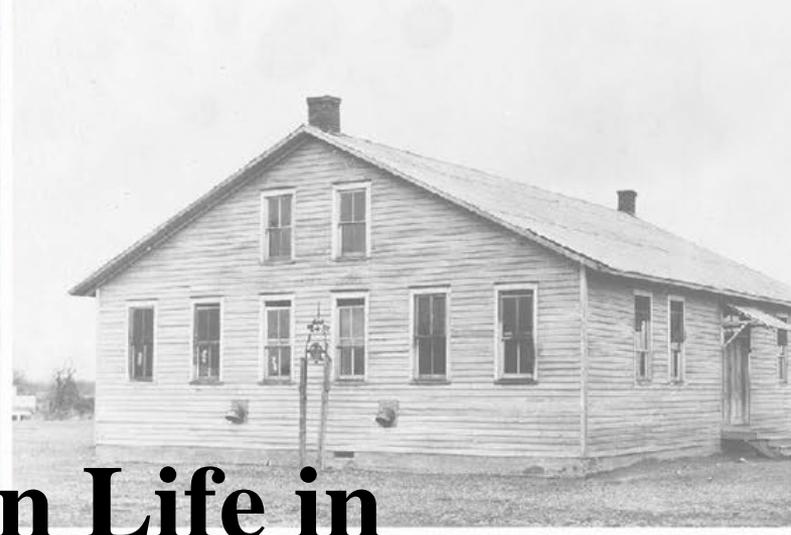
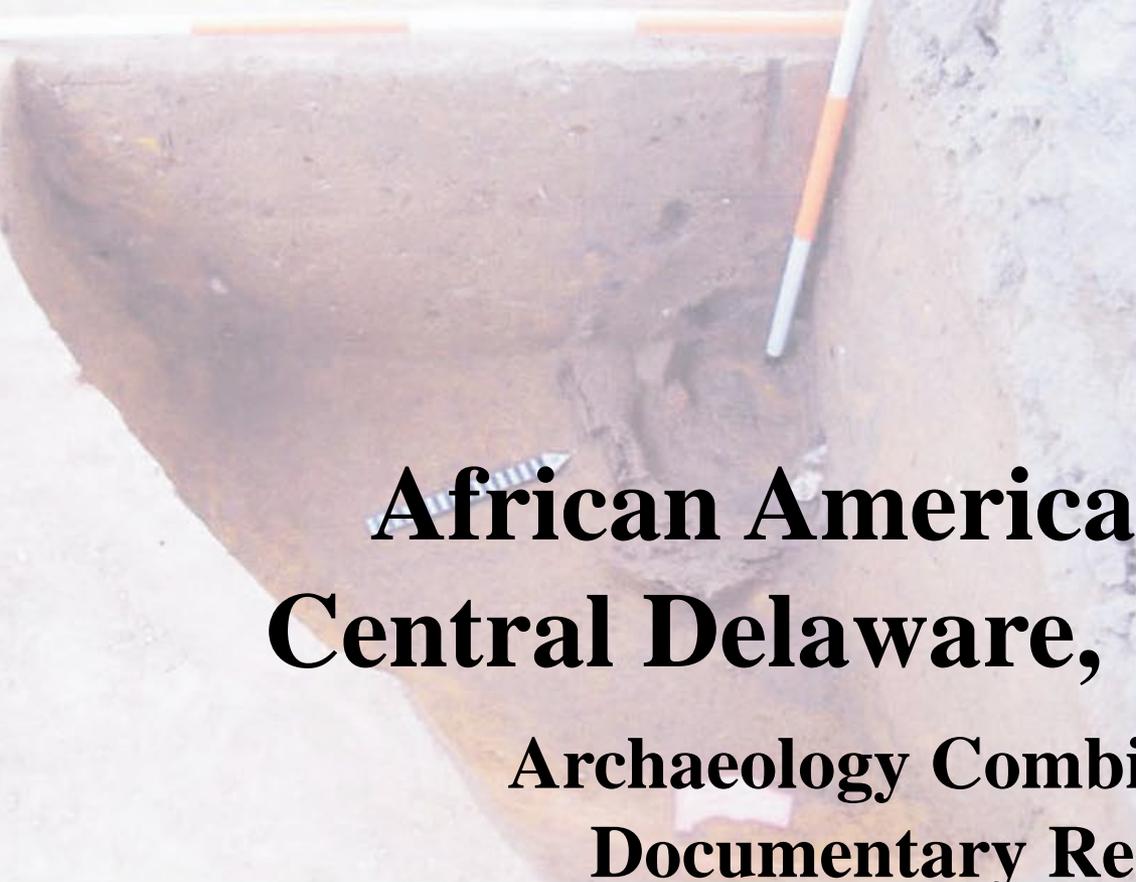


African American Life in Central Delaware, 1770-1940:

Archaeology Combined with Documentary Research



African American Life in Central Delaware, 1770-1940: Archaeology Combined with Documentary Research

Heidi E. Krofft and Jason P. Shellenhammer

Paper presented at the 49th Annual Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology, January 6-9, 2016, Washington, DC

Introduction

(SLIDE 1) One of the primary goals of historical archaeology is to provide a voice to the disenfranchised, those whose experiences are too often underrepresented in our history. In Delaware, as elsewhere, identifying and understanding African American sites and material culture has been an ongoing challenge. It is often difficult to identify these individuals through the archaeological record, but work over the past 30 years has sought to tease out the variety of African American experiences using multiple lines of evidence. This paper will highlight the historic context that was developed as well as the challenges encountered in identifying and interpreting the African American experience through the documentary and archaeological record. Through this synthesis and its use in future research, hopefully we can begin to give these individuals a voice in history.

(SLIDE 2) During the US Route 301 project, several sites were identified as having an African American component. One of these sites, the Dale Historic Site, located just north of Middletown Delaware, was the home of a landholding African American minister in the mid- to late- nineteenth century. Rev. Samuel Dale was a central fixture in the African American community and the site was determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. While the site exhibited strong integrity, it was agreed upon by DelDOT, the DE SHPO, and FHWA that the most valuable course of mitigation would be in the form of a historic context. The parameters of the context's theme, time period, and geographic limits were set as the African American life in St. George's Hundred during the period from circa 1770 to 1940.

(SLIDE 3) The purpose of the context is to present an exhaustive review of primary documentary sources to create a comprehensive account of African American life and settlement in St. Georges Hundred and provide guidance to researchers to help them navigate the often convoluted collection of primary source materials. In addition, the context identifies and discusses several African American site types that future archaeologists should be familiar with and expect in St Georges Hundred and places them within the greater context to provide guidance for future resource management decisions.

African American Context of St. Georges Hundred

In regards to the Historic Context, it would have been impossible to provide a complete and comprehensive narrative of African American Life in St. Georges Hundred over a 170-year period. While the research for this project was extensive, it was still limited by available sources and as we know, the African American experiences were certainly not the main focus for the people who authored these historical records. Also, since the primary purpose of the historic

context was to provide guidance for resource management decisions, the focus was placed on certain aspects of the historical records over others. Within these limits, the research fell into four broad areas: demography, community formation, socio-legal background, and material culture.

(SLIDE 4) Some of the more common and readily accessible historical records provide a Demographic Context of African Americans in St. Georges Hundred. These documents and the broad demographic context they provide helps us to put names to the faces of those African Americans that lived in St Georges Hundred. These sources included the U.S. Census, tax records, court judgment records, assessment records, inventories, and freedom affidavits. Specific research questions that were addressed included basic information such as numbers and percentage of population, how many were free or enslaved, and family structure and size. More specific questions included the mobility of African American individuals and family within and between communities, trends in landownership and wealth, and information on the types of jobs they held.

(SLIDE 5) In order to understand the African American lived experience, it is crucial to place them within the broader Social and Legal Background that existed in Delaware and the United States from 1770 to 1930. Over the course of this period, African Americans moved from being mostly enslaved to legal freedom, and then slowly integrated into the mainstream of American economic and social life. These changes and the larger social and legal context that African Americans lived in impacted every part of their lives. Considering these historical changes is essential to understand how African Americans negotiated their relationships, their communities, and their built environment and such information can aid in evaluating some historic properties.

(SLIDE 6) The context also focused on the research area of Space and Community Formation, looking at questions of community structure as well as how African Americans interacted with the landscape. Based on this research and previous historic contexts on African American settlement patterns, several distinct African American communities were identified and discussed. African American communities were viewed from the broad landscape perspective along an urban-rural axis or nucleated vs. non-nucleated settlements. Urban communities existed in Port Penn, Middletown, and Odessa, while rural communities included Mount Pleasant and Armstrong Corner. These different types of communities showed distinct physical characteristics, but continuities existed that provided the same sense of social community for their African American residents.

(SLIDE 7) The research theme of Material Culture is perhaps the most challenging to tease out, but can lend important information to archaeologists and those seeking to interpret African American archaeological sites. Previous archaeology reports, historical photographs, and standing structures were used to identify the material remains that are found on African American sites such as architectural, clothing related and foodways artifacts and provide a framework for interpreting them. On its own, the material culture can be challenging to interpret, but together with historic contexts, documentary records, and other lines of evidence, archaeologists in Delaware can better understand the African American experience in Delaware and share their stories.

Proposed and Expected African American Sites in St. Georges Hundred

(SLIDE 8) Drawing on the historic context, as well as a review of previously identified African American sites throughout the state and region, the document identified eight specific site types potentially associated with African Americans that future researchers should be mindful of as they conduct future archaeological studies in northern Delaware. This paper will focus on the most prominent site types that have the greatest potential to add new information to the growing scholarship of African Americans in Delaware and the Mid-Atlantic region.

