Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Site Number: 18PR411 **Site Name:** Southern Maryland Courthouse

Other name(s):

Prehistoric ☑ Historic ☐ Unknown ☐

Brief Description: Early Archaic, Late Archaic, Early Woodland base camp

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Latitude 39.0093 Longitude -76.8882

Elevation 30 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

Physiographic province: Western Shore Coastal

Ethnobotany profile available ☐ Maritime site ☐

SCS soil & sediment code

Terrestrial site ☑ Underwater 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): Intermittent stream

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

Minimum distance to water is 20 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	Y	Early woodland	Y	ca. 1675 - 1720		ca. 1900 - 1930	
MIddle archaic		Mid. woodland		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	☐		

Historic

Urban/Rural?

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

Interpretive Sampling Data:

Prehistoric context samples

Soil samples taken: Y

Flotation samples taken: Y

Other samples taken: Blood Res.,Floral,Refitti

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)	2	Piscataway	2
Le Croy	1	Calvert	
Morrow Mntn		Selby Bay	
Guilford		Jacks Rf (notch)	
Brewerton	3	Jacks Rf (pent)	
Otter Creek	1	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	24	Mockley		Sullivan Cove		Susquehannock	
Wolfe Neck		Clemson Island		Shenks Ferry			
Vinette		Page		Moyaone			
				Potomac Crk			

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

Other Artifact & Feature Types:

Prehistoric Artifacts			
Flaked stone	1441	Other fired clay	
Ground stone		Human remain(s)	☐
Stone bowls		Modified faunal	
Fire-cracked rock	600	Unmod faunal	
Other lithics (all)	2	Oyster shell	☐
Ceramics (all)	24	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	☐	Unknown	☐
Foundation	☐	Well/cistern	☐	Burial(s)	☐	Other	☐
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	☐		

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 Southern Maryland Courthouse Site (18PR411) is not actually a courthouse, but an Early Archaic, Late Archaic, and Early Woodland base camp site discovered on a tract that would eventually house a Federal courthouse for southern Maryland. The site is located just outside the incorporated limits of Greenbelt in northern Prince George's County, Maryland. It is situated on the west slope of a low knoll in an area of gently to moderately sloped Coastal Plain upland. Unnamed seasonal creeks flowing toward Indian Creek flank the site. Christiana silt loams and Zekiah soils dominate the site.

Archeological attention was first drawn to the site in 1990 when a Phase I project was undertaken to determine if any potentially significant archeological resources were present within the impact area for the proposed Southern Maryland Courthouse. The survey consisted of systematic shovel testing and the excavation of a limited number of 1 m2 test units.

Shovel test pit (STP) survey began with the establishment of a primary grid for an initial sub-surface inspection. A 15.24 X 15.24 m (50 X 50 ft) grid was superimposed across the courthouse property. The grid was aligned with the southern property line and lay roughly parallel to a nearby road. The grid was oriented 15°30' west of magnetic north. STPs measured an average of 50 cm in diameter and were excavated by observed stratigraphic level. Depths were measured relative to ground surface and all excavated soils were passed through hardware cloth. Profiles of each test were recorded on standard forms, listing soil consistency, color and inclusions. Each test was drawn to scale as a column profile.

More intensive testing involved delimiting boundaries of prehistoric activity within the property through the excavation of close interval (7.62 m or 25 ft grid) shovel tests around STPs in the original grid which contained prehistoric artifacts. In total, 73 close interval STPs were excavated. In addition, formal test excavation units (the 1 X 1s) were placed in the areas of greatest artifact concentration to more closely examine stratigraphic integrity and test for the presence of intact features. In total, 12 units, number 2-13, were fully excavated (Test Unit 1 was abandoned once it became clear that the unit was being excavated through road fill). These units were excavated in 10 cm arbitrary levels within observed natural stratigraphy to enhance vertical artifact provenience controls. Soils were screened through hardware cloth and each unit was excavated at least 10 cm into culturally sterile subsoil. In most units, if excavation had not exposed the underlying clay deposits, a representative quadrant was then excavated to the level of the clays as a final verification of the base of cultural deposition. All units were recorded on standardized forms, with representative profiles drawn to scale and photographed. Soil samples measuring approximately ½ liter were collected from the artifact bearing strata of 2 units to be subjected to flotation analysis as an indicator of the potential for ethnobotanical remains.

Prehistoric resources were encountered in four areas of the property. Only one evidenced intensive prehistoric activity and this was ultimately identified as 18PR411. No features were encountered in any of the examined areas, but concentrations of fire-cracked rock (suggestive of hearths) were encountered. Lithic artifacts recovered from the area ultimately defined as 18PR411 include 3 rhyolite points, 3 quartz points, 5 quartz bifaces, 1 quartzite biface, 3 rhyolite bifaces, 2 quartz unifaces, 53 chert flakes, 1 jasper flake, 44 rhyolite flakes, 183 quartz flakes, 148 quartzite flakes, and large quantities of fire-cracked rock (100+ fragments). Fifteen ceramic body sherds were also recovered from the site, all from a single test unit. Though only one positive mend could be made all of the sherds conform to the Accokeek type, and it seems likely that all of the sherds were part of a single vessel. Diagnostic lithics include a Kirk stemmed point, 3 Brewerton-like points, 1 Holmes point, and 1 Piscataway point. No ethnobotanical remains were recovered from the soil samples taken during Phase I work.

