

## 4.0 SURVEY RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

The architectural survey evaluated all resources within the APE built prior to 1954 using the NRHP Criteria for Evaluation (Appendix A) and the Delaware *Historic Context Master Reference and Summary* (Herman *et al.* 1989). A total of six resources was evaluated, using Delaware CRS forms (Appendix B). None of the evaluated resources within the survey are recommended as eligible for listing in the NRHP. A brief summary of each resource is provided below.

### 4.2 Overview of the APE

The School Bell Road (S.R. 1 to U.S. 40) Improvements project is located in Delaware's Upper Peninsula Zone. Historically, the area was rural and agricultural in nature, with the crossroad community of Christiana located at the northwest end of the APE.

The preliminary field view in August 2003 revealed that scattered vestiges of the area's rural and agricultural past were still present along the road, but the farmland and land holdings noted on historic maps and atlases (see Figures 3-10) are disappearing due to urban sprawl (see Figures 1 and 2). The School Bell Road (S.R. 1 to U.S. 40) Improvements project APE, like much of New Castle County, is characterized by extensive late twentieth century commercial and residential development. One nineteenth century farmhouse remains, but it is altered and has integrity problems. It is recommended as not eligible for listing in the NRHP. The majority of the remaining historic resources date from the middle of the twentieth century. Oddly, collections of Bungalow-style houses common to the first quarter of the twentieth century or large post-World War II housing developments are absent (Herman *et al.* 1989:36-37). The twentieth century resources are scattered along the highway. The Plan View for the School Bell Road (S.R. 1 to U.S. 40) Improvements project (see Figure 2) illustrates those places where resources built prior to 1954 are located.

### **4.3 Resources Along School Bell Road**

#### **4.3.1 N-14128 – Dwelling, 105 School Bell Road**

The dwelling at 105 School Bell Road is a modest Colonial Revival house (Photographs 1 and 2). The brick, two-story house is three-bays wide and two-bays deep. It features a side gable roof. The fenestration consists of eight-over-eight, double-hung wood sash windows. The central bay of the first floor features a broken pediment frontispiece surrounding a raised panel door. The house dates to 1953. It was built by its present owner and occupant Thomas Stafford (Thomas Stafford, personal communication 2003).

The house is recommended as not eligible for listing in the NRHP. To be eligible for listing, it must either be architecturally significant, associated with a historically significant event or person, or have the ability to convey important information. Architecturally, the house is an undistinguished example of Colonial Revival style residential architecture. One of the most common twentieth century architectural styles, Colonial Revival style houses were first built in approximately 1880. Variations on the style continue to be used to the present day (McAlester and McAlester 2000:324; Whiffen 1992:159-163). The style's ubiquity means that in order to be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion C for architecture, the house must be a high style example retaining all or most of the style's character-defining elements. High style examples are generally larger than their Colonial antecedents, with strictly rectangular plans of five to seven bays, balanced fenestration, doors with fanlights and sidelights (often set in tabernacle frames), a minimum of minor projections, hipped or double-pitched roofs with detailed eaves, balanced chimneys, and details such as pedimented dormers and/or Palladian windows (Carley 1994:190-191; McAlester and McAlester 2000:320; Whiffen 1992:159-160). This modest, mid-twentieth century example is not high-style and lacks nearly all of the character-defining elements. The house is what is generally described as a "Williamsburg Box," a common and undistinguished example of the Colonial Revival style.

The house is also not significant under NRHP Criteria A or B for association with an event or person. The house is not part of a residential subdivision or associated with important trends in post-World War II housing construction and suburbanization. The 1.21

ac lot never had an agricultural use, or agricultural outbuildings associated with it. Its owner, the original occupant, is not a historically significant person. It is also not significant under Criterion D for its potential to yield information important in history. Constructed in 1953, the house used common and well-documented building techniques.

