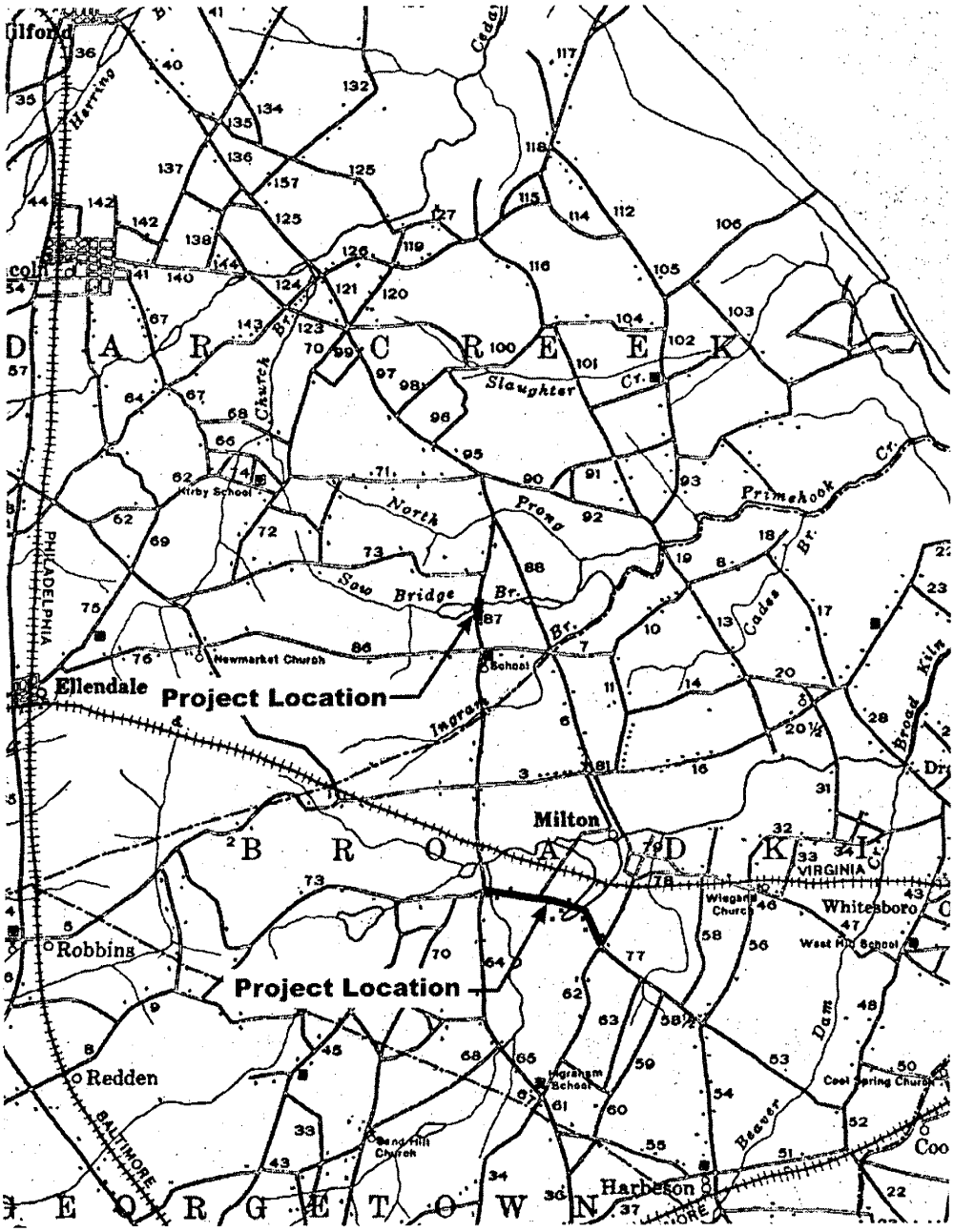
