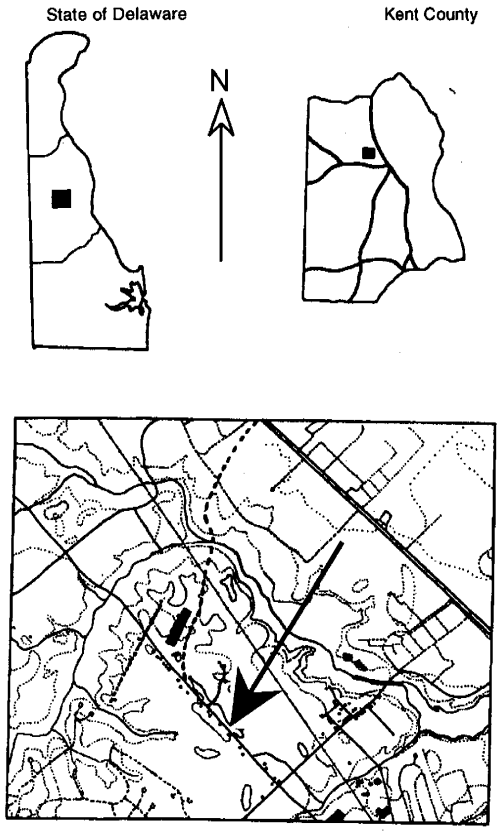
1. Discovering the Williams Property

An orderly research program
connected with a proposed highway project
revealed the existence of a unique archæological resource.

This is a report of Phase III (data recovery) investigations at the Nathan Williams site (7K-C-389) in Kent County, Delaware. The site has been identified as the residence and small farmstead of Nathan Williams, a free colored person, before 1840. The same tract was occupied by a tenant homestead later in the nineteenth century, probably on the same location (Heite and Blume 1995). The Delaware Deparatment of Transportation engaged Heite Consulting to conduct cultural resource surveys in an area where Scarborough Road would be built.



Local map, redrawn from USGS Dover

Figure 1
Location

Arrow in the bottom map indicates the location of the project area. Heavy dashed line is the course of the proposed new Scarborough Road.

Before the project began, in 1992, the site was farmland owned by Anita Baynard and Florence Smith, members of the family that has owned it for more than a century.

The Nathan Williams site has been identified by the State Historic Preservation Officer as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because it is a rare example of a documented ante-bellum black resident's site.. Therefore, a data recovery project was required when it was determined that the western approach to Scarborough Road would be built through it. The new road is shown as a heavy dashed line on Figure 1, at left.

This project is complicated by the fact that the present McKee Road was built through the Nathan Williams property in 1881, about forty years after he left. It has been widened several times since then. There is no way of knowing, from the documentary evidence, exactly how much of the house site had been destroyed by previous road construction. Based on Phase I findings, the investigators had reason to believe that some, at least, of the site had survived, and would be

impacted by the proposed roadway. The existing road passes through the longest dimension of the Williams parcel, suggesting maximum potential impact (Figure 5).

The primary objective of this project, therefore, was to identify the boundaries of the Williams homestead yard as well as the later tenant site, if they should not happen to be identical. The second objective was to salvage any data from either site that might be destroyed by impending road construction.

In addition to uncovering the physical evidence of the site, a major task was to define Nathan Williams in terms of the community in which he lived. Because Kent County's historical racial and ethnic distinctions are so poorly defined in the public record and in secondary sources, this aspect of the work would involve major devotion of time.

PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, State Historic Preservation Office, is charged with historic preservation planning in Delaware. This agency has produced a statewide historic preservation plan, with consultant assistance from University of Delaware Center for Historic Architecture and Design (Ames et al. 1989).

As outlined in the state plan, planning involves three steps: identification (Phase I), assessment of significance (Phase II), and protection of significant resources in accordance with pre-determined categories of significance.

Sometimes protection may include data-recovery archæological research, often called Phase III. A Phase III project destroys the site, or at least its information value, and thereby removes it from the National Register or the list of eligible sites.

Through the state plan, the National Register program has created a system for orderly identification and relatively objective assessment of significance. While the Register provides a measure of protection for resources against damage from federal activities, many losses occur because of activities that are not subject to federal or state laws and regulations. Indeed, local land-use regulations are recognized by the state plan as a key to effective preservation planning.

Recognized historic resources in Delaware were classified by the state plan authors (Ames, Callahan, Herman, and Siders 1989:19) into ten categories, in declining order:

Historic structures
Historical archæology
Prehistoric archæology
Historic structure and historical archæology
Historic structure and prehistoric archæology
Historical archæology and prehistoric archæology
Submerged historic site
Submerged prehistoric site
Submerged both prehistoric and historic
Multiple resource

This list was dropped from the final version of the plan, but it is a useful measure of historical perspective as expressed in the program. About 95% of Delaware's National Register entries are clustered in the first category, historic structures alone, even though a significantly large percentage of the identified cultural resources in the state are archæological sites belonging to the second and third categories. This project site belongs to the second most numerous category, historical archæology.

PLANNING TIME FRAMES

Time periods applied in Delaware preservation planning (Herman and Siders 1986) reflect only feebly the actual history of most parts of the state. The

state's generalized chronology is:

Exploration and frontier settlement.....1630-1730
Intensified and durable occupation.....1730-1770
Early industrialization.....1770-1830
Industrialization and urbanization.....1830-1880
Urbanization and suburbanization.....1880-1940

Only one area of the state, between Wilmington and Newark, actually experienced these periods in exactly this sequence. Cultural-resource investigations throughout the state are subdivided this way for the sake of uniformity, if not historical accuracy. Downstate, urban development came later, for example. The 1770-1830 industrialization exerted very little impact in Kent and Sussex counties.

