Site Name: St. Clement's Island Midden
Other name(s) West Area I

Brief Description: Middle & Late Woodland and Contact Period shell midden

Site Number: 18ST686

Physiographic province: Western Shore Coastal
Maryland Archeological Research Unit No.: 10
SCS soil & sediment code: None
Nearest Surface Water: Potomac River

Topography: Floodplain Y, Hilltop/bluff Y, Interior flat Y, Upland flat Y, Ridgetop Y, Terrace Y, Rockshelter/cave Y
Ownership: Private Y, Federal Y, State of MD Y, Regional/county/city Y

Contact period site: ca. 1820 - 1860
Nearest historic: ca. 1630 - 1675, ca. 1675 - 1720, ca. 1720 - 1780, Post 1930

Prehistoric context: Woodland site, MD Adena, Early woodland, Mid. woodland, Late woodland

Ownership: Private, Federal, State of MD

Ethnobotany profile: Available
Maritime site: Yes
Nearest historic context: Y=Confirmed, P=Possible

Ownership: Private Y, Federal Y, State of MD Y

Ethnic Associations: Native American, African American, Anglo-American, Hispanic

Ownership: Private, Federal, State of MD

Nearest historic context: Y=Confirmed, P=Possible

Site function contextual data:

Prehistoric:
- Multi-component Y
- Village
- Hamlet
- Base camp
- Rockshelter/cave
- Earthen mound
- Cairn
- Burial area
- Other context

Domestic:
- Homestead
- Farmstead
- Mansion
- Plantation
- Row/townhome
- Cellar
- Privy

Industrial:
- Mining-related
- Quarry-related
- Mill
- Black/metalsmith

Urban/Rural?
- Other

Transportation:
- Canal-related
- Road/railroad
- Wharf/landing
- Maritime-related
- Bridge
- Ford

Educational:
- Commercial
- Trading post
- Store
- Tavern/inn

Military:
- Battlefield
- Fortification
- Encampment

Townsite:
- Religious
- Church/mtg house
- Ch support bldg

Burial area:
- Cemetery
- Sepulchre
- Isolated burial

Other:
- Post-in-ground
- Frame-built
- Masonry
- Other structure
- Slave related
- Non-domestic agri
- Recreation
- Midden/dump
- Artifact scatter
- Spring or well
- Unknown
- Other context

Interpretive Sampling Data:

Prehistoric context samples: Yes
Soil samples taken: Yes
Flotation samples taken: Yes

Historic context samples: Yes
Soil samples taken: No
Flotation samples taken: No

Other samples taken: Yes
Microdebitage

Ownership:
- Private
- Federal
- State of MD

Nearest historic context: Y=Confirmed, P=Possible
### Diagnostic Artifact Data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projectile Point Types</th>
<th>Koens-Crispin</th>
<th>Clovis</th>
<th>Perkiomen</th>
<th>Hardaway-Dalton</th>
<th>Selden Island</th>
<th>Accokeek</th>
<th>Wolfe Neck</th>
<th>Vineete</th>
<th>Le Croy</th>
<th>Morrow Mtn</th>
<th>Guilford</th>
<th>Brewerton</th>
<th>Otter Creek</th>
<th>Piscataway</th>
<th>Vernon</th>
<th>Selby Bay</th>
<th>Jacks RI (notch)</th>
<th>Jacks RI (pent)</th>
<th>Madison/Potomac</th>
<th>Calvert</th>
<th>Lebo</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Pearlware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

### Prehistoric Sherd Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sherd Types</th>
<th>Shepard</th>
<th>Keyser</th>
<th>Marcey Creek</th>
<th>Popes Creek</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Townsend</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Yeocomico</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Minguannah</th>
<th>Monogahela</th>
<th>Susquehannock</th>
<th>Wilmington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Historic Sherd Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sherd Types</th>
<th>Ironstone</th>
<th>Staffordshire</th>
<th>Tin Glazed</th>
<th>Whiteware</th>
<th>Porcelain</th>
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</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Earthenware</th>
<th>Astbury</th>
<th>Jackfield</th>
<th>Mn Mottled</th>
<th>North Devon</th>
<th>Pearlware</th>
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</thead>
</table>

