PHASE II ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS
PIERCE/TALLEY HOUSE SITE
DELAWARE ROUTE 92 (NAAMAN'S ROAD)
BRANDYWINE HUNDRED, NEW CASTLE COUNTY
DELAWARE

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY
April 22, 1996

A. Introduction

The following report summarizes the results of Phase II Archaeological Investigations carried out by Hunter Research, Inc. in conjunction with the Delaware Department of Transportation's proposed storm water detention basin located between Mousley Place and Clearview Avenue, Stations 103+50 to 112+50, along Delaware Route 92 (Naaman's Road) in New Castle County, Delaware (Figures 1-3). The purpose of the investigations described herein was to evaluate the significance of an historical archaeological resource, the Pierce/Talley House Site, which was identified during an earlier Phase I archaeological survey investigation (Hunter Research, Inc. 1995). The study area was defined principally by the limits of intact soils around an identified stone shaft feature.

The archaeological investigations were conducted under the Parent Agreement #728, currently in force between Hunter Research Inc. and the Delaware Department of Transportation. Notice to proceed with this study was received on February 28, 1996. Background research was performed by Brian Seidel from March 14 to 27, 1996. Archaeological field testing was initially conducted on March 5, 1996 with additional field testing being conducted between March 12 and 14, 1996.

B. Historical Overview of the Pierce/Talley House Site

The Pierce/Talley House Site lies within what was originally a large parcel of land owned in the early 19th century by Joseph Pierce. The Rea and Price Map of New Castle County in 1849 shows that, during the mid-19th century, Joseph Pierce was residing in a dwelling located to the west northwest of the study area (Figure 4). Since this map does not depict the Pierce/Talley House, it is believed that the building was not in existence at this time.

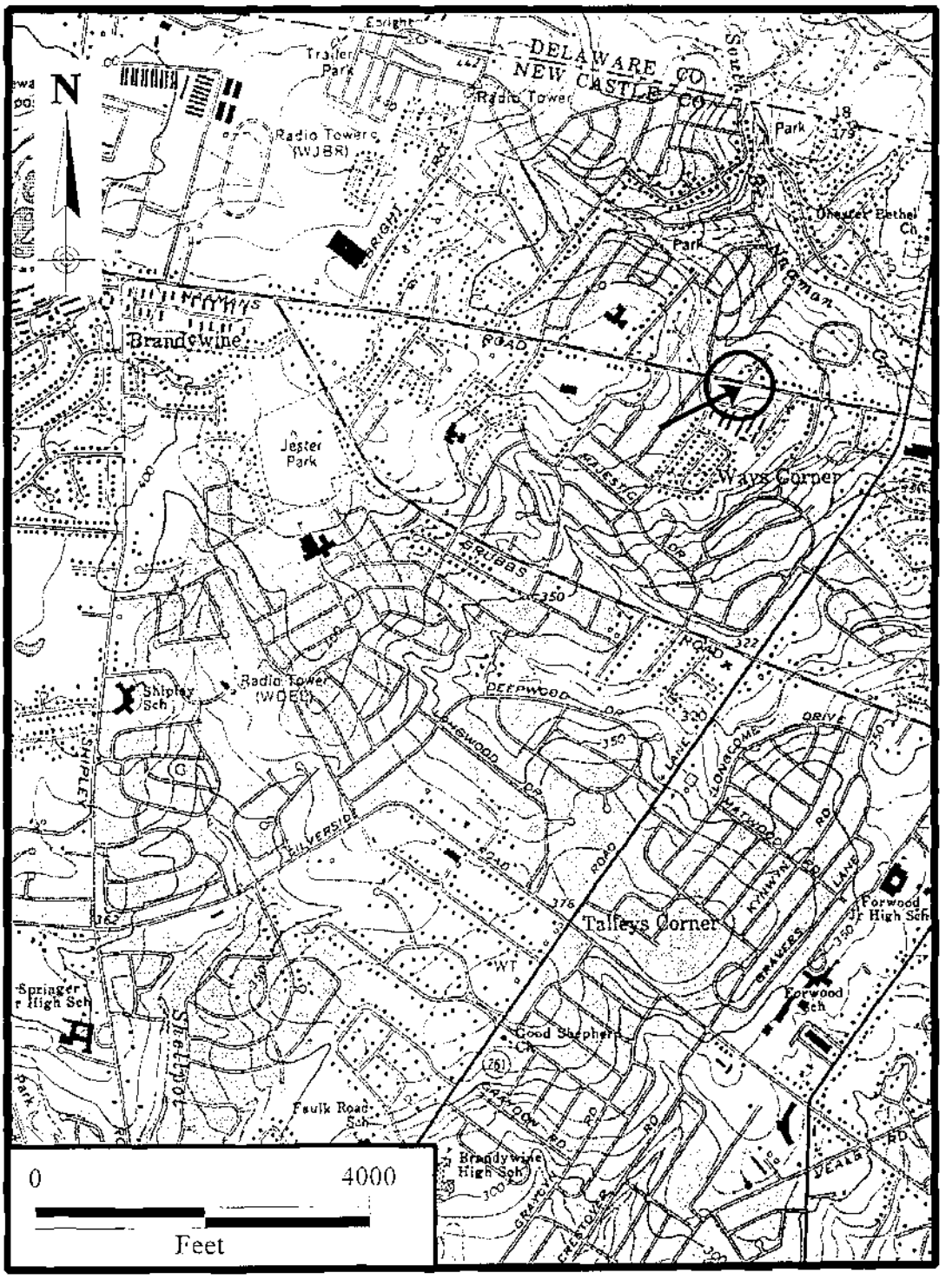


Figure 1. Detailed Location of Project Area (circled). Source: USGS Wilmington North Quadrangle 1987. Location of Pierce/Talley House Site indicated with an arrow.

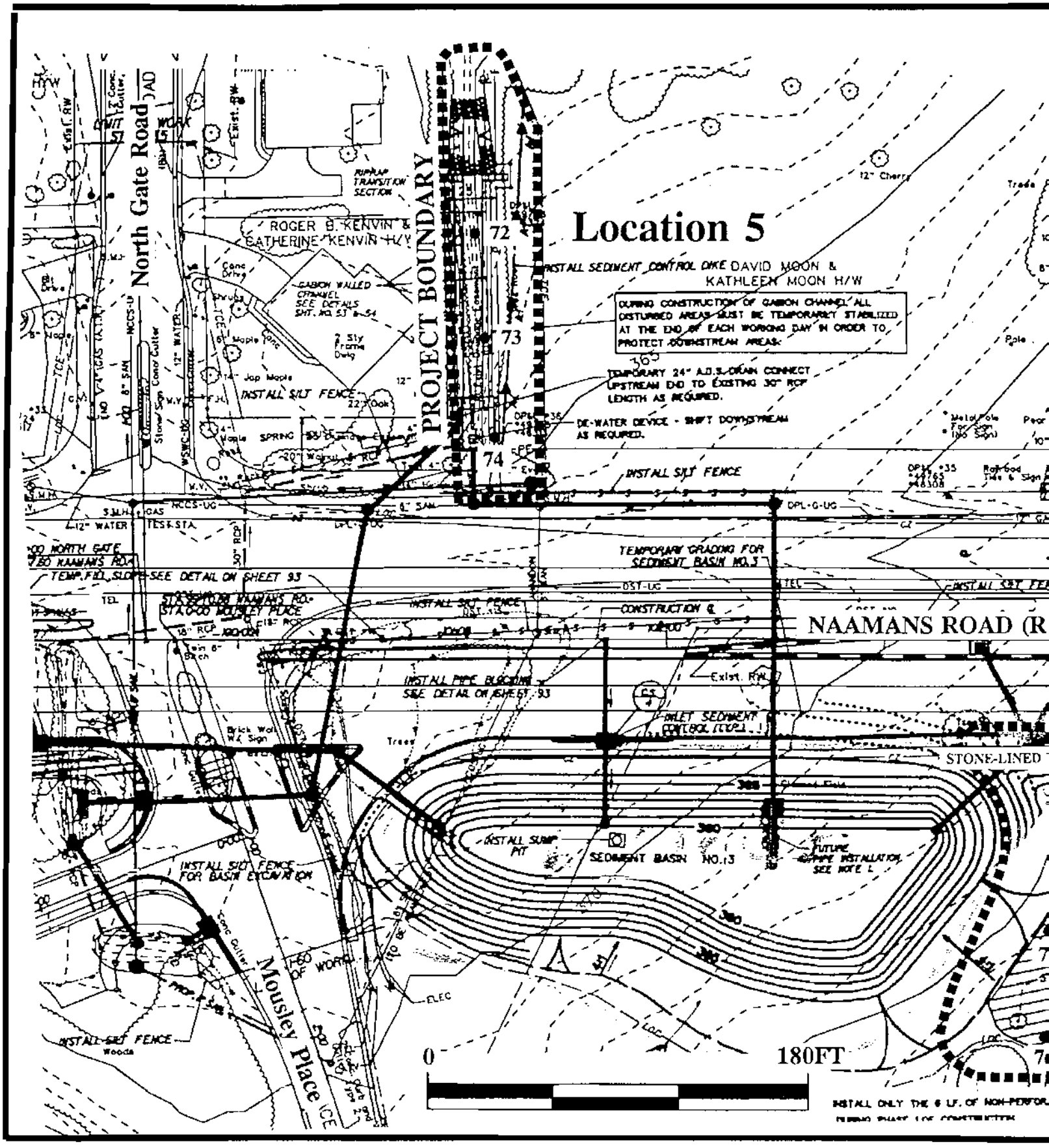
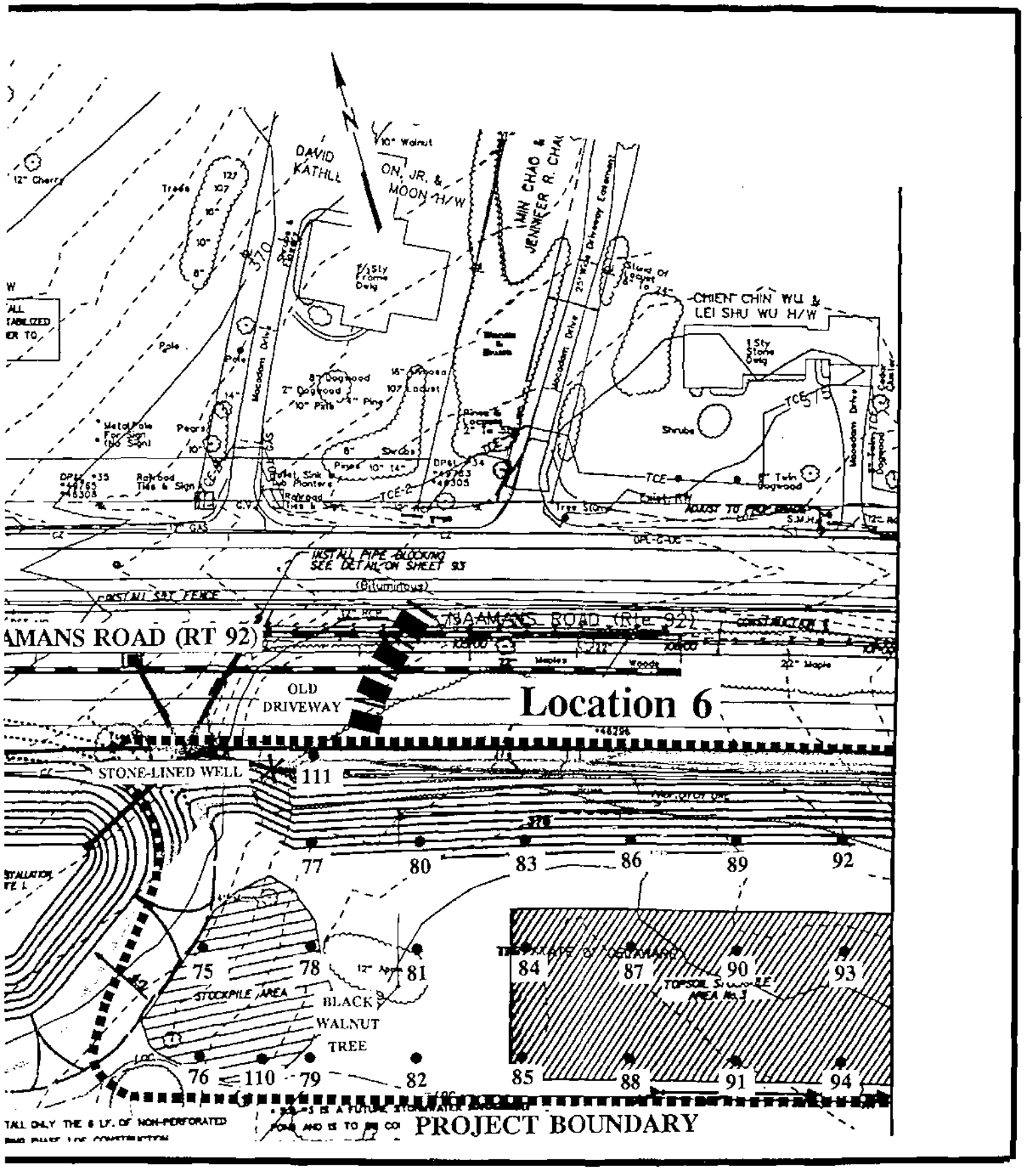


