Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Site Number: 18MO179 **Site Name:** Watts

Other name(s)

Prehistoric ☑ Historic ☐ Unknown ☐

Brief Description: Late Woodland base camp; Late Archaic & Early Woodland short-term resource procurement camp

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Latitude 39.1049 Longitude -77.1798

Elevation m Site slope 1%

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

Maryland Archaeological Research Unit No. 12 SCS soil & sediment code 54A

Physiographic province Eastern Piedmont Terrestrial site ☑ Underwater site ☐

Ethnobotany profile available ☐ Maritime site ☐

Topography

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

Ownership

Private	☐
Federal	☐
State of MD	☐
Regional/ county/city	☑
Unknown	☐

Nearest Surface Water

Name (if any) Watts Branch

Saltwater		Freshwater	
Ocean	☐	Stream/river	☑
Estuary/tidal river	☐	Swamp	☐
Tidewater/marsh	☐	Lake or pond	☐
		Spring	☐

Minimum distance to water is 0 m

Temporal & Ethnic Contextual Data:

Paleoindian site		Woodland site		Contact period site		ca. 1820 - 1860	
Archaic site		MD Adena		ca. 1630 - 1675		ca. 1860 - 1900	
Early archaic		Early woodland	Y	ca. 1675 - 1720		ca. 1900 - 1930	
MIddle archaic		Mid. woodland		ca. 1720 - 1780		Post 1930	
Late archaic	Y	Late woodland	Y	ca. 1780 - 1820			

Unknown prehistoric context ☐ Unknown historic context ☐ Unknown context ☐

Ethnic Associations (historic only)

Native American		Asian American	
African American		Unknown	
Anglo-American		Other	
Hispanic			

Y=Confirmed, P=Possible

Site Function Contextual Data:

Prehistoric

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

Other context ☐

Historic

Urban/Rural?

Domestic	☐	Furnace/forge	☐	**Military**	☐
Homestead	☐	Other	☐	Battlefield	☐
Farmstead	☐	**Transportation**	☐	Fortification	☐
Mansion	☐	Canal-related	☐	Encampment	☐
Plantation	☐	Road/railroad	☐	**Townsite**	☐
Row/townhome	☐	Wharf/landing	☐	**Religious**	☐
Cellar	☐	Maritime-related	☐	Church/mtg house	☐
Privy	☐	Bridge	☐	Ch support bldg	☐
Industrial	☐	Ford	☐	**Burial area**	☐
Mining-related	☐	**Educational**	☐	Cemetery	☐
Quarry-related	☐	**Commercial**	☐	Sepulchre	☐
Mill	☐	Trading post	☐	Isolated burial	☐
Black/metalsmith	☐	Store	☐	**Bldg or foundation**	☐
		Tavern/inn	☐	Possible Structure	☐

Post-in-ground	☐	**Slave related**	☐
Frame-built	☐	**Non-domestic agri**	☐
Masonry	☐	**Recreational**	☐
Other structure	☐	**Midden/dump**	☐
		Artifact scatter	☐
		Spring or well	☐
		Unknown	☐
		Other context	☐

Interpretive Sampling Data:

Prehistoric context samples

Soil samples taken N

Flotation samples taken Y Other samples taken Waterscreening

Historic context samples

Soil samples taken

Flotation samples taken Other samples taken

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Diagnostic Artifact Data:

Projectile Point Types

Clovis		Koens-Crispin	
Hardaway-Dalton		Perkiomen	
Palmer		Susquehana	
Kirk (notch)		Vernon	
Kirk (stem)		Piscataway	3
Le Croy		Calvert	
Morrow Mntn		Selby Bay	
Guilford		Jacks Rf (notch)	1
Brewerton	1	Jacks Rf (pent)	
Otter Creek		Madison/Potomac	30
		Levanna	35

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Prehistoric Sherd Types

Marcey Creek	3	Popes Creek	1	Shepard	315
Dames Qtr	1	Coulbourn		Townsend	
Selden Island		Watson		Minguannan	
Accokeek		Mockley		Sullivan Cove	
Wolfe Neck		Clemson Island		Shenks Ferry	
Vinette		Page		Moyaone	
				Potomac Crk	

Keyser	
Yeocomico	
Monongahela	
Susquehannock	

Historic Sherd Types

Earthenware

Astbury		Ironstone	
Borderware		Jackfield	
Buckley		Mn Mottled	
Creamware		North Devon	
		Pearlware	

Staffordshire	
Tin Glazed	
Whiteware	
Porcelain	

Stoneware

English Brown	
Eng Dry-bodied	
Nottingham	
Rhenish	
Wt Salt-glazed	

Other Artifact & Feature Types:

Prehistoric Artifacts

Flaked stone	6126	Other fired clay	
Ground stone		Human remain(s)	☐
Stone bowls		Modified faunal	
Fire-cracked rock	100	Unmod faunal	
Other lithics (all)		Oyster shell	☐
Ceramics (all)		Floral material	☐
Rimsherds		Uncommon Obj.	
		Other ☐	

Prehistoric Features

Mound(s)		Storage/trash pit	☐
Midden	☐	Burial(s)	☐
Shell midden	☐	Ossuary	☐
Postholes/molds	☐	Unknown	☐
House pattern(s)	☐	Other	☐
Palisade(s)	☐		
Hearth(s)	☑		
Lithic reduc area	☐		

Lithic Material

Fer quartzite	☐	Sil sandstone	☐		
Jasper	☐	Chalcedony	☐	European flint	☐
Chert	☑	Ironstone	☐	Basalt	☐
Rhyolite	☑	Argilite	☐	Unknown	☐
Quartz	☑	Steatite	☐	Other	☐
Quartzite	☑	Sandstone	☐		

☐ **Dated features present at site**

Historic Artifacts

Pottery (all)		Tobacco related	
Glass (all)		Activity item(s)	
Architectural		Human remain(s)	☐
Furniture		Faunal material	☐
Arms		Misc. kitchen	
Clothing		Floral material	☐
Personal items		Misc.	
		Other ☐	

Historic Features

Const feature	☐	Privy/outhouse	☐	Depression/mound	☐
Foundation	☐	Well/cistern	☐	Burial(s)	☐
Cellar hole/cellar	☐	Trash pit/dump	☐	Railroad bed	☐
Hearth/chimney	☐	Sheet midden	☐	Earthworks	☐
Postholes/molds	☐	Planting feature	☐	Mill raceway	☐
Paling ditch/fence	☐	Road/walkway	☐	Wheel pit	☐

Unknown	☐
Other	☐

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 M-NCPPC

☐ Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

Site 18MO179, the Watts site in Montgomery County, MD is a Late Woodland base camp and Late Archaic and Early Woodland short-term resource procurement camp. The site is situated on the west bank of Watts Branch, within a wooded, and steep-sided, stream valley that is owned by the City of Rockville and managed as park land. The site is located within the Council for Maryland Archaeology Research Unit 12 and the Piedmont Plateau physiographic province, while Watts Branch drains into the Potomac River approximately 15 miles to the southwest of the site. The site occupies a low terrace that is approximately 3.5 to 5 feet above the stream, which steadily undercutting the bank along the eastern edge of the site. A stormwater outfall passes through the southern portion of the site and drains into the stream and this is accelerating the erosion in this location.

The Watts Site (18MO179) was initially identified in 1981 by public informants. The site was subsequently investigated by archaeologist Ben Fischler. From August 1981 through April 1984, Mr. Fischler conducted frequent surface reconnaissance surveys at the site, followed by intermittent site visits between May 1984 through 2003. Based on temporally sensitive projectile points and pottery fragments, the site was initially determined to date from the Montgomery Complex (A.D. 1050 – 1425) of the Early to Late Woodland Period. Following Fischler's surface reconnaissance surveys, the site was further evaluated by Montgomery College in 2002, 2003 – 2005, and again in 2006.

In October 2002, Montgomery College conducted limited shovel test pit (STP) excavations at the Watts Site (18MO179) to determine site chronology and evaluate its archaeological integrity. In total, seven STPs spaced at 15-foot intervals were placed parallel to the stream edge. Of these, only five STPs were excavated. These STP excavations yielded 207 prehistoric artifacts, including lithic artifacts (n = 191) and ceramic sherds (n = 16). The artifacts were distributed over an area roughly 30 feet long by 5 feet wide, and were more densely concentrated in the central and southern portions of the site. The western extent of the site was not determined. Diagnostic materials consisted of one Late Archaic/Early Woodland Bare Island projectile point; five Madison or Levanna projectile points dating to the Late Woodland Period; and 16 quartz-tempered, cord-marked, Late Woodland Period pottery sherds.

During the 2002 investigations, Artifacts from Fischler's surface collection surveys also were examined. Diagnostic materials from these surveys consisted of 24 projectile points dating from the Late Woodland Period, including ten Madison-like points and eight Levanna points. One side-notched point that appeared to date from the Early Archaic to Middle Woodland periods, as well as pottery fragments that exhibited attributes of Shepherd Cord-Marked ceramics associated with the early Late Woodland Montgomery Complex (A.D. 1050 to 1450). Three lithic material types were identified in the composite assemblage: quartz, rhyolite, and chalcedony, with quartz being the predominant raw material type.

