Chapter 2

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the results of the supplementary historical research that was conducted to support the Phase II archaeological work plan.

The supplementary research complements the site histories that were prepared as part of the *Phase Ia Cultural Resource Survey, U.S. Route 301, Section 2* (Hunter Research, Inc. 2009) and the *Phase Ia (Reconnaissance-Level) Archaeological Survey, U.S. Route 301 Mainline Contract 3* (Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc. 2009). The Phase Ia site histories explored settlement patterns, land records and farm histories pertinent to the immediate project area. They identified the Rumsey Site as part of a 390-acre tract that was patented by James Heath in 1714 and acquired by William Rumsey Sr. in 1742. William had inherited the Bohemia Manor from his father Charles Rumsey, who had established the plantation near the mouth of the Bohemia River in Cecil County, Maryland, in the early 1680s. From the 1720s to early 1740s, William expanded the already extensive land holdings of the manor by acquiring additional property at the head of the Bohemia near the Maryland and Delaware boundary, including the 390-acre tract known as Heath's Third Parcel (Hunter Research, Inc. 2009:4-11 to 4-14).

Upon further examination, the historic context of land ownership and the activities of prominent landholders from the Phase Ia surveys did not fully address contextual questions raised by the archaeology of the Rumsey Site. The archaeological evidence suggests a higher than anticipated level of activity from ca. 1650 to 1783. There was no documentary evidence for colonial-period activity at the site other than its proximity to a no longer extant leg of the Choptank Road (Figure 2.1). The Rumsey Site is not located near the manor hall or landing that formed the center of plantation life at Bohemia Manor, nor is it near other documented Rumsey sites such as Bohemia Mills.

One hypothesis that immediately comes to mind is that the Rumsey Site is a colonial farm or rural dwelling site that was occupied by Heath/Rumsey tenants. Yet the archaeological evidence to date does not fit the anticipated pattern for this type of site. It lacks the signature of buildings, domestic artifacts and deposits associated with previously investigated rural farmsteads (Bedell 2002). The suggestion is that something other than farming and domestic activities occurred here and that it occurred periodically over a lengthy period of time.

What other historical activities might fit the pattern and be associated with the Rumsey Site? One working hypothesis is that the site has the characteristics of a small river landing at the headwater of the Sandy Branch. This hypothesis fits the topography and is reinforced by the discovery of a wagon path leading down to the stream. Did the landing and wagon path have a relationship to the overland cart roads between the Delaware River and the upper Chesapeake Bay? The Choptank Cart Road had been opened at least as early as the late 1680s and had been a route by which Marylanders could ship tobacco to the Lower Counties of Pennsylvania (as

Figure 2.1. Manuscript Map of Bohemia Landing and Adjacent Lands at the Head of the Bohemia River. *Circa* 1740. Scale: 1 inch = 2,000 feet (approximately). Project area circled.

Delaware was then known) to avoid the custom duties imposed on regulated goods by the Navigation Acts. Could this road have also made use of a landing on the Sandy Branch?

Smuggling, or at least illicit trade meant to bypass the official mercantile policies of the English government, is known to have occurred in the area from the 1660s to 1770s. Evidence is strong that it was countenanced by much of colonial society that resisted periodic attempts by colonial and royal officials to enforce the laws. The period from ca. 1764 to 1776 in particular was one of growing colonial resentment of the tax acts. The Sugar Act of 1764, the Stamp Act of 1765 and the Tea Act of 1773 were among the British trade laws that would eventually touch off the American Revolution. The Rumsey family rallied to the American cause. Nathan Rumsey traveled to France in 1776 or 1777 to arrange for ships to carry gunpowder and arms for the Continental Army. Some artifacts found at the Rumsey Site may have French provenance. Was the Rumsey Site possibly a transfer or warehousing point for illegally imported goods and military supplies? Would it have been logical for these goods to have been off-loaded from Rumsey's ships and then moved overland to storage points from anchorages on the Delaware shoreline?

In addition, some features of the Rumsey Site appear to be related to extractive industries. The presence of bog ores and pit features are possibly related to iron mining. An unusually high number of broken iron kettles and slag could be related to some sort of iron processing. Kettle fragments also call to mind the processing of potash from wood ash. Contextually, evidence of these activities predates the marl pits also discovered on site. Marl is green sand, rich in calcium carbonate that was dug from pits and spread on fields as a fertilizer by early nineteenth-century farmers.

Supplementary background research was undertaken to address these hypotheses and determine if they were supported by the historical literature. The research included a background review of untapped primary and secondary historical sources at the Library of Congress, the Maryland Historical Society, the Pennsylvania Historical Society, the Hagley Museum and Library and the Delaware Public Archives. Topics of research included specifically cart roads, smuggling, iron mining, potash and marl with a more general emphasis on trade, material procurement and land tenancy patterns in the region.

B. SITE HISTORY

In the mid-eighteenth century William Rumsey, Sr., a planter, surveyor, and customs agent from Bohemia Landing, came to own nearly all of the land in the southern part of the U.S. Route 301 project area. He acquired this large land tract, which once extended across the Maryland border, through various purchases of parts of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century tracts. The southernmost portion of Section 2 of the proposed U.S. Route 301 alignment crosses a small part of William Rumsey's large landholding.

The Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site [7NC-F-121, N14501] was part of a patented tract called "Heath's Third Parcel" (Table 2.1). Heath's Third Parcel was originally granted by patent to James Heath in 1714. When James Heath died, the tract passed to his son, James Paul

TABLE 2.1. CHAIN OF TITLE, RUMSEY TRACT

Date	Name	Reference	Consideration	Description
1714 -	James Heath	(Cecil County Court Land Record, 6/179)		390 acres
-1742	James Paul Heath	(Cecil County Court Land Record, 6/179)		
1742	William Rumsey Sr.	Cecil County Court Land Record, 6/179	247 pds.	
1742 - 1777	William Rumsey Jr.	Rumsey Family Papers	by will	
1777 - 1836	William Rumsey III	(New Castle County Deed X4/79)		
1836 - 1853	William Polk	New Castle County Deed X4/79	$15,946.68	970 acres
1853 - 1878	Eliza (daughter of William Polk) and John P. Cochran	New Castle County Probate Records, William Polk, 1853	by will	416 acres
1878 - 1894	William R. Cochran, by sherriff	New Castle County Deed F11/510	$5.00	416 acres including a three story frame dwelling house
1894	Equitable Guarantee Trust Co.	New Castle County Deed K16/244	$17,000.00	same description
1894 - 1896	John P. Cochran Jr.	New Castle County Deed K16/250	$18,199.62	same description
1896	Percival R. Bailey	New Castle County Deed D17/322	$19,075.00	same description
1896	Marion E. Cochran and John P. Cochran Jr.	New Castle County Deed D17/325	$19,075.00	same description
1896 - 1897	The Equitable Guarantee and Trust Company	New Castle County Deed E17/89	$15,631.15	same description
1897 - 1927	Jefferson B. Foard	New Castle County Deed L17/90	$18,000.00	same description
1927 - 1936	Frank R. and Bessie W. Pool	(New Castle County Deed Z39/284)	by will	
1936 - 1947	William Sterling and Adelaide Evans	New Castle County Deed Z39/284	$10.00	same description
1947 - 1979	Jefferson F. and Grace B. Pool	New Castle County Deeds Y46/354 and Y46/363	$25,000.00/$5.00	416 acres excepting certain parcels
1979 - 1980	Charles H. Schwabe, Trustee	New Castle County Deed Q108/1	$10.00	same description
1980 - 2005	Family Trust Von Croy	New Castle County Deed T110/300	$1.00	same description
2005	Poole Ventures LLC	New Castle County Deed #20050331-0030404	$4,833,540.00	2 lots (Parcels 142 and 137)
Poole Ventures LLC sold parcel 142 to Appoquinimink School District in 2005 (#20050617-0058778) but retains parcel 137.				

