

The Cultural Contexts of the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site

On July 24, 1608, Captain John Smith sailed away from Jamestown with a company of 12 men on his second exploratory expedition to Chesapeake Bay. Their shallop, the *Phoenix*, was an open barge, probably about 30 feet long and 8 feet wide. With a draft of less than 2 feet of water and a capacity of nearly 3 tons, it was ideally suited to coastal exploration. It could sail in deep or shallow water, propelled by sail or oars, and was light enough to pull ashore. On July 29, Smith and his crew reached the mouth of the Patapsco River, the most northern extent of his earlier expedition. Half his men had become too ill to take their turn at the oars. This situation precluded the exploration of smaller tributaries because sail power was only useful for large rivers (National Park Service 2011; Salmon 2006:21).

The following day, the *Phoenix* arrived at Turkey Point in Cecil County, Maryland, where the bay divided into four main rivers: the Susquehanna, the North East, the Elk, and the Sassafras. Several crewmen walked 6 miles up Little North East Creek, where they placed a wooden cross to claim the head of the bay for England. Smith explored the rivers during the next week. He visited the palisaded town of Tockwogh on the Sassafras River, where Susquehannock Indians of southern Lancaster County had arrived to participate in a trading party, along with dancing and feasting. Smith ended his stay at Tockwogh with an Anglican prayer service. The expedition party left the upper Chesapeake on August 8 for their return to Jamestown (Salmon 2006:21–22).

BEFORE EUROPEAN CONTACT

The following overview of the regional Delmarva pre-Contact chronology is largely abstracted from Custer (1989, 1996). As shown in Table 4.1, The prehistoric archaeological record of the upper Delmarva Peninsula can be divided into four chronological units, defined on the basis of sets of shared cultural characteristics and common adaptations to similar environmental conditions: The Paleo-Indian period (circa 12,000–6500 B.C.), the Archaic period (6500–3000 B.C.), the Woodland I period (3000 B.C.–A.D. 1000), and the Woodland II period (A.D. 1000–1650).

Table 4.1 Synthesis of Northern Delaware Prehistory

Environmental Period	Date Range	Traditional Eastern Chronology	Delmarva Chronology
Late Pleistocene	12,000 – 8000 B.C.	Paleo-Indian	Paleo-Indian
Early Holocene	8000 – 6500 B.C.	Early Archaic	
Middle Holocene	6500 – 3000 B.C.	Middle Archaic	Archaic
	3000 – 1000 B.C.	Late Archaic	Woodland I

Table 4.1 Synthesis of Northern Delaware Prehistory (Cont'd)

Environmental Period	Date Range	Traditional Eastern Chronology	Delmarva Chronology
Late Holocene	1000 B.C. – A.D. 1	Early Woodland	
	A.D. 1 – 1000	Middle Woodland	
	A.D. 1000 – 1600	Late Woodland	Woodland II

Paleo-Indian (12,000–6500 B.C.). The ancestors of the native people that John Smith encountered in the Chesapeake drainage had entered the North American continent at least 15,000 years earlier, having crossed the Bering Strait between Siberia and Alaska and then gradually making their way south and east. By about 12,000 B.C., groups of these early Native Americans, or Paleo-Indians as archaeologists call them, had entered what is today Delaware. The Paleo-Indian cultural period covers the Paleo-Indian and Early Archaic periods of the Traditional Eastern Chronology. It begins with the first evidence of humans in northern Delaware, at a time when the Laurentide ice sheet had retreated north of the Delaware River's headwaters, but still had an effect on the Delmarva Peninsula's weather patterns (Ogden 1977). The further withdrawal of the Laurentide ice sheet north of the Great Lakes mostly mitigated these effects by the end of the Paleo-Indian period. Thus, the first 5,000 years of the Paleo-Indian period are characterized by a cold and wet climate, which gave rise to a mosaic of grasslands, deciduous forests, and boreal forests. After 8000 B.C., a general drying trend is in evidence; spruce and pine boreal forests with small amounts of deciduous trees came to dominate the mixed forest and grasslands as this period closed out.

New Castle County, like much of the Middle Atlantic region, was characterized by a relatively complex set of overlapping environmental zones, providing a variety of subsistence resources for pre-Contact peoples entering the area. Throughout this period, the occupants of northern Delaware practiced hunting and gathering lifeways focused around sources of stone for tools, and incorporating a fairly fluid social organization based on relatively small bands of single and multiple family units. Archaeological sites from the first five millennia of this time period are usually identified in the presence of well-crafted stone projectile points usually made of high-quality crypto-crystalline stone, including chert and jasper. The points are characterized by a single long channel flake, or flute, removed from both sides of the point. Stone toolkits of the period also include bifacial knives, drills, gravers, burins, flake cores, scrapers, and flake tools with no formalized shapes. Due to the importance of these toolkits, Paleo-Indians probably employed a cyclical settlement pattern centered on the quarries necessary to construct the proper stone tools (Gardner 1974, 1980).

Throughout the 6,500-year time span of this period, the occupants of northern Delaware appear to have followed a more or less consistent regimen: a mobile lifestyle of hunting and gathering with a concentration on game animals (Custer 1985:25–41; Fagan 2000:353–380), although some modifications—particularly in the species exploited—appeared as Holocene environmental conditions emerged. The primary differences in the tool assemblages that emerged over the

course of the Paleo-Indian period are the introduction of new projectile point forms, while the balance of the toolkit remained essentially the same (Cavallo 1980; Custer 1984).

Archaic (6500–3000 B.C.). In the traditional chronology, there is a break in cultural patterns beginning about 8000 B.C., which corresponds with a general warming trend. Pine and northern hardwoods, particularly oak, replaced boreal forests and open grasslands. By about 6500 B.C., the climate had become warm and wet (rather like today) with distinct seasons that produced seasonal variation in both plant and animal resources. The Piedmont was covered in mesic oak/hemlock forests and accompanying understories, while deer became the dominant game animal. Sea level rise accompanied the melting of glacial ice and resulted in the elevation of the local water table and the creation of a number of large interior swamps. Warmer, wetter climatic conditions resulted in the rise of a greater variety of edible plant resources and aquatic environs—such as rivers, lakes, and marshes, along with their immediate surroundings—and became substantially more productive.

In the Delmarva Regional Chronology, the Paleo-Indian and Early Archaic periods are combined under the single rubric of Paleo-Indian. Archaic populations under the Delmarva chronology (incorporating the Middle Archaic chronological period of the Traditional Eastern Chronology; see Table 4.1) continued the basic lifeways of the previous period. Hunting and gathering continued as the basic subsistence pattern. Populations remained highly mobile in the Archaic period and social structure continued to be typified by band-level organization, with group membership evidently shifting on a seasonal basis in relation to resource availability.

