



## summary & recommendations

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Excavations were conducted at the location of the proposed Wilmington Boulevard in Wilmington, Delaware by Mid-Atlantic Archaeological Research, Inc. as part of a Phase II study of the historical and cultural resources of this area to be impacted. The work was commissioned by the Department of Transportation, Division of Highways of the State of Delaware as recommended by the Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs. The scope of services called for a general historical background study, the design and carrying out of a research program, and the conducting of field archaeological investigations at locations selected to provide data for evaluation of the archaeological resource potential.

The investigation has endeavored to examine both the physical and, to a lesser degree, social structure of a seven block area of Wilmington. The background study, supported by the archaeological investigations, indicate that archaeological resources exist within the project area which are associated with all phases of Wilmington's growth, from its founding in 1731 to the present. The Wilmington Boulevard project has attempted to explore a variety of features common to the urban environment within the context of a historically and functionally defined sample.

The Jefferson Street to Justison Street block was not archaeologically tested. Information provided by the Department of Transportation indicated that the entire block had been stripped at least to the level of basement floors and was, at the time of the field investigations, covered with select fill. Historical research, moreover, suggests that the resources of this block would yield only structural information which would be better viewed in the block to the east, Justison to Washington.

Excavations on the Justison Street to Washington Street block exposed several structural foundation walls of varying dates. In addition, a series of partially looted privy features were located and excavated. The materials recovered from these features suggest a variety of differing activities in this area. As only one feature was partially looted by collectors in each identified house lot, there is probably at least one more privy, and more likely two more, remaining undug. The backs of the house lots have a minimum of 9 inches of overburden protecting these and other backyard features from being truncated. Additional excavations in this area is warranted.

The Washington Street to West Street block was not tested by Mid-Atlantic Archaeological Research, Inc. personnel. Cellar entrances are evident along front Street and parting walls are still standing beneath the surface. It is suspected that, as with the previous block, backyard deposits are temporally stratified. If this is the case, the area should contain undisturbed portions of subsurface features. The top several feet of the area had been stripped by large machinery subsequent to the removal of the buildings in this block.

Subsurface investigations in the West Street to Tatnall Street block revealed several foundations which illustrate, in part, phases in building construction. Artifactual remains are few in number on this block and the authors are not certain that further work will yield any additional information of importance.

The most interesting structure in the Tatnall to Orange Street block was the building complex known as the Grubb Lumber Company. Excavations at Grubb Lumber revealed a series of complex structural features relating to various periods of building construction. In addition several walkways, a cistern and other subsurface pits were located and excavated. The artifactual remains from Grubb Lumber date these features from the mid-18th century to the present. Surprisingly little disturbance is evident. Several items were not located during the investigations. Privies, probably one for each generation of occupants, should exist and will, if not destroyed by subsequent use of the property for commercial and manufacturing purposes, yield culturally sensitive artifacts. A well system should be extant. The extensive excavation of this area would allow the illustration of the changing architectural fabric and functional nature of this block. It also should permit behavioral inferences to be sought through the study of these changes as they effect the material culture and livelihood of the inhabitants.

The Orange Street to Shipley Street block had several extant buildings which were occupied by the Sunday Breakfast Mission. Only one feature, a privy/well was excavated on this block. The site is still virtually untouched. Two additional privies were located and exposed near the excavated feature and numerous other subsurface features should be extant both within the former building sites (basement areas) and in the back lot areas. Materials recovered from the excavated feature were numerous and even the cursory examination provided by this report has revealed patterning in the assemblage. It seems likely that most, if not all, subsurface features in this block have contextual integrity and are likely to provide a great deal of information concerning the differing behaviors of inhabitants both on this block and throughout the project area.

One subsurface test was excavated on the Shipley Street to Market Street block. This test unit revealed an 18th century foundation with 19th century alterations, including step foundations. The parcel of land investigated was the original location of the Thomas Willing house (founder of the town in 1731). The cellar floor of an adjacent structure (107 to 109 Market Street) is of poured concrete and probe tests suggest that it covers extant subsurface features. Another group of extant structures (119, 123 and 129) still retain an 18th century roof configuration and structure form. It seems likely that the backyards of these occupied buildings will have preserved features, such as wells or privies.

The Market to King Street block has revealed a very complex array of features. Apart from numerous remains recovered from a privy and a cistern, the complex contains; another possible privy, a brick walkway/patio, a possible 18th century drain containing various artifactual materials, and two wall structures. The greater part of this block was not tested by Mid-Atlantic Archaeological Research, Inc. personnel.

Many of the elements on the Market to King Street block, due to its central location within the City of Wilmington, are from divergent time periods, but all have been sealed by either historic or recent land fills. All features were not located and few were excavated. The entire exposed unit (Parcels 188 and 189) has been covered with plastic and backfilled with sand. Extensive excavation in this area, and the areas surrounding it, should provide a vast amount of data concerning the historic utilization of urban lots as well as providing insights into the changing behaviors and status of the block and its inhabitants.

Four areas within the Wilmington Boulevard project area have been shown to contain intact archaeological remains with the potential of revealing, to the archaeologist, information concerning significant aspects of Wilmington's past. The Justison to Washington block contains relatively undisturbed privies and possibly wells relating to late 19th century residential units. Grubb Lumber (Tatnall to Orange Street block), Sunday Breakfast Mission (Orange to Shipley Street block) and the Market to King Street block all appear to be sensitive areas archaeologically and the most likely to provide significant information.

