I. INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the federal historic preservation program has enumerated a set of basic goals (National Park Service 1983). They guide the historic preservation planning process in each state, and consist of: 1) identifying the state's cultural resources; 2) establishing criteria by which to determine the signficance of the resources; 3) applying the criteria in evaluating identified resources; and 4) developing means to assure preservation of significant resources and/or the signficant information contained therein (Ames et al. 1989: 1). This planning process is closely tied to the National Register of Historic Places created by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

The historic context forms the "cornerstone of historic preservation planning" (Ames et al. 1989: 20). The historic context framework of time, space, and research themes provides a mechanism for evaluating historic resources in relation to broader cultural and historical patterns (Ames et al. 1989: 20; National Park Service 1983). It allows consideration of the relationships between archaeological and other historic resources. At the same time, it promotes integration and synthesis of disparate studies undertaken across each state, spanning over three centuries, and addressing innumerable topics from several theoretical and methodological perspectives.

The **Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan** developed a historic context framework for Delaware. It consists of: 1) five temporal periods: 1630-1730+/-, 1730-1770+/-, 1770-1830+/-, 1830-1880+/-, 1880-1940+/-; 2) five geographic zones: Piedmont, Upper Peninsula, Lower Peninsula and Cypress Swamp, Coastal, and Urban; and 3) 18 themes: one of these is Agriculture (Ames et al. 1989: 20-37). The **Management Plan for Delaware's Historical Archaeological Resources** built on this framework, modifying the themes with the introduction of four research domains: Domestic Economy; Manufacturing and Trade; Landscape; and Social Group Identity, Behavior, and Interaction (De Cunzo and Catts 1990: 16-23). One of the **Management Plan**'s goals was to identify priorities for managing Delaware's historical archaeological resources (De Cunzo and Catts 1990: 182-191). Highest priority was placed on developing "Historic Contexts relevant to the state's historical archaeological resources" (De Cunzo and Catts 1990: 182). Among the specific priority historic contexts proposed was (De Cunzo and Catts 1990: 185-186):

1. Geographic: Statewide
   Temporal: 1830-1940
   Theme: Agriculture and Rural Life

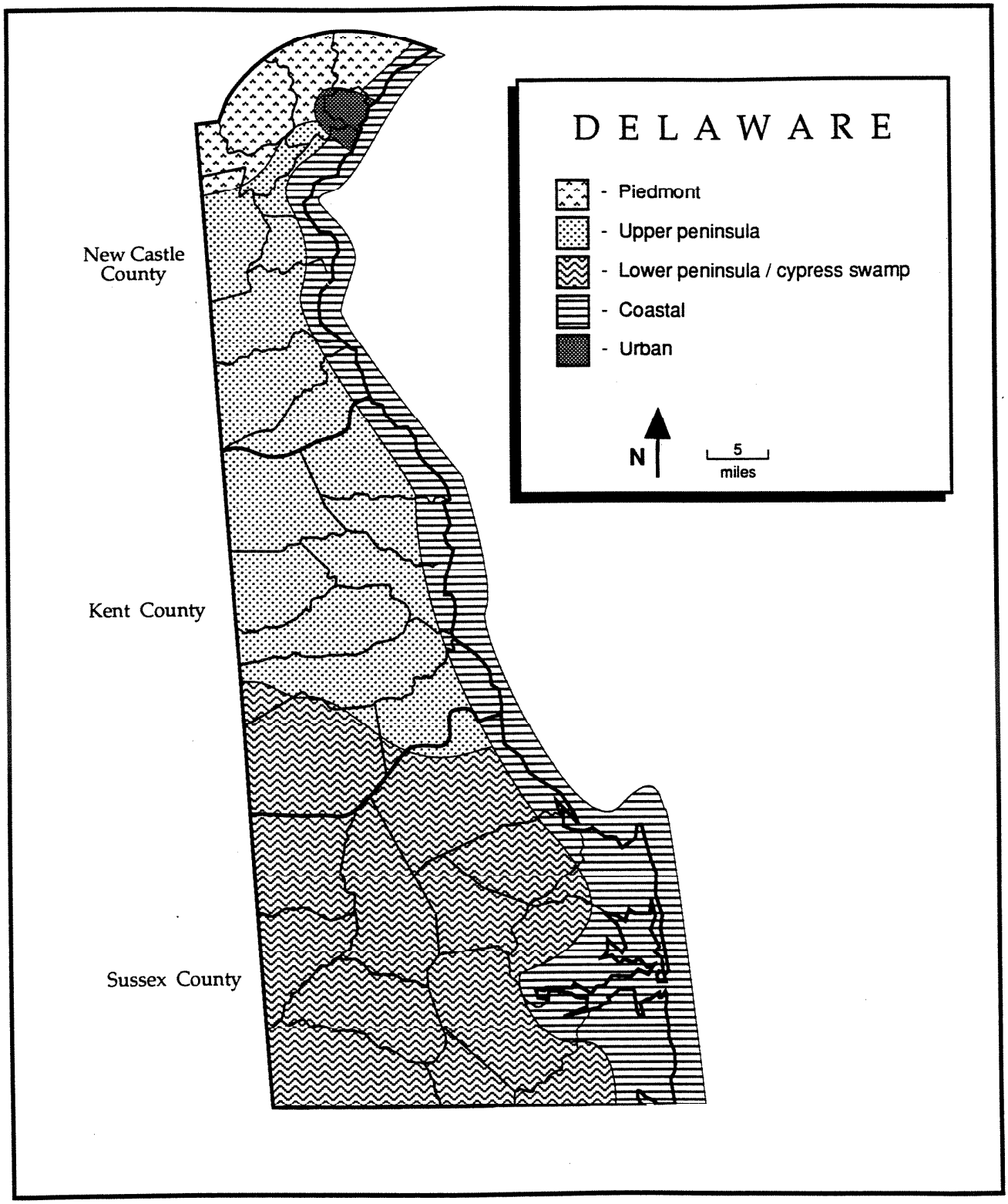
It is the nineteenth century and early twentieth century agricultural sites which are being encountered and impacted in large numbers by Section 106 projects in Delaware