As people expanded into new environments, the focus on high-quality lithic resources was lost. Toolkits of this period typically tended to be made from expedient and locally available material. Diagnostic stone tools include points with bifurcated bases, side-notched points, and various stemmed points.

People of the Archaic period (that lasted until roughly 5,000 years ago, or to approximately 3000 B.C.), while still hunter-gatherers, used a wider variety of environments than their predecessors. The recovery of specialized plant-processing tools (an array of pecked/ground plant-processing tools, such as grinding stones, mortars, and pestles) from some sites also suggests an increased reliance on vegetal foods, particularly nuts and seeds, as well as a certain degree of site specialization—locations that may have been chosen due to the availability of certain plant resources (Custer 1985:33–36; Fagan 2000:376). An increasing emphasis on aquatic resources also seems to have taken place, as evidenced in the recovery of artifacts such as netsinkers.

During this time, favored site locations became more diversified and included upland settings near both ephemeral and perennial streams and elevated landforms adjacent to swampy floodplains. Less intensively utilized procurement sites and temporary camps are recorded scattered throughout the surrounding uplands.

Woodland I (3000 B.C.–A.D. 1000). About 3000 B.C., the rate of sea level rise slowed, causing riverine and estuarine environments to stabilize enough to support significant and seasonally predictable populations of shellfish and anadromous fish. There is an increase in the number of sites from this time period, indicating a population increase. The inferred development of sedentism, from the number of complex sites found in this period, forms the basis of

distinguishing the Archaic from the Woodland I periods in the Delmarva region. The Woodland I period incorporates the Late Archaic, Early, and Middle Woodland periods of the Traditional Eastern Chronology.

Plant resources, as noted above, became increasingly important during the Middle Archaic period, and a growing emphasis on plant foods would be one of the hallmarks of Native American life in northern Delaware during the next 4,000 years from about 3000 B.C. to A.D. 1000. As in the previous millennia, this shift in emphasis was due in some measure to changes in the climate and environment. The beginning of the Woodland I period (correlating with the Late Archaic period in the traditional chronology [3000–1000 B.C.]) coincided with an extremely warm and dry climatic period called the xerothermic. These climatic conditions would have created more open grasslands and oak-and-hickory-dominated stands of deciduous forests. While game animals would have remained the same (i.e., deer, bear, turkey, etc.), their distributions were probably different. Many of the smaller interior streams appear to have dried; the floodplains of larger watercourses and other areas of standing surface water thus became the region's most attractive settlement locations (Custer 1985:36–38).

The Woodland I period saw a rise in Native American population and the increasing propensity to settle in one place for longer periods of time. Archaeological evidence indicates the intensified use of certain resources, especially plant foods and riverine resources (fish and shellfish). Durable storage and food preparation containers were developed, first in soapstone and subsequently in fired clay, and there is some indication that both maize and squash cultivation had begun by the first millennium B.C. Outside of northern Delaware, we also begin to see evidence of more complex social organization and social ranking, as well as mortuary ceremonialism (the ritual surrounding the burial or cremation of the dead) and the conspicuous consumption of goods. The latter might include specialized artifact forms or items fashioned from non-local materials, and would have symbolized the possessor's increased social status (Custer 1985:36–38; Custer 1996; Fagan 2000:389). On the other hand, less reliance on high-mobility subsistence strategies resulted in a reduction in effective group territory and, in conjunction with increases in overall population densities, led to the development of highly sophisticated regional trade networks.

As we noted above, people of the Woodland I period developed a variety of container forms, beginning with steatite bowls and evolving into a ceramic industry. At first vessels were thick walled, undecorated, and mirrored the shape of stone bowls. Through time, ceramic vessels become rounded, more refined, and often decorated. These vessels allowed the more efficient cooking of certain types of food and may also have functioned for storage of certain surplus plant foods. Long-term stockpiling of food surpluses is indicated in the presence of large storage pits of various configurations, and evidence for more sedentary habitation sites is supported in the appearance of semi-subterranean house structures. Apart from stone and ceramic containers, Woodland I toolkits show some minor variations over those of the Archaic period, as well as a few major additions. Plant-processing tools become even more common and seem to indicate an intensive harvesting of wild plant foods that, by the end of the period, may have approached the efficiency of agriculture. Chipped stone tools changed little over previous types, although broadblade, knife-like processing tools became more prevalent. Common point styles are stemmed, side-notched, and triangle points.

Woodland II (A.D. 1000–1600). In the traditional chronology, this period of prehistory is known as the Late Woodland. During the 500 years before their sustained contact with Europeans, many Native Americans gathered in small villages or hamlets. Most villages lay adjacent to major streams and rivers. By approximately A.D. 900, horticulture began to achieve an important role in the subsistence pattern across the Middle Atlantic region, but little evidence of these practices has been found in Delaware.

Two Woodland II complexes have been defined for Delaware. In southern Delaware, the Slaughter Creek Complex is characterized by the presence of triangular projectile points, Townsend ceramics, large macro-band base camps, and what may have been fully sedentary villages with numerous food storage pits. Most of the major sites associated with the Slaughter Creek Complex have been identified in the Coastal/Bay, Mid-Drainage, and Delaware Shore physiographic zones of southern Delaware. In northern Delaware, the dominant Woodland II culture is referred to as the Minguannan Complex (Custer 1989: 311–316), characterized by Minguannan ceramics (a hard, grit-tempered, high-fired variety similar to Potomac Creek), triangular projectile points, and the frequent occurrence of storage pits. While agriculture and settled village life developed in southern Delaware, and across the Middle Atlantic generally, there is no firm evidence for either of these changes in northern Delaware. Sites of the Woodland II period in northern Delaware occur in the same environmental contexts as those of earlier periods, and are oriented toward wetlands rather than toward fertile agricultural land. In many instances, earlier sites continued to be occupied during Woodland II times (Custer 1984; Thomas 1969; Thomas et al. 1980). The evidence suggests that the lifeways of Woodland II populations were not substantially different from that of their Woodland I predecessors and that they continued to rely on gathering and hunting, particularly in marsh areas. Ethnographic data on the Lenape, who occupied the region at the time that native peoples and Europeans came into contact, tend to support this conclusion (Stewart et al. 1986; Weslager 1972).

Contact Period (A.D. 1600–1750). The Contact period is marked by both the initial contact between the Native American inhabitants of Delaware and European explorers and colonists, and the ultimate collapse of traditional native lifeways and sociopolitical organization. Complicating our perception of this period is the dearth of sites with Contact components within the state. However, based on existing historic accounts, it appears as though the native groups in the northern part of Delaware did not maintain intensive interactions with European settlers, while at the same time remaining under the virtual domination of the Susquehannock Indians of southern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. By 1750, only a few remnant groups of Native Americans remained in Delaware. Several hundred descendants of the original native inhabitants still reside in the state today.

