How to Research Historic Properties in New Castle

New Castle Community Archeology Program
Wade Catts and Nedda Moqtaderi
January 22, 2006
Workshop Goals

- To provide a basic introduction to methods for conducting historical research
- To orient you to the major sources for researching historic properties
- To train New Castle residents in research techniques so that they can research their own properties
- To contribute to the town-wide efforts to learn about New Castle’s past through archeology and historical research
What can we Learn from Historical Research of Properties?

- Land Use History
- Change over time
- Historical Development of New Castle
- Important to know the details
Maps

- Latrobe Survey (1802)
- Beers Atlas (1868)
- Baists’ Map (1881)
- Hopkins Atlas (1893)
- Sanborn/Franklin Insurance Maps
Beers’ Atlas Map (1868)
Insurance Maps
Deeds

• What are they?
• Where can they be found?
  – Delaware Public Archive
  – Wilmington Deed Office
  – University of Delaware Microfilm
• How do you read them?
• What information do they contain?
Deeds

- Grantee/Grantor
- Occupation
- Location
- Improvements
- Metes and Bounds
- Landscape details
Estate Records

- Wills and Administrations
- Probate documents
- Orphans’ Court Records
  - Often contain plat of the parcel with details
  - Check UDCHAD webpage for selection of orphans court records on line.
Wills & Administrations
Inventories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Bacon Captain 14 lb.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>240 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Remnant 3 lb.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/4 lb. Crow</td>
<td>4 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 lb.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/4 lb. Crow</td>
<td>4 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Blue Calamander 14 lb.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Each</td>
<td>18 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Remnants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Piece%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Piece%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 1/2 yd. print blue</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>3 x 2 = 6 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 yd.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yard</td>
<td>18 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 1/2 lb.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/4 lb. Cajun</td>
<td>2 1/4 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 lb.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/4 lb. Cajun</td>
<td>2 1/4 d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 lb.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2 1/4 d</td>
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Carried forward 10 d 6 d
Orphans Court Land Plats
Tax Assessments

• What they Contain
  – Description of Structures, Acres, Lots, Values, Personal Wealth, Other Holdings

• “Best Years” for New Castle County
  – 1803-04
  – 1816
  – 1845
| Name                  | Description                  | Assessment
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--------------
| John Adams            | 20 acres                      | 1200         |
| James Smith           | 30 acres                      | 1500         |
| Mary Johnson          | 2 acres                       | 120          |
| Robert Davis          | 50 acres                      | 3000         |

**Notes:**
- John Adams owns 20 acres of land.
- James Smith owns 30 acres of land.
- Mary Johnson owns 2 acres of land.
- Robert Davis owns 50 acres of land.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Castello</td>
<td>His person 12 acres of land all improved with one stone dwelling, stone barn, stables &amp; $82</td>
<td>984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Copson</td>
<td>His person 100 acres of land with $20 82 improved with one old log dwelling barn, 18 wood land live stock</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Copson</td>
<td>His person 104 acres of land &amp; $18 live stock</td>
<td>1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisha Chandler</td>
<td>His person 105 acres of land &amp; $350 improved with one log dwelling stone barn stable live stock</td>
<td>3240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Record Groups

- Census Records
- Road Papers
  - Petitions and Returns
- Loan Office Papers
- Newspapers (Property Advertisements)
  - Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1783 (on line at University)
- Photographs
  - Public Holdings, Private collections
- City/Town Directories
Census Records

1800 Census Example

1860 Census Example
Secondary Sources

- Eckman Papers (at New Castle)
- Charles Gehring Publications
- Scharf, *History of Delaware* (1881)
- Louise Heite, Dissertation (1978)
- Edward Heite Archeology Plan
- Family Line Publications
The next workshop in our series:
“Shoebox Archeology: an artifact identification”
February 26, 2006

We welcome your input on this workshop and any other programs we have in the works.
Please take a moment to complete the evaluations.
Thanks for attending today!