#### **4.3.2 N-1598 – Ashton House, 211 School Bell Road**

The two-story Ashton House is a vernacular style, six-bays wide and two-bays deep building with a side gable roof (Photographs 3-11). It is a brick building with a stucco veneer. The facade features decorative brackets in the cornice and a projecting porch with a half-hipped roof. The front porch also has decorative spandrel panels. Foundation materials consist of brick, stone, and concrete. The fenestration consists of two-over-two, double-hung wood sash windows and various vinyl replacement windows.

A two-story, shed-roof addition to the east elevation has altered the house. Additionally, an extension of the front porch, with weatherboard siding, has further compromised the integrity of the building, as has the application of stucco. Repairs to the roof and the replacement of some of the rafters have diminished the potential for recovering dating information through dendrochronology. Furthermore, none of the visible rafters appear to have retained their bark edges, which are necessary for dendrochronology.

The Ashton House appears to be the product of three or possibly four building campaigns. The original portion of the farm dates to the first half of the nineteenth century. The Ashton House appears to have been built new *ca.* 1830 and remodeled later in the nineteenth century and again in the early twentieth century. Originally, it was a hall and parlor plan, two-story, exposed brick house. The hall and the parlor on the first floor featured corner fireplaces. The original fireplace surrounds have been removed. An encased stairway stood in the northwest corner of the hall. This, too, has been removed. The location of the former doorway aperture into the hall has been remodeled into a window.

The first addition to the Ashton House appears to have occurred during the Lofland period of ownership. It included the three-bay addition to the eastern half of the house. By 1880, the family of Alfred Lofland was located in New Castle Hundred and was significantly large. The household included nine family members. A 20-year-old mulatto servant and farmhand was also enumerated within the household (U.S. Census 1880:259a, 225d). The

presence of a large family in the home suggests a plausible explanation for enlarging the house.

Architectural evidence suggests that further changes were made to the house in the early twentieth century, when a portion of the porch was enclosed, the shed roof addition was appended to the east side, and the addition that projects from the front of the house was added. The utilitarian outbuildings date to the 1930s.

The original portion of the Ashton House dates to a period of architectural building and rebuilding in southern New Castle County. Owners of farms in the prosperous region either expanded old houses or constructed new ones (Herman 1987:110-111, 122-123, 128-139). The first expansion made the house into a center hall plan residence with a united facade. It was vernacular in style, with the cornice brackets the only artifice. The two-story, shed roof addition, partially enclosed front porch, and wing projecting from the facade unbalances the house and compromises design, workmanship, feeling, and association. The stucco finish and weatherboard siding compromises materials.

The building is not eligible for listing in the NRHP. The twentieth century alterations have compromised the ability to convey historic associations as a nineteenth century farmhouse. The building is also not representative of a nineteenth century farmstead, due to the architectural changes to the house, the loss of nineteenth century agricultural buildings, and the modest nature of the remaining outbuildings. For these reasons, the Ashton House is not eligible for listing under NRHP Criteria A or C. The historical record did not indicate that any owners -- the Ashton, Murray, or Lofland families -- were significant persons under NRHP Criterion B. Also, the house is not significant under NRHP Criterion D. Brick houses are the most common, most documented, and most over-represented nineteenth century farmhouses in southern New Castle County (Herman 1987:112-113). Their construction techniques are well known. As noted, it is not possible to get additional dating information through dendrochronology.

#### **4.3.3 N-14129 – Dwelling, 309 School Bell Road**

The dwelling at 309 School Bell Road is a Ranch style house that dates to ca. 1950 (Photographs 12 and 13). It is a one-story building with a side gable roof and asbestos siding. It is six-bays wide and two-bays deep. The fenestration consists of two-over-two,

double-hung wood sash windows. The house features an attached garage. The facade features a modest, three-part picture window.

The house is recommended as not eligible for listing in the NRHP. In order to be NRHP-eligible, the house must be associated with a significant event or person, be significant for its architecture, or possess the ability to yield information not available from other sources. The dwelling at 309 School Bell Road fails to meet any of these criteria.

