

Bishop (18HA176)

The Bishop Site (18HA176) is a multi-component site with a late 18th- and early 19th-century farmstead, and a prehistoric artifact scatter, located near Darlington in Harford County, Maryland. The ca. 1880 E.M. Allen House/Kelvin Grove Manor is located in the center of the site. The historic component of the site is a contributing resource to the Lower Deer Creek Valley Historic District, which contains over 300 historic properties that date from the mid-18th century to the 1940s. Since colonial times, the valley has attracted a sizeable Quaker population who, in turn, made the area a haven for free blacks. The district contains a sizeable free black community at Kalmia, the site of a documented stop on the Underground Railroad, and several other sites important to black history.

Ancestors of the Allen family owned the site property from 1802 when Henry Stump, Jr. purchased the land. The Stumps owned large tracts of agricultural land by the late 18th century. In 1821, Rachel Price, later Wilson, the niece of a Stump, purchased 50 acres that included Wilson Mill and a house on Darlington Road. Wilson's house is thought to have occupied the foundation upon which the E.M. Allen House now stands. In 1866 Rachel Wilson sold her property to E.M. Allen, her son-in-law. Rachel Wilson lived on the land until 1873. In 1879, the Wilson mansion burned down and the current structure built. The family farm was sold by E. Allen, Jr. in 1932. There were several owners of the property between 1933 and 1973 when the Bishop's purchased the land.

A Phase I survey was conducted in 1989 ahead of the relocation of the Route 161 Bridge over Deer Creek. The Bishop Site was identified as a moderate density historic artifact scatter associated with the ca. 1880 Allen House, and contained a small prehistoric artifact scatter. Sixteen shovel test pits (STPs) were excavated and two historic features identified: a lens of burned soil (Feature 302) with large quantities of charcoal and late 18th/ early 19th century artifacts. It was suggested that the burned lens reflected the earlier structure on the site destroyed by fire prior to 1880. Also discovered was an old roadbed. In all, 56 historic artifacts and 14 prehistoric artifacts were collected in the shovel test pits.

The Phase II testing was undertaken in 1993. Phase II evaluation included research, pedestrian reconnaissance, systematic subsurface investigations, and ethnobotanical analysis. A total of 71 shovel tests, one 0.5x1 m test unit and two 1x1 m test units were excavated within Area 1. In Area 2, a total of 118 shovel tests and three 1x1 m test units were excavated.

Archaeological testing in Area 1 revealed two historic features: the former roadbed of Darlington Road and a small quarry. The roadbed, possibly as old as 75 years, was located within the entire right-of-way. The small quarry, which measured 1.5 x 3 m, was identified near the base of the south slope. The granite that was removed from the protruding bedrock was probably used for construction of the nearby bridge abutments or dwellings. No prehistoric features were encountered in Area 1. In Area 1, a total of 43 possible prehistoric artifacts and 43 historic artifacts were also recovered.

Archaeological testing in Area 2 revealed a disturbed sheet midden near the house, with artifacts pre-dating the existing 1880 house. Area 2 was divided into four analytical units: the Front Yard, Back Yard, South Side Yard, and North Side Yard. Artifacts from the Back Yard indicated the yard was used for casual discard of kitchen refuse related to the present structure. Architectural items (especially nails) from the Back Yard suggested that this area was used for staging during the construction of the current house. In the Front Yard, the majority of artifacts predated 1820. The South Side Yard contained a high percentage of domestic glass and ceramics from the early 18th to the mid-19th century, and suggested it was a kitchen midden in use for a long period. The domestic artifacts in the North Side Yard were primarily limited to ceramic and glass fragments dated from the early to mid-19th century. A concentration of artifacts on the northern edge of the yard may have indicated the remains of an earlier outbuilding or trash pit. Also in the North Side Yard area, there was evidence suggestive of historic gardening activity. A historic well adjacent to the kitchen, was infilled during the late 20th century and not tested. In Phase II, a total of 9 possible artifacts represented the prehistoric component of Area 2, while the historic component was represented by 684 artifacts.

The Bishop Site (18HA176) consists of a late 18th- and early 19th-century farmstead and a prehistoric artifact scatter. Archaeological testing indicated that there had been extensive land modifications as a result of rebuilding and landscaping associated with the 1880 construction of the extant dwelling, the Allen House. Destruction debris from the house that burned in 1879 was used to infill a natural swale while leveling the land. Artifactual evidence indicated activity at the site for as much as 150 years prior to 1880. Early activity may have been associated with the first mills on Deer Creek, which appeared by 1750. Disturbance to the site has destroyed any intact deposits and intermixed the old midden with more recent deposits. However, the site represents over 200 years of occupation and is associated with several prominent families and individuals important in the rural development of the Lower Deer Creek Valley.