Artifact bearing deposits at the site were comparatively deep, lying below the reach of the plowzone and any historic disturbances. Analysis of the vertical distribution of artifacts within the Phase I test units at the site indicated that materials rarely occurred in the initial 10 to 20 cm. Artifacts were primarily concentrated between 25 and 50 cm below grade, a depth usually corresponding with the transition between a silty loam deposit and deep silty sands. However, a degree of vertical mixing was apparent throughout most of the units due mainly to root and rodent activity. Diagnostic points were not "in order" chronologically by soil layer. However, a number of projectile points from the Late Archaic to Early Woodland (and in one area fragments of Early Woodland Accokeek pottery) were concentrated in a zone 30 to 50 cm below grade in several portions of the site. This same zone contained the largest percentage of artifacts in all parts of the site. Several clusters of artifacts indicate a measure of horizontal integrity within the site. Concentrations of quartzite and chert chipping debris may be evidence of specific stone tool reduction or maintenance areas which remain relatively intact. The pottery concentration may represent another intact area if the sherds did indeed come from a single vessel. Concentrations of fire-cracked rock indicated the potential for disassembled hearth or boiling stone disposal deposits.

In general, the Phase I findings indicated good potential for intact deposition in the area ultimately identified as 18PR411. Based on these findings, Phase II work was recommended at the site. Phase II testing entailed the excavation of 30 one meter square test units distributed throughout the site. The locations of the units were determined through non-systematic, selective sampling in order to enhance the total number of artifacts recovered. That is, test units were placed in or near areas of known artifact concentration based on the results of the earlier investigations. The Phase II testing also involved refining the boundaries of prehistoric activity within the site, and thus several units were placed away from areas of highest concentration. Each unit was excavated in 10 cm arbitrary levels within observed natural stratigraphy to enhance vertical artifact provenience controls. Five cm levels were recorded in the first unit excavated, but this strategy was soon abandoned. All excavated soils were passed through hardware cloth to maximize data recovery. Representative profile sections from each unit were drawn to scale and photographed. Soil samples measuring approximately one liter were collected from each stratum below topsoil in each unit for possible flotation and ethnobotanical analysis.

Phase II testing at 18PR411 largely replicated the data recovered during the Phase I survey. More artifactual data was added to the database from the site, but not as much as had been anticipated and not of the quality expected, based on the potential recognized during analysis of the Phase I data. As in the Phase I study, no cultural features were identified.

Artifacts encountered during excavation of the Phase II test units include 3 quartz projectile points, 2 quartzite points, 8 rhyolite points, 1 chert projectile point, 18 quartz bifaces, 3 quartzite bifaces, 7 quartz cores, 2 quartz unifaces, 1 quartzite uniface, 1 rhyolite uniface, 2 chert unifaces, 617 quartz flakes, 136 quartzite flakes, 98 rhyolite flakes, 79 chert flakes, 7 jasper flakes, 6 chalcedony flakes, 3 other flakes, massive quantities of fire-cracked rock (500+ pieces), 2 hammerstones, and 2 mending Accokeek sherds, 7 ceramic spalls (likely Accokeek as well). The identifiable pottery sherds and one of the spalls were from a unit adjacent to the Phase I test square where the presumable single Accokeek sherd was recovered. Diagnostic lithic artifacts include 1 Kirk stemmed point, 1 LeCroy projectile point, 1 Otter Creek point, and 1 Piscataway point. Corner-notched and stemmed points as well as point fragments were also recovered, but could not be assigned to definite types.

Flotation analysis led to the recovery of one additional (very tiny) quartz flake tiny root hairs, small fragments of charcoal, pokeweed, wild cherry, and a fungal body. The seeds and fungal body are almost certainly modern intrusions. Due to the paucity of ethnobotanical data, not ethnobotanical profile has been produced for 18PR411.

As part of the Phase III study, blood residue analysis was conducted on a sample of 19 lithics and 1 ceramic object from both phases of study. Three flakes tested positive for blood residues; one for human and rodent blood (rice rat, deer mouse, woodchuck, beaver, vole, etc.), one for trout and rodent blood, and one for rodent blood only. One uniface tested positive for rodent blood. One biface tested positive for rabbit and trout blood. And finally, two points tested positive for blood residue; one for rodent blood and one for dog and rodent blood.

Phase II testing at 18PR411 indicated that there exists a degree of vertical and horizontal organization within the soil deposits, but that stratigraphic integrity was such that only general statements as to chronology could be advanced. The refined and detailed data necessary to associated non-diagnostic artifacts with particular occupations were not available at the site due to perturbation of the soil profile by natural agents. Direct and indirect evidence of disturbance resulting from bioturbation was recorded in a representative sample of units excavated during both phases of investigation. Similar disturbance can be inferred for the remainder of the site.

The site is a small, well-contained occupation site, and its presence in this locale adds to the general knowledge of land use patterns during several periods of prehistory in Maryland and the region. Yet due to the absence of cultural features and to the lack of detailed stratigraphic integrity, with a consequent inability to separate most classes of artifactual material chronologically, the research value of the site is diminished. 18PR411 should not be considered a significant archeological resource.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

00006681-3