

### 3.0 PRECONTACT AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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A.D. Marble & Company personnel conducted an archaeological resources file search at the Delaware Historic Property Research Center at the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office in Dover, Delaware. They discovered that no previously identified archaeological sites are located in the project APE. However, five sites are located within a 2-mile radius of the project area (Table 1). One site dates to the precontact period; three sites date to the historic period. Data for 7NC-E-17 were incompletely recorded. Four sites are associated with Red Clay Creek, while one is associated with an unnamed stream.

**Table 1. Previously Reported Archaeological Sites in a 2-mile radius of the APE.**

CRS #	Site #	Common Name	Period of Attribution	Associated Drainage
N-191	7NC-E-144	Greenbank Mill	Historic	Red Clay Creek
N-3695	7NC-E-17	Julian Site	None recorded	unnamed stream
N-3696	7NC-E-5	None recorded	Precontact	Red Clay Creek
N-11,162	7NC-E-84	Hollingsworth Site	Historic	Red Clay Creek
N-13,518	7NC-E-131	Kiamensi Woollen Mill Site	Historic	Red Clay Creek

\* missing from CRS files, 4/11/2008

As directed by DelDOT archaeology staff and also as a result of the lack of known precontact occupations in and near the APE, this report does not contain a detailed overview of precontact occupation in northern Delaware. Instead, the reader is encouraged to consult the following resources: Custer 1984, 1989a, 1994, 1996; Custer et al. 1983; Custer and Stewart 1990; Gardner 1982; Stewart 1989, 1992; Stewart et al. 1986; Weslager 1972. Although there is a lack of known precontact sites in or near the APE, the proximity of the project area to Red Clay Creek and other drainages does suggest that there is some potential for precontact sites to be located in the vicinity. Precontact site distributions in the Red Clay Creek drainage attest to the Piedmont floodplains as important loci for precontact occupations (Custer 1989b; Custer and DeSantis 1986; Custer and Wallace 1982).

Also as directed by DelDOT and based on the lack of evidence for historic occupation in the APE prior to 1830, the following sections provide an overview of the historical development of Christiana Hundred, New Castle County, and the Piedmont zone with a focus on the project area for the period extending from 1830 to the present. The majority of information presented herein

was compiled from a review of previous historic contexts and studies that were prepared for this area. Additional research was conducted to supplement the existing data, as necessary.

### **3.1 1830-1880±, Industrialization and Early Urbanization**

The extension of the railroad into the project area, the development of improved farming techniques, the adoption of new agricultural products, and the blossoming of major markets in the industrial cities of the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions prompted an economic boom in Christiana Hundred. In 1836, John Marshall purchased Solomon Hersey's mill on Red Clay Creek and expanded it. This mill is identified as "C. & J. Marshall's Rolling M[ill]" on Rea and Price's 1849 map of New Castle County (Figure 3). Other industries in the area included "D. Smith's Cot[ton] Fac[tory]" (southwest of the APE, at the intersection of Kiamensi Road and Red Clay Creek). This map also reveals that the backbone of the area's road network is in place by this date; the current Newport Road, a road south of the APE (Kiamensi Road), and several roads north and west of the APE including the Gap and Newport Turnpike (present-day Newport Gap Pike), Stanton Road, and Duncan Road are present. It is unclear when Newport Road was first laid out, but it appears to have served to connect the developing village of Marshallton with Newport, a shipping point to the southeast. The lone farm in the area (in the vicinity of the present-day Delcastle Technical High School) is attributed to "F Sawdon." Farms remain scattered throughout the area, while manufacturing enterprises remain clustered around natural power sources on waterways like the Brandywine River, Mill Creek, Red Clay Creek, and White Clay Creek (Herman et al. 1989:11).

