

DATA RECOVERY
AT THE
NATHAN WILLIAMS
HOUSE SITE

WEST DOVER HUNDRED,
KENT COUNTY,
DELAWARE

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DIVISION OF PLANNING

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On July 26, 1997, citizen volunteers came to the site and conducted the controlled surface collection that resulted in the distribution diagrams on page 29. These volunteers were Mike Downey, Linda Horstick, Anna E. Coker, Dennis J. Coker, Samuel B. Vann, Audrey Gardner, Richard Gardner, and JoAnne Sammons. Staff who worked on the site were Jimi Ale, Kimberly Dugan, and Cara Blume.

Special thanks are due to Kevin Cunningham and other personnel of the Delaware Department of Transportation, who encourage innovative investigations into the state's cultural heritage.

ABSTRACT

This is a report of Phase III (data recovery) activities at the Nathan Williams Site, which had been the residence of a literate free black family from about 1824 until about 1840.

In spite of the fact that much of the site had been destroyed by earlier construction, it was possible to collect artifact materials related to a family who belonged to a social group that has not been well documented.

1. DISCOVERING THE WILLIAMS PROPERTY

*An orderly research program
connected with a proposed highway project
revealed the existence of a unique archaeological resource.*

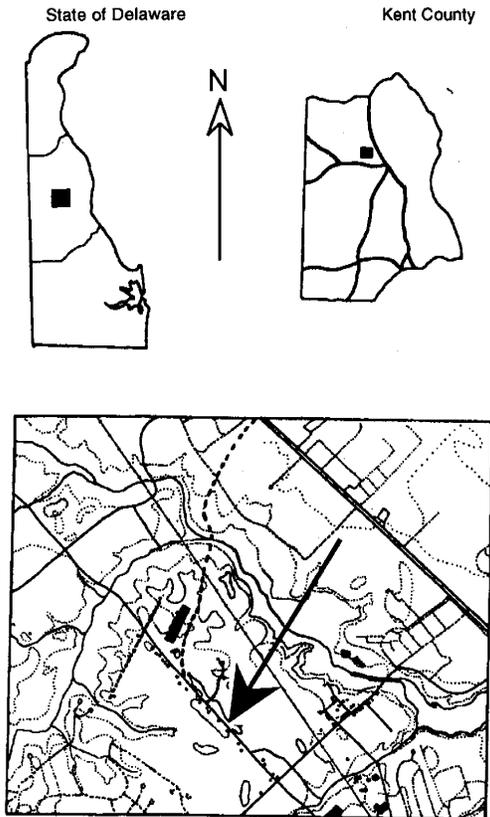
This is a report of Phase III (data recovery) investigations at the Nathan Williams site (7K-C-389) in Kent County, Delaware. The site has been identified as the residence and small farmstead of Nathan Williams, a free colored person, before 1840. The same tract was occupied by a tenant

homestead later in the nineteenth century, probably on the same location (Heite and Blume 1995). The Delaware Department of Transportation engaged Heite Consulting to conduct cultural resource surveys in an area where Scarborough Road would be built.

Before the project began, in 1992, the site was farmland owned by Anita Baynard and Florence Smith, members of the family that has owned it for more than a century.

The Nathan Williams site has been identified by the State Historic Preservation Officer as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because it is a rare example of a documented ante-bellum black resident's site. Therefore, a data recovery project was required when it was determined that the western approach to Scarborough Road would be built through it. The new road is shown as a heavy dashed line on Figure 1, at left.

This project is complicated by the fact that the present McKee Road was built through the Nathan Williams property in 1881, about forty years after he left. It has been widened several times since then. There is no way of knowing, from the documentary evidence, exactly how much of the house site had been destroyed by previous road construction. Based on Phase I findings, the investigators had reason to believe that some, at least, of the site had survived, and would be



Local map, redrawn from USGS Dover

Figure 1
Location

Arrow in the bottom map indicates the location of the project area. Heavy dashed line is the course of the proposed new Scarborough Road.

impacted by the proposed roadway. The existing road passes through the longest dimension of the Williams parcel, suggesting maximum potential impact (Figure 5).

The primary objective of this project, therefore, was to identify the boundaries of the Williams homestead yard as well as the later tenant site, if they should not happen to be identical. The second objective was to salvage any data from either site that might be destroyed by impending road construction.

In addition to uncovering the physical evidence of the site, a major task was to define Nathan Williams in terms of the community in which he lived. Because Kent County's historical racial and ethnic distinctions are so poorly defined in the public record and in secondary sources, this aspect of the work would involve major devotion of time.

PRESERVATION MANAGEMENT

The Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, State Historic Preservation Office, is charged with historic preservation planning in Delaware. This agency has produced a statewide historic preservation plan, with consultant assistance from University of Delaware Center for Historic Architecture and Design (Ames et al. 1989).

As outlined in the state plan, planning involves three steps: identification (Phase I), assessment of significance (Phase II), and protection of significant resources in accordance with pre-determined categories of significance.

Sometimes protection may include data-recovery archaeological research, often called Phase III. A Phase III project destroys the site, or at least its

information value, and thereby removes it from the National Register or the list of eligible sites.

Through the state plan, the National Register program has created a system for orderly identification and relatively objective assessment of significance. While the Register provides a measure of protection for resources against damage from federal activities, many losses occur because of activities that are not subject to federal or state laws and regulations. Indeed, local land-use regulations are recognized by the state plan as a key to effective preservation planning.

Recognized historic resources in Delaware were classified by the state plan authors (Ames, Callahan, Herman, and Siders 1989:19) into ten categories, in declining order:

- Historic structures
- Historical archaeology
- Prehistoric archaeology
- Historic structure and historical archaeology
- Historic structure and prehistoric archaeology
- Historical archaeology and prehistoric archaeology
- Submerged historic site
- Submerged prehistoric site
- Submerged both prehistoric and historic
- Multiple resource

This list was dropped from the final version of the plan, but it is a useful measure of historical perspective as expressed in the program. About 95% of Delaware's National Register entries are clustered in the first category, historic structures alone, even though a significantly large percentage of the identified cultural resources in the state are archaeological sites belonging to the second and third categories. This project site belongs to the second most numerous category, historical archaeology.

PLANNING TIME FRAMES

Time periods applied in Delaware preservation planning (Herman and Siders 1986) reflect only feebly the actual history of most parts of the state. The

state's generalized chronology is:

Exploration and frontier settlement.....	1630-1730
Intensified and durable occupation.....	1730-1770
Early industrialization.....	1770-1830
Industrialization and urbanization.....	1830-1880
Urbanization and suburbanization.....	1880-1940

Only one area of the state, between Wilmington and Newark, actually experienced these periods in exactly this sequence. Cultural-resource investigations throughout the state are subdivided this way for the sake of uniformity, if not historical accuracy. Downstate, urban development came later, for example. The 1770-1830 industrialization exerted very little impact in Kent and Sussex counties.

The period of the site's occupancy straddles two time periods. In downstate Delaware, a period of agricultural prosperity began around 1830, with the introduction of fertilization and budded fruit trees. This high-prosperity period was roughly the middle third of the century, marked by such events as the completion of the Delaware Rail Road in 1856 and the dramatic local expansion of canning that followed the Civil War. Larger farmers grew wealthy on new technologies and economic revolution that they spawned. Impact of this prosperity on lower economic classes has not been assessed.

Houses stood on the site during all these events (figures 4, 5 and 6), but no house has stood on the location within living memory.

During the period of nineteenth-century agricultural prosperity, the farm was owned by the DuHamel family and then by the Scottens, progressive white farmers, whose descendants remain on the property. During the tenures of both families, houses on the farm were occupied by nonwhite tenants.

THEMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

Delaware's "framework of historic context elements" (Ames,

Callahan, Herman and Siders 1989:21) is arranged according to a group of 18 themes, ten of which refer to occupations, such as forestry and manufacturing.

Transportation remains undefined among Delaware contexts. A historic context has been formulated for the archæology of agriculture and rural life in New Castle and Kent counties (De Cunzo and Garcia 1992), which is a useful tool for understanding certain aspects of the project area.

On the subject of ethnicity, some research has been conducted in Delaware, but planning contexts remain undefined. This property happens to lie in the center of the existing Native American remnant community of central Kent County. A generation after the time of Nathan Williams, part of the same property was developed by Native American descendants (Heite and Blume 1995).

PREHISTORY

People arrived in the Delaware Valley near the end of the last (Wisconsin) glaciation around ten or twelve thousand years ago. Glaciers entrapped so much water that the ocean lay fifty miles east of the present Sandy Hook, New Jersey. As the glaciers retreated and the ocean advanced, the

PREHISTORIC CHRONOLOGY (After Custer 1986)		
Dates	Environmental Episode	Cultural Period
8080 BCE	Late Glacial	Paleo-Indian / Early Archaic
6540 BCE	Pre-Boreal/Boreal Atlantic	Middle Archaic
3110 BCE	Sub-Boreal	Late Archaic
810 BCE	Sub-Atlantic	Woodland I
CE 1000		Woodland II
CE 1600		European Contact

project area's ecology changed. With changes in ecology and population came changes in land use, which are reflected in the cultural record.

Mammoths, musk ox, horses, caribou, and walrus provided food for dire wolf, short-faced bear, and other predators. Man was among the smaller competitors in the tundra food chain, but his skills compensated for his physical shortcomings. Nomadic people of this Paleo-Indian period were among the most skilled makers of flaked stone tools in the world. They would travel great distances to quarry the best flinty materials from which they made exquisite spearpoints, knives, and small tools. A well-known source of such material existed at the north end of Pencader Hundred.

Paleo - Indian hunting - gathering society lasted in the coastal plain until about 6,500 BC, when the Atlantic climate episode and the Archaic period of prehistory began. Northern hardwood forests had replaced the tundra, the ocean had risen, and the climate was warmer. Pleistocene megafauna were replaced by smaller game, which required different hunting techniques and tools. "Micro-band base camps" of this relatively arid period often are found on slight elevations above poorly-drained spots (called "bay basins") where game might have come to drink or feed. Even after the climate became wetter, people apparently continued to live on sand hills that formed near the basins. One such sand hill site was Simon's Savannah, excavated during the present project with field assistance provided by the Kent County Archaeological Society (Heite and Blume 1992: 42, 63).

By 3,000 BC, prehistoric society was decidedly different. The last prehistoric period, the Woodland, was characterized by larger groups of

people living together in villages, using pottery and other heavy or fragile goods that would have been difficult to move from place to place.

Woodland people tended to concentrate in more or less permanent settlements at places with abundant multiple resources, such as sites adjacent to shellfish beds on the edges of salt marshes. These settlements, called "base camps," were generally occupied by one or a few extended families. They sent out hunting and gathering parties, but they seldom dispersed whole populations to live off the land in the manner of their hunter-gatherer ancestors.

REGIONAL POSTCONTACT HISTORY

Wherever Europeans have settled, they have first built highly-organized towns on the frontier, projecting all the trappings and institutions of the mother country onto the perceived wilderness (L. Heite 1987; Heite and Heite 1989).

During the first years of any invasive settlement, there usually is a sharp division line between the natives and the incoming population; this division line frequently was expressed in America as a palisade and zones from which native people were excluded.

Pioneer farmers typically follow, after the soldiers have established an outpost of civilization. The first Dutch and Swedish settlements in the Delaware Valley conformed to the frontier model: they were populated mostly by males, compact and strictly regulated, and were supported largely by supply lines that brought necessities from Europe or from older colonies (Heite and Heite 1986).

Once the farmers were established, the colonial fortress towns

Distribution of free African-Americans in the Population Census and Tax Assessments

Percent of the total population as free African-Americans as interpreted by the agricultural tenancy context authors

(Siders *et al.* 1991, page 80)

	1820	1816/1822	1860	1860/1861	1896	1900
Appoquinimink	23%	18%	27%	17%	n/a	29%
Little Creek	40%	30%	30%	20%	17%	35%
Murderkill	27%	14%	26%	18%	18%	23%

were freed from dependence upon supply lines; a local supply network developed. As colonies spread into the surrounding farmland, contact with indigenous communities increased. Intermarriage usually was a feature of this contact, since the settlers were largely male, and the frontier traders were almost all men.

In each region, early settlement patterns were shaped by local conditions but the dispersal phase generally followed initial settlement. The role of Native American people in larger society during this period is not well documented.

International competition probably delayed the region's transition to the second, dispersed, phase of colonization, which was a less regimented period of agricultural development. Most other North American colonies moved to settle the countryside within a decade after initial settlement. The Delaware coastal settlements, in contrast, clustered around their fortified command posts for at least thirty years. Not until the fall of New Netherlands in 1664 was the Delaware Valley finally able to realize its potential as an open, self-supporting,

agricultural colony under a single European colonial power.

PROBLEMS OF DURABLE SETTLEMENT

Jurisdictional problems with the Maryland proprietors complicated development in western and southern Delaware. Maryland created an entity called Durham (or Essex) County, which pretended jurisdiction over much of the present Sussex and Kent counties.

Western parts of the "three lower counties" of the Penn proprietary, now the Delaware state, were disputed territory for a century. Much of the modern Kenton Hundred, near the project area, was originally granted and settled from Maryland.

Part of Kenton Hundred was reserved by the Penn family as a private manor, not subject to being granted by the Land Office. This tract, called the Manor of Frieth, enjoyed certain exemptions, such as tax relief, from the county authorities.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, antecedents of the existing Native American remnant community had established themselves as farmers in the area then known as Little Creek and Duck Creek hundreds.

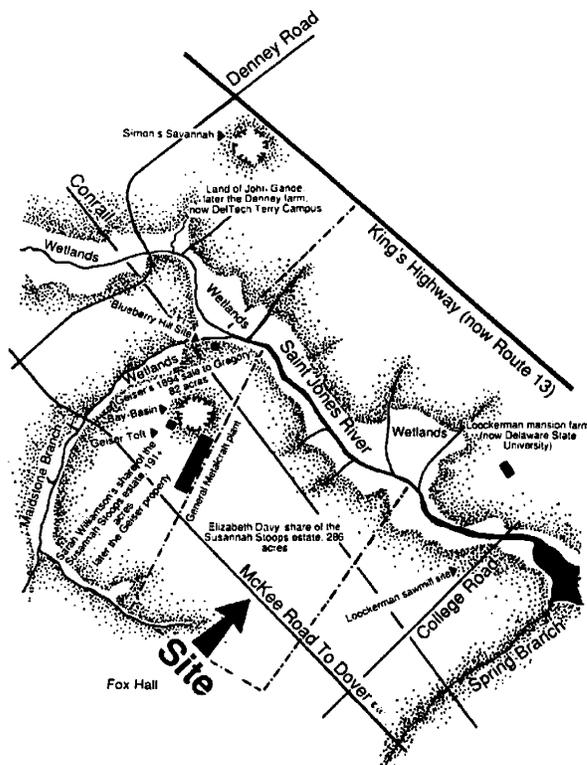


Figure 2

Vicinity Historical Map

This general historical map of the project vicinity identifies some of the places mentioned in this report during different periods, by their current and historical names. The King's Highway, for instance, is now Route 13.

EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD ECONOMY

First tobacco, and then grain and pork, exports sustained the colonial-era economy of central Delaware. These crops brought prosperity to the larger landowning families.

During the half century after the Revolution, Delaware farmland declined. Neglect, ignorance, and the disinterest of absentee landlords conspired to reduce the prosperity of Delaware agricultural areas. Early in the nineteenth century, a few educated

farmers began to introduce new methods that eventually had a lasting effect on the landscape.

Grafted peach trees and a curious green sandy marl would be the key to rebirth of Delaware agriculture.

