

6.0 DISCUSSION AND ELIGIBILITY STATEMENTS

6.1 7NC-F-122 – SANDY BRANCH PREHISTORIC

Discussion

Analysis of the Phase IB surface collection, including a small pebble jasper humped-back bifacial scraper and pebble jasper early stage bifaces, lead Hunter to tentatively date the site to the Woodland I period based on an association of these tools with Hell Island ceramics of the Webb and Delaware Park Complexes (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010). Phase II excavations did not recover any artifactual evidence to support this date range. The three small triangular jasper points recovered suggest a Woodland II period use range for the site (Custer 1984, Custer and DeSantis 1986, and Custer 1989). Furthermore, the low density nature of the artifact scatter suggests that the site was used ephemerally and is unlikely to include multiple components.

As a result of Phase II excavations at Locus A of 7NC-F-122, the site is interpreted as a low density artifact scatter contained completely within the plowzone. No cultural subsurface features were located as a result of excavations. A natural band of bedded limonite was located in one of the meter deep units excavated for geomorphological data (N999/E520). A sample of the limonite was taken; however, it appeared to be of low quality and not suitable for successful knapping. It is not believed to be the source of the limonite debitage recovered from the site but perhaps south of the drainage where higher quality bedded limonite deposits appear to have been mined and exploited during historical times (Bill Liebeknecht, Hunter Research, Principal Investigator, personal communication). The lack of subsurface features, coupled with the low density, primarily non-diagnostic nature of the artifact collection, precludes the exploration of any substantial research themes.

Statement of Eligibility

The evaluation of significance for 7NC-F-122, Sandy Branch Prehistoric, was carried out following the National Park Service's *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Archaeological Properties* (Little et al. 2000) in concert with Delaware's *Management Plan for Delaware's Prehistoric Archaeological Resources* (Custer 1986).

Research questions important for the Woodland II in this part of New Castle County include comparison of like- site types dating to Woodland I to understand culture change and dynamics in Delaware during the late prehistoric (Custer 1986). Both the Woodland I and Woodland II were periods saw great variety in settlement and subsistence practices. However, the southern portion of New Castle County is believed to have had low population density during this time, particularly during the Woodland II (Wilkins 1967; Griffith and Artusy 1977; Custer 1986).

Site 7NC-F-122 was evaluated under NRHP Criterion (d), the ability to yield important information about prehistoric use of the area. Testing at 7NC-F-122 resulted in only the most basic type of data set, the artifact catalogue. No features were recorded as a result of testing on site and no suggestion of patterned relationships between artifacts

(functional or chronological) or other site dimensions was discerned. As such, the data set from 7NC-F-122 cannot be reasonably expected to address any research questions or provide important information on the site itself, or within the larger context of late prehistoric cultural dynamics in Delaware.

Site 7NC-F-122 is located in a plowed field. In specific instances, it has been demonstrated that site location in a plowzone does not necessarily signify a lack of integrity (Little et al. 2000). In the case of 7NC-F-122, however, the site is contained completely within the plowzone. There is no evidence of discrete activity areas or artifact concentrations within the plowzone stratum and no evidence of any sub plowzone features. As such, site 7NC-F-122 is determined to be lacking in integrity of location and design.

Site 7NC-F-122 is located in Management Unit 4, Mid-Peninsular Drainage Divide, as identified in Delaware's Management Plan (Custer 1986:178-180). Based on the site probabilities developed for this unit, it was not anticipated that: 1) there would be a high probability of finding sites datable to the Woodland II; 2) that any discovered site would represent a discernible site type beyond that of a procurement location; and 3) that any site located would be likely to yield significant data. This assessment of poor data quality was demonstrated to be accurate in the case of 7NC-F-122, Sandy Branch Prehistoric.

Site 7NC-F-122, Sandy Branch Prehistoric, is recommended not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion (d). The low density scatter has no surface or subsurface integrity and is not likely to yield information important to this time period in Delaware prehistory, nor is it significant under any other NRHP criteria. No further work is recommended.

