AN ELUSIVE DISCOVERY: THE 17TH CENTURY TOWN OF HERRINGTON

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Abstract

Anne Arundel County's *Lost Towns Project* recently completed an extensive archeological survey in an attempt to locate the "lost" 17th century town of Herrington. Perhaps the second oldest settlement in the county, historical research and recovered diagnostic artifacts indicate that Herrington may date as early as the 1650s. The 100-acre survey project centered on an area that is still called Town Point in southern Anne Arundel County, Maryland. The excavation of 600 shovel test pits eventually identified a total of six archeological sites. These included one prehistoric, two 19th century, and three multi-component sites—including two with 17th century occupations. A large concentration of 17th century diagnostics was found in close proximity to active and relict springheads and a probable town-period road.

Introduction

Anne Arundel County's *Lost Towns Project* recently completed a Phase I survey that successfully identified the location of the 17th century town of Herrington. This survey was funded by a generous grant from the Maryland Historical Trust, and was centered on present-day Town Point in southern Anne Arundel County, Maryland. From October 2000 to December 2001, the project's team of archeologists and historians conducted extensive archival research, plat and ArcView GIS reconstructions, a shoreline survey, and the excavation of 600 shovel test pits (STPs) on private properties. Historical research and recovered diagnostic artifacts indicate that the origins of this colonial settlement date to at least the 1660s, if not the 1650s.

The archival component of this project involved collecting all references to Herrington and its occupants that could be found in land, probate, and other governmental records. These primary sources were used to reconstruct the boundaries of plantation properties and lots associated with the town. Documentary records were also used to form a chronology of ownership for various properties related to the town and surrounding area. ArcView GIS analysis assisted in identifying areas of high potential for settlement, as well as establishing the geographic parameters of the STP survey.

Archeological fieldwork began with a shoreline survey led by Maryland Historical Trust underwater archeologists which did not uncover evidence of colonial occupation, but was successful in documenting extensive shoreline erosion and fill episodes. A total of six sites emerged following lengthy shovel testing, including one prehistoric, two 19th century, and three multi-component sites. Seventeenth century diagnostics, including North Italian slipware, Rhenish stoneware, tin-glazed earthenware, and manganese-mottled earthenware (Figure 1) were found on two sites in close proximity to one, possibly two, springheads, and a possible town-period roadway. This paper describes the findings and conclusions of Phase I historical investigations and archeological fieldwork conducted in the search for Herrington.

Location

Herrington is located on the Western Shore of the Coastal Plain physiographic province, in southern Anne Arundel County, Maryland. The town is located in Maryland Archeological Research Unit #7 in the Herring Bay drainage, approximately 20 miles (32 km) south of Annapolis. The topography varies throughout the study area. Overall, it consists of rolling hills with some areas possessing steep slopes exceeding 20 percent and deep, well drained upland areas with relatively little to no slope. Several portions of the project area are designated dredge spoil disposal sites. Mapped soils within the study area are part of the Elkton-Othello-Mattapex soil association, with the most predominant soils including the Matapeake, Mattapex, Marr, and Fallsington series. Matapeake soils are deep, well-drained soils which typically occur in the uplands of

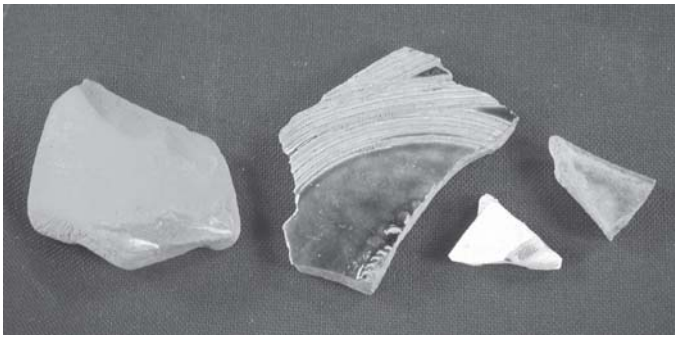

FIGURE 1. North Italian slipware, Rhenish stoneware, tin-glazed earthenware, and manganese-mottled earthenware.

the Coastal Plain, generally along terraces and major waterways (Kirby and Matthews 1978).

The study area is drained by Herring Creek to the north, an unnamed marsh to the south and by Herring Bay to the east. Herring Creek drains two navigable creeks. Tracy's Creek and Rockhold Creek, and an unnavigable creek named Trotts Branch. Today, Trotts Branch is nearly impassible, but may have been much deeper in the colonial period. Southern portions of the study area are drained by a tidal marsh that today is impassible, but which maps indicate were navigable in the eighteenth century (Papenfuse and Coale 1982). In addition to these named tributaries are numerous small springs and intermittent streams in poorly drained areas.

