5. POTENTIAL FOR HUMAN BURIALS EXISTING IN THE PROJECT AREA

NO CEMETERIES ARE DOCUMENTED on the current project site, but a lack of evidence or markers does not exclude the possible existence of an unmarked cemetery.

Delaware farmers tended to keep their dead nearby. At least two, possibly three, cemeteries are known to exist on farms near the project area. The Loockerman family is interred near the mansion house, now the center of the Delaware State College campus, and an eighteenth-century family graveyard recently was excavated in a former Loockerman-owned farm east of the highway.

Bachman and Catts (1990) have attempted to formulate a predictive model that can be used to identify likely locations of family cemeteries. They found that the majority of family cemeteries are sited behind the mansion house, between 100 and 1300 feet away on a well-drained ridge or knoll.

There is documentation for unmarked farm graveyards existing quite early in the settlement history of this region. Benjamin Mifflin, quoted by Bachman and Catts, noted in 1762 that the unmarked Shurmer and Mifflin cemetery elsewhere on this same grant was on a hill east southeast about 500 paces from the Loockerman mansion house, and he agonized over whether or not he should mark it.

Cæsar Rodney's antecedents were buried in unmarked graves near the family home but in a site so obscure that the Signer's executor [his brother Thomas] had to pay an informant to show him the family graveyard location. The site was later forgotten, only to be rediscovered again in recent years.

If a family came to a property with an established burial site elsewhere, they would be unlikely to bury their dead on the newly-acquired farm. Tombstone files at the Delaware Archives were used to identify those families in the project area that buried their dead away from the farm.

Churchyard and community cemeteries were rare in pre-Revolutionary Delaware. Bryn Zion, near Kenton, Kent County's first cemetery open to people who were not communicants of the adjacent church, was established by a deed from John and Philemon Dickinson when a Baptist congregation took over a former Presbyterian church to which the Dickinsons held title. Before that time, and in most places thereafter, churchyard burial was a privilege for active communicants and their families. Churchyards in the Dover area are largely filled with post-Revolutionary burials. The burial sites of virtually all the first century of Kent County settlers are unmarked and largely unlocated.

Poor people did not have tombstones until relatively recent times. White or black, their monuments were likely to be field stones or wooden boards. In the cemetery next to nearby Fork Branch church, established about 1850, several burials are marked with field stones and many are unmarked. At the predominantly white Bryn Zion, tradition states that blacks were buried in the rear, where no markers exist today. A traditional slave burial-ground site on former Dickinson property near the John Dickinson plantation house east of Dover has never been known to contain markers.

As public cemeteries and churchyards proliferated, the custom of establishing new farm cemeteries apparently declined, although old cemeteries continued to be used. Some families abandoned the old burial grounds, while others "moved" them. Graveyards could be "moved" in several ways in the Delaware tradition.

First, of course, the remains of the [known] deceased would be disinterred and moved to the churchyard in town. Such disinterments, even when performed by

professional undertakers, could not be expected to be uniformly thorough in their removal of deteriorated remains. Nor could they be expected to encompass unmarked or forgotten graves. Thus, unless the burial was relatively fresh or encased in a metal casket, disinterment was unlikely to be complete.

A second way to "move" a graveyard was for a farmer to drag away the tombstones and cultivate the graveyard. While this practice is generally met with revulsion, its prevalence is witnessed by the large number of tombstones found in, around, and particularly behind Delaware barns. Sometimes descendants of the deceased would rescue the tombstones and set them up in a nearby churchyard, as if they actually marked a grave. A comparison of the Tatnall tombstone list in the Delaware archives with the recent published study by the late Raymond Dill indicates that in the half-century between the two studies, dozens of Kent County graveyards have been plowed under.

The third method of "moving" a graveyard is a traditional method used to clear the title to ground when a cemetery had been reserved by a previous owner. In such a "move," a second tract of similar size is set aside elsewhere, either in a cemetery or in a less desirable part of the property. The tombstones are moved, together with a symbolic scoop of earth from each grave. This method had been employed at the Nowell cemetery before the actual graves were dug by MAAR Associates. Local legend holds that the "remains" of Cæsar Rodney moved from Jones Neck to Christ Church consisted of such a symbolic scoop of earth. Symbolic removals do not satisfy Delaware's unmarked burial law.

Therefore, a documented "moved" burial ground should always be considered potentially remaining *in situ* until tested and proven otherwise.

Even relatively wealthy and worldly-wise families, notably the Rodneys, Shurmers, and Mifflins, did not mark their family graves, even though they might reserve the family burial ground when they sold the property. One owner of the DelTech campus, Thomas Denney, reserved for himself a graveyard on an old family farm in the Smyrna area.

It seems from the evidence that unmarked or poorly marked family farm graveyards were the rule rather than the exception in Kent County. Their identification has become a major thrust of cultural resource surveys.

In response to the Bachman and Catts study, a map (FIGURE 9) was prepared, showing all the well-drained soils between 400 and 1000 feet from a known house site.

Clearly, such a broad area could not be practically surveyed for unmarked graves. Tests at fifty-foot intervals would almost certainly miss small cemeteries, which might be only twenty feet across, with faintly-defined grave shafts that could be revealed only by stripping away 100% of the topsoil.

Since Bachman and Catts suggest that graveyards are most likely to lie within the 180° arc away from the road, it is possible to eliminate the front half of the circle from the highest level of likelihood.

It is also possible to eliminate low-lying places, since burial grounds appear to have been sited on hills, and to eliminate tofts known to have been established after the family had begun to bury at another site. One may also eliminate areas that were difficult to reach or were located off the family's property.

Taking all of these exceptions into account, it becomes possible to narrow the area of probable to a workable sample size, which can be investigated economically as being likely to contain cemeteries if any exist in the area (FIGURE 10).

In all, there are ten tofts known to have existed near the project area during the agricultural period (TABLE IN FIGURE 9, FOLLOWING PAGE). When all the circumstances are examined, the actual sensitive area is reduced considerably.

On the Ford farm, there is a low probability that the occupants of the eighteenth-century tenant house (FIGURE 9, #6) might have buried in or near the edge of the right-of-way. If the Boyer family (FIGURE 9, #3) buried on their property west

of the highway, they almost certainly buried in the proposed right-of-way. The Stouts (FIGURE 9, #2) had a relatively large choice of burial sites, but the right-of-way passes through the zone of sensitivity for their burials.

There was a Stout burial ground at Leipsic, reserved in a deed from Emmanuel Stout, which may have been the resting-place of the Stouts who lived in the project area.

Given its continual history of short ownerships and tenant occupancy, the Geiser farm is not likely to contain familiy cemeteries.

Although the Denney family lived three generations on the site, they already had established a family burial ground on Route 13 north of the project area. Some of the later Denney owners are buried in the Dover Presbyterian cemetery. The Scotten and Ford family is known to have used town cemeteries; Emory Scotten's son was buried at Lakeside in 1901, beginning a family tradition.

It is extremely likely that the Ganoe family and Nathan Williams were buried on their farms, but the zones of their probable burials lay outside the right-of-way (FIGURE 9, #4, #10).

Tenant burials, and slave burials, remain an unknown quantity in the graveyard picture. Some white churchyards in Kent County are alleged to contain slave burials in the back. Some white family cemeteries have a tradition of containing servant burials. A few black burial grounds are documented as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century, but no earlier. For predicting these burial sites, no model is available because data is too scant to draw even tentative conclusions.