

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A. PROJECT BACKGROUND

This report presents data, analysis and recommendations for the Phase II investigation of the Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site [7NC-F-121, N14501]. The study area is located southwest of Middletown, New Castle County, Delaware, at the site of the planned Levels Road interchange on the selected U.S. Route 301 alignment (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Phase Ib work was performed by Hunter Research (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2011) and Richard Grubb & Associates (Grossman-Bailey and Philip A. Hayden 2011, Grossman-Bailey 2011). A Phase II management summary report was prepared by Hunter Research (Liebeknecht, Harshbarger and Burrow 2011). In 2013, CHRS, Inc. was contracted to finalize the Phase II archaeological survey report using the data provided by the Phase II management summary. The focus of the work by CHRS was to be on providing a more detailed analysis of the historical archaeological material recovered from the site. The current document follows the format of the Phase II management summary and contains the historical and descriptive text as provided by Hunter Research. The Hunter Research information has been supplemented by analysis of the historic archaeological component performed by CHRS, Inc. Because the Phase II management summary did not contain detailed analyses, the final Phase II Archaeological Survey Report at some points offers conclusions that vary from the management summary report and are so noted in the text.

The work forms part of the Section 106 compliance for the U.S. Route 301 highway project, as set out in the November 2007 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed by the Federal Highway Administration, the Delaware State Historic Preservation Officer (DSHPO), the Maryland State Historic Preservation Officer and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT). This MOA, prepared pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) and to 36 CFR 800, sets out the procedures to be followed for historic properties.

The approved objectives for this Phase II evaluation were as follows:

- 1). To define the horizontal and vertical limits of the archaeological resources represented by Area 2 Clusters A through D, and site areas 7/12 and 3/2 of the Richard Grubb & Associates' Phase Ib studies.
- 2). To establish the integrity of these resources. The National Register Guidelines for Archaeological Properties note that Location, Design, Materials and Association are the most relevant aspects of integrity for Criterion D evaluations, and Design, Materials and Workmanship under Criterion C. These two criteria were considered to be the most likely to be applicable to the archaeological properties under this study. Integrity was additionally defined in the approved proposal as "the preservation of patterning among artifacts and features capable of analysis that will provide significant information about human activity in the past." For historic period resources this should at a minimum include the presence of sub-plow zone cultural stratigraphy and features in association with artifacts. For prehistoric

