

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the data recovery excavations at the Williams Site (7NC-D-130) have contributed to the corpus of information concerning local and regional historical development. The changing patterns of disposal, consumption, and status for the occupants of the Williams Site, from tenant to mason to black laborer, can be seen in the archaeological record.

The tenant period of site occupation is represented by the remains of the Evans-Black Tenant House. The comparison of the tenant material culture from the Williams Site with the assemblages derived from several other early-nineteenth century sites in New Castle County suggests that there is a tremendous range of variability in the archaeological remains at sites that would historically be considered as "poor" tenant sites. If there was a "middle class" in early-nineteenth century Delaware, then the occupants of the Williams Site, the Whitten Road Site, and the Allen House seem to fall in this category. Two of these sites, Williams and Whitten Road, were the homes of farm tenants, and the Allen House was the dwelling of an artisan. Additionally, Christopher Jones at the Williams Site may have been supplementing his income as a part-time shoemaker. All of these sites and occupants are "smallholders" according to Simler's definition (1986). Their material remains, including dietary remains and consumption patterns, are remarkably the same, especially given the supposed historical differences between these sites. Like the conclusions reached by Shaffer et al. (1988:262-63) concerning the tenant occupation of the

Whitten Road Site, the Williams Site excavations indicate that there is no recognizable "tenant artifact pattern" in the archaeological record. This fact reinforces the statement by Shaffer et al. (1988:263) that "the traditional association of tenant sites and assemblages with inherently and recognizably lower status goods than owner occupied sites of the same period does not apply equally in all situations or time periods...". All of the historical archaeological investigations conducted at tenant sites have revealed the broad range of artifact variability present.

The most obvious discrepancy in the material worlds of the sites compared with the Evans-Black Tenant Occupation of the Williams Site is in the architectural remains at each of the sites, suggesting that the highly visible, built environment was significant in displaying social and economic position. The lack of substantial outbuildings at the Evans-Black Occupation of the Williams Site and at other tenant farmer sites in New Castle County (cf., Ferguson House), support the reliability of this contention. Thus it appears that there was a considerable range in what and who the "middle class" were in federalist New Castle County.

Unfortunately for the interpretations of the Williams Site, no discreet deposits related to the occupation of the site by Thomas Williams could be identified. This is disappointing because it was hoped that some significant interpretations and conclusions could be made about the role of the small-scale mechanic in rural Delaware communities. The only real

artifactual evidence of Thomas Williams' habitation of the site comes in the form of the stonemason's points and worked stone fragments found across the site. These objects were ubiquitous; indeed, they appeared in all of the major features investigated (Features 2 [well], 12 [Structure I], and 17 [Structure II]), were recovered from the plowzone, and even from surface collections beyond the immediate excavation limits of the site. Although the stonemason's points found were few in number, they do provide tangible evidence of the occupation and use of this site by a mason. Coupling this archaeological information with the little that was gleaned from historic sources, some light can be shed on the economic and social lives of rural stonemasons in the Lower Delaware Valley. As a group, masons were not particularly wealthy, were highly mobile, and at least in the mid-nineteenth century, were predominantly immigrants from England, Ireland, and France. Thomas Williams fit this characterization completely.

The archaeological evidence of the black occupation of the site is well-represented by the relatively substantial remains of the Williams-Stump House and the surrounding well, outbuildings, fencelines and privy features. The historical reflections, on the other hand, of Sidney Stump's residence at the site, consisting of tax lists, census returns, deed records, and other sparse written records, are difficult to glimpse, even at the distance of a few generations. If we had relied solely on these "shreds and patches" of historical information, little else would be known about the black occupants other than their names in a tax list or directory, or on a property deed. The

"inarticulate" groups of American History are elusive to pin down, and traditional black historians, such as Herbert G. Gutman, have done an excellent job of describing the black experience in slavery and freedom as seen in the historic and oral record (Gutman 1976:363-460). The danger, however, of writing about those who left no written records lies in generalities: "In 1865, the Delaware Negro was poor, uneducated, and leaderless" (Livesay 1968:90). By examining the material culture of the black families that resided on archaeologically investigated black sites in New Castle County, as well as the historic and spoken information that was available, a more vivid, fuller view of black life in rural Delaware has emerged than is apparent in the gross generality. The historical archaeologist James Deetz (1977:138) has observed that:

piecing together black history on the local level is a fascinating and often frustrating process of assembling fragments that form a coherent whole. To gain a true understanding of the story of a people, it is best to detail a picture of their life within a community and then to relate that to the larger world. It is in this process that archaeology can contribute in a significant way.

