

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the background, results and recommendations of a preliminary cultural resource assessment of the proposed extension and dualization of the Wilmington Boulevard, King and Front Streets to Fourth and Walnut Streets, Wilmington, New Castle County, Delaware (Maps 1 & 2; Plate 1). The purpose of this preliminary cultural resource assessment was to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and address Section 106 requirements to investigate the extent, and the degree of impact that the proposed Wilmington Boulevard project would have upon the cultural resources contained within the easternmost portion of the Wilmington Boulevard National Register Historic District. This project area is a segment of a larger proposed historic district which includes archaeological and architectural cultural resources dating, from the 18th century through today.

The Wilmington Boulevard project area is located approximately 400 feet north of the Christina River. The proposed road improvement consists of the reconstruction of Front Street to provide for an improved eastbound traffic flow into the central city (Blocks 1191 & 1192). Also involved is the construction of a new roadway along the adjacent area immediately north of Front Street (Blocks 1192, 1184, 1183 & 1102) to provide for a direct Interstate connection for westbound traffic leaving the center city (Map 2).

The project area was entirely vacant of standing structures at the time of archaeological fieldwork. In the mid-late 1970's and early 1980's several half and full city blocks, including

those within the project area, were demolished for urban renewal. The later demolition activities (post 1979) caused minor damage to the archaeological remains because structures were merely knocked into the cellar holes and fill was spread over the surface. In all earlier instances the demolition of the structures were accompanied by a removal of all foundations significantly disturbing the archaeological integrity of deposits in the vicinity of these structures. Background information on the engineering, environmental and cultural resource history of the Wilmington Boulevard project and Historic District are provided in earlier studies by, Blendy (1980 & 1982); DeLeuw, Cather/Parsons (1978); Herman (1982); Cunningham et al. (1980) Cunningham (1980); Thomas et al. (1980); Henry (1981); Klein (1981); Kruse (1969); Delaware Bureau of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (1980); Heite (1976); Fox (1976); Thomas (1980b); Guerrant (1981); Wise (1980, 1980 & 1981a, 1980 & 1981b, 1981c, 1981d) and DelDOT Demolition Specifications (1979, 1980 & 1981) and Design Specifications (1976, 1980 & 1982).

Archaeological fieldwork was begun on June 4, 1981 and terminated on July 28, 1981. Artifact processing and analysis, further archival research, and draft report preparation and writing were accomplished between October 1, 1981 and December 31, 1981. Final Report writing, preparation and compilation took place between January 5 and February 26, 1982. Final editing was accomplished late in 1984. Approximately 1297 persons days were spent on the data recovery program: 150 person days on fieldwork, 46 person days on archival research, 830 person days on

artifact processing, and 271 person days on data collation, analysis, report preparation and writing.

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CULTURE HISTORY

The earliest settlement in the area now called Wilmington occurred in 1638 when Swedish traders, soldiers, and colonists established the colony of New Sweden, and built a log-fort facing the Christina River at its confluence with the Brandywine River (Hoffecker 1977:15). The fort, known as Fort Christina was approximately three quarters of a mile east of the project area. The Dutch established their seat of government at New Amstel, about five and one half miles south of Fort Christiana. By 1655