



Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18AN252

Site Name: Free School

Prehistoric

Other name(s)

Historic

Unknown

Brief Description:

18th-19th century school house, early 20th century residence

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Maryland Archaeological Research Unit No. 8

SCS soil & sediment code 22) MVE

Latitude 38.9833

Longitude -76.6369

Physiographic province Western Shore Coastal

Terrestrial site

Underwater site

Elevation 30 m

Site slope

Ethnobotany profile available

Maritime site

Site setting

-Site Setting restricted

-Lat/Long accurate to within 1 sq. mile, user may need to make slight adjustments in mapping to account for sites near state/county lines or streams

Topography

- Floodplain
- Hilltop/bluff
- Interior flat
- Upland flat
- Ridgetop
- Terrace
- Low terrace
- High terrace
- Rockshelter/cave
- Hillslope
- Unknown
- Other

Ownership

- Private
- Federal
- State of MD
- Regional/county/city
- Unknown

Nearest Surface Water

Name (if any) Tarnan's Branch

Saltwater

Ocean

Estuary/tidal river

Tidewater/marsh

Minimum distance to water is 76 m

Freshwater

Stream/river

Swamp

Lake or pond

Spring

Temporal & Ethnic Contextual Data:

Paleoindian site

Woodland site

Archaic site

MD Adena

Early archaic

Early woodland

Middle archaic

Mid. woodland

Late archaic

Late woodland

Unknown prehistoric context

Contact period site

ca. 1820 - 1860

ca. 1630 - 1675

ca. 1860 - 1900

ca. 1675 - 1720

ca. 1900 - 1930

ca. 1720 - 1780

Post 1930

ca. 1780 - 1820

Unknown historic context

Unknown context

Ethnic Associations (historic only)

Native American

Asian American

African American

Unknown

Anglo-American

Other

Hispanic

Y=Confirmed, P=Possible

Site Function Contextual Data:

Prehistoric

Multi-component

Misc. ceremonial

Village

Rock art

Hamlet

Shell midden

Base camp

STU/lithic scatter

Rockshelter/cave

Quarry/extraction

Earthen mound

Fish weir

Cairn

Production area

Burial area

Unknown

Other context

Historic

Urban/Rural? Rural

Domestic

Homestead

Farmstead

Mansion

Plantation

Row/townhome

Cellar

Privy

Industrial

Mining-related

Quarry-related

Mill

Black/metalsmith

Furnace/forge

Other

Transportation

Canal-related

Road/railroad

Wharf/landing

Maritime-related

Bridge

Ford

Educational

Commercial

Trading post

Store

Tavern/inn

Military

Battlefield

Fortification

Encampment

Townsite

Religious

Church/mtg house

Ch support bldg

Burial area

Cemetery

Sepulchre

Isolated burial

Bldg or foundation

Possible Structure

Post-in-ground

Frame-built

Masonry

Other structure

Slave related

Non-domestic agri

Recreational

Midden/dump

Artifact scatter

Spring or well

Unknown

Other context

school house, residence

Interpretive Sampling Data:

Prehistoric context samples

Soil samples taken

Flotation samples taken

Other samples taken

Historic context samples

Soil samples taken

Flotation samples taken

Other samples taken



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Diagnostic Artifact Data:

Projectile Point Types		Koens-Crispin	
Clovis	<input type="checkbox"/>	Perkiomen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hardaway-Dalton	<input type="checkbox"/>	Susquehana	<input type="checkbox"/>
Palmer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vernon	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kirk (notch)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Piscataway	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kirk (stem)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Calvert	<input type="checkbox"/>
Le Croy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Selby Bay	<input type="checkbox"/>
Morrow Mntn	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jacks Rf (notch)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guilford	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jacks Rf (pent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brewerton	<input type="checkbox"/>	Madison/Potomac	<input type="checkbox"/>
Otter Creek	<input type="checkbox"/>	Levanna	<input type="checkbox"/>