Rather than representing a monolithic image of the oppressed black, the historical archaeological investigations of the Williams, Dickson II, and Heisler Tenancy sites in New Castle County have shown that there is a tremendous amount of variation in the housing, site layout, diet, and consumption patterns of the black community in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Williams-Stump and Heisler Tenancy houses, known from the historical record to have been owner-occupied sites, take on a new meaning when the historic information is

integrated with the material remains of the sites' inhabitants. These two sites, though occupied by a "farm laborer" and a "laborer," exhibited considerable differences in housing size and consumption habits. These differences are no doubt due to a number of factors: the relative statuses of the site occupants within the black community, the age of the sites and of the archaeological deposits, lengths of occupation, personal preferences, and the different educational levels of the two men.

The Dickson II house, a tenant dwelling, was virtually non-existent in the documents. The historic information provided about black tenants from that site represents a considerable addition to the existing corpus of material dealing with the study of tenancy in Delaware. The inhabitants of the Dickson II house were clearly of the lowest social station within the black community, apparently relying on rag picking for income, and wild game for much of their diet (Catts et al. 1989a).

This is not to imply that rural blacks in postbellum Delaware were not considered to be second-class citizens by the white majority. The historical works cited above make it clear that Delaware blacks, in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, were denied political freedom, employment opportunities, educational benefits, and had their social lives and economic opportunities severely circumscribed (Munroe 1957; Hancock 1968; Livesay 1968). There is no doubt that the majority of Delaware's African-Americans

were of low relative social status, particularly when scaled with the whites of the State. The significant thing that can be gathered from the comparisons presented here of the Thomas Williams Site with other black-occupied sites in Delaware is that despite their inferior social, political, and economic positions within Delaware's society, the material remains of rural blacks in Delaware suggest that there was a richness and variety in housing and material wealth between and among the members of the black community. Delaware blacks seem to have been part of the consumer society, as witnessed by the tremendous range and variety of artifacts recovered archaeologically, notwithstanding their ascribed second-class status. This is in contrast to the findings of some historic archaeologists in the South, who through their work on black and white sharecropper sites in Mississippi, have identified what they call the archaeology of poverty, or a lack of material remains, at many of these sites (Rodeffer 1984). The results of the work in Delaware are more in line with the investigations into the black community of Skunk Hollow, in Bergen County, New Jersey. In this study, considerable variation among several archaeologically-examined black house sites was found in terms of artifact patterns, dietary remains, and house dimensions (Geismar 1982).

Just as more historic information is necessary to refine our interpretations of history and events, additional archaeologically-oriented studies of black-occupied sites in the Delmarva Peninsula and the Middle Atlantic Region are needed to supplement the historic and spoken records. Livesay (1968) was

quite correct in his analogy that the postbellum black in Delaware was like an elusive reflection, occasionally discerned but difficult to pin down. More recent work utilizing a material culture approach, most notably by the historian George W. McDaniel (1982) in Southern Maryland, has shown that no matter how dimly perceived, the reflection, through the use of historical archaeology and its integration of the spoken word, the written word, and the artifact, a more complete and vibrant image of black society and culture can be brought into focus. By utilizing all of the data sources available to the researcher, this improved image, although still not the total picture of Delaware's rural black society, is considerably greater than the sum of its parts.

