3.0 REGIONAL AMERICAN INDIAN HISTORY

The American Indian history of the region has conventionally been divided into three general periods, which are seen as reflections of widespread technological and social adaptation roughly coincident with changes in environmental conditions. Following Griffin's (1967) chronology for eastern North America, these periods are referred to as the Paleo-Indian (ca. 12,000-8000 BC), the Archaic (ca. 8000-1000 BC), and the Woodland (ca. 1000 BC-AD 1600). The latter two periods are typically subdivided into early, middle, and late temporal segments.

An alternative chronology, focused more on evidence for changes in adaptive economic and social strategies than solely on diagnostic artifacts, has been proposed by Custer (1984, 1989) for the Delmarva Peninsula. Much of the existing, published database for Delmarva, as well as various settlement pattern models derived from that data, result from work conducted by Custer and his associates (e.g., Custer 1982; Custer and Bachman 1984; Custer and DeSantis 1985; Custer and Cunningham 1986), and is referenced to this Delmarva chronology. Thus, while the conventional model is the main organizational framework used in the present study, the regional Delmarva chronology is cross-referenced when necessary for comparative purposes. The Delmarva chronology defines the Paleo-Indian period to have extended from 12,000-6500 BC, and the Archaic period from 6500-3000 BC. Two later periods are recognized: Woodland I, from 3000 BC to AD 1000; and Woodland II, from AD 1000 to 1600. A number of cultural complexes are associated with Woodland I and Woodland II in the High Coastal Plain and Piedmont/Fall Line Physiographic Provinces, as indicated in Table 4-1, which also summarizes the correspondence between the two chronologies, along with their relationships to the climatic periods discussed earlier.

Table 4-1. Comparison of Prehistoric Chronologies with Climatic Episodes.

	CLIMATIC EPISODES	TRADITIONAL MIDDLE ATLANTIC CHRONOLOGY	CUSTER'S DELMARVA CHRONOLOGY	HIGH COASTAL PLAIN AND PIEDMON/FALL LINE COMPLEXES
1600	SUB-ATLANTIC	LATE WOODLAND	WOODLAND II	MINGUANNAN
1000		MIDDLE WOODLAND	WOODLAND I	WEBB- DELAWARE PARK
500				CAREY
AD/BC				
500	SUB-BOREAL			WOLFE NECK— DELMARVA ADENA
		EARLY WOODLAND		CLYDE FARM—BARKER'S LANDING
3000		LATE ARCHAIC		
4500		MIDDLE ARCHAIC	ARCHAIC	
6500	ATLANTIC			
8500	BOREAL	EARLY ARCHAIC	PALEO-INDIAN	
10,500	PRE-BOREAL	PALEO-INDIAN		
12,000	LATE GLACIAL			

The discussion that follows summarizes the current understanding of these periods to provide a context for the interpretation of American Indian archaeological traces at the Sandom Branch sites. The periods pre-dating the occupation of the Sandom Branch Site Complex are only briefly mentioned here, with sufficient details to further an understanding of the temporal components that are represented at the sites. The earliest definitive evidence for an American Indian presence at the Sandom Branch sites dates to the Late Archaic period. Repeated, although not continuous, use of the Sandom Branch Site Complex was seen from the Late Archaic into the Late Woodland period. These periods are considered in greater detail in the discussion of the regional culture history.

3.1 Early American Indian Inhabitants of the Region

The undisputed record of human habitation in the Middle Atlantic begins approximately 14,000 years ago near the end of the cool and relatively wet Late Wisconsin Glacial period, although evidence for an even earlier human presence in Eastern North America is slowly mounting (Fagundes et al. 2008; Goodyear 2005). As previously detailed, the retreat of the glaciers brought a fairly rapid warming trend throughout the Middle Atlantic, a phenomenon directly reflected in the replacement of northern plant and animal species by southern types. Like much of the region, New Castle County was characterized by a relatively complex set of overlapping environments, providing a variety of subsistence resources for people living in the region (Wesler et al. 1981; Meltzer 1988; Custer 1989; Dent 1995:75-82, 106, 128:15). Relatively few Paleo-Indian sites have been reported throughout the Middle Atlantic, and no direct evidence was observed of people living at the Sandom Branch sites this early.

