MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY MONTH 2025

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The State of Maryland

Proclamation

From the Governor of the State of Maryland

MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY MONTH
APRIL 2025

WHEREAS, *Maryland's many remarkable archeological discoveries at sites including the colonial capital of Annapolis; Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum; the Herman Barton Village; Biggs Ford; the Hughes Site; Mount Calvert; and St. Mary's City are of state and national significance; and*

WHEREAS, *Archeological sites provide a tangible link to at least 13,000 years of human history in Maryland, deepen our understanding of the state's diverse history and culture, and reveal otherwise unavailable information about the origins of our communities and traditions; and*

WHEREAS, *The protection, study, and interpretation of these unique and irreplaceable links to the past provide educational, scientific, and economic benefits for all citizens; and*

WHEREAS, *The Maryland Historical Trust has coordinated with the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation; Montgomery County Department of Parks; the Archeological Society of Maryland; the Council for Maryland Archeology; Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum; the Maryland Department of Transportation; Historic St. Mary's City and other individuals and organizations to inform and involve the public in the excitement of archeological discovery in our state.*

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WES MOORE, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND, do hereby proclaim APRIL 2025 as MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY MONTH in Maryland and call upon the people of our state to join in this observance.

Given *Under My Hand and the Great Seal of the State of Maryland, this 1st day of April Two Thousand and twenty-five*

Governor

Lt. Governor

Secretary of State

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Interested in participating in the discovery of local history as revealed through archeology?

Join the Archeological Society of Maryland, whose goals include the creation of bonds between avocational and professional archeologists. Volunteer on public archeology field and laboratory projects. Attend lectures, workshops, and archeological site tours (see the Calendar of Events on the Maryland Archeology Month website, www.marylandarcheologymonth.org). Engaging with the archeological community benefits all Marylanders!

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Exploring Maryland's Indigenous Ceramics

Zachary Singer, Chair, Maryland Archeology Month Committee

Maryland Archeology Month 2025 highlights Indigenous ceramics. Fired clay ceramics first appear in Maryland's archeological record approximately 3,000 years ago. Ceramic production is an additive process where clay and temper are kneaded together and then the tempered clay is molded, shaped, decorated, and fired. The clay firing facilitates the long-term preservation of ceramics in the archeological record, thus establishing ceramics as a key source of information for learning about Indigenous peoples in Maryland over the last 3,000 years.

Ceramics found on archeological sites preserve traces of the construction techniques and raw material selections that reflect both the actions of individuals and their shared cultural traditions. Archeologists distinguish ceramic traditions (i.e. pottery types) based on attributes that are identifiable from ceramic artifacts including the source of clay, the type of temper, the surface treatment, the decoration, and the shape of the ceramic vessel.

The articles in this booklet illustrate the wealth of information preserved in and on ceramics, which archeologists study to learn about the Indigenous peoples who made these ceramics. I hope you enjoy these excellent studies of Maryland's ceramic cultural traditions, ceramic replication experiments, and analyses of residues preserved on ceramics. These examples highlight the crucial role ceramics play in refining understandings of Indigenous cultures in Maryland over the past 3,000 years.

01

“Can you tell me what this is and how old it is?”

Identifying Ceramics and Using the Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland Website

Scott Strickland, Deputy Director, Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab

Chances are if you picked up one of these booklets, you’re into archaeology. Maybe you have a collection of projectile points and some other things you’ve found on the ground. Ceramics may not make it to some collections as they are often broken into tiny little bits that are harder to distinguish on the ground from eye-level.

If you have that eagle-eye and you’ve found a ceramic, perhaps it feels a certain way in your hand, maybe it is reddish in color, it has specks of stuff mixed in the clay, and one side may have a decoration or some kind of uneven surface. All of those things, when examined as a whole, are the things archaeologists look for when trying to identify a ceramic.

Ceramic types as defined by archaeologists use these observations (or attributes) to separate one ceramic from another. The most common attributes archaeologists use to define types are temper, surface treatment, decoration, and vessel form (if you have enough of a ceramic pot). Other attributes include paste color, paste hardness/texture, and thickness of the vessel. As with everything in archaeology – context, or the place where it is found, is important as well.

Temper is what is mixed into clay prior to creating a pot (Figure 1). Types of temper include crushed shell, crushed rock (of various types such as quartz, limestone, steatite, gneiss, and more), sand, or even crushed remains of other pots (called grog). Tempering clay is an important process because the temper itself prevents shrinkage and cracking during the firing process. Once tempered, clay would be coiled to form the basic shape of a pot.

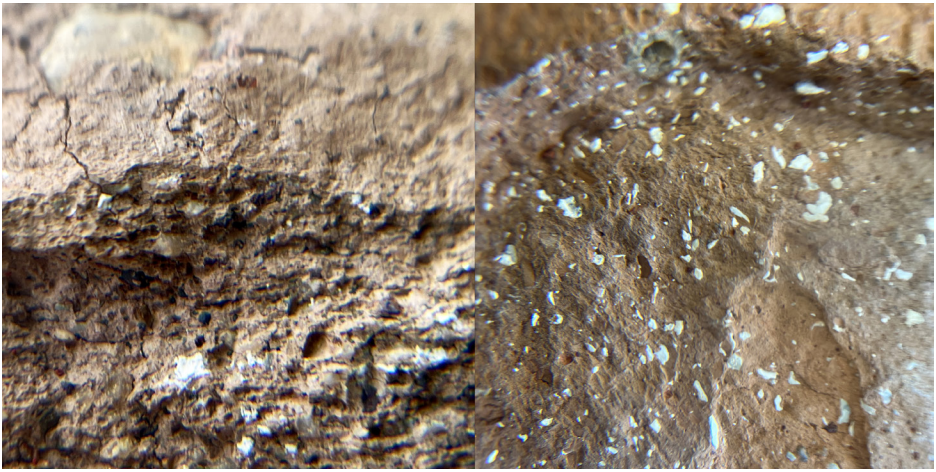


Figure 1. Close-up of grit (left) and shell (right) tempered fired clay from reproduction vessels.

After the pot has been coiled into shape any air bubbles between the coils needs to be minimized as the pockets of air could expand and lead to cracking and/or popping. This was avoided by malleating (or beating) the clay with paddles. Paddles were often wrapped in some type of fabric, which prevented the paddle from sticking to the wet clay and help to interlock the layered coils of the vessel. Malleating the clay would thin the vessel walls while also leaving distinctive patterns on the exterior surface of the clay – called surface treatments. Materials commonly wrapped around paddles included cordage, net, and fabric (Figure 2).

Additional surface details that are often distinctive to ceramic types are the form and type of decoration. Some vessels may be directly cord-marked, cord-marked using a cord-wrapped stick or dowel, incised, punctated, or have rims with other markings (and more!). Style of decoration also varies, with some containing complex geometric patterns or those with simple horizontal or oblique lines (Figure 3).

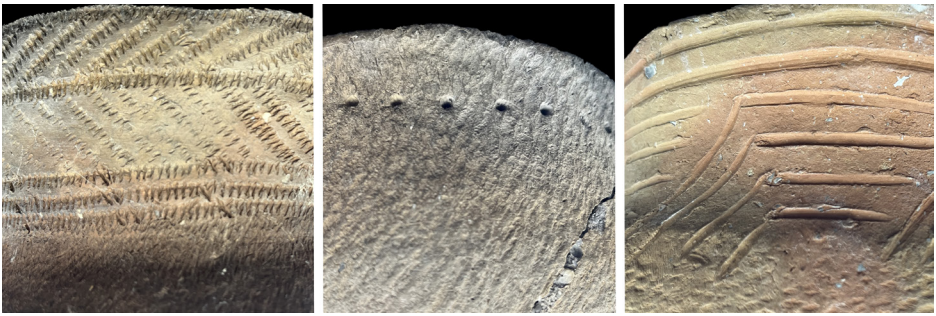


Figure 3. Variety of decoration types on reproduction vessels, from left to right; cord-wrapped dowel, punctated, and incised.

Figure 2. Cord-marked (left) and fabric-impressed (left) surface treatments from reproduction vessels.

The Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab's Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland website, first unveiled in 2002, is a tool used by professional archaeologists as well as the general public to identify artifacts across many different time periods, including a section called "Prehistoric Ceramics in Maryland." For the unacquainted, there are summaries of different pre-Contact periods that archaeologists use and simple guides for sherd identification. The presence of ceramics marks what is called the Woodland period, which is further broken down into the Early (1250 BC – 50 AD), Middle (50 – 950 AD), or Late (950 – 1600 AD) periods. A table for sherd identification breaks down the types present by physiographic region as well, such as the Western Shore Coastal Plain, Eastern Shore Coastal Plain, Piedmont, and Western Maryland.

Users can access more detailed descriptions of ceramic types using links within the table or browse by period. Individual ceramic description pages begin with any defining attributes that stand out from other ceramic types, chronology (when it dates to), distribution (where it is found), paste/temper, surface treatment, decoration, morphology (how it is constructed and vessel shape), references to how it was classified, and any radiocarbon dates that support the chronology. Galleries of artifact photographs for each type give users the ability to visually compare examples of the type against ceramics they might be trying to identify themselves.

A redesign of the Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland page is currently underway and is scheduled to be completed in 2025 (Figure 4). Enhancements will include new photographs, a searchable database, and attribute tags for photos. Users will be able to browse examples of types by temper, decoration, surface treatment, or other attributes. The redesign will also feature new information for each type, including recent research with updated chronologies and distributions.

Figure 4. Screenshot of the pending Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland redesign.

02

Innovation & Connection

The Story of Shell – Tempered Pottery in the Chesapeake

Martin Gallivan and Taylor Callaway, William & Mary

Around 2,000 years ago, Native communities in the Chesapeake region began producing a distinctive type of pottery tempered with crushed oyster shell. Today, archaeologists refer to these vessels as Mockley pottery. Characterized by cord- or net-impressed designs, they are found at archaeological sites from the mouth of the Chesapeake to the Delaware Bay. Archaeologists have long been interested in the historical developments that fueled the popularity of this pottery style across such a large region. New research has suggested a story of innovation, community ties, and shifting settlement patterns along the region's coastal and estuarine waterways.

Although archaeologists once thought the ware was invented and rapidly adopted around AD 200, recent efforts to radiocarbon date early Mockley pottery indicate that the tradition has much deeper roots, particularly in the southern Chesapeake Bay. New interpretations of radiocarbon dates suggest that communities in the southern Chesapeake were already experimenting with shell tempering more than a thousand years before the height of Mockley production.

Our ongoing research draws on radiocarbon dates generated by archaeologists working across the region, upon whose chronological evidence and interpretive ideas we rely to refine our understanding of this long history. The project includes significant contributions from numerous archaeologists, including Dan Griffith, William & Mary undergraduate researcher Brooke Spencer, and the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Lab.

How Archaeologists Are Refining the Chronology and Why it Matters

To better understand when and how Mockley pottery spread, we have recently turned to Bayesian modeling, a statistical approach that allows us to refine radiocarbon chronologies with greater precision. Traditional radiocarbon dating provides a broad range of possible dates, often spanning several centuries, making it difficult to pinpoint when an event occurred.

Bayesian modeling improves this by combining multiple dates from the same tradition to produce a more refined timeline. By applying this statistical approach, we can identify shifts in pottery production and use, helping us reconstruct how Native communities interacted and shared knowledge over time. In this case, we have compiled dozens of radiocarbon dates from Mockley ceramics recovered across the Middle Atlantic and applied Bayesian analysis to model the localized adoption of shell-tempered pottery among Native societies over time.

This method revealed something surprising: instead of appearing suddenly in the archaeological record around AD 200, as once thought, experimental Mockley-like pottery was likely first invented in the southern Chesapeake as early as 1350 BC. Knowledge of shell-tempering techniques was shared between Native societies in an apparently northward pattern. The earliest dates come from sites in the lower (i.e. southern) Chesapeake, with later dates appearing progressively northward into Maryland and Delaware. The model suggests a slow process of innovation and regional exchange. This pattern challenges older theories that suggested the rise in Mockley's popularity was caused by rapid social changes, like large-scale migrations. Instead, local networks of exchange, intermarriage, and seasonal gatherings were likely key drivers in the spread of shell tempering among communities connected through waterscapes.

The Spread of Shell-Tempered Pottery and What it Signals

Why use shell temper? Pottery in the Middle Atlantic region was often tempered with sand or small rocks before shell-tempering appeared. Crushed shells made pottery stronger and more resistant to breaking, particularly when used for cooking. However, firing shell-tempered pottery is challenging—it requires precise temperature control, as overheating could cause the shell to degrade, weakening the pot. Despite these challenges, Mockley pottery spread widely across the coastal Middle Atlantic, suggesting it was about more than just technology, it was also about a shared tradition of pottery production and the social connections it engendered.

As Mockley pottery became the dominant style from the Chesapeake to the Delaware Bay, Native communities began to establish more permanent settlements along rivers and estuarine bays. These waterside villages were home to forager-fishers who developed sophisticated methods for harvesting oysters, fish, and other estuarine resources well before the introduction of agriculture. Pottery and the foodways related to its use played a central role in bringing these communities together. Some shell-tempered vessels, especially those with elaborate geometric decorations, are associated with large gathering sites and feasting events. Known as Abbott Zoned Incised pottery, these decorated vessels often appear at places with evidence of ceremonial gatherings, suggesting they were used in celebrations and communal feasts.

Connections Across the Chesapeake

The spread of shell-tempered pottery also reflects the growing interconnectedness of Algonquian-speaking communities who lived in the coastal region. As settlements became more established along waterways, people maintained extensive social networks. Canoe travel allowed for frequent contact along rivers and across the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, helping explain how pottery styles and techniques spread so widely. These coastal communities persisted over generations, and their descendants remain in the region today, maintaining deep connections to their homelands.

Ultimately, the story of Mockley pottery is one of innovation and connection. While archaeologists once envisioned migrations bringing new technologies into the region, we now see a different picture: one of communities sharing knowledge across generations, shaping traditions that would eventually span the coastal Middle Atlantic.

This research is ongoing, with archaeologists working to fill in gaps, particularly along Maryland's Eastern Shore, an important pathway for the spread of shell-tempered pottery. The history of shell-tempered pottery in the region reminds us that innovation rarely happens in isolation—it flourishes through human connections, shared experiences, and the spread of traditions that link people across time and space.

03

American Indian Pottery on the Delmarva Peninsula – **A Key to the Past**

Daniel R. Griffith, Archaeological Society of Delaware, Inc

The study of pottery is one avenue to the history and culture of American Indian people. Since archaeologists in the Middle Atlantic first turned to pottery to help answer questions about the age of an archaeological site and its cultural affiliations, the approaches to such analysis have been continuously refined. Examining attributes of pottery like vessel form, decoration, exterior surface treatment or temper, archaeologists used stratigraphy and seriation, forms of relative dating, to place their pottery types in a chronological framework. Unfortunately for much of the Middle Atlantic Coastal Plain, opportunities to develop chronological frameworks through stratified sites are rare and such frameworks lagged other areas of the country.

Beginning in the 1950's however, archaeologists had a new tool, radiocarbon dating. This new tool allowed archaeologists to derive an absolute date on carbon bearing materials associated with archaeologically defined pottery types. The initial radiocarbon dates on the early, provisional pottery types led to a refinement of the typology itself. Using the new dating technique, archaeologists focused on pottery attributes that were most sensitive to changes through time. As it turned out, combining the attributes of exterior surface treatment and temper, which define different technological styles, was the most reliable combination of attributes to define a temporally sensitive type (Figure 1 on Next Page).

Accordingly, the pottery types you see in use today, like those listed in the Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland web page, are temporal types based on slightly different technological styles of manufacture. Combining refined typologies and chronology produces a temporal sequence of types that allows archaeologists to place sites in time where the types are found, while the range of different types throughout the region helps define areas of cultural interactions. More than addressing research questions about chronology, the variations in technological and symbolic styles lead to questions of social interactions, cultural dynamics, and identity.