Heath (Cecil County Court Land Records 6/179). James Paul Heath sold the property to William Rumsey Sr. in 1742 (Cecil County Court Land Records 6/179).

While there were likely many structures on Rumsey's extensive land holdings, evidence points toward the location of only a few. William Rumsey Sr.'s house was situated near Bohemia Landing, Maryland, which is well outside of the project area. He also built a gristmill and house on Sandy Branch near the Maryland state line by 1739. This mill was located downstream of the portion of Sandy Branch that cuts through the U.S. Route 301 alignment, and thus is outside of the current project area (Rumsey Family Papers).

When Rumsey died in 1742 his land, including the mill, passed to his son, William Rumsey Jr. When William, Jr. died in 1777, the land stayed in the Rumsey Family, passing first to William's oldest son Nathan and ultimately to his second son William Rumsey III. Evidence suggests that William Rumsey III leased his property (except the mill), goods, stock and slaves to his brother John Rumsey in 1785 (Rumsey Family Papers). The mill may have been out of use by 1836 when William Rumsey sold 970 acres of his property to William Polk for the deed for that property refers to the "old mill pond." The description of the boundaries in this deed also confirms that the mill was located outside of the project area (New Castle County Deed X4/79).

Rea and Price's 1849 *Map of New Castle County* (Figure 2.2) shows several dwellings located within the boundaries of the land that Rumsey had sold to William Polk, but none of these buildings are located within Section 2 of the proposed U.S. Route 301 alignment. Polk himself lived in Cantwell's Bridge [Odessa] where he operated a large and successful mercantile business (Delaware Historic Preservation Office, Research File, N-113). William Polk divided his land in his will dated 1853, leaving all of the land within the proposed alignment of Section 2 to his daughter Eliza, the wife of John P. Cochran (New Castle County Probate Records, William Polk, 1853).

John P. Cochran was a successful farmer and future political leader in Delaware who lived at "Cochran Grange" on the southeastern side of the road from Middletown to Warwick. He built the "Rumsey" farmhouse (N-113) on the land that he and his wife had inherited from William Polk. The Rumsey farmhouse is located approximately 1,000 feet south of the area that was investigated as part of this Phase II study. Though Cochran was active in politics, serving as the Governor of the State of Delaware from 1875 to 1879, he never wanted his children to become involved in politics. Instead he sought to provide them with land and skills to pursue agriculture. Thus by 1868, Beers' *Atlas of the State of Delaware* (Figure 2.3) shows John Cochran's son Charles Cochran as the occupant of the Rumsey Farm (Norton 1977; Sobel and Raimo 1978).

In 1878, ownership of the Rumsey Farm passed to William Cochran who owned it until 1894. During this time, almost 200 acres of the farm were dedicated to the cultivation of peaches, which might have been the downfall of William Cochran. After the peach blight destroyed Cochran's peach crop he was forced to sell the Rumsey Farm (Norton 1977). The farm was put up for sheriff's sale in 1894. During the next three years, the property changed hands a number of times before being acquired by Jefferson B. Foard in 1897 (New Castle County Deed L17/90).

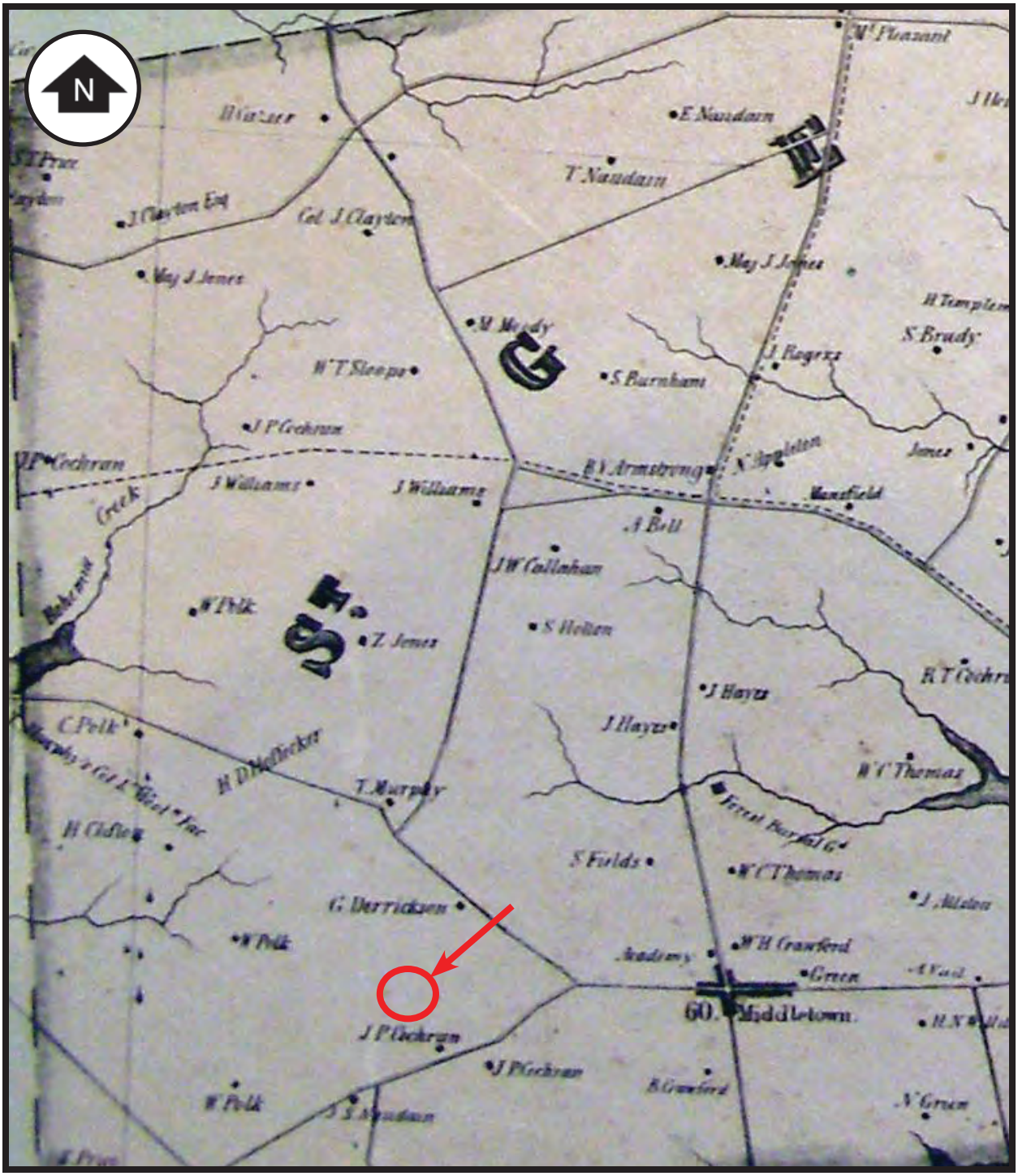

Figure 2.2. Rea, Samuel M. and Jacob Price. *Map of New Castle County, Delaware*. 1849. Scale 1 inch = 4,500 feet. Project area circled..

