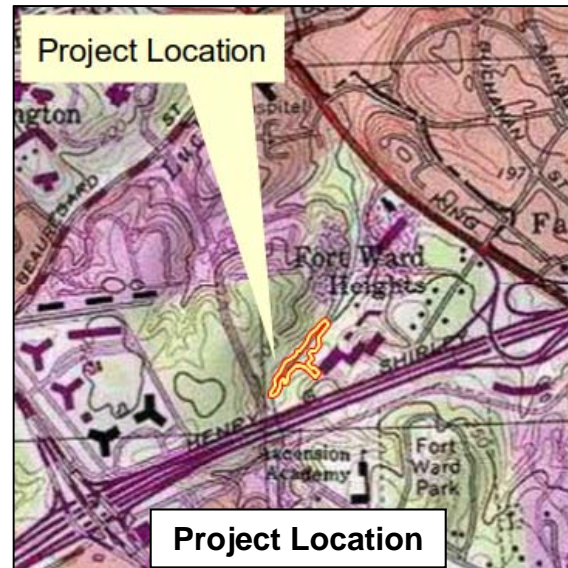


LUCKY RUN STREAM RESTORATION PHASE I/II ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

PUBLIC SUMMARY

Introduction

The City of Alexandria (City) is undertaking a stream restoration along approximately 275 meters (m) of Lucky Run on the west side of Alexandria, Virginia. This section of stream is located east Braddock Road between a number of apartment and condominium complexes. Alexandria Archaeology recommended archaeological investigations to determine if the project had the potential to impact significant archaeological deposits, including previously recorded site 44AX0031. AECOM conducted Phase I investigations in July 2018, followed by Phase II testing at 44AX0031 in September 2018 (Kozierski and Stewart 2018).



Context

PREHISTORIC

Mid-Atlantic prehistory is traditionally divided into three major periods: the Paleoindian (10,000–8,000 B.C.), Archaic (8,000–1,000 B.C.), and Woodland (1,000 B.C.–A.D. 1600) periods. The project area and immediate vicinity contain evidence of occupation during the Early and Middle Woodland periods. While the project area may have been, and likely was, visited by peoples during other prehistoric time periods, no diagnostic evidence of their presence has been discovered.

The Woodland period in the Mid-Atlantic witnessed the blossoming of innovations in technology, economy, and settlement. Ceramic technology was developed, with styles varying between regions. Projectile point technology also underwent further development and was eventually adapted to the bow and arrow (Dent 1995). Local and regional exchange systems were also important components to some Woodland period societies, with the movement of exotic materials from the Piedmont to sites on the Coastal Plain (Dent 1995; Sperling 2008). Throughout the Woodland period, there was a greater regional move toward sedentary lifeways, transitioning from a system of mobile collection strategies to one of established villages (Dent 1995; Sperling 2008). As people shifted to living in one place for an extended period, there is evidence that they began relying more on agriculture (Smith 1992; Dent 1995).

The Early Woodland began with the introduction of pottery around 1000 B.C., and potters' innovations, as reflected in ceramic types, have become a significant basis for dating Woodland

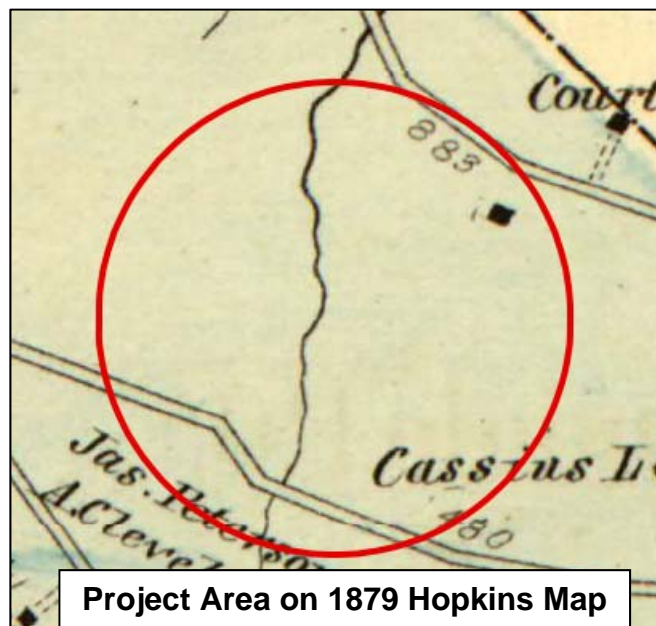
period archeological site components. Early Woodland sites are generally larger than sites of previous times, and there seems to have been an increasing reliance on riverine and estuarine resource areas. The settlement-subsistence system of this period was focused primarily on a series of base camps where people gathered together to exploit seasonally available resources (Gardner 1982:60) such as anadromous fish in the spring and early summer and estuarine resources in the fall and early winter. The smaller camps were established seasonally in areas where ripening resources or concentrations of game could be found.

The Middle Woodland period (500 B.C.-A.D. 900) generally is not well-defined, and researchers disagree about the exact boundaries of the period. Dent (1995:235) has referred to this period of “technological homogenization” where “ceramic and projectile point variability becomes limited to fewer types.” Despite the presence of fewer ceramic and projectile point styles, the Middle Woodland period represents a continuation and further development of cultural complexity from the Early Woodland period. In addition, intensification in trade networks over a large region is one of the notable trends evident by the onset of the Middle Woodland. Settlement patterns were largely similar to those of the Early Woodland, although base-camp settlements located at freshwater/brackish water junctions appear to have been abandoned in favor of broader floodplain sites where both non-tidal and tidal aquatic resources could be found (Dent 1995).

