



Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18FR792

Site Name: Best Farm Complex

Prehistoric

Other name(s) L'Hermitage, Hermitage Farm, Trail Farm

Historic

Unknown

Brief Description: 18th and 19th century plantation/farmstead

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Maryland Archaeological Research Unit No. 17

SCS soil & sediment code DuB,BtB,AfB

Latitude 39.3679 Longitude -77.3936

Physiographic province Lancaster/Frederick Lowl

Terrestrial site Underwater site

Elevation m Site slope 0-3%

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) Unnamed tributary of Mono

- | Saltwater | | Freshwater | |
|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Ocean <input type="checkbox"/> | Estuary/tidal river <input type="checkbox"/> | Stream/river <input checked="" 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 0 m

Temporal & Ethnic Contextual Data:

- Paleoindian site
- Archaic site
- Early archaic
- Middle archaic
- Late archaic
- Woodland site
- MD Adena
- Early woodland
- Mid. woodland
- Late woodland
- Unknown prehistoric context

- Contact period site
- ca. 1820 - 1860 Y
- ca. 1630 - 1675 Y
- ca. 1675 - 1720 Y
- ca. 1720 - 1780 Y
- ca. 1780 - 1820 Y
- Unknown historic context
- Unknown context

Ethnic Associations (historic only)

- Native American
- African American Y
- Anglo-American Y
- Hispanic
- Asian American
- Unknown
- Other Y
- French, German

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 | Furnace/forge <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Military | Post-in-ground <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Urban/Rural? Rural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other <input type="checkbox"/> | Battlefield <input type="checkbox"/> | Frame-built <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Domestic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> | Fortification <input type="checkbox"/> | Masonry <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Homestead <input type="checkbox"/> | Canal-related <input type="checkbox"/> | Encampment <input type="checkbox"/> | Other structure <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Farmstead <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Road/railroad <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Townsite <input type="checkbox"/> | Slave related <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Mansion <input type="checkbox"/> | Wharf/landing <input type="checkbox"/> | Religious <input type="checkbox"/> | Non-domestic agri <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Plantation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Maritime-related <input type="checkbox"/> | Church/mtg house <input type="checkbox"/> | Recreational <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Row/townhome <input type="checkbox"/> | Bridge <input type="checkbox"/> | Ch support bldg <input type="checkbox"/> | Midden/dump <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Cellar <input type="checkbox"/> | Ford <input type="checkbox"/> | Burial area <input type="checkbox"/> | Artifact scatter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Privy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Educational <input type="checkbox"/> | Cemetery <input type="checkbox"/> | Spring or well <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> | Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> | Sepulchre <input type="checkbox"/> | Unknown <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mining-related <input type="checkbox"/> | Trading post <input type="checkbox"/> | Isolated burial <input type="checkbox"/> | Other context <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Quarry-related <input type="checkbox"/> | Store <input type="checkbox"/> | Bldg or foundation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Mill <input type="checkbox"/> | Tavern/inn <input type="checkbox"/> | Possible Structure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| Black/metalsmith <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |

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	1
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	16	English Brown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Borderware	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mn Mottled	<input type="checkbox"/>	Whiteware	618	Eng Dry-bodied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buckley	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Devon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Porcelain	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creamware	2432	Pearlware	949			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	2	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ground stone	1	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

Numerous features containing diagnostic historic artifacts

Historic Artifacts		Tobacco related	
Pottery (all)	6813	Activity item(s)	283
Glass (all)	3674	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Architectural	6824	Faunal material	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Furniture	5	Misc. kitchen	4956
Arms	132	Floral material	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	278	Misc.	204
Personal items	39	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Historic Features

Privy/outhouse	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Depression/mound	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Const feature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Burial(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Railroad bed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Cellar hole/cellar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Earthworks	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Hearth/chimney	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mill raceway	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Postholes/molds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wheel pit	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Paling ditch/fence	<input checked="" 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 NPS

Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

The Best Farm Complex (18FR792) is an approximately 31 acre site located within, but near the northern boundary of the Monocacy National Battlefield in Frederick County, Maryland. The site encompasses a main farmhouse, a secondary dwelling, several outbuildings and support structures (some historic and some modern), and a portion of the adjacent fields. The site is a small portion of a larger 274 acre tract popularly referred to as the Best Farm by the National Park Service. It is so named for David Best, the tenant who lived at the farm during the Civil War. It has been variously referred to as L'Hermitage, the Hermitage, the Hermitage Farm, and South Hermitage during its historic occupation. The fertile soils in this valley are generally medium to heavy in texture, slightly acidic, and well-drained, and are underlain primarily by limestone, sandstone, shale, and siltstone. The site and the surrounding landscape were the scene of fighting on July 9th, 1864 during the Valley Campaign of Major General Jubal Early. He and his 20,000 Confederate troops pushed north through the Shenandoah Valley in an attempt to attack Washington DC from the north and to divert Grant's pursuit of Lee in the South. In order to allow Grant sufficient time to send reinforcements to the weakly defended capital, and in defense of the strategic supply lines provided by the Georgetown Pike, the B & O Railroad, and the Monocacy River, General Lew Wallace and approximately 6,500 Union troops engaged General Early in the Battle of Monocacy. Although the Battle of Monocacy is considered a Southern victory, it delayed the Confederate advance on the capital by 24 hours, permitting Union forces sufficient time to muster an adequate defense of the city. For this reason the Battle of Monocacy is frequently referred to as the "battle that saved Washington".

A more detailed account of the battle can be found in the synopsis report for 18FR30; the broader Monocacy Battlefield site. The major fighting during the Battle of Monocacy was fought on the neighboring Thomas and Worthington Farms. This report deals only with the 31 acre area encompassing the main house, ancillary structures, and two adjacent fields at Best Farm. Although a great deal of skirmishing and artillery action took place on the farm, much of the archeological work conducted within this particular area has revealed information not related to the historic Civil War battle, but to the Late 18th and early 19th century plantation owned by the Vincendières. As part of the archeological identification and evaluation study of the Best Farm, which began in 2001, a considerable amount of archival research was conducted regarding the Vincendières prior to the onset of excavations. The results of archival research are briefly outlined here, prior to a discussion of the archeological work. A more thorough examination of the archival results is available in the full site report.

Beginning in 1794 and 1795, the Vincendières, a French planter family with assets in the West Indies colony of Saint-Domingue (Haiti), began to acquire lands that would one day comprise a 748-acre plantation that they called L'Hermitage. Like many French refugees, the Vincendières came to the United States in 1793 to escape civil unrest associated with the French Revolution and with the slave uprisings that began in Saint-Domingue in 1791. The Best Farm is composed of the southern 274 acres of the original 748-acre L'Hermitage plantation, and contains a number of extant structures that are attributed to the Vincendière family, including the main house, a secondary dwelling, and a stone barn. The Vincendière family was unusual in a number of ways. Their origins in France and the Caribbean, as well as their devout Catholicism contrasted sharply with the predominantly English and German Protestant demographic of the Frederick area, bringing the Vincendière family into contact with a completely new landscape and culture. The Vincendière family's dissimilar worldview is reflected in the way in which they established and operated their plantation, and may have also escalated the antagonism that some residents of the town seem to have felt towards them.

The matriarch of the family, Marguerite Elizabeth Pauline de Magnan Vincendière, was a married woman, estranged from her husband, and living with another man. Though the true nature of her relationship with Payen Boisneuf, a cousin of her husband Étienne Bellumeau de la Vincendière, is not known, the prospect of a married woman with an unmarried single man living as a part of her household was not well-received in most circles in 18th and 19th century America. The nature of the split with her husband is also not well understood. He did not escape from Saint-Domingue with Marguerite, but arrived in America separately, taking up residence with his brother in Charleston, SC. The date of her youngest daughter Hélène Victoire's birth, as well as the wills of some of the parties involved, hint at the prospect that Hélène, was fathered by someone other than Étienne. This may be the cause of the estrangement and may help explain some of the unusual living arrangements. In addition, one of Marguerite's other daughters, Victoire Pauline Marie Gabrielle, acted as the legal and financial head of this odd household. Payen Boisneuf appears to have orchestrated the purchase of the family's land in Victoire's name. Boisneuf was a known debtor (despite his lavish public lifestyle) and may have been hiding assets in Victoire's name. The members of the household, as a whole, had the annoying tendency of refusing to pay their many debts until they were taken to court. In addition to all of this, the family owned an unusually high number (90) of enslaved individuals. According to Frederick County court records and 1 traveller's account, the Vincendières were unusually cruel to their slaves, reputedly torturing them with devices (whips, stocks, wooden horses, etc.) that were visible from the main road to Georgetown. All told, it may be said that the family did not endear themselves to the general population of Frederick County.

