ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT POINT LOOKOUT STATE PARK
September 4-5, 1975

In August, 1975, George Miller, Archeological Conservator with the St. Marys City Commission, reminded the Division of Archeology that construction within Point Lookout State Park, scheduled to begin in October, would affect two areas of potentially significant archeological information. The State Archeologist, Tyler Bastian then contacted the Park Superintendent to suggest an investigation be undertaken. Gerald Sword's response was enthusiastic and generously offered his assistance. The investigation was set for September 4th and 5th and Norma Wagner and Susan Deeney of the Division of Archeology, Maryland Geological Survey, met with Sword and Ranger Olee Teeter to review all available information on the two areas and also to determine their exact locations.

The first site is an early 19th century farm midden (ST 62), previously reported by J. Kent (1973), at which a marina has been scheduled for construction. Numerous artifacts have been recovered by Sword, Teeter and Miller and are being preserved by Ranger Teeter under Miller's supervision. Miller has examined the site closely and feels it is highly significant for the preservation of wood and leather which is generally not recovered from dry land sites. Also, the exceptionally large fragments of pottery from the 1830's and 1840's will make reconstruction of whole plates, jars, etc. easier and more accurate for display and study purposes. Miller has identified the midden as representing a very short span of time which will aid researchers in understanding social and economic relationships from the study of the leather, wood, bones, glass fragments and metal items found at the site. The preservation of ordinarily perishable materials, the large ceramic sherds, and the short time span makes the site unique in Maryland.
among those known to the Division of Archeology, although similar sites probably exist in comparable tidewater marsh environments. As much of the material as possible should be recovered and the contractor should be advised that any material he may uncover must be reported immediately to the Park personnel.

The second site, which is subject to destruction by channel construction, is in an area suspected of being part of the breastwork of the Civil War Prison once located on the Point. Three posts approximately 9 cm in diameter were visible in the water on the west shore of Lake Conoy. With the use of a probe 2 more posts were located in the water; however, they are \( \frac{3}{4} \) m apart whereas those nearer the shore are abutting against each other. One additional post was found buried on land abutting against the first visible posts.

Sword and Teeter stated that they observed 6 to 8 posts projecting in Lake Conoy (also mentioned by George Miller). On the basis of Kent's report, Sword and Teeter stated that in the Potomac River directly across from the posts of Lake Conoy, additional posts are known. On his base map #5 and the accompanying explanation (part III, p. 2), Kent notes "pilings with nails and wood" in the Potomac River which he thought to be "either a dock construction area or remains of some sort of earthen support". A map by C. Seaforth Stewart, Major of Engineers, 1864 (forwarded to the Division of Archeology by Sword, 1974), shows a dotted line in the area where Sword, Teeter and Kent thought some "earthen supports" might be, but no specific identification was made by Stewart.

The discrepancy in the number of posts reported and those actually found may in part be a result from the failure of Deeney and Wagner going out into the water and checking the area out. The reasons for this were (1) the urgency to test the land for buried posts; (2) the archeologists were not properly equipped for underwater investigation and (3) the Lake as well as the Potomac River were infested with jelly fish.
The area of the posts was in tall marsh grass and shrubs which had to be cleared. It was decided to excavate a trench perpendicular to the posts and as close to them as possible. A 5 ft wide by 15 ft long trench with 5 ft extending southwest of the posts and 10 ft extending northwest of the posts was the chosen design. The purpose of this was to determine (1) additional posts in alignment with those identified, (2) the builders' trench and (3) perhaps a moat which would have been located parallel and northwest of the posts.

With the help of Park personnel the grass was mowed and a large portion raked away. A 30 m baseline was laid along the dirt road of the Park's overflow camping area (located between the Lake and the Potomac River) and approximately 9 m west of and perpendicular to the posts in Lake Conoy. A geodetic marker served as a permanent point of reference for the base line.

Excavation was conducted in 10 cm levels in order to provide better stratigraphic control should the features of a stockade, builders' trench and moat be found. Because of rise in water level, due to high tide, excavation had to be halted in the southwestern 5 ft section of the trench. The water obscured all attempts to determine any soil distinctions or features. Excavation continued in the northwestern 10 ft section of the trench. The first 10 cm level contained many roots and the only artifacts recovered were a highly deteriorated tin can, a complete non-returnable brown glass beer bottle and a neck fragment from a second brown glass beer bottle. From the 10-20 cm level a piece of redware pottery attached to roots of a shrub was recovered and also part of a leather sole of a shoe. No indications of breastwork posts nor other features were noted.
The water level made it extremely difficult to determine features and the floor of the trench was becoming too muddy to excavate properly. It was decided to cease all excavations except in the area of the supposed alignment. A test pit was excavated within the trench in the area of the alignment of the posts to a depth of 25 cm at the east wall and 45 cm at the west wall. The only feature determined, before rising water inundated the test pit, was an oyster shell midden which also contained a brick lodged in the east wall (i.e., the wall nearest the posts). No posts were found within the test pit and all areas were mapped.

It was decided to use power equipment to remove dirt from an area parallel to the first trench dug by hand and perpendicular to the posts in the water but nearer to the dirt road to avoid the rising water. Ranger Teeter began excavations with a front end loader going approximately 68 cm deep and 2 m northwest of the posts before he was forced to stop because of high water. The cut did not reveal any posts. A test pit was dug near the west wall of the cut in the area of the supposed alignment to a depth of 104 cm. Excavation was again halted due to high water level. No indications of posts were found and the only artifacts recovered were 3 sherds, with orange glaze and buff interior of a probable ceramic beer bottle, at a depth of approximately 98 cm. Two sherds had a fragment of an incised design which consisted of 2 concentric circles separated by lettering (FA——EN*). In the center of the inner circle remains of an animal design, probably that of a lion, is evident. According to Noel Hume such bottles were made between A.D. 1840-1890 (1969: pp. 79-80). Everett and Janice Ford report that ceramic bottles were in characteristic use in Baltimore from ca. A.D. 1860-1885 (1974: p. 2). Though the evidence is not conclusive, these
sherds represent the only material recovered from the site which could be attributed to the Civil War period of the Park. The only other artifact recovered from the cut was a Huntz baby food jar. The cut was mapped.

No evidence was found indicating a straight aligned breastwork remaining in the vicinity. Either (1) it did not exist, or (2) perhaps the breastwork had a projection or bastion and was not straight across. If the latter is true then the test excavations could have missed the alignment if the test trenches were in the area of the bastion. A test perpendicular to the posts located in Lake Conoy and about 10 ft north of the initial trenches might reveal the breastwork, but the problem of rising water will still remain a constant affliction. Therefore, it is recommended that if construction is to take place in that area, the contractor should be on the alert for any cultural materials and that all such materials should be reported immediately to Park personnel.

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