



# Route 54

## Planning Study

Baltimore Hundred  
Sussex County  
Delaware



## A Glimpse into the Past

As part of the planning process, various studies are conducted for each DelDOT project. Together, engineers, scientists, preservation specialists, historians, and environmental planners use the findings of the studies to develop functional and creative designs that are sensitive to our state's natural, social, and cultural resources.

In addition to studying the effects of the project on the environment, these studies present a unique opportunity to explore Delaware's remarkable past. Surveys of above ground and below ground cultural resources - that is, historic buildings and archaeological sites - help us to understand the cultural landscape in which we live.

## Why Cultural Resources?

Progress is important, but so is our cultural heritage. Like many of DelDOT's other archaeological and historic preservation projects, the Route 54 Planning Study will seek to protect our heritage while improving Delaware's roadway system.



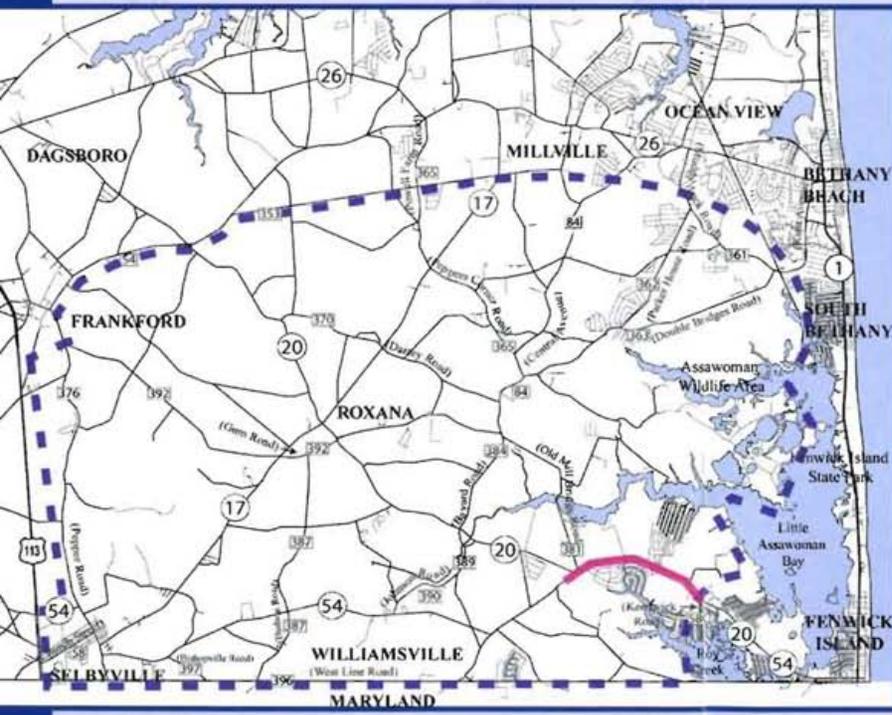
Federal Regulations exist to aid in protecting our past. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on cultural resources. Once it is decided that resources will be affected, DelDOT and consulting parties work together to minimize the effects of the project on those resources. This process allows the public and DelDOT to exchange ideas, alternatives, and solutions that result in a better future while protecting the past.

Both towns were named for the prominent families that settled in the area.

Selbyville is situated near the intersection of Route 54 and Route 113. Selbyville was first settled in 1778, and received its current name in 1842 from a prominent store owner, Sampson Selby. Selbyville was incorporated in 1902.

Fenwick Island, the southernmost beach in Delaware, was founded in 1682 by Thomas Fenwick. However, Fenwick Island was not incorporated until after World War II. Today, Fenwick Island is known as "The Quiet Resort."

Fenwick Island Lighthouse was erected in 1858 and lighted in 1859. It is currently owned by the state and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



## Settlement

Route 54 extends from Selbyville along Route 113 to Fenwick Island near the Maryland state border.

Between Selbyville and Fenwick Island are crossroad towns such as Williamsville and Bunting.



## Industry

Salt Mining was a lucrative business in Fenwick Island in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century, real estate ventures and religious camp meetings led the way to today's booming tourist industry along Delaware's coastline.

After the flood of "squatters" on state lands was cleared in the 1930s, the State of Delaware began to sell ocean front lots for \$200. Police and fire protection, along with lifeguard stations, ensured the development of Fenwick Island as a tourist destination.

As with most of Sussex County, Selbyville still enjoys success in the chicken broiler industry.

## Agriculture

Selbyville was the primary strawberry supplier of the East Coast until the 1930s. Strawberry farming in the area declined after the advent of the chicken broiler industry.

## The Ground Beneath our Feet

Archaeological studies will be undertaken by DeIDOT staff at a later date.



**Delaware Department of Transportation  
Archaeology and Historic Preservation**



**McCormick, Taylor & Associates, Inc.**  
Engineers and Planners

## A Note of Thanks

We thank you for your patience and cooperation as DeIDOT conducts the cultural resources studies for the Route 54 Planning Study. Any information that may help us to gain insight on the history of the area would be much appreciated.

## For more information, please contact:

Delaware Department of Transportation  
**Maureen Mauger, Project Planning and Design**  
# 302 • 760 • 2123 [mmauger@mail.dot.state.de.us](mailto:mmauger@mail.dot.state.de.us)  
**Michael C. Hahn, AICP, Cultural Resources**  
# 302 • 760 • 2131 [mhahn@mail.dot.state.de.us](mailto:mhahn@mail.dot.state.de.us)

**Information about other DeIDOT  
projects can be found at:**

[www.deldot.net/public.ejs](http://www.deldot.net/public.ejs)

**To learn about federal regulations regarding  
cultural resources, please consult:**

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
[www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)

The U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration  
[www.fhwa.dot.gov](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov)

The Delaware State Historic Preservation Office  
[www.state.de.us/shpo/index.htm](http://www.state.de.us/shpo/index.htm)