Figure 2. Location 5 (north of Naaman's Road, just east of North Gate Road) and Loc
of Mousley Place and west of Clearview Avenue). Site Plan Showing Location of Sub
Archaeological Survey.



th Gate Road) and Location 6 (south of Naaman's Road, east
owing Location of Subsurface Tests Excavated in the Phase I

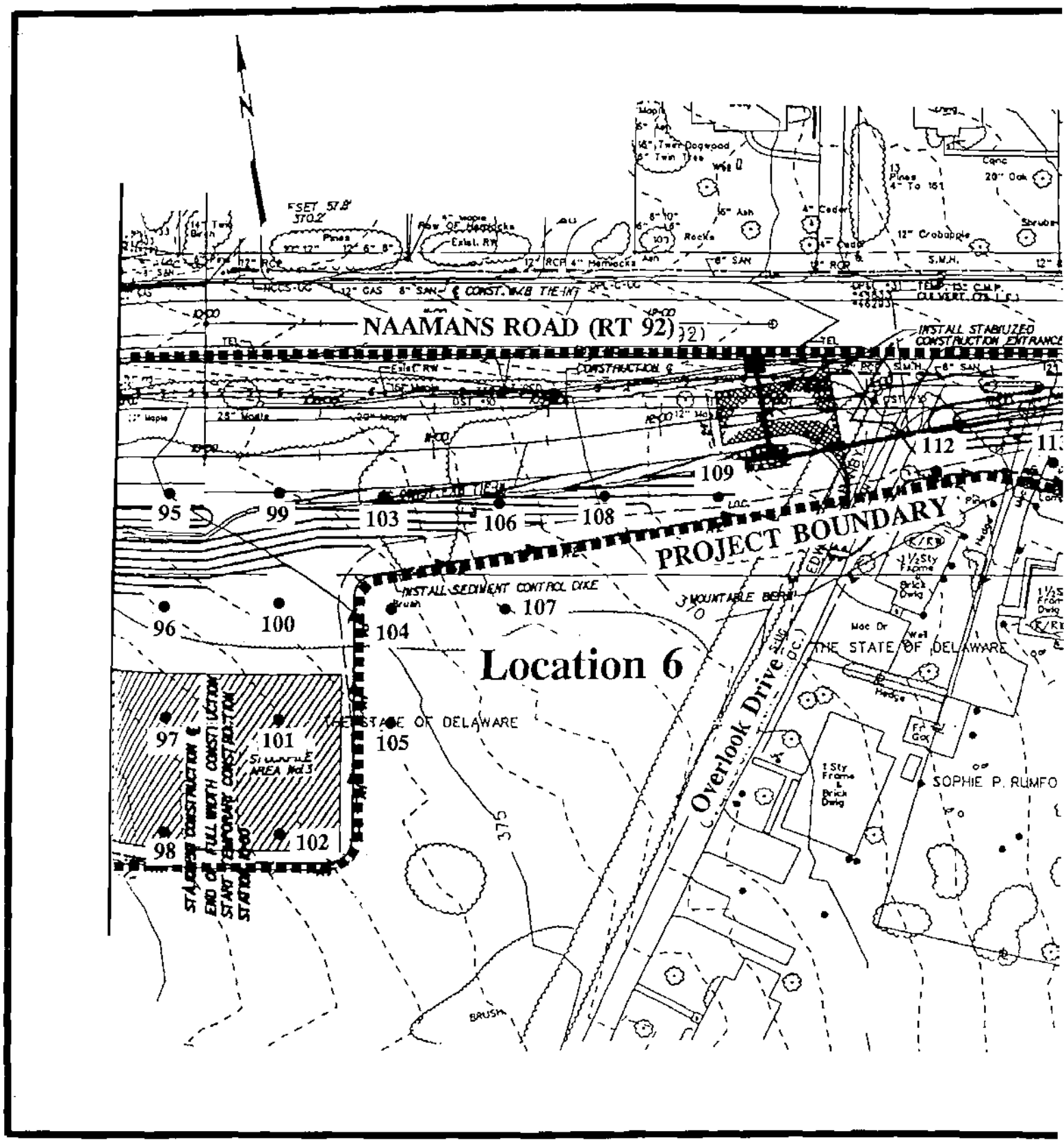
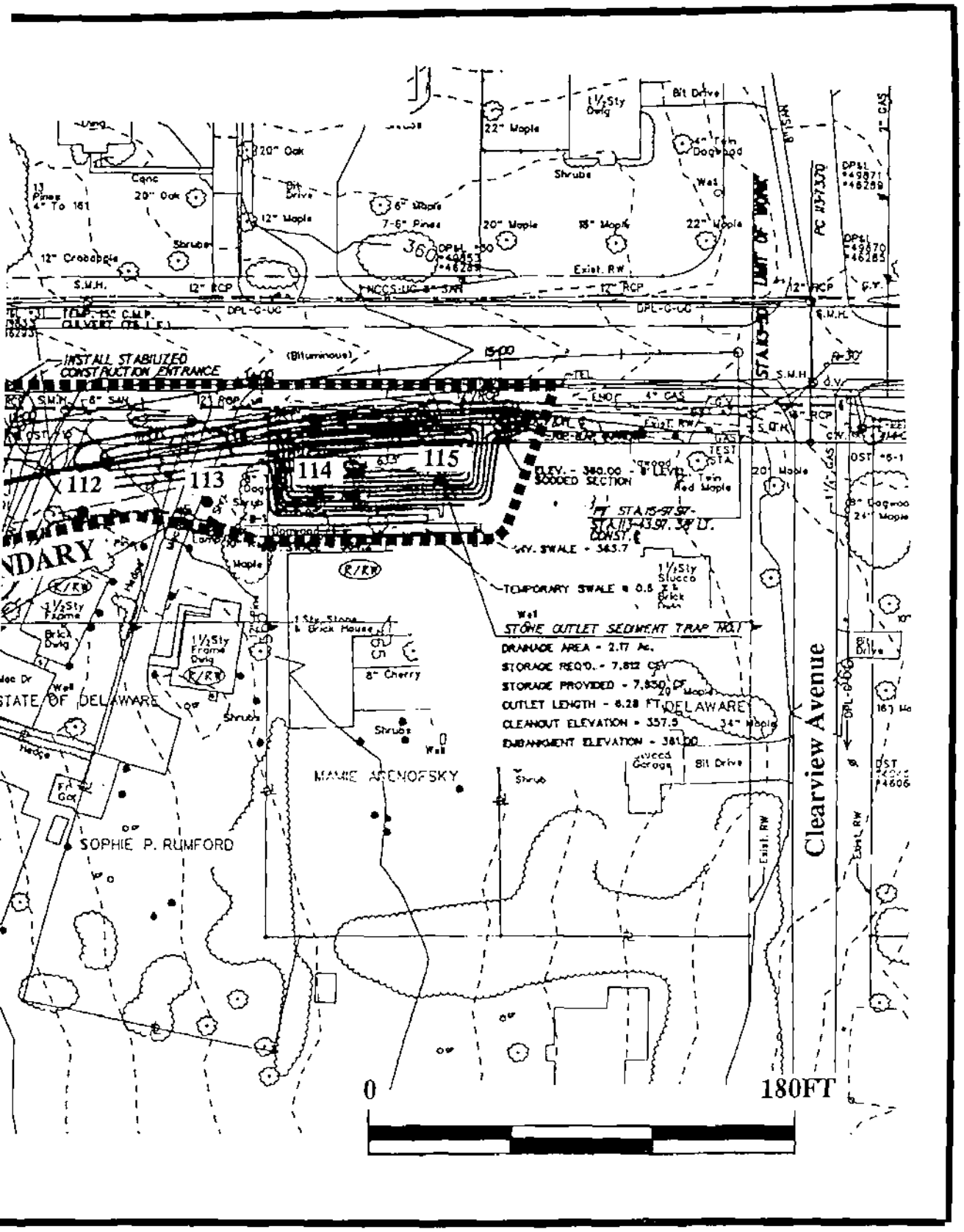


