



Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18CH216

Site Name: T4

Prehistoric

Other name(s) Ballast House, Brick House, Blossom Point Farm House

Historic

Brief Description:

early 19th century brick house

Unknown

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Maryland Archaeological Research Unit No. 11

SCS soil & sediment code Os

Latitude 38.4073 Longitude -77.1070

Physiographic province Western Shore Coastal

Terrestrial site Underwater site

Elevation 6 m Site slope 0

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) Nanjemoy Creek

- | Saltwater | | Freshwater | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ocean <input type="checkbox"/> | Estuary/tidal river <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Stream/river <input type="checkbox"/> | Swamp <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tidewater/marsh <input type="checkbox"/> | | Lake or pond <input type="checkbox"/> | Spring <input type="checkbox"/> |

Minimum distance to water is 2 m

Temporal & Ethnic Contextual Data:

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Paleoindian site <input type="checkbox"/> | Woodland site <input type="checkbox"/> | Contact period site <input type="checkbox"/> | ca. 1820 - 1860 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Archaic site <input type="checkbox"/> | MD Adena <input type="checkbox"/> | ca. 1630 - 1675 <input type="checkbox"/> | ca. 1860 - 1900 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Early archaic <input type="checkbox"/> | Early woodland <input type="checkbox"/> | ca. 1675 - 1720 <input type="checkbox"/> | ca. 1900 - 1930 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Middle archaic <input type="checkbox"/> | Mid. woodland <input type="checkbox"/> | ca. 1720 - 1780 <input type="checkbox"/> | Post 1930 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Late archaic <input type="checkbox"/> | Late woodland <input type="checkbox"/> | ca. 1780 - 1820 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Unknown prehistoric context <input type="checkbox"/> | | Unknown historic context <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| | | Unknown context <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Ethnic Associations (historic only)

- | | |
|--|---|
| Native American <input type="checkbox"/> | Asian American <input type="checkbox"/> |
| African American <input type="checkbox"/> | Unknown <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Anglo-American <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Y=Confirmed, P=Possible

Site Function Contextual Data:

Prehistoric

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

Historic

Urban/Rural? Rural

Domestic

- Homestead
- Farmstead
- Mansion
- Plantation
- Row/townhome
- Cellar
- Privy

Industrial

- Mining-related
- Quarry-related
- Mill
- Black/metalsmith
- Furnace/forge
- Other

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

Interpretive Sampling Data:

Prehistoric context samples Soil samples taken

Flotation samples taken Other samples taken

Historic context samples Soil samples taken N

Flotation samples taken N 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	9	Staffordshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stoneware	
Astbury	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jackfield	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tin Glazed	1	English Brown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Borderware	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mn Mottled	<input type="checkbox"/>	Whiteware	138	Eng Dry-bodied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buckley	1	North Devon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Porcelain	10	Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creamware	1	Pearlware	14			Rhenish	<input type="checkbox"/>
						Wt Salt-glazed	2

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Other Artifact & Feature Types:

Prehistoric Artifacts		Other fired clay	
Flaked stone	3	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

Historic Artifacts		Tobacco related	
Pottery (all)	216	Activity item(s)	60
Glass (all)	550	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Architectural	739	Faunal material	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Furniture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Misc. kitchen	426
Arms	13	Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	40	Misc.	77
Personal items	9	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

Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

Site 18CH216 is known by various names; the T4 Site, the Ballast House, the Brick House, and the Blossom Point Farm House. The names "Ballast House" and "18CH216" will be used hereafter. The site is an early 19th century tenant farmhouse constructed in a vernacular adaptation of the Federal style. It is located on the Blossom Point Field Test Facility (BPFTF) in southern Charles County, Maryland. The house is situated at the very end of Blossom Point, overlooking Nanjemoy Creek and the Potomac River. The area was cleared of most trees and plowed in the past. Soils at the site are of the Elkton series loams.

The first archeological work conducted at the site was a Phase I survey begun in 1989 and coupled with historical and architectural investigations relating to the farmhouse. The work was conducted because of the threat to the structure posed by on-going erosion at the site. Erosion of soils by the Nanjemoy River threatened to destabilize the house, warranting mitigation actions by the Army Corps of Engineers. The archival research reveals that as early as the middle 17th century, the property was under the control of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits). The Jesuits were granted large tracts of land by the proprietors of the Maryland colony to hold in trust, and the property on which 18CH216 now resides was part of a 4,000 acre estate known as St. Thomas Manor. These lands were then leased out by the Jesuits to turn a profit for the church. The first documented occupation of the Blossom Point area of the estate came in 1684, when Richard Boughton, onetime Secretary of the Colony of Maryland, obtained a long-term lease for 400 acres including Blossom Point. The terms of the lease required Boughton to "uphold, repair, sustain, maintain, and amend the said two tenements with their appurtenances and all new buildings whatsoever upon the premises to be built during the said term and all fences and enclosures and so on" and to pay a yearly rent of 1000 pounds of tobacco. The structure built at that time may be denoted as "Blossom Point Farm" on a 1712 map of the area, but that structure is almost certainly not related to the Ballast House.

