

NEBRASKA RP3: VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE POSITION PAPER

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As called for in the Nebraska "Request for Comment," this position paper on vernacular architecture and the RP3 seeks to address:

...First, the theoretical concerns of your discipline relative to the identification and evaluation of historic material culture; and second, your thoughts on the formulation of a holistic, interdisciplinary framework under which individual (but interconnected) study units can be defined.

Central to these two questions is the concept of holistic, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. Holistic views seek to know the whole of a community. These are achieved by knowing its systemic parts and the dynamic of their interrelationships. Interdisciplinary denotes a perspective melding together diverse methodologies and theoretical frameworks to comprehend the whole constellation of significances within a research problem. Multidisciplinary, on the other hand, suggests using discrete, layered perspectives approaching the research problem as if it were an archaeological site to be excavated incrementally. Multidisciplinary perspectives do not demand a broad-based interpretive synthesis.

Recent scholarship in American history and material culture studies demonstrates the imperative of developing interdisciplinary and multi-material approaches for the analysis, explication, and interpretation of historic materials. At its core, the call for interdisciplinary perspectives recognizes the fact that comprehensive studies yield greater insights into social and cultural process than do single-genre, single-discipline research strategies.



In one case study centered on the house, tenant houses, archaeology, and documentation of an eighteenth-century mid-Atlantic merchant, it was discovered that both single-discipline perspectives and single-object-oriented analyses are insufficient (Appendix 1). Where the merchant's dwelling and related buildings suggested one class of social and economic relationships, his archaeologically recovered ceramics presented a very different picture. The disjuncture between archaeology and architecture was reconciled through documentary research, but documents failed to explain the material consequences of recorded social, political, and economic actions. In this case study, we can see that no single body of data, no single theoretical perspective, no single research methodology is comprehensive enough to discover and articulate the patterns and meanings of historic contexts.

In the mandate for developing regional historic and cultural perspectives to facilitate cultural resource management, we are confronted with the same sorts of inconsistencies found in the material history of our 18th-century merchant--but on a much larger scale. The intention of this essay then, is to 1) outline an interdisciplinary perspective on vernacular architecture studies, 2) describe a research design for assembling diverse data into comprehensible and meaningful contexts, and 3) discuss the importance of interconnected study units for vernacular architecture in the RP3.

### Vernacular Architecture Studies

Vernacular architecture research is a field of study, not a discipline. Just as American studies, urban studies, or folklore are interdisciplinary fields of study, inquiries into vernacular architecture stem from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Excellent works in the field have been written by



economic historians, cultural geographers, architectural historians, folklorists, and archaeologists.

Although the roots of vernacular architecture studies in the United States and Europe can be traced back to antiquarian studies undertaken from the mid-19th century onward, the real impetus for scholarly inquiry into traditional buildings and building contexts has gained momentum only over the last thirty years. There are, of course, several major studies related to various aspects of vernacular architecture and antedating the last generation of work, but these works are exceptional. Before outlining the various ways in which students of traditional buildings approach architecture as material evidence, I would like to describe some of the major interpretive positions held in the field. As each of these perspectives is offered for review, it is important to remember that the best studies make use of several of these concurrently in the context of a single body of material.

#### Diffusion

Fred Kniffen, a cultural geographer, and his students have advanced the concept of diffusion as a major explanatory tool in the identification and mapping of building types. Based on the notion that paths of the transmission of architectural ideas can be plotted across broad landscapes, the first American studies in vernacular architecture surveyed, identified, and plotted building types attempting to discover typologically and chronologically recognized settlement patterns. At their simplest level, these diffusionist studies illustrated regional building types by certain external features as in Wilbur Zelinsky's work on the New England connecting barn.

