

## 4. HUMAN HISTORY IN THE PROJECT AREA

HUMAN GROUPS MAY HAVE entered the St. Jones valley as early as 12,000 years ago, during the Late Glacial climatic episode. Seasonal variation was not pronounced during this period because of the proximity of the continental ice sheet in the vicinity of what are now the Great Lakes.

### PALEO-INDIAN PERIOD

These earliest inhabitants lived by hunting animals, including large game such as mastodons, mammoths, and other Pleistocene megafauna. Because hunting was so important to their way of life, these people were skilled in making flaked stone projectile points, as well as other stone tools for use in processing the meat, hides, and other animal products.

Settlement seems to have been concentrated west of the project boundaries along the mid-peninsular drainage divide. Small scale hunting camps may have existed near swampy areas such as the bay/basins found within the study area, but for the most part, these settings were not occupied until later in the prehistoric period.

### ARCHAIC PERIOD

The Archaic cultural period begins about the same time as the Atlantic environmental episode. The disappearance of the glaciers allowed the development of marked seasonal variation, while the rising sea level allowed the development of swamps, increasing the variety of environmental settings available for exploitation. Within the project area, the bay/basin features would have filled with water during this period.

Paralleling this increase in the environmental and seasonal diversity, the Archaic Period is marked by an increase in the number and variety of tools in use. Of particular interest is the introduction of a

variety of ground stone tools, including axes, gouges, grinding stones, and other implements for exploiting plant resources.

Within the project area, Archaic Period sites are most likely to occur in association with the bay/basin features. The sand ridge along the southern side of the basin called Simon's Savannah is a typical location for Archaic procurement sites.

### WOODLAND I PERIOD

The beginning of the Woodland I cultural period coincides with the beginning of the Sub-boreal environmental episode, a period in which environmental conditions were generally drier than during the preceding Atlantic episode. There was also considerably more variation in climatic patterns than during previous period.

Large base camps developed in the floodplains of major streams and adjacent to major swamps, where the resource base was more reliable because of the variety of resources available. Many small procurement sites were also established along streams and adjacent to bay/basin features. In general, the focus appears to have been on the utilization of a wide variety of resources. This is reflected in the introduction of specialized ground stone tools and in the introduction of stone bowls, and later, of ceramic vessels.

In the project area, a variety of large and small procurement sites are likely to be found, as well as an occasional small base camp. Both headlands overlooking the Fork Branch floodplain and areas adjacent to bay/basin features are likely to have been used for settlements during this period.

### WOODLAND II PERIOD

The beginning of the Woodland II period is marked by a change in emphasis,

rather than by any dramatic change in cultural patterns. Base camps continue to grow in size, but procurement sites are smaller and fewer in number. The tool kit is less varied than it was during the Woodland I period, but the frequency of storage features has increased, even in smaller sites.

It is likely that the project area was used only for small scale hunting forays. Small procurement sites can be expected, particularly in the wooded fringes along the stream valleys.

#### CONTACT PERIOD

The contact period is the time of initial contact between European colonists and Native American groups. It begins with the first, indirect experience of Delaware Native Americans with European trade goods and diseases and ends with the disappearance from Delaware of Native Americans as recognizable tribal groups. It is likely that sites of this period will not be easily distinguished from sites of the Woodland II period.

#### COLONIZATION

Even though the area was not colonized during the Dutch period, several of the leading families in the project area bore Dutch ancestry, including such families as Lockerman, Comegys, and Boyer. After the English takeover, settlers from Virginia and New England came into Kent County; among the Virginia immigrants were some who proposed around 1670 to establish a town at the mouth of St. Jones River.

Their effort failed, and Kent County was without a proper settlement for another fifty years, and forty years after the county's court was established in 1680.

By then, claimants had taken up land along St. Jones Creek [Dover River] as far up as the head of tidewater at the present site of Dover. The most attractive unclaimed frontier lands still available lay on the inland levels along the main freshwater streams, including parts of the project area.

William Penn's accession in 1682 sparked a new land rush, as his Quaker associates moved into the Delaware Valley in large numbers.

Simon Hiron, who had settled the Chipping Norton tract on Muddy Branch, east of the project area, claimed two tracts, called Range [1000 acres] in 1682 and Concord [670 acres] in 1691 on the headwaters of Dover River. Another early claimant was Jane Bartlett, who took up a tract called Virgin's Choice in 1681 in the area later known as Fox Hall (Scharf 1888:1083).

