1. INTRODUCTION

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF Transportation proposes to widen and upgrade part of Route 113, north of Georgetown, Sussex County.

In order to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and other applicable regulations, the Department of Transportation required the contractor to conduct Phase I cultural resource investigations in certain parts of the proposed construction area, outside the right-of-way, pursuant to stipulation 7 of the memorandum of agreement for Route 113.

These investigations were to be conducted on the contractor's nine proposed topsoil storage areas adjacent to the right-of-way. Also included were investigations at the site of a batch plant near the right-of-way and at a site where rejected fill material was to be dumped. In all cases, the impact to any cultural resources would be entirely confined to the surface of the ground. No deep footings or excavations were envisioned.

The contractor, David A. Bramble, Inc., engaged Heite Consulting to conduct the survey. Fieldwork was completed during the first week in February 1993 by Edward Heite, assisted by Sam Cammissa. Artifacts and notes are being curated at Island Field.

The right-of-way was previously surveyed by Berger Associates (LeeDecker et al., 1992).

This project was unusual, since avoidance was implicit in the project design.

Discovery of cultural resources in most situations leads inevitably to evaluation and, possibly, treatment. After the Phase I results are compiled, identified sites are evaluated at the Phase II level. Those judged eligible for the Register are then subjected to "treatments" that might include avoidance (usually preferred), reduction of adverse effects, or mitigation (usually Phase III data recovery). In most cases, if an archæological site is found to be significant, it is excavated.

Here, the contractor identified avoidance as the preferred treatment. Any discovery of cultural resources, regardless of evaluated significance, would automatically remove a property from consideration as a topsoil storage area.

When a cultural resource was found, it was marked off by the archæologist and eliminated from the project area. This effective approach to cultural resource management short-circuits the three-step process, but is available only rarely.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The project area lies along the mid-peninsular drainage divide, where some of the water drains into the Chesapeake, and some into the Delaware. Some of the surface water does not naturally drain into either watershed, and must be assisted by man-made ditches.

Soils in the project area belong to the Pocomoke-Fallsington-Evesboro association, which are very-poorly-drained and poorly-drained soils overlying a moderately permeable subsoil of sandy loam or sandy clay loam, and excessively-drained soils that have a rapidly permeable sandy subsoil (Soil Conservation Service, 1974).

The dominant soil type is Pocomoke, a poorly-drained soil that occurs on upland flats and in depressions. The topsoil is typically black sandy loam, high in organic matter. The second most abundant soil is Fallsington, a poorly-drained upland soil that formed in loamy sediments. Evesboro soil, found in some parts of the project area, is excessively drained and sandy soil that has been favored for cemeteries. Klej soil, found on uplands, is well-drained loamy sand that often has a high water table.

While these soils might seem inhospitable to agriculture, they have been rendered productive by an extensive system of tax ditches that crisscross the project area.

The history of European-style agriculture in the project area has been punctuated by episodes of drainage

enthusiasm, during which farmers have spent large amounts of money to rid themselves of standing water. These investments, which have continued intermittently for two centuries, have marked periods of agricultural prosperity in southern Delaware.

Ditches have turned a swampy wilderness into productive farmland, but the struggle does not end. Old hand-dug ditches are being upgraded by machine cleaning and new ditches are being opened.

One of the ironies of the situation is the fact that drainage makes the land arable, but artificial irrigation is often required because the soils are sandy and "droughty." Once they are drained, they tend to become too dry for some crops.

Agriculture in the project area has always included subsistence farming, but during the past 75 years chicken farming has been significant. Chicken manure has improved the soils and chicken money has enriched the farmers.

Forestry is the major resource-exploiting industry in the project area. The native forest consisted of wetland hardwoods, but softwood plantations have come to dominate the area during the present century. The presence of a major state forestry unit at Redden has facilitated the development of progressive forestry practices in central Sussex County.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

When Georgetown was established in 1791, its site was ridiculed as being sixteen miles from nowhere, but it was near the geographical center of the county. For more than a century, population and government in Sussex County had revolved around Lewes, a thriving port town at the mouth of Delaware Bay. The new county seat was to be located in the wilderness, where hardscrabble farms and failed iron furnaces were the only economic activities. The courthouse site was an "old field," where agriculture had failed. The site clearly was not chosen for either its scenic beauty or its prosperity.

