

**THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF CHESWOLD:
A METHODOLOGY FOR THE RESEARCH OF
FRAGMENTARY LANDSCAPES IN DELAWARE**

by

Jonathan A. Schmidt

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Urban Affairs and Public
Policy

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ABSTRACT

Cultural changes and economic shifts moving at a high speed are influencing the way Delawareans live and impacting the historical landscape. As growth impinges upon the state's geographic fringe, Delaware's small towns and fragmentary landscapes face an increasing risk of being lost. Fragmentary landscapes are places with obscure histories and a built environment that is difficult to interpret, frequently related to a lack of evidence. The nature of this evidence shapes all historical research and fragmentary landscapes do not communicate their past clearly. These sensitive and unknown entities possess intricate and fragile truths about the past, present, and future of local culture.

Cheswold is a small town and fragmentary landscape in central Kent County, Delaware. The tiny hamlet is composed of a post office, some vacant lots, a lone restaurant, and a small core of nineteenth-century residences. With a population that has never exceeded 500, the town never supported a newspaper. No family bibles, business records, daybooks, journals, or diaries relating to Cheswold survive in the collection possession of any institutional repositories. There are few town maps of Cheswold, none prior to 1919. The historical records of town government are lost. There is no town historical society and no previously written town history.

This thesis contributes to the field of vernacular architecture by interpreting the significant history of Cheswold, testing a methodology that can be employed for further research of fragmentary landscapes in Delaware. The ability to build the interpretive relationship between existing broad patterns and fragmentary

local evidence holds tremendous information potential for future research.

Establishing a precedent for the research of small towns, each chapter of this thesis engages a different evidence base to interpret a separate component of Cheswold's history. Drawing from the research methods of this thesis, future researchers are able to ask directed questions of extant and negative primary evidence and utilize existing secondary studies to interpret fragmentary landscapes in Delaware.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A small town in central Kent County, Cheswold is situated on the boundary of Kenton and Little Creek Hundred, approximately six miles north of Dover and seven miles south of Smyrna. One of Delaware's smallest incorporated towns, the town is historically centered at the intersection of State Route 42 (known as Main Street within the town limits) and the Delaware Railroad, just west of U.S. 13 (Figure 1.1). Moorton Road parallels the railroad tracks north of Main Street, previously connecting rural residents with the now-demolished passenger railroad station. South of Main Street, Moorton Road becomes Commerce Street. The residential core of Cheswold extends in a loose, disconnected grid two blocks west along Main Street and two blocks south along Commerce Street. This section is comprised of late nineteenth century Gothic, Vernacular, and early twentieth century Four Square houses (Figure 1.3). While style, plan, and orientation vary, setback and side-yard distances maintain a consistent density and effuse a small town feel. The residential core retains the feeling, location and setting of the Cheswold's heritage as a small nineteenth-century railroad town.

The settling of the town in 1856 coincided with the construction of the north-south Delaware Railroad. At the height of the railroad's importance to the agricultural economy of the state, Cheswold served as a central agricultural shipping point for fresh and processed produce. Between 1856 and 1920, Cheswold served as a rural center of goods, services, education, and employment for the local population.

Though the size of the town never exceeded 500, Cheswold was home to a variety of canneries, grocers, blacksmiths, garages, churches, and schools.

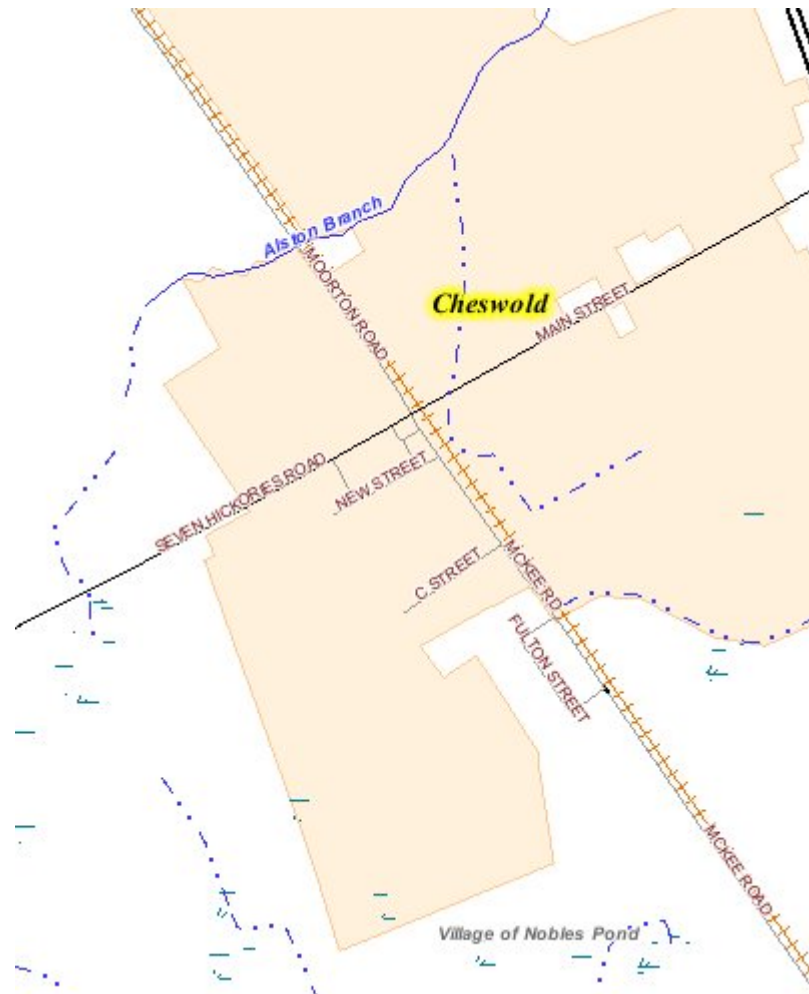


Figure 1.1 Street map of Cheswold featuring an overlay of the incorporated town's current boundaries. Map created with Delaware DataMIL.

Over the course of the twentieth century, technology, modernization, and changes in rural lifestyle profoundly affected the social and economic fortunes of the town. During the 1920s and 1930s, the contemporary decline of the railroad and rise of the automobile rendered town growth dormant for decades. Businesses closed or left town, schools consolidated and moved outside the community, and land uses evolved into the middling realm. Buildings and structures significant to the town's history, such as schools, stores and canneries, were demolished or moved. Today, the town is home to a small residential population, a small airport, mobile home park, industrial materials manufacturer, and several public buildings – post office, fire station, town hall and two churches.

Within the last decade, the construction of State Route One has accelerated growth in the Smyrna-Dover corridor. Situated in the midst of this strip of development, the Cheswold area is experiencing growth without historical precedent. However, to most commuters, Cheswold is the type of place that people whiz past in their cars, blissfully ignorant of its existence or curiously wondering, “Why is that town there?”

This thesis uses a sporadic and episodic documentary and physical evidence base and draws upon the methodology of fragmentary landscapes to develop and interpret the significant history of Cheswold. This small town is both a vernacular place and a fragmentary landscape. Born out of the literature of vernacular architecture, these two terms are independent, but not mutually exclusive. Vernacular architecture is a field with wide-ranging interpretations of a broad subject matter. Cultural geographers, architectural historians, and students of landscape have all written definitions of vernacular.

A diversity of perspectives supports the development of an integrated interpretation of vernacular architecture. One prominent scholar summarizes the study of vernacular architecture as a “phenomenon that many understand intuitively but few are able to define.”¹ Nonetheless, definitions do exist, and vary widely. Some are unspecific and inclusive in nature, stating that vernacular architecture contains “non-high style building[s]...structures not designed by professionals ... not monumental ... unsophisticated ... *mere* building[s]...”² Others approach the definition more finitely, as when architectural historian Dell Upton simply states, “Vernacular architecture is regional architecture.”³ Perhaps more indicative of the multidisciplinary study of vernacular architecture is the definition offered by Anna Vemer Andrzejewski and Allison Rachleff that expands beyond the built environment to include “everyday buildings within everyday places.”⁴ A definition that broadens the spatial study of architecture is significant, because it provides justification for interpreting not just the built environment, but also the greater landscape.

¹ Upton, Dell and John Michael Vlach, Eds. *Common Places: Readings in Vernacular Architecture*. London: University of Georgia Press, 1986, xv.

² Ibid.

³ Dell Upton, “Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia,” in *Common Places: Readings in Vernacular Architecture*. London: University of Georgia Press, 1986, 315.

⁴ Anna Vemer Andrzejewski and Allison Rachleff, “The Significance of Fragmentary Landscapes in Cultural Landscape Preservation,” in *Preservation of What, For Whom?: A Critical Look at Historical Significance*, ed. Michael A. Tomlan. Ithaca: The National Council for Preservation Education, 1998, 183

Cultural geographers coined the phrase *cultural landscape* as a method of relating the social history of a place and the human influence on the environment.⁵ The study of cultural landscapes adds meaning to the study of vernacular architecture when framed with the axiom of geographer Pierce F. Lewis that culture is “reflected in its ordinary vernacular landscape.”⁶ Another geographer, D.W. Meinig, writes that cultural landscapes’ “encompass an ensemble of ordinary features which constitute an extraordinarily rich exhibit of the course and character of any society.”⁷ Local landscape communicates local culture. By these definitions, the universe of cultural landscapes is unbounded. Where haven’t humans affected the landscape? Within the framework of cultural landscapes, the study of vernacular landscapes is related to vernacular architecture.

The landscape framework enriches vernacular architecture by considering “all kinds and scales of buildings within a given spatial and temporal context.”⁸ Advocated by architectural historian Dell Upton, these foundations were originally generated by landscape scholar John Brinckerhoff Jackson. In *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, Jackson focuses on defining the first term in the phrase “vernacular landscape”. Looking at the evolution of the term’s meaning, Jackson

⁵ Peirce F. Lewis, “Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene,” in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographic Essays*, ed. D.W. Meinig, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, 12.

⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷ Meinig, D.W., ed. *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, 2.

⁸ Anna Vemer Adrzejewski and Allison Rachleff, “The Significance of Fragmentary Landscapes in Cultural Landscape Preservation,” 183.

ultimately puts forth the democratic concept that in America, the definition of vernacular is fluid and “dependent on the community.”⁹ This perspective reinforces the notion that the study of vernacular architecture expands beyond the buildings themselves. Ultimately, it is another definition offered by Jackson that is most appropriate to the context of this thesis. A vernacular landscape, writes Jackson, has a “history without events – or at least recorded events – and we see it as the slow procession of generations....”¹⁰ This thesis engages the experience of Cheswold as a town without a history in documents or coherent landscape.

Like books, landscapes can be read from start to finish and should not be judged by an initial glimpse. As a composition of lands and buildings that exhibit a range of infrequent and unpredictable changes, incomplete landscapes are more significant than they first appear.¹¹ Too often, historians write where the survival of documents and physical resources assembles the considerable advantage of ease of interpretation. This ideal research scenario is becoming increasingly rare. More common is the history of vernacular places, which lies along meandering, circuitous paths.

Architectural historians Anna Vemer Andrzejewski and Allison Rachleff identified these vernacular places with incomplete histories, documentary records, or

⁹ Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*. London: Yale University Press, 1984, 86.

¹⁰ John Brinckerhoff Jackson. “The Vernacular landscape,” in *Landscape Meanings and Values*, eds. Edmund C. Penning-Roswell and David C. Lowenthal. London: Allen and Unwin, 1986, 70.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 67.

physical resources as fragmentary landscapes. A particular type of cultural landscape, a fragmentary landscape is defined by three characteristics.

- 1) the presence of buildings, structures, or objects surviving from different historic periods, often with significant alterations;
- 2) the existence of ruins or gaps in the landscape where historic buildings or structures formerly stood; and
- 3) the landscape's changes through time are reflected and revealed through the built environment and its surrounding natural features.¹²

This definition is grounded in the study of physical resources. Peirce F. Lewis writes, "the landscape does not speak to us very clearly."¹³ The state of the historical built environment in Cheswold meets this definition of a fragmentary landscape.

Cheswold, however, additionally suffers from an incomplete documentary record.

The documentation of historical activities within the town is extremely sporadic. The town never supported a newspaper. No family bibles, business records, daybooks, journals, or diaries relating to Cheswold survive in the collection possession of any institutional repositories. There are few town maps of Cheswold, none prior to 1919. The historical records of town government are lost. There is no town historical society; no known town history. The methodological approach to the study of fragmentary landscapes seeks to mitigate these evidence problems.

In researching Cheswold, a survey of the extant physical resources, documents, and context studies led me to engage a thematic approach to the history of the town. Recognizing a fragmentary landscape means moving past the idea that gaps

¹² Anna Vemer Adrzejewski and Allison Rachleff, "The Significance of Fragmentary Landscapes in Cultural Landscape Preservation," 181.

¹³ Peirce F. Lewis, "Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene," 26.

in the landscape are not important.¹⁴ These are telling signposts of a place's history. This thesis is not about learning as much as possible about the town, but rather tests the methodology of researching fragmentary landscapes. The nature of the evidence shapes all research. To establish the significant history of Cheswold, this thesis looks at all available and unavailable resources to establish historical patterns. Determined by the evidence base, each chapter of this thesis approaches the context differently. The individual chapters each communicate a different aspect of Cheswold's cultural identity. As a sum, the chapters interpret the significant history of Cheswold, a small town and fragmentary landscape.

In her 1998 thesis, Karen Theresa Theimer organized Delaware's small towns into a hierarchy by using the central place theory developed by urban geographer Walter Christaller. Central place theory explains the geographic location, size, spatial separation, and function of cities.¹⁵ A central place is a city or town. Each central place has an economic sphere of influence on a surrounding area, and exists to provide goods and services to this hinterland population.¹⁶ The size of a city directly correlates to the size of its hinterland. The ability of a city to distribute goods and services limits the spatial expanse and population of the hinterland.¹⁷ The relationship between town and hinterland is mutual. Towns are comprised of a

¹⁴ Anna Vemer Adrzejewski and Allison Rachleff, "The Significance of Fragmentary Landscapes in Cultural Landscape Preservation," 183.

¹⁵ Hartshorn, Truman A. *Interpreting the City: An Urban Geography*. New York: Wiley, 1980, 137.

¹⁶ Ibid., 106.

¹⁷ Ibid., 106.

number of businesses that survive because they are supported by the purchasing power of the town and hinterland.¹⁸ Within these businesses, certain economic services are classified as economic necessities, conveniences, or luxuries.

Christaller organized a seven-tiered hierarchy of cities based upon a town's ability to provide complex services for the local and hinterland population.¹⁹ Grades of central places increase with town population, hinterland population, and geographic size. Each higher level of central place contains the functions of the lower level cities.²⁰ Using 1996 population statistics, Theimer relates the characteristics of each level of the central place hierarchy to the small towns in Delaware. Frederica, with a population of 761 and size of 17 square miles, is identified as a market town, the lowest grade in the hierarchy. Frederica is larger than Cheswold in both population and size.²¹ The level economic complexity and geographic size of Cheswold classify it as a market town. The presence of the railroad enabled Cheswold to become a marketplace for the exchange of raw and processed agricultural products. Residents as well as farmers and fruit growers from the hinterland purchased goods and services in Cheswold that were not available in the more rural outlying areas. The

¹⁸ Brian J.L. Berry and W.L. Garrison, "A Note on Central Place Theory and the Range of a Good," in *Economic Geography*, No. 34, 1958, 304-311.

¹⁹ To learn more about central place theory, see Truman A. Hartshorn, *Interpreting the City: An Urban Geography*. New York: Wiley, 1980- 105-130.

²⁰ Theimer, Karen Theresa. *Delaware's Small Towns*. Master's Thesis. University of Delaware, Newark, 1998, 78.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

town historically possessed several general stores, along with a millinery and blacksmith. Perhaps due to its relative proximity to larger towns Smyrna and Dover, Cheswold's hinterland and the range of urban services it provided remained limited.