PEACH BOOM AND FARM PROSPERITY

Delaware soil productivity reached a nadir in the 1830s, when it was estimated that Delaware's farmland was within five years of total abandonment. Instead of collapse, the region rebounded during the next few years, thanks to aggressive young scientifically educated farmers (Passmore 1978) who introduced the concept of fertilization and budded fruit trees.

Scientific, fertilized, agriculture, as practiced today, was unknown during the first years of settlement. Only after large areas had been rendered infertile did American farmers begin to address the problems of conservation and soil fertilization.

Early scientific farming practices can be seen reflected in the soil in the form of ditches, drain tiles, calcined oyster shells, and tiny dispersed bits of brick, bone, pottery, and other domestic debris that would have been included with manure and compost. Manure, including human waste, was used extensively in the United States during the nineteenth century, when the word "manuring" referred to any soil modification.

The project area lies west of the head of navigation of the coastal streams, which meant that people here had difficulties reaching markets. Roads to landings were a lifeline until north-south land routes became established. First the king's road, then the rails, then the duPont Parkway, and finally the

Route 1 toll road, carried goods to Philadelphia.

When the Delaware Rail Road opened in 1856, peninsular producers gained access to national markets. Toward the coast, steamboat companies served communities that were not along the railroad. By the end of the nineteenth century, roads had been reduced to feeder status, and the railroads and steamboats dominated long-distance travel.

TRENDS IN LANDOWNING HISTORY

There have been periods when large estates accumulated, and periods when they were broken into smaller holdings. Such broad trends in ownership patterns can be seen reflected in the vicinity of the project area, which was consolidated, then fragmented, then consolidated again during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Heite and Blume 1992: 104-111)

The project area was originally part of a speculative holding owned by Philadelphia interests. It was bought by a local wealthy farmer, whose heirs were absentee landowners. As the property was subdivided with each death and estate division, the individual parcels became less valuable. Finally, the old manorial estate was divided into many parts, which were bought by local people who set about improving the property again.

Each real-estate transaction could influence the archaeological record. When a small farmer sold out to a larger landowner, his toft became a tenancy or

PRIORITY RANKING FOR BELOW-GROUND RESOURCES

(State Plan, June 1989, page 79)

Settlement patterns
and demographic change

Trapping and hunting

Mining and quarrying

Fishing and oystering

Forestry

Agriculture

Manufacturing

Other themes

was abandoned. Either way, the archaeological record was affected. When a well-off farmer married, he might build or remodel his house, also leaving a mark in the archaeological record of foundations, trash pits, and changed land use.

Such events must be documented as precisely as possible before any fieldwork, because they potentially provide explanations for archaeological deposits.

A marriage, estate sale, or farm consolidation is the documentary expression of events represented in the field by features and artifact deposits. With these

objectives in mind, documentary research for this project included probate, land grant, survey, and tax records at the state archives and the courthouse, in addition to secondary histories.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The overall theoretical point of view or orientation of this study is cultural materialist, in keeping with the general tone of the state management plans. Cultural materialists study the effect of environment and technology on human behavior. Culture is interpreted as a form of adaptation to both natural and social environments that results from the interaction among human individuals and groups. Cultural ecology is not a determinist theory; geography is considered to restrict or encourage the direction or intensity of particular cultural development, but is not determining.

Geographical determinism is a related, if not entirely congruent, concept employed by historians. A geographical determinist regards the landscape as a powerful actor in the drama of history, as fully empowered as politicians, entrepreneurs, or military leaders.

This theoretical approach is explicit in the state management plan for prehistoric resources and implicit in the plan for historic resources. Those who use the cultural materialist approach tend to rely upon predictive models to structure their survey activities.

HISTORIC CONTEXTS

Agriculture, and particularly agricultural tenancy, stand out as the dominant theme in Kent County history. A context study for tenancy was prepared by the University of Delaware Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering (Siders, Herman, et al., 1991). A context for archæology of agriculture and rural life in New Castle and Kent counties was prepared by the University of Delaware Center for Archæological Research (De Cunzo and Garcia 1992). Transportation remains undefined among Delaware contexts.

PROPERTY TYPES AND CONTEXTS

In terms employed by the Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan (Ames, Callahan, Herman and Siders 1989:33), the project area is part of the upper peninsula geographic zone. The management plan for prehistoric resources

(Custer 1986:13) classifies the project area in the peninsular divide physiographic zone. This is an area that includes a large number of Paleo sites, but few, if any, base camps from later periods.

The obvious historical archæological context is agriculture, as defined by DeCunzo and Garcia (1992), which will be considered here.

A defining characteristic of recent Delaware agriculture is consolidation. Over the past half-century, farms have been combined; as a result, there are many abandoned toft sites among the broad fields.

LOCAL PROPERTY TYPES

Nearby historic property types include agricultural complexes, agricultural fields, and a railroad. Older agricultural complexes all occur on well-drained soil. Only more recent habitations, such as mobile homes, occur on soils that are not naturally well drained. The project area is a sandy ridge, one of the favored geographical settings for agricultural complexes.

Among the various property types are several different sorts of residential or agricultural properties. These sites vary according to the occupants' wealth, status, ethnicity, and social connections. Some of the status-related characteristics may be reflected in the archæological record; one was the swept yard.

SWEPT YARDS

A property type not previously recognized by preservation planners,

<p>PRIORITY RANKING FOR ABOVE-GROUND RESOURCES</p> <p>(State Plan, June 1989, page 79)</p> <p>Agriculture</p> <p>Settlement patterns and demographic change</p> <p>Manufacturing</p> <p>Retailing and wholesaling</p> <p>Transportation and communication</p> <p>Other themes</p>

but significant in this context, is the swept yard. Within some ethnic and regional population categories, it is traditional to sweep the yard around a house to the extent that no artifacts, however small, are typically found in the area. Swept yards will be characterized by concentrations of artifacts along fence lines and beyond the yard, but virtually none in the yard surface itself. The practice has been observed in Africa and among German-American communities.

This practice is supposed by many to be most prevalent in African-American communities in the southern United States. The archaeological implications of sweeping have been demonstrated archaeologically. Excavations of an African-American farmhouse in Manassas National Battlefield Park, Virginia, provided insight into yard layout and the effect of sweeping.

The investigators reported that artifacts were very scarce in the immediate vicinity of the house, but were concentrated about 50 feet away. The yard had apparently been swept clean, leaving the trash residue around the perimeter (Martin, Parsons and Shackel 1997:164-165).

An archaeological predictive model for a swept yard can be formulated, based on the published examples. The swept yard will not only create a virtually artifact-free space, but it will create windrows of artifacts roughly congruent with the yard edge.

STATE PLAN CONTEXTS

Because of the high priority assigned to agriculture and the archaeology of agriculture by the state planning documents, there is a high likelihood that well-preserved agricultural remains would be candidates for the National Register. In particular, we are here dealing with small holders and tenants, whose agricultural activities differed from those of their neighbors in more than mere scale.

In order for a property to be eligible, it must possess integrity and definable boundaries as well as a quality called "significance," which can be defined only in terms of each specific context. The context may be spatial, temporal, or thematic, but it must exert a unifying effect (DeCunzo and Garcia 1992:311-317).

A concept of eligibility through "representativeness" takes on special importance when dealing with "ordinary" or "commonplace" properties. A property is "representative" if it contains all the elements of the "typical" property of that category. That is, integrity becomes the most important single determinant in evaluation.

If a farmstead site is "typical," how can it be eligible? This issue has been debated at length (Wilson 1990) in the cultural resource management community. In any case, it can be argued that significance depends upon

AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY TYPES	
Property types that might be found in or near the project area, based in part on a list promulgated for Delaware historic properties by Herman, Siders, Ames and Callahan 1989.	
Agriculture (crops)	
Products	
Nursery / Orchard	
Tobacco	
Grain	
Potatoes	
Truck crops	
Methods	
Cultivation	
Plowing	
Plow Scars	
Orchard planting holes	
Enclosures	
Field boundaries	
Drainage ditches	
Fertilization	
Manuring Spread	
Fertilizer Residues	
Forestry	
Sawmills	
Mining and Quarrying	
Borrow Pits	
Brick Clay Pits	

the site context. The context, for such comparative purposes, can be defined either as site type or geographical unit.

AGRICULTURAL TENANCY

A context document for Delaware agricultural tenancy has been developed by a group of researchers from the University of Delaware (Siders, Herman, Ames, Marth, Lanier, Watson, Bellingrath, Van Dolsen, Bashman, and Chase 1991). Under the title *Agricultural Tenancy in Central Delaware 1770-1900±: A Historic Context*, the authors seriously misinterpreted the racial picture of central Delaware.

In the course of the context research, the hundreds of Appoquinimink, Little Creek, and Murderkill were selected for detailed sampling and statistical analysis. These hundreds, as their boundaries then existed, were Indian country.

The Nathan Williams project area was originally in Murderkill Hundred, but after 1823 was part of Dover Hundred. It is now in West Dover Hundred. During the period covered by the University of Delaware study, the project area lay in Murderkill Hundred and then Dover Hundred. As a result of changed boundaries, the context's sampling included the project vicinity for only part of the period under study.

The three hundreds considered by the survey, therefore, happened to coincide with the homeland of the Native American population, but the coverage was inconsistent through time.

FLAWED ETHNICITY PERCEPTIONS

Ethnicity and Indian descent are critical contexts for interpreting the project area and a large segment of Delaware's cultural record. However, the state plan does not address ethnic

issues except in a very cursory manner. This project, along with the others along McKee Road, clearly demonstrate the need for a post-contact Native American context to be developed and integrated into the state plan.

Little Creek Hundred was, and is, the principal center of Kent County's Indian-descended population bloc, but there were groups of these people in Appoquinimink, Duck Creek and Murderkill hundreds as well (Heite and Blume 2001).

Unfortunately, the authors of the tenancy context fell victim to a common misconception that casts a serious shadow over their conclusions and throws into doubt the broad findings of the context. In compiling a racial profile of the three hundreds, the authors have assumed that all "free persons of color" listed in the census were actually African-Americans, for which statement there is no historical evidence. Analysis of the evidence reveals that the "colored" population listed in the census was largely Native American, and not African-American.

It is possible to distinguish between black and Native American families on the basis of surnames and genealogy. The intermarried Native American family groups tended to stay together to the extent that they can be identified in the record after two centuries.

Based on this misperception, the context authors presumed incorrectly that Kent County in the period had the "largest percentage of free African-Americans of any county in the nation," the authors noted that the "percentage of free African-Americans was even higher in Little Creek Hundred."

In fact, the people identified in the University of Delaware study were not all African-Americans. According to

the report, free African – Americans represented 29% of the Little Creek Hundred population listed in the 1800 census.

population that was listed among the

The actual return is different. The 1800 census reported 1,908 total individuals in the hundred, of whom 133 were slaves and 546 were lumped into “all other free persons of color except Indians not taxed.” Of these 546 nonwhites, 133 (24.3%) lived in households headed by people whose surnames indicated they were [taxed] Indians. There is no way to determine how many Indian individuals were among the free persons of color who were counted among white households, or those whose surnames are not readily recognized by modern researchers.

Untaxed Indians, for purposes of the census, were those who lived beyond the frontiers or in enclaves that later would be identified as reservations. No such Indians lived in Delaware during the period after the Constitution was adopted.

Thus, when the census figures are corrected for non-reservation Indians (identified by surname), the population contained at least as many free persons of Indian descent as persons of African descent, and probably more.

After making these corrections, it appears that the actual free African-American population of Little Creek Hundred in 1800 did not exceed 400, or about 20% of the total, and probably was significantly smaller. This was only two-thirds the percentage calculated by Susan Chase in the University of Delaware study.

Moreover, the report identified Benjamin Francisco (Sisco) as the “richest African-American in the hundred in 1822,” when in fact he was a member of the Indian descendant

“free persons of color” and identified by contemporaries as “colored.”

There is no evidence that he had any significant African ancestry, nor was he ever identified as anything but “colored” by his contemporaries. In spite of the lack of evidence, the authors of the context asserted that Sisco was African-American.

Among the others in this group who were lumped with the African-Americans were Jesse and Robert Dean, John Durham, Edward Conselor, Isaac Sammons, Isaiah Munce, and Elijah Conselor, documented ancestors of the existing Native American descended community.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Every cultural property should, ideally, be evaluated against all four National Register criteria listed on page 12. In practice, most sites can be eliminated from consideration under most criteria. Prehistoric archaeological sites are evaluated almost exclusively under Criterion D, properties that have



Plate 1: This 1926 aerial photograph shows the Nathan Williams property with no buildings east (above) of McKee Road.

yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

In order to satisfy Criterion D, a historic property must possess physical integrity; in this connection, one must know its horizontal and vertical extent. This determination is properly a function of a Phase II survey.

The resource must be able to contribute to our knowledge about some research question[s]. The ability of a site to answer a question is, of course, related to its integrity. Well-preserved sites, by definition, contain more information than damaged ones.

Although the state plan contains some research questions, it cannot pretend to describe every question that a site might present. The questions in the plan are, of necessity, narrowly restricted to the interests of its authors and the sources they consulted. In fact, there are a greater number of valid research questions outside the state plan than inside it.

Finally, the site must be significant. To an archaeologist, mere knowledge of the existence of a site is useful information. Any site can tell us something. To be significant as well as merely interesting, a site must have sufficient intellectual content that its excavation would substantially increase our knowledge about the people who have occupied the site.

To be eligible for the Register, under Criterion D, therefore, an archaeological property must meet all three tests of significance, integrity, and research value.

Integrity is a variable that can be evaluated only relative to a context. If a resource belongs to a common type, of which there are many well-preserved examples, it must retain a high level of integrity. A late-nineteenth-century middling-income farmstead, for example, is a common property type, represented by thousands of excellent standing examples. A damaged archaeological site of this property type would possess poor integrity, because it has a

relatively low information value under Criterion D.

On the other hand, there may be a half-dozen seventeenth-century buildings in Delaware. Any seventeenth-century architectural fragment therefore is likely to have immense significance, and by virtue of its very existence it can be said to have integrity.

Between these two extremes are dozens of property types with varying rates of survival. Delaware has a few eighteenth-century barns, most of which are large and permanent structures of stone or brick. A less substantial yeoman's post-in-ground or log outbuilding is less likely to survive, although there are a few documented examples in the state.

