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Preliminary notes on the Biggs Ford site, 41/30 (1)

Frederick County, Maryland 27/13

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Maryland Survey 26/13
Geological
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The B F site is a large, relatively well-preserved, ~~late prehistoric~~ multicomponent, late prehistoric Indian village site near the Monocacy River in central Fred. Co, Md. The site is in a cultivated field and has been known to ~~a~~ local ~~relic~~ ~~artifact~~ relic collectors and amateur archeologists for ~~many years~~ several decades. Brief testing was conducted ~~[illegible]~~ by Spencer O. Geasey about 1955 when a ~~[illegible]~~ few ~~[illegible]~~ refuse-filled pits were found below the plow zone. Geasey notified the Md. Geol. Survey in Oct 1969 that a proposed sewer interceptor from Walkersville to Frederick ~~was to~~ would cross the central portion of the site. Permission ~~[illegible]~~ was obtained from the owner-former, William Bt. Crum, to excavate ~~the~~

~~[illegible]~~

0
10
50

400

5
40

~~portion of the site~~
in the area to be destroyed by the proposed construction.
~~and~~ Excavations were conducted by the newly established
Div. of Archeol. of the Md. Geol Survey with volunteer
assistance from ~~after the~~ October 1969 ~~through~~ until July 1970.

A ~~Ta~~ road grader was used to push ~~stop~~ off the ~~Ta~~ 25 to
35 cm. of ~~plow-disturbed~~ plow-disturbed top soil ~~in an area measuring~~
~~about by meters where the site was to be~~
~~from~~ in a long strip, measuring 7 by 230 meters where the pipe was to cross
the site. This approach was used ~~[illegible]~~ for
several reasons: ~~[illegible]~~ Time and resources for excavation were limited,
artifacts recovered from the disturbed plow zone were of less
scientific value than those from undisturbed contexts below
the plow zone. Geasey's tests had demonstrated that
~~undisturbed~~ some undisturbed ~~deposits~~ archeological
deposits were preserved under the plow-disturbed soil.
~~and~~ Finally, our ~~[illegible]~~ small test holes revealed a ~~[illegible]~~ light
colored clayey subsoil that ~~[illegible]~~ would permit easy ~~distinction~~
~~between the d~~ ~~for the~~ ~~identification of the~~ differentiation of
the dark top soil and suggested that there would good preservation of ~~[illegible]~~
~~of~~ post molds and other ~~[illegible]~~ sub-plow zone disturbances.
~~The flow of the~~ ¶ Several dark, ~~refuse filled stains and~~
refuse-filled pits and a few post molds ~~were evident~~
became evident as soon as the grader reached the ~~[illegible]~~

top of the subsoil. Careful hand scraping with shovels, hoes, or trowels when the soil was moist and the sky overcast revealed the stains to best advantage. All apparent postholes were marked with small wooden pegs, and a line of stakes driven 10 meters apart down the center of the trench served as control points for the mapping after an area was scraped clean, the postholes, refuse deposits, and other stains were recorded on a site plan or map.

Time permitted cross sectioning of only a few of the postholes, but all other features lying wholly within the trench were completely excavated. A few features not entirely within the trench were partially excavated or left unexcavated. The pits and other large features were dug with shovels and generally excavated in two sections; one vertical half was completely removed and the profile of the remaining section was studied and sometimes recorded before the second half was dug. All dirt removed from features was sifted through screens with 1/4" inch mesh. Large dirt samples were saved from several pits and removed to the laboratory where it was washed through fine window screen.

Although hundreds of stains thought to be post molds were discovered and recorded, relatively few clear patterns emerged. The disorderly array? which seemed to predominate can be attributed to at least three factors: (1) the density of occupation, the superimposition of features, and the presence of at least two major late prehistoric components of different ages implies that there would be a confused (discussed below) overlapping of post mold patterns; (2) although most of the few apparent post molds that were cross sectioned proved to be post molds, some of the stains were probably rodent runs or other disturbances of non-Indian origin; and (3) the area excavated was too small to expose complete structures. Nevertheless, there were a number of alignments of clear, regularly spaced post molds. On the east edge of the site some curved lines with posts 6 cm in diameter and spaced 60 cm apart may be portions of stockades which surrounded the village. Although not clear in their entirety, two house structures were identified; the posts were 30-40 cm apart and sometimes paired. Both were rectangular in outline with parallel sides and rounded ends. One measured 5 by 9 meters, and the other measured 4 by 6 meters. It is likely that most of the postmolds are associated with either of the two late prehistoric components represented at the site, but it has not been determined to which late component the alignments may belong.

