

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Parsons conducted a Phase I archaeological investigation for the Right Turn Lane Project, located at the southbound US 13/State Route (SR) 299 junction in historic Odessa, New Castle County, Delaware (Figure 1). DelDOT planned to widen the west southbound lane on US 13 to provide a turn lane onto westbound SR 299, with potential impact to the corner property. The area investigated extended westward from US 13 and northward from SR 299 to the “Existing R/W” (Right of Way, or ROW) on the DelDOT 6/5/2000 plan sheets. At the time of the survey, construction plans included replacing the existing sidewalk and widening the road. While no standing structures presently appear within the project area, construction had the potential to impact historic features. Possible secondary impact included sign and utility relocation, and staging areas for construction within the ROW. Subsequent to the survey, archeological monitoring occurred for removal of the existing sidewalk.

The Kielkopf house was constructed in the late nineteenth century, and along with associated structural features remained within the project area until demolition in the late 1980s. In 1969, a survey conducted by the Winterthur Museum resulted in nomination of the Odessa Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. The district was enlarged in 1981 to include among other properties, the Kielkopf House (National Register number N126.29), and was eventually listed on the National Register in 1984. The current investigations examined the property from an archaeological perspective only, as the house and associated outbuildings were razed during the 1980s. The investigations were performed in accordance with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Advisory Council’s Guidelines set forth in 36CFR800 for the Protection of Historical and Cultural Properties, and the *Guidelines for Architectural and Archaeological Surveys in Delaware* (Delaware State Historic Preservation Office 1993).

II. PROJECT AREA HISTORY

Background research was conducted at the Historical Society of Delaware, New Castle County Courthouse, Corbit Library in Odessa, Delaware Public Archives, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In addition to archival research, informal interviews were conducted with members of the Odessa Historical Commission, neighbors, and Mr. Fred Kielkopf, owner of the house at time of demolition. Mr. Kielkopf, grandson of the builder of the house, John George Kielkopf, was a frequent visitor to the site during the field investigation, and supplied photographs and stories of the Kielkopf house and family, and of the Odessa community, for inclusion in this report.

The first land grant relating to the project area was to Garrett Otto, who received 180 acres of land in 1671 adjoining lands given to Hans Hansen to the east and Jan Sherricks to the west. Otto’s land was a rectangular lot abutting the northwest side of the Appoquinimink Creek, minus a few acres granted to William Whittet along the creek (UD History Department 1972:xviii; Figure 2). The road that became Main Street of Cantwell’s Bridge (later renamed Odessa) was along this boundary line between the Otto and Sherrick property, with Otto’s tract lying north of Main Street.

The corner of Sixth and Main was the first main intersection in town, a prime location for a business. The 1868 Beers Atlas shows a building owned by Daniel Corbit on the northwest corner of Sixth and Main (Figure 4). The structure extended the entire width of the lot (50 ft) and approximately one-third the length. The Odessa Historic Commission has no information relating to a structure on that corner prior to the Kielkopf residence (personal conversation with Horace Hotchkiss and Jerry Unruh, September 7, 2000). The tax assessment records revealed limited structural information on buildings identified at the time. However, Daniel Corbit owned a multitude of structures, and the tract in question could not be singled out among the tax records.

Daniel Corbit willed the land to his son, John Cowgill Corbit, in 1877. The 1881 Hopkins Atlas illustrates a building on the corner of Sixth and Main now labeled “store”, that probably fronted Sixth Street (Figure 5). John Cowgill Corbit sold the property to John George Kielkopf in 1888 (New Castle County Deed Book G14:457-459). Landowners of the Kielkopf property from 1888 to the present were as follows:

- John George Kielkopf (1888-1890)
- Odessa Loan Association (1890-1890) (Deed Book E15:464-467)
- Anna Walz (1890-1904) (Deed Book F15:261-263)
- Mary Kielkopf, daughter? of John George Kielkopf (1904-1913) (Deed Book U19:590-592)
- James Conner (1913-1917) (Deed Book Q24:165-167)
- George Kielkopf, son of John George Kielkopf (1917-1972) (Deed Book A27:475-477)

- Fred Kielkopf, son of George Kielkopf (1972 to early 1990s) (Deed Book W85:545)
- State of Delaware (early 1990s to present)

The 1893 Baist Atlas shows the same configuration of the corner store as the Hopkins 1881 atlas (Figure 6). It is possible that the Kielkopf house was already constructed, and that the new atlas did not reflect that the store was gone and the house had been built, as the 1893 map was almost an exact duplicate of the 1881 atlas.