While architectural historians have recorded a sizable body of information about

the architectural elements of Delaware farmsteads, the life of the farm family is the province of archaeology. Diaries, memoirs, and travellers' accounts can go only so far in painting a picture of early Delaware rural life.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

(National Register Bulletin 16a, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Forms*)

The quality of **significance** in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess **integrity** of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- ☛ A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- ☛ B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- ☛ C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- ☛ D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

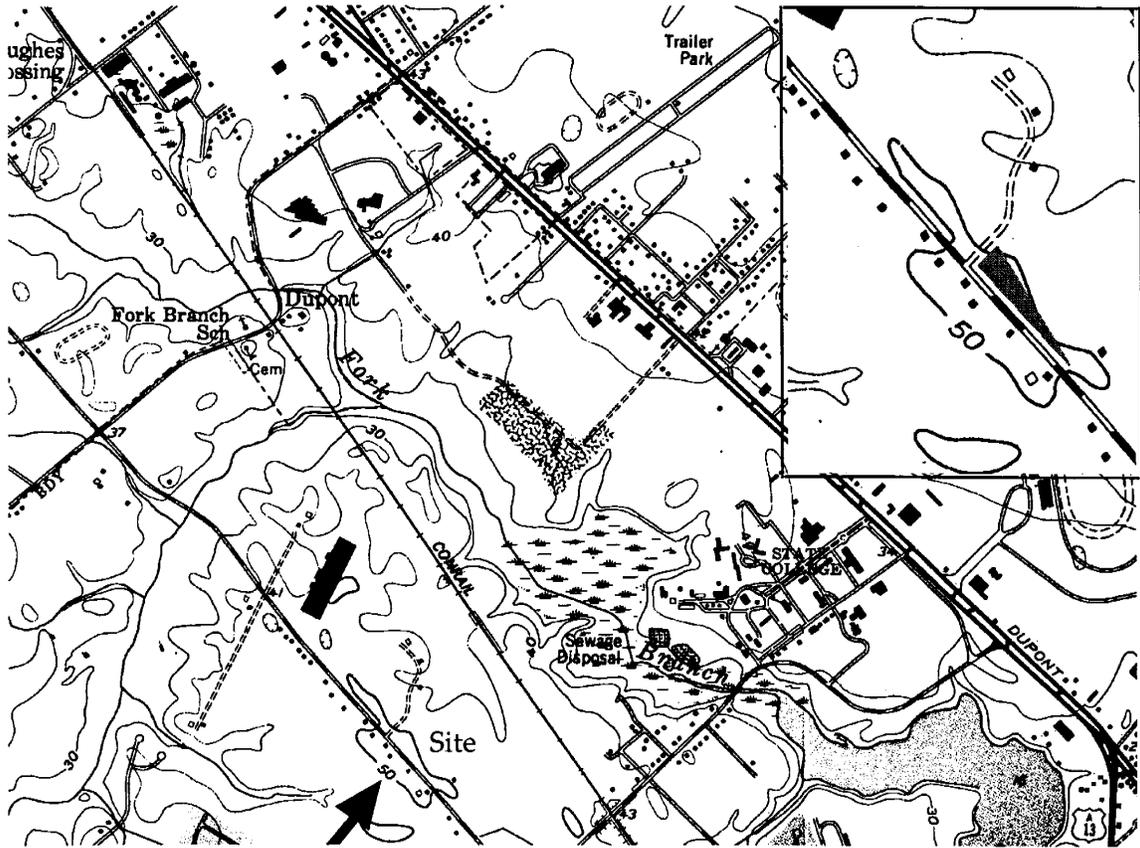


Figure 3
 Project location indicated by arrow, from the USGS Dover 7.5 minute quadrangle
 In the enlarged inset, upper right, the project site is shown shaded.

Archæology can, and will, supply minute details about diet, workplaces, levels of consumption, and even pathology that were never transcribed into the written or architectural record. The ephemeral nature of many rural structures requires delicate field techniques and sensitive documentary methods, beyond the usual standard.

A poor family living in a log dwelling with log outbuildings will leave

few artifacts and few features on the soil.

Because of their small size and scant artifact inventory, such poorer sites are difficult to detect by ordinary survey methods. Because they are under-reported, low-status sites have a potentially higher level of research interest and thereby, potentially higher significance in terms of the National Register program.

this area has been the subject of several reports by this firm as well.

Nearby, an early Paleo-Indian and Archaic site, Blueberry Hill, was identified and eventually excavated by the authors (Heite and Blume 1992:65-73). It proved to be a sandy ridge overlooking the mouth of Maidstone Branch, occupied throughout prehistory as an intermittent campsite.

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

The Nathan Williams site was identified in our McKee Road report and has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register. Even though it is significant, it was damaged by earlier road widening, and has limited information potential. Methods routinely employed in a Phase III project on an intact site are therefore inapplicable to this project (Heite and Blume 1992; Heite and Heite 1985).

For example, it was not possible to justify screening the surface materials because the purpose of a screened surface collection is to statistically develop a proxy for spatial relationships within a site. The site has been cut by roads, occupations overlap, and the developing neighborhood is intruding on the site.

Because the tract has been cut by the road, the archaeologists could only hope that a useful fragment had survived. That fragment would be found in the undisturbed subsurface features, not in the disturbed topsoil and not in the soil chemicals.

A house appears on the 1840 plot (Figure 4), the 1868 map (Figure 6), and on the 1882 plot (Figure 5) in roughly the

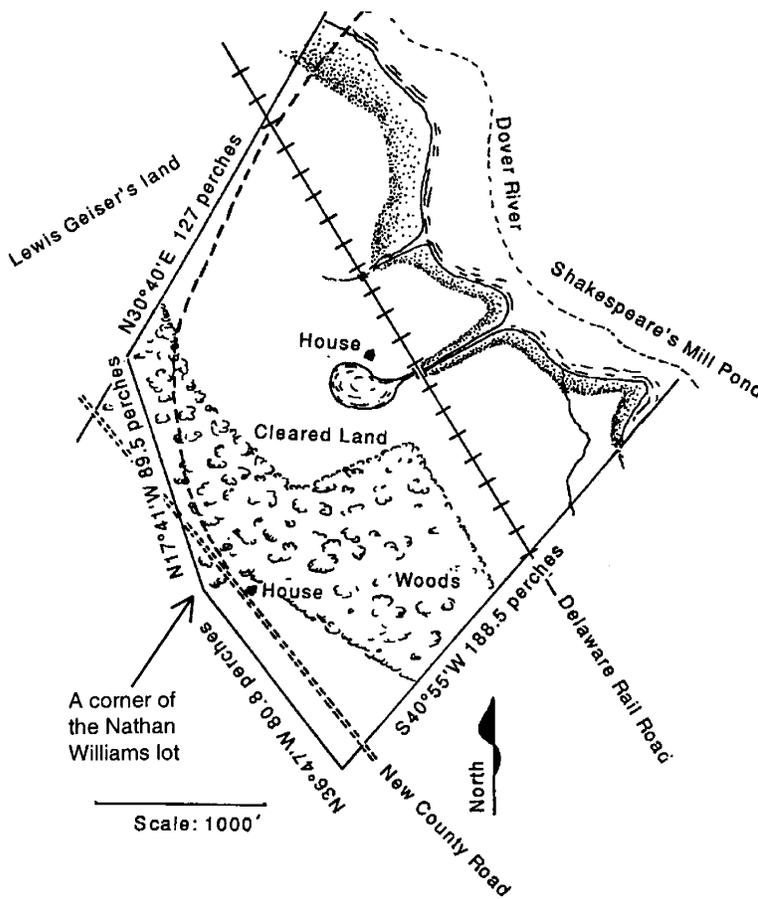


Figure 5

Composite sketch map, 1877, 1881

The dashed line indicates the course of the new Scarborough Road. The "New county road" is now known as McKee Road. This is a redrawing of the Orphans Court plot book entry, found in volume 4, page 247, with a whole area of 176 acres 82 perches. McKee Road, the "new county road," has been added to this plot to illustrate the impact on the site of subsequent widenings,.

location where the Phase II project found evidence. There is no way to know if these sources all depict the same house, or a succession of houses in the same general location (Heite and Blume 1995: 42-45). This location is a small "hill" or eminence that was truncated on the west by the road. The original roadway lay under the present southbound lane of McKee Road.

The later-period tenant house stood east of the original road, and the right-of-way has been expanded eastward. There was no way to know from documentary evidence if the house site was obliterated, but we were almost certain that it was severely truncated by twentieth-century road construction.

The proposed taking in the former Nathan Williams property is a wedge, about 90 feet wide on the north, tapering down to a point near the south property line of the Baynard tract (Figure 3). Surface collection had indicated that most of the site lay within 30 meters of the existing right-of-way.

It was possible to identify 30,000 square feet in the proposed taking where the Williams house and yard site might lie, based on the map evidence and the chemical studies. This study area was bounded on the north by the farm drive, and extended about 300 feet (70 to 100 meters) south.

Review of previously-excavated sites indicates that a home lot should originally have been much smaller than

30,000 square feet. The Benjamin Wynn tenancy in the Route 1 corridor (Grettlar, Miller, Catts, Guttman, Iplenski, Hoseth, Hodny and Custer 1994) occupied 14,400 square feet, and other home lots were similar (Heite and Blume 2001:128-129). Therefore, it would not be necessary to examine in detail the whole 30,000 square feet of the study area.

We presumed that spatial disposition of surface artifacts within the site is not likely to be very revealing. If anything should have survived to reveal something about Nathan Williams, we presumed that it would be found in subsurface features. In this, we were eventually to be proved wrong. Spatial distribution of artifacts proved to be the most important type of evidence the site yielded.

The earlier surface collection taught three things about the surface artifacts on this site:

1. *There are very few artifacts on the surface.* One may take this to indicate either that the surviving plowed field is outside the main site, or that there were few artifacts to begin with.

2. *The artifact collection is very mixed.* This site was occupied during much of the nineteenth century, by Nathan Williams and by later tenants. Moreover, there is an extremely high likelihood that neighbors and passers-by have contributed significantly to the artifact collection.

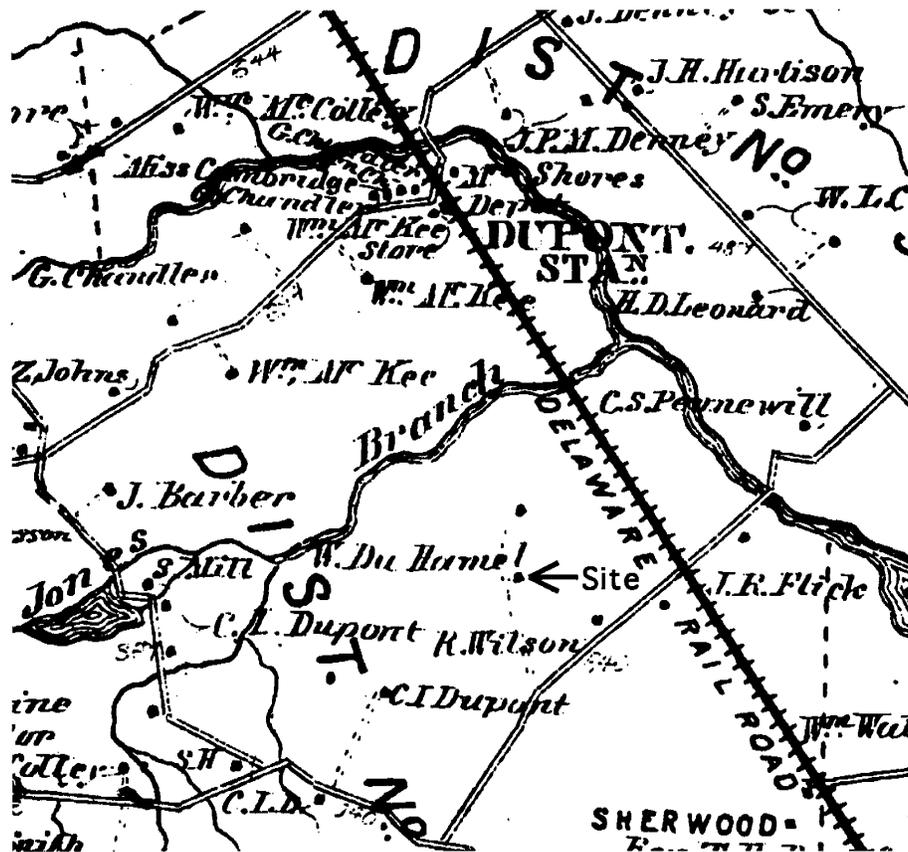


Figure 6
1868 map

This is a double-size enlargement of the 1868 Beers Atlas map. A house on the Nathan Williams site is indicated along a lane to the other house site on the property.

3. *Controlled surface collection on this site has a very poor ratio of cost to information value.* Since we already had identified that there were (probably undisturbed) subsurface features on the site, the value of topsoil investigations was dubious, and could easily be written off.

The consultant could not advise taking additional soil samples for chemical analysis at the Phase III level. Earlier work had already provided a chemical profile of the site, but because of truncation it would not be possible to

get a complete chemical map of the site as it existed when it was occupied.

Given all these problems, why should the project have gone forward? In a nutshell, the unique features of the site were sufficient to justify the work, even with reduced expectations.

The following sequence of operations was proposed.

I. Background research

A. Find any public records that might relate to Nathan Williams and his associates.

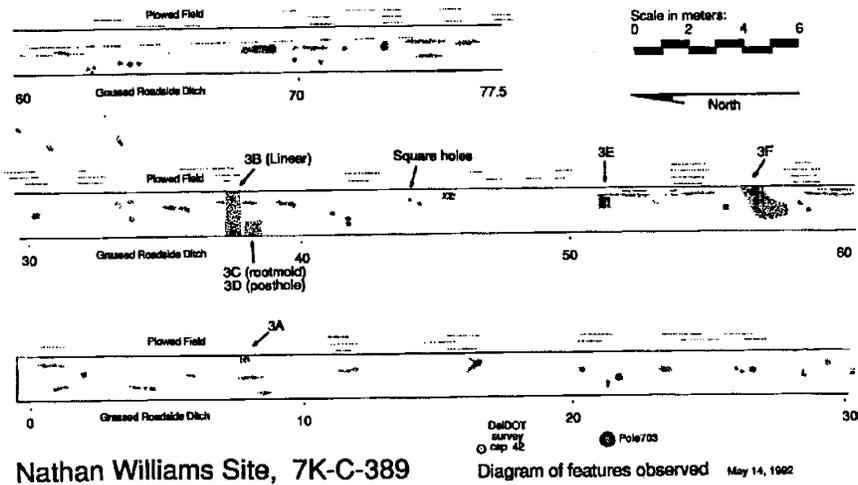


Figure 7
 1992 Test Trench

Archæologists identified several features that indicated existence of a house, possibly under the road. These small features are typical of the small post holes and trenches that often will be found on farmyard sites. This diagram appeared in the 1992 publication, page 67. Zero point was near the driveway. The figures at the bottom of the trench indicate the number of meters south of the driveway.

B. Define the racial and ethnic makeup of the community in which Williams lived.

II. Surface collect the artifacts

A. Plow, disk and grid the site.

B. Enlist the Kent County Archeological Society to do the surface collection.

C. Analyse and curate the artifacts.

III. Subsurface

A. Machine strip the entire taking, from the driveway to the south property line.

B. Excavate features.

IV. Synthesis

A. Clean, analyse, and interpret the artifacts.

B. Write the report.

As it turned out, several assumptions were wrong, but they led to improved outcomes. The controlled surface collection proved to be an excellent tool, and the participation of volunteers was a rewarding experience for all concerned.

2. THE COMMUNITY SETTING

*Nathan Williams lived in a community
where three distinct racial or ethnic groups
were recognized and segregated by law and custom*

The project site lies near the center of a community of mixed-race people of mostly Native American ancestry once known as "moors." This community has maintained its separate identity since the seventeenth century in Little Creek Hundred and parts of Dover and Duck Creek hundreds. The project area was for a time also partly in Murderkill Hundred.

Little Creek and Duck Creek hundreds, including what is now Kenton Hundred, were known in the seventeenth century as the Indian territory of Mitsawokett, over which the chief sachem was Petticoquewan, alias Christian. After he had sold several tracts, Christian disappeared from the public record. Thereafter, no traditional Indian leader was to claim the territory. Even without an identified sachem on the ground, Indians continued to live and maintain a community in Mitsawokett territory between the St. Jones and Duck Creek, where their descendants remain today.

Over the centuries these Indian descendants have rigorously maintained a distinct identity, even though the surrounding community has frequently considered them to be negroes or mulattoes. An abolitionist writer in 1837 lumped all the Kent County "colored" population, regardless of origin, because all nonwhites were suffering under the same discriminatory laws (Hancock 1971). In researching the Nathan Williams property history, this ambiguity has complicated the task of defining the subject's place in the

community racial "pecking order" of the period.

