

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL HISTORY

The historic archaeological investigations of the proposed Route 7 South Corridor can be used to address questions dealing with the diachronic and synchronic development of regional historic settlement patterns, community and social growth, and changes in land use. Like the study of the Route 7 North Corridor (Catts, Shaffer and Custer 1986), Route 7 South Corridor can be viewed as a cultural transect that cross-cuts the Upper Coastal Plain, allowing researchers to investigate various social and environmental settings within a single project area. A comparison of the results of the Route 7 North research with the Route 7 South research is useful because each project cross-cuts different contiguous environmental zones. Additionally, the Route 7 South Corridor can be viewed as a transect extending from decidedly "urban" locations near Christiana Bridge to more rural settings located to the south in New Castle Hundred.

The concept of nodal points used in the study of Route 7 North (Catts, Shaffer, and Custer 1986) can also be applied here. As defined by Hickman (1977:96), a nodal point is a location which, relative to the surrounding region, is the scene of frequent social interactions of various kinds. Christiana Bridge was clearly the primary nodal point in the Route 7 South Corridor and functioned as such for much of the eighteenth and part of the nineteenth centuries. The village was a major crossroads town, and a major transshipment center for regional produce. Thus, Christiana Bridge was not just a local nodal point, but it was a

significant regional nodal point as well.

Another group of nodal points not previously investigated by the Route 7 North project, or any other New Castle County archaeological studies, are the landings located on the major drainages around Christiana Bridge. These include Patterson's Landing and Read's Landing, both located near the confluence of Eagle Run and the Christina River, Lewden's Hay Landing on the south side of the Christina, the numerous wharves and stores located in Christiana Bridge itself, and, to the north on the White Clay Creek, White Clay Creek Landing, which is located at the Hale-Burns House. As has been noted by recent research in the Route 13 Relief Corridor (Custer, Bachman and Grettler 1986), the function of these landings, and their effect on the social and economic development of the region are little understood. They probably functioned similarly to those private landings seen in the Chesapeake and Tidewater areas of Virginia, such as Burwell's Landing near Williamsburg (Kelso 1984). As such, they were important nodal points for the community, where imported goods could be obtained, and trading, news and socializing were conducted on a daily basis. Landings are clearly a different type of nodal point than those seen on the Limestone Road survey, or even in the Ogletown survey (Coleman, Hoseth, and Custer 1987). The complex of historic sites identified at Patterson Lane attests to the local importance of landings, and the separate report on the Phase II investigations conducted on the Patterson Lane Site Complex will discuss the relationships among the Patterson and Read Landing sites and the local society and economy.

Settlement patterning in the Route 7 South Corridor was found to be similar to the dispersed farmsteads seen along Route 7 North (Catts, Shaffer, and Custer 1986). However, there was variation over time. Based on both archival research and archaeological site location information, earlier eighteenth century farmstead and "plantation" locations in the Route 7 South Corridor did exhibit the dispersed pattern seen on Route 7 North and noted by Manning (1983) for the Inner Coastal Plain of New Jersey. But, by the nineteenth century, changes in population size, land ownership, agricultural practices, and the growth of Christiana Bridge, caused settlement pattern changes. Considerably more small landholdings appeared, with many being less than 10 acres in size. Such properties are clearly too small for more than just subsistence farming and it is likely that the occupants were employed in non-agricultural pursuits, as artisans, merchants, or craftsmen. These smaller holdings are very apparent around Christiana Bridge and began to appear near the end of the eighteenth century. They are not actually located in the town itself, but are found in outlying areas, and are probably indicative of the growth of Christiana Bridge as a merchantile and commercial center. A similar pattern of the growth of small landholdings was identified along Route 7 North in the vicinity of Mermaid Tavern (Catts, Shaffer, and Custer 1986:66), and in the hamlet of Ogletown (Coleman, Hoseth, and Custer 1987). Like Christiana Bridge, but on a smaller scale, both Mermaid Tavern and Ogletown were related to commercial operations, such as taverns, stores, and blacksmith shops.

In more rural locations in the project area, such as in New Castle Hundred south of the Christina River, settlement pattern varied little from the established dispersed farmsteads of the eighteenth century. The area continued to remain agricultural and rural, and houselot locations seemed to be less environmentally determined than in the Piedmont. That is to say, houses and structures could be placed just about anywhere on the flat Coastal Plain. In these areas, as in the Inner Coastal Plain of New Jersey (Manning 1983), farm complexes could be located anywhere from 100 to 800 feet from the road. Silver Hill Farm, Pigeon Run Farm, and the McMullin Farm are representative of this pattern.

