

V. National Register Evaluation

Archaeological site 7NC-B-49 was evaluated for eligibility in the National Register of Historic Places. A property is eligible for the National Register if it possesses integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association and meets one of the following criteria (Andrus and Shrimpton 1995):

- A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Associated with persons significant in our past.
- C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- D. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Within the context of farmstead archaeology in Delaware, the Weldin Plantation Site (7NC-B-11) possesses a number of unique and exceptional features that make it eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D. The following sections will address criteria defined by De Cunzo and Garcia (1992: 299-301) as relevant to the determination of eligibility for historical archaeological sites in Delaware.

A. Historical Documentation and Oral History

As has been demonstrated by the Phase I report generated by Taylor et al. (1989), there is a great deal of documentary evidence concerning the site and its occupants. Deeds for the site show a clear chain of ownership back to the original survey in 1680. Most of the proprietors drafted wills providing at least partial descriptions of the property and their possessions (excepting Israel Peterson 1722-?). Fire Blotter Records from 1796 and 1803 provide a good description of the farmhouse and outbuildings during the property's period of tenancy. Census information from 1790 provides information on the household and possessions of one of the farm's tenants, William Little, who occupied the site as early as 1796, and as late as 1799. Tax assessments on Albanus Logan (husband of Maria Dickinson and co-owner of the property in the mid-nineteenth century) dating to 1837 and 1852 provide information on the size of the property and buildings. In addition, data from the Brandywine Hundred tax assessments (1849, 1852, 1861) and U.S. Agricultural Census of 1850 and 1860 provide information on the household, stock, and crop yields of John Bradford, tenant-occupant from 1849-1861. A Land Survey from 1743-1745 provides the metes and bounds of the property as originally surveyed in 1680. Historic Maps (Rea and Price 1849, Beers 1868 and Baist 1893) provide general information as to building location and general development of the area through time. In addition to these primary resources, Scharf (1888); Thompson (1984); Passmore (1975); and Runk (1899); and Talley (1899), provide personal/historical information on several of the site's owners.

The researchers were also able to make contact with Mr. Thomas Weldin, a family descendant who worked on the farm as a child in the 1920's and early 30's. Mr. Weldin has stated that he would be happy to relate his recollections of the property from that time period. There is therefore a high probability that an oral history of a period in the property's life can be created.

B. Archaeological Integrity

The site was occupied continuously from its first occupation in the early eighteenth century through its abandonment in 1934. There is some evidence of dateable, spatially discrete deposits (particularly later deposits), although Jacob R. Weldin and son appear to have engaged in a great deal of earth-moving during the mid to late nineteenth century. Some excavated contexts demonstrate mixing of artifacts dating from the mid eighteenth through the mid nineteenth century, probably a result of these activities.

Since only a small portion of the site has been sampled, the knowledge of the site assembled thus far is still fragmentary in this regard. The farmstead proper is large, and only a small portion has been sampled. There is potential for earlier, intact middens, privies and other features in the side and rear yards, as well as under Weldin Road. Future excavations should be geared towards revealing potential deposits, perhaps through mechanical stripping.

The physical integrity of the site is excellent. While the identification of the location of all of the early structures is incomplete at this stage, the remains of many structures dateable to (at least as early as) the mid-nineteenth century are visible at the ground surface. Preliminary excavations have also revealed evidence of post-constructed buildings in the rear yard, buried foundation remains of a separate room or building on the north side of the dwelling, and footings from possible porch features on the north and south side of the dwelling. The extant stone foundation walls to four buildings are evident on the surface. The corral walls and the bank (of the former bank barn) are extant. The site artifact assemblage thus far consists of 13,555 artifacts from the most recent excavations and an as yet undetermined number of artifacts from earlier excavations by Thunderbird, Inc. (No complete inventory was available at the time of this writing.) On the basis of the information collected during the excavations at the Weldin Plantation Site, it is clear that the site contains artifacts from all periods of occupation, as well as a wealth of faunal remains.

C. Representativeness

The site is located on an upland setting on the Piedmont Plateau Physiographic Province. The mapped soils are Talleyville silt loam, with 2-5% slopes, moderately eroded (TaB2), a well drained soil (Mathews and Lavoie 1970). The Weldin Plantation Site is an historic farmstead that may date to the early eighteenth century and was occupied until the mid-twentieth century. The site was identified previously and is discussed in greater detail in *Archeological Investigations of the Proposed Dualization of Route 141 (Centre Road), From Route 100 (Montchanin Road) to U.S. Route 202 (Concord Pike), New Castle County, Delaware*, Thunderbird Archeological Associates, Inc., 1989.

