

1. INTRODUCTION

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF Transportation proposes to widen and upgrade part of South State Street, Route 113A, south of Dover, in East Dover and North Murderkill hundreds, between routes 10 and 13, on both sides of Moore's Lake.

In order to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and other applicable regulations, the Department commissioned the author to conduct Phase I cultural resource investigations in the proposed construction area.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Isaac's Branch is the principal natural feature of the project area. This freshwater tributary of the St. Jones River becomes tidal and brackish about a half-kilometer downstream from the project area.

Soils in the project area belong to the Sassfras series of well-drained sandy loams. Except in stream valleys, the ground is generally level (Soil Conservation Service 1971). Sassafras soils are not only excellent for agriculture, they traditionally are preferred for town and subdivision locations. Virtually every town established in the Delaware coastal plain during the eighteenth century was built on Sassafras soils.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Since first European settlement, this has been a rich agricultural neighborhood, with a gristmill at its center. During the past half-century, suburban development has spread across the project area. The last farmland along this road between Route 13 and Route 10 is now under development.

Moore's Lake and its associated structures are the principal man-made features of the project area. Structures include the dam, the headrace, part of the mill, a dwelling, state fish-rearing ponds, boat ramps, and a footbridge. The original industrial purpose of the site is still evident, but most of the standing structures belong to the post-industrial period in the site's history.

West of the highway, between the bridge and the dam, is a small state-owned park containing a footbridge (K-6653) that stands on the abutments of the nineteenth-century bridge replaced in 1920.

The bridge over Isaac's Branch, structure 27B (K-6466), was evaluated in the cultural resource survey of Delaware bridges (Spero 1991:239) and found to be ineligible for the National Register on account of compromised integrity. The headrace bridge (K-6655) has not been evaluated.

South of the headrace are the state-owned fish rearing ponds (K-6652), established *circa* 1936 and still in use by private fish farmers. These ponds are said to have been hand-dug by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

A house on the west side of the highway, just north of the headrace, 1614 South State Street (K-1013), is historically connected with the mill. Farther north, a house on the east side of the highway has been inventoried (K-1014) in the state cultural resources survey, but not identified as significant.

East of the highway is a large commercial building (K-6649) that formerly was the temporary home of the Kent County [now Terry] campus of Delaware Technical and Community College between 1972 and 1975. Before its use as a college, this building was a store. It was originally part of the same commercial complex as the chicken houses, owned by the mill operator.

South of the former college building are a mini-storage facility, a sandwich shop, and a convenience store. Chicken houses stand behind the stores.

South of Moore's Lake, inside the intersection of Route 113A and Old Mill Road, is the former Delaware State Highway Department maintenance yard (K-6654). Three new houses, recently moved to the site, now occupy the former highway yard.