SITE HISTORIES

The Richard Whitehart and John Powell plantation sites are both located on the same 50-acre parcel known today as the Pollack property. Therefore, the sites' histories are presented together. The results of additional archival and historical research, including an analysis of a unique 1687 census of the area, is presented to place both sites in the larger historical context of late seventeenth and early eighteenth century settlement in central Delaware. A more general discussion of the regional history of central Delaware is given in the Phase II report on the Pollack Site (Grettler, Seidel, and Kraft 1994) and in several other surveys of the Early Action Segment of the proposed State Route 1 Alignment (Grettler et al. 1991; Bachman, Grettler, and Custer 1988).

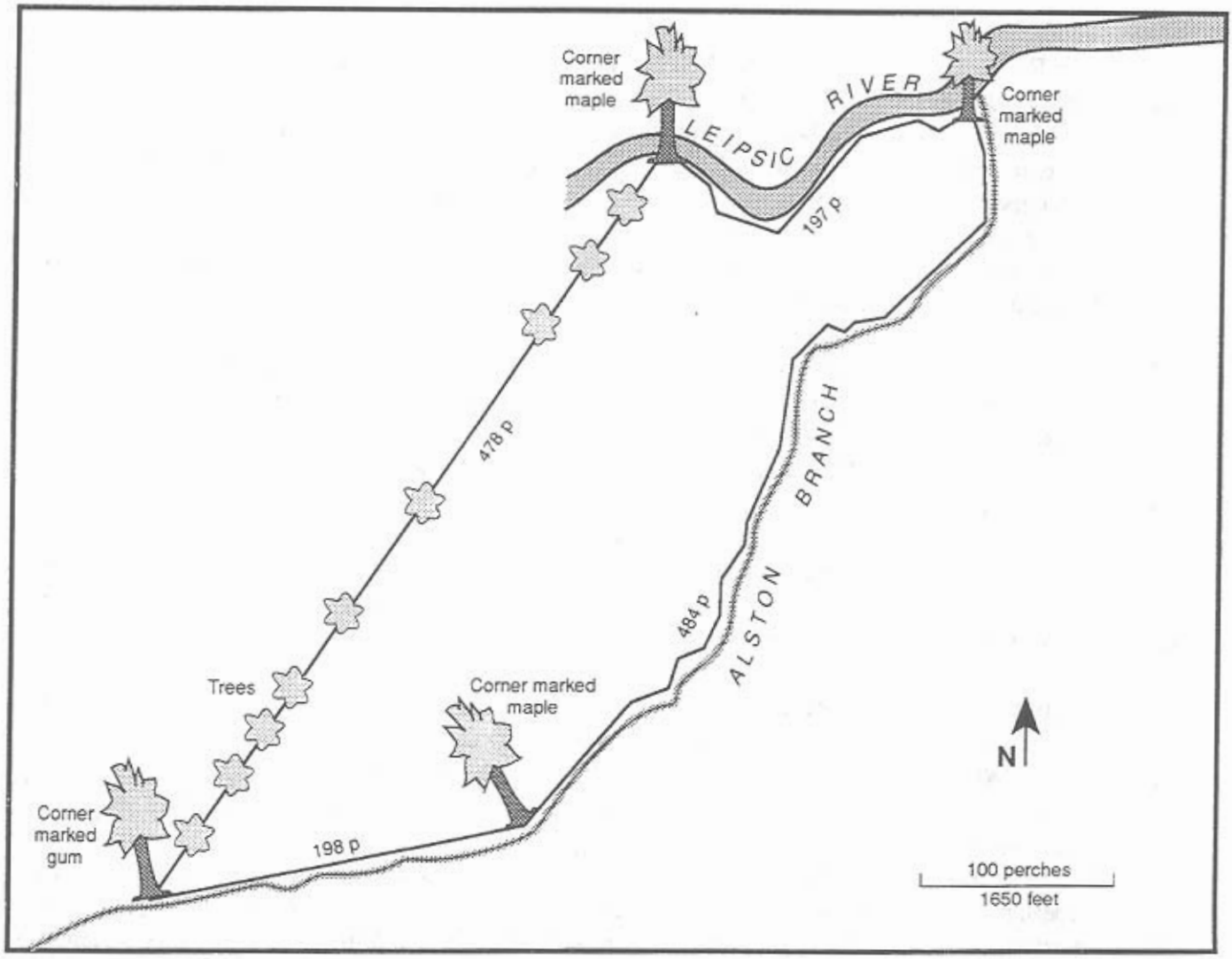
The chain of title of the Pollack property is given in Table 3. The Pollack property was originally part of a 400-acre tract first warranted to Richard (I) Whitehart in 1681. Whitehart named his tract "Little Tower Hill." The parcel was bounded on the north by the Leipsic River and on the east and south by Alston's Branch. Richard Whitehart came to Maryland as an indentured servant in 1671 (Skordas 1968:501). Whitehart was probably as young, between 17 and 28 years of age, as 90 percent of the 75,000 English immigrants to the Chesapeake between 1630-1680 (Kulikoff 1986:31). Whitehart was unmarried and probably traveled alone as no other Whiteharts are known to have ever emigrated to Maryland. As an indentured servant, Whitehart probably served a seven-year term of labor, the customary term for most indentured servants in the Chesapeake.

Whitehart apparently left Maryland for Delaware shortly after his indenture expired ca. 1678. By 1681, he was warranting his tract "Little Tower Hill" along the Southwest Branch of Duck Creek for the first time. Whitehart warranted the parcel a second time in December, 1686, and in March, 1687, had it surveyed by William Clark (Figure 6). By the time of this survey, Whitehart had probably been living on his plantation near the confluence of the Southwest Branch of Duck Creek and Alston Branch since his first warrant in 1681. By 1691, Whitehart was married to a woman named Elizabeth. Richard and Elizabeth may have been married earlier for they had six children before Richard's death in 1701. The three oldest children were boys, John, Richard (II), and Samuel Whitehart. The three youngest children were James, Elizabeth, and Mary Whitehart. A summary of the Whitehart family genealogy is given in Figure 7. Richard Whitehart occupied 7K-C-203C until his death in November, 1701. According to his will made one month earlier, Richard Whitehart bequeathed all of his real and personal estate to his "loving" wife Elizabeth. Elizabeth (I) Whitehart was to own this property during her widowhood. At her death, or remarriage, all of the property was to pass equally to their six children.

Elizabeth Whitehart never remarried and in February 1701/1702, was confirmed to be the sole heir of her husband's estate. At the time of his death, Richard Whitehart owned two parcels of land. The largest parcel was the 400-acre Little Tower Hill property on which he lived. The second tract was a smaller 150- acre parcel adjacent to the west. The boundary between Little Tower Hill and the second parcel was Walker's Branch, a small tributary to the Southwest Branch of Duck Creek (present Leipsic River). Whitehart never confirmed his title to this second property and he never appears to have improved the land.

FIGURE 6

1687 Survey Plat of Richard Whitehart's "Little Tower Hill"



During his lifetime, Richard Whitehart had to mortgage Little Tower Hill twice (Table 3). Whitehart defaulted on both mortgages, but never lost his plantation during his lifetime. The first mortgage was made in July 1686 for all 400 acres of his land to William Johnson, a local landowner. Johnson was another ex-Marylander who moved to Delaware from Talbot County by March 1677 (**Records of the Court of New Castle** 1904:192). Johnson, however, never took possession of the property and no record of the transaction was ever officially registered. Despite this first mortgage, Whitehart apparently retained a great deal of control over his property. In February 1689, Johnson helped Whitehart to mortgage part of his plantation a second time to Thomas Sharp, a wealthy local landowner and merchant living in Duck Creek Hundred. Whitehart apparently never satisfied his debt to Johnson as both men were forced to sell the 300 acres to Sharp in November, 1691.

