

## Chapter 4

### EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### A. METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation of Significance for the Rumsey Site [7NC-F-121], identified in the Phase I and Phase II surveys has been carried out broadly following the methodology outlined in the National Park Service's *Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Archeological Properties* (Little et al. 2000). The Delaware site forms are included as Appendix E.

#### B. PREHISTORIC COMPONENT

The prehistoric archaeological component of the site is comprised of 684 artifact distributed over ~1.85 hectares (~4.58 acres) or approximately three prehistoric artifacts per 100 square meters. No patterns were noted in the light density lithic scatter. During the Phase II excavations a total of seven pit features, two of a distinctive D-shape plan (Egghart 2005) were identified. The pit features are interpreted as prehistoric on the basis of the few artifacts in their fills, their appearance, and, in one case, the apparent survival of digging stick marks on the pit sides. The fills of these features were homogenous, suggesting rapid uniform and single episode infilling. The few other diagnostic artifacts from the investigated area show a range of dates from the Archaic through Woodland periods. Pits of this character have been located in other recent surveys on the U.S. Route 301 alignment and they appear to be a fairly common phenomenon in this part of Delaware. Following the commonly accepted archaeological thinking on these features, they are here interpreted as single-episode storage pits, perhaps used for no more than one season and then abandoned. They are assumed to date chiefly to the Woodland I cultural period.

The study of limonite lithic resources and artifacts was also undertaken as part of this study (see Cresson 2011, included as Appendix C to this report). The study suggests that while some experimental use was probably made of limonite resources available at the site itself, the majority of the artifacts made of this material at the site used other sources of raw material, notably but not exclusively Herring Island. These raw materials appear to have been removed from the quarries as blocky slabs and taken some distance in this form prior to reduction. This is an interesting observation and represents a clear information gain from the prehistoric component of this site.

The Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121, N14501) is not associated with one or more events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history and is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The property is not associated with any notable individuals and is recommended not eligible under Criterion B. There are no substantial patterns in artifacts or features that reflect distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or representative works of a master; or possession of high artistic values; or significant and distinguishable entities whose components may lack individual distinction (districts). The property is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. Based on the analysis of the archaeological data the

prehistoric component at the site has not yielded or is likely to yield information important to prehistory. The prehistoric component of the Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121, N14501) is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D.

## **C. THE RUMSEY HISTORIC SITE [7NC-F-121]**

### **1. General Observations**

As demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 3 above, interpreting the Rumsey Historic Site presents considerable challenges. Both its date and function require careful assessment. Establishing the date of occupation of the site can be attempted both from a documentary and an archaeological standpoint. As detailed in Chapter 2, the ownership of the site is well documented from 1714 onwards. The Rumsey ownership began in 1742 and continued to 1836, although the property was leased to another member of the family from 1785. The site is, however, distant from the Rumsey's homestead at Bohemia and also from the family mills. If the site is a domestic one it is therefore most likely to be that of an undocumented tenant. Other functions, however, seemed likely to Hunter Research on the basis of the archaeological data that was subject only to preliminary analysis.

As pointed out in Chapter 2, if the site has some connection to the extensive smuggling, customs duty avoidance and other illicit trade and commerce activities that were rife in the northern Delmarva Peninsula in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is more likely to have been used at some periods than others. Research has identified two periods: the 1680s and 1690s, and the 1760s and 1770s, as times when attempts to avoid the Navigation Acts and other discriminatory mercantilist legislation were particularly in evidence. In addition, the production of potash, stimulated by the removal of import duty on this item on its importation to Britain from the Colonies in 1751, experienced a boom in the 1760s that continued well into the nineteenth century.

Following this model for the site, it was predicted by Hunter Research that the archaeological evidence will show an emphasis of occupation in these periods. Table 4.1, prepared by Hunter Research, presents three types of dating information for the site. The table is framed by the portrayal of the generally accepted date ranges of 29 historic ceramic types found at the Rumsey Historic Site. Notes in the right column provide additional information on assumptions and observations made in determining the ranges. The beginning and end dates of the main property owners, from 1710 through 1850, are marked off with vertical emphases.