The period of the site's occupancy straddles two time periods. In downstate Delaware, a period of agricultural prosperity began around 1830, with the introduction of fertilization and budded fruit trees. This high-prosperity period was roughly the middle third of the century, marked by such events as the completion of the Delaware Rail Road in 1856 and the dramatic local expansion of canning that followed the Civil War. Larger farmers grew wealthy on new technologies and economic revolution that they spawned. Impact of this prosperity on lower economic classes has not been assessed.

Houses stood on the site during all these events (figures 4, 5 and 6), but no house has stood on the location within living memory.

During the period of nineteenth-century agricultural prosperity, the farm was owned by the DuHamel family and then by the Scottens, progressive white farmers, whose descendants remain on the property. During the tenures of both families, houses on the farm were occupied by nonwhite tenants.

THEMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

Delaware's "framework of historic context elements" (Ames, Callahan, Herman and Siders 1989:21) is arranged according to a group of 18 themes, ten of which refer to occupations, such as forestry and manufacturing.

Transportation remains undefined among Delaware contexts. A historic context has been formulated for the archæology of agriculture and rural life in New Castle and Kent counties (De Cunzo and Garcia 1992), which is a useful tool for understanding certain aspects of the project area.

On the subject of ethnicity, some research has been conducted in Delaware, but planning contexts remain undefined. This property happens to lie in the center of the existing Native American remnant community of central Kent County. A generation after the time of Nathan Williams, part of the same property was developed by Native American descendants (Heite and Blume 1995).

PREHISTORY

People arrived in the Delaware Valley near the end of the last (Wisconsin) glaciation around ten or twelve thousand years ago. Glaciers entrapped so much water that the ocean lay fifty miles east of the present Sandy Hook, New Jersey. As the glaciers retreated and the ocean advanced, the

PREHISTORIC CHRONOLOGY
(After Custer 1986)

Dates	*Environmental Episode*	*Cultural Period*
8080 BCE	Late Glacial	Paleo-Indian /Early Archaic
6540 BCE	Pre-Boreal/Boreal Atlantic	Middle Archaic
3110 BCE	Sub-Boreal	Late Archaic
810 BCE	Sub-Atlantic	Woodland I
CE 1000		Woodland II
CE 1600		European Contact

project area's ecology changed. With changes in ecology and population came changes in land use, which are reflected in the cultural record.

Mammoths, musk ox, horses, caribou, and walrus provided food for dire wolf, short-faced bear, and other predators. Man was among the smaller competitors in the tundra food chain, but his skills compensated for his physical shortcomings. Nomadic people of this Paleo-Indian period were among the most skilled makers of flaked stone tools in the world. They would travel great distances to quarry the best flinty materials from which they made exquisite spearpoints, knives, and small tools. A well-known source of such material existed at the north end of Pencader Hundred.

Paleo – Indian hunting – gathering society lasted in the coastal plain until about 6,500 BC, when the Atlantic climate episode and the Archaic period of prehistory began. Northern hardwood forests had replaced the tundra, the ocean had risen, and the climate was warmer. Pleistocene megafauna were replaced by smaller game, which required different hunting techniques and tools. "Micro-band base camps" of this relatively arid period often are found on slight elevations above poorly-drained spots (called "bay basins") where game might have come to drink or feed. Even after the climate became wetter, people apparently continued to live on sand hills that formed near the basins. One such sand hill site was Simon's Savannah, excavated during the present project with field assistance provided by the Kent County Archæological Society (Heite and Blume 1992: 42, 63).

By 3,000 BC, prehistoric society was decidedly different. The last prehistoric period, the Woodland, was characterized by larger groups of people living together in villages, using pottery and other heavy or fragile goods that would have been difficult to move from place to place.

Woodland people tended to concentrate in more or less permanent settlements at places with abundant multiple resources, such as sites adjacent to shellfish beds on the edges of salt marshes. These settlements, called "base camps," were generally occupied by one or a few extended families. They sent out hunting and gathering parties, but they seldom dispersed whole populations to live off the land in the manner of their hunter-gatherer ancestors.

REGIONAL POSTCONTACT HISTORY

Wherever Europeans have settled, they have first built highly-organized towns on the frontier, projecting all the trappings and institutions of the mother country onto the perceived wilderness (L. Heite 1987; Heite and Heite 1989).

During the first years of any invasaive settlement, there usually is a sharp division line between the natives and the incoming population; this division line frequently was expressed in America as a palisade and zones from which native people were excluded.

Pioneer farmers typically follow, after the soldiers have established an outpost of civilization. The first Dutch and Swedish settlements in the Delaware Valley conformed to the frontier model: they were populated mostly by males, compact and strictly regulated, and were supported largely by supply lines that brought necessities from Europe or from older colonies (Heite and Heite 1986).

Once the farmers were established, the colonial fortress towns

Distribution of free African-Americans in the Population Census and Tax Assessments

Percent of the total population as free African-Americans as interpreted by the agricultural tenancy context authors

(Siders *et al.* 1991, page 80)

	1820	1816/1822	1860	1860/1861	1896	1900
Appoquinimink	23%	18%	27%	17%	n/a	29%
Little Creek	40%	30%	30%	20%	17%	35%
Murderkill	27$	14%	26%	18%	18%	23%

were freed from dependence upon supply lines; a local supply network developed. As colonies spread into the surrounding farmland, contact with indigenous communities increased. Intermarriage usually was a feature of this contact, since the settlers were largely male, and the frontier traders were almost all men.

In each region, early settlement patterns were shaped by local conditions but the dispersal phase generally followed initial settlement. The role of Native American people in larger society during this period is not well documented.

