

Speech for Media Day at Choptank Road

By David Clarke, DelDOT Archaeologist

Good morning, I would like to thank you all for coming today, to visit the Wilson Farm Archaeological Site. I would also like to thank the Federal Highway Administration, as a sponsoring agency on the Choptank Road Project, the State Historic Preservation Office, specifically Gwen Davis for her continued support to protect and preserve all of Delaware's cultural resources, Dr. Lu Ann Decunzo from the University of Delaware for coming out today to talk about Historic Archaeology in Delaware, the consulting firm KSK, specifically Kimberly Morell, who has done any excellent job with the excavation of the site, and finally Pamela who has worked with us on every step of the project.

As one of DelDOT's two archaeologists Kevin Cunningham, and myself are tasked with overseeing all the Archaeological work that has gone on along Choptank Road, including the excavation of the Wilson Farm Tenancy site. As a result of the Archaeology we are doing here, we are able to breath life back in to the people who lived here in the past, and see how they lived, what they ate, and what toys the children played with. This research will add to our collective knowledge about Delaware's vibrant cultural heritage.

As part of DelDOT's environmental compliance with federal laws, an archaeological survey was performed along Choptank Road; this survey located the presence of the site we are standing near today. In the same manner that federal laws dictate DelDOT to survey project areas for endangered animals such as Bald Eagles, federal laws such as Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, mandate that we survey for Archaeological resources. Now, most of

the time, when archaeological sites are located within a project boundary, we adjust the project design to avoid the archaeological site. However, in cases such as this one we were unable to move or redesign the project for a number of reasons. Therefore, DeIDOT has hired a consultant to perform an archaeological excavation of the portion of the site that will be impacted during road construction. On average, DeIDOT performs about 15 to 20 Archaeological surveys each year, with about 1 or 2 Archaeological sites being fully excavated in the same manner as this one, almost all of the archaeological sites found during surveys are avoided via redesigning projects and their boundaries, thus protecting and preserving Archaeological sites.

Ok, on to the site, the Wilson Farm Archaeological site is most likely a late 19th to early 20th century tenancy site. The reason I say most likely is because the excavation of the site is still ongoing, and we won't know all the facts about the site until we have finished the excavation and have begun the laboratory analysis of the over 25,000 artifacts collected. That being said, what we do know to-date, is that the site consist of a house foundation, and associated artifacts such as children's marbles, bricks, nails, window pane glass, pottery, an ornate metal spoon, food remains in the form of butchered animal bones, coins, buttons, beads, etc., all this information along with historic maps and much archival research, eludes to this site being that of a tenant farmer during the late 1800's to early 1900's. Tenant farmer archaeological sites from this time period are not uncommon to Delaware, but what makes this site so important is the excellent preservation of artifacts and an intact house foundation. We do not yet know who lived here, or for how long, but most likely a family with children lived here who worked the nearby agricultural fields for themselves or a Farmstead owner.

Now, I would like to introduce Gwen Davis from the State Historic Preservation Office, who is going to say a few words about historic preservation in Delaware, and Dr. LuAnn Decunzo from the University of Delaware who is going to say a few words about the nature of historic archaeology in Delaware. Again I want to thank you all for coming out today. After our talks Kimberly Morell from KSK, and myself will give you a guided tour of the site, a chance to see and talk to the archaeologists performing the excavation, as well as see some artifacts from the site, and answer any questions you may have.