

**Appendix D:
Floral Report**

Report on the Analysis of Flotation-recovered Archeobotanical Remains from the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site (7NC-F-94), New Castle County, Delaware

Analyzed and reported by Justine McKnight

Introduction

Archaeological data recovery at the Wilson Farm Tenancy site (7NC-F-94) investigated an agricultural tenancy occupied during the years 1880-1960. The site produced evidence of multiple structures, yards, 85 historical features and a dense array of artifacts relating to the domestic, architectural and agricultural use of the property. In addition to this historic occupation, archaeology revealed evidence of an ephemeral prehistoric component within the site limits.

An important research goal of the Phase III data recovery effort was the definition of subsistence strategies relied upon by site residents over nearly 100 years of occupation. In addition to kitchen artifacts (canning tools and commercial foodstuff containers) and faunal remains identifying a suite of wild and farm-raised animal foods, excavated features yielded carbonized plant macro-remains which relate to the history of plant use at the site.

It was anticipated that the study of these archaeological plant remains would bolster our understanding of the diet and domestic life of the Wilson Farm tenants, and contribute to a more complete interpretation of the form and function of yard features - especially the gardens and dependencies associated with tenant life at the turn of the century in rural Delaware.

Soil samples for the recovery of plant macro-remains were secured from eight historic features directly related to the domestic occupation of the site. Ten flotation samples totaling over nine liters in volume were processed and analyzed. Table 1 provides an overview of the archeobotanical samples analyzed.

Table 01: Summary of Contexts Sample for Plant Macro-remains.

Feature Types	Feature Numbers	Date, Terminus Post Quem	Number of Samples	Original soil Volume (ml)	Weight of recovered plant material (grams)
Exterior builders trench	51	1925	1	1400	0.11
Shaft, possible well	34, 34D	1899	3	3000	0.115
Pits, various	25, 26, 32, 57, 60, 85	Early 19th to early 20th c.	6	5000	0.835
3 feature types	8 features		10	9400	1.06

Methods

Ten soil samples from eight cultural features were individually processed at the archaeological laboratory of URS Corporation, Inc., in Burlington, New Jersey, using water flotation. Volume and weight of each archaeological soil sample were recorded prior to processing. Samples were individually processed using a modified SMAP (Shell Mound Archaeological Project) (Watson 1976) type flotation system. The SMAP flotation machine is equipped with 2 submerged shower heads to aid agitation. Processing resulted in 2 (light and heavy) fractions of material. The light fraction was collected in nylon hose and the heavy fraction was captured in standard window screen. Floted portions were air dried.

Recovered light and heavy fractions (see Table 02) were submitted to archeobotanical consultant Justine McKnight at her Severna Park laboratory for analysis.

Table 02: Flotation Sample Details.

Fs no.	Feature no.	Original soil Volume (ml)	Original soil weight (kg)	Light fraction submitted	Heavy fraction submitted	Weight of recovered plant material (grams)
5008	26	600	0.88	Yes	Yes	0.07
5012	25	300	0.52	Yes	Yes	0.06
5040	32	1200	1.5	Yes	Yes	0.205
5072	34D	800	0.94	Yes	Yes	0.115
5118	57	1400	1.56	Yes	Yes	0.1
5132	60	600	0.7	Yes	Yes	0.13
5226	51	1400	1.96	Yes	Yes	0.11
5249	34	1000	1.18	Yes	*No	0
5255	85	900	1.18	Yes	Yes	0.27
5330	34	1200	1.64	Yes	*No	0
10 samples	8 features	9,400 ml	12.06 kg	10 light fractions	8 heavy fractions	1.06

* heavy fraction contained no visible plant artifacts

Dry heavy and light fractions were carefully passed through graduated geological sieves to provide divisions for analysis. Working beneath low-power magnification, carbonized botanical remains were separated from non-archeobotanical debris. The greater-than or equal-to 2mm botanical specimens were examined under 10X to 40X magnification and sorted into general categories of material (i.e. wood, nut, seed, etc.). Descriptions were recorded for each category of the greater-than or equal-to 2mm material. The less-than 2mm size fractions were examined under low magnification, and scanned for the remains of seeds and cultivated plants. Non-carbonized seeds were generally described but they were considered to be modern intrusions and were not removed from sample matrices or quantified.