Documentary Evidence

Documentary research shows that Herrington is among the earliest settlements in Anne Arundel County, as well as the Maryland colony. Southern Anne Arundel County was settled by the same group of Protestant dissenters who inhabited the banks of the Severn River in the ca. 1649 Providence settlement. The origins of the town may extend as far back as 1651, when William Parker surveyed and later patented 200 acres on the south side of Herring Creek (MSA 1651:286; MSA 1666:39). Herrington appears as one of two Anne Arundel County towns shown on the Augustine Herrman ca. 1670 map of the Chesapeake, which provides the earliest accurate cartographic depiction of the county (Figure 2).

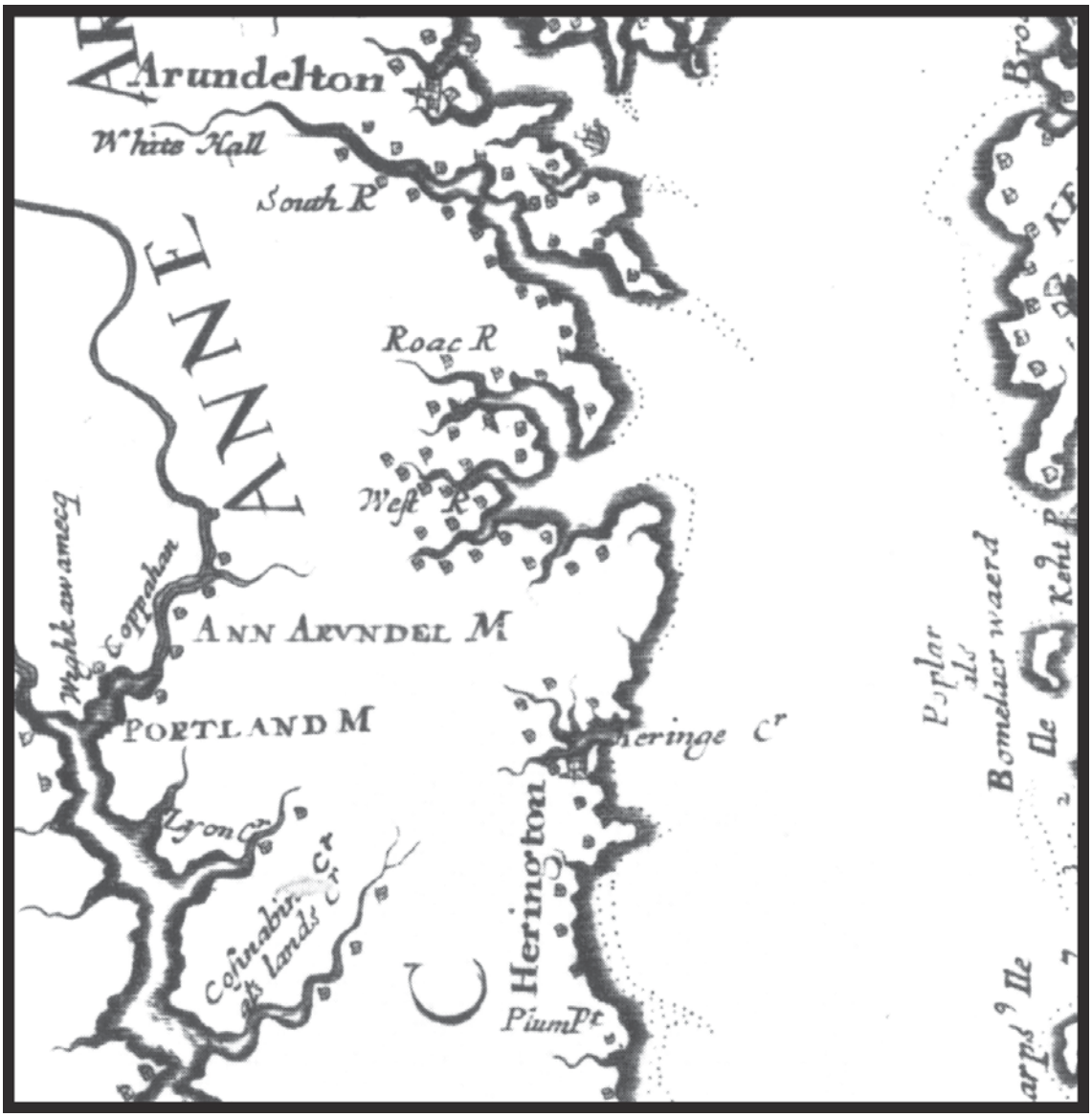

FIGURE 2. Augustine Herrman map of Virginia and Maryland (ca. 1670).

