

## RESEARCH DESIGN

From a regional perspective, the Blue Ball Tavern site was used to study several aspects of the developing economic landscape in this part of New Castle County during the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. The site originally functioned as a tavern, with documentation beginning in 1787. During the early nineteenth century, commerce prospered and rapid industrial and urban growth characterized the Piedmont and Upper Peninsula (De Cunzo and Catts 1990:59). The tavern appeared on maps and records until 1849; after that date it functioned as a tenant farm until the early 1900s. After 1914, the Blue Ball Dairy occupied the site. These aspects of its history are theoretically separable as research problems and where archaeological contexts could be separated, were compared to similar investigations in the area. Archeological data recovery has been carried out at the Riseing Son Tavern (Thompson 1987) and the John Ruth Inn in Ogletown (Coleman et al. 1990). Phase I and II studies have been conducted at the Mermaid Tavern complex (Catts et al. 1986) on Limestone Road. Comparative data for tenant farms have been supplied from the excavations at the Grant Tenancy site (Taylor et al. 1987), just a few miles away on the other side of the Brandywine River, from the Robert Ferguson site (Coleman et al. 1983), and from a number of other reports.

In terms of research problems identified by De Cunzo and Catts (1990), the Blue Ball Tavern perhaps can offer significant data about community interaction during the period 1770-1830 (defined in the Delaware Statewide Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan as Transformation from Colony to State), a time during which agricultural growth accelerated in the Piedmont area. It was during this period that many of the major roads became turnpikes. From 1830 to 1880 (the State Plan's period of Industrialization and Capitalization), the impact of another transportation revolution could be felt, with a decrease in overland transportation and the construction of railroads. This seems to coincide with the demise of many taverns. Of interest during these time periods are questions concerning facets of domestic life, particularly in terms of the contrasts between landowners and tenants. Du Pont ownership begins slightly before the period from 1880 to 1940 (Urbanization and Early Suburbanization), during which the property was used as a dairy serving the Nemours Estate; the property was later leased by the du Ponts to independent dairymen. A third transportation revolution, occurring about three quarters through this period, involved the construction of roads for motorized transportation.

It was not clear what to expect in terms of artifact differentiation between taverns and tenant farms, or even owner operated farms. For example, tavern operators typically lived at their places of business, combining residential functions with the tavern activities, which are not significantly different from the activities at a normal domestic site (food processing, food preparation and consumption, sleeping, team and stock maintenance, etc.). It was expected that some of these activities would be more heavily represented because of the larger number of people being served than would be the case at a strictly domestic site (Thompson 1987:113, 120; Coleman et al. 1990:185). Tavern keeper probate inventories have been found for the Blue Ball's occupants. The one from 1850 is divided into a general farming/livestock list, a kitchen list, a dining room list, a

'barr roome' list, a cellar list, and a bedroom list. This list shows a great deal of farm equipment in addition to an extensive household inventory. An 1827 keeper's inventory also includes extensive farming equipment and livestock as well as household goods. One hypothesis that can be tested at Blue Ball is that, because of the function of a tavern site, both spatial configurations and artifact inventories should be demonstrably different than at ordinary domestic sites and should include such things as larger stables, storage sheds and other outbuildings. However, other researchers have found it difficult to isolate a "tavern pattern," concluding that high variability in historic assemblages precludes simple correlation with socio-economic status, function, or regional location (Coleman et al. 1990). This may, however, be a factor of the nature of the comparison made. For example, tavern assemblages from both pre- and post-revolutionary times and from as far north as Cape Cod and as far south as South Carolina were considered. Perhaps imposing greater temporal and spatial limitations will be a productive avenue for identifying regional patterns. Additionally, variability in these assemblages may be anticipated as a factor of time.

Because discernable trends can be separated both historically and archaeologically within the site, the results of both the archival and fieldwork at the Blue Ball tavern will be presented in a manner that allows us to analyze these temporal phases separately. Archaeological contexts that can be limited to a particular phase will be discussed together as a contextual unit. The phases have been defined according to the site's primary function at different times, and included within each of these units are larger community, county, or statewide trends.

The first phase is the "Tavern Era," lasting from about 1787 at the latest to sometime in the 1850s. This phase can be archaeologically subdivided into earlier and later units within which the tavern operation will be discussed and compared in relation to the field results and accompanying historical documentation.

The second phase is the "The Tenant Farm" era and spans the years after 1850 to about 1909, after which A. I. du Pont purchased the property. This phase can also be subdivided into earlier and later units, based on historic and archaeological indications. The early era has been defined as 1862 to 1890 and the later from 1890 to 1909.

The last phase begins after 1909 and is termed the "Du Pont Dairy/Farm." It lasts until 1938, when du Pont died and the property was transferred to various Florida based companies and leased to independent dairymen.

Land use trends for each of these phases in the site's use can be seen through the distribution of various domestic and architectural artifact remains. This will be demonstrated and discussed in the results section of this report. Intra-site temporal and spatial comparisons will then be made to synthesize these temporal phases, and synchronic inter-site comparisons will be made with similar sites. All features are listed in Appendix I. Features that have been interpreted, based on TPQs or stratigraphy, to post-date the late twentieth century demolition of the tavern/house will not be discussed in the body of the report, but are also included in Appendix I.