One way to assess the intensity of occupation of the site through time is by totaling the number of ceramic types by decade. This gives a sense of the variety of material culture at a particular time. In the 1740s, the number of types increases sharply from the 9 of the previous decade to 16, and the number of types represented then remains above 15 until the 1820s, when it drops back to 12. The 1770s and 1790s have the highest ceramic type frequency, with 17 and 18 respectively (Table 4.2).

Using the methodology developed by South (1978), with modifications to the date ranges of some of the ceramic types based on more recent research, mean ceramic dates (mcd) were also

calculated, firstly for the site assemblage as whole, and secondly for contexts below the plow zone. A total of 2,643 ceramics were used for first calculation, and 281 for the second. The mean ceramic date for the site as whole is 1786 and the mean ceramic date for the sub-plow zone contexts is 1776.7.

**TABLE 4.1 RUMSEY HISTORIC/PREHISTORIC SITE [7NC-F-121, N14497] CERAMIC DATE RANGES AND FREQUENCY, AND PROPERTY OWNERSHIP**

Common Name	Start Date	End Date	Median Date	Sherd Count	1670	1680	1690	1700	1710	1720	1730	1740	1750	1760	1770	1780	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	Determinant Factor
					HEATH: James, James Paul			RUMSEY: William, Wm Jr., Nathan, Wm III			RUMSEY: Wm III leasing to John			POLK, Wm.														
Redware G	1740	1870	1805	985																								mottled glaze
Redware C	1700	1800	1750	589																								black manganese glaze
Creamware	1762	1790	1776	255																								
Red-bodied Slipware E	1740	1850	1795	206																								slip-trail
Redware F	1740	1850	1795	200																								brown manganese
Redware B	1700	1750	1725	148																								clear lead glaze
White Salt-glazed Stoneware	1720	1805	1762.5	64																								
Whiteware	1820	1900	1860	54																								
Pearlware C	1775	1840	1807.5	42																								plain/undecorated
Pearlware E	1795	1820	1807.5	14																								blue transfer-printed
Ironstone B	1840	1900	1870	17																								plain/undecorated
Red-bodied Slipware B	1700	1820	1760	18																								slip-trail with copper oxide
Pearlware B	1775	1820	1797.5	10																								blue hp'd underglaze
Whieldon	1740	1770	1755	9																								
Red-bodied Slipware D	1740	1800	1770	8																								white slip ground interior
Rhenish	1540	1600	1570	7																								
Redware H	1740	1890	1815	5																								brown and black manganese
Jackfield	1740	1780	1760	4																								
Redware E	1700	1870	1785	2																								glazed (indeterminate color)
Scratch-Blue WSG	1744	1775	1759.5	2																								
Ironstone A	1840	1870	1855	1																								molded
Pearlware A	1800	1840	1820	1																								Hand painted polychrome
Red-bodied Slipware A	1670	1795	1732.5	1																								slip-combed
Redware A	1700	1740	1720	1																								sgraffito

**TABLE 4.2**

**Ceramic Types by Decade**

Decade	Ceramic types by decade
1670	1
1680	1
1690	1
1700	7
1710	7
1720	9
1730	9
1740	16
1750	16
1760	16
1770	17
1780	15
1790	18
1800	15
1810	15
1820	12
1830	12
1840	13
1850	7
1860	7
1870	3
1880	3
1890	1

Cumulatively this data indicates that the greatest activity on the site was during the Rumsey ownership, with activity peaking, based on Hunter Research’s preliminary evaluation, in the 1740-1810 period. In 1760-1790 the top eight ranked ceramics are consistently present, and this appears, according to the preliminary analysis by Hunter Research, to be the most intense period of usage. Hunter Research felt that use during the Revolutionary War seemed highly likely, but was probably part of a more extended occupation and use of the site. Hunter Research felt that overall, this chronological analysis tends to support the hypothesis that the site had a non-domestic function that began to intensify in the 1740s and peaked in the 1760-1790 period. Since the start of the intensive use seem to coincide with the Rumsey purchase in 1742, it is tempting to also equate the start of the site’s decline with its lease, by William Rumsey III to his brother John Rumsey in 1785. The pearlwares which are assigned a notional 1790 start date on Table 4.1 could actually easily fall within the previous decade as trade with Britain picked up quickly after the end of the Revolutionary War. This would increase the ceramic frequency in the 1780s to 16, in line with previous decades. The highest number on the table was 18 ceramic types in 1790. Based on the Hunter Research preliminary analysis the historical and archaeological evidence the Period of Significance of this site was set at 1740 to 1785, encompassing the decades before the Revolution, the Revolution itself, and its immediate aftermath. The more detailed analysis undertaken by CHRS, is at odds with this conclusion. The mean ceramic date

