

ABSTRACT

Phase III archaeological excavations were conducted at the site of the Blue Ball Tavern, located in New Castle County, Delaware. The field investigations were conducted in 1996 and 1997 by Thunderbird Archeological Associates (TAA), Inc., for the Location and Environmental Studies Office, Division of Highways, Department of Transportation, State of Delaware (DeIDOT). The project was carried out as part of DeIDOT's planning study for the proposed widening of U.S. Route 202, in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106, and Section 13B of the Federal Highway Act. Excavations focused on the tavern/house foundation and the yard areas to the north, west, and south of the house. Excavations of the tavern/house foundation revealed that the structure had been built in three construction episodes, the oldest part (and the original eighteenth-century tavern) being the northernmost section. Two additions were built on the south side of the original tavern, probably in the nineteenth century. Investigations around the dwelling reveal a series of features including outbuilding foundations, stone walls, pit features, post holes, midden areas, and buried ground surfaces. These features reflect the changing economic and domestic functions of the site during its occupation and use beginning in the eighteenth century and ending in the 1970s. The history of the site may be divided into three major periods reflecting three distinct functions: the period during which it was used as a tavern (from approximately 1787 until the 1850s); the period during which it was a tenant farm (from the 1850s until 1909); and the period during which it was owned by the du Ponts and operated as a dairy farm (1909 to 1938). Archaeological data recovered during these Phase III investigations reveal many of the material manifestations of these changes in ownership, occupancy, and function.