The ambiguous term "moor" was applied to this community at some time in the nineteenth century, and has adhered until recently. The 1888 Scharf history describes the community and the legends that already had begun to accumulate around their origins:

"West of the town of Moorton are a class of people who claim that they are original Moors. At one time they owned over a thousand acres between Seven Hickories and Moorton. They claim to have settled here about 1710. In 1785 there were several families owning quite large estates, among whom were John and Israel Durham. They have always lived apart from both white and colored neighbors, and have generally intermarried, and steadily refused to attend the neighboring colored schools. In 1877, Hon. Charles Brown, of Dover, gave them ground and wood for a building near Moore's Corner, and since that time they have maintained a school there at their own expense. There are about fifteen families remaining." (Scharf 1888:1124)

THE INDIAN COMMUNITY

"Moors" now are generally identified as Indian descendants, whose antecedents have lived in this part of Kent County, at least since the seventeenth century. Beginnings of today's community are not well documented. None of the related people were identified as Indians in Kent County official records until 1853, when a member of the community was described as "Indian" for identification purposes at the Philadelphia customs house (Macdonald 1992).

The earliest mention in the Kent County records of one of the interrelated families is the birth of

Adam, son of Adam and Ellinor Butcher, in 1686 (Will Book B, page 29).

In 1698, Thomas Gonsela of Kent County received a deed to 120 acres on the north side of Little Creek from Griffith Jones. He had been Jones' tenant for at least five years, for in 1693 he was taxed for land owned by Jones. His earmark was registered April 30, 1700 (Deed Book C-1, page 243)

Thomas died in 1720, and left a widow, Johanna. Her name was spelled Conselar, while his was still written as Gonsela (Will Book F-1, page 14)

When the will of Thomas Conselor the younger was probated in 1739, he named three daughters and a grandson. The grandson was William Conselor, and the daughters were Elizabeth Francisco, Sarah Butcher, and Mary Conselor (Will book I-1, page 10). At about the same time, William Handsor moved to Kent County from Sussex, where he already had raised a family among the Indian community (Heite and Heite 1985:10).

Butcher, Conselor, Francisco, and Handsor descendants would continue to maintain a community down to the present day at Cheswold, occasionally intermarrying with families of known Indian origin from elsewhere. In Kent County records, ethnic or racial origins are not mentioned; the people are indistinguishable from their white neighbors as far as the records are concerned.

Because racial or ethnic origin was not required to be included in the Delaware public record during the Colonial period, it is sometimes difficult for historians and genealogists to identify Indian families in the record. The lack of racial designation in a record has been taken as indication that the person was white.

The term "mulatto," which meant any non-African, non-white, was applied in Virginia and Maryland to Christianized Indians and to any other people who were not European. In those colonies it was much more common to identify people by race during the colonial period. This practice appears to have been followed in Delaware counties, as shown by the case of Jacob Frederick, a "mulatto" who demonstrated in 1698 to the Sussex County court that he had no African ancestry (Horle 1991:1049).

At least one of the local Indian surnames can be identified with a specific tribe. Two men named Sisco [short for Francisco] represented the Nanticoke Indians in negotiations with the Governor of Pennsylvania in 1760, after they removed to the north (State of Pennsylvania 1852, VIII: 492), and the surname occurs among other Indian remnant communities in New Jersey.

Spanish Indian bondservants are known to have lived in the area, including one who had an English wife. Some of these Hispanics appear in the early records with English wives.

Other families lost their Indian identities in the record by integrating themselves into European society. Individuals surnamed Puckham, Williams, Coursey, Game, and Cambridge were clearly identified as Indians during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but their descendants were described under other labels.

Indian people were a sizable proportion of the population of this area during a period when their Indian identity was not recognized. When a separate racial identity was required, they were identified merely as "colored" or as "free persons of color." Normally, however, Indian origin was

1800 CENSUS OF LITTLE CREEK HUNDRED	
White population	1,229
Free persons of color, race not specified	546
[Free persons in Indian-headed households	133]
Slaves	133
<i>Total Population</i>	<i>1,908</i>

not distinguished from white in the public records, such as the assessment lists.

A 1779 Duck Creek Hundred [partial] tax list specifies the race of only one taxpayer, Ned Gibbs, "negro," who apparently was a member of a well-known and prosperous Kent County black family. The Indian-descended families would be indistinguishable if their surnames were not known from other sources. For convenience, they are italicized here by the author. The eight members of the community represented a third of the taxables on the list, which is now at the Historical Society of Delaware.

When the list is rearranged by relative wealth, the Indian-descended population are squarely in the lower-middle range of a scale dominated by a few white families:

<i>Jno Conselar</i>	1
Thomas Cutler.....	3
<i>William Conselor</i>	4
<i>Thomas Butcher</i>	4
Jno Macey.....	4
Patrick Conner.....	6
Evan Denney.....	6
Ned Gibbs, Negro.....	6
<i>Elijah Conselor</i>	8
<i>Isaiah Durham</i>	8
<i>Jno Durham Jr.</i>	8
Daniel Macey.....	10
Jno Denney.....	12
John Van Gaskin.....	12
<i>Whittington Durham</i>	15
Jos. Denney.....	15
<i>William Durham</i>	15
Francis Denney.....	20
Robert Rees.....	20
Sarah Allee.....	20
Jno Joy.....	25
Edward Rees.....	25

Christopher Denney.....	35
Jno Allee.....	40
James Raymond, Esq.....	50

Race definition in the region has been vague over the years, to the eternal frustration of historians (Heite and Heite 1985: 18). After the national census began in 1790, and as tensions increased over slavery and other racial issues, it became customary to identify individuals by race for the first time.

Racial description was not a science, and seldom was consistent. A few contemporary sources distinguish between "mulattoes" and "free negroes."

THE 1797 ASSESSMENT

One of these is the Little Creek Hundred 1797 assessment, which apparently reserved the "mulatto" designation for people of Indian descent. This document is further unique because the tax assessor required each taxable person to sign his entry; we therefore have a record of literacy in the hundred as well. Moreover, for each farm in the hundred, the principal tenant is listed, which provides even more detail about the locations of non-landowner farmers.

All the people listed here were identified as mulattoes. All signed with a mark unless there is an asterisk [*] after the name, indicating at least enough literacy to write a signature.

Isaiah Durham, tenant of Benjamin Stout
Daniel Songs [Songo]
John Farmer
Thomas Conselor*
William Durham, Jr., tenant of John Hamm on 136 ¹ / ₂ acres
Charles Sisco*
John Cott*
Thomas Butcher
Peregrine Jehanna*
Rachel Williams
William Durham, Sr., tenant of Robert Holliday and George Wilson
Thomas Hughes
James Dean on the land of Elijah Conselor
Elijah Conselor
John Saunders, no signature

John Johnson, cooper*
 Peter Cook
 Benjamin Sisco, tenant on 350 acres of Walter
 Williamson
 George Sisco
 Stephen Sparksman

In some cases there were people with the same name listed in different racial categories. There was, for example, a Thomas Butcher, "negro" and another labelled "mulatto." Charles Sisco, who signed his name, was listed without race. The only one of these people who was allowed to vote in the all-white elections was the "mulatto" Thomas Butcher.

The Rachel Williams on the list may have been a widow. Another Rachel Williams, widow of Solomon, was listed among the white taxpayers. Her husband, Solomon Williams, of Maryland, had owned land east of the present Bishop's Corner.

In the 1804 Duck Creek assessment, Benjamin Sisco (Francisco) was identified as tenant of William Killen on a tract with a log dwelling, 200 acres clear, 52 wooded, and 100 marsh. There are only "n" notations after nonwhite names in this list for that year, and Sisco was noted.

Again in the 1819 reassessment, the assessor identified mulattoes in Little Creek Hundred, but he did not require signatures. Here are the mulatto entries:

Benjamin Conselor
 Elijah Conselor
 Elias Butcher
 John Cott
 George Colbert
 Jesse Dean
 Daniel Farmer
 William Holston
 David Hutt
 John Johnson
 William Muntz
 Robert Muntz
 James Songo
 Benjamin Sisco (Francisco)
 John Sanders

The 1828 Little Creek Hundred assessment describes houses in some detail. The following are the "mulatto"

references, with their real estate ownership or tenancy:

Rachel Butcher, 4¹/₂ acres, log dwelling
 Elizabeth Carney
 John Cott, 2 acres, log house, in tenure of Becket, tenant with John Cooper on 271 acres owned by William Keith
 John Cott, jr.
 Benjamin Concealor, 36 acres, no improvement
 Hannah Concealor, 66 acres, log dwelling
 Jeremiah Concealor heirs, 36 acres, log dwelling
 Perry Cork
 John Carney
 Jesse Dean, 20 acres, 2 log tenements
 Benjamin Francisco, tenant on 358 acres owned by Sarah Cowgill
 Jonathan Hughes
 John Hughes, 6 acres, old log house, tenant on 340 acres of Alexander Murphey with a brick dwelling
 Samuel Songo
 Stephen Sparksman
 Zed Songo

Log dwellings appear to have been the standard shelter for the mulatto families, like most of the poorer residents. Those who were listed without a piece of property are presumed to be landless persons who also did not rent a farm as principal tenant.

William Yates reported in 1837 that among the "people of color" were "not a few who rank among the most respectable of the tenantry, and are skilful and successful farmers." Yates reported that two Francisco brothers had moved a few years since to Ohio, reputedly with \$10,000 cash (Hancock 1971:215). The Francisco brothers were, of course, members of the Indian family and not blacks. We may with some confidence identify them as Benjamin and, possibly, William Sisco.

MINORITY LITERACY

Nathan Williams was literate, which should have given him a relatively good start in life. Literacy was not common among nonwhites in Delaware at the time, and after the 1829 school law was implemented, nonwhites were excluded from public education.

The signed 1797 assessment list for Little Creek Hundred reflects a literacy rate of five among eighteen mulatto heads of household, or 27%, among the labelled mulatto population. Clearly they could get education from some source, if they had the means and the desire.

William D. Yates, an anti-slavery activist from the North, wrote a description of the state of Kent County colored people in 1837, while the Nathan Williams house was occupied (Hancock 1971):

... Formerly, that is prior, it was said, to the passage of the free school law, and the arrangement of the school fund system it was not uncommon for colored children when there were no other opportunities of instruction open for them to be admitted to the ordinary schools of the State. Indeed a number of my informants told me, both men and women, that when they went to school, colored youths were often admitted, some of whom were named to me and who are now respectable citizens. But since the passage of that law, which gave a legal sanction to the exclusion of the colored children, the appearance of one of them in a school of white children is an unusual phenomenon. The free people of color in Delaware are in a most dreadful state of destitution in regard to schools. There is now but a single school for the instruction of colored children during the week, as far as I can learn, in the whole state. ...

The Yates letter, written to encourage abolitionist activism, is important because it is a rare sympathetic antebellum account of the local nonwhite population. Abolitionists on the scene apparently destroyed or never kept records of their illegal activities.

ANTE-BELLUM NONWHITE EDUCATION

During the years before the school law was passed, children of all origins could obtain fee-paid education from private teachers, or from Sunday schools or other "poor" schools. Someone taught Nathan Williams to write, possibly in a school.

Free school law essentially closed the door on nonwhite education in Delaware for another half-century. Soon after the law was passed, the nation was gripped by a movement that can be described only as racist panic. Slave rebellions in the south stirred legislatures to pass racial codes that restricted the rights of nonwhites in many aspects of civil life. Some voted with their feet, establishing new homes in Canada and other places beyond the racial tensions of the South.

Kent County's trustees of the poor, when they bound a poor child as apprentice, generally required masters to provide twelve months of schooling for girls and eighteen months for boys, regardless of racial origin. The loose original indentures, now at the state archives, describe abandoned children and children who were given up by parents who could not afford the cost of raising them. Children born in the poorhouse frequently were bound out if there was no family to care for them.

The trustees were the principal welfare agency during the nineteenth century, and continued to operate the poorhouse into the twentieth century.

At this remove, it is impossible to determine if the education requirement was enforced. Some minority education clearly existed, but it has not been studied in detail, or even identified by historians.

Enforced or not, Kent County's provisions for nonwhite apprentice education stand in stark contrast to the Virginia law of 1804 that forbade the education of colored children (Rountree and Davidson 1998:182).

There were several private attempts to educate nonwhites in the immediate area. One was the White Oak Colored School, established in 1830 by a Quaker activist, Sally [Mrs. Daniel]

The Pleasanton Distribution

Extracts from notes in Kent County assessment books
in the Delaware Public Archives

<i>First entry</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>value</i>	<i>Final entry</i>
T[ransferred] to William Duhamel 1839	1 208 acres of land @ \$10 per acre brick dwelling out buildings in bad repair 150 acres improved in tenure of D. Rash	2080	Dover Dela Dover Dela Dover Dela
T[ransferred] to W. Cowgill 1839	2 600 acres of land @ \$7 per acre two wooden dwellings outbuildings in bad repair 340 acres improved in tenure of Herrington and Songo	4200	180 acres now T[ransferred] to P. Hamm Mar 1843
J E Palmer 1839	3 32 acres of land @ \$8 per acre small log dwelling in tenure of E. Hollis	256	
T[ransferred] to the heirs <i>Project Area</i>	4 275 acres land @ \$5 per acre wooden dwelling outbuilding in bad repair 75 acres improved in tenure of William Bedwell	1375	W. DuHamel 885 Eliz. Webb 185 Alice Cabbage 200 Susan Hamm 90 Eliza Cabbage 90
T[ransferred] to B F Hamm	5 133 acres of land @ \$7 per acre old brick dwelling outbuilding in bad repair in tenure of James Ward	931	Transfer to Francis Register and James Kerbin
T[ransferred] to B F Hamm	6 100 acres of marsh @ 50 cts per acre	50 8892	

Disposition of the John Pleasanton estate in Dover Hundred, as described in the county assessments after his 1838 death. His home farm and major holdings were in Little Creek Hundred, east of the project area and are not listed here. The assessor has noted the initial transfers to heirs in the left column, and the final transfers in the right column.

Cowgill, on the Little Creek Hundred farm of her brother, Hon. Jacob Stout. This site was about midway between Persimmon Tree Lane and Cowgill's Corner, along the present Route 9 (Scharf 1888:1120).

Governor Stout [1767-1857] of Leipsic was a near neighbor as well as business partner of John Pleasanton in the firm of Pleasanton and Stout. In the 1816 assessment, he was credited with 935 acres in Little Creek Hundred. He was married to Angelica [1755-1827], daughter of William Killen. The Stouts were at the center of the local establishment; others of the governor's sisters married John Cowgill, William Ruth, William Denney, and Robert

Register. From 1844 to 1847, Governor Stout was president of the Smyrna Bank (Martin 1984; Scharf 1888: 1118).

The White Oak school was burned down during the Civil War, rebuilt and then burned again. It is hinted that the fires were not entirely accidental. In the 1880s, it was again rebuilt.

In the 1828 Little Creek assessment, Mrs. Cowgill's 358 acres was listed in the tenure of Benjamin Francisco, a well-off member of the Indian-descended community who reportedly moved to Ohio a few years later. His descendants have made contact with local researchers, and bring the news that Benjamin moved to

Beaver County, Pennsylvania, and worked there as a coal miner, according to information received from his descendants.

Near Little Creek Landing, a school was kept for both white and colored pupils in 1832 (Scharf 1888:1120, 1121). This may refer to the Stout school.

Methodist churches in Delaware, from their beginning in the late eighteenth century, sponsored Sunday schools for the education of both white

and colored children, which received public subsidies for the white scholars (Clerk of the Peace returns, Delaware Archives). Quakers in Wilmington offered nonwhite children a night school in 1798 (Munroe 1954:57, 176). Between 1772 and 1798 the Wilmington Friends Meeting recorded numerous bequests to provide schooling for both black and white poor children. John and Mary Dickinson secured their annual pledge for this purpose by a mortgage on a Kent County plantation in 1794 (Friends School 1948: 5).