Prehistoric Sherd Types

Marcey Creek	<input type="checkbox"/>	Popes Creek	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shepard	<input type="checkbox"/>	Keyser	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dames Qtr	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coulbourn	<input type="checkbox"/>	Townsend	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yeocomico	<input type="checkbox"/>
Selden Island	<input type="checkbox"/>	Watson	<input type="checkbox"/>	Minguannan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Monongahela	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accokeek	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mockley	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sullivan Cove	<input type="checkbox"/>	Susquehannock	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wolfe Neck	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clemson Island	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shenks Ferry	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Vinette	<input type="checkbox"/>	Page	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moyaone	<input type="checkbox"/>		
				Potomac Crk	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Historic Sherd Types

Earthenware		Ironstone		Staffordshire		Stoneware	
Astbury	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jackfield	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tin Glazed	8	English Brown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Borderware	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mn Mottled	<input type="checkbox"/>	Whiteware	97	Eng Dry-bodied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buckley	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Devon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Porcelain	8	Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creamware	23	Pearlware	48			Rhenish	1
						Wt Salt-glazed	9

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Other Artifact & Feature Types:

Prehistoric Artifacts		Other fired clay	
Flaked stone	28	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ground stone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Modified faunal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stone bowls	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unmod faunal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire-cracked rock	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oyster shell	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other lithics (all)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics (all)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncommon Obj.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rimsherds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Prehistoric Features

Mound(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Storage/trash pit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Midden	<input type="checkbox"/>	Burial(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shell midden	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ossuary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Postholes/molds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>
House pattern(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Palisade(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Hearth(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Lithic reduc area	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Lithic Material

Fer quartzite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sil sandstone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jasper	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chalcedony	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chert	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ironstone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rhyolite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Argilite	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quartz	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steatite	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quartzite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sandstone	<input type="checkbox"/>
		European flint	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Basalt	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Dated features present at site

18th and 19th Century school structure(s)

Historic Artifacts		Tobacco related	
Pottery (all)	250	Activity item(s)	91
Glass (all)	733	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Architectural	1836	Faunal material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furniture	5	Misc. kitchen	214
Arms	12	Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	9	Misc.	495
Personal items	3	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Historic Features

Const feature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Privy/outhouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depression/mound	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Well/cistern	<input type="checkbox"/>	Burial(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cellar hole/cellar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trash pit/dump	<input type="checkbox"/>	Railroad bed	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Hearth/chimney	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sheet midden	<input type="checkbox"/>	Earthworks	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Postholes/molds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planting feature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mill raceway	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Paling ditch/fence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Road/walkway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wheel pit	<input type="checkbox"/>		

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Radiocarbon Data:

Sample 1: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 2: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 3: +/- years BP Reliability

Sample 4: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 5: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 6: +/- years BP Reliability

Sample 7: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 8: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 9: +/- years BP Reliability

Additional radiocarbon results available



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External Samples/Data:

Collection curated at MAC, Anne Arundel County Board of Education

Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

Site 18AN252 is believed to be the archeological and architectural remains of the first 'Free School' in Anne Arundel County, which was erected sometime between the years 1724 and 1739. The site is located in Davidsonville on a 1.39 acre parcel, with landscaped grass on all four sides and surrounded by private residences. The property is situated on a land mass dissected to the west by the Patuxent River and to the east by the South River. Tarnans Branch, a small tributary of South River, is approximately 228.6 m (750 ft) to the south and an unnamed tributary of the North River is about 228.6 m to the north. Soils at the site are predominantly Monmouth fine sandy loams and Monmouth clay loams.

The Anne Arundel (aka Annearrundell) Free School is believed to be the oldest colonial-era publically funded school still standing. It is believed to have operated from the time of its construction in 1724 until the 1860 or 1870ss. As early as the late 17th century, the Maryland Colonial Assembly began passing resolutions aimed towards the creation of public funded schools in each county of the colony. The first of such schools known to have been constructed was King William's School, built in 1696, was built in Annapolis and eventually became St. John's College. The original structure, however, does not survive.

It wasn't until 1722, that a rudimentary concept of public education took hold throughout the colony and the push to actually construct such schools in each county and parish took hold. In that year, a 7 member committee (consisting of members of both houses of the colonial assembly) met to formulate a plan and eventually produced a piece of legislation that was passed as the 'Maryland Free School Act of 1723'. It empowered boards of seven "Visitors" for each county who were to purchase land, establish a school there, hire school masters, and manage each property to support the school. These Visitors were to visit the school property periodically and undertake any improvements needed. At least 1 Visitor on each board was to be a minister.