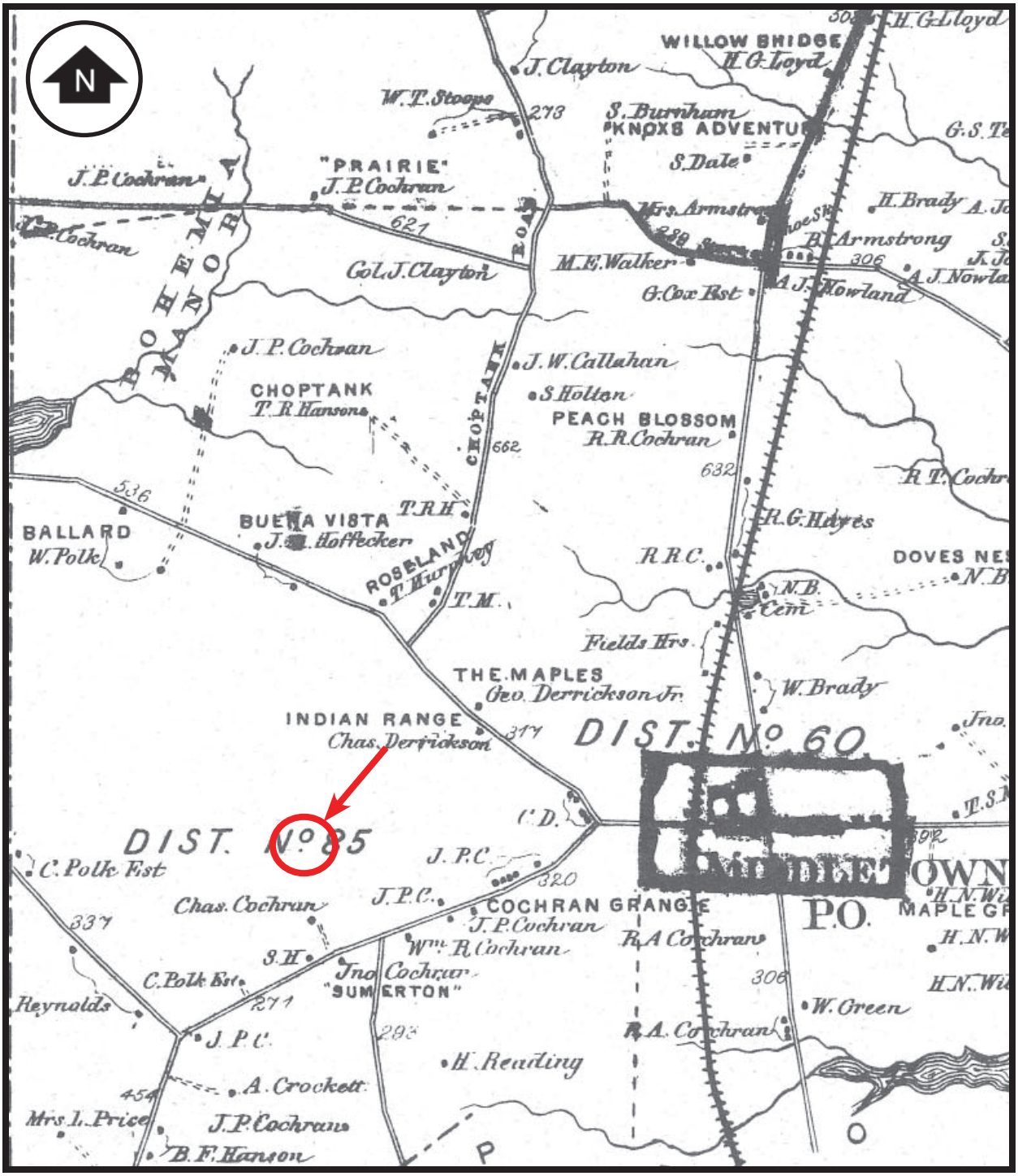

Figure 2.3. Beers, D.G. St. George's Hundred. *Atlas of the State of Delaware*. 1868. Scale 1 inch = 3,200 feet. Project area circled and study corridor indicated.

Foard bought the farm as an investment. He rented the land and house to tenant farmers though he visited the farm often. Foard built a half-mile horse track on the property that supported his interest in horse racing (Norton 1977). The farm continued to be rented well into the twentieth century and the boundaries of the property remained intact until 2005. That year, a portion of the former Rumsey Farm was sold to the Appoquinimink School District and now serves as recreational fields for the Appoquinimink High School (Parcel 142) (New Castle County Deed #200506170058778). Poole Ventures LLC retains ownership of Parcel 137 (New Castle County Deed #200503310030404).

C. SUPPLEMENTARY BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Supplementary background research was undertaken to address questions and hypotheses suggested by the Phase II archaeological evidence. The goal was to determine if previously untapped primary and secondary sources could shed light on activities that might have been taking place at this location, especially in view of the lack of historical documentation for the study area having been occupied by a dwelling. A summary of the findings is as follows:

H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland. Research focused on possible sources related to trade and smuggling on Maryland's Eastern Shore during the eighteenth century with a specific emphasis on identifying connections to the Rumsey property. Reviewed were the Fisher Transcripts of the British Treasury Board and Public Record Office related to the collection of customs duties from ca. 1764 to 1800 (MS 360), the Maryland Ports-of-Entry Records for eastern shore ports from 1745 to 1775 (MS 2355), Pre-Federal Customs House Records for the Districts of Baltimore, Annapolis, Patuxent and Oxford, Maryland, 1745 to ca. 1800 (MS 2414) and the Principio Company Records (MS 1730).

Of particular interest was an item in the Fisher Transcripts entitled *The Perils of a Surveyor of Customs in Maryland in 1775* by Robert S. Byrne. Byrne was appointed surveyor for the Bohemia and Sassafras Rivers on the eve of the American Revolution. *The Perils* are a detailed account of Byrne's attempt to seize contraband goods from wagoners on a road near Duck Creek (modern-day Smyrna). He was taken hostage by the wagoners who held him for several hours, all the while beating and threatening to kill him. Byrne was eventually able to escape but he was bedridden and afraid to return to his post. Other documents from the Fisher Transcripts provided evidence for a pattern of evasion of the Navigation Acts in the area of the Bohemia River, particularly leading up to the American Revolution. Royal officials in Maryland and London were well aware of these activities but felt powerless to stop them.

The Maryland Port-of-Entry Records and the Pre-Federal Customs House Records offer raw data on the types, amounts and values of goods entering and leaving Maryland's main ports of entry and the destination of the goods. It is not possible from these records to pinpoint specific ships or cargos that might have called on the Bohemia. Research focused on the port of Oxford because it was the closest port to the Bohemia. It would be possible to analyze these records to gain some idea of the goods that were being shipped to and from the Upper Eastern Shore, which would likely include some Delaware product, but separating out Delaware product or specific locations such as Bohemia Landing is not possible.

The Principio Company Records relate to the iron furnace located on Elk Neck four miles west of Havre de Grace, Maryland (about 20 miles from the project site). These records document that Benjamin Rumsey, the brother of William Rumsey, took part in a land transaction related to the furnace property ca. 1783-84. This transaction appears to have been related to the confiscation of the iron works from its British shareholders and transfer to American owners following the American Revolution. It is unclear whether Rumsey actually owned the land or was acting in an official capacity. There is no indication from these records that Rumsey supplied the furnace with iron ore from his land holdings.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. The Rumsey Family Papers had been accessed during the Phase Ia research. A more detailed examination was made of the collection, which numbers over 1,000 items, to determine if it held any further evidence of activities of interest. The Rumsey family papers include numerous mentions of the tobacco trade from the 1720s to 1780s, but none specifically mention the route by which those goods left Bohemia Manor.