Identifications were routinely attempted on all seed, nut and miscellaneous plant remains, and on a sub-sample of twenty randomly selected wood fragments from each sample containing *more* than twenty specimens, in accordance with standard practice (Pearsall 2000). Identifications of all classes of botanical remains were made to the genus level when possible, to the family level when limited

diagnostic information was available, and to the species level only when the assignment could be made with absolute certainty. All identifications were made under low magnification (10X to 40X) with the aid of standard texts (Edlin 1969; Hoadley 1990; Kozlowski 1972; Martin and Barkely 1961; Panshin and deZeeuw 1980; Schopmeyer 1974), and checked against plant specimens from a modern reference collection representative of New Castle county, Delaware. Specimen weights were recorded using an electronic balance accurate to 0.01 grams.

Results of Analysis

A total of 9.4 liters of historic feature fill were processed, yielding a site total of 1.06 grams of carbonized archaeological plant material. Identified plant remains include wood charcoal, a carbonized nutshell fragment, amorphous carbon, carbonized fungi, and non-carbonized fruit and weed seeds. An inventory of flotation-recovered plant remains is presented by FS number in Table 03.

In addition to identifiable botanical remains, the flotation samples contained an array of small artifacts and natural materials. These included non-carbonize roots, insect egg cases and body parts, fish scales, crushed shell, small snails, deciduous leaf fragments, and a possible small glass bead (FS 5255). In addition, many samples contained spherical carbon residue, a common bi-product of vegetal burning. It is formed when plant high in silica - such as grass - are burned and the silica fuses into droplets which persist in the soil matrix.

Wood Charcoal

The Wilson Farm Tenancy Site flotation samples produced a total of 127 fragments (0.91 grams) of wood charcoal. Of this total, 109 fragments (a maximum of 20 fragments per sample) were randomly selected for identification. The wood assemblage was characterized by small, fragmentary pieces of charcoal. The condition and small size of the fragments limited the analyst's ability to make conclusive taxonomic identification of many specimens. Seventy percent of the assemblage was classed as "ring porous", "deciduous" or "unidentifiable". Of the remaining fragments, 19 (17%) were white oak (*Quercus spp. LEUCOBALANUS group*), five (5%) were maple (*Acer spp.*), five (5%) were black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), two (2%) were pine (*Pinus spp.*), and one (1%) was hickory (*Carya spp.*).

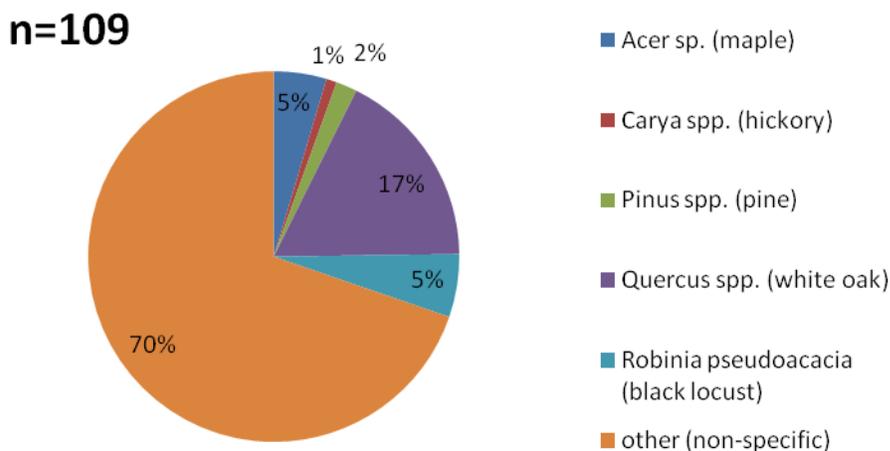


Figure 01: Percent composition of wood charcoal types identified.

