



Exposed brick foundation within excavation unit.

The archaeologists are removing soil from inside the foundation and surrounding yard area, collecting the artifacts, and documenting the evidence of the people who lived here. The information from this stage will be combined with data gathered from oral interviews and detailed research to help the archaeologists recreate the life of a tenant family in northern Delaware during the turn of the 19th century.



WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The most important source of information about the past is you! Artifacts and archives tell only part of the story. If you or anyone you know wants to share stories, photographs, or other information about Choptank Road, we want to hear from you! Please stop by the site to share your knowledge with us or contact us at the numbers below.



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Archaeology at The Wilson Farm Tenancy Site Choptank Road



The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) is improving a section of Choptank Road near Middletown, Delaware. Before construction begins on the roadway, DelDOT is required by federal law to conduct an archaeological survey within the proposed project area to identify any archaeological sites that may be impacted by construction activities. The investigation on Choptank Road began during the summer of 2003, and an archaeological team will be digging on the side of the road on the Sharp Farm between early March and late April.

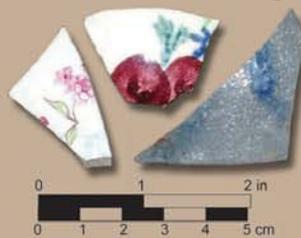
During the search for the former inhabitants of Choptank Road, archaeologists found a total of fourteen archaeological sites. Some of the sites are associated with prominent early residents of Pencader and St. Georges Hundreds.

However, most of the people who lived on Choptank Road were not wealthy or well known, but were farmers or sharecroppers who rented the land they worked. In New Castle County during the 19th century, more than half of the farmers who provided crops to city markets in Wilmington, Philadelphia, and Baltimore did not own their own land.



What do artifacts tell us?

The artifacts found on archaeological sites are sometimes the only remainders of the people who lived there. In looking at artifacts found during the previous excavations, archaeologists can pick out patterns that shed light on who lived there in the past and what life was like for them. We learn about inhabitants' everyday lives, such as what they ate, what they wore, how they made their living, and even how they spent their free time. Artifacts collected from the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site include objects that were used every day by the people who lived here.



Marble



An adult man probably wore the suspender buckle pictured at the top of the page. Archaeologists also found a much smaller child-sized buckle, marbles, pieces of a broken porcelain doll, buttons



Suspender buckle

from women's clothing and costume jewelry beads. The presence of items that belonged to men, women, and children suggests that a family probably lived here for at least part of the time that the house was occupied.

Archaeologists found many fragments of dishes with a variety of patterns, suggesting the inhabitants possibly used a collection of mismatched plates and bowls. The inexpensive and mismatched dishes hint that the family was not wealthy.

The gaming die pictured here is hand carved from a piece of wood. We don't know what kind of games the die was used in, but it does show that life was not all work for the people who lived here.

Gaming die



As part of the investigation, archaeologists consulted maps drawn in the 1800s, some of which indicate a building in a location that today is an open pasture located at the northern edge of the Wilson farm property. Archaeological test pits in this area contained large quantities of nails and broken



The Wilson Farm Tenancy Site, found by archaeologists during the investigation of the roadway, is an example of where a typical tenant family lived, worked, and raised a family in the late 19th century.

Pictured to the right is the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site, now known as the Sharp Farm.

window glass. Further exploration of the site resulted in the discovery of a brick foundation below the ground surface, as well as thousands of artifacts related to daily life, such as dishes, food jars, and farming tools. Archival research confirmed the presence of a tenant house on the Wilson Farm, and farm assessment records show that peaches, corn and wheat were the main products from this property in 1880, with small amounts of rye, potatoes, and apples to supplement the primary crops.

Intensive archaeological investigations, referred to as the data recovery phase of the project, are now being conducted to collect as much information as possible about who lived there and how they lived.