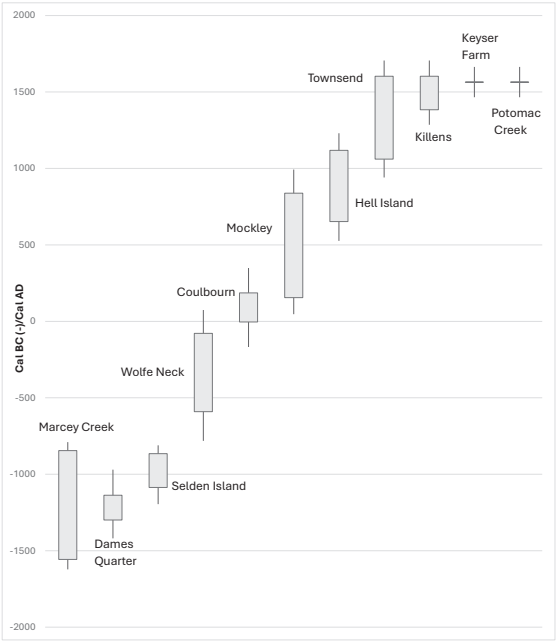


Figure 1. Griffith, Daniel R. 2012 – Delaware American Indian Ceramics: Radiocarbon Dates, in The Gray Farm Site: Phase II and Phase III Excavations on the Murderkill River (Sites 7K-F-11 and 7K-F-169); SR 1 Frederica North Grade Separated Intersection, Kent County, Delaware. Delaware Department of Transportation Archaeology Series, Dover, Delaware.

For most of Middle Atlantic prehistory, there is little but informative variation in overall technological style of pottery manufacture. However, during the Late Woodland period (1000 CE – 1600CE) decoration on the exterior of pottery first became widespread. The introduction of decorative techniques like incising or cord impression led to an elaboration of decorative motifs known to archaeologists as symbolic style. During these six hundred years, trends in symbolic style show changes through time and space. One example is Townsend pottery, a shell tempered, fabric impressed or plain exterior surfaces technological style that is widespread on the Middle Atlantic Coastal Plain from the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays south to the northern inland bays of North Carolina. Radiocarbon dating on separate symbolic styles shows a trend from complex to simple decorative motifs (Figure 2). The changes in symbolic style seem to suggest that there was a move from expressing differences between people to styles that suggest unity or oneness.

Another interesting pattern observed in the data is the distribution of Accokeek and Wolfe Neck pottery on the Delmarva Peninsula. Radiocarbon dating shows that these ceramic types are contemporary centered around 500 BCE. Analysis of several sites on the upper Eastern Shore of Maryland surveyed by Steve Wilke in the 1970's shows dense concentrations of Accokeek pottery with very few sherds of Wolfe Neck pottery present, while Wolfe Neck pottery bearing sites on the Delaware coast show no Accokeek pottery. These different technological styles clearly had different social histories in areas on the Delmarva Peninsula only sixty miles apart,

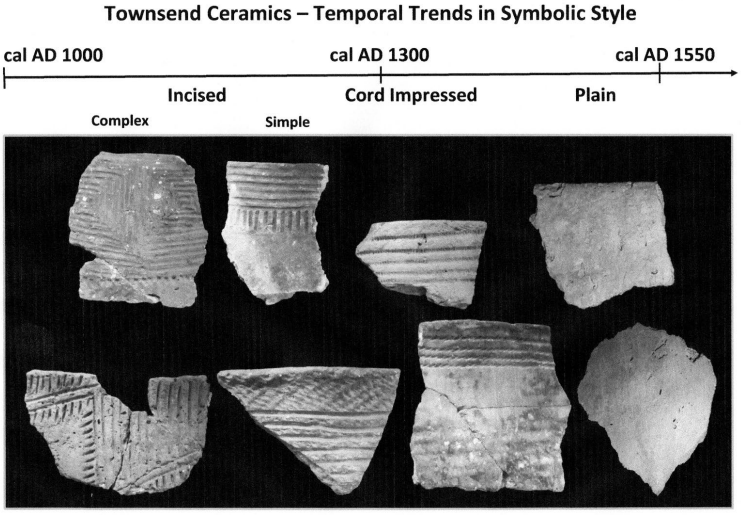


Figure 2. Griffith, Daniel R.
2018 – *The Contributions and Practice of Culture History in the Middle Atlantic Region*, in Middle Atlantic Prehistory: Foundations and Practice, pgs. 207-218, Rowman and Littlefield.

suggesting that differences in watersheds at this scale were social boundaries of some type at that time.

Maryland colonial records of the 17th century clearly identify Indian communities within the boundaries of the Maryland colony as well as recognizing numerous Indian Nations beyond the colony that interacted with each other. While analyzing pottery from sites on the upper Eastern Shore it was a surprise, to me at least, to identify a large quantity of Minguannan ceramics at two sites. Minguannan pottery, yet to be radiocarbon dated, is a Late Woodland type found predominantly in southeast Pennsylvania and northern Delaware and is typically associated with historically recognized Delaware Indian communities. What does the concentration of Minguannan pottery on the upper Eastern Shore mean? Why are the historic Delaware residing in towns away from the core of their territory? Such questions lead to exploring colonial accounts of interactions between the Delaware, Susquehannocks/Minquas and the trade in furs and European goods in the 17th century. How were the Delaware effected by this dynamic and did conflicts bring the makers and consumers of Minguannan pottery to this area of Maryland?

There are many ways to examine pottery in archaeological research, yet to examine questions about time and cultures in space today's types serve quite well while begging for further refinement.

DIAGNOSTIC ARTIFACTS IN Maryland

MARYLAND ARCHEOLOGY MONTH 2025 - INDIGENOUS CERAMICS

Prehistoric Ceramics

Ottery Ware

Defining Attributes

Ottery Ware is a relatively late pottery type characterized by uneven temper and is often not impressed.

Morphology

Ottery Ware includes a motley assemblage of specialized vessel types used to store a wide range of archeology and architectural history.

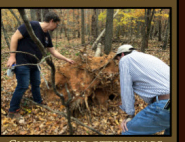
Chronology

Ottery Ware first appeared in 1998, and has been immensely popular ever since.

Distribution

Ottery Ware was first identified in Silver Spring, Maryland but has been documented throughout the Mid-Atlantic, New England, and the Midwestern United States.

CLICK FOR VESSEL TYPES



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04

CHAPEL BRANCH WEST

At the Center of it All

Julie Markin, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Archaeology, Washington College

The Chapel Branch West Site (18CA270) sits on a terrace overlooking the confluence of the Choptank River and Chapel Branch, north of Denton in Caroline County. The site was occupied by Indigenous peoples from the Early (1250 BC – AD 50) through Late (AD 950 – 1600) Woodland periods. During the 2023 Tyler Bastian Field Session in Maryland Archeology, volunteers excavated 19 2x2 meter units and recovered artifacts that expand our understanding of interaction and placemaking on the Eastern Shore.

While the ceramic assemblage contains wares that are typical for each Woodland period, the co-occurrence of geographically, and perhaps culturally, distant wares throughout all periods is atypical (Figure 1).

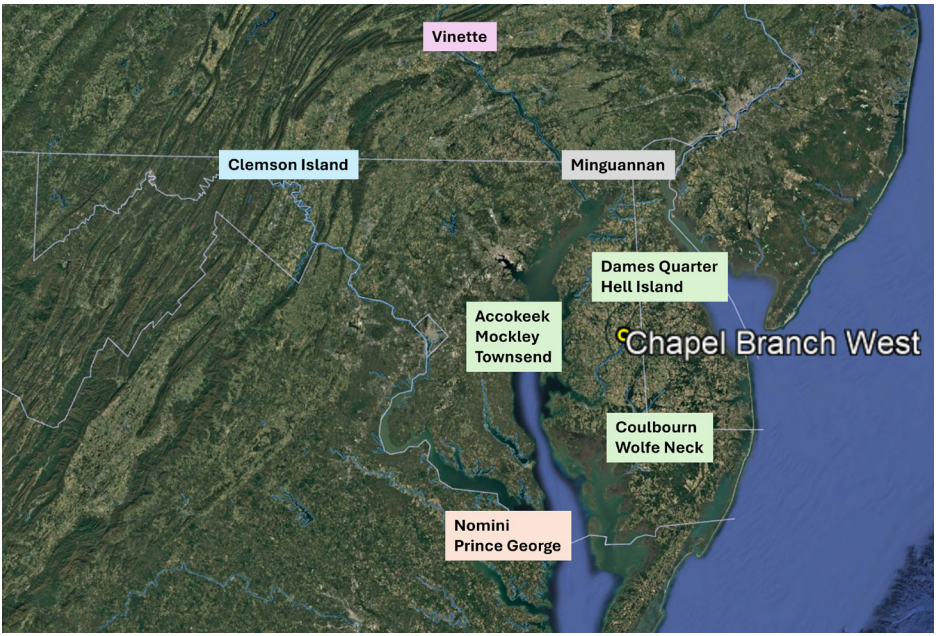

Figure 1. Location of Chapel Branch West (18CA270) on Maryland's Eastern Shore and geographic distribution of ceramic types recovered during excavations.