Under the Dutch and the Duke of York, local courts had taken charge of parcelling out the unclaimed land, but the new proprietor soon concentrated authority in his own land office at Philadelphia. The ensuing period was marked by large grants to Philadelphia merchants and speculators, including members of the Penn family, who effectively controlled the interior of Kent County for another century.

Nicholas Loockerman (1697-1769), scion of a wealthy New York Dutch merchant family, moved to Kent County about 1723 and established himself as an extensive planter on part of Hiron's Range. Within a few years, he had acquired extensive lands on both sides of the headwaters, some farmed by tenants and some cut for timber. He built a sawmill near where College Road crosses the head of Silver Lake (Scharf 1888:1081-1082).\*

#### THE NORTH [DENNEY] PORTION

The present DelTech Terry Campus and Kent Vo-Tech properties occupy much of the farm where Benjamin Stout lived. His widow's frame house was located in 1750 just east of the present main college building, on the present campus property (FIGURES 4, 5). After Mrs. Stout died, their son Emanuel consolidated his title to the farm in 1752. He then traded it, in 1756, to Lewis Ganoe in return for Ganoe's home place.

Three generations of the Ganoe family owned the farm. John Ganoe, apparently a son of Lewis, died intestate, and in 1805 the farm became the property of his brother Lewis, whose non-resident children in 1824 sold it to Thomas Denney, who died shortly thereafter.

Both the Ganoe and Stout families were among the developers of Fast Landing [Leipsic], on Little Duck Creek [now Leipsic River] at the eastern end of the present Denney's Road. This road was to become a local collector, running from a mill at the

head of Maidstone Branch to tidewater; when the Delaware Rail Road was built, DuPont Station was established at the grade crossing.

Thomas Denney was in the process of assembling a sizable farm by purchasing parcels from heirs of former residents. In 1803, he bought an adjacent parcel that had been in the Torbert family since 1750 (FIGURE 4). Between 1805 and 1828, the farm's mansion house site was relocated from a branch of the river, where Ganoe had lived, to a site by Denney's Road, reflecting the trend toward road orientation.

Denney chose to face Denney's Road rather than the state road (now U. S. 13). This choice can be attributed to the fact that roads connecting landings to the hinterland were more important than the north-south road to Philadelphia, since most commerce travelled by water.

The farm passed in 1828 to James Denney, whose son, John P. M. Denney, inherited it in 1845. John lived on the farm, and in 1871 bought the former Torbert parcels from his cousin Charles Denney. At his death in 1890, John P. M. Denney left both tracts to his daughter Allie P. Moore.

Her heirs in 1936 sold the properties to Frank Wright, who in turn sold the property west of Route 13 to Jacob Zimmerman, Inc. This transaction included parts of both Denney farms. In 1971, Jacob and Charlotte Zimmerman conveyed most of the land to the State of Delaware.

Locations of the Stout, Ganoe, and Denney houses up to 1828 are known from surveys (FIGURES 4, 5, and 6). A later Denney farmstead, still visible in the USGS map (FIGURE 1), was obliterated by construction of the college. Foundations apparently associated with this later toft were encountered during the current construction of a wing on the rear of the college building.

#### HISTORY OF THE FORD FARM

When Nicholas Loockerman (1697-1769) arrived in Kent County about 1723, he began a land acquisition program that his only son Vincent (1722-1785) continued vigorously.

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\* For references and a complete title descent, see Appendix 1.

In 1757, Vincent bought a piece west of the river and part of the Range, 150 acres, from the heirs of David Griffin, a Philadelphia joiner. In 1764, Vincent bought 89 acres west of the Dover River from Edmund Badger, a cordwainer, who had inherited it from his father. These tracts, and others, were bought from absentee owners, generally heirs of Philadelphia people who had invested in Kent County real estate during the first generations of the eighteenth century.

Vincent Loockerman and his wife Susannah had one son, called Vincent the younger. After the death of his first wife, Vincent, the elder, married Elizabeth Pryor, who was to bear him two additional children, Elizabeth and Nicholas. He provided for his first son, Vincent the younger, by granting him a life estate in all his land in Dover Hundred. This life grant was converted into an outright gift in 1782.

The 1782 deed described 500 acres, assembled from several parcels, west of Dover River and east of Charles Ridgely's Fox Hall tract, including the Badger tract and the Griffin purchase among others. The south boundary was Spring Branch, a stream that crosses McKee Road south of College Road today. Four tenants were identified in the deed. This tract contains all the project area that lies west of the river.