Note was taken of the correspondence of Nathan and Benjamin Rumsey during the early years of the American Revolution from 1775 to 1777. Nathan Rumsey was contracted by the Continental Congress to acquire and ship arms from France to the colonies. The letters indicate that Nathan Rumsey sent cargo ships from France. There is also an implication that he was shipping French goods aboard the ships for personal profit. It is clear from these records that Rumsey was trading tobacco for arms and other French goods but the ultimate destination of these goods is not specified. It seems likely that some of the goods were destined for his family's properties on the upper Chesapeake.

The Rumsey Family Papers also include court papers related to the case of *Rumsey v. Carnan.* These papers document a case of smuggling. In 1735, William Rumsey Sr. in his capacity as High Sheriff of Cecil County seized casks of rum from the home and storehouse of John Carnan. Rumsey accused Carnan of importing the rum from Pennsylvania without paying duties. Smuggling, however, was not the foundation of court case, as the facts of the smuggling were not in dispute. The evidence given was that Carnan had verbally abused Rumsey. Rumsey was seeking the court's permission to punish Carnan for assaulting his character and threatening him with murder.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Research at the HSP Library focused on the Philadelphia Custom House Papers, 1704-1789. The objective of the research was evidence of trade and smuggling related to an overland route between the Delaware River and upper Chesapeake Bay. The Custom House Papers were found to include numerous references to smuggling and attempts by ships to avoid custom duties. There were no references found specific to locations associated with routes crossing from the Delaware to the Bohemia. Interestingly, the Philadelphia Collector and Controller wrote to London in 1764 to state that it was beyond his power to control smuggling and illicit activities that went on outside of the Port of Philadelphia because there were so many convenient inlets and harbors at which to land and drop goods before ships reached the port. The landings at Reedy Island, Cantwell's Bridge and Port Penn fit this description but were apparently not the only places where such activities occurred. Contraband seizures and reports of corruption among the customs officers increased

between 1764 and 1777 and appear to be directly related to avoidance of the increase in duties on imported molasses and rum from the Caribbean.

Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware. The collections were searched for sources of information on bog ore mining, potash making and marl pits. An important discovery was Geologist James C. Booth's *Memoir of the Geological Survey of the State of Delaware*, published in 1841. Booth describes marl pits at the Rumsey Site that were probably in active use by the early 1820s. He also describes geologic formations on the Rumsey Site that contained 25% iron bog ore. It appears that the deposits were not considered rich enough in iron to be economically useful for iron smelting. General information was collected on bog-ore mining and potash making in the colonial period.

The University of Delaware's database was used to search the *Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1800* for search terms related to the Rumsey Site. Terms searched included Augustine Herrman, Casparius Herrman, Appoquinimink, Bohemia Landing, Bohemia Manor, Charles Rumsey, William Rumsey, Nathan Rumsey, smuggling, illegal trade, tobacco, cart road, Reedy Island, Cart Road, Choptank Road, Delaware Path, Sandy Branch, potash, iron and James Heath. The search yielded information on the sale of Bohemia Mills in 1773 by William Rumsey, the sale of a tract of land of 500 acres within three miles of the Head of Elk by Charles Rumsey in 1778 and the sale of 226 acres of land at Bohemia Manor by the estate of Peter Bayard in 1782. None of these properties were directly related to the Rumsey Site but do provide background information on the Rumsey's extensive land holdings.

D. DEVELOPMENT OF POTENTIAL HISTORIC CONTEXTS AND THEMES

The following potential historic contexts and themes were identified as possibly associated with the Rumsey Site. These contexts/themes are based on the supplementary background research and the development of hypotheses to explain the archaeological data. The purpose of these contexts/themes is to provide a structure for framing questions about the Rumsey Site's significance and potential eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

1. Potential Historic Context/Theme – Landings and Cart Roads

The Rumsey Site lies along the historically important transportation corridor between the Bohemia and Appoquinimink Rivers. This corridor was recognized in the early 1660s by Augustine Herrman as a geographically strategic location for carrying on commerce between the Delaware Bay and the upper eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay. As such, Herrman's Cart Road formed one of the earliest and most significant connections linking the upper Chesapeake region with Delaware and Pennsylvania. At New Castle, goods could be loaded aboard ships bound for Dutch New York or Europe. As described in Hunter Research's *Phase Ia Cultural Resources Survey, U.S. Route 301, Section 2* (Revised November 2009), a network of cart roads branching from Herrman's Cart Road developed from the 1660s to 1680s. One of these important roads was the Choptank Cart Road that touched upon the headwaters of the Sandy Branch of the Bohemia River south of Herrman's Cart Road and in proximity to the Rumsey Site.

From its inception, the cart road network was intended to strengthen the ties of trade between the Dutch in Delaware and the English then moving into the upper Chesapeake. Herrman likely intended to use the road to circumvent the Navigation Act of 1661, which restricted English trade in tobacco with the Dutch. An important geographical aspect of the Sandy Branch of the Bohemia was that it would have been accessible to shallow-draft watercraft, such as shallops. It would have made for a small landing that could be used to transfer goods, either by portage of the boat or by transfer of goods onto carts. This type of transfer might have been particularly attractive if it was desired that it take place away from more populous or observable locations.

Descriptions of the historic alignment of Herrman's Cart Road and Choptank Road are discussed in-depth in the Phase Ia report. The network of roads as it developed during the colonial period are shown on several important maps including the Eastburn map of 1737, the Rumsey map of ca. 1740 (Figure 2.1), the Mason map of 1768, and the Faden map of 1778. Supplemental research did not locate additional significant historical documentation for the roads in the vicinity of the Rumsey Site but the research into smuggling and contraband, as described below, strengthens the perception of this road as a vital overland link that lay largely beyond the scrutiny of customs officials.

2. Potential Historic Context/Theme – Smuggling and Contraband

Supplemental research identified smuggling and contraband as an important theme related to the general area lying between the upper eastern shore of the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware River. No references were found that specifically locate a smuggling operation or warehousing site at the Sandy Branch. In general terms, this smuggling appears to have involved ships laying off of Reedy Island or calling on the Assunpink Creek to avoid the customs agents in Philadelphia. At these locations, ships' captains could offload goods for transport across St. Georges Hundred to the Chesapeake. Chesapeake planters could ship tobacco or other marketable goods back across the watershed avoiding the import duties of the more tightly regulated Maryland and Virginia ports. Delaware with its historical ties to the Dutch both in the Old and New Worlds offered potentially lucrative contacts for shipping tobacco outside of the networks regulated by the Navigation Acts. The disputed boundary between Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware and the difficulties that the colonies' officials faced in identifying their jurisdictions only served to abet illicit activity.

American avoidance of the Navigation Acts was on-going throughout the colonial period and has been long noted by historians. Historic documentation of smuggling is fragmentary at best, as would be expected. Existing documentation is almost always from the point of view of the officials who attempted to uphold the laws governing trade, particularly during periods of time when the English government was energetically asserting imperial control. This documentation must be interpreted carefully but it does point to illicit trade as a common and engrained activity within colonial society that became only worth noting when tensions ran high with the mother country or a particularly energetic governor or proprietor. By the eve of the American Revolution, many colonists had come to see the Navigation Acts not only as trampling on civic rights of representative government but impinging on their customary economic relationships with one another and the rest of the world.

