

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION: GOALS AND METHODS

The goals of the historical research component of this project are to describe the historical setting of the corridor, establish the cultural parameters of development, and identify any known historic resources or locations within the project corridor likely to contain significant archaeological or architectural properties. Relevant sources were found at the Historical Society of Delaware; the Bureau of Archives and Records, Hall of Records; the University of Delaware; the Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (BAHP); and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). The Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., was fortunate in having found the original construction drawings for the Du Pont Highway and is grateful to both DelDOT and the Bureau of Archives and Records for their cooperation in obtaining copies of these important materials.

Site-specific historical research was undertaken in conjunction with the Phase 2 archaeological testing program. The principal goals of this research were to establish ownership and occupation of the subject properties. This began with a title search of each property, which allowed cross-referencing with the appropriate census schedules and other materials. Sources were consulted at the Sussex County Courthouse and the Bureau of Archives and Records. Much more documentary information is available for the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries than for the antebellum period. However, most of the archaeological resources identified in the study area fall within the period of ample historical documentation.

SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Sussex County

The study corridor extends roughly from the northern outskirts of Georgetown to the southern periphery of Milford in Sussex County; it is contained in the Georgetown and Cedar Creek hundreds. The earliest European occupation in Sussex County occurred in 1659 when the Dutch established a block house, called Company's Fort, at Hoerenkil, later Lewes (Hancock 1976:14). The outpost expanded to include a small agricultural settlement under the Mennonite leadership of Cornelius Plockhoy in the early 1660s. The Anglo-Dutch war interrupted the growth of the fledgling colony when Sir Robert Carr occupied New Amstel and Hoerenkil and confiscated all of the possessions of Plockhoy's community. Plockhoy later moved on to Germantown but some of his followers remained in Sussex County, where they swore allegiance to the English crown (Hancock 1976:14-15).

The three southern counties that became Delaware were contested by English proprietors as well as by rivaling English and Dutch imperial claims. No sooner had the English supplanted the Dutch than Lord Baltimore, proprietor of Maryland, challenged the claim of the Duke of York. In 1672, Captain Thomas Jones led raids on Hoerenkil on behalf of the Maryland proprietor, forcing settlers to swear allegiance to Lord Baltimore or suffer imprisonment and confiscation of their property. In the meantime, the Dutch fleet sailed into New York harbor in July 1673 and repossessed the city and the settlements on the Delaware. Maryland took advantage of the confusion to tighten its hold on Hoerenkil. Thomas Howell, acting under commission to Lord Baltimore, led another raid on the settlement on the grounds that the inhabitants had taken the oath of allegiance to the Dutch. A second raid led by Howell resulted in near destruction of the settlement except for a single barn (Hancock 1976:15-16).

Peace between England and Holland was restored in 1676 and Holland ceded its possessions in New York, New Jersey, and Delaware to England. Lord Baltimore continued to issue competing patents to land in what became Sussex County, known in Maryland as Somerset County; Governor Lovelace of New York, acting on behalf of the Duke of York, also issued patents to land in the county. Finally, in 1682, the three lower counties were confirmed to William Penn of Pennsylvania, which seems to have brought the contests among the contending proprietors to an end (Hancock 1976:17-18). Penn changed the name from Somerset to Sussex, organized a government, and instituted the system of hundreds.

By 1700, the county is believed to have contained about 1,000 persons. With Lewes as the only town and the commercial and administrative center of the county, settlement dispersed along the Indian River, Mispillion River, and Cedar Creek. Most families engaged in agriculture, with tobacco, corn, wheat, and rye as the principal crops. There were few roads and occupants relied primarily on water transport (Hancock 1976:20-21). Benjamin Eastburn's map of 1737 suggests that settlement was still fairly thin in Sussex County in the early eighteenth century although roads connected the major settlements and the Indian River appears to have been navigable by small vessels about ten miles inland (Munroe and Dann 1975:225).