Construction of a new county seat led to establishment of the "state road," predecessor to the modern Route 113, connecting Georgetown with Milford and the north. Other roads, from the established population centers, led to Georgetown's "circle" where the small frame courthouse served as the focus of the new town.

Since this project focuses on the State Road to Georgetown, historic resources in the project area are largely roadside development. These include commercial establishments, strip development, and farmsteads built to face the highway.

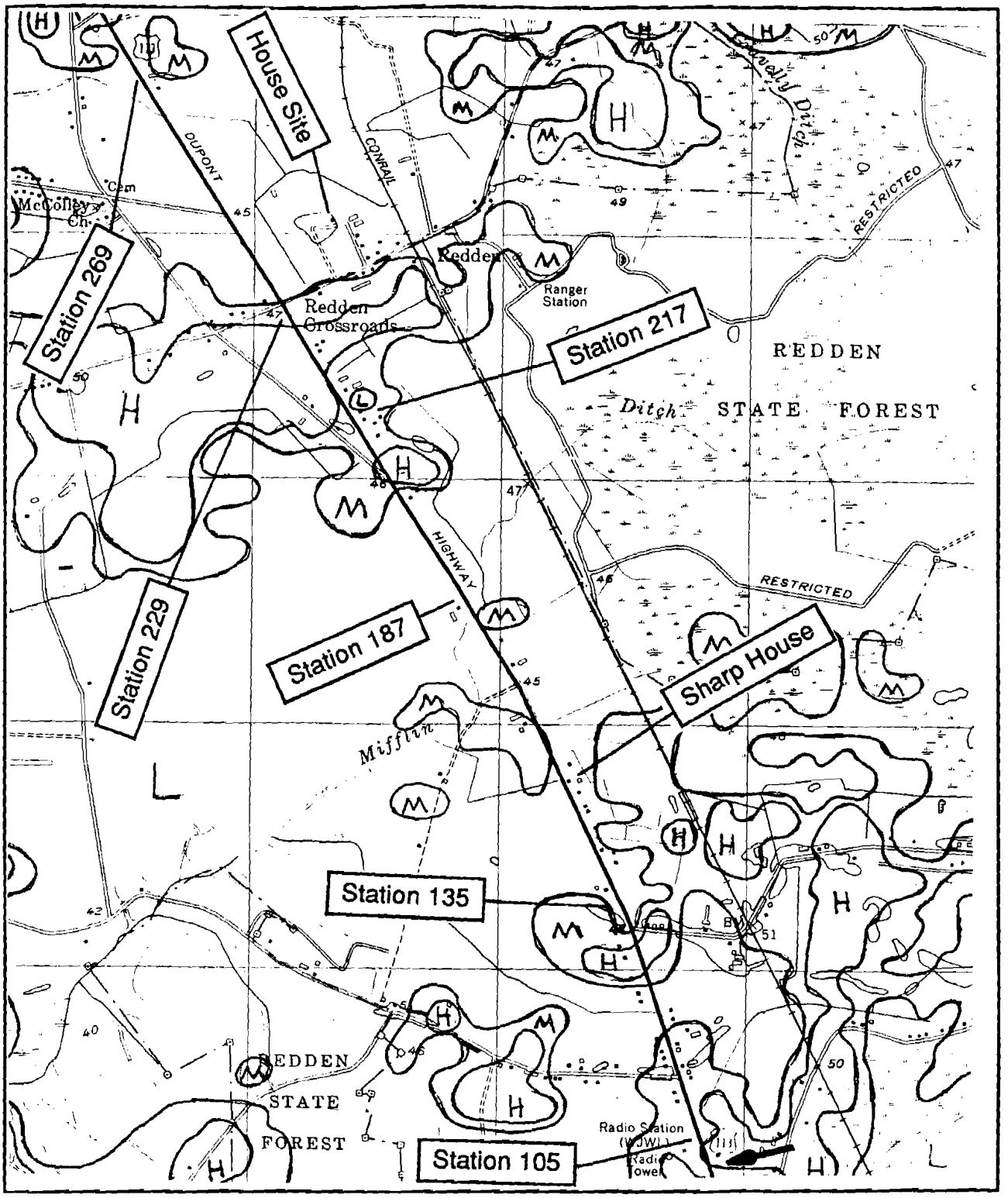

Figure 1

Project Area, southern part

Detail of USGS Georgetown quadrangle. Arrow indicates the southern end of the project area. On this map are superimposed the archæological probability assessments formulated by the University of Delaware Center for Archæological Research. Boxed references indicate loci discussed in this report.