Two periods of time stand out for smuggling activities since they relate to times when smugglers would have been forced to be particularly wary, and perhaps forced to move with some extra care. The first period is the 1680s to 1690s in the tumultuous period following the transition from Dutch to English rule in Delaware. The second period is the mid-1760s to 1770s in the tense years leading up to the American Revolution.

The first period in the 1680s and 1690s followed William Penn's receipt of his Royal Charter in 1681. Information about smuggling during this period Figures prominently in the writings of Maryland Governors Edward Randolph and Francis Nicholson both of whom decried the illegal trade between Maryland and Delaware (then the Lower Counties of Pennsylvania) and the ability of European ships, many sailing directly from Scotland, to circumvent the Navigation Acts. The complicity of Maryland planters in this trade was largely overlooked. As recounted by historian Gary B. Nash, this eventually led to an important but little known episode in Delaware history when in 1696 Governor Nicholson used military force in an ill-fated attempt to invade Delaware and enforce the Navigation Acts on the less-than-compliant population of the Town of New Castle. Nicholson was countered by local militia who thwarted his attempt to seize a suspect ship. Pennsylvania's Governor William Markham was deeply offended and Nicholson eventually beat a strategic retreat back to Maryland. When reported to the Court of St. James, the episode only served to deepen the disputes between William Penn and Lord Baltimore over the boundary between their proprietary grants (Nash 1965:229-239).

The second period of heightened scrutiny of smuggling occurred between 1763 and extended through the American Revolution. From the mid-1760s to the start of the Revolution, the prime focus of smuggling was to avoid duties on goods imported from the Caribbean and continental Europe. If Philadelphia customs records are any indication, this trade was largely unregulated outside of the city's immediate port. As in past times, goods delivered to Delaware could be transshipped a short distance to points in Maryland thus avoiding the Chesapeake ports of call and the more numerous customs officials and British ships that prowled the Chesapeake and regulated the trade in tobacco.

This smuggling route may have taken on added importance during the American Revolution. Benjamin Rumsey and William Rumsey Jr. served as members of Maryland's Revolutionary government. William Jr. was a Major in the Bohemia Militia and in that capacity would have certainly been responsible for supplying his men and providing for local defense. The movement of the British army up the Chesapeake during the Campaign of 1777 would have been a period of alarm and, possibly, of moving provisions inland from Bohemia Landing to safer points. Nathan Rumsey traveled to France to arrange the purchase of French guns for Washington's Army in 1776-77, and his letters report on the fitting out of ships full of supplies for transatlantic voyages (Rumsey Family Papers, Box 2, Folder 4). Moving these goods as far inland as possible by shallow-draft watercraft might have brought them to the Rumsey Site.

3. Potential Historic Context/Theme – Extractive Industry

a. Bog Ore

During the archaeological investigation of the Rumsey Site, evidence of bog ore was encountered. Bog ore, sometimes called limonite, develops geologically below the waterline in swampy areas where iron-bearing groundwater precipitates as an iron oxyhydroxide-bearing rock. Bog ore was highly sought after during the colonial period and was the source of iron for many colonial furnaces and forges. Ore could be shipped great distances by water from pits located along navigable streams. A historically significant and highly active furnace was the Principio Furnace west of Havre de Grace in Cecil County, Maryland, which operated non-continuously from ca. 1720 until 1925. It is located about 20 miles northwest of the Bohemia by water, thus making it the most likely candidate for using ore from the Rumsey Site based on geographic proximity. There were other smaller furnaces and forges located throughout the Chesapeake including in Delaware the Abingdon Furnace in White Clay Creek Hundred and several furnaces downstate in Sussex County, but for various historical and geographical reasons these seem highly improbable users of Rumsey Site ore (Heite 1974, 1983).

Mining bog ore was a laborious activity but it required few workers, simple hand tools and little infrastructure. It was unpleasant work calling for more strength than skill to handle sledges, picks and shovels to loosen the ore and fill baskets or buckets to be hauled from the pit (Figures 2.4 and 2.5) (Diderot 1987). Pit mining meant working in stagnant pools that filled with groundwater, ideal breeding grounds for insects and infectious diseases. An English traveler noted in 1770 that Chesapeake pit mining was “the most laborious employment allotted to worthless servants” (Bezis-Selfa 2004: 22). From the 1720s onward, bog ore was recognized in the Chesapeake as one of the natural resources that could be extracted from landholdings.

The Rumseys, as prominent landowners in the area, would have been well aware of the region’s iron industry and there is some evidence of their involvement, particularly in the area of land transactions. According to records of the Principio Company at the Maryland Historical Society, Benjamin Rumsey was involved in a land transaction of a piece of land in the Elk Neck area related to the Principio Furnace (Land Papers, Principio Company, 1724-1784). In 1761, William Rumsey sold 600 acres located on the Big Elk River to John Roberts, David Davis, Thomas May and David Thomas of Philadelphia, who formed a partnership for the purpose of manufacturing bar iron under the name the Elk Forge Company (Johnston 1998: 347-48). A review of the Rumsey Family Papers at the Library of Congress and standard secondary sources on the Chesapeake and Delmarva iron industries did not establish direct links between the Rumsey property and iron mining but it does seem within the realm of possibility that bog ore was removed from pits along the Bohemia for shipment to the region’s furnaces and forges. No evidence has, however, yet come to light to indicate that the Rumsey property was ever a major source of ore. Given the limited extent and character of the ore body at the Rumsey Site, it would appear to have not been a particularly viable or attractive location for other than very short term and exploratory mining activities.

