

2. PLANNING BACKGROUND

Any Phase I study can be defined as having one basic objective: to identify any cultural resources that lie within the project area. This is why a Phase I survey is also called a "location and identification," or a "reconnaissance" survey.

This Phase I survey is different, because it covers ground already well trod by earlier surveyors (Dames and Moore 1993; Payne 1994). Archaeological and historical resources have been identified nearby. The present purpose is therefore an exercise in fine-tuning earlier broad surveys for specific local purposes.

DOCUMENT RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The project area has been surrounded by giants of American history. John Dickinson and Cæsar Rodney lived on the adjacent farms. Rodney the revolutionary and Dickinson the philosopher led the state and nation through the Revolution. Dickinson's home farm is now a state museum, but Rodney lies in an unmarked grave near where his father's house once stood.

Any property in St. Jones Neck is potentially associated with a major figure in American history, if only because these two men owned much of the Neck.

Their presence has been a blessing to historians working in the vicinity, since a considerable archive has accumulated around them. The Delaware state museums' ongoing research project in support of the John Dickinson Plantation contains nearly all the available documentation on the vicinity, albeit slanted toward

the museums' mission of site interpretation.

In the shadow of the well-documented great men were the less distinguished yeoman farmers and tenants who actually tilled the land. While the Dickinson family were absent in Philadelphia or their Maryland estates, tenants tilled the ground in Jones Neck. Smallholders bought, and subsequently sold, small plots of ground that eventually became parts of larger holdings.

Over three centuries the history of land tenure on Jones Neck was an intricate ballet of holdings that were accumulated, traded, dispersed, and re-consolidated.

There were periods when large estates accumulated, and periods when they were broken into smaller holdings. These broad trends in ownership patterns can be seen reflected in the project area.

Each real-estate transaction could influence the archaeological record. When a small farmer sold out, his toft became a tenancy or was abandoned. Either way, the archaeological record was affected. When a well-off farmer married, he might build or remodel his house, also leaving a mark in the archaeological record.

Such events must be documented as precisely as possible before any fieldwork, because they provide explanations for archaeological deposits.

A marriage, estate sale, or farm consolidation is the documentary representation of events represented in the field by features and artifact deposits. With these objectives in mind, documentary research for this project included probate, land

PRIORITY RANKING FOR BELOW-GROUND RESOURCES (State Plan, June 1989, page 79)

Settlement patterns
and demographic change
Trapping and hunting
Mining and quarrying
Fishing and oystering
Forestry
Agriculture
Manufacturing
Other themes

PRIORITY RANKING FOR ABOVE-GROUND RESOURCES (State Plan, June 1989, page 79)

Agriculture
Settlement patterns
and demographic change
Manufacturing
Retailing and wholesaling
Transportation and
communication
Other themes

grant, survey, and tax records at the state archives and the courthouse, in addition to secondary histories.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The theoretical orientation of this study is generally cultural materialist, in keeping with the general tone of the state management plans. Cultural materialists study the effect of environment and technology on human behavior. Culture is interpreted as a form of adaptation to both natural and social environments that results from the interaction among human individuals and groups.

Geographical determinism is a related, if not entirely congruent, approach employed by historians. A geographical determinist regards the landscape as an actor in the drama of history, as fully empowered as politicians, entrepreneurs, or military leaders.

This theoretical approach is explicit in the state management plan for prehistoric resources and implicit in the plan for historic resources. Those who use the cultural materialist approach tend to rely upon predictive models to structure their survey activities.

Neither the historical nor the anthropological style of expressing these similar ideas should be interpreted as diminishing or ignoring the importance of particular studies of individual human beings.

Archæologists usually study people in groups, if only because the creation of an archæological site is a community effort. The archæologist must study whatever community, large or small, occupied the site.

On an isolated site, a few people may constitute the subject population. Sometimes, their achievements and personalities can be discerned, but more frequently they are individually indistinguishable from the rest of the group that created the archæological artifact or assemblage.

In very rare cases, such as the legendary Johnny Ward (Fontana *et al.* 1962), the person who created a site emerges from the archæological study as a

recognizable individual. In most cases, the subject population cannot be subdivided into any smaller unit than a family, a military unit, or a community.