Henry Glassie, who stands as one of the major formative forces in the development of American vernacular architecture studies on a number of fronts and was one of Kniffens' students, considerably broadened the scope of diffusion-oriented research. First, Glassie advanced the concept that instead of seeking to know the distribution of specific types, we should use the notion of house or building type to know the settlement and later histories of whole environments. This approach, applied to the eastern United States, introduced concepts of culture hearths, of house types based on plan rather than construction or style, of ethnicity and acculturation, and of variation within traditional thought and practice. As a folklorist and student of material culture, Glassie frequently discusses patterns of architectural diffusion as being embedded in a universe of traditional expressive genres, including narrative, food ways, and other object types. In his more recent works, Glassie has concentrated on the cognitive and creative forces behind traditional design. In these studies he strives to interpret architecture as a product of the tension existing between a variety of forces internal and external to the individual in society.

The influence of Kniffen and Glassie is apparent in the number and variety of diffusion-related studies published in the last decade. Dell Upton's work on the social diffusion of architectural ideas, Edward Chappell's research into the process of acculturation in the German settlements of western Virginia, Terry Jordan's analysis of Continental building patterns recorded in Texas illustrate a few of the approaches to diffusion-oriented vernacular architecture studies.



### Archaeological/Historical

American vernacular architecture studies from the archaeological and historical perspectives focus on the detailed examination and recording of buildings and the interpretation of structures in their historic social and economic contexts. Typically, these studies draw on British models for method and analysis and usually deal with architecture by region and/or historic period. Recent British works of this sort have been authored by Alan Gailey, Alexander Fenton, R. W. Brunskill, Barbara Hutton, Eric Mercer, R. Machin, and Peter Smith. The organizing principles in these writings involve extensive architectural descriptions of structures by form, construction, and ornamentation, and use explanatory interpretive models rather than abstract theoretical constructions. An example of the latter is W. H. Hoskins "rebuilding thesis" first published in the 1950s.

In his essay on the rebuilding of rural England, Hoskins noted that for a variety of possible reasons the vernacular architecture of the English countryside underwent a period of extended improvement in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries. This period was known at first as "the Great Rebuilding." Subsequent studies in the British Isles and the United States have shown, however, that rebuildings are part of a cyclical pattern of domestic architectural improvement. Furthermore, these cycles occur in the context of other economic, social, agricultural, and marketing changes. To demonstrate these patterns, students of vernacular architecture working in this school of thought examine not only buildings, material welfare, and landscapes, but also historical documentary evidence in the form of probate records, demographic statistics, land transactions, and other (often computer-qualifiable) evidence.



American researchers using archaeological/historical perspectives come from a number of disciplines, but seem to be limited in geographic range to the older settlement areas of the eastern United States. Figures in this group include Abbott Cummings, Richard Candee, Jack Michel, Bernard Herman, Cary Carson, and Carl Lounsbury. In particular, Cummings' work on seventeenth-century New England and Carson's essays on colonial Virginia stand as models for this approach.

#### Historic Ethnographies and Community Studies

The unifying element in architecture-oriented ethnographies and community studies is that the interpretation of buildings is meaningful only from a systemic perspective of a culture as a whole. The origins of this approach rest firmly in formative studies in anthropology, sociology, and folklore. Like other approaches to the field, this perspective is grounded in detailed description. The organizing principle behind description, however, is to document expressive and interactive layers of culture. Because valid observations of this sort are difficult to gain on a casual basis, researchers often find themselves living in and attempting to integrate themselves into the community they have chosen for study. The paradigm for such investigations are long-standing and were formulated by anthropologists such as Franz Boas and Clifford Geertz and sociologists like Robert Redfield. Over the last decades, community studies have involved historians calling for anthropological perspectives and anthropologists using historical methods. Chief among these have been Richard Beeman and Anthony Wallace.



Following antiquarian-based studies of traditional architecture, ethnographic analyses have the longest history of application in the United States. Alice Fletcher's work with the Omaha Indians in the early twentieth century is a major example of fieldwork methods and descriptive techniques advocated by Boas. More recently, studies by Jerry Pocius in Newfoundland and Charles Martin in southern Appalachia illustrate the growing interpretive sophistication of this approach.