The reasons that the Vincendière family chose to assemble such a large enslaved population are unknown. It is possible that the Vincendière family initially attempted to cultivate tobacco, and acquired a large enslaved population accordingly. It is also possible that in addition to agriculture, the Vincendières were engaged in some other secondary enterprise centered on enslaved labor, such as renting slaves to other farms or to some of the many mills, iron forges, furnaces, and glass factories that were in operation in the county at this time. Regardless of how they utilized bound labor, it is evident that the Vincendière family was attempting to replicate the large-scale slave labor system that was in place in their native Saint-Domingue.

The L'Hermitage plantation was assembled in two parts; the northern portion acquired in 1795 and the southern portion acquired in 1798. It is generally accepted that the southern portion (the Best Farm tract) was the center of the plantation operation. It is not clear precisely what sort of existing structures were located on the property at the time the plantation was assembled. A number of extant structures on the Best Farm are attributed to the Vincendière occupation of the property, however, and include the main house, a log and stone secondary dwelling, and a stone barn. The main house is thought to have been constructed in several sequences. The earliest portion is believed to date to the 1790s and consists of the south wing of the house which is made up of a stair passage, cellar, and two south rooms (this portion of the house probably had a hipped roof); and a two-storey, four room north addition believed to have been constructed relatively soon after the original south wing (this portion probably had a shed roof). A one-and-one-half storey log kitchen outbuilding was originally detached and to the west of the main house, and is also dated to about the same time period. The dating is based on the presence of floor brads of the early machine-cut variety with wrought "L"-shaped heads. Floor brads of this type were generally in use from the 1790s until 1805. Recent studies of the main house have identified its stylistic influences as a combination of "French Colonial", "Caribbean", and "Early Federal" architecture, suggestive of the Vincendière's propensity to imprint their worldview onto the landscape that they inhabited. The secondary dwelling is a small stone and log structure located to the east and north of the main house, which was constructed in the 1790s, probably by the Vincendière family. The structure has two doors that face east toward the Georgetown Pike, but probably also included an elevated gallery or porch to access the second-storey entrance doors, which face west, toward the main house. Interior refinements, including plastered walls and ovalo-architrave moldings, are similar to those in the main house suggesting (again) that the two structures were constructed around the same time. The secondary dwelling may have been used to accommodate the large Vincendière household,



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including other French refugees. One of the most interesting and unusual extant structures on the Best Farm is the hipped-roof stone barn, which is set well behind the main house to the west. The stone barn is believed to date from the 1790s as well. Constructed of local stone, the barn is rectangular with large bays facing east and west, and a segmentally-arched brick door opening in the north elevation that has since been partially enclosed to create a window. The stone barn may have originally been divided into three equal bays to form an "English" or "Yankee" barn, a style which has been employed in the British Isles and Continental Europe in general since the Middle Ages. The appearance of the barn is markedly different from the bank or "Swiss" barns that are common in western and central Maryland, such that the barn has generally been referred to as "French" in appearance and design. Limited research into the barn's ethnic derivation has been undertaken, and aspects of its form and construction appear to support a French origin. However, additional research is necessary. These buildings probably formed the heart of the plantation complex at L'Hermitage. It is likely, however, that additional dwellings and outbuildings existed on the plantation, including stables, sheds, ice or well houses, animal pens, privies, a blacksmith shop, and quarters for enslaved laborers and overseers.

By the second decade of the 19th century, Victoire Vincendière was advertising portions of L'Hermitage for public sale. The size of the population at the plantation was also in decline. Boisneuf died in 1815 and Victoire's mother died in 1819. By 1820, at least one of her brothers had also died and her remaining siblings had either married or were otherwise no longer living at L'Hermitage. The enslaved population had decreased to 48 individuals and by the time she died in 1854, Victoire had either sold or manumitted most of her enslaved servants, freeing the final three in her will. In 1827 Victoire sold L'Hermitage and moved to a townhouse in Frederick near St. John's Catholic Church, where she lived until her death. The property changed hands again in 1835, being purchased by a John McElfish, who rented it out to a tenant farmer the following year. The portion of L'Hermitage that would become the Best Farm passed to his daughter Ariana and her husband Charles E. Trail, who continued to operate it as a rental property. In fact, it appears the tract was owned by the Trail family until its purchase by the NPS in 1993 and was rented out to tenant farmers for most, if not all, of that period. David Best was leasing the property as early as 1843. David Best and his wife had four children, and in 1860 they owned 7 slaves. By 1860, he was farming 375 acres, and producing wheat, straw, oats, rye, corn, potatoes, wool, butter, and clover seed. Additionally, Best maintained 50 acres of unimproved land known as the "Best Grove", and produced cordwood on it. He also had a blacksmith shop in operation on the farm. It is this landscape that existed when fighting broke out on the morning of July 9th, 1864 between Confederate troops under Jubal Early and Union soldiers under Lew Wallace.