During the 1660s, Herrington functioned in several important public capacities, notably as an official port of entry and the site of a burgess election. Herrington was listed in the 1669 ordinance establishing official locations for the passage of both imported and exported goods, as well as the 1671 declaration requiring the unloading of cargo at specific locations (MSA 1669; MSA 1671). The fact that a 1668 burgess election was held at Herrington a month before passage of the 1669 ordinance makes it possible to speculate whether the town was physically in existence in 1668 or even erroneously left off the towns listed in the original 1668 Proclamation[1] (MSA 1668:325).

Herrington was also among the 31 tobacco port towns legislated by the Maryland General Assembly in 1683 (MSA 1683:609). "An Act for Advancing the Trade of Tobacco" and later supplementary acts were intended to spur the development of official towns and control the taxation of trade though formal instructions for surveying and establishing lots, as well as providing stiffer penalties for non-compliance (Reps 1972:94-96).

Archival research reveals the ownership of five one-acre town lots by John Wilson, Thomas Tench, Nehemiah Birkhead, Francis Holland, and William Cole, with at least three structures mentioned within the documents (MSA 1688:40-41; MSA 1691:163; MSA 1699:43-45; MSA 1701:325-327). By 1705, the five town lots appear to have been resurveyed and consolidated into a property called Evans Purchase, under the control of Christopher Vernon, followed by his two adopted daughters (MSA 1705:246; MSA 1707:Rent Rolls; MSA 1717:456).

The Herring Creek area eventually became a sanctuary for an active Quaker community. Regular meetings took place in the Chesapeake as early as 1661, and a 1673 gathering at a Herring Creek school house predated the construction of a meeting house later in the early 18th century (Kelly 1963:64). Perhaps the most prominent local Quaker was Samuel Chew Sr., a Maryland statesman who owned a large plantation, as well as a lot and house in Herrington of undetermined size (MSA 1677:241). Chew served as a member of the House of Burgesses, Sheriff of Anne Arundel County, Justice, Keeper of the Seal of Maryland, and Surveyor General of Maryland (Papenfuse et al. 1979). Herrington lot owner Nehemiah Birkhead was also part of the Friends contingent (Kelly 1963:65).

Curiously, Herrington was among the official towns specified in the town act of 1706 and supplementary act of 1707, yet no lot conveyances are known to have occurred by this point. Unfortunately, there is no reference in the written record that would explain the gradual demise of this once important tobacco port. Like many other legislatively enacted Chesapeake towns, this early settlement disappeared from the landscape for reasons not yet fully understood.

Methodology and Geographic Background

Lost Towns Project archeologists and historians relied on the initial documentary research of historians Joseph B. Thomas and Anthony Lindauer (1998) to establish the initial boundaries of what would be the "Herrington Study Area." Thomas and Lindauer's preliminary study concluded that an area near Town Point in southern Anne Arundel County, Maryland, was the likely location for the colonial town of Herrington. In October of 2000, the project launched an exhaustive search for primary records related to Herrington at the Maryland State Archives. An analysis of recovered land deeds and creation of plats using Landplat™ software provided confirmation that the 17th century Herrington settlement was situated somewhere within a 200-acre tract of land on the south side of Herring Creek that was initially surveyed by William Parker, the area's earliest recorded landowner (Figure 3).

ArcView GIS™ was used to evaluate areas of high potential for the STP survey, taking into account elevation and topography, proximity to water, and areas of previous disturbance. A "buffer" function was used to detail potential areas of high probability based upon a model established within the Providence settlement (1649), in the Broadneck area of Anne Arundel County. Sites in Providence, a settlement contemporaneous with Herrington, are found on flat areas, less than 1,000 feet from navigable waterways, and usually have a potable water source, either a fresh water springhead or creek, in the immediate vicinity.

Like the Providence model, the 17th century components of Herrington are situated on a high, flat area in proximity to one, possibly two, springheads, and approximately 1,000 feet from a creek providing direct access to the Chesapeake Bay. Other variables described by Lukezic (1994) such as slope and soil drainage were not digitally available, and thus were not used in this predictive model. However, based on the results of shovel testing, the Herrington settlement was probably a smaller, more nucleated settlement, and did not follow the dispersed hamlet settlement pattern of Providence. *Lost Towns Project* research has so far identified eight dispersed Providence sites, amounting to a collection of dwellings and outbuildings on lots 5 to 30 acres in size (Luckenbach 1995).