African American Agricultural Complex **(SLIDE 9)**

Though the large agricultural complex is one of the most common rural property types for archaeologists, it is actually a rare property type within the African American context in St. Georges Hundred. According to the 1837 St. Georges Hundred tax assessment, only two of the 27 listed free African American property holders were farm owners. By 1857 that number increased to just seven. Given the paucity of large African American owned farm complexes, the identification of such sites in the archaeological record is all the more significant, particularly those who African American ownership originated in the antebellum period.

While slavery in St Georges Hundred was on the decline far earlier than elsewhere in the south, the opportunity for African Americans to purchase property was still limited. Those few cases where former slaves were able to purchase land were rare and exceptional. As such, investigating such sites could open new avenues of research and provide perspectives on a variety of research questions concerning these landed African American property owners, such as: identity, assimilation, resistance, and community development. Additional research avenues would include how African American farms compare with those owned by European Americans.

House and Garden **(SLIDE 10)**

The house and garden is expected to be the most common domestic property type associated with free African Americans in St. Georges Hundred during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This property type became common in St. Georges Hundred and throughout central Delaware as planters developed new strategies for working with growing population of free African American agricultural laborers and their families. The house and garden properties were specifically designed to house these laborers through established lease-labor arrangements that governed both labor obligations and housing rental.

(SLIDE 11) House and garden dwellings were generally located on the edges of large Euro-American owned agricultural properties, either tucked against the trees, or in clusters along a road. Despite the distance of these dwellings from the main farm complex, they still remained within visual range of the main farm dwelling and their employer.

The house and garden buildings typically took the form of one finished room with an attached kitchen on the ground floor. A stair located inside the house often led to a second room, likely a sleeping chamber under the roof. These houses were extremely plain and were built to be easily portable. Planters moved their tenants' dwellings around the landscape frequently.

The archaeological signature of these homes is not well understood. The portability of these homes may in fact prove as a challenge for archaeologists to identify the structural remains associated with this site type. While at the same time, the absence of such remains may serve as

an identifying characteristic in itself. **(Slide 12)** While tell-tale structural remains may be absent, other features associated with the occupation of a site by a house and garden tenant would surely remain, such as subfloor pits, a well, and fence post that may have served to delineate the house garden or a small livestock pen. While domestic artifacts would surely be expected, the assemblage may not be extensive. House and Garden tenants were often poor and may not have had much in the way of household belonging. At the same time, these tenants were often transient and the leases short. So a tenant and his family would not have stayed at one site long enough for an extensive collection of domestic refuse to accumulate before the lease ended and the property owner relocated the home to another part of the property.

There is a growing theoretical literature on the use of space by African Americans, enslaved or free, as a way of understanding how they created their own lives within the overarching oppressive structures of racism and slavery. While slavery was on the dramatic decline in St. Georges Hundred during the Antebellum period, the development of this historic context illustrated racism was certainly present and likely manifested itself through these lease/labor relationships. The identification and further exploration of these house and garden sites would certainly add to this growing and exciting avenue of research.

Town Dwellings **(SLIDE 13)**

African American owned or leased town dwellings were generally found in only three locations in St. Georges Hundred from 1770 to 1940: Middletown, Odessa, and Port Penn. The number of African Americans living in these “urban” town dwellings increased during the late nineteenth century with the founding of Daletown, outside Middletown, around 1869.

A review of land records dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth century indicate that lots owned or rented by African American residents were similar in size to those owned by their Euro-American neighbors. However, these town lots were typically segregated with African Americans located on the outskirts of the main urban district. During the antebellum period a few lots were dispersed through the Euro-American areas of town but after the Civil War, such exceptions were no longer present.

Houses built on these town lots faced the street with no front yards, allowing for outbuilding to be constructed in the rear yards. A review of tax assessments for African American owned homes during the nineteenth and early twentieth century indicate the dwellings were generally of log or wood-frame construction. In fact, none of the African American-owned town dwellings identified in St. Georges Hundred were identified as either brick or stone even into the early-20th century.

Due to the segregation of these African American town dwellings in the mid-nineteenth century, archaeological identification would prove far easier than their rural counterparts. However, the same cannot be said for the several town lots in both Middletown and Odessa that were owned or leased by African Americans in the early 19th century, before community segregation became the norm.

The identification and exploration of these African American town dwellings, both pre- and post-Civil War, would prove interesting to future archaeological research particularly in regards to development of African American community formation. The research associated with the development of this historic context has shown that these nucleated African American

communities near or within Euro-American urban centers largely served as a catalyst of community development and identification. Through them, the first African American churches were founded. At the same time, members of these growing communities organized to develop their own institutions, such as schools, which were typically closed off to them in larger Euro-American society. While these communities and the institutions they founded were certainly important to those individuals and families living within them, they also served an important role to Rural African American families living in isolated house and garden tenements. While often geographically isolated, families living in the rural hinterland would come to these urban areas for services or to buy supplies and, as a result, would form connections with other families living in and around the towns, thus creating a larger network of support and community.

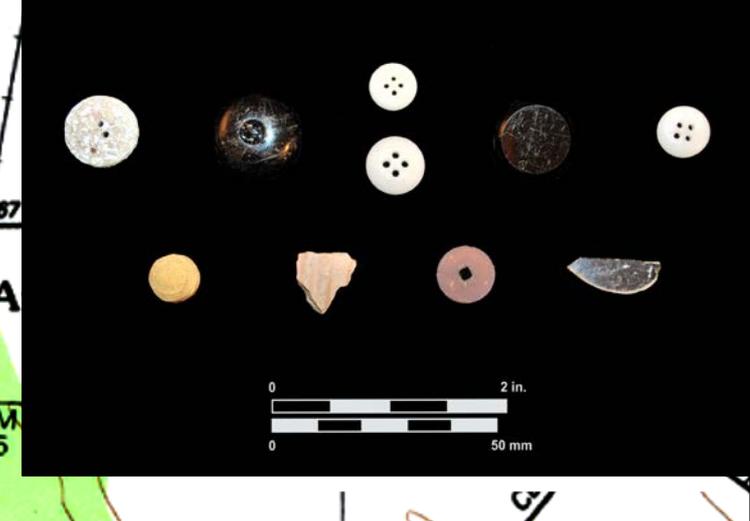
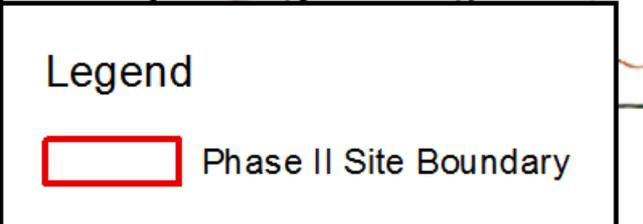
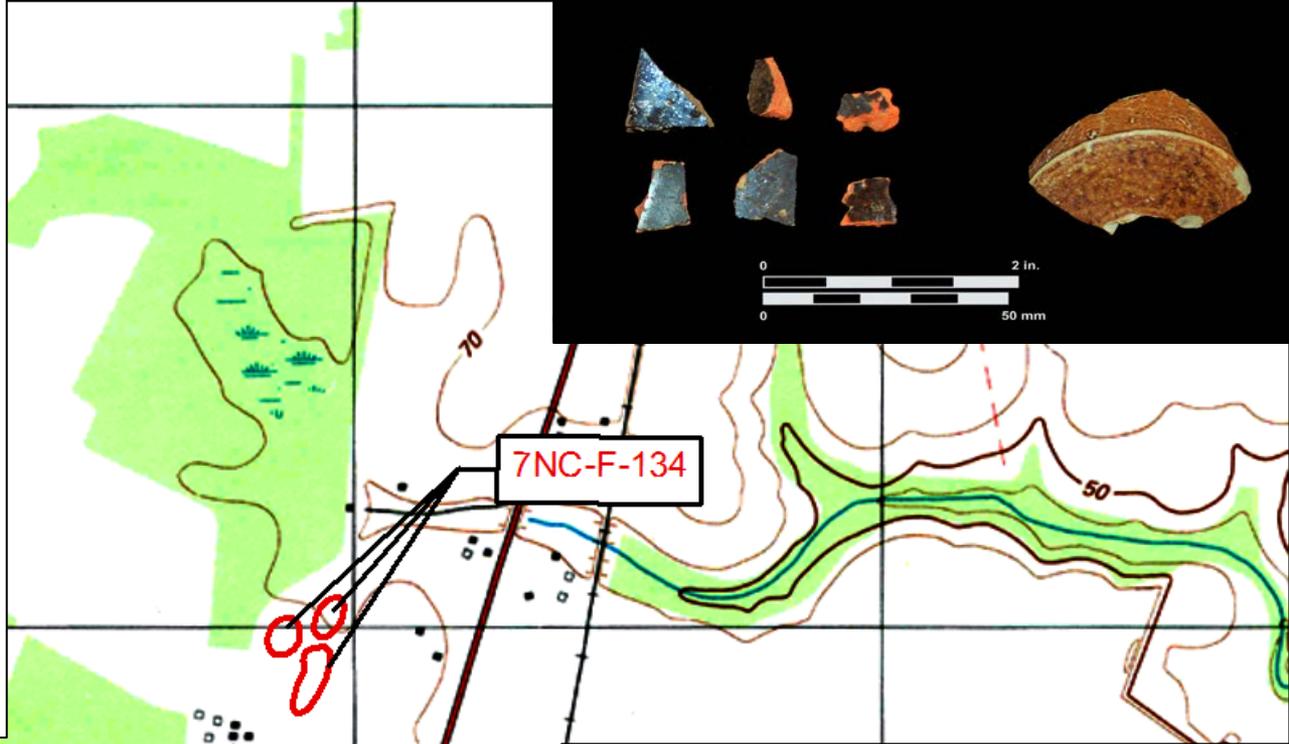
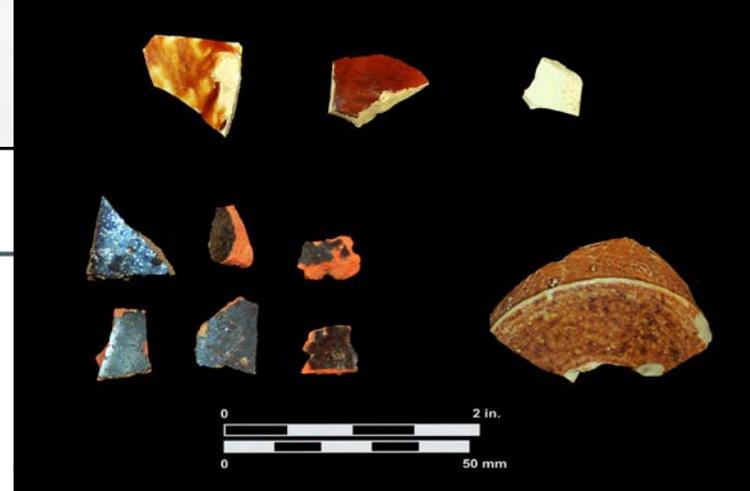
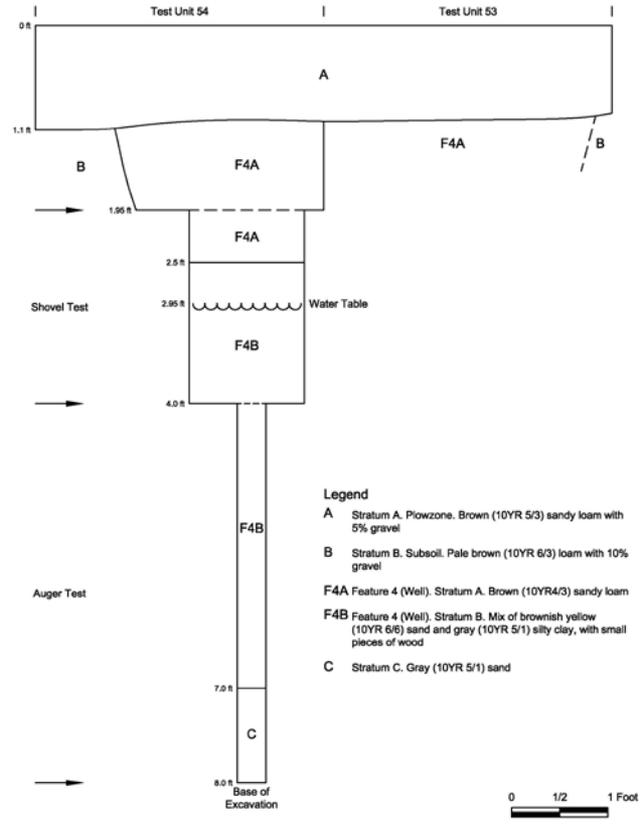
Conclusion