The Ballast House is most likely associated with Bennett Semmes, tenant of Blossom Point Farm from 1788 to 1832, who acted as overseer and agent for a number of Jesuit owned farms on the original St. Thomas Manor tract. In 1805 the Jesuits built a house for Semmes and the architectural investigations of the Ballast House suggest that it is the structure built in 1805. Semmes' will and other records indicate that he was not a wealthy man and at times had difficulty paying his rents. This state of affairs was quite common on Blossom Point, where agricultural returns appear to have been poor. The 1860 Agricultural Census shows that Blossom Point was the most valuable of the Jesuit Farms in St. Thomas Manor and that tobacco was the major cash crop along with corn and wheat. Most of the value of the farm, however, is derived from highly valued improvements and a large number of livestock. A further downturn in the economy at Blossom Point came during the Civil War, when the property was used as a Federal Army Camp. The farm resources and property were badly depleted and the Jesuits claimed \$31,000 in damages from the Federal government. Only \$4,000 was received. After the war, the Jesuits attempted to sell the property several times, but there were not buyers. Real estate agents noted the poor condition of the farm as a detriment to its sale. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a series of short-term tenants grew tobacco on the farm. However, crops were often insufficient to allow payment of rents. By the 1920s the last tenants left the farm and were not replaced. The farm then lay fallow for most of the time until it was leased to the United States Army as a test facility in 1942.

Architectural examinations reveal that the main block of the structure does date to the early 19th century and consisted of a 2 ½-storey, 3-bay structure of brick masonry construction laid up in common bond with headers at every sixth course. It is built in the Federal style, with two gabled chimneys flush with the south wall. The main block is sub-divided into east and west rooms on both main living levels. A formerly detached kitchen (probably original or built shortly after the main block) to the east was connected to the main block in 1852 by the construction of the one-storey "hyphen" built to hold lumber and pantry goods. The original exterior chimney of the kitchen is still present, but appears to have been repaired many times in the past. All three porches (open, enclosed, and screened) added to the main block appear to be 20th century in origin. More detail on the architecture of the Ballast House can be found in the full site reports.

Phase I archeological work in 1989 was conducted to identify any potentially significant archeological remains at the site. A series of fifty shovel test pits (STPs) were excavated in transects across the site to determine site boundaries and the context of archeological deposits. In addition to the STPs, five larger formal test units (of various sizes) were excavated to sample artifact deposits and better determine the context of these deposits. The larger excavation units were placed in areas where there were concentrations of artifacts both inside (2 units) and outside (3 units) the house structure. All excavated soils were screened through hardware cloth. The excavations revealed that the only intact archeological remains associated with the house are a series of refuse deposits located beneath the floor boards of the house itself. All of the surrounding yard areas had been extensively disturbed.

Artifacts encountered during the Phase I survey include 45 activity items, 343 architectural artifacts, 5 clothing artifacts, 336 kitchen-related items, 3 personal objects, 4 arms artifacts, 40 miscellaneous historic/modern objects, and 3 prehistoric artifacts. The activity items were 2 toys (a glass marble and a porcelain doll part), 28 pieces of lamp glass, a piece of non-electrical wire, a bolt, a rubber washer, a piece of miscellaneous hardware, a battery core, an engine belt, a piece of chain, an iron flange, 4 metal strips, a brass pushpin, and 2 iron tool handles. The architectural assemblage consisted of 22 pieces of brick, 17 concrete/cement fragments, 9 pieces of plaster, 2 linoleum fragments, 155 window glass fragments, 69 cut nails, 39 wire nails, 24 unidentified nails, a staple, a construction bolt, a plumbing pipe, and 3 miscellaneous architectural remains. Clothing remains consisted of a glass button, a plastic button, 2 shell buttons, and part of a safety pin. Kitchen-related artifacts were 111 ceramic sherds (1 Buckley, 1 tin-glazed earthenware, 1 creamware, 1 pearlware, 6 porcelain, 9 ironstone, 65 whiteware, 8 yellowware, 6 redware, 2 white salt-glazed stoneware, and 11 miscellaneous stoneware), 1 jar lid, 5 pieces of table glass, 66 bottle/container glass fragments, 5 tin can pieces, a crown cap, 113 animal bones, 30 oyster shell fragments, a butternut hull, a pumpkin seed, a peanut hull, and a hickory nut hull. The personal items were a plastic comb tine, a stamp of the letter "H", and a red bead. All of the arms objects were .22 caliber casings. Miscellaneous objects were 13 melted or otherwise unidentifiable glass items, 6 unidentified metal pieces, a lead sheet, a newsprint fragment, 3 pieces of plastic, a piece of vinyl strap, and 15 non-food animal bones. The prehistoric artifacts were 3 quartzite flakes.