Table 03: Inventory of Flotation-recovered Archeobotanical Remains from Site 7NC-F-94.

fs number	5008	5012	5040	5072	5118	5132	5226	5249	5255	5330	total
feature	26	25	32	34D	57	60	51	34	85	34	10 samples
feature type	pit	shallow pit	pit	fill deposit	pit	pit	ex builders trench	shaft/well	pit	shaft/well	
terminus post quem	1920	1924	1875	1907	1812	1840	1925	1899	1875	1899	
original soil sample weight (kg)	0.88	0.52	1.5	0.94	1.56	0.7	1.96	1.18	1.18	1.64	12.06
original soil sample volume (ml)	600	300	1200	800	1400	600	1400	1000	900	1200	9400
weight analyzed carbonized plant remains (grams)	0.07	0.06	0.205	0.115	0.1	0.13	0.11	0	0.27	0	1.06
WOOD CHARCOAL (n of fragments)	4	7	26	13	13	15	17	0	32	0	127
total weight (grams)	0.07	0.03	0.16	0.11	0.08	0.11	0.1	0	0.25	0	0.91
<i>Acer sp. (maple)</i>			2					3			5
<i>Carya spp. (hickory)</i>								1			1
<i>Pinus spp. (pine)</i>											2
<i>Quercus spp. (white oak)</i>	2				4		8	7			19
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia (black locust)</i>				6							6
<i>ring porous</i>											7
<i>deciduous</i>		7	5	7	9	13	9	2			45
<i>unidentifiable</i>	2		13			2		7			24
total identified fragments	4	7	20	13	13	15	17	0	20	0	109
NUT REMAINS (carbonized) (n of fragments)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
total weight (grams)	0	0	0.005	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.005
JUGLANDACEAE (walnut family)			1								1
MISCELLANEOUS PLANT REMAINS (carbonized) (n of fragments)	0	1	8	1	2	4	1	0	3	0	20
total weight (grams)	0	0.03	0.04	0.005	0.02	0.02	0.01	0	0.02	0	0.145
Amorphous carbon		1	8	1	2	3	1		3		19
Fungal fructification						1					1
NON-CARBONIZED SEEDS (presence)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
<i>Acalypha spp. (copperleaf)</i>	x	x	x	x	x						5
<i>Amaranthus sp. (pigweed)</i>								x	x	x	4
<i>Chenopodium/Amaranth (goosefoot/pigweed)</i>						x					1
<i>Fragaria sp. (strawberry)</i>								x	x		2
<i>Mollugo verticillata (carpetweed)</i>	x	x	x	x			x				5
<i>Panicum/Setaria (panic/foxtail grass)</i>	x										1
<i>Phytolacca americana (poke)</i>			x		x						2
<i>Rubus sp. (blackberry/raspberry)</i>			x					x	x		3
<i>Sambucus canadensis (elder)</i>			x					x	x		3
POACEAE (small grass)											3
SOLANACEAE (nightshade)			x								1

Carbonized Nutshell

Nutshell remains were limited to a single walnut family (JUGLANDACEAE) fragment recovered from pit Feature 32. The specimen represents an interior shell fragment, and it is uncertain whether it belongs to a hickory (*Carya*) or walnut (*Juglans*) species.

Miscellaneous Plant Remains (carbonized)

Amorphous carbon dominates the miscellaneous plant material class from the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site. A total of 19 unidentifiable fragments occurred in seven of the ten samples analyzed. In addition, a single fragment of a fungal fruit was identified from Feature 60. This fungal artifact may have entered the archaeological record attached to wood.