International competition probably delayed the region's transition to the second, dispersed, phase of colonization, which was a less regimented period of agricultural development. Most other North American colonies moved to settle the countryside within a decade after initial settlement. The Delaware coastal settlements, in contrast, clustered around their fortified command posts for at least thirty years. Not until the fall of New Netherlands in 1664 was the Delaware Valley finally able to realize its potential as an open, self-supporting, agricultural colony under a single European colonial power.

PROBLEMS OF DURABLE SETTLEMENT

Jurisdictional problems with the Maryland proprietors complicated development in western and southern Delaware. Maryland created an entity called Durham (or Essex) County, which pretended jurisdiction over much of the present Sussex and Kent counties.

Western parts of the "three lower counties" of the Penn proprietary, now the Delaware state, were disputed territory for a century. Much of the modern Kenton Hundred, near the project area, was originally granted and settled from Maryland.

Part of Kenton Hundred was reserved by the Penn family as a private manor, not subject to being granted by the Land Office. This tract, called the Manor of Frieth, enjoyed certain exemptions, such as tax relief, from the county authorities.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, antecedents of the existing Native American remnant community had established themselves as farmers in the area then known as Little Creek and Duck Creek hundreds.

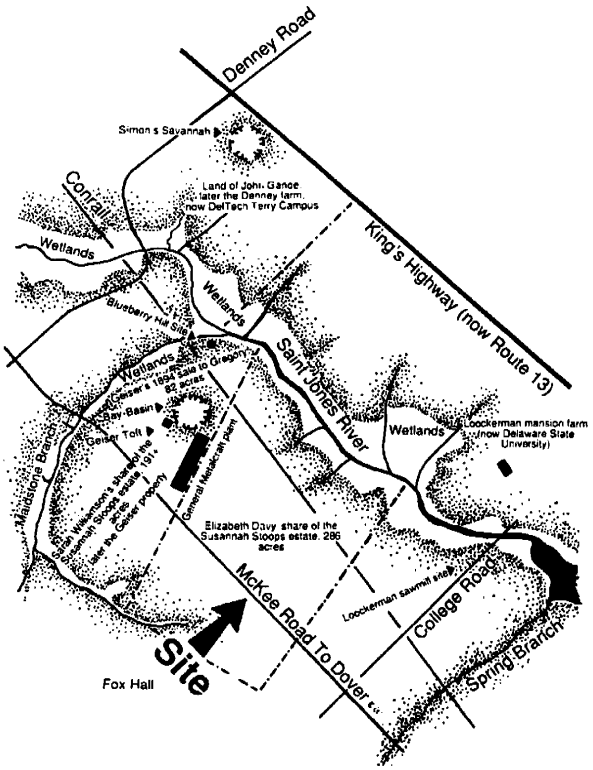


Figure 2

Vicinity Historical Map

This general historical map of the project vicinty identifies some of the places mentioned in this report during different periods, by their current and historical names. The King's Highway, for instance, is now Route 13.

EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD ECONOMY

First tobacco, and then grain and pork, exports sustained the colonial-era economy of central Delaware. These crops brought prosperity to the larger landowning families.

During the half century after the Revolution, Delaware farmland declined. Neglect, ignorance, and the disinterest of absentee landlords conspired to reduce the prosperity of Delaware agricultural areas. Early in the nineteenth century, a few educated farmers began to introduce new methods that eventually had a lasting effect on the landscape.

Grafted peach trees and a curious green sandy marl would be the key to rebirth of Delaware agriculture.

PEACH BOOM AND FARM PROSPERITY

Delaware soil productivity reached a nadir in the 1830s, when it was estimated that Delaware's farmland was within five years of total abandonment. Instead of collapse, the region rebounded during the next few years, thanks to aggressive young scientifically educated farmers (Passmore 1978) who introduced the concept of fertilization and budded fruit trees.

Scientific, fertilized, agriculture, as practiced today, was unknown during the first years of settlement. Only after large areas had been rendered infertile did American farmers begin to address the problems of conservation and soil fertilization.

Early scientific farming practices can be seen reflected in the soil in the form of ditches, drain tiles, calcined oyster shells, and tiny dispersed bits of brick, bone, pottery, and other domestic debris that would have been included with manure and compost. Manure, including human waste, was used extensively in the United States during the nineteenth century, when the word "manuring" referred to any soil modification.

The project area lies west of the head of navigation of the coastal streams, which meant that people here had difficulties reaching markets. Roads to landings were a lifeline until north-south land routes became established. First the king's road, then the rails, then the duPont Parkway, and finally the

Route 1 toll road, carried goods to Philadelphia.

When the Delaware Rail Road opened in 1856, peninsular producers gained access to national markets. Toward the coast, steamboat companies served communities that were not along the railroad. By the end of the nineteenth century, roads had been reduced to feeder status, and the railroads and steamboats dominated long-distance travel.

PRIORITY RANKING

FOR BELOW-GROUND RESOURCES

(State Plan, June 1989, page 79)

Settlement patterns and demographic change

Trapping and hunting

Mining and quarrying

Fishing and oystering

Forestry

Agriculture

Manufacturing

Other themes

TRENDS IN LANDOWNING HISTORY

There have been periods when large estates accumulated, and periods when they were broken into smaller holdings. Such broad trends in ownership patterns can be seen reflected in the vicinity of the project area, which was consolidated, then fragmented, then consolidated again during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Heite and Blume 1992: 104-111)

The project area was originally part of a speculative holding owned by Philadelphia interests. It was bought by a local wealthy farmer, whose heirs were absentee landowners. As the property was subdivided with each death and estate division, the individual parcels became less valuable. Finally, the old manorial estate was divided into many parts, which were bought by local people who set about improving the property again.

Each real–estate transaction could influence the archæological record. When a small farmer sold out to a larger landowner, his toft became a tenancy or was abandoned. Either way, the archæological record was affected. When a well-off farmer married, he might build or remodel his house, also leaving a mark in the archæological record of foundations, trash pits, and changed land use.