The earliest known photographic image of the Kielkopf House complex was from a 1908 postcard, view to the southwest (Figure 7). John Kielkopf constructed both the house and blacksmith shop sometime in the late 1880s or early 1890s, with both structures fronting Sixth Street. The house had a partial cellar, with a small cellar window north of the porch. Horse hitching posts can be seen in the street, with wheel repair anvils around the tree between the house and shop. Note that the street was several feet lower than the elevation of the front porch floor.



Figure 7: Kielkopf House, Ca. 1908 and Blacksmith Shop, View To The Southwest

A photograph taken between 1910-1915 from the south reveals the privy and a shed north of the house, and a concrete sidewalk that were not on the 1908 photograph (Figure 8). A wider porch has been added to the front of the house along Sixth Street and the southern entrance did not yet have a porch. Both “chimneys” for the Kielkopf house were stove vents in the living room and kitchen (personal communication with Fred Kielkopf, September 7, 2000). Note that the tree between the sidewalk and Main Street had just been trimmed and the small branches were only two to three feet long. An electric railroad, or trolley, operated in Odessa from 1903 to 1907 along Main Street, and ran in front of the Kielkopf property (Caley n.d.:22-23; Figures 9 and 10). Powered by a motor on the car, the machine would go to the Odessa wharf, where the conductor had to go to the opposite end and drive it back to Middletown (Caley n.d.:22-23). The trolley company went bankrupt, and the rails were torn up in 1907 (Mandes 1950; Heite 1972:10).