From the earliest days of historical archæology, practitioners have struggled to resolve the apparent conflict between general and particular interpretation. Is the site a window into the life of an individual, or into the lives of the group members who lived there, or into the lives of a larger population, of whom the site is but a sample? Is the archæologist writing a biography, a community history, or a contribution to the study of human society's larger characteristics?

While such questions have bedevilled "new" archæologists for a quarter century, more recent "post-modernist" or "post-processualist" archæologists may argue that it doesn't matter.

As the theoretical pendulum inevitably swings away from rigid formulations, it has become acceptable to concentrate on local history, local contexts, and local interpretations, without necessarily relating everything to universal considerations of political theory, natural laws, or some imposed theoretical model for a social structure.

EXPECTED PROPERTY TYPES

In terms employed by the Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan (Ames, Callahan, Herman and Siders 1989), and the management plan for prehistoric resources (Custer 1986), the project area lies in the Coastal geographic zone. This is an area that includes large prehistoric base camps and extensive historic agricultural enterprises.

The obvious historical archæological context is agriculture, as defined by DeCunzo and Garcia (1992).

A defining characteristic of recent Coastal agriculture is consolidation. Over the past half-century, farms have been combined; as a result, there are many abandoned toft sites among the potato fields.

Predictive models suggest that there is a relatively low likelihood for discovering prehistoric remains on the project area.

The largest property in the area is a military installation, which includes a variety of property types, including residential, institutional, industrial, and military properties. The immediate project area has only recently become part of this complex, and has yet to be fully integrated into it.

PROPERTY TYPES IN THE LOCALITY

The best-known nearby prehistoric property is the St. Jones Adena site, a prehistoric ceremonial burial site adjacent to the Lebanon Road. While burial complexes are spectacular, a more predictable, common (and archaeologically more useful) property type is the base camp, located at the edge of tidal marshes.

Nearby historic property types include agricultural complexes, agricultural fields, a nineteenth-century church site, and a nine-foot road. The older agricultural complexes all occur on well-drained soil. Only more recent habitations occur on soils that are not well drained.

STATE PLAN CONTEXTS

Because of the high priority assigned to agriculture and the archaeology of agriculture by the state planning documents, there is a high likelihood that well-preserved agricultural remains would be candidates for the National Register.

In order for a property to be eligible, it must possess integrity and definable boundaries as well as a quality called "significance," which can be defined only in

context. The context may be spatial, temporal, or thematic, but it must exhibit a unifying effect (DeCunzo and Garcia 1992:311-317).

A concept of eligibility through "representativeness" takes on special importance when dealing with "ordinary" or "commonplace" properties. A property is "representative" if it contains all the elements of the "typical" property of that category.

That is, integrity becomes the most important single determinant in evaluation.

If a farmstead site is "typical," how can it be eligible? This issue has been debated at length (Wilson 1990) in the cultural resource management community. In any case, it can be argued that significance depends upon the context in which the site is found.

The context, for such comparative purposes, can be defined either as site type or geographical unit.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Every cultural property should, ideally, be evaluated against all four of the National Register criteria listed on the next page of this report. In practice, most sites can be eliminated from consideration under most criteria. Prehistoric archaeological sites are evaluated almost exclusively

under criterion D: properties that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

In order to satisfy criterion D, a property must possess physical integrity; in this connection, one must know its horizontal and vertical extent. This determination is properly a function of a Phase II survey.

AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY TYPES

Property types that might be found in or near the project area, based in part on a list promulgated for Delaware historic properties by Herman, Siders, Ames and Callahan 1989.

- Agriculture (crops)
 - Products
 - Nursery / Orchard
 - Tobacco
 - Grain
 - Potatoes
 - Truck crops
 - Methods
 - Cultivation
 - Plowing
 - Plow Scars
 - Orchard planting holes
 - Enclosures
 - Field boundaries
 - Drainage ditches
 - Fertilization
 - Manuring Spread
 - Fertilizer Residues
 - Forestry
 - Sawmills
 - Mining and Quarrying
 - Borrow Pits
 - Brick Clay Pits

The resource must be able to contribute to our knowledge about some research question. The ability of a site to answer a question is, of course, related to its integrity. Well-preserved sites by definition contain more information than damaged ones.

