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What We Did and Why: The Research Design for the Data-Recovery Investigations of the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

Whenever a consultant recommends data-recovery investigations for an archaeological site, it should be with the recognition that as cultural resource management specialists we bear two responsibilities. One, as we noted in the previous chapter, is to aid our client in complying with the applicable regulatory requirements (i.e., Section 106, NEPA, etc.) in order to see the undertaking through to completion. Our other responsibility as professionals is to the resource itself; to ensure, given the constraints of the overall project, that we extract as much data as possible from a site before it is gone forever. Our ultimate goal as archaeologists and historians is to illuminate a bit of the past, using the material remains left behind by those who once lived and labored at a site like the Wilson Farm Tenancy, coupled with information drawn from a variety of documentary sources. Before we even go into the field, we put together a research design—basically a game plan—wherein we formulate research questions or identify research issues that we think can be addressed through data-recovery investigations, and then spell out the methods to be used in examining them. The questions/issues raised are based in part on the results of earlier phases of work at the site, together with information from other similar sites—in this case other nineteenth- and twentieth-century tenant sites, as well as farmsteads and urban domestic sites.

It's important to note at this point that while research issues and research questions provide a conceptual-theoretical framework for investigations, the archaeologist cannot allow him/herself to be a victim of tunnel vision. Archaeology is, and always has been, a bit serendipitous, meaning that we have to be able to shift our focus depending on the kinds of data coming out of the ground, or resulting from background research and analysis. In other words, we need to be flexible and open to new interpretations of data. We as archeologists must also recognize that future researchers will, in all likelihood, have research interests different from our own, not to mention more sophisticated analytical techniques. It is imperative, then, that we thoroughly and accurately record the results of our investigations. As Heite and Blume noted, "cultural resource inventories of raw data continue to be primarily collections for which no research objective has yet been developed. This lack of direction and research orientation may be a blessing, and may indeed define the primary future value of such data" (Heite and Blume 2008:18).

For the Wilson Site, the questions—posed in the initial data-recovery proposal KSK submitted to DelDOT, and subsequently by URS for the lab and report preparation tasks—revolved around its occupational history, the residents' domestic economy, the application of the "house and garden" model, and the ways in which the Wilson Farm Tenancy was similar to and different from other rural and urban sites in the region from this same general time period. As far as the site's occupational history is concerned, we wanted to know whether it was "inhabited by a series of itinerant laborers, freed slaves, a family headed by a tenant farmer, or a combination of these possibilities," and if such a series of households is "representative of the composition of an agricultural tenancy at the turn of the nineteenth century in northern Delaware." It's the sort of

complicated question that, if answered even in part, can lead to some interesting perspectives on the social history of Delaware, particularly in regard to racial/ethnic and class identity and relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Using the scheme established in the *Management Plan for Delaware's Historical Archaeological Resources* (DeCunzo and Catts 1990), the main contextual setting for this study is as follows:

Time Periods: 1880–1940 Urbanization and Early Suburbanization
Geographical Zone: Upper Peninsula
Research Domains: Domestic Economy; Social Group Identity; Behavior and Interaction; Building and Landscaping
Property Type: Agricultural Quarters

IDENTITY AND IDENTIFICATION

The identity of the occupants of the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site, and their household structure, is largely a historical issue. Preliminary background research for this project indicated that the residents of the site were, at some point in its history, African Americans. The 1880 census of St. George's Hundred suggested the possibility that the site was occupied by a Mr. Isaac Cooper and his family, who were described in the census as "black." Given the preliminary nature of the research, we could not discount the possibility that households of different ethnic/racial groups had lived at the site at different times during its history, which, as far as we could tell, stretched some seven decades between the 1880s and the 1950s. The research KSK conducted as part of the Phase I/II investigations suggested that the site was quite likely associated with tenant laborers; a map dating to 1881, a year after the census was taken, shows two structures, presumably dwellings, located in the site area close to the road, a setting that, during this time period, may be associated with those folks—black and white—on the lower rungs of the "agricultural ladder." As we shall see, the historical record is not always quite as complete as we would like it to be.