Figure 3. Location 6 (south of Naaman's Road, east of Mousley Place and west of
Location of Subsurface Tests Excavated in the Phase I Archaeological Survey.



ley Place and west of Clearview Avenue). Site Plan Showing
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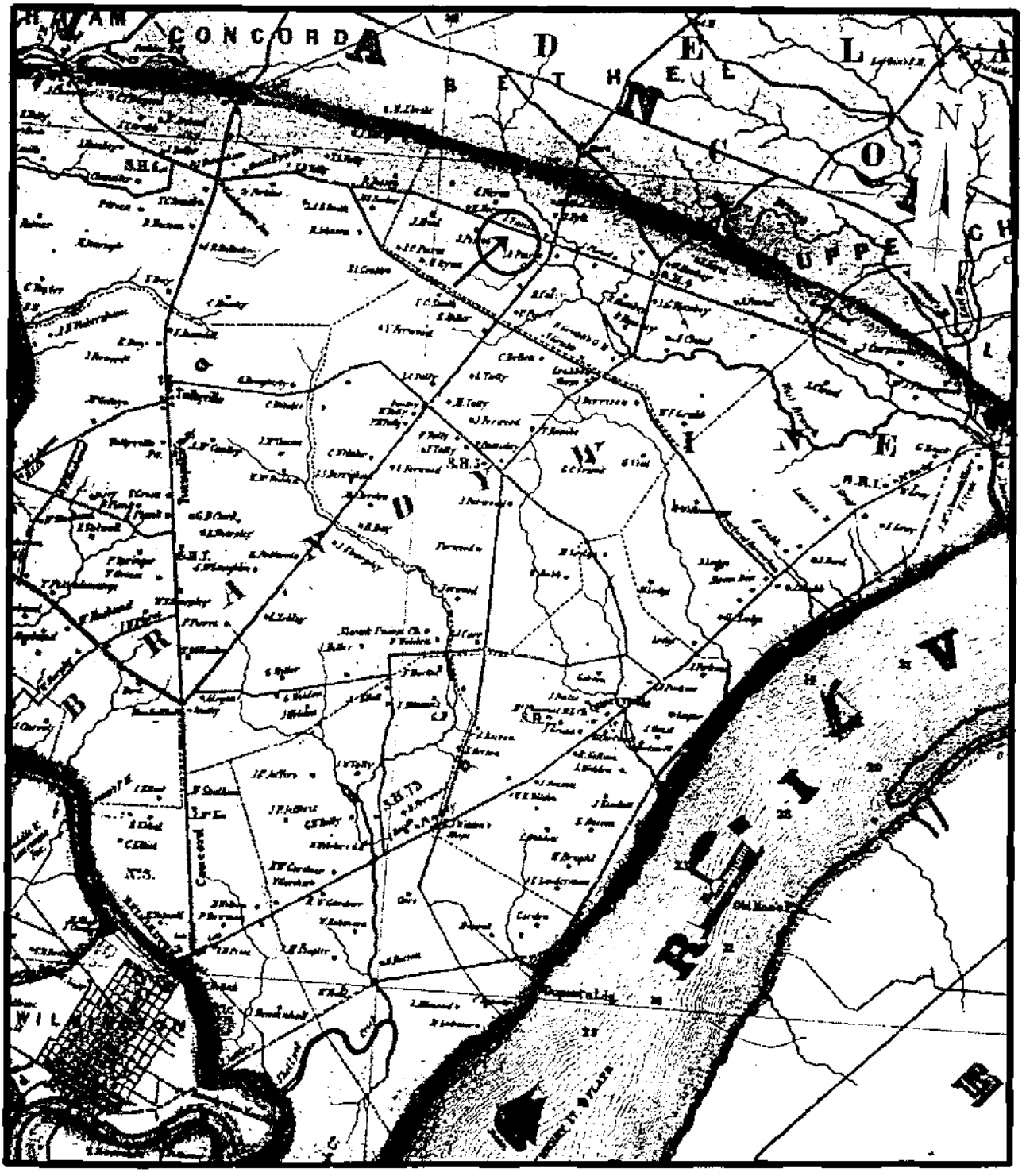


Figure 4. Rea, Samuel and Jacob Price. Map of New Castle County, Delaware. 1849. Scale 1 inch: 5,500 feet approximately. Location of Pierce/Talley House Site circled and indicated with an arrow.

Sometime around 1854 Joseph Pierce passed away. On November 14, 1854, his son Joseph Wesley Pierce purchased five acres of his father's estate for a fee of $10 (New Castle County Deed A-8 440). The deed of conveyance indicates that the property fronted on Naaman's Creek Road (present-day Naaman's Road) for 320 feet and extended approximately 500 feet in a southwesterly direction away from the road. It is speculated that, shortly after his purchase, Pierce built himself a house on the property and began to farm the surrounding land. The house was certainly in existence by 1860, since it is shown on the Lake and Beers Map of 1860 and labeled "J.W. Pierce" (Figure 5). The Agricultural Census Data for New Castle County in 1860 lists Joseph Wesley Pierce as farming a 14-acre farm in Brandywine Hundred.

On May 26, 1865 Joseph Wesley Pierce sold the five-acre property to William Bright of Wilmington, for a sum of $900 (New Castle County Deed B-8 77). In June of that same year Bright sold the property to the widow Susan P. Smith of Wilmington for the sum of $1,000 (New Castle County Deed B-8 377). The property changed hands again in December of 1865, when Susan P. Smith sold it to Robert Talley, the son of a local farmer, for the sum of $1,000 (New Castle County Deed D-8 379).

In A History of the Talley Family on the Delaware, published in 1899, Robert Talley is described as bright, industrious and thrifty. He was deformed at birth in 1837 and throughout his youth and adulthood needed the assistance of crutches. At age 15 he apprenticed as a shoemaker under Samuel Hewes of Wilmington, serving in this capacity for four years. In 1861 when the American Civil War broke out Talley served his country through his trade, turning out 500 pairs of shoes a year for the government, at 60 cents a pair. On March 8, 1866 Robert married Emily Beeson, daughter of Robinson and Rebecca (Talley) Beeson of Brandywine Hundred (Talley 1899:196-197).

The couple resided at their small five-acre farm on Naaman's Road through into the 20th century (Figures 6-8) and had two sons, Robinson Beeson and Lewis Talley, although the latter died at an early age. The Agricultural Census of 1880 lists Robert Talley as the owner of a five-acre farm valued at $2,000 in Brandywine Hundred. The census lists that he owned 75 chickens, valued at $45, 300 eggs, three bushels of wheat and one acre of tilled land. Robert and Emily Talley are believed to have lived on the farm, while Robert continued his shoe business, presumably in nearby Wilmington. Robert, an active man despite his disability, repaired pumps and did other odd jobs for his neighbors, while also learning from Jesse Kendall how to repair clocks (Talley 1899: 196-197). In 1918 Robert Talley died leaving the farm to his son, Robinson Beeson Talley. His last will and testament, written in 1917, described his property as consisting of "four and one half acres of land, with [a] stone house and frame barn ... on Naaman's Creek Road" (New Castle County Will 7178).

In December of 1943, upon the death of Robinson Talley, the property was sold by his executors (Equitable Trust) to Dr. Charles I. Hoch and his wife, Ruth Hoch, for the sum of $4,125 (New Castle County Deed B-44 525). Hoch was a veterinarian by trade, and he and his wife were at that time residing on the neighboring property located southeast of the Pierce/Talley five-acre farm (New Castle County Deeds C-44 514).

Figure 5. Lake, D.J. and S.N. Beers. Map of the Vicinity of Philadelphia. 1860. Scale 1 inch: 5,300 feet approximately. Location of Pierce/Talley House Site circled and indicated with an arrow.

