

DATA RECOVERY PLAN FOR THE
BENNETT-THOMAS MILL SITE (7NC-G-111)

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INTRODUCTION

This data recovery plan describes an alternative for mitigation of the adverse effects of the proposed State Route 1 Project upon the Bennett-Thomas Mill Site (7NC-G-111), New Castle County, Delaware. Execution of the data recovery plan is contingent upon the concurrence of the State Historic Preservation Office that a determination of no adverse effect would be appropriate upon recovery of significant archaeological data as set forth in 36CFR8000.4 and the Advisory Council's "Treatment of Archaeological Properties: A Handbook."

BACKGROUND

The Bennett-Thomas Mill Site (7NC-G-111, N-12769) was located and identified as a significant cultural resource during Phase I and II testing of the proposed State Route 1 alignment by the University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research (UDCAR). The site is located approximately one and one half miles south of St. Georges, Delaware west of present Route 13 in St. Georges Hundred (Figure 1). Site survey and testing were carried out under contract to the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to fulfill obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to evaluate the effects of the construction of the proposed State Route 1 on significant or potentially significant cultural resources as defined by the National Register of Historic Places (36CFR60).

Archival research indicates that the Bennett-Thomas Mill Site is the remains of a small fulling, grist, and saw mill and associated dwellings and outbuildings. The site was occupied

from ca. 1760 until ca. 1852. An earlier occupation, beginning as early as 1753, is suggested by nineteenth century county histories including Scharf (1888:987).

The first deed reference to the mill is a 1793 deed from the heirs of William Bennett to David and Lydia McWhorter, other heirs of William Bennett. The site is located on a 87 acre parcel and a partial chain of title for the property is given in Table 1. The mill was located on an 87 acre parcel bounded on the east by the road from Smyrna to Dover (present Route 13), on the north and west by Scott's Run and a millpond. Upon his death ca. 1792, William Bennett's land passed to his three children: son John Bennett and daughters Lydia McWhorter and Mary Burchard. The 1793 deed between these heirs describes a large "Fulling Mill Pond" indicating that the mill was operating at least that early.

Beginning in 1794, James Thomas, a neighboring clothier, set out purchasing the fulling mill property from the various heirs of William Bennett. Other deeds describe William Bennett as a farmer and it is likely that a professional miller or clothier--possibly James Thomas--had been operating the mill for Bennett. Thomas succeeded in obtaining most of the property by 1797 when he was assessed for 71 acres. In that year, the Bennett-Thomas site consisted of a saw and fulling mill, three houses, a kitchen, and stable. Thomas also owned six slaves--five adults and two children--and livestock valued at more than \$200.

James Thomas owned and operated the saw and fulling mill at the site until his death ca. 1798. By that time, he owned 104 acres in St. Georges Hundred, including the mill. James Thomas

TABLE 1

**CHAIN OF TITLE OF THE SCOTTS' RUN SITE
(7NC-G-111; N-2769)**

Transaction	Date	Acres	Deed
From Wm Bennett to John John Bennett, Lydia [Bennett] McWhorter and Mary [Bennett] Buchard	?	?	B-5-374
From John Bennett and David and Mary [Bennett] Buchard to David and Lydia Mc Whorter	6-12-1793	[87]	B-5-374
From David and Lydia Mc Whorter to James Thomas	3-26-1794	26	B-5-374
From James Thomas to David Thomas	?	2/5 part of 87	will?
From William and Margaret Liston and Rebecca Thomas to David Thomas	3-9-1805	2/5 part of 87	D-3-404
From Elizabeth Thomas to David Thomas	4-21-1808	1/5 part of 87	F-3-483
From David Thomas to Jacob Vandegrift	4-3-1817	87	B-5-336
From Jacob Vandegrift to Curtis Bowman	3-15-1838	87	B-5-287
From Curtis and Sarah Bowman to David W. Thomas	3-14-1839	87	B-5-499
From David W. and Susan Thomas to Job Townsend	1-3-1842	87	I-5-174
From Job Townsend to George W. Townsend (Sr.)	1893	87	NCC O. Ct. N-2-343
From George W. Townsend (Jr.) and George W. Simpler, exrs. of George W. Townsend (Sr.), decd. to Harry L. Gray	6-13-1896	87	B-17-298
From Harry L. and Annie Gray to Horace E. Simmons	11-24-1919	87	A-29-469

TABLE 1 (cont.)