The 300 acres Sharp took possession of in 1691 was the southern three-quarters of the property. This parcel contains the second site, the John Powell Plantation (7K-C-203H). The seventeenth century divisions of Little Tower Hill showing the location of the Whitehart and Powell plantations is shown in

FIGURE 7

Whitehart Family Geneaology, Circa 1681-1795

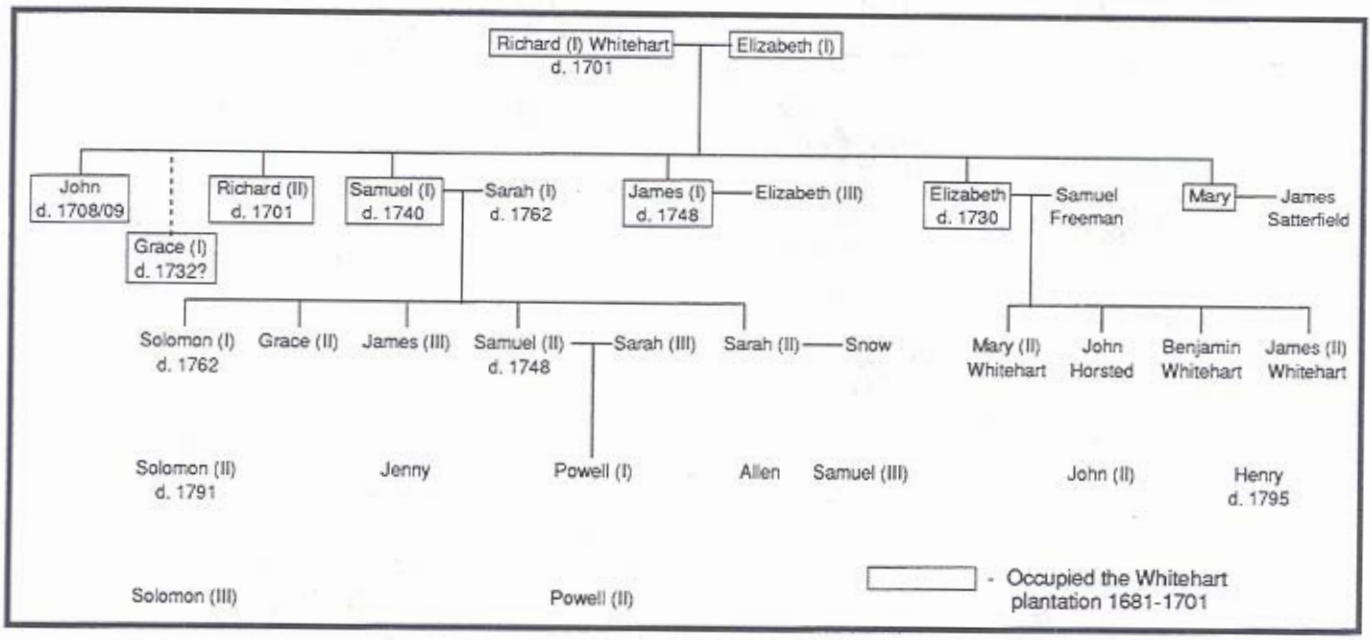


Figure 8. Whitehart divided his land along a new boundary running from Walker's Branch east to Alston Branch. Richard Whitehart sold the remaining 100 acres of Little Tower Hill to Thomas Sharp in June, 1698. Sharp does not appear to have taken immediate possession of the land and Whitehart probably continued to live on his farm until his death in 1701. An inventory of Whitehart's property was taken at his death in 1701. This inventory, however, has not survived.

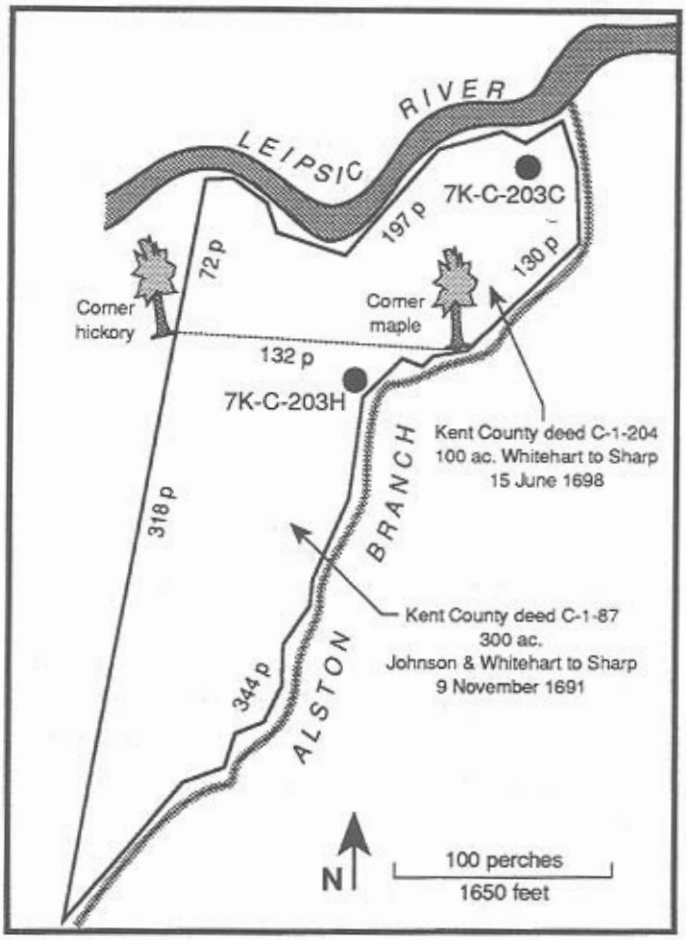
The Whitehart Plantation was abandoned shortly after Richard's death in 1701. The fate of his widow Elizabeth and their youngest children is not known. One of his eldest sons, Richard (II) Whitehart, owned land nearby and may have taken his mother and young siblings in. Richard Whitehart owned 150 acres east of Alston Branch that he had purchased from Thomas Wilson in 1700 (Kent County Deeds C-1-262). The two other Whitehart sons, James and Samuel, eventually owned a total of 450 acres along the south bank of the Leipsic on either side of Little Tower Hill (Kent County Deeds F-1-48 and Kent County Warrants and Surveys S8 147a). The Whitehart family, however, disappears from Little Creek Hundred tax lists after 1748.

The John Powell Plantation parcel was first set off from the Whitehart Plantation in 1691 (Figure 8). The low price of the Powell parcel paid by Thomas Sharp in 1691 suggests that the parcel was not improved. Sharp paid 47 pounds for the 300-acre Powell parcel in 1691, roughly three shillings per acre. Seven years later, when he purchased the remaining 100 acres of Whitehart's patent, Sharp paid more than twice that rate, 34 pounds for 100 acres or nearly seven shillings per acre. The improved Whitehart Plantation commanded more than twice the price per acre than the unimproved Powell parcel.