### Other Artifact & Feature Types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prehistoric Artifacts</th>
<th>Other fired clay</th>
<th>Flaked stone</th>
<th>226</th>
<th>Human remain(s)</th>
<th>226</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground stone</td>
<td>Modified faunal</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Unmod faunal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stone bowls</td>
<td>Oyster shell</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Uncommon Obj.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire-cracked rock</td>
<td>Uncommon Obj.</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Prehistoric Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Mound(s)</th>
<th>Storage/trash pit</th>
<th>Midden</th>
<th>Burial(s)</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Shell midden</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>Postholes/molds</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>Oyster shell</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House pattern(s)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oyster shell</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oyster shell</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oyster shell</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

### Lithic Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Fer quartzite</th>
<th>Jasper</th>
<th>Chaledony</th>
<th>Chert</th>
<th>Ironstone</th>
<th>Basalt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Sil sandstone</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>European flint</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>European flint</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Radiocarbon Data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample 1</th>
<th>+/- years BP</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Sample 2</th>
<th>+/- years BP</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Sample 3</th>
<th>+/- years BP</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample 4</td>
<td>+/- years BP</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Sample 5</td>
<td>+/- years BP</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Sample 6</td>
<td>+/- years BP</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample 7</td>
<td>+/- years BP</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Sample 8</td>
<td>+/- years BP</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Sample 9</td>
<td>+/- years BP</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All quantities exact or estimated minimal counts

### Additional radiocarbon results available
Shell midden sites are among the most common prehistoric sites known for the lower Potomac Valley. Classifications of St. Mary’s County soils include “Kitchen Middens,” meaning prehistoric shell middens that have altered the makeup of the original soils to a great extent. Shell middens predominate by a wide margin among sites within a 2-mile radius of St. Clement’s Island. It has been suggested that oysters did not become a major focus of the subsistence base until the last part of the Late Archaic period and shell middens commonly occurred during the Woodland period in the lower Potomac Valley. In general, site density increased into the 17th century, and decreased at the end of the 17th century, coinciding with an increase in European settlement in the region. Agriculture and oyster harvesting were at various times the focus of activity on the island throughout most of the 18th, 19th, and the early 20th centuries. The United States Navy took possession of St. Clement’s Island in 1919. They used the Potomac River for testing heavy artillery, often hitting the island. In 1934, a concrete cross was erected on the island to commemorate the beginnings of religious freedom in Maryland. The island was returned to Maryland in the 1960’s.

In September 1997, a Phase II archeological evaluation was undertaken at site 18ST686. The site had been previously identified by the Maryland Historical Trust as a potentially significant archeological site; therefore a Phase I survey was not required. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources was developing plans to build a revetment to retard erosion on St. Clement’s Island. Site 18ST686 was the proposed location for a source of fill for the planned revetment. The primary goals of the project were to determine whether the midden area was eligible for listing in the Maryland Register of Historic Properties, to determine the extent to which construction of the proposed revetment would affect significant resources, and to recommend management options that would permit completion of the construction without further damage to significant archeological remains.

The project area covered an approximately 404.7 square meter portion of West Area 1 that was to be impacted by the proposed construction. Testing occurred within an area bound on the north by the margins of an existing tidal pond and on the south by a point roughly 17 m from an existing stone revetment. To impact zone extended for about 50 m along the shoreline, and inland about 10 m toward a secondary growth forest. Prior to subsurface testing, archeologists surveyed exposed ground surfaces, especially along the beach, and the exposed shoreline profile. Observed artifact concentrations and distributions, and variation in midden thickness and shell density, informed the placement of shovel tests and test units. A total of 12 shovel test pits (STPs) and 3 test units (EU1-EU3) were excavated. STPs were dug at 10 m intervals along two transects that were placed 10 m apart and parallel to the shoreline. STPs were excavated through shell-bearing soil horizons into sterile subsoil. All artifacts were retained, including a sample of bog iron and revetment rock, except for shell fragments larger than ¼”, which were weighed in the field and discarded.