3. WHO WAS NATHAN WILLIAMS?

*While a landowner's family typically is well documented,
his non-white tenants and neighborhood smallholders
are virtually invisible in the public record.*

The search for historical documentation about Nathan Williams reflects the difficulties hampering any attempt to conduct historical research into the antebellum nonwhite underclass. There were at least three persons by that name in Kent County during this period. The other two were prosperous, and therefore well documented, white men in Smyrna and Milford. In order to sort out the activities of the three contemporaries, it was frequently necessary to review and dismiss records involving the other two Nathans.

In 1840, John Pleasanton's heirs were dividing a hardscrabble tenant farm. This was not the family's main holding; their elegant brick house, Pleasanton Abbey, stood on well drained soils east of town, unlike the poorly-drained clay soil of his tenant farms (Kent County Orphans Court Plot Book "1826" page 290).

Pleasanton had bought the farm from Loockerman heirs in 1818 (Kent County Deed Book J-2, page 251). The land had suffered from neglect; two generations of absentee landowners and guardians of minor heirs had done nothing to improve the property. Like much of Kent County at the time, this farm was on the verge of becoming totally unproductive waste land.

In 1822, Pleasanton was assessed for 286 acres of the home farm in Little Creek Hundred and 486 acres in Murderkill Hundred, which then, before 1823, included the present West Dover Hundred, including the project area. Just

over a third of the Murderkill Hundred holding was described as cleared ground.

John Pleasanton died in 1838, leaving a detailed will, dividing the farms among his various children. Most of the tracts were assigned wholly to one heir or another, but the former Loockerman property was split between children and grandchildren.

In the estate division, his daughter Mary DuHamel, received the better-drained eastern part of the property, except a small clearing "lately" in the tenure of Nathan Williams, "free Negro," as provided by her father's will:

"...and also the cleared or arable land (excepting the lot now in the tenure of Nathan Williams free negro) and twenty five acres of the woodland immediately adjoining to the same cleared or arable land, being part of the tract or parcel of land in Dover Hundred which I purchased from Thomas Davy and Elizabeth his wife.
..."

Mary eventually asserted a clear title to the whole 168-plus acres of her share, but there is no evidence that she bought the Williams interest. Nor is there a deed from her father to Williams. Obviously he had never owned the property free and clear, but he held enough of a claim that it could not be allocated in the estate division.

It is clear, from the terms used, that Williams was in possession when Pleasanton made his will, but had

left when in 1840 the land was described as "lately" in his tenure.

THE HUTT FAMILY

While the activities of the Pleasanton family are well documented, the Hutt and Williams families are not so well represented in the county archives. Whereas the Pleasantons are found in the Orphans Court and deed records, a Hutt reference is more likely to be found in the poorhouse and indentured service records.

A Kent County bond dated 24 September 1824 records a marriage of Nathan Williams to Ann Hutt. Nathan and Isaac Williams both signed the bond in their own handwriting. No race is mentioned in the bond, and no place of residence is given for any of the parties.

Marriage bonds for poor nonwhite people during the antebellum period are unusual, if not unique in this case. From other references, it is obvious that both individuals were nonwhite.

Hutt is not a name found frequently in Central Delaware public records; where they appear in the record, they are identified as mulatto. Outside decennial census returns, the family left a sparse paper trail. Yet they have lived in the area since the early eighteenth century. There is not a single deed recorded for a Hutt before 1835 in the Kent County Recorder's office.

Historians would identify such people as "underclass," almost impossible to chronicle. Individuals named Hutt are not numerous in records associated with the Native community, which included several prosperous landowners. They are chronicled primarily in the records of unfortunates who needed public assistance of one kind or another.

In 1758, John Hutt petitioned the Orphans Court to grant him his "freedom dues" commonly paid at the end of a term of indentured servitude. Hutt had been bound by the court to serve to the age of 31. His master, Charles Hillyard, died and his widow remarried to Presley Raymond. After the Raymonds were dead and Hutt's term had expired, Hutt asked the court to require the Raymonds' administrator to pay the dues.

On August 7, 1764, two mulatto boys, James and Presley Hutt, were bound as indentured servants, of their "own free will and accord, and with the advice and consent of his father and mother." The parents were unnamed, and the boys' marks were appended to the indentures. James was two years old and Presley was six, which may raise questions about free will. The masters were Isaac Carty and James Voshell, well-known white farmers. At the end of their indentures, the boys were each to receive two suits of "good working cloaths," one of which was to be new. There was no mention of freedom dues.

Another Hutt, named David, was born about 1758, according to later records. His relationship to James and Presley is not documented, but he would have been about six years old, the same age as Presley. It is always possible that David and Presley were the same person, but the records are not adequate to sort them out.

Two years later, in August of 1766, the overseer of the poor for Little Creek Hundred found a home for Charles Hutt, an orphan who was almost three years old. With the consent of two justices of the peace, the boy was bound to Samuel Whitman as a servant to the age of 21. The master was to provide "sufficient meat, drink, washing, lodging and apparel" but there

was no mention of education or freedom dues (Record Group 3555, Delaware Public Archives).

The fact that two of the mulatto boys were named Charles and Presley may be circumstantial evidence that they were sons of John Hutt, who had been bound to Charles Hillyard and Presley Raymond. Samuel Whitman, who took Charles, was a friend, and later husband, of Agness Loatman Sappington, a member of the Native American community who lived on the Bloomsbury tract excavated by the author for the Delaware Department of Transportation (Heite and Blume 2001).

Charles Hutt was a taxable in Little Creek Hundred in 1785; he accumulated some property, which he lost in a suit in 1799 (Kent County Chancery case H#8; Scharf 1888:1118).

David Hutt, "negro," was taxed in 1804, owning livestock but no land in Little Creek Hundred. The 1819 assessment, which distinguishes between negroes and mulattoes, lists David Hutt as a "mulatto," which could legally identify a person of either African or Native American descent. In Little Creek Hundred the term was most commonly used to identify people of Indian descent when a distinction was made.

In the 1830 census David Hutt and Nathan Williams are listed next to one another in Dover Hundred, which usually is construed to mean that they were next-door neighbors. He probably was a senior relative, most likely grandfather, of Mrs. Williams.

David Hutt was admitted to the county almshouse June 2, 1845 at the age of 87. He was, therefore, born around 1758, about the same time as Presley Hutt. His wife, Rachel Hutt, aged 75, entered with him and died June 22, 1845. When they first came to the

almshouse they were listed as being from Little Creek Hundred. When David re-entered the house on December 15, 1845, he was listed as a resident of Dover Hundred. He died at the poorhouse December 15, 1847 (Trustees of the Poor records, Delaware Archives).

David and his wife are the best-documented Hutts in Kent County, but the records of William Hutt are more colorful.

William Hutt fathered a female child who was born July 28, 1834 to Ann Cott. She was a member of the Indian-descended community in Little Creek and Dover hundreds. The bastardy bond, now at the Delaware Public Archives, dated December 6, 1834, was signed by her father, John Cott, as well as Samuel Johnson and William Hutt.

In 1840, Ann married Elijah Durham, according to an entry in the Cott family Bible. Elijah's brother, William (1819-1857), was a Methodist minister, according to his tombstone at Immanuel (formerly Manship) Church in Cheswold. They were sons of George and Susan Durham, tenants on Henry M. Ridgely's Fox Hall farm, the next property westward from the Pleasanton farm.

Ann Hutt is therefore clearly identified as associated with the Indian-descended community that still exists in the neighborhood. Members of this community in a later generation developed the residential neighborhood on the opposite side of the present McKee Road.

THE WILLIAMS FAMILY

Nathan Williams was born about 1802, according to his own 1842 testimony in which he is declared to be forty years of age.

Possible identifications of the relatives of Nathan Williams are somewhat more abundant. There were "mulatto" Williams families listed in the records of the period, and there were "negro" Williams families as well as white. Nathan was identified as a "free negro" in some documents, but only through identification by white record keepers.

Among the Nanticoke Indians who adopted European names were some people named Williams, who lived on the Locust Neck reservation in the present Sussex County, then in Maryland. A John Williams was one of the Nanticoke who signed the petition to recognize George Pocatus as their chief in 1759. (*Maryland Archives* 31:354, 283).

There was a Williams marriage among the local Indian population, around the time Nathan Williams was born. Hannah, daughter of Daniel Durham, who died in 1801, married someone named Williams at about that time. The marriage is documented only by the fact that her name changed during the estate probate of her father.. (Probate file, Delaware Public Archives).

James Williams may have been Hannah's husband. In 1816, he bought the share of Handsor Durham in the Jolley's Neck estate of Benjamin Durham, her brother. The Orphans Court permitted Williams to buy the heirs' shares in the fifteen acres. It was valued at \$45.93 (Kent County Orphans Court case file of Benjamin Durham, 1816, Delaware Public Archives; Kent County Deed Book O-2, page 278).

In a few instances, including the 1797 and 1819 Little Creek assessments and the 1828 Duck Creek assessment tax collectors distinguished between negro and mulatto taxpayers. In these lists, the

Indian-descended families appear consistently as "mulattoes," whereas in other years they are lumped with blacks.

Nathan Williams is listed in the racially-specific 1828 Little Creek Hundred assessment as a "negro." The 1838 Dover Hundred tax assessment is another of these lists that make the distinctions. It lists a Benjamin Williams, mulatto, but Nathan is absent from the list. A direct comparison is therefore impossible here, too.

So far, it has not been possible to attribute Nathan unequivocally to any of the northern Kent County black or mulatto Williams families, or to the Williams family from the Locust Neck Nanticoke community. There was a Kent County "white" family whose modern descendants claim an Indian tradition, who lived west of the project area later in the nineteenth century (Beverly Dancing Bear, personal communication).

As always, the records of poor nonwhite propertyless people are ephemeral at best. The scarcity of documentation, in turn, has resulted in their being under-represented in the published histories. There is exactly one entry for a Hutt in the 1888 Scharf history, and that was Charles on the 1785 Little Creek Hundred tax list.

RECORDS OF NATHAN WILLIAMS

Nathan Williams, newly married, appears first in the 1825 Little Creek Hundred assessment with no property but the poll tax. The Little Creek Hundred assessment for 1828 identified him as "negro," assessed for a sow and pigs as well as his poll.

The transfer list filed with the 1831 Dover Hundred assessment notes

that he had been transferred from Little Creek Hundred.

In the 1830 census, Nathan Williams was listed as a male free colored person between 24 and 36 years with a colored male under ten. There was also a female between ten and 24 (evidently born between 1806 and 1820) and another female under ten. If the older female is Ann Hutt Williams, she was under 18 when they were married in 1824, when Nathan was 22 years old.

The family must have been living in the neighborhood, if not on the property, because the same page contains entries for known neighbors, including John Denney, Angelica Handsor, David Hutt, and Cuffy Johns, who lived on the nearby road now known as Denney's Road. We may assume with confidence, then, that Williams moved to the property around 1829 or 1830, and that he was already an established householder with a son and a daughter at home

By 1836, Nathan Williams was in financial trouble. There is a "d" for delinquent next to his name in the Dover Hundred tax list. The 1839 Dover Hundred tax delinquency list includes Nathan Williams "N" with the notation, "good for nothing and insolvent."

At the time of Pleasanton's demise, 1838, Nathan Williams clearly was in trouble. His claim to the smallholding where he lived was not a documented title. The commissioners who divided the Pleasanton property for the Orphans Court acknowledged the Williams claim when they allocated

CREDITORS OF NATHAN WILLIAMS

1842 June Term, Superior Court, insolvent docket page 229

Foster Pritchett.....	10.00
Robt Fowler.....	4.00
George Parris.....	3 or 4.00
Isaiah Songo.....	5.00
Betsey Anderson.....	10.00
Doct. Isaac Jump.....	20.00

the land, but they did not set it aside in terms of an actual survey, which would have been customary if a transfer had in fact occurred.

On November 8, 1839, Nathan Williams indentured three of his children to William Jamison, and received a total of \$6 consideration.

The transaction must have been painful, for Williams was literate and their new master could not sign his name. His children were not to be guaranteed the education he had enjoyed. Each child was to receive cash instead of an education, "it being deemed inexpedient to stipulate for education in reading and writing." An illiterate master was unlikely to take kindly to educating his servants who were not entitled to free public schooling.

His daughter Lanty, who was three years, four months, and 26 days old, was bound to serve until the age of eighteen and receive twelve dollars and two suits of clothes "suitable to her condition, one of which is to be new" at the end of her term. She was to be taught the "trade" of servant.

Her master, William Jamison, conveyed her indenture in 1840 to John Moore, Jr. In 1847, when Lanty was eleven years old, Moore conveyed her indenture to Dr. Martin W. Bates. Two years later, Bates conveyed Lanty to Reuben Bowman. Then, in 1850, she was conveyed to Daniel Godwin. In each case, the conveyances were witnessed by justices of the peace and recorded in court (Indentures, Delaware Public Archives). The law and procedures were designed to protect the masters; there

was no similar provision for the justices to verify that freedom dues were paid.

William Jamison also took Nathan Williams' nine-year-old son Richard, who was to be trained in the business of farming and serve to the age of 21. Richard was to receive \$30 at the end of his term. Jamison conveyed Richard's time to James Pierce in 1840. In turn, Pierce conveyed Richard's indenture to John Reid in 1843.

Nathan's son John, seven years old, was bound to Jamison to serve until he was 21, when he was to get \$20. There are no transfers attached to his file at the archives.

The 1840 census describes Nathan Williams as a free colored man between the ages of 36 and 55 (about 38 actually) whose household included a woman in the same age bracket and two females under the age of ten. The two children mentioned in the census a decade earlier would have been more than ten years old, had they been present.

The two resident children on the 1840 census could not have been the same who were listed in 1830. Unless her age was mis-stated, the adult female could not be the same person.

Circumstances indicate a title less than fee, such as a contract for a deed. Not uncommonly, even today, poor people can obtain land by a lease-purchase agreement of this sort. In earlier times, such titles were called "terriers" because they were recorded only in the seller's rent-rolls, or terrier records. The actual sale, for purpose of the public record, would occur after the tenant made the agreed final payment.

Because there was no public recording of land contracts, it is possible

that a substantial number of transfers to poor farmers never made it into the county land books, especially if they failed to complete the payments.

These indentures left Nathan Williams with one child, Mary, at home. Joseph P. Comegys paid him \$20 for her indenture in October 1841. Mary, then aged seven, was to be Comegys' servant until she was eighteen, at which time she was to be paid \$5 in place of an education.

In 1842, Williams found himself in jail for debt. Because he owned nothing, he was discharged without a sheriff's sale. Foster Pritchett and Dr. Isaac Jump were assigned Williams' assets (Insolvent docket, 1842 June Term, Delaware Public Archives).

He pleaded in his petition to the court that he had a wife and child to support. The cause of distress may have been sickness in the family, because his major creditor was Dr. Isaac Jump, who happened also to be the attending physician at the almshouse. Williams does not appear in the records of the county trustees of the poor, but straitened economic circumstances forced the breakup of the family.

Another of the creditors was Isaiah Songo, also a "mulatto" of Indian descent, also a tenant of John Pleasanton, to whom he owed money on a note.

John Grinage, another member of the Indian-descended community, was also a Pleasanton tenant, according to the estate papers.

Williams disappears from the Kent County records after this incident.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Two campaigns of surface and subsurface investigations identified the edge of the Williams yard, but provided scant data on the lives of site occupants.