[archaeological identification and evaluation surveys and data recovery projects mandated by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in the case of construction projects on federal land or funded or licensed by the federal government]. There are not at present adequate guidelines or criteria to employ in making decisions regarding the significance of particular sites. It will not be possible to define adequate criteria until the Historic Context is developed.

This project takes the first step in this process, completing a fully developed historic context for agriculture and farm life in New Castle and Kent counties, Delaware, 1830-1940 (Figure 1). This historic context focuses on agricultural production and on the social and cultural aspects of farm life. Processing, transporting, and marketing of agricultural products, and institutionalized programs of education, aid, and socialization for farmers will be treated in a separate historic context. This fully developed historic context contains the following components:

1) Identification of the temporal period, geographical limits, and theme
2) Synthesis of assembled existing historical (based on both secondary and primary research), architectural, geographical, and archaeological information; description of the significant broad patterns of development associated with the context
3) Reference bibliography
4) Definition of archaeological property types associated with the context and prediction of the potential number, distribution, and location of known and expected property types
5) Definition of research questions that archaeological property types associated with the context may be expected to address
6) Review of criteria that have been applied in evaluating resources and development of new criteria to evaluate archaeological property types associated with the context; individual historical archaeological resources will then be evaluated within the context of the property types with which they are associated
7) Evaluation of identified/inventoried historical archaeological resources associated with the context
8) Development of goals, priorities, and information needs relating to the identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment of historical archaeological property types associated with the context
9) Development and implementation of a program of public involvement in the historic context development process
10) Provision of a mechanism for updating the context.

FIGURE 1
MAP OF DELAWARE SHOWING COUNTIES, GEOGRAPHIC ZONES



A Survey and Planning Grant from the State Historic Preservation Office, subgranted from the National Historic Preservation Fund, partially funded development of this historic context. The University of Delaware and the University's Center for Archaeological Research provided matching funding. Center for Archaeological Research staff developed the historic context in 1991-1992.

Public involvement in the context's development consisted of establishing an informal review committee of Delaware historical archaeologists. They assisted in defining the project methodology, identifying sources, reviewing drafts of the context's components, and offering suggestions and recommendations at each step in the context's development. The committee members were: Lu Ann De Cunzo, Project Principal Investigator, University of Delaware Department of Anthropology; Wade P. Catts, University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research; David J. Grettler, University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research; Alice H. Guerrant, State Historic Preservation Office; and Charles Fithian, Delaware State Museums.