The town of Lewes prospered as a maritime, commercial, and administrative center, but the gradual growth of western settlements led to familiar agitation by the so-called back country for a county seat that was more centrally located. In addition to agriculture, bog iron deposits and processing sites had led to some economic development west of the original coastal settlements along the headwaters of the Nanticote after 1763. By 1763, Jonathan Vaughn and other entrepreneurs from Chester County, Pennsylvania, had established the Deep Creek Iron Works, a complex of forges and foundries, located about seven miles northwest of the present site of Georgetown, which was supported by a 5,000-acre plantation, system of roads, and stone wharf on Deep Creek, which afforded access to ocean-going vessels (Tunnell 1955:87-88). Other furnaces and forges in the area

included Unity Forge, located three miles above Concord (the site of the Deep Creek Iron Works), and Collins Forge on Gravelly Branch. Operated successively by Captain John Collins, his son Governor John Collins, and his grandson Theophilus Collins, Gravelly Delight was the last of Sussex County iron works to manufacture iron using the traditional blast technology, shutting down some time in the 1850s (Hancock 1976:62; Tunnell 1955:88). The site of Gravelly Delight is west of the project corridor.

Although iron resources contributed to the economic development of the area, the nature of the early iron industry, particularly its requirements for vast quantities of timber from which to manufacture charcoal, did not stimulate rapid increase in population. The terrain in the vicinity of Georgetown was low and swampy and the land was held in large tracts by largely absentee landholders, further discouraging rapid settlement by farmers (Wade 1975:5). The relatively desolate swamps in the area afforded refuge to Tories during the Black Camp Rebellion of 1780. Most of the activity during the War for Independence affected the ports along the Delaware. However, insurrectionists mainly from Cedar Creek and Slaughter Neck Hundred led an uprising in 1780, having established their headquarters in a swamp about six miles north of Georgetown. Kent County militia dispersed the uprising, which involved about 400 men. The eight leaders were condemned to death for treason but pardoned in November 1780 (Hancock 1976:43-44).

Among the grievances that had become intertwined with economic complaints during the Revolutionary years was the continued sense of political isolation that the back country had felt in the years leading up to the war. This was finally resolved in 1791 when Georgetown was surveyed in John Pettijohn's field "sixteen miles from anywhere" and designated the county seat (Wade 1975:5). In roughly the same period but for different reasons, Parson Sydenham Thorne erected a mill on Mispillion Creek in 1787 and together with Joseph Oliver, the local landowner, encouraged people to take up lots in the newly-surveyed town of Milford. Oliver had occupied land in this area since 1773 when he bought a portion of Saw Mill Range, a 1,730-acre tract granted to Henry Bowman in 1680. Prior to constructing the mill, Oliver had run a store and shipped local farmers' produce to market on his own vessels (Milford's Founding and Founders, April 1987). In 1791, Thorne established an Episcopal Church in Milford, eventually shifting the religious center from an older church located three miles west of the fledgling town (Hancock 1976:57-58).

Except for Georgetown, whose genesis was essentially political, a series of small towns in the county followed a similar morphology: houses clustered around grist and sawmills, ports and fords, followed by schools, churches, post offices, and other industries (Hancock 1976:56). What frequently began as small transportation hubs with water power appropriate for milling thus combined central place services for the outlying farmers with transportation and industrial capability. Fleatown, later renamed Federalburg, was initially a small crossroads community defined by two

taverns that served the stagecoaches. The advent of the railroad, however, precipitated the slow decline of the taverns and then the village (Conrad 1908:695). Other small towns in Sussex County dating to this period include Seaford (1799), Laurel (1802), Bethel (1800), Dagsborough (ca. 1780), Millsboro (1792), Frankford (1808), Selbyville (1842), and Milton (1807) (Hancock 1976:58-59).

Growth in the vicinity of Georgetown was slow in the 1790s, due in part to the absence of networks of transportation and communication (Wade 1975:6). In 1796, the General Assembly authorized construction of three county roads: the first ran from Milford Bridge through Georgetown and Dagsborough to the Maryland state line; the second from Lewes through Georgetown to the Maryland state line; and the third line from Georgetown "to the west line that divides the hundred of Little Creek, in the said county from Maryland" (as quoted in Wade 1975:7). The road from Milford to Georgetown became known as the "State Road" (Beers 1868).