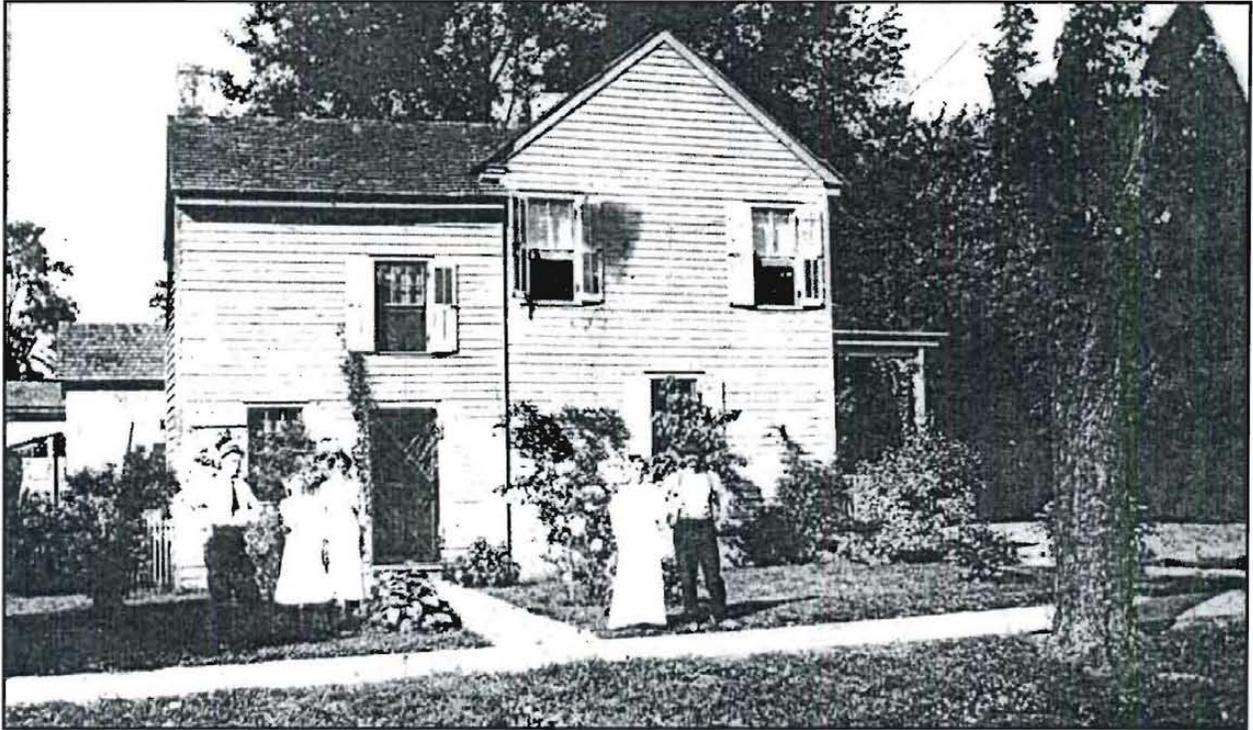


Figure 8: Privy (Far Rear), Shed, and House, Ca. 1910-1915



Figure 9: Postcard of Main Street, Odessa Showing Trolley Tracks



Figure 10: Postcard of Main Street, Odessa Showing Trolley Tracks

Another photograph shows the houses west and north of the Kielkopf House (Figure 11). The blacksmith shop is the darker structure to the right of the Kielkopf House. The small shed seen in Figure 8 north of the house is barely discernible. A wagon port roof extended from the blacksmith shop to the edge of the sidewalk fronting Sixth Street.



Figure 11: Kielkopf House, ca. 1910-1915, View Northwest

John George Kielkopf, son George, and grandson Fred, were blacksmiths. Fred Kielkopf operated a well drilling business in the shop for several years after World War II, and still owns the building containing Lorenzo's Pizza across Route 13 (formerly Sixth street) to the east. During Fred Kielkopf's tenure, the porch on the east side facing Route 13 was enclosed, and a small addition was constructed on the north side of the kitchen/dining room area (Figure 12; personal communication with Fred Kielkopf, September 7, 2000). A new blacksmith shop was constructed over the old shop between WWI and WWII, and the old shop was torn down from inside the new establishment (Figures 13 and 14).

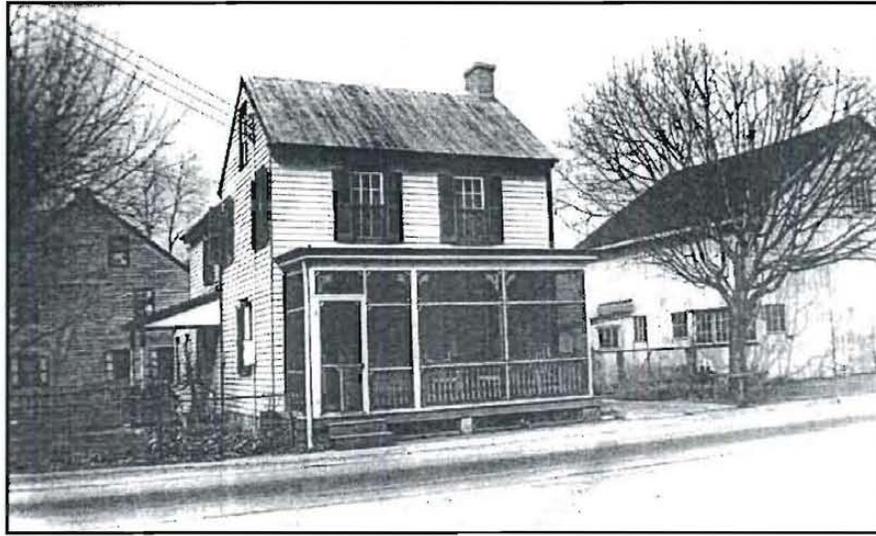


Figure 12: Kielkopf House with Enclosed Porch and Second Blacksmith Shop, ca. 1940, view northwest.



