

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY

Archaeological investigations of the Dunhams Block were carried out in three phases over a six-month period in 1987 as part of the Capital Center Project's compliance with Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act. Fieldwork concentrated chiefly on the Trenton House property and 12 and 14 North Warren Street, although the block as a whole was thoroughly assessed for archaeological potential and subjected to exhaustive archival studies.

All fieldwork was performed prior to demolition, an important factor in terms of the project logistics and the interpretation of archaeological data. The properties selected for detailed archaeological investigation all offered the prospect of producing sizable blocks of cultural stratigraphy suitable for large-scale area excavation. In general terms the anticipated archaeological potential was borne out in the excavation results and the reality of informative archaeological deposits surviving within downtown Trenton, in areas where deep basements are absent, has been amply demonstrated. These investigations, coupled with the recent studies conducted in the area of the New Jersey State House and the Old Barracks, are a reminder that, despite intensive urban redevelopment, significant information about Trenton's past still remains intact below ground.

Within the former hotel yard of the Trenton House property a more than four-foot accumulation of archaeological stratigraphy was documented in addition to a variety of structural features. These deposits reflected the intensive residential and commercial use of the property from the mid-1770s through to the present day and included evidence of the construction of the original house, its major stages of expansion as a hotel, the remains of a massive mid-19th century ice house, a succession of garden features and yard soils and an abundance of artifacts dating from the mid-18th through early 20th centuries. Investigations of the 12 and 14 North Warren Street properties produced a less complex stratigraphic sequence, but showed a number of backyard features, such as cisterns and outbuilding foundations, dating from the late 18th through early 20th centuries.

In the case of all three of the properties examined the archaeological and accompanying historical studies have enabled a far clearer understanding of the sequence of development, not only of the buildings on these properties, but also of the Dunhams Block as a whole. These investigations have demonstrated most effectively that the optimum knowledge about the history of an urban environment is to be derived from an integrated analysis of archival materials, historic architecture and archaeology.