Considering Ethnicity and Race

Ethnicity has been of considerable interest to historical archaeologists from the inception of the field in the 1960s. Given the cultural melange of the American colonies (later, states)—particularly those south of New England—archaeologists wanted to know how these various ethnic/cultural groups interacted, and how this interaction might be reflected in the archaeological record (for one of the first surveys of the subject, see Schuyler 1980).

Before proceeding further, we should define the terms "ethnicity" and "ethnic group." According to *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, ethnicity is defined as "ethnic quality or affiliation," which doesn't help very much in understanding the concept. Anthropologists, on the other hand, have long concerned themselves with the ways that people or groups categorize themselves and others, and tend to agree among themselves that "ethnicity" is a process rather than an immutable essence or quality.

According to anthropologist Tamara Dragadze, the ethnic group may be defined as "a firm aggregate of people, historically established on a given territory, possessing in common relatively stable peculiarities of language and culture, and also recognizing their unity and difference from other similar formations (self-awareness) and expressing this in a self-appointed name (ethnonym)" (Dragadze 1980:162, quoted in Renfrew and Bahn 2000:189). Along with the factors relevant to the notion of ethnicity Dragadze identifies, J. Milton Yinger adds that members of an ethnic group also participate in shared activities built around their (real or mythical) common origin (Yinger 1986:22).

What many scholars have come to accept is that ethnicity is not immutable or static. Indeed, many anthropologists, particularly those who follow Fredrik Barth (1969), consider ethnicity instead to be transactional and shifting. Ethnicity is, as Sandra Wallman (1979) has put it, the "process by which 'their' difference is used to enhance the sense of 'us' for purposes of organization or identification." The focus of attention in recent decades, particularly since the publication of Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (1969), has been the maintenance of ethnic boundaries—the structured interaction that takes place between groups across boundaries; as the sense of "us" changes, the boundary between "us" and "them" shifts (Wallman 1979:3). Ethnic identity depends on ascription, both by members of the ethnic group in question and by outsiders. Ethnicity, therefore, is not fixed but rather is situationally defined, fluid, and flexible. Like gender, wealth, and age, ethnicity is, as Renfrew and Bahn note, constructed and reconstructed in the practice of everyday life (Renfrew and Bahn 2000:219).

"Race" can also be defined in much the same way as "ethnicity," and during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was not unusual to see references to the "Anglo-Saxon race" or even the "Yankee race." By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the concept of race, based on gross, presumably permanent physical (i.e., phenotypical) differences (skin color, facial structure, hair form), had fully emerged in the United States and northwestern Europe. More recently, biologists, sociologists, and anthropologists have recognized that race is primarily a social construct, albeit one based on certain "observable" phenotypical features (Smith 1986:192). For van den Berghe, race is thus a socially defined group, which sees itself and is seen by others as phenotypically different from other such groups (van den Berghe 1983:222). Race, then, can be considered to be "a special case of ethnicity" (Yinger 1986:21).

In contrast to van den Berghe, Yinger, and others, Charles Orser (2007) has recently argued that race and ethnicity have different histories, and that racial categorization "has a distinct association with relations of power and control" (Orser 2007:9). While agreeing that "race" is a social construct, Orser sees it as a label imposed from the outside by those who see themselves as nonmembers of a racial group; ethnicity, on the other hand, is an identity that is self-imposed from the inside (Orser 2007:8). Individuals grouped together in a race are set apart, defined and compartmentalized, and this grouping is not necessarily based solely, or at all, on physical appearance. Cultural practices, religious beliefs, traditions, and combinations of cultural and physical attributes have been used by racial classifiers to build their categorization schemes (Orser 2007:8–9). Individuals can then "be treated in specific ways based upon their perceived membership in a 'race.' Racial designations create distinctions that have social meaning" (Orser 2007:9). This assigning of people to essentialist groups based on appearance or other

characteristics that allow them to be seen as biologically inferior or socially unequal is called racialization.

