

CONCLUSIONS

The Phase III data recovery investigations at the William Strickland Plantation Site, (7K-A-117) discovered the archaeological remains of a colonial farmstead dating from circa 1726 to circa 1764. Using primary and secondary documents, such as contemporary diaries, journals, deeds, court records, and probate records, a socio-cultural context for Kent County, Delaware, during the first half of the eighteenth century has been presented. The framework for this historical context was formed utilizing the research domains of landscape and domestic economy, as established by De Cunzo and Catts (1990). The history and material culture of the William Strickland Plantation Site are viewed from the perspective provided by the historical context, and an interpretation is offered of everyday life over two centuries ago in Duck Creek Hundred.

Consisting of several closely-clustered structures, including a dwelling, a kitchen/quarter, a smokehouse with a cellar, and two possible agricultural structures, the William Strickland Plantation of the 1750s was situated among the fields and forests of the Delaware Coastal Plain. The workyard at the site was not particularly large, and was defined by post-in-rail and worm fences that bordered the site, clearly delineating the workyard and buildings from the forests, marshes, pastures, and agricultural fields. The buildings at the site included post-in-ground and earthfast construction techniques, and some indications of chronology at the site were apparent by the artifact classes that appeared in each of

the structures, the evidence of building materials in the inventory, presence of sheet tin patches in the deep features, and the sequence of land acquisition at the site. The need for a source of water was fulfilled at the site by the presence of two wells, both in close proximity to the structures.

William and Rachel Strickland's place in the social order of the surrounding community is revealed by a number of factors. Documentary evidence places the Strickland family in the upper 10% of the taxables in Duck Creek Hundred by mid-century, and the presence of three slaves at the plantation suggests some degree of social prominence. The material culture associated with this social ranking is plainly seen in several classes of artifacts recovered at the site, most notably the variety of teawares and tablewares, the decorative personal items, and the broad range of faunal remains. Comparisons of the Strickland ceramic assemblage with similar assemblages from other eighteenth century sites along the Delaware River, such as the Old Swedes Church Parsonage in Wilmington, suggest that the Strickland household ranked in the higher levels of colonial society.

Local foodways were examined at this site, revealing previously unidentified dietary patterns for southern Delaware, due mostly to the lack of sites dating to this period that have been subject to data recovery excavations. The classes of species indicated by the recovered bones, indicate that wild food sources merely supplemented domesticated food sources.

Daily activities at the site, and the possibility that Rachel Strickland and her daughters were involved in the local economy, were evident from the presence of large numbers of redware milk pans and butter pots at the site. Agricultural production was represented by a single broken hoe blade, recovered from one of the wells. William Strickland's raising of livestock, a fact revealed by his inventory, was reinforced by the presence of horse shoes, and horse furnishings in the artifact assemblage. Finally, besides the large faunal assemblage, the day-to-day process of cooking, probably a slave's chore on the farm, was indicated by the cast iron cooking kettle, the large numbers of ceramics, and the egg shells, peach pits, and wheat recovered archaeologically at the site.

One insight gained as a result of the Phase III investigations at the William Strickland Plantation Site, and from the recent work with the colonial Delaware survey (Fithian 1992), is that colonial settlement in the Delaware River and Bay region was not the same, socially or culturally, as settlement in the Chesapeake. Archaeologists working in the Lower Delaware Valley should not necessarily select colonial Chesapeake sites for intersite comparisons, nor should they expect that farmstead layouts, architectural techniques, settlement pattern, artifact distributions, and faunal remains should be directly comparable to that region. Instead, historical archaeologists working in Delaware, southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey should begin to compare and contrast sites from these regions with each other, and perhaps define a "Delaware" region that can be contrasted with the "Chesapeake." The Phase III investigations at the William Strickland Plantation Site have attempted to provide a starting point for this type of study through the use of documentary evidence and material culture, and by comparisons of New Jersey and Delaware sites.

The Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia should also be included in any regional studies focusing on the Delaware River drainage. The colonial Eastern Shore has been studied by colonial historians, economic historians, and historical geographers (Papenfuse 1973; Breen and Innes 1980; Clemens 1980; Mason 1984; McCusker and Menard 1985:117-143; Carr et al. 1988). However, there has been less colonial archaeological investigations conducted, and reported, from the Eastern Shore than from the Delaware. Notable exceptions are Jull (1980) and Wesler (1984). The social, cultural,

and economic interplay between the Delaware and the Chesapeake during the colonial period, and throughout the nineteenth century, is a subject that has not been fully explored by historians or archaeologists, and is a fruitful area of inquiry that historical archaeologists should pursue. There are similarities and differences that will be visible in the archaeological patterns between sites on both sides of the Delmarva Peninsula, and this region could provide the link between Chesapeake society and the notion of "Middle Atlantic" society (Greenberg 1979; Gough 1983; McCusker and Mennard 1985:189-208).

In order for this research approach to work, a considerable amount of documentary research will be necessary to provide the needed historical context for the region. Tax assessments, rent rolls, probate documents, newspapers, deeds, and other primary and secondary literature will need to be canvassed, and colonial sites in the region will need to be reported. Scholars, including historians, economists, and geographers have already begun this work (cf. Main 1973; Lemon 1976; Wolf 1976; Jones 1980; Greene and Pole 1984; Doerflinger 1986; Jensen 1986), but they have not been concerned with the material culture of the region, and it is in this area of study that historical archaeologists can be of service. Most important, a dialogue between archaeologists working in the region will need to be started, so that similar questions will be asked of the data, and similar methodologies used in order to provide the answers.

In conclusion, the Phase III archaeological investigations at the William Strickland Plantation Site can constitute a beginning for the broader regional studies noted above. While not providing answers to all of the questions that were raised during the research, a task that few, if any, sites can accomplish, these excavations can serve as a spring board for future historical archaeological investigations of colonial farmsteads in the Lower Delaware Valley, and perhaps provide a research link between both shores of the Delmarva Peninsula.