The traditional Middle Atlantic chronology includes a break in cultural patterns around 8000 BC, approximately corresponding with a warming trend that signaled the Boreal climatic episode. The new pattern, referred to terminologically as Archaic, is usually recognized as ranging temporally from ca. 8000 BC to 1000 BC, during a period in which the physical environment became increasingly like that of the present (Joyce 1988). Major sub-periods are recognized within the Archaic, referred to as Early (8000-6500 BC), Middle (6500-3000 BC), and Late Archaic (3000-1000 BC).

The transition from Paleo-Indian to Early Archaic has often been viewed as a cultural continuum rather than a break, at least in terms of evidence for socio-economic activities (Custer 1989; 1990). Following Gardner's (1974) lead, Custer (1984, 1989) took the further step of combining the two periods in Delmarva under the single rubric of Paleo-Indian. Direct physical evidence from this period is slight at the Sandom Branch sites, occurring in the form of a single projectile point confirming to the Kirk type, which is typically dated to the later part of the Early Archaic (Coe 1964; Broyles 1971). No temporally diagnostic artifact associated with the Middle Archaic period was found at the Sandom Branch sites and the single AMS assay dating to this period is considered invalid, as it was found in a Middle Woodland context.

3.2 Later American Indian Inhabitants of the Region and the Sandom Branch Sites

One of the most important environmental developments affecting people who lived in the Middle Atlantic region during the entire Archaic period was the gradual rise in sea level accompanying the retreat of the continental ice sheets. Often referred to formally as the

Holocene marine transgression, sea level rise began very gradually during the Paleo-Indian period as meltwater from the glaciers flooded into the oceans and lead to widespread lowland flooding of coastal areas. This flooding extended up many Pleistocene river valleys, including the Delaware and Susquehanna (Stuiver and Daddario 1963). Among the effects of the inundation were marked rises in local water tables, an increase in shoreline complexity associated with development of estuaries, or transition zones between fresh and salt water, and a consequent increase in floral and faunal resources in newly formed marsh or wetland areas (Potter 1982). Large marshes and swamps became important foci for settlement-subsistence during the period (Gardner 1978).

The American Indian presence at the Sandom Branch complex became more substantial by the end of the Late Archaic period, as indicated by the occurrence of Brewerton, Lackawaxen, Lamoka, and Piscataway/Rossvile projectile points, as well as AMS assays. These occupations at Sandom Branch appeared to correspond with a marked increase in site frequency throughout the region during the early portions of the Late Archaic, suggesting both an overall population increase and movement into new parts of the landscape (Turner 1978). Evidence from some sites in riverine and estuarine areas suggests that sites were larger and more complex than in previous periods, implying a trend toward sedentism, or more settled occupation, and organized strategies for harvesting resources (Johnson 1986).

Traditional Middle Atlantic chronologies recognize the Late Archaic period as extending from ca. 3000 BC to 1000 BC. Regional environments during the Late Archaic were initially characterized by extensive oak-hickory forests. The rate of sea level rise had slowed by this point, allowing more stable riverine and estuarine environments to form that, in larger streams, could support significant populations of shellfish and anadromous fish, the latter being marine species that return to freshwater to spawn. Some researchers have suggested that the focus of settlement shifted early in the period to take advantage of increasingly predictable fish and shellfish resources in these areas (Custer 1978; Gardner 1978). In Delmarva, a pattern of warmer and drier climatic conditions occurred during the period referred to as the mid-postglacial xerothermic. Less vegetation and drier soils led to the relatively rapid burial of certain landscapes through aeolian or windblown deposition. This process has been observed in association with dry or xeric soils throughout the Lower Coastal Plain and the Upper Coastal Plain (Curry 1980, 1992; Ward and Bachman 1987; Curry and Ebright 1989; Daniels 1993; Heite and Blume 1995).

