

## Chapter 6

# EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE, ASSESSMENT OF EFFECT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### A. SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

The research and investigation undertaken during this study have enabled the significance of the house and the farmstead to be more fully evaluated and placed in context. The property can now be seen to have significance in several areas.

#### 1. The Farm as a New Jersey German-American Landscape

Both physically and culturally, the landscape of New Jersey is complex and remains largely unhomogenized even in the face of modern development. Each community, each township, each county and each region has its own individual character that contributes to its unique sense of place.

Beginning after 1709, large numbers of German immigrants came to New Jersey and, after first settling in the Lower Raritan Valley, moved north and west along the branches of the river into the hills and valleys of Northern Hunterdon and Northwestern Somerset and Morris Counties. These people cleared the lands, established farms and founded settlements. They settled in ethnic clusters in which German was freely spoken and in which neighbors shared the same Palatine traditions and belonged to the same Lutheran and Reformed churches. In the process they created a culture that was no longer German but now German-American. Although the landscape that they knew, and that they played so large a role in creating, has been modified and muted by subsequent phases of history, it remains the foundation of the area's modern cultural and shaped landscapes.

The history, literature, art, language, culture and customs, folklore, medicine and religious beliefs of the Pennsylvania Germans have been studied in depth. Comparatively little such attention has been directed at their New Jersey counterparts. This fact is due, of course, to the larger size of the Germanic populations in Pennsylvania and to the continued persistence, through to the present, of the group as a significant ethnic and cultural subpopulation. Although small cohesive pockets of German-American culture survived in New Jersey until they were finally extinguished by the patriotism and anti-Teutonic fervor of the first World War, the German-American communities of 18th-century New Jersey were relatively quickly subsumed by the expansion of the dominant Anglo-American culture.

The Christoffel Vought Farm is one of the largest and most significant surviving artifacts of Colonial German-American culture in New Jersey. The farm offers an important window into the world of 18th-century Hunterdon County and the opportunity to better understand the people that inhabited it.

#### 2. The German-American Character of the Farmstead: Hof and Scheierhof

The archaeological and historical data on the farmstead combine to suggest that the layout of the buildings, their function and style, all conform to patterns seen in the better-known Pennsylvania German farmsteads. In particular, it appears that there are at least three buildings in the domestic sphere of the *hof*: the standing house and the foundations of two others, perhaps a summer kitchen and an ancillary house. The buildings of the *Scheierhof*, the agricultural realm, are

not identified physically, but it is possible that the standing 19th-century dairy barns north of the house incorporate the 18th-century foundations of the original barn.

The archaeological investigations have defined the limits of the area of greatest archaeological sensitivity in which data relating to these issues, especially those of the *hof*, is found.

The irrigated meadows that probably existed east of the farmstead are also a distinctive German-American feature. The stone revetments in the stream are likely to relate the impoundment that provided water for the system.

Study of the Christoffel Vought farmstead with reference to identifying the buildings, structures and activity areas that stood on it in the 18th century, their uses and their spatial arrangement offers the potential to inform concerning life on the farm, 18th-century agricultural practice and the evolution and structure of the Colonial German-American farmstead in New Jersey. Information derived from the study of the Christoffel Vought Farmstead and through the archeological investigation of patterns of material culture could provide important data that would permit comparisons between the much more studied Pennsylvania Germans and Colonial German populations in New Jersey.

### **3. The German-American Architecture of the House**

Architecturally, the Christoffel Vought House is a hybrid between vernacular German house types of the late 17th and early 18th centuries and the more up-to-date Georgian influenced designs that were gradually becoming ubiquitous across the landscape of the Mid-Atlantic and the rest of the English-speaking world. As such, it is evidence of not just the assimilation of

certain aspects of current architectural trends into the building tradition of a people but also, perhaps more importantly, of the broader acculturation of a people...the transformation of Palatine Germans into German-Americans and, finally, simply into Americans.

When constructed by Christoffel Vought, *circa* 1759, the house made a strong statement within the surrounding architectural landscape. Built of stone and larger than most of its neighbors, the residence was intended as both an expression of the position that the Vought's had achieved within their community and of the permanency of their settlement. The ornamental plaster ceilings within the rooms of the first floor represent additional statements concerning the wealth and status of the house's owner but also, in their direct reference to the architectural practice of Germany, declare his ethnic and cultural background and further define the house as an amalgam of Continental German and English Georgian design.