Herrington's position below a cove leading to the Chesapeake Bay very likely represents a protective strategy for ships. A similar spatial settlement pattern is found at the neighboring and contemporaneous towns of London Town and Calverton, both of which provide water access in a manner that ensured safe harbor for tobacco fleets. The fact that Herrington was one of only three towns in the county assigned a Naval officer to enforce the taxation of trade indicates that it was once an active port for the export of tobacco (MSA 1686:502).

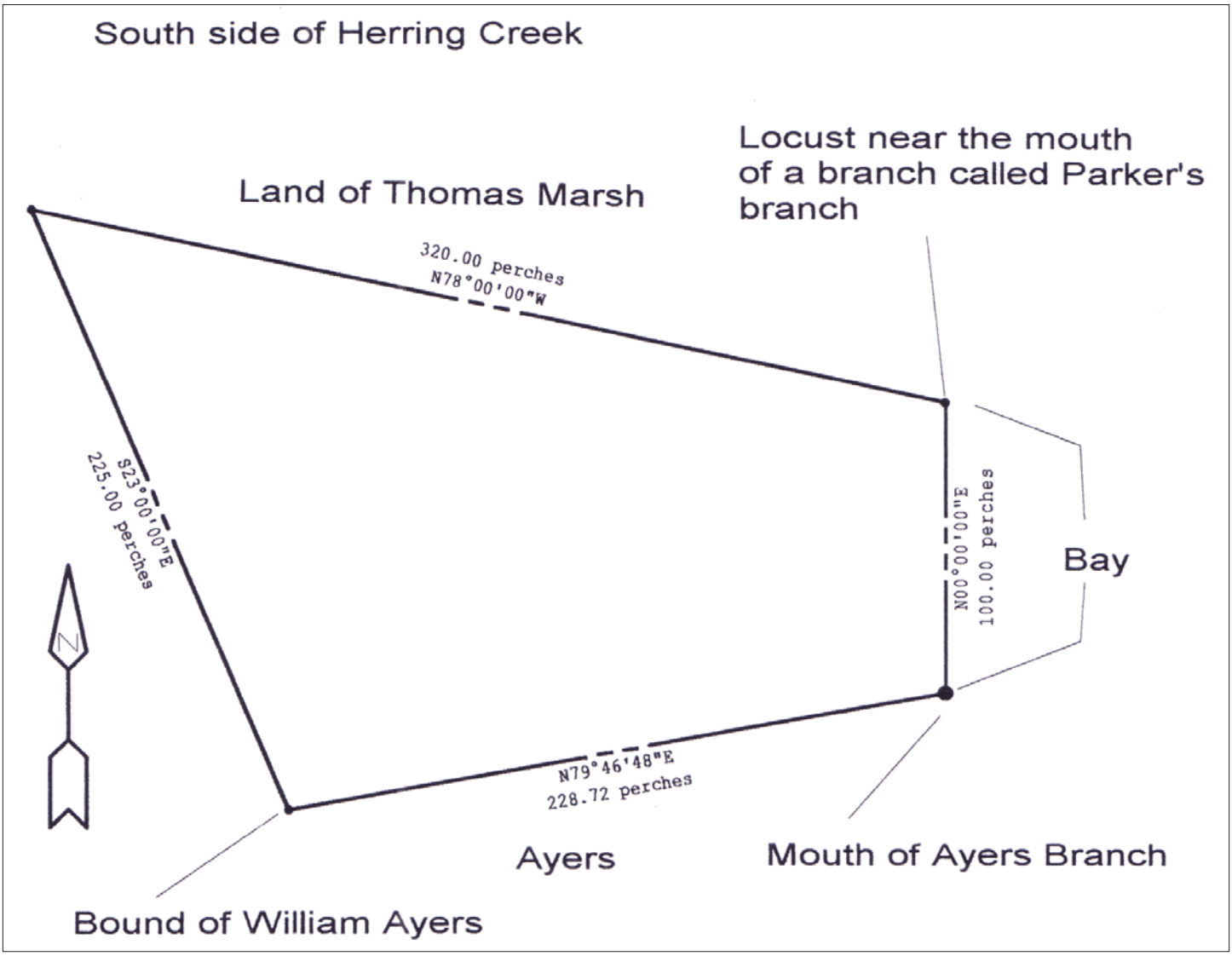

FIGURE 3. Two hundred-acre plat surveyed by William Parker (1651).

At the same time, Herrington's geographic layout and function appear to have had unique characteristics. While the town had direct access to a major roadway, it did not follow the path of London Town, which developed into a vibrant commercial nexus for overland travel between Philadephia and Williamsburg. As Thomas and Lindauer (1998:12) point out, London Town's growth can be linked to an important South River ferry service and short-lived county courthouse—an infrastructure which Herrington lacked.