Late Archaic American Indian populations exhibited more settled occupations than was true of the generalized foraging pattern of Middle Archaic groups. This shift forms the basis for the segregation of the traditional periods in the Delmarva chronology. In the Delmarva model, the Middle Archaic is referred to simply as the Archaic, while the Late Archaic is combined with the initial two sub-periods of the ensuing Woodland period, Early and Middle. The resulting cultural period is referred to as the Delmarva Woodland I (ca. 3000 BC-AD 1000), recognizing an extended interval of continuity in settlement systems and social organization (Custer1989:141-2).

Chipped stone artifacts characteristic of the Late Archaic period included a wide range of broad-bladed, stemmed, and notched points. The apparent profusion of point types during

the period prompted Custer (1994) to suggest that chronologies based on these artifacts alone may be problematical and thus unreliable. In this view, only certain point types are considered to be useful temporal indicators, including: Otter Creek; broadspears such as Susquehanna, Perkiomen, Koens-Crispin, and Savannah River; and Fishtails. Other points ranging from Vosburg and Brewerton, through Normanskill, Lamoka, Bare Island and Piscataway, are considered to be of relatively little use in establishing chronological trends due to problems with typological uncertainty and positive temporal associations.

Around 1000 BC, techniques for pottery manufacture were introduced across the region. This innovation has traditionally defined the beginning of the Woodland period in the Middle Atlantic. From an analytical standpoint, difficulties noted from the end of the Archaic in clearly defining projectile point types with good temporal associations persist into the Woodland period. Ceramics tend to have somewhat more discretely bounded typological attributes and time ranges during this time span, and have become the primary temporal indices for the Woodland period.

Evidence has been documented for an increase in sedentism as the people living in the region displayed increased efficiency in exploiting available resources. The appearance of greater numbers of storage features at sites such as Leipsic, Clyde Farm (7NC-E-6A) (Custer et al. 1985; 1986b), or Pollack (7K-C-203) (Custer et al. 1995a) during this period, may represent archaeological evidence of a trend toward more organized subsistence rounds and more sedentary settlement patterns.

The earliest known ceramic in the region is a type found at one of the Sandom Branch sites known as Marcey Creek ware. A steatite-tempered variety named after its type site on the Potomac River, in Arlington County, Virginia (Manson 1948), Marcey Creek ceramics were made and used from about 1200 BC to 800 BC. A series of five pit features containing Marcey Creek and a subsequent ceramic type, Dames Quarter ware (Artusy 1976), were documented at the nearby Blackbird Creek site (7NC-J-195D) (Parsons 2000), where they were dated between 980 BC and 1070 BC. Custer (1989:176, Table 23) notes that the predominant projectile points accompanying these two ceramic wares in Delmarva were various broadspears and fishtails, along with a series of long, stemmed points referred to as Bare Island/Lackawaxen, examples of which were identified at the Sandom Branch sites.

In terms of broad chronological patterning, the Delmarva chronology subdivides the Woodland I into a series of regional complexes that have been described as "set[s] of archaeological sites showing similar adaptations to the bio-social environments with limited spatial and temporal distributions" (Custer 1989:36). These complexes and their relationships to conventional chronologies are shown in Table 4-2, beginning with the Late Archaic (the initial part of Woodland I).

Dames Quarter ceramics and the stemmed, broadspear and fishtail points described above comprise part of a cultural complex designated as Barker's Landing in the Upper Coastal Plain, and as Clyde Farm in the Piedmont/Fall Line zone. Custer (1994:46) has proposed that a distinctive form of domestic architecture—the pit house—developed during the Woodland I, originally as part of the Clyde Farm Complex. Evidence of features

characterized by some researchers as pit houses has been reported in association with Woodland I period occupations at the Snapp (7NC-G-101), Leipsic (7K-C-194A), Pollack (7K-C-203), Carey Farm (7K-D-3) and Island Farm (7K-C-13) sites (Custer et al. 1995b).

The latter half of the Early Woodland in Delmarva is distinguished by a series of clay-tempered ceramic wares with type names such as Coulbourn, Nassawango, and Wilgus (Custer 1989:176, Table 23). These ceramics are often associated with the so-called Delmarva Adena Complex, in the Upper Coastal Plain, particularly in the watersheds of the St. Jones and Murderkill rivers, in Kent County. There is no direct evidence of Adena influence at the Sandom Branch sites.