Such events must be documented as precisely as possible before any fieldwork, because they potentially provide explanations for archæological deposits.

A marriage, estate sale, or farm consolidation is the documentary expression of events represented in the field by features and artifact deposits. With these objectives in mind, documentary research for this project included probate, land grant, survey, and tax records at the state archives and the courthouse, in addition to secondary histories.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The overall theoretical point of view or orientation of this study is cultural materialist, in keeping with the general tone of the state management plans. Cultural materialists study the effect of environment and technology on human behavior. Culture is interpreted as a form of adaptation to both natural and social environments that results from the interaction among human individuals and groups. Cultural ecology is not a determinist theory; geography is considered to restrict or encourage the direction or intensity of particular cultural development, but is not determining.

Geographical determinism is a related, if not entirely congruent, concept employed by historians. A geographical determinist regards the landscape as a powerful actor in the drama of history, as fully empowered as politicians, entrepreneurs, or military leaders.

This theoretical approach is explicit in the state management plan for prehistoric resources and implicit in the plan for historic resources. Those who use the cultural materialist approach tend to rely upon predictive models to structure their survey activities.

HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Agriculture, and particularly agricultural tenancy, stand out as the dominant theme in Kent County history. A context study for tenancy was prepared by the University of Delaware Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering (Siders, Herman, et al., 1991). A context for archæology of agriculture and rural life in New Castle and Kent counties was prepared by the University of Delaware Center for Archæological Research (De Cunzo and Garcia 1992). Transportation remains undefined among Delaware contexts.

PROPERTY TYPES AND CONTEXTS

In terms employed by the Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan (Ames, Callahan, Herman and Siders 1989:33), the project area is part of the upper peninsula geographic zone. The management plan for prehistoric resources (Custer 1986:13) classifies the project area in the peninsular divide physiographic zone. This is an area that includes a large number of Paleo sites, but few, if any, base camps from later periods.

The obvious historical archæological context is agriculture, as defined by DeCunzo and Garcia (1992), which will be considered here.

A defining characteristic of recent Delaware agriculture is consolidation. Over the past half-century, farms have been combined; as a result, there are many abandoned toft sites among the broad fields.

LOCAL PROPERTY TYPES

Nearby historic property types include agricultural complexes, agricultural fields, and a railroad. Older agricultural complexes all occur on well-drained soil. Only more recent habitations, such as mobile homes, occur on soils that are not naturally well drained. The project area is a sandy ridge, one of the favored geographical settings for agricultural complexes.

Among the various property types are several different sorts of residential or agricultural properties. These sites vary according to the occupants' wealth, status, ethnicity, and social connections. Some of the status-related characteristics may be reflected in the archæological record; one was the swept yard.

SWEPT YARDS

A property type not previously recognized by preservation planners,

PRIORITY RANKING
FOR ABOVE-GROUND RESOURCES

(State Plan, June 1989, page 79)

Agriculture

Settlement patterns
and demographic change

Manufacturing

Retailing and wholesaling

Transportation and communication

Other themes

but significant in this context, is the swept yard. Within some ethnic and regional population categories, it is traditional to sweep the yard around a house to the extent that no artifacts, however small, are typically found in the area. Swept yards will be characterized by concentrations of artifacts along fence lines and beyond the yard, but virtually none in the yard surface itself. The practice has been observed in Africa and among German-American communities.

This practice is supposed by many to be most prevalent in African-American communities in the southern United States. The archæological implications of sweeping have been demonstrated archæologically. Excavations of an African-American farmhouse in Manassas National Batttlefield Park, Virginia, provided insight into yard layout and the effect of sweeping.

The investigators reported that artifacts were very scarce in the immediate vicinity of the house, but were concentrated about 50 feet away. The yard had apparently been swept clean, leaving the trash residue around the perimeter (Martin, Parsons and Shackel 1997:164-165).

An archæological predictive model for a swept yard can be formulated, based on the published examples. The swept yard will not only create a virtually artifact-free space, but it will create windrows of artifacts roughly congruent with the yard edge.

AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY TYPES

Property types that might be found in or near the project area, based in part on a list promulgated for Delaware historic properties by Herman, Siders, Ames and Callahan 1989.

- Agriculture (crofts)
  - Products
    - Nursery / Orchard
    - Tobacco
    - Grain
    - Potatoes
    - Truck crops
  - Methods
    - Cultivation
      - Plowing
      - Plow Scars
      - Orchard planting holes
    - Enclosures
      - Field boundaries
      - Drainage ditches
    - Fertilization
      - Manuring Spread
      - Fertilizer Residues
  - Forestry
    - Sawmills
  - Mining and Quarrying
    - Borrow Pits
    - Brick Clay Pits

STATE PLAN CONTEXTS

Because of the high priority assigned to agriculture and the archæology of agriculture by the state planning documents, there is a high likelihood that well-preserved agricultural remains would be candidates for the National Register. In particular, we are here dealing with small holders and tenants, whose agricultural activities differed from those of their neighbors in more than mere scale.

In order for a property to be eligible, it must possess integrity and definable boundaries as well as a quality called "significance," which can be defined only in terms of each specific context. The context may be spatial, temporal, or thematic, but it must exert a unifying effect (DeCunzo and Garcia 1992:311-317).

A concept of eligibility through "representativeness" takes on special importance when dealing with "ordinary" or "commonplace" properties. A property is "representative" if it contains all the elements of the "typical" property of that category. That is, integrity becomes the most important single determinant in evaluation.

If a farmstead site is "typical," how can it be eligible? This issue has been debated at length (Wilson 1990) in the cultural resource management community. In any case, it can be argued that significance depends upon

the site context. The context, for such comparative purposes, can be defined either as site type or geographical unit.