This was not the first time soldiers from either army had been present on the farm. Troops from both armies had periodically camped on the Best Farm due to its close proximity to the Georgetown Pike, as well as the Monocacy Junction of the B&O Railroad which was built across the property in 1831. In fact, during the Antietam campaign, General Robert E. Lee and his staff are believed to have camped on the Best Farm. This is significant, because soldiers of the 27th Indiana would discover a small parcel in a clover field north of the Monocacy River and 100 yards east of the Georgetown Pike near the Monocacy Junction (i.e. in an area of the Best Farm designated as Field F by the NPS) on the morning of September 13th, 1862. This parcel contained three cigars and a letter from R. H. Chilton to Confederate Major-General D.H. Hill. The letter was the famous "Special Orders 191", a detailed communication of marching orders from Robert E. Lee to his subordinates. The recovery of the orders by Union troops supplied military intelligence which was crucial to the Union cause at the bloody Battle of Antietam four days later, a fight from which the South never fully recovered. As stated previously, the major fighting during the Battle of Monocacy in 1864 took place elsewhere and the Best Farm property was primarily the site of skirmishing, artillery positions, and small encampments before and after the battle. A detailed account of the battle is available in the synopsis report for 18FR30.

A tenant dairy farm was operated on the property in the 20th century, up until its purchase in 1993. Around 1949, a number of modern buildings were constructed on the property, including an asphalt shingle and plywood well house, a concrete silo, and a concrete block dairy barn, milk house, and equipment shed. In the 1950s, the Best Farm main house was equipped with indoor plumbing, but was confined to a frame infill addition and kitchen. Over the years a trench silo was constructed in the area between the stone barn, the main house, and the railroad tracks, along with a number of less substantial structures like hog pens, sheds, and chicken coops. Poured concrete was also used in some areas to help in the removal of animal waste. In 1991, a windstorm blew down a ca. 1878 forebay or bank barn that was located north of the secondary dwelling. In 1992, a large, aluminum pole barn was built on the site as a replacement.

Archeological work at the Best Farm Complex (18FR792) began in earnest in 2001 as a part of the National Park Service's Archeological Identification and Evaluation study of the Best Farm. The Best Farm complex was divided into three tracts during the study so that differential survey and testing methods could be utilized depending on the opportunities and constraints of the physical environment on each particular tract. The first tract consists of the historic building cluster and the approximately three acres of farmyard surrounding the buildings. Examination in this area consisted of a Phase I shovel test survey and Phase II excavation of units. The second tract is a roughly 7 acre field east of the secondary dwelling and the rest of the cluster. It was designated as "Field D" and examination within the tract consisted of a Phase I pedestrian survey and shovel test pitting. Just east of Field D, was the 21 acre "Field E" tract. Examination in Field E included Phase I systematic metal-detector and gradiometer surveys and Phase II excavation of units.