Transaction	Date	Acres	Deed
From Horace and Laura Simmons to Clarence A. Batten	1-4-1935	87	F-39-434
From Clarence A. Batten to Augusta V. B. Roberts	9-12-1935	87	R-39-302
From Wilmington Trust, exrs. of Augusta V. B. Roberts, decd. to the State of Delaware	6-7-1960	88.96	C-066-0387

Key: NCC O. Ct. = New Castle County Orphans Court

died intestate and the property went to his five children: David Thomas, Mary Bird, Margaret Liston, Rebecca Thomas and Elizabeth Thomas. Of all these heirs, David Thomas set out to acquire the rights to the mill and the rest of the property. David Thomas achieved his goal by 1808 after a series of transactions with the other heirs. Local tax assessments taken in 1803 note the presence of a saw and fulling mill, two dwelling houses, a kitchen, and a barn on the property. No slaves were assessed for James Thomas' estate and it is likely that the six slaves he owned in 1797 had already been divided among his heirs.

By 1816, the Bennett-Thomas mill site had been occupied for at least twenty years. A tax assessment made that year described David Thomas' fulling mill as "old" and described only one other house, a small brick dwelling. The fate of the two other dwellings described in 1797 is not known. It is possible that both structures were either gone or in such poor condition as to be valueless.

David Thomas owned and operated the saw and fulling mill until 1817 when he sold the entire property to Jacob Vandegrift. Vandegrift owned and probably operated the mill until 1838 when he sold the property to Curtis Bowman. Bowman sold the property one year later to David W. Thomas, a relative of David Thomas. David W. Thomas owned the property until 1842 when he sold it to Job Townsend of nearby Appoquinimink Hundred. Thomas himself lived in Appoquinimink Hundred suggesting that he operated the mill through tenants.

Job Townsend owned the Bennett-Thomas mill until his death ca. 1893 when the property passed to his son George W. Townsend. Job Townsend operated a mill on the property at least as late as 1852 when he was assessed for a "brick house, stable and C. mill." The "C. mill" indicates that the mill was processing clover seeds, a common mill function in Delaware and one noted later in other sources for the Bennett-Thomas mill. No other buildings are noted at the site and it is likely that the two or three other dwellings noted in the 1797 and 1816 assessments were gone by 1852.

The Townsend family owned the 87 acre parcel until 1896. After the death of Job Townsend, the property passed to his son, George W. Townsend (Sr.). The senior Townsend died intestate in early 1896 and the property was awarded to his son George W. Townsend (Jr.) by the New Castle County Orphan's Court. The Townsends were not living at the mill at the time. According to historic maps, the Townsends were living as early as 1849 at a large house much nearer to present Route 13. This house is 1,000

feet east of the Bennett-Thomas Mill Site and is well beyond the boundaries of the site.