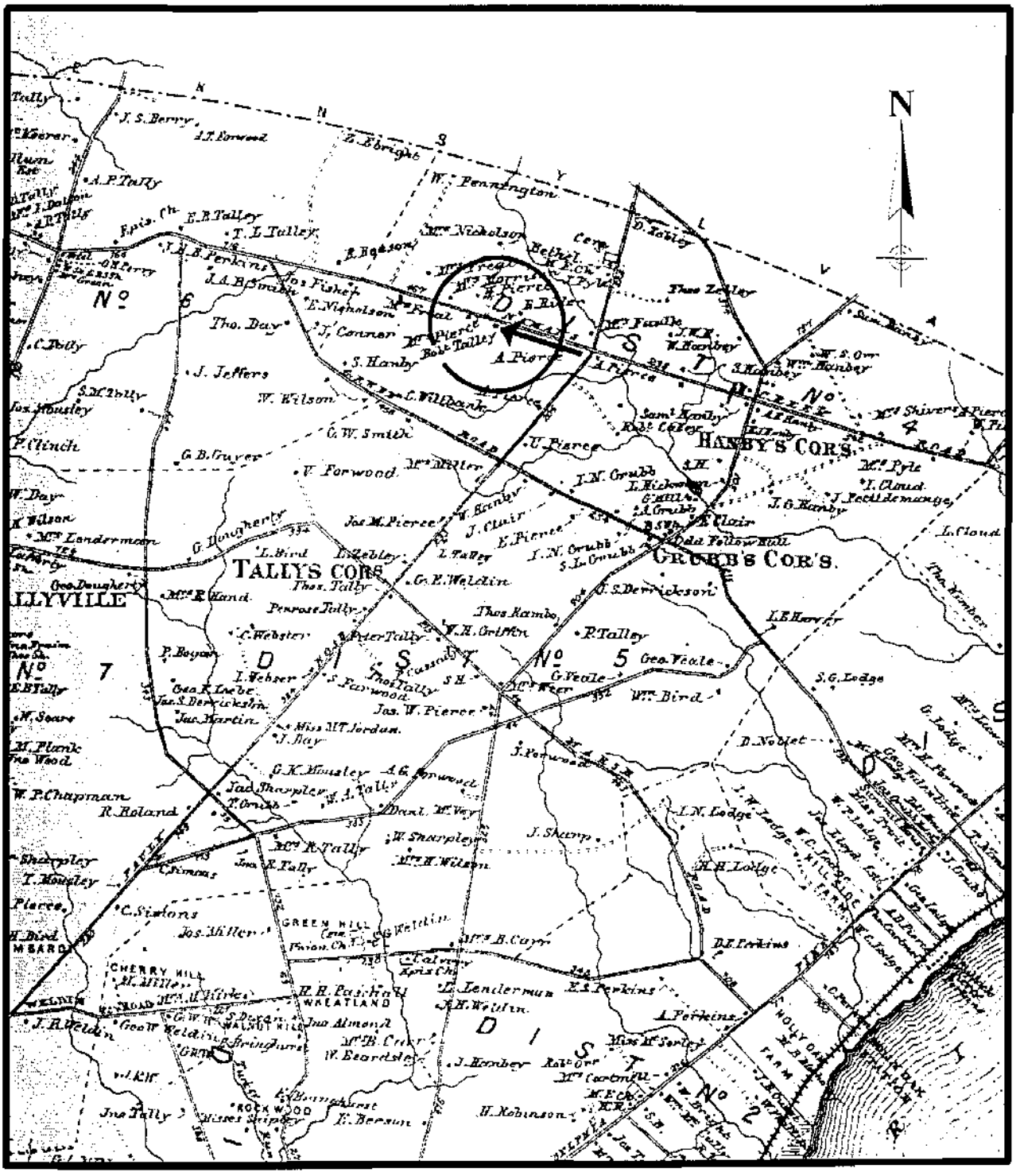


Figure 6. Beers, D.J. Atlas of the State of Delaware. 1868. Scale 1 inch: 3,600 feet approximately. Location of Pierce/Talley House Site circled and indicated with an arrow.

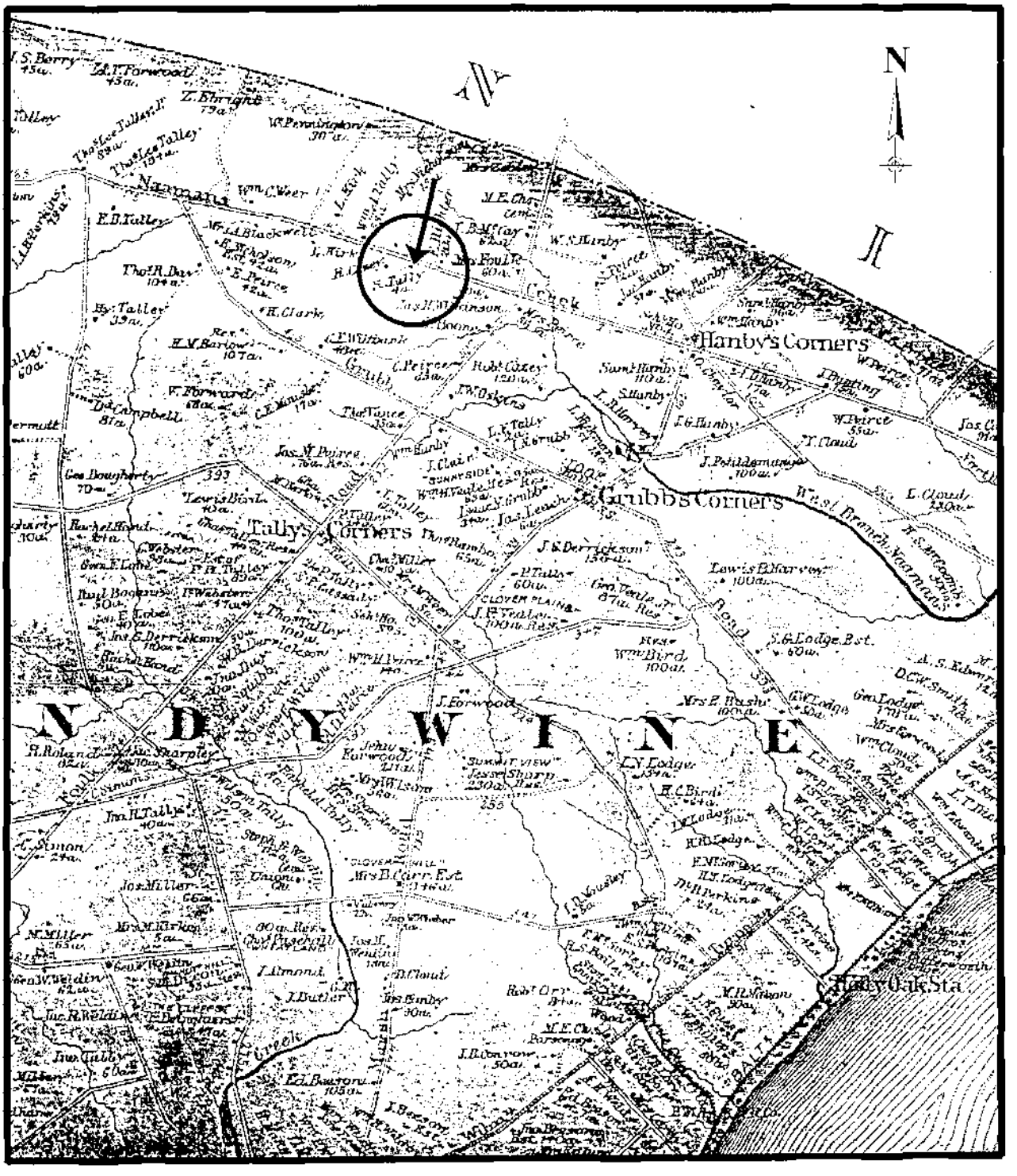


Figure 7. Hopkins, G.M. Map of New Castle County, Delaware. 1881. Scale 1 inch: 3,350 feet approximately. Location of Pierce/Talley House Site circled and indicated with an arrow.

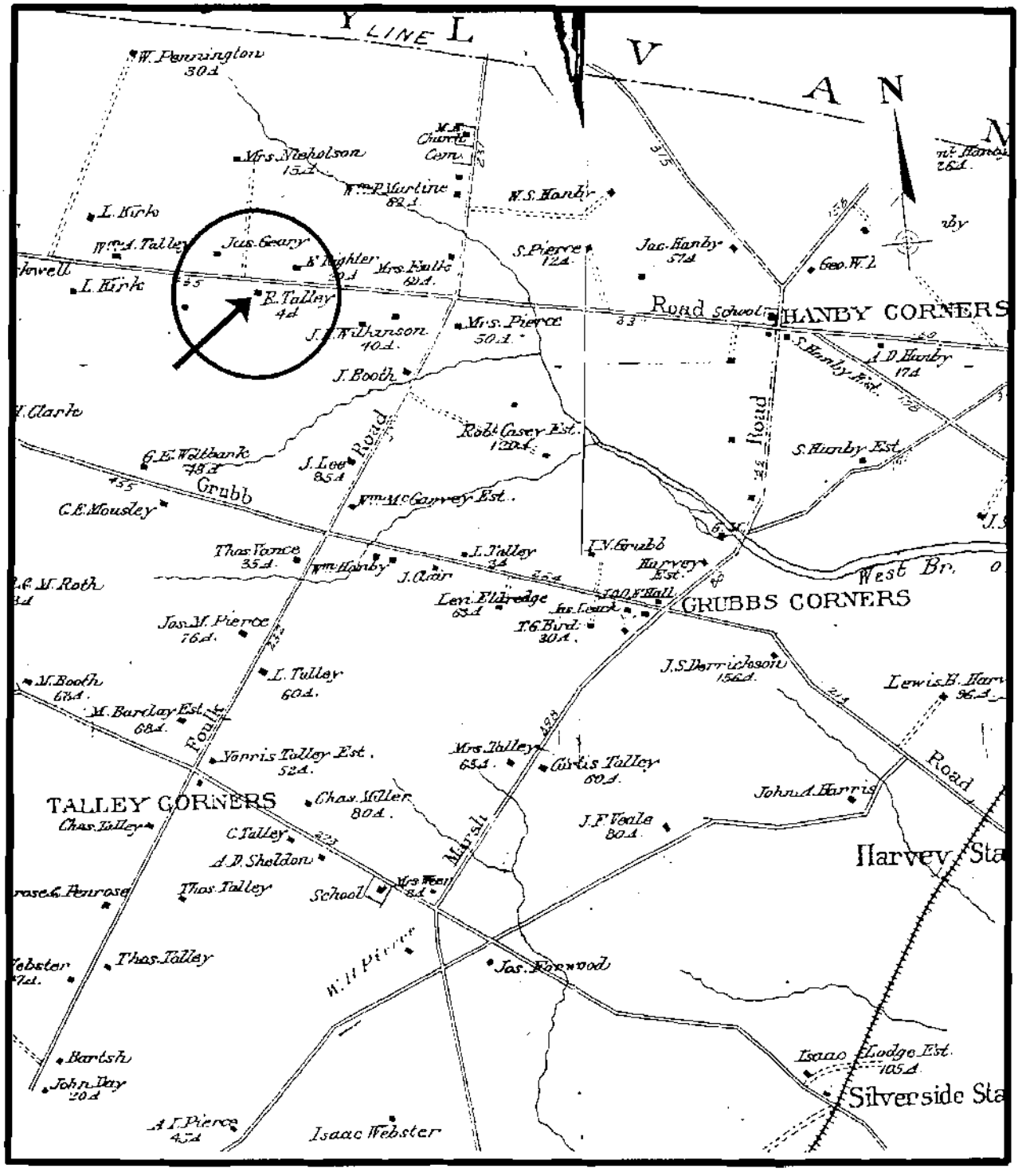


Figure 8. Baist, G. Wm. Baist's Atlas of New Castle County, Delaware. Plate 9. Brandywine Hundred. 1893. Scale 1 inch: 2,000 feet approximately. Location of Pierce/Talley House Site circled and indicated with an arrow.