Although the house was constructed during a time when farmland was beginning to be subdivided for residential uses, 309 School Bell Road does not convey an association with significant events, community builders, building technologies, or architectural design trends that developed in the postwar housing boom. The history of post-World War II suburbanization is better conveyed through intact, planned, residential subdivisions. Individual houses do not impact the history of the movement. There also is no evidence that the house is associated with a historic person.

The house does not convey the architectural qualities of a representative example of a Ranch style dwelling. To be eligible under architecture, Ranch houses must have the characteristics that define the style: an L- or T-shaped plan, low pitched hipped or side gable roof, large picture windows, and sliding glass doors leading out to patios. Patios and large picture windows (also called window walls) are particularly crucial, character-defining features. Patios extended the living space outdoors into a partially enclosed space used for social and leisure functions, which evoke the California good life idiom (Clark 1986:211; McAlester and McAlester 2000:479-480). The dwelling at 309 School Bell Road lacks the L- or T-shaped plan, the window wall, and the patio.

The house is also not significant under Criterion D for its potential to yield information important in history. Constructed in 1953, the house used common and well-documented building techniques.

#### **4.3.4 N-14130 – Silo, 0 School Bell Road**

The structure is a double concrete silo with a metal roof (Photograph14). The silo is the only remaining structure on a farm that was mapped as early as 1868 (see Figure 4), and as late as 1953 (see Figure 9). The farm buildings that formerly stood adjacent to the

silo have been demolished. This type of silo began to appear on farms in the 1920s. They were particularly prominent on dairy farms (Lanier and Herman 1997:211-214).

The silo is recommended as not eligible for listing under Criteria A, B, or C of the NRHP due to a complete loss of integrity. It no longer conveys its historical association with the farm operation formerly located at this site because all other, character-defining resources associated with the site -- the farmhouse, barn, and other agricultural outbuildings -- have been removed. It is also not significant under Criterion D. The silo is a common type using well-documented and common construction techniques. It does not have the potential to yield significant information.

#### **4.3.5 N-14131.001-.120 – Fair Winds**

Fair Winds is an undistinguished, residential subdivision platted in 1946 (New Castle County Plat Book 1946:Vol. 3, Page 5), although sustained building activity did not occur until the 1950s and construction within the subdivision continues to the present day. The subdivision contains approximately 120 buildings (Photographs 15-67). Appendix C contains a list of the CRS numbers cross-referenced with their tax parcel numbers. The subdivision consists of a variety of modest Cape Cod and Ranch style residences -- many of which are altered from their original appearance-- as well as vernacular style commercial buildings, vernacular style motels, and larger houses from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. None of the original residences are remarkable examples of their style. Additionally, many of the former residences along U.S. 40 have been demolished to make way for commercial strip malls or have been renovated into small retail spaces. Two religious properties have also been built within the subdivision.

The original houses are typically one story in height; newly constructed buildings are typically two stories high. The majority of houses are frame, single family residences with a variety of exterior treatments ranging from vinyl or aluminum siding to stucco.

Seymour Road forms the axis of the subdivision. Paralleling it to the south between Fir and Holly avenues is a newly-opened street within the subdivision, Ellen Drive, formerly an unnamed service road. There are four cross-streets: Lark Avenue, Oriole Avenue, Holly Avenue, and Fir Avenue. Two roads intersect with School Bell Road, Cardinal Avenue, a one-block long road parallel to Seymour, and Fir Avenue.