Community studies of vernacular architecture have also adopted aspects of prosopographical social history. In prosopography we see community defined not by collective biography mapping time and place, but by other mutual bonds which recognize non contiguous relationships. The analysis of German-American architecture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or the examination of colonial dwellings commissioned by rural and urban Quakers proceed from the concept of a group whose members are ethnically or ideologically related. The most successful work in this area to date has focused on communitarian groups like the Moravians or Rappites.

#### Structuralism

Structuralism advanced in the United States almost single-handedly by Henry Glassie and his students. Structural approaches to vernacular architecture are inspired by the writings of European-trained anthropologists, linguists, historians, literacy historians, psychologists, and ethnographers. The three main levels of inquiry in structuralist writings are the cognitive structures from which ordered expression is derived, the function of expressive culture as complex and variable signs, and the mediation of tensions or oppositions between forces like nature and culture, individual and society,



and open and closed aspects of social organization.

Glassie's Folk Housing in Middle Virginia uses all of these perspectives in what is one of the most compelling and provocative studies in American vernacular architecture. Drawing on the work of Noam Chomsky (linguistics), Dell Hymes (sociolinguistics), Claude Levi-Strauss (anthropology), the Annales school of French social history, and other sources, Glassie presents the reader with an ahistorical architectural history with the same verve as Foucault's works Discipline and Punish and The Archaeology of Knowledge. The value of Glassie's work in this area is not so much one of detail, but the application of a method characterized by immense intellectual ability and the recognition of significant associations in his material far beyond the time and borders of his tiny Virginia study area.

The single largest problem in structuralist studies of any kind is one of consensus. We cannot write about structuralism as a unified theory except on the most basic terms, as in the introduction to Michael Lane's Introduction to Structuralism. In fact, most texts dealing with structuralism are anthologies built up of sometimes complementary, but often wildly disparate, essays. The primary factor binding such studies together is a quest for a theory of mind--a quest that may be as quixotic as it is necessary. Few Americans other than Glassie have had much success with structuralist questions in vernacular architecture studies. Most writers become inextricably bogged down in jargon and confused by the dialectic between theory and data. The key exceptions in this still-emerging approach are Robert Blair St. George and Dell Upton. Writing respectively about seventeenth-century New England and eighteenth-century Virginia, these two scholars have blended theory with historical documentation and material culture, thereby confirming the validity and enormous



of the material itself. Definitions of vernacular architecture in the United States tend to be inclusive. Recent work has involved urban row houses, ethnic communities (including free black settlements, Chinese-American gambling dens, and German barns in Wisconsin), apartment houses, mill towns, tract housing, industrial archaeology, earth-fast architecture, various building technologies, resort architecture, Methodist campgrounds, ranches, pueblos, yard art, and household shrines. The notion that research is geared to rural or village housing of the colonial and pre-Civil War eras refers to earlier studies premised on American diffusionist and British historical approaches. The reality, as evidenced by the papers delivered at the annual meetings of the Vernacular Architecture Forum, reveals a broad range of interests delving into on everything from seventeenth-century New England barns to nineteenth-century popular pattern-book inspired houses to twentieth-century midwestern town squares.

The field of vernacular architecture is not delineated by a specific body of material, but by the concept of the "architecture of common usage." In examining the particular expressions of that language, four primary avenues of field research have emerged. Three of these--form, fabric, and fashion--are specific to buildings and lend themselves to the formulation of useful organizing typologies; the fourth--context--unifies the first three as well as setting out broader conceptual and interpretive problems.

While individual studies may choose to emphasize form over fabric and fashion or fabric over form and fashion, the majority strive to integrate these abstracted categories into unified, contextualized analyses. As a way of conceptually dissecting buildings, these divisions remain extremely helpful. The names of the categories provided here are an attempt at synthesizing



a variety of such models. A thoughtful overview of categorical divisions in vernacular architecture is provided in Howard Wright Marshall's Folk Architecture in Little Dixie. The four most generally applied research areas are outlined below.