Archeological Investigations

Shoreline Survey

As stated earlier, a one-day shoreline survey (Figure 4), led by Steve Bilicki of the Maryland Historical Trust, did not discover obvious colonial period components. This effort was limited by water depths, the extensive disturbance of cultural material by construction activities, and the deposit of large quantities of fill and rip-rap along large portions of the shoreline.

Subsequent analysis of this shoreline area indicates that the eastern Town Point shoreline area experienced extensive erosion, while the southern Trotts Branch cove shoreline was subjected to filling activities. A large number of diagnostic 19th and 20th century ceramics were found during a survey of the filled beach area, including bottle glass, whiteware, semi-vitreous ware, a possible fragment of pearlware, and a large handmade brickbat.

Significant shoreline erosion was confirmed by long-time local property owners and watermen Captain Ed Crandell and his son Ned, who recovered two millstones lying 50 feet from the Town Point shoreline during a storm

FIGURE 4. Field crew conducting an informal shoreline survey.

blowout in the mid-20th century. These millstones strongly suggest the presence of a windmill and its ultimate collapse into Herring Bay. Supporting this theory is a turn-of-the-century stereoview photograph of a windmill that once stood at Town Point (Figure 5).

Shovel Testing

Over the course of eight months, *Lost Towns Project* archeologists and volunteers excavated 600 shovel test pits (STPs) on two grid systems. STPs were excavated on a grid 60 feet apart from one another. When promising archeological materials were encountered, additional STPs were excavated at 30-foot intervals. Shovel testing was completed only in areas considered to possess high to moderate potential for recovering artifacts. Areas of extreme slope and poorly drained soils were not tested during this survey.

Archeological Findings

Crandell Farmhouse (18AN1210)

This site measures approximately 220 x 100 feet and was once the location of a 19th century farmhouse. Today, three late-20th century dwellings currently occupy this area. Examination of a photograph of the farmhouse suggests that the residence was built during the second half of the 19th century, most likely between 1860 and 1890 (Figure 6). The house was reportedly destroyed by fire in the 1960s. The site appears disturbed, and the site may be graded across the entire hilltop.

Artifacts recovered include brick, oyster, miscellaneous iron hardware, coal, modern glass (4), colorless glass (3), cobalt blue glass (1), wire nail fragments (30), square nail fragments (9), unidentified nail fragments (67), whiteware fragments (7), and semi-vitreous ware (1). Two features were encountered during the STP survey. The first was a small posthole with the remains of a wooden post that is most likely relatively modern considering the survival of organic material and its small size. However, it may represent a fence post related to the farmhouse. A second unidentifiable feature contained oyster, coal, coal slag, cut nail fragments, and glass, consistent with known site occupations.

Fanny's Gut (18AN1211)

The "Fanny's Gut" site is a 450 x 200-foot site with artifacts spanning the 17th through early-20th century. The site, which is located on a topographic ridge overlooking a natural spring, is named for an African-American woman whose residence was once located in this vicinity. Artifacts recovered from this site include: brick, oyster, coal, modern glass, unidentified square nails, cut nails (3), wire nails (5), whiteware (9), pearlware (2), semi-vitreous wares (3), porcelain (1), domestic gray stoneware (1), an unidentified stoneware (1), unidentified red earthenware (2), yellowware (1). A doorknob, whiteware sherd bearing the mark of the prodigious Edwin Bennett pottery of Baltimore, and a haircomb (Figure 7) highlight the presence of a domestic occupation (Lehner 1988).

A single sherd of manganese-mottled earthenware and two fragments of terra cotta tobacco pipe were also found in this area. Although they are not specifically diagnostic, terra cotta tobacco pipes usually date to the third quarter of the 17th century. Manganese-mottled earthenware was an English-made ceramic produced as early as the 1660s and continued in production until the first quarter of the 18th century (Noël Hume 1991).

Additionally, there is little evidence of any architectural artifacts from this period. Most notably absent from this area is daub. Daub is one artifact type that defines the extent and boundaries of most 17th century sites. The absence of daub and wrought nails, and the presence of 17th century artifacts suggest that further research on this early component is necessary.

Crandell Field (18AN1212)

A number of artifacts dating to the early 19th century were found along an old raised roadbed measuring 205 x 80 feet. Several STPs contained brick, coal, oyster, pearlware (1), yellowware (2), whiteware (1), semi-vitreous ware (1), white clay tobacco pipe fragments (2), olive green bottle glass (1), modern glass (17), secondary flakes (2), unidentified nails (7), wire nails (2), and a bone fragment (1). Nearly 1.5 feet of clay fill overlies artifact-bearing strata at this site, and one STP contained an unidentified feature filled with oyster, brick, and dark brown clay.