In 1945 the Hochs bought an additional nine acres of land, bordering on the southeast of the Pierce/Talley property, bringing their total acreage to slightly more than 33 acres (New Castle County Deed Y-44 585). Based on the recollections of local residents, the Pierce/Talley House is believed to have been unoccupied during the Hoch's tenure. On July 3, 1969 the Hochs sold their entire 33+ acres, including the original Pierce/Talley five-acre farm, to Benson & Benson, Inc. for the sum of $350,000 (New Castle County Deed P-82 672). Four years later, on January 16, 1973 Benson & Benson sold five acres of land fronting on Naaman's Road, including the site of the Pierce/Talley House, to the State of Delaware for the sum of $85,000 (New Castle County Deed G-87 31). Today this property is bordered on the north by Naaman's Road, on the east southeast and southwest by Overlook Drive and on the west northwest by Mousley Place.

A local resident remembers the house as it existed in the early 1950s. It was a small one-story, three-bay stone dwelling with a central door and a window to each side. There were no signs of a porch or roof at that time, and dirt was pushed up against the building up to the windows. The area was overgrown, obstructing the view of any other outbuildings that may have been behind the house (Julia McBride 1996: personal communication). Sometime between 1973 and 1987, while under the ownership of the State of Delaware, the remains of the house are believed to have been totally dismantled.

C. Archaeological Field Investigations

1. Phase I Archaeological Survey (see Hunter Research, Inc. 1995)

In the area previously identified as Location 6 (east of Mousley and west of Clearview Avenue, stations 103+50 to 112+50), successional growth and historic vegetation (pear, hemlock, black walnut and locust) were noted. This area also contained a stone-lined dry-laid well which was observed 20 feet west of Shovel Test 111 (Figure 2). No artifacts were recovered from this test. An extant driveway was also visible in this area, suggesting that the archaeological remains of a historic structure might lie in the same general vicinity, even though there were no visible signs above ground. Phase II level investigations were recommended for this location to clarify the extent, character and significance of the archaeological resources.

2. Phase II Archaeological Survey

The initial Phase II archaeological investigations took place on March 3, 1996. The project personnel consisted of William B. Liebeknecht, Principal Investigator, Frank Dunsmore, Senior Archaeologist, and Sue Ferenbach and Brian Seidel, Assistant Archaeologists. Three one-meter-square excavation units were placed at 15-meter intervals across the front portion of the unstripped area (Figure 9). The top portion of the stone-lined well was also cleaned out and a shovel test was placed on an adjacent knoll a short distance west northwest of Excavation Unit

1. All of the one-meter-square excavation units used a single numerical sequence to record the strata and features (Appendix A). All soils were removed through controlled manual excavation and screened through 1/4-inch hardware mesh. Artifacts were retrieved and bagged according to stratigraphic provenience, and were processed and cataloged in the Hunter Research Inc. laboratory in Townsend, Delaware (Appendix B).

a). Shovel Tests

The single shovel test was located 18 meters west northwest of Excavation Unit 1 on a knoll containing a large tree stump. The knoll appeared to be artificial with large rocks and debris visible on the surface. A straightforward soil profile was recorded as follows: Context 1 (0 - 24 cm), silty loam top soil [10YR 3/4]; Context 2 (24 - 55 cm), silty clay subsoil [10YR 5/6], excavation stopped by large roots. No artifacts were recovered from this test.

b). Excavation Units (Figure 9)

Excavation Unit 1, located 11 meters (36 feet) north northeast of the stone-lined well and 13 meters (43 feet) south southwest of Naaman's Road, showed that the original stratigraphy had been altered by the construction of a dry-laid stone wall (Figure 10). The sterile yellowish brown silty clay subsoil [5], was encountered at 46 centimeters (1.5 feet) below the ground surface (Appendix A). Context 5 was cut by the construction of a dry-laid stone wall [3]. The stones were angular and poorly laid and were interpreted as the foundation wall for a front porch. To the west, Context 3 was abutted by a dark yellowish brown silty clay speckled with small pieces of charcoal [2], a deposit interpreted as an occupation level. To the east, context 3 was abutted by a dark yellowish brown silty clay sterile level [4]. Although Contexts 2 and 4 appear to be the same matrix, the layer to the east of the foundation was assigned a different context number, since it contained no artifacts. Diagnostic artifacts recovered from Context 2 included pearlware, creamware and whiteware (Appendix B). These artifacts indicate a date of occupation within the first half of the 19th century. Contexts 2, 3 and 4 were overlain by a dark strong brown sandy silty loam [1], a demolition level. A single sherd of ironstone granite-china with flow blue decoration, dating to the late 19th century, was the only diagnostic artifact recovered from this context.

In Excavation Unit 2, located 15 meters (49 feet) east southeast of Excavation Unit 1, the stratigraphy was better preserved. The sterile yellowish brown silty clay subsoil [5], was encountered at 33 centimeters (1.1 feet) below the ground surface. Context 5 was overlain by the same dark yellowish brown silty clay occupation level [2] noted in Excavation Units 1 and 3. Diagnostic artifacts recovered from Context 2 consisted of redware sherds from a slip-trailed plate and a hollowware storage vessel. Context 2 was overlain by a dark strong brown sandy silty loam [1], a demolition level that was noted across the intact portions of the site.

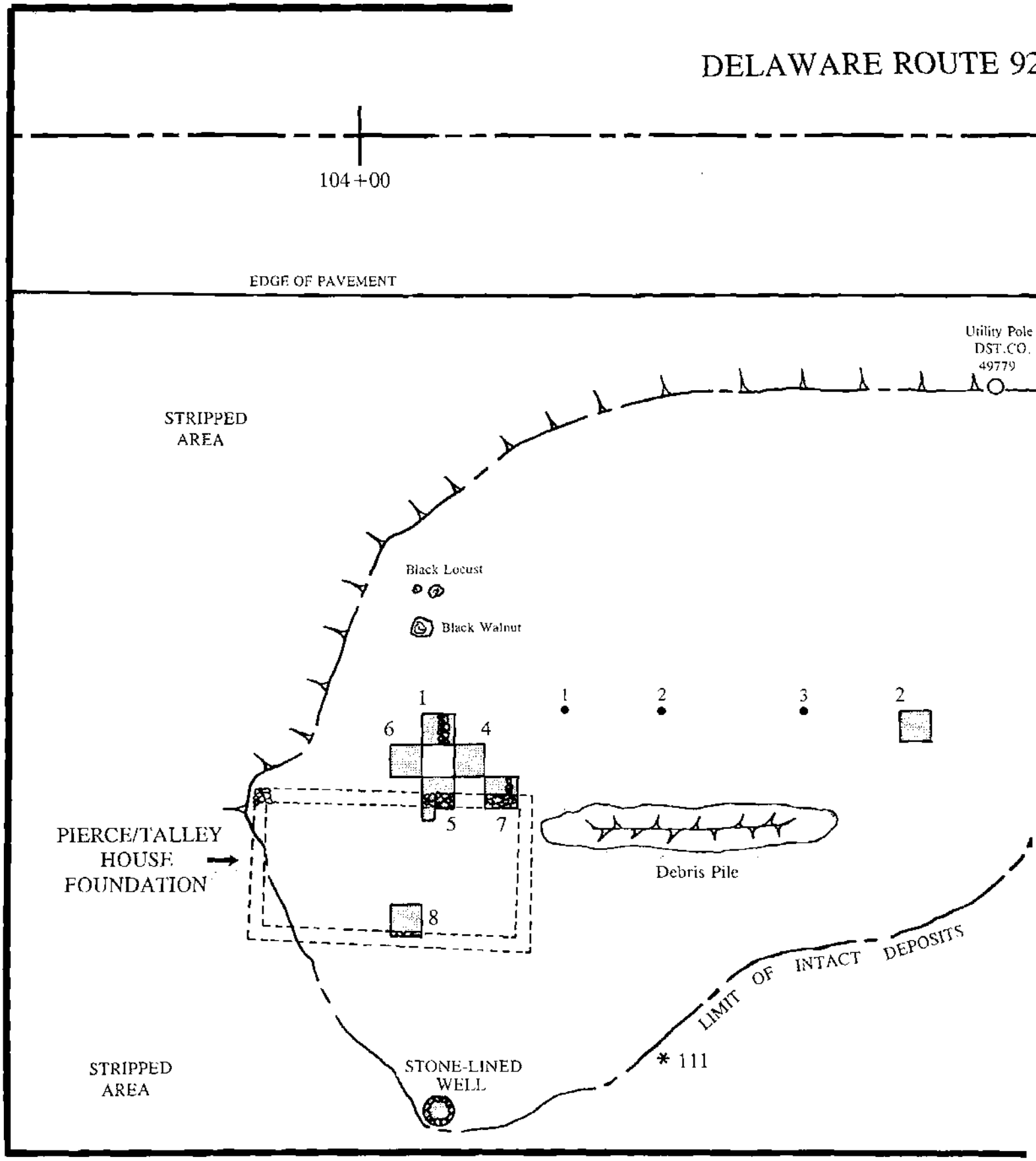
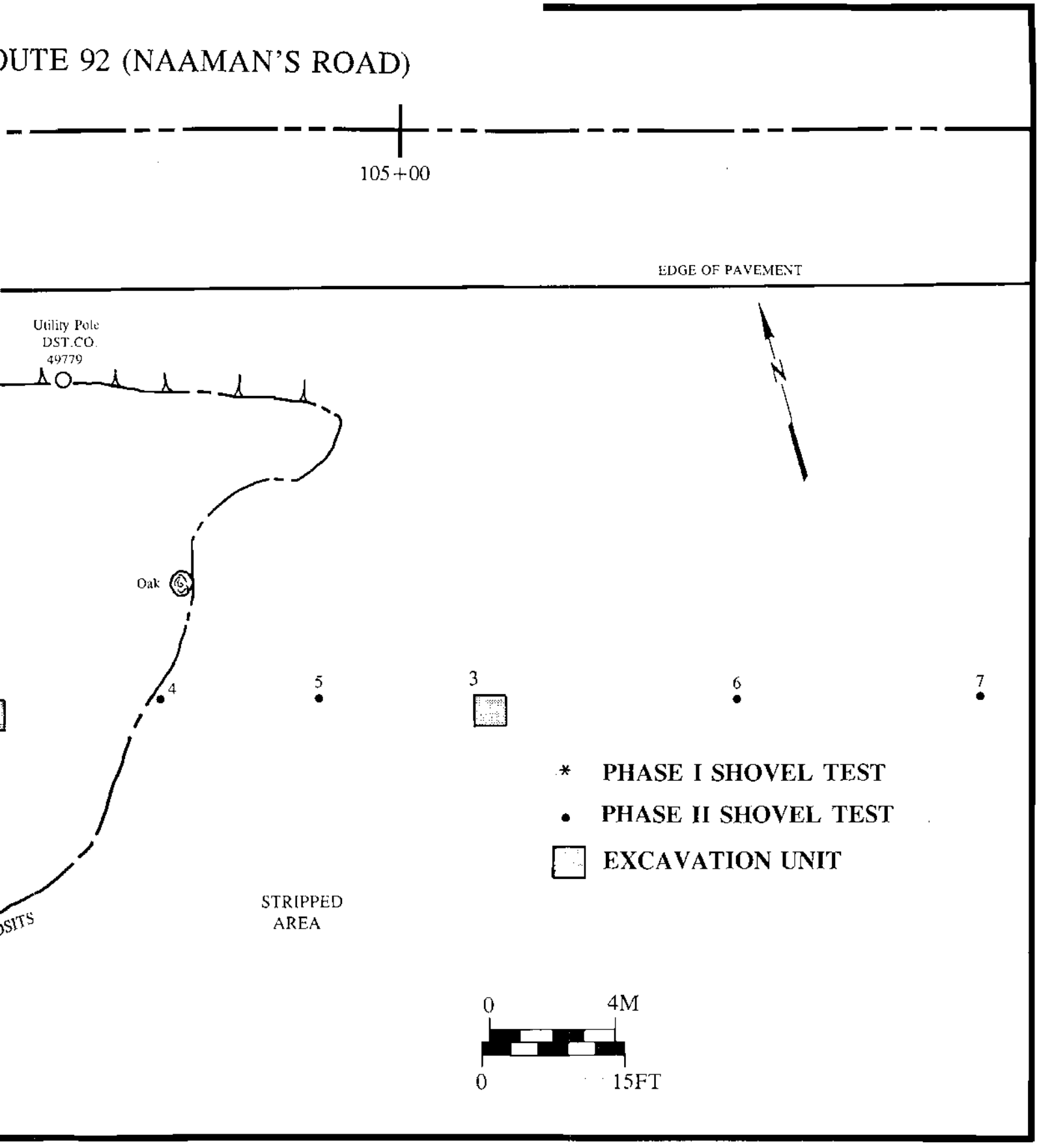


