

Archaeological Excavations at the Grade-Separated Intersection Project State Route 1, and State Route 12 (Frederica North) Kent County, Delaware



The Delaware Department of Transportation is planning improvements to the S. R. 1 / S. R. 12 (Frederica North) intersection in Kent County.

Previous archaeological testing indicated that a major Native American Archaeological site (the Gray Farm site) is located in the area to be affected by the road construction project.

The purpose of the current excavation is to learn more about the Native American peoples who occupied the site and to share this information with the public.



Various Woodland I ceramics from after 1000 BC are present.



Woodland I stone tools were often made from locally available cobbles.



An artist's rendering of an early Woodland I camp. (Drawing by Jeffery Mathison)

Archaeological Excavations

Who were the prehistoric people who lived here? Previous archaeological test excavations yielded numerous prehistoric stone and ceramic artifacts, whose characteristics suggested occupation during what archaeologists call the Woodland I and Woodland II periods (approximately 3000 BC – AD 1600). These were the ancestors of the Lenape and Nanticoke people, also called the Delaware, who met the first European colonists in the early seventeenth century.

The state of Delaware has a unique and dynamic prehistoric cultural sequence. During the Woodland I period, from 3000 BC – AD 1000, people adopted the use of ceramics and agriculture. Areas along streams in the coastal region of Delaware, like the Gray Farm Site, were very attractive because of the shellfish and other related foods that could be procured. Current field investigation plans call for hand excavation of over 2000 square feet of surface area, and mechanical excavation of up to an additional 27,000 square feet. The site has a great potential to yield the remnants of storage pits, food processing features of various kinds and shelters. Such evidence of cultural activities may be identified as stains typically at the base of the topsoil layer. Besides the artifacts found from the site, these features are important sources of information. They have the potential to expand our knowledge of the site occupants' diet, settlement patterns, social organization, and world views.

What's the next step? Artifacts will be labeled based on where they were found, then taken to an archaeological laboratory for cleaning, labeling and further identification and study. Ultimately they will be sent to the Delaware State Museum for future display. When the excavations and analysis of the artifacts are complete, the findings will be recorded in a technical report available to the public, as one of a series that continually adds to our knowledge of Delaware's past.



An Archaeological Excavation Unit.

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To learn more about DelDOT's archaeology program go to:
www.archaeology.deldot.gov.