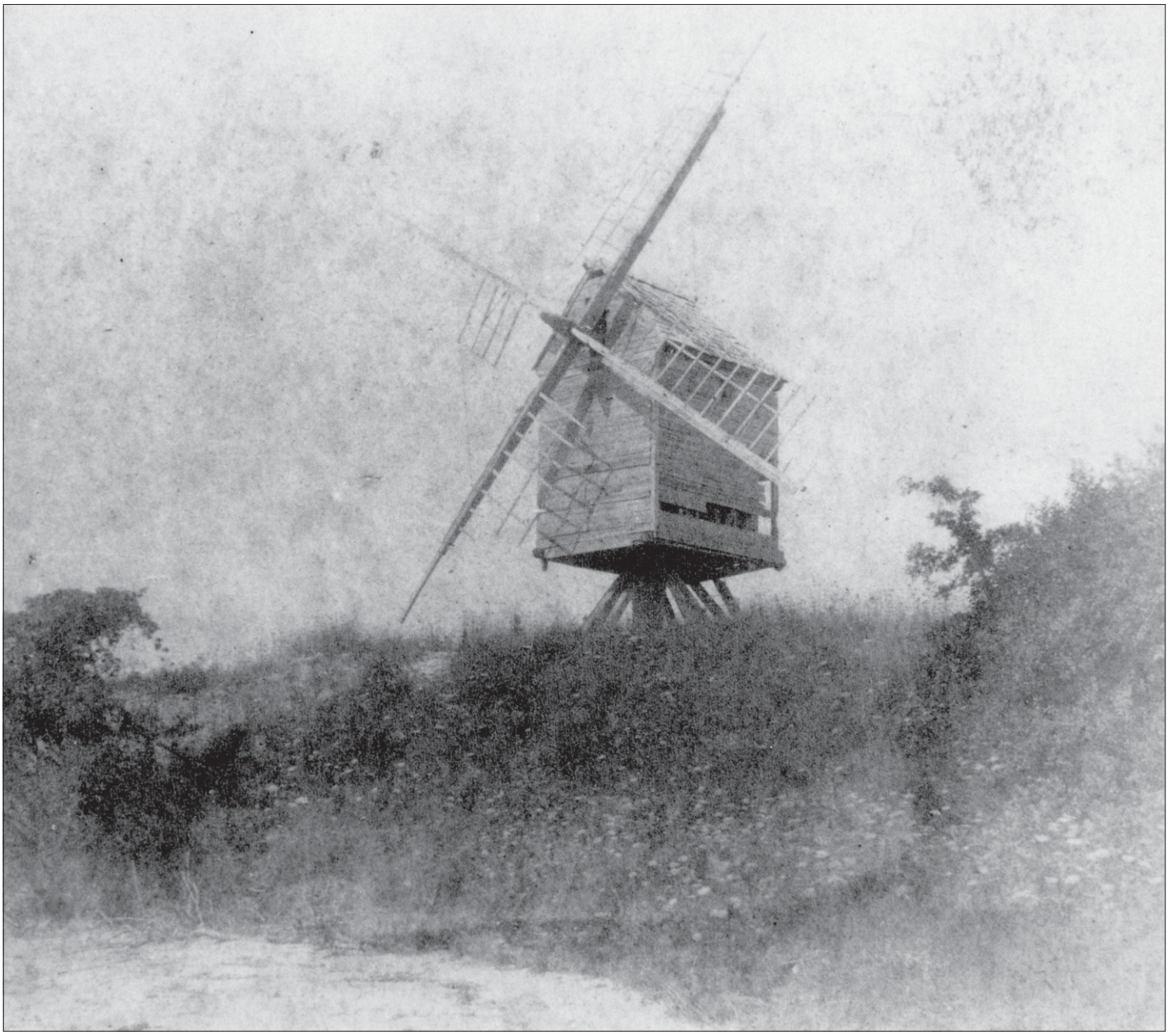

FIGURE 5. Town Point Windmill.
(*Courtesy of Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland, Gustavia Wemyss Perry Collection*)

Leitch Road Cut (18AN1213)

Prehistoric artifacts were recovered from four widely spaced STPs located on a ridge site measuring 300 x 200 feet. These artifacts probably represent a diffuse Woodland period lithic scatter, indicative of an intermittent campsite location. The site's integrity has been impacted by erosion and a gravel roadbed used to bring spoil to a nearby dredge disposal area. The artifacts recovered include an oyster fragment, two tertiary flakes, two fire-cracked rocks, and one small triangular chert projectile point that is a poorly executed Levanna point (A.D. 700-1200; see Figure 8).

