Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Site Number: 18PR240 **Site Name:** Potter Site P

Other name(s) Mockley Point Area

Prehistoric ☑ Historic ☐ Unknown ☐

Brief Description: Late Archaic and Early & Middle Woodland camps and burials

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Latitude 38.6947 Longitude -77.0453

Elevation 2 m Site slope 0

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. 11 SCS soil & sediment code

Physiographic province Western Shore Coastal 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) Potomac River

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

Minimum distance to water is 50 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	Y	ca. 1720 - 1780		Post 1930	
Late archaic	Y	Late woodland		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 ☑

burials

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	N	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

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

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Prehistoric Sherd Types

Marcey Creek		Popes Creek		Shepard		Keyser	
Dames Qtr		Coulbourn		Townsend		Yeocomico	
Selden Island		Watson		Minguannan		Monongahela	
Accokeek		Mockley		Sullivan Cove		Susquehannock	
Wolfe Neck		Clemson Island		Shenks Ferry			
Vinette		Page		Moyaone			
				Potomac Crk			

Historic Sherd Types

Earthenware		Ironstone		Staffordshire	
Astbury		Jackfield		Tin Glazed	
Borderware		Mn Mottled		Whiteware	
Buckley		North Devon		**Porcelain**	
Creamware		Pearlware			
Stoneware					
English Brown					
Eng Dry-bodied					
Nottingham					
Rhenish					
Wt Salt-glazed					

Other Artifact & Feature Types:

Prehistoric Artifacts

Flaked stone	20	Other fired clay	
Ground stone	15	Human remain(s)	☑
Stone bowls	316	Modified faunal	104
Fire-cracked rock		Unmod faunal	22
Other lithics (all)		Oyster shell	☐
Ceramics (all)	50	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	☐	slate, felsite	

☐ **Dated features present at site**

Historic Artifacts

Pottery (all)		Tobacco related	2
Glass (all)	10	Activity item(s)	1
Architectural		Human remain(s)	☐
Furniture		Faunal material	☐
Arms		Misc. kitchen	1
Clothing	17	Floral material	☐
Personal items	9	Misc.	20
		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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Other name(s) Mockley Point Area Historic ☐

Brief Description: Late Archaic and Early & Middle Woodland camps and burials Unknown ☐

External Samples/Data: Collection curated at

☑ Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

The Mockley Point Site (18PR240) is a cluster of Late Archaic and Early to Middle Woodland burials and possibly related campsites at Piscataway Park owned by the National Park Service and managed by the Accokeek Foundation in south-western Prince George's County, Maryland. The site is located on the south bank of Piscataway Creek on a swampy hook of land (also known as Mockley Point). It is situated on a 61 meter long natural knoll rising about 2.4 meters above the surrounding landscape. Soils at the site are Sassafras sandy loams and the natural stratigraphy consists of course river sand covered with clay from a flooding episode, and topped with a fine sandy layer.

The Piscataway Creek region has long been known to local collectors and residents as an excellent spot to search for American Indian artifacts. The first documented archeological find occurred in 1859 when a local farmer found a small burial site on his property. Over the latter part of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, artifact collection occurred at 18PR240 and surrounding sites in a disorganized, and largely destructive manner until the purchase of what was then known as the "Hard Bargain" farm in 1923 by Henry and Alice Ferguson. The actions of several local collectors on Mrs. Ferguson's property (sometimes without her permission) prompted her to contact members of the professional archeological community in an effort to protect what she was certain was a significant archeological site. Alice Ferguson's efforts met with little success, so she took it upon herself to undertake controlled excavation of the archeological deposits at "Hard Bargain" to the best of her ability.

In 1939, Mrs. Ferguson began excavating at 18PR240 after having spent the previous few years working at the Accokeek Creek Site (18PR8). Site 18PR240 is just one of many significant archeological sites documented by Alice Ferguson on Hard Bargain and adjoining properties (now Piscataway Park). Synopsis reports have been prepared for all sites at Piscataway Park where test units were excavated during Ferguson's tenure and in subsequent salvage operations. These sites were re-inventoried during the course of several compliance surveys throughout the park and in this respect are appropriate material for the archeological synthesis project. Poorly documented sites, such as those documented in the late 19th century and prior to Ferguson's work, are not considered. Nor are sites where test units have not been excavated (i.e. only surface survey or STPs have been excavated).