Thomas Sharp never occupied either portion of Little Tower Hill. Sharp owned another thousand acres of land in central Delaware and lived in Duck Creek Hundred. The largest of his holdings was not Little Tower Hill, but a 626-acre tract on the north side of the Southwest Branch of Little Duck Creek

FIGURE 8

Seventeenth Century Divisions of "Little Tower Hill"



(Kent County Warrants and Surveys S5 #26). Sharp was a substantial member of the community and was one of eight prominent Delawareans who informed the Pennsylvania Assembly of Delaware's desire to form a separate province in November, 1701 (Scharf 1888:127; Horle 1991:663-4). Sharp maintained extensive commercial and personal contacts with Philadelphia leaders, including Andrew Hamilton, the son of Penn's first Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania. The younger Hamilton eventually purchased the entire Little Tower Hill tract in 1722 and even became one of Sharp's chief executors and heirs when he died in 1729.

John Powell probably first occupied Sharp's 300-acre portion of Little Tower Hill shortly in 1691 after Sharp took possession of it from Whitehart and Johnson. Powell probably built his plantation with the help of his wife Ann Howard, his brother William Powell, and his brother-in-law, John Howard. Both William Powell and John Howard lived in the area. All three families were relatively close; family members routinely witnessed each others wills, served as executors, and willed small items to each other.

John Powell and his wife Ann had seven children on their plantation. A summary of the Powell family genealogy is shown in Figure 9. The oldest of their children, John (II) Powell, died in 1723. The six younger children were Joseph, Hannah, Samuel, David, Jonathan, and Christian Powell. All of these children were born before their father's death in late 1715 or early 1716.

FIGURE 9

Powell Family Geneaology, Circa 1716-1723

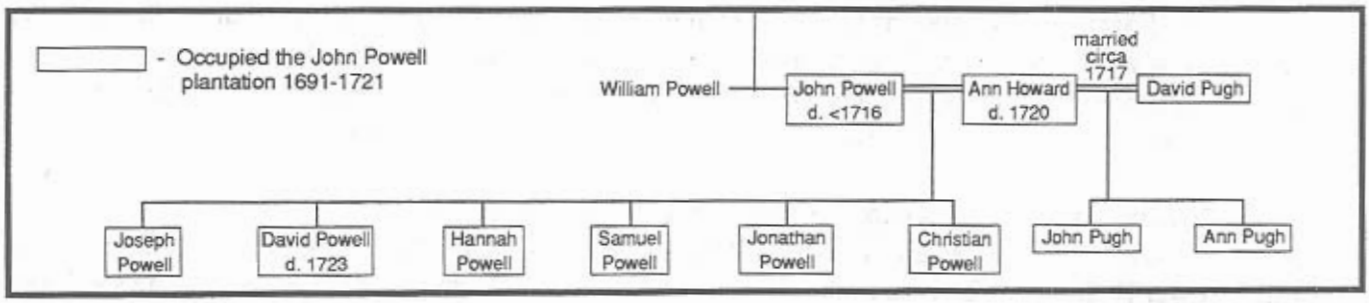
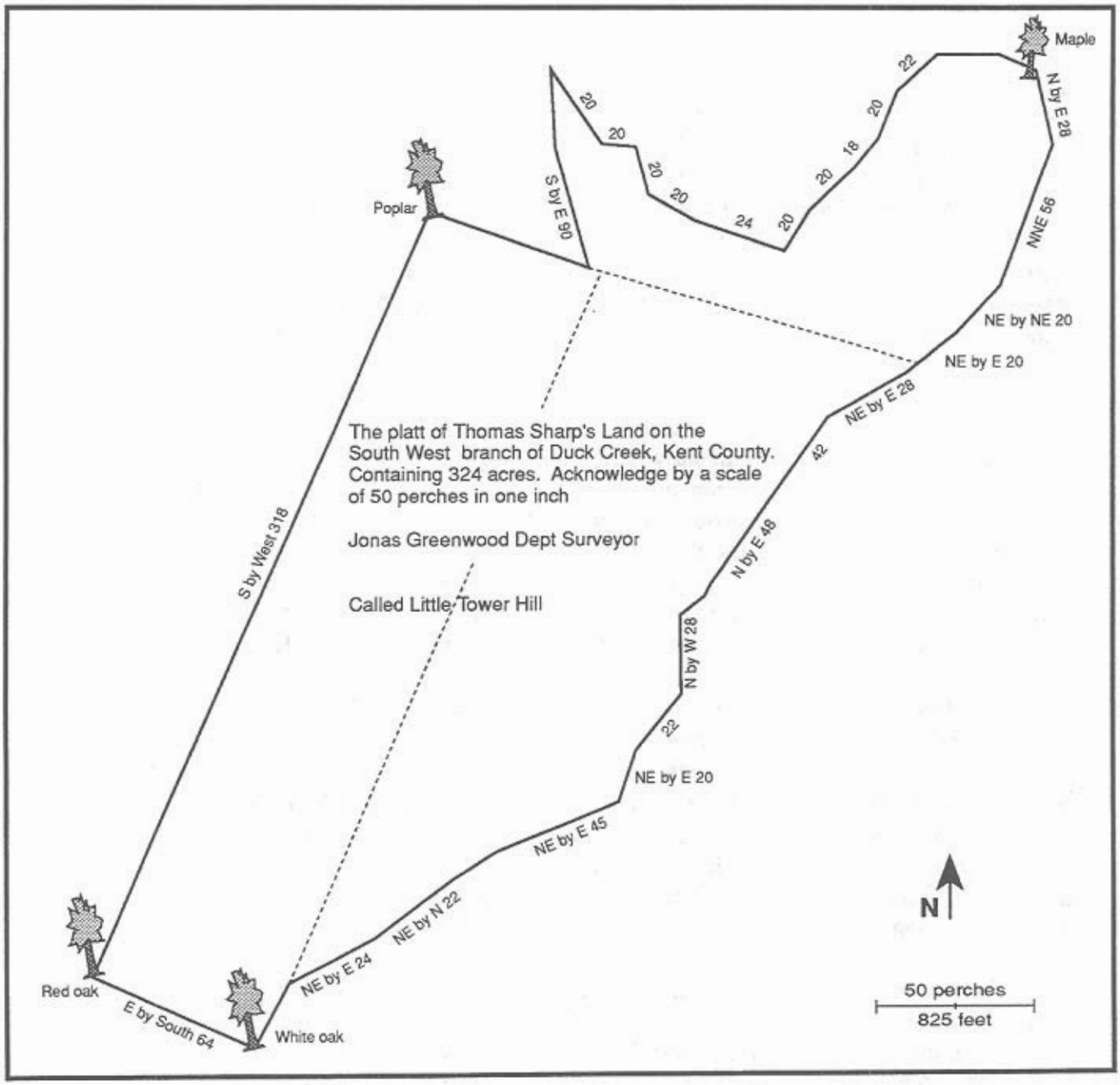


FIGURE 10

1702 Plat of Little Tower Hill



At the time of his death, John Powell was heavily in debt to a number of creditors. His foremost creditor was Thomas Sharp who had purchased the adjacent 100-acre Whitehart Plantation only three years prior in 1698. According to later deeds, Thomas Sharp had agreed to sell Powell all 400 acres of Little Tower Hill in 1704 for 210 pounds. This transaction, however, was never recorded and Sharp never effectively conveyed the property to Powell (Kent County Deeds H-1-81). Sharp may have been preparing to sell the property as early as April, 1702, when he commissioned another survey of Little Tower Hill. The results of this survey are shown in Figure 10. Typical of early warrants, no structures are shown on the property.