Within the established central place order of market towns, Cheswold is more accurately described as a transport city. A transport city is a place whose primary economic function or social order is defined or closely related to a natural or physical resource related to transportation.²² More fully discussed in chapter two, Cheswold was established in 1856 as a postal depot on the Delaware Railroad. The railroad and related canning industry had a direct impact on the limited physical growth and economic prosperity that did occur in Cheswold. A low level of urban services, relatively small hinterland and significant economic link to the railroad define Cheswold as a market town and transport city.

Because of the town's small size, and its related place in the urban hierarchy, few sources of common historical economic ephemera exist. The very absence of sources not only supports the town's designation as a market town, but reinforces difficulties in the typical research methodology for interpreting the town's history through materials and documents. A historic context is an "organizational format that groups information about related historic properties, based on theme, geographic limits and chronological period."²³ It is possible to construct a context from each perspective: developed around a theme or historical activity, a physical place or geographic location, or a specific time. Constructing a context around a singular historical theme requires the presence of historical documents enabling the

²² Ibid., 78.

²³ *Federal Register*. 29 September 1983, 44716.

interpretation of the significance of certain economic or cultural activities. In addition to understanding these activities, temporal and geographic boundaries are also developed. A context based on a geographic area obliges the dedication of considerable amounts of time and effort into developing historic themes and geographic origins. With few available sources of evidence, it proved exceedingly difficult to develop themes and geographic boundaries for Cheswold.

The limited presence of physical resources and documentary evidence posed unique challenges to interpreting the historical activities in and around Cheswold. Though the town features municipal boundaries and was defined by its proximity to the railroad, the composition and size of the town's hinterland differed across time. Access to transportation and technological advancements was not equivalent across the agricultural landscape. Therefore, it is not possible to draw a concrete line around Cheswold and say that people living inside identified with the culture of Cheswold. The hinterland as defined by educational practices may be different from the agricultural hinterland. In developing a historic context for a particular place, historical activities and geographic boundaries vary across time, wreaking havoc on concepts of place identity and significance.

In developing a historic context, the formal avenues first take one to the physical landscape itself. The natural and built environment can provide clues about the past through both the presence and the absence of cultural landmarks and historical icons. However, with fragmentary landscapes, in addition to location-specific research, emphasis is placed on drawing from external documentary sources of information.²⁴ In the absence of previous work, you need to start from scratch with

²⁴ Adrzejewski and Rachleff, 185.

primary resources. The books, context studies, manuscripts, probate inventories, tax assessments, census returns, court records, private journals, photographs, and maps that comprise the documentary record complement the material landscape.

Exhausting these documentary resources is a necessary, if tedious, task.

The surviving documents that support the research of Cheswold include government records, historic photographs, historic maps, historical secondary histories, and historic contexts (Figure 1.2). This material provides the foundation for the study of Cheswold. Asking directed questions of these primary and secondary documents contributes to the process of interpreting the significant historical activities of a landscape.²⁵

²⁵ Ibid., 184-185.

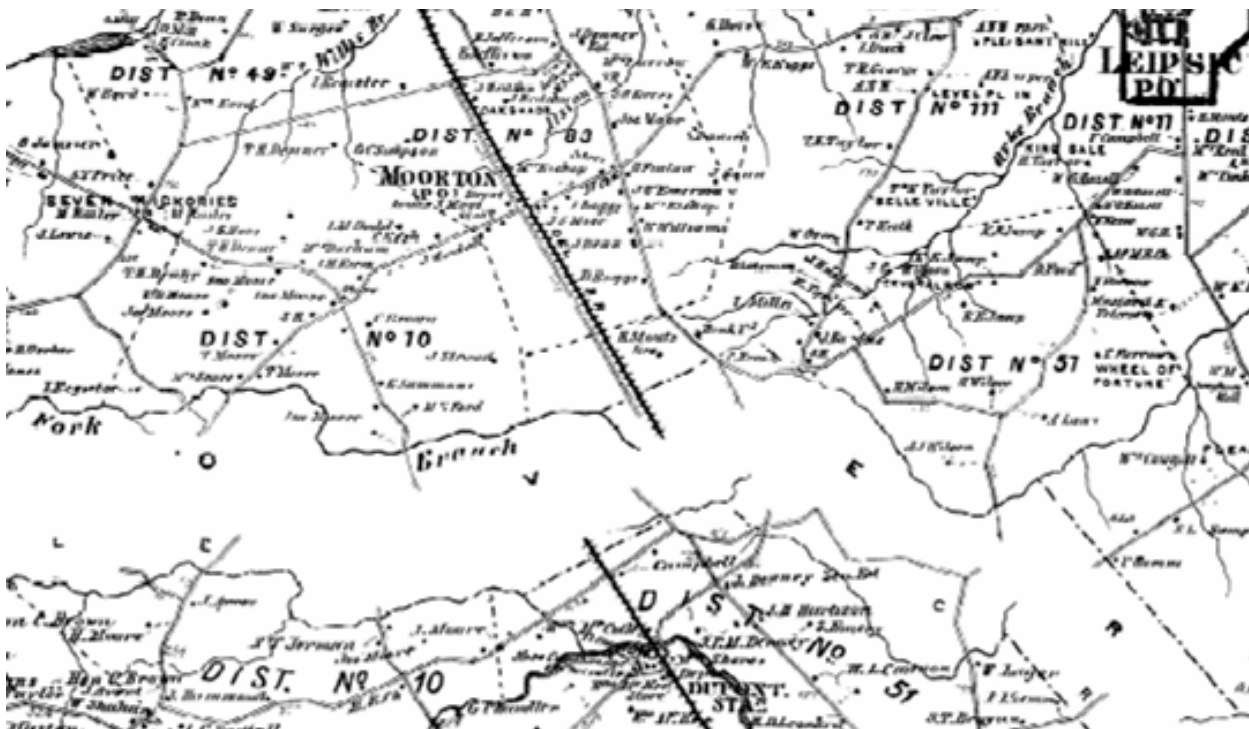


Figure 1.2 Little Creek Hundred as depicted on the Beers' Atlas of Delaware, surveyed in 1868. Historic maps are key elements in any documentary record. Studying historic maps helps to shape the conceptual framework of research and formulate questions about the landscape. Courtesy of the Center for Historic Architecture and Design, University of Delaware.

This thesis was born out of my internship at the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (DESHPO) during the 2005-2006 academic year. In response to land development threats to the historical landscape, the DESHPO took renewed interest in Cheswold in 2003, through an architectural survey. A primary drawback encountered during the 2003-2004 survey was a perceived lack of mainstream historical resources. A concise history of Cheswold does not exist. It was my responsibility as an intern to develop a historic context for Cheswold, to reconstruct

the significant history of the town and expand upon both the geographic and cultural boundaries of previous studies. To accomplish these goals, I conducted in-depth, archival research into the town history and read broadly on the topic of context development.

Research began with the review of established sources within the DESHPO. Cultural resource survey forms provided a detailed overview of the universe of architectural styles in Cheswold. *Town of Cheswold: Architectural Survey Report* by Emma Young, a previous DESHPO intern, presented a summary of architectural findings, and organized the few known pieces of town history into a narrative. *The History of Delaware, 1609-1888*, by Thomas J. Scharf offered a superficial glimpse into the condition of Cheswold in 1888, but provided little in the way of history. Historical primary resources consulted included the 1859 A.D. Byles' *Map of Kent County*, the Beers' 1868 *Atlas of the State of Delaware*, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps for 1919, 1929, and 1951. While these resources provided a visual component to the history of the town, they did little to bring it to life.

To engage the unique cultural history of Cheswold, I was directed to read ethnographic histories of the Lenape community, found in cultural resource management reports by Delaware archaeologist and historian Ned Heite. *Fork Branch/DuPont Station Community: Archaeological Investigations on Denney's Road, Dover Kent County Delaware, A Community on McKee Road* and *Archaeological and Historical Investigations at the Hurd Wetland Replacement Site on the Tract Formerly Known as Bloomsbury* each contain a research component discussing the ethno-history of a local minority population historically referred to as "Moors," and presently identified as Lenape Indians.

The “Moors” are a local minority population with an ambiguous history. Identified in popular history as early as 1888, in *The History of Delaware*, the “Moors” were referred to as being historically settled on the land west of Cheswold. The “Moors” are the focus of several mid-twentieth century studies by C.A. Weslager, including his 1943 work *Delaware’s Forgotten Folk: the story of the Moors and Nanticokes*. Though Weslager explores folk origins and engages the community at the social level, the historical origins of the “Moors” ultimately remain indistinct. It was not until the work of Ned Heite, that the most plausible history of the minority population was determined. Heite used census manuscripts, military records, wills, land ownership records, and probate inventories to trace surnames of members of the community. The conclusions of Heite’s research raised the profile of the culturally held belief that the “Moors” can trace their origins to local, pre-European-contact-period Indian settlements.

Historical convention maintains that during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the native Lenape Indian population migrated north and west, eventually settling in Canada. Contrary to this belief, it is now postulated that small isolated communities of the tribe remained in portions of central Delaware, mimicking patterns uncovered by ethno-historians throughout the United States. Heite inconclusively traces the surnames of persons believed to be Indians to records as early as the eighteenth century, where these surnames are inconsistently identified as mulattoes.²⁶ At some point during European settlement, the dominant culture began

²⁶ Ned Heite argues that the use of the term mulatto in historical records is significant because of a change in the definition of the word. Heite argues the term “mulatto” historically applied to any person perceived to be a minority of non-African origin.

labeling the Indian community as “Moors.” The reason for this name is lost to the past.

The contributions of the Lenape community to the history of Cheswold are difficult to quantify. Records do not identify them with any consistency. This is because the racial status of individuals was historically subject to the perceptions of the record keeper. Thus, in census returns, the identified race of persons who may have been “Moors” changes from decade to decade. Without manuscript evidence, the community’s social relationships, land-owning patterns, and financial networks are inaccessible. The community has recently taken an active interest in extracting their identity from historical documents and is currently collaborating with the DESHPO to pursue the identification and preservation of culturally significant resources.

Engaging the methodology of researching fragmentary landscapes, this thesis develops three historically significant activities associated with Cheswold. Each individual chapter looks at the extant physical evidence, interprets existing research, and combines relevant patterns with primary research data. Chapter two explores the development of a significant influence on the development of a town based primarily upon extant and historical physical resources. Chapter three is a model for reconstructing and interpreting the significant past of a locally controlled institution through the sole use of documentary records. Chapter four develops a local context using both direct and indirect evidence culled from extant resources that address and interpret broad patterns. Implementing the methodology for the research of fragmentary landscapes assists in understanding and interpreting the history of Cheswold.

This research method begins with the nature of the evidence. The common perception is that a lack of evidence plagues researchers of fragmentary landscapes and makes it difficult to develop a coherent narrative. The application of this methodology in this thesis successfully dispels the dilemma rooted in a perceived lack of evidence. Each chapter wrangles with a different problem encountered when researching a vernacular place. The methodology employed in this thesis is a significant diagnostic tool for the research of vernacular places.

With evidence based on the physical railroad tracks, chapter two explores the history of Cheswold as a railroad town. The town literally straddles the railroad tracks, centered on the intersection of Kenton-Leipsic Road and the Delaware Railroad. In the absence of a comprehensive statewide context for the railroad, historical maps, related context studies, and physical resources were used to generate the local significance of the railroad. Viewing the town as a fragmentary landscape supported the implementation of this method for developing Cheswold's history as a railroad town. This research sets a precedent for future work into the history and significance of small towns situated on or near railroads in Delaware.

Chapter three inverts the evidence problem of the previous chapter. The vibrant history of education in Cheswold exists solely in the documentary record. There are currently no schools operating in or near Cheswold. Yet, surviving local and state records indicate that at one time as many as nine schools operated around Cheswold. Locally controlled and operated for nearly a century, the documentary evidence of Delaware's rural one-room schoolhouses provide a glimpse of the value a community placed on education. Though schools operated with minimal government oversight during the nineteenth century, the Delaware State Archives maintain

extensive holdings, including meeting minutes, account books, student rosters, and ephemera from individual school districts. Twentieth-century holdings include the names of teachers and administrators, members of Parent-Teacher Associations and associated student groups, building records, and photographs of many school buildings. In Cheswold, where no school building survives, the documentary record aids in the reconstruction and interpretation of the historical landscape of education. The availability of secondary resources and vast collection of primary documents in education facilitates the development of a local context of education.

Chapter four utilizes broad patterns established in existing research to define and develop an understanding of the significant agricultural practices in the Cheswold hinterland during the mid-nineteenth century. Interpreting historical documents constructs a mutual relationship between hinterland farmers and the town. This chapter addresses the development of a historic context in the absence of any direct evidence. Changes in technology, redevelopment of historical resources and the passage of time contribute to the lack of documentation of historical agricultural practices.

Each chapter in this thesis engages a separate evidence base to contribute a unique aspect of the individual activities composing Cheswold's historical culture. The culture of the past was not static. Rather it changed at a much slower rate. Today, cultural changes and economic shifts moving at a high speed are influencing the way Delawareans live. The changing needs of Delawareans are manifest in new construction and land use development witnessed on the landscape. As growth impinges upon the state's geographic fringe, Delaware's small towns and fragmentary landscapes are increasingly at risk. These sensitive and unknown entities possess

intricate and fragile truths about the past, present, and future of local culture. Fragmentary landscapes do not communicate their past clearly. Understanding fragmentary landscapes requires a steady, meticulous hand and the focus of a dedicated researcher. Threats to these vernacular places need to be anticipated, so that their heritage can be studied, interpreted, protected, and preserved. This thesis represents the literal preservation of one fragmentary landscape, Cheswold, and, through the development of a replicable methodology, the symbolic preservation of countless others.



Figure 1.3 Typical mid-to-late nineteenth century houses lining the north side of New Street in Cheswold. Photograph by the author, 2006.

Chapter 2

RAISON D'ÊTRE: CHESWOLD AS A RAILROAD TOWN

Every place has a reason for existing. The forces that define, shape, and help us to interpret vernacular and fragmentary landscapes, similarly affect the historical record. In developing a local history, the nature of the evidence base - both documentary and architectural - affects the argument crafted. It is thus problematic to construct a context for a town that lacks a coherent historical narrative. The town of Cheswold historically maintained a core population close to 350 persons. This small town never supported a local newspaper. Government records are lost and vast and significant portions of the built environment have been demolished or removed. During large periods of Cheswold's history, there is no direct access to the functioning of everyday town life. Gaps in manuscript and physical evidence construct a complicated research environment, typical of vernacular places.

The history of Cheswold is culled from sporadic and episodic resources. The known locations, cultures, people, businesses, and institutions that comprise Cheswold's unique history construct a disjointed historical landscape. Any clear understanding of the significance of Cheswold's history requires connecting it to some broader pattern. Relying upon this methodology is contingent upon the availability of context resources. There is no comprehensive railroad context in Delaware. The political histories of the railroads in Delaware are documented in Masters Theses written two generations ago. The only primary documentary resources that specifically tie Cheswold to the railroad are the annual reports of the Delaware

Railroad. These annals survive in an incomplete set at the Delaware Public Archives. Therefore, context development in this chapter will rely upon the physical and indirect documentary resource. One of the most prominent physical resources in Cheswold is the railroad tracks. Documentary evidence from historic maps, state directories, primary and secondary histories and “The Canning Industry in Delaware, 1860-1940 +/-: A Historic Context” by Dean A. Doerrfeld aided in the context development.²⁷ This chapter approaches the historical development of Cheswold as a railroad town.