On June 19th, 1724 the seven Visitors for Anne Arundel County purchased 150 acres of land for 106 £ at the head of the South River and owned by Richard Snowden. By August of that year, they had signed a contract for the construction of the school. The proceedings of the Visitors record the explicit instructions given to the builder for the construction of the school. These records reveal that the school house was to be 18 feet wide by 25 feet long, 1½ stories tall with a large "great room" downstairs for classes and living space for the school master (and possibly boarding students) upstairs. The upstairs was partitioned with a fireplace in each room. The builder, Captain Thomas Gassoway, died in 1739 and the settlement of his estate mentions the receipt of 100 £ from the Visitors of the Anne Arundel Free School. Thus, the school had to be constructed sometime between 1724 and 1739.

In May of 1746, a notice was placed in the Maryland Gazette advertizing that a John Wilmot was serving as schoolmaster and listing out the subjects which new students would be taught. He is the first-known documented school master at the free school, but he could have had a (currently undocumented) predecessor. A second building, likely a kitchen, was added to the schoolhouse during the latter half of the 18th century. The school struggled for most of the rest of that century to keep an effective schoolmaster in place, to obtain funds for education and upkeep, and to retain students (as they were in competition with several local private schools) by then. However, the school would continue to operate as a school until the 1860s or 1870s. From 1806 to 1809, Johns Hopkins attended the Anne Arundel County Free School (perhaps its most famous student).

By 1875, the old Free School was being used solely as living quarters, with a new one-room school house situated about ¼ mile to the west. The upper half-storey was deconstructed and a full second storey addition was added to the building. The new school west of the old building would serve local children until the early 20th Century. In 1910, an Act of the General Assembly led to the sale of the 150 acres of land to the McKenney family. It would remain a single parcel until 1975, when it was subdivided and sold off as individual residential lots. Future owners would make several renovations to the property, but enough of the original building remained in the mid 1970s that architects, archeologists, and local historians, though they could discern the plan of what was the original Free School.

Beginning in the 1970s, the Anne Arundel Retired Teachers Association and the Anne Arundel County Board of Education began to take interest in the possible restoration of the structure believed to be the schoolhouse. Though archival and architectural research seemed to support the idea that the school might prove to be the free school built in 1724 by the Maryland colonial government, it was felt that an archeological survey of the property might be able to confirm the site's use as such. The property was already under a perpetual archeological and historical easement when the first archeological work was carried out in 1978, and MHT was obviously, very involved in oversight of work conducted on an easement property.

The aforementioned survey was carried out from late April to early June of 1978. The major objective of the research was to compare the 1724 Visitors of the Free School architects plan for the school with the structures encountered during excavation. In addition, the construction stages of the old building were studied and compared with the known facts about the history of the Free School. Oral history data were also secured from reliable witnesses to add to the information already recorded about the school.

The site was excavated with shovels and trowels, using 1.27 and 0.64 cm (½ and ¼ inch) mesh for screening of all "artifact-bearing" soils. Soil samples were retained, but not analyzed and field records/catalogs were kept in notebooks. A total of 17 trenches of varying sizes were excavated both along the exterior foundation of the structure at 18AN252 and within the interior. In addition, 4 shovel tests were excavated judgmentally. It was estimated that about 15% of the site area, or 17.8 m² (192 ft²), was excavated in these rather narrow (most less than 61 cm wide) trenches. Field graphs of ground plans and profiles were kept for each trench and related to the building as a whole. The site was included within a grid of 1.524 m (5 ft) squares and a datum plane was set up for vertical locations. Little additional information is provided in the full site report as to the manner of excavation and no artifact catalog is provided.

The results revealed that the archeological deposits at the site were largely intact. Much disturbance had occurred to the remnants of the standing structure over the years due to vandalism and salvaging, but below the soil little evidence of disturbance was encountered. Artifacts were recovered dating to both the 18th and 19th centuries. In addition, the original researchers noted the presence of materials such as writing slate fragments and pencils, which would be expected at an educational institution. Unfortunately, no comprehensive artifact catalog is provided in the full site report and, as one reviewer at MHT noted, most of the diagnostics recovered have a long history of use (none could be pinpointed specifically to the early 18th century when the school was founded) and writing slate, etc. are actually quite common at historic sites.

