LETTER REPORT
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PHASE I CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY OF BETHUEL WATSON'S ESTATE - THE "HILL LAND", CEDAR CREEK HUNDRED, SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE

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Delaware Department of Transportation
Dover, Delaware 19903

INTRODUCTION

Parsons Engineering Science (Parsons) conducted a Phase I survey for the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). The project area was located on the east side of SR-1 southeast of Milford, Delaware, in Cedar Creek Hundred. A storm water management pond is being proposed east of an overpass over SR-1 on old Highway 14 to Milford.

The study was performed in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA), the Advisory Council's Guidelines for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Properties (36 CFR 800), and the Guidelines for Architectural and Archaeological Surveys in Delaware (Delaware SHPO 1993). The fieldwork was conducted in close consultation with DelDOT.

The project area measured 125m E-W x 350m N-S at the widest points and covered 28.75 square kilometers (7.1 acres). The tract was situated in a very low rise separating the Misipillion Creek and Cedar Creek drainages in a predominately flat, cultivated field (Figure 1). The southern third of the tract had recently been planted in winter wheat, with no evidence of growth above ground, yielding 100 percent visibility. The remainder of the project area was covered with very thin wheat, resulting in 90 percent visibility.

The west side of the tract was bounded by a hog-wire fence topped with barbed wire separating the field from the off-ramp of SR-1. The southern boundary was bounded by a fenced pasture for miniature horses of the Knollack Horse Farm operated by the landowner, the Thawleys. The northern boundary was a fence separating the field from a neighboring cultivated field. The field continued for several hundred meters to the east of the project area.

An archival assessment of the project area was made prior to the field investigations in the Delaware Public Archives and the Sussex County Courthouse. The records at the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) were reviewed after fieldwork to identify previously reocrded sites in the project area. The farm had been assigned a cultural resource site designation in 1983 (S-3743), but the project area itself contained no previously recorded archaeological sites. Archival records indicated that a farmstead had been located where the present farmstead and horse farm is located at least since the mid-19th century. A short interview with the landowner, Mrs. Thawley, prior to the field work, indicated that renovations of the house had revealed hand cut (or machine made) square nails.

FIELD METHODOLOGY

A north-south baseline was established on the eastern boundary of the project area and a grid was established. East-west oriented pedestrian survey transects were placed at 5 m intervals across the area. All cultural material observed in the first walkover was flagged and then noted. As the artifacts were being recorded from the first walkover, a closer examination was made in a 2m radius around each artifact to locate more cultural material. High-fired brick fragments constituted the majority of the observed cultural material, but only a sample was retrieved. Several large stones seen in the field were noted but not collected. All other pre-1950s cultural material was collected on the established grid system.

Nine shovel test pits (STPs) were placed in areas of higher concentrations of historic artifacts and near two recovered projectile points. All non-brick cultural material was saved from the STPs. All STPs were excavated to sterile subsoil and the soil was screened through 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth. Modern (i.e., pre-1950s) debris was not collected. No features or anomalies were discovered. Artifacts were bagged in resealable polyethylene bags with complete provenience information recorded in indelible ink. A site map was drafted at the completion of fieldwork.

LABORATORY METHODOLOGY

All collected artifacts were returned to the Parsons laboratory. The artifacts have been cleaned and stored in resealable polyethylene bags, which contain an acid-free tag with complete provenience information. All artifacts, notes, and photographs will be professionally archived, and will be transferred to a repository at completion of the project.

ARCHIVAL RESULTS

The project area was completely contained within a 170-acre tract of land that can be traced back to at least the late 18th century. Robert Hill received the land probably in the 1790s (Sussex County Land Warrants and Deed Books indices *passim*). Robert Hill died ca. 1815, leaving a wife, Rhoda (a.k.a. Roda), and several minor children: Sarah (Mrs. Henry Hudson), Eliza (Mrs. Thomas Clark), Nathan, William, Henry, Ann Catharine, and Robert (Orphan Court Case File for Robert Hill 1818; Orphan Court Records O:139-145; Sussex County, Delaware). Robert Hill's estate was not finalized until his children began to reach legal age. His son William, in 1826, filed to have the land divided between his mother, Rhoda, and his siblings (Orphan Court Records 1826:440, Sussex County, Delaware).

By 1827, a deadline for his siblings to file grievances or come forward to claim part of the land had passed, and the land was divided with Rhoda receiving one-third of the lands as a Dower. Her lands were Dower #1 and #2 on the plot map that was attached to the court documents (Figure 2; Orphan Court Records 1827:440, Sussex County, Delaware). Both Dower allotments contained houses, but the house on Dower #1 was drafted as a much more substantial structure, probably depicting the Hill home place. The area containing the present project was listed as wood land. An interesting detail was found the description of Rhoda Hill's Dower #1. The southern boundary of that parcel was drafted to contain a rectangular jog only ten feet from a shed door on the northwestern corner of a barn.