Table 4-2. Woodland Period Regional Complexes in Delmarva.

(adapted from Custer 1994:23)

	EASTERN CHRONOLOGY	DELMARVA CHRONOLOGY	DELMARVA WOODLAND COMPLEXES		
			LOWER COASTAL PLAIN	UPPER COASTAL PLAIN	PIEDMIONT/ FALL LINE
1600	LATE WOODLAND	WOODLAND II	SLAUGHTER CREEK	SLAUGHTER CREEK	MINGUANAN
1000	MIDDLE WOODLAND	WOODLAND I	LATE CAREY COMPLEX	WEBB COMPLEX	DELAWARE PARK COMPLEX
500			CAREY COMPLEX		BLACK ROCK II COMPLEX
AD / BC	EARLY WOODLAND		WOLFE NECK COMPLEX	DELMARVA ADENA COMPLEX	BLACK ROCK I COMPLEX
500			BARKER'S LANDING III COMPLEX		CLYDE FARM III COMPLEX
1000	LATE ARCHAIC		BARKER'S LANDING II COMPLEX		CLYDE FARM II COMPLEX
1500					
2000			BARKER'S LANDING I COMPLEX		CLYDE FARM I COMPLEX
2500					
3000					

Changes in regional settlement patterns have been inferred for the final stages of the Early Woodland period, with semi-sedentary base camps, often referred to as macro-band base camps, increasing in size (Custer 1989, 1994:297). Studies indicate a shift in the locations of these sites away from small, creek floodplains to large, river floodplains. This shift to larger, more fertile floodplains may have set the stage for the local development, or adoption, of horticulture (Snyder and Gardner 1979; Gardner 1982:78). On the Delmarva Coastal Plain, Custer (1986, 1994:95) noted a shift in base camp locations from confluence areas of freshwater streams and estuaries to locations farther upstream, which could include locations

such as the Sandom Branch sites, which occurred on a low ridge above the upper end of the Blackbird Creek estuary. Increased participation in trade and exchange networks is also noted, as is an assumed increase in societal complexity. Both processes are inferred from the appearance of exotic lithic raw materials as well as artifacts and burial ceremonialism associated with cultures from the Mississippi and Ohio River Valleys (Custer 1989). The size and type of occupation debris from the Sandom Branch sites may help address this settlement model issue.

The break between Early and Middle Woodland periods is usually placed sometime after AD 1, and is roughly correlated with the appearance of a new ceramic tempering agent—shell. Shell-tempered pottery is first seen in Delmarva in a thick-walled, often cord-marked or net-impressed ceramic ware known as Mockley, examples of which were recovered at one of the Sandom Branch sites. The date range for Mockley in Delmarva is approximately AD 110 to AD 450 (Artusy 1976), although most reported Mockley ceramics cluster between AD 200 and AD 330. Delmarva sites with Mockley ceramics include Carey Farm (7K-D-3), Wilgus site (7S-K-21), Hughes-Willis (7K-D-21), Wolfe Neck (7S-D-10), and 18KE17, the latter located on the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake in Kent County, Maryland (Custer 1989:Appendix 2).

Points associated with the period include: lanceolate and stemmed Fox Creek or Selby Bay types; corner-notched or pentagonal Jack's Reef; and, shouldered and contracting stemmed Rossville (Steponaitis 1980; Wanser 1982). The latter point types were recovered at the Sandom Branch sites. A preference for argillite and rhyolite in the manufacture of certain lithic tools, particularly Fox Creek or Selby Bay points, is also noted during the period (Custer 1986; Curry and Kavanagh 1989). Mockley ceramics and Fox Creek points have been noted as hallmarks of the Carey Complex (AD 1–AD 600), which is recognized throughout Delmarva (Custer 1989:Table 23).