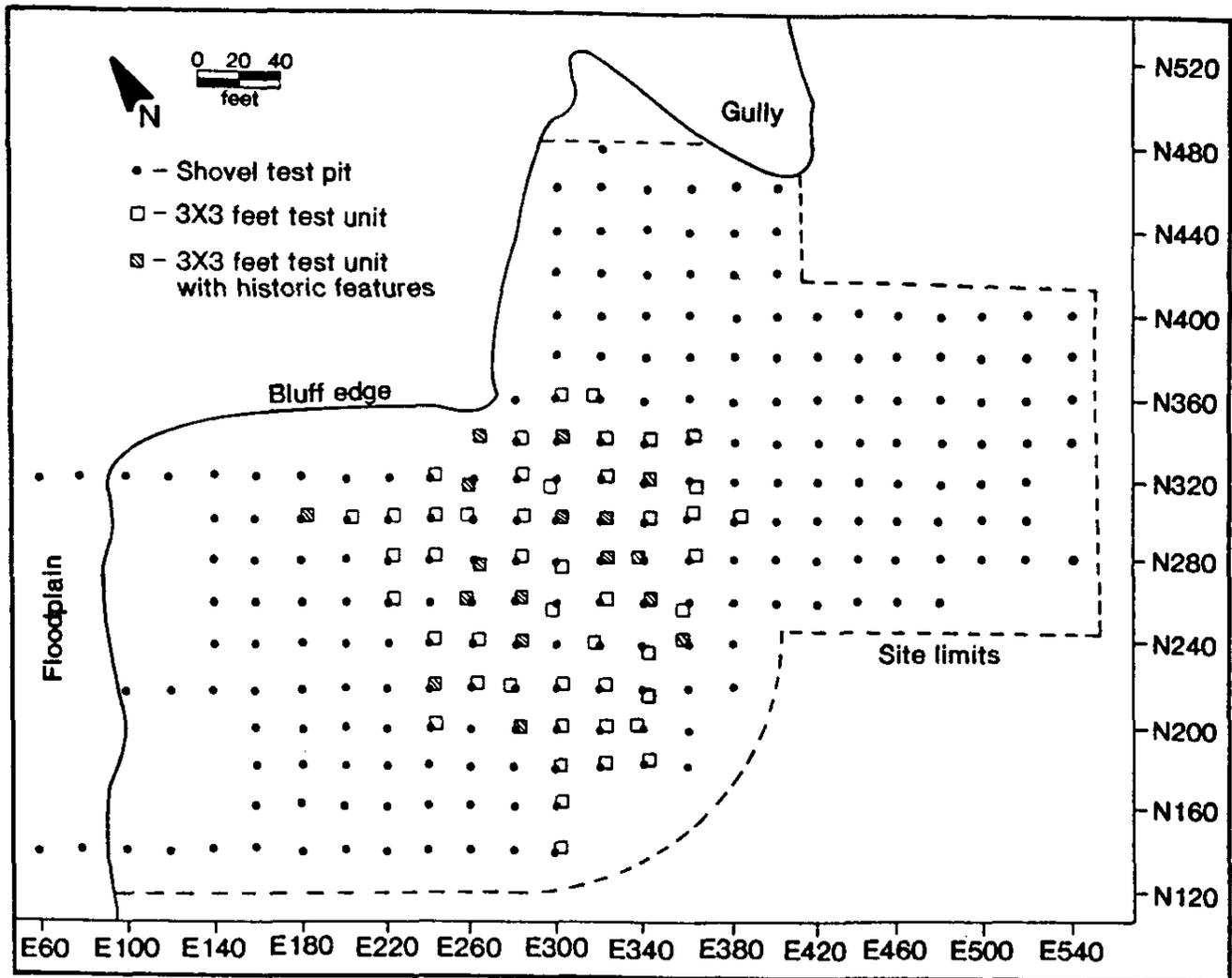
Harry Gray purchased the Townsend property in 1896. The Bennett-Thomas Mill appears to have been abandoned ca. 1852, the last time it appears in local tax records. The abandonment of the site is probably related to the construction of the G.W. Townsend house nearer to present Route 13 ca. 1849. The parcel was then occupied by a series of owners from 1896 until 1960 when the state of Delaware purchased the property. The Bennett-Thomas mill, however, had already been abandoned as it does not appear on Beer's 1868 atlas of St. Georges Hundred.

Phase I testing consisted of a pedestrian survey of the slight bluff along the south bank of Scott's Run. The area was thickly wooded and visibility was poor. No historic sites were shown in the area on any known nineteenth century maps, but the potential for historic remains was high. A total of 168 shovel test pits were then dug. These tests were excavated at 20' intervals along the edge of the bluff approximately 400' south of Scott's Run. Diagnostic mid-to-late eighteenth and early-nineteenth century historic artifacts were recovered from plow zone and subsoil contexts over an approximately 100' by 200' area along the bluff. Diagnostic ceramics included fragments of creamwares, pearlwares, white salt-glazed stonewares, and locally-produced redwares. The presence of cut nails, bricks, and window glass fragments indicated the presence of a structure. A Phase II survey was thus recommended.