EU1 was a 1x2 m block situated within the densest portion of the shell concentration. The area appeared to retain integrity and demonstrated little evidence of leaching of soil nutrients. EU2 was a 1x1 m square located near the eastern boundary of the project area and beyond the northern boundary of very dark brown soils observed in the STP survey. EU3 was also a 1x1 m square. It was located immediately adjacent to the eroding shoreline in order to expose in plan view a large cluster of charcoal, designated Feature 3, first identified in the shoreline erosional face. Feature 3 was later determined to be the remains of a burnt tree or tree roots. All EU's were excavated below the midden soils until sterile strata were encountered to depths between 45 and 55 cm below datum. Five-gallon soil samples were collected from selected strata of each unit for flotation and water screening.

EU1, Stratum A contained only Yeocomico and Camden potteries types, Stratum B produced a Townsend sherd, and Stratum C contained only Pope’s Creek pottery. This presented a strong likelihood that the central portion of West Area 1 maintains stratigraphic integrity. The surface artifact distribution and shoreline profile observations supported that conclusion. The southern and northeastern portions of the site, however, contained disturbed and mixed soils. Thus the stratigraphic integrity of those areas of the site was comprised, possibly as a result of alluvial processes and/or agricultural activity. Features encountered in EU1 and EU3 were excavated but were determined to be natural, rather than cultural, in origin. No cultural features besides the midden itself were identified. It was not possible to delineate the site boundaries of the shell midden because it extends beyond the Phase II project area as defined by the Scope of Work. The distribution of positive STPs indicated that the shell midden extended beyond the limits of West Area 1, and that intrastratigraphic and interstratigraphic variation may exist further inland.

In all, 326 prehistoric artifacts were collected from the surface, STP, and test unit investigations. Artifact counts were taken from Appendix C: Artifact Catalog in the original report. A total of 127 pieces of debitage and 85 broken cobbles were recovered along with 3 fragments of revetment rock. There was a single quartz bifacial tool, 7 modified flakes, 1 unifacial tool, and 2 utilized greenstone fragments. Other lithic items included 8 hammerstones, a few of which possibly served a dual abrader function, and 1 pitted stone. A total of 35 fire-cracked rocks were retained. The lithic remains indicated predominantly expedient tool production and use. The bulk of the lithic assemblage was composed of quartz (56%) followed by quartzite (24%), sandstone (12%), chert (4%), jasper (2%) and greenstone (5%). Ceramic artifacts (n=56) included 6 Popes Creek and 5 Mockley (1 net-impressed, 4 plain) sherd, 1 Townsend sherd, 2 possible Camden sherds, 6 Yeocomico ceramic sherd (1 incised, most brushed or plain, 1 cord-marked), and 36 unidentified sherd. The association between Camden and Yeocomico pottery at West Area 1 suggested a late 17th century date for the latter type. Conversely, the predominance of Yeocomico pottery and the abandonment of the area by many Native Americans at the end of the 17th century suggested an early-to-mid-17th century date for those deposits.

Measurements of oyster shells taken in the field were used to determine the characteristics of the oyster bed from which they derived. The maximum dimension of the shell from the valve to the aperture (height) was divided by the measurement perpendicular to the height (length) in order to provide a length-height ratio. The majority of the oyster shell had a ratio less than 2.0 which indicated that the oysters were harvested from a setting close to shore, where the water was shallow and the bottom consisted of a mixture of mud and sand. The early colonists probably harvested oysters from shallow waters but by the end of the 17th century, over-exploitation led to deep water harvests. That information led the archeologists to the conclusion that the height-length ratio calculations for West Area 1 supported an occupation date earlier than AD 1700. Although it was indicated in the original report that some oyster shell was collected and some shell was weighed and discarded in the field, no total weights or counts were provided. Weights from most of the strata within the 3 EUs were a significant limiting factor in assessing the percentage of the oyster biomass removed by the occupants of West Area 1.
West Area 1 of the St. Clement’s Island shell midden (18T686) preserves the remnants of short-term occupations by small groups of Native Americans during the Middle and Late Woodland/Contact periods. This shellfish procurement and processing site has the potential to provide important information on regional prehistoric ceramic chronology, settlement patterns, and task specialization. For these reasons, it was determined that the St. Clement’s Island Shell Midden (West Area I) was eligible for the Maryland Register of Historic Properties under Criterion D. Three treatment plans were presented for management of the site: preservation in place, an extended Phase I survey inland, and a Phase III data recovery (recent aerial images show what appears to be revetment in the general location of the site).