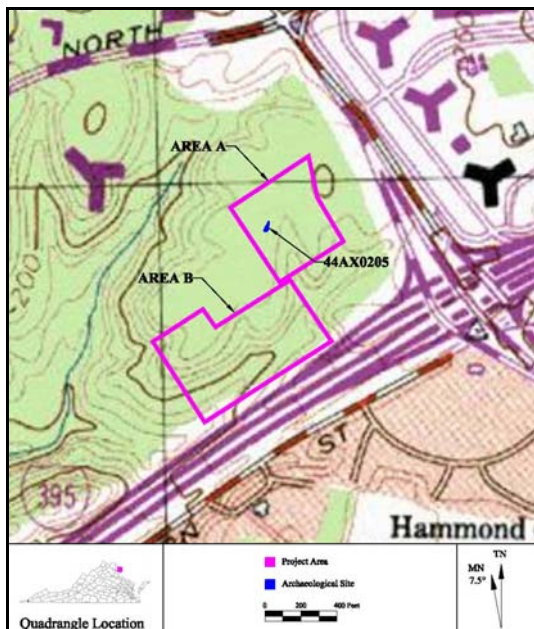




PUBLIC SUMMARY: CULTURAL RESOURCES INVESTIGATIONS OF THE 4-ACRE MARK CENTER VI PARCEL (AREA A) AND ONE ACRE OF THE 6-ACRE MARK CENTER BUILDINGS 2A, 2B, AND 3 PARCEL (AREA B) WITHIN THE MARK CENTER COMPLEX ON SEMINARY ROAD IN THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

In May and June of 2008, on behalf of the Duke Realty Corporation, Cultural Resources, Inc. (CRI), conducted archaeological testing of four acres within the Mark Center VI parcel (Area A) and approximately one acre within the Mark Center Buildings 2A, 2B, and 3 parcel (Area B) at Mark Center on Seminary Road in the City of Alexandria, Virginia. This project area was previously surveyed between 1979 and 1994 in multiple investigations conducted by Terry Klein of the Alexandria RPO and Robert Adams (1994).

requested additional survey efforts to meet current cultural resources standards and guidelines. A portion of Area A was subject to shovel testing at that time, as were the upland terraces in Area B. Alexandria Archaeology requested 30-foot interval shovel testing and 5-foot interval metal detecting of all of Area A and the low lying terraces of Area B in an effort to provide 100% coverage of both areas and to relocate an area where two shovel tests excavated in 1994 indicated evidence of activities associated with Native American occupation. Fieldwork involved digging shovel tests, generally one-to-one-and-one-half-foot-diameter holes designed to locate artifacts, and more carefully excavated square test units that evaluated the stratigraphy and examined the soil for evidence of fires, hearths, posts, and other non-portable remains of past activity.



Detail of Alexandria, VA USGS Quad Depicting the Project Area Location

Following a review of the previous research, Alexandria Archaeology

Site 44AX0205 was identified during shovel testing in Area A of the Mark Center project. The base of a Savannah River point and 15 pieces of chipping debris or debitage, the by-products of stone tool manufacturing, were recovered from three shovel tests excavated within a 45-x-30-foot area. The Savannah River point indicates an occupation dating to the Terminal Archaic Period, circa 2,500-1,000 B.C. In addition to the Savannah River Point, excavation of five test units within Site 44AX0205 recovered five non-

diagnostic stone tools, 1,083 pieces of debitage, and two historic artifacts. Quartzite constituted the overwhelming majority of stone material recovered, with quartz a minor component of the assemblage. After the identification of Site 44AX0205 within the Mark Center VI Parcel (Area A), a Phase II investigation of Site 44AX0205, consisting of the excavation of five test units, was conducted.



View of Savannah River Point and debitage recovered from Site 44AX0205

At the conclusion of the initial fieldwork, Alexandria Archaeology found the site to be locally significant and requested additional excavations at Site 44AX0205. CRI conducted this additional work in October of 2008. This additional work yielded approximately 2,717 lithic artifacts from 98 1.5-x-1.5 foot square excavation units within Site 44AX0205.

Debitage, including numerous expedient tools, constituted the overwhelming majority of artifacts recovered from Site 44AX0205. Expedient tools refer to generalized artifacts that lack extensive finishing and shaping. Because flakes removed from a cobble are extremely sharp, such relatively simple tools may serve a wide variety of purposes. Formal bifaces, so named because they

are tools shaped by removing flakes from two sides of a cobble to produce knives, spear points, and other extensively shaped and sharpened tools, also occurred on site. The formal bifaces included early stage bifaces through a finished Savannah River point. Groundstone tools, more-or-less unreduced cobbles that exhibit pitting or wear from grinding and processing foods, generally plants and nuts, and broken stone that had been burned in a hearth form the remainder of the artifacts.

The density of artifacts plummeted rapidly as distance from the site core increased. The densest concentration of artifacts lies within an area no larger than ten feet in diameter. Yet, within this very small site, artifacts generally associated with plant processing (i.e., groundstone tools), processing of various floral and faunal remains (flake tools), a hearth or stone boiling (fire-cracked rock), tool production (debitage and early and middle stage bifaces), and hunting (one Savannah River base) were recovered. The small size of the site, the low artifact density, and the composition of the assemblage indicate sequential use of Site 44AX0205 over a very short period at some point during the Terminal Archaic (ca. 2500-1000 B.C.) produced the palimpsest of artifacts recovered during the fieldwork. At an archaeological time scale, very short-term, sequential use refers to intermittent activities that took place over a time frame as brief a single day as well as multiple return trips that perhaps occurred over a period as long as a year.