Figure 13: George Kielkopf Shoeing a Horse Ca. 1940, With Dugan/Carty House To The North

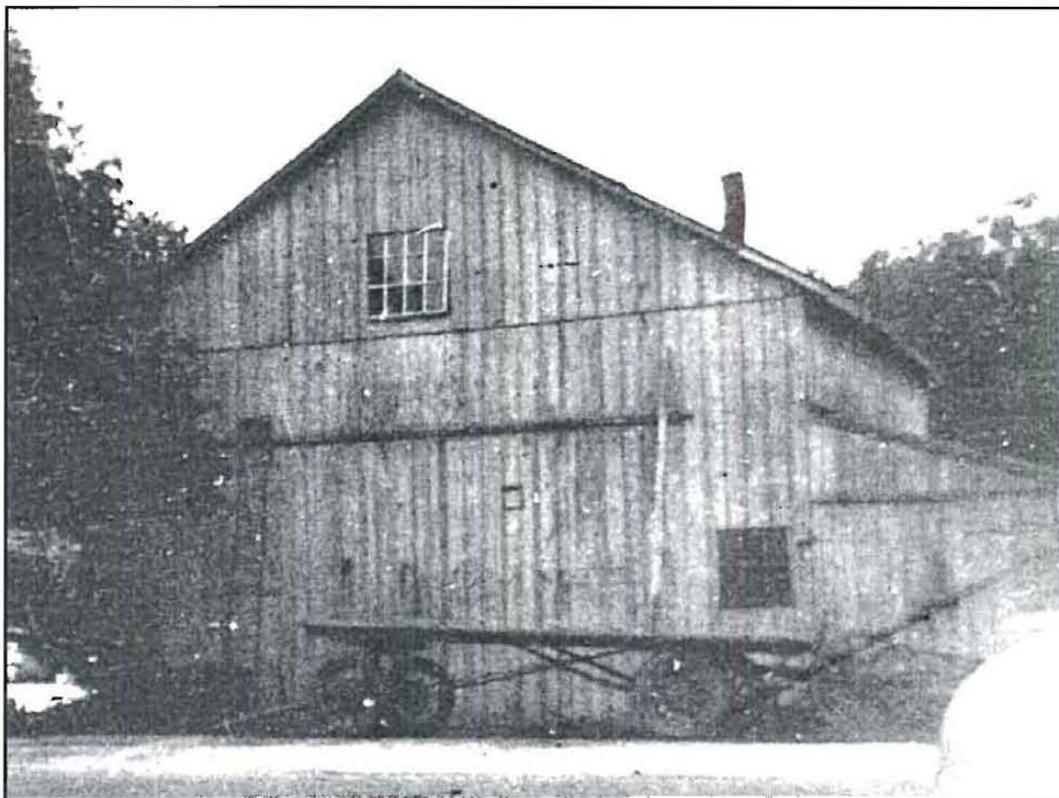


Figure 14: The New Kielkopf Blacksmith Shop

A brick-lined, hand-dug well was located a few feet from the northwest corner of the house. The well was used until after WWII (personal conversation with Fred Kielkopf, September 8, 2000). The privy was apparently always in that location during the Kielkopf's occupation. In the 1930s, the WPA installed a new privy adjacent to the old, on a concrete slab with wooden superstructure. A garden was located between the blacksmith shop and the northern property line. A 25 ft deep, 8ft wide, hand-dug cesspool was located between the blacksmith shop and the northeast corner of the house after WWII. The cesspool was lined with concrete blocks and had a concrete slab cover. The floor of the new blacksmith shop was concrete, poured in several stages over many years.