Early Woodland wares include Wolfe Neck, Coulbourn, Accokeek, and Dames Quarter common across the Delmarva Peninsula, as well as Vinette associated with Western Shore and New England contexts. The Middle Woodland period is represented primarily by Mockley wares. During the Late Woodland occupation, typical Delmarva Townsend and Hell Island wares are co-mingled with Minguannan pottery associated with northern Maryland-southern Pennsylvania contexts.

Adding to the curious nature of Chapel Branch West was the recovery of a type of pottery that was not readily identified in the field. Based on its quartz temper and cord-marked exterior surface treatment (Figure 2), the pottery was tentatively identified as Middle Woodland Nomini (AD 700 – 900). Cord- or fabric-impressed Nomini wares are common in Virginia's Northern Neck region. Many of the sherds found at Chapel Branch West exhibited hand-drilled holes below the lip, raising the possibility that this ware could be related to another northern Virginia ware. Prince George (500 BC – AD 300) wares are tempered with chert or quartz pebble and are primarily cord- or net-marked. Although infrequent, Prince George pottery may be decorated with evenly spaced punctations below the rim. The presence of either ware on Maryland's Eastern Shore would be somewhat unusual.

Figure 2. Unusual cord-marked quartz-tempered ware recovered from Chapel Branch West.

As the ceramic assemblage was processed in the lab, a third ceramic type, Clemson Island, arose as a strong contender. Clemson Island (AD 800 – 1400) pottery is tempered with crushed rock (quartz, chert, or gneiss) and exhibits a cord-marked or fabric marked surface treatment. A distinctive feature of Clemson Island wares is the presence of a row of punctations or small depressions on the upper rim of vessel exteriors. Punctations were made with a blunted round dowel and may occur on the interior or exterior of the vessel. Punctations generally create a raised node on the opposite side of the impression. Deviating from this norm, Clemson Island sherds from the Chapel Branch West site exhibit holes that are drilled through the vessel wall (Figure 3), presumably as a design element. Clemson Island wares are found primarily in western Maryland's Ridge and Valley province, mirroring the distribution of nearly identical contemporaneous Owasco pottery in northern Pennsylvania and New York state. In these regions, Clemson Island is considered as transitional Late Woodland, spanning the late Middle Woodland and early Late Woodland periods, which may be the appropriate designation at the Chapel Branch West site, as well.

Figure 3. Clemson Island fabric impressed pottery. As the sherd is broken across the drilled hole, it is likely the hole was the cause, as a weak spot, of the break rather than part of a process to mend the broken fragments.

The regular reuse the Chapel Branch West site may indicate that the location was becoming a "persistent place" that held particular meaning for the inhabitants. The meaning could be mundane – location and natural resources – or sublime, in terms of the activities that occurred or the groups who came together, or a combination of both. The co-occurrence of pottery styles that span the entire Woodland period and that represent distant areas suggests intimate connections between the inhabitants and communities across the Bay as well as to the north and east. Or it may push us to rethink the way we define these regional ceramic types and encourage us to look at stylistic attributes on smaller scales. As no structures have been found to date, Chapel Branch West's persistence may reflect its nature as a borderland where people, objects, and ideas freely moved, were exchanged, and were adopted. The complex ceramic assemblage from the Chapel Branch West site opens the door to research that can contribute substantially to our understanding of the fluid social landscape and complex economic organization of the Eastern Shore prior to European arrival.

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05

Late Woodland Keyser Ceramics

Robert Wall, Towson University

Native ceramics in Maryland provide archaeologists with a variety of details on the cultures that made them and, because of their tendency to preserve well in archaeological contexts, much information can be drawn from their recovery when other important perishable evidence has faded away. Recoverable information includes the age of the culture who made the ceramics as well as the technology employed to manufacture them. Ceramics are also vehicles for other archaeological evidence that assist in the interpretation of the past. For example, residues such as protein, pollen, and carbon that adhere to ceramic surfaces can provide many important details about the environment and the diet of the cultures who produced them.

This brief summary describes a particular ceramic type found on archaeological sites in Maryland. Shell-tempered ceramics of the upper Potomac and Shenandoah River valleys traditionally referred to as Keyser Cordmarked ceramics, mark the last phase of the Late Woodland period in central to western Maryland prior to European contact. These ceramics were made by horticulturalists that cultivated maize, beans, squash, sunflowers, and other domesticated plants in gardens associated with small village settlements.

Keyser ceramics, which are thin (ca. 6-7mm) but durable, provide archaeologists with a time frame as well as a region or territory where "Keyser" people lived in palisaded villages. The villages consisted of a ring of circular houses within a surrounding stockade or palisade that on some sites measures more than 100 meters in diameter. As with all ceramic assemblages there is a beginning date and an end date for Keyser, in this case circa AD 1400-1575 for most sites.

Keyser ceramics are tempered with crushed freshwater mussel shell and typically exhibit a prominent cord-wrapped stick impressed lip, sometimes referred to as a "pie crust or scalloped" pattern (Figure 1). Nodes, which are small, flat to rounded pieces of clay, are often attached to the area just below the lip or rim of the vessel and vary in shape and design. Some nodes are simply plain, others are marked with cord-wrapped stick impressions or perforated from the sides.

The bodies of Keyser ceramic vessels are cordmarked with a cord-wrapped paddle, predominantly in a vertical pattern, and most often with final s-twist cordage The final cordage twist means that the twisted cord used to make impressions on the clay in groove-like lines, before firing, is oriented in an s-shaped pattern (slanting down to the right), leaving a negative z-shaped impression on the ceramic's surface. The interiors of Keyser vessels are often blackened and smooth making the finely crushed shell temper appear as a sparkling white pattern. Mending holes used to attach broken vessels are commonly found in body sherd collections, more so than most other ceramic types in the region.

What appears to be early Keyser ceramics, from sites such as Cresaptown in western Maryland, exhibit plain surfaces on thick vessels and are simply decorated with incising across the lips of vessels (Figure 2). The bodies of such vessels are relatively thick and are typically cordmarked but some vessels are plain. It is possible that Keyser ceramics originated from earlier ceramic series (e.g., Page and Shepard) whose primary attributes include higher percentages of crushed rock temper (e.g., limestone, chert, and quartz); have thick, brittle vessel walls; and exhibit cord-marked or plain surfaces on the exterior of the vessel. Some of the same characteristics found on Keyser ceramics, such as nodes and folded over lips, are also found on earlier Page ceramics. However, the dominant features of Keyser ceramics, such as the scalloped pattern and oblique punctates (stamped in the clay with a dowel), are relatively unique.

Figure 1. Keyser ceramics with typical attributes.

Figure 2. Early Keyser ceramics from the Cresaptown site (18AG119)

An alternative hypothesis regarding the origins of Keyser peoples is that they represent an intrusive population in the Potomac and Shenandoah valleys. This means that the Keyser ceramic tradition came with the tribal group that migrated into the region, ca. AD 1400. Where they came from is the controversial question. Similarities in Keyser ceramics to Monongahela groups to the west and north, in Pennsylvania, suggests some relationship to Keyser. However, the ultimate origin of the Keyser peoples remains unclear.

Keyser ceramics are found on many sites from the Middle to upper Potomac Valley and in the Shenandoah Valley. An isolated collection of Keyser ceramics from the Frederica site in Delaware suggests contact with the Potomac Valley Keyser groups but this represents an anomaly in the Chesapeake region. The Hughes site is one of the more easterly manifestations of Keyser in the Potomac Valley with Barton and Cresaptown in the North Branch Valley of the Potomac lying on the western fringe. Keyser ceramics were originally defined as shell-tempered Late Woodland wares recovered from excavations in the 1940s on the Keyser Farm site in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The same site also produced Page ceramics, which precede Keyser in the region, and Potomac Creek, which post-date Keyser.