A topic related to the settlement pattern of the project area is that of landscape changes over time. Herman (1984:5) has found that, in southern New Castle County, a major period of re-building occurred from about 1820 to the Civil War. This was caused by over-population, migration, poor agricultural practices, and transportation changes. During this period, the man-made landscape of the southern portion of the county was considerably reworked, as landowners acquired abandoned and overworked properties and incorporated them into their own holdings. Herman notes that no farm was left unaffected by these changes.

Similar activities appear to have occurred at the same period of time around Christiana Bridge. Archaeological evidence, deed records, and Orphans Court records indicate that, in the first half of the nineteenth century, there were some major changes in the local landscape. These changes ranged from

obvious physical manipulations of the landscape, such as the altering of the course of the Christina River in the mid-1820s, to less subtle changes in fencelines, road relocations and closings, and removal or reorientation of structures. Evidence for these changes can be seen most clearly along Patterson Lane, where small landholdings were carved out of larger, recently consolidated farms, which in turn had been made up of older parcels bought during the period of flux between 1820 and 1850. None of the fencelines or property lines on the ground today in the Patterson Lane area were present prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, a clear indication of the extent of these landscape changes. Similar evidence for the reworking of the landscape can be seen at the Upland Victorian Site and the Nowakowski Site, tracts that were divided, consolidated, and divided again, all before 1860. The archaeological investigations of the Ogletown intersection have noted the same phenomenon (Coleman, Hoseth, and Custer 1987). All of this evidence points to major social and economic changes occurring in the region in the first half of the nineteenth century, and they suggest that the effects of these changes may be observable archaeologically.

IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL PREHISTORY

The archaeological survey of the proposed Route 7 South Corridor provides some interesting data on prehistoric site distributions of the northern border of Delaware's High Coastal Plain. However, before discussing the site distribution data, it is important to describe the large scale erosion of Holocene

landscapes in the project area. Earlier surveys and studies of archaeological sites in the local area, and the adjacent Fall Line zone, noted numerous locations where extensive erosion of Holocene landscapes had taken place. A tabular summary of some of these stratigraphic data is presented by Custer and Watson (1987:84-85). In the data base reported by Custer and Watson, there are many locations along the headland bluffs of the lower White Clay Creek and Christina Rivers where Holocene soils containing artifacts less than 5000 years old are underlain by Pleistocene sands and gravels. The Green Valley site complex (Custer, Sprinkle, Flora, and Stiner 1981), which is located directly along the Fall Line is the only location where Pleistocene cobbles and gravels were exposed in the plowzone surface soils. In one interior locale, at site 7NC-D-70 (Custer, Catts, and Bachman 1982), a well developed sequence of intact Holocene and Pleistocene soils was encountered. Similar intact soil profiles were encountered during a transect survey of interior High Coastal Plain areas of the Route 896 Corridor in northwestern New Castle County (Lothrop, Custer, and DeSantis 1987). In contrast, almost all of the Route 7 South Corridor surface soils were eroded to the extent that Pleistocene age deposits were exposed in plowzone and surface soil contexts. These eroded soils were found in both interior and riverine settings. Similar highly eroded soils have also been noted during non-systematic surveys of proposed housing and commercial development projects adjacent to the proposed Route 7 South Corridor (Custer n.d.c).

The effect of this pronounced erosion in the project area is difficult to assess. In many areas with highly eroded soils, thin scatters of prehistoric artifacts were present. Some of these artifact scatters were so diffuse that they were not even registered as site locations. Examples of these types of artifact scatters were seen in the Texaco West, Moore, and Marta tracts. These artifact scatters may either be the eroded remnants of sites which once contained more artifacts or the artifact scatters are indicators of highly transitory use of interior areas.

Comparison of the interior artifact scatters of the Route 7 South Corridor to other site contexts, both within and outside of the corridor, provides some insights for their interpretations. At several locations within the corridor where pronounced erosion had taken place, there are archaeological sites where fairly large numbers of artifacts remained present on the eroded landscape. Examples include 7NC-E-50, 7NC-E-81, 7NC-E-16, 7NC-E-52, and 7NC-E-54. Therefore, erosion of surface soils does not always entail removal of large numbers of artifacts. Similar examples of dense accumulations of artifacts at sites on eroded landscapes are also known from other sites outside the corridor such as the Arrowhead Farm site (Custer, Jehle, Ward, Watson, and Mensack n.d.), the Green Valley site complex (Custer, Sprinkle, Flora, and Stiner 1981), the Hollingsworth Farm site (Thomas 1982), a series of sites on the upper Elk River (Ward 1987), and some sites in the Churchman's Marsh area (Custer 1982). Given the fact that artifact concentrations can be preserved on eroded surfaces, it is assumed that the diffuse artifact scatters found

during this survey do represent ephemeral and transient use of these areas.