The Wilson Farm Tenancy Site is located on valley floor terrain between the headwaters of two first-order streams. The nearest stream is approximately 250 feet to the north. Settlement pattern data suggest that the site location would be unlikely to contain Paleo-Indian or Early Archaic sites because the low population density during these periods allowed hunter-gatherers to settle in more favorable locations along major drainages. The use of upland settings expanded in the Late Archaic as locations for short-term or special-purpose camps. Although climatic models suggest that smaller streams dried up during the Woodland I period, making settlement in upland regions less attractive, the major prehistoric occupation at the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site was during the Woodland I. Although upland areas in the Delmarva region continued to be used

for short-term camps during the Woodland II and Contact periods, no evidence of occupation during these periods was found at the site.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

In 1638, Swedish settlers established Fort Christina at the confluence of Brandywine Creek and the Christina River in what is now Wilmington, Delaware. As the first permanent European settlement in Delaware (the Dutch made several earlier attempts, none successfully), Fort Christina quickly became the nucleus of the scattered Swedish and Finnish settlements in what became known as New Sweden. By the 1650s, the Dutch had begun to encroach on this lightly populated Swedish colony. They established Fort Casimir near present-day New Castle in 1651, part of an effort to block Sweden's attempts to control commerce on the Delaware River and as a move to reassert their own claims to the region. Within three years, however, the Swedes, under Governor Johan Rising, seized the fort and renamed it Fort Trinity (*Fort Trefaldighet*). This success was short-lived, for in the autumn of 1655, Pieter Stuyvesant sailed from Nieuw Amsterdam, recaptured Fort Casimir and took control of the colony of New Sweden. With their headquarters at New Amstel (New Castle), near Fort Casimir, the Dutch then began a program of development for this portion of New Netherland. However, before they could accomplish much, the English captured the whole of New Netherland in 1664, lost it to the Dutch in 1673, and retook it the following year (Meinig 1986:129–130).

In spite of the maneuvering of colonial powers, settlers continued to trickle into the lower Delaware Valley throughout the seventeenth century. Farmers mostly, they came from Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, and England to establish themselves in widely scattered farmsteads along the Delaware and inland along its tributaries, where they grew wheat, rye, maize, and tobacco, and raised livestock. As these settlers moved inland from the Delaware River, others had been taking up lands along the eastern shore of Maryland, where some of them received large grants from Lord Baltimore (Cecil Calvert).

The land on which the site of the Wilson Farm Tenancy is located was once a part of Bohemia Manor, the seventeenth century estate of Augustine Herman. Herman (circa 1621–1686), an explorer, cartographer, and merchant, was born in Prague, then a part of the Kingdom of Bohemia. He arrived in New Amsterdam (New York) in 1644 and succeeded in becoming a wealthy merchant with considerable real-estate holdings. In 1659, the Dutch government sent Herman to negotiate a dispute between the Dutch and Lord Baltimore regarding the ownership of lands on the western shore of Delaware Bay. Herman argued that the Maryland proprietor's charter did not include previously settled lands. Further, the short-lived 1631 Dutch Swanendael settlement at present-day Lewes, Delaware, gave the Dutch prior rights to the whole Delaware River watershed. Baltimore rejected Herman's argument, but the English successors to the Dutch title, the Duke of York and William Penn, were successful in their claims, ultimately leading to the separate existence of the state of Delaware.

Augustine Herman admired the productive land of the upper Chesapeake region and made a bargain with Lord Baltimore. Herman agreed to make a map of Maryland and the surrounding country in exchange for a tract of land near the headwaters of Chesapeake Bay. In 1660, he established Bohemia Manor on 400 acres in Cecil County, east of the Elk River and north of the

Bohemia River. When he completed the map, Herman was granted additional lands that he named Little Bohemia, south of the Bohemia River, and St. Augustine Manor, stretching to the Delaware River. He built a cart road between the Bohemia River in Cecil County and the site of Odessa on Appoquinimink Creek in New Castle County, Delaware (Vincent 1870:374). Herman eventually acquired 30,000 acres, becoming one of the largest landowners in North America (Glenn 1899:124–128).

Bohemia Manor had some of the most productive land in the region, encompassing territory in present-day Cecil County, Maryland, and New Castle County, Delaware. The manor's eastern boundary was in present-day St. Georges Hundred, along the Old Choptank Road between Bunker Hill Road on the south and the head of Back Creek in Pencader Hundred on the north. The manor boundaries followed Back Creek into Cecil County, continuing along the Elk River to its confluence with the Bohemia River, then following the Bohemia River and its tributaries (Mallery 1888:13).

The St. Augustine Manor lands extended eastward from Bohemia Manor to the Delaware River—between the mouth of Appoquinimink Creek on the south and the mouth of St. Georges Creek on the north, encompassing all of St. Georges Hundred. Augustine Herman no doubt chose this tract because it was the most likely corridor for a canal to connect the Delaware River with Chesapeake Bay. Augustine Herman's claim to St. Augustine Manor did not receive the sanction of the Penn proprietors. Herman's son Casparus, under a license from Pennsylvania governor Carr, took possession of several hundred acres on the Delaware River at the site of Port Penn and built a home there in the 1670s he named Augustine. The dividing line between the two manors was Choptank Road; it followed the course of an aboriginal trail that ran along the dividing ridge between Chesapeake Bay and Delaware Bay. In 1682, Casparus Herman laid out a 12-foot-wide cart road along the trail between St. Georges Creek and the Chester River. The location of the division line between the manors became a point of contention, but was settled in 1721 when Choptank Road became the official boundary (Johnston 1881:187; Mallery 1888:20).

Augustine Herman had five children: Ephraim, Casparus, Anna Margaretta, Judith, and Francina. Anna Margaretta married into a distinguished Dutch family and their one daughter, Ariana, married into a family from York, England, who became part of the colonial elite of Maryland. Judith married Colonel John Thompson, a provincial judge involved with early treaties of Delaware Valley Indians. Through Judith, Thompson inherited part of Bohemia Manor in Cecil County. Augustine Herman's daughters took land grants within Bohemia Manor as their inheritance, which did not prevent decades of litigation among their descendants. Eventually, the heirs of the three sisters released their rights to share in the whole of Bohemia Manor (Johnston 1881;Mallery 1888:25–30).

