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U.S. ROUTE 1 RELIEF ROUTE
NEW CASTLE AND KENT COUNTIES
CULTURAL RESOURCES PLANNING



A historic and prehistoric cultural resource planning survey is being conducted by the Delaware Department of Transportation, Division of Highways, and the Federal Highway Administration in conjunction with the University of Delaware, Center for Archaeological Research. The planning is necessitated by the proposed U.S. Route 13 corridor in New Castle and Kent Counties.

The Route 13 corridor study area (approximately 40 miles N-S by 8 miles E-W) traverses some of the oldest and most important prehistoric and historic settlement areas in the State of Delaware. The earliest known prehistoric peoples lived during the **Paleo-Indian Period**, from about 12,000 B.C. - 6500 B.C. This period overlapped and immediately followed the last great glaciation of North America. These peoples probably lived a nomadic existence, collecting wild vegetal foods and hunting now extinct large game animals such as bison, mastadons, sloths, etc. The project area contains no known sites from this period, but they have been found nearby and may be located during the survey.

The **Archaic Period** (6500 B.C. - 3000 B.C.) saw the establishment of oak and hemlock forests over the landscape, with the peoples adapting to present day plant and animal forms. The adaptation was one of a more generalized hunting and gathering pattern in which plant food resources would have played an increasingly important role. The settlement pattern consisted of large base camps and outlying hunting sites, reflective of a social organization characterized by the seasonal waxing and waning of band groups. Archaic Period sites in the project area include the Indian Mound site (7NC-E-2) in northern New Castle County and (7K-A-10), a procurement site near Smyrna.



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The **Woodland I Period** (3000 B.C. - A.D. 1000) saw a flourishing of tool types and a large increase in the number of known sites within the project area. In addition, large sedentary base camps were established, such as the Robbins Farm, Barker's Landing, and Coverdale sites in southern Kent County, and the Hell Island site near Odessa. The intensive harvesting of wild plant foods that may have approached the efficiency of agriculture, and the introduction of broadbladed, knife-like chipped stone tools were important developments during this period. Also seen was the addition of stone, and later ceramic, containers, which allowed for the efficient cooking and storing of foods. Major trade networks are evident from the presence of exotic raw materials utilized for the manufacture of utilitarian and ceremonial objects.

The **Woodland II Period** (A.D. 1000 -A.D. 1650) contains many similar resource procurement methods and the large base camp settlement system of the Woodland I Period. However, there was an increasing reliance on plant foods and coastal resources, such as shellfish. Social organization changes were evidenced by a collapse of the trade and exchange networks and the end of elaborate cemeteries. An important site from this period is the Hughes-Willis site near Little Creek, a macro-band, summer-fall nut processing camp.

The **Contact Period** (A.D. 1650 - A.D. 1750) is that period when European settlers entered the area and first made contact with the native peoples. These sites are characterized by a mixing of Indian and European lifeways and artifacts and have much to tell about the acculturation process experienced by the Indians. Unfortunately, no documented Contact Period sites have ever been found in Delaware, although they have been found in Pennsylvania and other surrounding states.

The **Historic Period**, although only about 350 years in length, is equally as complex. The first permanent settlement in Delaware was the Dutch settlement of Zwaanendael, established as a whaling colony near present-day Lewes in 1629. However, relatively little settlement took place in the project area for the remainder of the seventeenth century. The land was sparsely settled, with scattered subsistence farms and logging, milling, and fur trading operations along the principal water courses, which were the major transportation routes.

The Delmarva Peninsula has long been primarily an agricultural region and its historic development is closely tied to farming practices. When William Penn assumed proprietary rights over the "three colonies on the Delaware" in 1682, settlement was strongly encouraged through the granting of land patents. Most prime agricultural land along the principal transportation routes (navigable streams and a few early cart roads) were occupied by the middle of the 18th century. Also at this time, many marshes, particularly along Drawyer's Creek, Appoquinimink Creek, and the Leipsic River within the project area, were drained to provide more farmland.

Most early farm production was of a "subsistence" nature, where products were grown and consumed at the same location. However, toward the end of the 18th century, wheat and timber came to be grown as "cash" crops.

The first three-quarters of the 19th century saw tremendous expansion and development on the Delmarva Peninsula. The increasing demand of large, domestic markets for the agricultural products of the hinterland and the establishment of reliable transportation facilities, including the construction of turnpikes, cartroads, canal and railroad lines, spurred the development and productivity of the "spine" of the Peninsula. The pattern of dispersed farmsteads continued, but extensive local road systems connected farmsteads to transport facilities and towns. Wheat and peaches were the market-oriented crops and many of the wealthy peach growers mansions still stand in the project area, particularly around Middletown, Odessa, and Townsend.

The late 19th century was characterized by a solidification of previous land use patterns, with small but steady growth in the agrarian towns accompanied by the introduction of light manufacturing, such as tanneries and carriage makers. Also notable within the project area was the growth of numerous black communities. Major technological developments, including advances in agricultural machinery, home construction techniques, and the introduction of gas, electricity, central heat, and indoor plumbing, profoundly affected the lifeways of the time.

The 20th century has seen the shift away from wheat and peaches to the production of soybeans and feed corn to support the lower Delmarva chicken industry. The small farming communities lost their economic importance as storage and redistribution facilities, businesses, and service providers became concentrated in the major population centers outside the project area. New homes were constructed in once predominantly rural areas and new commercial-industrial-service employers supplied jobs to the growing non-agricultural suburban populations.

The systematic survey of the study area is designed to gather information on patterns of prehistoric and historic occupation. The study area encompasses diverse environmental zones and should yield significant new data on a variety of past Delaware lifeways through time as well as refining the concepts of prehistoric and historic cultural development outlined above.

If you request any further information or particulars concerning this cultural resource project, please contact Kevin Cunningham, DelDOT Archeologist at 739-3826.