

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE HISTORY OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

Archaeological sites are documents that preserve information about the past, just like the paper documents preserved in archives and museums. If archaeological sites are destroyed without proper excavation, that information is lost forever. In order to prevent such losses, the Delaware Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the Cultural Resource Group



of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., has conducted archaeological survey and testing in the path of the proposed Puncheon Run Connector. The Puncheon Run Connector will carry traffic from the new SR 1 to U.S. 13 and SR 8 south of Dover, relieving congestion on local roads.

Archaeological testing of the Puncheon Run Connector corridor began in 1995, and a number of archaeological sites have been located. One of these is the *Thomas Dawson Site*.



Thomas Dawson and his family seem to have been quite ordinary Delawareans. They were small farmers, and may have had a sideline in the brewing business. Archaeological testing has shown that remains of their farm survive, including building foundations and trash pits full of artifacts. The dates of occupation (1740-1780) are based on the artifacts found at the site, especially ceramics (pottery and porcelain), which evolved very rapidly in the 1700s. The site of the Dawsons' farm is a valuable record of how ordinary people lived in the 1700s.



We have many written records of life in Colonial times, but most of these are government documents, which do not reflect the concerns of the people. Most of the

surviving personal documents, such as letters and diaries, were written by wealthy, well-educated people. Ordinary people seldom expressed themselves in writing, but they did express themselves through speech, prayer, song, dance, and the things they made with their hands.

The eighteenth century saw very great changes in people's material lives, such as new kinds of houses, clothing, dishes, and furniture. Some historians have emphasized the



new consumer culture as a hallmark of modernity, but millions of Americans could not afford to become consumers. Some of them continued to live in their log cabins, eat their traditional foods, and wear homespun clothes.



To understand the past, archaeologists study many kinds of people from the past, from the wealthiest and most powerful to the most humble and obscure. Since people like the Dawsons left few written documents, we must try to recover their lives through the material objects they made and used. For people like the Dawsons, archaeology can provide a unique perspective on the past.



HOW TO GET THERE—



FOR MORE INFORMATION—

DelDOT and Berger invite everyone (individuals and/or groups) to visit and/or work at the site. Site tours and work hours are continuous from 8:00am to 3:00pm, Mondays through Fridays. For more information about visiting the site, please contact Kevin Cunningham of DelDOT at (302) 739-3826 or Dr. John Bedell of Berger at (202) 331-7775.



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Louis Berger & Associates, Inc. (Berger)*