Captain Ed Crandell, a life-long resident of Town Point, recalled seeing bones eroding out of an embankment in this area, which suggests this area may have been the site of a cemetery. A casual examination of the ground surface in the area of the hill above this road cut revealed several depressions on the ridge. These depressions appeared to be of roughly correct proportions for historic pe-

FIGURE 6. Crandell farmhouse (18AN1210).

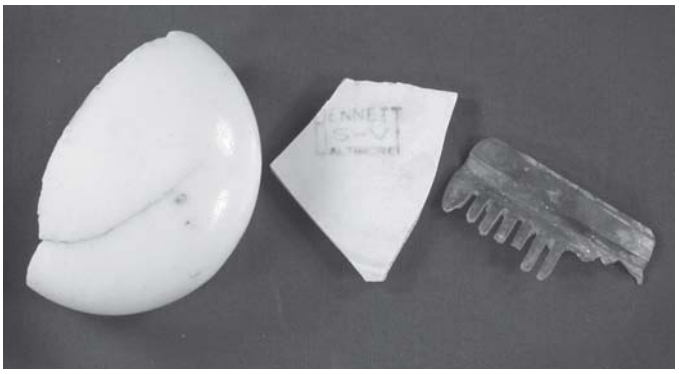

FIGURE 7. Artifacts recovered from 18AN1211. *l-r:* ceramic doorknob, Bennett whiteware sherd, hair comb.

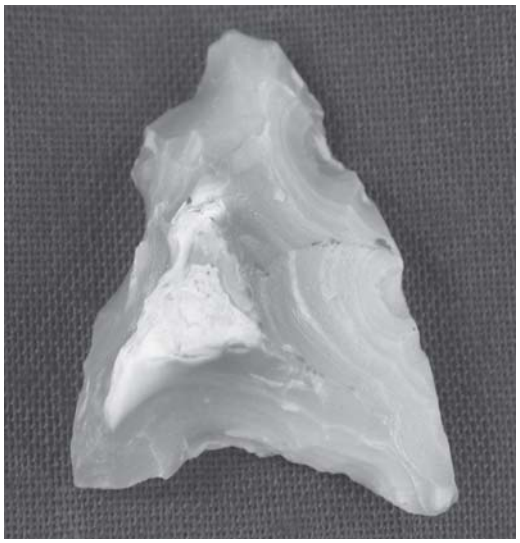

FIGURE 8. Levanna projectile point (18AN1213).

riod graves. Following these observations and discoveries, the shovel test grid was not excavated within the suspected confines of the cemetery.

Herrington (18AN1214)

The first significant quantities of early colonial period artifacts were discovered on one of the few topographically flat areas in proximity to a cove on either side of a roadway that could be contemporaneous with the town period. The site is located within 150 feet of an active spring. Two fragments of North Italian slipware were recovered from the site, suggesting an exceptionally early date of occupation, prior to the fourth quarter of the 17th century.

An excavated STP exposed a large daub- and charcoal-filled feature. This feature is tentatively identified as a hearth and is most likely associated with a 17th century structure. The only artifacts recovered from the feature were fragments of charcoal and daub. Overall, the colonial artifact concentration covers an area roughly 690 x 480 feet in size, with later historic occupations extending the size of the site to 960 x 630 feet. The earliest colonial component of this area represents the site of Herrington.

A second historic period feature contained a 0.4 to 0.5-foot thick lens of whole oyster shell, daub, bone, and charcoal, encountered between 1.0 and 1.5 feet below the ground surface. The artifacts recovered from this feature include Rhenish brown stoneware (1), tin-glazed earthenware (2), North Devon gravel-tempered earthenware (1), North Devon sgraffito slipware (3), white tobacco pipe (1), gray flint (2), and one anomalous sherd of pearlware.

Diagnostic colonial period artifacts were recovered from a total of 53 STPs. The earliest artifacts include Rhenish gray stoneware (5), manganese-mottled earthenware (1), North Italian slipware (2), Rhenish brown stoneware (3), terra cotta tobacco pipes (5), North Devon gravel-tempered coarse earthenware (10), North Devon sgraffito slipware (3), white pipe belly bowl fragments (2), tin-glazed earthenware (9), English brown stoneware (2), white tobacco pipe fragments (52), and olive green bottle glass (32). All of these artifacts are generally present on 17th and 18th century sites.

