



Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18TA203

Site Name: Ames Oyster Midden

Prehistoric

Other name(s): Steelman Shell Midden

Historic

Brief Description:

Middle-Late Woodland shell midden, short-term resource procurement

Unknown

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Maryland Archaeological Research Unit No. 4

SCS soil & sediment code MKD

Latitude 38.5959 Longitude -76.0022

Physiographic province Eastern Shore Coastal P

Terrestrial site

Underwater site

Elevation -20 m Site slope

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
- High terrace
- Hilltop/bluff
- Rockshelter/cave
- Interior flat
- Hillslope
- Upland flat
- Unknown
- Ridgetop
- Other
- Terrace
- High Bank
- Low terrace

Ownership

- Private
- Federal
- State of MD
- Regional/county/city
- Unknown

Nearest Surface Water

Name (if any) Choptank River

Saltwater

Ocean

Estuary/tidal river

Tidewater/marsh

Spring

Minimum distance to water is 10 m

Freshwater

Stream/river

Swamp

Lake or pond

Temporal & Ethnic Contextual Data:

Paleoindian site

Woodland site

Archaic site

MD Adena

Early archaic

Early woodland

Middle archaic

Mid. woodland

Late archaic

Late woodland

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 prehistoric 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? 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

Post-in-ground

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 N

Flotation samples taken Y

Other samples taken

Historic context samples

Soil samples taken N

Flotation samples taken Y

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	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	58	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	4	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	64	Eng Dry-bodied	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buckley	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Devon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Porcelain	10	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		Other fired clay	
Flaked stone	252	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ground stone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Modified faunal	1
Stone bowls	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unmod faunal	84
Fire-cracked rock	37	Oyster shell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other lithics (all)	36	Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics (all)	82	Uncommon Obj.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rimsherds	3	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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chalcedony	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Chert	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ironstone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rhyolite	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Argilite	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quartz	<input checked="" 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

Shell midden

Historic Artifacts		Tobacco related	
Pottery (all)	83	Activity item(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass (all)	80	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Architectural	619	Faunal material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furniture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Misc. kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arms	1	Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	1	Misc.	354
Personal items	1	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Historic Features

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

Collection curated at MAC Lab/JPPM

Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

The Ames Oyster Midden (18TA203) is an Early and Late Woodland period shell midden and short-term resource procurement site. There is also a historic component at the site, possibly related to a 19th century occupation. The site is located on the Ames property, on the north bank of the Choptank River in Talbot County. It is situated on a high terrace which is eroding into the river. The soils in the site area are Keyport silt loams. Keyport soils are extremely susceptible to stream bank erosion and in the site area the shoreline had retreated 2.316 m (7.6') between 1848 and 1943. The area back from the bank was a residential lawn separated by a deep swale that runs north from the river and at one time served a private wharf or landing. The shell midden extended approximately 45.72 m (150') along the bank and extended back from the edge of the bank a minimum of 9.144 m. The average thickness of the remnant portion of the truncated midden was 12 cm.

Plans for shore erosion control along the Choptank River were reviewed by Maryland Historical Trust personnel in October 1982 followed by a field visit to the property. At that time, a previously unidentified shell midden (18TA203) was located in the project area. Proposed disturbance as a result of shoreline erosion control was to include landscaping and terracing to approximately 9.144 m back from the edge of the bank. Therefore, it was determined that a site examination should be conducted prior to work commencing. In April 1983, staff from the Maryland Geological Survey, Division of Archeology, with volunteers from the Mid-Shore Chapter of the Archeology Society of Maryland, conducted test excavations at 18TA203. The primary objectives of the investigation were to assess the site within the projected area of impact for periods of occupation, depth, intensity, distribution, and significance. The excavation and analysis also focused on the recovery of environmental data from flotation samples that would indicate seasonality from the oyster hinges and other environmentally sensitive floral and faunal remains. The only available report on the site excavations was a draft version located in the 18TA203 Site Files. Included in the files was an artifact inventory from which most of the artifact data was retrieved. The oyster analysis data was taken from a handwritten report and tables located in the site files. A separate detailed analysis of the faunal remains was also located in the site files.

A total of 18 one-meter squares placed in a line parallel to the bank were excavated. Beginning at an arbitrary point 10 m east of the western limits of the property, where shell was first observed in the bank, a systematic pattern of alternating units was begun moving from west to east. All excavated soils were screened through ¼" mesh hardware cloth. Flotation samples (9.365 liters or 2.5 gallons each) were collected from the southeast quadrant of six test units that were placed on the highest point of the terrace, where intact shell deposits were located. All flotation was conducted at the Division of Archeology's lab with the exception of Feature 1, which was water screened in the Choptank River using window screen mesh.