Because the site may date to the 1710s, it could have been occupied throughout each of the periods described in the *Management Plan for Delaware's Historic Archaeological Resources*. During the Exploration and Frontier Settlement Period, the *Management Plan* indicates that dispersed English farmsteads are located along the major creeks. Information relating to domestic economy, manufacturing and trade, landscape interaction, and social group identity, behavior, and interactions might be obtainable from excavations at this site.

The Intensified and Durable Occupation Period continues to provide a context for domestic economy for farmsteads that may have slaves or indentured servants. The evolution of the site throughout the Transformation from Colony to State, Industrialization and Capitalization, and Urbanization and Suburbanization Periods may allow a unique opportunity to compare the occupation of one site during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. The property was owner occupied at various times throughout its history and tenant occupied during other times. Comparison of different occupations, with presumed differences in economic status, may provide important data concerning socioeconomic patterns throughout the history of this site.

Farm use at Chestnut Hill varied through time. During its first seventy-five years of existence it was owner occupied. No historical data is available concerning farm produce from that era. However, it seems likely that the site followed known agricultural patterns and focused on market wheat production. During the farm's tenancy period, the property was almost certainly devoted principally to the raising of livestock, with perhaps some attention to dairy farming. The importance of dairy farming increased in the area towards the middle of the nineteenth century. The documentary evidence regarding the early to mid-nineteenth century tenant, John Bradford, indicates increasing emphasis on dairy farming. The documentary and archaeological evidence (size, nature and layout of structures, dairy related ceramics, glass) demonstrate a shift towards dairy production in the mid-nineteenth century until the site's abandonment in the twentieth century.

D. Research Questions and Needs

(1) Landscape

The extant ruins of the Weldin Plantation Site can reveal a great deal about the arrangement of daily activities on a large nineteenth century dairy farm. Other farmsteads excavated in the region (cf. William Strickland Site [7K-A-117], Whitten Rd. Farm [7NC-D-100]. W. Eager Farm) have lacked the integrity of Weldin's structural remains and as a consequence have required more substantial field efforts to identify and map building locations and layout. Because the stone foundations of many of the structures at Weldin are still evident on the surface, such work is not necessary. The visible evidence provides us with a "key" to the activities carried out on the farmstead.

Aside from providing a base map for intra-site activity, the Weldin structures can also provide us with a sample of the layout of a large, apparently successful, owner-occupied farm that can be of value in discussing such properties on a regional level. Detailed data generated at the Weldin Plantation Site can be compared to that collected at other farmsteads to interpret differences and similarities of farm layout across spatial, temporal, and socioeconomic lines. Potential comparisons may be made to the William Strickland Site (7K-A-117); the Whitten Road Farm (7NC-D-100); the W. Eager Farm; The Grant Tenancy Site (7NC-B-6); and the Buchanon-Savin Farmstead, for example.

In addition to the known structural remains - most of which are associated with the mid-nineteenth through twentieth centuries - further excavations would certainly yield evidence of other, perhaps earlier, building remains. Evidence for one such building appears to have been identified on the north side of the extant dwelling remains, where buried foundation walls were

discovered. Excavations near this wall, in the north yard (backyard of the dwelling) revealed the site's greatest number of early artifacts (plain white salt-glazed stoneware and scratch-blue; delft; early glass) and a notable lack of late-nineteenth century artifacts in the buried strata. Howard Weldin, a descendant of the site's owner-occupants from the mid-nineteenth through early twentieth centuries, also recalls that there was a stone-lined well in the field on the north side of Weldin Road. Considered together, this suggests that early architectural/landscape remains are likely to be found in the north yard, as well as under the existing Weldin Road.

The size of the buildings, their style (as much as can be determined from the remains), layout, materials, and construction methods, provide a wealth of information that can be interpreted with relation to the ideas, beliefs, and values of the site's most significant (and well-known) occupants, Jacob R. Weldin and his son, J. Atwood Weldin. As recent research has shown (Mascia 1996; Grettler 1991; Siders et al. 1991; Herman et al. 1989), middle nineteenth century architecture and farm layout indicates much about the ideology of a site's occupants. When considered in tandem with issues such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and other factors, the size of a site's buildings, their durability, style, and layout all take on added significance. The question is phrased more explicitly by De Cunzo and Catts (1990: 132):

How do socioeconomic status and aspirations, level of technological development, household economy, ethnicity and ideology, values and beliefs all influence the construction of domestic buildings and the use and improvement of the land? (132).

