



For The Inquirer / DAVID M. WARREN

Archaeologist Dan Bailey measured the site during the final phase of the dig last fall. It turned up only three arrowheads.

Developers get OK after history dig

It yielded little of archaeological value. Until then, plans to build a 13-acre age-restricted community in Gibbsboro were held up.

By Lillian Weis

INQUIRER CORRESPONDENT

GIBBSBORO — About 3,000 to 1,000 B.C., tribes and hunters roamed the open fields that are now part of Kirkwood Road.

These American Indians set up temporary camps behind Hilliards Creek — also known as Millard's Creek — while they searched through the dense wetlands for wild animals, plants and fish.

A high concentration of arrowheads and tools used for hunting and food processing were found in an area adjacent to Hilliards Creek during the first phase of an archaeological investigation in November 1994.

That is why final approval for the 13-acre Heritage Village Development, an age-restricted community on Kirkwood Road, was held up.

A second and final phase of the excavation, done north of the creek between Oct. 24 and Nov. 1, 1995, turned up only three arrowheads. That site was found to be "insignificant" and final approval was given to developers on March 12.

"The area where significant artifacts lie will be protected by the borough," said Mayor Edward G. Campbell 3d. About five acres close to the stream corridor were designated open space and will be preserved, he said.

In Gibbsboro, a dig must be done on pre-historic and historic sites when deemed necessary by the Planning Board before any development. And the site along the creek was included in the town's historic district. "It has been a source of archaeological information in the past," said Bruce Compton,

chairman of the borough's Historic Preservation Committee.

The area adjacent to the excavation is where the Nicholson Branch, Hilliards Creek and Cooper River come together. It has long been known as a rich source of wildlife that made it attractive to early American Indians. Residents have found many arrowheads within the 2.2-square-mile community.

The artifacts found in the southeastern corner of the 140,000 square-foot area date to the Late Archaic period, an era in which the American Indians were still gatherers and hunters, not farmers.

"To subsist in this way, they had to move around searching for wild animals and food," said John W. Lawrence, project archaeologist and principal investigator at Richard Grubb & Associates. "This is a location visited repeatedly by small groups, either families or hunting groups such as males that would stop for short period of times throughout the year."