Phase II testing consisted of the excavation of 60 additional shovel tests and 63 measured 3' by 3' test units. All

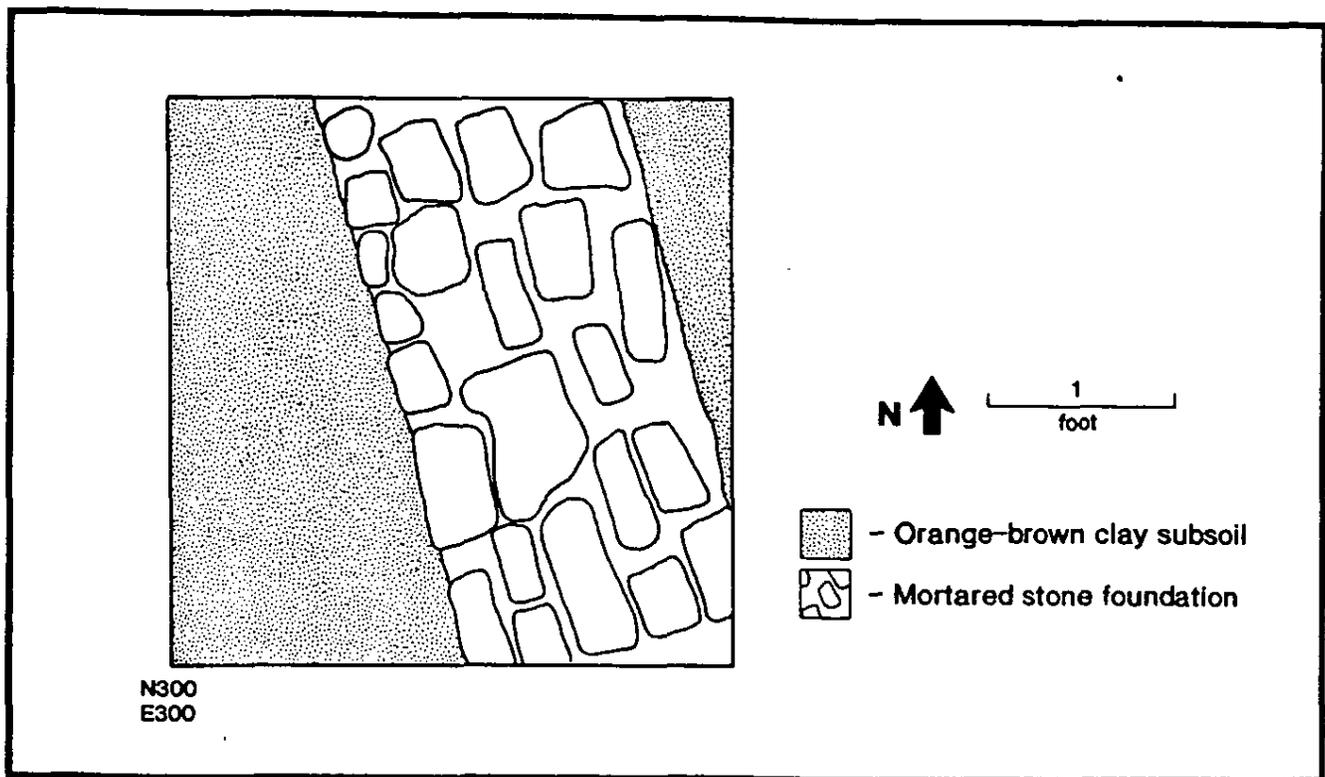
FIGURE 2

Site Limits and the Location of all Phase I and II
Test Units and all Features



excavations were placed on the same 20' grid established during the Phase I survey. Phase II testing located the limits of the site (Figure 2) and two primary areas. These two areas, Areas I and II were identified by testing (Figure 3). Area I, the core of the site and the primary locus of domestic activity, contained an artifact density of between 20 and 128 artifacts per shovel test (Figure 2). Area II was defined by an area of low artifact

