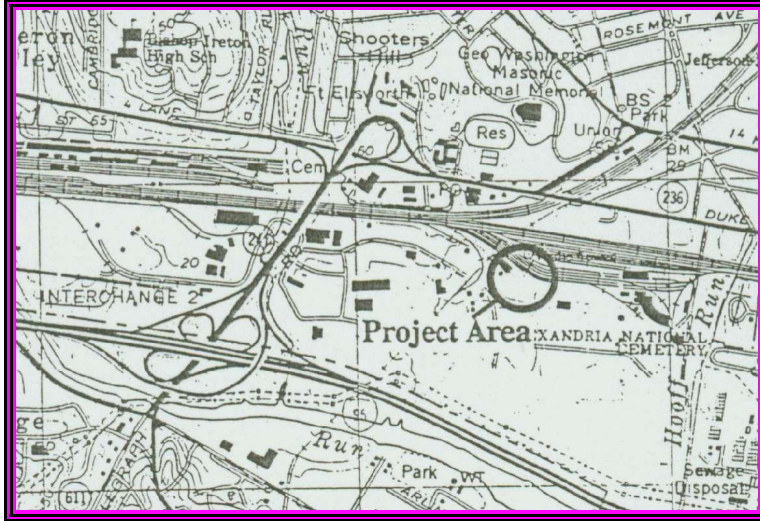


**ALEXANDRIA FEDERAL COURTHOUSE
(44AX164)**

Report Summary by Shirley Scalley



INTRODUCTION

In late 1992, Engineering Science, Inc. conducted archaeological investigations of a 1/2-acre site in the northern portion of Block I of the Carr/Norfolk Southern (CNS) property in Alexandria, Virginia. Block I was the portion of the planned Carr 70-acre development between Duke Street and Eisenhower Avenue under consideration by the General Services Administration (GSA) to be the site of the future Alexandria Federal Courthouse. Earlier tests in the southern portion of the site revealed no archaeological resources.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was executed between GSA, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (VSHPO), and The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Alexandria Archaeology concurred in the MOA. A Scope of Work for each of Phase I and II investigations of the

site was reviewed and approved by Alexandria Archaeology and VSHPO.

Phase I was carried out in two stages during July 1992. Stage I determined that no archaeologically significant areas existed on the northern boundaries of the site and that pile driving there could proceed. Stage II determined that there was a historic grade at an elevation of 19 to 26 feet under a 1/2-acre area in the northern portion of the site and that grading the site to a 14- to 15-foot elevation would have a negative archaeological impact. During a combined Phase I and Phase II evaluation of the site in August and September of 1992, almost 900 prehistoric and historic artifacts were recovered and a subplowzone feature was identified.

These results showed that the project area contained a multi-component archaeological site and was potentially eligible for the

National Register of Historic Places. Accordingly, a Phase III investigation was planned to more fully excavate and evaluate the site. A Scope of Work was developed in consultation with Dr. Pamela Cressey of Alexandria Archaeology and Dr. Thomas King of GSA, National Capital Region. Engineering Science conducted the work in November and December of 1992.

HISTORY

Prehistoric Occupation

The project area lies in the Cameron Run Valley and has geographical and biological characteristics that have attracted man to the area during both prehistoric and historic periods.

The prehistory of the region is traditionally divided into three major cultural periods: the Paleo-Indian (10000 B.C.-7500 B.C.), the Archaic (7500 B.C.-1000 B.C.), and the Woodland (1000 B.C.-A.D. 1600). The prehistoric artifacts recovered during excavations indicate use of the site during the Late Archaic and Woodland Periods, from approximately 3000 B.C. to as late as 1600 A.D.

In addition to prehistoric lithic flakes, tools, and various stage biface, a Piscataway point from the Middle Woodland and a pottery fragment with a cord-impressed decoration from the Late Woodland were recovered.

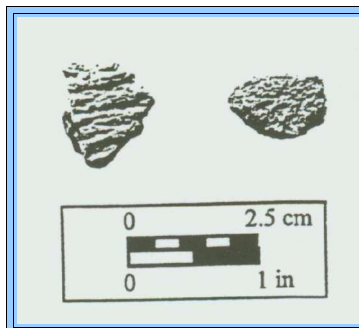
Of particular interest, however, was recovery of the base of a Savannah River broadspear projectile point, which suggests that the site was used during the transition period between the Late Archaic and Early Woodland known as the Savannah River Phase. During this time, there was a shift from the generalized

foraging subsistence pattern of the Late Archaic to the beginnings of more complex agricultural societies in the Woodland. It was a shift in the location of semi-sedentary base camps from small creek floodplains to large river floodplains, setting the stage for the development of horticulture. Regional interaction may have become more widespread also. Larger, possibly macro-social campsites appeared during the Savannah River Phase, and there tended to be increased sedentism toward the end of the period. This period represents an important shift in adaptation and settlement, and the Cameron Run Valley may have played an important role in the transition in this area.