Fair Winds was platted by Lonzy W. Seymour, a trolley car motorman from Wilmington who later became a real estate agent. He purchased the land from the Dashier family, the farmers adjacent to the subdivision. Fair Winds was the only subdivision he developed. He was not a home builder, and he did not reside in Fair Winds (Lonzy W. Seymour, Jr., personal communication 2003; U.S. Census 1930:11b). The building lots were sold to individuals rather than speculative building contractors who built numerous homes to be sold at a later date. According to a resident of Fair Winds, Mrs. Harvey E. Burriss, most homes were built by their owners. For instance, Mrs. Burriss, who has served in the Fair Winds Civic Association since its inception in 1976, stated that she and her husband purchased plans and supplies for their home from a lumber company in St. Georges. They hired a contractor to clear and level their lot with a bulldozer (Mrs. Harvey E. Burriss, personal communication 2003).

Fair Winds is not significant as a historic residential subdivision under NRHP Criteria A, B, C, or D. Research did not uncover an association with a significant event or person. Although the houses were constructed during a time when farmland was beginning to be subdivided for residential uses, Fair Winds does not convey an association with significant events, community builders, building technologies, or architectural design trends that developed in the postwar housing boom. Other planned, postwar subdivisions in New Castle County better represent the historic residential subdivision property type. House construction, sanitary sewerage, and site preparation techniques utilized in the building of Fair Winds preclude the potential for recovering archaeological information.

Fair Winds also has compromised integrity. The subdivision is replete with new construction. Much of it is located at the east ends of Ellen Drive (the former service road) and Seymour Road, where lots that were platted as single lots have been subdivided into two lots to increase the concentration of housing. A second area of concentration is at the northwest portion of the subdivision, in lots originally marked as future parks or open space. In addition to these concentrated areas, there are also new houses scattered throughout the subdivision. Of the approximately 120 houses in the subdivision, 40 date from the late twentieth or early twenty-first centuries. Additionally, many original houses have been so altered that they no longer convey their original designs. And the portion of the subdivision along Route 40 is now nearly completely given over to commercial development or vacant lots.

Fair Winds is recommended as not eligible for listing in the NRHP.

#### **4.3.6 N-14132 – Dwelling, 532 Pulaski Highway**

The dwelling at 532 Pulaski Highway dates to *ca.* 1950. The frame building is vernacular style, one-story high, six-bays wide, three-bays deep, and topped with a side gable roof (Photograph 68-71). Windows are a combination of one-over-one replacements and two-over-two, double-hung wood sash. The front porch has been enclosed and a garage has been attached to the main building. A second garage that is two-bays wide and detached is the only outbuilding associated with the property. The residence has been converted into a used car sales and repair business. Neither the house nor the detached garage are historic.

The dwelling at 532 Pulaski Highway is not significant under NRHP Criteria A, B, C, or D. In order to be NRHP-eligible, the house must be associated with a significant event or person, be significant for its architecture, or possess the ability to yield information not available from other sources. The dwelling at 532 Pulaski Highway fails to meet any of these criteria.

Although the house was constructed during a time when farmland was beginning to be subdivided for residential uses, 532 Pulaski Highway does not convey an association with significant events, community builders, building technologies, or architectural design trends that developed in the postwar housing boom. The history of post-World War II suburbanization is better conveyed through intact, planned, residential subdivisions. Individual houses do not impact the history of the movement. There is also no evidence that the house is associated with a historic person.

The building is also not significant under the Roadside Architecture context (LeeDecker *et al.* 1992). That context applies to resources that were constructed to support the automobile industry and automobile transportation in Delaware. The dwelling at 532 Pulaski Highway was not built as an automobile dealership, although it serves that function now. When built *ca.* 1950, and throughout the period covered by this report (pre-1954), it functioned as a house.

Architecturally, the house is an example of a common vernacular house type built with great frequency beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing until today. In

light of its ubiquity and commonality, it does not meet the requirements of NRHP Criterion C. It does not embody the distinctive characteristics of any one type, period, or method of construction, represent the work of a master, possess high artistic value, or represent, absent its place in a historic district, a significant and distinguishable entity whose component parts may lack individual distinction. The house has also been altered.

The house is also not significant under Criterion D for its potential to yield information important in history. Constructed in 1953, the house used common and well-documented building techniques.