Other complexes in the Middle Woodland in Delmarva include the Webb Complex, in the Upper Coastal Plain, and the Delaware Park Complex, to the north, in the Piedmont/Fall Line. The Webb Complex was identified at the Island Field site (7K-F-17) (Thomas and Warren 1970; Custer et al. 1990b). Diagnostic artifacts included Hell Island ceramics, a crushed quartz-tempered and fabric- or cord-impressed ware with a date range of approximately AD 600—AD 1000. Associated lithic tools consisted of Jack’s Reef pentagonal, Rossville, and a generalized side-notched point. In addition, burials and evidence of mortuary ceremonialism suggest the re-emergence of contact with extra-regional groups; a radiocarbon date of AD 740 was returned from a cremated burial at the site (Thomas and Warren 1970). Among other Webb Complex sites are the Hell Island (7NC-F-7) and the Taylor Cedar Creek (7S-C-17) sites, the latter with a dated to ca. AD 645 (Artusy 1976). Hell Island ceramics were not identified at Sandom Branch, but Jacks Reef and Rossville points were among the projectile points recovered.

Attributes of the Delaware Park Complex, the late Middle Woodland manifestation in the Piedmont/Fall Line, are described mainly through excavations at the Delaware Park site (7NC-E-41), where a number of large and small storage pits from the period were documented. Radiocarbon dates of ca. AD 605 and AD 640 were obtained from two of the

pit features (Thomas 1981). Associated with the features were Hell Island ceramics, Jack's Reef pentagonal, Rossville points, and a generalized side-notched point. A similar combination of Hell Island ceramics and Jack's Reef points was recorded at Clyde Farm (7NC-E-6) (Custer 1989:291). In comparison with the contemporary Webb Complex, relatively low levels of exchange have been inferred from a general absence of exotic artifacts.

Sometime after AD 900, maize horticulture began to play a significant role in the total subsistence system throughout much of the Middle Atlantic. Direct evidence of cultivation of any kind is rare and scattered on the Middle Atlantic Coastal Plain, and has yet to be recorded on the Delaware Coastal Plain (Custer and Cunningham 1986:24). Custer (1989:300) cited clear evidence of a pattern of focused collecting on a scale with earlier Woodland subsistence systems, from which he theorizes that horticulture remained a secondary activity. Continually increasing sedentism is assumed on the basis of storage facilities and house structures that have been documented from this period, particularly in the southern part of the peninsula. The relative absence of exotic lithics and non-local influences on mortuary practices, along with a marked period of cultural stability as evidenced in ceramic wares throughout the period, have been taken to imply an apparent breakdown of the extensive trade and exchange networks operating during the earlier portions of the Woodland period (Stewart et al. 1986).

These changes in the patterns of life across Delmarva were distinct, and they represent a cultural break defined by researchers as the Late Woodland period, which extended from AD 1000 to AD 1600. The latter date represents the approximate date that Europeans first made meaningful contact with the people who had lived in Delmarva for centuries. The Late Woodland period corresponds roughly with the Woodland II period in the alternative Delmarva chronology (Custer 1989:298-299).

The Late Woodland complex recognized in the Piedmont/Fall Line and Upper Coastal Plain zones, within which the Sandom Branch site occurs, is the Minguannan Complex, marked by a ceramic ware of the same name which is characterized by sand, grit, or crushed quartz temper and smoothed or cord-marked exteriors (Custer 1985). Minguannan ware, which was common at one of the Sandom Branch sites, is often decorated with incised or corded designs, which are occasionally found together in a variety referred to as Minguannan Compound Decorated (Griffith and Custer 1985). Associated projectile point forms were restricted to several forms of triangular point, also found at the Sandom Branch sites. Little evidence of widespread sedentism has been discovered at Minguannan Complex sites. In contrast to Late Woodland complexes such as the Monongahela of southwestern Pennsylvania and adjacent states (Means 2007), there are no large villages known archaeologically in association with Minguannan Complex artifacts, nor has a marked shift to fertile bottomlands been documented.

3.3 Ethnohistoric Records

Although there is some archaeological data related to the Contact period in Delaware, much of the information on settlement patterns and territorial boundaries during that time is drawn from ethnohistorical accounts, which are descriptions of American Indian groups written by

contemporary Europeans. Attempts to connect ethnographic groups with archaeologically derived culture complexes have generally proved unsuccessful. This results from a combination of the incomplete nature of the archaeological record and the biased and sometimes erroneous accounts of colonial Europeans (Custer 1989:333).