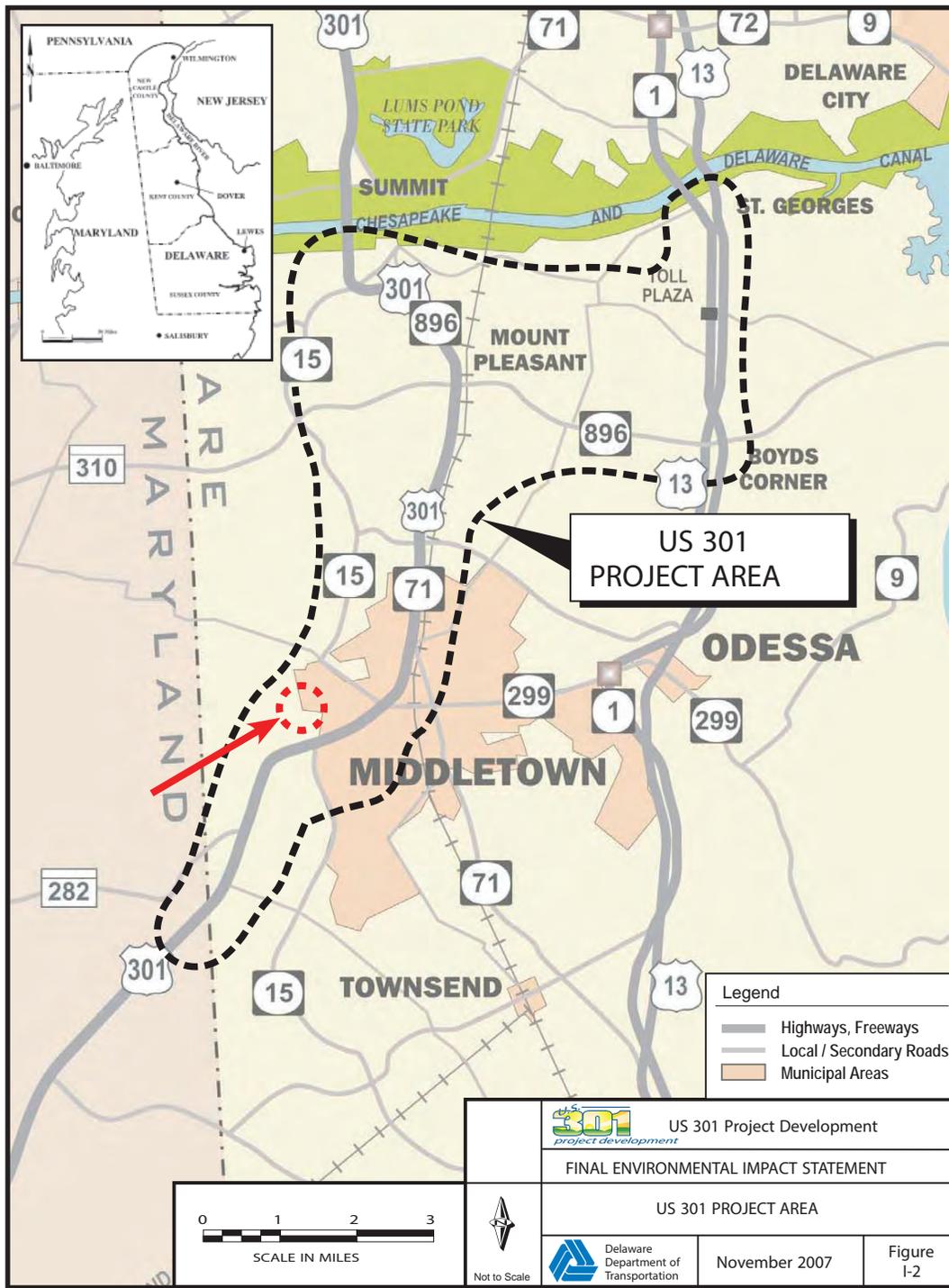


Figure 1.1. General Location of the U.S. 301 Selected Alternative Project Corridor. The area covered by this report is circled. (Source: Federal Highway Administration and Delaware Department of Transportation 2007 Figure I-2).

