



Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18PR42

Site Name: Ferguson Ossuary

Prehistoric

Other name(s): Powell #38

Historic

Unknown

Brief Description:

Contact ossuary

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Maryland Archaeological Research Unit No. 11

SCS soil & sediment code: MtA

Latitude: 38.6953

Longitude: -77.0119

Physiographic province: Western Shore Coastal

Terrestrial site

Underwater site

Elevation: 6 m

Site slope: 0-5%

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): Tributary of Piscataway

Saltwater

Ocean

Estuary/tidal river

Tidewater/marsh

Minimum distance to water is: 76 m

Freshwater

Stream/river

Swamp

Lake or pond

Spring

Temporal & Ethnic Contextual Data:

Paleoindian site

Woodland site

Archaic site

MD Adena

Early archaic

Early woodland

Middle archaic

Mid. woodland

Late archaic

Late woodland

Unknown prehistoric context

Contact period site

ca. 1820 - 1860

ca. 1630 - 1675

ca. 1860 - 1900

ca. 1675 - 1720

ca. 1900 - 1930

ca. 1720 - 1780

Post 1930

ca. 1780 - 1820

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

Ossuary

Historic

Urban/Rural?

Domestic

Homestead

Farmstead

Mansion

Plantation

Row/townhome

Cellar

Privy

Industrial

Mining-related

Quarry-related

Mill

Black/metalsmith

Furnace/forge

Other

Transportation

Canal-related

Road/railroad

Wharf/landing

Maritime-related

Bridge

Ford

Educational

Commercial

Trading post

Store

Tavern/inn

Military

Battlefield

Fortification

Encampment

Townsite

Religious

Church/mtg house

Ch support bldg

Burial area

Cemetery

Sepulchre

Isolated burial

Bldg or foundation

Possible Structure

Post-in-ground

Frame-built

Masonry

Other structure

Slave related

Non-domestic agri

Recreational

Midden/dump

Artifact scatter

Spring or well

Unknown

Other context

Interpretive Sampling Data:

Prehistoric context samples

Soil samples taken: U

Flotation samples taken: U

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	Koens-Crispin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hardaway-Dalton	<input type="checkbox"/>	Perkiomen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Palmer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Susquehana	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kirk (notch)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vernon	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kirk (stem)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Piscataway	<input type="checkbox"/>
Le Croy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Calvert	<input type="checkbox"/>
Morrow Mntn	<input type="checkbox"/>	Selby Bay	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guilford	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jacks Rf (notch)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brewerton	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jacks Rf (pent)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Otter Creek	<input type="checkbox"/>	Madison/Potomac	<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	<input type="checkbox"/>	Staffordshire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stoneware	
Astbury	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jackfield	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tin Glazed	<input type="checkbox"/>	English Brown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Borderware	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mn Mottled	<input type="checkbox"/>	Whiteware	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eng Dry-bodied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buckley	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Devon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Porcelain	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nottingham	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creamware	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pearlware	<input type="checkbox"/>			Rhenish	<input type="checkbox"/>
						Wt Salt-glazed	<input type="checkbox"/>

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Other Artifact & Feature Types:

Prehistoric Artifacts			
Flaked stone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other fired clay	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ground stone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human remain(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Stone bowls	<input type="checkbox"/>	Modified faunal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire-cracked rock	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unmod faunal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other lithics (all)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oyster shell	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics (all)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rimsherds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncommon Obj.	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	copper ornaments, glass beads, trade beads

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 checked="" 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

Jasper	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fer quartzite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sil sandstone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chert	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chalcedony	<input type="checkbox"/>	European flint	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rhyolite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ironstone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Basalt	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quartz	<input type="checkbox"/>	Argilite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Quartzite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Steatite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Sandstone	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Dated features present at site

Contact era ossuary dated by the inclusion of diagnostic artifacts

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

Historic Features

Const feature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Privy/outhouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depression/mound	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foundation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Well/cistern	<input type="checkbox"/>	Burial(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cellar hole/cellar	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trash pit/dump	<input type="checkbox"/>	Railroad bed	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Hearth/chimney	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sheet midden	<input type="checkbox"/>	Earthworks	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Postholes/molds	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planting feature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mill raceway	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Paling ditch/fence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Road/walkway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wheel pit	<input type="checkbox"/>		

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Radiocarbon Data:

Sample 1: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 2: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 3: +/- years BP Reliability

Sample 4: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 5: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 6: +/- years BP Reliability

Sample 7: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 8: +/- years BP Reliability Sample 9: +/- years BP Reliability

Additional radiocarbon results available



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Site Number: 18PR42

Site Name: Ferguson Ossuary

Prehistoric

Other name(s) Powell #38

Historic

Brief

Description:

Contact ossuary

Unknown

External Samples/Data:

Collection curated at

Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

The Ferguson Ossuary (18PR42), also known as Powell's Site #38, is a contact period ossuary containing the remains of at least 207 Native American individuals (likely Piscataway Indians) in south-western Prince George's County, Maryland. The site is believed to be a component within, or in close proximity to the remains of the principal town of the Piscataway Indians from ca. 1630 to 1680 (known historically as "The Piscataway Fort" or "Kittamaquund"). The precise location of the ossuary is not known due to the inadequacies of record keeping relating to the site in the late 1930s/1940. It is likely that the ossuary is in the vicinity of a post-WWII era housing development in the area. The ossuary is certainly near the head of the embayed portion of Piscataway Creek, on the south shore. Soils at the site are primarily Grosstown gravelly silt loams.

