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Mr. Kevin Cunningham
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Dear Kevin:

I'd like to go over the research design document in some detail. However, in a letter there is space only for a few high spots. It seems to me that the work of several others in this area should be considered. Dan, Cara, Lou, and I have been refining these very concepts for about ten years now. Cara, for one, drafted a design for the use of the state. I can see in this document some misconceptions that will trap a newcomer who has not worked extensively with the subject.

In particular, see my two publications on the subject, which were published as volumes 1 and 2 of the state preservation plan several years ago.

I urge you to consider convening a symposium on the subject, before you go any farther. If this document is published in its present form, you are likely to precipitate polarization and controversy that is unnecessary at this stage.

First, I question the statement that the area under study is topographically uniform and homogenous. The author later identifies some rather large exceptions. Certainly it is impossible to say that the original settlers were culturally homogenous, or that the population ever became a single social or cultural entity. Any research design specifically for Delaware must take into account our rich ethnic and physical diversity.

Three competent researchers have studied the first-generation rural settlements in great detail. Working in all three counties, they found that the early land grants were defined by natural features and not by any pre-arranged patterns. These physical features that defined

the earliest boundaries survive as boundaries today.

In fact, below the canal, there are at least four different historic environments, that produced radically different settlement and subsistence patterns from first colonization to the present.

Hudson's three stages might apply to Pencader, Christiana, Brandywine, White Clay, and Mill Creek hundreds, where the land was in fact parcelled out in Penn's grid scheme after 1682. In fact, Lemon's observations hold true in these parts of Delaware. However, the vast majority of our land area was laid out in a wholly different type of pattern. Settlements were few and concentrated; landholdings were small and close together. The first areas of settlement were densely populated, planned communities. Later the population dispersed, to coalesce later.

Moreover, I believe that it is difficult to blandly equate the federal Land Office system to Penn's. The Pennsylvania land office never was able to impose the grid on Delaware in any case. In Iowa, the grid was a prearranged system, which dictated the very concept of land itself, as sections and quarter sections. In the east, land was conceived in terms of plantations, fields, or inheritances of undefined shape and acreage. The whole concept is different.

Our population did not spread out evenly, partly because of large speculative holdings, partly because of topography, and partly because of the transportation network. Until the generation of the American Revolution, everything west of the uppermost mills was "forest" or inferior land.

During the nineteenth century, railroad routes marked a massive shift in population. Up and down the Delaware Rail Road, the average size of landholdings changed radically, from large speculative tracts, to smallholdings, back to large farms, and then back to smallholdings. The duPont road in the twentieth century, and the decline of the peach industry, marked another radical population and homestead-size shift.

However, in the more recent case, the forces at work were wholly different.

The paper does not address the very important fact that Delaware had two periods of frontier town-building, in the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In both cases, new

towns were erected quickly, according to a predetermined and culturally predictable plan, without a developed hinterland network. Both the coastal frontier towns and the railroad towns inherited the Ulster model verbatim, as did the courthouse towns of Arkansas and other well-publicized examples. This is not to say that all Delaware townsites were born in this manner. Certainly there is a second, accretional, form of townsite in Delaware, that emerged in the presence of mills, landing roads, and north-south roads, in a combination that could be quantified.

Variability of farm size in Delaware is a function of soil, drainage, transportation, varying ownership types, and market. Because certain resources are concentrated in specific areas of the state, we have a very high degree of geographical determinism.

I question the statement that six identified DelDOT projects can adequately test all the settlement types listed in the paper. In the first place, they are upstate, where the historical environment is utterly different from downstate. Furthermore, the sites in question reflect only about a third of our settlement history.

For your consideration, I submit a list of "factors affecting settlement development" in Delaware. These may fit into the rather broad categories outlined by Henry, but some are so significant that they probably should be considered as major factors independently:

Soil Drainage

Since the seventeenth century, drainage has dictated settlement, both constricting and expanding the spread of population. This aspect of geography is nowhere mentioned in the document, probably because it was not a factor in Southeastern Pennsylvania or Iowa, whence came the data for the model. The paper does, however, identify marshes as impediments to settlement, which is precisely the opposite of the Delaware experience.

Power

Water power is such a dominant theme in Delaware history, from the earliest times through the nineteenth century, that it cannot be lumped under geography or wherever it is. Nearly every community in the state before 1855, except New Castle, Dover, and Wilmington, derived much of its vigor from water power resources.

Portage

I find the definition of transportation route types too generalized and too vague. Delmarva's role as a portage on the north-south corridor made nearly all of our transpeninsular routes part of the inter-regional system. This would place most of our roads in the highest class of the conventional hierarchy, which is misleading in the extreme. New Castle is the only early portage town that could be called a center for inter-regional communication. In view of the overwhelming importance of portage throughout Delaware, I believe that you need to re-think the whole matter of surface transportation categories. Even the Delaware Rail Road was conceived as a portage, part of a combined water-land inter-regional network.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, Delaware's major transportation arteries ceased to be portages and became parts of single-mode transportation networks. The slow conversion to single-mode transportation was not complete until very recently.

All in all, the paper is a competent general essay on research design, but it is not a specific Delaware document, reflecting applicable specific local understanding. To compound matters, there are some zingers among the examples. For example, "It is expected that only the largest settlements will have trolleys." Dover, Odessa, Port Penn hardly were "largest settlements". Such a sweeping generalization reflects poor understanding both of electric-railway history and the history of Delaware. The statement itself has little bearing on the document, but its absurdity will reflect poorly upon the author's, and your agency's, credibility.

As it stands, the document will be received as a rehash of broadly-accepted statements, without the specificity and insight of a research design statement.

For your sake, I urge you to keep this document out of circulation until there has been time to hone it considerably. I'm ready to help, and the others in the field certainly are.

Lou has reviewed the document with me, but probably will have some more specific input through her channels.

In the meantime, I urge you to get a copy of the state plan for historic preservation, volume 1, in which I outlined

many of these issues in more specific detail. The thematic statements appear in volume 2. Although I have developed my ideas further since that time, the document was accepted by some pretty insightful people as a basis for research design.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'NA' or similar, written in a cursive style.