Sites as important as those encountered at Piscataway Park must be placed in their proper historical context. That context is described in detail in the synopsis report for 18PR8, as 18PR240 was once considered to be part of 18PR8. The Ferguson's attention was attracted to 18PR240 because of the prominence with which the knoll (see above) rises above the surrounding landscape. The locale seemed very conspicuous and was excavated in the summer of 1939. The site was surveyed into 15.24 meter (50 ft) grid squares across the knoll. No detailed description of Mrs. Ferguson's field methods at 18PR240 has been written, but a full site report on the Accokeek Creek site excavations written in the early 1960s states that similar methods were employed at 18PR8 and 18PR240. Excavation of 18PR8 entailed the stripping of the disturbed topsoil to reveal areas where cultural concentrations extended to a greater depth. When areas of interest were located, the 15.24 meter square would be sub-divided into 1.524 meter (5 ft) test units and examined in detail. Excavation at 18PR240 was likely done in a similar fashion.

Excavation at 18PR240 revealed that the site primarily served as a burial area for several occupations by Native Americans. A number of features were exposed, including 112 postmolds, 5 fire hearths, 6 stone piles, 31 burial pits, 2 miscellaneous pits, 1 dog burial, and a historic/contact era ossuary. Five burial "programs" are represented at the site. These are 1) the "old pit" burials near the top of the knoll and similar burials elsewhere, 2) the more recent "shallow grave" burials, 3) burials of cremated remains, 4) "refuse" or "humiliation" burials, and 5) the contact period ossuary burials.

The "old pits" are a group of 24 burials located near the very top of the knoll. These burial pits, with three exceptions, began just beneath the topsoil and extended through the wind-blown upper sand layer to the clay beneath. The three exceptions were burial pits 9b, 18, and 18b which cut through the clay to the coarse river-deposited sand beneath. Burial pits 9b and 18b only began beneath the fine sand layer and are, thus, thought to pre-date the deposition of this upper stratigraphic layer. Pottery sherds and points were present but are not described in the full site report. Ferguson felt that other very old pits might remain persevered in the area beneath the fine sand layer, since the stripping of the topsoil would not have exposed them. Near the base of the knoll, on its south side, three similar pits (also thought to be similar in age) were located.

One of the "old pit"-type burials at the base of the knoll had been disturbed by a long and shallow pit containing 5 skulls (4 adults and an infant) and almost no post-cranial remains. Two additional shallow pits were located nearby and contained few bones. These were disturbed at some late date, suggesting exhumation by the ancient inhabitants of the area and reburial, possibly in ossuary contexts. Fragile shell-tempered sherds are the only grave goods mentioned in this area. A similar, disturbed burial was encountered at the top of the knoll, in the area of the "old pits". This burial underlay a large fire hearth and "feasting" remains. A large postmold and a stone pile were right next to the burial pit. Leg and foot as well as arm bones were the only human remains encountered and appeared to be jumbled (again as if most of the skeletal remains were removed for reburial elsewhere. Pottery sherds and a celt with a corrugated edge are reported from this burial and/or the fire hearth above it.

Pits containing the remains of cremation burials were also encountered at 18PR240. These were not the pits in which the bodies were actually burned, but secondary burials of the cremated remains. There was one exception to this rule. One fire hearth was noted which contained the burnt bones of an infant and shell-tempered pottery sherds.