06

Finding a Frontier Among the Threads

John Henshaw, William & Mary

Indigenous ceramics tell an interesting story of the last few thousand years of North American history prior to the arrival of Europeans on the continent. From the beginning of the discipline, archaeologists have used the pottery of the past to understand who people were and their daily activities. From the food they ate, their belief systems, to the materials to which they had access, ceramics can reveal a lot about Native American life.

One aspect of Indigenous ceramics that researchers have studied for decades focuses the impressions made on the surface of vessels by cord-wrapped paddles and dowels. Indigenous craftspeople produced twisted cords from plant or animal fibers, which were then wrapped around some kind of implement and used to create decoration on the exterior of pottery. This decoration technique was commonly used by people throughout the Potomac River drainage in Maryland and Virginia. During the Late Woodland period (AD 900 – 1600), many of the common types of pottery found by archaeologists were decorated in this way. While the cords themselves have long since decomposed, the impressions left on ceramics endure.

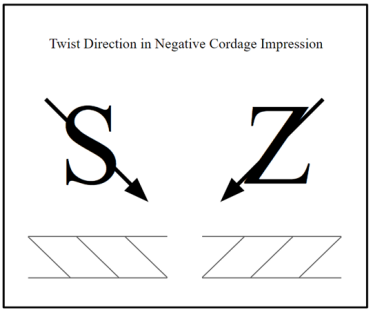

Figure 1. The negative impressions of cordage twist direction.

Cordage impressions are incredibly useful for archaeologists because they represent a very durable expression of how people were connected in the past. It has the added benefit of only existing in two variations: either twisted clockwise, known as s-twist, or counter-clockwise, known as z-twist (Figure 1). In much the same way that parents teach their children a particular method for tying their shoes, which then gets passed along to subsequent generations, cordage is taught to apprentice potters and passed down through generations. Within a particular culture, most people will produce cordage twisted in the same direction and that practice will persist through time within the members of the culture. Given this consistency, cordage can then be used to see interaction in the past.

Around the year AD 1400, a group of people migrated into the Potomac River drainage and settled villages near local communities. This new group of people, known to archaeologists as the Keyser complex, also decorated their pottery with cordage impressions, but tempered their ceramics with freshwater mussel shell and they twisted their cordage in the opposite direction. However, by studying the cordage twist direction from ceramics at a number of sites throughout the Potomac drainage myself and several colleagues have identified an unusual pattern. Many sites associated with Keyser show mixed distributions of twist direction, sometimes with a near even split. This is atypical, considering that most types of pottery heavily favor one direction over the other. The unusual pattern occurs at many Keyser villages, as well as some contemporary non-Keyser villages. The reasons for this anomaly are intriguing and point to very complicated interactions.

Figure 2. Keyser ceramics

This ceramic study revealed that communities along the Potomac River were building important relationships between different cultures. To build alliances and enduring relationships, people were choosing to marry into communities of the other culture, moving into the new village and adopting the practices of their new home. The presence of these people is evident in the mixed twist directions. While these potters began to decorate and construct their pottery according to the traditions of their new community of potters, they continued to twist cords in the same direction due to muscle memory. These marriages connected the two towns and allowed for trade and other interactions to happen. Instead of fighting or isolating from one another, which can often happen when cultures meet during uncertain times, ceramics show that these communities chose a more sustainable path forward when met with larger populations and the arrival of new settlements nearby.

The Potomac River between AD 1400 – 1600 became an eventful frontier. Ceramics can reveal a lot about what people did and were thinking during those centuries. Since ceramics can show patterns of both change and continuity, archaeologists can discover a lot about how people chose to interact with one another in the past through studying ancient pottery. In the case of the Potomac River, thousands of sherds of pottery reveal the threads that wove together a variety of cultures during a time of change and new circumstances.

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07

Keeping My Temper Under Control

Lynne Bulhack, Ceramist, Experimental Archeologist, ASM Native American Liaison

In the context of Indigenous ceramics, temper is a substance added to clay that modifies its properties when wet or dry as well as during and after firing and in use. A variety of materials may be added to clay when preparing to make pottery; organic materials of plant or animal origin, mineral tempers in the form of crushed rock and sand, as well as material of human activity in the form of crushed pot sherds (referred to as grog). Archeological literature suggests the properties these materials modify include: 1) reducing shrinkage in drying and firing, 2) lowering the vitrification temperature of the paste, 3) increasing fired strength, and 4) increasing or decreasing plasticity. Through ceramic experimentation, I have found that only mixing low plasticity clay with a more plastic clay will increase plasticity of the paste and adding fine particles of soapstone will dramatically decrease plasticity. In an effort to improve clay plasticity, traditional Japanese potters employed a series of settling ponds making use of sedimentation to separate fine material from coarse material by suspension in water. In 28 years of teaching ceramics, I have had only one student successfully use sedimentation to slightly improve the plasticity of "wild" clay.

Temper in archeologically recovered sherds and pots is a primary attribute in defining an Indigenous ceramic type along with surface treatment, morphology, and decoration. A typology often becomes a main unit of analysis in developing chronologies, geographic distributions, indicators of technological change, trade activity, and even migration of peoples. It is important to recognize that a sherd or a group of sherds may not be representative of a whole pot. This brief essay will not address the questions raised by using typed sherds to tell these stories. I will focus on hands in the mud empirical experience; experimental archeology.

Stallings Island plant fiber-tempered pottery is the oldest known pottery in North America dating to around 2,500 BC. I have not experimented with plant-fiber temper. Crushing rock, shell and grog with my favorite hammer-stone results in large, medium, and small chunks of rock and shell as well as powder (Figure 1).

I generally keep pounding until I achieve what I determine is the best particle size for the shape, size, and function of the intended pot. I often wonder if Indigenous folks sieved their crushed material when adding temper to the clay? (Figure 2)

Figure 1. Crushed oyster shell with a hammer-stone.

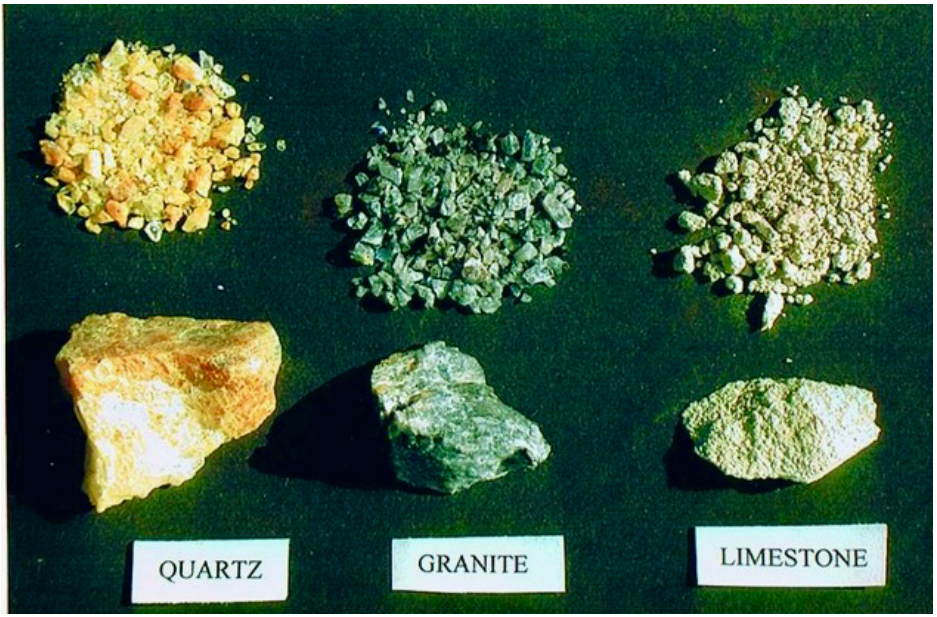

Figure 2. Experimentally Crushed Tempers.

The majority of Indigenous pots were intended for daily use in storage, food preparation, serving, and the processing of animal and plant material. Quartz and grog crush easily. Hardness of the limestone and steatite or soapstone that I found was highly variable. I did not do controlled heating experiments to determine what temperatures were needed to improve crushability, I simply found softer varieties of limestone and soapstone.