FIGURE 4
Floor Plan of Test Unit N300 E300

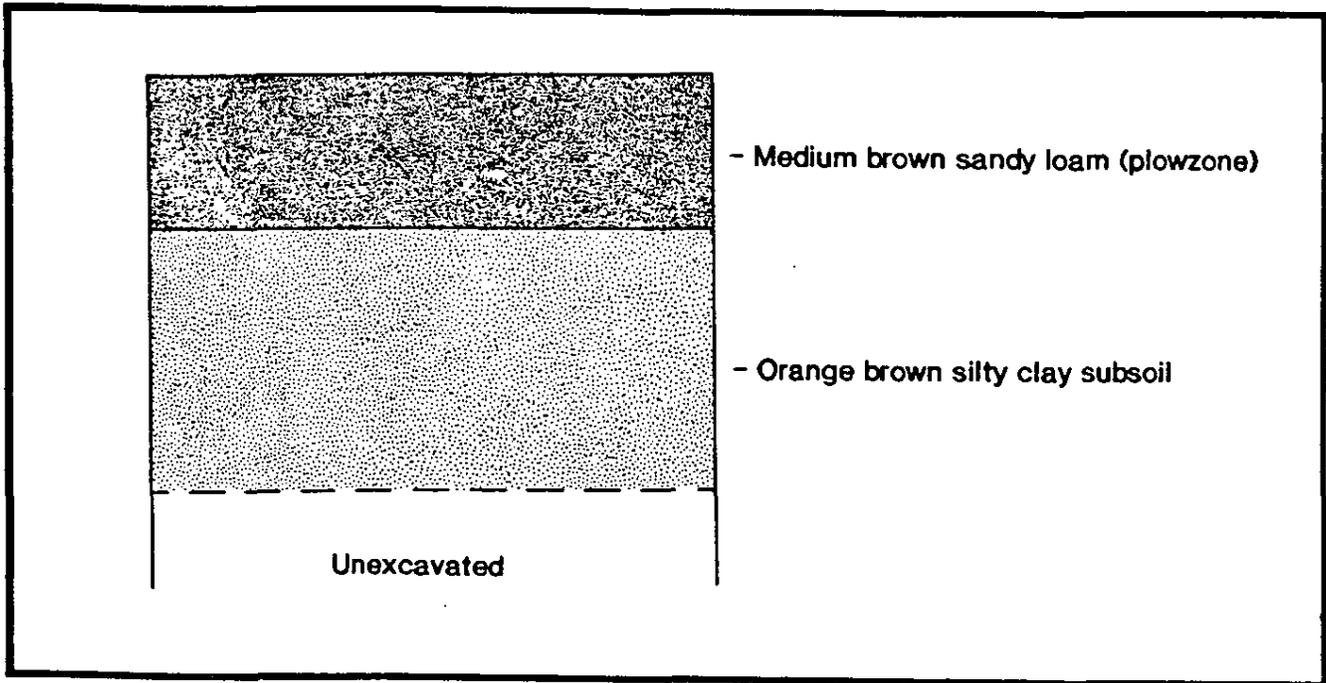


features were identified by Phase II testing (Figure 2). All but two of these features were located in Area I. Nine of these features were brick and mortared field stone foundations. At least two buildings are represented. The largest of these buildings is located near N300E300 and may be the remains of the Bennett-Thomas fulling mill itself. A floor plan of T.U. N300E300 is shown Figure 4. Other features located by Phase II testing included a trashpit containing a cow mandible, fenceposts, and unknown artifact concentrations. A typical soil profile is shown in Figure 5.

Diagnostic mid-to-late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century ceramics and other artifacts were recovered from intact subsoil