The earliest visual reference to any settlement near Cheswold appears on the 1859 *Bytes Map of Kent County* (Figure 2.1). The map identifies the town at the intersection of the Delaware Railroad with Kenton-Leipsic Road (later Main Street and present-day State Route 42) as Moorton. The town was named for James S. Moore (also spelled Moor), the station agent, postmaster, and store proprietor in 1859. Moore came from a locally prominent landowning family. The town was originally a postal depot settled by the Delaware Railroad in 1856 as Leipsic Station.²⁸

The Delaware Railroad commonly named rural stations for nearby established towns. An inland grain port, Leipsic was located approximately three miles east. Leipsic sat at the terminus of an early eighteenth century road used to transport grains raised on the fertile farms of the eastern shore of Maryland. At Leipsic, these goods boarded boats bound for the large urban markets of the northeast. The Delaware Railroad intentionally appropriated the name. Leipsic Station was

²⁷ Doerrfeld, Dean A. with David L. Ames and Rebecca J. Sheppard. *The Canning Industry in Delaware, 1860-1940+/-*. Newark, DE: Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, 1993.

²⁸ Young, Emma and Robin K. Bodo. “Town of Cheswold: Architectural Study,” Unpublished Paper, Dover, 2004.

shrewdly located west of the port town and business rival. The name of the railroad station served a dual purpose as a geographic identifier to passengers and an overt suggestive reference to farmers traveling the Leipsic road en route to shipping their crops via the Delaware River. Situated west of the port town, the railroad - and Leipsic Station - provided a closer and quicker overland north-south shipping route that would supplant the multi-mode, east-west cart path to Leipsic and the north-south Delaware River transportation route.

The Delaware Railroad first operated the ninety-seven-mile north-south line in 1856.²⁹ This line was Delaware's first north-south overland transportation route. Earlier efforts in Delaware railroading, the New Castle-Frenchtown Railroad (1831), and the Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore Railroad (1837), were outgrowths of a decades-long trade rivalry between Philadelphia and Baltimore.³⁰ Economic interests from each city constructed railroads in an attempt to lay claim to the largest sphere of agricultural raw materials. Railroads lines extending from each city tracked across northern Delaware, shortening the transit time for goods. These railroads connected Philadelphia and Baltimore, and benefited investors in those cities before local interests in Delaware.

In contrast to these earlier efforts, the Delaware Railroad was planned by, financed by, and benefited Delaware interests. The downstate route ran from the town of New Castle (with connections to Wilmington) to Delmar in Sussex County, at the

²⁹ Scharf, Thomas. *History of Delaware, 1609-1888*. Philadelphia: L.J. Richards & Co., 1888, 1128

³⁰ Livingood, James Weston. *The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry 1780-1860*. Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1947, 116.

Maryland state line. The railroad connected rural residents and farms throughout the state with Wilmington, Delaware's center of industry, shipping, and technology.³¹ Like pearls on a string, a series of towns grew alongside the railroad through southern New Castle, Kent, and Sussex counties. The railroad served to stimulate development, determining the type and direction of growth. Rapid transit routes provided the initiative for new population centers to grow around marketing, shipping, and industry.³² During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the railroad spurred town growth on the Delaware peninsula.³³

In the late 1850s, Leipsic Station was a simple postal depot situated among the farm fields of central Little Creek Hundred (Figure 2.3). Approximately five miles north of Dover and seven miles south of Smyrna, the tiny station split the distance between two rural crossroads communities along Kenton-Leipsic Road. In her thesis *Delaware's Small Towns*, Karen Theresa Theimer identified crossroads as the earliest form of settlement to appear in Delaware, developing out of a residential grouping at the intersection of two or more roads.³⁴ Keith's Cross Roads was situated east of the fledgling railroad station, with Shawn's Cross Roads located west. Little more than a small collection of houses and perhaps a store, these communities were considered important enough by surveyors to appear on the 1859 Byles map.

³¹ Gibb, Hugh R. *The Delaware Railroad*. Master's Thesis. University of Delaware, Newark, DE, 1965.

³² Theimer, 56.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 27.

Over the next several decades, the economic pull of the railroad would stimulate growth of Moorton at the expense of these communities.³⁵ In 1859, Leipsic Station was renamed Moorton. The small town consisted of the rail station, James S. Moore's store, the nearby dwelling of J. Lewis, and a steam powered grist mill operated by Smyrna entrepreneurs Hoffecker and Huffington.³⁶ Ultimately an unsuccessful venture, the mill was shuttered after a few seasons. Grains continued to be refined at several local water-powered mills, connected to Moorton by a growing network of roads. The original railroad depot stood at the northwest corner of the intersection of Kenton-Leipsic Road with the Delaware Railroad. In the coming decades, the railroad would become the primary influence on the growth and prosperity of the fledgling community.

At the time of the survey for the Beers' *Atlas of the State of Delaware* in 1868, the railroad had been influencing the landscape for 12 years. This 1868 map depicts a few changes from the Byles map of nine years earlier. East of Moorton, a new road parallels the west side of the railroad. This road (now Moorton Road north of Leipsic-Kenton Road and Commerce Street south of Leipsic-Kenton Road) provided east-west travelers with a more direct route to the railroad station. Furthermore, the surveyors captured a larger cluster of houses near Moorton, represented by dots on the map. The interpretation is a slight resettling of the population away from the previous crossroads communities. Keith's Cross Roads and Shawn's Cross Roads are not identified on the 1868 Beers' Atlas of Delaware.

³⁵ Ibid., 53

³⁶ Byles, A.D. *Map of Kent County*, 1859. Reprint. Dover: Collection of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office.

The following year, the Delaware legislature carved Kenton Hundred out of Little Creek and Duck Creek Hundreds. The Delaware Railroad served as a convenient eastern boundary for the new administrative district. This division is significant because it placed tiny Moorton in two separate hundreds. During this period, census takers used the hundred boundaries as administrative districts. Therefore in census returns through the nineteenth century, the town's population is divided between Kenton and Little Creek hundreds. Tracking the continuous local population is exceedingly difficult.

With only the 1874-5 State Directory as evidence, it appears that Moorton's growth accelerated during the 1870s. The register identifies a grain dealer, railroad agent, two merchants, a physician and a tiler as holding businesses in the town.³⁷ In addition to the town residents, the directory enumerated dozens of fruit growers and farmers residing in the agricultural hinterlands. The railroad shipped the fresh produce from these tenant and land-owning farmers. Canning technology arrived in Moorton during the next decade, enabling farmers to process lower quality yields, refine excess product, and attach a premium to previously wasted goods.

In 1881, the Maryland firm of Smith & Brown opened a cannery at Moorton.³⁸ Judging by the available evidence and context information, this complex is representative of the early industrial period of canneries, c. 1870-1890.³⁹ The

³⁷ Talbott, J.T. *Delaware State Directory, 1874-1875*. Philadelphia: Collins, 1874.

³⁸ Scharf, 1129.

³⁹ Doerrfeld, Dean A. with David Ames and Rebecca J. Sheppard. *The Canning Industry in Delaware, 1860-1940 +/-*. Masters Thesis, Newark: University of Delaware, 1993, 11.

cannery also appears in the background of an undated photograph of the Cheswold train station.⁴⁰ The 1919 Sanborn Map of Cheswold, an addendum to the company's map of Dover, also documents the facility (Figure 2.4). This complex was located northeast of the intersection of the Delaware Railroad and Kenton-Leipsic Road, approximately 150 yards north of the second generation, brick passenger depot. The one-and-a-half story cannery was organized in a linear plan and featured a railroad siding, peeling shed, processing house, boiler house, warehouse and at least two bunkhouses. This cannery processed peaches, the primary agricultural product of the surrounding countryside during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴¹ As many as three canneries would operate in Moorton during the early twentieth century.⁴² No documentary records for any of these facilities are known to survive.

As truck farmers continued to bring their products to Moorton for processing and shipping, the town blossomed to capitalize on the ready-made consumer market. Using state directories, newspaper clippings, secondary histories and architectural evidence, it is possible to reconstruct Moorton during its late nineteenth century boom. The number of commercial and professional services increased and the residential section of the town was laid out in a small grid, southwest of the intersection of Kenton-Leipsic Road and the Delaware Railroad.

⁴⁰ Moorton was renamed Cheswold in February of 1888. The story will be told in subsequent pages.

⁴¹ Scharf, 1129.

⁴² Information gleaned from the 1919, 1929 and 1950 Sanborn Maps of Cheswold. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, *Map of Dover, Delaware*, Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. Dover: Delaware State Historic Preservation Office, Reference Reel #108.1

Today, side-gabled I-houses and vernacular, gothic-revival cottages line Commerce, New, West, and Main streets, the town's most accessible relic of a boom long forgotten. While plan, style, and orientation vary, setback and rhythm maintain a consistent density, inculcating an urban feel unto the small railroad town.

During this period, social life in Moorton grew to the point where town residents began extolling their enterprises in the weekly *Smyrna Times*. Between 1886 and 1889, a series of biweekly "Letters from Moorton," appeared in the nearby town's newspaper. Written by several residents under various pseudonyms, these letters provide the most intimate glimpse available into the boomtown's business. Though most of the reports deal with the Cheswold social scene, essential town news is sporadically included. The slow, rhythmic pace of rural town life in Cheswold is highlighted by the nature of items considered newsworthy. The arrival of a traveling salesman (February 29, 1887), the fruit and nursery journal of Caleb Boggs (May 11, 1887), and the wares for sale at the W.F. Collins general store (June 1, 1887) are among topics worthy of mention.⁴³

Through these letters, we discover that Moorton residents gathered socially at the International Order of Good Templars, organized on March 15, 1886.⁴⁴ A letter dated June 30, 1888 bemoaned the town's weak strawberry crop, but

⁴³ These pieces appeared regularly in *Smyrna Times*, the closest weekly newspaper. Segments titled "Letter from Moorton" and later, "Letter from Cheswold" appeared regularly in *Smyrna Times*, the closest weekly newspaper, between 1887 and 1889. The *Smyrna Times* is on microfilm at the Delaware State Public Archives in Dover. *Smyrna Times. Various Articles and Letters to the Editor, 1886-1896*, Dover: Delaware Newspaper Project, Delaware Public Archives, 9210.14.

⁴⁴ Scharf, 1130.

celebrated the Sunday School at Bethel Church in nearby Hammville. The letter also spoke of the town's blacksmith shop and celebrated the opening of a millinery. A staple of rural communities, blacksmiths tended to the needs of travelers and farmers, but also the town's business and industry. A millinery shop indicated the presence of a core population large enough to support the selling and fashioning of clothes.

At the close of the boom decade, Moorton grew to the point where its name became the source of confusion. Difficulties surrounded the timely delivery of the town's mail; mistaken deliveries were common with the nearby towns of Worton in Kent County, Maryland and Morton in Delaware County, Pennsylvania.⁴⁵ In February 1888, the residents of Moorton gathered to change the name of their town.⁴⁶ Local lore maintains that several names were placed into a hat, and the name "Chesswold" was drawn. The distinctive name was the product of fusing "chess" (a large group of chestnut trees once found near the town) and "wold" (an old English word for woods or trees).⁴⁷ The Delaware Railroad was first to recognize the name, with the state legislature following suit. A letter in the *Smyrna Times* dated March 20, 1889 gave notice of Cheswold's intention to incorporate as a dry town, 800 yards by 700 yards. The town officially incorporated on April 18, 1889.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ "Letter from Cheswold" in *Smyrna Times*, February 15, 1888. Microfilm, Dover: Delaware State Public Archives, accessed 5 October 2005.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Young, Emma and Robin K. Bodo. "Town of Cheswold: Architectural Study," 6.

⁴⁸ "An Act to Incorporate the Town of Cheswold." Files of the Delaware General Assembly, 1889, Vol. 2, p. 151, Dover: Delaware State Public Archives, accessed 4 November 2005.

A physical description of Chesswold (sic) appears in the 1888 *History of Delaware* by Thomas Scharf.⁴⁹ When surveyed by Scharf, the town contained 35 houses, a population of 200, three general stores, as well as a wheelwright, brickyard, cannery and grain dealer⁵⁰. The town directory of the same year places the population of Moorton at 350, with a few more stores and businesses.⁵¹

The details of life in Cheswold between 1888 and 1919, as related to the railroad, have yet to be uncovered. The gap in historical resources discussing the town's industrial practices and railroad activities is filled by a wealth of information pertaining to the development of the Cheswold school system. The relationship between the historical development of rural education in Delaware and schooling in Cheswold will be explored in Chapter 3.

In 1919 representatives of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Company surveyed Cheswold. At this time, the town and surrounding farms supported a second cannery. This cannery was located at the southeast corner of the intersection of the Delaware Railroad and Main Street. It was constructed of concrete and was oriented catty-corner to the intersection.⁵² The cannery appears as operational on both the 1919 and 1929

⁴⁹ The discrepancy of the dates with the change in the town's name casts doubt on town lore. The town's name was reportedly changed in 1889. However, *The History of Delaware*, published in 1888 refers to the town as "Chesswold." The reason for the discrepancy is unknown.

⁵⁰ Scharf, 1128.

⁵¹ *Delaware State Directory for 1888*. Wilmington: Ferris Bros., Publishers, 1888, 233.

⁵² Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. *Map of Dover, Delaware*. Plate 22. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1919. Collection of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office, Reference Reel 108.1.

Sanborn Maps of Cheswold (Figure 2.5). Also located on the cannery property were a two-story dwelling and the Pennsylvania Railroad freight depot.⁵³ Perhaps the most telling addition to the landscape of Cheswold was an auto repair shop and gas station on the northwest corner of Commerce and New streets. A few early garages also appear behind residential dwellings in town. Even as early as 1919, the automobile was making its mark on this railroad town.

Within a few years, the Cheswold Cold Storage Company, a third cannery, opened directly across the railroad tracks from the earlier Smith & Brown cannery, just 475 feet north of the passenger station. The Cheswold Cold Storage Company first appears on the 1929 Sanborn Map. The primary building was constructed of reinforced concrete and featured refrigeration technology. Significantly, the complex was set back from the railroad and did not have a railroad siding, suggesting that the primary mode of transportation was likely automotive. The automobile era in Cheswold had been established.

As the railroad declined in importance, the fortunes of Cheswold followed suit. Farmers were no longer beholden to the schedules and costs of the railroad. In 1924, the DuPont Highway opened, passing a mile east of Cheswold's intersection with the railroad, bypassing not only a town, but a way of life. The highway renewed commercial interest in Keith's Cross Roads, renamed Bishop's Corner after late farmer William S. Bishop. Farmers could now ship by truck, the same transportation technology that allowed them to take the DuPont Highway to Dover for shopping. The road had the effect of unraveling the dense core of Cheswold. Lining Main Street east of town are the bungalows, four-squares and vernacular buildings emblematic of

⁵³ Ibid.

early twentieth century, marching towards DuPont Highway. This suburban development reflects the economic pull of the new highway.

The decline of the railroad precipitated the economic decline of Cheswold. Businesses closed, moved east, or left in search of more profitable markets. As they do not appear on the 1951 Sanborn Map, the freight depot was demolished and two of the three canneries closed prior to that date (Figure 2.6). The population of the town remained flat. However, the Cheswold Cold Storage Company continued to produce apple brandy and peach schnapps through 1950.⁵⁴ The complex of buildings appears on 1937 and 1954 aerial photographs of Cheswold, but has since been demolished (Figure 2.7).⁵⁵ The year the facility closed is unknown.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Cheswold sits impacted by decades of economic decline or stasis. Although much of the town's commercial life has withdrawn, Cheswold, at least in appearance, has changed little from its period of significance. The compact nature of the original town core, featuring traditional design features and largely complete historic residences continue to define the community. Despite the lack of nearly all critical associated resources, the railroad tracks remain, a vestige of historical significance and a starting point for research.

Under the maxim that every place has a *raison d'être*, Cheswold is a railroad town. The methodology of this chapter pulls from an evidence base grounded in physical resources and supported by a sporadic framework of primary documents

⁵⁴ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. *Map of Dover, Delaware*. Plate 22. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, 1929-1951. Collection of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office, Dover. Reference Reel, 108.1.

