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## ABSTRACT

This is a report of a house site excavation in Duck Creek Hundred. The house was occupied from circa 1750 to circa 1814 by several tenant households, some of who were members of documented Native American families.

Among the discoveries were artifacts, made in the tradition of prehistoric stone tools, but flaked from bottle glass.

The presence of this flaked glass, on a site occupied by families with acknowledged Native American connections, demonstrates that Native craft practices survived into the second half of the nineteenth century, far longer than previously documented.

The site is significant because it provides part of the long-sought link between today's local Native American population (known as Lenape) and their prehistoric antecedents.

As required by federal and state regulations, the authors examined the social and political setting in which the site was occupied. This involved studying the community, which included African-American, Native American, and European people. An earlier study in this series, by Louise Heite, demonstrated that Native American people suffered a decline in status during this period, and this study expanded those findings.

Research for this report was accomplished with active assistance from Native American genealogists, some of whom are related to the families that occupied the site. The report has also

been reviewed by members of the local Native American community, who support the findings. The significance of the site was attested by the State Historic Preservation Officer, who declared it eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Community research in particular has benefited from cooperation among professional archaeological contractors, government staff, and interested members of the public. DelDOT has been encouraging its contractors to find new and effective ways to involve the public in its projects, and this is one of the completed successes of that effort.

## FOREWORD

In 1767, Agness Sappington was destitute and desperate. Her husband, William, had died. She was trying to support four growing daughters from her previous marriage to Jeremiah Loatman. Even her right to occupy her ramshackle cabin was disputed. William Sappington had claimed ownership in a muddy patch of clay where he cut timber during the last years of his life, but his title had never been registered, and now the Axells were attacking the house itself.

The well-connected widow Axell, who held a good title to the property, sent her son-in-law to evict Agness, and he pulled off the roof. Agness tried to hang on, but eventually it became obvious that she couldn't stay. She and the girls fled across the branch to take shelter in Thompson's garret.

Desperate, she called on her friend Samuel Whitman, a prosperous and literate farmer who lived nearby. Whitman, who had helped her settle the Loatman estate, filed legal papers and now helped Agness press her claim to the ruined house and woodyard. With court permission, she was able to sell William Sappington's shaky claim to Mrs. Axell for a pittance.

Then she married Whitman, for whom she bore two children that survived to adulthood. Life was good, at last, several rungs up the economic and social ladder.

1814 was not a good year for Thomas Conselor. He fell behind on his store account at Benjamin Coombe's in Smyrna; early in the year the storekeeper sued and sent the constable to collect. On April 16, Abraham Allee, his landlord, grabbed the bridle of his horse while he was trying to plow ground that belonged to Samuel Conner. After Allee had stopped the plowing and knocked down the fence, Moses and Jacob Thompson plowed the ground and kept Conselor from working the ground. Conselor went to the magistrate in Dover and filed suit to be heard in Common Pleas. The case never came to trial, but Conselor moved to New Jersey

Two centuries later, a public agency with no prior interest in Agness Sappington or Thomas Conselor came on the scene, and their stories unfolded for archaeologists and historians. The property where Conselor and the Sappingtons had lived and worked was called Bloomsbury, and the purpose of this project was to tell their story.

This report describes research that went in in many directions at once, testing and exploring different ways to interpret the data. It may seem disorganized, or unfocussed, to those who are accustomed to more tightly-structured historical accounts with pre-ordained methodology. The digressions were necessitated by the extremely sparse and sometimes internally contradictory data. Every suggested line of research was followed, sometimes with encouraging results and sometimes with frustrating failures. At the end of the day, a picture of life at Bloomsbury emerged with remarkable clarity, and an eighteenth-century Native American community came into sharp historical focus