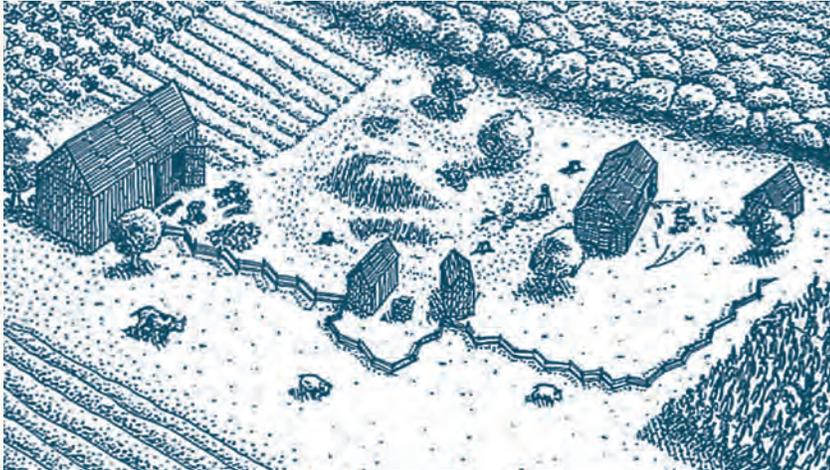


Archaeological Investigations at The Downs

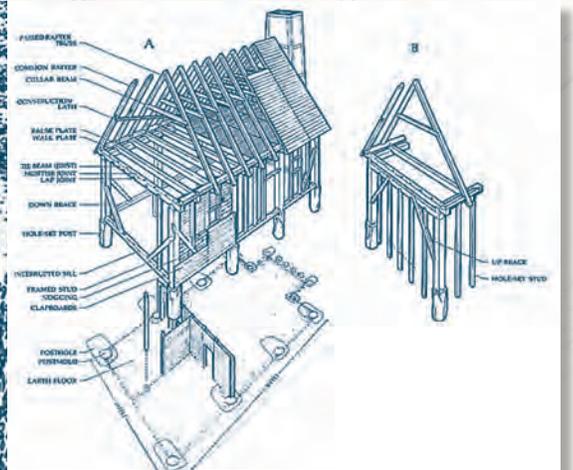
Somy Field Site, Little Heaven, Delaware

The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) plans to build a grade separated intersection on SR 1 in Little Heaven. The work is a federally funded project that is sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). A.D. Marble & Company is investigating the Somy Field Site, a colonial period farmstead site, prior to construction. Archaeologists identified the site in 2008 when they discovered middle to late eighteenth century pottery sherds in the southwestern part of the field. The team excavated some test pits in 2011 and found similar artifacts, as well as fenceline post holes and a pit that may have been the cellar of an earthfast-constructed house.



Source: Grettler et al. 1995:87

Figure 1. Example of what the farm complex at the Somy Field Site may have looked like during its active years.



Source: Carson and Hoang in Carson et al. 1981:143

Figure 2. Drawing depicts the possible construction style of the house at the site.

Historic research shows that the site sits on a large tract referred to as The Downs during the early eighteenth century. According to records, four different families owned the property in the 1700s. The artifacts prove someone lived on the site at that time; however, there are no written records that confirm residence until later in 1817. It is likely that the eighteenth-century owners were absentee landlords who rented the land to a tenant farmer, and it is the farmer's archaeological record discovered and studied today.

The Delaware Historic Preservation Office (DESHPO), in consultation with DelDOT, determined that the site was potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places because it could provide information about eighteenth-century tenant farm life in central Delaware. It is expected that the investigations will uncover a well; more fenceline post holes; the remainder of the cellar hole; signs of outbuildings like a privy, root cellar, and a shed or barn; and more artifacts dating to the colonial period. Ultimately, the artifacts and buildings will reveal patterns that shed light on the tenant farmer family's daily life and how it made a living in rural eighteenth-century central Delaware.



Figure 3. Some of the artifacts discovered previously at the site.

For more on the DelDOT Archaeology Program:

<http://deldot.gov/archaeology/>

For more on archaeology in Little Heaven:

http://deldot.gov/archaeology/little_heaven/phlb/index.shtml

http://deldot.gov/archaeology/little_heaven/phase2/index.shtml

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