From 2003 through 2005, Montgomery College conducted additional fieldwork at the Watts Site that consisted of a combination of test unit (TU) and STP excavations. In total, 16 STPs measuring approximately 1.5 by 1.5-foot; four TUs measuring 3 by 3 feet; and three quadrants of TUs 5 and 6 measuring 1.5 by 1.5 feet were excavated. Test Units 1, 2, 3, and 4 were excavated in arbitrary levels of 0.2 feet within the natural stratigraphic layers, while the three quadrants of Test Units 5 and 6 were excavated in arbitrary levels of 0.1 feet without reference to the natural soil stratigraphy. The investigators decided on this reduction in the thickness of the arbitrary levels and disregard of the natural stratigraphy based on the results of the previous excavations, which indicated that there was very little stratigraphic separation between the temporally divergent artifacts and that temporally consistent groups of artifacts often crossed between stratums. Soil samples were collected from TUs for flotation and water screening.

These investigations yielded a much larger artifact sample (n = 2,908) and provided additional insight into the vertical and horizontal distribution of cultural materials. Based on the results of these investigations, Gallagher and Robinson (2006) determined: (1) The Watts Site (18MO179) contains two distinct occupations dating to the Late Archaic (ca. 3000 B.C.) and the Late Woodland Montgomery Complex (ca. A.D. 1300). (2) Site stratigraphy is somewhat disturbed and complex. (3) The site contains pottery and an unusually large frequency of triangular projectile points. (4) No cultural features have been identified at the site. These researchers also noted that the terrace in the core area of the site was thought to be unplowed, with the highest artifact densities occurring at the interface of Stratum A and Stratum B. Artifacts were more densely concentrated in the mid-northeastern portion of the site in a 10-foot wide area close to the banks of the creek, with the eastern boundary of the site defined by the eroding stream bank.

Additional test excavations at the Watts site occurred in 2005 and 2006. These excavations comprised an additional six quadrants. The excavation of these quadrants resulted in the recovery of 2,758 prehistoric artifacts.

AAHA utilized the classification system presented in Gallagher and Robinson (2006). However, to ensure the validity of any conclusions regarding the horizontal and vertical separation of the artifacts, all temporally diagnostic artifacts were reexamined, re-inventoried, and weighed as part of the site review. The diagnostic artifacts indicated a Late Archaic/Early Woodland component defined by the presence of Marcey Creek (n=3) and Pope's Creek (n=1) pottery, as well as, Brewerton (n=1), Piscataway (n=2), Bare Island (n=1), and Meadowood (n=1) projectile points. The Late Woodland component is defined by the presence of Shepard pottery (n=199), as well as Jack's Reef (n=1) and triangular (n=47) projectile points. Review of the later work conducted by Montgomery College indicated that the results of this fieldwork are consistent with the earlier fieldwork and failed to provide new evidence regarding the horizontal and vertical stratigraphy within the site.

In May 2015, a Phase I archaeological survey for the Upper Watts Branch Park – Forest Preserve Environmental Restoration Project was conducted that included a large portion of the Watts Site. Field methods consisted of pedestrian reconnaissance and STP excavations. STPs, measuring approximately 1.5 by 1.5 feet, were spaced at 50-foot intervals across the site and were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.3 feet into sterile subsoil. This survey clarified the site's boundaries and determined that its eastern edge has been lost due to stream bank erosion. Additionally, both the western and southern edges were disturbed by sewer construction during the 1960s. Nonetheless, a significant portion of the site was found to be intact and retain stratigraphic integrity. A subsequent review of the 2015 Phase I report by the MHT resulted in the request for a Phase II archaeological evaluation of the site to more clearly define the site's horizontal and vertical boundaries while conclusively assessing the site's eligibility for listing on the NRHP.

The Phase II archaeological evaluation investigations of the Watts Site (18MO179) were conducted in the Spring of 2017 by AAHA. Fieldwork consisted of a pedestrian survey, reestablishment of Montgomery College's grid, a shovel test pit survey, the excavation of test units, and a geomorphological examination of the site.

The excavation of 4 shovel test pits (STPs) at close intervals was conducted in order to explore some of the peripheral areas of the site. Measuring

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approximately 1.5 ft, these STPs were excavated into natural subsoil or to the limit of practical excavation. A total of two 3 by 3-foot units, four 3 by 1.5-foot units, and four 1.5 by 1.5-foot units were excavated during the Phase II. The units were aligned with the previous investigations' grid. Manually excavated soils were passed through a 1/4-inch hardware screen mesh to insure uniform recovery of artifacts. To ensure consistency with the most recent work conducted by Montgomery College, the 2017 excavations were conducted in arbitrary levels of 0.1 feet irrespective of natural strata within the horizons below the disturbed, uppermost horizons.

