

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING AT THE  
PEARSON HOUSE, 5779 FORREST AVENUE  
(CRS K-6920)**

**PEARSON'S CORNER TRANSPORTATION STUDY  
WEST DOVER HUNDRED  
KENT COUNTY, DELAWARE**

**STATE CONTRACT 26-008-01**

**DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
AGREEMENT 1415  
FOR CULTURAL RESOURCE SERVICES  
TASK 9**

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## 1. Introduction

Improvements are planned to the intersections of Forrest Avenue/Halltown Road (Delaware Route 8) with Hartly Road (Delaware Route 44) and Pearson's Corner Road in Kent County, Delaware. Three improvement scenarios are currently under consideration. These range in scope from the simplest, which consists of relatively minor roadway improvements involving the addition of turning lanes at the two intersections, to the most complex, which involves the construction of turning lanes, the realignment of the southernmost segment of Hartly Road along a new corridor and the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Halltown Road and Hartly Road.

The Delaware Department of Transportation anticipates the use of federal transportation funds by the Federal Highway Administration in connection with these activities and thus they would be considered undertakings subject to compliance under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and review by the Delaware Historic Preservation Office.

In 2008, Hunter Research, Inc. was contracted to verify that 16 previously identified architectural properties were in fact constructed prior to 1961, the survey's established cut-off date; to evaluate the eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places for all pre-1961 properties, both individually and as part of a potential historic district; and completion of Delaware Cultural Resource Survey forms for each property regardless of age. A Phase IA archaeological study of the project corridor was also completed (Hunter Research, Inc. 2009).

The testing that is the subject of this report was undertaken by DelDOT archaeologists in April 2009 at the property on the southeast corner of the Forrest Avenue and Pearson's Corner/Halltown Road intersection. This property, 5779 Forrest Avenue, has been informally termed the Pearson House and has reference CRS K-6920 (see Appendix E).

Physical and documentary evidence suggest that the current house was built on the southeast corner of the intersection of Forrest Avenue and Pearson's Corner and Halltown Roads in the early 1920s. Title data and several 19th-century maps (Rea and Price 1850, Byles 1859, Beers 1868) indicate that a house and store owned by Abraham Pearson stood on this location during the second half of the 19th century, it appears to have been torn down or otherwise removed by 1922. That year, the Delaware State Highway Department drew plans for the widening of the road from Dover to Pearson's Corner. Though these plans do depict buildings, there is nothing shown on the southeast corner of Pearson's Corner (Hunter Research, Inc. 2009).

Immediately to the east of the above property is the site of the original Pearson House identified on the 1850, 1859 and 1868 historic maps (Hunter Research Inc 2009: Figures 3.5 through 3.7). A house remained at this site in 1981, when it was recorded as CRS K01163, but had been demolished by 1993, when it no longer shown on the USGS map (Figure 1). The building appears to have been a vernacular center-hall structure with a chimney at each gable end and a central doorway. From the limited information available it appears probable that this was the house built by William Pearson between 1833 and 1837 (Hunter Research Inc. 2009: 3-7). A one and-a-half story subsidiary wing had been attached to one gable end but

had been taken down by 1981. The house site itself is not within the APE, but tests 4, 5, and 7 through 11 were along its Forrest Avenue Frontage.

The Pearsons Corner intersection is mapped as lying on well-drained Sassafras Sandy Loam. Six prehistoric sites have been recorded within two miles of the project area (Hunter Research, Inc. 2009; Table 2.1). These are all located on well-drained Sassafras Sandy Loams, in several cases adjacent to poorly drained upland Pocomoke soils. All are close to drainages except 7K-C-30, which lies next to an extensive area of poorly drained Pocomoke soils and swampland. Since this area is distant from water sources its prehistoric sensitivity was assessed as low.