The neutral parties asked to divide the Hill land could not devise a way to divide the remaining two-thirds of the Hill land equally among the siblings (Orphan Court Records 1827:440, Sussex County, Delaware). In addition, William's brother Nathan, then living in Pennsylvania, had not come forward and forfeited his right to part of the land before subdivision. Therefore, only two sections were subdivided for the siblings, marked as #3 and #4 on the plot map (Figure 2). William received allotment #3 and the receiver of allotment #4 is not known at this time. William's allotment #3 also mirrored the rectangular jog in Dower #1 given to his mother.

William Hill lived in Milford with his wife Margaret and received Dower # 1 after his mother died. In 1851, William and Margaret sold a 339 acre tract to Curtis S. and Bethuel Watson, brothers from Milford, which contained all of allotment #3 and the southern portion of Dower #1 containing the large house seen in Figure 2 (Figure 3; Sussex County Deed Book 19:243). The land, valued at $9,500, was in one parcel, save a quarter-acre lot for the "***family burying ground (now partly enclosed by a rail fence)***" which was to be left intact for use by the Hill family as they saw fit (Sussex County Deed Book 19:243).

The cemetery was located on the northern tract in 1851, labeled as Dower #1 on the 1827 plot, and given to Bethuel Watson in the 1860s, who sold it to Harry Deputy in 1907. Dr. Nathan Pratt married Mary Hill, daughter of William and Margaret Hill, and the grandparents of a "Dr. Pratt of Milford" were said to be buried 2 miles east of Milford on land belonging to Harry Deputy with no stones existing by 1930 (Pratt 1986:19; Hudson 1930:515). It is suggested that at least Robert Hill and wife, as well as William and Margaret Hill were buried in the cemetery.

Figure 2: Robert Hill's estate division in 1827 (Orphan Court Records 1827:440).

