

## INTRODUCTION

Saulsbury Road, also known as McKee Road, McKee and Geiser's Road, or Horsehead Road, has developed during the past century from a private farm road into a major industrial artery. As traffic has increased, the road has been upgraded and straightened.

### Project description

Because of the road's growing importance, the Delaware Department of Transportation is incrementally improving it again. The current phase of the improvement will include realignment near the point where the road crosses Mudstone Branch.

On March 8, 1980, representatives of the Department of Transportation, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Federal Highway Administration met at the site to discuss possible encroachments on a knoll in the northeast quadrant of the intersection of the road with the branch. Based upon location, elevation, and soil characteristics, the conferees agreed that the knoll has potential both as a prehistoric and historic archaeological site.

Standing remains and living memory testified to the existence of a nineteenth-century farmstead on the knoll. Archaeologists agreed that the existence of a prehistoric site was likely.

The farm is currently under cultivation; the farmstead site is abandoned and grown up in brush. Considerable casual dumping has caused the site to become a tangle of old tires, furniture, and garbage. Extensive landscaping in the farmyard and along the cut of Saulsbury Road remains evident in spite of this dumping. A former borrow pit between the farmstead and Mudstone Branch is covered by a young hardwood forest. Except for yard trees at the farmstead, few evergreens were observed on the property.

### Project goals

In order to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, it was deemed necessary to conduct phase I and phase II archaeological investigations.

On October 12, 1982, the Department of Transportation requested a research proposal and budget for such work from Edward F. Heite and Louise B. Heite of Camden, Delaware, professional archaeologists. On August 18, 1983, Agreement 304 was executed.

Goals of the project included the identification and delineation of any prehistoric site that might have survived on the knoll and in the field adjacent. The researchers were also directed to establish the historical and archaeological significance, if any, of the farmstead, for purposes of

determining National Register eligibility for the prehistoric and historic components.

At the same time, the archaeologists sought to determine the impact of the gradual development of Saulsbury Road upon the former inhabitants of the farmstead. Since the farmhouse originally was oriented toward Denny's Road to the north, what was the effect of exposing the rear of the property to public view? Findings from this study could conceivably be useful to future planners who might consider similar road reorientations.

After conducting intensive on-site and archival research, Louise Heite began excavations on September 22 and finished December 3. Wet weather during the fall season delayed the project.