Steatite or soapstone was the least agreeable temper I used because it is primarily composed of the hydrous, magnesium, silicate mineral talc. Crushing soapstone to an acceptable temper size resulted in an abundance of powder. The powder along with the chunks added to the clay paste immediately absorbed a significant amount of water greatly reducing plasticity. Much messing about with water and temper ratios was required to get back to a cooperative, plastic clay paste. Here, I must say that as a maker of pottery, someone who finds clay magical and inspirational, I am appalled at using the word paste to refer to the weathered rock minerals that become clay and when given form and heated to various temperatures above 500 degrees C. once again becomes rock-like. I have had test pots fired below 500 degrees C. return to mud in a spring rain. I do not make pots with clay "paste". I use a clay "body" or clay "matrix".

It is important to keep in mind that "wild" clays are highly variable and the same temper in different clays will behave differently. I have been invited to Williamsburg by my friend and colleague Daniel Abbott, Nanticoke interpreter of Native American life ways, to do some experimental firing of shell tempered pottery using Pamunkey clay. Experiments with small amounts of Pamunkey clay have shown that the low temperatures common in bon-firing will render Pamunkey clay hard enough to ring like a bell when struck with a metal utensil unlike other clays fired to the very same temperature.

Calcium carbonate tempers such as marine shell impose stringent limits on the firing temperature of shell tempered pottery. The calcium carbonate of shell decomposes at temperatures between 650 degrees C. and 898 degrees C. and becomes calcium oxide. Calcium oxide in the fired ceramic takes up atmospheric moisture after firing, causing parts of the vessel to crumble. That is exactly what happened to my first firing of shell tempered pots. A shorter, faster firing where the temperature of the pots did not exceed 750 degrees C. solved the problem with that particular clay and its shell temper. Temperatures and atmosphere within a bonfire vary. What is important to pots in a firing is heat work which is a combination of time and temperature and cannot be accurately measured with a pyrometer. Indigenous potters could read their pots during the important preheating phase of firing, understood their fuel and could read the fire, intimacy with material and process enabled success. Indigenous knowledge is not, was not primitive.

08

Crafting Vessels from Stone –

Ednor Soapstone Quarry

Cassandra Michaud, Senior Archaeologist, Montgomery Parks

Before clay was discovered as a superb and locally available material to shape into pots, Indigenous groups turned to a material called steatite for carving bowls and other artifacts from boulders and outcrops. Also known as soapstone due to its waxy feel, steatite is only found in limited places throughout Maryland. Veins run roughly parallel to the Fall Line, which serves as the division between the Coastal Plain and the Piedmont zones. Soft and easily carved, yet durable and able to retain heat well, groups living in the area 3000-4000 years ago realized that steatite made for excellent cooking vessels. Sculpted into a variety of shapes and sizes, the vessels were placed directly in the fire to heat the contents; other times, steatite fragments were heated and put in the vessels to aid in cooking the meal. The containers also have served as a key component in processing tree nuts, which can require several steps of grinding and soaking the nuts for easy human consumption.

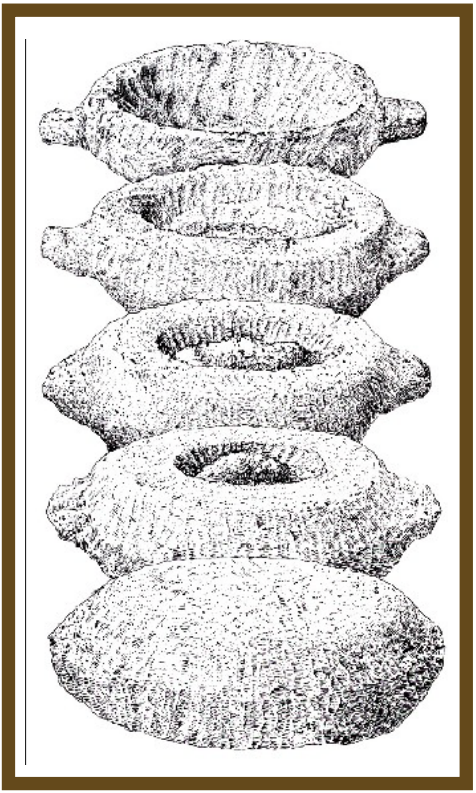

Figure 1. Soapstone bowl reduction process described by William Henry Holmes (Tweedie 2014).

Sitting on a small rise above the surrounding land, the Ednor Soapstone Quarry lies on one of these veins in Montgomery County, part of a chain of steatite quarries connecting across the river into nearby Howard County. Given the absence of the material in other parts of Maryland, steatite was sought after through trade or direct acquisition at a quarry like Ednor. Exactly how that happened is still under research, though fragments of carved steatite – whether bowls or pipes or items of personal adornment – have been recovered archaeologically across a wide swath of the eastern woodlands. Clearly, the effort to acquire steatite was worth it despite the long distances and bulky nature of the artifacts. The importance of steatite as a resource even after clay pottery became more common can be seen in the shapes of the first clay pots created, which mimicked those often found in steatite vessels. The first pots also used ground steatite mixed with the clay as temper, likely to increase the structural stability of the vessels.

Figure 2. Soapstone bowl fragments from the Ednor Site

Originally identified by Smithsonian archaeologist William Henry Holmes in 1897, the Ednor Soapstone Quarry site is now part of the land Montgomery Parks stewards. Future plans for the Ednor site include research into how soapstone quarry locations were chosen, how the vessels were manufactured, and how the vessels were transported, traded, and exchanged through the Middle Atlantic. The park will also provide opportunities for the public to learn about this important inflection point in the County's history.

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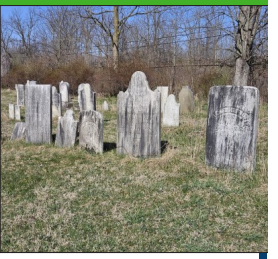

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09

A Look at Indigenous Ceramic Vessels in the Historic St. Mary's City Collections.

Chrissy Perl and Erin Crawford, Historic St. Mary's City

Historic St. Mary's City (HSMC) is a living history museum and National Historic Landmark located in Southern Maryland. St. Mary's City was the first English settlement in what is now Maryland and served as the colonial capital until AD 1695. HSMC strives to represent the history of all the people that once lived across its landscape. This includes 9,000 years of human activity that is represented in the museum's collection of about 6.5 million artifacts and counting.

The collection contains a substantial amount of indigenous materials such as ceramics and lithics. These artifacts attest to the indigenous occupation of this area beginning in the Early Archaic Period (9500- 7000 BCE). Ceramics were introduced to the material record in the Woodland Period (1000 BCE- 1600 CE) and indicate a continual occupation before and after colonial contact. Current ceramic evidence points to major occupations in the Early Woodland (1000 BCE- 50 CE) and the Late Woodland (950- 1600 CE) periods. The following indigenous ceramic vessels represent unique examples of post-use deposition, ware types, and decorative styles in our collections.

Accokeek Ware Vessel

Figure 1. Mending Accokeek Ware sherds from the Leonard Calvert House Site excavations at HSMC.

Accokeek ware is a common example of Early Woodland ceramics which typically consists of a crushed quartz temper and cord-impressed surface treatment. Archaeologists excavating the Leonard Calvert House Site, located in the center of the colonial capital, uncovered 240 sherds of an Accokeek ware vessel in the corner of a single 5'x5' unit. The sherds were closely clustered together and showed direct mends while in situ. These mends were further verified in the lab and appear to be a portion of a singular vessel broken by environmental effects (roots, insects, animals, etc.) post deposition. The concentration of so many mending sherds in one small area suggests that much of the original pot was discarded as one piece before further breakage. Other concentrations of Accokeek ware sherds have been found dispersed across our landscape and may represent multiple Early Woodland settlements or one sustained occupation at what is now HSMC. Examining both broad landscape spatial distributions and highly concentrated deposits can show us the extent to which people utilized the landscape as well as singular disposal events.

