## DelDOT TO5 Travelling Display

## Panel 4 of 4

## Rural African-American Lives in Delaware Illuminated through Archaeological Study

Hundreds of archaeological sites have been identified in Delaware, but only a small number of sites have been studied intensively that pertain to rural African-American lives. Through these archaeological studies we have learned about some specific individuals and families from Delaware’s past.

“Those who can see the legacy of the past in the present are better equipped to challenge the status quo.” Dr. Agbe-Davies

### Cooper

Two individuals from the early slavery period (pre-1830), are Richard and Nanny Cooper, freedmen who resided in Kent County between ca. 1778 and 1820. Their homestead is known archaeologically as the Garrison Energy Site (7K-C-455B). Richard was born a slave in Barbados ca. 1720 and brought to America when he was 12 or 14 years old. After being sold several times, he eventually became the property of Thomas Hanson, a member of the Society of Friends (Quakers). Prior to 1778, Richard and Nanny worked on his farm until they were granted freedom. After being freed, Richard and Nanny Cooper farmed, raised hogs, and lived in a log house with a stable and two corn cribs. They frequently attended Friends meetings and were respected members of a small community of freedmen outside of Dover. Archaeological study of their house site found a modest assortment of plates and mugs, as well as silver button, and some decorative teacups. Soil chemistry analysis was conducted of the yard area, finding evidence that the Coopers swept their yard. Recorded in the Quaker Meeting Records, “Richard Cooper a Black man of Maryland and member of the society of Friends aged 102 years Departed this life 10 Mo 3th 1820.”

### Williams

Not far from the Coopers resided Nathan Williams. Mr. Williams was of African descent but was possibly part Nanticoke Indian. The history of his Indian ancestry is not fully known. It is known that he was literate and a free man, with no documentation of him ever being enslaved, and that he lived at the Nathan Williams House Site from about 1825 to 1840. Mr. William’s house was demolished when a road was constructed through the property in 1881, and the archaeological study examined spaces that were once yards of the house. A few pieces of humble tableware were found, as well as a white ceramic button and a clay tobacco pipe.

“To accept one’s past – one’s history – is not the same thing as drowning in it; it is learning how to use it. An invented past can never be used; it cracks and crumbles under the pressures of life like clay in a season of drought.”

— JAMES BALDWIN, THE FIRE NEXT TIME

### Walmsley

Mr. David Walmsley and his family resided on a property near Christina from about 1870 to ca. 1890. Their house site is known archaeologically as at the William Dickson Site. David and Sallie (or Sarah) were born and raised as slaves in Maryland, and are listed in the 1860 U.S. Federal Census living in Dover with 5 children and one elderly dependent. By 1880, the Walmsley’s were living near Christina; Mr. Walmsley was a laborer and Mrs. Walmsley was listed as keeping house which included raising 6 children. He and his family rented their home. Archaeological study of the house site recovered considerable quantities of decorated plates and teacups, as well as buttons, straight pins, and toys. Utilitarian objects, such as milk pans were also recovered. A large number of animal bones were found near the house with kitchen waste, showing that the Walmsley’s ate both livestock (cows, pigs, and sheep), and wild game such as fish and muskrat. In 1887 Mr. David Walmsley and his family purchased a house nearby, known archaeologically as the Heisler Tenancy (tenants resided there earlier). David Walmsley died around 1900, and his family continued to live at the site until about 1940. They kept their lease at the earlier house for a few years, for reasons not known. At their purchased home, archaeologists found a wealth of artifacts in the rear yard, including decorated plates and bowls, bottles, and a stone lined well.

### Stevenson

From the 1880s to about 1920, Mr. Nicholas Stevenson and his wife Mary (nee Smith) lived in a rented house on a large estate near Glasgow. The house was owned by the Cazier family, a wealthy, white family in Pencader. Located along the entrance drive to the estate, the house was nicknamed ‘the gatehouse.’ The house site is known archaeologically as Jacob B. Cazier Tenancy No. 2. Mr. Stevenson worked on the Cazier farm and took care of the family horses. While not a landowner until later in life, Nicholas’ father William Stevenson, owned two small lots in Pencader Hundred County. Around 1920 Nicholas Stevenson moved away from the Cazier estate and took up residence by Lum’s Pond. His relatives, Rudolf and Ethel Stevenson, took up the lease in the gatehouse, and lived there until 1934. The house was demolished in 1935 during the expansion of the nearby road. Archaeologists studied the remains of the house site and its yard, finding large numbers of artifacts. Fancy platters and plates were found, suggesting that the Stevensons had a close relationship with the Caziers, and were sold or gifted dinnerware from the wealthy manor house. Medicinal bottles were recovered from the site, as well as perfume bottles. The remains of two cats were also recovered, likely household pets.

### Stump

Sidney Stump was an African-American man who lived near Glasgow in the late nineteenth century. He was born in Harford County Maryland ca. 1839 but purchased a home in Pencader Hundred in 1875 where he lived with his family until his death in 1922 at the age of 88. That home is known archaeologically as The Thomas Williams Site, named after the prior owner (a white man), who built some of the structures on the property. Mr. Stump and his family operated a small farm on their 1.5-acre property, and they worked seasonally as farm laborers on nearby farms. Records indicate that Sidney was often out of work for months at a time, so the Stumps raised vegetables, fruit, wheat, and other field crops, both for home use and likely to supplement their income. They sold produce to nearby Glasgow shopkeepers and to more distant Wilmington markets. They also raised a small amount of livestock (cattle and hogs). Archaeological study of the Stump property revealed a variety of ceramics being used by the family, from humble earthenware milk pans to decorated plates and cups. The diet of the family included a variety of meats, including their livestock and wild game (raccoon, muskrat, and rabbit). Interesting finds from the site included tobacco pipes and medicinal bottles.

Referecnes:

1. <http://campusarch.msu.edu/?p=3484> ; <http://archive.archaeology.org/0301/etc/conversations.html>

2. <https://www.societyofblackarchaeologists.com/>