The Archaeology of Ethnicity and Race

Given what we've just discussed in terms of ethnic identity, how do we tease out evidence for ethnicity, much less race and racialization, from the archaeological record? Much of our effort early on in historical archaeology was expended in identifying index artifacts considered unique to a particular ethnic group. These could range from "Home Rule" tobacco pipes associated with nineteenth-century Irish immigrants to the foundations of a "shotgun" house associated with African Americans. In other words, we were hunting for cultural "survivals," artifacts that had either been transported to the New World from the homeland or were produced in North America using an Old World cultural grammar (the "shotgun" house with its "African" proxemics) (Vlach 1986). At the same time, historical archaeologists were attempting to tease out patterns from the archaeological data that also could be attributed to different ethnic or cultural groups. For example, Stanley South identified what he termed the "Brunswick Pattern" of refuse disposal, in which trash was tossed adjacent to dwellings, a pattern he associated with eighteenth-century British American (or British colonial) sites. South also defined the "Carolina Artifact Pattern," which measured the relative frequencies of particular groups and classes of artifacts from several sites that the documentary record indicated British Americans had occupied. The idea was that British colonists in the eighteenth century would bring with them "a basic set of behavioral modes, attitudes, and associated artifacts that would not vary regardless of whether their ship landed at Charleston, Savannah, or Philadelphia" (South 1977:86). The same would apply to other ethnic groups, be they Dutch, Spanish, or German; each would bring its own goods, its own beliefs, its own way of doing things. In other words, "Englishness," "Dutchness," or "Africanness" were assumed to lie in "values and practices that came from the homeland and that were not shared with neighbors" (Upton 1996:3).

Complicating this seemingly simple picture are the regional and local variations characteristic of the Old World. If all politics can be described as local, then identity deserves a similar designation, certainly within the ethnic and cultural mosaics that were Africa and Europe in the recent and distant pasts (Posnansky 1999). It is what happened to these ethnic groups once they came ashore in the Americas that particularly fascinates historians and historical archaeologists. People were forced to adapt existing cultural practice in the face of a new and unfamiliar environment. New arrivals in North America also found themselves rubbing elbows with others who sometimes did not share the same language, religious beliefs, or ways of doing things, and in the process creating new cultural forms. This interaction and blending has been variously termed syncretism, creolization, or ethnogenic bricolage (Fennell 2007). The assumption underlying many archaeological studies of ethnicity is that cultural forms (or at least some of them), however modified through interaction, can be traced backwards in time and space (see Upton 1996 for a critique of this approach).

Some researchers, like Paul Mullins, take exception to this essentialist view of culture. Mullins (1999) challenges us to get past our quest for African cultural survivals and "to confront the power relations that structured the possibilities of agency and bounded self-determination" (Mullins 1999, in DeCunzo 2004:236). Indeed, he argues that the search for African continuities distracts us from a confrontation with racism and material domination and the compromise and

reformulation necessary for negotiating inequality (Mullins 1999:34; Singleton 1995:133). Orser (2007), too, takes this general approach, focusing on social structure and power relations. For him, the construction of racial hierarchy through the process of racialization produces material outcomes that can be investigated archaeologically (Orser 2007:13). On the other hand, Orser notes that constructing an archaeology of racialization is not easy. While artifacts, such as the "Home Rule" pipes mentioned earlier, do suggest cultural affiliation, we must situate their presence within a historical context that recognizes the racialization process (Orser 2007:185–186).

Issues of race and ethnicity also apply to Native Americans of the Contact-period and later. In general, Native Americans who were not removed to distant reservations became landowners by acquiring land in the European tenure system (Heite and Blume 2008:75-79). These Native Americans adopted the characteristics of the dominant society through the process of acculturation. Because they were not able to claim their Native American identity, they were classified as "mulatto", "negro" or "colored." Thus, nonwhite people of color were lumped together, essentially masking the history of Native Americans during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Between the Revolution and the Civil War, racial distinctions among nonwhites became significant and legal restrictions were increasingly restrictive. Many Native Americans were forced off their land. Efforts to assimilate Native Americans by bringing them completely into the European-American culture began after the Civil War to remedy the failures of the reservation system and bring the tribes into "civilized" society (Hoxie 1984: 11, 15).

What does this mean for the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site? The historic record noted earlier suggests that at least some of the occupants of the site were African American. The Phase II fieldwork also resulted in the recovery of a straightening or pressing comb, and while hardly a "cultural survival," it is an item that is almost universally associated with African American women. While most artifacts or artifact assemblages from the site will most likely not have such a strong association with African Americans, or with European Americans for that matter, we may be able to address ethnicity, race, and racialization if we follow Upton's advice to be careful in our assumptions and to keep in mind the tension between individual action (that ethnicity can be a tool for individual self-fashioning) and collective culture (Upton 1996:5–6).

