

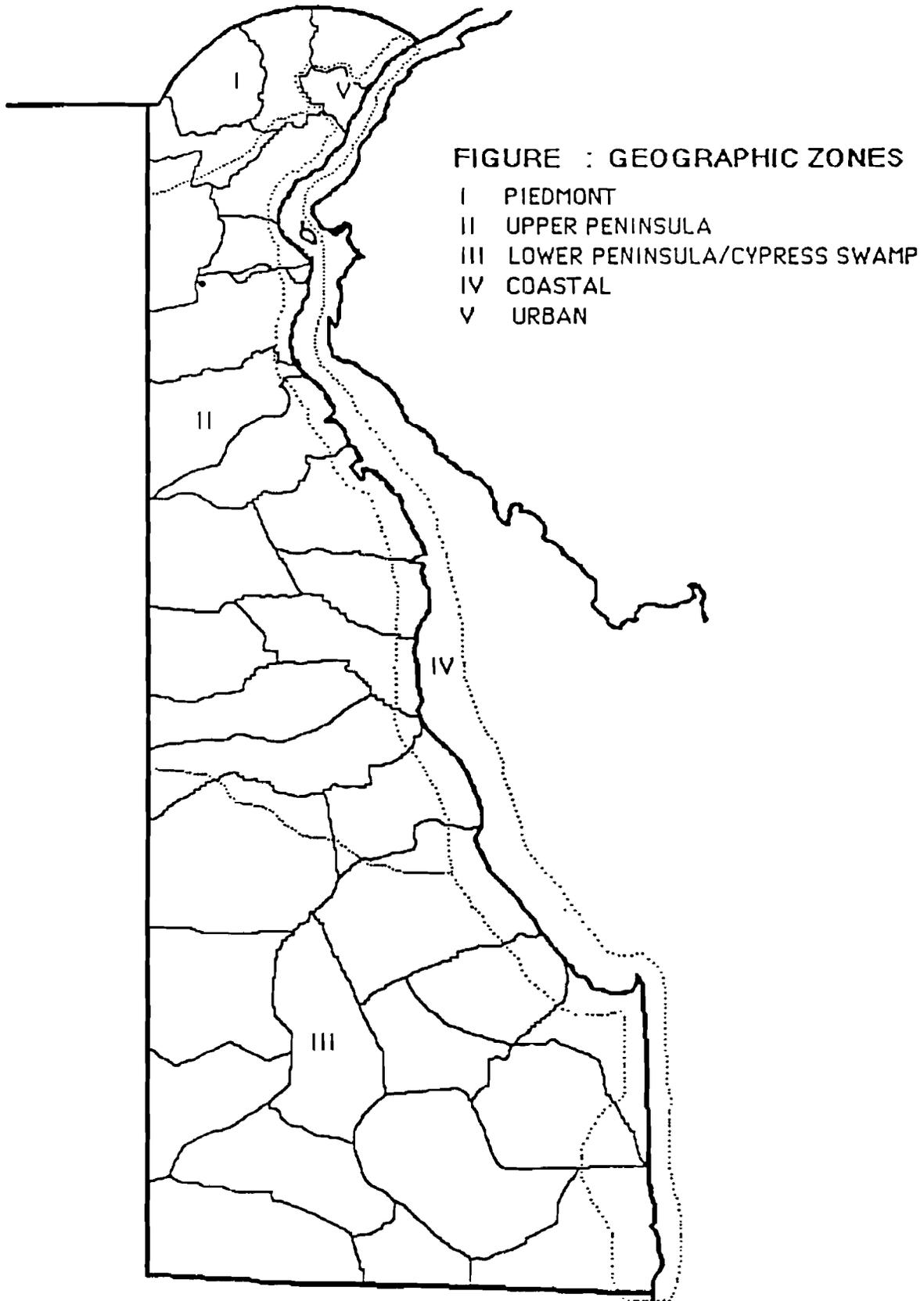
physiographic characteristics such as geology, drainage, soil types, and native flora and fauna. All of the resources and historic contexts discussed here are related primarily to the Upper Peninsula Zone (Figure 1). The Upper Peninsula Zone is part of a larger geographical area known as the Atlantic Coastal Plain. With its flat landscape, rich soils, and close proximity to the growing markets of Philadelphia and Baltimore, the zone became one of the most productive agricultural areas in the east during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Historic Contexts for the Study Area. From the general historic themes of Agriculture, Settlement Patterns and Demographic Change, and Architecture, Engineering, and Decorative Arts, a number of more specific themes and historic contexts can be developed. There are two thematic National Register nominations and two historic contexts that are particularly important: **Dwellings of the Rural Elite (NR)**, **The Rebuilding of Saint Georges Hundred (NR)**, **Agricultural Tenancy in Central Delaware (context)**, and **Early Twentieth Century Rural Architecture (context)**. In addition to these four contexts, which have already been studied to some extent in this region, there are a number of resources related to four other contexts that ought to be considered: **log building construction in central Delaware**, **early twentieth century farm planning**, **rural family development**, and the identification of **resources related to the African-American experience in Delaware**. Each of these historic contexts could be developed using resources in the study area that are potentially eligible for the National Register and are also facing potential impact from the Route 301 Corridor; each is discussed more fully below.