⁵⁵ Data Source: Delaware DataMIL and Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs. www.datamil.delaware.gov.

and existing context studies. This chapter did not grasp at straws to reveal as much as possible about the town history. Facing an incomplete paper trail, the chapter methodology unfolded organically, through the presence and absence of direct evidence. The existence of railroad tracks spawned a research process that began with seeking out physical resources and moved into primary source documents. Context studies aid in understanding the built environment. The ability to interpret and apply broad patterns to specific resources is an invaluable skill. The method employed for developing Cheswold's history as a railroad town sets a research precedent for future research of vernacular places.

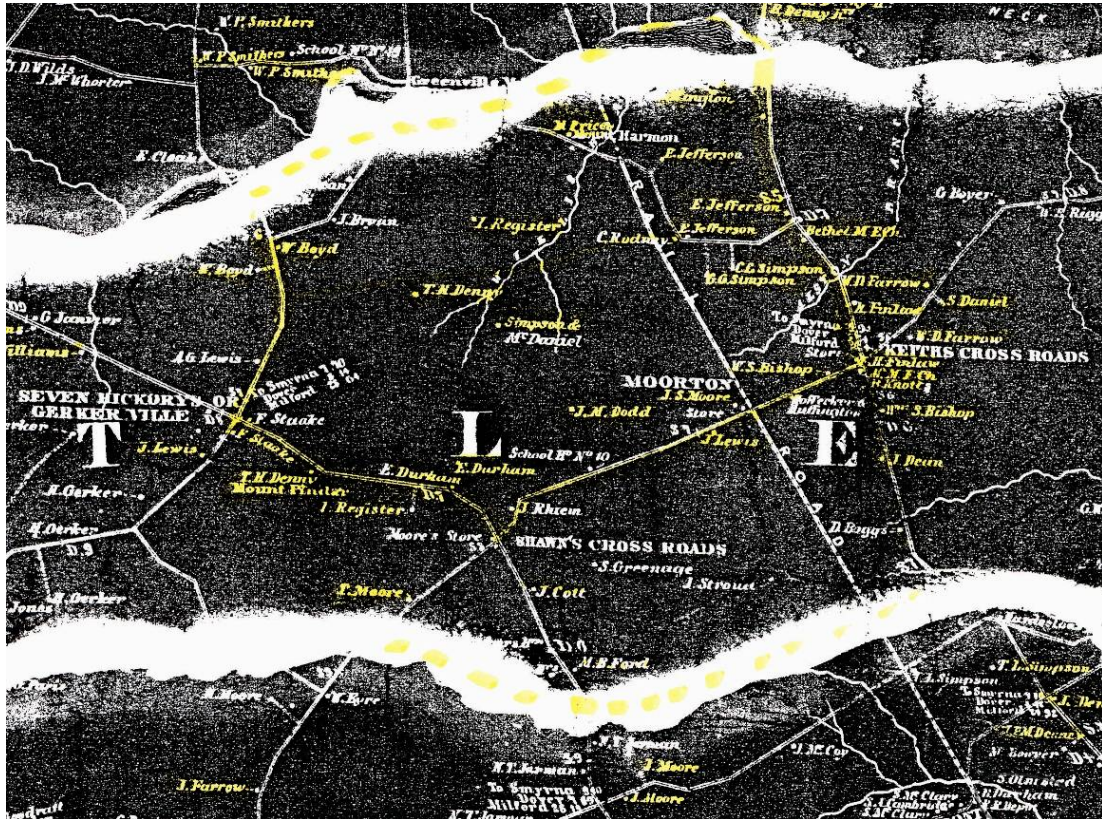


Figure 2.1 The 1859 Byles Map of Kent County holds the earliest known visual depiction of Moorton, the settlement that would become Cheswold. This map was surveyed during the same year the tiny settlement took the name “Moorton.” Comparison with the Beers’ Atlas (Figure 1.1) portrays a landscape reorganizing around the economic influence of the railroad. Courtesy of the Center for Historic Architecture and Design, University of Delaware.



Figure 2.2 A three-bay, two-story Gothic Revival frame dwelling at the southwest corner of Main Street and West Street in Cheswold. Exhibiting few stylistic elements beyond proportions and form, this type and period of house is seen throughout town. Photograph by the author, 2006.



Figure 2.3 During the nineteenth century, several times daily trains passed through the Cheswold passenger station, providing connections to Wilmington and even Philadelphia. Just south of the passenger station, the freight depot (not pictured), was the commercial center for farmers to participate in local and regional agricultural trade. The smokestack at the center left of the photograph marks the location of a cannery long since demolished. Courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives.

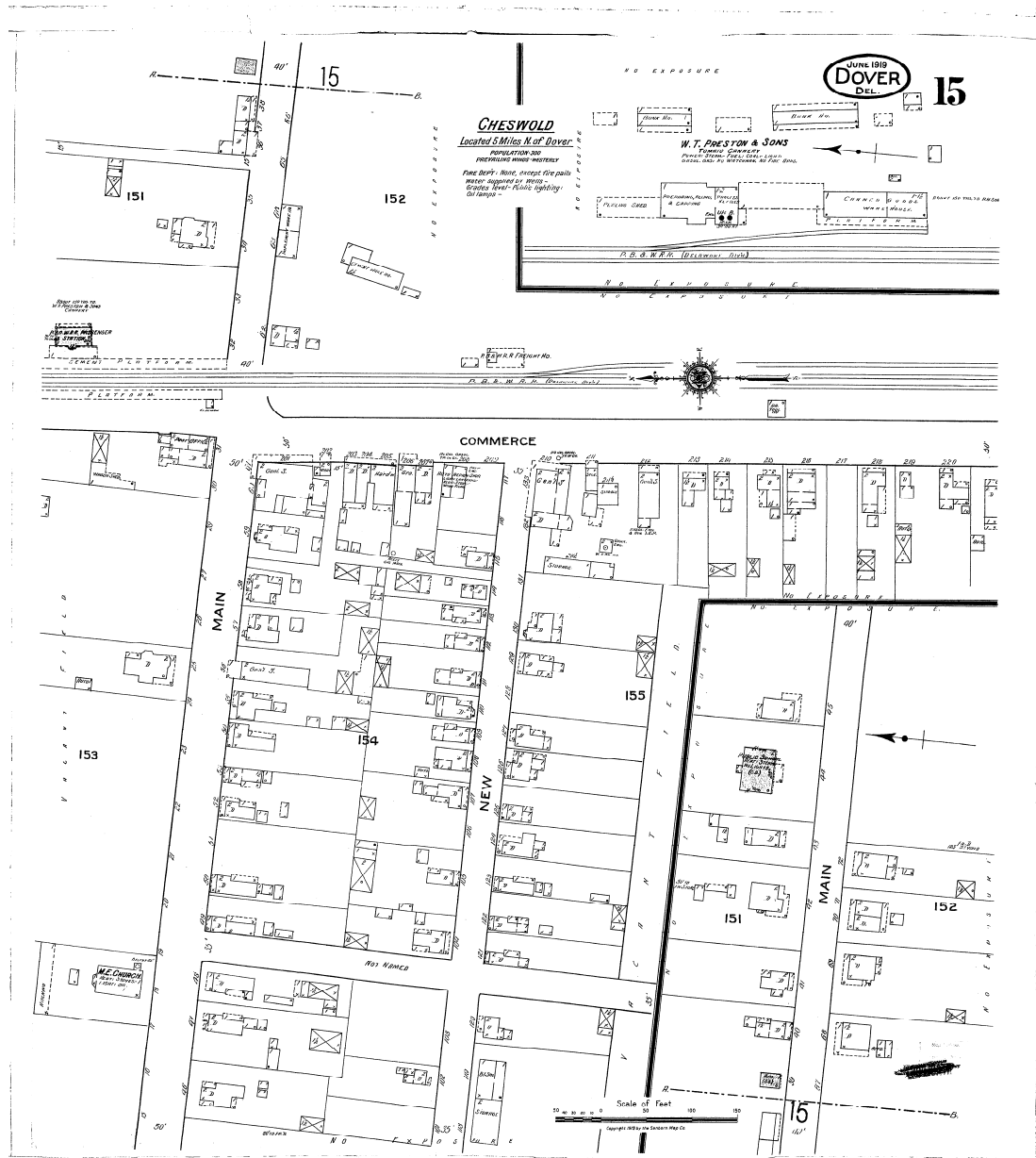


Figure 2.4 The 1919 Sanborn Map of Cheswold was a special inclusion to the fire insurance company's map of nearby Dover. Though the map was spliced to fit the town on one sheet, it is the first known visual of the layout and street pattern of Cheswold. Courtesy of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office.

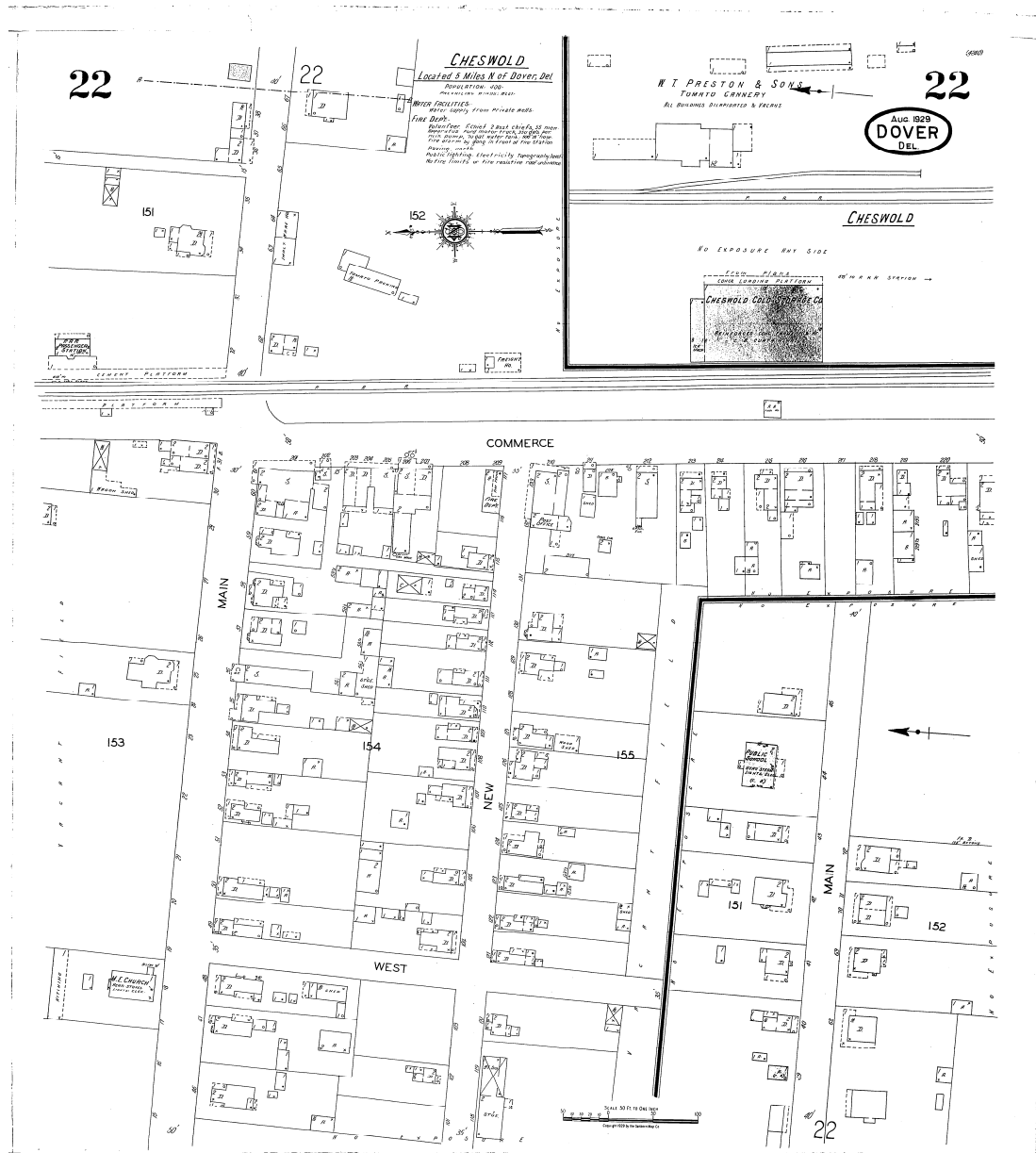


Figure 2.5 Cheswold in a 1929 Sanborn Map. This map depicts the presence of three canneries in town. Comparison between maps provides a portrait of the town's changes across time. Between 1919 and 1929, the town's first firehouse was constructed at the northwest corner of Commerce Street and New Street. Courtesy of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office.

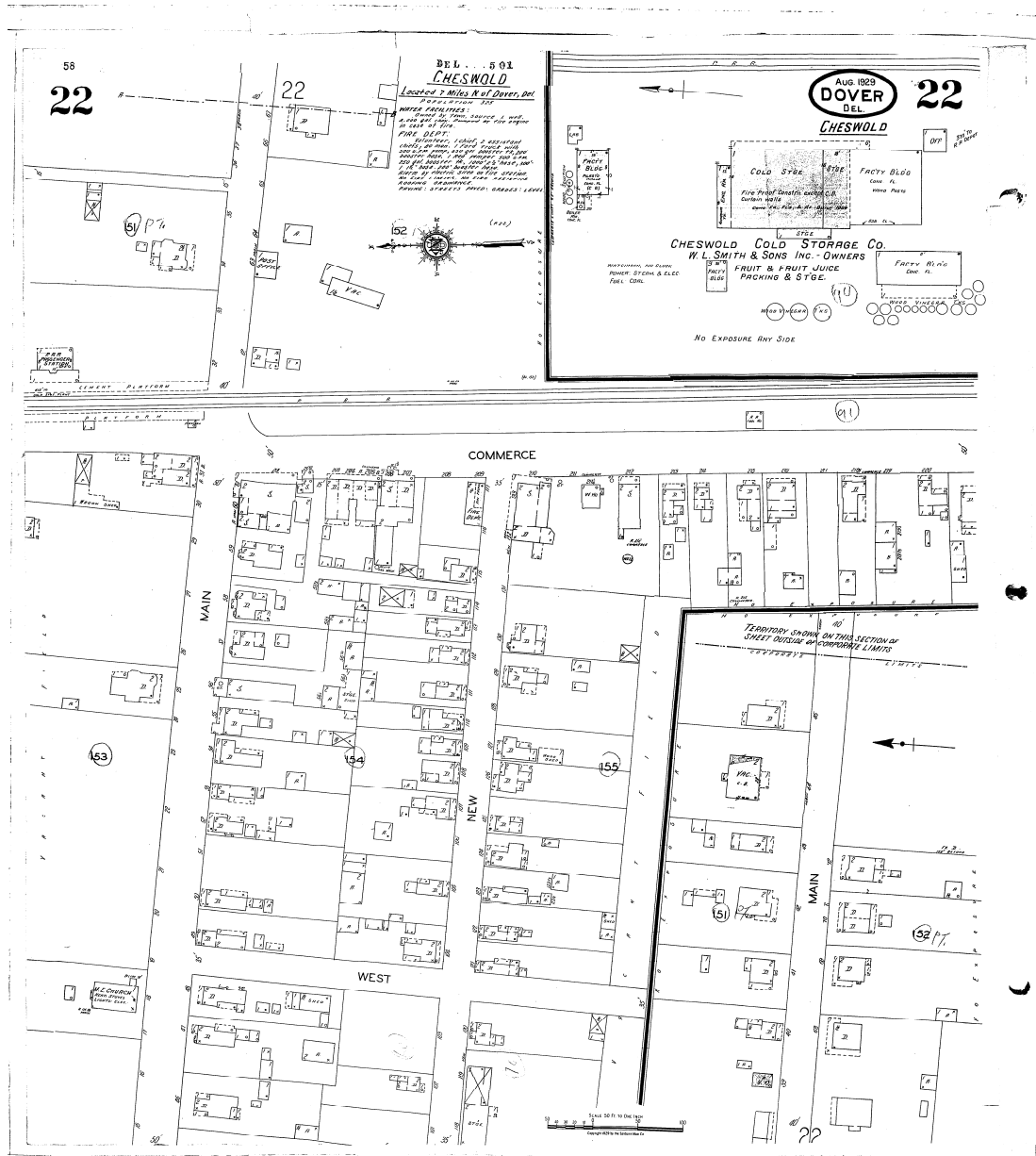


Figure 2.6 The 1929 Sanborn Map of Cheswold was updated in 1951. The Cheswold Cold Storage Company expanded considerably since the previous survey of the town. In the bottom insert, the dwelling identified as the SD 83 schoolhouse in previous maps is now listed as vacant. Additionally, the post office moved from New Street to its current location on East Main Street. Courtesy of the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office.



