

ABSTRACT

Phase III archaeological data recovery excavations were conducted at two late seventeenth and early eighteenth century farmsteads in central Kent County, Delaware: the Richard Whitehart Plantation (7K-C-203C) and the John Powell Plantation (7K-C-203H). Both sites were located on the same 50-acre property, known locally as the Pollack Site (7K-C-203). Archaeological excavations were undertaken by the University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research for the Delaware Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration because both sites had been determined to be significant historic archaeological sites which would be destroyed by borrow pit excavation and wetland replacement area preparation associated with the construction of State Route 1. The sites were located within one-half mile of each other near the confluence of the Leipsic River and Alston Branch. Documentary and archaeological excavation data showed that the Richard Whitehart Plantation was occupied from ca. 1681-1701 and the John Powell Plantation was occupied from ca. 1691-1735. Both sites were primarily owner-occupied. The two families occupying the sites were not related, but were probably close neighbors for a short period of time around the turn of the eighteenth century.

More than 400 archaeological features including post molds, wells, trash pits, and wooden dwelling foundations were excavated at both sites. Each site included the remains of a dwelling, outbuildings, wells, trash pits, and fencelines. The structures at both sites were arranged around work-yard areas that were also used for the disposal of domestic refuse. Large tobacco barns were present at both sites and cultivation of tobacco seems to have been the major occupation of both Richard Whitehart and John Powell.

Artifacts recovered from the sites included a variety of ceramics, pipes, metal fragments, and food remains. Both families consumed pork and beef, and supplemented this diet with locally available wild plant and animal foods. Ceramic assemblages from the sites were dominated by simple redwares, but some refined German and English stoneware tankards and fine crystal wine glasses were present. The presence of more expensive drinking vessels is interesting because Richard Whitehart and John Powell were both former indentured servants who had acquired their plantations late in life and spent most of their life in debt. Neither family ever escaped that debt, and multiple mortgages and foreclosures haunted each family during their occupations of the sites.

Cover Illustration: The cover illustration shows a rosette seal from the body of a stoneware jug known as "Bellarmine" found at the John Powell Plantation. Bellarmine jugs were manufactures in the Rhineland during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century and were fashionable drinking and storage vessels throughout colonial America.