DOMESTIC ECONOMY

Simply put, the research domain of domestic economy, as defined by DeCunzo and Catts (1990), encompasses the range of means—including production, reproduction, and consumption—employed by a family or household to achieve its goals. As DeCunzo and Catts (1990:17) have noted, these goals might include simple survival or economic, occupational, and/or social mobility. Production, reproduction, and consumption can therefore be perceived as a strategy designed to achieve these goals. This domestic strategy consists of several elements that are amenable to historical and/or archaeological research. These elements include the composition and occupational structure of the household (a critical and largely historic issue); home production (of food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities, together with surplus products for the market); and consumer behavior. The latter can be broadly defined to include participation in a local barter economic system and/or a cash-based market economy (DeCunzo and Catts 1990:17). Of particular relevance to consumer behavior are the household's investment in furnishings, equipment and tools, and goods such as clothing, toys, tablewares, medicines, and a

host of other consumer items. Attention should be paid as well to the household's investment in, utilization of, and improvements to commodities such as land and buildings, although such investments were much more important to property holders and the principal tenants of a tract of land. At the root of any study of consumer behavior, as Orser (2007:13) has put it, is the idea that people consume what they find meaningful within the universe of what they can afford. "The central issue for archaeologists viewing the remains of consumption practices is how to interpret the mundane world of personal possessions in ways that provide insights into quite significant social issues, including racial identity, nationalism, and affluence" (Orser 2007:13). The aspirations of St. Georges Hundred rural folk to social class and equality in the marketplace could be worked out in the form of the clothing they wore and the furnishings and bric-a-bric with which they stocked their homes.

Home production is also critical for understanding the domestic strategies of rural populations. How self-supporting were late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century rural households? How tied to the markets were they, and what was the effect of the expansion of the capitalist market economy and the commercialization of agriculture during this period? Evidence of foodways (floral and faunal remains, and artifacts associated with food preparation, storage, and consumption) can be particularly useful for understanding the self-sufficiency of late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century households, especially through the analysis of butchering patterns and the distribution of faunal elements. If we can gauge their self-sufficiency and market participation, it may be possible to place the household(s) in local, regional, national/international contexts.

THE HOUSE AND GARDEN

For a traveler in late-nineteenth-century Delaware, a common feature on the landscape would have been the small houses dotted along the roads or on the edges of fields or farm complexes. These dwellings, usually occupied by tenant laborers and their households, were often referred to by their owners and occupants as house and gardens (Siders and Andrzejewski 1997:151). The house and garden emerged in the early nineteenth century, partly in response to the changing relationship between farmers and laborers, partly in response to the agricultural reform movement. Until the late eighteenth century, enslaved African Americans provided the bulk of the agricultural labor force on farms in central Delaware. By 1800, manumissions had reduced the enslaved portion of the labor pool to a mere fraction of what it had been a few decades earlier, and farmers found themselves relying on free African Americans and poor white families who could not afford to purchase or tenant their own farms (Siders and Andrzejewski 1997:149–150).

Over the course of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of Delaware farmers began to pay attention to the discourse on agricultural reform, as soil exhaustion and western competition took their toll on the state's agricultural economy. Farmers were prompted to diversify crops and move toward a more scientific, business-like approach to operating their farms. While some farmers could often get by with just seasonal labor (for harvest and planting), many others employed at least some people year-round, in order to carry out the various task the farm required. Although agricultural laborers were often lodged in the farmer's home, these tended to be single men. For married laborers and their families, the landowner would often lease them a

dwelling and a small plot of land (normally one to five acres) for a garden and perhaps to raise a cow or a few pigs and chickens (Siders and Andrzejewski 1997:152, 154), as well as allowing them to cut firewood from a specified area of the farm (Clemens and Simler 1988:112). Work contracts were usually a year in duration and tenant laborers were free to work for other employers during slack times, as long as outside work did not interfere with the labor required of them by the landowner.

The dwellings provided for tenant laborers were generally small, usually one and a half or two stories, with the average dimension of the main block ranging from 16 x 16 feet to 18 x 20 feet. The house usually contained a main room on the first floor, with a winder stair leading up to a single room above. These houses could be of either log or frame construction, with whitewashed interiors (Siders and Andrzejewski 1997:151). As Siders and Andrzejewski note, these dwelling almost always were constructed atop pier foundations of wood, brick, or stone, both to protect them from ground moisture and to render them more easily portable (Siders and Andrzejewski 1997:151).

