

ABSTRACT

Archaeological investigations were recently carried out at Lums Pond State Park, in an area which is now an artificially constructed wetland. During a walkover of the property in the 1970s, a Native American archaeological site was located in an agricultural field. The site was officially recorded as 7NC-F-18 by the Historic Preservation Office of the State of Delaware. The site was not revisited for some time, although the items collected were incorporated in a cultural resources management plan for the park in 1983.

A systematic archaeological survey employing shovel tests identified several concentrations of prehistoric stone tools throughout the area. Further investigation established that even though the site lay in what was once a plowed agricultural field, distinct clusters of artifacts could be seen, both in the plow zone and in the soil below. The site lay along the fringes of a stream which fed into the former St. Georges Creek. Excavations were conducted in three areas within the site: on the top or crest of a low hill (Area 1), midway down the slope (Area 2), and on the floodplain of the stream (Area 3). The areas contained clusters of fire-cracked rock, stone tool manufacturing debris, features, food remains, and occupation surfaces. Multiple special analyses were conducted to better understand site formation, prehistoric activity, and the history of landscape formation, including geoarchaeological and geomorphological analysis, spatial plotting of artifact assemblages employing computer contour mapping, statistical analysis of artifact attributes, radiocarbon dating, feature morphological analysis, paleobotanical analysis, geochemistry on features and strata, stone tool chemistry, refitting of chipped stone tools and fire-cracked rock, jasper reduction experiments, and organic residue analysis.

Excavations at the site and employment of the special studies brought forth numerous insights into the prehistoric lifeways of the area. There was evidence that the site had been occupied sporadically prior to 3000 BC, during a period referred to as the Archaic period. The predominant occupations occurred about 1400 BC and 850 BC, during the Woodland I period. Much of the material culture conforms to the Clyde Farm Complex of the Woodland I, which consists of characteristic projectiles and ceramics. Later, Woodland II occupations were also identified, one of which was dated around 1500 AD. A series of pits in Area 2 of the site indicated that Woodland I groups had used the site for resource storage. Once the pits had served their usefulness, they were filled in and abandoned. Among the items found in the pits and in other buried contexts were charred oak and hickory wood and nuts, as well as mint and huckleberry seeds. Organic residue analysis of stone tools indicated that blood residues were preserved, including deer blood. Stone debris indicated that the inhabitants manufactured tools at the site, employing percussion and bipolar flaking techniques, and brought others ready-made, to be resharpened as they were used. Cobbles and pebbles from local streams along with jasper from nearby Iron Hill were used for stone tool manufacture. Analysis showed that other jaspers came from quarries farther north, including those as distant as Pennsylvania. An enormous amount of detailed information about the prehistory of the site was collected, making the archaeological investigations well worth the effort expended.