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Fendig Site 44ST1164

Presentation Transcript

(Slide 1) In the winter of 2014, members of the Patawomeck Tribe of Virginia requested that the Virginia Department of Historic Resources conduct an archaeological investigation in the vicinity of the Aquia Creek Marina in Stafford County, Virginia. They believed that in this area were the remains of the village of Quiyough, which appears on John Smith's 1612 Map of the Chesapeake. Mike Clem of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources investigated two separate sites in the area: 44ST1164 and 44ST1216. A second investigation of 44ST1164, also known as the Fendig Site after property owner Eliot Fendig, was conducted by Dr. Lauren McMillan and students from the University of Mary Washington in conjunction with members of the Patawomeck Tribe. This latest investigation is the primary focus of this presentation.

(Slide 2) The Patawomeck people belong to the larger ethnic, language, and cultural group of Eastern Algonquin speaking people. The Eastern Algonquins were made up of several smaller groups including the Patawomecks who had their own cultural practices and dialects of speaking. Even though the Patawomecks were bordered by much larger chiefdoms, they kept their autonomy as a distinctly separate group.

(Slide 3) John Smith's venture up the Chesapeake in 1607 was spurred by European interest in precious metals. He had learned from trading with other Indian groups that the Patawomecks controlled a mine that produced a glistening mineral known as antimony. Though this wasn't the type of metal Smith was searching for, his explorations resulted in his detailed 1612 map, which can be seen here. The map here is a bit difficult to read so a red circle has been put over the spot where Smith located the village of Quiyough. This village was far from being the largest Patawomeck settlement, but its location likely provided an important warning system for other settlements upriver in case of invasion.

(Slide 4) As of 2014, no previous archaeological work had been done on or near the Fendig site. One of the primary reasons for investigating this area was that it coincides with the location of Quiyough on John Smith's map. To find a Native American village that dates to the earliest period of European settlement would provide immense insight into the relationship between the two cultures. Another reason for investigation was that it would be of great significance to current Patawomeck tribal members whose ancestors lived in this area for so long.

As you can see from the bottom left map on this slide, the topography of the site is incredibly low. The site is located on the shore of Aquia Creek, which is a tributary to the

Potomac River. Above this map is an aerial photograph overlaid with the boundaries of both DHR investigations. The Fendig site (44ST1164) is the larger one, consisting mostly of a 7.4-acre tilled field surrounded by woodland. Just north of the field is a shed, a garden, and a house which is still currently inhabited.

Investigations by the DHR began in 2014 with a walking survey of the field. Initial interest in this area was spurred by the presentation of a large quantity of artifacts that had been collected there by the site's owner. Surveyors included both DHR staff and volunteers from the Patowomeck Tribe, who searched the ground's surface for artifacts and made note of their specific location. This process was aided by the fact that the field had just been plowed, making visibility much better. A subsequent investigation was carried out in 2017 which consisted of the excavation of 26 shovel test pits at 25-foot intervals along the western edge of the survey site. A shovel test pit is a roughly 18-inch diameter hole excavated to recover artifacts. These pits are represented by the white circles on the image to the right.

(Slide 5) Over 90% of prehistoric artifacts recovered from both DHR investigations were lithics, meaning that they were made of stone. Of these artifacts, the overwhelming majority were flakes made from either creating or re-sharpening projectile points. Some of the only artifacts that can be used to date a prehistoric site's occupation period are projectile points and ceramic pottery, like the ones shown here. Once analyzed by the DHR, the recovered artifacts were determined to predominantly date to what are known as the Late Archaic and Early Woodland periods. The calendar years that these periods span are 3500BC-1200BC, and 1200BC-500BC respectively. Other types of artifacts found by the DHR include a chipped ax made of greenstone, unfinished projectile points known as bifaces, and 18th-20th century bottle glass.

(Slide 6) The 2019 investigation was carried out by Dr. McMillan, UMW student volunteers, and Patowomeck Tribe members. It consisted of 88 shovel test pits excavated on a 25-foot interval grid, a map of which can be seen to the left. The primary area for our work was the grassy area and garden to the north of the large field. Our investigation yielded 1,148 artifacts, of which 79% were prehistoric lithic artifacts. The most common types of lithics found were tertiary flakes, which are typically very small and associated with the refinement of tools.

(Slide 7) Our analysis was extremely similar to the DHR's. Firstly, the majority of our artifacts were flakes, which unfortunately cannot be dated to any specific time period. What we were able to date was confined to projectile points and prehistoric pottery. These two types of artifacts can be placed into typologies, or classifications, based on their physical characteristics. Starting from the top left image and going clockwise, the typology of these points are: Savannah River, Fishtail, Calvert, and Piscataway. Not all projectile point types were clearly identifiable, but those we could determine were predominantly from the Late Archaic to Early Woodland periods.

(Slide 8) A total of 30 pieces of Native American pottery were found in the 2019 excavation. Although this is a small percentage of overall artifacts, these pieces of ceramic were of vital importance to our analysis of the site. This is because they give a much narrower date range for the site's occupation than lithic artifacts. For example, the Piscataway point can be dated to anywhere between 1750BC-25AD, while the Accokeek Creek type pottery can be confidently dated to 900BC-300BC. Ceramic is typified both by the materials it is made of and the decorations that are put on it. Between our pottery and projectile points, our findings clearly resembled those of Mike Clem and the DHR: this site was most likely occupied between the Late Archaic and Early Woodland periods.

(Slide 9) Another reason why prehistoric pottery was so important to our analysis is because it showed us that there was not one singular period of occupation at this site, but two. The most common type of pottery we found was Accokeek, but the second-most was Moyaone. This type of ceramic dates to 1300AD-1650AD—much closer to the period of European contact than the other artifacts we examined. Moreover, we also found examples of Townsend and Minguannan types, which date to 950AD-1600AD and 1200AD-1650AD. While these artifacts date to much later than those from the Early Woodland, there seems to be a gap of at least 1,000 years between the two groups. This could mean that the area was inhabited by Native Americans in the Early Woodland period, abandoned for some time, then returned to much later.

Because neither UMW's investigation nor those carried out by the DHR found evidence of 17th century European exchanges with Native Americans, it is unlikely that this area was the site of Quiyough. Moreover, we did not find any archaeological evidence that would be indicative of long-term settlement. This leads us to believe that this area was either a smaller hamlet or village that was an extension of Quiyough, or the more likely prospect that it was an impermanent hunting camp used for making and repairing tools. Nevertheless, Quiyough may still lie nearby either up- or downriver since it appears on Smith's map. We suggest that more archaeological investigation take place in the plowed field to the south, as this area may yield more artifacts and therefore more insight as to what this site represents.