(SLIDE 14) One of the lessons of this study has been that extensive historical research that covers a neighborhood rather than a single property can often establish relationships not apparent in less thorough research. For example, basic Phase IA research established that the Samuel Dale Site had belonged to the Rev. Samuel Dale, but the site's previous occupation as a house and garden tenement was identified later in the account books of a neighbor and estate owner, James Mansfield. Many of the African American archaeological sites in St. Georges Hundred were parts of communities, the history of which has been laid out in this document; the authors believe that this broader, community history provides important contextual information for interpreting these sites.

(SLIDE 15) Another lesson has been that the study of African American archaeological sites in Delaware is greatly enriched by a broad knowledge of African and African American archaeology. The particular meanings of artifacts like well-worn sherds of glass and ceramic, the possibility that some features and groups of artifacts held special meanings are not always obvious outside of this context.

Given the broad similarities in material culture between African American sites and general lower class tenant farm sites, the work at the Dale Historic Site and the development of this historic context has shown the strength and importance of multiple lines of evidence and the use of broad contexts when interpreting these complex sites in Delaware. It has been the purpose of this document to explore in the detail the archaeology of one group of people in a small place, laying out what is known and what remains to be learned. This information, it is hoped, will be of use to those who come after us, helping them to identify and place African American archaeological sites in their proper historic context, evaluate their significance, and provide meaningful scholarship to the ever expanding study of the African Diaspora.

Site 7NC-F-134
Test Units 54 and 53
North Wall Profile



Demographic Context

AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSEHOLD SIZE IN ST. GEORGES HUNDRED, 1800 TO 1880

CENSUS YEAR	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN HOUSEHOLDS																TOTAL	MEAN FAMILY SIZE
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
1800	.	.	1	8	2	6	.	10	1	3	.	2	.	.	.	1	34	7.0
1810	.	.	4	6	6	6	10	6	4	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	42	6.0
1820	.	.	5	11	10	8	10	6	.	3	.	1	2	.	.	.	56	6.1
1830	3	18	11	31	21	10	7	8	2	1	1	.	.	.	.	.	113	4.5
1840	7	28	33	23	17	16	11	6	3	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	144	4.0
1850	5	13	25	18	34	17	9	7	8	1	2	.	.	.	.	.	139	4.8
1860	1	22	31	35	36	30	25	6	8	2	.	.	.	.	1	.	197	4.9
1870	4	30	40	48	42	37	28	18	12	3	5	2	1	.	.	.	270	5.1
1880	6	30	68	53	42	37	33	13	10	4	3	3	1	1	.	.	304	4.8

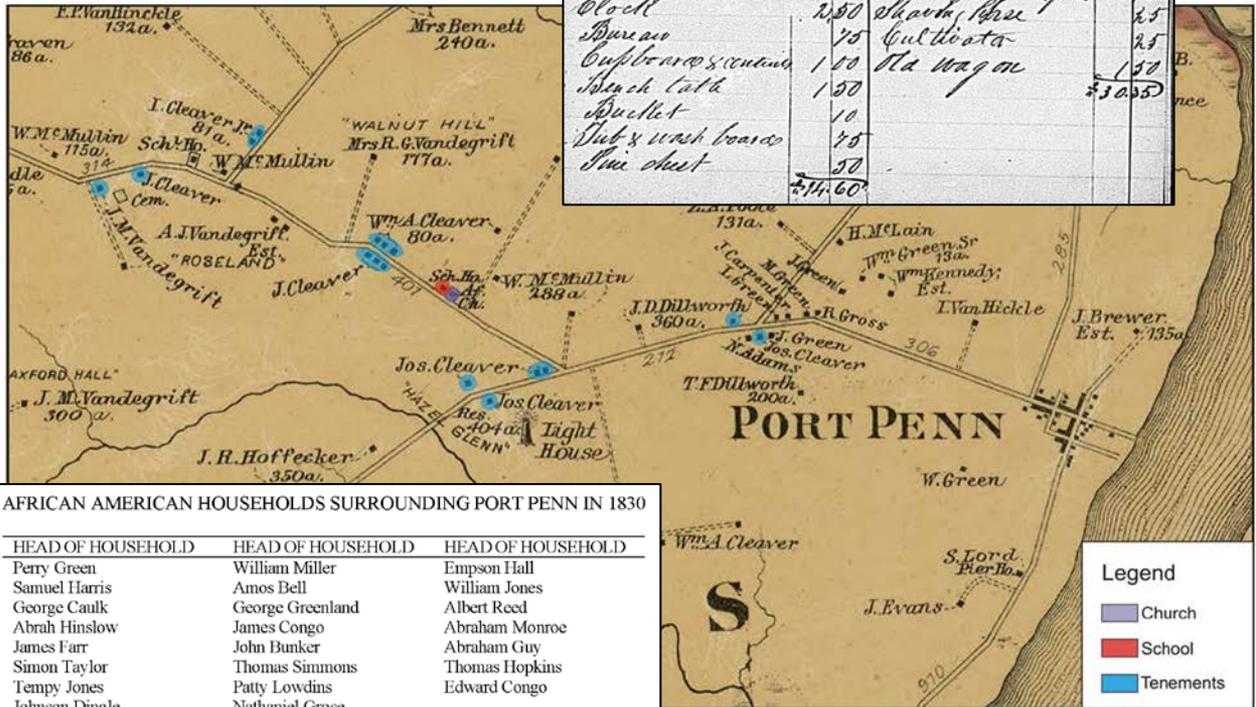
Inventory of the goods and chattels of George Congo, deceased, et al; of St. Georges Hundred New Castle County, and State of Delaware. to wit?