In view of the necessity of removing 5779 Forrest Avenue, on April 30, 2009 DeIDOT undertook 11 shovel tests, mapped using GPS, around the building (Figure 2, Plates 1 and 2)). Tests 1 through 3 were placed along the east side of Pearson's Corner Road, and Tests 6 through 11 along the south verge of Forrest Avenue (State Route 8). These tests yielded a number of historic artifacts and data on soils and sediments. These data have the potential to throw light on the history of occupation at this location. The tests were placed judgmentally at between 15 and 5 meter separations.

## **2. Data Analysis**

### **A. Soils and Sediments**

Soils in this area are mapped as well-drained Sassafras Sandy Loam. In seven tests (Shovel Tests 4, 5 and 7 through 11) an undisturbed soil sequence was identified, comprising a plowzone (silt loam 10YR 3/2), containing historic artifacts, overlying a clay loam (10YR 6/8) devoid of cultural material, probably a B

horizon. Shovel Tests 1, 2, 3 and 6 all exhibited modern disturbance to depths of between 40 and 60 cm (15.75 to 23.6 inches).

### **B. Artifacts (Plate 3)**

Each of tests produced artifacts. A total of 148 artifacts were recovered, an average of 13.45 artifacts per test. The range was from as low as three artifacts (Shovel Tests 8 and 10) to as high as 73 (Shovel Test 3). All retained artifacts were recovered from the plowzone or other latest defined horizon (entered as context 1 in the artifact inventory).

One tested jasper pebble (Shovel Test 5) is the only probably prehistoric item recovered. Early 19th-century whiteware is the oldest clearly datable ceramic type found. A total of six pieces were recovered. The manganese-glazed redware sherd from Shovel Test 11 may be of a similar date. Ceramics make up less than 5.5% of the collection, a notably low number, while historic glass bottle fragments are at almost 25%. Building materials (glass and brick) make up about 40% of the collection. The remainder is modern materials and ferrous metal artifacts.

Shovel Test 3, which yielded the largest number of artifacts, was also the most disturbed, with coal and plastic being found to a depth of 59 cm (23 inches). As this test lies closest to the rear ell of the present house (assumed to be in the general location of the earlier structure) it may be that these artifacts do reflect the presence of 19th-century rear yard midden materials. The whiteware, aqua-colored window glass, oyster fragments and single cut nail point in this direction.

### 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The soil stratigraphy on the east side of Pearson's Corner Road (Shovel Tests 1 through 3) was disturbed. Although Shovel Test 3 produced a relatively large number of artifacts, possibly reflecting the former presence of a sheet midden close to the site of the former house, these items were not in situ, suggesting that integrity is lacking here. Artifact numbers were low in the more intact soil profiles identified along Forrest Avenue, only Shovel Test 11 showing an above-average count and yielding similar 19th-century materials (intermixed with later artifacts) to Shovel Test 3.

Taken as a whole these data confirm 19th-century activity on the property, including domestic artifacts as evidence of one of more buildings nearby, presumably including the Pearson house CRS K01193.. However, the lack of stratigraphic integrity, especially on the western side of the corner property, and the generally low density of artifacts in most of the tests, combine to suggest that the area has a very limited ability to provide information important in history or prehistory.

The areas tested therefore lack the integrity to merit consideration for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. The previous study (Hunter Research, Inc. 2009) demonstrated that Criteria A through C were inapplicable to the property itself, and the lack of stratigraphic integrity precludes consideration under Criterion D.

No further archaeological work is recommended under Section 106 procedures.

## REFERENCES

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1868 *Atlas of the State of Delaware*. Pomeroy & Beers, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Byles, A.D.

1859 *Map of Kent County, Delaware*. A.D. Byles, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Hunter Research, Inc.

2009 Cultural Resource Survey For Pearson's Corner Transportation Study, West Dover Hundred, Kent County, Delaware (State Contract 26-008-01, Delaware Department of Transportation, Agreement 1415 for Cultural Resource Services, Task 2)

Rea, Samuel and Jacob Price

1850 *A Map of the State of Delaware from Original Surveys*. On file, Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, Delaware.

**Appendix A**

**SHOVEL TESTING LOGS**

**Appendix B**  
**ARTIFACT CATALOG**

**Appendix C**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE SURVEY FORM**