Perhaps one of the most interesting finds at the site was 8 burials containing the remains of individuals who appear to have been purposefully humiliated or disdained in burial. Six of these were articulated in-flesh burials (situated near the base of the knoll), often with apparently purposefully broken bones and arranged in distorted positions, and all covered with village refuse. Four of these burials (3 adults and 1 juvenile) were situated one atop the other in the same pit in loosely flexed positions. The feet of these individuals were pinned back to the tibias and one of the skulls was wrenched around backwards with the jaw broken and to one side. An unusable platform pipe was found beneath this last individual's head, two celts were on either side, and a spear was at the feet. The individual directly beneath this burial had a relatively intact post-crania, but the skull had been entirely crushed, as if on purpose. A gorget, a broken awl, and 2 pieces of worked bone were noted within this burial pit, along with general refuse like charcoal and ash, pottery sherds, and faunal remains. Slightly to the northeast of these 4 burials were two additional pit burials of a similar nature. One was an extended burial covered with village refuse which had the lower half of the body completely obliterated by the excavation of the second pit. This latter pit contained the remains of an individual situated semi-upright, with dislocated knees and lower legs bent upwards. This person also had their arms tied together above the head. There were deep scratches (possible scalping marks) on this individual's skull and 7 triangular points recovered inside the ribcage. Two other burials were represented only by a few bones and teeth in what were otherwise refuse pits. These may have been human remains unintentionally disturbed at some point in prehistory, which later made their way into refuse

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pits.

A historic/contact era ossuary (containing numerous European trade goods) is also linked to the site through Mrs. Ferguson's field notes which, according to MHT staff, equate the ossuary with "Pit 3" at Mockley Point. Pit 3 is shown on a map of the site features near the southwestern edge of the site. At least 11 individuals were buried within this ossuary (some as bundles) based on the presence of 11 skulls. A number of burial goods were included in the ossuary, but because of the dating of the site, these straddle the prehistoric and historic categories used in the tables above. Thus, the placements used in assigning them to the tables are explicitly stated below.

Burial remains include an iron hoe (counted as a historic activity item), a pair of scissors (historic clothing-related), and iron bracelet (historic personal), a 17th century Jesuit signet ring (historic personal), at least 16 brass pins (historic clothing-related), 3 hawk bells (historic personal), a copper disk (historic personal), pottery (prehistoric ceramics), scraps of rusty metal and glass (historic miscellaneous), pieces of cut brass sheet (historic miscellaneous), bird bones (prehistoric unmodified faunal), 1 flat shell bead (prehistoric modified faunal), hundreds of small shell beads (prehistoric modified faunal), 1 twisted glass bead (historic personal), an antler projectile point (prehistoric modified faunal), a kaolin pipe fragment and at least part of another "trade" pipe (both historic tobacco-related). A spoon (Historic miscellaneous kitchen item), is in a photograph of artifacts collected from the ossuary, but Mrs. Ferguson's field notes do not make mention of a spoon.

All of the data suggests that Mockley point served primarily as a burial area throughout the various periods of prehistoric and historic occupation evidenced throughout much of Piscataway Park. The presence of the hearths points to possible secondary use as a campsite area, but these fires could have been used in some sort of mortuary processing activity as well.

No artifact inventory has been produced for the Mockley Point site, but descriptions of the site and its features do make reference to the types of artifacts encountered (as in the burial descriptions above). A few further points are of note. A paucity of lithic flakes is noted as is a surprising preference for raw materials other than the locally available quartz for the stone tools recovered from the site. Almost all of the pottery recovered came from the aforementioned pit features. The pit features contained occasional fragments of charcoal, projectile points (described as "pre-village", i.e. Late Archaic and Early to Middle Woodland), pottery, and in some cases small pieces of human bone and/or teeth. The site is described as having as much steatite present as was encountered throughout the entire excavation of 18PR8 (around 316 vessel fragments) and a great number of grooved axes were reportedly scattered around the knoll.

Based on the extant data, 18PR240 appears to be both a prehistorically and historically significant site which exhibited intact burial features, hearths, refuse pits, and postmolds. Furthermore, the original excavators of the site note that additional intact features were likely preserved beneath the upper sandy stratigraphic layer. This suggests that the site is still capable of answering significant research questions.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

00006618, 00006605, 00006607, 00007502