The Nathan Williams Site was first identified during the general survey of the Scarborough Road project area (Heite and Blume 1992: 67) and described as a "rare example of documented free black antebellum site" for which a Phase II investigation was recommended. Subsequent research indicates that Williams may have been a member of the local Native American community, but the site remains a rare example.

Phase II work performed in 1992 was published in connection with a study of properties at the McKee Road terminus of Scarborough Road (Heite and Blume 1995: 42-45, 65-73, 92). During the Phase II investigations, a strip of ground along the edge of the roadway was scraped by a Gradall, and features were identified (Figure 7). A soil chemical survey was carried out, and a flagged surface collection was conducted.

This technique proved successful for locating artifact concentrations, even though it did not produce a facile table of numerical results. The surface collectors were given pin flags and instructed to stick one in the ground whenever there were several artifacts in a small area. The resulting diagram, figure 8, convincingly identified a concentration of artifacts.

Scattered features were revealed by the Gradall, but no foundations or other structural remains could be identified. The features are shown on figures 13-17. After subsurface features were identified, they were found to

cluster near the concentrated artifacts that had been identified in the surface collection.

Perhaps more significantly, the Phase II flagged surface survey revealed what appeared to be a line of nineteenth-century artifacts parallel to the road and about twenty or thirty feet east of the present pavement. This apparent line of artifact clusters was interpreted as a fence line, consistent with a swept yard.

In a traditional swept yard, all trash is scrupulously swept from the bare earth of the immediate house

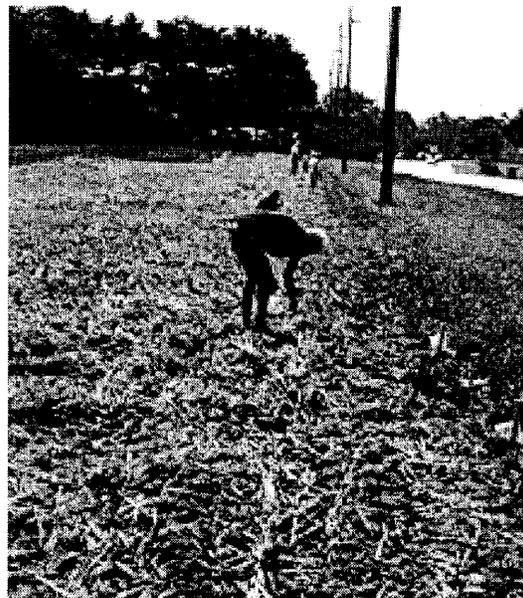


Plate 2

Surface collections by volunteers

The site was staked in ten-foot squares, and then volunteers came to gather the collection that resulted in the data on figure 10.

vicinity. Small artifacts will inevitably be swept to the fence line, where they should form a linear pattern.

The concentrations of features and artifacts were found on a slight elevation, which was identified from the documents as the probable location of the Williams house. Chemical survey results were consistent with this finding; subsoil calcium, manganese, and magnesium peaked in this area.

The Gradall trench opened in May 1992 was 77.5 meters long, and five feet (1.65 meters) wide (Figure 8). Features were found clustered on the

highest part of the site, between 40 and 60 meters south of the driveway. The features included a linear stain, a root mold, a post hole, and a more complex feature of unknown purpose (Figure 7). Many stake holes were not capable of interpretation because of the small area uncovered.

Chemical survey was taken in both topsoil and subsoil levels. Subsequent research has indicated that a subsoil sample is sufficient.

Phosphate levels, normally representing a concentration of organic waste, were depressed in the area

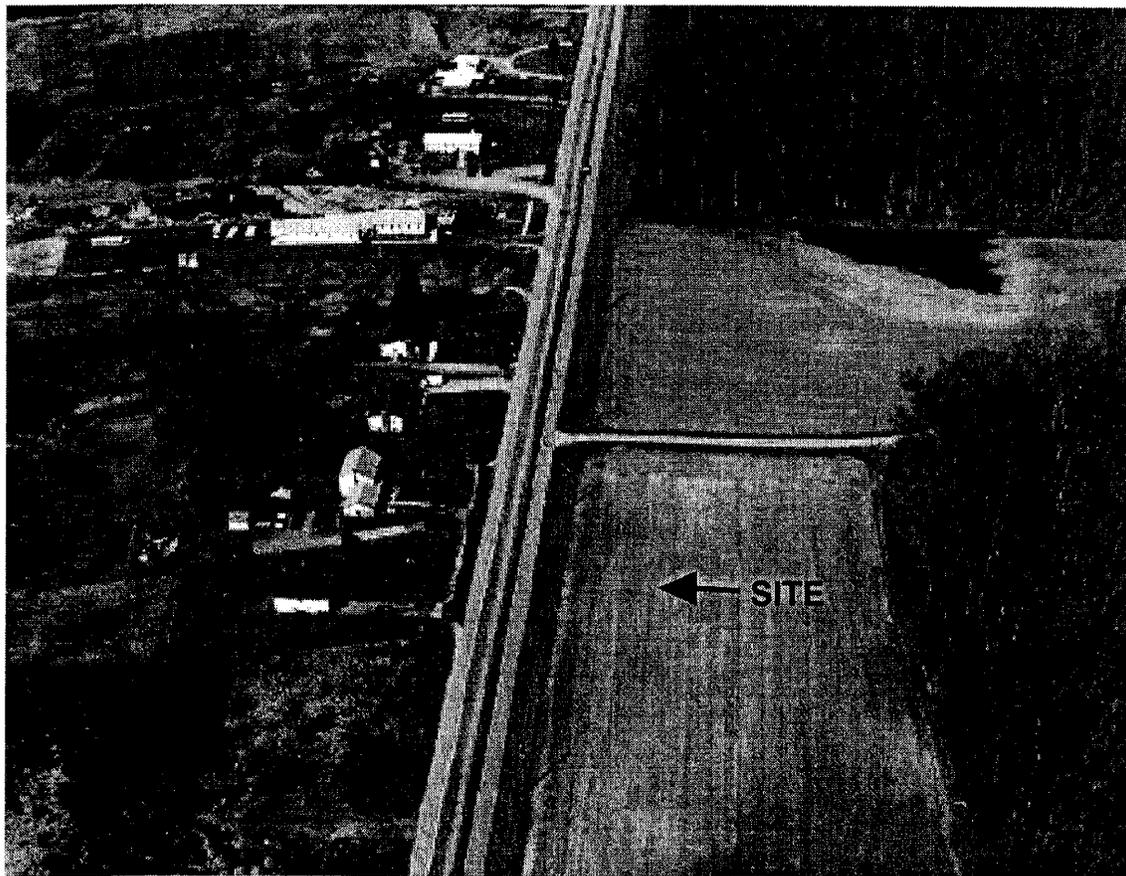


Plate 3

Before the highway project, looking northward. The driveway may be the old road shown in the Beers *Atlas* map. The tree line at right is the historic east boundary of the Williams tract.



Plate 4

Staff members Jimi Ale and Kim Dugan clean the scraped area on the south end of the trench. A rusted-out domestic water pipe trench has been opened here, revealing a pipe just below the plowzone.



Plate 5

Kim and Jimi take a much-needed break while clearing the south end of the machine cut, where many small features were identified, associated with periods later than the time of Nathan Williams. This is a close-up of the small pipe trench.

between 40 and 60 meters south, which we identified as the toft area. Calcium was elevated in the same area.

Success of the surface collection at the Phase II level inspired the data collection strategy implemented five years later in the data recovery phase. In the Phase III project, the entire Williams field, 900 feet long, would be subjected to a controlled surface survey (Figure 9).

The wedge-shaped tract was laid off in a ten-foot grid, with a zero point beyond its south end. Volunteers were invited from the local Native American organization and from the local

archaeological society. Each volunteer was assigned to a block of squares, and a marked bag was provided for each ten-foot unit.

The refined and expanded 1997 surface collection brought the Nathan Williams toft into sharp focus, at the same time giving further evidence that most of it had been destroyed by road construction.

About 300 to 350 feet south of the driveway, the largest concentration of artifacts was close to the road. Another concentration was observed about 200 to 250 feet south of the driveway, but a short distance from the road. Again, a

linear pattern of artifacts was observed parallel to the road, this time in several rows.

Two smaller artifact concentrations were observed, one at the south end of the project and the other at the 600-foot point. These happened to be relatively higher elevations along the way. The southern concentration proved to be the remains of a twentieth-century tenant house.

In order to understand the internal geography of the site, the surface collection was broken into its components. A diagram, showing the presence and absence of various artifact categories, figure 9, brought the Nathan Williams site into even sharper focus.

Presence/absence maps based on the surface surveys were most revealing (Figure 10).

Coal, a common indicator for later nineteenth-century house sites, was found throughout the study area. After the railroad came in 1856, heating by coal became economical, for the middle classes at least. A scattering of coal across a field is pretty fair evidence of manuring during this period, because coal waste would be mixed with household garbage. It may be taken as an indicator of progressive farming practices.

Coal ash was recommended to the author by Agricultural Extension Service agents as recently as 1970 for lightening clay soils. Therefore, coal was not considered a useful marker.

More units at the north end contained brick than at other parts of the site. Quantitative analysis of the brick was dismissed as impractical because no specific guidelines had been given to the volunteers as to how much brick should be recovered, and what minimum size constituted a recoverable specimen.

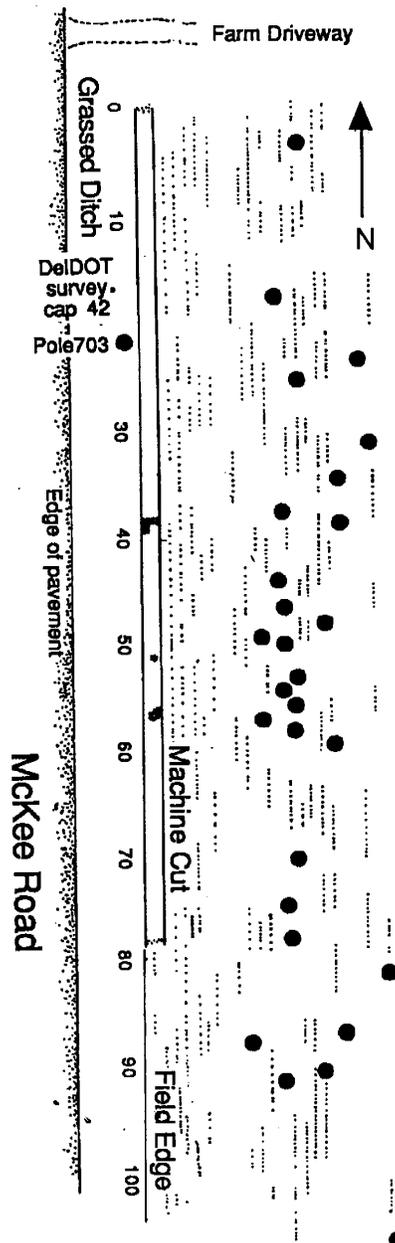


Figure 8

Diagram of the 1992 surface collection and the machine cut. The concentration of artifacts, at about 50 to 70 meters from the driveway, corresponds with the concentration that would be noted in 1997 at 850 to 1,000 feet along the new base line. The large dots are locations of flagged clusters. The stippled shading represents the direction of the plow furrows. Features in the machine-cut trench are shown for reference; the diagram of this trench is shown in Figure 7.

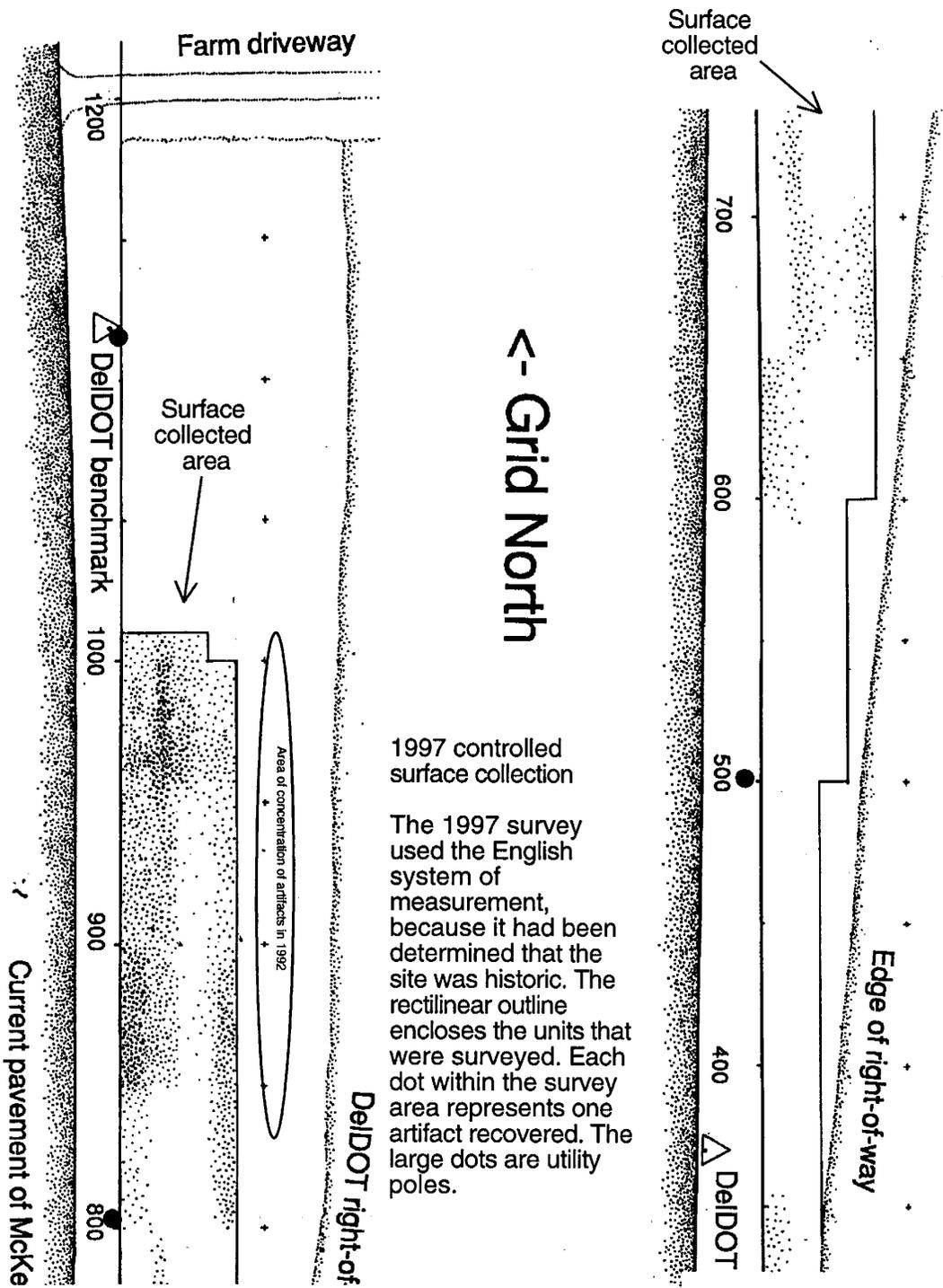
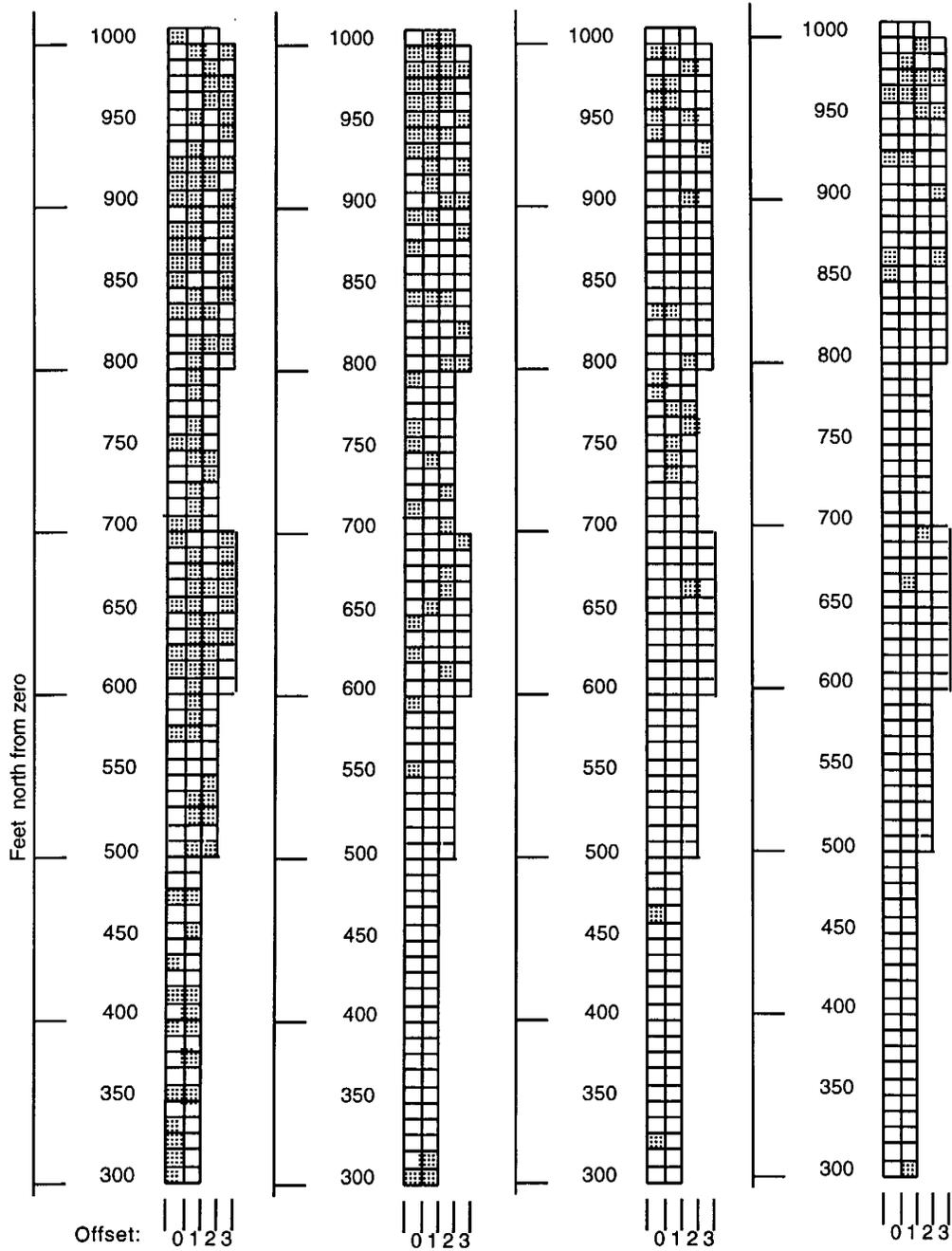


