

CHAPTER 6

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SURVEY OVERVIEW

Phase I and II archaeological field investigations were conducted within the Puncheon Run Connector project corridor at various times between September 1994 and May 1995. For ease of reference and operation, the project corridor was divided into five segments as follows: **Area A** - the area adjacent to and southeast of U.S. Route 13 between Webbs Lane and (South) State Street (stations 331+14.5 to 353+50); **Area B** - the section of the project corridor extending from South State Street to the east bank of the St. Jones River (stations 354+90 to 397+00); **Area C** - the section of the project corridor extending from the east bank of the St. Jones River to U.S. Route 113 (stations 393+00 to 422+50); **Area D** - the section of the project corridor extending from U.S. Route 113 to State Route 1 (stations 423+50 to 440+00); and **Area E** - the easternmost section of the project corridor lying to the east of State Route 1 (443+00 to 460+50) (Figures 6.1-6.8; Plates 6.1-6.8).

The following paragraphs present a combined overall summary of the Phase I and II survey investigations proceeding from west to east along the project corridor. A more detailed description and assessment of the Puncheon Run Site, the Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site, the Dawson House Site, the Nixon Mill Site and various lesser historic sites are given in Chapters 7 through 12 below. In all, a total of 890 shovel tests and 86 one-meter-square excavation units were excavated in Areas A through E during the Phase I and II surveys. A total of 27,738 prehistoric and historic artifacts were recovered. Stratigraphic data and basic information on cultural materials recovered from these excavations are summarized in Appendices A and B.

A. Area A [stations 331+14.5 to 353+50] (Figure 6.1a-b; Plate 6.1)

The Phase I field survey involved the excavation of a total of 114 shovel tests (ST#s 1-114) spaced for the most part at 30-meter intervals. The testing interval was narrowed to 15 meters near the intersection of U.S. Route 13 and South State Street, and also close to the South State Street crossing of Puncheon Run, to explore the potential for early historic occupation in this prime location. A total of 142 artifacts were recovered from this area during the Phase I survey. A scatter of mid- to late 18th-century artifacts was recovered from the area northwest of station 349+00 within the footprint of a proposed stormwater retention basin. This artifact assemblage was generally characteristic of a domestic site, although no structural remains were identified. The artifacts recovered included sherds of white salt-glazed stoneware and redware and fragments of vessel glass.



Plate 6.1. General view of Area A looking north showing a well-manicured grassy field; field crew conducting subsurface testing in the background (Photographer: Frank Dunsmore, September 1994) [HRI Neg. 94015/4-2].

Phase II testing and documentary research were concentrated on the area where 18th-century materials were found, which was subsequently identified as the Dawson House Site [7K-C-414] (see below, Chapter 10). Phase II field investigations involved the excavation of a total of 24 shovel tests (ST#s 115-138) and 12 excavation units (EU#s 1-12). These additional tests were deployed both within and beyond the project limits in order to delimit the site boundaries and fully test the site's archaeological integrity. A total of 2,325 artifacts were recovered from the Phase II survey excavations.

B. Area B [stations 354+90 to 397+00] (Figures 6.2a-b and 6.3a-b; Plates 6.2 and 6.3)

The entire Area B segment of the project corridor falls within an extensive area of previously documented prehistoric occupation that has been assigned the site number 7K-C-51 and is here referred to as the Puncheon Run Site. The Phase I field survey involved the excavation of a total of 312 shovel tests (ST#s 1-312) spaced for the most part at 30-meter intervals across the project corridor. The testing interval was narrowed to 15 meters between stations 365+00 and 393+00 to explore the perceived high potential for evidence of both prehistoric and historic activity on the peninsula on the north side of the confluence of Puncheon Run and the St. Jones River. As a result of the Phase I field investigations, four prehistoric loci and one historic site (contained within Locus 1) were identified within the boundaries of 7K-C-51, while an additional historic resource, the Nixon Mill Site [7K-C-413], was noted immediately to the south, just outside the Puncheon Run Connector project limits (see below, Chapters 7 and 11). A total of 634 prehistoric and historic artifacts were recovered from the Phase I Survey.

Phase II testing was chiefly concentrated around the identified prehistoric activity loci and entailed the excavation of a total of 186 shovel tests (ST#s 313-499) and 56 one-meter-square excavation units (EU#s 1-56). These additional tests were deployed both inside and outside the project limits in order to delimit the Puncheon Run Site and its constituent loci in the project vicinity and to fully assess the cultural stratigraphic sequence. A total of 6,564 prehistoric and historic artifacts were recovered from the Phase II survey. Limited clearing, mapping and archival study was also conducted for the Nixon Mill Site as part of the Phase II investigations.

C. Area C [stations 397+50 to 422+00] (Figures 6.4 and 6.5; Plates 6.4-6.6)

A total of 215 shovel tests pits (ST#s 1-215) were excavated within Area C during the Phase I field investigations. This testing showed that the wooded area on the rim of the bluff overlooking the St. Jones River, between stations 397+50 and 399+50, had never been plowed and contained well developed and well preserved cultural stratigraphy. The remainder of this segment, from station 399+50 eastwards to U.S. Route 113, mostly exhibited a thin plowzone, from four to six inches thick, overlying a culturally sterile subsoil.



Plate 6.2. General view of Area B, Locus 1, looking east showing a grassy field and a woodlot in the background (Photographer: Frank Dunsmore, December 1994) [HRI Neg. 94015/30-3].



Plate 6.3. General view of Area B, Locus 3, looking southwest showing field crew conducting subsurface testing in the foreground (Photographer: Frank Dunsmore, December 1994) [HRI Neg. 94015/30-6].