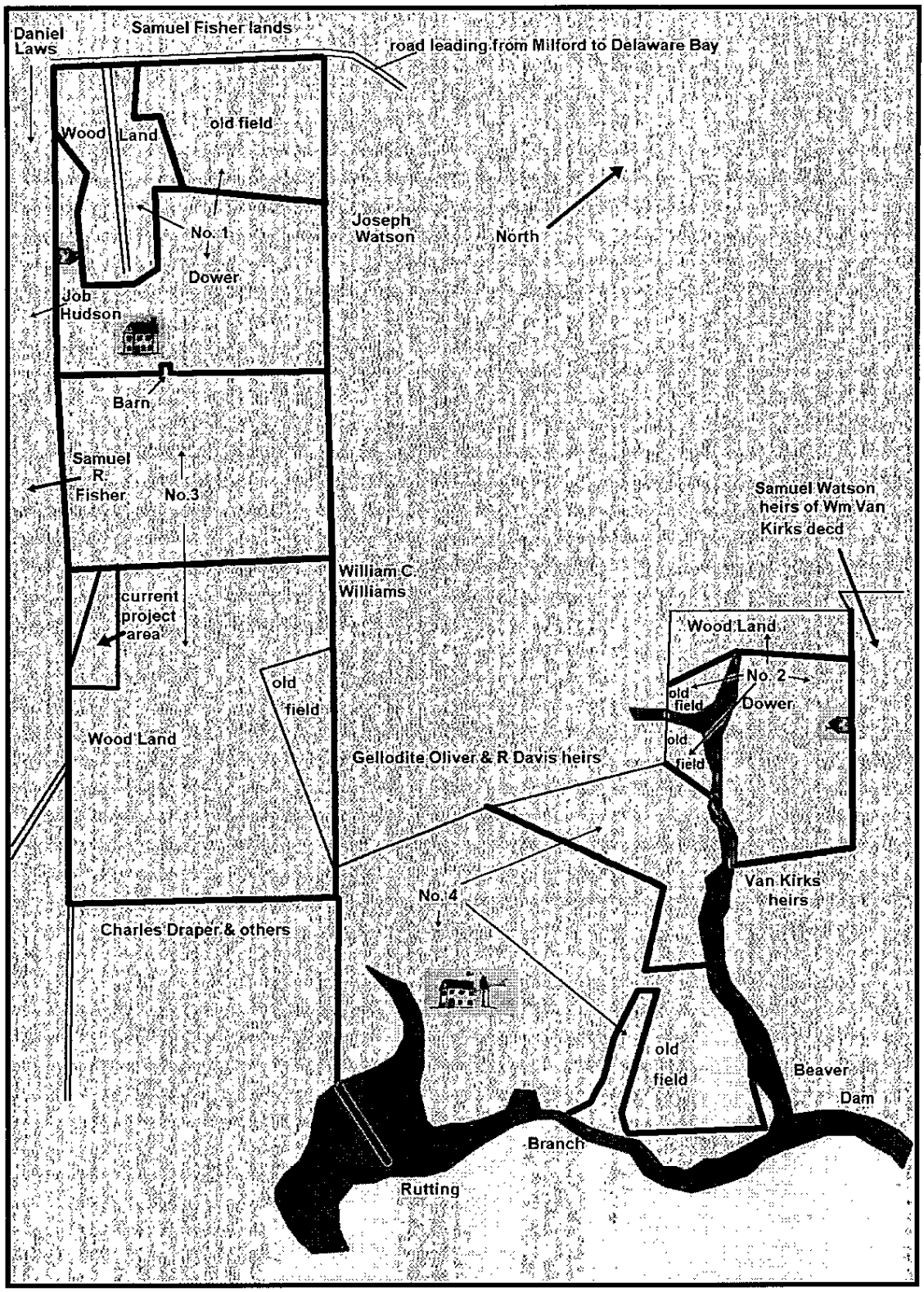
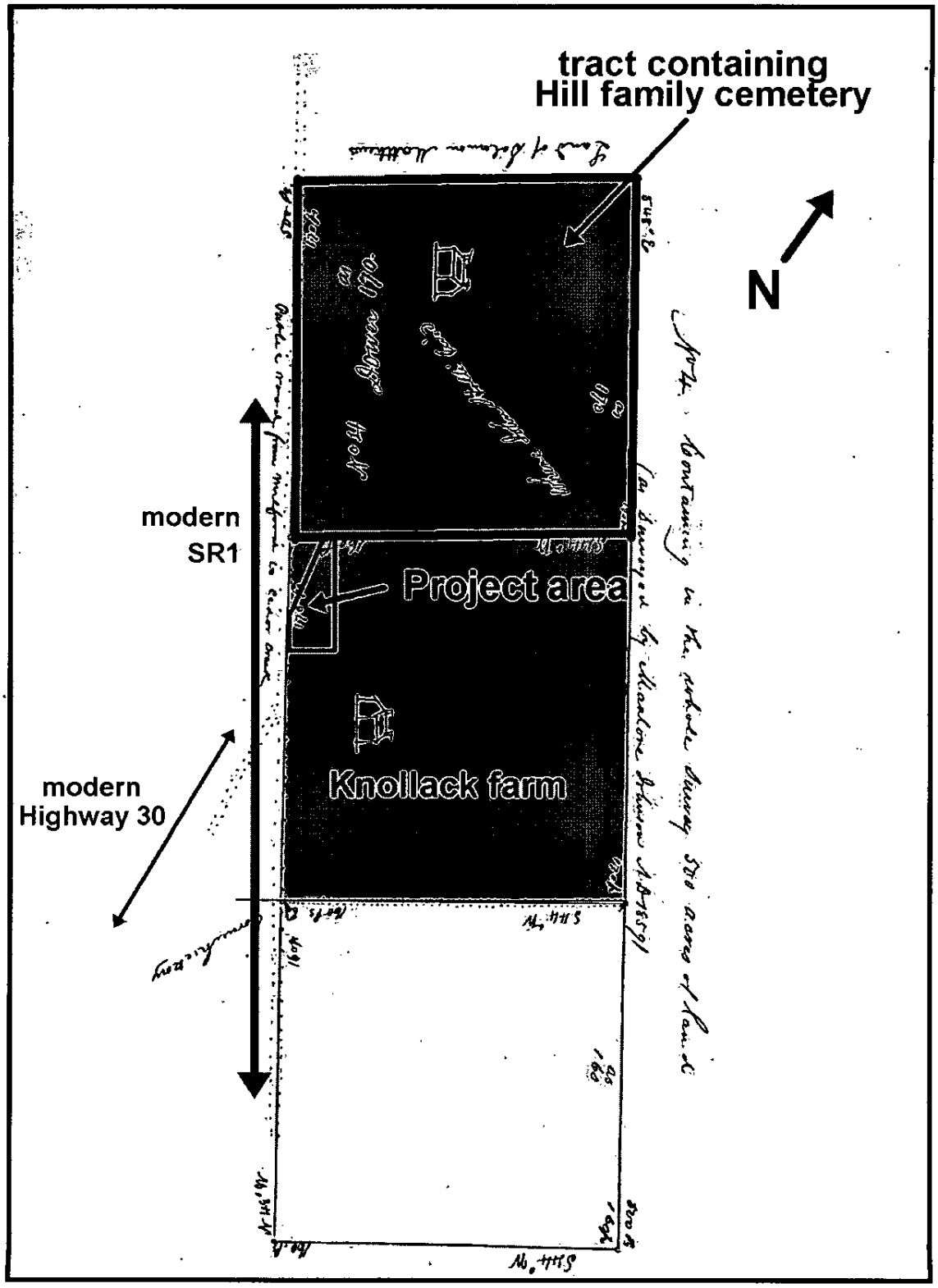
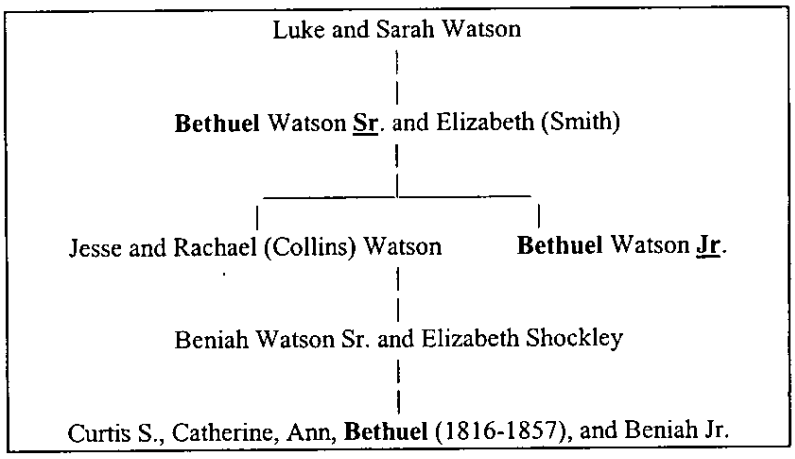