The houses built for Delaware's tenant laborers followed, fairly closely, the prescriptions laid down by agricultural reform writers like J. B. Bordley, founder of the Philadelphia Society for Agriculture. In his *Essays and Notes on Husbandry and Rural Affairs*, Bordley noted that cottages should measure no greater than 12 feet wide by 16 feet long and be no more than two stories in height. As Gall (2007:2–7 and 2–8) notes: "later, during the mid-nineteenth century, agricultural magazines, such as the *American Agriculturist* (1858M: 73–74), advocated that a cheap and comfortable laborer's cottage should measure 16 feet wide by 22 feet long with an 8-foot-wide lean-to projecting 4 feet from the rear of the structure. Such structures would have cost $200 to $250 to construct at mid-century. Bordley (1801:390) also suggested that a small garden are be allocated for use by the tenant for subsistence farming. Bordley warned landowners, however, not to grant the tenant laborer leeway to cultivate for profitable agricultural purposes, which "might tend to draw the cottager from the farmer's business to attend to an enlarged employment of his own" (Bordley 1801:390).

Siders and Andrzejewski's study of house and garden dwellings (1997) notes a general consistency in the location of these structures. Unlike the farm complex (tenant or owner-occupied), with its range of outbuildings often set well back from the road and located in the middle of prime agricultural land, the house and garden dwelling was often situated on land marginal for agricultural purposes. Farm owners often set these houses at the edge of a planted field. In other instances, house and garden dwellings were situated in or near a complex of agricultural outbuildings, sometimes in the middle of an agricultural field. Finally, and most relevant to the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site, farm laborer dwellings were frequently built along a road, often in groups of two to five houses (Siders and Andrzejewski 1997:157). In many cases, the house and garden dwelling was within visual range of the farmhouse, allowing surveillance by the landowner and representing the social distance between owner and tenant.