The remainder of Bohemia Manor entailed upon the descendants of Augustine Herman's two sons. Four Lords of Bohemia Manor followed Augustine Herman, but after his great-grandson Casparus Herman died in 1735, the title became extinct. Litigation over distribution of the valuable estate persisted for more than five decades. The land passed through the female line. The manor lands were subdivided into numerous leased farms until 1762, when a court awarded the manor to two female heirs as tenants in common in a fee simple title (Johnston 1881:180).

In 1789, the Maryland legislature passed an act empowering the Court of Chancery to appoint two commissioners to work with two Delaware commissioners to divide Bohemia Manor between Peter Lawson (who had acquired the share of Mary Herman Lawson, the great granddaughter of the founder); Charles Carroll of Carrollton (who owned a mortgage on the Ensor half share of Bohemia Manor); Joseph Ensor Jr.; and Mary Oldham neé Ensor, the wife of Colonel Edward Oldham (the share of Catharine Herman Bouchell, the great granddaughter of the founder and sister of Mary Herman Lawson). Peter Lawson was awarded a one half share in the partition. Charles Carroll received one-quarter share through his interest from the mortgage. Joseph Ensor Jr. and Mary Ensor Oldham received a one-quarter share through inheritance from her mother, Mary Bouchell Ensor (Cecil County Deed Volume 18:174; Johnston 1881:173–185).

In 1791, Peter Lawson sold one-third of the land he had been awarded in the Bohemia Manor partition to Richard Bassett and Colonel Joshua Clayton for £2,300 (Cecil County Deed Volume 17:405; Johnston 1881:184). Charles Carroll sold his part of Bohemia Manor in 1793 for £9,827.10 to Joshua Clayton, Richard Bassett, and Edward Oldham, who were already in possession of the land. The tract consisted of 2,440 acres of land lying west of Choptank Road to the branches of Bohemia Creek and included the project area. When all their tracts were combined, the three partners owned a part of Bohemia Manor in Cecil County, Maryland, and all of Bohemia Manor in the state of Delaware (Cecil County Deed Volume 18:174; Johnston 1881:185).

Richard Bassett was born on Bohemia Manor in 1745. He was a United States senator for Delaware from 1789 until 1793, when he resigned to become chief justice of the Court of Common Pleas. He remained the chief justice until 1799, when he was elected governor. He resigned in 1801, when President Adams appointed him as a United State Circuit Court judge for the Third District, comprising Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. He was one of the most prominent Delawareans of his day. He died in 1815 at his home on Bohemia Manor (Conrad 1908:940).

Joshua Clayton (1744–1798) married Rachel McCleary, the adopted daughter of Richard Bassett. Joshua Clayton and his bride settled in St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, on Bohemia Manor at his home, Locust Grove. He lived there until his death. He served in the Maryland Bohemia battalion in the Revolutionary War. He served as Delaware state treasurer and then served as president of the state. In the fall of 1792, he became the governor for the full term of three years, 1793 to 1796. Two years later, he was elected as a member of the United States senate from Delaware. Clayton went to Philadelphia to help in the yellow fever epidemic and caught the disease. He died at his home in Delaware on August 11, 1798 (Conrad 1908:903–904; Munroe 2004:124).

Joshua Clayton had a son, Thomas, who represented Delaware in both houses of Congress and served as the state's chief justice. Thomas had a son known as Colonel Joshua (of Thomas) (1802–1888), who entered the law profession but switched to farming in 1830. For the next 57 years, he pursued farming at his home farm, Choptank on the Hill (NRHP-listed and still extant, though engulfed by modern housing development), located about a mile and a half north of the Wilson Tract on Choptank Road (Baist 1893; Beers 1868). He introduced new and original methods of cultivation, including extensive use of drainage ditches, fertilizing with lime, and

subsoil plowing. His land became productive and free of malaria. His methods were widely copied by farmers of that region and the adjoining territory of Maryland. At one time, he owned over 3,500 acres of land; of this, he gave 2,400 acres to his 10 children. One of his heirs was Mary Price, who owned the farm immediately north of the Wilson Tract (Hepburn 1904:23; Lewis 1908:407–408).

Richard Bassett's other daughter, Ann, married James A. Bayard in 1795. The Bayards were one of Delaware's most prominent families and had been associated with Bohemia Manor since 1698. James A. Bayard served as Delaware's senator from 1804 to 1813. Ann was widowed in August 1815; her father died one month later. She inherited a part of Bohemia Manor that included the project area from her father. Through the deaths of her husband and father, she became the owner of a substantial amount of real estate in Delaware, Maryland, and Philadelphia. In 1819, she conveyed some of her real-estate holdings to her son Richard H. Bayard and George Gillasspy, a Philadelphia physician. The deed included a 350-acre farm at the headwaters of the Bohemia River under the tenure of Thomas Jones. The boundary lines of the farm began at the crossing of Choptank Road over Cedar Branch, then ran southwest to Indian Branch (also known as Van Bibber's Mill Branch), followed the stream down to Bohemia Creek, and continued up the creek to Cedar Branch, then back to the beginning point (Cecil County Deed Volume JS 17:192).

JONES/HANSON OWNERSHIP

The property history of the Wilson Tract tenant house has been traced back to the 300-acre Choptank Farm rented by Thomas J. Jones in 1819. He appeared for the first time as a head of household in St. Georges Hundred in 1820, when he was listed as "Thomas Johnes," between 26 and 45 years old. He had a household of 10 white individuals, one free African American over the age of 45, and four slaves. Two of the slaves were boys, 14 years old or younger; the other two were a girl and young woman between 14 and 26 years old (New Castle County Probate File, Thomas Jones, 1831; U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1820:158).

Thomas Jones married at least two times. He had a son Zachariah, who was born sometime between 1802 and 1805, according to census records. Zachariah was probably the offspring of Thomas Jones' marriage to Ann Shelton in 1804 (Delaware Marriage Records, [16]:245). Thomas's second wife was also named Ann. They had three children: Ann Elizabeth, Mary Adeline, and Thomas Perry Jones, who were born between 1810 and 1820, according to census records (New Castle County Orphan's Court Record Volume L-1:303). Thomas Jones died in April 1824 without leaving a will. His wife Ann and his eldest son Zachariah were appointed the administrators of his estate. At the time of his death, Thomas Jones held the title to Choptank Farm. The New Castle County Orphan's Court appointed Ann to be the guardian of her children, who were all minors (New Castle County Orphan's Court Record Volume L-1:303).

Choptank Farm supported the Jones family by producing wheat, rye, corn, and flax. The farm's livestock included two pair of oxen, 26 cattle in various stages of development, and nine horses. The farm also had sheep and swine. Thomas Jones used slave labor to plow the fields, harvest the grain, and tend the livestock, as well as do housework, cook, spin, weave, and sew. Thomas

Jones had the following slaves at the time of his death (New Castle County Inventory of Thomas Jones, 1824).