When Vincent the younger died, his daughter Susannah inherited the tract, estimated to contain 746 acres. An Orphans Court valuation in 1796 described two miserable tenant farms, one containing 100 acres arable land farmed by William Farmer, a Negro. Near Fox Hall was an un-fenced farm with 50 acres and an old one-story house, plus a 20-acre field that was to be combined with it. Four tenants in 1782 had dwindled to one tenant and an unrented farm fourteen years later.

Susannah also was a non-resident landowner. While still a minor, she married James Stoops of Philadelphia, and died without reaching her majority. Her share in the paternal estate was divided into shares among her siblings, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Vincent. The middle section, 286 acres, fell

to her sister Elizabeth, who married Thomas Davy of Philadelphia.

Improvements consisted of a one-story log dwelling covered with weatherboards, and two or three old out buildings in the tenure of Samuel Burkalow.

After Elizabeth Davy died, Thomas sold the tract to John Pleasanton in 1818. When John Pleasanton died in 1838, he left the property in four parts. One section, along the river, was left to his daughter Mary DuHamel (1810-1877). The rest was to be divided among Mary and her sisters.

William DuHamel, Mary's husband, became the founding corresponding secretary of the state agricultural society established in 1849; Mary was to be a member in her own right. William also was a founding officer of the Kent County agricultural society that evolved from the first state society in 1854. (Scharf 1888: 437).

Mary's tract included eleven acres lately in the tenure of Nathan Williams, a free Negro. This share, 136 acres 86 square perches, including the Williams acreage, is approximately the present Ford farm. She died in 1877.

In 1881, before her estate was settled, the Court of Quarter Sessions laid out the present McKee Road diagonally across the west side of Mary DuHamel's tract. The new road followed the high ground, leaving useless triangles of property on either side. Jacob Moseley, who had bought the tract to the west, found himself owning 3.75 acres east of the road, while the DuHamel heirs owned a little over four acres west of the new road. The little house of Nathan Williams remained on the east side of the new road.

The Orphans Court plot for the DuHamel estate division (FIGURE 7) shows the farm's forest cover much as it is today. The Nathan Williams house still stood, immediately adjacent to the road. On the west side of the railroad was another house, where the toft had been pictured in the Stoops division of 1804, east of the present farmhouse.

William Denney, Mary DuHamel's son-in-law, bought the farm when her estate

was sold in 1882. In 1884, he traded triangles with Moseley, creating the present western boundary of the tract along the road.

Denney sold the farm in 1888 to its first resident owner, Emory Scotten of Sussex County, whose descendants still own and reside there.

Historic toft sites on the Ford farm include the present farmhouse, built by Emory Scotten. The earlier main house site, occupied at least since the eighteenth century, lay east of the present toft. It was occupied within living memory. The only other historic toft on the farm was the Williams cabin, near where the present driveway enters. One of the farm's owners, Anita Baynard, lives in a modern house on the south edge of the farm, and the other owner lives in a mobile home near the main house.

In the woods near the proposed right-of-way are some outbuildings, formerly part of a sawmill complex. Parts of the mill may still be seen in the woods nearby. The pattern of open ground and forest today is virtually identical to the pattern shown in the earliest extant surveys.

#### HISTORY OF THE GEISER FARM

Like the Ford farm, the Geiser farm was originally part of the vast Loockerman holdings, occupied by tenants and treated as an investment. For a time during the nineteenth century, it was owned by a resident landowner, but most of the tract's history has been marked by fast turnovers and absentee landowners.

The northern third of the Susannah Stoops share of the Loockerman estate fell to her sister Sarah. It was described in the 1804 survey as 191 acres, 122 square perches of woodland, cleared land and cripple. Boundaries of the tract were Mudstone Branch on the north, the present line between this and the Ford farm to the south, and the Fox Hall tract to the west. The division map shows at least three roads crossing Maidstone Branch over this property. Improvements consisted of two log cabins occupied by the Negro Abraham.

Sarah Loockerman married Nicholas G. Williamson of Wilmington. They mortgaged the property to Joseph Grubb in 1807 and redeemed it in 1809. In 1815, the Williamsons sold several of her properties to John Reed and Arthur Johns.

John Reed was a Dover merchant who owned land throughout central Kent County, including several tracts next to this one and lots in Leipsic. He died in 1844. When his estate was divided in 1846, the parcel went to his daughter Elizabeth. Acreage was calculated at 213 acres 12 square perches. At that time, a tenant named N. Costen was living in a house on the western end of the tract, where most of the arable land was located. The eastern end, now the project area, contained only a small area identified as "arable."

