



# Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18BC138

Site Name: Fells Point Synagogue

Prehistoric

Other name(s)

Historic

Unknown

Brief Description:

early 19th century grocery and synagogue

## Site Location and Environmental Data:

Maryland Archaeological Research Unit No. 7

SCS soil & sediment code

Latitude 39.2872

Longitude -76.6006

Physiographic province Western Shore Coastal

Terrestrial site

Underwater site

Elevation -6 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) Northwest Branch of Patap

#### Saltwater

Ocean

Estuary/tidal river

Tidewater/marsh

#### Freshwater

Stream/river

Swamp

Lake or pond

Spring

Minimum distance to water is 310 m

## Temporal & Ethnic Contextual Data:

Paleoindian site

Woodland site

Archaic site

MD Adena

Early archaic

Early woodland

Middle archaic

Mid. woodland

Contact period site

ca. 1820 - 1860

Y

ca. 1630 - 1675

ca. 1860 - 1900

Y

ca. 1675 - 1720

ca. 1900 - 1930

Y

ca. 1720 - 1780

Post 1930

Y

ca. 1780 - 1820

Late archaic

Late woodland

Unknown historic context

Unknown prehistoric context

Unknown context

### Ethnic Associations (historic only)

Native American

Asian American

African American

Unknown

Anglo-American

Other

Hispanic

German, Eastern European Jews, Ger-Am

Y=Confirmed, P=Possible

## Site Function Contextual Data:

### Prehistoric

- Multi-component
- Village
- Hamlet
- Base camp
- Rockshelter/cave
- Earthen mound
- Cairn
- Burial area
- Misc. ceremonial
- Rock art
- Shell midden
- STU/lithic scatter
- Quarry/extraction
- Fish weir
- Production area
- Unknown
- Other context

### Historic

Urban/Rural? Urban

#### 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

- 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

Synagogue, Grocery

## 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



# Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

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

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

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

## Other Artifact & Feature Types:

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

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

Dated features present at site

19th century chimney and keg sump

Historic Artifacts		Tobacco related	
Pottery (all)	9	Activity item(s)	4
Glass (all)	101	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Architectural	<input type="checkbox"/>	Faunal material	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Furniture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Misc. kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arms	<input type="checkbox"/>	Floral material	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Misc.	12304
Personal items	1	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

Other name(s)

Historic

Brief

Description:

early 19th century grocery and synagogue

Unknown

## External Samples/Data:

Collection curated at Maryland Historical Society

Additional raw data may be available online

## Summary Description:

The Fells Point Synagogue (18BC138) is an early 19th century grocery and Jewish synagogue at 1534 Fleet Street in downtown Baltimore, Maryland. The site is situated on the west edge of the Fells Point District of the city and within the Fells Point Historic District. It is bounded on the east by Bond Street, on the south by Fleet Street, on the west by Dallas Alley, and on the north by rowhouses located along Bond Street. The site includes a three storey late 18th century brick structure which has seen multiple uses over the past 200 odd years. The building has been used as a home, a grocery store, twice as a synagogue, a saloon, an auto parts store, and a stained glass shop among other uses. The exterior portion of the site consists of a large yard area located to the north and west of the building. Until circa 1998, several rowhouses occupied part of this yard area.

Fells Point was the newest of the three 18th century towns that were merged to form Baltimore City (Jones or Old Town and Baltimore Town being the other two). The beginnings of Fells Point date to 1730 when William Fell, a Quaker by birth and a carpenter by trade, sailed to Baltimore from Lancashire, England. Upon arrival in Maryland, he purchased a 100 acre tract from Lloyd Harris called Copus Harbor (also known as Long Island Point as early as 1670). He built a home there and erected the first shipyard in the future Fells Point in 1730.