Room for up stairs			\$1460
Washbasin			500
Three new chairs	15	Shoe & fixtures	
Shoe water, Canada	50	Shoe chipping rolls	75
Stick		One brood axe	1 50
Two iron barrels	25	pen shaver	25
One trunk	20	Woods saw & head	30
Drum & saddle	50	One saw & head	40
Carriage	15	Port barrels & box	35
Four beds & contents	10	Put doors	
Two earthen jugs	25	Raini cask & hog line	25
One box	10	One crib	
One iron crock	15	Shoe, trousers & wages	1 10
Hammers, Whetstone	10	Shot & spade	50
Five augers	1 50	Contents of crib	50
Two contents, da. ins.	25	Ironing board	10
Room for 1 down stairs		Ironing stone	1 00
One window chair	2 00	Wheel barrel	1 00
Block	2 50	Wagoning saw, half	75
Bureau	75	Shaver, three	25
Cupboards & contents	1 50	Cultivator	25
Wrench lathe	1 50	Old wagon	1 50
Bucket	10		
Shoe & wash boards	75		
One chest	50		
	7 14 60		\$30 25

DALETOWN RESIDENTS IN 1880

HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD	VALUE OF REAL ESTATE*	OCCUPATION
Thomas Henry	6	-	Farm hand
Alexander Harmon	8	-	Waiter
John Empson	6	-	Farm hand
William Empson	10	-	Waiter
Abraham Miles	3	\$75	Farm hand
William Anderson	3	-	Farm hand
Francis Pearce	3	-	Keeping house
Julius Black	2	\$100	Farm hand
John B. Williams	4	\$100	Restaurant keeper
Henry Gray	3	\$800	Horse trainer
Rosa Sipple	1	-	Waiter
Napolean Reed	6	-	Farm hand
Rosa Sipple	8	-	Keeping home
Isaac Empson	3	-	Farm laborer
Thomas Wright	7	-	Ostler
David Jefferson	11	\$300	Farm hand
Henry Williams	4	-	Farm hand
Henry Jones	10	-	Farm hand
George Jones	2	-	Farm hand
Charles Johnson	8	\$450	Pump maker
William Downs	7	\$250	Hod carrier
Lavina Commeges	1	-	Keeps house
Sarah Jones	8	\$300	House keeper
Edward Rees	5	\$300	Teamster
Angeline Emery	1	\$300	Keeps house
Charles Alexandria	8	-	Fishery
William Cammoile	4	\$350	Ostler
John B Green	7	\$300	Trainer
James Byard	2	-	Farm hand
Thomas Turner	10	-	Farm hand
Francis Miller	2	-	Farm hand
Frisby Cammoile	3	\$50	Farm service
Robert Hall	3	-	Farm hand
Charles H. Hutchins	7	-	M.E. minister
Joseph Williams	3	-	Farm hand
William B. Johnson	8	-	Waiter
Robert Danding	7	-	Waterman
Benjamin Empson	9	-	Farm hand
William Hall	5	-	Commercial laborer
Amanda Henry	4	-	House keeper
William Collins	2	-	Farm hand
Frank Miller	1	-	Farm hand

*Based on the 1880 Tax Assessments for West St. Georges Hundred



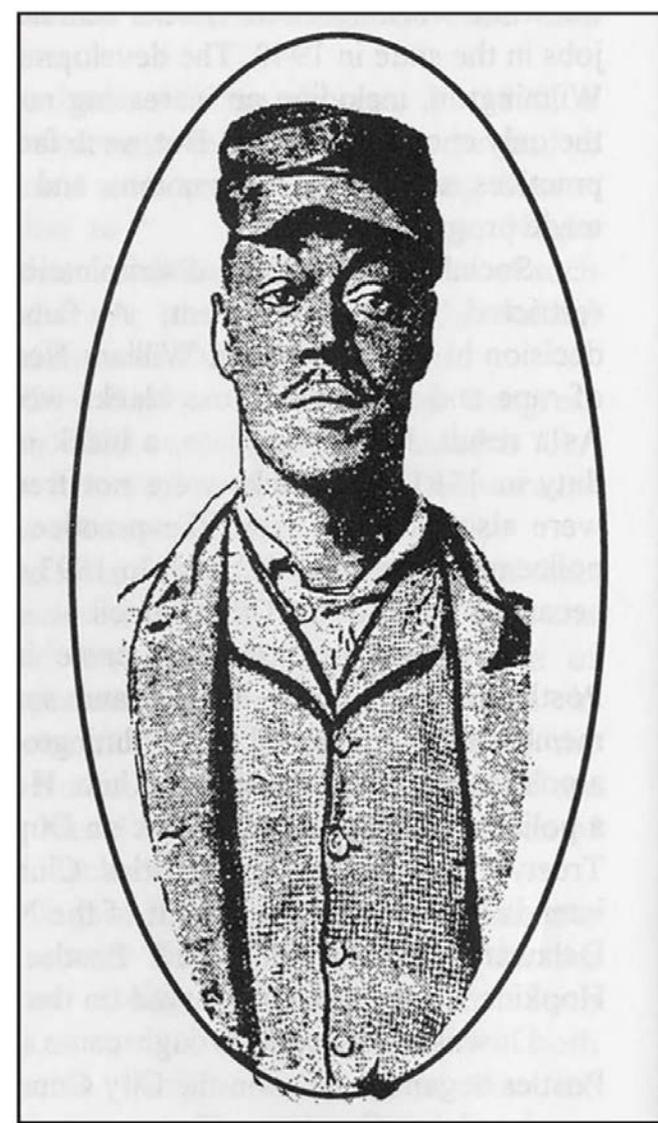
AFRICAN AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS SURROUNDING PORT PENN IN 1830

HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD
Perry Green	William Miller	Empson Hall
Samuel Harris	Amos Bell	William Jones
George Caulk	George Greenland	Albert Reed
Abrah Hinslow	James Congo	Abraham Monroe
James Farr	John Bunker	Abraham Guy
Simon Taylor	Thomas Simmons	Thomas Hopkins
Tempy Jones	Patty Lowdins	Edward Congo
Johnson Dingle	Nathaniel Grose	

Social and Legal Context

POPULATION OF ST. GEORGES HUNDRED BY RACE, 1800 TO 1880

CENSUS YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION	WHITE	AFRICAN AMERICAN	FREE BLACK	ENSLAVED	PERCENT AFRICAN AMERICAN	PERCENT FREE AFRICAN AMERICAN
1800	3365	2400	965	484	481	29	50
1810	2879	1945	934	620	314	32	66
1820	2934	1963	971	587	384	33	60
1830	2468	1456	1012	771	241	41	76
1840	3130	1969	1161	1023	138	37	88
1850	3652	2436	1216	1050	166	33	86
1860	4532	2856	1676	1574	102	37	94
1870	5074	3067	2007	2007	0	40	100
1880	5036	3098	1938	1938	0	38	100



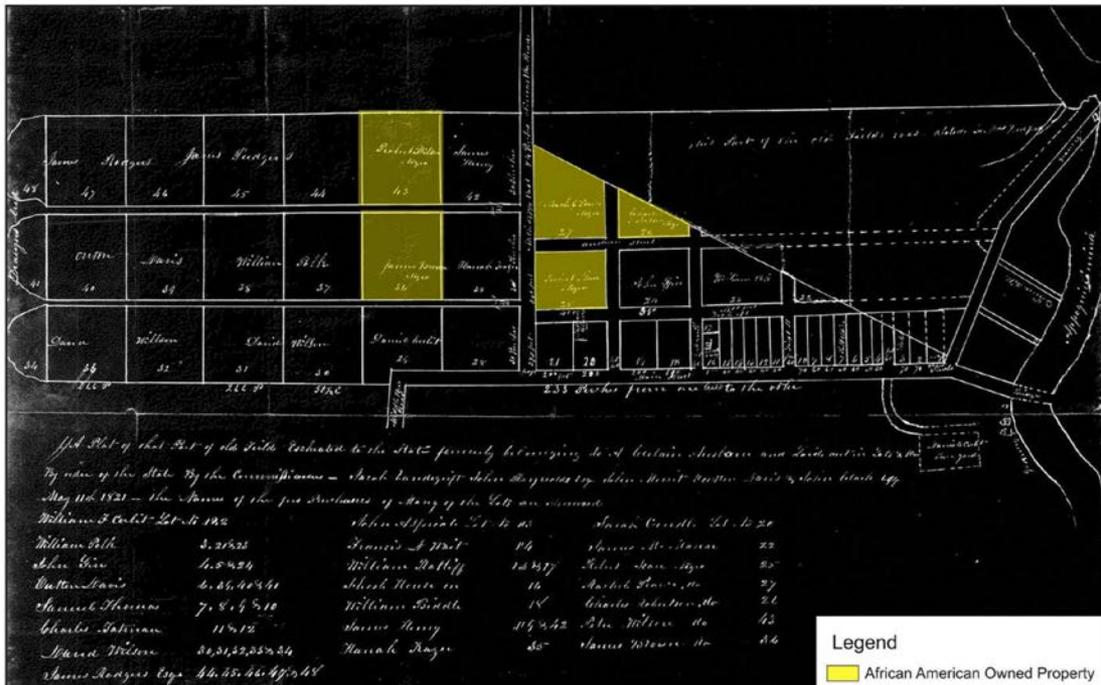
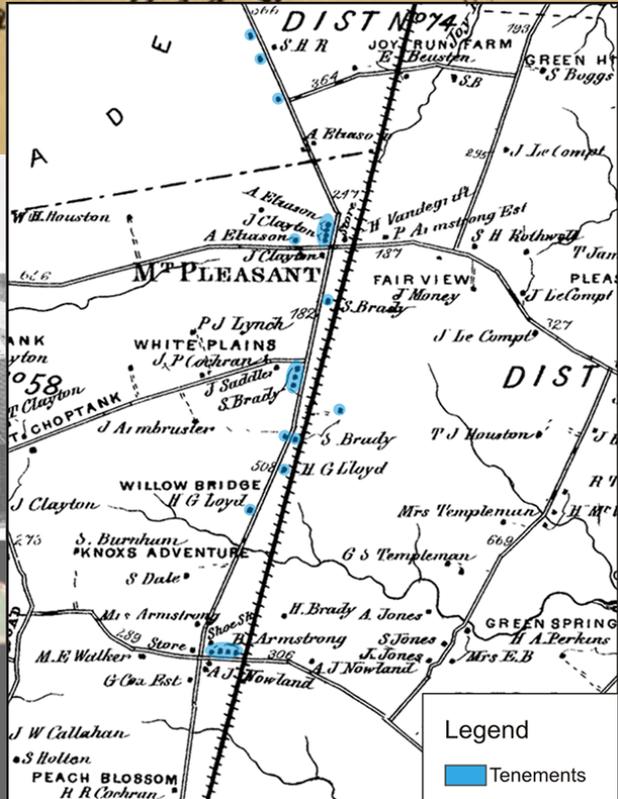
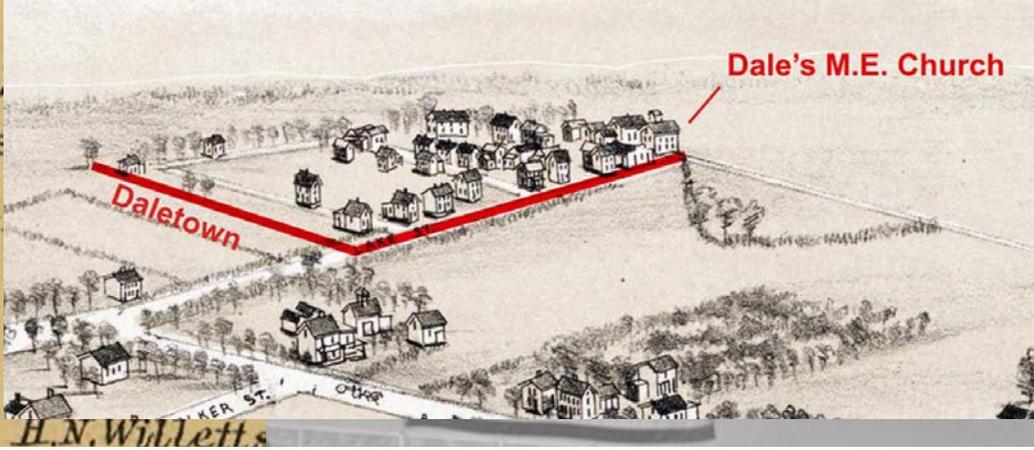
**George White,
1903 Lynching Victim**