Thomas Andersen – to serve 13 years from April 1824
Ann Andersen – to serve 9 years from November 1824
Sarah Bradock, aged 16 – to serve 21 years
Charles Betle, turning 6 on July 9, 1824 – to serve until 31 years old
Henry Robinson, who turned 2 on February 5, 1824 – to serve until 31 years old
George [Washington] Bostic, [aged 9] – to serve until 28 years old
James Byard, born February 20, 1824 – to serve until 31 years old

In 1826, Ann Jones purchased the labor of James Andersen, an enslaved African American. She paid John Vandegrift of Cecil County, Maryland, \$100 to have James Andersen work on Choptank Farm until he reached the age of 31. His age at the time of the transaction was not mentioned. His relationship to the other Andersens on Choptank Farm is unknown. Thomas Andersen was freed from bondage in 1842 when he was 29 years old (Barnes and Pfeiffer 2002:139, 141; Cecil County Deed Volume JS 24:283).

In 1830, Zachariah Jones was listed as the head of a household of five white individuals. The age ranges provided on the census suggest that Choptank Farm was the home of Zachariah's stepmother Ann and his three half-siblings, Ann, Mary, and Thomas. Choptank Farm was also the home to 12 enslaved African Americans. Four of the male slaves were between the ages of 10 and 36. Four enslaved boys under the age of 10 were also part of the Jones household.

The remaining four slaves were probably Ann Andersen, about 29 years old, Sarah Bradock, about 22 years old, and two girls born since the last enumeration in 1820. The Zachariah Jones household also included three free black males. One free black man was over 55 years old and probably was the same free man listed in the 1820 enumeration. The other two black males were between the ages of 10 and 36 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1830:94).

The census taker listed the household of Edward Bayard immediately following the household of Zachariah Jones. Edward Bayard was a free black man who headed a household of six other free blacks. The age ranges suggest that Edward Bayard might have been the patriarch of a family group that included a woman over 55 like himself, one adult male and female, and three children—two boys and one girl. The combination of the Bayard household's appearance "next door" to Zachariah Jones and Bayard family members living in the Jones household suggests that Edward Bayard may have occupied a tenant house on Choptank Farm. Tenant House I is depicted on the 1868 map of St. Georges Hundred in the southeast corner of the farm, where present-day Sharp's Lane meets Choptank Road (Figure 4.1).

A distribution of the Jones estate was made in 1831, when all the children of Thomas Jones had reached their majority. The inheritance did not include the farm itself, which was left whole in two equal shares held by Zachariah Jones and his stepmother Ann V. Jones. At the time of distribution, Thomas Jones' personal estate (e.g., household goods, farm tools, livestock, crops, and slaves) was worth about \$3,000. Ann inherited her dower portion of one-third, about \$1,000.

Each of Thomas' four children inherited about \$500 (New Castle County Probate File, Thomas Jones, 1831).

Thomas P. Jones moved away from Choptank Farm in the 1830s. Zachariah Jones was the sole white male living at Choptank Farm in 1840. Four white females in their 20s comprised the remainder of the white inhabitants. His stepmother Ann is not listed in his household; perhaps this was an enumeration error. Only one free black man, between the ages of 36 and 55, was a resident of the household in this period. The contingent of slaves the Jones family owned increased by one in the 1830s. In 1840, eight men in the household, including six slaves and the free black man, did farm work. Four children had been born into slavery and added to the household since the previous enumeration. Three females were of working age, between 10 and 36 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1840:305).

Thomas and Ann's daughter, Mary Adeline C. Jones, married Benjamin F. Hanson on March 25, 1842. Hanson was one of the most affluent landholders in St. Georges Hundred. Benjamin built a house in the southwestern corner of the hundred for his new bride. The house, named Evergreen Cottage, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Benjamin and Mary had four children before she died in March 1848. He married Mary's sister, Ann E. V. Jones, on December 19, 1848. She died in 1857, and Benjamin took a third wife, who was also named Ann (Delaware Marriage Records, [22]:201 and [12]:235; National Register Nomination – B.F. Hanson House; Richards and Richards 2006:101; Burial Records of Old St. Anne's Cemetery 2008).

In 1850, 45-year-old Zachariah Jones and his 70-year-old stepmother Ann were both residents of Choptank Farm. The other members of the household included 16-year-old Nicholas Vandegrift, who might have been a farming apprentice, and 30-year-old Rebecca Milan. Zachariah Jones concentrated on getting the most production out of his 260 acres of improved farm land. He had eight milking cows that yielded 600 pounds of butter. He had eight horses, 17 cattle, and 24 swine, a greater number than were found on even larger farms. He harvested 2,700 bushels of corn and 900 bushels of oats to support his livestock. Unlike many of the farmers in the hundred, Zachariah did not grow much wheat, producing only 50 bushels. In 1850, New Castle farms produced twice the amount of wheat as Kent and Sussex farms combined. New Castle farmers were more progressive, experimenting with different forms of fertilizer and new crops (Hoffecker 1977).

Eight enslaved blacks did the farm and house work. They included five males between the ages of six and 23, and three females between the ages of 10 and 16 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Agriculture Schedule 1850:115; Population Schedule, 1850:193; Slave Schedule, 1850:[95]).

Ann Jones died on June 29, 1858, at the age of 80 (Burial Records of Old St. Anne's Cemetery 2008). She owned a half interest in Choptank Farm. On her deathbed, she decided to divide her share between the descendants of her first and second marriages. She gave half of her share in the farm to her son, Thomas P. Jones, for his lifetime. Upon his death, the quarter interest in the farm would pass to his four children—i.e., Zachariah Jones, Caroline Hays Jones, Ann T. Jones,

and Linda Jones. Ann left the remaining quarter interest she owned to the children of her deceased daughter, Mary Adeline: Thomas Ross Hanson, Ann Jones Hanson, Benjamin Peter Hanson, and Eugene Marion Hanson. In her will, Ann Jones bequeathed two of her slaves, Sarah Frances and Bob, to the two granddaughters who had been named after her. She stipulated that these two slaves and all her other slaves should be freed when he or she reached the age of 30 (New Castle County Records 1866; New Castle County Probate File – Ann V. Jones, 1858).

Ann Jones' half interest in Choptank Farm included both real and moveable property. Therefore, she claimed 50% ownership in the following slaves (New Castle County Inventory – Ann V. Jones, 1859).