### **4. The Voughts: German American Loyalists**

Christoffel Vought and John Vought were both well-known individuals within their community whose names appear repeatedly as such within state and local records and in first hand accounts of events in Hunterdon County during this time period. Their leading role in the local Loyalist movement bought them notoriety both within and outside of the boundaries of Hunterdon County. The role of local Loyalist leaders in organizing resistance to New Jersey's Revolutionary government and their efforts to disrupt its support of the war were significant themes within New Jersey's Revolutionary War period history. Raids like the one that the Vought's conducted against Thomas Jones' tavern helped to instill the fear of retribution among supporters of the Revolution and to foster the bitter hatred that ultimately developed

between Revolutionary and Tory. The Christoffel Vought House was undoubtedly used by the Vought's as a stage of operations for their Loyalist related activities during the summer and fall of 1776 and certainly was the scene of the militia raid on the property that resulted in the arrest of Christoffel Vought by Captain Fredrick Frelinghuysen.

## **B. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT**

On the basis of the above observations, the Christoffel Vought Farm is a highly significant historic resource and meets the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The New Jersey Historic Preservation Office has preliminarily stated that the house is significant under Criterion A "for its association with Loyalism in the American Revolution" and under Criterion C as the "earliest known example of ornamental plaster in the State of New Jersey."

This consultant is of the opinion that the Christoffel Vought Farm is additionally significant under Criterion A for its association with the historic patterns of settlement of Hunterdon County by ethnic Germans during the 18th and 19th centuries and significant under Criterion B for its associations with Christoffel and John Vought, personages who played an important role in the events surrounding the early settlement of Hunterdon County and, as active Loyalists, in later Revolutionary War related contexts. The Vought House, itself, is further significant under Criterion C as a well-preserved, rare and significant example of New Jersey-Germanic architecture.

Finally, the Christoffel Vought Farm is also eligible under National Register Criterion D in that it has demonstrated potential to inform the lifeways and agricultural practices of German-American populations in Hunterdon County and New Jersey during the 18th century. Of particular interest is its ability to provide important information concerning the component

parts and spatial arrangement of *Der Hof* and *Der Scheierhof* on 18th century German-American Farmsteads in New Jersey. The property is also secondarily significant under Criterion D for its ability to provide information concerning broader agricultural practice in Hunterdon County during the late 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.

The period of significance of the Christoffel Vought Farm is defined as beginning in 1759 with the date of the initial purchase of the property by Christoffel Vought and ending with the *circa* 1900 date of the construction of the large hay barn, the last major building to be constructed on the property. The boundaries of the Christoffel Vought Farm as a New Jersey and National Register eligible resource are drawn to encompass the lands currently defined as Blocks 60, Lot 56, Block 74.01, Lot 1 and Block 18, Lot 5 (Figure 6.1). The boundaries of the eligible resource should include the alignment of Grey Rock Road between these two lots. A significant portion of the current road alignment seems to conform to that of the 18th-century farm access lane and archaeological resources were identified which may extend beneath the paved surface.

Taken together, Block 60, Lot 56, 74.01, Lot 1 and Block 18, Lot 5 represent approximately one quarter of the original 285 acre purchase made by Christoffel Vought in 1759. Although development has consumed much of the farm's former acreage, the surviving undeveloped acres represent the core component of the farm and include Vought's meadowland and the fields immediately surrounding the farmstead. They contribute to the resource's historic integrity by providing the context for understanding the way in which Christoffel Vought Farmstead related to the surrounding 18th-century agricultural landscape. Importantly, they also include Christoffel Vought's meadowlands and the remnant of the meadow irrigation system. The meadows were integral to the raising of cattle and other livestock on the farm during the 18th century