All of these areas contain materials relating to Wilmington's development as a small river town in the early 18th century to an industrial city by the end of the 19th century. Grubb Lumber contains a closely defined, stratified architectural complex from which information concerning traffic flow, and the changing concepts of space may be discerned. Market to King Street block has at least one, possibly several, intact occupation floors and preserved activity areas. Finally, the Sunday Breakfast Mission provides undisturbed privy and possibly refuse deposits. The combination of contexts provided by these areas should yield sufficient data for the understanding of the variability and dynamics of urban growth. Complex and changing cultural processes and behaviors are in evidence in all urban contexts. It is hoped that future excavations will provide an understanding of such processes in Wilmington.

Based upon the archaeological investigations and historical document research conducted at the Wilmington Boulevard project area, the following recommendations can be made:

- (1). Archaeological Data Recovery operations should be instituted at the Wilmington Boulevard project area. It has been determined that the cultural resources present within the project area constitute some of the most significant in regards to the early history of the State of Delaware and the social and economic development of the City of Wilmington. It has been further shown that these resources, in their documentary and archaeological forms are available for investigation. It can be assumed that the selection of data recovery over that of resource conservation is necessary since the construction of the Wilmington Boulevard is the best and most prudent alternative open at the present time. Therefore, it is recommended that archaeological data recovery, as outlined in this section, be initiated as soon as possible.
- (2). Intensive Historical Documentation should be conducted prior to and in conjunction with archaeological data recovery operations. The background document search conducted for the present Phase II study has revealed the wealth of data available to the researcher as well as its relative assessability and its value in interpretation of the total picture of the development of Wilmington and the artifactual remains which can be extracted by archaeological means. A full-time historical documentor should be assigned to recover and interpret, together with the historical archaeologist, those records on the past history of the City of Wilmington.
- (3). Archaeological excavations do not appear to be called for within the block bounded by Jefferson and Justison Streets. Evidence has been presented which indicates that any cultural resources existing within this block will have been extensively disturbed during the razing and stripping operations which followed its acquisition by the Department of Transportation. Furthermore, historical documentation has suggested the development of this block as housing for city workers, as was the two blocks to the east (Justison to West Streets), during the last half of the 19th century. It appears that the development of these set of blocks are quite similar in most architectural and social respects.
- (4). The Justison to Washington Street block has been shown to contain cultural resources that are relatively undisturbed and that should be subjected to data recovery operations. The development of this city block was relatively late and reflects the expansion of the industrial capacities of the City of Wilmington. Information about residential patterns of the late 19th century, relatively uncontaminated by earlier cultural activity, should be sought through archaeological exploration. It is recommended that several units (entire parcels) be subjected to investigation.

- (5). Data recovery excavations within the Washington to West Street block should be minimal and limited to the search for specific types of information not available in the Justison to Washington Streets block. Historical developments in this block would mirror that of the two blocks to the east. It is recommended that initial operations be scheduled for Justison to Washington and then, if certain types of data are not found, follow up work be conducted in the block between Washington and West Streets.
- (6). Although the City of Wilmington's western edge, for a number of years, was marked by West Street, and information that reflects this fact should be found in the archaeological record, it is a fact that very little in the way of intact cultural resources are likely to be found within the West to Tatnall Streets block. Due to stripping operations associated with the razing of standing structures, little of the archaeological record remains. Therefore, no archaeological investigations are recommended for this block.
- (7). Extensive archaeological work should be undertaken within the block bounded by Tatnall and Orange Streets. This includes the site of the Grubb Lumber Company property which was subjected to relatively extensive excavations. The Tatnall to Orange Street block has been shown to contain intact archaeological resources relating to 18th century residential and commercial property, early 19th century residential and light manufacturing properties and late 19th century residential, manufacturing and commercial properties. The industrialization of Wilmington virtually passed by this block leaving intact the record of the above listed cultural activities. As noted in the documentary history prepared by MAAR personnel, this block can provide a wealth of information about the development of the city.
- (8). Orange and Shipley Streets bound a block which can be shown to supplement archaeological resources noted in the Tatnall to Orange Street blocks. Therefore, The excavations recommended for this block can be characterized as specific in scope, problem oriented and labor intensive. It is recommended that excavations in the Orange to Shipley Street block be scheduled later in the course of data recovery to take advantage of information revealed by earlier archaeological work and by the historical document study. More specific problem-oriented endeavors can then be initiated to round out the data base.
- (9). Preliminary investigations at the site of the Thomas Willing house between Shipley and Market Streets indicate that some data about early 18th century residential architecture may be discovered. It is recommended that excavations be scheduled to investigate this phenomenon. These excavations should extend into the present Market and possibly Front Streets to obtain data available from the period when the two roadways were narrower than at present.

- (10.) The most intensive work of the data recovery operations should be scheduled within the block bounded by Market and King Streets. This was the center of the town established by Thomas Willing, the center of residential and commercial activities during the early development of the City of Wilmington, and was the most intensely utilized block within the mature commercial and industrial urban center during the 19th century developments documented for the largest city of Delaware. Archaeological investigations conducted by Mid-Atlantic Archaeological Research, Inc. have demonstrated the wealth of information contained in this area. This archaeological resource will most likely prove to be the most important source of historical data within the New Castle County region.
- (11). Finally, it is recommended that archaeological data analysis not be subject to impingement by needs for additional excavation manpower and that a considerable effort be expended upon the interpretation of the historical and archaeological record prior to its total destruction by necessary road construction operations. This work can proceed hand in hand with field excavations and provide feedback to the archaeological team conducting the research program. No effort should be lost on this endeavor.