The original researchers expressed confidence based on the documented history of architectural changes at the Free School, and the size and shape of architectural features encountered at 18AN252, that the two building are one and the same. The MHT site files for 18AN252 reveal that there was some skepticism about the specific conclusions in 1978-1979, but ultimately, MHT believed that the archival evidence proved the site was authentic. MHT supported



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the efforts of the Anne Arundel Retired Teachers Association and the Anne Arundel County Board of Education to restore the site and funded additional architectural and archeological work. The professional architectural studies carried out in 1979 (and later), proved that 18AN252 was indeed the Free School and it was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. A plan for restoration was developed and implemented over the next several years. Ultimately, the working group decided to restore the structure to a condition similar to what it would have looked like from roughly 1815 to 1875.

During the early 1980s, steady progress was made in making repairs to the building. Additional archeological work was carried out in 1984, principally by a crew of volunteers. Unfortunately, no final report has ever been issued.

A Phase II level of research was carried out in October of 1989 as the Teachers Association and Board of Ed. Prepared to undertake a major capital improvement that would help in the restoration and interpretation of the Free School. At that time, a septic system and associated water and sanitation lines were to be installed. Thirteen shovel test pits (STPs) and seven 91 X 91 cm (3 X 3 ft) test units were excavated during the Phase II project.

The STPs were excavated at 3.66 m (12 ft) intervals in two areas. The first area (9 STPs) was situated north of the northeast corner of the Free School, where a septic line was to be installed. The second area (4 STPs) was off of the southeast corner of the building where a waterline and well point would be situated. All shovel tests measured between 38.1 and 45.72 cm (15 and 18 in) in diameter. Soils from the shovel tests and the test units were screened through hardware cloth. Artifacts were collected, the stratigraphy and other features were recorded, and the tests were backfilled.

Test Units 1 through 6 were north of the eastern wing of the school house, along the proposed septic installation corridor (septic tank, sewer lines, connector box, and 2 dry wells). Test Unit 7 was south of the eastern wing of the structure, at the far end of the proposed well and water line. Again, each test unit was 91 cm square and units were spaced to gain a general understanding of the soils and artifactual deposits along the proposed construction routes. Specific locations were also chosen in response to cultural features revealed or found to be absent in some of the STPs or indicated by ground contours. In all, approximately 40% of the corridors of disturbance were sampled. Excavation was accomplished with hand tools, primarily trowel and shovel. Soils were excavated by natural strata and sifted through hardware cloth. Notes, plan and profile drawings, and photographs were kept. Upon completion of each test unit, they were backfilled with the original soils.

A total of 5 features were encountered during the Phase II excavations. Test Unit 1, Feature 1 was a deposit of modern debris and concrete rubble, possible a section of curb. Test Unit 5, Feature 1 was a small pit (evident as a slight depression at ground surface) filled with late 19th and early 20th Century refuse. Test Unit 5, Feature 2 was a pit apparently excavated in the late 19th century and backfilled with household trash. Test Unit 5, Feature 3 is a postmold and post remnant found along the west wall of the unit. Test Unit 6, Feature 1 is a second postmold with fill dating to the latter 19th or early 20th Centuries. A fence line projected between the evidence of posts in Units 5 and 6, has no apparent alignment with the Free School building walls. While no intact features were exposed during the excavation of Test Unit 7 (the only one south of the school building), the artifacts recovered indicate a significant mid to late 18th Century midden is in the immediate vicinity.