Frances [Bayard], 8 years old
Ellen [Bayard], 8 years old
Ann [Bayard], 3 years old
Edward [Bayard], 2 years old
Mary [White], 6 years old
Adeline [Henry], 20 years old
Bob [Bayard], 3 years old
Thomas [Henry], 17 years old
George [Henry], 22 years old
Andrew Bayard], 7 years old
Louisa [Bayard], 8 months old

According to census records, Zachariah Jones was 58 years old in 1860. He owned real estate valued at \$19,000. He married a wealthy widow, Mary H. Hoffecker, on January 12, 1860 (Delaware Marriage Record Volume 44:163). His household included 13-year-old Zachariah Jones Jr., the son of Thomas P. Jones. The Jones household also included 11 enslaved African Americans, seven of whom were below the age of 10. St. Georges had the largest enslaved population (103) of all the hundreds in New Castle County in 1860. Zachariah owned more slaves than anyone else in the hundred (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Enslaved African Americans in the Zachariah Jones Household in 1860

Name	Age	Color	Occupation
George Henry	24	Black	Farm Laborer
Thomas Henry	22	Black	Farm Laborer
William Henry	18	Black	Farm Laborer
George Madison	23	Black	Farm Laborer
Ellen Bayard	8	Mulatto	
Mary White	7	Black	
Ann Bayard	5	Black	
Robert Bayard	4	Black	
Edward Bayard	4	Black	
Louisa Bayard	4	Mulatto	
Andrew Bayard	2	Black	

Frances Bayard, the 8-year-old enslaved child bequeathed to Ann Jones Hanson, had indeed become part of the household of Benjamin F. Hanson. She was the only slave Hanson listed. Zachariah Jones listed two servants in his household—a 34-year-old black woman, Wilhelmina

Bayard, and William Henry's 20-year-old daughter Adeline, who was described as "mulatto." Wilhelmina was not listed as one of Ann V. Jones' slaves in the probate record nor as one of Zachariah Jones' slaves in the 1860 census of slaves; however, a record of Wilhelmina's manumission was not recorded until 1862. Although Adeline Henry was listed among the slaves belonging to Ann V. Jones, Zachariah Jones did not list her as one of his slaves in 1860. In 1862, Adeline married Alfred Goldsborough, a black laborer (Barnes and Pfeiffer 2002:117; Delaware Marriage Records [44]:112; U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Slave Schedules, 1860:10).

In 1860, Edward Bayard was a 60-year-old African-American farm laborer who headed a household listed immediately after Zachariah Jones. Edward did not own real estate but did possess \$100 worth of personal property. Edward Bayard shared his home with 44-year-old Milison (Millicent) Bayard and five Bayard children between the ages of one and nine; i.e., David, Isabel, John, Mary, and Clarence (U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1860:844).

Ann's son, Thomas P. Jones, and two of his daughters lived with the family of George Derrickson on The Maples, a farm near Middletown. Thomas died on January 25, 1865, clearing the way for his four children, all of whom were minors, to come into their inheritance. A total of eight grandchildren were the owners of a half share in the Choptank Farm. Zachariah Jones brought a suit against his stepmother's heirs in chancery court to make a legal partition of the farm. As expected, the court found that with so many heirs, the property could not be partitioned without a detrimental loss in value. Therefore, the court ordered that the farm be sold at a public auction. The sale was held on October 18, 1866, at a hotel in Middletown. Benjamin F. Hanson, Ann Jones' son-in-law, purchased the 299-acre and 75-square-perch farm for \$22,500, presumably for the benefit of his children (New Castle County Records 1866; New Castle County Deed Book I8:453; U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1860:872). Zachariah Jones retired from farming and moved to Middletown (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Middletown, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1870:720).

Benjamin let his eldest son, Thomas Ross, run Choptank Farm. It is 25-year-old Thomas who is depicted at Choptank Farm on the Beers 1868 map of St. Georges Hundred (see Figure 4.1). Perhaps Thomas did not take to farming. By June 1870, he had moved to Philadelphia and become a clerk in a dry goods store (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Population Schedule, 1870:268). On March 24, 1870, Benjamin F. Hanson sold Choptank Farm to Manlove D. Wilson, a farmer from Appoquinimink Hundred, for \$29,975. Wilson helped finance the operation of the farm through loans from Zachariah Jones (New Castle County Deed Book O9:252; New Castle County Probate File – Zachariah Jones, 1874).

WILSON OWNERSHIP

It appears that Manlove purchased the farm for his second son, George. George was 15 years old in 1870 and, along with his older brother John, helped run his father's Appoquinimink farm. The Wilsons remained residents of Appoquinimink Hundred until George came of age. The new acquisition had increased the value of Manlove Wilson's real-estate holdings to \$50,000 and his

personal property to \$8,000. The Wilson household consisted of Manlove's wife Mary and their seven children, as well as two young black farm laborers, John Bristor and George Washington (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Appoquinimink Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1870:425).

Although the Hansons were no longer owners of Choptank Farm, it appears that their connection may have continued for a short time. Agricultural statistics from Choptank Farm covering the 12-month period prior to June 1870 were reported by Benjamin Hanson Jr., in his role as the farm manager or agent. Choptank Farm was described as being 280 acres and worth \$30,000. The Hanson brothers did not make the farm yield as much as Zachariah Jones had, but had similar outputs when compared with neighboring farms. They turned a profit of \$2,500 after paying \$1,000 in wages for the year. Benjamin P. Hanson was living in Appoquinimink Hundred with his new wife and baby son at the time he submitted the agricultural report.

A young farmer, George Derrickson, was enumerated as part of the sequence of neighbors of Choptank Farm. He probably rented the mansion and farm during the period before George Wilson was ready to manage the farm. George Derrickson was the son of the owner of The Maples, the farm on which Thomas P. Jones had lived. George Derrickson Jr. owned no real estate, but had personal property valued at \$15,000. His household included his wife and baby, servants, and three farm laborers (U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1860:871; 1870:748).

Choptank Farm had at least one tenant house in 1870. Tenant House I, in which the family of Edward Bayard had lived, is depicted on the Beers 1868 map in the southeast corner of the farm on Choptank road adjacent to present-day Sharps Lane (see Figure 4.1). The black family, headed by a 28-year-old farm laborer sequentially following the name of George Derrickson on the 1870 census, is the most likely candidate for the occupants of Tenant House I. James Whortenberry, a native of Delaware, lived with his wife Lydia and three children, two of whom were attending school (U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Agricultural Schedule, 1870:5-6; Population Schedule, 1870:748; Appoquinimink Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1870:429).