Figure 9. Pierce/Talley House Site, Site Plan Showing



an Showing Location of Dwelling, Well and Subsurface Tests.

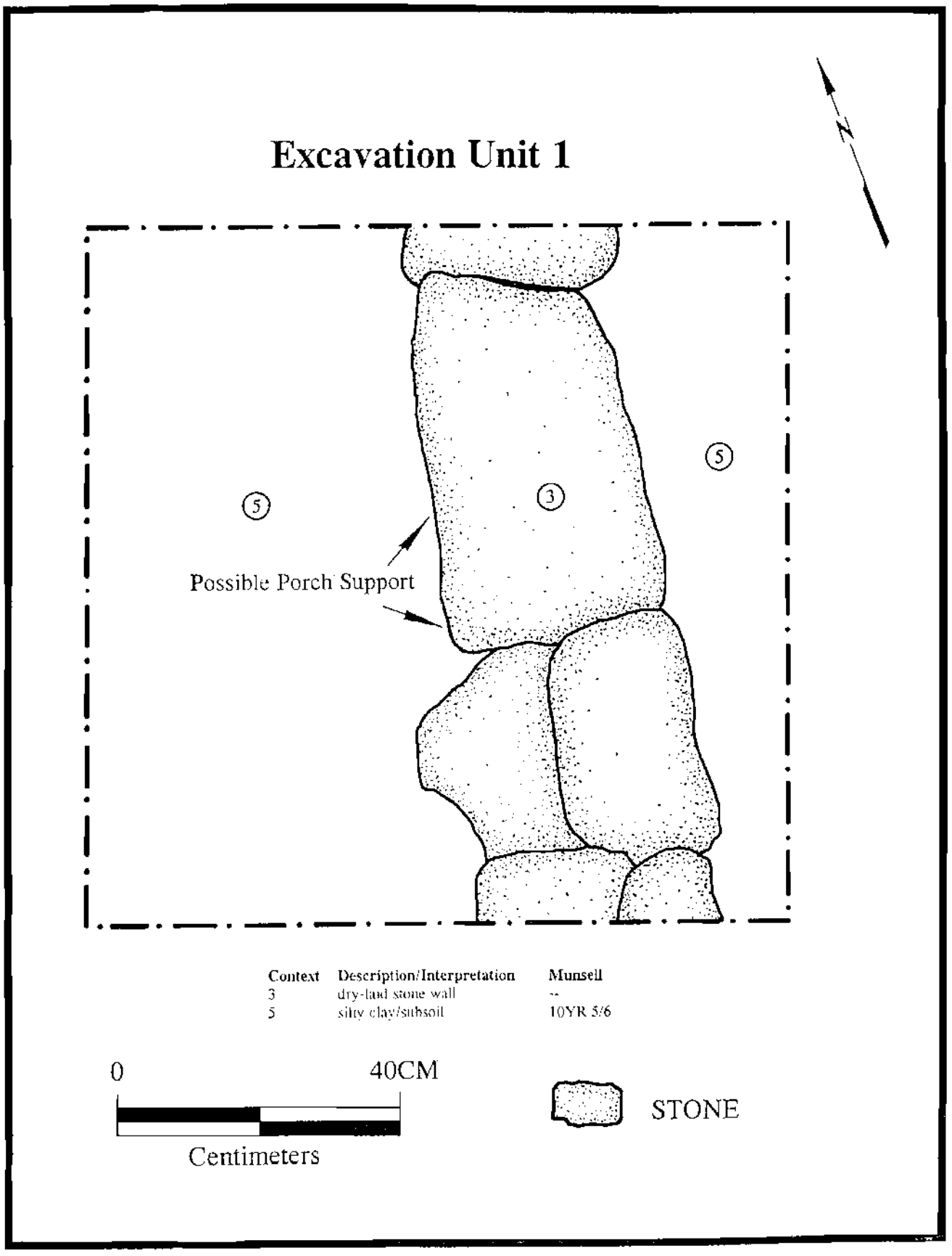


Figure 10. Pierce/Talley House Site, Excavation Unit 1, Plan View.

Reasonable stratigraphic preservation was also noted in Excavation Unit 3, 15 meters (49 feet) east southeast of Excavation Unit 2. The sterile strong brown silty clay subsoil [6] was encountered at 20 centimeters (0.6 feet) below the ground surface. Context 6 was overlain by a dark yellowish brown silty clay [2], similar to that observed in Excavation Units 1 and 2. One sherd of ironstone granite china was recovered from Context 2. Small pieces of brick and coal were discarded in the field. Context 2 was overlaid by the same dark strong brown sandy silty loam [1], the demolition level noted elsewhere on the site.

c). Partial Excavation of Stone-lined Well

The stone-lined dry-laid well or shaft feature was cleared of debris down to 169 centimeters (5.5 feet) below the ground surface. Further penetration down into the well was considered unsafe. The shaft was cut down through a dense reddish orange clay and was constructed of dry-laid rounded cobbles. The upper fill of the shaft contained larger angular rock similar to those used in house construction. The artifacts include fragments from a George Washington portrait flask manufactured at the Dyottville Glass Works in Philadelphia in the 1840s, a tumbler base, an embossed beer bottle fragment, an amber bitters bottle fragment, lamp chimney fragments, grey-bodied salt-glazed stoneware cuspidor sherds, slip trailed redware plate sherds and an ironstone granite-china saucer rim sherd with a molded wheat and black berry border manufactured in England, ca.1850-1873.

d). Artifact Analysis

The artifacts recovered from the initial Phase II field investigations showed an apparent gap in the temporal sequence between c.1800-1825 to c.1840-1880. Both temporal groups are characteristic of domestic sites and are sparsely represented considering the area excavated.

3. Supplementary Phase II Archaeological Survey

Following the initial Phase II archaeological investigations, it was still felt that insufficient work had been undertaken to allow for a determination of eligibility or evaluation of the site's integrity. Following consultation between representatives of the Delaware Department of Transportation, the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office and Hunter Research, Inc., additional testing of the intact portion of the site and detailed historic research were consequently undertaken to facilitate a more accurate assessment of the site.

a). Shovel Tests

A total of eight shovel tests were excavated across the site along a line 13 meters (43 feet) south southwest of Naaman's Road (Figure 9; Appendix A). The purpose of these tests was to establish the eastern boundary of the site based on the presence of the dark yellowish brown silty clay occupation level identified as Context 2 within Excavation Units 1-3. Shovel Tests 1-6 all exhibited a level of dark yellowish brown silty clay which was identified as either Context 2 or 3 (depending on the shovel test). No artifacts were recovered from any contexts within these shovel tests. Shovel Tests 7 and 8, located respectively 15 meters (49 feet) and 30 meters (98 feet) east southeast of Excavation Unit 3, exhibited a truncated soil profile and the upper soil layers had apparently been stripped off by a former owner of the property.

b). Excavation Units (Figure 9)

A total of five excavation units (EU#s 4-8) were placed in a checker board fashion adjacent to Excavation Unit 1 in hopes of better understanding the foundation [3] found in that unit (Figure 9).