Artifacts recovered during the 1989 Phase II excavations included 91 activity items, 1,836 architectural artifacts, 9 clothing items, 5 furniture-related items, 854 kitchen-related artifacts, 3 personal objects, 16 tobacco-related objects, 12 arms items, 495 miscellaneous historic/modern objects, and 28 prehistoric artifacts. The activity items were 6 toys (3 porcelain doll fragments, a rubber ball fragment, a toy marble, and a plastic toy boat), 30 pieces of lamp glass, 5 non-electrical wire fragments, an aluminum ID tag, a hinge wrench, 3 slate pencil fragments, a pencil eraser, 18 fragments of writing slate(s), 5 pieces of chalk, a steel rod, an aluminum rod, a rubber gasket, a gear wheel, 16 miscellaneous hardware fragments, and a snaffle bit. Architectural artifacts were 618 brick fragments, 16 cement/concrete fragments, 432 mortar/plaster fragments, 5 pieces of black/brittle tar paper, 129 asphalt shingle fragments, 22 pieces of asbestos siding, 255 window glass fragments (2 of which are hand blown), 19 possible lumber fragments, part of a red cedar post, 332 nails (138 cut, 104 wire, 33 wrought, and 57 unidentified), a brad, 2 staples, an iron spike, a hook and screw eye, a metal hasp, and an electrical wire fragment. Clothing items were a brass snap, 2 brass eyelets, 2 pewter buttons, a rubber shoe part, a piece of shoe leather, a brass suspender clap, and a leather fragment. The furniture items were 2 tacks, 2 possible stove valves, and a glass chandelier part. The kitchen-related artifacts were 250 ceramic sherds (23 creamware, 48 pearlware, 8 tin-glazed earthenware, 8 porcelain, 2 semi-porcelain, 1 brown agateware, 2 coarse earthenware, 97 whiteware, 1 yellowware, 32 redware, 9 white salt-glazed stoneware, 1 Rhenish stoneware, 1 burnt stoneware, 6 miscellaneous stoneware, and 11 unidentified ceramic sherds), 390 glass fragments (10 milk glass fragments, a probable vessel glass fragment, 41 jar fragments, 3 canning jar lid liner fragments, a jar lid with a porcelain liner, and 334 bottle glass fragments), 2 tin cans, a possible brass spoon handle, 190 faunal objects (62 animal bones, 123 oyster shell fragments, and 5 burned oyster shells), and 21 nuts or nutshells. The three personal items were a plastic curler, a piece of mirror glass, an 1884 Indian Head penny. The tobacco-related artifacts were 8 pipe stems and 8 pipe bowls. The arms objects were nine .22 caliber shells, 2 honey-colored gunflints, and a shotgun shell. The miscellaneous historic and modern items were 3 unidentified hand-blown glass fragment, a melted glass fragment, 84 other pieces of glass, an unidentified pewter object, 97 unidentified metal pieces, 15 burned wood fragments, 7 other wood fragments, a piece of shale, 12 plastic fragments, 2 pieces of white rock, 264 pieces of coal, a cinder fragment, and 7 pieces of charcoal. The prehistoric items recovered during the Phase II survey were a quartz point base, a quartzite drill, a chalcedony flake, a rhyolite flake, 12 quartz flakes, 5 quartz shatter fragments, and 7 quartzite flakes.

Most artifacts and features encountered during the 1989 Phase II testing program dated from the 1880s to the present. Thus, it was determined that the construction activities for the well and septic system would not endanger any known significant cultural resources. However, there were some noteworthy findings in Test Units 1 and 7, and to a lesser extent, Test Units 5 and 6. In Test Unit 1, a modern midden (i.e. trash pit) with a large section of curb or culvert posed an impediment to the (then) proposed construction activities. A largely intact 18th Century deposit could be uncovered near Test Unit 7. Special attention had to be taken in the construction area south of the school house (archeological monitoring). Evidence of posts was uncovered in Test Units 5 and 6, warranting additional consideration. These features were of a late 19th/early 20th century origin and could be portions of larger features, such as fence lines, not evident in the test units. In addition, a prehistoric component (i.e. 2 tools and 27 flakes) was encountered north of the school house. Tentative dates suggest an occupation during the Late Archaic and Early Woodland/Archaic periods.

No additional documented archeological work has occurred at 18AN252. However, the site likely still retains significant research potential. Additional work to the south of the standing Free School structure has the potential to yield intact archeological deposits dating to the 18th century use of the school. Potentially, data could be obtained of a unique nature relating to Colonial-era free education, a rarity not just in Maryland, but in North America. The site should be considered a significant archeological resource.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

00000462, 00000612, 97002799, Site Files