A total of 436 prehistoric artifacts were recovered during these Phase II archaeological investigations, all of which were lithic in nature apart from a single piece of prehistoric ceramic. Lithics by raw material included quartz (n=335), quartzite (n=48), siltstone (n=28), rhyolite (n=17), chalcedony (n=5), and chert (n=2). The occurrence of exotic or non-local materials like rhyolite, chalcedony, and chert within the lithic assemblage was relatively rare, representing only 24 of the 435 lithic artifacts.

Few lithic tools or cores were recovered during these excavations, with only 18 identified within the assemblage of 435 lithic artifacts. The 18 tools include six projectile points and fragments (4 rhyolite and 2 quartz), two quartz flake tools, four bifaces (2 quartz, 1 siltstone, and 1 quartz), four utilized quartz cores, and two rhyolite retouched flakes. The few tools and cores found at the site would imply the focus of the site's inhabitants was on processing quartz and quartzite cobbles, available in streambeds as well as in quartz outcrops nearby. The result was not necessarily the production of formal tools, but rather the breaking up and testing of cobbles for knapping quality. The lack of formal cores indicates the expedient nature of the raw material testing and processing. This would result in more shatter and angular fragments of tested cobbles rather than formal core preparation. Previous investigations in the core area of the site, however, have produced many tools, especially projectile points of non-local raw materials. This implies that numerous short-term visits to the site were made, perhaps for hunting and resource procurement activities. The lack of features implies the presence of principally short-term occupations.

With regard to the temporal identification of the projectile points, all of the fragments recovered from the Phase II survey represented unidentifiable tips or lateral pieces. Both of the identifiable points (one quartz and one rhyolite) were triangular, indicating an association with the Late Woodland occupation of the site. All of the remaining bifaces recovered during these excavations were of locally available quartz and siltstone material. Two early-stage bifaces, one middle-stage biface, and one late-stage biface were recovered and indicate that the occupants were using the locally available materials to manufacture tools and blanks for tools at the site. The presence of quartz utilized core fragments (n = 3) and flake tools (n = 2) further confirms this. The quantity of fire cracked rock recovered from the site was minimal, with only 34 pieces recovered from the units.

Just under 61% of the assemblage was recovered from a combination of the A and 2Ap horizon. The artifacts recovered from below the A/2Ap horizon included a mix of biface reduction flakes, flake fragments, cobble shatter, and little else. These deeper artifacts provided little information regarding when the site was occupied or, beyond the processing of local raw material, and resharpening and manufacture of stone tools.

Only three clearly diagnostic artifacts were recovered during these investigations. The first is a small (w = 14.7g) piece of prehistoric quartz tempered ceramic. Somewhat crudely made and with granite and black stone temper, the sherd appears to represent Dames Quarter Ware. The other two diagnostic artifacts were triangular points, which also denote a Late Woodland Period occupation. The previously recovered ceramic sherds comprised three Marcey Creek sherds from the Early Woodland Period, one sherd of Pope's Creek from the Late Early Woodland through Early Middle Woodland Period and 199 sherds of Shepard Ware from the early Late Woodland.
It is the interpretation of the soil stratigraphy, and thus the interpretation of the vertical provenience of the artifacts, that differs most substantially from the earlier excavations. Previous investigations had experienced difficulty in identifying and defining the various soil horizons within the Watts Site and so a geomorphological examination of the site was conucted to assess the natural formation processes and whether the soil and landscape may have been altered by modern disturbances. The identification of an historic plowzone within the site has reallocated many of the artifacts within the uppermost portion of the site from an undisturbed provenience to a disturbed provenience. A review of the older artifacts previously recovered from the Watts Site, such as the Late Archaic points and Transitional/Early Woodland ceramics, indicate that they all came from the surface or from the uppermost, and thus disturbed, stratum. It is also likely that artifacts from some of the earlier components washed off the adjacent upland landform which abuts the floodplain and may be imperceptibly interbedded with alluvial soils on the outer edge of the floodplain.

Despite the large amounts of debitage recovered during the previous investigations, both the current and previous excavations failed to yield a similarly high number of temporally diagnostic artifacts as were previously recovered from the surface and out of the eroding stream bank. This appears to indicate that main locus of the site was within the eastern portion of the site and has largely been destroyed through stream erosion. Additionally, the many years of excavations at the Watts Site have led to the excavation of approximately 40% of the site area. No cultural features have been identified despite these extensive excavations. Overall, due to the erosion of the core site area, the large-scale excavations already conducted, the lack of intact features, and the presence of the majority of the artifacts in disturbed contexts, 18MO179 was recommended as not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and no additional archaeological research is recommended.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

95002748, 95002870