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PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY ALONG THE RIGHT-  
OF-WAY OF FAI-1, STATE OF DELAWARE

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When the Federal Highway Construction Act of 1955 was enacted into law, provisions were incorporated, largely through the efforts of those active in the archaeology of the western states, to insure the effective salvage of prehistoric and historic sites which would be destroyed by the newly constructed roads. When, therefore, plans were drawn for the construction of a federally supported, interstate highway across the northern part of Delaware (FAI-1), the Delaware Archaeological Board engaged me, late in the spring of 1958, to make a survey along the proposed right-of-way. The objective of the survey was to discover and to certify for salvage operations any prehistoric or historic site whose destruction would seriously hamper the acquisition of knowledge concerning the past.

As soon as arrangements were completed, the survey was begun and continued through the summer and fall of 1958. Survey activities consisted of field investigations designed to discover surface indications of prehistoric occupation, interviews with local residents and collectors to discover to what extent such evidences had been found in the past, and test excavations in those areas which were both promising and available.

Although FAI-1 extends between the Delaware Memorial Bridge and the Maryland State line, west of Iron Hill, the area selected for actual survey was restricted to that section west of the Churchman's Marsh and ~~just east of the proposed Churchman's Road Interchange~~. Such a restriction was made because the marsh itself, and the intensive alteration of the surface topography through a long period of urban, suburban and industrial development gave little promise for any significant preservation of prehistoric remains east of this point.

The section to be surveyed included the right-of-way strip, 300 feet wide, and the four immediately proposed interchanges; i.e., Churchman's Road, east of the marsh formed by the junction of the ~~White~~ Clay Creek with the Christina; Route 7, between Stanton and Christiana and immediately west of Churchman Road; Pine Swamp Corner, between Ogleton and Christiana; and Iron Hill, on Route 896, south of Newark and adjoining the upper reaches of Christina Creek.

Except for its western portion, as it crosses Iron Hill, FAI-1 traverses the coastal plain whose surface materials consist mainly of unconsolidated and easily eroded marine clays, sands, and gravels which, with the tidal marshes in the eastern portion, is intersected by meandering streams whose shifting channels carry the waters to the sea. It is an area of erosion rather than deposition, erosion which has been intensified during

the historic period by intensive agriculture. These geological and cultural factors, when combined with the apparent sparseness of prehistoric settlement, makes for survey conditions quite different from those which prevail in the western states where surveys and salvage operations have proved unusually successful.

The area encompassed by the roadway itself is so small as to suggest an analogy between the search for significant occupational sites there with the proverbial search for the needle in the haystack. For this reason primary stress was placed upon the interchange areas, each of which comprised some 50 to 70 acres. Where accessible and where determined, however, the proposed road bed was searched for surface indications.

Because of the already existing knowledge of numerous surface collections made from the Clyde Farm, bounded by the ~~White~~<sup>White</sup> Clay Creek, Route 7, Churchman's Road and Churchman's Marsh, the survey was begun at this point, at various times alone, with the aid of a student crew, and in association with Mr. Ronald J. Mason who was engaged by me for a short period to assist in the survey. Test pits were opened on the right-of-way west of the Marsh in an attempt to discover whether subsurface features in this area would reinforce surface discoveries made to the north outside of the restricted survey area. These test excavations proved uniformly negative and indicated that a very thin surface soil overlay a heavy, compact, sterile clay. Questioning of residents produced information leading only to the conclusion that the area was barren. Moving west, we searched the cultivated portions of the proposed Churchman's Road and Route 7 interchanges for some surface indication of prehistoric occupation. Nothing was found. Informants indicated that in addition to the known collections made in the field immediately south of ~~White~~<sup>White</sup> Clay Creek, Indian materials had occasionally been found in the heavily wooded areas between the Route 7 and Pine Swamp Corner Interchanges. Attempts were made to investigate this area but were aborted by the density of the ground cover and by the fact that the right-of-way was not sufficiently marked in this area. Where possible, both interviews and surface surveys were made between Pine Swamp Corner and Iron Hill Interchanges, but again without success. Because of its availability and its cultivated state, the area just north of Cooch's Bridge, although outside the survey area, was surveyed intensively for surface indications. Nothing was found on the ground nor could residents in the area recall any finds in the past.