The Phase I investigations showed that faunal remains, some of which represented food remains, were present in a relatively intact context beneath the Blossom Point Farmhouse. The Phase I excavations did indicate that animals such as cats, rats, and opossum probably lived under the house and their burrowing and other activities might have disturbed the context of the archeological materials to some extent. These faunal remains probably date to the late 19th – early 20th century. These sub-floor refuse deposits are similar to a plowzone deposit, their vertical stratigraphic context is disturbed. However, their horizontal context has not been badly disturbed since the horizontal disturbance is limited by the walls of the house and the room foundations. Based on the presence of these archeological deposits, Phase II excavations were recommended in the area within the footprint of the house to determine the extent of disturbance.



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Unknown

The field methods used for the Phase II excavation of the subfloor deposits at 18CH216 were to dig a series of 10 measured excavation units from the main rooms of the house. The size and number of the units was determined by the placement of floor joists and other architectural elements, but were not larger than 1.524 m X 1.524 m (5 ft X 5 ft) squares. On average, the units were 91 X 91 cm in size. Placement of the units within the rooms was determined by the presence of intact deposits, location of architectural features, and safety considerations. Nonetheless, an attempt was made to sample different sections of each room. Five units were excavated in the kitchen wing of the house, three units were excavated in the east room of the main section of the house, and two units were excavated in the west room of the main section. All soils were excavated in 15.24 cm (.5 ft) levels, given the disturbed nature of the archeological deposits. All soils were screened through hardware cloth to recover artifacts and ecofacts. Additionally, 2 soil samples of approximately 20 liters each were taken from each level of each excavation unit. One sample was subjected to flotation analysis to recover floral remains and very small faunal remains. The second sample was waterscreened through 1/8 in mesh to recover small faunal remains that would otherwise be lost. Few artifacts and ecofacts were recovered from the 1/8 in mesh water screening and flotation and are not discussed further here.

Artifacts encountered during the Phase II testing included 15 activity items (all toys), 396 architectural objects, 35 clothing remains, 509 kitchen-related artifacts, 6 personal items (4 coins and 2 keys), 2 tobacco-related objects (pipe fragments), 9 arms artifacts (modern ammunition components), and 37 miscellaneous objects (non-food faunal remains). The architectural assemblage included 179 window glass fragments, 200 nails, 3 spikes, and 14 pieces of construction hardware. The clothing remains were 5 buckles, 3 pins, and 27 buttons. The kitchen assemblage consisted of 105 ceramic sherds (13 pearlware, 4 porcelain, 73 whiteware, 5 American Blue and Gray Stoneware and 10 misc.), 115 bottle/container glass fragments (including pharmaceutical bottles), 17 other table glass pieces, 163 animal bones, and 109 pieces of shell. Many of the modern remains were apparently discarded in the field and are not included in this synopsis report as they are listed in the appendices of the full site report, but not counted in the tables of the report or discussed in the main text.

The artifact frequencies varied from room to room, with the kitchen wing having the highest numbers of artifacts, the East Room of the main house showing the next highest frequency, and the West Room showing the lowest frequencies. Much of the artifact assemblage is dominated by food remains and artifacts associated with food preparation and serving in all rooms. The fireplace configuration in the kitchen is clearly related to food preparation and the large numbers of subsistence-related artifacts in this room is hardly surprising. The East Room of the main house was thought to represent a dining room and the presence of limited subsistence remains fits with this interpretation. The West Room of the main house is probably a formal parlor and the absence of subsistence artifacts in this room is also not surprising.

No trash pit features extending into the subsoil were identified under the house and the artifacts represent a sub-floor sheet midden. Concentrations tended to be deepest near the hearths, and it is thought that trap doors through the floor for the disposal of waste may have been present near the fireplaces; a feature documented in other structures of the period. These types of trash and garbage deposits are not uncommon at 19th century sites from a variety of cultural contexts (particularly at sites whose occupants were of lower socio-economic status), even though they may seem to violate modern sensibilities concerning sanitation and health. The food remains reveal a diet that included the use of both wild game and domesticated animals. Home butchering of domesticated animals, including pigs, chickens, and turkeys, for immediate consumption took place and inexpensive cuts of beef were also purchased for consumption. Wild animals, fish, and shellfish of the Potomac estuary were also part of the diets of the site's inhabitants. Wetland settings were utilized for wild food production more commonly than upland settings. When compared to other contemporaneous sites, this pattern seems to indicate that the overseers at Blossom Point represent a middle-ground in the socio-economic hierarchy; between slaves/poor tenants and plantation owners.

In all rooms, the process of recent (post-1940) floor replacement and repair disturbed the context of the artifacts. A mix of artifacts from various time periods within the 19th and 20th century are present and attests to the disturbed context of these deposits. Most of the 19th century material is from mid-century or later. Furthermore, faunal remains from various scavenging and burrowing animals were recovered from the sub-floor deposits and the activities of these animals would have further compromised these deposits' contextual integrity. While the Phase II investigations did collect interesting information on the lifeways of the 19th century overseers who occupied the Ballast House, given the extensive disturbance of archeological deposits, the site is unlikely to yield additional useful information pertaining to Maryland history.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

00005767, 00005781