

RUMSEY/POLK TENANT/PREHISTORIC SITE (7NC-F-112, CRS # N-14492)

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) will be constructing a new U.S. Route 301 highway alignment in New Castle County stretching from the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal to just over the Maryland State Line south of Middletown. Under Federal laws, archaeological surveys and excavations are required for the project to locate and study archaeological resources critical to understanding Delaware's history.



Results of Phase I surface collecting
*red dots = historic artifacts

The Rumsey/Polk Tenant/Prehistoric Site was identified in a plowed field as a dense cluster of Pre-Contact, 18th, and 19th-century artifacts by Richard Grubb & Associates, Inc. (RGA) during a Phase I archaeological survey in 2009. The site is located on an upland setting near a tributary of Sandy Run close to the Delaware/Maryland border. This location was prized by both Native Americans and Colonial farmers.



18th century Flintlock pistol barrel

Owned by notable Delaware and Maryland residents in the 17th and early 18th century, by 1742 the site was part of the Delaware estate of prominent landowner William Rumsey Sr., whose home stood at Bohemia Landing in Cecil County, Maryland. William Rumsey Sr. was wealthy and influential, a mill owner and customs collector for the Cecil County District. His son, William Rumsey Jr., was a Patriot and major of the Bohemia Battalion during the Revolutionary War. In 1836, the site was acquired by William Polk, a major landowner in New Castle County and continued in the Polk ownership until it was abandoned circa 1848/1855. The Rumsey/Polk Tenant/Prehistoric site was occupied by tenant farmers.



English Gunflint



1739 George II English half penny



18th century wineglass

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Artifacts and remains of earthfast houses, hearths, pits, and wells indicate that the site was occupied in two phases: 1740s to 1770s, and 1797/1804 to 1848/1855. The pre-1740 site occupation is hinted at by some early historic artifacts. The occupation is considered a domestic and agricultural tenancy but the identity of the tenants is as yet unknown. Judging by the high quality of many of the artifacts, including wine glasses and bottles, teaware, and dishes, these tenants were apparently not poor. Some of these artifacts hint at the individual tenant's identity, participation in Middletown's and regional commerce, as well as the political movements of the day.



18th to 19th century house features and a well or cistern in the heart of the site

Phase III archaeological investigations of the site this summer are expected to tell us much more about the daily lives, trade, diet, and identities of the occupants, as well as provide information about the politics of boundaries and borders during critical periods of Delaware and Maryland history, and connections with the Rumsey and Polk families during the 18th and 19th centuries.



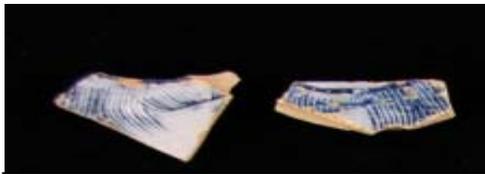
**1751 to 1779 Cockpit Hill Derby, England
Hand-painted canister-style teapot lid**



Silver-plate spoon



Circa 1848 pipe depicting presidential candidate Lewis Cass, a proponent of "Popular Sovereignty," a compromise stance on slavery



"Scratch blue" ceramic