Corn had been the principal crop cultivated in Sussex County during the Colonial period and retained its primacy during the first half of the nineteenth century, followed by wheat and other crops. Farmers appear to have practiced a mix of relatively small-scale subsistence/commercial agriculture (Hancock 1976:59). Wheat prices were initially inflated by European demand during the Napoleonic Wars, but after 1819 this market vanished, leaving economic depression in its place. Migration to new lands further west accentuated the depression and agriculture stagnated until about 1830. Thereafter, urban demand for fruits, vegetables, and dairy products slowly stimulated the state's agricultural economy, assisted by improved agricultural techniques that enhanced farm productivity (Hancock 1974:I:374). This transition to farming suited to the domestic urban market was felt first in New Castle County but with the growth of the rail system began to spread to Sussex County by the eve of the Civil War (Hancock 1947:I:376). Farmers in Sussex County did experiment with raising silk cocoons and mulberry trees in the 1830s and 1840s, encouraged, no doubt, by a state bounty on the production of cocoons and silk in 1837 (Hancock 1976:30).

The middle decades of the nineteenth century were notable for the tremendous expansion in the cultivation of peaches. Peaches were introduced into the state by Isaac Reeves of New Jersey in 1832. New Castle County was initially the center of peach cultivation, although with the construction of the railroad, peach orchards had spread to lower Delaware by the 1850s (Hancock 1947:I:382; 1976:60-61). The Delaware Railroad reached the Maryland border at Delmar in 1859. The Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, which was extended from Harrington east to Milford and then south through Ellendale to Georgetown in 1869, encouraged not only cultivation of more perishable, market crops but also the establishment of processing plants and canneries in the town (Delaware Division of the Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Wilmington Railroad 1914; Wade 1975:35).

On the eve of the Civil War, the statewide transition away from grain had begun but was far from complete. Delaware was still heavily invested in wheat and corn, and the most valuable farms and those with the greatest concentration in orchard products, market gardens, and dairying were located primarily in New Castle County (Hancock 1947:1:383). Sussex County lagged behind New Castle in the shift to new crops, and unlike Kent and New Castle Counties, where slavery was a dying institution, contained more than half of the state's slave population (Hancock 1976:64). The largest slave owner in the county on the eve of the war was Benjamin Burton of Indian Creek Hundred, owner of 28 slaves. Burton was the exception, rather than the rule; most slaves augmented relatively modest farm households where they worked as domestic servants or field laborers (Hancock 1976:65).

Sectional tensions were high in the county during the war, and residents of Broad Creek Hundred openly celebrated Confederate victories. Most people were unenthusiastic about the proposed compensated emancipation of slaves in 1861, and the Democrats carried the county in the 1862 elections. In economic terms, however, the war was fundamentally kind to the county, leading to higher prices for agricultural commodities and an expansion in shipbuilding facilities in both Milford and Milton (Hancock 1976:82-84).

The economic promise implicit in the extension of the railroad prior to 1860 became apparent in the decades following the war. Population growth in Sussex County was slow but steady, tourism to shore resorts increased, and by 1900, the county was the state leader in production of peaches, blackberries, and strawberries. Corn was still the leading crop, as it had been since the Colonial period, and Sussex County farmers derived additional income from livestock, poultry, and dairying (Hancock 1976:88-89). The railroads were responsible for other forms of development as well. Both Lincoln and Ellendale, surveyed in 1867, constituted direct responses to access to the railroad (Robinson 1976:62), and in 1875, the Fruit Preserving Company, a cannery, was established in Georgetown near the railroad depot, marking an industrial response not only to improved transport facilities but also to the transition in local agriculture (Wade 1975:35). In 1876, the Georgetown Packing Company was organized (Wade 1975:41). Industry in Georgetown expanded in the 1880s under the leadership of Charles H. Treat. Treat acquired the Fruit Preserving Company in 1883 and began to manufacture various wooden novelties and dishes. In 1885, Treat opened a second plant, which manufactured baskets, barrels, casks, lumber, and scroll- and jig-sawing. Treat's manufactories were soon followed by several new canneries, a steam sawmill, and expanded consumer services, from insurance to ice cream parlors (Wade 1976:41-42). Not all functions were concentrated in the towns and villages, however. Churches and schools were distributed across the landscape where they were easily accessible to the dispersed rural population.