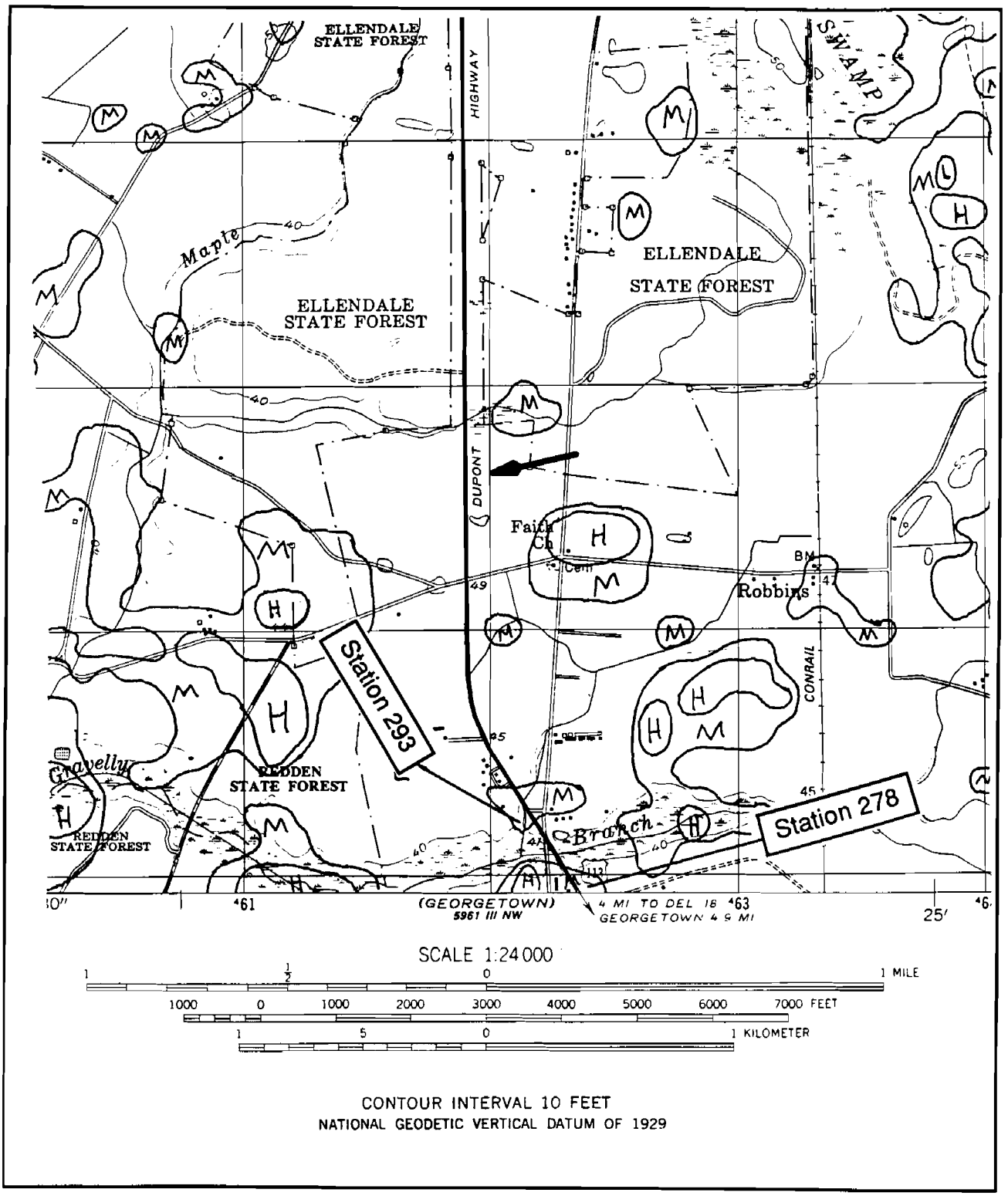

Figure 2

Project Area, northern part

Detail of USGS Ellendale quadrangle. Arrow indicates the north end of the project area. On this map are superimposed the archæological probability assessments formulated by the University of Delaware Center for Archæological Research.

QUADRANGLE LOCATION