

## 6. FINDING SITES ON THE FARM

*Phase I fieldwork identified archaeological sites and answered questions about the geography of the property. An eighteenth-century house site was among the resources.*

Phase I fieldwork began with cultivating part of the field on June 20, 1994. The former owner, Mr. Carl Hurd, traversed the lower half of the property with a disk harrow. A 50% coverage was attained by alternating cultivated and fallow strips. Since the harrowing needed to follow the former cultivation furrows, each field was disked in a different direction.

The plan was to disk the field, and wait for a driving rain to wash the dirt from any artifacts that might be lying on the surface. After a bone-dry week, strong rains finally came, allowing surface collection to begin June 30. After the rain, there was a window of one or two weeks, before new weeds would have obscured the surface again.

The 50% surface collection was restricted to the southern half of the property,



Figure 23:  
Test pit excavation

George Keeler trowels while Aaron Jones sifts, October 20, 1994.

where earthmoving impact will be severe. The swaths were walked by two people, under excellent visibility conditions.

The only artifact concentrations were found on the two previously-identified ridges of brown, well-drained, Mattapeake and Matapex soil (ER 1a, 11). The only artifacts found outside these soil zones were a thin scattering of more recent materials west of the existing Ford farmhouse (ER 1b).

Most of the property consisted of grey, wet, sticky Othello soils impassable for pedestrians after the slightest rain. Inhospitable as they are today, these soils could not have been much more attractive to earlier generations, except as hunting range.

The two well-drained hummocks are today separated by a twentieth-century ditch. The ditch was created before 1937, since it appears in the aerial photograph of that date (Figure 17, page 44).

West of the ditch, discovery of a sizable concentration of eighteenth-century artifacts prompted us to sink two five-foot-square test pits, later numbered 12a and 13a in the excavation register. These test squares were located at the apparent center of the artifact concentration. It soon became obvious that a site of some importance was present. The two test units were thirty feet apart.

The pits yielded late-eighteenth-century materials, including high-status ceramics. This was the highest point of well-drained soil in the westernmost (Conner) third of the 1771 division.

The only feature found in these tests was a shallow, flat-bottomed depression

about eighteen inches by a foot, containing brown soil flecked heavily with charcoal and brick chips. This depression was apparent at the bottom of the plow-zone, and intruded into a feature that appeared to be a plow scar. These linear features, which appeared at the bottom of both test squares, were brown soil marks with clods of yellow soil, running north-south. Features were sampled, dug, drawn and photographed.

East of the ditch, where a modest scattering of artifacts had been found, a test pit was sunk three feet square into the plowzone of the well-drained soil. No artifacts were recovered.

Woodlands in three areas impeded surface survey. These woods all were mapped as Othello soil, which is wet and inhospitable to human settlement. However, certain activities can take place in such environments, and can leave archaeological remains.

Activities in such areas include timbering, including sawmill sites, or brickmaking. Trash disposal is also common in poorly-drained woodlands such as this.

In order to understand the cultural history of the woodlands, three lines of shovel test pits were opened. The first line of shovel test pits was dug



Figure 24

Initial test squares in the site core revealed disturbance by farm tractor tires, which would prove a major hindrance during subsequent data recovery.

through a rectangular clump of woods on the northwest border of the property. This small woodlot had recently been cut over. It appears on the 1937 aerial photograph (Figure 17, page 44) in roughly its present shape. A line of shovel test pits diagonally across the lot (ER 2-10) yielded two pieces of barbed



Figure 25

By July 20, exactly a month after the disking, the site surface had already become obscured by a dense weed cover. Two five-foot test squares were being dug in the area identified as the site core.

## Figure 26

This sketch map identifies the test pits that were dug in the woods near the north end of the property. The 1877 property line was created in the 1812 division of Francis Denney's estate. The five-acre triangle to the north of the line was granted to Francis Denney, Jr. by the commissioners. The Barren Hope tract lies to the left in this map.

wire, a broken pebble, and a piece of a non-returnable beer bottle. Since the barbed wire was found near the perimeters, it could suggest that the lot was once fenced, as for an animal pen. The soil was uniformly grey, silty, and wet. No other man-made evidence was found in the woodlot.