Excavation Unit 4, located adjacent to and south southeast of Excavation Unit 1, produced little additional information. The sterile yellowish brown silty clay subsoil [5] was encountered at 33 centimeters (1.1 feet) below the ground surface. Context 5 was overlain by a dark yellowish brown silty clay level [4] as seen in the earlier units. Diagnostic ceramics recovered from Context 4 included sherds of redware, creamware and ironstone granite china. A U.S. penny, dating to 1944, was also recovered from Context 4. Context 4 was overlain by a dark yellowish brown sandy silty loam [1], the demolition level noted elsewhere across the intact portion of the site.

In Excavation Unit 5, located adjacent to and to the south southwest of Excavation Unit 4, the stratigraphic sequence was interrupted by a foundation wall (Figure 11). The sterile yellowish brown silty clay subsoil [5] was encountered at 37 centimeters (1.2 feet) below the ground surface. Context 5 was cut by a builders trench [8] within which lay a well-constructed mortared stone wall [7] and a back-fill deposit of dark yellowish brown silty clay [9]. The stones are larger than those observed in the foundation encountered in Excavation Unit 1 and extend much deeper into the subsoil. This wall [7] appears to be the front foundation wall of a dwelling. Contexts 2 and 4, a dark yellowish brown silty clay, overlie the subsoil [5] and the builders trench and fill [8 and 9]. Diagnostic artifacts recovered from Context 2 comprise a redware and a stoneware sherd. Context 2 was overlain by the mottled dark yellowish brown loam demolition level [1]. Artifacts recovered from Context 1 include cut nails, window glass and ceramics (redware, ironstone granite china and pearlware).

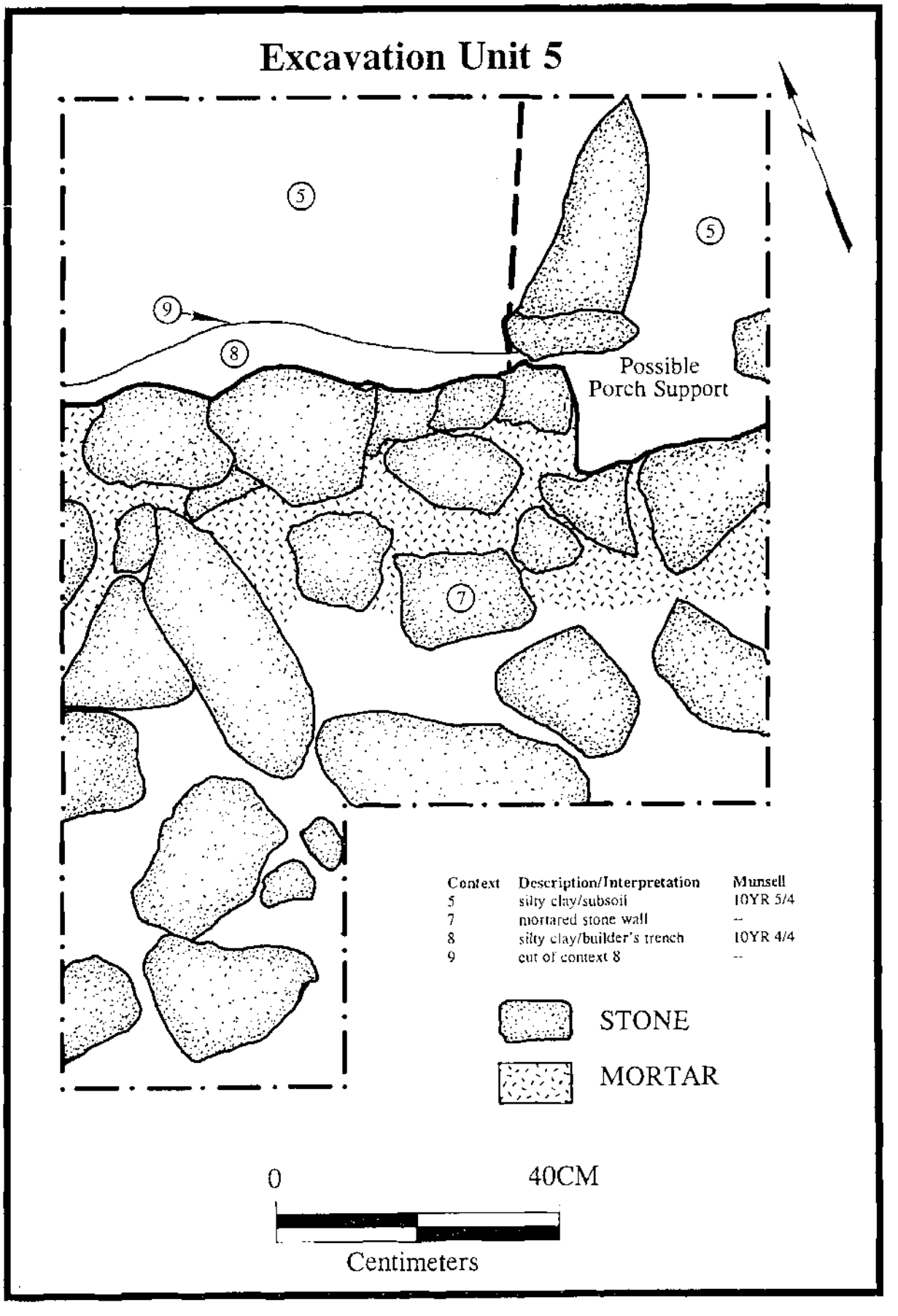


Figure 11. Pierce/Talley House Site, Excavation Unit 5, Plan View.

Excavation Unit 6, located adjacent to and south southwest of Excavation Unit 1, was similar to Excavation Unit 4. A sterile strong brown silty clay subsoil [6] was encountered at 32 centimeters (1 foot) below the ground surface. Context 6 was overlain by a yellowish brown silty clay subsoil [5] with no artifacts. Context 5 was overlain by the dark yellowish brown silty clay occupational level [2] seen in the adjacent units. Diagnostic artifacts recovered from Context 2 comprise sherds of pearlware, redware and ironstone granite china. Context 2 was overlain by the dark yellowish brown sandy silty loam demolition level [1].

Excavation Unit 7, located adjacent to and south southeast of Excavation Unit 4, was similar to Excavation Unit 5 (Figure 12). The sterile yellowish brown silty clay subsoil [5] was encountered at 30 centimeters (one foot) below the ground surface. Context 5 was cut by a mortared stone wall [7], a cut [18] for an abutting dry laid wall [17] and a posthole [15]. Two flat stones were placed at the bottom of the posthole (20 centimeters in diameter) to prevent the post from rotting. The cut [15] was filled with a mottled clay [16]. The wall [17] appears to be another porch support similar to the one found in Excavation Unit 1. Contexts 5, 7 and 15-18 were all overlain by the dark yellowish brown sandy silty loam demolition level [1]. Within the demolition level were the remains of an asphalt access lane probably used during the construction of the adjacent Beacon Hill Apartments. This access lane was formerly identified in the Phase I Archaeological Survey Investigation as possibly being related to the historic resource; upon re-examination, however, it clearly crosses over the stone foundation and is of modern construction.

Excavation Unit 8, located five meters south southwest of Excavation Unit 6, encountered the remains of another foundation wall (Figure 13). The sterile red clay subsoil [13] was encountered at 126 centimeters (4.1 feet) below the ground surface. Context 13 was overlain by a thin yellowish brown clay floor [12]. Above the floor [12] is a mortared stone basement foundation wall [11] which has a whitewashed interior. The basement is filled with mottled sandy silt and stone rubble [10] from the demolition of the house. Contexts 10 and 11 were overlain by a dark grayish brown silty clay demolition level [1]. Context 1 contained a cut nail and one ironstone granite china sherd.

c). Split-spoon Probing

Split-spoon probing of the areas adjacent to Excavation Units 1 and 4-8 enabled the approximate dimensions of the house to be established as measuring five meters (16 feet) north-south by nine meters (30 feet) east-west with a three-meter (10 feet) wide porch attached to the north side. This plan suggests a simple two-room dwelling, probably one-and-a-half or two stories high, with a basement and porch.