In conclusion, the data recovery excavations at the Thomas Williams Site revealed three separate occupational and functional periods in the site's history: farm tenant, mechanic, and black laborer. The archaeological investigations were able to examine the tenant occupation and the black occupation in some detail, and have added to the growing data base concerning early nineteenth century farm tenant lifeways, and have illuminated the nature of black householding and rural life in late nineteenth century Delaware. Through comparisons with other tenant and black-occupied sites in the Middle Atlantic, insights into diachronic and synchronic changes in diet, refuse, and consumption patterns have been presented.

The analyses of the Williams Site data also have implications for future historical archaeological research and

methodologies. The 25 percent stratified systematic unaligned sampling scheme utilized at the Williams Site seems to have provided a reliable view of artifact distributions and spatial utilization patterns across time and space. This technique has been successfully applied to other historical archaeological sites in the state (Shaffer et al. 1988; Hoseth et al. 1990), so comparable data bases are being generated on an intersite level.

Diachronic spatial utilization of the site was defined by the artifact distribution frequencies generated through the 25 percent random sample. Thus, different activity areas were identified and Inner and Outer Yard areas were defined. These components are the "backbone" of yard proxemics as defined by Moir (1987). Future analysis at other sites using this concept, the interpretation of the changing patterns of the yardscape around typical dwellings over time, will help us clarify diachronic spatial utilization of historical archaeological sites over time.

The use of soil chemical analysis has provided an additional dimension to the study of intrasite structure. It has been shown that the patterning of concentrations of certain soil trace elements can be correlated with the occurrence of particular activities (Coleman et al. 1985; Custer et al 1986; Shaffer et al. 1988; Hoseth et al. 1990). Soil analysis in conjunction with intact feature patterns and artifact distributions can aid in the delineation and interpretation of various site activity areas and provide a more complete understanding of site usage over time.

The intersite comparison of archaeologically-derived house dimensions seems to be an accurate indicator of the social class and status of a site's occupants within the community. This type of analysis has been successfully used at other sites within the region (Catts et al. 1990; Hoseth et al. 1990). The architectural comparison of first-floor dimensions indicates that dwellings and structures functioned historically as status symbols, a conclusion that architectural historians have already reached though their data is generally based on only above-ground remains (Herman 1987a). In this case, the archaeological remains are an additional component and source of information since they represent structures which do not survive. As more archaeologically-derived house dimensions are generated, the continuum of house sites can be further refined.

The Miller Ceramic Scaling Indices of the ceramic assemblages from the Williams Site were conducted to measure the relative economic ranking of the site's inhabitants and, from a broader perspective, to place the occupants of the site in a regional perspective. The difference-of-proportion tests were used to identify patterned variability in the ceramic assemblages and to determine if these were historically significant. Both of these analyses were conducted instead of simple sherd or vessel percentage comparisons because of the variability in the quantity and quality of the ceramic assemblages from archaeological sites. The comparative analyses of numerous ceramic assemblages from a range of contemporary sites, urban and rural, black and white, has shown that there is considerable variability in the historic ceramic assemblages

from these sites that have no simple explanations.

An important implication of the analyses presented in this report is that there are no simple correlations between patterned variability in ceramic assemblages and socio-economic status, site function, layout, ethnicity, or cultural geographic context. Future historical archaeological investigations should seek to examine more completely this variability, through the use of appropriate analytical techniques, in order to better understand its meaning. As future work is completed on archaeological sites within this region and similar data is generated, information gleaned from the Thomas Williams Site analyses and interpretations can be used for comparisons. Then, the analytical techniques used in this report can be refined, modified, or expanded to further clarify our understanding of past lifeways.

In conclusion, the data recovery excavations at the Thomas Williams Site (7NC-D-130) have produced comparative information as well as useful and interesting insights into the everyday lifeways of early nineteenth-century farm tenants, antebellum stonemasons, and post-Civil War black laborers. Identified at the site were two distinct historical site occupations, with separate dwellings and outbuildings, and a prehistoric component from a disturbed context, which was larger than initially suspected. Through the comparisons of the various occupations of the Williams Site with other local and regional historical sites, changing patterns in site layout, spatial utilization, refuse disposal, and socio-economic status were observed, and

have added to the growing body of archaeological knowledge documenting Delaware's past.