While a considerable amount of data has been collected concerning the form and evolution of the house and garden dwelling (Siders and Andrzejewski 1997; Siders et al. 2001), less is known about the spatial organization of these sites. The Bordley plan, for instance, depicts a range of small outbuildings separated from the house by a fenced-in garden (Figure 2.1). The placement
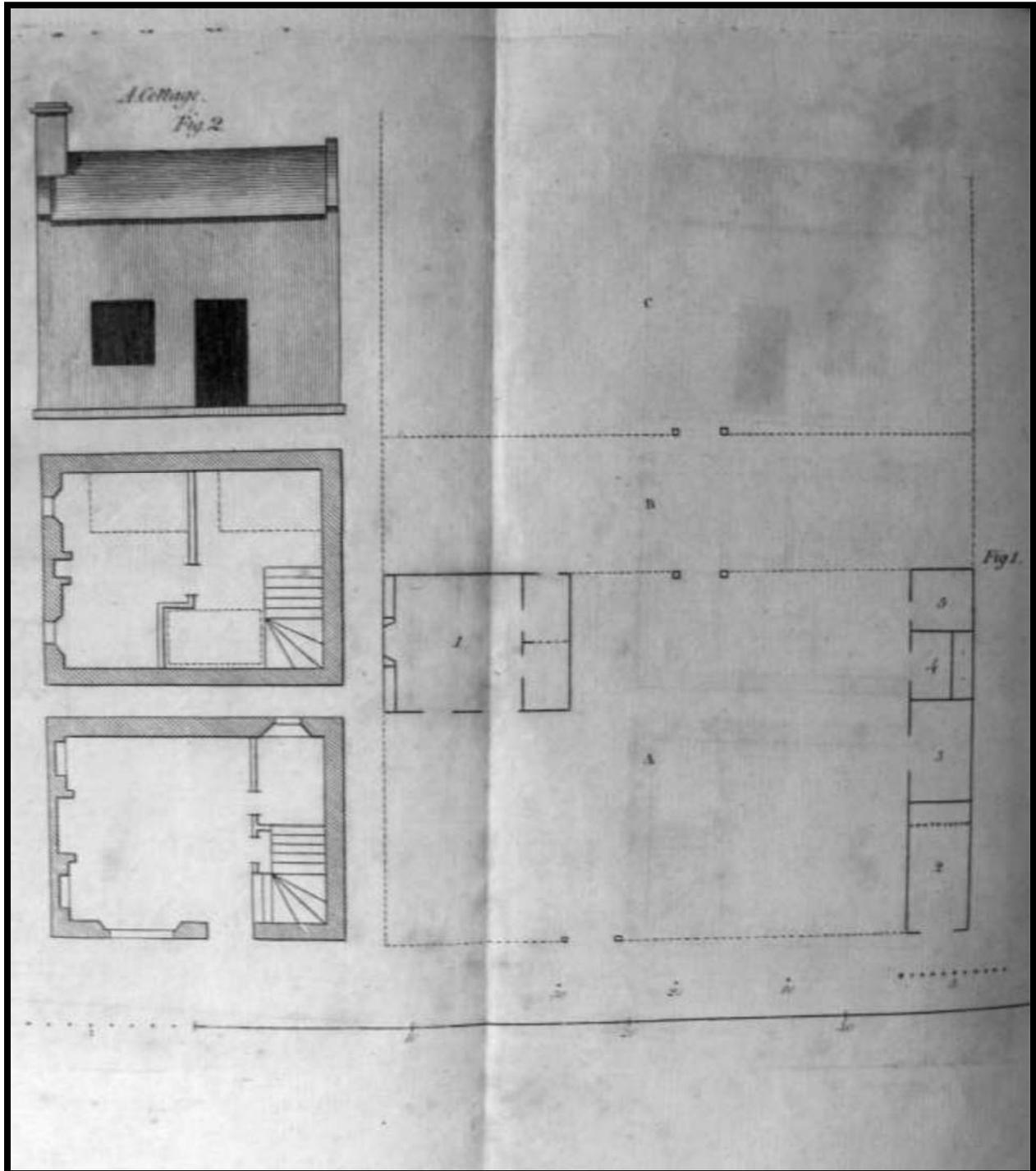
Figure 2.1   J. B. Bordley's plan of a cottage and garden for agricultural laborers. On the right, note the plan of a cottage (1), front yard (A), backyard (B), garden (C), and outbuildings (2-5). Figure 2 on the left shows the front elevation and the first and second floor plans (Source: Bordley 1801).

of ancillary structures on house and garden lots probably varied widely. For those dwellings built along the roadside, like the Wilson Farm Tenancy, outbuildings—probably a shed or two— would have been placed to the side or behind the house. Archaeology is critical here for determining how such sites were arranged spatially—not only for documenting the placement of outbuildings, but for identifying activity areas and those places where the household discarded its refuse.

THE SCOPE OF WORK FOR THE WILSON FARM TENANCY INVESTIGATIONS

The point of a data-recovery investigation, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, is to try to gather as much useful information as possible, mainly in an attempt to address the research issues posed after the initial phases of work have been completed. A data-recovery investigation of a historical site is, by necessity, multi-disciplinary, involving historical research, archaeological fieldwork, and a range of data analyses once the artifacts and samples have been brought back to the laboratory. The following is a brief discussion of the approaches taken to the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site, first by KSK and subsequently by URS. Much of the text relating to KSK's work is taken from the draft management summary Morrell and Glumac prepared in 2007.

Historical Research

As with any data-recovery investigation of a historical site, the first step in the Wilson Farm Tenancy research involved the collection of documentary information. KSK's Phase I/II work had been limited to the examination of a number of historic maps, so they had some sense of the property's configuration and the course that development in the Middletown area had taken during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Morrell and Glumac 2008). Based on this initial work, it was quite evident that Site 7NC-F-94 was peripheral to the main domestic focus of the property, the George F. Wilson residence, once known as "Choptank."

KSK's Phase III historic research was designed to accomplish two tasks: 1) examine the history and development of the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site; and 2) examine the settlement and agricultural history of this region of Delaware. To do this, KSK researchers visited a number of archives, including: the New Castle County Recorder of Deeds, the New Castle County Register of Wills, and the Historical Society of Delaware, all in Wilmington; the New Castle Public Library in New Castle; the Delaware Agricultural Museum and the Delaware State Archives in Dover; the University of Delaware Morris Library and the Newark Public Library in Newark; the Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library in Odessa; and the Historical Society of Middletown. In addition, a formal interview was performed with Mr. George Clough, a long-time resident of Choptank Road who had some memory of the structure at the site.