John Powell's widow Ann remarried shortly after her husband's death. She married David Pugh in 1716 and by 1719, had two children with Pugh. Ann and David Pugh lived on the Powell Plantation and continued to satisfy his outstanding debts, probably in hopes of clearing the title to the farm and gaining full possession of it. The largest debt they paid was one of 83 pounds in August, 1716. This debt was recovered by Thomas McCabbin, who probably also had close dealings with Thomas Sharp. David and Ann Pugh continued to satisfy her deceased husband's debts until August 1717. The final debt they satisfied from Powell's estate was a debt of 11 pounds owed to Nathan Blubury, another Philadelphia merchant. The Pughs probably continued to live on Powell's plantation until 1722, when the 300-acre farm was sold to Andrew Hamilton, a wealthy Philadelphia merchant and land speculator (Konkle 1941). David Pugh never owned any other land in Kent County according to deed records. Thomas Sharp still held title to all 400 acres of Little Tower Hill, including Powell's plantation, in 1722. Sharp was apparently still one of Powell's creditors when Ann Pugh died in early 1720. With his wife's first husband's estate still unsettled, David Pugh took John Powell's remaining debts to the Kent County Court of Common Pleas in November, 1721. No evidence of a survey done at this time has been located.

Ann Pugh had been ailing since early 1719, and wrote her will in November of that year. Her will gives a detailed look at daily life in early Kent County (Kent County Wills D-10). She was trying to provide for two families, nine children, on contested land. Her first husband had settled the land only 20 years before and had incurred great debts to both wealthy local landowners and Philadelphia merchants. She married her second husband less than a year after she was widowed and bore him two more children before she died four years later. Her first concern was for her two youngest children, John and Ann Pugh. In her will, Ann Pugh could provide them with only 13 shillings each when they reached maturity. Until then, she wanted them to be raised by John Foursi and his wife, a local family.

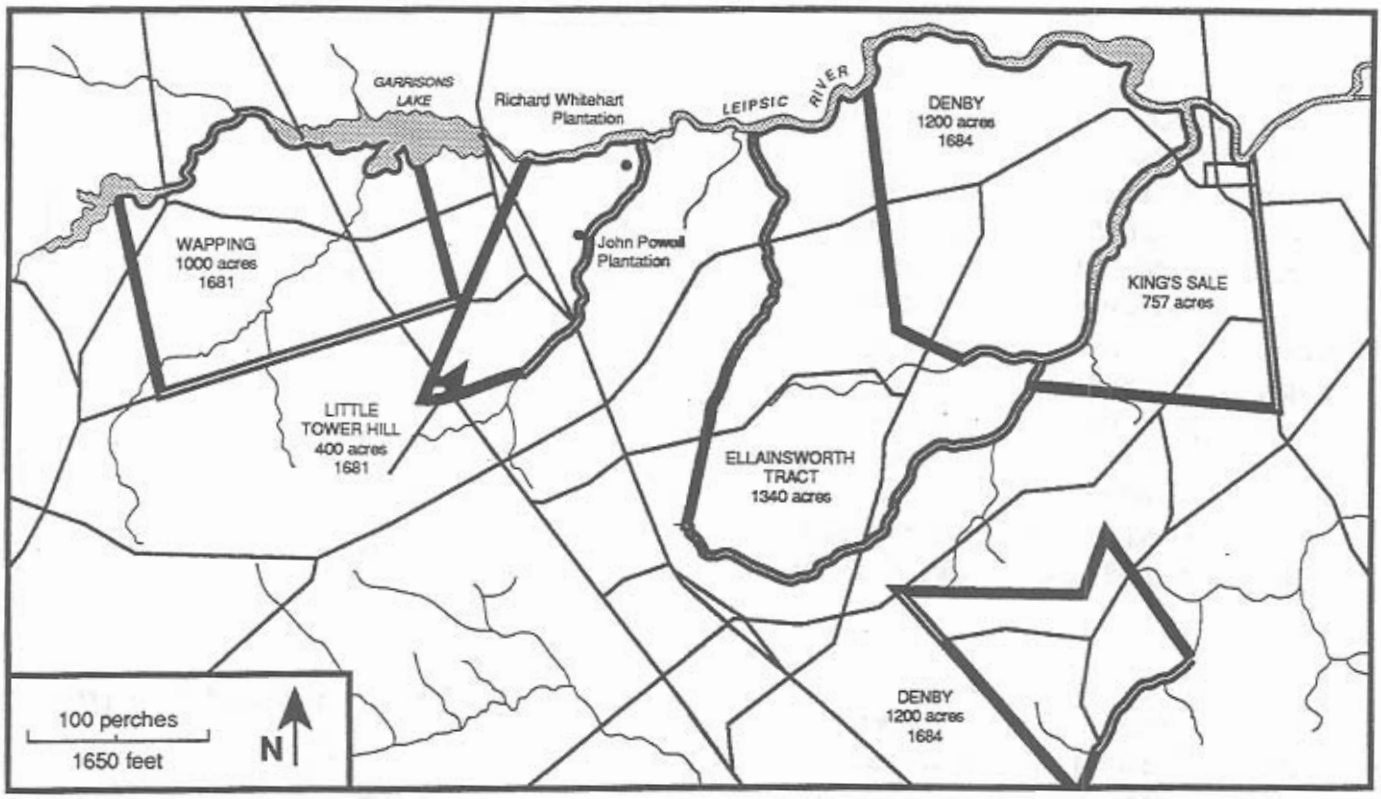
Ann Pugh's second concern was for her seven older children by her first husband. To these children, she gave small amounts of livestock, bedding, household furniture, and other personal goods. Younger children received more goods, but all were carefully entrusted to the care of relatives and friends. To her brother-in-law William Powell, she entrusted her daughter Hannah Powell. Her youngest sons by her first husband, Samuel, David, and Jonathan Powell, were bound to be "bound out in Philadelphia to some handycraft [sic]." Another son, Joseph Powell, was to be bound to John Mifflin, another substantial Philadelphia merchant. Mifflin was charged with educating Joseph to write a "Good, Legible hand" and "arithmatic [sic] as far as the Rule of Three."

The Kent County Court of Common Pleas reaffirmed Thomas Sharp's title to Powell's 300 acres of Little Tower Hill in 1721. Sharp already owned the adjacent Whitehart Plantation. By 1721, however, the post-in-ground structures on Richard Whitehart's farm were probably already gone. Indeed, it is likely that Whitehart's farm was abandoned and destroyed shortly after his death in 1701. Even by 1701 this farm would have been at least 20 years old and would have probably been in poor condition as no evidence of repair was found among the archaeological remains.

After his title to Powell's plantation was confirmed in late 1721, Thomas Sharp quickly sold all of Little Tower Hill to Andrew Hamilton of Philadelphia. Hamilton purchased 324 acres containing both the Whitehart and Powell plantations from Sharp in two separate transactions in February, 1722, and March, 1723. Two transactions were needed to clear the property from objections raised by unspecified third parties, probably either Powell's other creditors, or his heirs.

FIGURE 11

Seventeenth Century Landscape (ca. 1690) Along the South Side of the Leipsic River (Southwest Branch of Duck Creek)



Andrew Hamilton, however, successfully gained title to all of Whitehart's and Powell's plantations on Little Tower Hill by 1723. Hamilton's final purchase of the property in this year probably marks the abandonment of the Powell Plantation. The Whitehart Plantation had already been gone for nearly 20 years and the lack of diagnostic second quarter of the eighteenth century ceramics from the Powell Plantation indicates it was abandoned before creamware and white salt-glazed stonewares were introduced to American markets in the early 1730s.

