

Archer (18HA249)

The Archer Site (18HA249) is a multicomponent site representing a Late Archaic-Late Woodland prehistoric resource procurement camp and a late 18th- to early 20th-century artifact scatter, located within the National Register boundary of the Lower Deer Creek Valley Historic District in Harford County, Maryland. The historic component identified at the site is associated with the 19th-century Gaughen House Site, the stone foundation of which sits just outside the southern site boundary.

The site is situated on land that was originally part of the 529 ac property owned by Martin Gaughen (purchased in 1955) which was transferred to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in 1961. The Gaughen farm was comprised of a house thought to have been built sometime in the mid-19th century, and several agricultural outbuildings. Only the corn crib is extant. The corn crib and the site of the house were listed as contributing elements to the Lower Deer Creek Valley Historic District. Historically, the land was part of large landholdings of first the Stump, then the Archer families. The Archer and Stump families merged in 1816 through marriage. Both the Stump and the Archer families were prominent locally; John Archer, Sr. was a doctor and a politician; the Stumps were wealthy landowners. The Archer family began acquiring land in the vicinity of the site ca. 1855 and maintained a large property until 1937 when the 529 acres was sold to B. Oles. Oles in turn sold the property to H. Holfeldt in 1950 who then sold it to M. Gaughen in 1955.

Phase I work was conducted at the site in 1995 and 1996 prior to the expansion of the Deer Creek Recreation Area. Fieldwork consisted of surface collection, the plowing of 21 strips of varying lengths across the site, and the excavation of 45 STPs. During the Phase I survey, 4,516 prehistoric, and 312 historic artifacts were recovered.

A second Phase I archaeological survey was undertaken in 1999. The project area was comprised of 5 small areas (Areas B-F). Area B was located on the south side of the gravel road/trail, adjacent to Site 18HA249. Site 18HA249 was identified as Area A and was subjected only to Phase II testing. Fieldwork conducted in January 1999 during the Phase II site evaluation consisted of the excavation of 62 STPs and seven 1x1 m test units (TUs 1-7), and the mechanical stripping of five 1 m wide trenches that totaled 200 m². First, a baseline was established along the northern edge of the eastern field and the entire site was shovel tested at 20 m intervals. Once areas of artifact concentrations were identified, then test units were placed across the site. All excavated soils were screened through 0.635 cm (1/4") mesh. The 5 backhoe trenches were placed roughly parallel to the 1995/6 Phase I strip plowed areas. Trenches 1 (90 m long), 2 (30 m long), and 3 (30 m long) were excavated in the eastern field and Trenches 4 (30 m long) and 5 (20 m long) were excavated in the western field. After plowzone removal, each trench was hand scraped in order to search for features. It is unclear if and by what means artifacts were recovered during the mechanical stripping of the plowzone and subsequent scrapping. No artifacts were listed in the Artifact Inventory in the original report so it is presumed that none were collected during this portion of the testing.

A single feature was encountered during the Phase II testing. Feature 3-01 may have been the edge of a plowscar or animal burrow that was not fully exposed in the unit or it may have been the base of a prehistoric or historic feature that was truncated by plowing. It was postulated that the character of the feature suggested that the feature probably represented an animal burrow. A total of 115 prehistoric artifacts and a scatter of 9 historic artifacts were collected from the site.

The Archer Site (18HA249) represents a multicomponent Late Archaic-Late Woodland prehistoric resource procurement camp, and a late 18th- to early 20th-century artifact scatter. The principle prehistoric occupation of the site appears to have been during the Late Archaic/Early Woodland transitional period. There is also substantial evidence for Late Woodland use of the site but less artifactual evidence for a Middle Woodland occupation (represented by a possible Mockley sherd and a Potts point). The prehistoric component of the site did not possess horizontal or vertical integrity or research potential sufficient for listing it on the National Register of Historic Places. The historic artifacts represent field scatter; the assemblage is likely associated with the occupation of the 19th-century Gaughen House.