Aside from the promise which the previously collected surface finds from the Clyde Farm gave for positive results at Churchman's Road Interchange, greatest optimism was entertained for the area around the Iron Hill Interchange. The occupant of the land to be absorbed by this section of the highway showed me a small collection of some five miscellaneous projectile points which it was said had been collected during farming operations. The surface of this and neighboring areas was, therefore, searched

intensively on two different occasions in the hope the area would yield materials suggesting the need for further test excavations. Unfortunately no material ascribable to human workmanship was encountered.

Because the exact right-of-way of the highway west of Iron Hill Interchange had not yet been determined, the Iron Hill section was not surveyed, although local history has it that an Indian trail led across this easternmost extension of the Piedmont; and since this short stretch has as yet not been investigated, this report must necessarily be considered preliminary and incomplete.

In general, then, for the purposes for which the survey was inaugurated, the conclusions of this report must be considered negative. More specifically, there does not appear to be any prehistoric or historic site which requires salvage because of the threat raised by the construction of FAI-1

I cannot conclude this report without a few general observations — some of them speculative — and recommendations. If these be considered not pertinent, this section may be eliminated from the report itself.

As regards the survey itself, I am personally disappointed that no evidences of sites worthy of further excavations were found. My disappointment is the greater because the enthusiasm and vision of the Delaware Archaeological Board led it to expend much of its small budget in an attempt to protect, for the future, what knowledge we can derive from the past, to protect this from the necessary depredations of the present. In this respect, to my knowledge, Delaware has set an example for the states along the Eastern Seaboard. The negative conclusions to which this report has come do not, of course, suggest that there was no significant prehistoric occupation in the area, nor, may I add, of the particular areas surveyed. Unless we were to sink test excavations every hundred yards or so along the right-of-way, it would be impossible to reach any but probable conclusions. There can be no doubt that an important settlement existed — and probably at more than one period — on that elevated portion of the Clyde Farm which borders Red Clay Creek. Despite the extensiveness of former collecting activities and despite the undoubted erosion that has occurred, it seems to me that this is a site well worth digging under controlled archaeological conditions. It is possible — and I think probable on the basis of the present topography of the area — that some portion of this site has been destroyed by the southerly movement of the creek channel; nevertheless, enough of the site still exists, I think, to warrant systematic excavations. Although the data are far less manifest, I think there may have been some significant occupation in the general area of the Iron Hill Interchange along the upper reaches of the Christina as it passes east of Iron Hill. The movements of the creek channel here and subsequent cultural alterations of the topography may well have eliminated any remains of such occupation, but the area may repay more extensive investigations.

If further highway surveys are planned, I would suggest one or two steps which might aid in the efficiency of the survey: (1) Inauguration of the survey by the Board should, if possible, be delayed until the exact right-of-way has been agreed upon and options placed upon the properties acquired. Difficulties were encountered in the present survey because of the indeterminacy of plans (notably in the Iron Hill section) and because of the resistance of the land owners who had not yet been notified, other than by rumor, of the absorption of their properties by the highway. Such a situation makes for extremely difficult relations between the surveyor and the local residents (whose cooperation he requires) and impedes the possibilities of making test excavations where such may be desired. (2) Some stimulus should be given, either under official or semi-official sponsorship, to the construction of a master site survey for the State. While these are made by County chapters or societies, the results of such surveys should be localized so as to be immediately available to the Board or its representative in the event of contemplated topographic disturbance either through highway or industrial construction. (3) Attempts might be made to procure from the Highway Department copies of the aerial photographs which are usually made (from an altitude of 800 feet) prior to the planning of highways. Examination of such photographs are much more rewarding than contour maps alone in the selection of promising site locations.