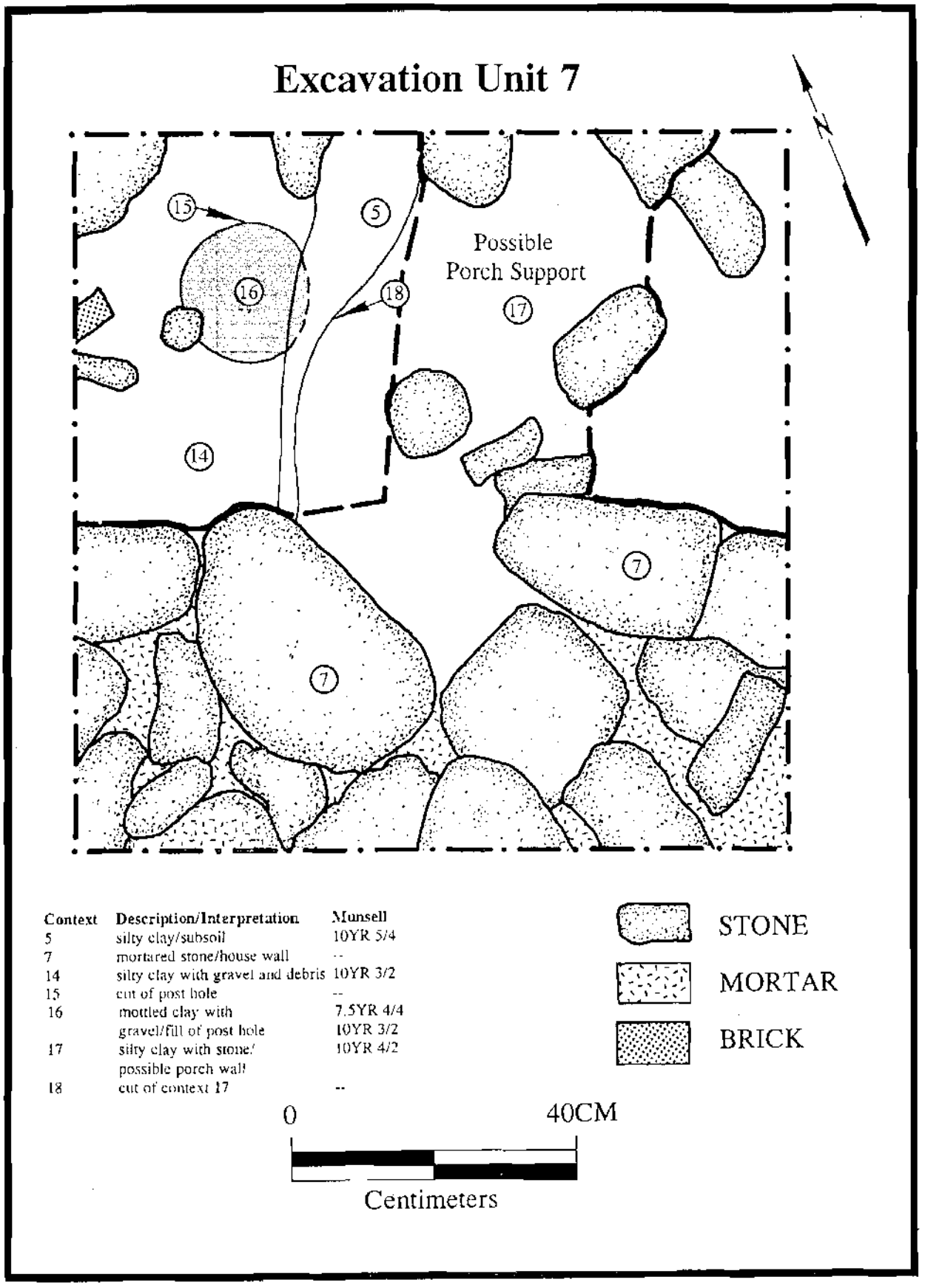
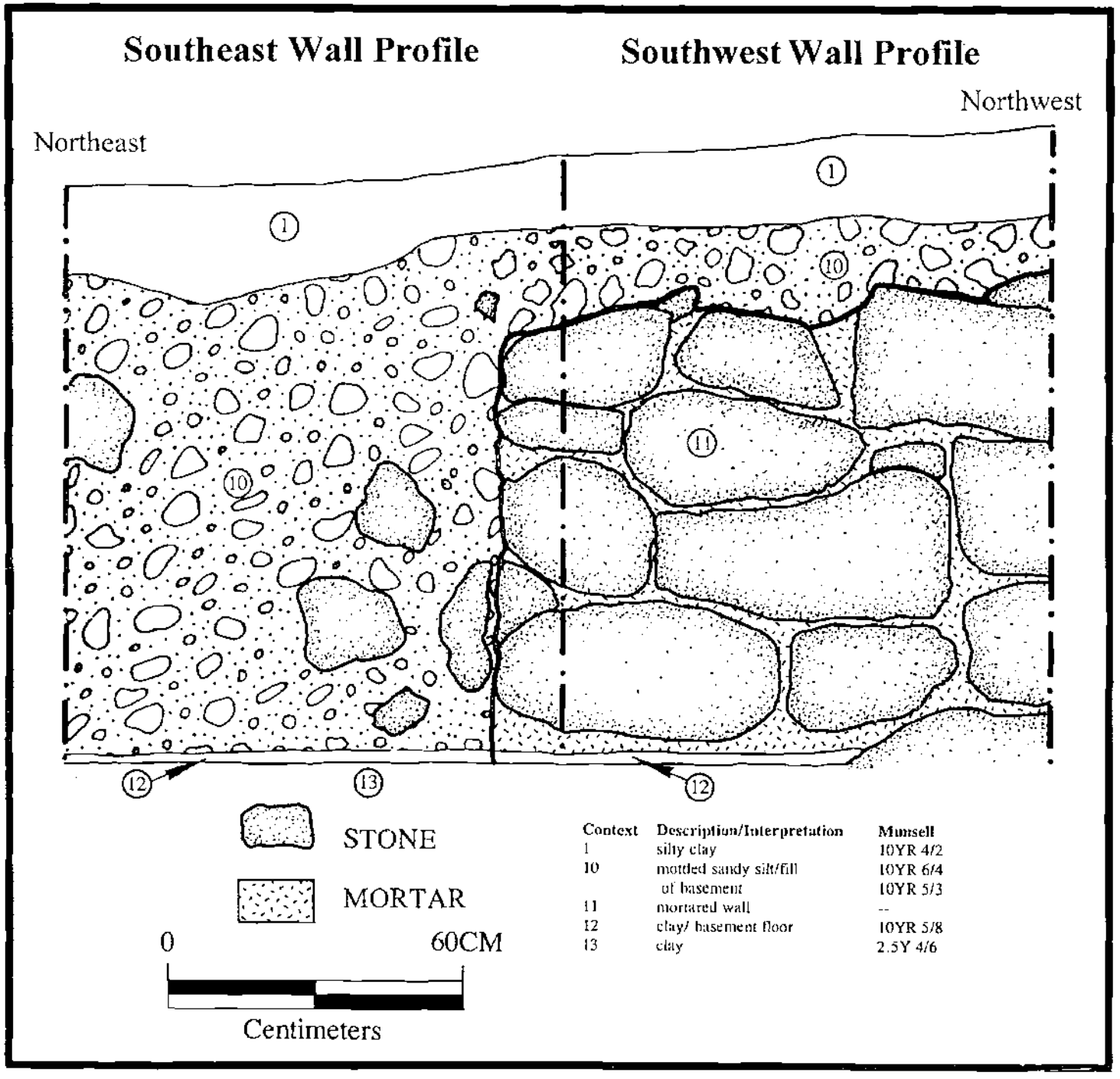


Figure 12. Pierce/Talley House Site, Excavation Unit 7, Plan View.



Context	Description/Interpretation	Munsell
1	silty clay	10YR 4/2
10	mottled sandy silt/fill	10YR 6/4
	of basement	10YR 5/3
11	mortared wall	--
12	clay/ basement floor	10YR 5/8
13	clay	2.5Y 4/6

Figure 13. Pierce/Talley House Site, Excavation Unit 8, Southeast and Southwest Profiles.

d). Artifact Analysis

The artifacts recovered from the additional units demonstrated the same gap in the temporal sequence (from c.1800-1825 to c.1840-1880) that was noted in the assemblage from Excavation Unit 1. Based on the background historical research, artifacts from the first quarter of the 19th century may represent items passed down to Joseph Wesley Pierce from his parents who lived on an adjacent property to the west northwest. The artifacts associated with the later period are clearly associated with the Robert Talley occupation.

D. Evaluation and Recommendations

Phase II archaeological investigations conducted along the south side of Naaman's Road located the remains of the Pierce/Talley House, a simple stone dwelling that was extant from the mid-19th century until at least the early 1970s. The property was first developed around 1854 by Joseph Wesley Pierce, the son of a prominent local farmer. Pierce appears to have farmed the five-acre property himself for almost a decade, until, in 1865, following a number of changes in ownership, it came into the hands of Robert Talley. Talley, a shoemaker and small-time farmer, owned the property until his death in 1918, when it passed to his son, Robinson Beeson Talley. The younger Talley also farmed the smallholding until he died in 1943, whereupon the property went into rapid decline and the house was abandoned. The house was finally demolished sometime between 1973 and 1987.

The current archaeological investigations identified the house site approximately 4.5 meters (15 feet) north northeast of a stone-lined well (discovered during the Phase I archaeological survey). A poorly preserved foundation was recorded and found to measure approximately five meters (16 feet) north-south by nine meters (30 feet) east-west with a three-meter (10-foot) wide porch on the front (north) side. The long axis of the building was oriented parallel to Naaman's Road. The foundation extended approximately 3.5 feet (one meter) below the surface and exhibited white-washed walls, suggesting that the cellar space was used for cold storage or as a finished basement, depending on the construction of the upper portion of the house. A local resident recalls that the house was a one-story stone house. However, it seems more likely that the house was more likely a one-and-a-half or two-story double-celled farmhouse, similar to those found in Chester County, Pennsylvania (Herman 1987:23) (Schiffer 1976). When the house was demolished, the upper stone portion was pushed into the foundation and into the adjacent well. The area surrounding the immediate yard of the house was stripped down to the red clay subsoil removing any traces of outbuildings and severely disturbing other archaeological deposits associated with occupation of the property.

Based on the Delaware Historic Context Archaeology of Agriculture and Farm Life, New Castle and Kent Counties, Delaware 1830-1940, the Pierce/Talley House Site can be classified as an agricultural dwelling since the house was once the residence of a farm owner-operator. The site retains archaeological evidence of a dwelling, a small portion of the yard and a well.

Documentary research and temporally diagnostic material culture recovered during the Phase II Archaeological Investigations, indicate that the site was actively being used from the mid-19th century to the early 1940s. Physical boundaries typically used to define agricultural dwellings on archaeological sites such as fence lines, walls and hedgerows are no longer present; only a portion of the core of the site still survives. Owing to the heavy-handed demolition of the dwelling and subsequent stripping of the site, the surviving archaeological remains are considerably reduced from what one might otherwise expect on a site of this type. There was a notable paucity of material culture in the shovel tests and excavation units.

In the opinion of this consultant, even though the property is of some local historical interest as a smallholding associated with the Pierce and Talley families, the fact that much of the nucleus of the farmstead has been physically removed greatly reduces its archaeological importance. Although the archaeology of the site can be broadly dated to the period between c. 1854 and c.1943 (confirming the documentary record), there is minimal stratigraphy and mid-19th-century artifacts are well-mixed with much later 20th-century materials. Owing to its loss of archaeological integrity, it seems highly unlikely that the Pierce/Talley House Site could usefully address any of the research domains identified in the Delaware Historic Context Archaeology of Agriculture and Farm Life, New Castle and Kent Counties, Delaware 1830-1940, and the property is therefore not considered eligible for inclusion to the State or National Register of Historic Places. No further archaeological work is recommended at this location in connection with the Delaware Department of Transportation's proposed storm water detention basins.

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