

## THE CULTURAL SETTING

The regional history that follows is abstracted from a number of sources, including a number of earlier DelDOT reports, including Coleman et al. 1984, Coleman et al. 1985, Coleman et al. 1990, De Cunzo and Garcia 1992, Grettler et al. 1996, and Taylor et al. 1989.

The earliest colonial settlement in Delaware was made by the Dutch in 1631 near present day Lewes; here, under the sponsorship of the Dutch West India Company, was a small venture established for the purpose of whaling and raising grain and tobacco. This, unfortunately, ended with the all-male population being massacred by the local Indians in 1632. In 1638, a group of Swedes employed by the New Sweden Company settled further north, building Fort Christiana in what is now part of the city of Wilmington. The Fort became the nucleus of a scattered settlement of Swedish and Finnish farmers known as New Sweden.

The Dutch claimed the same area of land by right of prior discovery, and in 1651 the West India Company retaliated by building Fort Casimir at New Castle to try to block Swedish efforts to control commerce in the Delaware River. Although the Swedes were able to capture Fort Casimir in 1654, renaming it Fort Trinity, the rivalry between the two groups continued, with the Dutch recapturing Fort Trinity and seizing Fort Christiana as well. New Sweden went out of existence as a political entity and, in 1657, the City of Amsterdam negotiated for and acquired Fort Casimir from the West India Company, founding a town near the Fort and calling it New Amstel. Settlers fell under the supervision of local officials appointed by the burgomasters of Amsterdam.

In 1664 the English attacked the Dutch settlement at New Amstel, and a transfer of political authority from Dutch to English occurred. Former Dutch magistrates continued in office under the new English authority, and the residents of the area--the Swedes, Finns and Dutch--peacefully accepted the rule of the Duke of York through his appointed governors. In 1682, proprietary rights were granted to William Penn and his representatives. Now Delaware was under the control of Philadelphia, both economically and politically.

The settlement pattern at this time was one of scattered farmsteads located along the Delaware and its tributaries. Cultivated fields were gradually replacing the forests (although as late as 1756 a Swedish visitor observed that most of the farms were "newly cleared"). During the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Philadelphia had begun to dominate the economic scene in the lower Delaware Valley, having become the chief export port for grain and flour. Although subsistence farming continued to be important, with

**TABLE 1**

Appraisement of the Goods and Chattel of William Murphy, deceased Brandywine Hundred

Carriage		30.00	
Cook Stove		5.00	
do do		1.00	
Feather Bed & c	12.00		
Bedding	10.00		
Cot Bed		.75	
Carpenting		12.20	
Blankets and Coverlets	15.50		
Dining Table		3.00	
1/2 Doz. Silver Spoons	10.00		
Knives & Forks & c		2.00	
Lot of Dishes		5.00	
Bureau & Contents		5.00	
Stand		.50	
Setee		2.00	
4 Looking Glass	5.00		
Clock		2.00	
Wash Stand		.75	
4 Pictures		2.50	
15 Chairs		7.50	
2 Stands		.50	
Lot Tools		1.00	
9 Grain Bags		2.25	
Lot of Pots & Kettle		.50	
Chest & Contents		.75	
Chest 25, Chest & Tools 200		2.25	
Box of Bottle & c		.50	
Lot of Lines & Sackings	75		
3 Trunks & Contents		50	
Drills & c		1.00	
2 Saws & Tools	3.00		
Andirons & c		1.50	
Churn		.50	
Baskets & Cards	.20		
Lot Bottle & c		.25	
Table & Bedsteads		.25	
Wheelbarrow		2.00	
Ladder	1.00		
8 Day Clock		5.00	
Sofa		5.00	
Grindstone		1.50	
2 Card Tables		8.00	
2 Doz Chairs		8.00	
Side Board		5.00	183.90

We the subscribers do in affirmation say, that the goods and chattels in this inventory, have been appraised by us at the sums stated which are according to our best judgement their true value.

September 9th 1870

Adam Grubb  
John H. (?) Bullock

supplemental sources of cash income on an occasional basis (Taylor et al. 1989:25). Statistics indicate that workers in the powder yard (such as E. I. DuPont's, on the Brandywine) often left the company and the hazards of the job at an early age, taking their savings and purchasing farms nearby (Uminowicz 1979: 19). This helped to off-set a trend that centered on the migration of workers to urban areas.

Farming occupied the vast majority of those parts of the landscape suitable for agriculture until quite recently, and was practiced by the remaining descendants of the early settlers--those Swedes, Dutch and English who first broke ground here. Although at the beginning of the 1800s, agriculture had become significantly less productive under the old practices, new techniques such as the use of improved drainage systems, fertilizers, and farm machinery boosted production greatly. While the traditional crops--oats, corn and wheat--were still in demand, decreasing crop yields encouraged crop rotation with marketable fodder grasses, a commodity required by urban transportation (Bidwell and Falconer 1941:235; Passmore et al. 1978:29). Urban markets also required meat, fattened in the pastures before being sold; the cow manure was an important by-product, valued as fertilizer. Ultimately, dairying became an important alternative to crop production in Delaware (Passmore et al. 1978:36). Tenant farming, common in the eighteenth century, became even more prevalent in the nineteenth century. By the beginning of the twentieth century, over 50% of all the farmers in Delaware were tenants or share croppers (De Cunzo and Garcia 1992:28).

New Castle County's proximity to Wilmington as well as its excellent transportation network are two of the factors which allowed the County to grow and diversify rapidly as it entered into the twentieth century, although the decline in the use of water power in favor of cheap fossil fuels and electricity directly contributed to the demise of the factories on the Brandywine (Taylor et al. 1989: 27). Today, considerable residential and commercial development has been carried out, and the area has taken on the character of a mixed land-use suburban environment, with numerous housing subdivisions, strip malls, large malls, and various small business and commercial complexes. Increasing intensity of cultural use of the area has meant that many older functional buildings (barns, coops, dairies, etc.) are gone or have been replaced by more modern ones, while the residences themselves are in various stages of restoration, remodeling or decay.

#### **OWNERSHIP HISTORY**

The following ownership history is taken from Taylor et al. 1989. Although the present study area consists of only one and a quarter acres, the Murphy House was originally situated on an approximately fifteen acre parcel located at the northeast corner of