

**DRAFT**

**Phase I/II Archaeological Investigations  
Choptank Road/State Road 15 Improvement Project  
New Castle County, Delaware**

Report Prepared for:

Edwards and Kelcey  
1247 Ward Avenue  
West Chester, PA 19380-4259

and

DelDOT/Environmental Studies Section  
800 Bay Road  
Dover, DE 19901

Report Prepared by:

Kimberly A. Morrell and Petar D. Glumac, Ph.D.  
***Kise Straw & Kolodner***  
Cultural Resources Group  
123 South Broad Street  
Suite 1270  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19109

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## ABSTRACT

Between the spring of 2004 and April 2006, archaeologists from Kise Straw & Kolodner conducted Phase I and Phase II archaeological investigations of the Choptank Road Improvement Project area in Pencader and Saint George Hundreds, New Castle County, Delaware. Performed for Edwards and Kelcey and the Delaware Department of Transportation, and required as compliance for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA, 1966), this investigation encompassed portions of a 4.82-mile roadway alignment in northern Delaware. Representatives of McCormick Taylor & Associates (MTA) undertook initial investigation of the proposed project area in 2001-2002; Kise Straw & Kolodner assumed responsibility for the completion of the archaeological investigation in the spring of 2003.

The majority of the project area encompassed by this investigation was located in close proximity to the extant roadways and within well-maintained grassy road verges or active agricultural fields. The overall project area was divided into 37 discrete test areas in an effort to create manageable testing segments; the agricultural nature of much of the project area permitted the use of systematic shovel testing as the primary testing methodology with controlled surface collection in many areas employed as a supplemental means of investigation. This methodology involved the placement of a total of 1,755 shovel test pits, including the 290 test pits originally excavated by MTA, and resulted in the combined collection of 203 prehistoric and 996 historical artifacts during the execution of the Phase I investigation. The majority of artifacts were collected from subsurface contexts, rather than during surface inspection of the project area. Native American and historical-era artifacts were recovered from throughout the project area and were derived from a total of 14 delineated sites; individual Native American occupations dated to the Archaic through Woodland I culture periods and generally represented examples of short-term procurement camps, while historical sites exhibited evidence of use ranging from the late seventeenth through the mid-twentieth centuries.

Of the 14 prehistoric and historical sites identified during KSK's Phase I investigation of the Choptank Road/SR 15 Improvement Project, a total of 8 sites were assessed to warrant additional (Phase II) archaeological investigation. These Phase II endeavors consisted of the excavation of a total of thirty-one (31) test units across the eight sites. Two of the Native American sites (7NC-F-92 and 7NC-F-99) tested during the Phase II archaeological investigation produced subsurface features undisturbed below the historical plow zone, while two historical sites contained sufficient integrity to warrant Phase III data recovery. Historical artifacts and the remains of a mortared brick foundation (7NC-F-94) were found in the approximate location of historically mapped late-nineteenth century/early twentieth century dwellings. Elements of the artifact assemblage suggest that tenant farmers and/or African American individuals may possibly have occupied one of these dwellings during some or all of the occupation history of the structure. A second site (7NC-F-100) subjected to Phase II investigation produced an artifact assemblage with manufacture dates generally restricted to the turn of the eighteenth century; excavation units on this site contained several sub-plow zone features potentially comprising the remains of earthfast foundation elements.

Based on the results of these Phase II investigations, two sites (7NC-F-94 and 7NC-F-100) were determined to be eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D of the National Historic Preservation Act, based upon their historical components. Both of these sites also contain intact prehistoric elements below their historical occupations and were proposed for Phase III data recovery efforts, provided that avoidance measures could not be enacted to ensure their continued preservation in place. At the time of this document's composition, 7NC-F-100 has been successfully avoided through applied avoidance strategies; however, 7NC-F-94 remains within the zone of proposed impacts and therefore is recommended for Phase III archaeological data recovery.

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