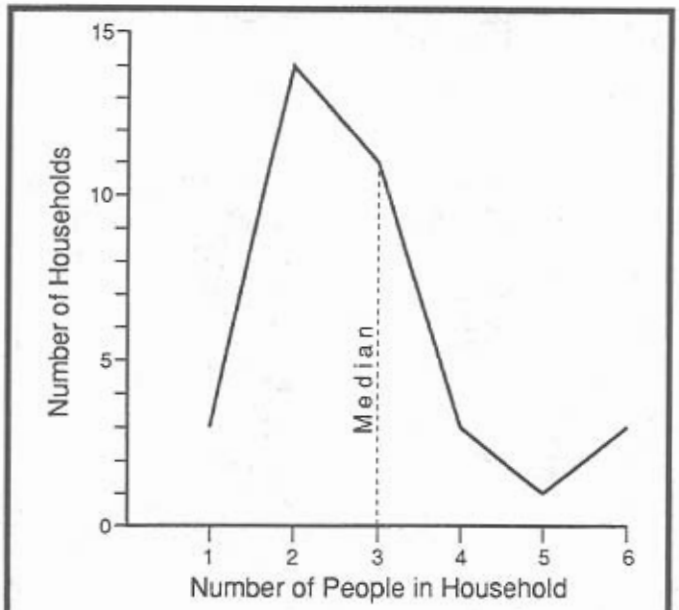
Thus, by the mid-1730s, both the Whitehart and Powell plantations had been abandoned. Both families would have seen tremendous changes in the scant 40 years they occupied Little Tower Hill. When Richard Whitehart first warranted the tract in 1681, he would have been on the frontier of settlement in central Delaware. Only one other tract, John Willis's Wapping, was located farther inland along the Leipsic River in 1681. The reconstructed late seventeenth century landscape of the south side of the Leipsic River is shown in Figure 11.

A census of the inhabitants of central Delaware taken in 1680 found 99 people living in 35 households between Cedar Creek and Duck Creek, an area slightly larger than present Kent County. Only 26 families (72 total people) lived in the northernmost part of this section between present day Dover and Smyrna. This area included the Leipsic drainage. Neither Whitehart, Powell, Sharp, Johnson, or any other known person associated with either plantation was listed in this census.

Most of the 35 families (80%) in Kent County in 1680 had three or fewer members (Figure 12). Most families consisted of a husband and wife and a single small child or young servant. Few people (8% of all households) lived alone. Similarly, only seven households (20%) had four or more members. No households in 1680 had more than six people. Family size and complexity, however grew quickly as this part of central Delaware was settled in the 1680s and 1690s by hundreds of settlers from Maryland, Virginia, England and Ireland. High tobacco prices and competition over prime land in Maryland and Virginia encouraged migration to both sides of the Delaware Bay. By 1687, 261 people lived between Cedar and Duck Creek in Kent County. These people lived in 63 separate households. In just seven years, the population increased by more than 150 percent from 99 people in 1680 to 261 people in 1687.

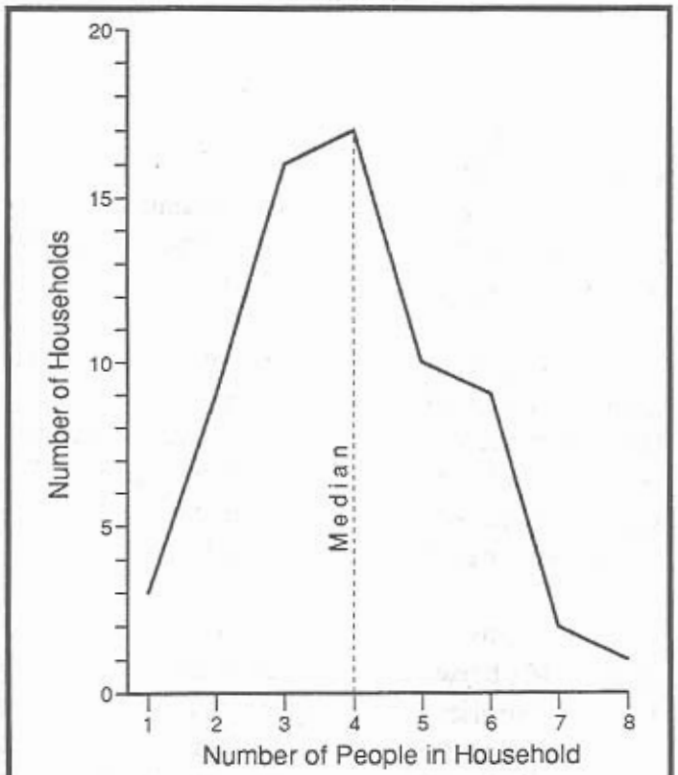
Household size, however, grew only slightly to an average of four members by 1687 (Figure 13). Families were significantly smaller than the average of six people per household estimated for other British colonies in North America in the eighteenth century (Greene and Harrington 1932; Alexander 1974; Snydacker 1982; Potter 1984). Parents were relatively old, and had few children. Sixty-five percent of the population was between 20 and 45-years-old (Figure 14). One quarter of the population was under 10 years old and the remaining 10 percent of the population was older than 45 years of age. The average age of male heads of households in 1687 was 38 years. These men were consistently older than their wives who averaged 30 years old. Ex-servants like Whitehart and Powell were getting late starts in life. Most men did not have their first child until 31 years of age, relatively old compared to a life expectancy of only 43 years in the Chesapeake (Figure 15). Most women began to bear children slightly younger at 23 years of age.

FIGURE 12
Household Size in Kent County in 1680



Source: 1680 census taken for Edmond Andros reproduced in Scharf 1888: 1030.

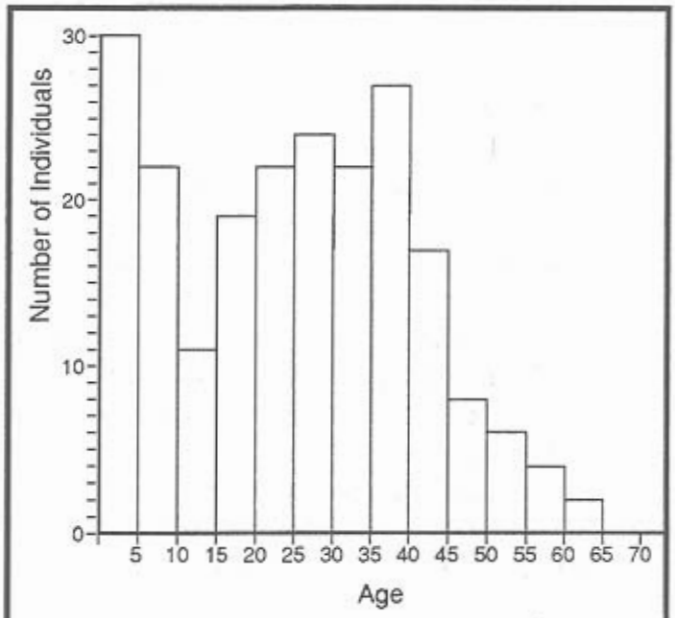
FIGURE 13
Household Size in Kent County in 1687



Source: 1687 census of 63 households in Kent County, Delaware (DSA microfilm).