A map of Christiana Hundred dating to 1868 illustrates that the APE was occupied mostly by farmlands (Pomeroy and Beers 1868; Figure 4). A few residences and a schoolhouse were located west of the APE, and a farmstead attributed to "S. Cranston" was located at the site of the present-day Delcastle Technical High School. One other dwelling, attributed to "E. Williams," was located on present-day Newport Road. The project area was generally in agricultural use as opposed to the mill-economy in place on the Red Clay Creek to the west and southwest.

Innovations in the transportation system, particularly the establishment of railroads, were critical to the economic expansion of the United States during the mid-1800s. This was true for the

agricultural economy of Christiana Hundred as well. In approximately 1872, the Wilmington and Western Railroad (W&WRR) was laid out north of the APE (Ames et al. 1989:13). A rail stop on this line, known as Kiamensi Station (later known as Marshallton Station), was located northwest of the APE and near present-day Old Capitol Trail. This rail line provided a market route from Wilmington to Landenberg in nearby Chester County, Pennsylvania. No extant structures from this period are found within the APE.

### **3.2 1880-1940+, Urbanization and Early Suburban Urbanization**

During this period, industry and manufacturing greatly expanded in Delaware. A reciprocal decrease in the number of people employed in agriculture also took place. With this change, a greater percentage of the state's population resided in cities rather than in rural areas. Important improvements in transportation occurred; improved roads, emerging railroads, and mass transit coupled with a growing professional middle class contributed to the early development of suburban commuting (Herman et al. 1989:15). By 1900, commercial agriculture, urbanism, and light industry were all growing in Delaware. Farmers in this "automobile age" further diversified their products moving toward dairy, poultry, and garden vegetable/orchard farming. Toward the end of the period, suburban communities began developing outside of urban centers.

Hopkins' 1881 *Map of New Castle County* illustrates the project area at the beginning of this period (Figure 5). Due to its proximity to Red Clay Creek, the majority of development in the surrounding study area was largely concentrated along the creek and in small town centers such as Marshallton (west of the APE) and Stanton (southwest of the APE). A network of roads was in place by this date, and the W&WRR supported a station at Kiamensi (north/northwest of the study area). Newport Road was sparsely settled, with only Schoolhouse "No. 77" and two dwellings shown west of the project area. The map indicates that "E. Williams" was still associated with a dwelling near the eastern edge of the APE (Hopkins 1881).

In order to gain an independent route to New York via Philadelphia, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O) organized a new company, the Baltimore & Philadelphia Railroad in 1883, which would utilize some existing routes including the Philadelphia and Reading and Bound Brook Railroads. The newly formed company also acquired the W&WRR. New trackage laid out

in roughly 1886 diverged from the W&WRR northeast of the study area and transected the APE (Scharf 1888:432). This new line operated as the Philadelphia Division of the B&O and provided another viable means of transporting local goods to larger markets in Wilmington, Philadelphia, and Baltimore (Ames et al. 1989:13). This rail line is depicted on Baist's 1893 *Atlas of New Castle County* (Figure 6). The atlas also reveals that the project area is still relatively undeveloped with the exception of a few farmsteads and dwellings along Newport Road. The original structure at 1419 Newport Road is present on the Baist map; it would appear that this dwelling was therefore established before 1893 and after 1881 because it is not depicted on the Hopkins map.

Over the next several decades, the landscape would dramatically change with the laying out of subdivisions and further residential development along Newport Road. About the same time of Baist's map, members of the St. Barnabas Protestant Episcopal church purchased a small lot at the southeast corner of Newport Road and a road leading to the Kiamensi Woolen Mills (present-day Kiamensi Avenue and west of the project area) and erected a place for worship (New Castle County Deed Book C16:198). This church is evident on a map of the area published in 1904 (USGS 1904, Figure 7). Again, the map reveals a largely agricultural APE with little residential development. About fifteen years after their initial purchase, the members of St. Barnabas Protestant Episcopal Church purchased an additional L-shaped lot of land surrounding their church for expansion and the laying out of a small cemetery that contains graves dating from the 1920s through the 1960s (New Castle County Deed Book L22:296).