Figure 3: Map of the 339-acre tract of Robert Hill's Estate sold to Curtis and Bethuel Watson in 1851.



Curtis and Bethuel Watson were descendants of Luke Watson, who brought his family to Lewes from Connecticut in 1677 (Pettit 1941:1). A lineage relates the common names in the Watson family:

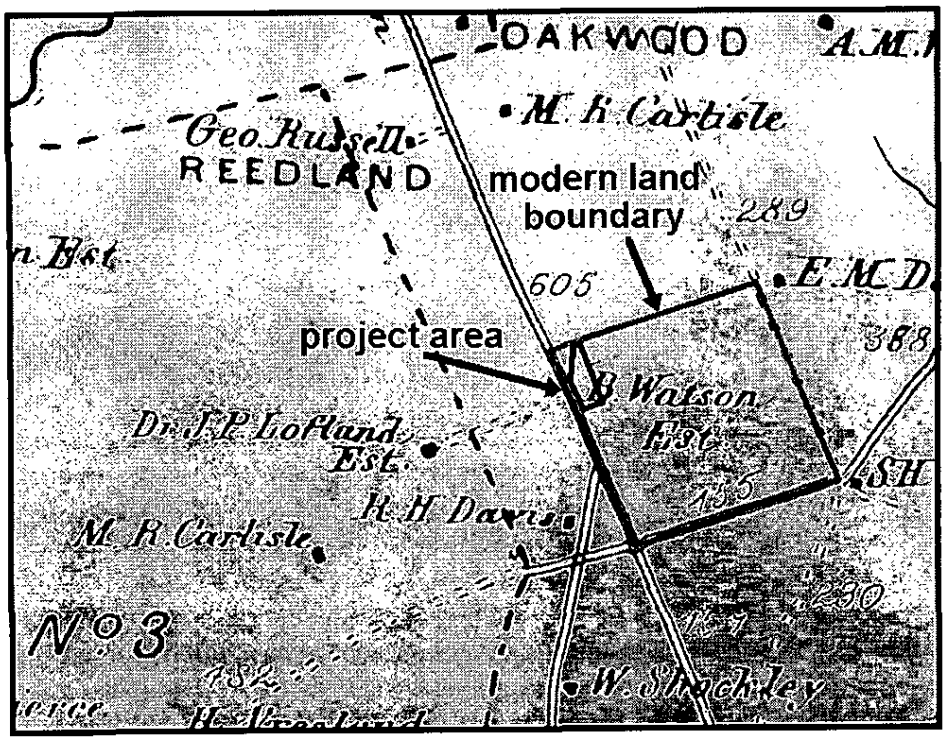


Curtis and Bethuel Watson (1816-1857) owned the shipbuilding firm of CS Watson and Co., and they purchased several tracts of land for timber to construct vessels in Milford to ship grain, staves, bark, and lumber to Wilmington and Philadelphia and beyond (Scharf 1888:1192). Curtis and Bethuel also purchased the 160-acre tract to the south of the Hill tract from Samuel Draper, from another local shipbuilding family.

Bethuel Watson (1816-1857) and Ruth Tharp Watson had five children: Mary, William Tharp, Beniah, Annie, and Minnelia. Bethuel died in 1857, and in 1859, a Chancery Court case in Kent County divided up the Watson brothers' lands. Ruth received several parcels as Dower tracts, including the north half (170 acres) of the **Hill Land,** as the tract was called. Since both Rhoda Hill and Ruth Watson received the same tract containing a house as part of a Dower, it is suggested that the structure on the northern tract was a substantial structure in which to reside or rent. The south half (170 acres) of the **Hill Land** to Bethuel's children, but formal transfer of land did not occur until the children were of age in 1870 (Orphan Court Case File for Bethuel Watson, Kent County; Sussex County Deed Book 163:539). The land was labeled as "*B Watson Est*" in the 1868 Beers Atlas (Figure 4).

According to the deed and court records, the Watson's considered the tract a rental property and did not live on the land, at least by 1859. Further archival research into deed records of that time period would be difficult to determine names of the tenants. Tax records may indicate when the house structure was built, but only if the owner did not own several tracts containing houses that would mask the tract in question.