Finally, the site must be significant. To an archæologist, mere knowledge of the existence of a site is useful information. Any site can tell us something. To be significant as well as merely interesting, a site must have sufficient intellectual content that its excavation would substantially increase our knowledge about people who used the site.

To be eligible for the Register, therefore, an archæological property must meet all three tests of significance, integrity, and research value.

Integrity is a variable that can be evaluated only in context. If a resource belongs to a common type, of which there are many well-preserved examples, it must attain a high level of integrity. A late-nineteenth-century middling-income farmstead, for example, is a common property type, represented by thousands of excellent standing examples. A damaged archæological site of this property type would possess poor integrity, because it has a *relatively* low information value under Criterion D.

On the other hand, there may be a half-dozen seventeenth-century buildings still standing in Delaware. Any seventeenth-century architectural fragment therefore is likely to have immense significance, and by its very existence it can be said to have integrity.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

(National Register Bulletin 16a, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Forms*)

The quality of **significance** in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess **integrity** of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

☞ A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or

☞ B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or

☞ C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

☞ D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Between these two extremes are dozens of property types with varying rates of survival. Delaware has a few eighteenth-century barns, most of which are large and permanent structures of stone or brick. A less substantial yeoman's outbuilding is less likely to survive, although there are a few documented examples in the state.

ARCHÆOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE

While architectural historians have recorded a sizable body of information about the architectural elements of Delaware farmsteads, the life of the farm family is the province of archæology. Diaries, memoirs, and travellers' accounts can go only so far in painting a picture of

early Delaware rural life for the documentary historian.

Archæology can, and will, supply the minute details about diet, workplaces, levels of consumption, and even pathology that were never transcribed into the written or architectural record. The ephemeral nature of many rural structures requires delicate field techniques and sensitive documentary methods, beyond the usual standard. A poor family living in a log dwelling with log outbuildings will leave few artifacts and few features on the soil.

THE ARCHÆOLOGY OF POOR PEOPLE

Rural poverty offers special logistical problems for the survey archæologist, in addition to the interpretive questions raised by this area of research. There are few models to predict locations of poor tenant

houses, squatter shacks, and the homes of impoverished landowners.

Yet these people are among the best candidates for archaeological interpretation, since they have left little documentary or architectural evidence for other disciplines to interpret.

Because of their small size and scant artifact inventory, the poorer sites are difficult to detect by ordinary survey methods.

A standard grid of test pits, commonly arrayed fifty feet apart, could easily miss a building that was only sixteen feet square and contained no brick and few ceramics.

If such a site is mechanically stripped of its topsoil, most of the spatial information will be destroyed, since there are few subgrade features, such as foundation walls. It is therefore necessary to define the sites associated with poverty by soil chemicals and other proxy measures that are not always needed on more affluent sites with many features and artifacts.

Surface collection under less than the best conditions are also unlikely to detect these sites, since their inhabitants owned few durable goods. A surface collection can recover between 1% and 10% of the artifacts in a plowzone, which means that an economically very poor site can be represented on the surface by a few sherds only. The irony of the situation, for a field researcher, is that the most eligible sites may be the ones that yield the smallest artifact assemblages and most ephemeral remains.

WORLD WAR II SITES

The most significant event in the recent history of Jones Neck was World War II, when a sleepy agricultural region became a busy part of the national defense effort. Aside from the street plan of Dover Air Force Base, little remains as evidence of this period.

World War II is only barely a half-century ago. Sites this recent must possess exceptional value if they are to be considered eligible for the National Register. At Dover Air Force Base, most of the wartime features have been obliterated. The street layout, some of the runways, and dump sites, remain from the period.

A postwar aspect of the base, a research facility far away from the project area, has been nominated to the National Register recently.

POSTWAR CULTURAL RESOURCES

Main gate strip development, an inevitable ancillary of military bases, came late to Dover. The land across from the installation remained in private hands until recently.

Dover's strip was never as large or as sleazy as some of the famous main gate communities around the nation. To find a good standing example of this phenomenon, one must look elsewhere.