Figure 9

Figure 10

Controlled Surface Collection, July 26, 1997: Distributions of selected artifact types

Shading indicates presence of a particular material in a ten-foot surface collected unit.



Column interpretations:

- 1. Coal present in unit
- 2. Brick present in unit
- 3. Pearlware and red earthenware
- 4. Aqua and amethyst glass

SUBSURFACE TESTING

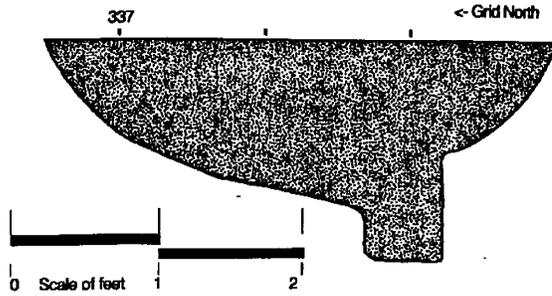


Figure 11

North-south profile through the feature at 337 feet on the grid

A definite cluster was indicated in the north, where the Williams house was expected. The bricks, upon analysis, proved to be useful artifacts.

Pearlware and red earthenware, which most commonly are found on early nineteenth-century sites, clustered on the north end of the tested area. Aqua and amethyst container glass, common on late nineteenth-century sites, were found primarily in this same area, suggesting long occupation after Williams left.

Surface collection results therefore confirmed our original presumption that the Nathan Williams site was located on the rise at the north end of the project area, and that the concentrations found farther south are related to other occupations.

The bricks were particularly revealing. Most, if not all, the identifiable bricks were handmade and clamp fired. Overfired glazed bricks were not uncommon. In the north 990 square, there was a "voussoir" brick fragment, probably meant for a flat arch. Such arches are found on the nearby Loockerman Hall, the eighteenth-century mansion house that is now the symbolic main building of Delaware State University.

After the surface collection was finished, the site was stripped and the most productive parts were stripped by Gradall. The machine removed the plowzone and the subsoil was shovel-scraped in search of features.

The Gradall trenches were a disappointment, in terms of finding features related to Nathan Williams. Much of the scraped area was devoid of features, and many of the features related to such later activities as an orchard. The Gradall stripping was directed by the maps of surface finds, particularly the 1997 work, figure 8. In the area where virtually every square had yielded brick, there was no sign of masonry structures

The feature at 1020 feet was an irregular hole, five feet by about three feet. It was interpreted as a root mold.

At 990 feet was a hole with one straight edge but the other sides irregular. It appeared to be a tree fall (figure 11). Contents of this feature included burnt coal, refined white earthenware, and a soft-drink bottle, all of which indicate deposition later than the Nathan Williams occupancy. Such items as dark-glazed red earthenware could have been that early.

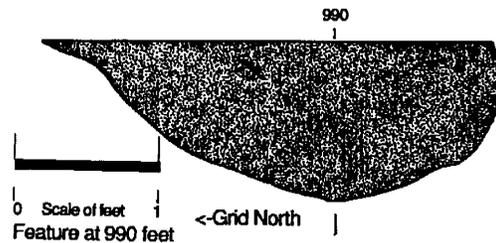


Figure 12

North-south profile through the feature at 990 feet on the grid

The contents of this pit are a secondary deposit, including some glass fragments with surface abrasion and a wide variety of pieces, never many of the same ware. Barbed wire and brown bottle glass indicate a relatively recent date for the final closure of this hole.

There were three postmolds or planting holes on ten-foot centers around 950 feet on the grid. Adjacent was another hole, apparently a planting hole. It contained burned clay, and there was a burned post mold about a foot away. This may be remains of a planting location, such as bean poles in an area where other crops requiring large holes would have been planted.

Some features, like the cluster around 840 feet on the grid, probably are related to planting activities, such as orchards. This cluster consisted of an irregular hole, 22 inches by 15 inches. About six feet away was a cluster of small stake or planting holes, while another foot-square amorphous stain was a little over four feet away.

These features are consistent with a propped-up orchard tree.

While manmade, these features do not appear to be related to the

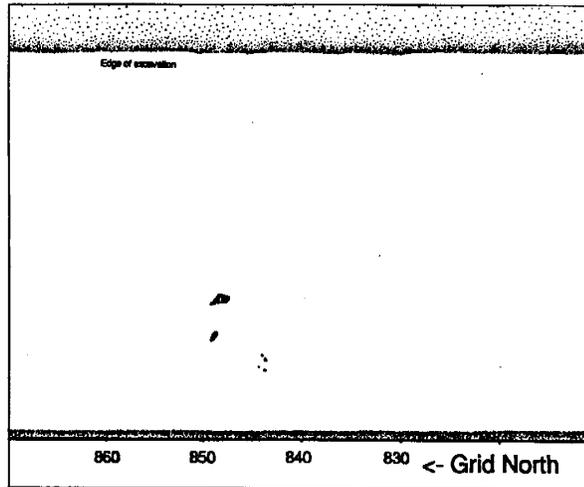


Figure 13

Other feature locations in the north, 800 to 900 feet on the grid

Nathan Williams period. Farther south along the line, we tested some of the cultural features to determine their origins.

Features were more numerous as we moved southward, but they also appeared to be newer.

At 650 feet on the grid, there was a cluster of three molds, five feet apart and about a foot in diameter. These molds were half a foot deep.

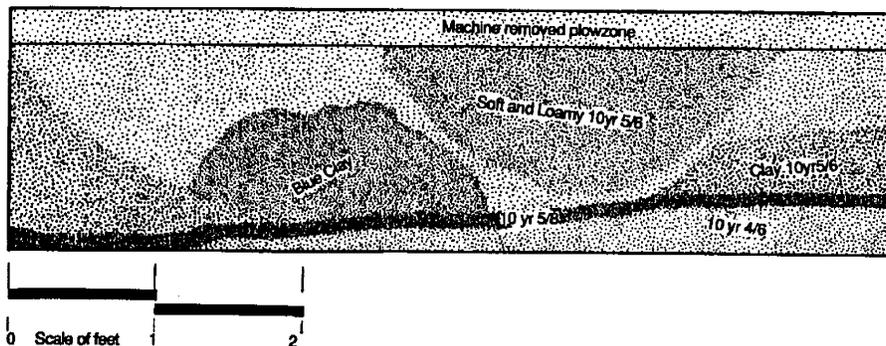


Figure 14

East-west section through the feature at 603.5 feet along the grid.

One of several linear features, probable deep plowscars, terminated about 630 feet. This v-bottom shape indicates the use of a deep plow with a chisel point, rather than a mouldboard plow that normally is employed for cultivation.

Most complex of the apparently agricultural features was located at about 600 feet on the grid (figures 14 and 15). This feature contained a soft loamy center section, surrounded by disturbances indicating a planting activity. The corners of the feature were marked by postmolds smaller than a foot in diameter, in a square pattern about two and a half feet on a side. Because it had so many components, this feature was selected for exploration by intensive excavation.

What emerged was a planting hole with corner posts, possibly a "box" to protect the tree from livestock. The other nearby apparent planting holes did not include this feature. The concentration of features in this area apparently was part of an orchard.

The last patch of features was found at the extreme south end of the



Plate 6

Gradalls were used in both projects to uncover features. This was the Phase III cut being opened.



Plate 7

Feature at 600 feet, opened to 20 inches

project area. Like the other stripped areas, this part of the site was selected for investigation on the basis of raw artifact counts. A shallow pipe trench, with the pipe still in place, crossed the trench (Figure 15).

A ditch, between 330 and 340 feet, appeared to be a domestic boundary, with a series of post molds and apparent planting holes. The ditch turned a corner and tapered away to the southward. A circle of stake molds and a row of small features combined to give the cumulative impression of a boundary line that had been maintained by a sequence of driven posts and plantings.

Without foundations, trash pits, wells, privies, or other traditional archaeological interpretive features, the physical trail to Nathan Williams was obscure. Without any certain definition of this origins, or any of his subsequent history, his documentary history is weak. Yet we know that he lived, prospered, failed, and died.

5. TALKING BRICKS AND BABBLING BOTTLES

*Detailed analysis of artifacts
from the site provided details
about the lives of its former occupants.*

Gross analysis of surface-collected artifacts identified at least three distinct activity areas, one of which was the probable Nathan Williams site between 850 and 1000 feet along the base line (Figure 9). This area contains the highest elevation of the property. This was the same area where the first survey identified an apparent line of early artifacts east of the road.

Concentration of bricks at the north end of the site could be identified as the pulverized remains of the chimney to the Williams house. Because of their probable association with the house, the bricks received special scrutiny.

Between 600 and 700 feet was a smaller concentration. The materials here consisted of a sparse scattering of the earlier materials found on the north end.

The other artifact concentration appeared south of 400 feet. The materials here were distinctly newer.

The driveway is identified as the remanant a cart road, shown by Beers, that served the property before the present McKee Road was opened. Nathan Williams' house apparently faced this road.

The Delaware State Museums accession number is 97.28. Artifacts are catalogued from the surface survey in terms of the base line. Each ten-foot increment along the line was staked, and in some cases the surface collection was as much as four ten-foot squares wide, numbered 0 to 3. Thus an artifact labelled 97.28.640.3 would be from the unit beginning at 640 on the base line, and the fourth unit to the east. For purposes of discussing distributions, only the distance along the line is given.

PROBABLE WILLIAMS BRICKS

The brick collection consists entirely of country bricks, mostly overfired or other kinds of wasters. Such bricks would commonly be found during the eighteenth century in the neighborhood of brick clamps. Only the two-inch (thickness) dimension survived on any of the samples. Presence of a

Surface Collected Brickbat Analysis	
<i>Surviving Unit Dimension(s)</i>	<i>Comments and Finish</i>
900.3.....2"	Handmade, hard fired grey
930.....	Handmade, glazed, dark red
930.1.....2"	Handmade, hard fired grey
950.....1.5"	Handmade, hard fired, dark red
950.....	Very soft salmon, no finish
960.....	Handmade, dark red, glazed
960.1.....2"	Handmade, glazed salmon
960.1.....	Very hard, no surface, grey
970.....	Handmade, dark red
980.....	Handmade, dark grey
990.....2"	Handmade blue glazed voussoir
990.1.....	Handmade, overfired, sand finish

voussoir indicates a level of refinement above the ordinary.

If this brick collection were found without accompanying artifacts, on an undocumented site, the obvious conclusion would be that it was an eighteenth-century context, related to construction of a building with some architectural refinement.

However, since all the bricks were rejects, it is more logical to conclude that this site's occupants were salvaging bricks from an old clamp. Most likely this clamp was very near, also on the Loockerman property. There are several patches of Fallsington soil, which could contain brick clay, nearby, including the woods immediately to the east.

Fallsington soils are likely to have contained brickmaking sites. The two nearest brickyards shown on the 1868 Beers *Atlas* were on Fallsington soils, east of the main road, now Route 13.

DOMESTIC ARTIFACTS

Early artifacts on the site included a white clay bit-end pipe stem fragment with a 6/64" bore diameter. This fragment was found in the midst of the supposed house site, at unit 970.2. A single pipestem, especially a bit end, is no indicator of age, but stems of this bore diameter generally were made before the middle of the eighteenth century. Bit-ends sometimes are somewhat larger in bore diameter than the internal diameter, which degrades their usefulness as measures of date. In any case, the pipestem belongs to a period before the time of Nathan Williams.

Nineteenth-century glass remains on this part of the site included a piece of a clear panelled bottle in unit 950.2 with the raised letters "SYR" surviving, probably from the word "syrup," in an

indented panel. After the middle of the nineteenth century such panel bottles were the common container for medical liquids.

All the utilitarian wares in this area of the site were red earthenwares. One sherd was covered in a brown clear glaze, with a trail of white slip. The rest of the red earthenwares with surviving glaze was black-glazed.

Refined wares from this part of the site included a white vessel with brown transfer printed decoration. All the materials in this range were produced after the "pearlware" period at the beginning of the nineteenth century (i.e., mid-century).

Just to the south, between 800 and 900 feet, the artifacts were less numerous and there were fewer features. All the brickbats with identifiable surfaces were from handmade bricks, and were predominantly overfired.

Bottle glass in this area included some identifiable pieces. An aqua Rumford baking powder bottle finish was the only marked piece in this group (870). A fragment of a thick dark green (black in reflected light) wine bottle appears to be from a cylindrical vessel (840).