The vastly improved transportation system and technology of the late 1800s and early 1900s had a profound effect on community development across the state. New paved roads and public transportation, such as the trolley lines from the center of Wilmington as far out as Yorklyn (northwest of the APE, near the Chester County, Pennsylvania border), allowed people to work in the city but still live in a non-urban environment (Herman et al. 1989:16). The Brandywine Trolley Line and the People's Bus Company provided a means of early public transportation to the village of Marshallton (Newman 1961:21). During this early phase of suburbanization, residential communities expanded outward from the urban cores of cities like Wilmington

(Herman et al. 1989:34). As a result, a number of new houses were built in the area, generally on the outskirts of existing communities or on narrow strips of land at the edges of farms in close proximity to the improved highways. While the trolley did not directly reach the study area, the improved roadways led to the laying out of the “Washington Heights” subdivision west of the APE on the south side of Newport Road between Lafayette Street and Kiamensi Avenue. It was laid out in 1907 on former farmlands owned by Mary G. Flinn; this subdivision developed slowly over the next several decades (Brizzolara 1995:8-4).

The land bounded by “Washington Heights,” Newport Road, and the B&O (present-day CSX), which contains the western portion of the APE, may have also been intended to be a subdivision known as “North Kiamensi” according to an undated plan of building lots on file at the Delaware Historical Society (Anonymous n.d.:n.p.). The “North Kiamensi” plan included a portion of Vincent G. Flinn’s 153-acre farm that extended eastward across the B&O and Newport Road to include land on which Delcastle Technical High School and the Delmarva Substation now stand. Vincent G. Flinn died in 1889 (recited in New Castle County Deed Book R27:303), and it is unclear if this plan was developed prior to Flinn’s death or in later years. The “North Kiamensi” plan included the land on which present-day 1500 Newport Road (CRS No. N-13111; also the location of 7NC-E-185), the St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, the St. Barnabas Parish House, and 3716 Kiamensi Avenue now stand. However, deeds of sale for the property at 1500 Newport Road, as well as the St. Barnabas Episcopal Church property, give no indication that the land was ever formally attributed to “North Kiamensi” (New Castle County Deed Books C16:19 and R27:303).

The rise of the automobile and improved roads in the early 1920s allowed Wilmington’s residents to move outside of its urban boundaries and maintain easy commutes for working in the city center. Between 1920 and 1930, the population within Christiana Hundred increased 127 percent as former farmlands were subdivided (Chase et al. 1992:68). Located along the southeast side of Old Capitol Trail, a well-traveled transportation route between Wilmington and Newark, Ella F. Cranston subdivided a portion of her family farm in the 1920s. Known as “Marshallton Heights” and located on the north side of Newport Road and west of the B&O, the subdivision’s 16.7 acres primarily consisted of 25 foot by 125 foot lots, although the lots on the east side of

Kiamensi Street were laid out in 0.5-acre portions. Cranston conveyed the first of these lots in 1925 (New Castle County Deed Book H33:399). The Cranston family was also attributed to land on the northwest side of Old Capitol Trail, which is known today as Cranston Heights. A consultation of biographical resources provided no evidence that the Cranston family was locally prominent. The narrow lots of Marshallton Heights suggest Cranston may have originally intended the subdivision to serve as worker housing for the nearby mills located along Red Clay Creek and on part of the aforementioned Cranston land. However, the area's industrial base was quickly shrinking, and thus Marshallton Heights developed into a single-family subdivision. The unseated lots were generally sold in multiples for about \$100 per lot and the majority of the lots were conveyed prior to 1930. New homes were not necessarily erected immediately after the purchase of the lots. For example, in 1928 Ella Cranston conveyed two of the lots on which 1605 Newport Road now stands, but the dwelling was not erected for another ten years, ca. 1940 (New Castle County Deed Book S35:298).

