

Conclusions and Recommendation

In the context of the Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan: Historic Contexts (Ames et al. 1987), Clayton Farm should be viewed in several ways. Geographically the Clayton site is located in the upper peninsula coastal zone. It was an area settled early in Delaware's history. Transportation via waterways was typical at that time. New Castle Hundred, in which the Clayton Farm was located, was bordered on the east by the sea and on the west by the Christiana River. Settlers were, therefore, afforded ease of access to the water-ways by early over-land transportation routes.

The history of the Clayton Farm site begins with the history of the Commons of the town of New Castle. The Commons were established by 1701, perhaps earlier. This would place the early history of the Clayton Farm locale in the "frontier settlement" phase according to the State of Delaware's Preservation Plan. The site was used until the early 1950s, the "suburbanization" phase. The first 100 years (1701-1803) the land was utilized as "common land" for the use of the inhabitants of the town of New Castle.

During the years 1803-1804 the Commons ceased to be used by the residents of New Castle. Apparently outsiders, not residences of New Castle, were using the land for their own purposes. For this reason the land was divided into a number of farms that were let in tenancy, the proceeds going to the Trustees of New Castle Commons for use by the town of New Castle. This change of use, corresponds with Delaware's "transformation from colony to state" time period.

The Clayton farm was tenant-owned and, presumably, market-oriented. Although the location was probably used for agricultural purposes since the early eighteenth century, the archaeological site seems to relate to the later part of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, which was a time of economic and technological transition. The landscape of much of the country was shifting from an agrarian to a suburban one. Transportation networks evolved which effected settlement patterns nation-wide. Technology altered what people did and how they did it. The focus of agriculture changed from one concerned with family subsistence to a market oriented industry.

As technology evolved and industry developed, the location of industry began to expand. These industries employed more people, not only new emigrants, but also agriculturalists, who, for the first time, had the choice and opportunity to leave rural life for city life. The land on both sides of the Christiana-New Castle Road maintained its rural character well into the twentieth century, when the project area began to become increasingly suburban. The site spans the history of northern Delaware from its "Transformation from colony to state," through "Industrialization and Capitalization" to "Suburbanization" (see Ames et al. 1987).

The potential importance of the remains at the Clayton farm site was thought to lie in its documentation as a tenant site. The names of the tenants for 100 years are known. The make-up of one family's household is known. The physical remains of the site included the house foundations, a well, and a trash disposal area containing datable material.

In the county of New Castle, Delaware, few historic sites have been studied in depth. Of the few that have been studied, the evidence as to whether the site was a owner-operator farm or a tenant farm is tenuous. Research at the Robert Ferguson/Weber Homestead in Ogletown, New Castle County, Delaware (Coleman et al. 1983), indicated that Robert Ferguson owned the land from 1834 to 1870. Ferguson was taxed for a log house in 1835. Two years later he was assessed for 2 frame houses and 2 frame barns. Later (1881-1885) a house, a "tenement," and a barn remained. Apparently these houses were on different sides of the road (Coleman et al. 1983:12-13). An informant, Jasper Lynch, stated that he lived on the south side of the road, while his parents lived on the north side in the "Ferguson House" (Coleman et al. 1983:19). The structure on the north side of the road was called the "Ferguson House" locally. It was believed to be a tenant house by the investigators because it was small and did not have many out-buildings (Coleman et al. 1983:91). Little concrete support exists for this conclusion.

Research at the Clarksdale Tenancy site #1 (7NC-D-111, N-10288) indicated a structure on the site in 1868. The investigators found late nineteenth to early twentieth-century artifacts. The foundation to the dwelling was located. The site was much disturbed and judged ineligible (Lothrop et al. 1987:161). As with the Ferguson House, it is unclear how the investigators determined this to be a tenant site.

The Clarksdale Tenancy site #2 (7NC-D-115, N-10903) consisted of an extant house dating to 1906, which had been extensively modified and was occupied by tenants at the time of study (circa 1987). Artifact density was low. Some "field studies" led the investigators to believe that the low density of artifactual material recovered from the site indicated that it had been a tenant dwelling. The site was judged ineligible for listing on the National Register (Lothrop et al. 1987:167-169).

The Jacob B. Cazier Tenancy site #2 (7NC-F-64, N-10284) was a late nineteenth to early twentieth-century site. While the site was being excavated, informants revealed that the site had been occupied by a black retainer of Mr. Cazier. The man's name was Stevenson, and he was a carriage driver (Lothrop et al. 1987:61). Information used in establishing that the property was a tenant farm site is unclear. This site was deemed eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Sites for two reasons: (1) the comparative data it could yield in the study of other nineteenth-century tenant sites in Delaware similar to those above, and (2) the belief that the site "can ... yield a data base for examining issues of ethnicity not previously addressed in northern Delaware" (Lothrop et al. 1987:233).

The Grant "Tenancy" site located in northern New Castle County, Delaware, was thought to be a tenant house site on the basis of map evidence. The house location appears only once, on Beers Atlas, along with two other structures, all with the name "H. Grant" in association with them. Thunderbird and Associates believe that, of the three H. Grant structures shown, the one they excavated was a tenant house because of "the relatively limited appearance of the structure on maps..." (Taylor et al. 1987:21). The evidence that the site excavated by Thunderbird Archaeology Associates is a tenant dwelling is insubstantial.

It would appear that the Clayton site is the only tenant site identified in Delaware on firm historical evidence. Unfortunately the information gathered in this study constitutes virtually all the information, both documentary and archaeological, available. The site, when recognized, had already been seriously impacted by the evolving land use and shifting economy surrounding it. Thus during the evaluation phase of the archaeological work on the Clayton Farm site, most of the information available was gathered. Because of the limited area of intact soils, the lack of definitive distributional data, and an inability to separate the different temporal components at the site, the Clayton Farm site no longer possesses the potential to add to our understanding of rural life in northern Delaware. No further work is recommended.