Sometime between 1868 and 1881, two tenant houses were built in the northeast corner of the farm on Choptank Road, Tenant Houses II and III (Beers 1868; Hopkins 1881). The latter is the subject of this study (Figure 4.2). More than likely, the Wilsons built the two houses as they prepared for George's management. If these houses were already built by 1870, the most likely tenants were one of the cluster of nine black families that the census enumerator visited after the Whortenberrys. Their immediate "neighbor" was the household of Franklin and Rebecca Fisher. The Fishers were in their early fifties, but had three children under the age of five. The next house on the census taker's route was the home of Minty (short for Araminta) Cooper and Mary Cooper, who were 35 and 40, respectively. Minty Cooper earned money outside the home, while Mary kept house. They shared their household with a 12-year-old domestic servant named Laura Dale and a three-year-old girl named Velmah Johnson (U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule, 1870:748).

The Wilson family was among the earliest white settlers of Sussex County. John Wilson was a farmer and general store proprietor in Cedar Creek Hundred (Primehook Neck) in Sussex County. He married Catherine Davis and had a son in 1819 they named Manlove Davis Wilson. The family moved to the Middletown area in New Castle County. Manlove attended the Middletown Academy and learned agriculture on the family farm. When he was 18 years old, Manlove rented his own farm. He used his profits to buy a 220-acre farm in Appoquinimink Hundred around 1840, where he planted large orchards. Manlove Wilson married Mary V. Frame in Georgetown, Delaware, on January 20, 1852. His wife's father was a county sheriff and state legislator, and well connected to political and business interests in the state (J. M. Runk Co., 1899:398–399).

By 1880, George F. Wilson had completed his apprenticeship on his father's farm. He moved to St. Georges Hundred and lived on Choptank Farm as a "gentleman farmer" with a foreman to manage the farm and a housekeeper to manage his household. Three farmhands were included in his household. In the 1880 agricultural census, George F. Wilson is listed as the farm's operator. He rented the farm from his father in return for a share of the products. The farm consisted of 295 acres of improved farm land, 76 acres of pasture and five acres of woodland; it was valued at \$21,000. The farm's products were worth just under \$2,600, and \$555 had been paid in wages to his farmhands. The farm had horses, milch cows, beef cattle, swine, and poultry. One hundred acres of the farm was devoted to pasture and hay. Another 48 acres was devoted to wheat, 40 acres to corn, 28 acres to rye, and four acres to oat crops. One acre of Choptank Farm had 20 apple trees and another 25 acres were planted with 7,500 peach trees (U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule 1880:364; Agricultural Schedule for western St. Georges Hundred, 1880:7).

The 1880 census offers few clues as to who would have occupied the three Choptank Farm tenant houses. Sandwiched between the census listings for the Wilson home and the home of white farmer, Jesse Holton, was the home of Isaac Cooper, a 40-year-old black farmhand. His wife Mary kept house, and they had one child, one year old, Isaac. Age errors are frequently made on the census. Isaac's wife Mary was probably the same "Mary Cooper" to occupy the house in 1870, despite being listed as a 35 year old in both 1870 and 1880. Isaac Cooper was probably one of the Wilson farm's tenants, but which of the three tenant houses he occupied cannot be determined with census records. Another home "close by" to Choptank Farm, according to the census listing sequence, was headed by Mary Manning. She was probably the mother of Choptank Farm foreman James Manning. Mary Manning lived with her eight children and might have occupied one of the three Wilson tenant houses (U.S. Bureau of the Census, St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, Population Schedule 1880:364).

In 1885, Manlove Wilson retired from farming at the age of 66 and purchased a home in Middletown. He was regarded as a charitable, generous, well-read man who was able to accumulate a substantial amount of valuable farmland—enough to set up each of his seven children (J. M. Runk Co., 1899:398–399). He died on January 13, 1893, at the age of 73. He left his wife a life estate in the home they shared on West Main Street in Middletown.

The eldest child of Manlove and Mary, John P. Wilson, inherited a 255-acre farm in Cecil County, Maryland, upon his father's death. George F., who never married, inherited Choptank Farm. The next in line, Elizabeth Catherine, married John W. Roberts. She inherited a 300-acre

farm in Kent County, Maryland, but the couple lived in Blackbird Hundred. The fourth child, Manlove D. Wilson Jr., inherited the 220-acre family farm in Appoquinimink Hundred. The fifth child, Mary “Mollie” J. Wilson, never married. She was considered to be an exceptionally cultured and refined woman. She inherited a 120-acre tenanted farm in Appoquinimink Hundred. William B. Wilson, the sixth child, inherited a 440-acre farm in Blackbird Hundred, New Castle County, but established his home farm in Cecil County, Maryland. The youngest child, Anna Laura, married Edward D. Hearne, a well-known attorney in Georgetown, Delaware. She inherited a 124-acre tenanted farm in Appoquinimink Hundred (J. M. Runk Co., 1899:398–399; New Castle County Will Book P2:291).

Mary V. Wilson remained in her Middletown home after her husband’s death. Her two unmarried children, George and Mary, lived with her. Mary Wilson lived another 16 years, dying in 1909 at the age of 83 (New Castle County Probate File #2048 – Mary V. Wilson, 1909; Tatnall Tombstone Collection; U.S. Bureau of the Census, West St. Georges Hundred, New Castle County, Delaware, 1900:140). The year before their mother’s death in 1909, George conveyed Choptank Farm to his sister Mollie. About a year after their mother’s death, the Wilson siblings decided to convey all their rights in the Middletown house to their sister Mary, nicknamed “Mollie,” giving her full title. George and Mollie lived in the Middletown family house on West Main Street. In 1924, Mollie sold the house to Edward Gray for \$5,400. George bought a house on South Broad Street to which he, Mollie, and their widowed sister Annie moved. Ever since their move to town, the Wilsons had managed without any live-in servants (New Castle County Deed Books Y21:343; V13:297; Q22:326; N32:435; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Middletown, New Castle County, Delaware, 1910:145; 1920:208; 1930:181).

The renters of Choptank Farm in 1900 and 1910 could not be ascertained, and therefore the residents of the tenant houses are unknown. It is uncertain whether Mollie would have allowed these short-term tenants to occupy the Wilson farm mansion, which was still filled with all her furnishings. A 1939 inventory lists the rooms of the mansion, which included a sun porch, kitchen and pantry, front hall, music room, living room, and dining room on the first floor (New Castle County Probate File #21306 – Mary J. Wilson, 1939). The Wilsons lived only three miles away and could have easily divided their time between their town house and country place. A soil map made in 1915 indicates that Tenant House I, in the southeast corner of the farm on Sharp’s Lane, and one of the tenant houses in the northeast corner of the farm (Tenant House II) had been removed sometime since 1893. The remaining tenant house was the Wilson Tract tenant house (Tenant House III) (Figure 4.3).

