



Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18CV217

Site Name: Johns Creek Cabin

Prehistoric

Other name(s) 10/B

Historic

Unknown

Brief Description: 19th-early 20th century domestic site/country store

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Maryland Archaeological Research Unit No. 9

SCS soil & sediment code

Latitude 38.4210

Longitude -76.4626

Physiographic province Western Shore Coastal

Terrestrial site

Underwater site

Elevation +31 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
- knoll

Ownership

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

Nearest Surface Water

Name (if any) Johns Creek

Saltwater

Ocean

Estuary/tidal river

Tidewater/marsh

Minimum distance to water is 150 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 P

ca. 1630 - 1675 ca. 1860 - 1900 Y

ca. 1675 - 1720 ca. 1900 - 1930 Y

ca. 1720 - 1780 Post 1930

ca. 1780 - 1820

Unknown historic context

Unknown context

Ethnic Associations (historic only)

Native American

Asian American

African American

Unknown Y

Anglo-American

Other

Hispanic

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? 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

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

country store

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	English Brown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Borderware	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mn Mottled	<input type="checkbox"/>	Whiteware	1691	Eng Dry-bodied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buckley	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Devon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Porcelain	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creamware	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pearlware	96			Rhenish	<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"/>	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

19th Century house/store foundation

Historic Artifacts		Tobacco related	
Pottery (all)	2030	Activity item(s)	5
Glass (all)	1457	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Architectural	495	Faunal material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furniture	5	Misc. kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arms	6	Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	28	Misc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal items	2	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Historic Features

Privy/outhouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depression/mound	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Const feature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Burial(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Trash pit/dump	<input type="checkbox"/>	Railroad bed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cellar hole/cellar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sheet midden	<input type="checkbox"/>	Earthworks	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hearth/chimney	<input checked="" 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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External Samples/Data:

Collection curated at MAC

Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

The Johns Creek Cabin site (18CV217) or the 10/B site, is the remains of a 19th to early 20th century domestic site and country store just north of Lusby in Calvert County. The site is situated on a high ridge top north of Johns Creek, a tributary of St. Leonard's Creek. The site is situated in a woodland setting of mixed hardwoods and pine with an understory of greenbrier, poison ivy, honeysuckle, and laurel. Evidence of periodic lumbering exists on the site. Deep gullying is evident along the edges of the ridge top, evidence of severe erosion. Soils at the site are Downer loamy sands and Dodon sandy clay loams.

The site was first identified in 1984 during the preliminary survey of a highway improvement project corridor. At that time the Maryland State Highway Administration was proposing realignment and dualization of the MD Route 2/4 corridor. The study area consisted of a roughly 17 km (11 mile) stretch of the route. Improvements to the roadway would result in significant impacts to any archeological resources within the project corridor. Because the highway project was publically funded, the SHPO requested that Phase I survey be conducted.

The 1984 Phase I field reconnaissance was carried out in linear transects running roughly parallel to the proposed right-of-way (ROW) centerline and spaced approximately 15 meters apart, thereby covering the entire ca. 80 meter wide corridor. Where sufficient surface visibility (50% or greater) existed, examination was limited to surface collection. In areas exhibiting less than 50% surface visibility, 40 cm shovel test pits (STPs) were excavated on a roughly 15 m grid.

The Johns Creek Cabin site was identified during initial reconnaissance as several above-ground remains were evident. Researchers recorded the remains of a fieldstone foundation with a chimney base at one end, a circular depression (well hole) 8 meters south of the structure, and a road trace passing along the east side of the structure. Artifacts collected amongst the remains included a piece of oyster shell mortar, 3 window glass fragment, 1 cut nail, 2 salt-glazed gray stoneware sherds, and 11 bottle glass fragments. Based on these findings, Phase II testing was recommended and immediately undertaken.