### Form

The definition of space in terms of building plan, site organization, or town lot is recognized as the basis for meaningful typologies. No matter what manner of construction is employed or fashionable finish applied, buildings continue to occupy, divide, and contain space. Formal typologies for dwellings follow the internal division of space, such as with hall, chambered-hall, hall-parlor, double-parlor, and cross-passage plans. Of course, certain forms appear only in limited contexts, such as row houses in Philadelphia or Baltimore or Flurkuchen-plan dwellings in Continental settlements in Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Texas, or Nebraska. In any case, buildings can be typed by the space they define. In constructing formal typologies, it is necessary to avoid vague types such as "I houses" and fractional Georgian designations. These tend to provide a label which is external to the social, cultural, and environmental forces that influenced the design of these structures.

One element missing in most vernacular architectural typologies is the process of additions and subtractions. Most existing typologies identify a set of core or whole forms, but then do not address types of architectural transformations. When a traditional ethnic building type is renovated into a more popular or academic plan, the typology should identify the change as well as the original configuration.



potential of Glassie's approach.

Discussions of structuralism usually appear hand in hand with discourse on semiotics, the science of signs. Semiotic analyses differ from structuralist problems in that they are less concerned with generative forces at work in expressive culture. Even the notion of mediated binary oppositions is tempered in the sense that the primary oppositions exist between the sign and its meaning. Even (where the object whether icon or dwelling) is constant, the ability of the object to signify (to convey specific sets of meanings, associations, or values) is not. On the other hand, the physical reworking of objects may not constitute a change in meaning, but may indicate an empirical solution to keeping specific value expressions constant. In the science of signs, there is also a school of strategic semiotics where the sign is considered within the context of ethnographic observation. Again, Glassie is a formative American force in this area of study as related to vernacular or folk architecture. Less well known in the field is Juan Bonta's Architecture and Its Interpretation, which offers a useful and innovative theory on the valuation of signs. While the object of Bonta's attention is Mies Van Der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion, his arguments have significance for interpretive models in vernacular architecture.

#### Other Approaches

The preceding discussion of theoretical stances serves to point at mainstream concerns in American vernacular architecture as a field of study. Other approaches include phenomenology (Gaston Bachelard), landscape theory (Yi-Fu Tuan), and technological history (Charles Peterson and Harley McKee). One aspect of the diversity of vernacular architecture studies is the nature

### Fabric

Fabric refers specifically to types and means of construction. Examples of research in this area are Abott Cummings' work on timber framing in the Massachusetts Bay area from 1625 to 1725, R. W. Brunskill's and Alex Clifton-Taylor's guide to English brickwork, and aspects of David Murphy's paper on Nebraska log construction read to the 1983 meeting of the Vernacular Architecture Forum. Studies on building fabric tend to be technologically oriented with parallel emphasis on factors like craftsmanship, ethnicity, and technological change. While fabric technologies (i.e., log, concrete, brick, balloon frame, wattle-and-daub, etc.) can be typed, the resulting typologies are neither as discrete nor as accessible as those based on form. The statistics developed on form types by fabric reveal much more about the nature and significance of building. Discussions on fabric are most useful in contexts of the social organization of building and in the arena where the treatment of building material incorporates significant changes not apparent in form.

### Fashion

Fashion or style denotes the use of ornament, decorative motifs, or cosmetic features in conjunction with building form and fabric. The most conventional use of fashion as a tool in architecture history is in the recognition and postulation of historically defined, usually seriated, periods. Organizing buildings by Greek Revival, Italianate, or Gothic works well for most academically inspired structures. For the mainstream of vernacular buildings however, style-based designations are typically more frustrating than useful.



The typical study of style is either motif- or designer-oriented, as for example in the documentation of the work attributed to Samuel Sloan or A. J. Downing. In research of this sort, typological considerations are often bracketed within relatively specific dates, discussed through characteristic motifs, and, in the case of traditional architecture, perceived in terms of social and aesthetic (usually downward) diffusion. Among the problem areas in the study of fashion is the construction of coherent typologies (particularly in the contexts of site-specific architectural changes or recognized historical patterns of aesthetic use such as 19th-century eclecticism). Fashionable architectural elements are most susceptible to rapid and dramatic change. Students of vernacular architecture still have difficulty in establishing the rationale and significance of such changes and often supply label such transformations simply as updates. Fashion in vernacular architecture is not less important than form of fabric; it is currently less understood in terms of social, cultural, and architectural process.