Phase I work in the Best Farm yard area began with the establishment of a 3.048 X 3.048 meter (10 X 10 ft) site grid for the spacing of shovel test pits. Exceptions to the 3.048 meter testing interval were made where applicable, however, and include a section to the south of the secondary dwelling house, an area between the CSX railroad tracks and the main house, and an area between a corn crib and the old stone barn. The area to the south of the secondary dwelling house is in the vicinity of a historic road trace, which is visible on the ground and in early aerial photographs. This area was therefore determined to have a relatively low potential for identification of intact sub-surface features and was tested on a 9.144 meter (30 ft) interval. The area between the main house and the railroad was tested on a 6.096 meter (20 ft) interval as it is extremely deflated and compact, suggesting some ground disturbance (possibly due to cultivation) and a lower potential for containing intact archeological resources. STPs excavated in this deflated area exhibited a much deeper plowzone than was observed in the rest of the yard area, further indication that this area has been greatly impacted by agriculture. The area between the corn crib and stone barn contained a large amount of surface concrete rubble which made manual excavations in this area difficult, so this area was shovel-tested on a 6.096 meter (20 ft) interval as well. A small area on the north elevation of the stone barn was examined with 16 STPs on the 3.048 meter interval, however, in order to investigate an unusual architectural element of the barn. On the north elevation, a series of stones protrude from the wall at the northwest and northeast corners. Although the purpose of this feature is unknown, it was initially interpreted as indicative of a north elevation addition. A total of 754 STPs were initially excavated within the Best Farm yard area (as defined above). Seventy-eight of these were considered "high potential" based on the higher yield of artifacts recovered from them and the recovery of evidence for potential subsurface features. High potential STP designations were used to identify areas that warranted further investigation during Phase II of the project and were evaluated using excavation units.

Along the south elevation of the stone barn, STPs excavated on a 6.096 meter (20 ft) interval isolated a concentration of mortar, stone, and other architectural debris suggestive of a demolition layer. Additional STPs were offset somewhat in order to isolate the extent of the demolition layer. The location was chosen for further excavation during Phase II with the excavation of 10 test units. Most of the units were 1.524 X 1.524 meters (5 X 5 ft) in size, but adjustments were made to size and shape depending upon the field data and evolving research questions as features/artifacts were uncovered. The test units revealed a 7.62 meter X 10.668 meter (25 ft X 35 ft) mortared stone foundation with the same orientation and axis as the stone barn. The limited excavations conducted within the interior of this feature area revealed two large postholes, which may have supported a roof, floor, or loft. One unit placed outside the structure exhibited as



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Unknown

many as 25 bricks and brick fragments at the transition to sterile subsoil. This might indicate that the structure had a brick, segmentally-arched door opening, similar to the door opening on the north elevation of the stone barn. These may have been left when the structure was damaged or dismantled. The majority of the artifacts excavated from this area (62%) are categorized as architectural and consist primarily of nails (27 hand wrought, 644 machine cut, 47 wire, & 328 unidentified), spikes, mortar, brick fragments, and a very small amount of flat glass (1,349 architectural objects total). In contrast, a relatively small amount of domestic and kitchen-related artifacts were collected from these units (219), accounting for only 10% of the assemblage from this area. The kitchen remains consist primarily of miscellaneous glass container fragments (199), as well as undecorated whiteware sherds (8), plain or iron-oxide glazed red earthenware (5), and one piece of undecorated pearlware. The small amount of domestic and kitchen-related artifacts indicates that the structure was not a dwelling house, but was more likely a shed or dependency used to store equipment, produce, or animals. The large number of machine cut nails recovered indicates that it was probably constructed after ca. 1815-1820, while the small amount of wire nails and other modern materials indicates that it was not in use into the 20th century. Some evidence of fire-damage, in the form of charcoal, burnt wood and fire-hardened nails was noted, suggesting that the structure may have burned down. It is not evident whether the superstructure of this feature was also constructed of stone. A large amount of wall rubble was not noted, suggesting that the superstructure may have been constructed of log or frame. It is also possible that wall rubble was salvaged and reused elsewhere at the site. Given the limited nature of the investigations around the foundation, additional research would aide in interpretation.

Between the stone barn and the corn crib, in an area that was previously covered by roughly finished concrete, two STPs containing large amounts of modern and historic artifacts and brick fragments were excavated. These remains appear to be related to a 1952 aerial orthophoto showing a small structure. Two 1.524 X 1.524 meter (5 X 5 ft) excavation units were placed to explore this area. A total of 1,424 artifacts were recovered from the two units. The majority (66%) are categorized as architectural, consisting primarily of brick fragments, nails (141 machine cut and 232 wire), and flat glass. A total of 304 domestic and kitchen related items were recovered from the test units including 13 buff and grey-paste utilitarian stoneware sherds, and 6 undecorated whiteware fragments. Dateable glasswares, however, were almost exclusively machine-made, suggesting a 20th century timer period for these units. This is further supported by the features uncovered in these units, which included an electrical wire fence remnant and a modern gravel road bed or cattle trail. Two postholes were also noted in one test unit, however, the associated artifact assemblages from these features indicate that they are modern as well. These postholes may be associated with an electrical wire fence, or with the structure visible in the aerial orthophoto. Based on the artifact assemblage and the absence of historic features, the structure visible in the aerial photographs is interpreted as a modern farm outbuilding or dependency, possibly a milking shed.