PHASE II MANAGEMENT SUMMARY: LEVELS ROAD INTERCHANGE AREA

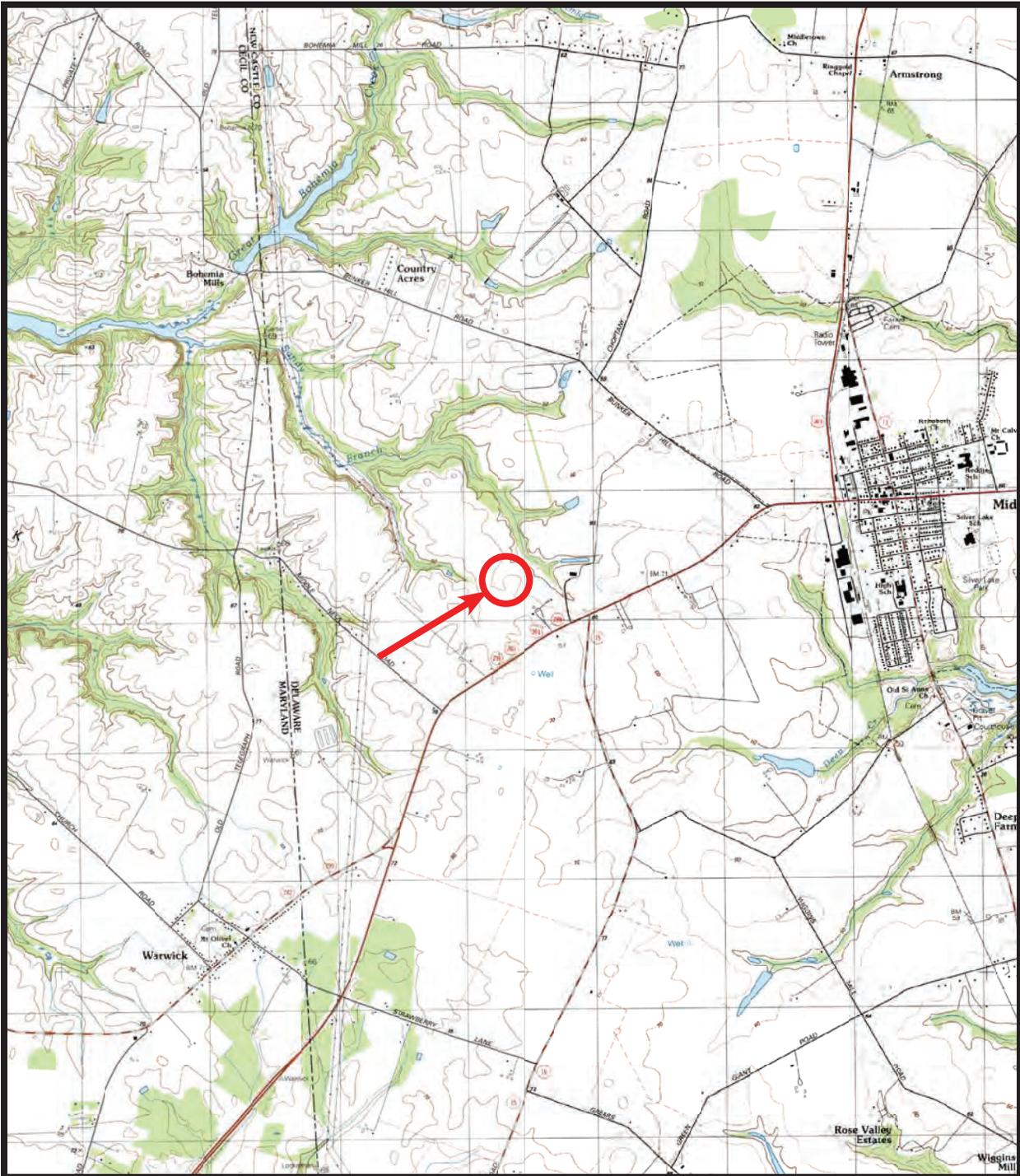


Figure 1.2. Detailed Location of the Phase II Investigations of the Rumsey Historic-Prehistoric Site. Scale: 1 inch= 2,000 feet. Project area circled. Source: USGS Cecilton, MD and Middletown, DE. Quadrangles (1993).

resources, the presence of temporally and/or culturally diagnostic artifacts in association with horizontal concentrations of other artifacts was considered to demonstrate integrity.

3). To develop preliminary interpretations of the data and function of the sites within the established Delaware historic contexts framework. The Domestic Economy and Landscape domains are likely to provide the thematic framework for evaluation.

4). Supplementary historical research designed to contribute to the framing of contextual statements and evaluation considerations. Given the emerging understanding of the early historical framework of the project areas, all four National Register Criteria will be considered when evaluating the significance of the historic sites, although Criterion D is likely to remain the primary consideration for the prehistoric resources.

B. PHASE I RESEARCH

1. Historical Research

The documentary and secondary literature research undertaken for the Phase Ia reconnaissance study showed that the project area fell within a large tract owned by the Rumsey family from 1742 to 1836 (Hunter Research, Inc. 2009: see Table 4.1 below). The Rumseys had acquired property in the general vicinity beginning in the 1690s, purchasing from the extensive holdings established by Augustine Herman extending from the Bohemia River to the west to the Delaware River on the east. Herman had established a cart road joining the two watersheds that ran to the north of the current project site. The Rumsey family were major landholders in this part of Delaware and were active in its political and economic life.

2. Archaeological Survey

Phase Ib archaeological survey undertaken by Hunter Research consisted of a surface collection survey, a metal detector survey in areas where historic artifacts were clustered on the surface, the excavation of 63 shovel tests in area of artifact clusters, and the excavation of six units measuring 2.5 feet by 10 feet each. The Phase Ib recovered 4,596 artifacts from this area (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2011).

Prehistoric artifacts were clustered on knolls overlooking the heads of relict streams. The prehistoric materials from this area date from the Late Archaic/Woodland I periods and suggested short-term hunting and/or possibly lithic procurement for limonite (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2011:4-11). Two distinct clusters of chiefly mid-eighteenth-century historic artifacts were noted on two gentle rises near the Sandy Branch. The historic artifacts suggested, in the initial analysis, the presence of a non-domestic eighteenth-century site along the Sandy Branch (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2011:4-11).

Phase Ib archaeological survey undertaken by Richard Grubb and Associates in Area 2/3 consisted of a surface collection, a metal detector survey, the excavation of 84 shovel test pits placed at 7.5 meter intervals at the outside limits of a concentration of prehistoric and historic artifacts and four measured test units. The Phase Ib Archaeological survey recovered 1,487

artifacts from Area 2/3 (Grossman-Bailey and Philip A. Hayden 2011:4-23). This site was interpreted as the location of a former tenant house or farmstead shown as owned by “W. Polk” on the 1849 Rea and Price map, but not surveyed on the 1868 Beers Atlas. The site was part of a tract owned by William Rumsey Sr. and the Rumsey family from 1742 until 1836, when it was purchased by William Polk. It was then owned by Polk, his daughter Eliza Polk Cochran, and the Cochran family during the nineteenth century as part of the “Rumsey” Farm (Grossman-Bailey and Philip A. Hayden 2011:4-65).

Phase Ib archaeological survey undertaken by Richard Grubb and Associates in Area 7/12 consisted of a surface collection a metal detector survey, the excavation of 40 shovel test and one measured test unit. The Phase Ib Archaeological survey recovered 428 artifacts from Area 7/12 (Grossman-Bailey and Philip A. Hayden 2011:4-23/4-24). “The brick sample included burned, over fired, glazed, vitrified and waster fragments. Based on the variation in brick types, it was hypothesized that the linear distribution of brick fragments might indicate a brick clamp (informal brick kiln for local and farm use) in this area or the remains of a burned structure (Grossman-Bailey and Philip A. Hayden 2011:4-94).