

ABSTRACT

They say the dead tell no tales, but if we know how to listen, the houses they lived in, the tools they used, the dishes they ate from, and the trash they left behind can tell us fascinating stories about the men and women of centuries ago and the world they lived in. On behalf of the Delaware Department of Transportation (DeIDOT), archaeologists from the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc. (LBA), have conducted intensive, Phase III archaeological studies at the McKean/Cochran Farm Site. The site, which was located on the Appoquinimink River just west of Odessa, Delaware, in southern New Castle County, will be destroyed during the construction of State Route 1. Excavation of the farm uncovered two sequential sets of buildings, the first dating to about 1750 to 1800 and the second to about 1800 to 1830. The structures uncovered include two houses, two post barns, two wells, and a dairy. The building foundations were well preserved and provided a great deal of information about the structures on the site, including a house with complex stone foundations and a very unusual dairy, built in the form of a springhouse on a site with no spring. More than 38,000 artifacts and animal bones were recovered during the excavations, including particularly rich collections of ceramics and animal bone. The buildings and the artifacts show that the residents were part of the Delaware Valley culture, which can be distinguished in many ways from the culture of the nearby Chesapeake region. Since southern New Castle County physically resembles the Chesapeake region much more than it does the hilly lands of northern Delaware and southeastern Pennsylvania, it seems that the residents of the McKean/Cochran Farm were more interested in maintaining the culture they brought with them from the Old World than adapting themselves to the New World environment in which they lived.