The area between the frame corncrib and the small log outbuilding adjacent to the main house contained a total of 8 high potential STPs which were characterized by high concentrations of domestic and architectural artifacts as well as differential soil characteristics, ash, and charcoal. These factors were interpreted as indicative of potential features, even though field assessments of datable artifacts collected from this area were often so poorly preserved as to prevent determination of the time period of the deposits. Very limited examination was undertaken here during Phase II, consisting of a single 1.524 X 1.524 meter (5 X 5 ft) test unit. A large feature was identified in the uppermost strata of the northern half of the test unit, extending the entire length of the unit from east to west on what appears to be the same axis of the nearby corn crib and log outbuilding. It was delineated by what appeared to be a burned wooden rail or plank (1 in X 2 in machine-sawn lumber) extending the length of the unit, which separated the feature from a mixed context stratum south of the feature. Upon excavation of this feature a large amount of charcoal was noted; the remains of larger burnt timbers resting on or slightly in the subsoil (suggesting they were burned in place). Artifacts recovered from the feature were primarily architectural (422 objects). Poor preservation, however, prevented the identification of the manufacturing technique of most of the recovered nails. 95 were identified as wire nails, 47 were machine-cut, 2 were identified as hand-wrought, and the remaining 244 were unidentifiable. In addition to architectural materials, a significant amount of modern container glass fragments (96) and ceramic sherds (32) were recovered. Based on the recovered artifacts, the feature is interpreted as a trash pit or midden containing primarily modern debris; in fact, aluminum foil was observed at the base of the feature, confirming a modern date (counted as a single kitchen item in the table above). In the remainder of the excavation unit (south of the trash pit feature), the upper soil strata contained a mixture of modern and historic materials, but below that was a dense concentration of large brick fragments and limestone rubble. This may be rubble from the destruction of some unknown structure that predates the creation of the trash pit feature. Artifacts recovered from this context include a few kitchen-related artifacts; including 3 whiteware sherds, as well as some architectural artifacts, including 2 cut nails. The absence of any modern rubbish and its stratigraphic position below the modern trash pit feature suggest that it may be an intact historic stratum, but further research is needed to confirm its precise nature.

Inside the ell of the main house, five high potential STPs were identified exhibiting a very deep "A" horizon as well as high concentrations of historic artifacts. Differential soil characteristics were also noted in this area, suggesting a feature of some sort and warranting the excavation of two 1.524 X 1.524 meter (5 X 5 ft) test units. Two additional smaller units were placed in the same general area to the south, but were inconclusive. A total of 10,635 artifacts were recovered from the two 1.624 meter squares. In addition, 8 features were noted and an artifact dense sheet midden was identified spanning both units. This sheet midden likely dates to the mid-19th century. The features encountered include two ash-dumping episodes, a drainage feature, 3 possible postholes/molds, a rodent burrow, a rectangular storage or refuse pit, and a pipe trench. A total of 2,717 artifacts were recovered from the sheet midden itself. Kitchen-related artifacts were the most numerous within the midden; consisting of 19 creamware sherds, 275 pearlware sherds, 7 Bennington Bennington/Rockingham sherds, 20 buff paste stoneware sherds, 7 gray paste stoneware sherds, 307 redware sherds, 9 yellowware fragments, 551 whiteware sherds, and 280 faunal remains. The remaining artifacts were largely architectural (755), or were deposits of ash, cinder, and coal. One clothing items was recovered, a Federal eagle button from the Civil War era. All of the data seem to suggest that the sheet midden was a deposit of refuse from the kitchen, coupled with occasional dumping of stove rubbish. The architectural artifacts are likely due to the midden's proximity to the house. The midden appears to be of mid 19th century origin based on the button and the datable ceramics present. Aside from the midden, the most important features noted (from an interpretive standpoint), are the postmolds and pipetrench (which had a piece of pipe within it). The postmolds may point to the presence of a shed in this locale, while the pipe trench (which seems to date to the same period as the midden based on datable ceramics recovered within it) is likely related to a cistern discovered nearby.

