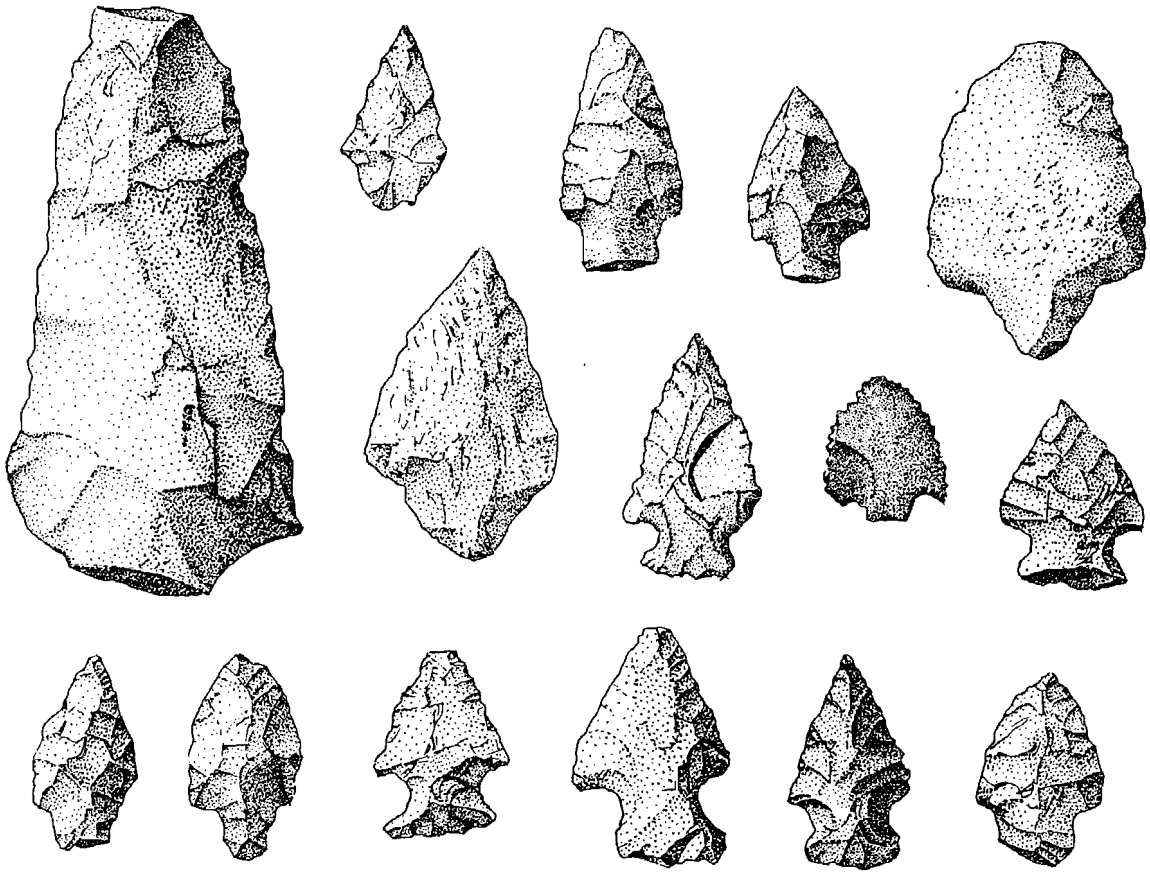
FINAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT THE LEIPSIC SITE (7K-C-194A), STATE ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR, KENT COUNTY, DELAWARE



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Delaware Department of Transportation Archaeological Series Number 118

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ABSTRACT

The Leipsic Site (7K-C-194A) is a large prehistoric habitation site that is one of several large prehistoric sites in the Leipsic River Valley of northern Kent County, Delaware. A section of the site lay in the Right-of-Way of the State Route 1 Corridor and Phase III data recovery excavations were undertaken to gather significant archaeological data from this portion of the site prior to its destruction. Final archaeological excavations specifically sought to determine the site's role in regional settlement systems, study the organization of ceramic and lithic technologies throughout the site's occupations, and collect data on local prehistoric subsistence systems. In general, the data recovery excavations revealed that the riverside setting of the Leipsic Site was an attractive locale for intermittent and repeated human settlement for more than 10,000 years as evidenced by the variety of projectile points spanning the period between 8,000 B.C. and A.D. 1500 which were recovered from the site.