6.2 7NC-F-124 – SHELL BUTTON SITE

Discussion

Phase II test unit excavations revealed very little artifactual evidence associated with shell button manufacture at site 7NC-F-124. This striking lack of artifacts beyond a surface context suggests that the collection recovered during the Phase IB survey (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010) was not originally located on the site. Due to the lack of subsurface artifacts within the plowzone, it is believed that the shell artifacts were brought in and re-deposited as part of a dumping episode associated with recent construction work north and east of the site (Appoquinimink High School and the Spring Arbor retirement community respectively). Waster shells are found in large quantities near former shell button factories in Milton (Sussex County) and they have been used as gravel substitutes along roads, in driveways, and in recent construction projects in the Milton area (Melinda L. Huff, personal communication June 2011). Ultimately whether the 7NC-F-124 shell deposit is a result of intentional repurposing or incidental dumping is not known; however, excavations confirmed its deposition in secondary context. In addition, the presence of compacted soils near the sewer line that bisects the site core reinforces the supposition that the site was used for parking and/or transporting of heavy vehicles.

As a result of Phase II excavations at 7NC-F-124, the site is interpreted as a low density artifact scatter contained on the surface and within the plowzone. It is not believed to be representative of a specific historical use of the area and instead likely represents discard near the property's edge, a common pattern on historical farms. The non-shell collection consists primarily of artifacts that are in secondary context, small in size and demonstrate no clear pattern of distribution, temporal range, or type. The complete lack of context or subsurface features, coupled with the low density and primarily non-diagnostic nature of the artifacts, precludes the exploration of any substantial research themes.

Statement of Eligibility

The evaluation of significance for 7NC-F-124, Shell Button Site, was carried out following the National Park Service's *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Archaeological Properties* (Little et al. 2000). It is of note that site 7NC-F-124 is multicomponent (a three-quarter grooved ax dated to the Woodland I was recovered during Phase IB surface collection), however, only the historic component of the site was evaluated for NRHP eligibility.

Site 7NC-F-124 was evaluated under NRHP Criterion (d), the ability to yield important information about historic use of the area. Since the greatest majority of shell and associated material was found only on the surface, the historical artifacts related to shell button manufacture are interpreted as brought in from a secondary location and dumped on the site. The original location and depositional context is unknown. As such, the data set from 7NC-F-124 cannot be expected to address any research questions or provide important information on the shell button industry in this part of New Castle County, Delaware.

Site 7NC-F-124 is recommended not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion (d). This low density scatter represents an artifact redistribution, has no surface or subsurface integrity, and is not likely to yield information important to Delaware's manufacturing history, nor is it significant under any other NRHP criteria. No further work is recommended.

6.3 7NC-F-126 – BUNKER HILL NORTH

Discussion

Site 7NC-F-126, Bunker Hill North was recommended for Phase II evaluation at the Phase IB level by Hunter Research (Liebeknecht and Burrow 2010). This recommendation was made based upon a "striking concentration of 18th century material" recovered largely from a surface context, and may represent a tenant house. In addition to the recovered artifacts, the location along Bunker Hill Road, understood from research to be an important and early part of the transportation and specifically cart road network, was cited as a potential point of interest/significance.

As a result of Phase II excavations at 7NC-F-126, the site is interpreted as a multi-component, relatively low density artifact scatter contained completely within the plowzone (density assessment made based on comparison of other 18th-century sites in

the 301 project, personal communication, Bill Liebeknecht, 2011). It is not believed to be representative of a specific historical use of the area. In addition, the collection consists primarily of artifacts that are small in size and demonstrate no clear pattern of distribution or meaningful concentrations, temporal range, or functional type. Though initially interpreted as possibly representing a mid-to-late 18th-century occupation, Phase II excavations did not reveal artifactual or feature evidence to support this. Rather, it is believed that historical artifact deposits on site could be a result of somewhat localized earth movement (resulting in the redeposition of material from Indian Range farmstead or, more likely, the Maples). Also, though manuring was not practiced in Delaware until much later than elsewhere along the east coast, the small number of early artifacts could suggest that they were included in a during the dredging of a midden, privy, etc. for manure. Nevertheless, the paucity, size, and condition of the artifacts suggests they may have been deposited originally off-site.

