

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The archaeological data, historical analysis, and architectural survey of the Wilson-Slack site all combine to show various aspects of the life of a 19th century entrepreneur in rural New Castle County. Archival data show that as time progressed, the Wilson-Slack blacksmith enterprise expanded both in terms of scope of activities and variety of markets. Although the basis of the business and profit was the local, surrounding farm communities within 5 miles of the site, certain aspects of business life extended throughout the Middle Atlantic region. These business activities seem to have produced a small surplus of cash which was used to purchase some foodstuffs, rather than relying on home-raised produce. Nonetheless, the socio-economic standing of the site's inhabitants, based on tax records, remained lower than that of nearby families engaged in agriculture, such as the Hawthorn site (Coleman et al. 1984). This is probably due to larger landholdings among farming families. Similarly, the material culture which was recovered archaeologically from the Wilson-Slack domestic complex was no different from that of land-holding farming families (Coleman et al. 1984) or tenant farmers (Coleman et al. 1983). Archival data suggest that the Wilson-Slack family had a higher status in that some family members fulfilled important, higher status, community functions. Nevertheless, this status was not apparent archaeologically, except possibly with regard to purchase and consumption of meat cuts. Even this differential consumption pattern may not be strictly related to status. It could be the case that the inhabitants of the Wilson-Slack site had to purchase more foodstuffs because labor was devoted to blacksmithing and manufacturing rather than food production.

Spatial patterning of activities show some similarities and differences when the Wilson-Slack site is compared to the Hawthorn and Ferguson sites. The Wilson-Slack site's stratigraphy indicates numerous cutting and filling activities around the

house and associated outbuildings. In general, it can be stated that there seems to be an increasing degree of spatial segregation through time. This increasing spatial segregation seems to be correlated with the increasing extent of the machine shop/blacksmithing/grist mill activities. The spatial changes seem to have continued over a fairly long period of time at Wilson-Slack as did the processes of business growth.

In contrast, the Hawthorn site (Coleman et al. 1984) shows a rather dramatic and abrupt reorientation of both activity areas and the domestic structure. Also, a shift in agricultural outbuildings occurs around the same time. These changes seem to occur as the Hawthorn site occupants are drawn into an emerging local market economy in the 19th century. In many ways, the changes at the Hawthorn site seem to be more planned, while the changes at the Wilson-Slack site seem to be more incremental and not a product of planned growth. These changes mirror patterns in the archival data for the Wilson-Slack site in that one gets the impression that the Wilson-Slack business ventures grow in response to changes outside of the participant's control. It is interesting to note that Manning (1983) found similar patterns among 19th century farmsteads on New Jersey's Inner Coastal Plain.

By way of another contrast, the Ferguson site (Coleman et al. 1983), a tenant farm site, does not show any spatial reorientation or changing spatial utilization through the 19th century. This absence of change probably is related to the tenant nature of the site's occupation and to the reduced effects of emerging market economies on non-landholding tenant farms.

In sum, when the Wilson-Slack data are compared to other sites in the local area, there appear to be important and unique features of the Wilson-Slack site. Archival, architectural, and archaeological data all can be combined to provide a portrait of the lifeways of a family of rural industrial entrepreneurs during the

19th century. The contrasts of these lifeways with other rural patterns are also evident.

The analysis of the of the Wilson-Slack data also has implications for future research and methodologies. First, the analysis of Wilson-Slack soils data shows that some soil chemical and physical properties (pH, phosphorous, and potassium) are useful for discerning human activity areas at historic sites while other (calcium and magnesium) are not. The useful soil properties may have applications at sites where standing structures and architectural features are no longer extant and artifact densities are low (see Hurry and Kavanagh 1983).

The results of comparative analyses of the Wilson-Slack site and other local sites raise some interesting issues about general historical archaeology methodologies. Standard analytical techniques such as those developed by South (1977, 1979) have not generally proven to be useful in analyzing rural sites in northern Delaware either because there are insufficient data or because the results are at best trivial (Coleman et al. 1984). Furthermore, most general analyses of artifact categories, such as ceramics, show no differences among sites which obviously experienced very different patterns of artifact deposition and which were the products of very different lifeways according to archival data. In some cases this absence of differences may be due to the small size of most samples from good contexts which could be subjected to some of the more interesting non-traditional analyses (eg. - Miller 1974). In other cases, the traditional methods of historical archaeology seem to fail to produce meaningful, non-trivial results.

Two methodological alternatives are to focus on: (1) faunal remains, and other ecofacts indicative of diet, and food processing and consumption habits, and (2) use of space. Both of these topics are usually not directly considered in the archival data, and their consideration provides insights to past lifeways that can be discovered only through archaeology. Their study and integration with archival

data requires some different uses of written records, such as the catchment analysis used in this report, but these new uses provide interesting data. Continued consideration of these two topics will also require some adjustment of field excavation methods. Sampling of middens for food remains will be important in future studies as will be systematic sampling of broad areas of sites.

The comparative approach used in this report has also been useful in studying past lifeways and cultural processes. This comparative approach requires comparable data and it is hoped that future studies in the region will use comparable methods and produce comparable data. It should also be noted that the comparability of methods should apply to both archival and archaeological analyses.

From a narrower perspective, certain local research requirements became apparent from the analysis of sites in the Route 4 Corridor. It would be useful to sample additional sites of different socio-economic settings. Sites with potentially high importance that would be part of Del DOT projects include the Temple site and Ogletown, which would provide information on lifeways at small towns in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries; the Patterson site, which would provide information on a landowner of a higher socio-economic status; and sites along Route 7 near the Fall Line, which may provide additional information on 19th century milling and industrial sites. An additional site that could provide important comparative material would be the Clyde Farmstead in the vicinity of Churchman's Marsh.

In conclusion, important changes in 19th century life took place in northern Delaware and these changes shaped our lives. Archaeological and historical analysis of sites like Wilson-Slack can help us to understand these changes and learn more about our past.