The crawlspace below the enclosed porch fronting Route 13 was covered with wire mesh hardware cloth (Figure 15). The cement sidewalk visible in Figure 15 may or may not be the same sidewalk observed in Figure 8, but in any case was replaced with a new sidewalk and curb when the Route 13 southbound lanes were constructed after WWI. In 1946, the Delaware Department of Transportation raised Route 13 almost two feet in elevation in front of the Kielkopf residence (Figure 16). A high curb was built directly adjacent to the front board of the porch on the Kielkopf house, bringing the street almost level with the porch. Prior to 1946, the porch had two steps down to the sidewalk and then one step down from the curb to the street level. The wooden front steps were moved to the north side of the house to pour a high curb against the brick footers for the porch and directly against the fascia board of the porch.



Figure 15: Screen Under Porch Visible Right of the Steps



Figure 16: Elevation of Route 13 in 1946 to the Level of the Kielkopf Porch
(Note: the wooden steps have been moved off to the side of the house.)

A brick-lined storm drain was laid under the new sidewalk and currently extends along Routes 13 and 299 adjacent to the Kielkopf property (Figure 17). The drain may have been laid directly on the old sidewalk prior to the raising of the highway. Two additional drains were constructed near the blacksmith shop and the north property boundary.



Figure 17: Brick-Lined Storm Drain Under Current Sidewalk, Built in 1946

The Odessa Historic District was surveyed in 1969 to include a four-block area, and enlarged in 1981 to encompass almost the entire town (NRHP Nomination Forms 1969, 1981; Figure 18). The district was listed on the National Register in 1984. The 1981 survey incorporated the Kielkopf House (National Register number N126.29) and nearby properties. The house was described on the form as a late 19th century, wood-framed two-story, two-bay, gable-roofed, frame dwelling with rear additions. The windows were six over six sash-hung with no shutters. A three-light transom topped the front door. A porch with turned post supports and cutwork brackets extended across the façade. The form included no photographs of the Kielkopf House.

The Kielkopf house was rented in the 1970s and 1980s to an individual named Wallace, who worked for the highway department during the day. Wallace had a barber chair in the front living room of the house and cut hair in the evenings and on weekends (Fred Kielkopf, personal communication). The house and shop were razed in the late 1980s. A bulldozer was used to push the concrete slabs and other surface trash and building materials into the cellar. Figure 19 shows the footers for the porch, along with the imprint of the crawl space screening on the elevated roadbed concrete. The well had been capped years earlier. The cesspool and the concrete floor of the blacksmith shop were left intact.

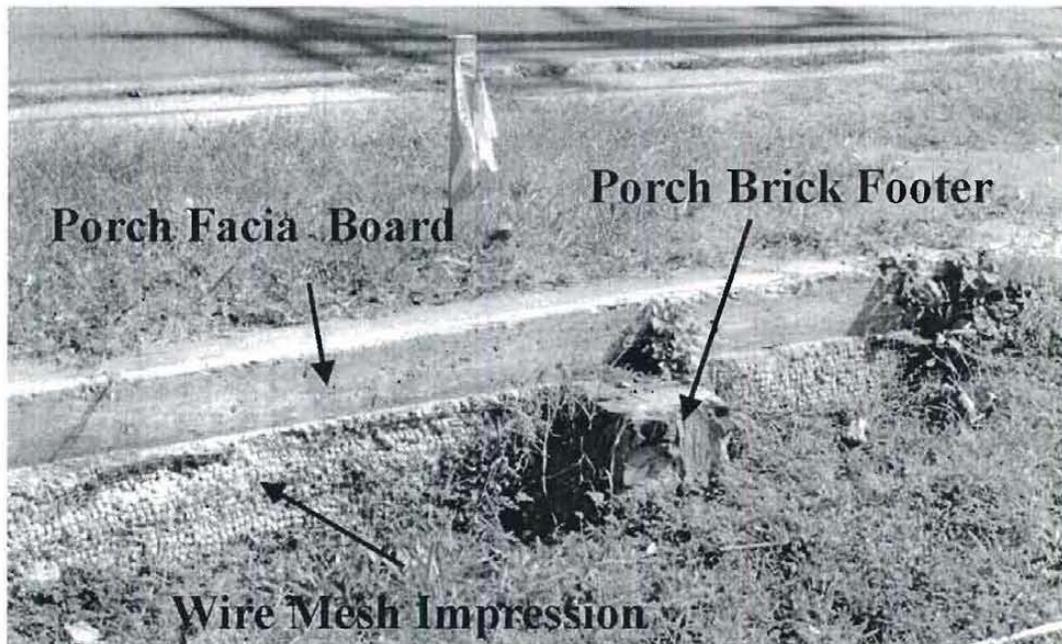


Figure 19: Curb Along SR 13 Showing Porch Brick Footers and Wire Mesh Imprint on Concrete