HISTORIC

The western side of Alexandria was farmland up until the start of the twentieth century. Early histories of the area are sparse. The location was patented in 1651 as part of what would later become Fairfax County, and the general area was soon cleared for tobacco cultivation (Adams et al. 1993:66). The project area was part of a 982 acre deed that went to Fairfax County court justice William Henry Terrett in 1741 (Adams et al. 1993:69).

The landscape was sparsely inhabited during the eighteenth century, and while roads were built near the project area during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the area stayed fairly rural. A mid-nineteenth century traveler described the region between the Little River and Middle Turnpikes as a pine wilderness, with only a scattering of cabins along a 12 mile long track between Alexandria and Fairfax (in Wrenn 1972:12). Following the Civil War, the pace of development in the region increased. Maps from the 1870s and 1880s illustrate buildings largely to the south and east of the project area, but few in the immediate vicinity.



Project Area on 1879 Hopkins Map

Development of the area increased significantly in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century. Residential developments grew, coincident with the influx of government employees, military leaders, and their families, to the Washington D.C. area during and shortly after World War II. In 1957 the city limits of Alexandria expanded westwards to encompass the

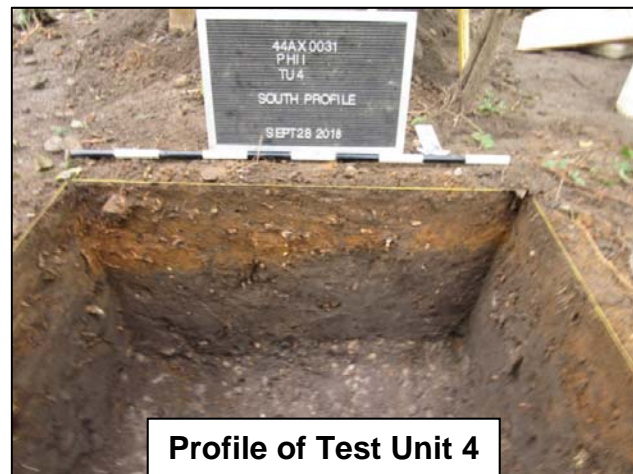
project area. At this time, an easement was granted to the city to construct sewer lines in the area. By the 1970s plans were in place for moderate density residential development of the area, and by the 1990s condominiums and high-rise apartments had been built. The area is now highly populated and continues to grow and develop.

44AX0031

The project area overlapped with the boundary of previously recorded site 44AX0031. Alexandria City Archaeology first recorded the site was in 1979. The site survey form indicates three small artifact loci connected by surface scatters of flakes on the north bank of Lucky Run (in Adams et al. 1993:Appendix B:163). International Archaeological Consultants (IAC) conducted investigations of 44AX0031 in September 1992 as part of planning for a storm water retention pond. IAC's excavations recovered nearly 2,000 flakes, chipped stone bifaces, Terminal Archaic soapstone vessel fragments, and Early Woodland Accokeek ceramic sherds. The site was recommended eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and preserved in place by a covering of landscape fabric and gravel (Adams et al 1993:211).

Findings

The Phase I survey consisted of the excavation of shovel test pits (STPs) at 9 and 4.5 m intervals, which resulted in the discovery of three isolated finds, one new archaeological site, 44AX0236, and additional portions of 44AX0031. The isolated finds and 44AX0236 are small scatters of non-diagnostic prehistoric and historic artifacts and are considered not significant. Given the findings of the previous work at 44AX0031, however, the presence of additional portions of the site within the project area triggered a more intensive Phase II evaluation to determine if significant portions of the site are located within the project area. This work included the excavation of additional STPs as well as the excavation of six test units (TUs), which measured either 1-x-1 m or 0.5-x-1 m in size.



The archaeological investigation revealed evidence of Early and Middle Woodland period occupation within the project area. Diagnostic artifacts included Accokeek ceramics, typically associated with the Early Woodland period, and a Selby Bay projectile point more commonly found at Middle Woodland period sites, but also at earlier sites. The volume and variety of artifacts point to a wide range of activities that took place at the site. These would have likely included the production of stone tools (bifaces, stone chipping debitage, hammer stone) and the preparation of food (fire-cracked rock, ceramics for boiling, possibly scrapers and microblades for meat or fiber cutting). The presence of micro-blades, scrapers, a possible spokeshave, and other expedient cutting tools might also indicate butchering of animal kills, hide working, cutting of fibrous plants (for food or other uses), and woodworking activities.



Selby Bay (L) and Piscataway (R)

The broad range of activities suggests intensive occupations, possibly of the resource extraction or seasonal-camp varieties. The site may have functioned as a camp occupied by smaller groups, perhaps extended families or small bands. The sheltered valley would have been favorable during cold parts of the year, or might have been a location where specialized plant or animal resources were harvested. Occupations were likely brief, but frequent.

The site did yield historic artifacts, but many were recovered from fill or fluvial deposits and may have been brought in from elsewhere. The few historic artifacts in secure contexts indicate a light footprint during the more recent past. There was no evidence of plowing in the areas investigated, and it is possible that the project area was not cultivated in historic or modern times. The historic record and distribution of historic sites in the project vicinity suggest that the few habitations that were present in the area were in the uplands and likely date after the second half of the nineteenth century.

Recommendations

While archaeologists found evidence of 44AX0031 within the project area, most of the site within the project area does not contain any significant archaeological deposits. As such, the significant portions of the site as documented in the 1990s and to a small extent by the current project will be avoided by the stream restoration work.

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