Rappahannock Fabric-Impressed Vessel

Figure 2. Examples of Late Woodland Rappahannock

The large quantities of shell-tempered indigenous ceramics in the collection reflect increasing population density and a shift to more sedentary settlement patterns practiced by indigenous peoples in the Late Woodland period. One type of shell tempered ceramic frequently excavated at HSMC is Rappahannock fabric-impressed. In 2014, a Rappahannock vessel was found at a site near the Leonard Calvert House Site and exhibits a well-defined fabric impressed surface treatment. These sherds were found in close proximity to each other and several of them mend together. Others exhibit identical characteristics, indicating they are all originally from the same vessel.

Rappahannock Incised Vessel

Figure 3. Similar Rappahannock Incised sherds with a notable herringbone pattern from the Leonard Calvert House Site.

As ceramic production techniques changed, decoration and motif preferences also shifted and by the Late Woodland incising became the favored form of decoration. An example of this technique is seen in a group of Rappahannock sherds with an incised herringbone motif found in multiple contexts in the current Leonard Calvert House Site excavations. Despite the lack of mends, these sherds have nearly identical fabric and decorative patterns, meaning they are most likely from the same original vessel. While they are concentrated at the Leonard Calvert House Site, they are dispersed across several excavation units. This dispersal is likely the result of later site occupations, including a colonial government building, a temporary fortification, an ordinary, and a 19th-century mansion house. All of these later occupations impacted the complex archaeological stratigraphy we observe today.

These three examples of Native ceramic vessels are a small assemblage of artifacts that provides HSMC archaeologists insight into the lives of the past indigenous communities that lived in southern Maryland. Using a variety of analytical methods, such as crossmending and vessel analysis, these three vessels are a window into how we as archaeologists study ceramics in an effort to understand how people in the past made, decorated, and used essential daily objects. The relationship between artifacts and the archaeological contexts in which they are found also aids our broader understanding of how people in the past utilized the landscapes they inhabited and the resources found there. The indigenous narrative continues to expand as excavations continue across the HSMC landscape.

10

A Burning Question:

What is Preserved in Charred Encrustations on Ceramics?

Zachary Singer, State Terrestrial Archaeologist, Maryland Historical Trust

A primary function of many ceramic vessels is their use as containers for cooking food. Insights into the contents cooked in a pot can be gleaned from analyses of residues preserved on and absorbed within ceramics. Visible residues typically occur as charred encrustations, which are likely the result of a portion of the food being burned during the cooking process. Samples of the charred crust can be removed from the ceramic and then analyzed to learn about the foods that were burned onto the pot during cooking. An example of the types of information that can result from the study of ceramic encrustations is provided by a pilot study of ceramics from the River Farm Site (18AN881).

The River Farm Site is located along the floodplain of the Patuxent River in the Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary of Anne Arundel County. The site was first recorded in 1992. Anne Arundel County's Cultural Resources Division and the Lost Towns Project led large-scale investigations of the site between 2015 and 2017. During these excavations, a buried living surface was encountered, which preserved several archaeological features and large ceramic sherds dating to the Middle and Late Woodland time periods.

In 2018, visible encrustations identified on 2 fabric impressed and oyster shell tempered ceramics identified as Late Woodland Townsend ceramics were chosen for study. The PaleoResearch Institute radiocarbon dated the charred encrustations, extracted pollen, starches, diatoms, and phytoliths from the food crusts, and investigated the organic composition of the residues via Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy.

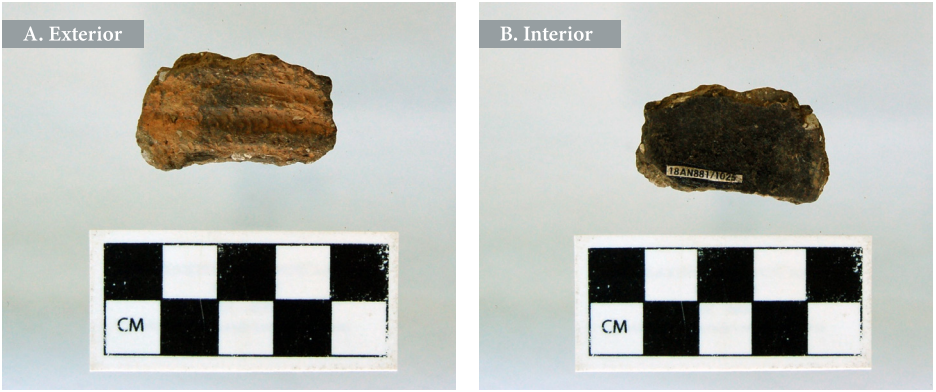

Figure 1. Townsend sherd from Feature 103. A. Exterior. B. Interior with visible charred encrustation.

One ceramic sherd with visible encrustations was recovered from a large trash midden, Feature 103 (Figure 1). Carbonized food crust removed from the sherd yielded an AMS radiocarbon date of 865 ± 24 RCYBP (PRI-5875), which has a two-sigma calibrated age range of AD 1052-1255 or 898-695 cal BP. These dates fit well with other radiometric dates for Late Woodland Townsend wares (ca. A.D. 950 – A.D. 1600).

FTIR analysis of the organic compounds preserved in the charred crust indicated the presence of pectin and cellulose from the cell walls of plants. The encrustation did not yielded pollen nor starch grains. The phytoliths recovered from the food crusts included many palm family phytoliths and a few grass phytoliths. Diatoms and sponge spicules were observed suggesting use of water when cooking.

The analysis of the microbotanical remains and organic residues preserved in the charred encrustation suggests that this pot was used for boiling food that likely included palmetto, which is a member of the palm family. Presently, the northern distribution of palmetto extends to the Carolinas but not into the Mid-Atlantic. The calibrated radiocarbon dates from the encrustation coincide with the Medieval Warm Period, which dates between A.D. 900-1300 and is a time when global temperatures were warmer than at present. Perhaps the presence of palmetto phytoliths preserved in the food crust on this ceramic reflect a more northerly natural range for palmetto during the Medieval Warm Period and that Townsend ceramic using peoples at River Farm collected and boiled palmetto locally. Alternatively, the palmetto may have been acquired via trade or exchange.

The other ceramic sherd with visible encrustations was recovered from a small trench, Feature 200 (Figure 2). Charred food crust removed from the sherd yielded an AMS radiocarbon date of 772 ± 33 RCYBP (PRI-5877), which has a two-sigma calibrated age range of AD 1219-1284 or 732-666 cal BP. These dates overlap with other radiometric dates for Late Woodland Townsend wares (ca. A.D. 950 – A.D. 1600).

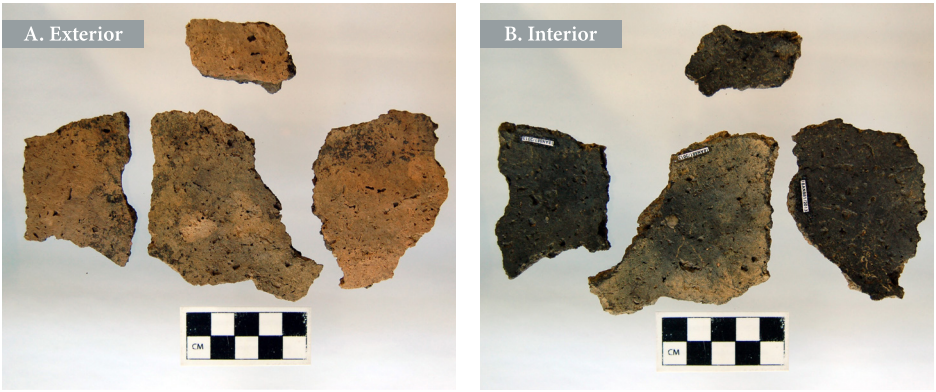

Figure 2. Four Townsend sherds that mend from Feature 200. A. Exterior. B. Interior with visible charred encrustation.

This FTIR signature yielded peaks typical of proteins. No starches were observed. Pollen extracted from this charred food crust indicate the presence of marshelder, ragweed, gum trees, pine, wormwood, grasses, and plants in the goosefoot family, sunflower family, and mustard family. Phytoliths indicative of Zea mays (maize) cobs and glumes were recovered. A single sedge phytolith was found. Diatoms and sponge spicules were also noted.

The combined FTIR, phytolith, and diatom record indicates boiling maize, meat, and possibly sedge roots or tubers in this vessel.