The earliest general information about American Indian groups in the region is from John Smith's account of his early explorations of the Chesapeake Bay area. Smith reported that the dominant groups of the southern Delmarva were the Accomac and the Occohannocks. Both were allied with the Powhatan of the Virginia mainland for at least the early portion of the seventeenth century (Smith 1986a:150-151, 1986b:224-225).

The Assateague appear for the first time in Maryland records in 1659 as residents on the Atlantic coast near the head of the Pocomoke River (Browne 1885:379-380). They had several villages along the seaboard side of present-day Worcester County, Maryland, between the Pocomoke River and the ocean bays and inlets (Marye 1939b:20). Some of the Assateague moved east to the Assawoman Inlet area in the later seventeenth century, and then north to Indian River. In the 1680s, they become known as the Indian River Indians (Browne 1904:442-444, 1908:264-265; Marye 1939a). Land sales and other records can trace the presence of Indian River Indians in the southern part of Delaware through the 1740s (DeValinger 1940, 1941; Marye 1939a, 1940).

The Kuskarawaok, who became known as the Nanticoke Indians, inhabited the area along the "Kus flu" or Nanticoke River drainage, occupying between 5-10 villages simultaneously during the seventeenth century (Browne 1905:256; Smith 1986a:150, 185, 189, 1986b:226). This group was reportedly the largest and strongest on the Delmarva: Smith estimated they had as many as 200 warriors (Smith 1986a:150). He described their language as different from that of the Powhatan, and acknowledged them as significant participants in the indigenous prestige goods trade through their manufacture of white shell beads. They also were known for their abundance of furs (Smith 1986a:150, 1986c:164-165, 168). The Nanticoke remained a strong presence on the Peninsula throughout the Contact period, maintaining possession of significant portions of their core territories (Busby 2000; Porter 1979).

North of the Nanticoke, along the Choptank River drainage, was the territory of the Choptank Indians. The Maryland colonial government initiated interaction with the Choptank in the first half of the seventeenth century (Browne 1885:362-364; Marye 1936:15). They were divided into three bands, each with a territorial base but residing predominantly within a definable, contiguous area in the vicinity of present-day Cambridge, Maryland (Browne 1896:260; Marye 1936:15; McAllister 1962). This group also maintained possession of their core territories throughout the Contact period primarily by cooperating with the colonial Maryland government (Busby 2000; Porter 1979).

The Siconesse were an Atlantic seaboard group associated with the large Lenape entity of the Delaware/New Jersey/Pennsylvania area. At the time of Contact, they inhabited the area around Cape Henlopen and Lewes, Delaware (Browne 1896:146). Other Native groups associated with the larger Lenape designation were resident in the extreme northern sections

of the Delmarva. The Lenape can be divided along linguistic lines. A relatively homogenous dialect was spoken north and east of the Raritan River and the Delaware Water Gap, while a more diverse group of dialects was spoken south of this line (Goddard 1979). The northern people, inhabitants of northern New Jersey, Manhattan Island, and the area of the North River (Hudson River), are generally defined as Munsee. Unami speakers inhabited areas along the South River (Delaware River) encompassing central and southern New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, and northern Delaware at the time of Contact (Kraft 1986:xv).

The Native groups resident in the northern part of present-day New Castle County, Delaware, in the Brandywine River Valley, included the Quenomysing and the Minguannan who were collectively referred to at times as the Brandywine Indians (Weslager 1972:34, 38). The Brandywine Indians maintained a separate identity from other Unami-speaking Lenape to south and east and from Munsee speakers to the north through their patterns of settlement, land transactions, and cross-cultural associations (Weslager 1972:178-179).

The Susquehannock Indians entered the Delmarva peninsula around 1608, making forays from their villages along the Susquehanna River in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. By the late 1650s, they had expanded their fur trading territory to the north shore of the Choptank River (Jennings 1968; Smith 1986a:149-150, 1986c:231). Their presence affected the form and substance of Lenape life and pushed other groups, such as the Monoponsons, of Kent Island, and the Wicomiss, on Maryland's side of the Delmarva, southward with sustained hostilities (Jennings 1968; Marye 1938:147, 150; Rountree and Davidson 1997:80).