Although Sussex County was the center of Delaware's peach growing in 1890, peach culture in the state was on the wane by 1900, partly as a result

of disease, the cause of which was never identified (Hancock 1947:I:385-386). At the turn of the century and continuing up to World War II, corn and wheat were still important crops as were strawberries, tomatoes, lima beans, green peas, snap beans, cantaloupes, asparagus, watermelons, cucumbers, and sweet corn, particularly in the southern part of the state (Baker 1947:I:394). The state highway program, inaugurated in 1920, greatly stimulated dairying and egg sales in Sussex County in the period following World War I (Baker 1947:I:397,401).

The principal innovation in twentieth-century agriculture was the expansion in raising broilers, that is, young birds weighing less than two and one-half pounds. The modern industry is associated with the experiments of Mrs. Wilmer Steele of Ocean View, Sussex County, with raising and marketing chicks in 1923. By 1928, broiler production had spread across Sussex County and into Kent and New Castle. The Steeles pioneered the timing of raising fowl, beginning the broods in February, as well as with the organization and sizes of the houses. The 2,000-bird unit, the standard in 1930, had by 1940 become considered a "back yard" flock, capable of being handled as a part-time activity (Baker 1947:I:402). The expansion in the production and marketing of broilers simultaneously led to an expansion in hatcheries and hatching-egg production as well as the processing, distribution, and retailing of feed (Baker 1947:I:403, 404). The broilers had initially been delivered live to urban markets; demand among New York City's burgeoning Jewish population was particularly strong. In 1938, Jack Udel established the first dressing plant in Frankford, Sussex County, which successfully slaughtered and dressed the birds and then shipped them to retail outlets (Baker 1947:I:405).

Since 1920, Sussex County has grown enormously, although it retains its agricultural basis. In 1970, 85 percent of the residents were classified as rural, and more than one-half of Delaware's farms and cropland were contained in the county (Hancock 1976:101). Corn has remained an important crop, but cultivation of soybeans together with corn and poultry has supplanted growing of labor-intensive fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, lima beans, peas, and strawberries. Many canneries and processing plants shut down or were replaced by grain elevators, broiler houses, and poultry processing plants (Hancock 1976:100). Vlasic Foods maintained a food processing plant in Millsboro and Draper Foods employed about 1,000 people at another vegetable packing plant in Milton. In addition to food packing and processing, modern industries in the county include chemicals, instrument manufacturing, nylon, fertilizer, textiles, and electronics (Hancock 1976:103).

The Du Pont Highway

Just as the expansion of transportation facilities in the middle of the nineteenth century under the aegis of the railroad launched an era of agricultural innovation and prosperity, the improvement in roads after 1920 underwrote another shift in agricultural orientation. Construction of the Du

Pont Highway, now Route 113, marked an important event in the transportation history of the state, inextricably embedded in far-ranging infrastructural change.

In 1903, the state legislature passed the State Aid Law, established funding and an administrative framework for a state highway department and also passed two laws governing the use of automobiles, marking the first state recognition of this form of individual transport. The State Aid Law was unpopular and was repealed in 1905 (Mack 1947:II:538-539). Nationally, the Good Roads movement appealed to the economic development that a highway system would spur, but support within Delaware was weak. In 1908, T. Coleman du Pont (1863-1930) offered to construct a superhighway through the state without cost to the public through a "plan which was spectacularly novel and far-sighted for that period -- and in fact still is" (Rea 1975:171).