This research topic seems especially suited to the Weldin site, since both Jacob and his son Atwood invested so much in their farm's structures. It can be examined at a functional level (what are the functional attributes of massive, durable outbuildings, the choice of a bank barn etc.), and at an aesthetic level (the Weldin Plantation Road Entrance, wood-framing over the stone house, possible addition of porches, planting of trees, etc.).

To better answer questions as to why the Weldins "dressed" their farm as they did, it would be useful to examine the literature pertaining to progressive farming at this time. Information on the Weldin's themselves, contained in Scharf (1888); Runk (1899); and Talley (1899) will also be vital to developing the type of personal details on the Weldins that will be necessary to address questions of ideology. Grettler's (1991) work on rural reform and its archaeological manifestations will provide important perspectives as well. Finally, historical analyses that deal with such topics as the economic and social implications of progressive farming in the region (cf. Michel 1985; Passmore et al. 1978; Passmore 1975) and the consideration of "elite" agricultural families in New Castle County, particularly in the late nineteenth century will provide excellent cross-disciplinary perspectives.

Again, the archaeological evidence and interpretation of ideologically motivated choices can be compared to that seen at other sites in the region, across temporal, socioeconomic and ethnic lines. If earlier structures can be positively identified at the site level at the Weldin Plantation, then the data these present can be compared with the mid- to late-nineteenth century architectural remains at the site to construct a better picture of the interplay of ideology and architecture at the site during earlier periods.

It should be noted that any discussion of ideology is highly interpretive. However, there appears to be adequate historical research to "reconstruct" a good picture of the Weldins as well as some of their predecessors at Chestnut Hill. Combined with archaeological evidence of architecture and farm layout, we believe that the Weldin Plantation possesses excellent potential for research on this theme.

(2) Socioeconomic Phenomena

Because of the changes that occurred in the local agricultural economy during the period of time the Weldin Plantation Site was occupied, and because the farm was both tenant- and owner-occupied over the course of its history, the site presents a significant resource that may yield important archaeological data regarding the shift in the product focus of the farm over time, the changes in its relative emphasis on subsistence vs. market production, and the contrast between the household assemblages associated with its tenant occupants vs. those associated with resident owners. The farm's history appears to reflect the agricultural trends seen more generally in the region: initial (probable) emphasis on wheat production in the early to late eighteenth century under a resident owner, more generalized farm production during the years of its tenancy (1785-1862), followed by a shift during the Weldin family's ownership to large-scale dairying, which continued up to the first quarter of the twentieth century. This very closely parallels the pattern evidenced in northern Delaware as a whole (Bidwell and Falconer 1941; De Cunzo and Catts 1990; Munroe 1978).

As noted above, the historical record provides sufficient information to construct a fairly detailed view of the Weldins' farming activities and, to a lesser extent, those of the previous occupants of the farm (Scharf 1888; Runk 1899; Taylor et al. 1989). Although the Weldins' extensive construction activities have substantially disturbed some areas where the evidence of earlier buildings and other archaeological features might have been found, there are still several parts of the site that were unaffected by this work. In addition, because the orientation of the access road to the property changed over the time of its occupation, the orientation of the farm's structures is likely to have changed as well, increasing the likelihood that subsurface evidence of previous activities remains intact in areas the Weldins would have found logistically less advantageous. The identification of such features and the interpretation of their function should yield information that would be of use in identifying the specific agricultural activities undertaken at the site, as well as shedding light on the domestic lives of the farm's residents over the years. This data, when considered in conjunction with the available textual records, should yield valuable information regarding the character of the lives of the residents of the farm during discrete periods, both before and during the Weldins' occupation.

De Cunzo and Garcia (1992) suggest that the comparison of households in an area with regard to their class status and role in the agricultural economy ("Large land-owning agriculturalists vs. tenants vs. small subsistence agriculturalists vs. small commercial, diversified agriculturalists, etc." [pg. 277]) represents an important avenue for historic archaeological research. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data collected at the Weldin Plantation Site will be ideal for use in such a higher-level study. Because the site promises to yield information relative to comparisons across a variety of dichotomous socioeconomic classifications, it should be of use in comparative studies that include other sites in the region across a fairly wide spectrum of site types and chronological periods.