The lot west of the Kielkopf property had a large two-story house and a small one-story shed-roofed kitchen addition on the rear. The gable was parallel to Main Street, with the house abutting the sidewalk. The house was present in many of the Kielkopf photographs, and was torn down to put in a one story ranch style house that was later bought by Tidewater Utilities (Figures 20 and 21).

The Henson house adjacent to Corbit Alley (now Park Alley) was probably built in the early 1880s (see Figure 21). The Henson structure was a two-story I-house situated perpendicular to Main Street and set back a few feet from the sidewalk, but was apparently not the L-shaped structure illustrated on the 1868 Beers Atlas map (see Figure 4). The NRHP nomination form stated that the house was a 2-bay, late 19th century frame dwelling with later shed roof addition, extensively altered, and labeled as a non-contributing element to the historic district because of modifications (NRHP 1981:12; Figure 22). One- and two-story shed-roofed additions were added to the east side of the structure. Tidewater Utilities bought the lot in the 1980a and razed the house to construct a parking lot.

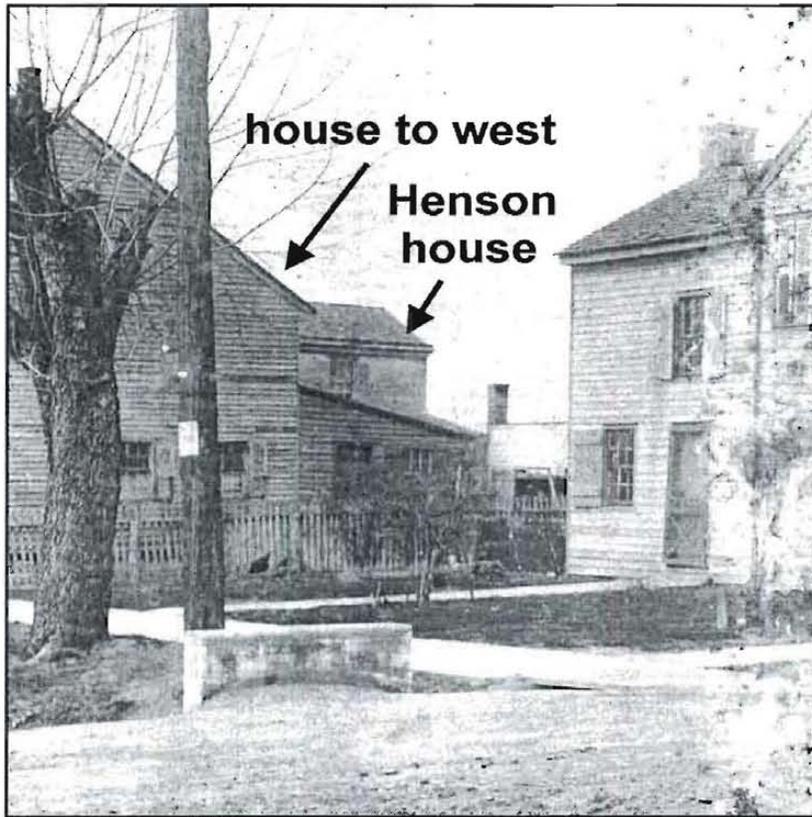


Figure 20: The House West of the Kielkopf House, ca. 1910-1915



Figure 21: Ca. 1930s Photograph Showing the House West of the Kielkopf House, with a Young Fred Kielkopf