### Context

Context describes the theoretical, historical, and cultural parameters within which vernacular architecture is interpreted and understood. In terms of National Register criteria, the guidelines of integrity and significance are context-oriented issues. Integrity may refer to recognized changes and not to original condition. Significance falls within the five primary criteria and may touch on any one or more listed "areas" including "other."

The RP3 mandate is to establish contexts internally--that is within circumstances relevant to particular local, regional, and/or national landscapes and history. To accomplish this most ambitious end, we have to arrive at a formula for context-setting methodologies. The study unit concept is premised on a model of architectural continuity and change in which other explanatory models--such as ethnicity, rural economy, and urban growth--are subsets. This leaves us with the dilemma of deriving a means for measuring continuity and change. To accomplish that end, only multidisciplinary perspectives will shape a comprehensive interdisciplinary model. It will be more helpful to address the preceding issue by example rather than through generalization.

Over the last several years, a group of researchers at the University of Delaware has been studying the context and structure of nineteenth-century Delaware rural society, economy, family structure, agriculture, industry, and architecture. Because each individual brought certain sets of questions and assumptions to the project and because, despite Delaware's small size, the project is statewide in scope, we found it beneficial to utilize quantitative methods for designing research programs and defining certain areas of context. The types of materials we are able to code into viable computer programs include manuscript population censuses, manuscript agricultural and manufacturing censuses, tax rolls, probate records, National Register listings, and orphans court property valuations. By developing this material on the geographical equivalent of a township basis, we are able to produce maps which typologically and chronologically identify definite regional and subregional trends.



As we deal with quantifiable materials, we also collect data which yields more through textual analysis. Farm accounts, merchants' day books, atlases, diaries, road records, and court documents both challenge and provide substance and clarity to basic statistical patterns. Statewide architectural inventories provide the index to evaluating the effect of economic and agricultural patterns. One of the most interesting by-products of our pooled efforts is the discovery of "hidden" relationships. Correlations exist between house form and change relative to factors such as crop types and yields, criminal punishment, and literacy.

Case Study:

Broad Creek Hundred, 1770-1850

Broad Creek Hundred in southwestern Sussex County, Delaware, serves to illustrate the insights gained from varied data and through a variety of methodologies. While all the research for the hundred was developed concurrently, it will be demonstrated that consecutive data development would provide valid, albeit tentative, study unit guidelines. Broad Creek Hundred today is an almost totally rural landscape composed of sandy soils, broken up with swamps and slow-moving streams feeding into the Nanticoke River and the Chesapeake Bay to the west. Soybeans, corn, and chickens are the primary sources of farm revenue, although some truck farming continues in the area. Parts of the hundred remain thickly wooded with pine, gum, white oak, and cypress. Settlement is scattered, with single farms and an occasional crossroads hamlet.

An architectural inventory of the hundred revealed no buildings dating before 1800--a situation made remarkable by the fact that substantial portions of the surrounding hundreds were being patented and occupied in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Recorded houses built prior to 1850 were typically small: one-story in elevation, one or two rooms in plan, and furnished with at least one gable-end chimney. All buildings were of timber frame or log construction and employed local woods. Outbuildings associated with dwellings were smokehouses, corn houses, dairies, granaries, and small barns. Many buildings also revealed evidence of having been moved from their original sites in the 1800s.

General patterns revealed in the computerization of the 1850 manuscript agricultural census describe a rural economy based on average farm size of 66 improved and 68 unimproved acres. The average value of a farm was \$1,094.70; the principal activities were growing corn, keeping swine and sheep, and processing wood and beeswax. Wheat cultivation was minor and tobacco growing nonexistent. The overall picture is one of a rural community of small farms and extensive forests; a landscape where major farm machinery was an unusual investment, hauling and plowing was done with oxen, and the farms were of little worth on a statewide comparative basis.