Du Pont proposed to organize a state-chartered corporation that would acquire a 200-foot right-of-way. Within the corridor would be a center roadway for high-speed automobile traffic. To either side would be north- and south-bound electric trolley tracks. Beyond the trolley lines would be lanes for heavy trucks and vehicles, and on the outermost lanes would be soft-surfaced routes for horses and horse-drawn conveyances. Defining the edge of the roadway would be sidewalks for pedestrians, and any unused portions of the corridor would be leased to utility companies or to farmers. Income from the leases would support the maintenance of the road, and the entire system was believed to be ultimately self-supporting. As a totally new concept, the proposed corridor would bypass towns and villages but would be connected to them by spurs (Rea 1975:171, 179). Although there was some opposition, particularly among more conservative downstate farmers, du Pont prevailed and in March 1911, the legislature passed the necessary enabling legislation and the Coleman du Pont Road (or Boulevard) Corporation was created (Rea 1975:172, 174). Construction began near Georgetown in October.

Du Pont was initially his own chief engineer but he soon brought in Frank M. Williams, formerly Chief Engineer of the New York State Highway Department, and two European consultants, Ernest Storms from Belgium and Thomas Aitken from Scotland. Other notable individuals associated with the early stages of the project were Charles M. Upham, future chief engineer of the Delaware Highway Department; C. Douglass Buck, who was destined to become du Pont's son-in-law and then Governor of Delaware; and finally Coleman du Pont's son Francis V. du Pont, who went on to serve as Chairman of the Delaware Highway Commission, then to sponsor the Delaware Memorial Bridge, and finally to become Chief of the Bureau of Public Roads during the Eisenhower administration (Rea 1975:175-176).

Construction stopped six months into the project due to political opposition and litigation over land condemnation proceedings. The eventual compromise reduced the corridor to a 100-foot right-of-way and increased

the formula for assessing the value of farmland that was taken. Construction proceeded until 1917 by which time a two-lane concrete roadway had been finished from the Delaware boundary as far north as the Appenzellar farm near Ellendale (Rea 1975:176). In 1916, Delaware had organized a State Highway Department, which created an agency prepared to take over the responsibilities represented by the du Pont's project. Coleman du Pont was a member of the State Highway Commission, and confronted by potential conflict of interest, personal health problems, and increasingly complex private financial burdens, he agreed to cede the completed portion of the road to the Highway Department, which would complete the remaining 69 miles to Wilmington, and to pay for the cost of completing the project up to a maximum of \$44,000 exclusive of the costs of bridging the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. The road at this point occupied a 40-foot strip and unused land in the corridor reverted to the original owners (Rea 1975:177-178).

The road was completed in 1923 and dedicated in 1924. In 1925, it was incorporated into the national primary road network authorized in the Federal Highway Act of 1921, denoted U.S. Routes 13 and 113. The roadway was widened 20 feet between Wilmington and the fork of U.S. 13 and U.S. 40 in 1927, due to heavy use, and in the early 1930s, it was dualized between Wilmington and Dover (Rea 1975:179-180). Subsequently, additional mileage between Dover and Selbyville has been rebuilt as a dual highway (Rea 1975:180).

Although du Pont initially foresaw a completely new corridor in which to construct his vision, sections of Delaware 113 between Georgetown and Milford, which contains portions of the first phase of construction under the Boulevard Corporation, appear to contain parts of the earlier alignment. The State Road, the main route between Georgetown and Milford, had been authorized in 1796. It remained the principal road for over a century (Figures 3-6). The partially finished Du Pont Highway is shown on early twentieth-century quad sheets, stalled, however, at Appenzellar farm near Ellendale (Figures 7-9). It is clear from these maps that the Du Pont Highway picked up the old Milford, or State, Road north of Georgetown, below Sharp Hill School, followed the old alignment a short distance to a point below Redden Crossroads, where it diverged, and then crossed the old alignment at Gravelly Ditch, where the new road jogged west slightly before proceeding on a course that was roughly parallel to the older route.

Construction of the Du Pont Highway led to other changes in the rural landscape between Milford and Georgetown. Several existing farm roads, such as Road 641, were closed or relegated to the status of private lanes. The new highway also presented new opportunities for commercial development, including gas stations, roadside produce stands, and convenience stores. The proliferation of the automobile, and the gradual improvement of roads in general also encouraged new residential construction, unrelated to the traditional agrarian lifeway, most visibly

represented by mass-market "bungalows" and other Craftsman-derived dwellings, many with stylistically-matching garages.