The commissioners appointed to make an annual valuation by the Orphans Court determined that 153 acres were "brush" land, and the rest was improved with an orchard, a small frame dwelling house in "tolerable" repair and an old log crib "which should be repaired"

Elizabeth married Daniel Cowgill, Jr., son of Ezekiel Cowgill. They executed an indenture of trust to Clayton Cowgill in 1853, which required his signature on any conveyance of property.

In 1855, they conveyed it, with other property, to George Jones and George McCorkle of New Castle County. They, in turn, sold it to Zadoc and George Townsend of New Castle Hundred in 1857. George Lobdell, a Wilmington industrialist, briefly held a one-third share during 1859. In 1860, the property was deeded to George R. Townsend, Zadoc's son.

Townsend and Lobdell were both officers of the third (1836) New Castle County agricultural society during this period. Lobdell was its president when the financially embarrassed society dissolved in 1872 (Scharf 1888: 435).

In 1876, court commissioners laid out a new road from Forest Street in Dover, across roughly the same course as the present

Saulsbury Road (Kent County Road Book: 221-224), but it was not immediately built.

The sheriff sold the property in 1877 to Margaret Stuart of Wilmington, who held it a month and conveyed it to Walter Cummins, also of Wilmington. Cummins sold it in September 1878 to Catherine Miller of Dover. She moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania, and sold it in 1880 to Lewis Geiser of Dover.

Geiser was apparently not only a resident owner but an aggressive agriculturist. Soon after he bought the land, the new road was built, called the "McKee and Geiser Road" that eventually became the present McKee or Saulsbury road.

The new public road divided the property, creating eighty acres east of the right-of-way. Geiser sold the part east of the road in 1894 to William H. Gregory of New York. The tract was sold in 1899 by the sheriff to his widow, Anna Gregory, in her own right.

In 1900, the sheriff again sold the farm, this time to Pennell Emerson. Emory Scotten, the next-door neighbor, had sued Anna M. Gregory upon default of a mortgage. At the time, the site was improved by a two-story frame dwelling, apple, and pear orchards.

Emerson sold the property in 1903 to Charles Gruner of New York City. He was resident in East Dover Hundred when he sold the property three years later to Amos Nolt of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Nolt had moved to East Dover when he sold the property to Joseph Neville of Canada in 1908. Nolt took back the mortgage on the property. Neville moved to East Dover Hundred, where he resided a month later when he conveyed the land to Louis Kesselring.

Kesselring had moved from Washburn, North Dakota in 1906 and settled on a farm at Oak Grove (Clark 1963:42). He did not settle on the Geiser farm, which he sold in 1911 to David Mosley, who in 1905 had bought the western part of the Geiser tract.

Mosley sold the farm in 1915 to Joseph T. Vance, formerly of Bison, Oklahoma, but then of Kent County. He sold it two years later to James E. Vaughn, of Little Creek Hundred, who held it six months and sold it to Elmer Outten, of Dover.

Outten conveyed it in 1920 to Leroy Eikenberry, subject to two mortgages from previous transactions. The same day, Eikenberry conveyed it to Arthur Heggan of Camden County, New Jersey, subject to four mortgages.

When Heggan sold the property in 1930, he was a resident of East Dover Hundred. His sale, to Herbert W. Savage of Poland, Clay County, Indiana, was subject to a mortgage left over from Mosley's 1915 conveyance, which was by then held by the Farmers Bank.

Savage did not move to East Dover Hundred. He was still a resident of Indiana when he sold the property in 1933 to Margaret E. Downs of Philadelphia. She held the property until 1939, and built the present frame bungalow, which was "nearly new" when she sold the property to John Edward Allen of Long Island, New York

Allen was a local resident in 1942 when he conveyed the land to Walter P. Allen of New York City. Certain obligations, including a mortgage to Thomas C. Frame, encumbered the property. Walter P. Allen died intestate June 22, 1951, leaving the property to his son. In 1958, Walter P. Allen, Jr., of Broomall, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, sold the tract to the Ches-Del Corporation. Out of this tract in 1974, the corporation sold off the present site of the General Metalcraft plant.

At that time, improvements included a bungalow, a stable, barn, and sheds. Ches-Del Corporation in turn conveyed it in 1986 to Calvin and Valerie Boggs, Harold and Frances Remley, and John and Carol Krieger. They, in turn, sold the remainder to the present owners, John and Janis Beiser. A truck terminal was built on the north side of the tract, leaving only about forty acres in the farm, which is no longer under cultivation.