calculated by Hunter Research using all ceramics recovered was 1786.0. CHRS feels that the date ranges for redware may be too complex to provide accurate use in mean ceramic date calculations. Using refined paste only, CHRS calculates a mean ceramic date of 1793.4 near the date that has the highest number of ceramic types identified by Hunter Research. While the mean ceramic dates for the site as a whole are not widely divergent from that calculated by Hunter Research, mean ceramic dates for each of the loci at the site suggests that the site is wholly contained within the period of John Rumsey’s lease of the property between 1785 and 1836.

**2. Historic Contexts**

The main period of the site falls within the following period as defined in the Delaware Historic Preservation Plan: 1770-1830±: Early Industrialization. Hunter Research had originally identified the site as falling within the following periods: 1630-1730±: Exploration and Frontier Settlement; 1730-1770±: Intensified and Durable Occupation; and 1770-1830±: Early Industrialization. Hunter Research had included the earliest period because there is a small amount of material from the site that they felt dated to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Hunter Research felt that such material remains rare at Delaware historic sites and that

this component should not be overlooked although its context and meaning were unclear. Nearly all of this material is redware that has a period of manufacture that extends well into the eighteenth century (cf. Table 4.1).

On the basis of their preliminary analysis Hunter Research indicated that the site is considered to be relevant to the research domains of Manufacturing and Trade, and Social Group Identity, Behavior and Interaction identified in the Delaware Historical Archaeological Resources Management Plan (de Cunzo and Catts 1990: 16-22).

Hunter Research indicated that they felt that there were no pre-existing historic contexts that appear to apply to this site. In Chapter 2 four contexts were proposed: Landings and Cart Roads; Smuggling and Contraband; Extractive Industry: bog ore, potash and marl; People Least Prominent. The archaeological data from Locus 4 may be indicative of a landing and associated cart road; however, the artifacts from the locus are domestic in nature and similar to those found at three of the four loci that make up the site. Smuggling and Contraband was proposed by Hunter Research on the basis of a suspected early eighteenth to mid-eighteenth-century occupation the presence of artifacts that may represent interaction with the French. The analysis of the artifacts suggests that the period of occupation at each loci may have been relatively brief, and that the site relates to the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century use of the landscape. Although data provided indicated that bog ore, potash, and marl may have been extracted from the area around the site, the archaeological evidence is sparse. The theme that best fits the Rumsey Site is that of People Least Prominent. The site likely represents a series of activities undertaken by tenant farmers who were not important landowners. They may have been working on the behalf of important landowners like the Rumseys or they may have been working on their own, but the activities suggested were likely laborious and menial.

### **3. Criteria of Evaluation**

The historic component of the Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121) is not considered to be eligible under either criterion A or B, since historical research does not indicate association with notable historical figures or with significant events.

Some consideration was given to eligibility under Criterion C (for properties showing “the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction”). Guidance in Little et al. 2000 indicates that Criterion C may be applicable to archaeological properties where they show a “pattern of features common to a particular class of resources,” or where relatively intact architectural remains have been buried through either cultural or natural processes. Since the site has shown very little patterning in this sense. The Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121) is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C.