The location selected by Fell was a wise one. Deep water, suitable for ship building and docking, existed very close to shore, while mud flats at Jones Town and Baltimore Town hampered shipping efforts at those locations for a number of decades until extensive and expensive piers could be built. In 1732, William Fell married Sarah Bond. They had five children: 4 girls named Ann, Jane, Margaret, and Catherine, and 1 boy named Edward. William Fell named his property Fells Prospect but because of the contour of the land, it was often referred to as Fells Point. Fell continued to buy adjacent properties into the 1740s. By 1745 he owned 1,100 acres in the Fells Point area as well as additional properties elsewhere in Anne Arundel and Baltimore Counties.

In 1746 William Fell died. His only son, Edward, inherited the family home and most of his father's properties, including those at Fells Point. Edward Fell married his cousin, Ann Bond, in 1758 and in 1763 he laid out the Copus Point (Fells Prospect) land into a town called Fells Point. Streets and alleys were laid out and the sale of lots began. Growth was brisk and for a time outpaced that of Baltimore (Baltimore own and Jones Town had been merged in 1745). During the next 20 years, Fells Point grew to be the shipbuilding center of Maryland.

In 1766 Edward Fell suffered an untimely death at the age of 33. His widow and their young son, William, had their affairs managed largely by Thomas Bond, Edward Fell's brother-in-law. He oversaw the sale and development of Fells Point until William Fell Jr. reached the age of majority in the late 1770s. On October 7th, 1773, Thomas Bond sold several lots, including Lot #585 and #589, to William Hammond of Baltimore. Hammond was initially a ship's carpenter, but ultimately became a well-known merchant and land-speculator in Baltimore. On 24 December, 1774, William Hammond by Deed/Lease transferred Lots #585 and #589 to Robert Morton for the term of 99 years and the payment of an annual lease of £ 7.5. These lots contained the area of Site 18BC138. The Morton family held the fee simple rights to the property into the 19th century.

Initial use and building construction on the two lots most likely occurred no earlier than 1775 and no later than 1797. The earlier date reflects the acquisition by lease/deed of the site by Robert and Mary Morton (Robert's wife). The later date is when Robert and Mary Morton's daughter (also named Mary) leased the property that became 1534 Fleet Street to James Smith. Smith was listed as a ship's rigger in the 1796 Baltimore City Directory and his brother, John Smith, was listed as a carpenter and joiner. The lease identified the Smiths as whip makers. Evidently the two brothers later joined together in a new trade. In 1798, Mary Morton leased the lot which became 532 and 534 Bond Street to Elijah Hughes, a blacksmith, although other evidence indicates that Mary leased the lot, possibly in late 1795 or early 1796, to someone named Norris. He, in turn, sub-leased the property in 1796 to Jonathan Harrison, a house joiner. The records associated with the leases and sub-leases of the 1790s indicate that houses were present. The Mortons held the fee simple rights to the 1534 Fleet Street property into the 19th century.

In 1802, a George Presstman obtained a lease-hold to the property (ground rent) at 1534 Fleet Street (i.e. the northwest corner of Fleet and Bond at that time known as 117 Bond) from the heirs of James Smith. The Presstman family opened up a grocery on the spot. The 1804 Baltimore City Directory lists Thomas Presstman (George's nephew) as a new tenant at 117 Bond Street (1534 Fleet). Thomas Presstman had moved his grocery store from 57 Wilk Street to the corner property on Bond Street and would continue his grocery business at this location through 1833, also residing there in the 4 years just before his death in 1835. Prior to 1832, Presstman lived at the 57 Wilk Street address.

Early 20th century secondary sources describing the founding of Nidche Y'Israel, the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, state that the first Jewish synagogue in Baltimore (or Maryland for that matter) was established in 1830 and that services were held in the neighborhood of Fleet and Bond Streets. The meeting place is described as being in a small room above a local grocery store. Records also indicate that the congregation met elsewhere after 1832, but would not build a permanent home until they constructed a synagogue on Loyd Street (the third oldest synagogue building in the US) in 1845. Thomas Presstman appears to have sublet the second floor room above his grocery to the synagogue until he took up residence on the second floor himself in 1832, prompting the Jewish congregation to move elsewhere.