Figure 2.7 Historical aerial photographs are useful in determining the spatial geography of a place. On this 1937 aerial photograph of the north side of Cheswold, it is possible to make out the Cheswold Cold Storage Company cannery north of town. Orchards expand north and west of Cheswold. Courtesy of Delaware DataMIL.

Chapter 3

A WEALTH OF INFORMATION: EDUCATION IN CHESWOLD

One of the most iconic historical images of rural America is the schoolhouse. A common feature of the Delaware landscape, schoolhouses were historically found in all of the state's small towns. Typically one-room in plan, the rural schoolhouse was a physical marker of local autonomy. Constructed, maintained and funded locally, schools represented a measure of the value a community placed on education. In 1913, when Delaware's school system was at its most diffuse, there were 290 rural, 47 incorporated (town), and 87 non-white, minority school districts across the state.⁵⁶

During this period, according to evidence in the documentary record, nine schools in eight districts served the Cheswold vicinity (Figure 3.3). At present, the only physical indication of any school near Cheswold is a street sign. South of town, School Lane parallels Main Street, running perpendicular to Commerce Street. Although not apparent to the casual observer, in town, one schoolhouse actually does survive. Built in 1906, the former Cheswold School District 83 (hereafter SD 83) schoolhouse presently serves as the Cheswold Volunteer Fire Company station (Figure 3.1). The fire company purchased the abandoned schoolhouse in 1951, after SD 83 consolidated into the Smyrna and Capital Special School Districts. Multiple

⁵⁶ Schools in the city of Wilmington operated separately from the rural school system.

additions and renovations have changed the appearance of the school building.⁵⁷ In 2006, the station house appears as a modern building (Figure 3.2). To study a building that has undergone such changes, it is necessary to take an archeological approach, reading it stratographically and developing its significance through documentary research. In the absence of physical evidence elsewhere in Cheswold, understanding education begins with the documentary record.

The arrangement of evidence in the educational record inverts the problem of the previous chapter. The history of activities related to the railroad began with the physical infrastructure. Subject to the ever-changing needs of students and teachers, schools are a prominent form of public architecture. In many locations, school buildings remain standing - in service as originally intended or serving some other function – and can be studied for clues about their past. On the grand scale in Delaware, the availability of these buildings provides a solid foundation for developing thematically based historic contexts. However, in Cheswold, there are gross gaps in the physical evidence of education. As resources, the majority of schools do not survive. It is the documentary record that assists in the interpretation and reconstruction of the landscape of schools in and around Cheswold. The word landscape at its simplest meaning is “a collection of lands.”⁵⁸ Therefore, the term *landscape of education*, as employed in this thesis incorporates all the extant and fragmentary resources related to schooling.

⁵⁷ The fire company enlarged the east main street four-square and converted it into a firehouse. Renovations in the 1950s and 1970s further expanded the building. The only physical clue of the building’s past as a schoolhouse is a seam in the brick on the east elevation.

⁵⁸ John Brinckerhoff Jackson. “The Vernacular landscape,” 67.

Historical social conventions of segregated schooling contributed to the spatial arrangement of schools around Cheswold. Schools were designated by race as white and non-white schools. School districts with a “c” suffix were associated with the African American or, as in Cheswold, Native American communities. The resident Lenape community is linked to the minority school districts in Cheswold. The segregated school system serves as a natural organizing principle for research; schools are grouped into white and non-white categories.

Research of this landscape of education is based in the educational contexts, primary source records, and secondary histories that comprise the evidence base. In *History of Delaware*, Scharf captures the condition of each school in the state at the time of his survey. The historical bureaucratic operation of public schools in Delaware ensures a solid evidence base of primary documentation. Oversight from state and federal departments of education periodically generated comprehensive histories of the education. The unique philanthropy of Delawarean Pierre S. DuPont, and the family’s meticulous record keeping, ensures access to the public and private records of the massive overhaul of the state’s education system during the 1920s. In an effort to catalog their physical resources, the Kent County Department of Education photographed all of its schools following DuPont’s rebuilding campaign. These primary and secondary source documents direct the interpretation of the landscape of education.

A major frustration in researching Cheswold, is that the documentation of the history of education is dispersed across the state. The Historical Society of Delaware in Wilmington holds the meeting minutes of the Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People; Hagley Museum and Library in

Greenville maintains the holdings of Pierre S. DuPont's philanthropic reforms of public education in the 1920s; and the Delaware Public Archives in Dover possesses state and local records to individual school districts. Although this evidence base is quite large, it is discontinuous and contains frequent tautologies. The sporadic nature of the evidence base and the custom of keeping records in decentralized locations were problems encountered during the interpretation of Cheswold's landscape of education. Holdings of primary resources, though frequently sporadic and incomplete, make invaluable connections between the larger context and local activities. The framework of these larger contexts facilitates the development of local contexts in education throughout the state.

For much of Cheswold's history, the landscape of education reflects patterns identified throughout the state. Students walked to one-room schoolhouses from nearby farmsteads or from within the town. The amount of money a community was willing or able to contribute to its school is the framework to gauging the quality of the local school.⁵⁹ After the consolidation of the rural school system, when both minority and Caucasian students were bused to regional schools, the Lenape ("Moor") schools continued to operate.

As an institution, locally controlled education is a reflection of cultural values of the community or an investment in the preservation of a way of life. The continued investment of the Lenape community in education signifies an investment in a culturally valued way of life. The unique and significant cultural history of the

⁵⁹ Taggart, Robert. *Private Philanthropy and Public Education: Pierre S. du Pont and the Delaware Schools 1890-1940*. University of Delaware Press, Newark: 1988, 28.

Lenape community has an identity within the local historic context of education in Cheswold.

The history of education in Cheswold begins in 1835 with a small schoolhouse, constructed between Moorton and Moore's Corner.⁶⁰ Later named the Moore's Corner School, SD 10 was surveyed as part of Delaware's earliest foray into state supported public schools. In 1829, the state legislature passed the Free Schools Act.⁶¹ Authored by Willard Hall, credited as the father of Delaware's public education system, the act created Delaware's framework of locally funded, locally controlled schools. Surveyors established district boundaries along property lines and natural water features such as ditches, rivulets, and creeks.⁶² The existing boundaries of Delaware's hundreds, the state's smallest political districts, were frequently ignored.⁶³ Six years after the initial survey, the SD 10 schoolhouse was constructed in 1835. The schoolhouse was located northeast of the crossroads leading to Kenton and Seven Hickories, near the present location of the Cheswold Methodist Episcopal church (Figure 3.4).⁶⁴

Under state law and according to accepted cultural practices of the time, this school provided education for white children only. Little is known about the early

⁶⁰ The location of all the schools in the vicinity of Cheswold can be found on Figure 2.2

⁶¹ Kent County Clerk of the Peace. *Record of the Kent County School District Boundaries, 1829-1915*. Delaware Public Archives, Dover, p. 13-14.

⁶² Surveyors kept their records in a boundary book that survives at the Delaware Public Archives.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Scharf, 1127. The Cheswold M.E. church was constructed in 1892

operation of this school district, outside of an 1860 fire that destroyed the original schoolhouse.⁶⁵ The school was rebuilt west of present day Moore's Corner as a simple frame, gable-front, one-room building (Figure 3.5, 3.6).⁶⁶ This school continued to operate through the 1933-1934 school year, when it was consolidated into the Cheswold School District.⁶⁷

In 1847, two additional white school districts were surveyed in Little Creek Hundred, predating both the railroad and settlement of the town that that would become Cheswold. Nelson School District (SD 49) named for surveyor and landowner William W. Nelson, encompassed land north of the Willis Branch (now Alston Branch).⁶⁸ The district constructed a schoolhouse in 1847 just north of Little Duck Creek (now Leipsic River), approximately one mile north of Seven Hickories.⁶⁹ Housing 45 students, this original school was replaced in 1886 at a cost of \$600.⁷⁰ This second building was a one-room, one teacher school similar in appearance to the

⁶⁵ Scharf, 1127.

⁶⁶ Ibid. See also Department of Public Instruction Photographs in State Board of Education Photograph Collection, c. 1929-1959, Box 1 Folder 4, Delaware State Public Archives, Dover, accessed 27 December 2005.

⁶⁷ *Educational Directory of the State of Delaware*. Department of Public Instruction, 1934. At the Delaware State Public Archives, Dover.

⁶⁸ Kent County Clerk of the Peace. *Record of the Kent County School District Boundaries, 1829-1915*, p. 56.

⁶⁹ Scharf, 1127.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

SD 10 schoolhouse. The district ceased operations prior to the 1918-1919 school year.⁷¹ The school no longer stands.

School District 51 was surveyed in late March 1847 and encompassed lands south and east of what would become Cheswold.⁷² Taxpayers in the district funded the construction of a schoolhouse at Denny's Cross Roads, located north of Fork Branch and just east of present day US 13 (Figure 3.7). Known as Denny's School District, in 1886 the school housed 34 students.⁷³ Despite the close proximity of the schoolhouse to Cheswold, this district operated independent from the community. State educational directories indicate that no teachers or administrators involved with the Denny's School lived in Cheswold.⁷⁴ Judging by the school district boundary lines on historic maps, it is possible that children living on farms south and east of Cheswold attended Denny's School.

In researching the history of public education in Delaware, the philanthropy of Pierre S. DuPont plays a unique role. During the 1920's, DuPont invested millions of his fortune in cataloguing, studying, rebuilding, and reforming Delaware's public schools. An ancillary product of his efforts is the wealth of documentation of the schools system at a historical moment during which it was extremely fragmented. The Denny's School District was the recipient of a one room

⁷¹ *Educational Directory of the State of Delaware*, 1919.

⁷² Kent County Clerk of the Peace. Record of the Kent County School District Boundaries, 1829-1915, p. 59

⁷³ Scharf, 1120.

⁷⁴ *Educational Directory of the State of Delaware*, 1914-1964.

“DuPont School” during the 1920s. The district continued to operate through the 1950s, when it was consolidated into Dover’s Capital School District.

Carved out of the Leipsic School District (SD 11), SD 83, later to become the Cheswold School District, was surveyed in 1859.⁷⁵ The new district encompassed the land directly surrounding the fledgling town then named Moorton. The original schoolhouse was located at Hammville, northeast of Moorton and east of present-day US 13. This crossroads community consisted of a small gathering of houses near the Bethel Church (no longer standing). An 1872 insurance policy with Kent County Mutual valued the 20 feet by 26 feet frame schoolhouse at \$500.⁷⁶ During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Moorton grew into a small center of rural commerce. Gauging by letters written to the *Smyrna Times* in 1887, there was considerable community discussion in favor of relocating the schoolhouse to Moorton.⁷⁷ It was not until 1889 that the residents garnered enough clout to move the schoolhouse to recently renamed Cheswold. Due to the absence of physical and documentary evidence, the exact location of the original schoolhouse is unknown. During the first year, four teachers instructed 83 students.⁷⁸ The original schoolhouse in Cheswold was replaced in 1906 by a two-story, four-classroom four-square. The

⁷⁵ *Record of the Kent County School District Boundaries, 1829-1915*, p. 123.

⁷⁶ Kent County Mutual Insurance Company. “Application of the Commissioners of School District House No. 83.” Delaware State Public Archives, Dover.

⁷⁷ “Moorton Public Schools.” in *Smyrna Times*. 27 April 1887. Microfilm, Microfilm, Delaware State Public Archives: Dover.

⁷⁸ Scharf, 1120.

new concrete block and asbestos tile school was located on North Main Street, east of the railroad tracks and away from the town's residential core.

Amidst a rural landscape dominated by one-room schools, the Cheswold schoolhouse was the only multiple-teacher, multiple-room school for white children between Dover, Leipsic and Smyrna.⁷⁹ Cheswold residents sent their children to the grade one through six school through 1943.⁸⁰ In a trend common throughout the state, parents seeking to educate their children beyond primary school sent them to live with relatives in Smyrna or Dover. Offering grades one through four, the school continued to operate through the 1948-1949 school year⁸¹ After the 1948-1949 school year, the Cheswold School District was consolidated into the Smyrna and Capital Special School Districts. The school was purchased by the Cheswold Volunteer Fire Company in 1951. Today the building serves as a fire station.

The population density of Indians in and around Cheswold was significant enough to support the operation of four minority school districts. Minority districts are identified in official records with the suffix “-c.” A 1925 study conducted by Richard Watson Cooper and Herman Cooper, and funded by Pierre S. DuPont's reform initiatives, placed Cheswold amidst the highest concentration of minority school districts in Kent County. However, school district records indicate no African-American schools operated in the Cheswold area. Districts believed to specifically

⁷⁹ “Rural School Consolidation 1919-1920” Memo in Longwood Manuscripts of Pierre S. DuPont, Hagley Museum and Library (Group 10 Series A, File 712-28)

⁸⁰ *Educational Directory of the State of Delaware*, 1914-1943.

⁸¹ *Educational Directory of the State of Delaware*, 1944-1949.

serve the African American community were located away from Cheswold, situated around the nearby towns of Kenton and Leipsic. The minority schools closer to Cheswold, SD 140-c (Mount Friendship), SD 143A-c and SD 143B-c (Moore's Corner and Cheswold), and SD-145-c (Fork Branch/DuPont Station), are identified as "Moor" schools in historical documents.⁸² The existence of this self-identifying remnant Indian population is significant. The community independently maintained their own schools, separate from the dominant white and African American populations.

The earliest reference to a *Moor* school appears in Scharf's *History of Delaware*. "In 1877, Hon. Charles Brown, of Dover, gave [the Moors] ground and wood for a building near Moore's Corner, and since that time, they have maintained a school there at their own expense."⁸³ As depicted in historic photographs, this school, SD 143-c, was similar in appearance to the nearby SD 10 (Figure 3.8).⁸⁴ The next known reference to this school is through the surviving financial accounts for School District 143-c.⁸⁵ The account book chronicles the expenditures and income for the district between 1899 and 1918. Under the structure of Delaware's education laws, prior to 1919 school districts were funded by the communities they served and

⁸² At present, it is not known if African-Americans living in Cheswold attended *Moor* schools.

⁸³ Scharf, 1124.

⁸⁴ The boundaries of minority school districts were not published on historic maps, or recorded in the surviving records.

⁸⁵ Historically, a 'c' suffix, representing the term "colored", indicated a school district attended by non-white, minority students. Indians and African Americans were lumped together as "c."

supplemented by a state dividend. In comparison to the accounts of SD 10, during the same period, SD 143-c actually received a greater disbursement from the state.⁸⁶ The reason for this disparity is unknown, though for a period of time, records indicate that SD 143-c operated two schoolhouses.