Non-carbonized Plant Remains

Non-carbonized plant remains observed within the assemblage included modern root fibers, leaf fragments and non-carbonized seeds. These seeds occurred in 100% of the flotation samples analyzed. Eleven different seed types were identified: Copperleaf (*Acalypha spp.*), pigweed (*Amaranthus spp.*), goosefoot (*Chenopodium spp.*), goosefoot or pigweed (*Chenopodium/Amaranth*), strawberry (*Fragaria sp.*), carpetweed (*Mollugo verticillata*), panic or foxtail grass (*Panicum/Setaria*), poke (*Phytolacca americana*), raspberry or blackberry (*Rubus sp.*), elder (*Sambucus canadensis*), grass (POACEAE), and nightshade (SOLANACEAE). It is unlikely that these non-carbonized specimens relate directly to historic occupation of the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site. Although the persistence of non-carbonized plant remains from rare contexts such as consistently xeric or water-saturated environments does occur (Hastorf and Popper 1988; Minnis 1981; Pearsall 2000), such conditions do not characterize the historic contexts sampled. Non-carbonized plant remains occurring within archaeological soil samples from similar open-site environments are usually considered to be intrusive modern specimens (Minnis 1981; Keepax 1977). The recovery of non-carbonized plant remains may reveal specific contamination episodes associated with animal (i.e. rodent, insect, gastropod) burrowing, the action of root growth and decay, architectural destruction, aeolian processes, or by the combined effects of these factors.

Discussion

Plant macro-remains recovered from historic features can reveal details of daily life and the organization and use of space. Below, the archeobotanical data from the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site are examined by individual feature.

Feature 25 describes a shallow pit feature located near the interior of the south wall of the tenant house foundation. The feature yielded mostly architectural artifacts and household items (mostly bottle glass). A single 300 ml flotation sample (FS 5012) (weighing 0.52 kg) was processed and analyzed from Feature 25. A feature total of 0.06 grams of carbonized plant macro-remains included seven fragments of deciduous wood charcoal and a single piece of amorphous carbon. Four species of non-carbonized seeds identified within the feature are thought to be modern intrusions.

Feature 26 was an oval pit located near the south wall within the interior of the tenant house foundation. This feature produced an association of iron artifacts arranged in a unique manner and pointing to the feature as a site of special, possible spiritual significance (Morrell and Glumac 2007:7). A single 600 ml flotation sample (FS 5008) (0.88 grams) processed from Feature 26 produced 0.07 grams of carbonized plant macro-remains. Four fragments of wood charcoal (pine and unidentifiable) were recovered. Four types of non-carbonized seeds were also noted.

Feature 32 was a shallow, irregularly shaped pit located inside the tenant house foundation. The feature bore a small collection of domestic artifacts. A 1200 ml (1.5 kg) flotation sample (FS 5040) from Feature 32 produced 0.205 grams of carbonized plant material. The widest diversity of plant materials was recovered from this feature. Wood charcoal (26 fragments, with maple and ring porous taxa identified), a single JUGLANDACEAE (walnut) nutshell fragment, and 8 fragments of amorphous carbon were identified. Feature 32 also contained five different species of non-carbonized seeds.

Feature 34 was a brick-lined, wood-sheathed shaft feature (probably a well) located just west of the tenant house. Two contexts within this feature were sampled, each bearing a mix of architectural and late nineteenth - early twentieth century domestic artifacts. Two flotation samples were collected and processed from the shaft feature. These were devoid of carbonized archeobotanical remains. Non-carbonized seeds representing four different kinds of weedy plants were noted.

Feature 34D describes the fill deposit into which the shaft feature (Feature 34) was excavated. This fill deposit yielded nearly 700 artifacts (predominantly architectural items with some domestic and personal artifacts). A single, 800 ml (0.94 kg) flotation sample retained from Feature 34D produced 0.115 grams of carbonized plant macro-remains. Thirteen fragments of wood charcoal (black locust and deciduous types) and amorphous carbon (one fragment) were recovered. The sample also contained non-carbonized seeds representing two distinct taxa.

Feature 51 was the exterior of the builder's trench associated with the east wall of the tenant house foundation. Brick fragments and a variety of kitchen-related artifacts (including canning jar and lid liner fragments) were recovered from the trench. 1400 ml (1.96 kg) of feature sediment were submitted to flotation processing, yielding 0.11 grams of carbonized plant material (FS 5226). Recovered plant macro-remains include 17 fragments of wood charcoal (white oak and deciduous types) and 1 piece of amorphous carbon. Two kinds of non-carbonized seeds were also identified.