AGRICULTURAL TENANCY

A context document for Delaware agricultural tenancy has been developed by a group of researchers from the University of Delaware (Siders, Herman, Ames, Marth, Lanier, Watson, Bellingrath, Van Dolsen, Bashman, and Chase 1991). Under the title *Agricultural Tenancy in Central Delaware 1770-1900±: A Historic Context,* the authors seriously misinterpreted the racial picture of central Delaware.

In the course of the context research, the hundreds of Appoquinimink, Little Creek, and Murderkill were selected for detailed sampling and statistical analysis. These hundreds, as their boundaries then existed, were Indian country.

The Nathan Williams project area was originally in Murderkill Hundred, but after 1823 was part of Dover Hundred. It is now in West Dover Hundred. During the period covered by the University of Delaware study, the project area lay in Murderkill Hundred and then Dover Hundred. As a result of changed boundaries, the context's sampling included the project vicinity for only part of the period under study.

The three hundreds considered by the survey, therefore, happened to coincide with the homeland of the Native American population, but the coverage was inconsistent through time.

FLAWED ETHNICITY PERCEPTIONS

Ethnicity and Indian descent are critical contexts for interpreting the project area and a large segment of Delaware's cultural record. However, the state plan does not address ethnic issues except in a very cursory manner. This project, along with the others along McKee Road, clearly demonstate the need for a post-contact Native American context to be developed and integrated into the state plan.

Little Creek Hundred was, and is, the principal center of Kent County's Indian-descended population bloc, but there were groups of these people in Appoquinimink, Duck Creek and Murderkill hundreds as well (Heite and Blume 2001).

Unfortunately, the authors of the tenancy context fell victim to a common misconception that casts a serious shadow over their conclusions and throws into doubt the broad findings of the context. In compiling a racial profile of the three hundreds, the authors have assumed that all "free persons of color" listed in the census were actually African-Americans, for which statement there is no historical evidence. Analysis of the evidence reveals that the "colored" population listed in the census was largely Native American, and not African-American.

It is possible to distinguish between black and Native American families on the basis of surnames and genealogy. The intermarried Native American family groups tended to stay together to the extent that they can be identified in the record after two centuries.

Based on this misperception, the context authors presumed incorrectly that Kent County in the period had the "largest percentage of free African-Americans of any county in the nation," the authors noted that the "percentage of free African-Americans was even higher in Little Creek Hundred."

In fact, the people identified in the University of Delaware study were not all African-Americans. According to

the report, free African – Americans represented 29% of the Little Creek Hundred population listed in the 1800 census.

The actual return is differentThe 1800 census reported 1,908 total individuals in the hundred, of whom 133 were slaves and 546 were lumped into "all other free persons of color except Indians not taxed." Of these 546 nonwhites, 133 (24.3%) lived in households headed by people whose surnames indicated they were [taxed] Indians. There is no way to determine how many Indian individuals were among the free persons of color who were counted among white households, or those whose surnames are not readily recognized by modern researchers.

Untaxed Indians, for purposes of the census, were those who lived beyond the frontiers or in enclaves that later would be idnetified as reservations. No such Indians lived in Delaware during the period after the Constitution was adopted.

Thus, when the census figures are corrected for non-reservation Indians (identified by surname), the population contained at least as many free persons of Indian descent as persons of African descent, and probably more.

After making these corrections, it appears that the actual free African-American population of Little Creek Hundred in 1800 did not exceed 400, or about 20% of the total, and probably was significantly smaller. This was only two-thirds the percentage calculated by Susan Chase in the University of Delaware study.

Moreover, the report identified Benjamin Francisco (Sisco) as the "richest African-American in the hundred in 1822," when in fact he was a member of the Indian descendant population that was listed among the

"free persons of color" and identified by contemporaries as "colored."

There is no evidence that he had any significant African ancestry, nor was he ever identified as anything but "colored" by his contemporaries. In spite of the lack of evidence, the authors of the context asserted that Sisco was African-American.

Among the others in this group who were lumped with the African-Americans were Jesse and Robert Dean, John Durham, Edward Conselor, Isaac Sammons, Isaiah Munce, and Elijah Conselor, documented ancestors of the existing Native American descended community.

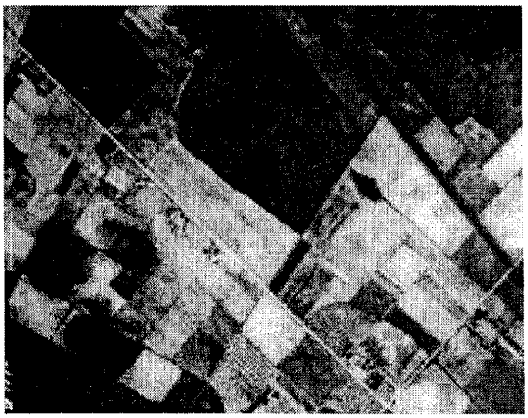


Plate 1: This 1926 ærial photograph shows the Nathan Williams property with no buildings east (above) of McKee Road.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Every cultural property should, ideally, be evaluated against all four National Register criteria listed on page 12. In practice, most sites can be eliminated from consideration under most criteria. Prehistoric archæological sites are evaluated almost exclusively under Criterion D, properties that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

In order to satisfy Criterion D, a historic property must possess physical integrity; in this connection, one must know its horizontal and vertical extent. This determination is properly a function of a Phase II survey.

The resource must be able to contribute to our knowledge about some research question[s]. The ability of a site to answer a question is, of course, related to its integrity. Well-preserved sites, by definition, contain more information than damaged ones.

Although the state plan contains some research questions, it cannot pretend to describe every question that a site might present. The questions in the plan are, of necessity, narrowly restricted to the interests of its authors and the sources they consulted. In fact, there are a greater number of valid research questions outside the state plan than inside it.