As part of the Phase II project, archival research and oral history interviews were undertaken to obtain some background information about the site. Examination of historic maps revealed that a structure may have been present as early as 1824, but was likely demolished sometime between 1908 and 1932. Archival data was severely limited due to a courthouse fire that occurred in 1882, destroying many of the early Calvert County land records and other documents. The owner of the property in 1882 was a William Coster. The 1850 Federal Census for Calvert County lists William F. Coster as a 14 year-old male in residence with his mother, Jane E. Coster. The 1860 census enumerates William Coster in the same household and describes his profession as "mariner". Coster is not referenced in the 1870 census but appears in the 1880 census as married to Laura M. Coster with two dependent children, Charles and George Hagelin. The Hagelin children were Laura's children from a prior marriage, which ended in her previous husband's death. William F. Coster's profession is described in 1880 as "merchant". The 1890 census no longer exists. The 1900 census lists William F. Coster as a merchant with wife, Laura, two daughters from their marriage and one stepson in residence. Coster is listed as being capable of reading and writing. Coster is believed to have died by the time of the 1910 census.

Because census listing described Coster as a "merchant", the local business directories and gazetteers were consulted in an attempt to trace his career. These directories indicate that the Costers kept a store in the area of 18CV217 from 1891 until 1906. Before 1891 it appears the Costers lived further south near Cove Point on the Chesapeake Bay. The listings for their business (in the area known as "upper Cove Point") ceased to exist by 1909 and coupled with the census records, it is speculated that he died around this time. The property was held by his heirs until its sale at a tax auction in 1919, to Frank and Ella Lusby and Joseph and Carrie Coster. In that same year it was sold to Samuel and Mary Shutt. From there the tract passed through several hands until it was acquired by the State Highway Administration. As mentioned previously, the structure no longer appears on maps after 1908.

Oral history interviews tend to confirm that the Costers owned and occupied the site at John's Creek Cabin. Multiple informants also agreed that William Coster operated a store at the location and both stated that the store served as a post office as well. Gazetteer data, however, does not lists him as the postmaster, so the arrangement is uncertain. The hill upon which the former store was described as being located by informants (i.e. the location of 18CV217) is known locally as "Coster's Hill" and the adjacent wetland is referred to as "Coster's Swamp". Both informants said that Coster lived there and operated a store in the late 19th century. Neither informant was certain of the date of the site's abandonment, but both agreed that by the 1910s it had already been derelict for some time. In addition to serving as a store and post office, one informant stated that it also functioned as a polling place at one time.

At the time of the Phase II research, the site was very heavily overgrown with poison ivy, greenbrier, and honeysuckle, and the initial stage of fieldwork was clearing vegetation. Special care was taken in hand-clearing the foundation. Clearing revealed a foundation that was 9.75 X 4.87 meters, with stone chimneys at BOTH ends and a rubble pile related to demolition at the southeast end. In order to establish site extent, a systematic sample of posthole digger test pits (i.e. STPs) was excavated at 3 m intervals across the site area. This sample was excavated outward from the foundation until cultural material ceased to be found or topographic constraints (steep slopes) were encountered. Fourteen additional STPs were excavated around the outside of the house foundation. All STPs were excavated into sterile subsoil and sifted through hardware cloth. A soil sample was retained from the A horizon of each STP for chemical analyses and the stratigraphy was recorded on standardized forms. A total of 359 STPs were excavated.

Formal test units, 1 m X 1 m in size were then excavated to test site integrity and retrieve controlled samples of cultural material to establish a temporal framework for the site occupation. Units were placed to delineate the remains of the structure and to test other potential features. Two midden areas were also sampled to obtain a representative range of artifacts relating to the site occupancy. A total of 19 1 X 1 m units were excavated. Additionally, a pedestrian reconnaissance of the surrounding area was undertaken and a topographic map of the site environs was made to place 18CV217 in context. The only additional cultural feature identified during the reconnaissance was an oval depression of uncertain function located approximately 20 meters east of the house. A mechanical trench was also excavated across the suspected well feature south of the main structure to confirm that it was indeed a brick-lined well. It was found to be lined with common brick in a soldier course and all-stretcher bond (a typical form for 19th century wells).

Several patterns were noted when the distribution of artifacts recovered during testing was analyzed. Artifacts clustered around the structural ruins and to the south and east. Fine ceramics appear to cluster to the south and to the east of the structure while course ceramics are more diffuse. Bottle glass is more heavily concentrated around the structure and to the east. Oyster shell concentrates in the southeast, strongly suggesting a refuse pile in that location. Nails are generally dispersed around the structure, as are window glass and brick. Mortar, in contrast, is only encountered in quantity immediately adjacent to the structure. In summary, the artifacts distributions suggested four principal loci: two refuse areas to the southeast, a primary yard midden on the south, and another yard midden to the north of the structure.