Feature 57 was shallow, oval pit located in the north yard. A small artifact collection recovered from the feature included architectural debris, container glass and ceramics. A single flotation sample from Feature 57 (FS 5118) measured 1400 ml (1.56 grams). Recovered archeobotanical remains include 13 fragments of wood charcoal (white oak, deciduous) and two fragments of amorphous carbon. Non-carbonized seeds (three taxa) were also noted.

Feature 60 was a rectangular pit located in the north yard which bore a small collection of artifacts. Processing of a 600 ml (0.7 kg) flotation sample (FS 5132) produced 0.13 grams of carbonized plant material. Fifteen fragments of wood charcoal (deciduous and unidentifiable types), three fragments of amorphous carbon and a fungal fragment were recovered. The sample also contained non-carbonized weed seeds.

Feature 85 describes a circular pit located in the north yard which contained a variety of architectural and domestic artifacts. 900 ml (1.18 kg) of feature fill were flotation-processed from Feature 85, producing 0.27 grams of carbonized plant artifacts. Thirty-two wood charcoal fragments were recovered (maple, hickory, white oak, ring porous and unidentifiable types). Amorphous carbon (3 fragments) was also present. In addition, the Feature 85 sample contained non-carbonized seeds from four species of plants.

Table 04: Overview of Feature Results.

Feature No.	Terminus Post Quem	Grams of carbonized plant remains per liter of feature fill	Wood present	Nut present	Amorphous carbon present	Fungi present
25	1924	0.2	Yes	No	Yes	No
26	1920 (1880)	0.117	Yes	No	No	No
32	1875	0.171	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
34	1899	0	No	No	No	No
34D	1907	0.144	Yes	No	Yes	No
51	1925	0.079	Yes	No	Yes	No
57	1812	0.071	Yes	No	Yes	No
60	1840	0.217	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
85	1875	0.3	Yes	No	Yes	No

Grouping the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site flotation samples together by gross feature classes, we are able to examine the data for general patterns (see Table 05). The pit feature class contains the greatest diversity of plant artifacts (wood, nut and miscellaneous) as well as the greatest diversity of species (a range of identifiable woods are present in the pits). In addition, the pit feature class reveals the greatest ubiquity of non-carbonized seed types, suggesting that these contexts experienced the greatest degree of bioturbation or movement of minute materials. Figure 02 compares the density of archeobotanical materials within each feature type using the measure of average grams of carbonized material per liter of feature sediment processed. The pit feature class was the most productive in terms of carbon density, followed by the builders trench and shaft/well feature types.