FIGURE 14

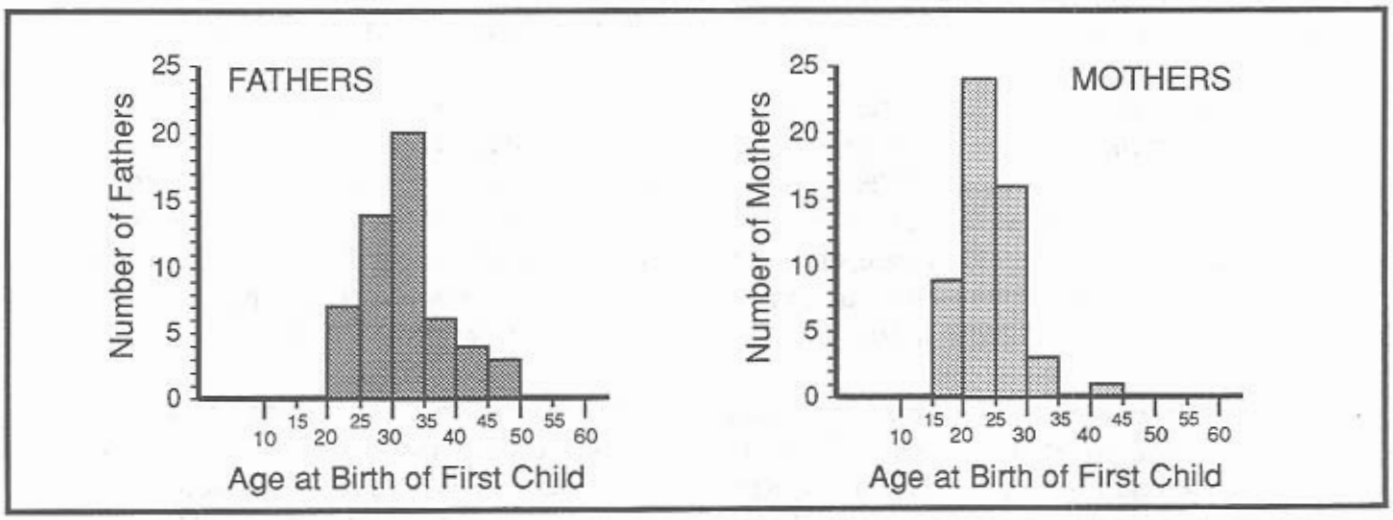
Age Distribution in Kent County in 1687



Source: 213 individuals of known age from the 1687 census of Kent County, Delaware (DSA microfilm).

FIGURE 15

Age of Parents at the Birth of Their First Child in 1687



These relatively old families had correspondingly young and few children. Four out of five families had at least two children, both of whom were typically under 10 years of age. Only one of five families had three or more children. The combination of older parents with very young children contributed to the demographic vigor, but also inherent instability, of early Delaware. Similar demographic conditions were first identified in the Chesapeake by Lois Carr and Lorena Walsh (Carr and Walsh, 1977, 1982; Walsh 1977; Main 1982; Menard 1973a and 1973b). Similarly late ages of marriage and childbirth have

been identified in Maryland and Virginia (Carr and Walsh 1982). Historians of the Chesapeake have suggested that indenture periods delayed most marriages. Indentured servants were forbidden to marry in both Maryland and Virginia. Female servants who became pregnant were subject to additional terms to compensate planters for their lost labor, and the additional expense of childbirth and raising the infant.

While Delaware had no such laws allowing planters to extend the terms of pregnant servants, it is likely that many of the settlers in Kent County in 1687 came from Maryland and Virginia after serving their terms. Edward Randolph, a Royal collection agent, ascribed recent increases in tobacco production in Kent and Sussex counties in 1696 to numerous families "recently removed thither from Maryland" (Hancock 1963:325). The delays in marriage and childbirth caused by indentures would explain the relatively late ages of marriage and childbirth identified in central Delaware.

Where Richard Whitehart and John Powell emigrated from is not known. Both families, however, probably came from Maryland. Thomas Sharp moved from Maryland to Delaware in 1689 (Horle 1991:663). In 1702, Sharp was one of seven men from Delaware who boasted to William Penn that the Lower Counties were now shipping 10 vessels of tobacco per year to England (Hancock 1963:336). Sharp and other members of the committee were seeking more protection from pirates and other threats to commerce. Penn, however, remained unmoved by their arguments and testily replied that Philadelphia alone was two and half more valuable than all three Lower Counties.

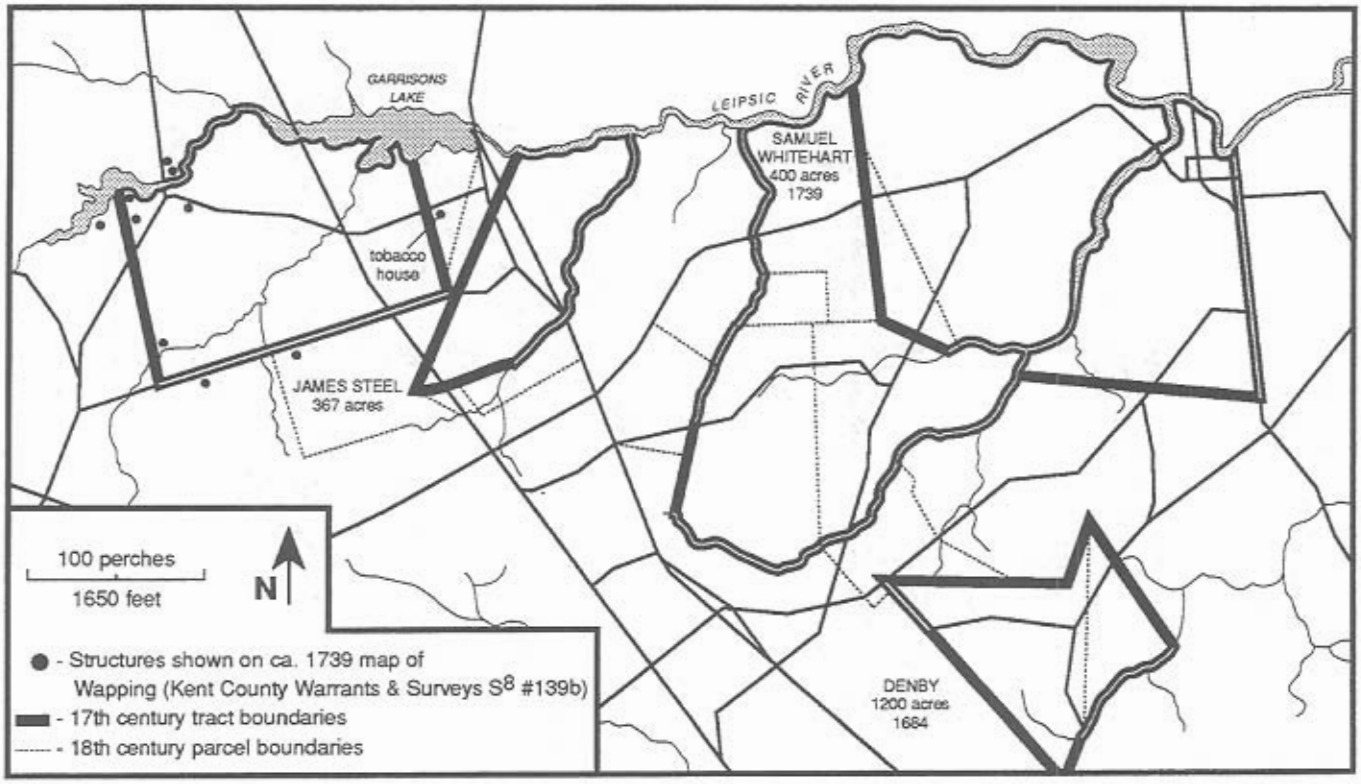
The 261 people living in Kent County in 1687 had settled on 26,899 acres of land. Kent County currently contains 380,000 acres of land (Matthews and Ireland 1971:1). Thus by 1687, seven percent of the county had been granted. The median landholding per household was 400 acres. A considerable range of property sizes, however, was recorded by the 1687 census. Parcel size ranged from 25 to 1,848 acres. Families with older heads of households tended to own slightly more land. Two major exceptions to this general trend were a small number of wealthy young men who owned extensive tracts and older men who had probably already begun to divide their holdings among their adult children.