The purpose in doing this research was to look at a wide range of documents that might have a bearing on the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site. Deed research established the basic outline of the property's history, providing data about changes in ownership. Wills also give us some idea of the owner's possessions, especially land, while population census enumerations allow us a view of household structure at particular points in time (usually every 10 years), providing us with the number of individuals living on a property, together with their age, sex, race, and, in the case of

slaves, their condition of servitude. Tax records, along with the probate inventories, allow us some insight into the changing economic fortunes of some of the households associated with a particular site. Newspapers can also provide a wealth of information on life events—birth notices and obituaries—and information on sheriff and estate sales.

As a 2009 follow-up to KSK's research, URS examined additional documents at the Delaware State Archives in Dover. Among these were deeds, tax records, estate papers, census data, directory information, and vital records. As well as these primary documents, KSK and URS also examined a number of secondary sources, including reference works on regional history and culture, archaeology, historic architecture, prehistory, and geology.

Taken together, these documentary materials provide us with a considerable amount of baseline information necessary for reconstructing the past of the Wilson Farm Tenancy property. We get a sense of the people who owned the land and, to some extent, those who worked there and who lived in the small house on Choptank Road. However, if we rely solely on the historical documentation, we miss many of the details—the texture, the materiality if you will—that can only be supplied through archaeological fieldwork and data analysis.

Archaeological Fieldwork

In order to address the research questions they had posed in their data-recovery proposal, KSK had two principal objectives for their fieldwork at Site 7NC-F-94. First, they hoped to recover data concerning the spatial organization of the site. In other words, the locations of building remains, features, yard spaces, and the like, and how these might relate to each other and to the foundation uncovered during the Phase II study. Second, they wanted to collect as large a sample of artifacts as possible, since it is the ceramics, glass, bone, and other items—together with the spatial data—that inform us about the material lives of a site's occupants.

To accomplish their objectives, KSK took a fairly standard archaeological approach to the Wilson Farm Tenancy Site, where (in terms of stratigraphy) they essentially had a plowzone layer overlaying the truncated subsoil. Common practice on sites like this, and the one that KSK followed, is to carry out the excavation in stages—the first stage involving taking a sample of the plowzone soils, followed by the removal of the remaining plowzone by hand or machine.

Based on the results of the Phase I and II investigations, KSK had a pretty firm idea of the extent of the site within the APE and a sense of where some of the major artifact concentrations were located. Because the distribution of artifacts in the plowzone may indicate the presence of a truncated feature (like a trash pit), or an old ground surface or midden disturbed by the plow, a good-sized sample of the plowed soil is desirable. In consultation with DelDOT and the DE SHPO, KSK set about excavating 28 5-x-5-foot units, covering a total of 700 square feet and representing an approximately 11% sample of the site's plowzone (700/6200=11.3%), based on the somewhat arbitrary limits of the site. Factoring in the five Phase II units, the plowzone sample rises to about 13%. Most of the units (*n*=17) were placed within, adjacent to, or overlapping the foundation (Figure 2.2).

Because plowing destroys the stratigraphy of a site, mixing the soils and creating a more or less uniform stratum to the depth the plow can reach, the plowzone is usually removed as a single

Figure 2.2   KSK field crew sampling the plowzone.

level, as done at Site 7NC-F-94. In a few instances, excavation extended into the underlying B horizon using arbitrary 10-centimeter (0.35-foot) levels.

The KSK field crew screened all of the soil through ¼-inch mesh (Figure 2.3) and kept all of the recovered artifacts for later analysis. Once they had finished the sampling, the plowzone across most of the site was removed via machine (Figure 2.4). Any exposed features were then cleaned by hand, mapped, and, where appropriate, bisected and excavated one half at a time (Figure 2.5). Samples for flotation analysis were collected from a number of features, primarily to recover botanical remains (such as seeds or nuts) that might otherwise disappear through the screens.