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Soil chemical analysis was performed on samples taken from the Phase II STPs. Specifically, phosphate, potassium, and calcium levels were examined. Phosphate is derived from organic wastes and suggests deposition habits, animal penning, and garden manuring. Potassium relates to the deposition of fireplace ash and the location of exterior surface fires. And calcium results from oyster shell deposition, agricultural liming, and architectural sources such as mortar.

The phosphate pattern shows a strong peak directly south and west of the structure. Both of these areas may have served as locales for tethering draft stock in the yard by individuals visiting the store. Southeast of the structure is a concentration of phosphate which may relate to overbank deposition of organic wastes. Two small concentrations of phosphate occur away from the house. While these could be loci of outhouses, there is no other substantiating evidence.

The potassium distribution reveals two general "spreads", one east of the structure and one approximately 18 meters to the south on a slope. Both of these areas probably served as convenient disposal areas as they were away from the road and main entrance. Two very high concentrations may reflect individual dumping areas. Dumping near the house would not be precluded since fireplace ash is less odious than other wastes.

The calcium distribution shows elevated calcium levels within the entire southeast area of the site. This distribution correlates with that of oyster shell, which is most likely the source of the calcium.

The general pattern that emerges for deposition around the structure at Johns Creek Cabin suggests a major area of deposition to the south of the structure. This area would have been the "front" yard, but given the commercial orientation of the site, this front yard was not a formally-kept space, but rather the primary locus of interaction, activity, and therefore deposition. The area to the north of the structure would have functioned as a "back" yard, with deposition perhaps from the domestic occupation of the site. Finally, areas of redeposition are suggested in the far eastern part of the site, resulting from clearing of the accumulated refuse from the yards adjacent to the structure.

Artifacts recovered from 18CV217 during Phase II excavations included 5 activity items, approximately 112 window glass fragments, 478 other architectural remains including brick and nails (mostly machine cut), 5 furniture objects, 28 clothing artifacts, 2,028 ceramic sherds (96 pearlware, 1,691 whiteware, 175 ironstone, and 66 yellowware), 1,331 bottle glass fragments, 2 personal items, 45 tobacco pipe fragments, 7 other tobacco-related artifacts and 6 arms objects. Examination of the various stylistic attributes of the ceramic assemblage yields a mean ceramic date of 1855 for the assemblage. When combined with other diagnostic artifacts and spatial distribution data, it appears the cabin may have been built around 1840, with the addition built in the 1850s or a860s.

Site 18CV217 was found to be a very complex site, spanning most of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. The site has suffered little or no disturbance since abandonment. Preserved wooden beams, above-grade foundations, and chimney bases are all indicative of the excellent integrity of the site. The main structure, or a portion thereof, appears to have functioned as a country store, and possibly also served as a rural post office. According to oral history interviews, the upstairs sections provided living quarters for the storekeeper and his family. The structure consisted of a main cell (built to be 16 X 20 feet) with a chimney centered in the west wall, an addition (built 12 X 16 feet) on the east end of the main cell which also had a chimney, and a shed attached to the south side of the structure.

Artifact patterns indicate a "public side" which fronted on the county road. It appeared to be an area that was periodically cleaned (more likely do the intensity of activity there than to a desire to keep it "presentable") with slightly more activity items, tobacco-related artifacts, and furniture items. A predicted "private side" on the opposite side of the structure was also found to exist (delineated by a high bottle glass ratio), although there are also indications of a "private-public" interaction area which reflects both the residential and commercial nature of the site. Oral history from two informants adds to both the archeological findings and data collected during archival research. Ceramic vessel analysis indicates a lower to middle wealth range typifying the store's clientele.

In general, The Johns Creek Cabin site was found to be a significant archeological resource, eligible for the National Register, based on its representativeness of a relatively rare, yet culturally important, entity: the 19th century country store. Nonetheless the Phase II testing sufficiently addressed the site's research potential and no further work was recommended. The highway project moved forward and, consequently, the site may have been destroyed.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

00000250