Numerous visitors to central Delaware in the first two decades of the eighteenth century commented on the sparseness of settlement. One of the most astute visitors was John Oldmixon who published a guide to America in 1708. Oldmixon observed that the Lower counties were "Settled like Virginia, not in Townships, but in scattered Plantations (Hancock 1962b: 119). Kent County was "not so well planted" as northern Delaware, but was still very fruitful and contained "many tracts of Excellent land." The excellence of the land in Kent and Sussex counties, Oldmixon noted, led planters to scatter their settlements "as they thought best for their Convenience" (Hancock 1962b:120-21).

The inherent population instability in early Delaware is reflected in the life histories of the Whitehart and Powell families. Both families were orphaned by the early death of their father. Ann Powell quickly remarried, within a year of being widowed. Remarriage formed complex step families that became even more complex as additional children were born. Both Elizabeth Whitehart and Ann Powell bore at least seven children over their lifetimes. These complex family relations also slowed the accumulation of land and capital by inheritance. Allan Kulikoff (1986) traced the founding of huge family fortunes in the Chesapeake to the early 1710s when parents lived long enough to successfully transfer accumulated holdings to their children. Longer-lived parents meant more stable families and prevented the dilution of land and capital inherent to step families.

FIGURE 16

Early Eighteenth Century Landscape (ca. 1740) Along the South Side of the Leipsic River (Southwest Branch of Duck Creek)



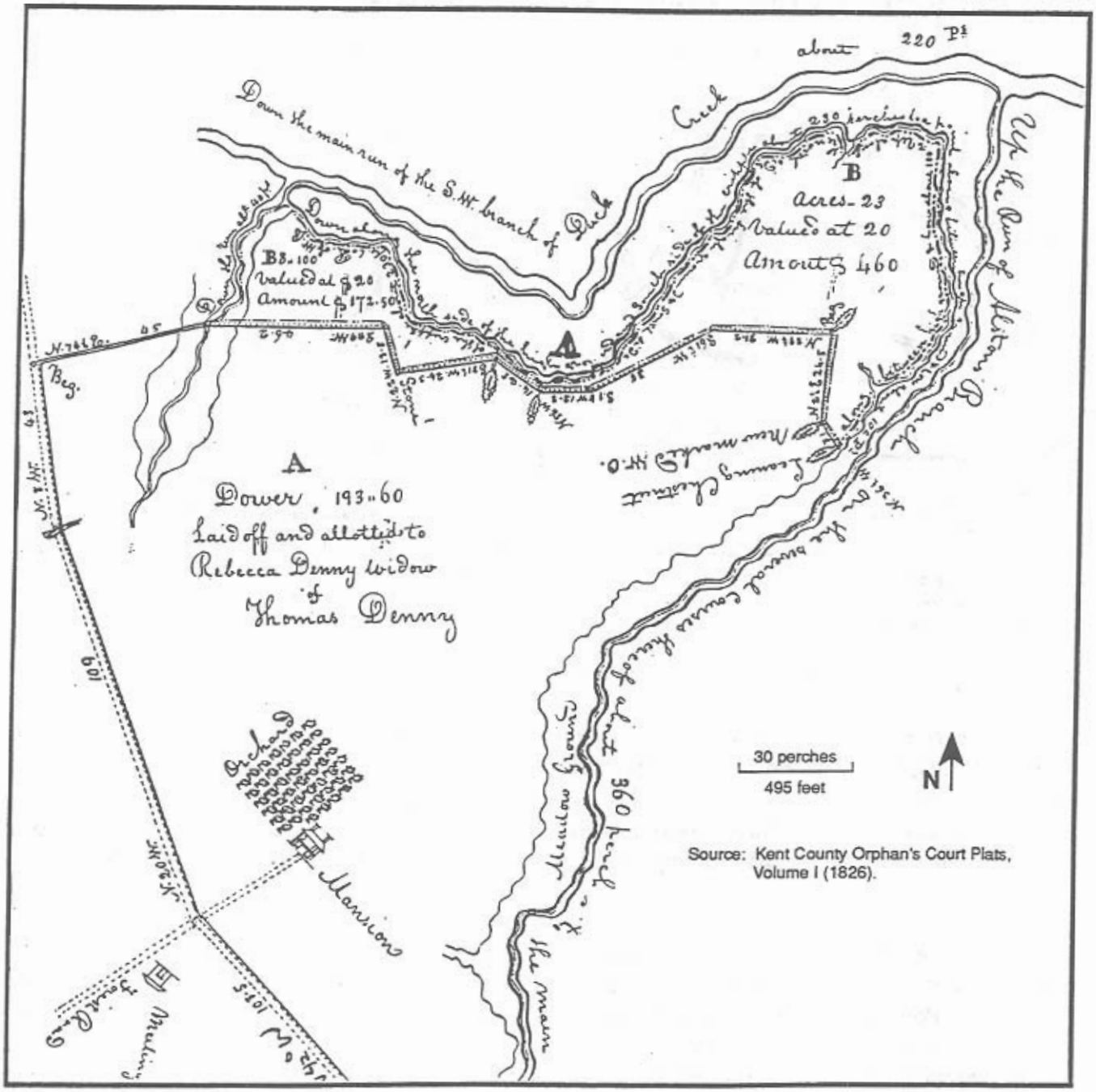
When this level of social and demographic stability was reached in central Delaware is unknown. Such stability, however, certainly occurred by the late 1730s. By this time, the Leipsic River drainage had been occupied for nearly 60 years and the area was relatively settled. The large seventeenth century tracts had been divided, and those divisions subdivided to parcels as small as 100 acres. These divisions are shown in the reconstructed landscape of the south side of the Leipsic River ca. 1740 shown in Figure 16.

As can be seen in Figure 16, all of the major initial land grants along the south side of the Leipsic River had been divided into small parcels by 1740. One of these grants, the 1000-acre Wapping tract west of the Pollack property, contained 10 separate structures in 1739. These structures included a grist and saw mill on the north side of the river, a tobacco house along the western edge of the grant, and eight separate dwellings. Each of the other major divisions of the early grants probably also had structures on them, but as these early surveys only rarely show them, no other structures are shown in Figure 16.

Andrew Hamilton owned the Whitehart and Powell parcels until his death ca. 1768. The parcels then passed to his son James Hamilton who sold all 324 acres to James Raymond in 1769. Raymond was one of the wealthiest men in central Delaware in this period. He lived on Raymond's Neck in Duck Creek Hundred and operated other tenant farms throughout Duck and Little Creek hundreds.