Comparing the results of the Phase IB and Phase II efforts shows that the artifact collections are actually fairly consistent. While the Phase I report does indicate a concentration of 18th-century material, this material really only accounts for a small part of the overall collection, less than 4 percent, and was recovered solely from surface contexts. Many of the Phase IB artifacts noted as “early finds” were clustered within 20 m of Bunker Hill Road in the southwestern quarter of the site core, with a smaller concentration near the north-center of the site core.

A total of 395 historical period artifacts were collected from the Phase IB surface collection performed by Hunter. A small number of sherds manufactured exclusively in the 18th century were recovered as part of this effort. The artifacts considered to have been produced in the 18th century included nine coarse lead-glazed redwares, two sherds of white salt-glazed stoneware, and one sherd each of agateware, Staffordshire slipware, Midlands Mottledware, and tin-glazed earthenware (Figure 6-1). Most of these sherds were very small spalls and upon reassessment, in several cases the attribution is questionable.

There is also an issue of estimated date range for coarse lead glazed earthenwares. The majority of artifacts attributed to the 18th century in the Hunter report (Lieknecht and Burrow 2010) were those cataloged as "coarse earthenware, redware, black manganese, 1700-1800." In fact, from sub-surface contexts, four small redware sherds of this description were the only artifacts found in the Phase I study that were attributed exclusively to the 18th century. In the current study, a similar proportion of the coarse lead-glazed redwares (both brown and black lead glazed) were recovered, however a broader date range was considered that includes production into the 19th century.

The current study did not include broad surface collection, however the test unit material did include sherds that may have been produced in the 18th century, including a similar proportion of lead-glazed coarse earthenwares. However, no sherds were identified that were known to have been manufactured exclusively in the 18th century. Therefore, the subsurface assemblages of the Hunter and current study are very similar. The identification of six highly fragmented potentially 18th century sherds in disturbed 19th

and 20th century surface context was not considered to be significant enough to warrant further work since the early material could not be confirmed in subsurface contexts in the Phase II study.

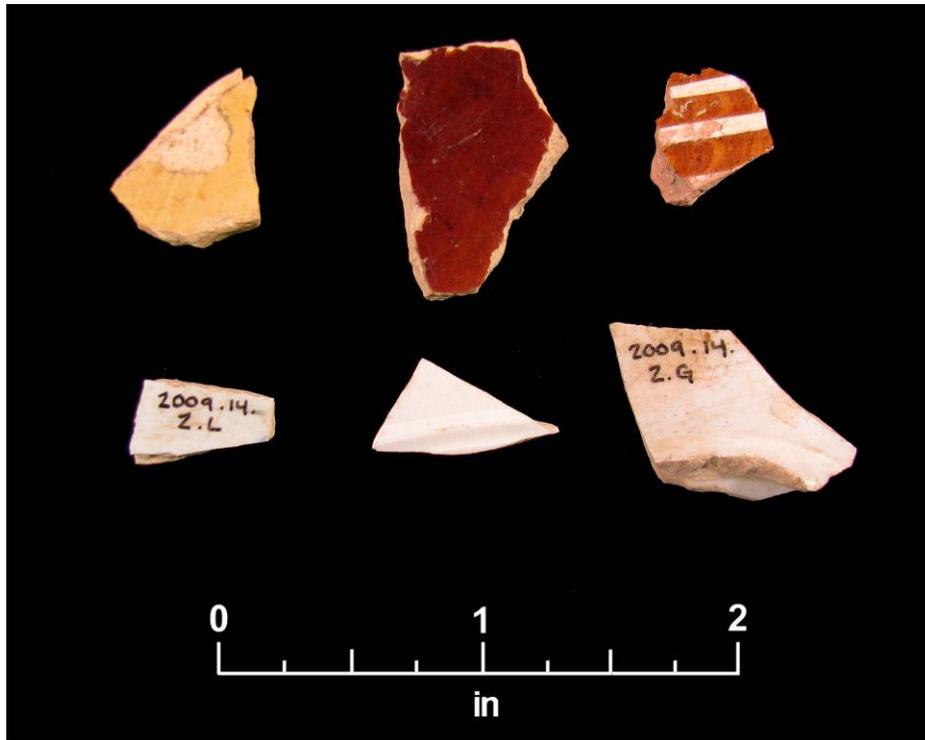


Figure 6-1. 7NC-F-126, 18th Century Sherds from Phase I Surface Collection.