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 in the area 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. Ultimately, her work would take her onto adjoining properties such as the farm of John Claggett on which the Ferguson Ossuary Site was located. Ferguson began excavation on the Claggett Farm as something of a salvage operation, as the farm was for sale at the time and Ferguson rightly suspected that the location would be developed.

A more detailed description of Ferguson's excavation work on the property of John Claggett (aside from the ossuary) is available in the synopsis report for 18PR40, as is a more detailed description of the historical context surrounding the site and the Piscataway Fort that the ossuary is thought to be related to. Site 18PR42 was assigned a separate site number from 18PR40 because of the lack of location information.

Ferguson describes the ossuary as extremely difficult to excavate due to the soils at the site. These were described as hard-baked clay full of gravel and quite difficult to dig. The nature of the soils precluded stripping of the topsoil over large areas to expose postmolds and other features which would provide clues about the site layout. Most of the excavation had to be done with picks and mattocks. Mrs. Ferguson does not divulge the method used during her excavation of the ossuary. She does, however, complain that the hardness of the soils at 18PR42 and rapid drying out of the bones led to serious fragmentation of the remains when they tried to remove them. Ferguson reported recovering some 254 skulls and one redeposited cremation. The ossuary was in the shape of an oval trench, roughly 6.1 meters (20 ft) X 4.88 meters (16 ft) in area and 1.1 meters (3.5 ft) at its deepest point. A vacant, undisturbed space devoid of bone and artifacts was in the center of the ossuary.

Later re-analysis of the remains from the Ferguson ossuary by osteological experts determined a minimum number of individuals (MNI) of 207 based on the quantity of left temporal bones in the assemblage. The discrepancy between Ferguson's number of skulls and the MNI may merely be a function of preservation. Infant bones were largely absent, but the remains of at least 1 infant were recovered from the apparent remains of a leather pouch along with shell and tubular copper beads. Both juveniles and adults were present, but age estimates on the adult skeletons are probably unreliable as are sex determinations. A modern re-analysis of this ossuary assemblage might provide more reliable determinations of age and sex, but post-cranial bones were noticeably under-represented compared to the number of skulls. This suggests the importance of the skull in the burial treatment of the Piscataways. This is further underlined by the presence of many small bones (phalanges, toe bones, ribs, etc.) stored within the cranial cavity, sometimes along with loose beads. Pathologies represented in the burial population include dental caries, 3 fractures, and several cases of periostitis on tibia bones.

Grave goods included 2 fossil shark's teeth, shell beads (at least 100), a groundstone celt, thousands of European-made glass beads, and copper trade goods. No projectile points or tobacco pipes and only a few sherds were encountered in the ossuary. Tiny turquoise blue beads were the most abundant trade item present. Other objects include small round red glass beads, small round black glass beads, small round white glass beads, small round light-blue glass beads, small round dark-blue glass beads, small round light-blue glass beads with 3 white stripes, small round dark-blue glass beads with white stripes, medium navy/white/red star glass beads, large navy/white/red star glass beads, very large red/white star glass beads, very large white/red/blue star glass beads, at least 200 tubular copper beads (arranged both end-to-end and side-by-side), at least 8 copper discs apparently used as pendants, 2 large copper discs with central perforations (found at either side of a skull suggestive of a headdress), 4 copper "tinkling cones", a copper pendant reminiscent of a raptorial bird, 2 wide copper finger rings, 8 copper hawk bells (1 encased in leather), a copper spiral, 5 copper "lozenges" found strung together, 18 copper jetons issued during the reign of King Charles I, fragments of a scalp preserved by copper salts, as well as numerous pieces of leather and cordage preserved by the action of the copper.

Many of these artifacts were found in ordered combinations of alternating pairs to create necklaces and other forms of adornment. Details of these arrangements can be found in the photographs in MHT site files. Perhaps the most interesting artifacts are the copper jetons. These medallions served as "touchpieces"; admission tokens to the "Ceremony of the King's Touch". Charles I is one of many English kings who participated in the ceremony around the time of his coronation (and perhaps later), in which individuals afflicted with scrofula (Tuberculous cervical lymphadenitis) were admitted to a ceremony with the king in which his touch was supposed to heal them of the disease. These tokens are known to have been issued between 1630 and 1640. All of the jetons recovered at 18PR42 have been drilled for suspension.

The items listed above certainly came from the ossuary excavated by Ferguson, but because the collection from the ossuary was originally considered part of the Claggett site collection (what has come to be known as 18PR40), the artifact tally from this synopsis report is recorded only in the table for the 18PR40 synopsis report rather than in the table above.

As noted previously, the Claggett farm was for sale at the time Alice Ferguson was excavating and around 1946, the portion of the farm on which Mrs. Ferguson is thought to have been excavating was subdivided. A subdivision of small homes now sits atop the probable location of 18PR42. It is thought that this post-WWII type housing was actually rather low-impact. House footprints are small and many may be raised on block foundations. Intact deposits may remain in the yards on the sub-divided lots. Thus, the research potential of 18PR42, and really the area surrounding the actual ossuary which is thought to represent the Piscataway Fort, is not currently known. A promising avenue for research is detailed examination of the land records from the 1940s and 50s as well as examination of aerial photographs to determine if there are likely spots where intact deposits may remain preserved.

MARYLAND
HISTORICAL



TRUST

Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number:

Site Name:

Prehistoric

Other name(s)

Historic

Brief
Description:

Unknown

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):