The location of the first Jewish synagogue in Maryland is important in the history of Judaism as a symbol of the triumph of faith in a long battle for Jewish civil rights in the state. Before 1828, Jews in Maryland were unable to vote, hold political office, or incorporate as legal congregations under the Maryland Constitution of 1776. With the passage of the "Jew Bill" in 1828, Jews gained these rights. Nidche Y'Israel was the first congregation incorporated after passage of the 1828 law and met in the space above the Presstman grocery at the corner of Fleet and Bond.

In 1834, Thomas Presstman's son, George, began operating a clothing store out of the 1534 Fleet Street location. He continued operating the store at this location following his father's death and up until 1840 when he moved to a new location at 17 Thames Street in Fells Point. In 1838, he bought the 1534 Fleet Street property at public auction from the Morton family heirs, securing the deed 2 years later. The relocation of his grocery store to Thames Street meant that George Presstman could begin renting the Bond Street building, as well as other properties he had acquired from the Morton family estate, for financial gain. George Presstman proved to be very resourceful in this capacity and within 10 years would devote his full energies to the real estate business. After 1840, the Fleet/Bond Street building and lot were no longer used by the Presstmans and became home to a succession of shops: a saloon, a boarding house, an auto parts store, and a stained glass shop.

Interestingly, the Presstman family may have continued to rent to the Jewish community groups in Fells Point until around 1848. Only secondary sources from



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Unknown

the early 20th century exist, but an organization known as the United Hebrew Benevolent Society (founded in 1833) reportedly rented the second floor of the store at 1534 Fleet Street not long after the departure of Nidche Y'Israel. This society offered assistance to newly arrived Jewish immigrants coming through the Port of Baltimore. They also provided a space for the services of the second Jewish congregation in Baltimore, known as the Fells Point Hebrew Congregation or Oheb Israel (Lovers of Israel). Thus, the site, represents the very center of the Jewish community of Baltimore in the 19th century.

The site was first investigated in 1998 by the Baltimore Center for Urban Archaeology (BCUA). In 1997, an older structure was raised in the vicinity of 1534 Fleet Street, resulting in some grading of the yard surfaces at the site and exposing artifacts, which were collected by locals to a minor extent. The exposures prompted BCUA to act and from 1998 until May of 1999, eight 1.524 X 1.524 m units were excavated on the site. These units exposed 13 privies and a cistern. The latter feature was investigated by an avocational archeologist. No report has been written describing the findings of the 1998-1999 field seasons.

The first (and only) field project at 18BC138 for which a detailed report has been written occurred in the spring of 2000. Archeological work was carried out on the interior of the standing structure at 1534 Fleet Street. The excavation was performed at the request of the owner of the property, Brian Schwartz, and was funded with a non-capital grant from the Maryland Historical Trust. At the time, Mr. Schwartz was considering options to renovate the building as office space and possibly as a museum dedicated to the 19th century immigrant experience in Baltimore. This work was not required by existing federal, state, or local regulations, but was done entirely by the desire of Mr. Schwartz to preserve the historical and cultural remains associated with the property.

Six 1.524 X 1.524 m (5 X 5 ft) test units were excavated in the dirt floor interior of 1534 Fleet Street. Four of these units were placed over a brick feature which was just visible on the ground surface. These units occupied the center of a first-floor room and extended almost to the east wall of the building. Excavation of these four units would eventually reveal that the brick feature (Feature 1) was a central pile chimney. The other two units were placed in the northwest and southwest corners of the building in order to compare soil strata across the room with that found in Feature 1. Units were not placed in the northeast and southeast corners of the room. The southeast corner of the room was the location of the main entrance to the building. This entrance consisted of a late 19th to early 20th century storefront which was a later addition to the room. No unit was placed in the northeast corner of the room because it was felt that the unit in the units in the other corners had provided sufficient comparative soils data.