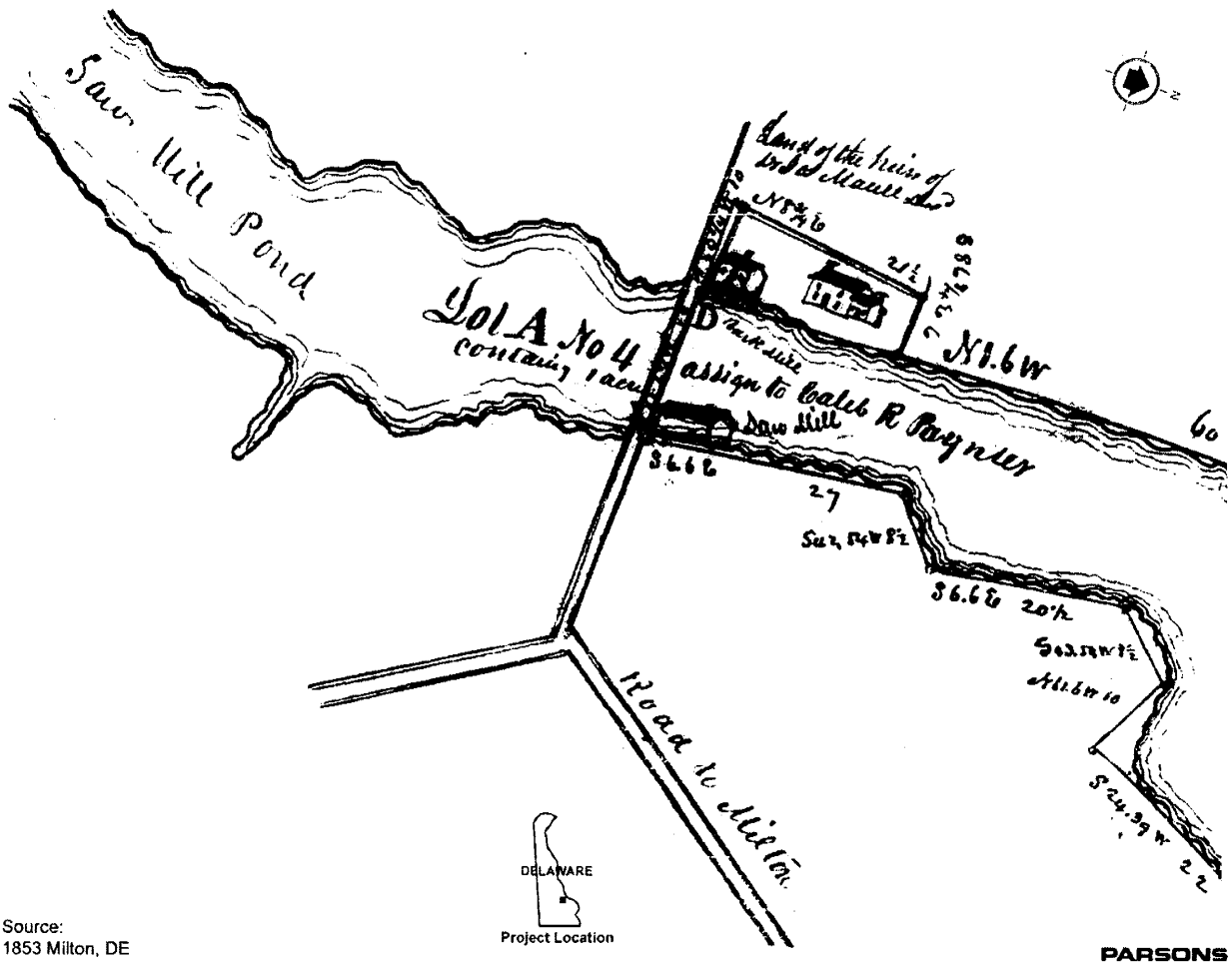