(Top Row, Artifacts 2-N, 2-M, and 2-K; Bottom Row, Artifacts 2-L, 2-H, and 2-G)

Due to the overall lack of evidence, the site function is admittedly imperfectly understood. There are several potential explanations for the site's existence. Given the small number and poor condition of the mid-18th century artifacts the site area is not believed to have been occupied during this period or even later, during the 19th century. Though there is no indication that a structure was once located on site, it is an agricultural field and adjacent to the mid-19th century Maples farmstead and across the road from the former Indian Range farmstead (occupied from the mid-19th century or earlier, up to 2005 when it was demolished for construction of a housing development), and has likely been farmed throughout its documented history.

This land use history of 7NC-F-126 is relevant in that it details that the land was in use and farmed from early on. It also demonstrates late-18th century activity in the area of Indian Range Plantation and later mid-19th century activity at the Maples – adjacent to the Bunker Hill North Site. The artifact collection from 7NC-F-126, Bunker Hill North, is consistent in size grade regardless of artifact date, suggesting that it has been churned and plowed together for many years. While it has been suggested that the site could exist below the current Bunker Hill Road surface, this does not seem to be the most likely scenario. Bunker Hill Road has existed in its current location since the 18th century. Though the road has no doubt been widened and paved, it does not appear to have been

significantly relocated. Should the main part of the site exist under the road, one would expect a higher concentration of early artifacts to both the north and south of the road as well as a wider range of artifact types and sizes.

Statement of Eligibility

The evaluation of significance for 7NC-F-126, Bunker Hill North, was carried out following the National Park Service's *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Archaeological Properties* (Little et al. 2000) in concert with Delaware's *Management Plan for Delaware's Prehistoric Archaeological Resources* (Custer 1986) and *Management Plan for Historical Archaeological Resources* (DeCunzo and Catts 1990).

Site 7NC-F-126 was evaluated under NRHP Criterion (a), (b), (c), and (d). Detailed background research conducted at both the Phase I and Phase II levels determined that the site was not associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history (a).

The site was found to have no subsurface integrity and the artifacts recovered were generally non-diagnostic providing a general and wide ranging temporal association (late-19th century). Though associated with an early plantation in the area, Indian Range, detailed background research conducted at both the Phase I and Phase II levels did not uncover an association with the lives of persons significant in Delaware's past (b).

Phase II excavations determined that the site lacks subsurface integrity, has no identified cultural features, and has a generally 19th-century, non-diagnostic artifact assemblage. As such, the site does not embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction necessary for NRHP significance (c).

From Phase I and Phase II efforts, the site was determined to be a mixed, multi-component site restricted to the plowzone. In addition, the artifact assemblage from both the Phase I and Phase II work represent a general, non-diagnostic collection dating primarily to the late 19th century, a time frame that is well understood in the region. No suggestion of patterned relationships between artifacts (functional or chronological) was noted. The range of artifacts and their generally non-diagnostic nature, combined with the absence of archaeological features, leaves little data with which to address relevant research questions within the site itself, or within the larger early historical context in Delaware (d).

In addition, site 7NC-F-126 is located in a plowed field. In specific instances, it has been demonstrated that site location in a plowzone does not necessarily signify a lack of integrity (Little et al. 2000). In the case of 7NC-F-126, however, the site is contained completely within the plowzone. There is no evidence of discrete activity areas or artifact concentrations within the plowzone stratum and no evidence of any sub plowzone features. As such, site 7NC-F-126 is determined to be lacking in integrity of location and design. It is not possible to interpret what activities may have taken place on site or when

they occurred, assuming the site may represent an activity area and is not the result of manuring (as discussed above).

Site 7NC-F-126 is recommended not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under criteria a-d and the criteria developed for the Management Plan for Delaware's Historical Archaeological Resources. The relatively low density, mixed context scatter has no integrity and is not likely to yield information important to any historical contextual framework in Delaware history. It is neither representative nor associated with significant events or persons. No further work is recommended.

As a result of supplemental shovel testing conducted as part of the Phase II effort, it is further recommended that the site limits of 7NC-F-126 be expanded to include the current LOC.