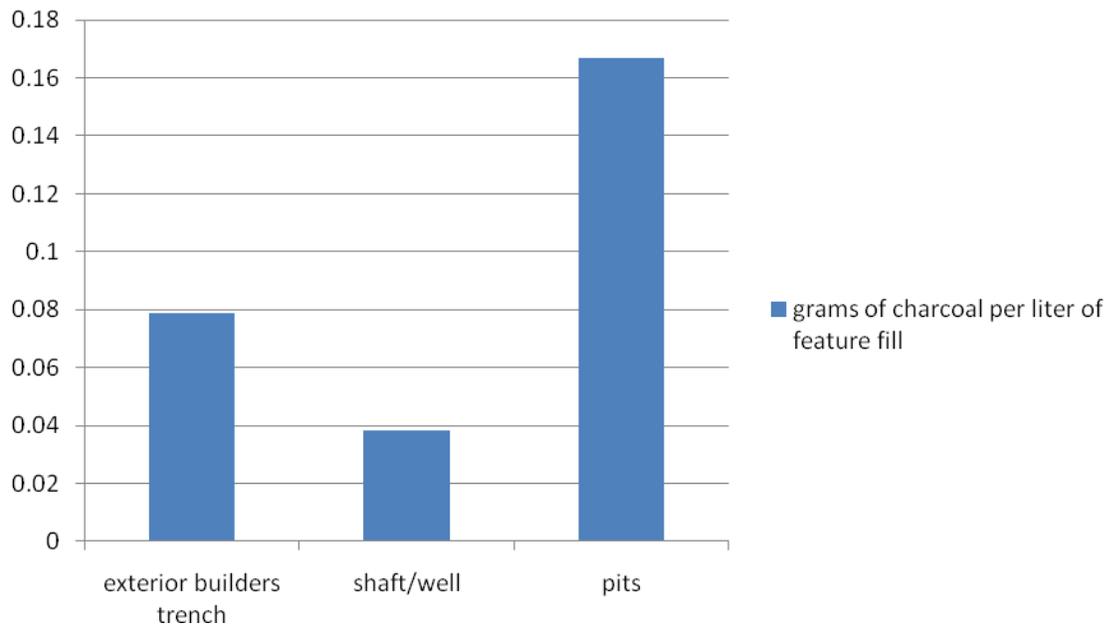


Figure 02: Comparison of the density of archeobotanical materials by feature type.

Table 05: Summary of Flotation Data by Feature Type.

Feature type	builders trench	shaft/well	pits	total
Feature numbers	51	34 and 34D	25, 26, 32, 57, 60, 85	10 samples
No of samples	1	3	6	
Original soil sample weight (kg)	1.96	3.76	6.34	12.06
Original soil sample volume (ml)	1400	3000	5000	9400
Weight analyzed carbonized plant remains (grams)	0.11	0.115	0.835	1.06
WOOD CHARCOAL (n of fragments)	17	13	97	127
total weight (grams)	0.1	0.11	0.7	0.91
<i>Acer sp. (maple)</i>			5	5
<i>Carya spp. (hickory)</i>			1	1
<i>Pinus spp. (pine)</i>			2	2
<i>Quercus spp. (white oak)</i>	8		11	19
<i>Robinia pseudoacacia (black locust)</i>		6		6
<i>ring porous</i>			7	7
<i>deciduous</i>	9	7	29	45
<i>unidentifiable</i>			24	24
total identified fragments	17	13	79	109
NUT REMAINS (carbonized) (n of fragments)	0	0	1	1
total weight (grams)	0	0	0.005	0.005
JUGLANDACEAE (walnut family)			1	1
MISC PLANT REMAINS (carbonized) (n of fragments)	1	1	18	20
total weight (grams)	0.01	0.005	0.13	0.145
Amorphous carbon	1	1	17	19
Fungal fructification			1	1
NON-CARBONIZED SEEDS (percentage presence)	100	100	100	100
<i>Acalypha spp. (copperleaf)</i>		33	67	50
<i>Amaranthus sp. (pigweed)</i>	100	66	17	40
<i>Chenopodium/Amaranth (goosefoot/pigweed)</i>			17	10
<i>Fragaria sp. (strawberry)</i>		33	17	20
<i>Mollugo verticillata (carpetweed)</i>	100	33	50	50
<i>Panicum/Setaria (panic/foxtail grass)</i>			17	10
<i>Phytolacca americana (poke)</i>			33	20
<i>Rubus sp. (blackberry/raspberry)</i>		33	33	30
<i>Sambucus canadensis (elder)</i>		33	33	30
POACEAE (small grass)			50	30
SOLANACEAE (nightshade)			17	1

The Wilson Farm project area lies within the Oak-Pine Forest (Atlantic Slope Section) as defined by Braun (1950:192) and the Oak-Hickory-Pine forest association outlined by Kuchler (1964). Native forest cover over the project area was characterized by a medium tall to tall forest of broadleaf deciduous and needleleaf evergreen trees. Dominant species would have included hickory, shortleaf pine, loblolly pine, white oak and post oak. The flotation-recovered wood assemblage from historic features at 7NC-F-94 is composed of taxa common to this forest association (Little 1971; Sargent 1884; Taber 1960; Tatnall 1946). It is interesting that coniferous trees are not well-represented with the feature assemblage, although they would have formed a significant part of local forests. The low frequency of coniferous woods suggests that the recovered wood remains represent species which were culturally selected for particular uses (perhaps for fuel, as both maple and white oak are high-calorie woods) (Graves 1919). Tree species documented archaeologically at the Wilson Farm Tenancy include both upland and lowland forest elements, suggesting that the site inhabitants exploited a variety of available micro-environments.