In 1906, the amount of money distributed from the state to SD 143-c doubled. This increase supports the potential construction of a second school in the district, located south of town.⁸⁷ Sixteen years later, in 1922, the district received a consolidated two-room, two teacher school funded by the education reforms of Pierre S. DuPont (Figure 3.9). The school was located near the second SD-143-c school, just south of the residential core in Cheswold, on unincorporated land at the end of C Street/Saulsbury Road.⁸⁸

Geographically, the school was situated in close proximity to a neighborhood referred to by locals as the “Four Hundred”.⁸⁹ This neighborhood is known for its cultural ties to the Lenape people. Consistently supporting two teachers, the school provided education in grades one through eight.⁹⁰ SD 143-c operated

⁸⁶ *School District # 143c, Account Book 1898-1918*. Department of Public Instruction Records, Delaware State Public Archives, Dover.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ “Site for Colored School (Moorish) At Cheswold,” a memo among Longwood Manuscripts of Pierre S. DuPont, Hagley Museum and Library (Group 10 Series A, File 712.17).

⁸⁹ There is currently no documentary research to substantiate cultural or social ties between the Lenape people and this neighborhood. However, in an informal interview, tribal member Denny Coker suggested cultural connections.

⁹⁰ *Educational Directory of the State of Delaware, 1914-1964*

through the 1963-1964 school year, long after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In defiance of segregation practices intended to separate and integration intended to homogenize, the Lenape school in Cheswold was an emblem of cultural and community identity. After the school closed, the Dover Special School District deeded the school to the town of Cheswold in March 1966.⁹¹ The building has since been demolished and today the lot is vacant (Figure 3.10).

Prior to the Civil War, in Delaware, other than in the city of Wilmington, there existed only seven schools for African-Americans.⁹² A group of prominent, socially conscious white citizens of Delaware organized the Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People in 1866. This private civic organization initially funded the construction of minority schools throughout the state and subsequently offered financial support for teacher's salaries after communities organized their own schools. Two Moral Improvement Association schools were located in the Cheswold vicinity. These schools served the Lenape community.

The Fork Branch or DuPont Station School, so named for the stop on the Delaware Railroad in close proximity to a mill owned by Charles I. DuPont, SD 145-c was located on McKee Road adjacent to the Little Union Church. This school has its oAs early as 1877, a school funded by the Delaware Association for the Moral

⁹¹ "Closed School Files of the State Board of Education." Folder in the Records of the Department of Public Instruction, Delaware State Public Archives, Dover.

⁹² Cooper, Richard Watson and Herman Cooper. *Negro School Attendance in Delaware: A Report to the State Board of Education of Delaware*. Bureau of Education: Service Citizens of Delaware, University of Delaware, Newark, 1925.

Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People was operating in the Fork Branch community.⁹³

Although the construction date is not known, in 1877, the Moral Improvement Society school at Fork Branch conducted classes for 55 students over a term of 2 ¾ months.⁹⁴ Terms at white schools were considerably longer.⁹⁵ Like the schools in SD 10, 49, 51 and 143-c, the original SD 145-c schoolhouse was a small, gable-front, frame building on the south side of McKee Road.⁹⁶ In 1921, this school building was replaced with a DuPont-funded one-room schoolhouse, located directly across the street (Figure 3.11).⁹⁷ Though Little Union Church remains standing, both schools have been demolished. Surnames of teachers and trustees associated with this school correspond to surnames identified by Ned Heite as belonging to Native American remnant groups.⁹⁸

⁹³ Minutes, 1866-1876, Delaware Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People of the State. Collection of the Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington.

⁹⁴ Minutes, 1866-1876, Delaware Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People of the State. Collection of the Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Department of Public Instruction Photographs in State Board of Education Photograph Collection, c. 1929-1959, Box 1 Folder 4, Delaware State Public Archives, Dover, accessed 27 December 2005.

⁹⁷ “Site for Colored School (Moorish) At DuPont,” a memo among Longwood Manuscripts of Pierre S. DuPont, Hagley Museum and Library (Group 10 Series A, File 712.17).

⁹⁸ This association was discovered by the author. A spreadsheet of names can be found in a research file at the DESHPO.

The Mt. Friendship School (SD 140-c) was located in Kenton Hundred, north of Cheswold. This school also had nineteenth century origins with the Moral Improvement Society.⁹⁹ The school operated as early as 1877, with 74 students enrolled for a six month term.¹⁰⁰ This two-story vernacular frame school is depicted in an undated photograph from the State Board of Education collection (Figure 3.12). The larger size of this original school is likely related to the demand for education in the local community.

The Mt. Friendship community received a one-room DuPont schoolhouse in 1921.¹⁰¹ This school continued to operate through 1965. After closing, the school was sold at public auction April 30, 1966.¹⁰² School Districts 140 and 143, the “-c” suffix was dropped after the 1957-58 school year, were the last two minority school districts to close in Kent County and two of the last four, along with Milton and Ross Point in Sussex County, to close in the state.¹⁰³

Evidence problems have hindered research into the history of Cheswold. Architectural historians traditionally look first to physical resources, however, in

⁹⁹ *Minutes, 1866-1876, Delaware Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People of the State.*

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ A memo among Pierre S. DuPont’s papers entitled “Forecast” details the overall timeline and cost of the construction of 40 colored schools between October 1921 and September 1922. “Forecast” Longwood Manuscripts of Pierre S. DuPont, Hagley Museum and Library (Group 10 Series A, File 712.17)

¹⁰² “Closed School Files of the State Board of Education.”

¹⁰³ Page, Brian. “National Register Nomination: Milton School #196C, CRS S-9014”. State Historic Preservation Office, Dover.

Cheswold, no school buildings survive in a recognizable condition. Turning to documentary records, these sources were fraught with missing data and incomplete information. In the absence of a complete local timeline of education, secondary histories and broader contexts provided the appropriate underpinning to explain local activities. The local context of education around Cheswold relied upon the study of settlement patterns and historical documents to interpret activities and reconstruct a local geography of schoolhouses.

The study of schoolhouses reveals a flexible geographic boundary for determining the hinterland. The schools discussed represent those in the immediate vicinity of town. However, when split into minority and Caucasian school districts, a separate geography emerges. The Cheswold School District (SD-83) possessed the largest schoolhouse among a landscape crowded with one room schoolhouses. The multi-room school served as an epicenter for the local hinterland's cultural practice of investing in education. Flying in the face of school consolidation and desegregation, the Lenape community's continued investment in local education can be viewed as a bulwark of self identification as well as an extension of local culture. The understanding and interpretation of the history of the individual schools and collective landscape of education draws upon secondary histories and broader contexts of education. These broad patterns contextualize the experience of education in Cheswold, animating a landscape of schoolhouses plucked from the documentary record. The schoolhouses once served as physical representations of a local investment in education, illustrating the geographic and cultural hinterland of Cheswold.



Figure 3.1 The School District 83 schoolhouse in a 1926 photograph. Located on east Main Street in Cheswold, the building was the largest schoolhouse between Smyrna, Leipsic and Dover prior to consolidation. Photograph courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives.



Figure 3.2 The station house of the Cheswold Volunteer Fire Company. The rear section of this building, the portion clad with stucco, was previously the SD 83 schoolhouse (Figure 3.1). Photograph by the author, 2005.

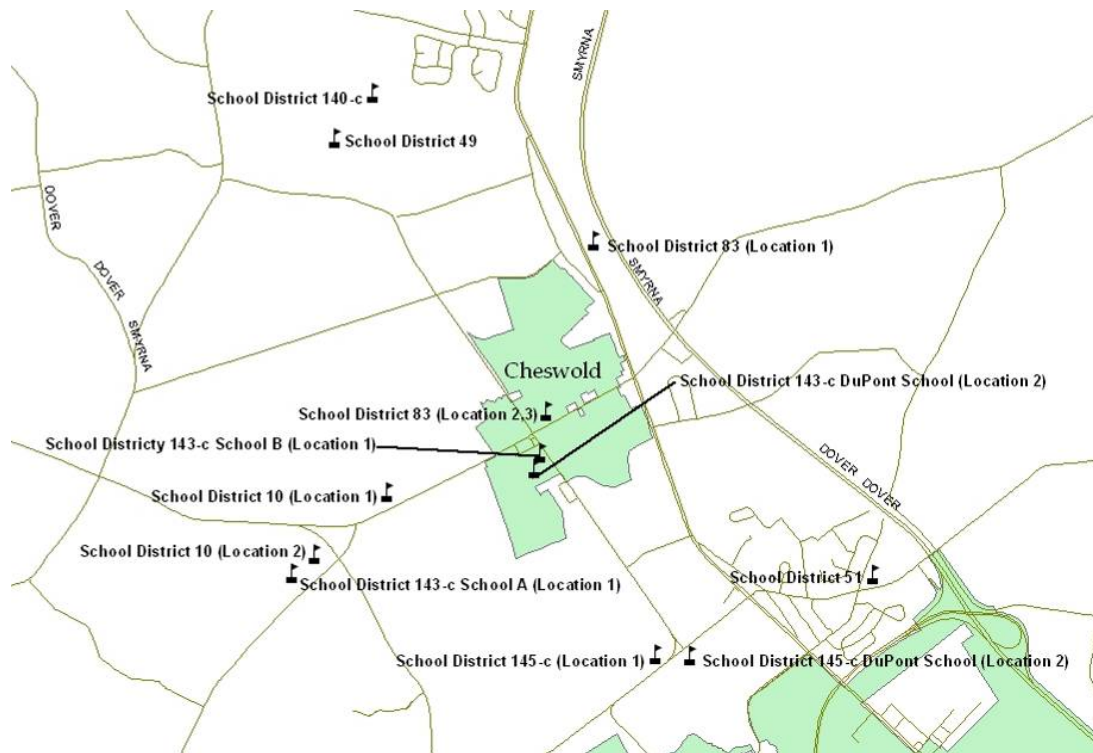


Figure 3.3 Map depicting the historical locations of rural schoolhouses in and around Cheswold. Map generated using GIS.

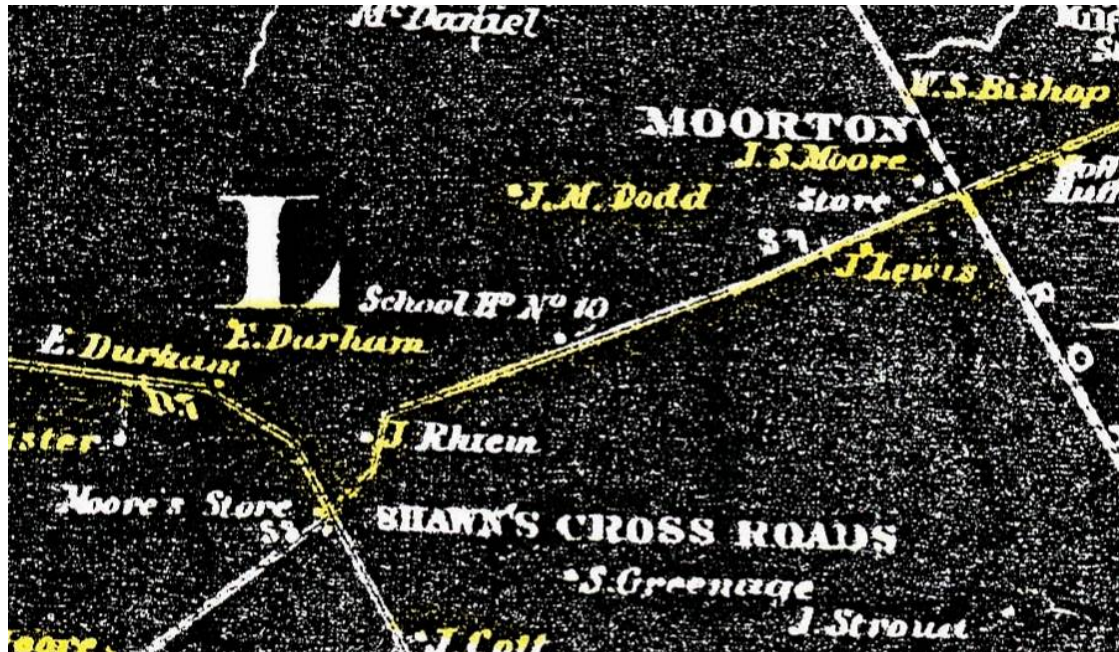


Figure 3.4 The 1859 Byles Map of Kent County indicates the original location of the School District 10 schoolhouse, east of Shawn's Cross Roads (now referred to as Moore's Corner) Courtesy of the Center for Historic Architecture and Design, University of Delaware.



Figure 3.6 The second School District 10 (Moore's Corner) schoolhouse in a 1926 photograph of the Kent County Department of Education. The school looks remarkably similar to the nearby minority School District 143-c (Figure 3.9). Photograph courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives.



Figure 3.7 The old School District 51 (Denney's School District) schoolhouse was located at a crossroads southeast of Cheswold. Research shows that no teachers lived in Cheswold, though children living in the town's southeastern hinterland would have been educated at the SD 51 schoolhouse. Photograph dated November 11, 1932 courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives.



Figure 3.8 The School District 143-c (Cheswold colored school district) schoolhouse was located west of Moore's Corner. Abandoned after the 1922 construction of the DuPont schoolhouse in Cheswold, unverifiable accounts indicate the building was adopted for use in the nearby Amish community. Photograph courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives.



Figure 3.9 The School District 143-c “DuPont” schoolhouse in a Kent County Department of Education Photograph dated December 19, 1922. Financed by the philanthropy of Pierre S. DuPont, this two room schoolhouse housed classes for Cheswold’s Indian population through 1964. Situated on School Lane near Commerce Street, the building was demolished at an unknown date. Photograph courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives.



Figure 3.10 The historical location of the School District 143-c “DuPont” schoolhouse as it currently appears. Photograph by the author, 2006.

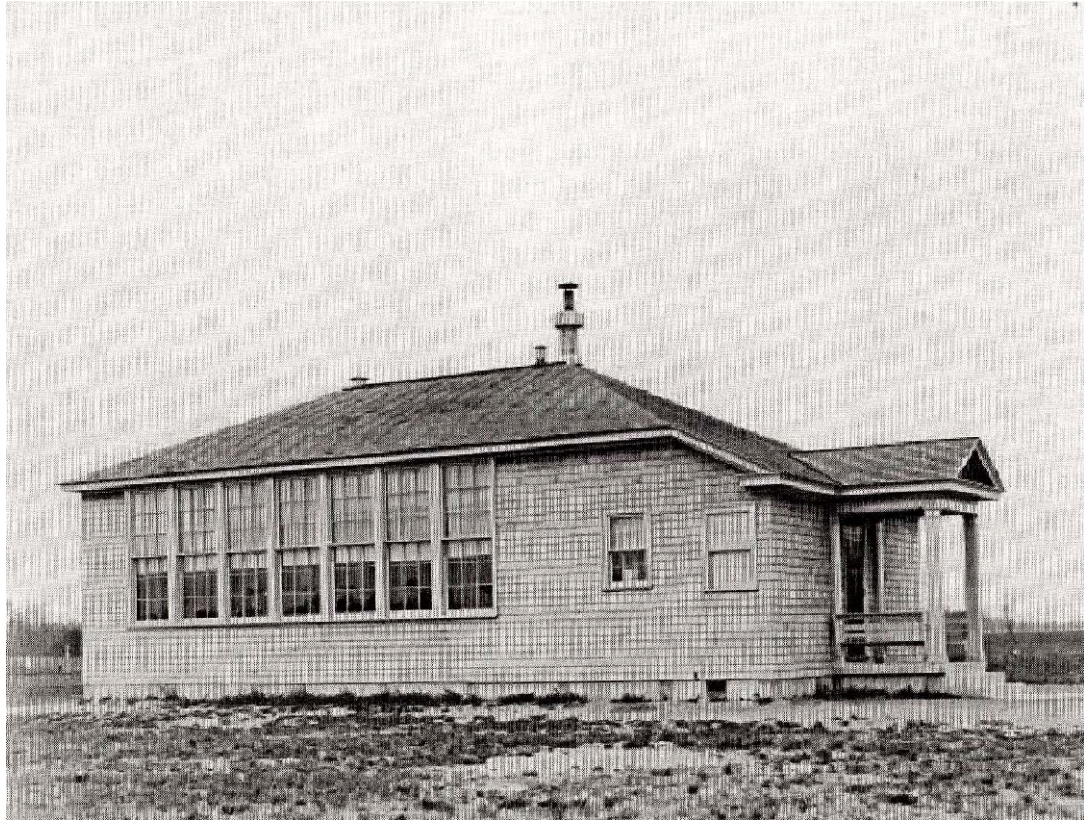


Figure 3.11 The School District 145-c (Fork Branch) one room “DuPont” schoolhouse, constructed in 1921. Among other intended improvements, schoolhouses of this type were designed to increase the quality and amount of natural light students received in the classroom. This schoolhouse replaced an older one-room building directly across the street. Photograph courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives.



