



Phase II and Phase III Archaeological Database and Inventory

Site Number: 18WA479

Site Name: Cushwa's Warehouse

Prehistoric

Other name(s)

Historic

Unknown

Brief Description:

19th - early 20th century canal warehouse

Site Location and Environmental Data:

Maryland Archaeological Research Unit No. 18

SCS soil & sediment code Pn,BkD

Latitude 39.5992

Longitude -77.8286

Physiographic province Great Valley

Terrestrial site

Underwater site

Elevation m

Site slope 8-25%

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) Chesapeake & Ohio Canal

Saltwater

Ocean

Estuary/tidal river

Tidewater/marsh

Spring

Freshwater

Stream/river

Swamp

Lake or pond

Spring

Minimum distance to water is 0 m

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

Y

ca. 1630 - 1675

ca. 1860 - 1900

Y

ca. 1675 - 1720

ca. 1900 - 1930

Y

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

Historic

Urban/Rural? Urban

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

Warehouse

Interpretive Sampling Data:

Prehistoric context samples

Soil samples taken

Flotation samples taken

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		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	<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		Staffordshire		Stoneware	
Astbury	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jackfield	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tin Glazed	11	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	17	Pearlware	82			Rhenish	<input type="checkbox"/>
						Wt Salt-glazed	12

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

Other Artifact & Feature Types:

Prehistoric Artifacts		Other fired clay	
Flaked stone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ground stone	<input type="checkbox"/>	Modified faunal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stone bowls	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unmod faunal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fire-cracked rock	<input type="checkbox"/>	Oyster shell	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other lithics (all)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ceramics (all)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncommon Obj.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rimsherds	<input type="checkbox"/>	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 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 type="checkbox"/>	Chalcedony	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chert	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ironstone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rhyolite	<input type="checkbox"/>	Argilite	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quartz	<input 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

19th century warehouse

Historic Artifacts		Tobacco related	
Pottery (all)	122	Activity item(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Glass (all)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Human remain(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Architectural	<input type="checkbox"/>	Faunal material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furniture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Misc. kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arms	<input type="checkbox"/>	Floral material	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Misc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
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 checked="" 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 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 NPS?

Additional raw data may be available online

Summary Description:

Cushwa's Warehouse (18WA479) is the archeological deposits associated with a large 2½ storey brick and frame commercial warehouse within the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park in Washington County. The site is situated in northwestern Williamsport, immediately adjacent to the C&O Canal basin. The standing structure on site (MIHP# WA-WIL-033) is the location of the former Cushwa's Feed and Cement Warehouse. The surrounding landscape is heavily altered from its native state due to the construction of the canal and the installation of ancillary businesses and structures associated with the canal. Native soils at the site were likely Pope fine sandy loams (which still exist in pockets), but significant historic fill lies across most of the site.

Williamsport, MD was already a major shipping point before the C&O Canal arrived, and the engineers of the canal planned to increase its importance further. They built a wide basin just south of the Conococheague Aqueduct to handle boats being loaded and unloaded. This basin was originally called the Williamsport Basin, but it is now known as the Cushwa Basin. It was a focal point of commercial and industrial activity from 1835 until 1924. In addition, a certain Charles Warfield received permission in 1835 to build a basin for his produce business just north of Lock 44. He widened the canal by 15 to 20 feet along a distance of about 120 feet. This "Warfield's Basin" became another focus of both manufacturing and trade.

The first detailed description we have of buildings around the Cushwa Basin is a report made to the canal company in 1838 by G.W. Rodgers. A sketch he made of the site shows three buildings fronting on the basin: the Cushwa Warehouse in the center, then belonging to a "Mrs. Williams", a second warehouse to the south, and Beatty's plaster mill to the north. This mill was constructed in 1835-1836, using wastewater that flowed from the basin to Conococheague Creek. A small warehouse is shown behind Beatty's mill, and a larger structure belonging to B. Drake is shown a short distance back from the basin, northeast of the Williams warehouse.

The Western Maryland Railroad reached Williamsport in 1872. At that time the Cushwa Warehouse was modified to allow easier loading and unloading of rail cars. From then until the canal ceased operations in 1924, coal was the main cargo handled at the basin. Coal was brought down the canal from mines around Cumberland and loaded onto rail cars for distribution up the Hagerstown Valley and even to Baltimore. According to one estimate from the 1870s, half the population of Williamsport depended economically on the coal trade through Cushwa Basin. A detailed 1877 map of Williamsport shows only one structure at the Cushwa Basin: the Embry and Cushwa Warehouse.

In 1879, the Miller Brothers leased land and water rights on the Cushwa Basin for a new mill. The mill was powered by water falling from the basin through a mill race to Conococheague Creek. Originally it was used to grind plaster, like the Beatty mill that preceded it in this location, but soon it was mainly used for milling lumber. This mill building stood until 1928, when it was destroyed by fire. Several pictures of the basin survive from the late 1800s, when it was used primarily as a loading area for coal.