A number of dwellings located along Newport Road west of James Avenue were not originally part of Ella Cranston's Marshallton Heights subdivision. These dwellings are part of adjacent properties that have since been subdivided. Historically, these parcels belonged to the Phil Gaines Estate and a parcel attributed to D. Black. Today, there are approximately seven dwellings associated with these adjacent parcels.

The Marshallton Heights subdivision, however, would never fully develop as the result of the State Board of Education purchasing Sections 4, 5, 6, and part of 8 for the construction of a new consolidated school in 1930 (New Castle County Deed Book Z36:363). This purchase limited the development of the subdivision to the north side of Newport Road and the south side of Cranston Avenue (present-day School Lane). In the 1920s, the Marshallton school district had an enrollment of 255 persons and was forced to hold classes in other buildings throughout the village in addition to a four-room brick school along Newport Road (west of the current study area). Following the acquisition of land in Marshallton Heights in 1930, the Board of Education erected a new school for grades 1 through 9 (Brizzolara et al. 1993:14). The new Marshallton Consolidated School, which as its name suggests consolidated the surrounding area schools into one central location and opened in the fall of 1932 (Newman 1961:21; Anonymous 1957:n.p.).

The Marshallton Consolidated School as well as 1500 Newport Road and the St. Barnabas Protestant Episcopal Church and Cemetery are visible on an aerial photograph showing the APE and taken in 1937 (USDA 1937; Figure 8). The aerial photograph also demonstrates the slow rate of construction within the Washington Heights subdivision (west of the APE) and Marshallton Heights subdivision. A small orchard located west of 1500 Newport Road is also present on the aerial (present-day tax parcel 0704110091). This orchard is no longer extant. No activity is indicated on the land west of the orchard (New Castle County Tax Parcel 0704110110) or south of the B&O (New Castle County Tax Parcel 0704120013) in 1937.

In 1934, baseball player Judy Johnson, considered one of the best third basemen to play in the Negro leagues, purchased a *circa*-1925 American Foursquare dwelling in the Washington Heights subdivision. Johnson was able to purchase the dwelling using money he received while playing baseball. The dwelling's location was particularly convenient for Johnson's wife Anita who first taught at the Absalom Jones School on Newport Road (west of the APE), and later at the Marshallton Consolidated School. Johnson resided in his Washington Heights dwelling until just shortly before his death in 1989 (Brizzolara 1995).

According to a date stone applied to the foundation, the congregation of the St. Barnabas Episcopal Church erected a parish house south of their church building (and across from Judy Johnson's house) in 1932. The building not only held weekly Sunday school classes but also served the community as a meeting hall (Newman 1961:21).

### **3.3 1940-Present, Commercialization and Suburbanization**

As transportation networks expanded and automobiles became commonplace after World War II, suburbanization spread throughout northern Delaware in earnest. Dense suburbanization and commercialization began around Wilmington and then affected areas adjacent to Newark and New Castle. Seeing that available lands around Wilmington were swallowed up by large-scale residential and commercial development, the more rural portions of New Castle County became attractive locations for further development. This pressure, along with the continued improvement of state roads in the vicinity, all helped facilitate the extreme level of

suburbanization and commercialization present in and/or planned for development in the study area today.

By the end of World War II, the pattern and density of settlement in Delaware had spread from localized urban centers to interlocked suburban communities across the state. Small communities were replaced by commercial and industrial strip development extending along major roads. Planned communities began to grow out of subdivided former farm fields. The growth of automobile ownership in the second half of the twentieth century fueled these patterns of development. The suburbanization of the study area and APE continued in the years following World War II.