A grey saltglaze vessel fragment

Surface Collected Brickbat Analysis	
<i>Surviving Unit</i>	<i>Comments and Dimension(s) Finish</i>
800.2.....	Hard grey, overfired
800.3.....	Dark red, very hard, with pebbles
820.3.....	Handmade, grey, overfired
820.3.....	Handmade red, sandy black glaze
840.2.....2"	Handmade, grey & red, blue glaze

exhibited a nearly black smooth interior glaze (890.1). American-made utilitarian stonewares of the nineteenth century were frequently dark glazed on the inside.

The only button was a four-hole white ceramic specimen (840.3). There was a plain pearlware sherd (830), apparently from a fairly thin vessel. Another piece of pearlware was polychrome decorated (850), typical of the early nineteenth century.

These remains are consistent with a middle nineteenth-century house site, occupied during the period when sketch maps show a house in this vicinity.

FEATURE AT 990 FEET

The only feature on the site to yield a significant collection of artifacts was an irregular pit at about 990 feet. The materials in this pit appeared to be a secondary deposit, since there were no large fragments of vessels.

Materials in the feature included some coal, some clinker, cut nails, and brick fragments. There was some delicately printed white earthenware and a sherd from a thick black-glazed

red earthenware vessel. There was a small white milk glass button and some purple sponged white earthenware.

While the feature is not clearly twentieth-century, its contents apparently represent yard trash accidentally buried during an operation that probably was the planting of a tree. The later materials in this pit indicate that the yard was occupied late into the nineteenth century, which is consistent with the duHamel survey evidence (figure 5) that shows a house here in 1882.

MINOR CONCENTRATION

Between 700 and 800 feet along the line, there was a small concentration of gross artifact count. Most of the material was black-glazed red earthenware, oyster shells, and bricks.

This may be an outlying element of a site, but there was no particular evidence of a structure. It is near enough, and similar in content, to classify it as part of the Williams toft site.

UNSTRATIFIED

Among the unstratified materials are two categories that have nothing whatever to do with the site's history. First of these categories are the roadside clutter, or litter. Whenever these were found during the surface collection, they were silently discarded and ignored. Some of the materials in the collection, of course, could be unrecognized roadside litter. Of course, it could be argued that litterbuggery of the roadside is a human activity and therefore worthy of documentation. We do not choose to follow that line of reasoning.

More significant is the manuring spread that is expected on any site

Surface Collected Brickbat Analysis		
<i>Unit</i>	<i>Surviving Dimension(s)</i>	<i>Comments and Finish</i>
700.2.....		Overfired, black, no glaze
710.....		Salmon, no finish surviving
720.2.....		Overfired, dark red, glaze one face
740.3.....		Overfired, dark red, no surfaces
760.....		Salmon, no finish surviving
760.3.....	2"	Overfired glaze two faces, dark red
780.3.....	2"	Overfired, dark red, no glaze
790.....		Salmon, no finish surviving



Plate 8

Jimi Ale sets the stakes along the edge of the field to mark units for the surface collection.

owned by scientifically-oriented farmers. This property did not come into such hands until mid-century, but there was plenty of material that could be attributed to manuring. Most prominent among these materials will be coal and clinker, which were used to lighten clay soils.

The most interesting artifacts, according to archaeological folklore, always are found without context. In the "general surface" bags were examples of shell-edged pearlware, annular wares, and many refined white earthenwares. These materials indicate that a house here was occupied during the early years of the nineteenth

century, and that fine English china was being used, possibly second-hand.

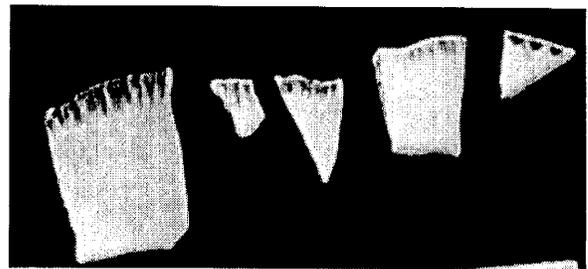


Plate 9

Shell edged pearlware found on the site reflects a wide date range for this material.

6. WHAT WE LEARNED

*The story of Nathan Williams
defies stereotypes while
details of his life defy detection.*

By all accounts, Nathan Williams was an unusual person. He was a person identified as a literate free black who filed a marriage bond at a time when few people of his race observed this legal nicety. The existence of a marriage bond speaks of money and pretense to financial stability. He very nearly became a landowner, and clearly commanded respect from his wealthy white landlord.

Unfortunately, we cannot know how usual or unusual he was, because the demographics of such people have not been studied in any detail. There were other educated and well-off free black families in antebellum Delaware, notably the Gibbs clan of the Camden area.

Without detailed studies, our understanding of these people must necessarily be hidden behind a veil of stereotypes. For example, the negative impact of the 1829 free education act has been largely ignored in the popular mind in the shadow of its undeniable positive impact on the white population.

Beneficial events frequently have downsides, affecting the most vulnerable people at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. This effect was noted in Wilmington, where a sizable free black population of tradesmen existed before the Civil War, only to disappear during the postwar years when the black population in general should have been benefitting from emancipation (L. Heite 1987: 198, 205, 208).

The family of Mrs. Williams was identified as a "mulatto" in the context of central Delaware's convoluted racial distinctions. They clearly associated with the Indian-descended component of the mulatto population. Her parents probably were David (c. 1758 - 1847) and Rachel (c.1770 - 1845) Hutt.

The Hutts are among the fifteen identified "mulatto" taxable households listed in the 1819 assessment of Little Creek Hundred (page 17, above). Of those fifteen, eleven are known from genealogies to belong to the Indian descended community.

From a social point of view, in the context of the day, the couple possessed a relatively high status, in spite of the fact that her associates might have considered that she had married downscale racially, even though her husband was literate. We do not know if literacy conferred status within the nonwhite community.

RESEARCH METHODS

The bottom-up approach to site documentation and interpretation was rigorously tested at the Nathan Williams site. In a good-faith effort to fairly represent each person associated with the property under study, special documentary-research tactics must sometimes be employed.

Wealthy, literate and politically active white people are easy to identify and describe because they leave a

copious documentary trail in the public and private records.

Records of poor, illiterate, and disfranchised people are different. The usual well-indexed sources are mostly silent. Instead, poor people will be found in the records of the trustees of the poor, or the petty criminal courts. The hunt for Nathan Williams involved reading a half-century's poorhouse records, combing the Common Pleas dockets, and looking for clues in the tax records.

Without more specific records of the man himself, the only way to flesh out the story of Nathan Williams was to study the community in which he lived. Though spotty, the picture effectively places the man in history. From this experience, it became obvious to the author that Delaware needs a context study of the various nonwhite ethnic groups that developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

TENANCY AS A RESEARCH TOPIC

Because history is written by winners of wars and published by dominant populations, losers and lower castes seldom are chronicled from their own point of view. Recent archaeological studies of tenant sites in Delaware are a case in point; so many of these studies concern the physical remains and the owners, but not the occupants.

Delaware's historic preservation program has attempted to address tenant issues in a context prepared by University of Delaware scholars. The context drew upon court, probate, insurance, and poorhouse records in an effort to formulate a profile of agricultural tenants in the state (Siders, Herman, Ames, Marth, Lanier, Watson, Bellingrath, VanDolsen, Bashman and Chase 1991).

Studies of non-landowners can be complicated in a society where ownership of land was the basis for measuring relative wealth. Social status is another difficult subject where the landless classes are concerned. In Kent County the leading families could be identified because they dwelt in two-story brick houses and married one another. They were white; if they weren't genetically white, nearly everyone treated them as if they were.

The vast majority (two-thirds in Little Creek Hundred) of people on the tax assessment were not listed with enough land to support a family. In some localities, a 20-acre holding was considered a "smallholder" farm that required outside employment of the occupant family. Under this definition, Nathan Williams would have needed to work, probably as a laborer on another farmer's land. Delaware assessors considered a parcel of less than ten acres to be a "lot" rather than acreage (Siders *et al.* 1991:xiii).

Many of these people were "poor white" families who did not marry people who lived in two-story brick houses, or they belonged to the Indian-descended colored population, who married only among themselves. A few taxable households were headed by free negroes, who represented the bottom rung of the traditional class ladder.

Archaeological reports on tenant-occupied historic sites have typically been written from the top down. Much of the historical background research has been concerned with the property owner, while the physical evidence related mostly to the tenants, who not infrequently were unidentified. A quick review of the descriptions of tenants recent published tenant sites will convey something of the scope of this issue.

The Grant Tenancy site report (Taylor, Thompson, Snyder and Gardner 1987) dwelt at length on the site owners, but never named a single tenant. The authors did, however, ascertain that the material possessions of the tenant were on a par with those of certain landowners.

In contrast, studies of the Cazier gatehouse residence near Glasgow included detailed biographical data on the tenant families, some of whom were interviewed for the report (Hoseth, Catts, and Tinsman 1994). Studies of the tenants in this case were made relatively easy by the site's recent date and the survival of a rural community that included the tenant family.

Also near Glasgow, the Thomas Williams site report interpreted both owner-occupants and tenants in relatively equal biographical detail (Catts and Custer 1990).

William Eager was the owner-occupant of his Little Creek Hundred homestead from 1866 to 1877, but the house was occupied for a half-century, usually by tenants. All the site occupants, both owner and tenant, were discussed in a mere seven pages of the report (Gretler, Bachman, Custer, and Jamison 1991). They were, however, identified by name even though they were presented without biographical details.

At structure A on Patterson Lane near Christiana, African-American tenant David Walmsley is not only identified, but his artifacts are related to activities of his family. Nearby, the Heisler tenancy was identified by the name of its owner, and none of the tenants were identified (Catts, Hodny and Custer 1989: 217-224). In these two examples there was an attempt to interpret the lives of the tenants, rather

than merely catalogue their belongings. However, the background research was not sufficient to determine who lived on the sites through the years.

None of these reports of tenant sites are primarily about the tenants, though some contain more or less than others about the people who created the sites. The reports reflect a definite trend toward dealing more fully with the tenants, however.

SURVEY INTENSITY AND RESULTS

This site was studied once before, at the "location and identification" level, which means that there are two independent bodies of archaeological information. Comparison of these two bodies of data might enable us to measure the relative effectiveness of more intense research methods that were employed the second time.

The 1992 survey, which was not tightly controlled as the 1997 survey, yielded similar materials (Heite and Blume 1995: 104-106). Like the later survey, the 1992 investigations yielded a few very early pieces, including dark beverage bottle fragments, that belong to a period before the time of Nathan Williams. Shell edged pearlware, for example, should have been long out of style when Williams arrived, and the beverage bottle material includes eighteenth-century types. These may have been second-hand items of little value that could have been obtained easily by poor households.

While features were found below the plowzone during both projects, none could be unequivocally attributed to the Nathan Williams period on the basis of artifact content. The surface material from both campaigns included material from the Williams period as well as earlier and later material.

Williams probably occupied a site that was already cleared, if not already developed. On the USGS topographic map (figure 3, page 9) the fifty-foot contour line on the map almost precisely outlines the Williams eleven acres. This elevated site could have attracted the earlier tenants on the Loockerman estate, for permanent or temporary sites. The "cart road" that is now the driveway served at least two households before McKee Road was opened.

At the outset, the investigators accepted the proposition that the house site itself was very likely to have been destroyed by widening McKee Road during the twentieth century. The narrow line of artifacts from the original surface collection was interpreted as the expected buildup of artifacts from a swept yard. As it developed the larger scope of the second surface survey revealed a distribution pattern of artifacts that had escaped yard sweeping.

Since many important sites are found in less than pristine condition, it is important to consider what can be done with whatever remains. If a site is otherwise significant, the archaeological aspects may be less critical to the mix of attributes that make up significance.

THIS PROPERTY TYPE

The homesite of an educated free black in the antebellum period is an uncommon property type in the archaeological literature. Only one has been previously identified in the Middle Atlantic slave states.

Economic Analysis of the Benjamin Banneker Site (1737-1806) is the nearest comparison. Banneker was

another educated landowning black person whose association with well-off white people can be documented (Peters 1986). In 1755, free black landholders represented less than two percent of the entire Maryland population. A similar situation is reflected in a Delaware tax list of 1778 (page 16, above).

Like Williams, it appears that Banneker was assisted by Quaker abolitionists and educators, and the artifacts from his site indicate a comfortable middling material environment, including refined English tablewares. The similarities to the later Williams site are unavoidable, but two sites do not constitute a property type that can be interpreted and studied in depth.

SIGNIFICANCE

At first blush, it would appear that a badly-truncated (but potentially significant) site lacks the integrity to qualify for eligibility under criterion D. Upon reflection, this project offered an opportunity to examine the potential rewards of studying such a site.

Documentary research is a necessary accompaniment of any cultural resource project. In the course of such research, a site's significant associations the other criteria might come to light. This happened at the Nathan Williams house site. The owner's literacy, his involvement with the people who were trying to school colored people at a time when such education was illegal or at least frowned upon, gives a clue to an undocumented phase of Delaware educational history.

The artifacts, and accompanying records, have been conveyed to the Delaware State Museums.

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430	0		1 coal	
440	0			no artifacts
450	0			no artifacts
460	0	1 transfer-printed pearlware		
470	0		1 coal	
480	0			no artifacts
490	0			no artifacts
400	1		1 coal	
410	1		1 coal	
420	1			no artifacts
430	1			no artifacts
440	1			no artifacts
450	1		1 coal	
460	1			no artifacts
470	1		1 coal	
480	1			no artifacts
490	1		2 slag	
500	0			no artifacts
510	0	1 plain European porcelain		
520	0			no artifacts
530	0			no artifacts
540	0		1 brick	
550	0			no artifacts
560	0		1 slag	
570	0		1 coal	
580	0			no artifacts
590	0	1 glazed brick		
500	1		2 slag 2 coal	
510	1		1 slate clinker	
520	1		2 coal	
530	1		7 coal	
540	1			no artifacts
550	1	1 modern clear vessel glass		
560	1			no artifacts
570	1		1 weathered shell 2 coal	
580	1		1 coal	
590	1		1 coal	
500	2		3 coal	
510	2		1 weathered shell	
520	2		1 coal	
530	2		1 coal	
540	2		1 coal	
550	2			no artifacts
560	2			no artifacts

570	2			no artifacts
580	2		1 weathered shell	
590	2			no artifacts
600	0	1 brown stoneware basal sherd 1 porcelain	4 coal 1 shell	
610	0	1 hard rubber button	1 coal	
620	0	2 brick	1 brown bottle glass 2 slag 2 coal 1 shell	
630	0	1 blue enamelled whiteware		
640	0	1 brick		
650	0		1 coal	
660	0			no artifacts
670	0			no artifacts
680	0			no artifacts
690	0		1 coal	
600	1		1 coal	
610	1	1 whiteware basal sherd	1 coal	
620	1		1 coal	
630	1	1 whiteware sherd 1 clear bottle glass	1 coal	
640	1		4 coal	
650	1		1 coal 1 brick 1 shell	
660	1		2 coal 2 shell	
670	1	1 amethyst pressed glass 1 aqua bottle glass 1 aqua panelled bottle sherd	1 coal	
680	1		1 coal	
690	1	1 oyster shell hinge	1 clinker	
610	2	1 green bottle glass	1 shell 1 clinker 2 bricks 1 coal	
620	2		1 coal	
630	2		1 coal	
640	2		1 coal	
650	2	1 white refined earthenware	1 shell	
660	2	1 pearlware basal sherd 1 sandstone fragment	1 brick 1 slate clinker 1 coal	
670	2	1 sandstone fragment 2 brick		
690	2		1 slag 1 shell	
600	3	1 white refined earthenware		
610	3			no artifacts
620	3			no artifacts
630	3		4 coal	