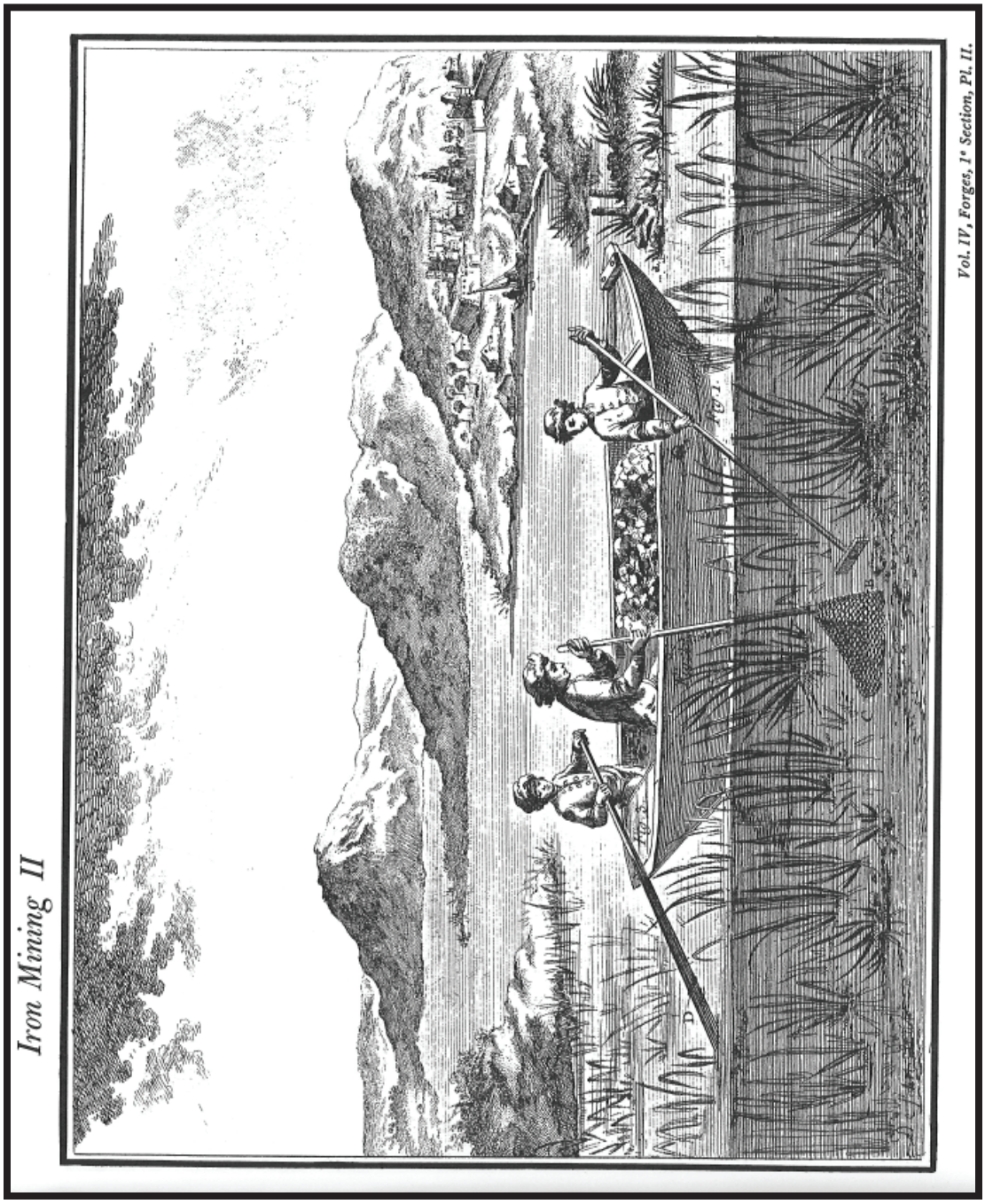

Figure 2.4. Mining bog ore from a boat, as practiced in certain parts of France, particularly Brittany, in the mid-18th century. Source: D. Diderot, *A Diderot Pictorial Encyclopedia of Trades and Industry,* Vol. 1 (Paris 1767, reprint ed. 1987), 83.

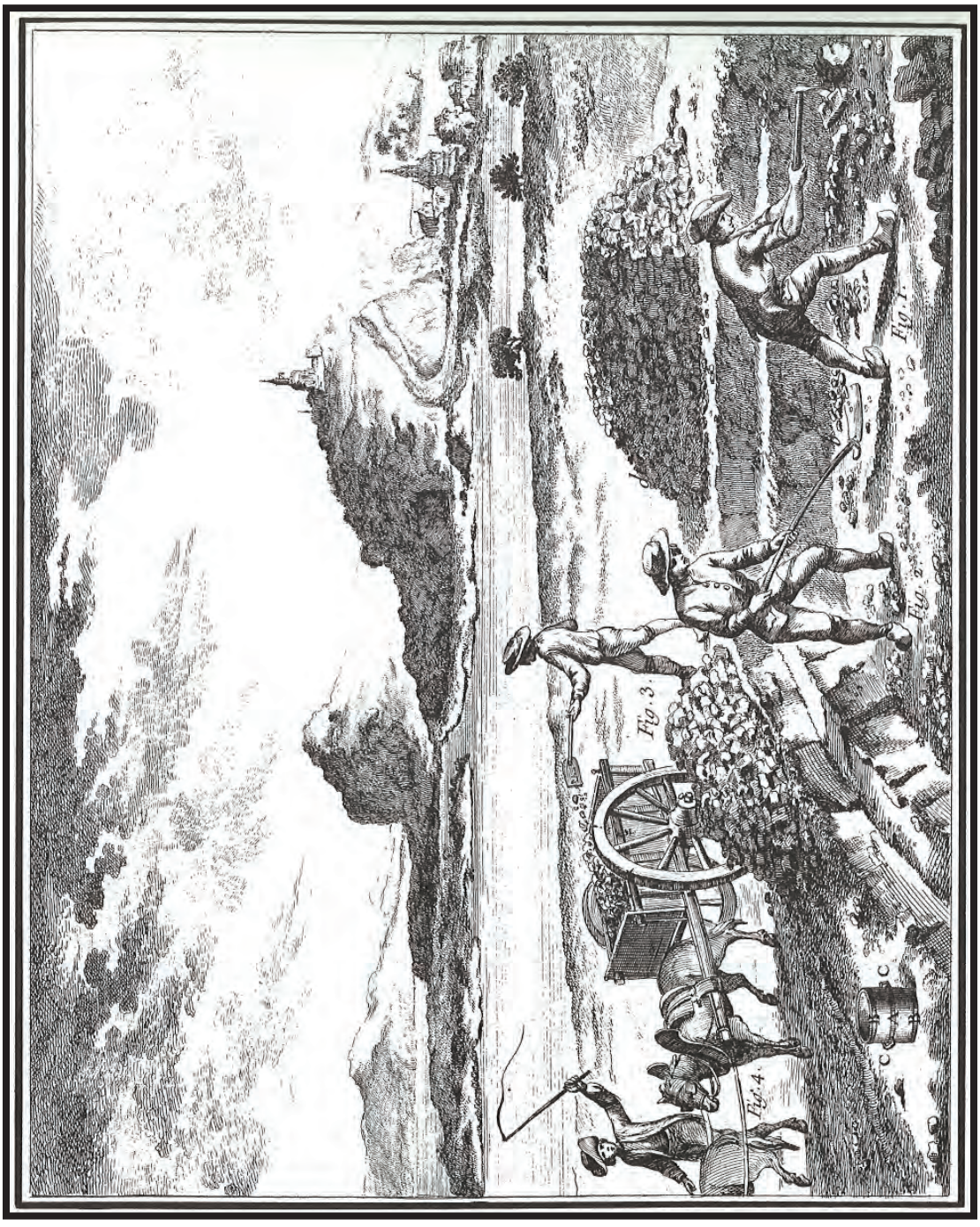

Figure 2.5. Mining for iron ore from a shallow pit. Source: D. Diderot, *A Diderot Pictorial Encyclopedia of Trades and Industry*, Vol. 1 (Paris 1767, reprint ed. 1987), 83.

b. Potash

Potash is the historic name for potassium carbonate, a substance known from remote antiquity and used in the making of glass, and from the early Middle Ages in the making of soap. The traditional method of making potash was to burn wood, collect the ashes and then leach the ashes by pouring water over them, usually accomplished in a wood barrel. The final step was draining the lye solution from the barrels and boiling it down in iron kettles at high temperatures until the liquid was gone. This yielded a brownish to blackish mass called potash, which could be further refined by repeating the process to concentrate the potassium carbonate. Highly refined potash could be from 70 to 95 percent pure and was known as pearl ash (Multhauf 1981:227-28).

Association of the Rumsey Site with potash manufacture was suggested by the numerous iron kettle fragments found during archaeological investigation. Potash kettles were known to frequently crack or split because of the high heat and the boiling away of the liquid (Lewis 1747:7). Cracked kettles might be characteristic of a site that was occupied to process the ash from the clearing of nearby woodlots, certainly an activity that might have fit with a remote corner of a large plantation or lands found marginal for agriculture.