“That it shall be the duty of the Commissioners of the town of Middletown, and of any Justice of the Peace and Constables of New Castle County residing in said town, to suppress all riotous, turbulent, disorderly, or noisy assemblages of negroes, mulattoes, or other persons, in the streets, lanes, or alleys of the said town after night, or on the Sabbath day, or at any other time or season whatever, and for this purpose it shall be the duty of the said Constable upon the requisition of any one of said Commissioners, and without further warrant, forth with to seize and arrest any such negroes, mulattoes, or other person so offending, and to carry them before any Justice of the Peace residing in said town, and whom conviction before said Justice whose duty it shall be to hear and determine the case. The said Justice shall sentence any such negro, mulatto, or other person so convicted to pay a fine not exceeding five dollars, and commit the party to prison for any period not more than five days, or until the said fine and costs be paid.

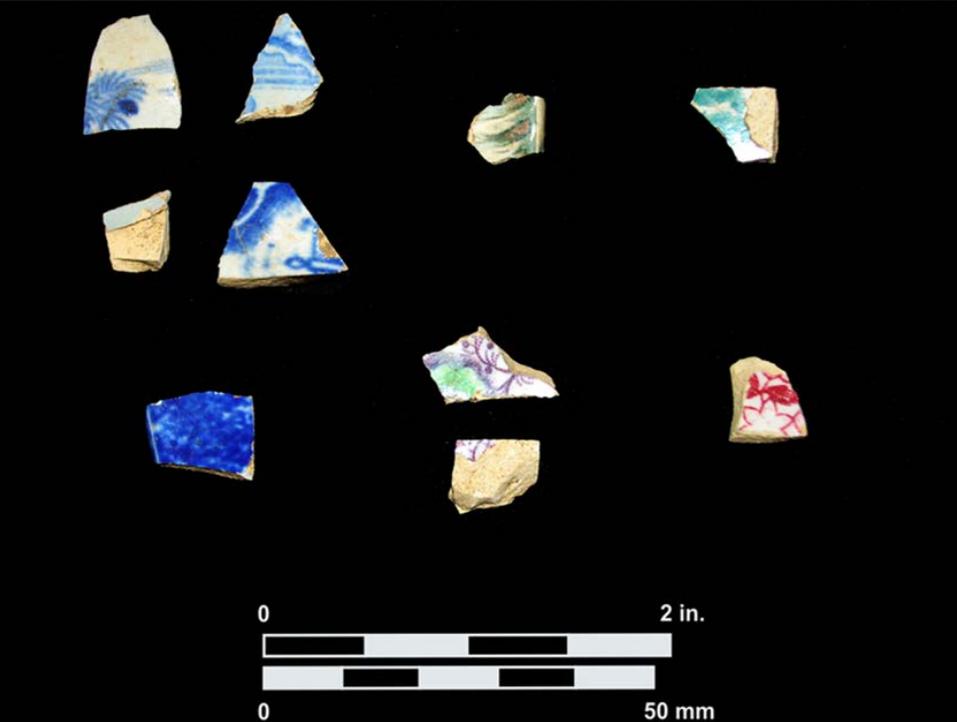
It shall be the duty of the said Justice of the Peace upon complaint made before him of any such riotous, turbulent, or noisy assemblage as aforesaid, to issue his warrant to the said Constable, commanding him to bring any such negro, mulatto, or other person so offending as aforesaid before him for trial. Upon every conviction of a riotous, turbulent, or disorderly person, the Justice and Constable shall each be entitled to a fee of sixty cents to be paid by the person convicted.”

Act to Incorporate the Town of Middletown, Section 10
February 12, 1861

Space and Community Formation



Material Culture





Proposed African American Archaeological Property Types

African American Agricultural Complex

House and Garden Tenancy

Slave Quarter

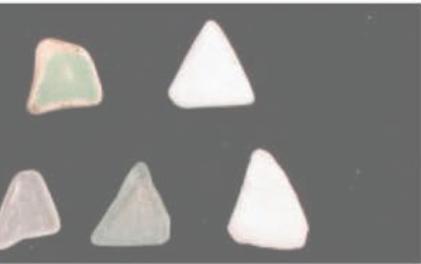
Town Dwelling

Schools

Churches

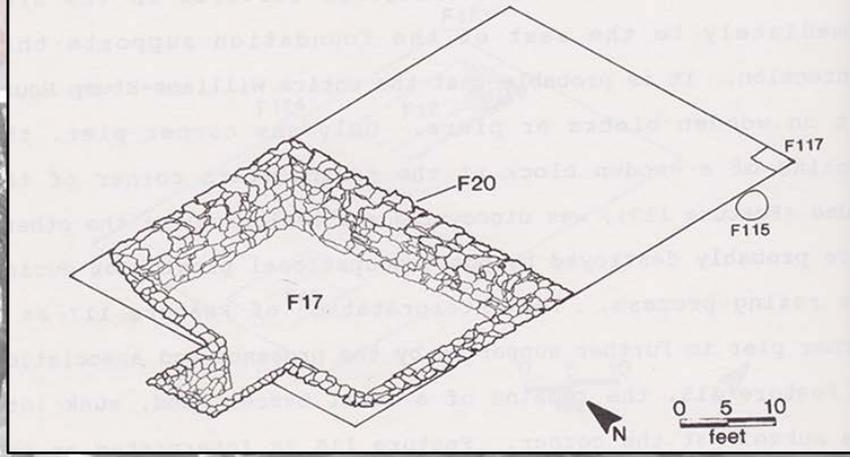
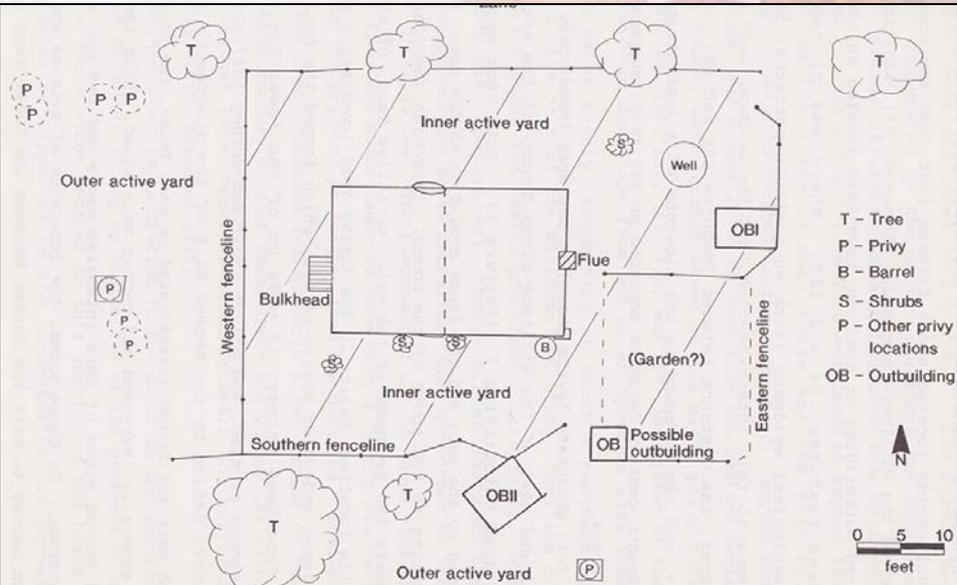
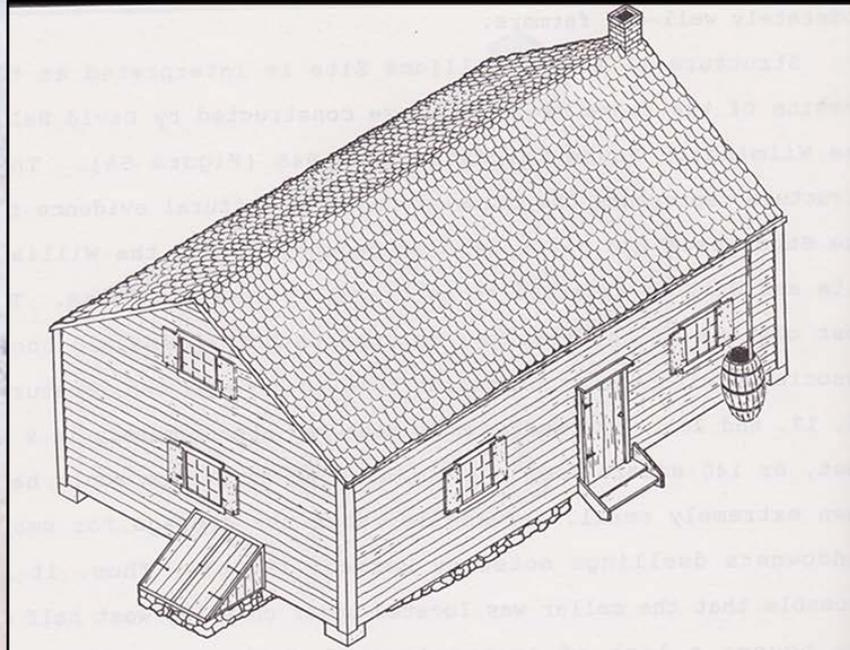
Cemeteries