Figure 3.12 The old School District 140-c (Mount Friendship) schoolhouse. The reason for the unconventional appearance of the school is unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Delaware Public Archives.

Chapter 4

UNDERSTANDING THE TOWN-HINTERLAND RELATIONSHIP: AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN THE CHESWOLD VICINITY, 1850-1880

The previous two chapters constructed a methodological framework for the research of Delaware's small towns by engaging the misconception that a lack of documentary and/or physical evidence hinders the advancement of research. This chapter will engage an evidence problem associated with geography. By their very definition, vernacular places suffer from a lack of previous study or from a paucity of direct, local sources of information. The ability to cull and emphasize relevant, local information from existing – frequently broad-stroke – research is a valuable tool. As the process of research advances, the next level of context research moves inside the broader patterns to create micro-geographic contexts.

The historic context framework has furthered the understanding of county- and state-wide agricultural patterns. Understanding the agricultural activities in the Cheswold hinterland, as well as the relationship between the hinterland and town, during the mid-nineteenth century will be developed through the interpretation and application of relevant information from both geographically broad research and locally specific data.

In response to the arrival of the Delaware Railroad, agricultural activities in Cheswold evolved from an emphasis on subsistence farming to an increasingly external, market-driven capitalist system. The evidence for this progression is found in extant context studies on Kent County agriculture, as well as papers and articles

discussing the rise and fall of the peach trade. Farmers affect the landscape through a constellation of activities that includes cultivating crops, harvesting natural resources, rearing livestock, and constructing buildings that meet their agricultural and domestic needs. These activities have entered the historical record through the continuous practice of farming activities, the efforts of preservationists and survival of both material and/or documentary evidence. The evolution of farming practices involves a flexible combination of capital, market access, soil quality, labor availability, and technological innovation.¹⁰⁴ Historic contexts pull from surviving documentary and physical evidence to measure the significance of these variables, convenient in constructing and interpreting broad agricultural patterns.

In 1850, the U.S. Census documented the agricultural production of the nation's farms. Government surveyors literally walked from farm to farm to collect information. Many of the names seen on agricultural census schedules also appear on historic maps. As a result, it is possible to trace micro-geographic agricultural patterns when names on agricultural schedules are matched with names appearing on historic maps. This comparison is a valuable diagnostic tool in the study of small towns that may have no other historical reference point aside from the decennial census.

In rural Little Creek Hundred, Kent County, Delaware, the 1850 agricultural census schedule captures the local agricultural economy at the historical moment just prior to the 1856 opening of the Delaware Railroad, the same year Cheswold was settled. In 1984, Jack Michel and a group of University of Delaware

¹⁰⁴ Michel, Jack. *A Typology of Delaware Farms, 1850*. Paper delivered at the Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, 1984, 3.

graduate students conducted a quantitative study of Delaware farms based upon a random sampling of the 1850 census, including farms in Little Creek Hundred. This study broadly organized agricultural patterns in Delaware into northern and southern geographic regions. Farmers in each region turned the advantages of their natural surroundings into capital resources.

Northern farms tended to be continuous, more intensively and efficiently cultivated, while southern farms placed greater emphasis on animal husbandry and were more sporadic with large tracts of unimproved land.¹⁰⁵ Farmers in northern Delaware were the states wealthiest and maintained the highest land values. These farmers took advantage of their proximity to railroad lines and major northeast markets. Participating in the agricultural scientific revolution added value to these farms. Fields were fertilized with lime and guano and farmers invested labor-saving machinery that increased yields of a diverse array of crops, including corn, oats, wheat, and hay.¹⁰⁶

In comparison, farms in southern Delaware adhered to traditional, more extensive agricultural practices. Livestock were typically not penned and allowed to forage for food. Farmers here almost exclusively planted corn, using older, less efficient methods. Produce from southern Delaware shipped to markets such as Wilmington, Philadelphia and Baltimore via water transportation routes.¹⁰⁷ The sandy or swampy soils in many areas of southern Delaware plagued farmers. Without an economically feasible method to transport fertilizer, farmers had few methods at

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 6.

their disposal to improve the land.¹⁰⁸ As a result, of little capital available for investment and no direct overland access to large markets, land values were low.¹⁰⁹ As can be expected, the characteristics of Delaware's central farms fall somewhere between the northern and southern counterparts.

In 1850, Little Creek Hundred spanned the width of Delaware. Situated in north-central Kent County, the Leipsic River separated Little Creek Hundred from Duck Creek Hundred, to the north. The Little Creek comprised the southern boundary between Little Creek Hundred and St. Jones Hundred. Here the peninsular soils had been worked for more than one hundred years. As in northern and southern regions of the state, the farms in this region reflected the most efficient use of lands.¹¹⁰ Farms in this area were typically 150 acres, of which 100 acres were improved, approximating the statewide average.¹¹¹ Farmers participated first in subsistence farming practices geared towards sustaining the family and second in the small-scale market production of wheat, butter, and livestock.¹¹² The quality of soil in Kent County varies widely. A vast network of creeks crisscrosses Kent County, depositing nutrients in places and carrying them away from others.¹¹³ This produces an agricultural landscape that can

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ De Cunzo, Lu Ann and Ann Marie Garcia. *Historic Context: Archaeology of Agriculture and Rural Life, New Castle and Kent Counties, Delaware, 1830-1940*. Newark, DE: Center for Archaeological Research, University of Delaware, 1992, 38.

¹¹⁰ Michel, 37.

¹¹¹ De Cunzo and Garcia, *Archaeology of Agriculture*, 76.

¹¹² Ibid., 126.

¹¹³ Ibid., 131.

vary greatly in quality across very small distances. The inconsistency adds difficulty to the interpretation and reduction of the broad patterns in Kent County agriculture into the geographic context of Cheswold. More cogent perhaps to the understanding of the evolution is a description of the agricultural condition in 1850. The following section describes the nature of agriculture in central Kent County at the middle of the nineteenth century.

Farmers in Little Creek Hundred implemented the three-field system of planted, fallow and pasture, supplemented with woodland. Planted fields yielded Indian corn in the fall and winter wheat each spring. On occasion, these staple crops were supplemented with a mixture of hay, oats, rye and potatoes.¹¹⁴ Still other farmers kept bees or cultivated small patches of berries or beans. Yields of these crops varied and were dependant upon the amount of capital a farmer invested in mechanized equipment. At this time, farmers in Kent County generally invested less than \$25 in agricultural implements such as shovels, hoes, forks, scythes and grindstones.¹¹⁵ Horse-drawn cultivators common in New Castle County did not migrate widely into Kent County until the arrival of the railroad in the late 1850s, when they were more easily transported.

In the poorer regions of Kent County, farmers continued to work with oxen, a source of labor that was cheaper and slower but more reliable.¹¹⁶ While oxen could survive on corn and fodder, horses required a diet at least partly comprised of

¹¹⁴ Michel 39. These crops are listed in descending order according to the proliferation of their yield.

¹¹⁵ Hancock. "Agriculture in Delaware," 375.

¹¹⁶ Michel 20.

wheat.¹¹⁷ Horses worked faster, but were more expensive and required more and higher quality food. Horses required the dedication of greater financial and physical resources from farmers.¹¹⁸ Though not all farms kept horses, farms on which wheat was grown typically had horses. Still other farmers kept both horses and oxen, granting work duties to the oxen, leaving horses for general riding or for moving crops.¹¹⁹

In addition to draught animals, approximately one-third of Kent County farmers kept one or two dairy cattle and between three and five beef cattle.¹²⁰ Census schedules indicate that dairy cows produced around a pound of butter per week. This is perhaps enough to support a family, with a small surplus available for bartering. Beef cattle were treated in much the same way, slaughtered, salted and stored for personal consumption, barter or payment.¹²¹ Rather than dairying or raising cattle, farmers in central Kent County concentrated on cheaper livestock, such as pigs and sheep.¹²²

The 1856 southward extension of the Delaware Railroad from New Castle to Dover - and eventually Seaford - had a profound impact on agriculture in the state. For the first time, downstate farmers had swift access to Wilmington, with frequent

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹²¹ De Cunzo, *Historical Archaeology of Delaware*, 64-65.

¹²² Ibid., 131.

connections to other larger urban markets of the northeast.¹²³ The immediate effect of the railroad was a reorganization of the landscape and distribution and collection of goods. This change is witnessed in the establishment of towns up and down the railroad line. As discussed in Chapter 2, in Little Creek Hundred the railroad was the primary impetus behind the settlement of Moorton in central Little Creek Hundred. Reorganizing the landscape, the railroad brought the first form of mechanized overland transportation to the rural hinterlands. A medium to provide for a steady influx of technological farming equipment, trains brought central Kent County farmers access to raw materials such as fertilizer, coal, and a larger pool of laborers.¹²⁴ In response to the new machine in their garden, farmers in Little Creek Hundred began the slow shift of realigning their economic activities from previously established crossroads settlements to the new, railroad town of Moorton.

As economic and logistical patterns shifted, farmers responded by shifting into more intensive agricultural practices by placing a greater emphasis on crops specifically driven by market production. Agricultural census returns for the year 1860 support this trend.¹²⁵ Access to markets served as a change agent for farmers in Little Creek Hundred to move away from subsistence farming. Farmers continued to grow more corn and wheat than any other staple, but began supplementing their field crops with orchard fruits.¹²⁶ Although peaches existed in Delaware as early as 1724

¹²³ Ibid., 102.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Michel 42-43.

¹²⁶ De Cunzo and Garcia. *Archaeology of Agriculture*, 134.

and Kent County as early as 1807, these isolated orchards did not register any known economic impact.¹²⁷ The arrival of the railroad facilitated the commercial rise of the peach in Kent County.

Isaac Reeves planted the first peach orchard in Delaware specifically intended for exporting the crop to market in 1832. Though Reeves previously kept a large orchard in New Jersey, it was the small orchard planted near Delaware City that had a significant impact on the agricultural economy of Delaware.¹²⁸ Reeves' orchard was the forbearer of the 1835 orchard plantings of Major Philip Reybold.¹²⁹ Reybold, Reeves and their contemporary Jacob Ridgeway were Delaware's earliest investors in peaches as a market crop. Within ten years the Reybold family owned 78,000 trees, exporting large crops to Philadelphia and New York.¹³⁰ However, the grandeur that the peach trade brought to New Castle County was short-lived.

The Delaware City peach crop was devastated in 1856 by the "yellows," a contagious crop disease known to orchard planters even in the eighteenth century.¹³¹ A highly contagious fungus, the "yellows" causes the stunting of trees and fruit and ultimately the death of the crop. Farmers tried various treatments, including quarantine and burning infected trees, to rid their orchards of the hated disease. The

¹²⁷ Hancock, Harold B. "The Rise of the Delaware Peach Industry, 1832-1870." Paper delivered 1932, copied 1939. Research File "Peach" of Agricultural Museum of Delaware, Dover, 9.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹³⁰ De Cunzo, *Historical Archeology of Delaware*, 130.

¹³¹ Hancock, Harold B. "The Rise of the Delaware Peach Industry," 10.

yellows continued to affect yields in New Castle County for the next several seasons.¹³² To escape the scourge, some farmers took advantage of the new railroad line and migrated orchard crops to holdings further south in the state. The downstate movement of the peach industry had begun.

Peach orchards existed independently near the towns of Leipsic, Dover and Smyrna in Kent County as early as 1840.¹³³ However, these crops were small and limited to locations near the coast. Peaches are delicate and subject to the bruising that resulted when the crop was transported by wagon over rutted dirt roads. Therefore, prior to the railroad, peach crops could not be shipped long distances overland. Without a southern rail connection, crops were shipped north by water. In 1848 the port of Dona, five miles northeast of Dover, shipped a peach crop of 125,000 baskets.¹³⁴ Gross receipts for orchard products tabulated in the 1850 agricultural census indicate that New Castle County out-produced Kent County by 300 percent, \$29,659 to \$9,897.¹³⁵

With the arrival of the railroad, peach orchards were able to spread inland away from the coast. The migration of market-crop peaches into Little Creek Hundred signified a paradigmatic shift in local agricultural practices. Farmers began cultivating a crop whose profitability was incumbent upon access to the railroad, an entity controlled, at least in part, by outside interests. Speed to market was another

¹³² Ibid., 29.

¹³³ Ibid., 20.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 21. Historians believe this number to be grossly inflated.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 22.

significant factor in the economic viability of peach farming.¹³⁶ Fresh peaches were a fragile crop and the longer they took to transport to market, the more the crop atrophied from bruising and spoilage.¹³⁷ Though the southernmost orchards in Delaware continued to ship by water, the ascendance of the peach crop contributed to the shift in transportation routes in Delaware.

In 1857, the Delaware Railroad shipped 27,882 baskets of peaches, a number that increased to 225,697 by 1862, and an astounding 736,494 baskets in 1865.¹³⁸ Raising the profile of climatological shortcomings, frosts late in the spring of 1866 severely reduced the annual yield. The industry, a noteworthy change in terminology, recovered the following year, when more than 1,000,000 baskets were shipped over the Delaware Railroad.¹³⁹ In 1867, shipments by rail averaged 100 cars per day during the height of peach season, from late July through mid September. Farmers in the area of Moorton contributed more than 50,000 baskets of peaches to this bumper crop.¹⁴⁰

After the grand successes of 1867, late season frosts again ruined the 1868 crop. Just 12,267 baskets shipped by rail across the whole state. The crop was up

¹³⁶ Scharf, 443.

¹³⁷ This problem was a contributing element to the development and spread of the canning industry in Delaware during the coming decades. For more on the canning industry see

¹³⁸ Michel, 34.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 35.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 36.

again in 1869, estimated at nearly 2,000,000 baskets.¹⁴¹ The pattern of boom and bust cycle in peaches is evident.

With the rapid expansion of the industry, farmers guarded against the boom and bust cycle by incorporating larger orchards into their farms, while others dedicated their entire lands to orchard crops. Subsequently, the livelihood of fruit farmers became individually dependent upon the success of their peach crop. A rail accident, late season freeze, or a bout with any number of fungi could send farmers already teetering on narrow profit margins into economic ruin.

Between Kenton and Moorton, Henry Gerker ran what may have been the largest peach orchard in the state. Gerker was a Philadelphia glue and whip manufacturer who first purchased land in Little Creek Hundred in 1852. He planted an orchard that grew so large by 1870, that it was the subject of a Harper's New Monthly Magazine article. The article provides an intricate description of the landscape and condition of the agricultural landscape of a peach farm. Gerker's trees were harvested using eleven wagons capable of holding 90-110 baskets each. Pulled by four horses or mules, each wagon was accompanied by three African American workers.¹⁴² The article also describes a ramshackle distillery situated on the property. Situated in close proximity to the Kenton station on the Delaware Railroad, Gerker was able to ship fresh and processed peaches from his farm. Although the Gerker orchard represents the extreme rather than the norm, it serves as a relevant local

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 37.

¹⁴² "Among the Peaches," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. No. CCXLVI, Vol. XLI, September 1870, 516. "Peach" Research File at Agricultural Museum of Delaware, Dover.

example of the significant impact the statewide trend of peach cultivation had on the agricultural landscape of Little Creek Hundred.