Finally, the site must be significant. To an archæologist, mere knowledge of the existence of a site is useful information. Any site can tell us something. To be significant as well as merely interesting, a site must have sufficient intellectual content that its excavation would substantially increase our knowledge about the people who have occupied the site.

To be eligible for the Register, under Criterion D, therefore, an archæological property must meet all three tests of significance, integrity, and research value.

Integrity is a variable that can be evaluated only relative to a context. If a resource belongs to a common type, of which there are many well-preserved examples, it must retain a high level of integrity. A late-nineteenth-century middling-income farmstead, for example, is a common property type, represented by thousands of excellent standing examples. A damaged archæological site of this property type would possess poor integrity, because it has a *relatively* low information value under Criterion D.

On the other hand, there may be a half-dozen seventeenth-century buildings in Delaware. Any seventeenth-century architectural fragment therefore is likely to have immense significance, and by virtue of its very existence it can be said to have integrity.

Between these two extremes are dozens of property types with varying rates of survival. Delaware has a few eighteenth-century barns, most of which are large and permanent structures of stone or brick. A less substantial yeoman's post-in-ground or log outbuilding is less likely to survive, although there are a few documented examples in the state.

While architectural historians have recorded a sizable body of information about the architectural elements of Delaware farmsteads, the life of the farm family is the province of archæology. Diaries, memoirs, and travellers' accounts can go only so far in painting a picture of early Delaware rural life.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

(National Register Bulletin 16a, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* s)

The quality of **significance** in American history, architecture, archæology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess **integrity** of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

☞ A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

☞ B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

☞ C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

☞ D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

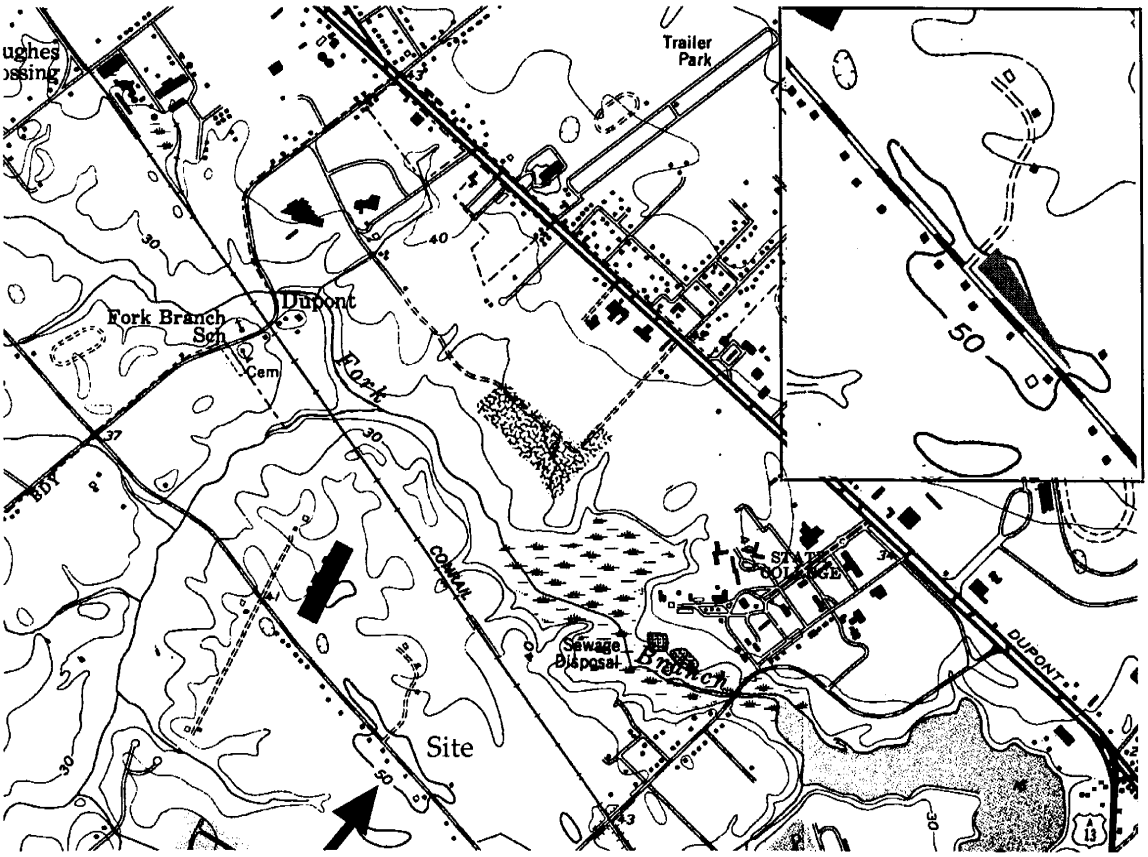


Figure 3
Project location indicated by arrow, from the USGS Dover 7.5 minute quadrangle
In the enlarged inset, upper right, the project site is shown shaded.

Archæology can, and will, supply minute details about diet, workplaces, levels of consumption, and even pathology that were never transcribed into the written or architectural record. The ephemeral nature of many rural structures requires delicate field techniques and sensitive documentary methods, beyond the usual standard.

A poor family living in a log dwelling with log outbuildings will leave few artifacts and few features on the soil.

Because of their small size and scant artifact inventory, such poorer sites are difficult to detect by ordinary survey methods. Because they are under-reported, low-status sites have a potentially higher level of research interest and thereby, potentially higher significance in terms of the National Register program.

this area has been the subject of several reports by this firm as well.