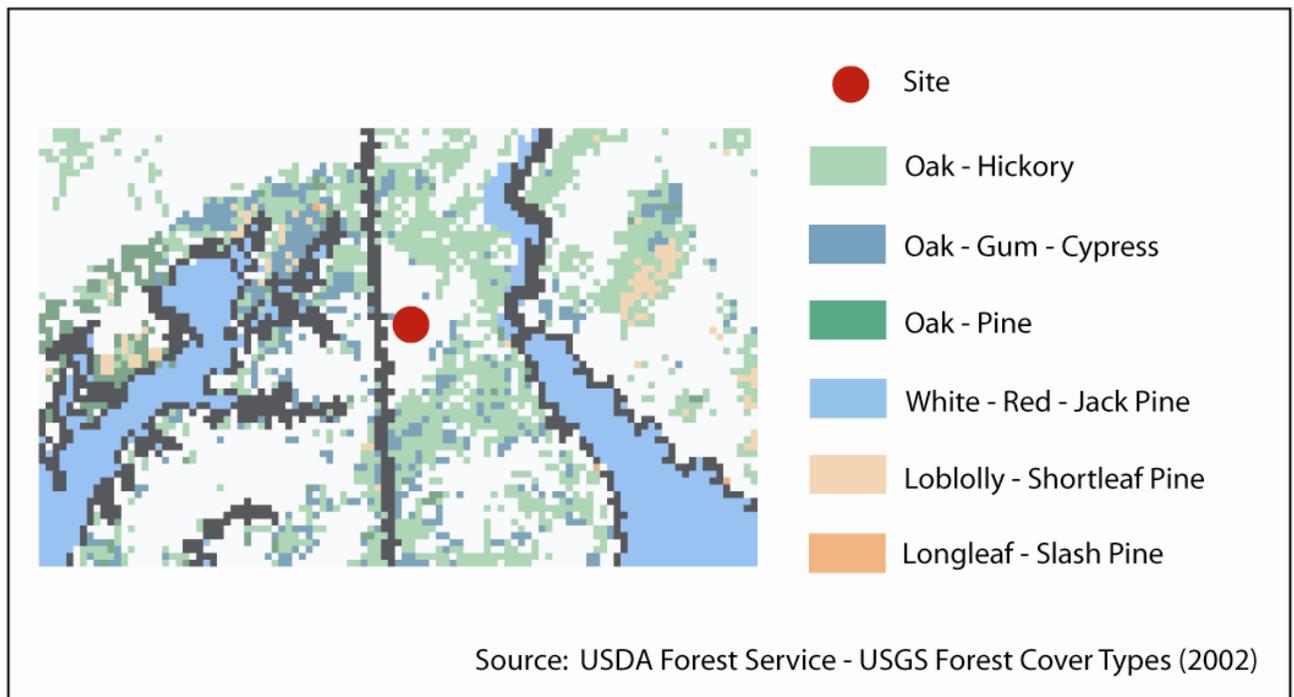


Figure 03: Existing forest cover in the vicinity of the project area.

While archeobotanical remains often provide strong markers for seasonality, the meager data from the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site fail to suggest any seasonal patterns.

The archeobotanical assemblage from the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site provides only limited data to aid in our understanding of the lives of tenant farmers at the turn of the century in rural Delaware. The assemblage, being limited to wood fibers and amorphous charcoal (with fungus) provides no evidence for the kinds of plant foods gathered, grown, processed or consumed by site residents. Likewise, the assemblage offers no data upon which to base an interpretation of the agricultural venture around which site economy is thought to have been focused.

Study of the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site features provides an opportunity to examine turn of the century life in Delaware. Archival research suggests that the site was occupied primarily by African-American tenants for most or all of its history. It was hoped that the archeobotanical assemblage from this site would advance our understanding of the culture of rural tenancies in the region. While an adequate number and diversity of cultural features were sampled during site data recovery, poor organic preservation severely limited both the quantity and quality of information regarding human-plant histories at the site. Disappointingly, the archeobotanical assemblage recovered from the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site provides insufficient data on which to interpret the full range of plants and plant products that were undoubtedly important to the people who occupied the tenancy residents and the economy of the farm.

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