Of the 52 white tobacco pipe fragments recovered during shovel testing, 19 possess measurable bores. The bore dimensions for this site are distributed as follows: 4/64 inch (4), 5/64 inch (5), 6/64 in. (7), 7/64 inch (2), and 9/64 inch (1). Using pipe bore diameters is generally an unreliable technique for dating archeological sites, especially with a sampling size less than 1,000 (Noël Hume1963). A date of 1718.4 was derived from these 19 stems using the Binford method for calculating dates from pipe stem bore diameters. However, the general distribution of these

bore sizes, between 4/64 inch and 9/64 inch, is indicative of a long-term period of occupation.

This site is prominent on the landscape and commands an expansive view of Herring Bay. It is likely that this hill site was used from the 18th century onward as a prominent plantation site. It is likely that many of the 18th and 19th century artifacts recovered at the Herrington site were deposited from the top of the hill, and from outbuildings associated with the plantation. Further testing is intended to determine the exact stratigraphic relationship and chronology of this site.

Large quantities of relatively non-diagnostic material were also recovered. Daub is among the most important of these artifacts. Daub is usually an architectural material associated with chimney construction or chinking in log structures. Wooden or wattle-and-daub chimneys were used throughout the Chesapeake in the 17th and 18th century (Lounsbury 1994). The sheer quantity of daub recovered from such a large area is suggestive of numerous chimneys from multiple structures.

This site also contained prehistoric shatter, cores, and quartz secondary flakes, evidence of some form of tool manufacturing. Fire-cracked rock indicates a temporary campsite. Though the quantity of prehistoric artifacts recovered was relatively small, the types that were recovered suggest a definite pattern. Whether this pattern was created through recovery bias or through cultural activity patterns is unknown. The lack of primary and tertiary flakes suggests a unique cultural phenomenon which further excavation may help to explain.

Tacaro Farms (18AN1215)

Another large multi-component archeological site measuring 1250 x 360 feet in size was found on a Marr sandy loam terrace adjacent an unnamed tidal marsh south of the study area. The site appears to be a prehistoric site composed of a relatively thin shell midden interspersed with several extremely dense loci. Ninety-seven ounces of oyster shell was recovered from a 2-foot-thick layer of shell beginning 1.3 feet below ground surface. This STP also contained fragments of pig teeth and bone (20), a large fragment of fire-cracked rock, a fragment of quartz shatter, and fragments of daub (7). Fire-hardened clay similar to daub and fire-cracked rock suggest the nearby presence of a prehistoric hearth. Few other prehistoric artifacts were recovered, with the exception of one rhyolite flake, perhaps suggesting a Late Archaic or Middle Woodland occupation.

Two other historic artifact loci are located within the overall site boundaries of the prehistoric site. The first historic locus contains oyster, brick, unidentifiable red earthenware, a fragment of white tobacco pipe, white salt-glazed stoneware, and tobacco pipe, indicating a mid-18th century site. The second historic locus includes oyster shell, olive-green bottle glass (2), and one fragment of scratch blue white salt-glazed stoneware. The nature of this artifact concentration is unknown; however, it likely represents archeological deposits from an earlier site where a private residence now stands.

Conclusion

The Phase I investigation successfully identified two 17th century components in close proximity to one, possibly two, springheads, and a possible town-period roadway. A total of six archeological sites were discovered, including one prehistoric, two 19th century, and three multi-component sites. Archival research indicates that Herrington is one of the earliest colonial settlements in Maryland. Diagnostic ceramics recovered from Phase I investigations are contemporaneous with the early dates associated with documentary records.

While *The Lost Towns Project* Phase I survey successfully confirmed the existence and location of one of Maryland's earliest town settlements, the circumstances of Herrington's origins, development, and demise remain one of the great mysteries of the 17th century. For reasons unknown, a consolidation of five one-acre lots in the town of Herrington started in 1699, and was complete by 1705. Unfortunately, there is currently no explanation for the seemingly abrupt manner in which Herrington drops from the documentary record after this period. Additional archeological investigations will hopefully provide a better understanding of the various forces that affected the viability of this once important settlement, transforming it into the present-day community of Town Point.

Acknowledgements

The Lost Towns Project owes an enormous debt to Town Point residents Ed Crandell, Mr. and Mrs. Ned Crandell, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Westland, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Nacci, Mr. and Mrs. William Conlyn, Mr. and Mrs. Barbara Crawford, Mr. and Mrs. Craig Conner, and Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Leet for their continued support of this project. The outstanding assistance of the project's many dedicated volunteers and interns is also greatly appreciated.

Notes

1. The dates cited within use the Julian calendar instead of the Gregorian calendar. The first day of the year using the Julian calendar is March 21. The date March 13, 1668 was the last month of 1668 just eight days before 1669.

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