Historic Occupation

The project area lay within or on the margins of what was, from c. 1780 until the early twentieth century, the unincorporated village of West End. West End was a transitional area that had grown up along Little River Turnpike between urban Alexandria and the surrounding rural area. It served as a transshipment point for cattle and other rural products destined for the Alexandria, Georgetown, and D.C. markets. The initial processing, such as butchery, tanning, and milling, was also conducted at West End.

Although no historical information was found on actual occupants of the site, information on the landowners was available, mainly through tax and census records. During the time the Courthouse Site is thought to have been used, c. 1780 until the mid-nineteenth century, the project area changed ownership a number of times. The owners from 1762 until 1794 were the West family. They sold the property to John Korn in 1794. John Korn granted his partner, Jacob



Prehistoric Pottery Fragments
Left: Cord Impressed

Wisemiller, a one-half interest in the property in 1807. Korn and Wisemiller owned the property until 1811. During this period, a wagon yard was located on the property. Korn and Wisemiller were business partners who lived in Alexandria and were involved in a variety of enterprises, including biscuit baking, sales, and schooner chartering. Their household consisted of 12 white males, six white females, six male slaves, and four female slaves.

When Korn and Wisemiller advertised the property for sale in 1808, they mentioned the presence of a “good dwelling house.” The location of the house was not recorded, but it was probably located along Little River Turnpike where the settlement during this period was concentrated. John Zimmerman, a butcher, acquired the property in 1811. Although he lived in the West End, he did not live on this property. The value of the buildings on the property in 1811 was \$1,200; the combined value of the land and buildings was \$4,500. In 1821, the value increased to \$4,800, with a marginal notation that this was an increase of \$15 per acre added for new buildings. What these buildings were or where they were located is unknown. Zimmerman’s household was recorded in 1820 as consisting of four white males, six white females, four male slaves, three female slaves, and one free African American male.

The property remained in the Zimmerman family until 1849. From 1841 to 1849, they

operated a tavern on the property. The tax records do not indicate any improvements to the property during this period. When the Zimmerman heirs advertised the property, they described “a commodious tavern, with all useful and appropriate outhouses, buildings, and improvements for a public house and farm.” The locations of these structures are unknown, although the tavern would almost certainly have been located along the turnpike. David Watkins owned the property in 1851. He did not reside on the property or continue to operate the tavern. It is likely that the property was used for agricultural purposes while he owned it. Watkins owned the land until 1887, which is after the period of occupation that has been identified archaeologically. In 1897, the property passed to the Southern Railway Company.

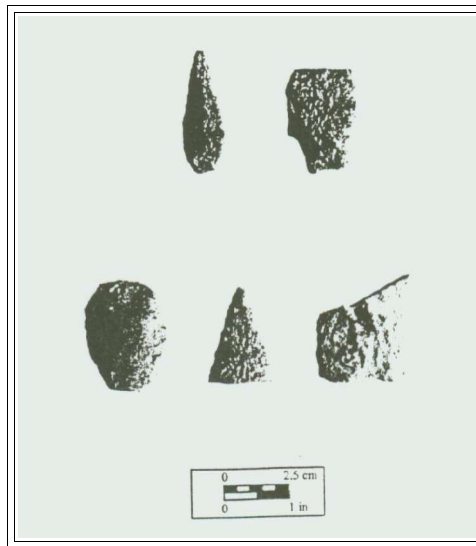
ARCHAEOLOGY

Features

After the fill was removed, the highest point of the site was about 26 feet above sea level. From that point, the land sloped down to the north, east, and west.

To the east was a steep gully that had been filled in the twentieth century. To the west was another drainage, probably a small stream, pond, or marsh. This drainage had been filled by siltation and artificial fill. Parts were presumably plowed, because the fill strata were overlain by plowzone.

The only feature of human origin found was a subplowzone ditch that extended from the drainage to a point outside the project area.



Top: Piscataway and Savannah River Points
Early Stage Biface; Two Late Stage Bifaces

The absence of features may be the result of any actual residence or activity area being outside the project area, or if within the project area, of having all associated features destroyed by plowing.

Prehistoric Artifacts

A total of 126 prehistoric artifacts were recovered during Phase II and III investigations. Of these, 119, or 88%, came from contexts without modern disturbance. They were predominantly flakes and flake fragments of quartz and quartzite. A few were of rhyolite, chalcedony, or chert.

Other artifacts recovered include the Piscataway and Savannah River points, pottery sherds, tools, and bifaces in various stages of completion.

A lack of diversity of artifact types and the low density of artifacts suggest that the type of occupation was that of a micro-social unit camp. Inhabited by small groups, these camps functioned as base camps or procurement outposts, such as fishing stations. Data limitations preclude further speculation about the site.