The shift from subsistence farming to developing a capitalist agricultural economy was gradual. Landowners, tenants, farm hands, laborers and a small number of slaves comprised a diverse and complex social fabric of Little Creek Hundred. Within social networks, variables of geographic location, financial status, available skill sets, cultural tradition, race, and personal aesthetics further complicate an uneven transition into a capitalist economy. The absence of evidence creates a great difficulty in parsing out the multidimensional agricultural networks. Census and demographic records provide a reliable access point for interpreting historical change in a vernacular place.

Between 1840 and 1880, decennial agricultural census schedules documented the condition of farmers. This section raises the profile of two farmers near Cheswold during the agricultural evolution. In 1850, thirty-seven year-old farmer James M. Dodd owned and operated a 152-acre farm in the center of Little Creek Hundred. Dodd, his second wife Martha (42), daughter Mariam or Marion (4), and farm hand James H. Person (16, Caucasian), occupied the farm located midway between Seven Hickories and Keith's Cross Roads.¹⁴³ The farmstead was situated just north of Kent County School House No. 10 on the Kenton-Leipsic Road, just northwest of present day Cheswold. At the time of the 1850 agricultural census, the farm consisted of 52 improved acres, which Dodd valued at \$1000. Dodd had \$25 invested in agricultural implements, a figure that was typical for the region. Dodd

¹⁴³ United States Census of Population, Kent County, 1850. Manuscript Schedules. Delaware State Archives, Dover.

kept a horse and two oxen for labor, two dairy cows for family use and one beef cattle, nine sheep, and six pigs. The land yielded 110 bushels of corn and 22 bushels of wheat, which may have been fed to the livestock.¹⁴⁴ On an average-sized farm, the amount of unimproved land and lack of a significant investment in tools identify Dodd's production as that of a subsistence operation.

Southeast of Dodd's farmstead, adjacent to the State Road (that would become the DuPont Highway in the twentieth century), Jesse Dean farmed a 15-acre parcel of land. The forty-nine year-old Dean, his wife Hester, 6 daughters, and thirteen year-old son Enoch occupied the small farm. Identified as a laborer on the 1850 census manuscripts, Dean likely worked on other farms and tended to his own land in his spare time. Although Dean was assessed real estate taxes through his death in 1869, he may have additionally tenanted another property.¹⁴⁵ His father, Jesse Dean, Sr. was known to have owned a small share of land, possibly the same farm, and tenant other lands.¹⁴⁶

Dean was part of a trend in minority land ownership unique to Little Creek Hundred. In 1860, 27 African-Americans owned 28 pieces of property in Little Creek Hundred. These landowners represented 20 per cent of the African-American

¹⁴⁴ Figures on Dodd's farm taken from United States Census of Agriculture, Kent County, 1850. Delaware State Archives, Dover.

¹⁴⁵ *Kent County Tax Assessments*, Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Record Group 3535.000, Rolls 30-36.

¹⁴⁶ Siders, Rebecca J., et al. *Agricultural Tenancy in Central Delaware, 1700-1900+/-: A Historic Context*. Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware, 1991, 5, 51.

population.¹⁴⁷ However, including Dean among the population of African-Americans is the subject of historical conjecture. Dean is identified on census returns as a mulatto. Late historian Ned Heite put forth the idea that Dean may have been Lenape Indian.¹⁴⁸ This theory is based upon extensive research into the lineage of members of the reformed Lenape tribe that exists near Cheswold. In the nineteenth century, census administrators could only identify persons as Black (B), Mulatto (M) or Caucasian (no marking). It was not possible to list a person as an Indian. Recent scholarly interpretations of racial labels maintain that these classifications were subject to the social predilections and biases of the census taker.¹⁴⁹ In 1850, the “Assistant Marshall” and census administrator of Little Creek Hundred was William Collins, a Caucasian local. There is no way of knowing whether he was cognizant of Dean’s complex ethno-history.

In 1850, Dean valued the holdings of his small farm at \$350 and approximated his agricultural tools to be worth \$20. On 12 improved acres, Dean kept three draught animals: one horse and two oxen, two dairy cows, and five pigs. The small farm yielded 120 bushels of corn and 10 bushels of wheat.¹⁵⁰ Dean produced nearly the same crop yields as James M. Dodd on 36 fewer improved acres. It is possible that Dodd dedicated only a portion of his improved land for crops. Dean also

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴⁸ Heite, Edward F. and Louise B. Heite. *Fork Branch/DuPont Station Community*. DelDOT Archaeology Series No. 37, 1985, p. 19-20.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Figures on Dean farm taken from United States Census of Agriculture, Kent County: 1850. Delaware State Archives, Dover.

may have achieved these results by owning or arranging for the use of a neighbor's cultivator. Dean's 1869 probate lists the sale of an "old Dearborn," that his son Robert purchased for \$3.50. William Williams, his neighbor, purchased a harrow (valued at 50 cents in the probate) and cultivator (valued at 2 dollars) at the estate sale for a total of 8 cents.¹⁵¹ The date when Dean purchased these items is unknown, as is the value of the implements in 1850 dollars.

Between 1850 and 1860, annual rear estate assessments for James M. Dodd range between \$810 and \$900. By comparison, Jesse Dean's annual property assessments were \$330.¹⁵² Despite the absence of a comprehensive assessment, it is likely that neither farm underwent grand changes. The 1860 agricultural census returns are a more complete measure of farming. As in the 1850 census returns, James Dodd reported an investment of \$25 in agricultural implements and 50 improved acres.¹⁵³ However, the land may not have been organized in the same manner. At 140 acres, the farm was 12-acres smaller. In the decade between census surveys, Dodd shed his team of oxen in favor of a second horse. In 1860, Dodd also kept two dairy cows, two beef cattle, and five sheep. The crop yield represents the most significant change on the Dodd farm. The staple grain harvest included 200 bushels of Indian corn, 50 bushels of wheat and seven bushels of rye. In addition to these traditional crops, Dodd also harvested seven bushels of peas, 50 bushels of potatoes,

¹⁵¹ Kent County Register of Wills, Jesse Dean Probate, Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Record Group 3545.000, Roll 60.

¹⁵² *Kent County Tax Assessments*, Delaware Public Archives, Dover, Record Group 3535.000, Rolls 30-36.

¹⁵³ Figures on Dodd's farm taken from United States Census of Agriculture, Kent County: 1860. Delaware State Archives, Dover.

104 pounds of butter and ten pounds of honey.¹⁵⁴ Placed in the context of the period, it is possible that the railroad supported the increased investment and productivity of Dodd's farmstead.

The Jesse Dean farm was not enumerated by the 1860 agricultural census schedule. However, identified as a laborer, Dean appears on the manuscript population schedules for 1860. Drawing from his listed profession, the size of his farm in 1850, and known agricultural labor patterns, it is possible Dean was tenantry another farm in the area.¹⁵⁵

Dean died in 1869, prior to the 1870 census. His probate record provides window into the condition of his farm at the time of his death. James S. Moor and Joseph Moor on catalogued Dean's estate on September 11, 1869. The estate was valued at \$73.54, with furniture comprising the most valuable possessions. In addition to the harrows and cultivator mentioned earlier, Dean also possessed an ox chain, indicating he may have had access to a team. The absence of livestock and draught animals supports the theory that Dean was a tenant farmer. The Moors valued Dean's crop of corn at \$22.50 (\$.75 per bushel at 30 bushels) and a small crop of potatoes at \$.25. The value of the estate and condition of the farmstead indicates that Dean was not wealthy. The contents of Dean's probate indicate that he was not a capital investor in the agricultural evolution. However, if Dean was indeed a tenant farmer, he contributed social capital and skill sets to the changing agricultural landscape.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ For information on tenant farming in Little Creek Hundred, see Siders, Rebecca J. et al. *Agricultural Tenancy in Central Delaware, 1700-1900+/-: A Historic Context*. Center for Historic Architecture and Engineering, University of Delaware, July 1991.

This chapter examines the agricultural activities of the geographic hinterland of Cheswold during the town's first thirty years of existence, 1850 to 1880. The variety farming practices taking place identify a diverse farming population. Fruit farming, crop farming, and animal husbandry were conducted on farms of many sizes with a variety of scientific advancements, mechanical implements, and farm laborers. Across time the farmers of the region moved from subsistence farming to an increasingly capitalist, market-driven practices. Illustrated by the experience of James Dodd and Jesse Dean, this transition was not achieved uniformly. One thing that did increase with relative equality was the importance of Cheswold as a central marketplace for farmers of every sort.

With direct access to the railroad, Cheswold became the de facto shipping point for farmers able to transport their goods to the freight depot. Similarly, as farmers came to town to ship their produce, Cheswold increasingly became a source of commercial goods and social behavior. In turn, Cheswold's capacity to provide services became greater as farmers increasingly shipped their yields over the railroad. Access to the railroad gave farmers incentive to produce larger yields. At the same time, fertilizers produced richer soils, and land values increased. Slowly specialization reorganized the agricultural landscape around Cheswold, and peaches became the fashionable - but profitable - crop. Large shipments of peaches moving from orchard to railroad depot to market strengthened the relationship between town and hinterland.

Technology, changes in land use over time, and the perennial nature of agriculture ensure the destruction of physical markers of the town-hinterland relationship from this early period in Cheswold's history. In the absence of physical

resources, research into the historical agricultural activities began with broad agricultural histories. Primary documents directed the interpretation of these patterns on a local level. The relationship between Cheswold and the hinterland mutually strengthened and expanded as agricultural practices became increasingly market driven and reliant upon the railroad.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Delaware is comprised of fifty-three incorporated and countless unincorporated small towns.¹⁵⁶ These towns were established at various times during the course of the state's history. They grew in response to local and regional commercial, political, and social needs. Across time, small towns experienced a variety of fates: some grew into larger economic successes, some maintained a steady existence, and others faded into relative obscurity. A gathering of buildings centered at a crossroads or long-defunct mill, on railroads or once-navigable waterways, these small towns litter the Delaware landscape. They are hidden in plain sight within twentieth-century suburban growth patterns, as well as located in rural areas, untouched by modern development.

These towns can reveal their history through documents, objects, people, buildings, and landscapes. The significant past of small towns is frequently held unequally among historical societies, legacy families, and timeworn written and/or oral histories. Yet, not all these towns possess these research amenities. In some cases, progress and development have reorganized the town, resulting in the abandonment, alteration, or demolition of historic buildings, structures, and landscapes. Historical documents no longer exist. Here, the reorganization of the town over time has affected the historic integrity of the natural and built environment.

¹⁵⁶ Theimer, 1.

Obscured significant histories, contribute to an incomplete historical record, posing seriously challenges to research. Scholarship identifies places with such obscure histories as fragmentary landscapes.

The study of small towns and their fragmentary landscapes enhances our understanding of historical cultures and the contemporary built environment. By definition, efforts in this area of vernacular architecture frequently encounter unique research environments: atypical development patterns, unusual building types, or inaccessible or incomplete documentation. However, it is not the quantity of evidence, but rather the quality of research and ability to extract the most relevant data from the available sources that enhances the historical record. Significant histories emerge when researchers ask the appropriate questions of the evidence.

Cheswold is a fragmentary landscape. There is no written town history, let alone a historical society. Never exceeding a population of 500, the town never supported a newspaper. Physical evidence of the town's past is limited to residential houses and empty lots. Local heritage survives only in these buildings and in the documents found in a variety of institutional repositories throughout the state. No journals, business accounts, or daybooks from the surrounding community survive. Prior to 1919, there are no known local maps of Cheswold. Put simply, the town is not the keeper of its past.

This thesis is not about learning as much as possible about Cheswold, or any other fragmentary landscape. Rather, through the historic context framework, the goal is to interpret evidence, further the understanding of the past, and develop significance. As the pace of development accelerates toward the geographic fringe, developing a methodology for the research of fragmentary landscapes in Delaware

provides researchers with a valuable tool. This methodology directs the development of historic contexts that place an emphasis on the relationships between broad trends and local activities gleaned from the surviving historical record.

This thesis sets a valuable research precedent for researching Delaware's fragmentary landscapes. Though difficult to research, Delaware's small towns have a significant past. Establishing the significant history of Cheswold provides a methodology for accessing that significant past. In the absence of a complete local historical record, this thesis makes use of historical resources in Delaware to identify town origins and to interpret significant cultural activities in and around Cheswold.

As in all scholarship, the nature of the evidence shapes the research framework of fragmentary landscapes. It is imperative to assess your resources accurately and to know your evidence. The simple act of observation is the greatest teacher. Survey the landscape, looking at both the physical and documentary record. Each type of evidence communicates different concepts and ideas about the past. Some carry greater weight than others. Use the statewide historical repositories of information. The Historical Society of Delaware, Hagley Library, Morris Library at the University of Delaware, Delaware Public Archives and Delaware Agricultural Museum each harbor unique and valuable resources. In all research, remember that negative evidence (the absence of evidence) can speak as loudly as that which survives.

Each chapter of this thesis engaged a different evidence base to interpret a separate component of Cheswold's history. Studying extant physical resources and known archaeological sites provided clues to interpreting the primary documentary research. The geographic location of Cheswold and presence of railroad tracks led to

the use of primary railroad records and secondary railroad histories. Chapter two interpreted the impact of a national technological advancement in transportation on Cheswold. Historic photographs and secondary published histories directed the interpretation of a historical landscape of education in Cheswold that can no longer be identified in the built environment. The records of the state's involvement in education were a particularly fruitful source of information. Chapter three reconstructed the historical culture of local education in Cheswold. The existence of multiple secondary agricultural histories, supported by primary agricultural census data as well as probate records and tax assessments, engaged the study of temporally bounded, locally significant agricultural activities. These documents explicate a mutually dependent town-hinterland agricultural relationship during the earliest days of Cheswold. Studying a landscape lacking integrity, the methodology of researching fragmentary landscapes employed in the research of Cheswold facilitated the interpretation of significant historical activities.

The historic chronological periods and themes discussed in this thesis are not exhaustive. There are historically significant activities embedded in Cheswold's historical record that remain undiscovered or researched. A large resource for future study is the influence of the Lenape community on the history and development of Cheswold. The historically self-identifying Indian tribe is only beginning to explore its origins. The written and oral traditions held within this community can only enhance the interpretation and significance of the town. Another avenue for future research is the nature of religious practices in the area. Agricultural activities from other periods, such as the influence of orchard farming, can be explored. The family of former Delaware Governor Caleb J. Boggs was native to Cheswold. The family

and government papers of the Boggs family could provide insight into town development. Furthermore, the records and rolls of the Cheswold Volunteer Fire Company and police department can be developed into thematic contexts. Community residents should be approached and encouraged to donate family papers, documents and photographs to public institutions able to preserve these important records. Making these collections accessible to researchers in the future will develop a more complete understanding of the town's historical culture facilitate the preservation of Cheswold's significant past.

Replicating the methodological approach of this thesis is paramount for successful future research into the history of Delaware's small towns and fragmentary landscapes. The ability to build the interpretive relationship between existing broad patterns and fragmentary local evidence holds tremendous information potential. Developing the significant history of a geographic area requires the identification and exploration of historic themes and time periods. Each theme and time period examines a different set of activities and draws from a different set of historical evidence. By their very definition, the integrity of fragmentary landscapes is compromised. These cultural landscapes must be treated as fragile resources. Evidence should be actively cultivated and preserved so that significance can be developed. The process of asking directed questions of extant and negative primary evidence and drawing from existing secondary studies is a viable methodology for the research of fragmentary landscapes.

This thesis contributes to the field of vernacular architecture by interpreting the significant history of Cheswold, through a methodology that can be employed for further research of fragmentary landscapes in Delaware. The first

state's small towns and fragmentary landscapes continue to face threats from the advancing development. Preservationists are now armed with a roadmap for the research of these unique and significant locations. Threats to fragmentary landscapes need to be anticipated so that their heritage can be studied, interpreted, protected, and preserved.

Appendix
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