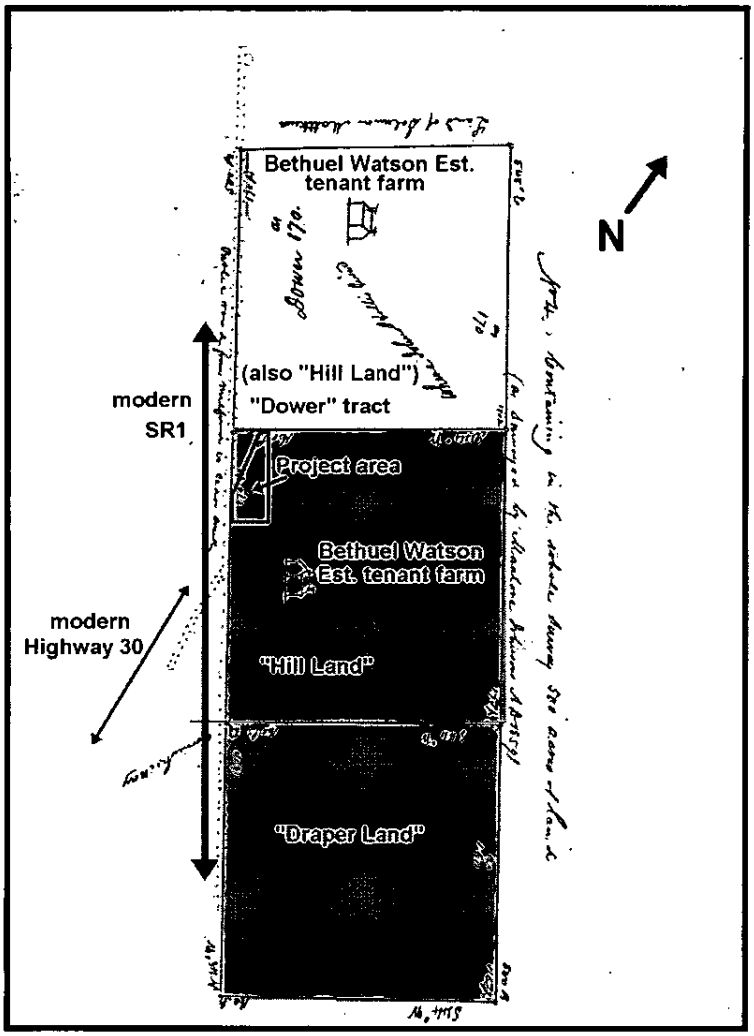
Figure 4: Project area plotted on the 1868 Beers Atlas for Cedar Creek Hundred.



The **Bethuel** Watson family was related to two Delaware governors. **Bethuel**'s wife, Ruth Tharp, was the daughter of William Tharp the 37th Governor of Delaware (1847-1851). She remarried soon after Bethuel's death to Manlove Carlisle, who became the guardian of his stepchildren. **Bethuel** and Ruth's son, William Tharp Watson, became the 51st governor of Delaware (1895-1897; www.state.de.us/facts/history/delgov3.htm, March 9, 2001). The Watson, Tharp, and Carlisle families, while owning many farms in the region, as seen on the 1868 Beers Atlas map, their main residence was in Milford.

Minnelia (Minnie) Watson married Charles Heisler and was widowed by the time she sold her interest in the land to Lee Hirsch in 1908 for $14,000 (Figure 5; Sussex County Deed Book 163:539). Also included in the transaction was the "Draper Land", located to the south of the "Hill Land", and the two tracts combined have remained intact to the present. Ruth and her husband George Draper, a descendant of the Draper ship building family in Milford, sold their interest in the land tract in 1920 (Sussex County Deed Book 221-81).

Figure 5: Map of the Bethuel Watson Estate settlement showing the project area.



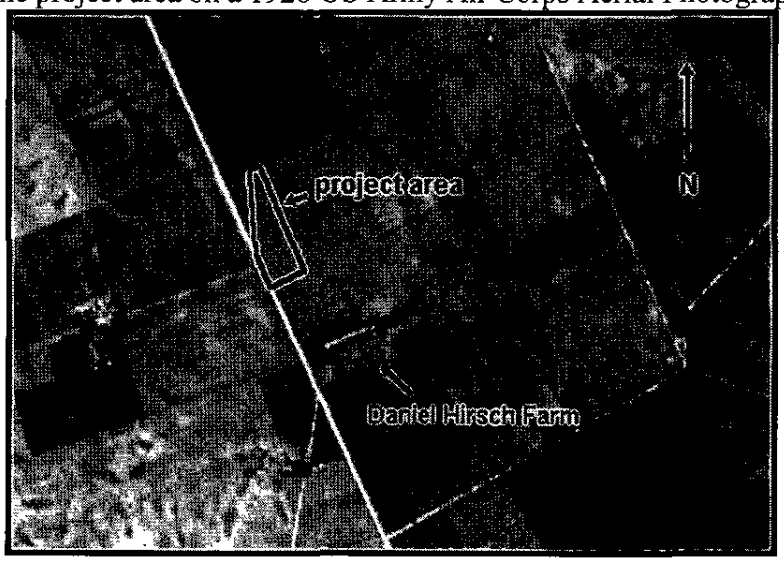
The Watson descendants sold the land in the 1920s, but many of the subsequent land owners may also have been absentee landowners. Table 1 lists the names of the known landowners since the Bethuel Watson family owned it in the mid-1800s.