FIGURE 17

1827 Orphans Court Plat of the Land of Thomas Denny, Deceased



It was Andrew Hamilton who probably built the two-and-a-half story brick house that served as the primary dwelling on the 325-acre farm after the Powell Plantation was abandoned ca. 1723. This building is extant, but cut off from the present Pollack property by present Route 13. This house served as the primary dwelling on the property throughout the nineteenth century. The present 50 acres of the Pollack property, including the sites of both the Whitehart and Powell Plantations, were never again divided and remained part of the same farm from 1723 until 1990 when the Delaware Department of Transportation purchased the property.

James Raymond, who purchased the property from James Hamilton in 1769, sold it to Sarah Alston in 1775. Sarah Alston had recently been widowed by the death of her husband Arthur Alston. During his lifetime, Arthur Alston purchased the adjacent 300-acre parcel to the east. The Alston family first settled along the south bank of the Leipsic River between Alston Branch and Ellingsworth Branch in the early 1680s. The first Alstons were neighbors of the Whiteharts and Powells. The Alstons may have even settled in the area earlier than Richard Whitehart, as they appear in the 1680 census of householders living between Cedar and Duck Creeks.

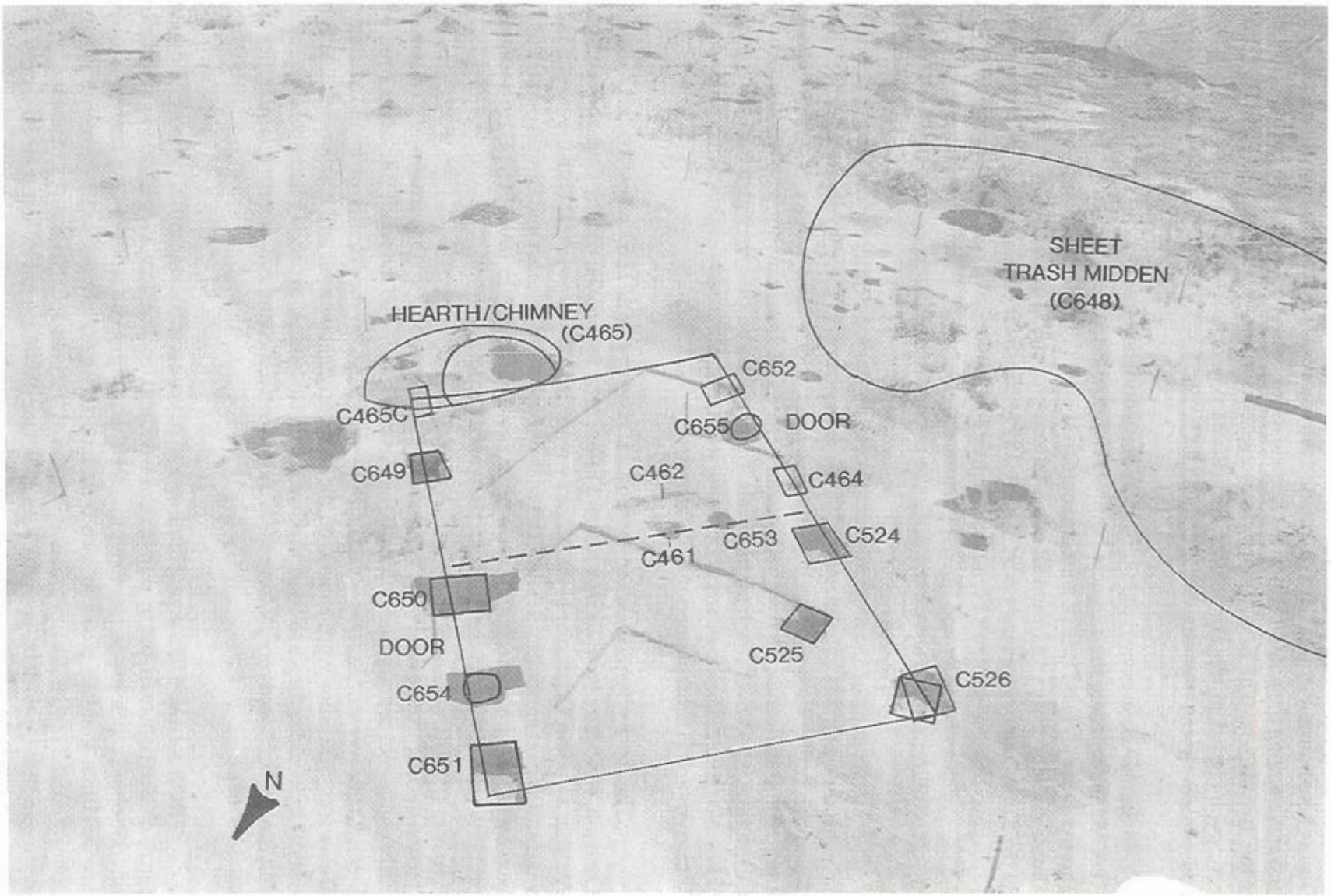
Sarah Alston owned the Pollack property until her death ca. 1826. She lived in Appoqunimink Hundred and tenanted the 323-acre farm with numerous tenants. By 1827, the entire property passed to Thomas Denny. The Dennys were a large family living throughout Duck and Little Creek hundreds. Thomas Denny died in 1826 and all of his various properties, including the Pollack parcel, were divided by the Kent County Orphans Court in early 1827. This plat of the Pollack property is shown in Figure 17. As can be seen in Figure 17, no later eighteenth or nineteenth century structures were ever built over the sites of the Whitehart and Powell plantations. The area of both sites, however, was cultivated and the present limits of the adjacent woodlot to the north established as early as 1827.

The location of the large eighteenth century brick dwelling for the farm is also shown in Figure 17. This dwelling was located nearly 2000 feet southwest of the Whitehart and Powell plantation sites. These two earlier sites were well beyond the limit of domestic activity of this site and few later mid-eighteenth, nineteenth, or twentieth century materials from this house were deposited over the two earlier sites. Whatever few later materials found at the two sites were also invariably found in the plow zone. No other evidence of any post dating to later than the early eighteenth century occupation of the Whitehart and Powell plantations was found.

The Denny family owned the Pollack property until 1869 when the land passed to Ephraim Garrison, a wealthy local landowner and miller who owned the nearby Garrison's mill and millpond. Another Orphans Court plat of the property made in 1869 showed that both the sites of both plantations were still vacant agricultural field. The sites of both the Whitehart and Powell plantations continued to be plowed and cultivated until borrow pit excavations began in 1991. The Garrison family owned the property until 1949, and the Pollacks purchased the farm in 1956.

In conclusion, the Whitehart and Powell plantations are the remains of two late seventeenth to early eighteenth century plantations along Alston Branch and the south side of the southwest branch of Duck Creek (present Leipsic River). Both sites were on the frontier of inland settlement in central Delaware. Both sites were located on the same original warrant and both Powell and Whitehart were heavily indebted to the same handful of wealthy local landowners and Philadelphia merchants. Whitehart and Powell borrowed money from these men to settle the land and support their families until they were established.

Both men also had young families and never escaped their initial debts. Full ownership of their farms eluded both men, but by dint of hard work and local custom, they appear to have retained a degree of control over their properties that provided them with more security than later tenants. As provincial law held that grantees stood to lose their land if they could not settle it, monied men like William Johnson and Thomas Sharp probably extended very reasonable terms to the families on their land. Although heavily in debt, both the Whitehart and Powell families lost their land only after numerous attempts to satisfy their creditors.

PLATE 10

Aerial View of Richard Whitehart Plantation House and Sheet Midden