APPENDIX X

PUBLIC INFORMATION HANDOUT

FOR THE

WILSON/SLACK AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS WORKS

AND FARMSTEAD COMPLEX

August-September 1983

STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS
P. O. BOX 778
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

WILSON/SLACK AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS WORKS AND FARMSTEAD

A phase II cultural resource survey is being conducted by the Delaware Department of Transportation, Division of Highways, and the Federal Highway Administration in conjunction with the University of Delaware, Department of Anthropology archeologists at the Wilson-Slack Agricultural Implements Works and Farmstead. The survey is necessitated by the widening of Route 4, which calls for the removal of all structures on the property. →

The site currently consists of a homestead, a two-story frame dwelling, together with two frame outbuildings, one a barn and the other a former blacksmith shop which the current owner refers to as a machine shop. The dwelling, barn and the blacksmith shop are original, mid-19th century structures. A machine shop (later a grist mill), a smaller barn, a chicken coop, one privy, two small sheds and the Wilson Station railroad yard are no longer standing. The site has been occupied for approximately 140 years by members of the same family, who have retained the extensive 19th century family and business records.

Alexander Wilson, grandfather of the present owner, operated the implements works, consisting of blacksmith, wheelwright, and machine operations, on the site from 1851 to 1896. Archival research has shown that this business was one of northern New Castle County's principal suppliers of implements to rural farmers and to local railrods. The blackmsith shop used by Wilson is still standing, unaltered, in its original position. However, much of the equipment has been removed over the years. The structure used by Wilson as a machine shop, and later by his son John Wilson as a grist mill up until the 1920's, is believed to be that located archeologically and referred to in the photo. It is probable that Alexander and John Wilson included in his customers owners of other local farmsteads which have been the subject of recent Delaware Department of Transportation, Division of Highways, Federal Highway Administration and the University of Delaware, Department of Anthropology archeological research surveys, the Robert Ferguson and the W. M. Hawthorn Farmstead located on Rt. 4 and New Churchman's Road respectively.

The Wilson-Slack dwelling, constructed about 1840, was enlarged prior to 1860 and has been unaltered since. It is basically a duplex structure, with four rooms on the ground floor, bedrooms on the second floor, a raised full basement, and an enclosed front porch extending the breadth of the building.

The combination of extant structures, archeological remains, and extensive business records presents a unique and rare opportunity to study the lifeways of a rural 19th century entrepreneur.

If you request any further information or particulars concerning this project, please contact the site supervisor or Kevin Cunningham, DelDOT Archeologist at 736-3243.