Although the local landscape has been altered considerably, the site occupies a watershed divide between Holmes Run



View of Bifacial Tool Recovered from Site 44AX0205



View of Quartz Tool Recovered from Site 44AX0205



View of Hammerstone and Quartzite Tools Recovered from Site 44AX0205

and Four Mile Run, relatively close to the Potomac River. Individuals and groups ranging out from base camps along the Potomac River or traveling from the river to the interior probably occupied the site. The activities conducted on site probably varied in response to the spatial relationship between Site 44AX0205 and the home base at any given time, and on the resources available in the site vicinity during different seasons. Stone tool production and use, in particular reliance on expedient tools, was an important activity represented in the assemblage recovered from Site 44AX0205.

Unfortunately, the growth of Alexandria remade the landscape surrounding Site 44AX0205, and non-stone tools have disintegrated over time. As a consequence, the various hypotheses about the precise activities carried out at Site 44AX0205 cannot be verified. Several alternatives exist, however. To avoid presenting a single 'just-so story,' we present several alternative scenarios of the activities that formed Site 44AX0205.

At some point between 2,500 B.C. and 1,000 B.C., a group of hunters climbed the ridges to the divide between Holmes Run and Four Mile Run and began to search for game. Moving up the watershed divide, which channeled deer and other large animals from the Potomac River to the interior forests, they stopped near a small spring at the head of an ephemeral drainage. The hunters, probably younger men, searched the nearby streambeds and ravines for cobbles. Testing for stone quality and initial removal of the weathered rind of the stone occurred where the cobbles eroded from the ridges or washed onto

cobble bars along the stream. Unaltered cobbles were also collected for use in a hearth. Sitting around the hearth, the group chipped tools, discarding the tools sharpened to nubs and those that broke during production along with a substantial amount of chipping debris near the spot where they worked. They may have collected, processed, and eaten plants and smaller animals or insects while watching for game. At some point the hunters set off in search of game or, using their newly manufactured points, took down animals passing by the site. Scraping tools, possibly evidence of hide processing, may indicate that the group worked the hides at some point before returning to the base camp. The sexual division of labor characteristic of many hunter-gathers, however, argues against this scenario, though it remains plausible. Typically, women collect and prepare the majority of plant foods and often work hides as well.

Alternatively, a small family or extended family moved out from a base camp, probably closer to the Potomac River. The group climbed the bluffs and traveled across the ridges separating Holmes Run from Four Mile Run, taking the path of least effort by remaining on the level ridge top. Assuming that the division of labor by sex and age commonly described by ethnographers applied to the group, smaller parties spread out across the landform to hunt, forage, and replace tools. One group, probably composed of several males, searched the nearby streambeds and ravines for cobbles suited for tool production. Like the hunters, the male party carried the reduced cobbles the level land at the head of the ravine and manufactured tools. There, individuals made tools, discarding the extensively

sharpened and worn-out tools and those tools that broke during manufacture along with the substantial amount of debris near the spot where they worked. They may or may not have constructed a hearth at that time. Regardless, after finishing the tools and collecting whatever additional stone material would be required later, the party tramped off in search of game, to collect other goods, to meet with members of other extended families, or returned to camp with the finished tools, leaving behind a substantial accumulation of chipping debris.

A second party, perhaps composed of women, children, or simply less accomplished flintknappers, collected flakes from the refuse pile. The flakes, far sharper than after use or reworking, were useful for a variety of tasks conducted either on site or elsewhere in the region. Some flakes, reworked to increase the angle of the edge, served as tools for scraping hides, bark, fibrous plants, or a variety of other activities. At that same time, or somewhat later, plants were processed using cobbles for grinding and pounding. The individuals then left, whether after reuniting with the group of flintknappers or not.

Although this scenario is plausible, near surface archaeological deposits exist on landforms traversed by many people over thousands of years. As a consequence, archaeological sites typically accumulate over far longer time periods than described in the first and second scenarios. In addition, tool production need not have been the initial activity that occurred on site. The cobbles arranged in a hearth perhaps remained visible on the ground surface, creating, as would the larger pile of

debitage, the initial condition that led later people to carry out different activities in a very small area.

A third possibility, therefore, spaces the activities that interfere with each other, like plant processing and perhaps cooking, hide working, and tool manufacture, over a longer time period. Initially, the cobbles gathered elsewhere were lugged to Site 44AX0205. The cobbles were used to construct a hearth, and, possibly, for stone boiling. Stone boiling involves heating the unaltered cobbles in a fire, and then placing the fired stones in a container to heat the contents. In this case, baskets or wooden bowls seem the most likely type of container, since no containers were recovered during the excavation. At the same time, or perhaps at some point before natural and cultural processes obscured the ground surface, another group, probably including women, returned to the area, to collect and process plants using the cobbles as grinding stones. At another time, flintknappers brought cobbles to knap to an area where a hearth already existed. After manufacturing points and cutting tools, the group moved on, leaving a substantial accumulation of debris behind. At a later date, a small group that had collected plants or seeking to process messy hides away from a living area used the chipping debris instead of climbing down to the river to collect stone for the manufacture of flake tools. Groups that return to an area repeatedly over a period of time represent the most common behavior that creates archaeological sites; still, the available information do not confirm any of the three scenarios, nor does the data unambiguously rule out any of the three alternatives. In addition, the precise

sequence of different activities remains unknown, though the creation of a hearth or stone tool production both seem likely to have created a pile of refuse that could be reused at a later date.



**View of 1.5 x 1.5 foot Grid over Site
44AX0205**



**View of Excavation in Progress at Site
44AX0205**



**View of Completed Excavations at Site
44AX0205**