An electric transmission line cuts through the older and larger woodlot, near the middle of the west property boundary. This woodlot shows on the 1937 aerial photo, before the power line was constructed. It is called a swamp on the 1812 estate map. Test pits (ER 15-20) were

opened at twenty-meter intervals between the east edge and the property fence, a distance of 118 meters. The first tests were shovelled, but a hand auger was soon put to use. In all cases, the grey clay was overlain by a thin layer of leaf mold. No artifacts were found in the test pits, and no features were observed in the woods.

Since the property boundary is 311 years old, it is likely to contain very old features. In places the boundary is marked by a ditch, and in places by a fence. The hedge-row appears to be from several different periods.

## Figure 27

Two lines of shovel test pits were dug through the sticky Othello soil in the swampy woodlots, even though both common sense and predictive models had indicated that nothing was likely to be found there. The testing was useful, however, because it confirmed the models and emphasized the need to consult soil types before planning surveys.

## SOIL CHARACTERISTICS AND CAPABILITIES

(Based upon Soil Conservation Service Kent County survey 1971)

ELEMENTS OF WILDLIFE HABITAT:	OTHELLO (Ot)	MATAPEAKE (MeB)	MATTAPEX (Mt)
Grain and seed crops	poor	fair	fair
Grasses and legumes	fair	good	good
Wild herbaceous upland plants	fair	good	good
Hardwood woodland plants	good	good	good
Coniferous woodland plants	fair	poor	poor
Wetland food and cover plants	good	not suited	poor
Shallow water developments	good	not suited	poor
LIMITATIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:			
Roads in open areas	Severe: high water table	Slight	Moderate: moderately high water table
Cemeteries	Severe: high water table	Slight	Moderate: moderately high water table, moderately slow permeability
Home gardens	Severe: poor natural drainage	Moderate: 2 to 5 percent slope	Moderate: impeded natural drainage

Along the line, sixty-eight meters from the end of the first traverse line, was a corner stone and a square wooden post, marking one of the property corners established by the 1821 division of the adjacent Barren Hope tract (Kent County Warrants and Surveys A<sub>2</sub>#39). The rough fieldstone marker showed signs of having been recently recovered by a surveyor. The adjoining fence corner is hung from a post that appears to be a beam from a framed building.

The corner marker stood in the newer woodlot, which appeared as a fallow field on the 1937 aerial photograph. In its northeast corner is a rectangular pond, which was not there in 1937. This pond is interpreted as an attempt to drain the site. A deer-hunter's stand along the property line testifies to the game-attractive nature of this terrain, which offers considerable browse and drinking water for wildlife. These conditions probably have attracted hunters since the early Holocene, since prehistoric hunting stands frequently are found immediately adjacent to modern deer stands.

A line of auger tests was opened from the vicinity of the corner marker out to the edge of the smaller woodlot, 68 meters away (ER 21-24) at twenty-meter intervals. Again, no artifacts were found and the soil was a uniform gray color with a thin forest mold covering.

The only remaining pre-ordained testing was a pair of shovel test pits to be opened in the vicinity of the kidney-shaped pond proposed for the northern perimeter of the property. This is an area of low probability, since it naturally has standing water on an unproductive clay soil. Nothing cultural was found in these tests (ER 172, 173).

### AREAS WITHOUT RESOURCES

The poorly-drained parts of the property, mapped primarily as Othello soils, yielded no evidence of cultural resources, historic or prehistoric. The wooded areas of the property proved to have been left fallow because they were not capable of supporting crops or other productive activities. Soil capabilities (table, above) again were shown to be a major predictor of site locations.

## DESCRIPTION OF RESOURCES

While the hummocks duplicate the soil conditions and elevations found at the prehistoric sites across the road, no such finds were immediately evident. The prehistoric component of the site's surface collection consisted of one unfinished point. The fire-cracked rocks were problematical; they could as easily have originated with the historic occupation.

Any differences between this site and the ones across the road could be explained by one factor that is missing from this site: Hawkey Branch is an insignificant stream compared to Taylors Gut. The prehistoric population could have been attracted

to more abundant resources nearby, and left Hawkey Branch alone.

The site on the southwest corner of the property, 7K-B-23, appeared to be an eighteenth-century occupation site, warranting further investigation. A few nineteenth-century artifacts found west of the existing farmhouse (ER 1b) appear to be associated with that occupation.

The Phase I survey recovered a few artifacts east of the ditch in the southeast side of the property, but no site was defined, in spite of a test pit (ER 14) that was sunk near the apparent center of the finds.



Figure 28

The Phase II team, in October 1994: Edward Heite, Aaron Jones, and George Keeler.