The analysis of charred encrustations from the River Farm Site provided direct evidence of the cooking practices of Late Woodland peoples, revealing both the foods they consumed and the methods they used. Future studies of Woodland period archaeological sites should prioritize the identification of visible encrustations on ceramic sherds during field and laboratory analyses. Sherds with visible encrustations should be minimally handled and not washed to avoid contamination or accidental removal of the crusts. This research highlights the potential of ceramic residue analyses to enhance the study of Woodland period subsistence practices throughout Maryland.

11

A 300-Year-Old Mystery on the Patuxent

Matthew D. McKnight, Chief Archaeologist, Maryland Historical Trust

The Teagues Point site is a mystery. It only came to MHT's attention in September of 2023, after a local resident contacted the State about a colonial site he'd collected from decades before the land was acquired by Maryland DNR. Examination of the artifact collection suggested the site was clearly domestic in nature and dated to the latter half of the 17th century. Seventeenth century dwelling sites are extremely rare. Of the roughly 15,000 archaeological sites in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, only 314 contain 17th-century components. Of those, only 29 are in Charles County, 7 of which have received archaeological attention beyond basic identification-level survey.

In December of 2023, working with the Charles County Archaeologist and a local chapter of the ASM, MHT organized a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey at the site that revealed the presence of multiple anomalies consistent with infilled cellars and subfloor storage pits. We quickly realized that this was a site that would benefit from additional attention. Block excavations at Teagues Point this spring will open up a "window" into domestic life in the mid-late 17th century.

Just who occupied this landscape at that time is yet a mystery. The site may represent the plantation of Captain Richard Smith, a militia leader who may have acquired the land as an investment and settled indentured servants or relatives on the parcel. Smith was one of the few Protestant militia officers to support Lord Baltimore during the Glorious Revolution (1688-1689), and served the colony as Surveyor-General in the 1690s. You are all invited to Charles County to help investigate and hopefully solve the mystery!

The 54th Annual Tyler Bastian Field Session in Maryland Archeology May 23 – June 2 in Charles County

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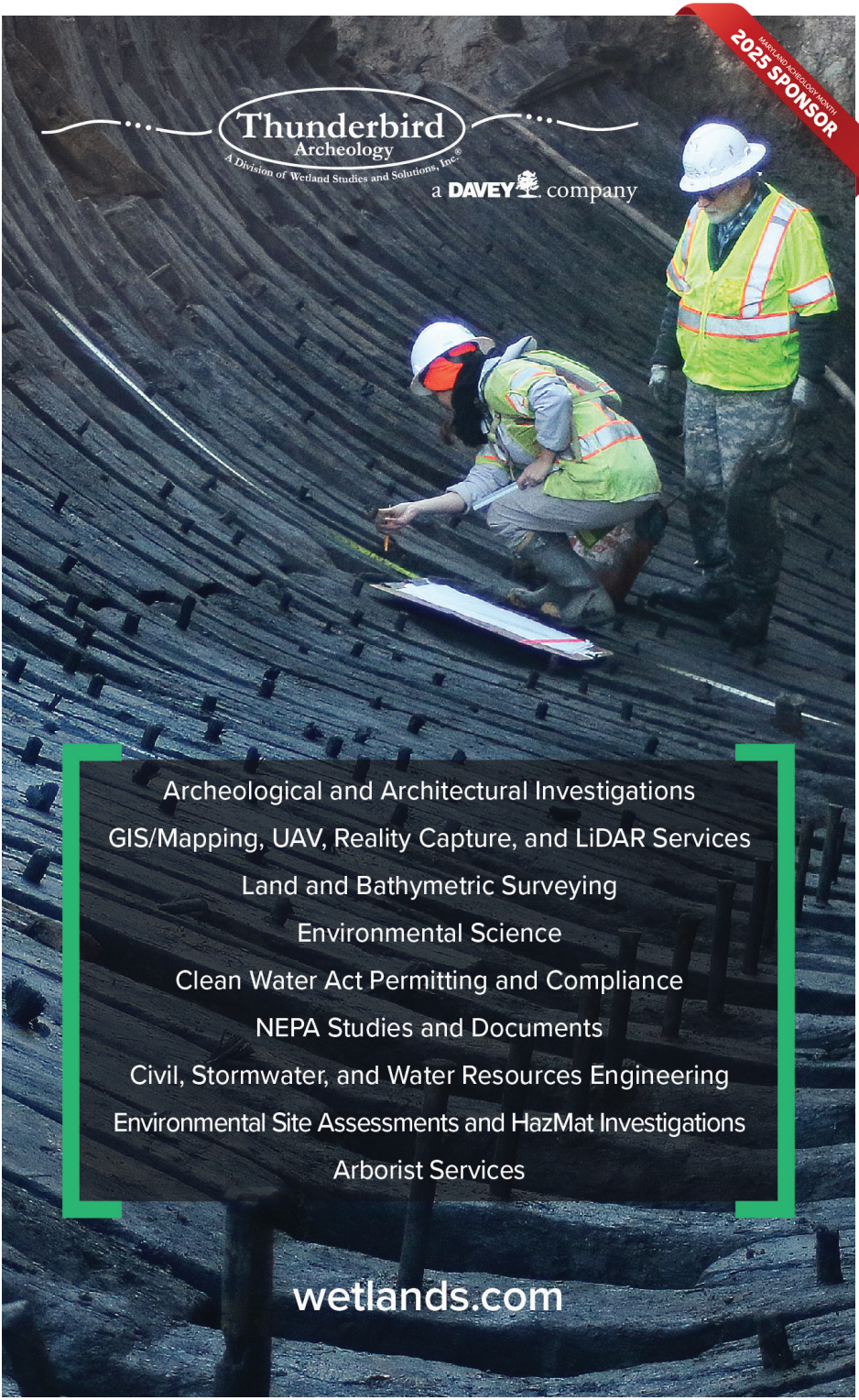
The Maryland Historical Trust (Trust) is a state agency dedicated to preserving and interpreting the legacy of Maryland's past. Through research, conservation, and education, the Trust assists the people of Maryland in understanding and preserving their historical and cultural heritage. The Trust is an agency of the Maryland Department of Planning and serves as Maryland's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). **Visit us at www.mht.maryland.gov**

Montgomery Parks Cultural Resources Stewardship Section is dedicated to researching, interpreting, and preserving the County's cultural heritage for future generations of residents, as well as to encourage public use and enjoyment of Parks historic sites. The Archaeology Program offers a wide variety of opportunities for public participation in archeological pursuits, including regular volunteer days and public events. **Visit ParksCulturalResources.org to learn more about our activities and current projects.**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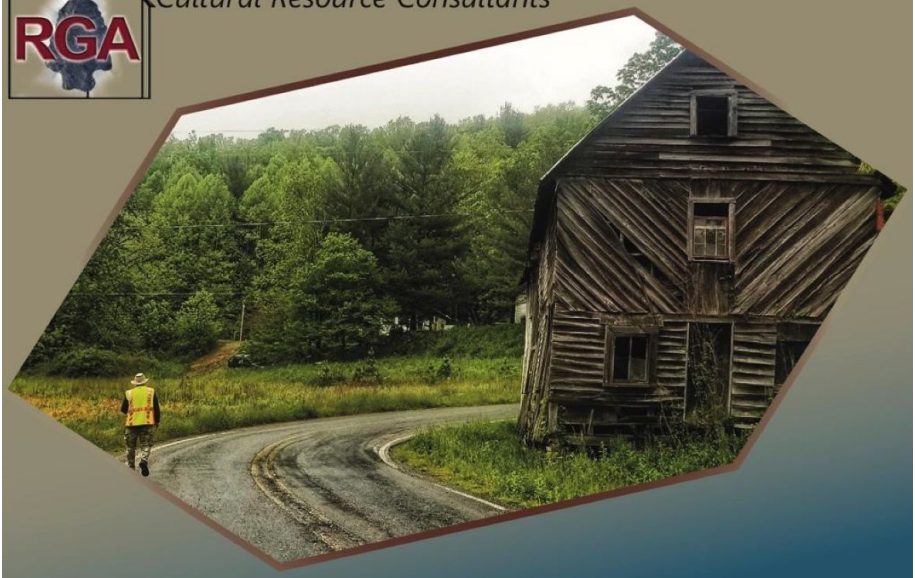

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