

ABSTRACT

The Carey Farm Site (7K-D-13) and the Island Farm Site (7K-C-13) are located along the St. Jones River just south of Dover, Kent County, Delaware. The final Phase III excavations were focused on understanding the sites' role in regional settlement patterns, studying the organization of lithic and ceramic technologies during the varied occupations of the sites, and collecting data on prehistoric subsistence systems. Paleoenvironmental research showed that rich estuarine resources and tidal and non-tidal wetlands were present in the sites' vicinity in varied combinations for the past 10,000 years. These varied resources made the sites attractive settlement locations for varied prehistoric groups, and the varied artifacts recovered from the sites show that they were used on numerous occasions over the past 10,000 years. Prior to 3000 B.C., the occupations were rather ephemeral and the only archaeological evidence of this early use of the sites is a scatter of projectile points and waste flakes from the manufacture of stone tools.

After 3000 B.C., prehistoric groups began to spend more time at the Carey Farm and Island Farm sites. They built houses and dug pits to store foods at the sites, and probably spent several months there during the cold-weather season. A typical house would have had an excavated "basement-like" pit depression almost as large as the house itself. A pole-frame construction was probably covered with bark or textiles to produce a wigwam structure. None of the houses would have been big enough to accommodate more than a nuclear family. In some parts of the sites, feature distributions show signs of communities that might have included as many as six families; however, in most cases the feature distributions show no indications of multiple-family occupations. At any given time in the past there were probably only a few families living at the sites. Most of the pits contained everyday household debris, but some contained rather spectacular archaeological remains such as nearly complete ceramic vessels and a cache of 57 argillite bifaces. The presence of these artifacts in the pits suggests that they were used for refuse disposal after they were no longer used for storage. The houses were probably used for only one year. There are no data to suggest that there was any change in the way the sites were used from 3000 B.C. to A.D. 1500. However, the most intensive use of the site occurred between A.D. 0 and A.D. 900.

Core and biface technologies were the main lithic technologies used at the site, and cobbles and pebbles found in the immediate sites' vicinity were the major raw materials used. As was the case for settlement at the sites, there was little change in lithic technologies at the site over time. A special aspect of the lithic technology was the presence of numerous small retouched flakes tools that may have been parts of compound tools. Only a few seeds were found in the flotation samples taken from the features and overall organic preservation was poor. However, many samples of charred nut hulls were preserved and recovered. Hickory, butternut, and acorn were important floral food sources. No signs of any cultigens were recovered.

Cover Illustration: The cover illustration shows an aerial view of the Carey Farm and Island Farm sites looking north. The wetlands of the St. Jones River are visible on the left hand border of the photograph and the cleared right-of-way for the State Route 1 Corridor is visible in the upper right.