Figure 3. 1914 Map of Project Area, Milton, Delaware
(Sussex County Farm Journal 1914)



Source:
1853 Milton, DE

PARSONS

Figure 4. 1853 Plat of Diamond Pond and Bridge, Milton, Delaware
(Sussex County Orphans Court Records 1853)

? can we get this compared to current map for more context

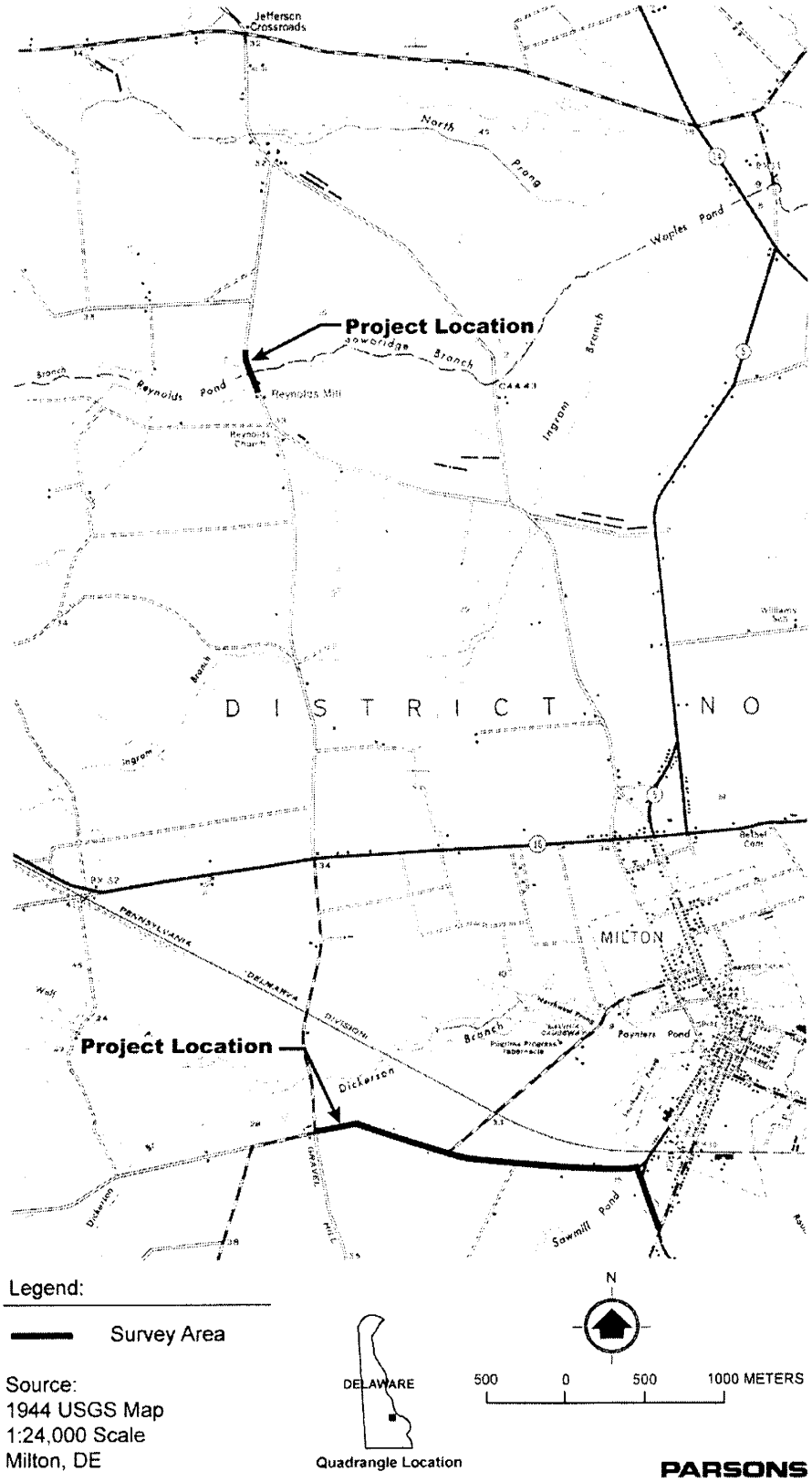


Figure 5. 1944 Map of Project Area, Milton, Delaware
(USGS 1944)

No buildings south of Route 319 occur in the project area on the 1868 map, although five have been added by 1914. A pond south of Route 319 and east of Route 30 in 1868 appears to have been filled in and replaced by a stream that flows under Route 319 by 1914.

Route 30 north of Route 319 in the project area will not be modified beyond the current right-of-way. Therefore, land use patterns will be discussed briefly. Dickerson Branch, a stream that flowed into the northwestern end of Mill Pond, also flowed under Route 30 in 1868 (Figure 2). It appears that Dickerson Branch had been dammed just west of Route 30, creating a pond. J. G. Betts owned a grist mill on the west side of Route 30, north of this stream. North of the grist mill was the residence of D.H. Reed. Both buildings are gone by 1914, although the pond remained (Figure 3). Captain N.C. Ellingsworth owned the next four buildings along Route 30, including a store north of an intersecting road (present-day Route 16). The two Ellingsworth buildings south of Route 16 may have been standing in 1914.

On the west side of Route 30, William C. Prettyman owned land south of Route 16 and James Ponder owned land to the north of Route 16. The Prettyman residence was gone by 1914, but another building had been added to the north. The Ponder residence may have been present in 1914, with another building added to its south.

After crossing Ingrams Branch, the next properties along Route 30 in 1868 belonged to W. Sharp and a school house on the east side, and C. Reed on the west side. The school still appears on the 1914 map with a church in place of the Sharp residence. The Reed residence is gone by 1914. North of the schoolhouse, Route 30 intersects with a road leading to Ellendale (present-day Route 231).