Table 1: Chain of title for the project area from 1870 to present.

Grantor	Grantee	Date	Comments	Deed Book
Carl E. Dugan	Beverly T. Dugan	1977		847-1
Louis Phillips	Carl E. Dugan	1961		532-595
Brown P. Thawley	Louis Phillips	1961		532-595
John and Edna Burris	Brown P. and Virginia Thawley	1942		339-320
Lee and Anna Hirsch	John and Edna Burris	1940		329-14
George and Ruth Draper	Daniel Hirsch (brother of Lee Hirsch)	1920	½ interest	221-81
Minnie Heisler	Lee Hirsch	1908		163-539
Bethuel Watson Estate	Minnelia W. Watson and Ruth	1870	Orphan Court	Kent County

The earliest known aerial photograph of the project area was taken in 1926 by the US Army Air Corps (Figure 6). The photograph clearly indicated the farmstead, and no buildings or anomalies could be observed in the project area. The farmstead to the northwest of the project area was still intact, as was the angled road extending to the west from Highway 14.

Figure 6: The project area on a 1926 US Army Air Corps Aerial Photograph.

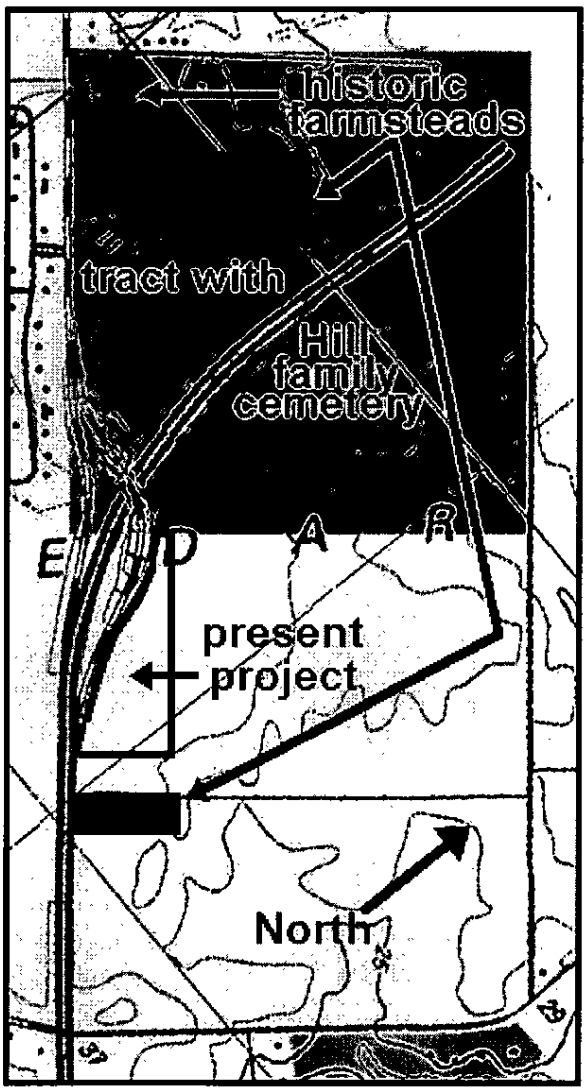


A 1995 aerial photograph of the project area indicated that the Watson farm, now known as the Knollack Horse Farm, or Dugan Farm, was still intact, although there were many modern outbuildings added to the complex since 1926 (Figure 7). The farm across the road to the northwest of the project area had been razed, and only the trace of the angled road going southwest of SR1 could be observed. The onramp had also been constructed to the old road into Milford.

Figure 7: The Knollack Miniature Horse Farm (1995 Aerial Photograph - Terraserver).

The archival research indicated that three historic farmsteads and a rural family cemetery were located in the vicinity, but not directly within the present project corridor (Figure 8). Two farmsteads located on an 1827 plot were situated on the tract to the north as well as the Hill family cemetery. A third farmstead, constructed on the same tract as the present project in the 1850s, is located a few hundred meters to the south. No historic structures or complexes were recorded in the boundaries of the present project.

Figure 8: Location of historic farmsteads and Hill family cemetery tract in relation to the present project.



