

Conowingo (18CE14)

Conowingo (18CE14) is a multicomponent site with occupation dating from the Late Archaic through the Late Woodland period, possibly a seasonal (spring through summer) aggregation of micro-social units into a macro-social unit base camp. A concentration of historic artifacts was also identified at the site.

Site 18CE14 was identified in 1905 by Talbot D. Jones, an avocational archaeologist. Jones' collection, including 57 artifacts from this site, is curated by the MAC Lab. In the 1930s an avocational archaeologist with the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology collected artifacts, and reported on it after the 1936 floods. Permission to conduct excavations was granted by land owners in 1941. A small island located just off the shoreline was also apparently considered to be part of the site. The artifact collection from the island directly reflected that material recovered from the mainland. The excavator described the presence of a Late Woodland village occupation in the northern half of the site, as damaged by dam construction and destroyed in the 1936 flood. This was the only portion of the site where traces of hearths and refuse pits were found. Unfortunately, after only limited investigations could be undertaken, work was halted because of the war. Since the 1940s, testing at the site was limited to the Harford County Chapter of the ASM, and a weekend excavation in 1962 by a Pennsylvania state archaeologist and members of the Archeological Society of Maryland (ASM) who excavated 2 units measuring 5'x5' at the site. Extensive looting took place at the site in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

MGS personnel and ASM members excavated the site in 1974. In one of the test units, Feature 1 was identified as a possible hearth. A concentration of fire-cracked rock and a few flecks of charcoal were noted in the fill. Grit-tempered ceramic sherds were found on the surface of the feature. About 60 ceramic sherds and several points were reportedly collected.

In 1981 and 1982, MGS and ASM conducted field investigations to collect data on depth, stratigraphy, and cultural periods. Several of the private collections were also examined. Artifacts recorded during the examination of those collections included 59 bifaces, 15 groundstone objects, and 21 unidentified ceramic sherds. Eighteen 1 m² units were excavated. During 1982, 13 individual 2 m² units were expanded from the units excavated in 1981.

Three loci, the northern, middle, and southern, were identified and examined. Excavations revealed that the southern area, near the mouth of the creek, was used most intensively. Late Archaic material was concentrated in the southern and middle areas, while ceramics were concentrated in the northern units. The south area was determined to be a locus of general stone tool manufacture, food processing and habitation whereas the middle area had limited stone tool manufacture with greater emphasis on tool use. The northern area appeared as a general use area highlighted by a concentration of ceramics and retouched and utilized flakes. That some stratigraphic integrity remained in the study area was evidenced by the location of soapstone fragments and Late Archaic points below the plowzone and underlying the Woodland sequence of ceramics and associated points. The Late and Middle Woodland diagnostics shared the 0-10 cm and 10-20 cm levels. The 20-30 cm level was Middle Woodland and the 30-40 cm level contained Early Woodland and Late Archaic diagnostics. The remaining levels (40-80 cm) were

Late Archaic. A total of 14,910 prehistoric artifacts were recovered during the 1981-82 investigations. A total of 3,316 historic items were also retained during the archaeological investigations. The historic artifacts were concentrated in the southernmost section of the study area. In historic times, the terrace formation was the scene of farming, milling, fishing, transportation, and electrical power generation. Between the river and US Route 222 in the immediate vicinity of the site the remains of the Maryland Canal (also called Susquehanna Canal) are to be found. The canal was incorporated by an act of Legislature in 1783 and operated from ca. 1808 to the 1860's. The construction of the Columbia and Port Deposit Railroad, which parallels the east side of Route 222, was carried out from 1866-1877. The completion of the dam and the effects of the Great Depression brought a down swing to the economy of the area. The historic component of the site was less than briefly treated in the site report; presumably it was considered to be insignificant.

Conowingo (18CE14) is a multicomponent site with occupation dating from the Late Archaic through the Late Woodland periods. A settlement model for the Conowingo site was suggested to be the seasonal (spring through summer) aggregation of micro-social units into a macro-social unit base camp. The presence of non-local items at the site suggested a series of exploitive procurement camps operating from the seasonal macro-social unit base camp. It was hypothesized that these micro-social units would move laterally both up and down the Susquehanna River and into the interior river drainages of the nearby creek and other tributary streams and drainages. For decades, the Conowingo Site has been a favorite spot for local relic hunters, has been damaged by construction activities, and undergoes constant erosion from natural processes. Some controlled archaeological investigations have been conducted at the site which provided substantial data regarding the site's chronological development and functionality. Artifact collections from the site can be found at the Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum, the Natural History Society of Maryland, the Maryland Historical Society, and the Harford County Chapter of ASM.