Similar diffuse scatters of artifacts have been identified from some portions of the High Coastal Plain in the vicinity of the Appoquinimink River (Custer and Bachman 1986a), in coastal Kent County, Maryland (Custer, Jehle, Ward, Watson, and Mensack n.d.; Wilke and Thompson 1977), and on the St. Jones and Murderkill drainages in the Low Coastal Plain (Custer and Galasso 1983). However, the more common site distribution pattern is one of discrete artifact concentrations which can easily be identified as archaeological sites (Kavanagh 1979; Custer and Wallace 1982; Custer, Catts, and Bachman 1982; Custer and DeSantis 1986; Custer n.d.a, n.d.d). It is suggested here that the presence of diffuse lithic scatters and very ephemeral use of interior areas in the Route 7 South Corridor is a special type of prehistoric land use which is related to the presence of the very large base camps along the lower Christina River and in the Churchman's Marsh vicinity. It is hypothesized that prehistoric settlement systems of the Woodland I Period were highly focused on the major drainages and marshes. For the most part, procurement forays into the interior were oriented toward specific resource settings and these kinds of forays produced a series of discrete procurement sites and staging sites similar to the Hawthorn site (Custer and Bachman 1983) and sites of the Route 4 Corridor (Thomas 1980; Custer, Catts, and Bachman 1982; Bachman and Custer 1983). Otherwise, use of interior areas was very transitory and ephemeral. In general, most of the Route 7

South Corridor seems to have been used in this manner. This land usage is somewhat at odds with the expectations of the predictive model, which anticipated the presence of discrete procurement sites. However, the differences of observed and expected results is one of degree because even though procurement activities were more ephemeral than expected, they were still taking place in the expected locales.

Archaeological studies of the Christina River crossing are not yet complete. However, preliminary findings can be compared to expectations of the predictive model. Other than the small Marta Site (7NC-E-16) and a few lithic scatters, no prehistoric artifacts were found on the north side of the Christina River even though it is an ideal site location with springs and seeps to provide fresh water and ready access to the tidal marshes of the Christina River. The absence of a site in what is an ideal location may indicate that the previously-stated hypothesis of the "social" attractiveness of dense settlement around Churchman's Marsh is a part of prehistoric settlement location choices. Nonetheless, there does seem to be a fairly large prehistoric site, the Lewden Greene site (7NC-E-9), on the south side of the Christina River. Further testing at the Lewden Greene site should clarify its context and function within the local settlement system and the predictive model.

The Upland Victorian site (7NC-E-54) is something of a contradiction of the predictive model. This site is tentatively identified as a Woodland II micro-band base camp and its location on a minor tributary was not completely expected. However, even though Woodland I and Woodland II adaptations are similar, a

TABLE 14

SUMMARY OF SITES AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Site	Level of Study	Recommendations
Texaco East (7NC-E-81)	Phase I and II	No further work
Larson (7NC-E-50)	Phase I and II	No further work
African Union Methodist Church	Phase I and II	No further work
7NC-E-32	Phase I	No further work
St. Francis Hospital	Phase I and II	No further work
Lewden Greene (7NC-E-9)	Phase I	Intensive Phase II recommended
Patterson Lane Complex	Phase I	Intensive Phase II recommended
Marta Site (7NC-E-16)	Phase I and II	No further work*
Nowakowski Site (7NC-E-52)	Phase I and II	No further work
Upland Victorian (7NC-E-54)	Phase I and II	No further work

* - Not in ROW due to alignment shift

breakdown of the intensive focus on riverine areas and tidal marshes has been noted for the upper Delmarva Peninsula during Woodland II times (Stewart, Hummer, and Custer 1986). The Upland Victorian Site may be representative of this trend as are sites 7NC-E-6B (Custer 1982) and 7NC-E-42 (Custer and Watson 1985) in the Churchman's Marsh area.

To develop a regional perspective on site distributions, it is interesting to consider a transect model of site locations from both the Route 7 North and Route 7 South Corridors (Figure 61). The intensive Woodland I use of the riverine and stream areas is highlighted in all zones as is the similarity of Woodland I and Woodland II adaptations and settlement patterns. The previously noted differences in procurement site usage between the Piedmont and Coastal Plain are also apparent. In sum, the Route 7 South Corridor survey provides interesting insights on site distribution patterns and has helped to refine predictive models.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Phase I/II survey of the Route 7 South Corridor has identified two locales, the Patterson Lane site complex and the Lewden Greene Site (7NC-E-9), which will require intensive Phase II research to determine these sites' eligibility for the National Register. Separate reports will be issued on these intensive Phase II investigations. No further work is recommended for any other sites identified in the corridor. Table 14 summarizes the cultural resource management recommendations for each site.