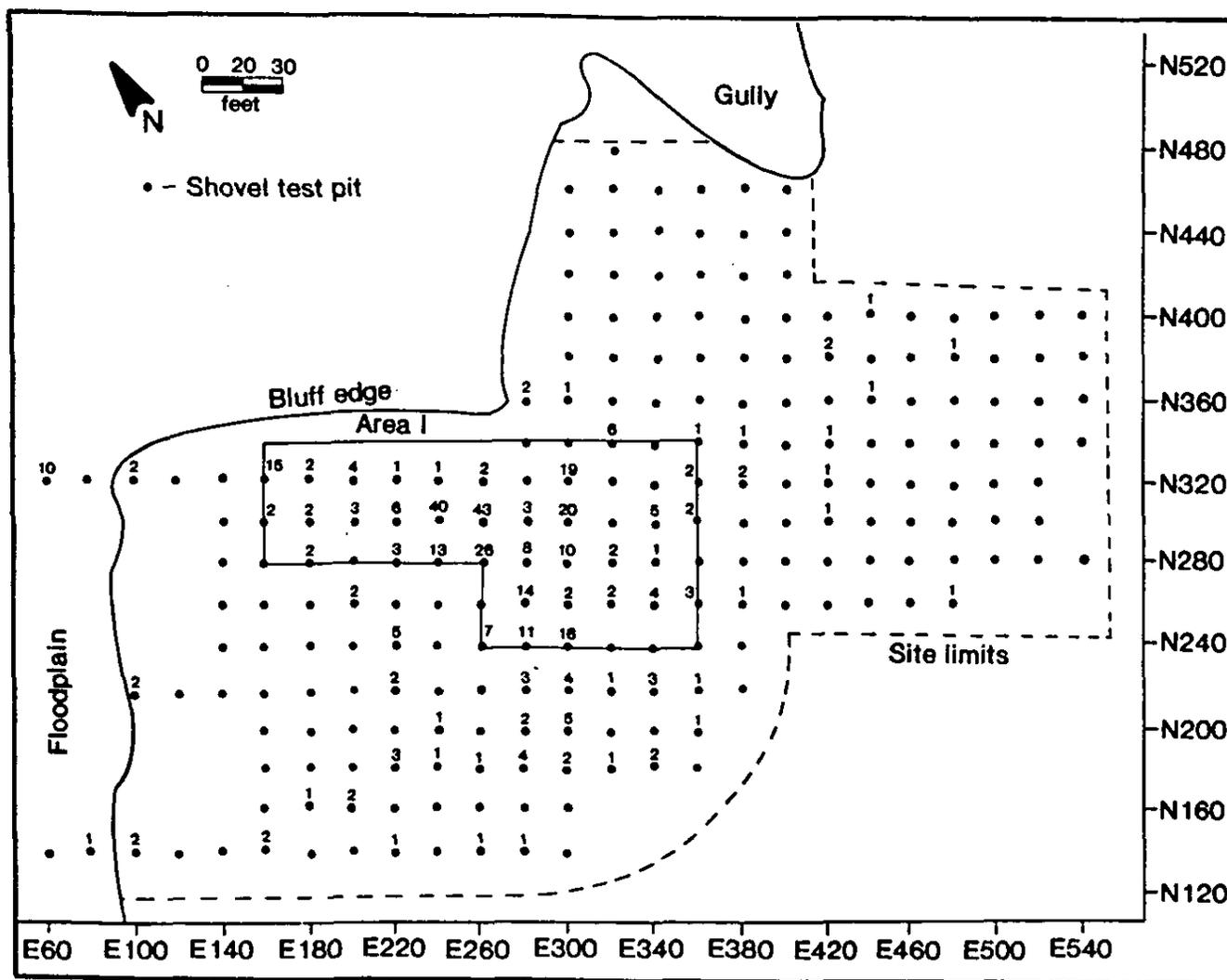
FIGURE 5

Typical Soil Profile (Test Unit N300 E180)



deposits in both Areas I and II. Undecorated creamwares and pearlwares, Whieldon wares, and slip-decorated and utilitarian redwares were the most common historic ceramics found. These wares are consistent with the known occupation of the site and their distribution over the site identifies Area I as the primary locus of domestic activity (Figure 6). Other domestically-related artifacts included a brass buckle, olive bottle glass, lamp glass, and faunal remains. Window glass, brick fragments, and cut nails were also recovered. Prehistoric artifacts from seven of the 228 total Phase I and II shovel tests were recovered, but no evidence of any prehistoric features or any significant prehistoric remains were identified.

FIGURE 6
Distribution of Historic Ceramics



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Investigations at the Bennett-Thomas Mill Site could examine the historical context of manufacturing and agricultural change in the Upper Peninsula Zone for the periods 1770-1830 and 1830-1880. The period between 1770-1830 has been identified by Ames et al. (1987) as a period of early industrialization. The period 1830-1880 has been similarly identified as a period of industrialization and early urbanization (Ames et al. 1987).

Both of these trends closely affected the processes of site formation and utilization at the Bennett-Thomas Mill Site and data from this site is germane to current historical and archaeological perspectives on these periods.