The historic component of the Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D. The National Register Guidelines identify two characteristics necessary for an archaeological property to meet Criterion D:

a) Data Sets. This refers to the demonstrated presence of artifacts and features in physical relationships that will permit analysis pertinent to relevant research questions. Based on the analysis of the data collected, the Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121) has potential to address relevant research questions. There are four loci that are temporally distinct and spatially segregated. Each loci is a domestic deposit. While the data available about the exact location of the dwellings is limited, sufficient archaeological evidence has been gathered to indicate that they were near the artifact clusters that represent the loci. Historical information has indicated that the site was most likely occupied during the period of John Rumsey's lease of the property from his brother. On the basis of comparisons with other archaeological sites and the historical knowledge that Rumsey did not occupy the property, the site has been identified as representing the remains of a series of tenant farms. The site reflects the changing use of the landscape by the tenants over a forty years period from the 1780s into the second decade of the nineteenth century.

b) Relevant Research Themes, and the Ability of the Data Sets to Address Them. Hunter Research indicated that they felt that there were four research themes that the data from the site may be able to address: Landings and Cart Roads; Smuggling and Contraband; Extractive Industry: bog ore, potash and marl; People Least Prominent. Other than the Wagon Cart Trace there is no other data at the site that appears to be able to address a Landings and Cart Road theme. There is no data to support a Smuggling and Contraband theme. Although there is a hint of extractive industry in or near the site. Within the four loci examined, there is no data that could be used to address significant questions relating to an Extractive Industry theme. The site does provide information within the research of the People Least Prominent. The archaeological data provides insights into the changing use of the landscape by tenant farmers in this portion of the State during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the continuity of exchange networks during the same period. It provides comparative data that, within the context of other archaeological assemblages, has allowed the details of historical development in northern Delaware to be better understood.

#### **4. Assessment of Significance**

The historic component of the Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121) is considered to be significant at the regional or local level.

#### **5. Integrity Assessment Under Criterion D**

National Register guidance identifies seven aspects or qualities of integrity. These are briefly discussed below.

**Location:** the site meets National Register integrity for location, since it lies at its original location, the general character of which remains comprehensible.

**Design:** under Criterion D, the design component of integrity refers to the preservation of intrasite patterning within the archaeological record, expressed as "the preservation of

distributional information in the plowzone, and the presence of subplowzone features” (Bedell et al. 1999). The site preserve a distributional pattern. Four loci have been identified. Each loci appears to be temporally distinct and relates to a different occupation of the landscape. Subsurface features such as postholes and a Wagon Cart trace are present.

**Setting:** The setting of the site contributes to its significance. The prominent sandy knoll and small valley at Loci 3 and 4, and their close proximity to the Sandy Branch, provide a sense of the site and its likely function in the eighteenth century. The location of Loci 1 and 2 on the landscape evoke the refocusing of the tenant farmers away from the creek.

**Materials:** Under Criterion D, “integrity of material is usually described in terms of the presence of intrusive artifacts/features, the completeness of the artifact/feature assemblage, or the quality of artifact or feature preservation.” The Rumsey Historic Site [7NC-F-121] has demonstrated good quality preservation of artifacts and features, even though coherent structure plans and overall site layouts have not been recoverable. The house placement on the site is reflected by the discrete artifact concentrations across the site. Few intrusive artifacts are present. All of the artifacts are consonant with the period when the property was leased by William Rumsey III to his brother John Rumsey (i.e., 1785 to 1836).

**Workmanship:** This quality is not considered relevant to this site.

**Feeling and Association:** The site possesses the qualities of both Feeling and Association. The artifacts provide data illustrative of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century occupation of the area by tenant farmers.

## 6. Eligibility

The Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121) is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

## Conclusion

A Phase II management summary report was prepared by Hunter Research (Liebeknecht, Harshbarger and Burrow 2011). On the basis of the executive summary, the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred that the historic component of the Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121) was eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Rather than requesting additional archaeological field work (i.e., data recovery) in the portions of the site to be impacted by the project, DelDOT and the SHPO proposed an alternate mitigation strategy. The alternative mitigation strategy (see Appendix F) included detailed analysis of the data collected during the Phase II archaeological survey and the production of a Phase II archaeological survey report that incorporated this information. Alternative mitigation also included material culture studies of two classes of artifacts found at the Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121): gunflints and buttons. The study of these objects from the Rumsey Historic/Prehistoric Site (7NC-F-121) is to be undertaken within the context of all similar objects recovered during archaeological investigations associated with U.S. Route 301 project.