Sites Associated with the Underground Railroad

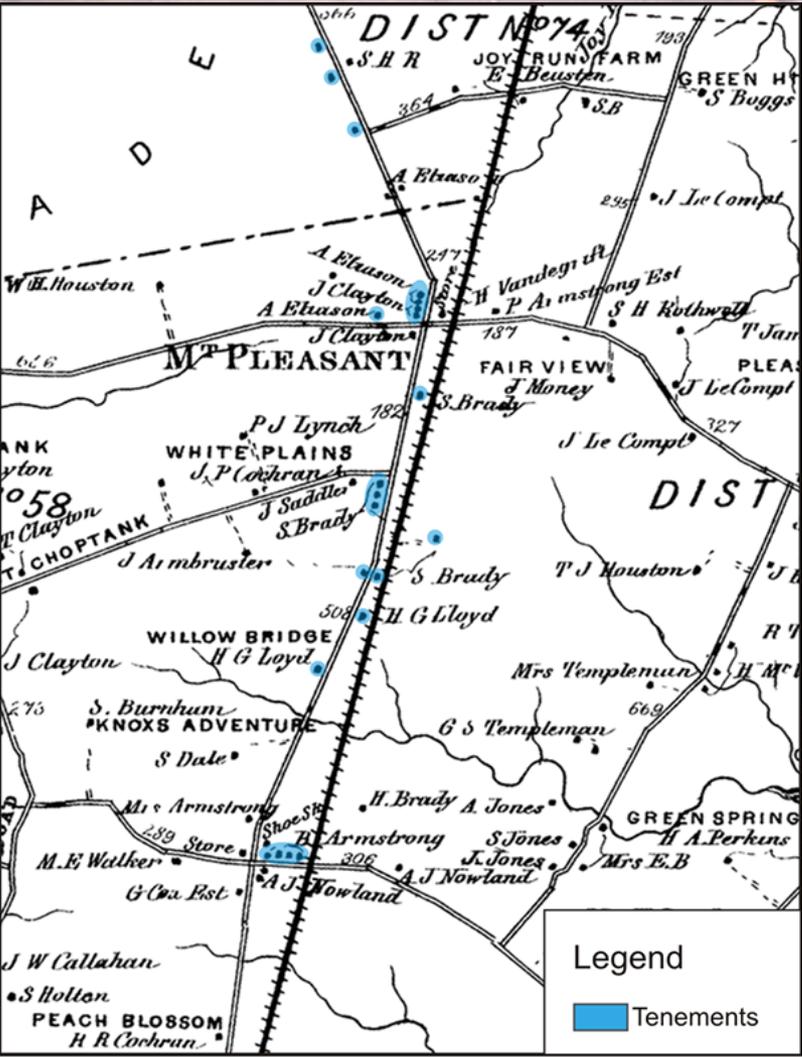


African American Agricultural Complex

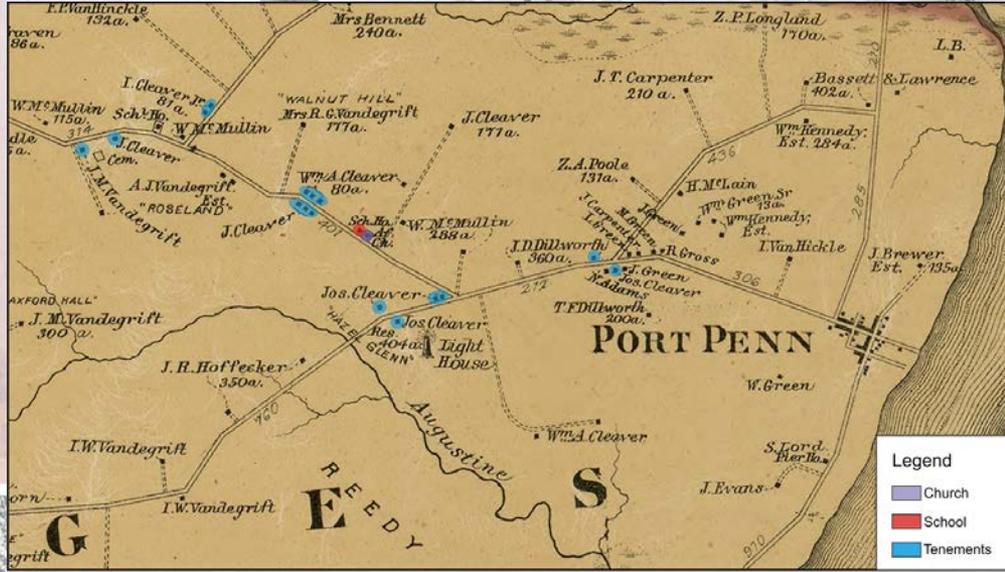
African American Owned Farm Complexes in 1849, St Georges Hundred, Delaware



House and Garden Tenancy



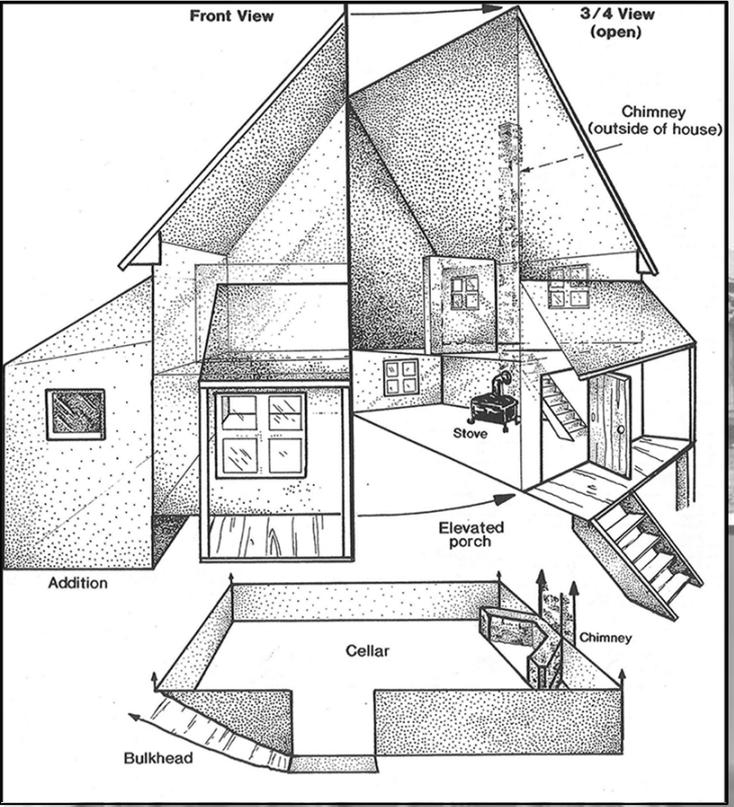
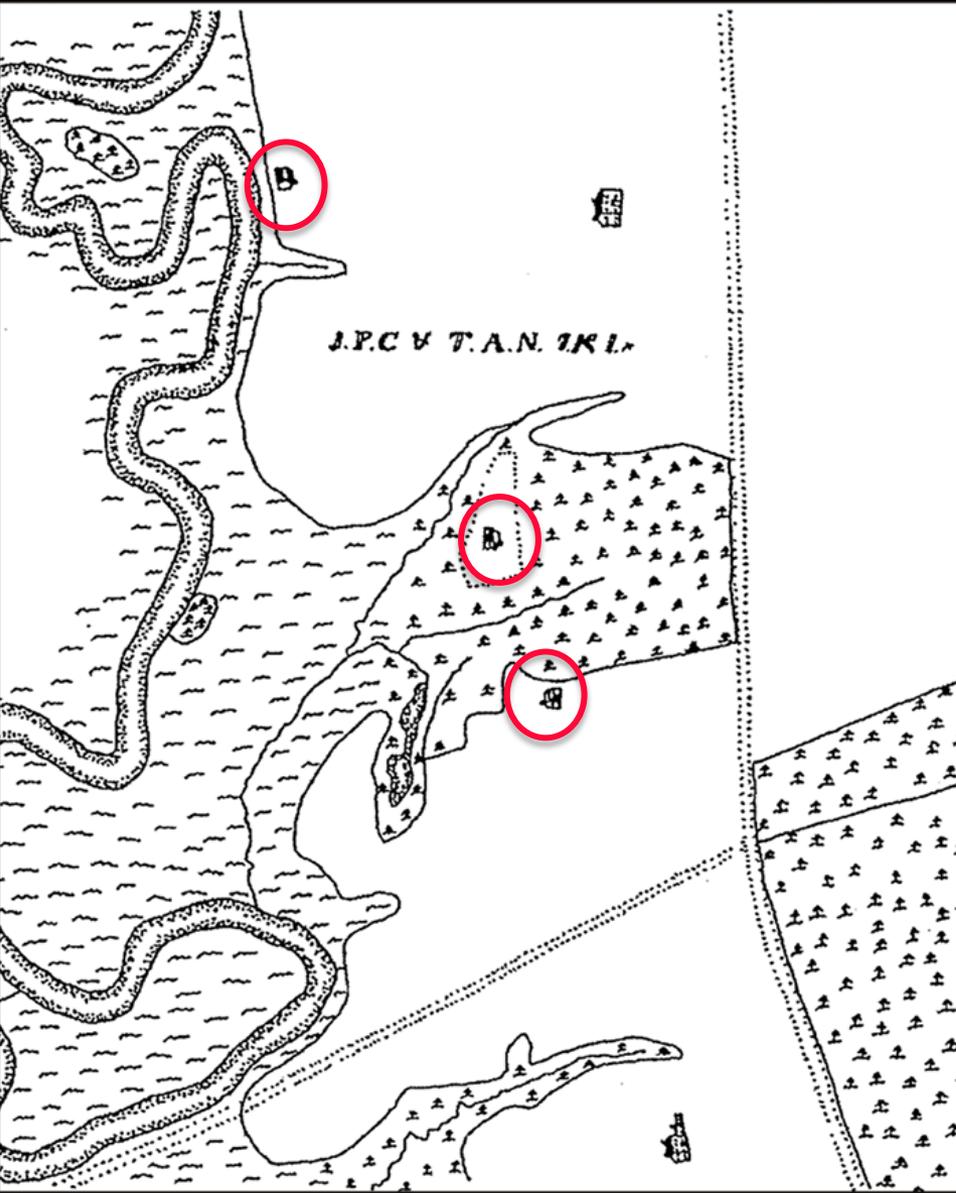
African American Tenancies Along Summit Bridge Road