~~Over ... features which proved to be refused~~

Over 30 ~~[illegible]~~ features ~~[illegible]~~

~~identified by~~ appearing as dark or disturbed soil in the top of the subsoil were identified; ~~[illegible]~~ Most of the pits ~~were~~ ~~proved to be~~ ~~[illegible]~~ of unknown function but ~~[illegible]~~ were filled with refuse; ~~[illegible]~~ 10 were ~~proved to be~~ graves. There were generally two shapes of pits outlines; round and elongated. The round pits were scattered at random, ~~while~~ but the elongated pits were arranged end-to-end in an (OVER) ~~elongated pits contained only~~ FIVE ~~the~~ As will ~~be [illegible]~~ become evident ~~[illegible]~~ below, all of the elongated pits were associated with the earlier of the two major late components of the site while the ~~[illegible]~~ round pits can be attributed to at least three sperate components. All of the graves ~~[illegible]~~ (except some skull fragments in one of the elongated pits) were associated with the latest ~~[illegible]~~ major component; some were intrusive into elongated pits.

Graves seemed to be scattered at random within the area of dense occupation exposed by our trench. There were 10 graves containing a total of 12 skeletons; 2 of the graves contained 2 infant skeletons each. There were 8 infants, 2 juveniles, and 2 adults plus some skull fragments of an adult included in one of the elongated pits. The adults and juveniles were single flexed burials. The heads of the skeletons were usually to the east or south; none were to the west. Grave goods were found with about half of the burials. Typical artifacts with the graves were shell disk beads and drilled olenella shells. One juvenile was accompanied by a miniature over. The exceptional adult grave was a middle-aged male accompanied by a bow and quiver of 10 arrows, two celts, a broken and worn 2-hole gorget, a vasiform steatite pipe, 2 bone punches, a beaver incisor, and several bird claws and wing bones.

No dog skeletons were found.

Potsherds and triangular unnotched projectile points were the most common artifacts recovered during the excavations at the BF site. Two types of pottery comprise over 95 % of the sherds recovered. About two-thirds of the sherds have cord-roughened surfaces and grit temper. Decoration consists of rows and plats of cord-wrapped-stick impressions and occasional exterior or interior punctations. The rims have squared or splayed-out lips, and some have an added exterior strip or filet which is characteristically decorated with oblique impressions of a cord-wrapped stick. The Biggs Ford sample combines features of the early late prehistoric Shepard Cord-Marked type of the Potomac Valley Late Woodland Montgomery focus and of the central Pennsylvania Late Woodland Clemson pottery type, all of which in turn are related to Late Woodland Owasco types in New York where it is the prehistoric ancestor of Iroquois pottery.

The ~~second~~ other principal ~~pottery~~ kind of pottery found at B.F. ~~[illegible]~~ has both cord-roughened and smoothed surfaces and is ~~[illegible]~~ tempered with crushed river mussel shells. ~~[illegible]~~ Rims are typically undecorated, but a few are incised or punctated. Some rims have small lugs. The sample is related to Keyser Cord-Marked of the ~~[illegible]~~ Potomac - Shenandoah ~~[illegible]~~ valley Late Prehistoric Luray focus and more generally to the ~~[illegible]~~ Upper Ohio valley Late Prehistoric and early contact. Monongahela cultures. ~~[illegible]~~ ~~contact at B.F. ca. A.D. 1500 to [illegible]~~ No contact artifacts were found at Biggs ~~Ford~~.

Other kinds of pottery comprise a small minority of the total sample. Included are several sherds of ~~the~~ steatite tempered Early Woodland Marcey Creek Plain.

Most of the projectile points recovered are ~~[illegible]~~ triangular unnotched points of which there are two varieties. About half of the triangular points are of medium size (ca. 30 cm long) and made of rhyolite; the other triangular points are smaller (ca. 20 cm long) and made of quartz. About a quarter of the projectile points found are ~~[illegible]~~ broad-stemmed or shallow side-notched types of unweathered rhyolite and probably of Middle Woodland affiliation of ca. A.D. 200 to 600. ~~[illegible]~~ ~~Other kinds of stemmed and notched points~~ Few other kinds of points occurred (or?).

Organic remains were common in the pits. Bones include deer, turtle, turkey, and others. Charred ~~[illegible]~~ corn kernels were abundant ~~[illegible]~~ in some of the elongated pits.

Apart from pottery and projectile points, artifacts recovered include turtle shell bowls, bone awls, marginella shell beads, ~~a chunkey stone fragment~~, a fragment of a discoidal (chunkey stone),

Two major components can be identified. ~~The~~ The ~~[illegible]~~ earlier ~~[illegible]~~ includes the elongated pits, ~~and~~ ~~the~~ large triangular rhyolite points, ~~and~~ grit tempered pottery, ~~which~~ ~~were the only [illegible]~~ and many of the round pits. On the basis of artifact, especially ceramic, comparisons to ~~the~~ dated sites in other areas this component ~~can~~ may date between AD 900 and 1300. The later major component includes ~~the~~ all of the burials, some of the round pits, ~~and~~ small quartz triangular points, and shell tempered pottery. None of the latter kinds of points and pottery were found in the elongated pits, and several of the burials ~~were intrusive~~ pits were intruded into the elongated pits. The late component ~~can be dated between~~ may date between A.D. ~~900 and~~ 1300 and 1500.