RESOURCE POTENTIAL

Thinly settled in the Colonial period, this section of Sussex County developed as an area of small mixed subsistence/commercial farms supported by a network of roads, railroads, and towns during the nineteenth century. As in most of eastern agriculture in the second half of the century, farmers in the vicinity of the corridor presumably began to specialize in market crops and commodities, whether grain or the more perishable fruits, vegetables, or dairy products, depending on their relative proximity to transportation. First railroads and then highways facilitated the transition to increasingly perishable products destined either directly for urban markets or for the processing/packing plants that dispersed in local towns developed along the railroads.

More unique, however, than the farms that clustered along the State Road is Delaware 113 itself. This section of the road was built under the aegis of Coleman du Pont and the Boulevard Corporation (or Coleman du Pont Road, Inc.), which was innovative in both conception and execution (Rea 1975:180-181). Not only did du Pont appreciate the relationship between roads, economic development, and the transition to the automobile that was upon them, but he also understood the need to differentiate "among roadways in accordance with the type of traffic to be carried" (Rea 1975:181). Initially, he believed that public mass transit, in the form of electric trolleys, should be incorporated into the integrated transportation system that he envisioned, and he also appears to have pioneered the concept of locating the highways out of town and linking them to the old downtowns via spurs, thus setting up modern strip development and the deterioration of older urban centers. Moreover, he conceived of the highway as a self-sustaining economic entity (Rea 1975:179, 182), like the subsequent tollways. Although the original proposal called for an entirely new corridor, the map research presented here indicates that portions of the older route are contained within the modern corridor, revising current understanding of what actually happened as well as underlining the historical significance of Delaware 113 as a transportation route.

THE DELAWARE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

The study area is contained in the Lower Peninsula/Cypress Swamp Zone, defined in the Delaware State Historic Preservation Plan. Based on the preceding summary of its historical development, the study area has the potential to contain resources pertinent to twelve of the economic and/or cultural trends in the periods 1630-1730 (Exploration and Frontier Settlement), 1730-1770 (Intensified and Durable Occupation), 1770-1830 (Early Industrialization), 1830-1880 (Industrialization and Early Urbanization), and 1880-1940 (Urbanization and Suburbanization).

Located on the periphery of Colonial settlement, the cypress swamps were exploited for timber, and there exists the potential for evidence, albeit ephemeral, of these activities. Occupation of the area in dispersed farmsteads clearly intensified by the end of the Colonial period (i.e., 1780s and 1790s), leading to agitation for relocation of the county seat to a more central location. This occurred in the 1790s. The landscape was, nonetheless, still quite open, particularly in the swamps, which afforded sanctuary to insurgents. Associated with the economic development of the early nineteenth century was exploitation of bog iron deposits in the vicinity of the project corridor, but none of the known centers for this activity falls within the limits of the study area.

The turn of the century saw construction of the State Road between Georgetown and Milford in an alignment closely parallel to the study corridor. This major change in the landscape stimulated primarily agricultural development in this area, leading to construction of farm complexes along the route. Principal developments in the mid-nineteenth century include development of peach culture and other forms of market/orchard gardening and the extension of the railroad, sections of which parallel the study corridor. This alteration in the landscape led to the formation of railroad towns and stimulated the fruit/vegetable processing/packing industry, which remains a feature of Sussex County's landscape and economy today.

Peach culture reached its apex in about 1890 and then began to decline. The advent of the broiler industry in the 1920s, however, made available another commodity to be sold in urban markets. Access to markets was facilitated by construction of the Du Pont Highway, the first leg of which was built between 1911 and 1917. The project corridor contains the earliest portion of this remarkable feature of the landscape, notable as a feat of engineering and visionary transportation planning as well as of public/private interface in infrastructural development projects. Also contained within this segment of the highway is a part of the former State Road, which was incorporated into the new alignment despite the original intent to construct an entirely new thoroughfare.