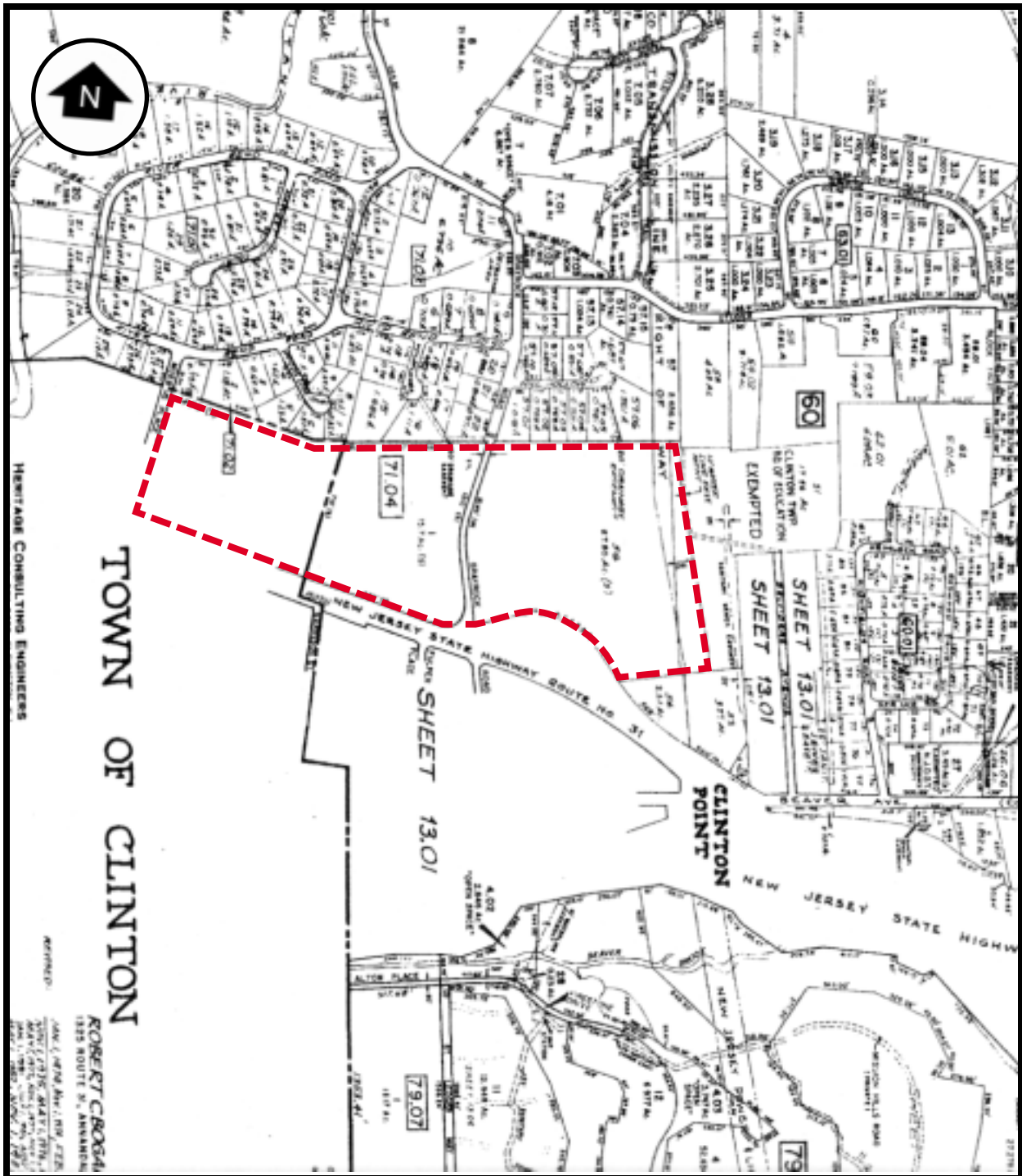


Figure 6.1. Map Showing Recommended Boundaries of the Christoffel Vought Farm National Register Eligible Property (Outlined). Base Map: Studer & McEldowney, Tax maps of Clinton Township and Town of Clinton, Hunterdon County, New Jersey. 1962 (Revised to Present). Scale: 1 inch=890 feet (approximately).

and these activities seem to have been the primary economic focus of the Vought family's agricultural efforts. Meadow irrigation systems of this type have rarely, if ever, been studied in New Jersey although they are well known in Pennsylvanian context. Lastly, the surviving farm fields also serve to buffer the farm from the encroachment of incompatible modern development and other intrusions.

The Christoffel Vought House, the Dairy Barn, the Hay Barn and the Wagon Shed, associated low stone retaining walls, associated archaeological deposits and stone channel walls in the creek and the surrounding agricultural landscape should be considered contributing resources.

### **C. ASSESSMENT OF EFFECT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Vought House is of such significance that this consultant cannot recommend strongly enough that the buildings and the ornamental plaster ceilings be preserved in place, and that if at all possible the proposed road widening and access scheme which runs through the area of the north barns be abandoned in favor of one that includes an access road relocated further to the north. The relatively close proximity of the currently proposed access road to the Christoffel Vought House would present an adverse visual effect by introducing regular traffic flow on a paved roadway that had not previously existed, by altering the house's surrounding landscape and by impacting the spatial arrangement of the farmstead. Additionally, there may be direct effects from vibration and noise that could affect the integrity of the building.

Regardless of the location of the access road, the construction of the school building on the property will unavoidably have an adverse effect on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places eligible property from the standpoint that it will compromise

the Christoffel Vought Farm's historic setting and viewshed, and will diminish the historic contextual connection between the farmstead and its surrounding and supporting agricultural lands. Reasonable effort should be made to make the design of the new school facility as unobtrusive, sympathetic and as compatible as possible in terms of overall character, size, massing, materials, texture and color with the Vought Farmstead complex. Landscape screening options should also be pursued to minimize view of the school from the farmstead complex.

