Compton Site Finding Aid
18CV279

Introduction
The Compton Site (18CV279) is a mid-17th-century tobacco plantation located near the mouth of the Patuxent River at Solomons in Calvert County, Maryland. The traces of at least five earthfast structures and post and rail fencing dating between 1651 and 1685 were uncovered. William and Magdalen Stevens acquired the Compton Site in 1651, when they are believed to have come to Maryland from Virginia. The Stevens remained at the site until 1665, when they left for the Eastern Shore. The site continued to be occupied until 1685 by as-yet-unidentified tenants.

The Compton Site collection has the potential to yield important information about 17th-century plantation life in the rural Chesapeake. Although the Compton Site resembles a typical tobacco plantation in many ways, the site’s architecture and artifact assemblage suggest the variability that is suspected to characterize early colonial culture. The Compton collection can be used to address questions of adaptation, household organization and change through time, trade, standards of living, and other issues concerning colonial Chesapeake culture.

Archaeological Background
Thunderbird Archaeological Associates identified the Compton Site in 1987 during a Phase I investigation for the Patuxent Point residential subdivision for CRJ Associates, Inc. Agricultural fields in the project area were plowed in 20-foot wide strips and then surface collected in 20-by-20-foot squares. The excavation of two one-foot square test pits in a surface concentration of oyster shells revealed the presence of a subsurface feature.

Phase III investigations of the Compton Site were conducted by Louis Berger and Associates (LBA) between June and August 1988. The first period of data recovery focused on the excavation of 162 2.5-by-2.5-foot units from the plow zone layer within the site boundaries. All soil was screened through ¼-inch mesh, and 57 samples for soil chemical analysis were collected. Following the plow zone sampling, the remaining plow zone was mechanically removed from a 140-foot-by-150-foot area. During the second phase, subsurface features, such as post holes, post molds, and pits, were identified and mapped. Of these features, 26 were excavated, most of them pit features. The refuse pits were excavated following natural stratigraphy, and a flotation sample was removed from every major layer. No soil was screened during feature excavation. Unfortunately, few post holes or post molds were excavated, making it difficult to sort out precise construction technologies and sequences for the five structures and three fence lines identified at the site.

The site plan of 18CV271 consisted of five post-in-the-ground structures, four surface middens, two cooking pits, post-and-rail fencing, and other subsurface features. The 16-by-16-foot dwelling, consisting of one or two rooms, had paned windows and a wattle and daub chimney which utilized Dutch yellow bricks. The four additional earthfast structures measured 18 by 20 feet, 18 by 25 feet, 10 by 10 feet, and 5 by 6 feet. Three fence lines, including a diamond-shaped post-and-rail enclosure, were probably used to pen livestock and delineate yard space. Two elliptical pits were possibly utilized for cooking, while three additional ones were probably used for the preparation of mortar. In addition, three cooking pits dating from the Middle and Late Woodland Periods (ca. 500-1600 AD) were uncovered.

Artifacts
A total of 27,832 artifacts were recovered from 18CV279. This collection includes a large number of Dutch artifacts, such as brick, ceramics, and tobacco pipes. Furthermore, the occupants at Compton appear to have invested a portion of their wealth in portable material goods, as indicated by the presence of several costly artifacts.

The ceramic collection included primarily English, Dutch, and locally-made earthenwares, along with smaller numbers of Italian, Iberian, and French earthenwares and German stonewares. Identified earthenware types included North Devon gravel-tempered, gravel-free, and sgrafitto, Morgan Jones, Staffordshire-type slipware, tin-glazed, Dutch earthenware, North Italian slipware, Iberian storage jars, Saintonge ware, and Red Sandy ware, while recognized stonewares included Rhenish brown and Rhenish blue and gray. The large number of identified Dutch forms, with their distinctive handles and rim shapes, is unusual, and they included skillets, pipkins, bowls, and a pitcher. Other vessel forms from the site included dishes, porringers, jugs, plates, an ointment pot, a storage jar, a rectangular baking or drip pan, and a barrel costrel. At least one Indian-made Potomac Creek vessel was recovered, which is believed to be contemporary with the site’s occupation.
A total of 2,699 white and terra cotta tobacco pipe fragments were recovered from Compton. European tobacco pipe fragments had various decorative motifs, including Pikeman/Minerva, thumbnail impressions, fleur-de-lis, rouletting, and incising. Fifteen pipes with "EB" maker's marks, which were used by Edward Bird from 1635-1665, were recovered, along with one with the mark of Flower Hunt (1651-1672). Decorations on eight terra cotta pipes included rouletted and dentate motifs such as running deer, triangles, and horizontal lines. One agatized tobacco pipe bowl was recovered.

The majority of the glass artifacts from 18CV279 were beverage-related. Fragments from 22 case bottles, one wine bottle, and three drinking vessels were recovered. These drinking containers include a colorless non-lead stemware fragment for which portions of the stem and bowl survive, an opaque white paneled drinking vessel with red and blue enameled decoration, and a decorative amber prunt. One small red bead and one millefiori bead with alternating blue and white horizontal stripes were recovered.

Architectural artifacts included seven lead window came fragments, two stock locks, a latch lock bar, and a sliding bolt. Clothing and sewing-related artifacts consisted of 52 copper alloy straight pins, five iron hook and eyes, two pairs of iron scissors, one copper alloy hook and eye, one decorative copper alloy mesh band made from links and coils, and a copper alloy thimble. Fifteen lead shot and an iron trigger guard for a wheellock musket were found, along with a copper alloy upholstery tack with a floral shape, a heart-shaped hasp with a keyhole, and a trowel-shaped hasp without a keyhole. Two iron knife blades and two bone knife handles made up the recovered kitchen implements. Personal artifacts included a copper alloy spur with either a gold wash or gold leaf, and a bone comb with two different tooth sizes.

Faunal and floral materials revealed additional information about the diet of the Compton Site occupants. A total of 6,829 animal bones were recovered, representing such species as chicken, goat, sheep/goat, pig, cow, horse, deer, raccoon, opossum, mole, shrew, drum, yellow perch, sheepshead, turtle, and crab. Floral remains included peach, cherry, persimmon, raspberry, pin cherry, corn, and sorghum.

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Louis Berger and Associates, Inc.