



# 18<sup>th</sup> Century Sites from the US Route 301 Archaeology Program

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## INTRODUCTION

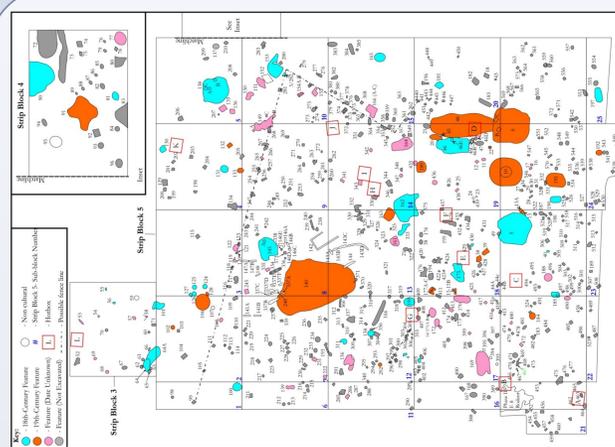
The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) is in the throes of its largest public works project in over 13 years. DelDOT plans to construct 17 miles of new grade-separated highway across southern New Castle County, to move traffic safely and efficiently from U.S. route 301 in Maryland onto the existing Delaware state route 1 corridor. archaeological survey work has identified numerous 18th century historic archaeological sites that will completely alter what we thought we knew about this early historic time period in Delaware and the Mid-Atlantic region. This archaeology program has utilized the talents of 10 cultural resource management firms (CRM).



This overall mega project for FHWA and DelDOT is estimated to be 800 million dollars with the archaeology program coming in around 9-11 million dollars making it the most expensive archaeological endeavor the state of Delaware has ever undertaken. Utilizing the talents of the 10 CRM firms, Phase I, archaeological survey identified 62 sites on the project. Phase II archaeological evaluation was carried out on 26 sites and 14 were found potentially eligible to be on the national register of historic places. This poster will discuss 7, 18<sup>th</sup> century sites excavated in 2012.

## SEVEN 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SITES

The first 18<sup>th</sup> century site is the **Rumsey Polk Tenant Prehistoric Site** (Richard Grubb and Assoc.). This is a multicomponent Native American and historic site. There are two historic components to this site, 1742 to the 1780's and 1804-1852. Both historic components are likely agricultural tenancy occupations. The phase III excavation identified 622 features and almost 27,000 artifacts as well as numerous floral and faunal assemblages. One brick lined well was also hand and mechanically excavated. This well most likely relates to the later occupation of the site. This site's features are vast and very complex at 1 feature for almost every 4 square meters of excavation. Here is a map of the site showing the quantity and complexity of all the features. The blue features are from the 18<sup>th</sup> century component.



The next site is the **Bird-Houston Site** (The Louis Berger Group). This is another multicomponent site with an early occupation of 1770 – 1830 and a later occupation of 1830 – 1920. The two occupations are spatially separate unlike the previous site discussed which has overlapping occupations. The Bird-Houston site contains 36 features and over 8,000 artifacts from both loci. The 18<sup>th</sup> century occupation contains two wells and numerous pit features. One of the 18<sup>th</sup> century wells did have intact cribbing at it's base. Of note about this site is the 18<sup>th</sup> century well had over 1,000 artifacts in it, most of which were late 18<sup>th</sup> / early 19<sup>th</sup> century ceramics such as Creamware, Jackfield, Pearlware, and Coarse red earthenware.



Red earthenware sherds and the 18<sup>th</sup> century well with intact wooden cribbing where the artifacts came from.

The next 18<sup>th</sup> century site is the **Houston Le-Compt site** (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group). This site dates from 1779 – 1930 and constitutes one of the longest continual occupations of all the 18<sup>th</sup> century sites in the project. The site is a farmstead represented by over 300 features (about 250 were postholes), 3 historic wells (all from different occupations of the site) 1 main house with multiple building episodes (picture below) and one of the largest artifact assemblage of all the 18<sup>th</sup> century sites in the project. Of interest about this site are all the amazing "small finds" artifacts such as the 18<sup>th</sup> century William and Mary-styled escutcheon plate shown below.



The next site is the **Cardon Holton Site** (Hunter Research Inc.). This site is situated along one of the 18<sup>th</sup> century cart roads that cross the US Route 301 project. The Cardon Holton site dates from 1720 to 1740 and represents a very tightly dated short term occupation domestic site that potentially can be defined as a "contract plantation". This site consists of a number of domestic features such as a root cellar, well, smokehouse, and fire / refuse pits. During the phase III fieldwork about 0.75 acres were striped identifying 13 major historic features and 66 postholes. Similar to other 18<sup>th</sup> century sites on this project the Cardon Holton site did have a prehistoric component. Roughly 7,100 historic artifacts were collected during Phase I, II, and III work at the site.



North Devon sgraffito ceramic sherds and the site prior to excavation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century well.

The next 18<sup>th</sup> century site is the **Noxon's Tenant site** (The Louis Berger Group), which dates from 1740 to 1765 and represents a domestic / farm occupation along one of the 18<sup>th</sup> century cart roads in the project. The Noxon's Tenant site identified 67 features during phase III fieldwork and roughly 6,500 historic artifacts including a substantial faunal assemblage. This site also identified and excavated two 18<sup>th</sup> century wells, one of them containing 992 artifacts including sherds of: Staffordshire slipware, Jackfield, Delftware, and white salt-glazed stoneware. This well also produced 309 faunal specimens and intact wooden cribbing at the base of the well.



Staffordshire Slipware Porringer Sherds and an 18<sup>th</sup> Century well with intact wooden cribbing at its base.

The next 18<sup>th</sup> century site is the **Armstrong-Rogers Site** (Dovetail Cultural Resource Group). This site dates from the mid 1700's to the 1880's and represents an agricultural farmstead and dairy. This site contains numerous outbuilding features such as a smokehouse, dairy, and two wells. A total of 135 features were identified and over 6,300 artifacts recovered. Of note at this site is the dairy and adjacent well with a partially intact wooden lift pump dendrochronologically dated to the 1750's, and contemporaneous with the other well on the site.



The dairy and well from the Armstrong-Rogers site, as well as the wooden lift pump from the well in situ.

The last 18<sup>th</sup> century site is the **Elkins Site** (Hunter Research Inc.). This site includes two separate 18<sup>th</sup> century loci and a burial ground with 5 individuals. The two loci at the Elkins site date from the 1720's – 1730's and 1740 – 1780. The burial ground may or may not be associated with either loci at this site or another 18<sup>th</sup> century site in the vicinity. The Elkins site consists of subsurface cellar features from domestic buildings, outbuildings, posts, and a potential wolf trap pit. The Elkins site is most likely a small farmstead or "contract plantation". This site also has a native American presence but it is unknown if it is contemporaneous with the historic component. The phase III field work identified 8 major structural features and 58 post features. The phase III field work recovered roughly 7,000 historic artifacts and 22,000 architectural artifacts. One point of note is that a portion of the Elkins site artifact recovery was done via 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch mesh screening and recovered a massive "small finds" assemblage of beads, pins, metal, fish scales, small lead shot, and more.



Images from the Elkins site of one of the burials, cellar feature, small finds, and a possible wolf trap pit feature.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the US Route 301 project will completely change our interpretation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape in Delaware and the Mid-Atlantic region. These 7 sites, and others from the project will conclude their labwork, research, and report writing over the next few years and provide more insight into this amazing time period in our nations history. Please keep up with the project via our website [WWW.ARCHAEOLOGY.DELDOT.GOV](http://WWW.ARCHAEOLOGY.DELDOT.GOV)