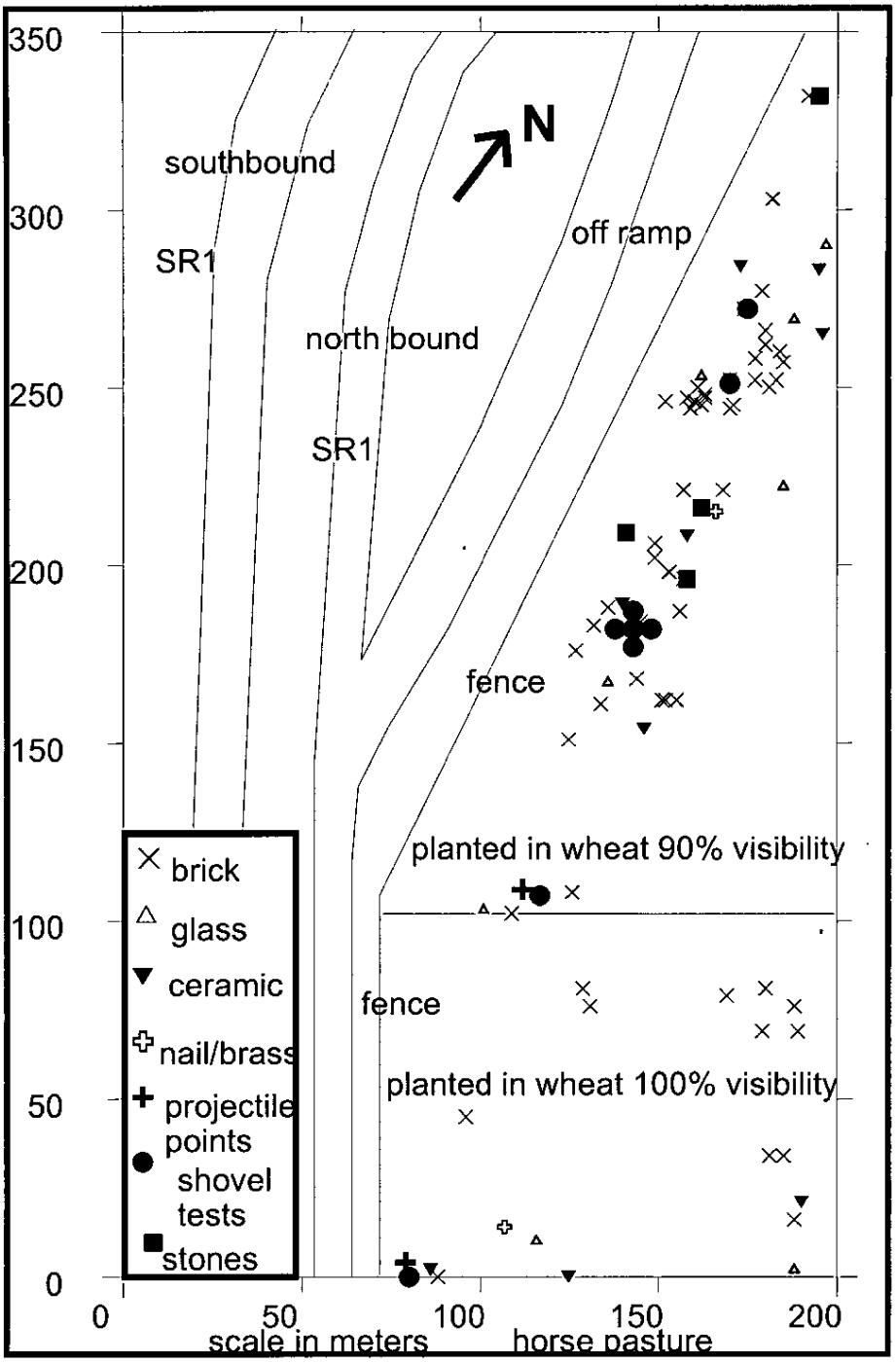
FIELD RESULTS--HISTORIC

Only 101 historic artifacts were observed, divisible into 14 categories (Table 2). The majority of the assemblage was brick fragments. Few pre-1950s cultural material was recovered, although some date between the mid-19th century to WWI (1918). A few clear bottle fragments indicated some post-WWI manufacturing (Figure 9).

Table 2: Historic artifact typology from Bethuel Watson's Estate The "Hill Land".

Artifact Type	Count
Pane glass	4
Olive glass	1
Bottle glass (solarized)	4
Bottle glass (clear)	4
Brick fragments	68
Brass plate?	1
Whiteware	2
Creamware	1
Redware	3
Blue-edged whiteware	2
Amber	1
Pressed glass (candy dish?)	1
Stone slabs	8
Square nail	1

Figure 9: Artifact distribution within the project area.



The historic road was originally located several meters west of the northern two-thirds of the project area prior to the construction of SR1 and the modern overpass, and some of the artifacts could be attributed to the nearby road. However, the majority of the cultural material probably originated from the nearby farmstead complex thru manure spreading and general discard in the field. Mrs. Thawley, the landowner, stated the house had one more brick chimney than is currently in the house. She could not remember when the chimney was removed, but it is possible that the brick fragments in the field are remnants of the brick debris from the chimney or other remodeling phases of the farm.

So few non-brick architectural related artifacts were recovered (n=5, pane glass, nail), that more than likely no structures were ever present directly within the project area. The archival record indicated a house was on the property very near the location of the current farmstead is located, as early as 1859, but not within the project area. Since a single piece of creamware, olive glass, and square nail are the only historic artifacts from the assemblage that would date prior to the 1850s, then the assemblage is probably general scatter or residual trash from the current farm complex or historic road. Subsequent remodeling phases may be responsible from the general discard of the historic material within the project area. Therefore, the project area is not considered noteworthy enough to be declared a formal archaeological site, and the artifacts will be processed as a general field scatter related to the outlying areas of the nearby farm.