Road plans prepared in preparation for the replacement of a plank deck bridge over the B&O Railroad with present-day Bridge 1-651 show residential development along the road that had begun earlier in the twentieth century (Delaware State Highway Department 1949). In addition to the bridge replacement, the plans called for the construction of a reinforced concrete retaining wall along the south side of Newport Road in front of present-day 1500 Newport Road (the retaining wall is still extant) as well as wire rope guard rails along the east and west approaches to the bridge. Additionally, the curve in Newport Road east of the bridge (in the vicinity of present-day 1419 Newport Road – the portion [northeast quadrant] of the APE where six STPs were excavated) underwent a slight realignment to the southwest at this time. The road plans show a two-and-one-half-story frame “double house” dwelling on the north side of this curve immediately adjacent to the roadway. As discussed below, this dwelling appears to have been demolished between 1961 and 1968.

Dramatic increases in population also spurred the need for additional school classrooms. Eight classrooms were added to the Marshallton Consolidated School in 1951. Three years later, another classroom was added to the school, and a new elementary school was erected along Kirkwood Highway (northwest of the study area) (Anonymous 1957:n.p.). Kirkwood Highway was a main route between Wilmington and Newark. In 1953, the majority of the development along Kirkwood Highway was residential (USGS 1953; Figure 9). Continued expansions in residential development in the surrounding area, including Marshallton Heights, would lead to

commercial development along Kirkwood Highway in the following decades. The 1953 map also indicates that the crossing that once carried Kiamensi Avenue over the B&O (southwest of the project bridge) was no longer in use.

Mapping of the area dating to 1953 and 1961 clearly shows the post-World War II development of both Marshallton Heights and Washington Heights (USDA 1961; USGS 1953; Figures 9 and 10). A local writer described the village of Marshallton as a once “thriving, bustling industrial community...now encircled by modern housing developments” (Newman 1961:21). Sometime around 1961 the St. Barnabas Episcopal Church erected a new facility outside of the project area. For over a year, the church building at 3700 Kiamensi Avenue remained vacant until December 1962, when the King’s Pentecostal Church began holding services at this location (Anonymous 1962:n.p.).

The greatest alterations to the agricultural landscape of the APE and vicinity came between 1961 and 1968 (USDA 1961, 1968; Figures 10 and 11). By 1968, the Vocational Technical High School was under construction on the former farmlands east of the railroad bridge. Also by this date, the dwelling in the northeastern quadrant of the bridge had been demolished, and a *circa*-1965 dwelling had been constructed in its vicinity (present-day 1419 Newport Road). The Delmarva Power Station was being erected on a formerly vacant parcel of land south of the project bridge between the CSX Railroad and Newport Road to meet growing demands for energy. Land between the cemetery and 1500 Newport Road as well as land south of the construction site of the Delmarva Power Substation remained vacant and unaltered. Slow residential development continued within Marshallton Heights.

In the 1960s, major commercial development expanded along Kirkwood Highway, which had always been a main route between Wilmington and Newark. This commercial development, including the commercial strip mall at Price’s Corner north of the APE, spawned additional residential development along the arterial roads that led to and from Kirkwood Highway. The commercial growth also resulted in the expansion of the roadway into a four-lane highway (Ames et al. 1984:10). Although the surrounding area has undergone tremendous development and transformation in the past few decades, the APE is largely similar to the way it was 40 years

ago. While the east side of Kiamensi Street never developed, a grouping of mobile homes was in this location by the late 1960s.

The B&O eventually consolidated with the Chesapeake & Ohio and the Western Maryland Railroads to form the Chessie System. The Chessie System merged with the Seaboard Coast Line in 1980, and the two lines retained their names and formally became CSX Transportation in 1987 (trains website, accessed July 9, 2008). CSX still operates the rail line that bisects Newport Road today and owns Bridge 1-651.

Construction continued within Marshallton Heights in the early 1970s, including new ranch dwellings. Small areas of open land can still be found west of 1500 Newport Road (as well as on the north side of the road) and south of the Delmarva Power Station. Modern infill (post-1958) is located along Newport Road west of the APE. Today the roadway serves as a secondary route that provides access to the Delcastle Technical High School and the village of Marshallton.