Dwellings of the Rural Elite in Central Delaware, 1770-1830 +/-

The architectural development of Delaware's Upper Peninsula Zone from 1770 through 1830 was strongly influenced by a period of intensive building activity that resulted in increased numbers of durable houses. A significant component of this new architectural landscape was made up of the houses of the rural elite--individuals who were among the wealthiest 20 percent of the taxable population, owned land, and were engaged in a market-based extensive agricultural economy. They also tended to promote several new concepts: the privatization of the countryside--through forms of enclosure; the industrialization of agriculture--through their commitment to agricultural reform and scientific farming; the regulation of the rural economy--through the control of labor and tenancy; and the capitalization of farming--through agricultural machinery, farm buildings, and livestock. The dwellings of the rural elite symbolized their self-perceived status within the communities they occupied.

The dwellings of the rural elite are a distinctive property type generally sharing a number of architectural features. Because the property type is associated with a particular socio-economic group, however, there are notable exceptions to the general rule. The most common form of dwelling associated



with the rural elite of the Upper Peninsula Zone, 1770-1830 +/-, is a two-story house often of brick construction and laid out on a stair-passage (most often center-passage) plan. The interiors of the dwellings of the rural elite are typically fitted with paneled fireplace walls or mantles, open stairways with turned balusters and newels, and an internally consistent hierarchy of finishes signifying the relative importance of rooms within the house. Because the dwellings of the rural elite are recognized as expressions of social and economic status, there are non-architectural features that define the property type. In the period of greatest significance, the dwellings are associated with, and occupied by, individuals ranking in the top two deciles of assessed wealth within their hundred. Furthermore, these individuals are land owners, most owning multiple farms, who are engaged in extensive commercial relations and invest in agricultural improvement and the early industrialization of agriculture.

This thematic National Register nomination was written in 1989 and resulted in the listing of ten dwellings. A list of additional dwellings that were already listed on or determined eligible for the National Register and were potentially related to the theme was included in the text of the nomination. Several of the buildings on that list are located within the Route 301 Corridor study area and face a potential impact from the proposed corridors. They include Cann Farmstead (N-3997), Eliason House (N-413), Summerton (N-112), Rumsey Farm (N-113), Cochran's Grange (N-117), Hedgelawn (N-118), and the eighteenth century farm complex at N-5149. All of these sites possess dwellings and complexes of outbuildings with the features that would make them potentially eligible for nomination within this theme. Bellvue (N-3975) no longer possesses its dwelling, but there may be evidence linked to the outbuildings and the history of the property's development that could be valuable for further expansion of the nomination.

The Rebuilding of St. Georges Hundred, 1850-1880+/-

Through the middle decades of the nineteenth century, St. Georges Hundred was the scene of extensive improvements in farming and architectural design. The drive toward agricultural reform (which began in the first quarter of the century) was allied closely with contemporary attitudes toward the purpose and appearance of rural architecture. Over an extended period of 40 years nearly every house and farm building was subject to what locals referred to as "repairs and renewals." The self-described goal of St. Georges Hundred farmers was to realize the dream of an estate. The aggressiveness with which they pursued that ambition led to the transformation of local agricultural practice and architectural design.

The emerging consensus among scholars is that rebuilding cycles are actually part of broader historical building patterns, and that a direct correlation can be established between agricultural, economic, and social forces, and architectural transformations. The term "rebuilding" is used here because that is literally what took place in mid-nineteenth century St. Georges Hundred. In this period