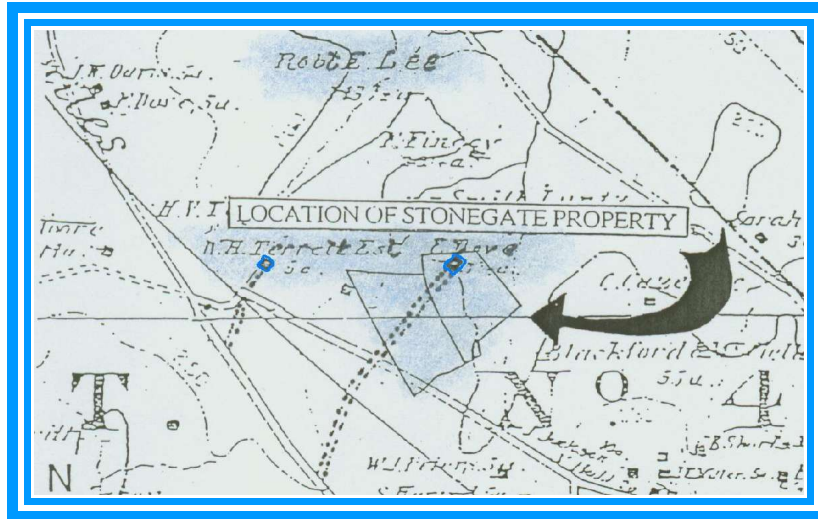


# STONEGATE DEVELOPMENT - PARCELS A AND B (44AX31, 44AX166, 44AX167)

*Report Summary by Shirley Scalley*



1894 Hopkins map showing location of Dove house within Project Area

## INTRODUCTION

From September 1992 through July 1993, International Archaeological Consultants conducted a preconstruction investigation of a 23-acre area in the western part of the City of Alexandria. Located along Braddock Road near Interstate 395, this area is now the site of 505 town homes, known as Stonegate, developed by Eakin/Youngtob Associates, Inc. The following archaeological sites were identified and investigated:

1) The C. J. Site (44AX31) located along the creek at the southern boundary of Parcel B that had been identified in 1979. The earlier studies revealed that a small group of individuals had occupied the area extensively during the Early Woodland Period (900 B.C. to 200 A.D.). Further investigations along the flood plain of the creek uncovered evidence

that prehistoric occupation had occurred there periodically over several thousand years.

2) A prehistoric site (44AX166) where projectile points had been manufactured in three separate areas during the Late Archaic Period (3000-1200 B.C.).

3) A historic site (44AX167) with the remains of one nineteenth and two twentieth century structures with an associated pig feeding area.

## HISTORY

About 15,000 years ago, as the Ice Age was coming to a close, the environment around what is now the City of Alexandria was far different than it is today. The climate was colder, more like that of Canada today; the vegetation was primarily jack pine and spruce trees; and the animals that roamed the area included moose, mastodons, elk, bison, and

even large bears. The ocean is estimated to have been 300 feet lower, and the East Coast would have been 50 to 75 miles farther to the east.

When the temperature began to rise and the glaciers melted, the ancient Potomac River became a vast waterway. It carried incredible amounts of water, sand, and gravel from the glaciers to the ocean. The ocean slowly rose, reaching its current level by about 3000 B.C., and the Chesapeake Bay was formed. As the river meandered from side to side over thousands of years, sand and gravel were deposited along the banks and at the mouth of the river. By the time the last glacier had melted, the river had dwindled to the size we know today. The Stonegate development sits on sand and gravel terraces left behind as the Potomac receded.

The first Virginians date to around 9500 B.C. Archaeological traces of them are rare. The rise in sea level inundated most of the areas they inhabited, and the number people was small. Since the first human habitation, the climate, vegetation, and animal populations varied until the environment we know today was established by about 1000 B.C.

These early people lived as hunters-gatherers for thousands of years. They are thought to have first lived in family groups. As their numbers increased, their cultures became more complex, and the size of the groups expanded. Eventually they established small hamlets and then villages where hundreds of people lived.