Nearby, an early Paleo-Indian and Archaic site, Blueberry Hill, was identified and eventually excavated by the authors (Heite and Blume 1992:65-73). It proved to be a sandy ridge overlooking the mouth of Maidstone Branch, occupied throughout prehistory as an intermittent campsite.

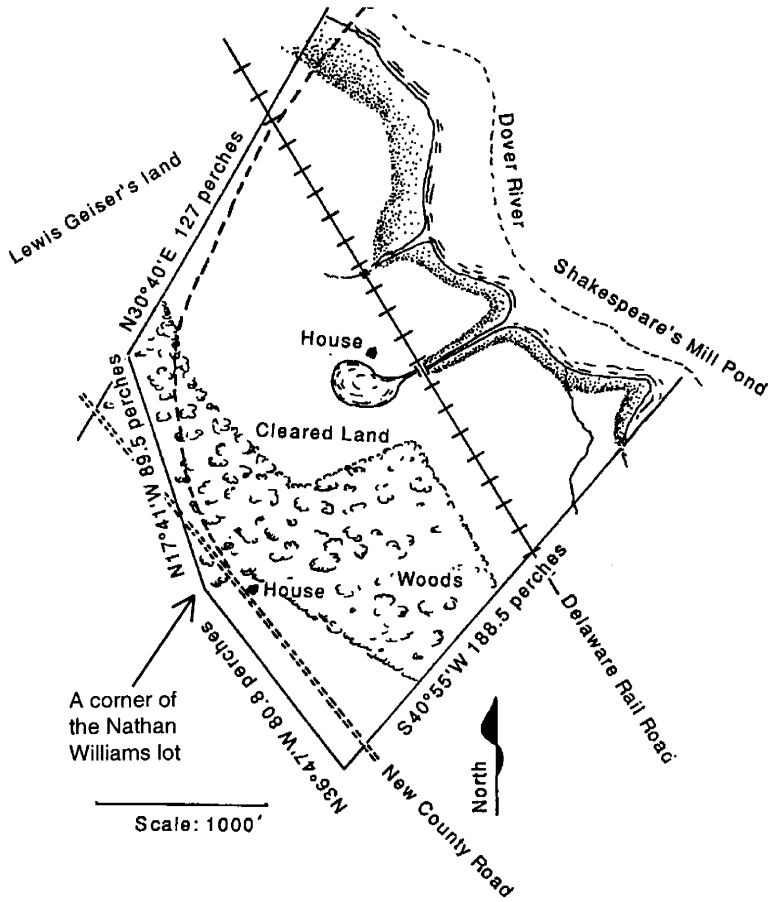


Figure 5

Composite sketch map, 1877, 1881

The dashed line indicates the course of the new Scarborough Road. The "New county road" is now known as McKee Road. This is a redrawing of the Orphans Court plot book entry, found in volume 4, page 247, with a whole area of 176 acres 82 perches. McKee Road, the "new county road," has been added to this plot to illustrate the impact on the site of subsequent widenings,.

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

The Nathan Williams site was identified in our McKee Road report and has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register. Even though it is significant, it was damaged by earlier road widening, and has limited information potential. Methods routinely employed in a Phase III project on an intact site are therefore inapplicable to this project (Heite and Blume 1992; Heite and Heite 1985).

For example, it was not possible to justify screening the surface materials because the purpose of a screened surface collection is to statistically develop a proxy for spatial relationships within a site. The site has been cut by roads, occupations overlap, and the developing neighborhood is intruding on the site.

Because the tract has been cut by the road, the archaeologists could only hope that a useful fragment had survived. That fragment would be found in the undisturbed subsurface features, not in the disturbed topsoil and not in the soil chemicals.

A house appears on the 1840 plot (Figure 4), the 1868 map (Figure 6), and on the 1882 plot (Figure 5) in roughly the

location where the Phase II project found evidence. There is no way to know if these sources all depict the same house, or a succession of houses in the same general location (Heite and Blume 1995: 42-45). This location is a small "hill" or eminence that was truncated on the west by the road. The original roadway lay under the present southbound lane of McKee Road.

The later-period tenant house stood east of the original road, and the right-of-way has been expanded eastward. There was no way to know from documentary evidence if the house site was obliterated, but we were almost certain that it was severely truncated by twentieth-century road constrution.

The proposed taking in the former Nathan Williams property is a wedge, about 90 feet wide on the north, tapering down to a point near the south property line of the Baynard tract (Figure 3). Surface collection had indicated that most of the site lay within 30 meters of the existing right-of-way.

It was possible to identify 30,000 square feet in the proposed taking where the Williams house and yard site might lie, based on the map evidence and the chemical studies. This study area was bounded on the north by the farm drive, and extended about 300 feet (70 to 100 meters) south.

Review of previously-excavated sites indicates that a home lot should originally have been much smaller than 30,000 square feet. The Benjamin Wynn tenancy in the Route 1 corridor (Grettler, Miller, Catts, Guttman, Iplenski, Hoseth, Hodny and Custer 1994) occupied 14,400 square feet, and other home lots were similar (Heite and Blume 2001:128-129). Therefore, it would not be necessary to examine in detail the whole 30,000 square feet of the study area.

We presumed that spatial disposition of surface artifacts within the site is not likely to be very revealing. If anything should have survived to reveal something about Nathan Williams, we presumed that it would be found in subsurface features. In this, we were eventually to be proved wrong. Spatial distribution of artifacts proved to be the most important type of evidence the site yielded.

The earlier surface collection taught three things about the surface artifacts on this site:

1. *There are very few artifacts on the surface.* One may take this to indicate either that the surviving plowed field is outside the main site, or that there were few artifacts to begin with.

2. *The artifact collection is very mixed.* This site was occupied during much of the nineteenth century, by Nathan Williams and by later tenants. Moreover, there is an extremely high likelihood that neighbors and passers-by have contributed significantly to the artifact collection.