Prior to ca. 3000 B.C., the occupations were rather ephemeral and the only signs of their presence are projectile points and waste flakes from the manufacture of stone tools. However, after 3000 B.C., prehistoric groups began to spend more time at the Leipsic Site, and they built circular to oval houses with bent saplings as supports for roofs of bark, hides, or rushes. The houses also had interior fireplaces, an excavated "basement" like depression almost as large as the house itself, and a "sub-basement" storage pit. Storage pits and large outdoor fireplaces that may have been communal resource processing areas are also present.

All of the houses are relatively small and would have housed individual families. In one area of the site it is possible that up to six of the these houses were occupied at once. However, in all other areas of the site, the houses seem to indicate individual occupations. At any given time in the past, there was probably only one household living at the site. Lithic and ceramic debris were found in some of the pits inside the houses indicating that the pits were used as refuse receptacles after they were no longer used as storage pits. The occupations probably lasted less than one year, and the presence of interior fireplaces in some of the houses suggests that the occupation spanned the cold-weather months. There seems to be little change in the way the site was used and the households who used it from approximately 3000 B.C. to A.D. 1500. When the limited occupations of the Leipsic Site are projected across similar sites throughout the state, very low projected population densities, approximately one person per square mile, resulted.

Lithic technologies at the site included core and biface reduction which relied heavily on cobbles and pebbles that are present right at the site. Projectile points found at the site are sometimes made from materials not readily available in the immediate vicinity of the site, such as argillite and rhyolite. These artifacts may have been brought to the site as part of the tool kit transported by prehistoric groups, used, broken, discarded, and replaced with new tools manufactured at the site from local cobbles and pebbles.

Cover Illustration: Selected projectile points recovered from feature excavations at the Leipsic Site.

DelDOT Archaeological Series Index Information

This form is intended to provide information on the contents of this volume for indexing. It is also intended for researchers to use to check the research methods and topics included in this volume.

Report Title: **FINAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT THE LEIPSIC SITE (7K-C-194A), STATE ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR, KENT COUNTY, DELAWARE**

DelDOT Report Number: **118**

Level of Investigations: [Phase I, II, III, Planning Survey, Specialized Study]

Phase III

Basic Time Periods Covered:

__X__ All prehistoric
_____ Mainly prehistoric, some historic
_____ Equal coverage of prehistoric and historic
_____ Mainly historic, some prehistoric
_____ All historic

Site Contexts:

	Prehistoric	Historic
Plow zone/disturbed surface soils	X	
Intact features	X	
Buried artifact-bearing strata		

List up to five major time periods or site types

1. **ALL PREHISTORIC TIME PERIODS**
2. **BASE CAMP**

List up to eight major topics covered in Conclusions and Discussions of Results

1. **PALEOENVIRONMENTS**
2. **REGIONAL LITHIC TECHNOLOGIES**
3. **SUBSISTENCE SYSTEMS**
4. **HOUSEHOLD, COMMUNITY, AND REGIONAL SETTLEMENT PATTERNS**
5. **PREHISTORIC MIGRATIONS**

Specialized Analyses Undertaken

	Prehistoric	Historic
Blood Residue	X	
Ceramic Chronology	X	
Ceramic Vessel Surface Alterations	X	
Cordage Twists from Ceramic Impressions	X	
Faunal Analysis		
Flake Attributes	X	
Floral Analysis	X	
Flotation	X	
Geomorphology and Pedology	X	
Glass Analysis		
HABS Documentation		
HAER Documentation		
Historic Architecture		
Informant Interviews		
Leather Analysis		
Miller Ceramic Index		
Mortar Analysis		
Palynology	X	
Projectile Point Chronology	X	
Projectile Point Function	X	
Radiocarbon Dates	X	
Soil Chemistry		
Spatial Distribution of Artifacts	X	
Stone Tool Functional Analysis	X	
Wood Identification	X	

List up to 5 other specialized analyses not listed above:
NOT APPLICABLE

Geographic Area Covered

_____ New Castle County
__X__ Kent County
_____ Sussex County
_____ All State

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Curation Note: All artifacts, site records, analytical data, photographs, slides, and video tapes from the Leipsic Site are curated at the University of Delaware Center for Archaeological Research, Newark, Delaware, 19716. For further information contact Jay F. Custer, University of Delaware (302-831-2821) or Kevin Cunningham, Delaware Department of Transportation (302-739-3826).

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