In order to mitigate the identified adverse effects, the following are recommended, and are summarized on Figure 6.2.

**Photographic recordation of the Christoffel Vought Farm meeting Historic American Building Survey Standards** should be undertaken. Photography should include wide-angle photography of the ornamental plasterwork. Special attention should be paid by the photographer to the relationship of the Christoffel Vought House to the former meadowlands that are to be the site of the new school. The irrigation channel and any related infrastructure should also be photographically recorded.

**The Vought Farmstead fencing should be adjusted and maintained.** This measure is necessary to ensure that no accidental damage occurs as a result of construction activities, to provide a secured perimeter for the site until the building is reoccupied and to prevent the looting of archaeological resources. The fenced area should be adjusted to **include the defined Archaeological Protection Zone** (see Figure 6.2). Within the Archaeological Protection Zone proposals for ground disturbance will be submitted to the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office for review, and appropriate conditions for adjustment to the proposals or for archaeological recordation will be made. Because of the distance (and irrigation channel) separating the hay barn from the rest of the Vought

Farmstead (Vought House, dairy barn and wagon shed), this building may be fenced separately. Exterior illumination of the Vought Farmstead complex should be provided during evening hours and at night during the period that the building remains unoccupied.

**The measured drawings documenting the ornamental plasterwork** completed by Michael J. Margulies, Architect under contract to the Clinton Township Historic Preservation Committee should be amended to show areas of loss of historic plaster and supplemented to include drawings documenting the associated plaster cove cornice moldings and string course and details of each individual plaster molding profile.

**The Christoffel Vought House should be stabilized and “mothballed.”** In order to protect the house during the construction process, particularly during the period that it may continue to be vacant while a suitable use/occupant/owner is identified, and while preparation for any subsequent renovation/restoration of the building is underway, an individual meeting the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications in Historic Architecture (as designated in 36 CFR 61) should be engaged to develop and implement a plan for stabilizing and “mothballing” the Christoffel Vought House. This individual will need to be able to demonstrate substantial experience with similar “mothballing” projects involving historic properties. This plan should assume that the building may remain unoccupied for several years and should include measures necessary to secure the envelope of the buildings and to address issues of climate and moisture control and ventilation. The architect should have on his staff or as a member of his project team an experienced materials conservation expert who can provide recommendations with reference to the steps necessary to ensure the continued preservation of the ornamental plaster features during the period that the building is to remain vacant. The plan should also

detail provisions for frequent and regular inspection of the exterior and interior of the building to monitor conditions and should provide a mechanism by which to document the fact and demonstrate to all concerned parties that these inspections are taking place.

**National and New Jersey Registers of Historic Places Nominations** should be completed for the Christoffel Vought Farm in order to ensure that the building and property is documented in the public record and that it will receive adequate consideration with reference to any future public projects that may have the potential to impact the resource.

An abbreviated **Historic Sites Management Plan** (meeting the guidelines prepared by the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office) should be prepared in order to help identify appropriate uses for the building and to provide recommendations and guidance for any future rehabilitation/restoration of the property in order to ensure that any future work done to the Christoffel Vought Farm is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. This plan should address archaeological considerations as well as historic architectural issues and should take into account the entire Christoffel Vought Farm.

**A program of archaeological monitoring** should be developed and undertaken to ensure that any historically significant evidence is documented prior to unavoidable disturbance. Three areas require monitoring during construction: 1). The portion of the meadow irrigation system impacted by the proposed access road, 2). The Dairy Barn area (see below), 3). The portion of Gray Rock Road immediately in front of the house where the foundations of the possible summer kitchen lies.

In the event that the relocation of the proposed access road cannot be accomplished, the **interior and exterior of the dairy Barn should be documented** by means of photography and measured drawing. The measured drawing component of the recordation should consist of the preparation of a floor plan showing the footprint of the barn and each of its appendages. This work should also incorporate additional study of the barn in order to identify the historic relationships of its spaces, the date of original construction and those of subsequent modification. Photographic documentation should be conducted in accordance with Historic American Buildings Survey standards and may be conducted as part of the photographic recording of the farm recommended above.

**No blasting or pile driving** should be undertaken as part of the school construction activities unless the report of an engineer with qualified experience in working with historic buildings and structures can demonstrate that there will be no resultant damage to the ornamental plaster ceilings. In the event, that blasting is undertaken (under the above conditions), the plaster ceilings should be regularly inspected for damage and blasting/pile driving should be halted in the event that any such damage is observed. Blasting/pile driving activities should remain halted until a strategy is developed to repair any resultant damage to the ceilings and to protect said ceilings from further damage from these activities.