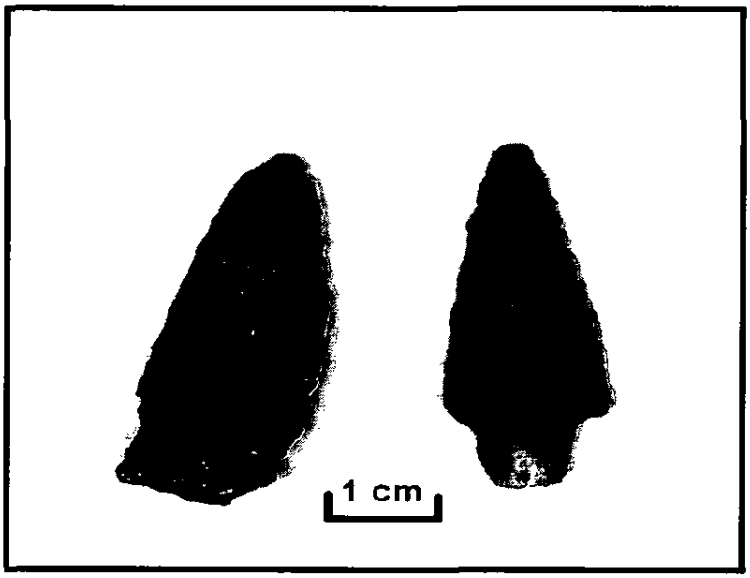
The Cultural Resource Survey Structural Data Form for the farm complex (S-3743) stated the in 1983, the house was a 2 ½ story, l-shaped, frame structure with a brick foundation. White aluminum siding covered original wood siding that was painted yellow, attached with hand cut nails, with ¼ hewn logs as joists. The front porch was not original, presently floored with brick with high two-story columns (doric capitals). The form also indicated there were four layers of wooden shingles on the house, but the wording suggested the shingles were on the side covered with the aluminum siding, and the roof was covered with asphalt shingles. The current landowner, the Thawleys, have added a one-story addition to the rear of the house. The barn, probably constructed after 1900, was a large rectangular structure with concrete blocks on the first story with a framed second story. The structure was originally a dairy barn with I-beam supports for the middle bay.

The house was considered ineligible for nomination to the NRHP during a driving tour of the SR1 corridor in the mid-1990s, but no report was ever filed with the recommendations (personal communication with Gwen Davis, April 2, 2001). The historic integrity of the house has been severely compromised by the renovations, and the remainder of the farm complex has not retained the buildings from the period of significance (mid-19th century). The proposed storm management pond is not thought to compromise the viewshed of the complex any more severely than the impacts that have already occurred on site from renovations. Therefore, no further work on the farm building complex on the current project is warranted.

FIELD RESULTS—NATIVE AMERICAN

Two projectile points comprise the entire prehistoric assemblage from the project area, datable generally to the Woodland I (3000 BC to AD 1000) (Figure 10). No other cultural material, such as bifaces, cores, or flakes were recovered. One of the projectile points was a brownish jasper, straight stemmed point probably made from a pebble. The second projectile point was a deep reddish jasper, slightly expanding point probably made from a cobble or pebble. The surface of the field was resurveyed in a 10m radius around each of the projectile points but no additional prehistoric artifacts were observed. A single STP was excavated next to each point location, also negative for cultural material. The prehistoric artifacts are considered isolated finds and are not considered part of a formal archaeological site.

Figure 10: The two projectile points from the project area.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present survey covered 7.1 acres and found only 101 historic artifacts and 2 Native American projectile points. The majority of historic material was high-fired brick fragments, with lesser numbers of bottle glass, large stones, and ceramics. The only other architectural related artifacts were four pieces of window pane glass and a single square nail. The small historic artifact assemblage dates mainly to the last half of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. Archival maps and deed records indicated a farm building has been nearby, but not within the project area, since at least 1859. Archival records also indicated a family cemetery was nearby, but lying within the adjacent land tract to the north of the project area. Since the date of the artifacts range from the period when buildings were known to be off-site, the historic material is considered general dispersal within the field, perhaps from cleaning of the farm yard or manure spreading and not a formal archaeological site. Additionally, the nearby house and farm complex have been renovated several times and are not considered eligible for nomination to the NRHP.

The Native American artifacts consisted of only two Woodland I (3000 BC – AD 1000) projectile points, with no other accompanying cultural material. The project area, situated in a low rise between to drainages, is not within an area of high probability for prehistoric sites. The two projectile points were probably isolated occurrences and not considered part of a formal archaeological site, and therefore, not eligible for nomination to the NRHP.

The low frequency of historic and prehistoric artifacts across the entire project area, as well as the lack of sub-plow zone cultural material or soils that could contain cultural material, indicates the project area would not contain information relevant to nomination to the NRHP. Furthermore, the cultural materials are not considered to be part of a formal archaeological site. Therefore, Parsons ES recommends no further archaeological work within the project area.

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