Historic Artifacts

A total of 6,518 historic artifacts were recovered from both the plowzone and subplowzone during Phase II and III investigations. The artifacts were classified into seven functional groups: Domestic, Architectural, Domestic/Industrial, Flint Ballast, Personal, Arms, Miscellaneous.

The largest class within Domestic Material was ceramics; the second largest was bottle glass. Ceramics accounted for 55.3% of the

entire historical assemblage. The major varieties were refined earthenware, coarse earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain.

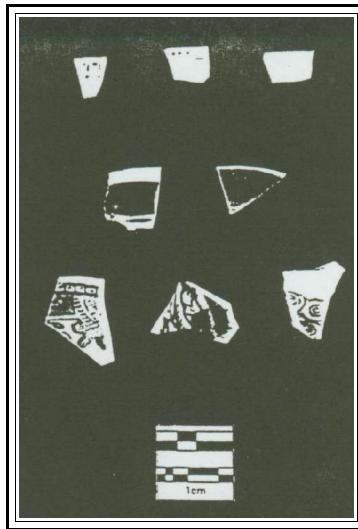
Most of the ceramics were refined earthenwares, usually tableware. More than half of these dated from 1762 to the present day. The coarse earthenwares, used in food preparation, dated from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century and were not diagnostic. Most of the stoneware dated anywhere between 1650 and 1825, except American stoneware, which was probably first produced in 1718 and is still produced today. Stoneware included mugs, pitchers, bottles, and tableware.

Some of the porcelains were China imports and some European. Chinese porcelain was imported to the colonies before 1650 and continues to be imported today. One piece could be identified as "Canton" porcelain, which was imported to the United States between 1800 and 1830. The European porcelain was first manufactured in the eighteenth century and is still manufactured today.

Analysis of the ceramics provided the best means of determining the dates of the historic occupation of the site. The diagnostic ceramics cover a range from c.1650 to c.1930, with an overall mean date of 1826.176. Forty-five percent of the assemblage was manufactured c.1800. Based on this distribution, it is

unlikely that the site was occupied before c.1780.

The preponderance of pearlware suggests that the site was occupied in the early nineteenth century, possibly as early as the late



Chinese Porcelain

eighteenth century. The yellow ware and Rockingham indicate that occupation continued after c.1830. How long the occupation continued into the nineteenth century is more difficult to ascertain. Some of the decorative techniques on the various ceramics recovered suggest an occupation to 1880. The absence of other types of ceramics also suggests that occupation didn't extend much beyond the 1880s.

There was not enough data to make inferences about the socio-economic status of the household(s) using the ceramics. The greatest concentration of ceramics occurred within and along the edge of the drainage and may have been the result of refuse disposal. A concentration of architectural material at the top of the historical slope suggests this might be the location of a residence. No features were encountered, however, that would support this conclusion.

CONCLUSION

Recent filling, construction, and remediation impacted the archaeological condition of the site. Portions of the historic ground surface that survived were buried under up to 18 feet of fill. Cinder block foundations and sewer and other pipe trenches did significant damage, and portions of the site were contaminated with hydrocarbons. It is remarkable that any traces of the site's early history have survived.

Interpretation of the archaeological data recovered was complicated because these investigations considered only a 1/2-acre slice of a large site. The rest of the site lies outside of the project area.

Despite these problems, the site does contribute to our knowledge of prehistoric activities in the Cameron Run Valley. The artifacts recovered suggest use of the site

from the Late Archaic through the Late Woodland. However, the data is insufficient to draw any conclusions about the specific nature of the occupation.

Many of the historic artifacts probably came from a residential occupation during the period c.1780 to c.1850, though there is little documentation of such settlement. The spatial patterning of the artifacts indicates ongoing residential refuse disposal along and within the drainage and marsh. A localized scatter of architectural and domestic material was found at the top of a small rise that may have been the site of a small residence or outbuilding. The absence of structural features may mean that the evidence was removed by post-1850 plowing or that any structures were located outside the area investigated. If a house existed, it is likely that the occupants were either tenant farmers, workers at the businesses along Little River Turnpike, or slaves. The data were not sufficient data to determine the socioeconomic status of the occupants.

Although the Alexandria Federal Courthouse Site is a small sample of the transitional area west of Alexandria, the investigations do suggest changes in land use from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century from farming to residential occupation. They also indicate a reorientation of the settlement pattern from a dispersed, essentially rural pattern to one oriented toward Alexandria and the roads leading to Alexandria. Further research in this area will help to define the interaction of the Alexandria City site with the surrounding agricultural and rural community.

This summary is based upon the 1993 report "Archaeological Investigations at the Alexandria Federal Courthouse (44AX164), Alexandria, Virginia."