In early colonial North America, potash manufacturing tended to be a purely domestic craft associated with the home soap maker. Potash did not begin to achieve the status of an industry until the middle decades of the eighteenth century when potasheries appeared in American cities often as an adjunct to soap or glass works. Potash makers would travel the city each morning collecting waste ash from fireplaces, hearths and ovens. Industrial-scale potash making associated with the clearing of land began to become more widespread during the 1750s and 1760s due to demand from Britain, which had become reliant on sources of potash from Spain, Poland and Russia. These British sources of potash were vulnerable to interruption, and it only seemed natural that British North America should become the empire's source of potash.

In 1747, William Lewis with the encouragement of Parliament published a pamphlet in an attempt to instruct an American audience in the process of making high quality potash (Lewis 1747), and in 1751 Parliament abolished the import duty on potash as a way to promote the infant American potash industry (Multhauf 1981:230). In 1758, the Society of Arts in London offered a series of premiums on the production of potash in America and received samples, which London chemists tested for purity (Multhauf 1981:234).

Enthusiasm for American potash manufacture was evident in the pages of *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, published in Philadelphia. From the 1750s to 1770s, articles encouraged the region's population to produce potash and advertisements listed potash equipment for sale. It was estimated that as much as half the cost of clearing land could be recovered by the sale of potash. In 1771, a 500-acre tract of land in Sussex County, Delaware was offered for sale. The seller suggested that "making potash might be carried on to profit, as it is thought 6 or 7000 bushels of ashes would be brought yearly, by the country round about, to exchange for goods" (*The Pennsylvania Gazette,* 7 November 1771).

A boom in potash manufacture began in about 1762 and British imports of potash from America doubled or tripled each year until surpassing 1,000 tons in 1766. By 1770, the colonies

were exporting nearly 2,000 tons annually, most of it from New England although potash also came from Mid-Atlantic and Southern colonies. Potash imports were disrupted by the American Revolution, but the industry recovered quickly and an average of 6,600 tons of potash was shipped annually from the United States from 1790 to 1820, except for disruption caused by the War of 1812 (Multhauf 1981:236).

Potash works were not capital-intensive operations. They could be short-term sites set up to take advantage of nearby supplies of wood or they could be more permanent installations intended to process ash carted in from a surrounding area. A potasherie needed at a minimum a few barrels and kettles. The kettles could be heated either over an open fire or preferably held within a furnace that provided high and even heating to reduce the lye solution (Figure 2.6). Due to problems with cracking and splitting, kettles designed specifically for potash manufacture tended to have extra heavy bottoms (Lewis 1747:7). In 1757, *The Pennsylvania Gazette* offered for sale a potash works consisting of "ten large cedar tubs and receivers, three caldrons, two carts, two horses and gears, twenty cords of split ash wood, and a large quantity of ash, supposed to be near 5,000 bushels" (*The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 14 July 1757). Another *Gazette* article offered for sale "large iron furnaces, from 45 to 65 gallons, suitable for making potash …." (*The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 18 June 1772). Labor for making potash was not highly skilled but it did take some experience to produce a quality product. In 1768, the sheriff of Gloucester County, New Jersey, captured a runaway slave who "understands the business of making potash, pearlash and Boston Crown soap …." If the slave's master did not come to pay his fines, the sheriff planned to sell the slave to the highest bidder in two weeks time (*The Pennsylvania Gazette,* 31 December 1768).

Potash was also sometimes used as an additive in the manufacture of saltpeter (potassium nitrate), one of the ingredients used in the making of gunpowder. Saltpeter was made in much the same process except with animal guano instead of wood ash. Potash added to poor quality saltpeter was known to improve the explosive quality of the powder. By the mid-eighteenth century, this was the generally accepted practice in making saltpeter in France, Germany and other parts of the European continent but it was not common in Great Britain due to the quality of the saltpeter imported from India (Multhauf 1981: 232). During the American Revolution with supplies of saltpeter and gunpowder from Great Britain cut off, potash was needed in the colonies for use at American gunpowder works. Appeals were made to patriotic colonists to make potash although the evidence is slim that such appeals were effective (*The Pennsylvania Gazette* 24 January 1776).

The Rumseys certainly would have been aware of the market for potash and the need for potash to support the American military effort. It seems within the realm of possibility that the Rumsey's or their land tenants could have had a potash works. Although plausible, no documentation for a potash works was found in the Rumsey Papers or in the other documentary sources examined for this project.

c. Marl

Marl is naturally occurring, lime-rich clay or sand that is formed under marine conditions and is found in shallow, thin sedimentary bands in the geologic coastal plains of Delaware,