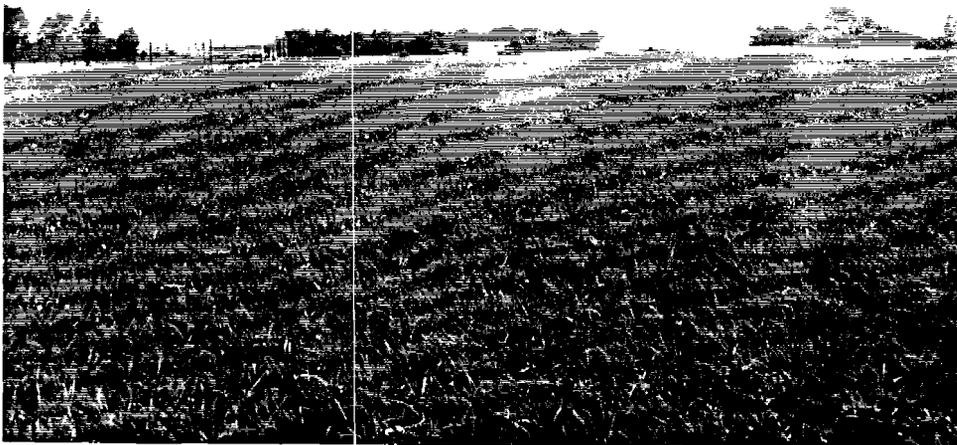


Plate 6.4. General view of Area C looking east from the eastern end of the apple orchard showing a well-manicured grassy field; the small building in the background is "Uncle Henry's" produce stand (Photographer: Frank Dunsmore, August 1994) [HRI Neg. 94015/1-4].



Plate 6.5. General view of Area C looking northeast showing field crew conducting subsurface testing (Photographer: Frank Dunsmore, August 1994) [HRI Neg. 94015/1-8].



Plate 6.6. General view of Area C looking east showing heavily overgrown apple orchard along Transect 4 (Photographer: Frank Dunsmore, November 1994) [HRI Neg. 94015/13-37].

The Phase II field investigations within Area C entailed additional shovel testing and unit excavation in two areas where, based on the results of the Phase I fieldwork, potentially important archaeological resources were suspected. Eighteen shovel tests (ST#s 300-317) and two one-meter-square excavation units (EU#s 1 and 2) were located along the western frontage of U.S. Route 113, where historic resources were anticipated. Thirty-one shovel tests (ST#s 400-430) and 28 one-meter-square excavation units (EU#s 3-30) were placed along the bluffs overlooking the St. Jones River, where the Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site [7K-C-411] was identified and delineated. The Phase I and II field investigations thus noted various different sites within Area C: the Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site [7K-C-411]; two historic building foundations; and several surface middens containing materials ranging in date from 1860 to 1960. A total of 3,590 artifacts were recovered from Area C.

The bulk of the prehistoric cultural materials came from the Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site, which extends from the river at station 397+50 to station 403+50. Within the area of this site, two surface scatters of historic materials was noted near the edge of the bluff. One appeared to date from the first quarter of this century and included a number of equine salt feeders, samples of which were given to the Delaware State Museum and the Delaware Agricultural Museum and Village. The second scatter contained materials of mostly late 19th-century date. Neither scatter was extensive or considered to be significant. The Hickory Bluff Prehistoric Site is discussed in greater detail in Chapters 8 and 9.

No significant historic or prehistoric resources were encountered in the portion of Area C between stations 403+50 and 417+00. A 30-meter testing interval was employed for most of the shovel tests excavated in this area. This area lay within the area that was covered by a former apple orchard.

From a review of the files of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (DSHPO) and historic maps of the area, the remaining section of Area C, between stations 417+00 and 422+00, was thought to contain the sites of two houses and an associated farm complex. These structures were identified in the DSHPO files as sites K1003 and K1004. The original testing interval failed to produce conclusive evidence of the presence of these sites. Further cartographic analysis and an examination of the aerial photographs directed additional shovel testing to identify the sites of two basements thought to be sites K1003 and K1004 (see below, Chapter 12).

D. Area D [stations 423+50 to 440+00] (Figures 6.6 and 6.7; Plate 6.7)

A total of 72 shovel tests (ST# 1-72) were excavated in this area during Phase I field investigations, employing mostly a 30-meter testing interval. On the adjacent property to the south, the University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research (UDCAR) conducted Phase I and II level surveys (in 1986 and 1994, respectively), locating a few isolated cultural materials, but not encountering any resources significant enough to warrant further investigation or National



Plate 6.7. General view of Area D looking east showing heavily overgrown apple orchard along Transect 2 (Photographer: Frank Dunsmore, September 1994) [HRI Neg. 94015/6-2].



Plate 6.8. General view of Area E looking north showing the grassy shoulder along the east side of northbound State Route 1 with an overgrown evergreen tree farm on the right (Photographer: Frank Dunsmore, September 1994) [HRI Neg. 94015/4-25].

Register listing (Custer et al. 1986a; Grettler et al. 1991; Riley et al. 1994). The testing interval was tightened within the right-of-way adjacent to the locations where UDCAR found artifacts. However, the current survey program found no evidence for significant historic or prehistoric resources in Area D.

E. Area E [stations 443+00 to 460+50] (Figure 6.8; Plate 6.8)

A total of 56 shovel tests (ST# 1-56) were excavated in Area E during Phase I field investigations, using mostly a 30-meter testing interval. The testing interval was narrowed on both sides of the stream to explore the possibility of prehistoric occupation. No significant historic or prehistoric resources were encountered in this area.