African American Tenancies Near Port Penn



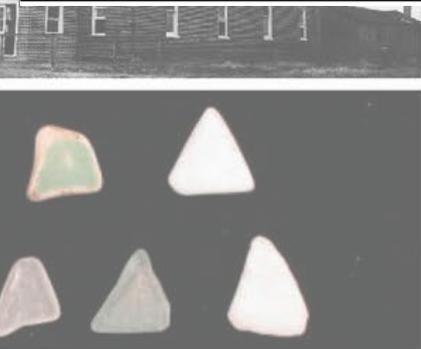
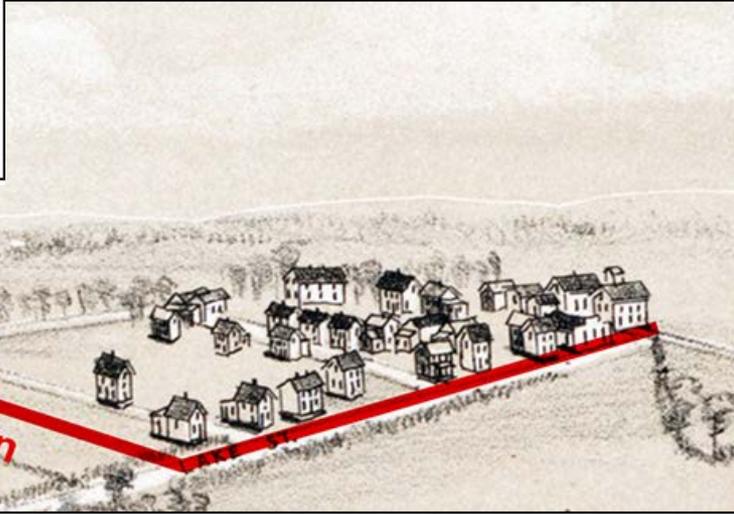
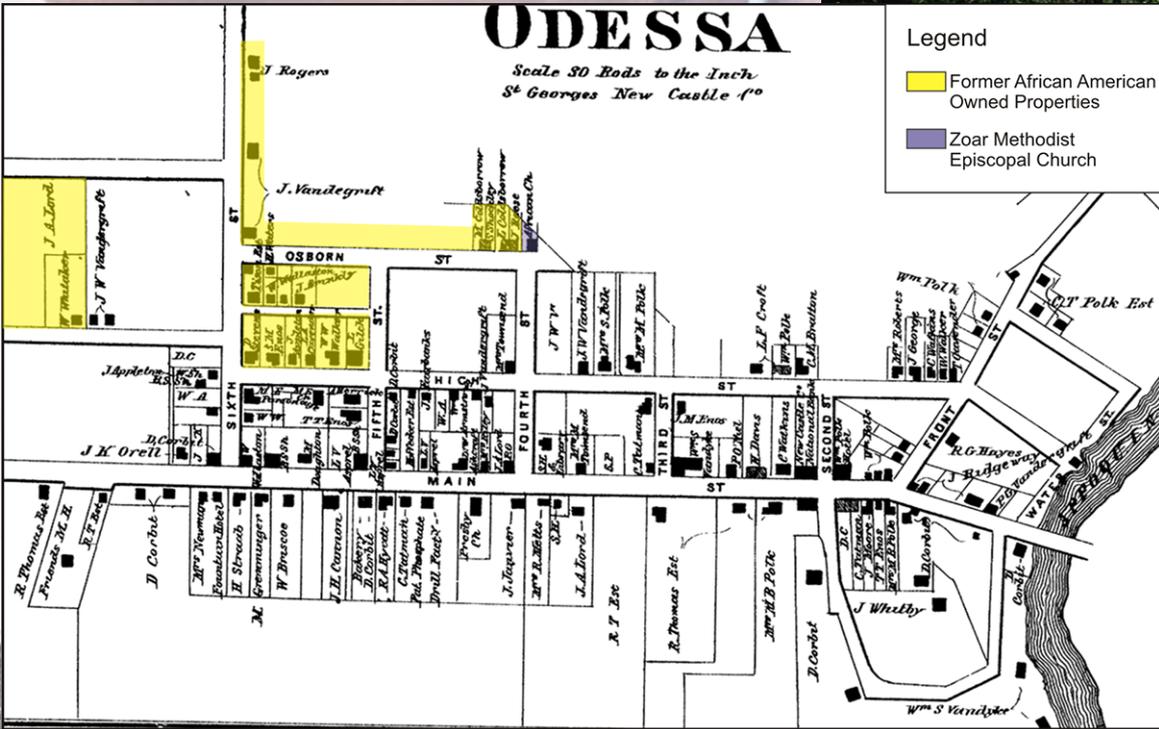
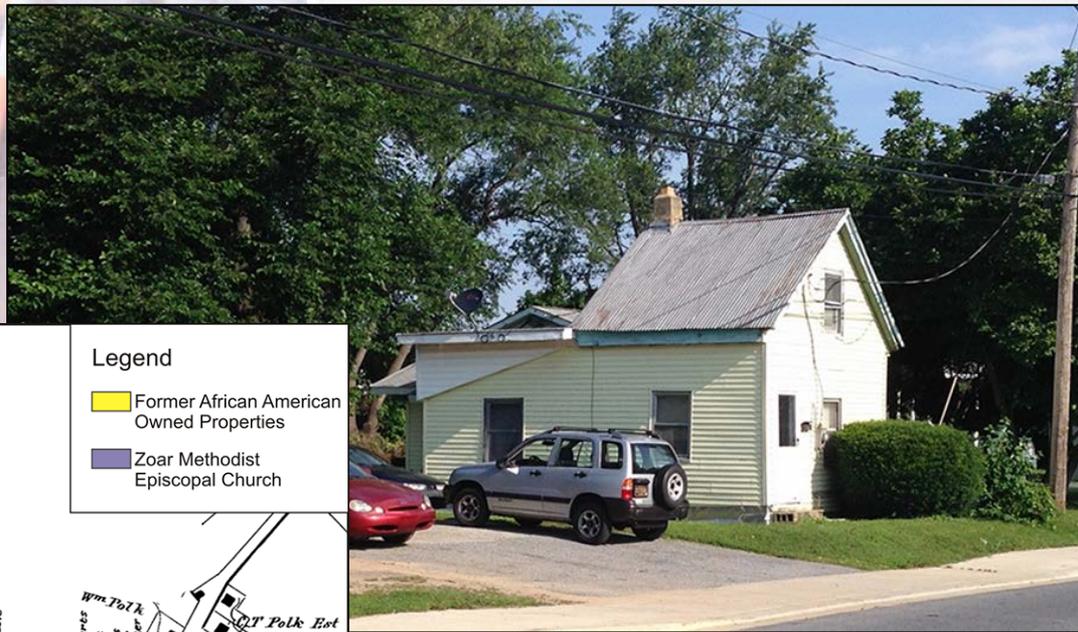
House and Garden Tenancy