Before excavation began, the entire interior of the building was covered with a 1.524 m grid tied to the northeast exterior corner of the building. A 30.5 cm (1 ft) thick layer of smashed glass was removed from the surface of the entire interior. This layer was located directly below and between the floor joists (in various stages of disrepair) and consisted of broken bottle fragments dating to the late 19th or early 20th century. It is believed that this layer was laid down below the shop's floor boards in an attempt to deter rodent entry to the building. Most of the glass which was removed from this upper layer in the interior of the building was not retained. A grab sample of 118 diagnostic pieces was kept. These items included a fragment of molded ironstone, 3 sherds of unglazed redware, 3 sherds of annular decorated stoneware, a sherd of Rockingham, a sherd of molded whiteware, 98 sherds of light green bottle glass, molded vessel colorless glass, a copper ring, 3 red clay molded pipe bowls and a 5/64 pipe stem, a sherd of white bodied kiln waster, and 3 pieces of kiln furniture.

After removal of the initial glass layer, soils were removed by natural/cultural stratigraphic layer. In units where a single stratum was over 30.5 cm in thickness, the stratum was often broken into smaller arbitrary levels in order to maintain tighter stratigraphic control. However, in units where the stratum had been previously determined to be part of an early 20th century fill episode, tight 30.5 cm arbitrary levels were not used. The fill was removed either as one level or in several levels of more than 30.5 cm thickness. All of the soil removed from the units was passed through hardware mesh. Because of the large quantities of rubble in the fill layers, architectural debris (such as brick, mortar, and slate) and miscellaneous debris (such as coal) were sampled, but not retained.

Unit level forms were kept for each unique level within a unit. Feature forms were kept for each unique feature encountered, and separate feature level forms were kept for those features which had multiple layers within them. Plan views were made of features. Profiles were done of the unit stratigraphy from one wall in each unit. A photographic record was also made of the excavation.

During the course of the 2000 excavation, 12,422 artifacts were recovered during the excavation of glass from the surface and in the units, as well as 3 cultural features. It also uncovered 10 distinct strata. The three features were an H-shaped central chimney, the chimney fill, and a wooden keg sump. The 10 aforementioned strata included (from earliest to most recent), a natural soil stratum, four strata associated with occupation of the property from circa 1791 through at least 1892, and five strata of fill placed in the basement after circa 1890. No distinctively "Jewish" artifacts were recovered during the excavation of the site in 2000.

Stratum I was the naturally deposited subsoil. Stratum II was the earliest cultural level and is associated with initial occupation of the building as a residence and shop. It was the dirt floor of a kitchen area located in the basement or cellar of the home. Dates for Stratum II are circa 1791 to 1797. Stratum III was the first wood floor in the basement. It probably dates to the period 1797 to at least 1808 if not the late 1820s. This floor was associated with a kitchen during the occupation of the building by a Matthew Campbell and John Fownes, Sr., and possibly with initial occupation of the property as a grocery store by Thomas Presstman (after 1808). Strata IV and V were a sand and gravel fill layer and the second wood floor. These two strata appear to have been placed in the building at the same time (sometime between 1808 and 1831). This floor level is associated with occupation of the building by the Presstman family and their later leasing of it to various tenants until circa 1904. The floor was covered between 1904 and 1909 by Strata VI, VII, VIII, IX, and X. This deliberate filling probably occurred shortly after a Morris and Lena Pondfield bought the property in 1904. At least part of the fill in these strata was obtained from refuse piles belonging to the Edward Bennet Pottery on Fleet Street as kiln wasters bearing his maker's mark were recovered from within the strata. The glass layer that sat atop the fill also appears to date to the period of the Pondfield's occupation.

Additional work was conducted at 18BC138 during the summer of 2002. No final report has been written describing the work conducted that year, but the collections, field notes, samples, and photographs obtained by BCUA were donated to the Maryland Historical Society when BCUA went defunct. Whether or not the site retains any remaining research potential is uncertain.

## External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

97001998