As excavations proceeded in the kitchen ell area, an unusually intense drought combined with oral historical information led to the discovery of another feature inside the main house ell. Adjacent to the sheet midden feature to the east, a large circular depression was observed, which contained taller and darker grass than the surrounding areas. Conversations with a local informant, a former tenant on the property, revealed that a cistern was located inside the ell in the vicinity of the depression. Using a soil probe, subsurface bricks or stones were defined and marked around the edge of the depression. Two 0.762 X 0.762 meter (2.5 X 2.5 ft) excavation units, and one 0.762 X 1.524 meter (2.5 X 5 ft) excavation unit were placed on the southern edge of the depression to isolate the wall and confirm the existence of the cistern. The informant recalled that the cistern was constructed of brick and that a hand pump was affixed to it. Adjacent to the cistern and hand pump was a shed structure that housed a bathtub; the hand pump was used to fill the tub from the cistern for bathing. The cistern was used in this fashion until the 1950s, when interior plumbing was installed to the main house. According to the informant, the cistern and shed had been there at least since 1924. Mixed-content artifact assemblages were encountered in the upper soil strata of the cistern; 231 of which were architectural and 219 were kitchen-related. Given the proximity to the kitchen and the frame infill addition to the house, these mixed content artifact assemblages are probably related to rubbish disposal and construction activities. As excavation progressed through the upper soil strata, a lens of yellowish-red clay was encountered in all three units that formed an arc corresponding to the perceived edge of the depression. This layer was, however, culturally sterile. After



Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18FR792

Site Name: Best Farm Complex

Prehistoric

Other name(s) L'Hermitage, Hermitage Farm, Trail Farm

Historic

Brief Description:

18th and 19th century plantation/farmstead

Unknown

further excavation, it became evident that the clay lens overlaid the wall of the cistern. The wall of the cistern was constructed of brick and mortar, laid with non-uniform spacing in uneven courses; probably the result of hasty or amateur masonry. Inside the cistern, a much darker grayish-brown silty loam was observed, which contained a great deal of cinder, coal, coal ash, and modern and historical artifacts. Plastic and aluminum were found in the same context as kaolin pipe stems and pearlware. This mixed-context fill is probably associated with disuse and demolition of the cistern. Outside the cistern wall, below the upper soil strata, a fairly uniform deposit of dark yellowish-brown silty clay was revealed that contained primarily historic artifacts. This deposit probably represents the historic living surface. Of the artifacts collected in this deposit, the majority (371) are kitchen-related, ceramic sherds being 204 of these artifacts. Five of the sherds are creamware, 78 are pearlware, 1 is Alexandria Gray salt-glazed, 1 is gray paste stoneware, 46 are redwares, and 27 are whiteware. In addition, 89 of the artifacts recovered are faunal materials, including 52 fragments of oyster shell and 37 mammal bones of various kinds. Other artifacts are architectural in nature (85), consisting of brick, mortar, and nails. Below this artifact rich deposit was a yellowish-red silty clay with a large amount of gravel present, but otherwise sterile. A series of upright stone slabs was also encountered adjacent to the cistern in one of the test units. This feature appeared to be a stone flower bed border. The only other feature encountered was a postmold, probably related to the aforementioned shed for the bathtub. The types and time spans of the datable artifacts recovered support a mid-19th century time span for the cistern, and reflect the usage of the yard area for rubbish disposal associated with the kitchen. The poor construction characteristics of the exposed portion of the cistern suggest that it was a hasty or amateur effort, and might reflect the farm's tenant history.

One important archeological feature at the Best Farm complex was not located using STPs or any other field methods described above. Near the southwest corner of the south wing of the main house, a large groundhog hole was noted. Inside the groundhog hole, what appeared to be a stone wall was observable. A solid soil probe was used to follow the wall, and an STP was off-set from the established grid in the vicinity of the perceived corner. Once the walls and corner had been located, it was evident that a very small structure or feature existed in this area, and a single 0.762 X 1.524 (2.5 X 5 ft) test unit along with two 1.524 X 1.524 meter (5 X 5 ft) units were placed to explore the structure. It was provisionally interpreted to be a privy. It was only excavated to a sufficient depth to allow confirmation that it was indeed a privy, but a total of 1,120 artifacts were recovered from it. Approximately 481 of the artifacts are architectural in nature, while 411 are kitchen-relate

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

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