When archaeologists excavate a site, we in effect destroy it. No matter how carefully we excavate, we can never physically reassemble the site. It is imperative, then, that our record of the site in question is as thorough as possible, so that we can reconstruct it on paper and in the computer once the excavation is completed. To that end, archaeologists fill out a form for every stratum and feature in every excavation unit. These forms, like the ones KSK used, require the excavator to record such basic information as the date of excavation, the unit number, its size, the opening and closing depths of each stratum, and the types of artifacts collected (Figure 2.6). Once the excavation unit is finished, a profile (or cross-section) drawing is made of at least one of the walls to illustrate the relationships between the various strata. Similarly, we draw the cross-section of each bisected feature before removing the rest of the fill. We also make plan drawings when we think a top-view of a unit or feature would be particularly informative. To supplement the paperwork, we also take photographs during every stage of the excavations, recording things like unit profiles, foundation walls, or simply showing the work in progress. While there is no one correct method of data recordation, the rule of thumb is that thoroughness counts (Noël Hume 1969, Hester, Shafer, and Feder 1997, and Joukowsky 1980 are all good introductions to archaeological field methods).

Artifact Processing and Analysis

As for the artifacts recovered during the Wilson Farm Tenancy excavations, these were eventually brought to URS's laboratory for processing and analysis. Artifacts hold immense appeal for both the archaeologist and non-archaeologist alike. These artifacts were the things used (and in some cases, made) by the people who lived and worked on the site being studied, and, as such, provide a sense of a direct connection with the past. Artifacts recovered from an archaeological site are more than just curios, however. Properly excavated and analyzed, these items—along with architectural remains and soil deposits—provide us with evidence of the past that can be collected in no other way. It is in the laboratory that we begin to get a real sense of the kinds of food people ate, the types of consumer goods they preferred, the ailments they suffered from, and sometimes even their political affiliations (McIntosh 1986:103–145; Noël Hume 1969:257–292).

Like the fieldwork at the site, artifact processing followed a set of standardized procedures. Once in the lab, all artifacts were cleaned with plain water; in the case of deteriorating bone, a damp toothbrush was used to clean off as much loose dirt as possible without causing further damage. Iron artifacts, such as nails, were drybrushed (Figure 2.7). Bone and shell were placed in bags labeled with the appropriate provenience information, while other artifacts (like glass and

Figure 2.3   KSK field crew screening soil.

Figure 2.4   Backhoe stripping of the plowzone.

Figure 2.5   KSK field crew excavating a feature.

Figure 2.6   KSK field crew recording data.

Figure 2.7   URS lab technicians cleaning artifacts.

ceramics) were labeled in ink with the trinomial state site number and the numbers indicating the provenience from which they had been recovered. The artifacts were then sorted into categories for cataloging based on their material composition—i.e., bone, shell, iron, glass, lithics (rock type), and ceramics—and function. For historic artifacts, we generally based our categories on those Stanley South (1977) defined. The faunal material from the site was sent to Marie-Lorraine Pipes for analysis, and Justine McKnight analyzed samples of floral material (Appendices C and D, respectively).

The prehistoric artifacts recovered during the excavations were sorted into general classes and then further divided into types based on key morphological attributes, indicative of or linked to particular stone-tool production strategies. So, for instance, the class "biface" would be divided into types, with each type defined by the stage in the lithic production sequence it represents— i.e., early-stage, middle-stage, etc.

Once the inventory was completed, we entered the artifact information into a computer database created with the Microsoft *Access* software package. We had hoped to carry out ceramic vessel reconstruction and cross mending (i.e., matching up sherds from a particular vessel from different proveniences) to arrive at minimum vessel estimates (Figure 2.8), and to conduct analysis based on the Miller CC-index. However, because the vast majority of the ceramic and glass artifacts were recovered from the plowzone, the fragments were much too small to perform vessel reconstruction, limiting our analyses to sherd/fragment counts. Finally, in order to analyze the spatial distributions of artifacts in the plowzone, we entered the data for certain artifact types into the *Surfer 5.02* contouring and surface-mapping program. Because the excavation units were clustered around the dwelling foundation, we did employ the contour program, instead shading in the units based on artifact density.

Once we had completed our analyses and selected artifacts had been photographed, the Wilson Farm Tenancy collection was prepared for permanent curation in accordance with the guidelines established by the Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

Figure 2.8   Vessel fragment analysis.