

**REEDY ISLAND CART ROAD SITE 4
[7NC-F-153]**

**U.S. ROUTE 301 PROJECT
ST. GEORGES HUNDRED
NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE**

PHASE II ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

AND

**ALTERNATIVE MITIGATION:
A RESEARCH PROGRAM TO TEST THE CART ROAD PREDICTIVE MODEL
THROUGH GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY, LIDAR IMAGE ANALYSIS,
SOIL COMPACTION STUDIES, TOPOGRAPHIC MAPPING
AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION**

**PARENT AGREEMENT 1535
TASK 11**

Prepared for:

**Delaware Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 778
Dover, Delaware 19903**

Prepared by:

**Ian Burrow, Principal
William B. Liebeknecht, Principal Investigator
Patrick Harshbarger, Principal Historian
Alison Haley, Historian
Hunter Research, Inc.**

APRIL 2014

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This report assesses the eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places of three groups of archaeological material forming part of the Reedy Island Cart Road Site 4 [7NC-F-153] in St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware. This 18th-century site was identified during Phase I investigations carried out previously as part of the U.S. Route 301 project. Two of its components, identified as Loci 1 and 3, were considered eligible on the basis of the Phase I data alone, and have been placed into covenants to ensure their permanent protection.

The eligibility of Loci 2 and 4, in the south part of the 7NC-F-153 site area, could not be fully evaluated on the basis of the Phase I study. A Phase II investigation was therefore designed and implemented to resolve the issue.

A third area, Locus 5, was also investigated during this Phase II study. Lying to the south of Loci 2 and 4, Locus 5 had also been subjected to earlier Phase I studies, firstly by Archaeological and Historical Consultants, Inc., and subsequently (in part) by Hunter Research, Inc. Historical research had demonstrated that Locus 5 straddled a late 17th- to early 18th-century boundary between two early plantations. Additionally, ongoing work on the early cart-road network connecting the Upper Chesapeake and the Delaware River indicated that one element of this network ran along this boundary and probably crossed the branch of Drawyer's Creek that lies immediately to the east, running northeastwards from there to meet the present Boyd's Corner Road (also probably part of the network). The research design for the project called for the use of ground-penetrating radar and magnetometer instrumentation to test for anomalies that might be related to the boundary and to the cart road. Any such anomalies were to be investigated by selective machine stripping of the plowzone and the hand excavation of exposed sediments.

Investigation of Loci 2 and 4 confirmed that these were concentrations of 18th-century artifacts, but excavations failed to identify any subsurface features that might be related to actual structures. The working hypothesis was that these loci do reflect the former presence of outbuildings (perhaps quarters for hired laborers or slaves, or barns or other specifically agricultural structures). While no firm conclusions can be drawn from the available evidence it is assumed that any such buildings were of log or ground-sill construction that could not be detected with the techniques employed. It seems clear that there were no post-in-ground structures at the two loci. There were considerable differences in the artifact collections between the two loci. The western (Locus 2) had a decidedly domestic character, while Locus 4 had a smaller and much more limited range of artifacts, including a piece of a 'Fitch' curry comb: a type designed for use on oxen. It is argued that these two loci are non-contributing components to site 7NC-F-153.

The geophysical survey of Locus 5 identified the strong signature of two parallel linear features following the predicted alignment of the cart road. Archaeological exposure of these anomalies at several locations showed that they were ditch features about 3 feet wide at the top, one foot wide across the base, and about 0.75 feet deep from the base of the overlying plowzone. A berm between the ditches was typically about seven to eight

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

feet and was extremely hard and firm although there was no sign of any artificial surfacing. Running roughly down the center of the berm was a series of later, chiefly square or rectangular, post pits, many containing the post molds of round or rectangular posts and probably forming a fenceline.

A formal evaluation of significance process determined that this suite of features probably reflects the presence of the cart road and its subsequent replacement by a boundary fence, and that it was eligible for the National Register under Criterion D. Since this area lies on the proposed U.S. Route 301 carriageway alignment the adverse effect of construction requires treatment. In accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement for the project, treatment through an alternative mitigation strategy is proposed. This tests a predictive archaeological depositional model for the survival of physical traces of these early cart roads. The testing of this model is presented in a subsequent report.