Population figures for 1800, 1830, and 1850 reveal the total number of inhabitants almost doubled in a fifty-year span. Within that general increase, there was a constantly increasing number of free blacks and a diminishing number of slaves. The number of whites in the hundred, however, nearly doubled from 1800 to 1830 and then remains stable through 1850. The black population on the other hand grew at a faster and more consistent rate over the full fifty years.



Property descriptions coded from orphans court valuation returns from 1770 to 1850 describe a landscape in which there is little architectural change. The great majority of houses were of wood, one-story in elevation, one-room in plan, contained an average 465 square feet (less than 20 by 24 feet), and possessed a brick or wood chimney. Tenant houses and kitchens were formally the same as land holders' dwellings except smaller (in one case, 10 by 12 feet). The buildings found on the typical estate included a barn, smokehouse, cornhouse, and tenant house. If a barn was not present, its functions were usually left in the open or partially brought into a granary, cornhouse, or stable. Each farm was surrounded with rail fences five to seven rails high and averaging a total of 1,300 panels. The farm itself was divided into a three or four crop rotation and included separately fenced "outfields." Apple and peach orchards were an important part of each farm description. Finally, two thirds of all buildings, fences, orchards, and even the soil were noted over the entire period as being at the very best in "tolerable good" condition and more commonly as bad, worn out, and old.

Probate inventories added more detail to our case study. The most common possessions--tools, farm equipment, and furniture--fit our images of small houses, a few farm buildings, and a half wooded/half cultivated landscape. Three categories of tools emerge: first, tools for farming; second, implements for working in the woods; and third, tool chests for other non-agricultural occupations. Everyone in Broad Creek Hundred was likely to own felling axes, wedges, chains, and a timber cart. Saws were not prevalent, though, and other evidence demonstrates that rough timber was converted into usable lumber at local saw mills. When people were not working in the woods, they worked on the farm with grub hoes, weeding hoes, and an occasional

shovel. Plows of various sorts were used to open the ground and harrows to break the clods. Timber carts doubled as farm carts. Half of our sample gained additional income in other occupations, such as carpenter and blacksmith.

Household furnishings by house type continue to show a materially undifferentiated community. The 18 by 20 foot hall-plan dwelling, stuffed with three beds, two chests, seven chairs, a cupboard, looking glass, and two tables, is furnished differently from more complex hall-parlor and three-room plans primarily in matters of quantity and quality. A 20 by 34 foot hall-parlor plan would contain more beds, chairs, chests, tables, etc., before it would hold different types of furnishings such as desks, stands, or tea tables. Household furnishings in Broad Creek Hundred also extend to looms, wool wheels, flax wheels, and other textile processing implements. Looms, in fact, are so common that the dwelling without one listed is usually an anomalous situation as with the bachelor trapper who owned a house but no furniture. In terms of furnishings, we also see the pattern of separate, sometimes attached, kitchens. These work rooms contain the looms, rough furniture, and a hodge podge of tools, cooking utensils, textiles, and general "lumber" or "trumpery."

Diaries, day books, and other private narrative accounts for nineteenth-century Broad Creek Hundred are rare. Court indictments and depositions, however, help to fill the gap. The two most common crimes were felony theft and assault, closely followed by kidnapping. Felony theft often involved stealing wood off of other farms and in one case, 500 fence rails and an 18- by 20-foot house. Convicted felons were publicly whipped, set out in stocks, and required to wear the letter "T" sewn to their clothes. Kidnapping



centered on the lucrative cottage industry of abducting free blacks and slaves and selling them to slave traders, who shipped the captives down the Chesapeake Bay and into the American south. As with other offenses the punishments for kidnapping were rooted in public displays of humiliation, pain, and shame.