The first archeological excavations in the Cushwa Basin area were carried out in 1977 in and around Cushwa's Warehouse (18WA479), in advance of planned restoration efforts. Seventeen 1.52 X 1.52 m (5 X 5 ft) units were dug, five inside the warehouse, eight along the outside of the north wall, two along the south wall, and one each along the east and west ends. Some, but not all, of these units were excavated to bedrock. The stratigraphy in most units consisted of several thin layers of soil mixed with coal and lime over a deep layer of yellowish brown loam. Some of this basal loam was definitely fill, but it continued down to bedrock, and some of it may have been undisturbed natural soil. It was certainly identical to natural soil observed in nearby exposures. No builder's trenches could be observed around the deep stone foundations, so it seems that the fill was deposited around the foundations after or when they were built. The most obvious nearby source for a large amount of fill would be the Cushwa Basin itself. If the fill came from the excavation of the basin, this would date the construction of the warehouse to around the time the basin was dug (1835). However, the complex foundations of the warehouse (discussed below) give some indications that the warehouse predates the basin, so the origin of the fill is not certain.

The artifacts did provide evidence of activity on the spot well before the canal was constructed. These included 11 sherds of Delftware (1620-1800), 9 sherds of white salt-glazed stoneware (1720-1805), 3 sherds of white stoneware with scratch blue decoration (1744-1775), 17 sherds of creamware (1762-1820), and 82 sherds of pearlware (1775-1840). These domestic artifacts imply, not a warehouse, but a dwelling or tavern. A fairly substantial domestic site must have stood in this general area from about 1750 onward. This was presumably the tavern for which a Joseph Williams sought licenses in 1752. Quite likely the location of this site was within the Cushwa Basin, which would account for the incorporation of the artifacts into the fill in the surrounding areas. Of course, the presence of a nearby dwelling or tavern does not rule out a warehouse. Numerous domestic artifacts dating to after 1835 were also found in the surface strata around the Cushwa Warehouse.

The foundations of the Cushwa Warehouse proved to be very complex. The visible structure of the warehouse was divided into three sections, and it was thought that these might have been built at different times. However, the foundations seemed to reflect a different sequence of construction than the structure. The middle and west sections of the warehouse shared a common foundation. The foundations under these sections had two parts, upper and lower. The lower foundation was a deep, massively built (1.22 m or 4 ft wide), well-constructed wall resting on bedrock about 3.05 m below the current grade. This wall terminated about 1.13 m below grade. Resting on top of the lower foundation, but not tied to it, was another wall built of different materials and in a different style from the lower foundation. The stones were smaller and of a different color, and they were not so well laid. This upper foundation supported part of the currently standing structure. It could be securely dated to after 1832 by a five-cent piece found in the fill alongside it. Other parts of the structure were supported on brick pilings .2 meters square, which also rested on the lower foundation. The wall of the Cushwa Basin was built up against both the lower and upper foundations along the west side of the warehouse, suggesting that the warehouse walls were built first. However, it is not certain whether the stone walls of the basin date to the original 1835 construction period or a later repair or reconstruction.

The eastern part of the warehouse rested on a completely separate foundation, built up against the foundations of the middle section. These were well constructed and rested on bedrock. However, they were much shallower than the deep foundations under the middle and western sections, as bedrock sloped upward to the east in this location. The same fill dated to after 1832 beside the middle section was also found around the east section, dating these foundations to post-1832.

The interpretation offered by the 1977 researchers was that the deep foundations under the west and central sections of the warehouse represented a pre-canal structure. Around the time the canal was built, that structure was demolished down to its foundations (or possibly jacked up), the upper foundation was



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built, and the warehouse built anew or replaced on top of the elevated foundation. The raising of the foundations by 34.4 cm may have been necessary because of the extensive landscape modifications that accompanied the building of the canal. If the old floor of the warehouse was below the level of canal water, it would certainly have been necessary to elevate the structure. The east section was built soon afterward.

This interpretation is plausible, but there are other explanations that have been suggested. Since there is no definitive evidence of any pre-canal warehouse in this location, the two layers of the foundation might represent stopping and starting of construction in the 1830s. Someone, presumably a member of the Williams family, could initially have ordered the construction of a large warehouse with massive, very secure foundations. But, perhaps because money ran short, or perhaps because of a documented five-year delay in the building of the canal, construction was halted, and when it resumed it was carried on in a less expensive and more expeditious way. The appeal of this view is that it accounts for the odd fact that while commerce at Williamsport grew greatly after the canal was built, the upper section of the foundation is more poorly constructed than the lower. It is also hard to imagine how a large warehouse at Williamsport could have been omitted from maps made as part of the planning to build the canal.

No additional information about the 1977 excavations at 18WA479 is available at MHT. There is no copy of the original report and the data gathered for this synopsis comes from a 2009 project which re-assessed the earlier work.

Based on the findings in 1977, it would appear that 18WA479 is a significant archeological site. The site consists of the archeological component associated with the Cushwa Coal Building (MIHP# WA-WIL-033). The site includes the remains of a buried 1835 ground surface and varying structural features associated with the canal related transportation and commerce activities in the Cushwa Basin. The archeological investigations uncovered artifacts and intact features associated with the site's historical uses. The site has been determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register as a contributing resource to the C&O Canal National Park. The site is eligible under Criteria A and D for its association with the C&O Canal and for its demonstrated potential to yield important information regarding the canal-related transportation, commercial, and industrial activities in the Williamsport area.

External Reference Codes (Library ID Numbers):

95001295