

ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE CLARK TENANT SITE (7S-C-108)

To ease congestion along State Route 1 in Sussex County, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) have embarked on an ambitious plan to create overpasses at major intersections. Due to the presence of laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, DelDOT must take into consideration potential impacts to the environment and cultural resources during the design process. This assures that notable conditions such as wetlands and important buildings area avoided during construction.

Cultural resource studies associated with the SR 1 & 16 overpass project began in 2016. DelDOT engaged Dovetail Cultural Resource Group (Dovetail) to perform an archaeological and architectural survey to identify sites, buildings, structures, objects and districts within the area that may be significant. Based on this work, Dovetail returned to the area in 2017 to perform additional studies on seven architectural resources and the one recorded archaeological resource: the Clark Tenant site (recorded as site 7S-C-108 with the State of Delaware). The data obtained in 2017 led the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (DE HPO) to determine that the site was significant as it contained an abundance of information on tenant life in lower Delaware. DelDOT is completing the current data recovery excavation to assure that all of the information is retrieved from the site before it is impacted by overpass construction.



The site was found by systematically walking the plowed field looking for artifacts and digging shovel test pits (STPs)—small holes dug in a grid to find features and cultural materials.



The site location (in red) on an 1850 map above. Archival research and artifacts such as this copper button (below) can help understand the history of this area and those who lived here.



The Clark Tenant site represents a historic domestic complex. Occupied from the late-18th through the mid-19th century, its inhabitants did not own the land but worked the fields. Ongoing research will help determine if they were tenant farmers—people who leased small parcels of land to grow cash crops—or if they were enslaved individuals who were forced to farm land owned by the Clark family. The current archaeological work will provide additional data on the daily lives of those who once lived on the site through an analysis of their buildings and material goods, such as ceramic plates, glassware, and iron objects like cauldrons. Nails and post holes can share information on their dwellings and outbuildings. Without research such as this and DelDOT's efforts, their story would not be told.

For more information on the SR 1 & 16 Interchange Project and DelDOT's Cultural Resource Program, please contact:

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