House and Garden Tenancy



Town Dwellings



Tenants from Mansfield's
Account Books

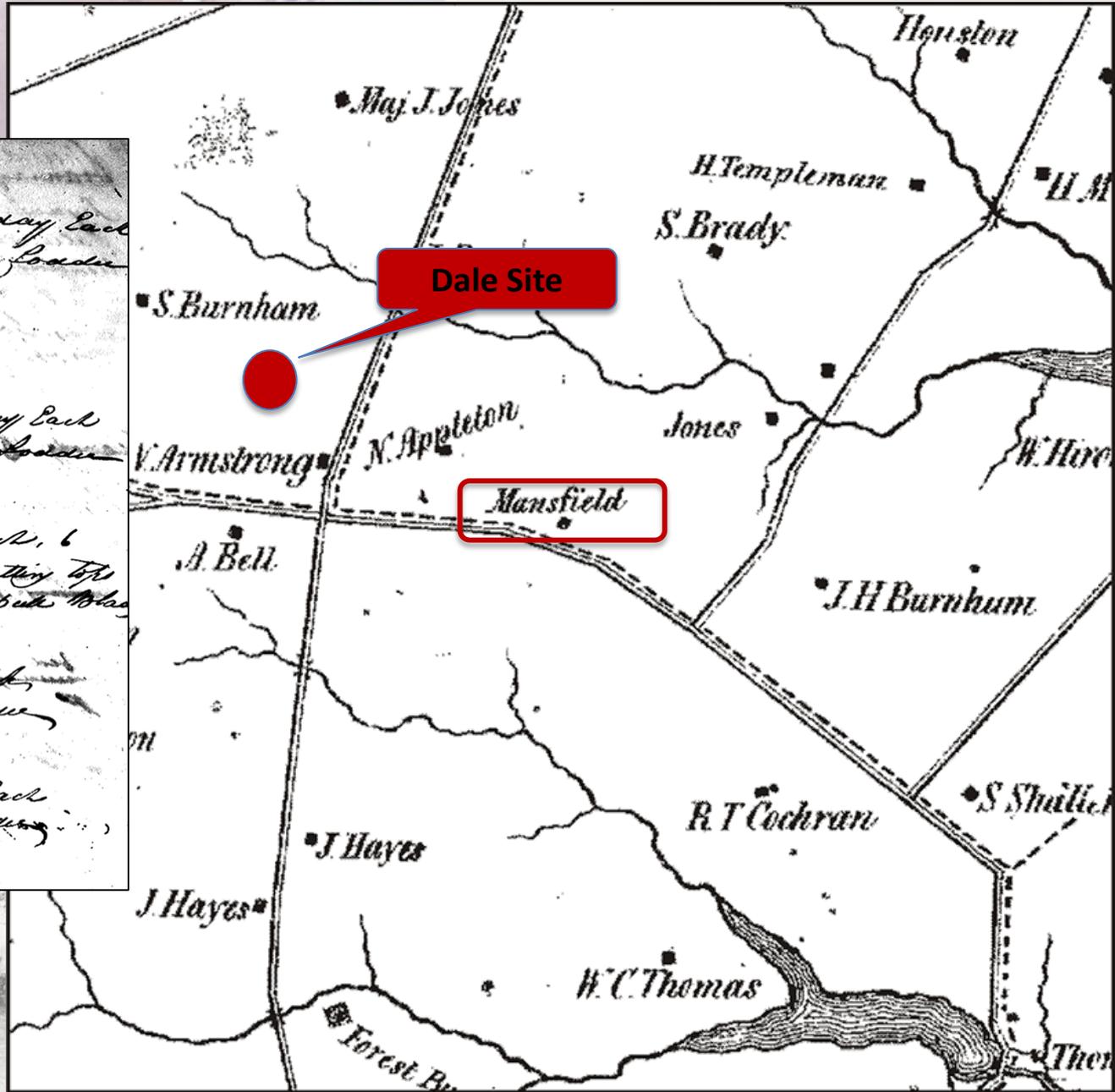
Monday Sep 3 Sam Black 4
 4 Michael East 1 day each
 P. A. Bartlett in fodder
 Henry Allen 4

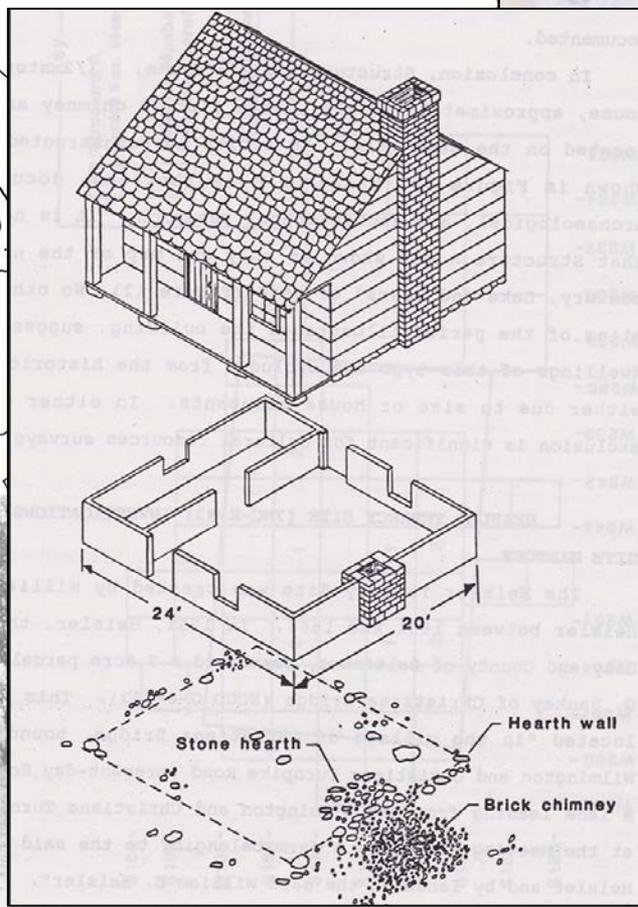
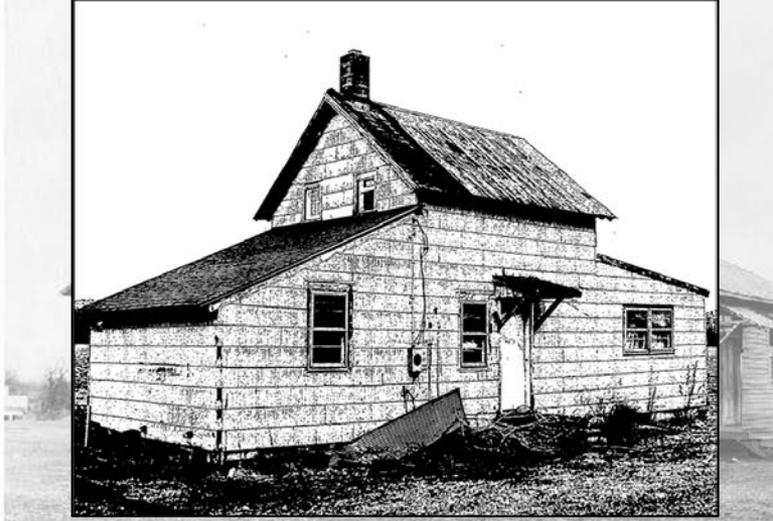
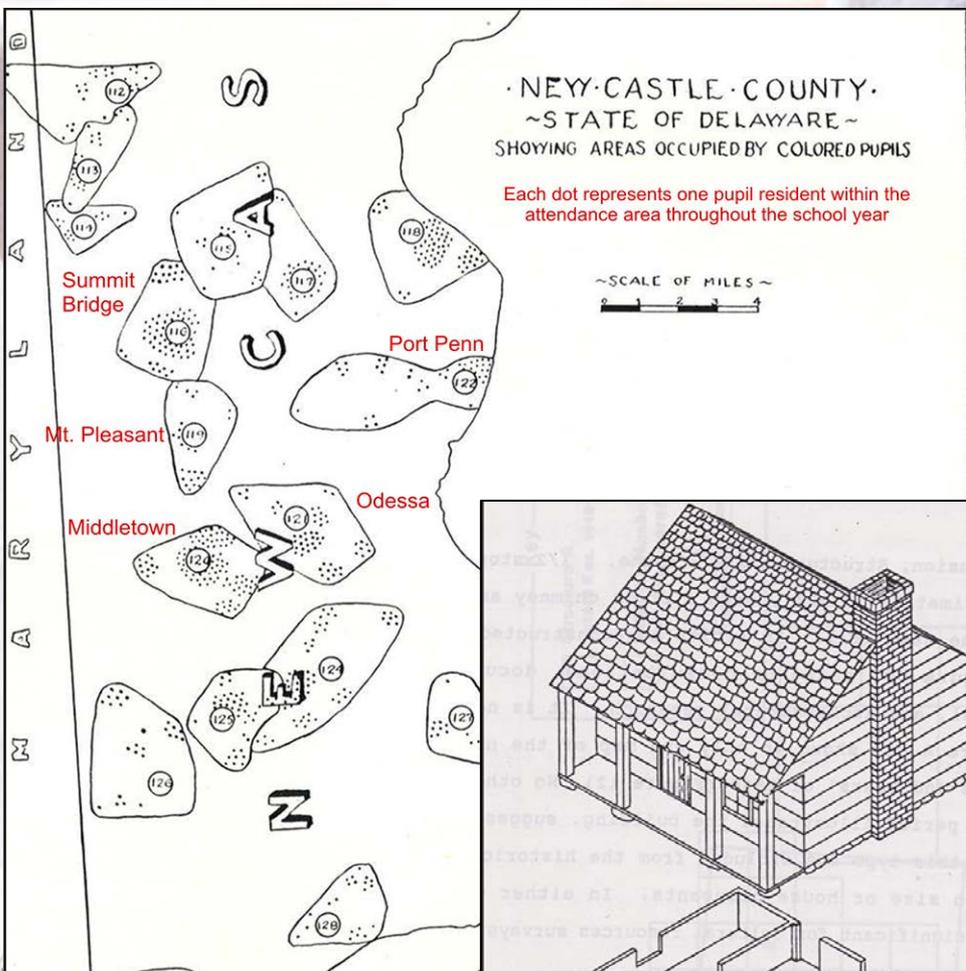
Tuesday Sep 4th
 Sam Black 5
 5 Michael East 1 day each
 P. A. Bartlett in fodder
 Sam Allen 1
 Henry Allen 5

Wednesday 5th
 Sam Black 2 day each, 6
 6 Mich East finished cutting top
 Henry Allen began to put black

Thursday 6th
 Sam Black 7
 7 Mich East 1 day each
 Sam Allen in fodder
 Henry Allen 7

Friday 7th
 Sam Black 8 1 day each
 8 Mich East in fodder
 Sam Allen 3
 Henry Allen 8





Thank You!

Acknowledgments

David Clarke, DelDOT
Kevin Cunningham, DelDOT
Heidi Krofft, DelDOT
John Bedell, Berger
Delaware Department of Transportation
The Louis Berger Group, Inc.