A single feature was identified during the test unit excavations. Feature 1 was located in test unit N50E102. It consisted of a shallow pit that contained whole oyster shell and a few pieces of fire-cracked rock. Two test units were placed on the terrace east of the deep swale to ensure that there was no continuation of the midden on that side. No remains of the midden were located in either of the units.

A total of 408 prehistoric artifacts were recovered during the excavation. There were 225 pieces of debitage (108 jasper, 88 quartz, 20 chert, 2 chalcedony, 1 quartzite, and 6 rhyolite) and 6 cores. With the exception of the rhyolite, all of the represented raw materials were locally available. Tools included 5 bifaces, 3 modified flakes and 12 utilized unmodified flakes. A single, unidentified black chert side-notched point was recovered from the midden layer. Other lithics included 1 hammerstone and 1 grinding slab fragment, 28 split quartz cobbles, and 6 split jasper cobbles. A total of 37 fire-cracked rock fragments were identified. All of the fire-cracked rock was discarded at the Division of Archeology laboratory following the site analysis. There were 82 ceramic sherds (4 Early Woodland Wolfe Neck, 57 Late Woodland Townsend cord marked including 3 rim sherds, 1 Rappahannock incised, and 20 unidentified sherds). A modified bone object, an awl, was also recovered.

A total of 84 unmodified faunal remains were collected from the excavation units and the flotation samples. The poor condition of the assemblage, a result of chemical erosion, fungus decomposition, root cast channeling, and cracking and splitting from surface exposure, indicated that the assemblage was associated with an open depositional environment for a prolonged period of time. Only a few specimens exhibited evidence of burning or incineration. Indeterminate mammal remains were the most abundant comprising 83% of the faunal assemblage. Most specimens were from large mammals (n=43) and the remainder were from small mammals (n=7). Identified wild species included white-tailed deer (n=15), mostly long bone fragments from areas of meat concentrations on the deer. The remains of large domesticated animals included pig (n=4) and sheep (n=1). Deer and pig bones (n=9 and n=1 respectively) were recovered from test unit 12 which probably represented the remains of historic refuse. Bird remains (n=8) were uncommon and when present were too fragmentary for identification. The only reptile example was a single box turtle shell fragment. A single fish remain from a catfish was identified. Catfish are common in the local freshwater river systems and lakes. Four snails were also identified but there was no conclusive evidence that they were consumed. In addition to the faunal analysis, an oyster seasonality assessment was conducted. The results, based on a 101 sample size, indicated that 68.3% of the oyster was harvested in the spring.

A later 19th century component is mixed with the aboriginal materials in the plowzone. The historic component reflects the historic occupation of the property. Construction of the extant house on the land located just north of the midden dates to the early 19th century. Additionally, brick, cobbles, and historic oyster shell remains were observed in the area of the historic wharf/swale. An old road cut leads down to the wharf where there is a recent timber pier. Impact on this area by the proposed erosion control construction would be minimal since the bank was only 1.524 m (5') in the area and the beach area was wider. Generally, the historic material was evenly distributed across the length of the baseline. There was a slightly higher concentration on the eastern edge of the project area.

A total of 1,104 historic artifacts were collected from the site. There were 619 architectural items (457 brick fragments, 35 pieces of window glass, 90 cut nails, 2 unidentified nails, and 35 pieces of mortar). There was 1 clothing item (a porcelain button). There were 128 kitchen-related items (45 bottle glass fragments, 30 sherds of plain whiteware, 34 blue transfer print whiteware, 10 porcelain sherds, 4 stoneware sherds, and 5 red earthenware sherds). There were 354 miscellaneous items (9 pieces of wire, 39 unidentified metal fragments, 296 pieces of coal, 3 pieces of slate, 6 fieldstones, 1 piece of red ochre, and 4 unidentified miscellaneous objects). The only personal item was a possible bone bead. There was 1 arms-related item (a .22 caliber shell). All of the coal, brick (except 1), mortar, and fieldstones were discarded at the Division of Archeology laboratory following the site analysis.

The Ames Oyster Midden (18TA203) represents a prehistoric shell midden and resource procurement site. Diagnostic artifacts recovered during Phase II excavations indicated utilization of the area in at least the Early and Late Woodland periods. A historic component, representing refuse disposal, was also identified. It is most likely related to early 19th century occupation in the location. Recent aerial photos of the site area indicate that revetment has been



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**Brief
Description:**

Unknown

placed along the shoreline. While this may have had a slight impact on the oyster shell midden, the site was already in danger of destruction due to natural and aggressive shoreline erosional processes. At least of portion of site 18TA203 remains preserved along the river bank.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):