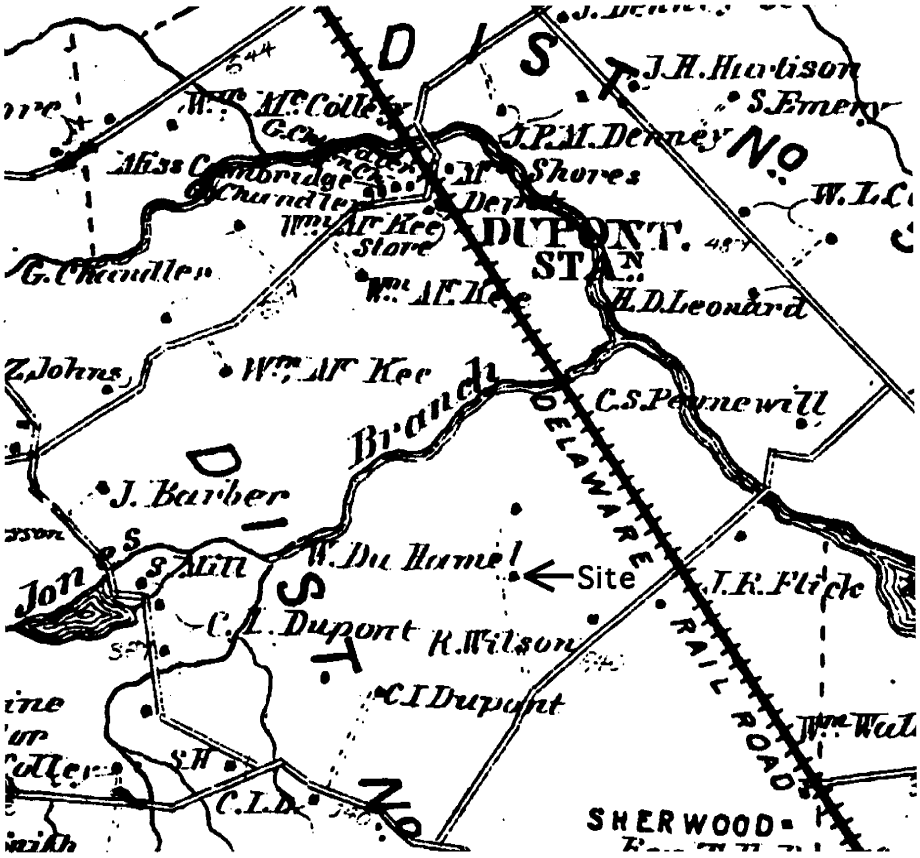


Figure 6

1868 map

This is a double-size enlargement of the 1868 Beers Atlas map. A house on the Nathan Williams site is indicated along a lane to the other house site on the property.

3. Controlled surface collection on this site has a very poor ratio of cost to information value. Since we already had identified that there were (probably undisturbed) subsurface features on the site, the value of topsoil investigations was dubious, and could easily be written off.

The consultant could not advise taking additional soil samples for chemical analysis at the Phase III level. Earlier work had already provided a chemical profile of the site, but because of truncation it would not be possible to get a complete chemical map of the site as it existed when it was occupied.

Given all these problems, why should the project have gone forward? In a nutshell, the unique features of the site were sufficient to justify the work, even with reduced expectations.

The following sequence of operations was proposed.

I. Background research

A. Find any public records that might relate to Nathan Williams and his associates.

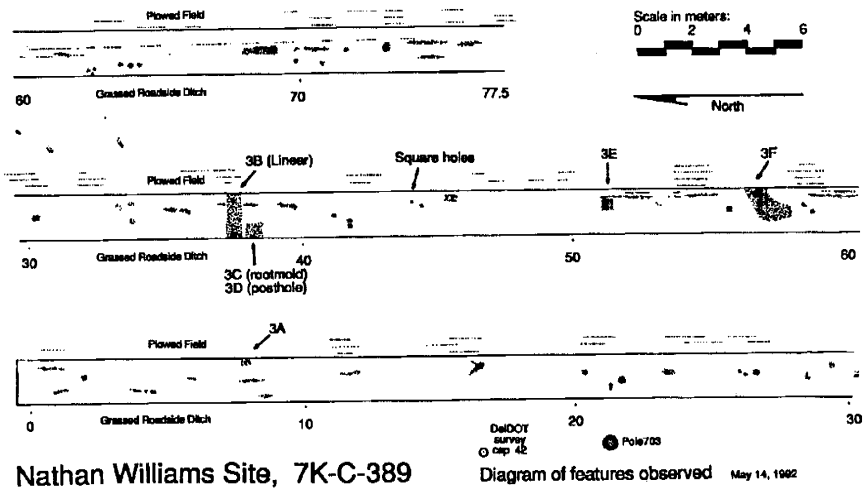


Figure 7

1992 Test Trench

Archæologists identified several features that indicated existence of a house, possibly under the road. These small features are typical of the small post holes and trenches that often will be found on farmyard sites. This diagram appeared in the 1992 publication, page 67. Zero point was near the driveway. The figures at the bottom of the trench indicate the number of meters south of the driveway.

B. Define the racial and ethnic makeup of the community in which Williams lived.

II. Surface collect the artifacts

A. Plow, disk and grid the site.

B. Enlist the Kent County Archeological Society to do the surface collection.

C. Analyse and curate the artifacts.

III. Subsurface

A. Machine strip the entire taking, from the driveway to the south property line.

B. Excavate features.

IV. Synthesis

A. Clean, analyse, and interpret the artifacts.

B. Write the report.

As it turned out, several assumptions were wrong, but they led to improved outcomes. The controlled surface collection proved to be an excellent tool, and the participation of volunteers was a rewarding experience for all concerned.