There are informational sources for Broad Creek Hundred and its surroundings not cited here. Still, the sense of data sources and their content will suffice to make some concluding observations. First, with all the data presently in hand, there are some crucial materials lacking. Chief among these is an historic sites archaeological survey with some selective subsurface testing. Also absent is the identification of all milling seats and the developmental history of transportation networks. Even with recognized gaps in our still growing project, we are able to perceive certain sets of associations that would aid in study unit development. The majority of inhabitants in the hundred from first settlement to the eve of the Civil War remained yeomen and servants or laborers; a minority--including merchants, millers, and plantation owners--were involved in extensive social and commercial relationships. Dwellings and furnishings remain typologically related, but material status is achieved through factors of quantity and quality of finish. The forests supported a second rural economy separate from agriculture, and wood was the emphasis for protective judicial covenants and a resource constantly threatened through theft. House plans were open in nature, and criminal punishment is public. Agricultural buildings were limited in number and small in size. Taken together, all these factors describe a pre-modern rural society: a society perfectly reasonable within itself, but completely out of step with communities only twenty to fifty miles to the north, south, and west.

Within a time frame of 1800 to 1850, these neighboring communities define other contemporary study units. While Broad Creek evidenced little internal change in that half century, parallel communities like St. Georges Hundred in New Castle County to the north were undergoing radical transformations involving everything from the technology of agriculture to the wholesale spatial reordering and segregation of household functions. If we were to examine statewide agricultural patterns for the period in question, we would note that everyone grows corn. What we do not see is that there are a number of methods and ends to the cultivation, processing, and storage of even the most basic crops.

What makes the case study of Broad Creek Hundred significant to a discussion of the RP3? First, it demonstrates a relatively straightforward set of methodologies for getting at the formation of specific study units. Second and more importantly, it illustrates a serious flaw in the process of study unit identification. While the graphic and textual models in the publication Resource Protection Planning Process draw on a paradigm of continuity and change, they stress change over continuity and they presume change is constant and equal. As a colleague likes to point out, the railroad and all of its attendant historical and architectural phenomena came to the Delmarva Peninsula; unfortunately, it did not come all at one time. The basic wisdom in her observation is that the chronological mapping of change by locale, county, state, and region will become more and more asynchronous as the geographical units gets progressively larger.



In his writings, Michael Foucault defines historical periods not by date, but by operative bodies of social, technological, cultural, and economic knowledge. If the study unit concept is to succeed, it would be better to make specific dates subsets of more comprehensive themes. As in vernacular architecture, the basis for the most usable typologies are by form and not by date. Once the forms are known and mapped, then temporal specifics enable us to perceive their distribution and significance. Such a framework then allows us access to continuity as well as change.

### Conclusions

At the time the rural history project of which Broad Creek Hundred is a part was initiated, RP3 was not a concern. As the RP3 has developed, however, we find that the patterns emerging from our research also identify useful and relevant study units that are being reviewed by the Delaware Office for Historic Preservation. The problem in Delaware is that as we extend our research program back to the seventeenth century, we have fewer extensive data bodies with which to work. The settlement of the Great Plains, though, occurred in a period when such record groups were governmental policy.

In terms of using vernacular architecture to identify and define study units, it should be remembered that buildings are contextually complex. Types can be identified geographically and chronologically on one level and at the same time define ethnic, economic, social, and occupational cross currents on another. A single structure or group of structures typically encompasses multiple contexts and may bear relevance to more than one or two study units. The domestic architecture and agricultural history of southern New Castle County, for example, relates on one level to the shift in the American grain and milling markets following the Civil War; on another level, they are the

product of regional and even wholly local concerns. The issues of non-contiguous relationships and localized phenomena in vernacular architecture are crucial segments in study unit formulation.

In sum, vernacular architecture studies are interdisciplinary. Such studies may start from basic typological considerations, but for typologies to be useful, vernacular architecture studies must extend into the multifaceted examination of cultural processes in historic contexts. Context-oriented studies require a firm grounding in architectural, landscape, archaeological, historical, and folklife data development, research, and analysis. Vernacular architecture studies as an RP3 component demands overlapping study units and extra-local (even national) perspectives. The goal of a holistic interdisciplinary framework for the RP3 is not only attainable, it is necessary to the process of making cultural resource management decisions. Students of vernacular architecture have long accepted the validity of anthropological and historical notions on interconnectedness, and few would question the validity, much less the need, for interdisciplinary perspectives.



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