Using these temporal contexts as they have adapted to historical archaeological sites in Delaware, the archaeological contexts of manufacturing and trade and domestic economy encompass all of the historical contexts noted above (De Cunzo and Catts 1990: 16-21; 131-138). Research concerning manufacture and trade in the periods 1770-1830 and 1830-1880 could focus on three interrelated topics at the intra- and inter-site levels: agriculture and economic change, milling, and landscape change. These three topics overlap significantly and underscore the need for more basic research about the role of rural mills in the agricultural economy, especially agricultural production and processing. More specifically, data from the Bennett-Thomas Mill could address questions concerning rural self-sufficiency, production processes, distribution networks, work patterns, mill architecture, and worker housing. Data on these current research questions could then be compared to other milling sites in Delaware, specifically the mills along Beaver Creek (Grettler et al. 1988) and the Brandywine River (Ackerman 1968, Shogren 1986, Taylor et al. 1989). Industrial sites such as the Lebanon Cannery near Dover (Heite and Heite 1989) and the Mermaid Blacksmith Shop in New Castle County (Catts et al. 1986) could also provide useful comparative data.

On an intra-site level, investigations at the Bennett-Thomas Mill can seek to examine changes over both time and space in mill

architecture, worker housing, agriculture, and the effects of changing consumer patterns within an increasingly volatile nineteenth century economy as contained in the archaeological record. Manufacturing and trade sites comprise only 8% of all known historic archaeological sites in Delaware and little is known about the everyday lives of millers and their workers (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:111). For example, why did the Bennett-Thomas Mill change its operations so quickly from saw and woolen milling to fulling only, and then to simply milling clover seeds? How did the lives of the workers that lived in the houses near the mill differ from those of surrounding farmers? Did milling as a commercial activity enable workers to purchase more or different goods than farmers forced to rely more on barter? What was the role of these small mills in the local regional economy and how did changes in the regional and national economy affect them? These questions may be answerable through historical documentation as well as archaeological evidence.

The archaeological context of domestic economy can also address research questions on both a local and regional level. In addition to the mill, the Bennett-Thomas Mill Site includes the remains of three houses. These houses were probably inhabited by mill workers who also engaged in agriculture. Indeed, the Bennett-Thomas Site can be interpreted within the larger historic context of agriculture (Ames et al. 1987). Specifically, data from the domestic occupations of the Bennett-Thomas Mill Site could be compared to a number of owner- and tenant-occupied farmsteads in northern and central Delaware

(Hodny et al. 1989; Catts and Custer 1990; Catts et al. 1989; Coleman et al. 1983; Hoseth et al. 1990; Heite and Heite 1985; Scholl et al. n.d.; and Catts et al. 1992). Such comparison offer the potential for significant information on site layout, economic orientations, and consumer behavior.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODS

The main goal of the proposed data recovery project is to collect data on spatial organization, faunal assemblage, and artifact assemblage. Preliminary excavations at the site show the potential for these kinds of data at the site. Artifacts, features, and standing structures dating to the nineteenth century have been identified in intact contexts.

Field research in Area I will consist of the excavation of a sample of plow zone soils around the existing structural remains. One three foot square test unit will be selected randomly and excavated from each 10' X 10' block to recover artifacts and reveal features. After sampling, the plow zone will be stripped to expose all features. All features will then be excavated. Soil from all 3' x 3' squares will be screened through 1/4" mesh and a standard volume of each feature will be floated and water screened. These recommended excavations would be comparable to the excavations carried out in the core of the Jacob Cazier Tenant Site (Hoseth et al. n.d.), Darrach Store Site (De Cunzo et al. n.d.), Temple Site (Hoseth et al. 1990), Thomas Williams Site (Catts and Custer 1990), and the Whitten Road Site (Shaffer et al. 1988).

Area II is a large area of low artifact density south and east of the primary locus of domestic activity in Area I. Phase II testing located two features in Area II and the potential for additional features is high. Area II may contain features, but the artifact yield is expected to be low. Recommended data recovery excavations in Area II would include mechanical stripping of the plow zone to expose any exposed features and excavation of all features. The level of effort of excavation of any portion, or all of, Area II is considerably less than Area I.

Laboratory analysis will consist of standard processing and cataloging of artifacts following Island Field Museum guidelines. South's (1977) functional artifact classes will be used to generate artifact density maps to identify patterns in the plow zone and the subsoil. Standard analytical procedures will be followed for floral and faunal remains. Both field and laboratory data-gathering will create a data base for the Bennett-Thomas Mill Site to be comparable to other local historical sites.

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