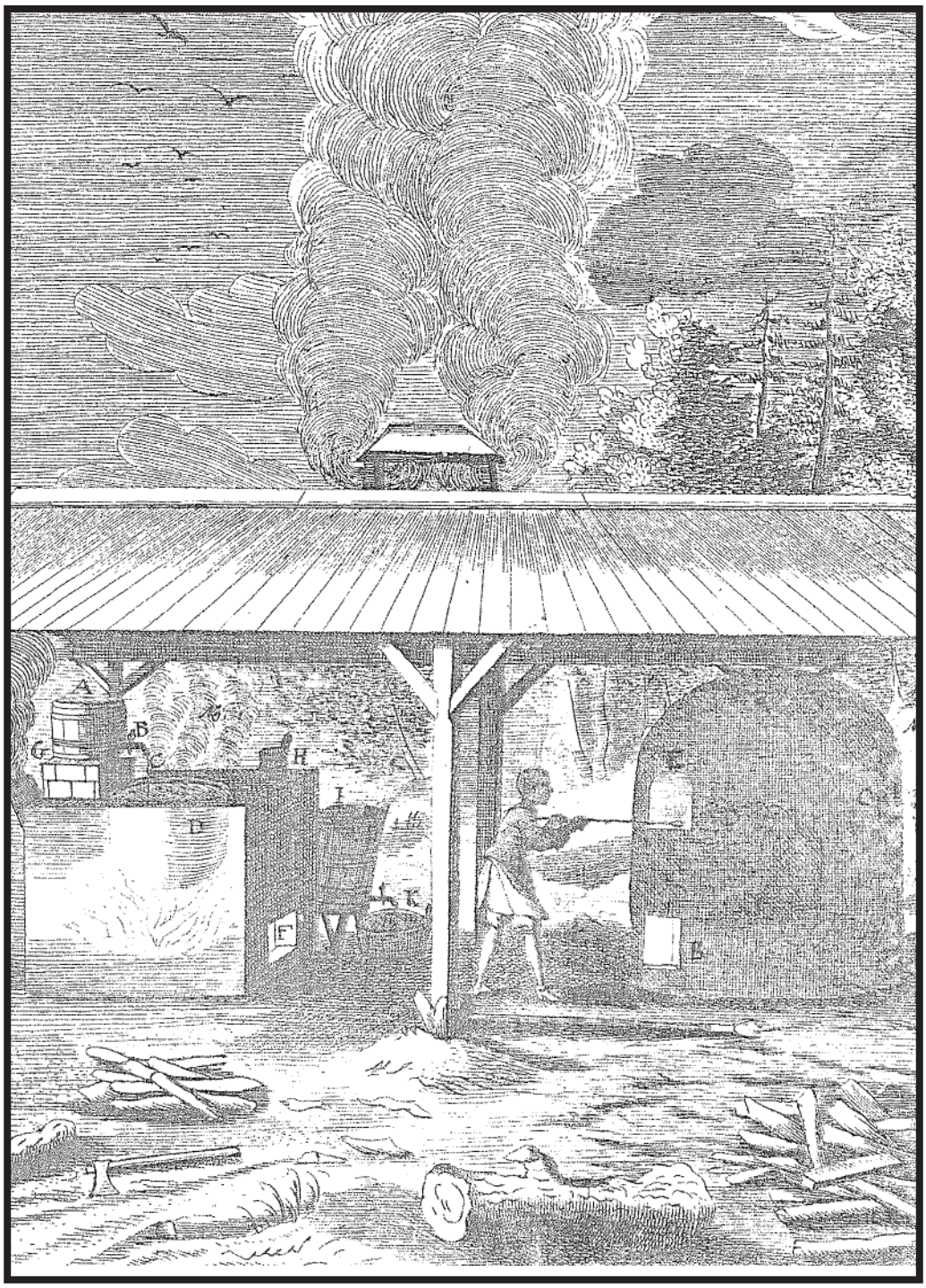

Figure 2.6. Production of potash in 17th-century Europe. At left are a tub for leashing ash (I) and a container of raw solution (A) feeding the iron boiling kettle (D). On the right is a furnace for calcining the raw potash from the boiling kettle. Similar small-scale manufacturing operations may have begun appearing in the American colonies during the mid-18th century. Source: Johann Kunkel, *Ars vitraria experimentalis* (1679) as reproduced in Multhauf 1981: 229.

Maryland and New Jersey. In Delaware, the marl beds are concentrated in St. Georges Hundred, from south of the canal to just south of Appoquinimink Creek. In the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, farmers in the area began using marl to enrich their fields, finding that its high content of calcium carbonate boosted crop production, especially potatoes. Farmers dug pits to extract the marl for use on their fields. Pits were often located along streams or embankments where marl outcroppings were visible. The construction of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal from 1824 to 1829 revealed significant marl deposits. Particularly high quality marl pits, as judged by the marl's proven ability to boost crop production and its ease of spreading on the fields (sandier marls were easier to spread than clayey ones), sometimes moved land owners to start commercial pits but most played out quickly. Marl had its limitations, chiefly its lack of nitrogen. In the late nineteenth century, commercial fertilizers and nitrogenized lime led to a decline in the use of marl.

During Phase II archaeological investigations of the Rumsey Site in 2011 bands of bright green-colored marl were encountered. Upon further research, it was discovered that the property has a documented history of marl extraction. In 1841, Geologist James C. Booth in his *Memoir of the Geological Survey of the State of Delaware* wrote about "the marl pits of W. Polk, about three miles W. of Middletown, on one of the sources of the Bohemia River …." (Booth 1841:48). William Polk was the owner of the Rumsey property from 1836 to 1853. Booth described the particular geologic composition of Polk's marl as a "decomposed and indurated Green Sand." He further wrote:

> At the first view, it would seem to be wholly composed of shells cemented into a hard mass requiring the aid of a pick to remove it from its solid bid; a more rigid examination, however, detects a mixture of shells, green sand, siliceous sand and calcareous matter cementing the whole into a stony mass, thus forming and instructive example of the origin of the rock formations. … In a practical point of view, excepting the difficulties of excavating the more solid portions, the whole may be shown to possess great value, for it crumbles to powder soon after its exposure to the atmosphere, and its effects on vegetation may be seen at the present time after an application of 20 years (Booth 1841: 48-49).

Booth's observations imply that marl had been extracted from several pits located along the upper branch of the Bohemia River and successfully used on nearby fields since at least the early 1820s. The use of marl from Polk's pits may have continued into the latter decades of the nineteenth century. In 1888, Thomas Scharf in describing the geology of Delaware observed that marl remained "a material worthy of the attention of those farmers of the State whose lands are underlaid [sic] by it" (Scharf 1888: 7).

4. Potential Historic Context/Theme – People Least Prominent

The Rumsey Site likely represents a series of activities undertaken by colonists who were not important landowners. They may have been working on the behalf of important landowners like the Rumseys or they may have been working on their own, but the activities suggested were likely laborious and menial. They may have been smugglers moving regulated goods between

colonies, tenant farmers augmenting their income through illicit trade, servants or slaves working at extractive industries, or local militiamen moving military supplies between the bays in support of the patriotic cause.

Historians and archaeologists of colonial America have long understood that the people least prominent in the historical record have been the poorer sorts – the tenant farmers, the indentured servants and the slaves who occupied the lower strata of colonial society. Their everyday lives and activities are among the most difficult to document and the most difficult to interpret. This challenge should not diminish the idea that the Rumsey Site could contain potentially important data on activities that were highly localized and different from the domestic or agricultural activities more typically associated with farm and rural dwelling sites of the same time period.

The relationship of larger landholders to tenants, servants, slaves and Native Americans is perhaps the key to the study of the changing character of colonial society from ca. 1650 to 1783. It is not only what made New England different from the South but it shaded distinctive geographical identities that could vary from colony to colony and even from town to town. James T. Lemon's classic *The Best Poor Man's Country* (1972), for example, describes a world of tenancy in nearby Chester County, Pennsylvania, where small to middling farmers had opportunities to accumulate wealth and eventually reach a measure of independence. In contrast, Allan Kulikoff's *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Culture in the Chesapeake 1680-1800* (1987) paints a very different picture of the same period where opportunities for social and economic mobility declined for un-landed colonists of European descent and a racial caste system entrenched in response to the tobacco trade and the political power of the landed gentry, represented by families like the Rumseys.

New Castle County's lower hundreds geographically straddled the divide between Pennsylvania and the upper Chesapeake. Goods and patterns of trade and materials' extraction within the cart road network may have provided significant economic opportunity for the lower rungs of colonial society even as property ownership patterns and the poorer quality of the land limited opportunity and placed them on the margins of a broader agricultural economy.

E. FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The traditional sources of historical documentation for the study of rural colonial sites in New Castle County (deeds, tax records, orphans' court, probate inventories, genealogy and community history, newspapers) have been reviewed. There appears to be little chance that they will yield significant new information on the Rumsey Site unless the site can be linked with the name of a tenant or some other individual who worked this particular corner of Bohemia Manor. Other less traditional sources of documentation such as customs records, ships records and records related to iron, potash and marl have also been reviewed yielding some contextual background that possibly relates to the site.

Potential sources of information that have not been examined are the colonial government records of Cecil County, Maryland, particularly General Court or Levy Court records. These records are fragmentary and housed at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. Most of the surviving records are from the 1760s to 1770s and thus postdate the settlement of the boundary

dispute between Maryland and Delaware. They would therefore appear to be more likely to relate to activities occurring on Rumsey's extensive landholdings lying west of the project site. Still, it is possible that they would identify individuals or patterns of trade and activity in the area. It is noted that they include mid-eighteenth-century lists of slaves, indentured servants, tax ratables, judgments and convictions and the reports of a warehouse inspector from the 1770s. Some records are specific to Bohemia Manor hundred. This cache of records may have some useful information to interpreting the Rumsey Site.

Another avenue for future research would be Revolutionary War records related to the procurement of arms and supplies by Nathan Rumsey and the movement of goods of French origin across the Rumsey properties in Maryland and Delaware. Research would include the papers of the Continental Congress and of individuals prominent in the procurement of supplies such as army officers serving in the quartermaster corps, merchants under contract to the Continental Congress or financiers like Robert Morris. Many of these papers have been published and indexed, which will make the search easier but nonetheless challenging due to the breadth of sources.