According to the 1918 tax assessment, Choptank Farm consisted of 200 tillable acres and 95 unimproved acres. The buildings were valued at \$2,800. The total real-estate value of the farm (land and buildings) was \$17,025 (New Castle County Tax Assessments, St. Georges Hundred, 4th district, 1918: not paginated). Just before World War I, the average farm in New Castle County was 106 acres and worth \$11,084. New Castle County had 2,208 farms in operation; just over half the farms in the county were owner operated (52%). The remaining farms were operated by tenants (48%). Farm operators were overwhelmingly native-born whites (89%). Another 7% were foreign-born whites. Only 4% of New Castle’s farms had a black operator (Wilmer Atkinson Company 1914).

Mollie Wilson owned livestock up until 1918, as indicated by her tax assessments. In succeeding years, her tenants were assessed for the livestock they kept on her farm. Between 1920 and 1939, New Castle County tax records list the names of owners and tenants attached to a particular property.

Some individuals were also residents of the farm, as indicated by their capital tax assessments. The Choptank Farm tenants are presented in Table 4.3 below (New Castle County Tax Assessments, St. Georges Hundred, 4th district).

Table 4.3 Choptank Farm Tenants

Year	Tenant	Value of Stock	Capital Tax
1920	Benfield Dillinger	2,000	Yes
1920	Horace Warner		Yes
1921	Benfield Dillinger	2,000	Yes
1921	Howard Dillinger		Yes
1921	Horace Warner		Yes
1922	Frank M. Barney		
1923	Frank M. Barney		
1923	Benfield Dillinger	2,000	Yes
1923	Howard Dillinger		Yes
1924	Frank M. Barney	1,400	Yes
1925	Frank M. Barney	1,400	Yes
1925	William T. Sartin Jr.		Yes
1926	William T. Sartin	1,500	Yes
1927	Oscar Collins		
1928	Oscar Collins	1,300	Yes
1929	Romeo "Romy" B. Coleman	1,700	
1929	H. & Mamie E. Filligain (sic)		Yes
1930	Romeo B. Coleman	1,700	
1931	George Wilson	1,400	No
1931	Orlando Tigner (sic)	500	No
1932	George Wilson	1,400	No
1932	Orlando Tigner (sic)	500	No
1932	Roy W. Willey	650	Yes
1933	Roy W. Willey	650	Yes
1934	Durant H. Clark	1,100	Yes
1935	Durant H. Clark	1,100	Yes
1937	Durant H. Clark	1,100	Yes
1939	Durant H. Clark	1,100	Yes

In 1920, Mollie Wilson rented Choptank Farm to Benfield Dillinger and Horace Warner. Dillinger was a 54-year-old Pennsylvania-born farmer who lived on Armstrong Road with his wife and three sons. Horace Warner was a 30-year-old single farm laborer who lodged with tenant farmer William Sapp on Choptank Road. The Sapp household, listed immediately adjacent to the Wilson farm's nearest neighbor on the 1920 census, is the most likely candidate to be the occupants of the Wilson farmhouse. William Sapp listed himself as a farm overseer. He was a 68-year-old widower whose home was run by his widowed daughter Ethel. The household included his seven children, between the ages of one and 17. Besides the aforementioned lodger, Horace Warner, the household included a 74-year-old black farm laborer named Wesley Croker. In the vicinity of the Sapp household, according to the census sequence of households, were

homes headed by white tenant farmers. Few blacks headed households on Choptank Road in 1920. One of the few, John Hall, was listed on the census near the Sapps. Hall was an unmarried 50-year-old farmhand. His household included Andrew Miller, another single farmhand, Ellen Foarman, a divorced cook, and 20-year-old Addie Foarman, who had no job (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 13th Representative District, New Castle County, Delaware, 1920:225).

According to tax records, the tenant of Choptank Farm switched from Howard Filligain (also spelled Fillingame) to Romeo “Romy” Coleman sometime during 1930. The census taker, making his way along Choptank Road on April 29, 1930, found Maryland natives Howard and Mamie Fillingame as the tenants in residence at Choptank Farm. They lived with their black hired man, 21-year-old Arthur Henry. The most likely resident of the Wilson Tract tenant house (III) was William Ridgway, a 33-year-old black man who worked for the New Castle County Road Department. His household was the rental property listed on the census as nearest to the Fillingame household. Ridgway, who was single, shared the house, with 26-year-old Addie Hardy (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 13th Representative District, New Castle County, Delaware, 1930:204).

When Mollie Wilson died intestate in 1939, her estate was divided in four parts. One quarter was inherited by her only living sibling, her widowed sister, Annie W. Hearne. The other three-quarters were divided between nieces and nephews, the children of Manlove, William, and Elizabeth. Mollie’s estate consisted of the 299-acre Choptank Farm and the 120-acre Appoquinimink farm that she had inherited from her father. At the time of Mollie’s death, Choptank Farm was in the possession of tenant farmer Durant H. Clark (New Castle County Orphan’s Court File, 1939, #37). Choptank Farm was sold to Bayard Sharp for \$15,500 at a public auction held on November 10, 1939, at the Middletown Hotel (New Castle County Orphan’s Court file 1939 #37).

At the time of her death in 1939, the Wilson Tract tenant house (III) was probably still standing. It is depicted on the 1931 U.S. topographical atlas (Figure 4.4) and on a 1937 aerial. By the time another aerial map of the area was produced in 1954, the tenant house had been removed (Historic Aerials.com; U.S.G.S. 1931). Bayard Sharp was a noted racehorse breeder and owner. He was the original director of Delaware Park and close friend of George H. W. Bush. Sharp expanded the Wilson Tract into a 750-acre farm. He remained the owner under his personal name until 1999, when he sold it to his corporate entity, Choptank, LLC. Bayard Sharp died in 2002 (New Castle County Deed Book 2766:301).

Choptank Farm was typical of many other Delaware farms. During the nineteenth century, the Hansons and Wilsons counted on plentiful and cheap black labor to run their diversified farms and become their domestic servants. These farms were made even more profitable by the peach industry from the 1830s until the 1890s. Gentleman farmers lived off the income of their farmland rentals, often buying additional farms that were rented to tenants. After 1900, farm labor became scarcer and managing the farm became more difficult. Farm owners found good tenants and moved to town. The 1920s brought an agricultural depression that made farm products less profitable and rents low. The loss of income at Choptank Farm is reflected in the \$2,500 mortgage that Mollie Wilson took out in 1934. She died in debt that the sale of Choptank Farm was able to satisfy (Bausman 1933:164–166; New Castle County Mortgage Book T26:107).