The earliest identifiable artifacts found at Stonegate were two projectile points on the terrace that were identified as lobate points from around 5500 B.C. No artifacts were found that could be associated with the points, which suggests that hunters lost them. Prehistoric occupation in the development area appears to have been limited and

sporadic, with the highest level of cultural occupation along the creek at the southern edge of the property. Native Americans ceased to occupy the area by the late 1600s.

By the mid-1600s, King Charles II had granted five million acres in the Northern Neck of Virginia to seven of his loyal supporters. After years of consolidation and inheritance, the property passed to Thomas Lord Fairfax and then was dispersed through purchase warrants and land patents. The Fairfax descendants sold the last of their properties in 1808.

The first landholder of record in the Stonegate area was William Henry Terrett, who acquired 982 acres in 1741. He was a man of wealth and social standing and acquired other properties in the area as well. After Terrett's ownership, the property changed owners a number of times. No record could be found of a building on the property, probably because of its rural location and because the soil was too poor and stony for cultivation.

The first record showing occupation of the area is the 1860 census, which lists Robert and Peggy Dove and their five children as residents. A structure is also shown on a map of the same period. The census indicates that Robert Dove came from Fairfax County and was an illiterate laborer. The Dove family was not entered on the tax rolls until 1927, when the name of Edward Dove, the grandson of Peggy Dove, appears.

The Dove family house was located on a narrow 3-acre strip of land at the southern edge of the Washington Forest, a large landholding owned by the Lee family. The property was subdivided into four smaller lots and distributed among the children of Peggy Dove after her death. The Dove home is reported to have burned in 1927, and Edward Dove and his wife moved to a place a short distance to the north on Leesburg Pike.

Remains of two other structures built a number of years after the fire were identified. They were a small outbuilding, perhaps a tool shed, with a single row of loose-laid cinder blocks for a foundation, and a single-story frame home with a tax value of \$300 in 1941. These structures were razed sometime between 1953 and 1960.

The property remained in the hands of a development corporation from 1945 until 1965, when Paul T. Stone acquired it. Mr. Stone died three years later, and the property remained in a trust until his youngest heir reached age 30. Eakin/Youngentob Associates, Inc. acquired the property in 1992.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

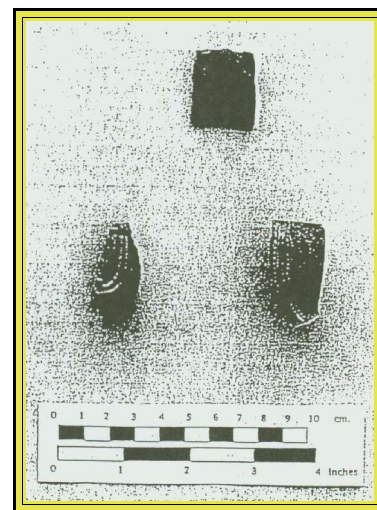
The historic site was located during a walkover of the area where traces of the former structures were observed and numerous ceramic sherds and bottle fragments were concentrated. The site had only a few visible signs of where the structures had formerly stood. Some of the plants that had been planted around the house many years ago were still growing and greatly assisted in defining the limits of the site. One of the structures, a house that had been built in the 1940s and destroyed by 1961, was located under a dense thicket of grapevine and Japanese honeysuckle.

Unlike the historic site, the prehistoric site had no visible indicators to define its presence. Shovel tests revealed its location. Artifacts recovered were lithic debitage, i.e., waste flakes from projectile point manufacture. These flakes are relatively abundant artifacts that indicate cultural activity in a given area and are often the best indicators of the site size.

After the two sites had been located and identified, work began to determine their

significance and whether intact cultural features, such as house foundations, post molds, or remains of hearths (campfires), were present.

Excavations at the historic site were conducted after a thorough examination of the historical documents. This research followed the ownership of the land from its original patent in the mid-1600s through to the current day. No archival or archaeological evidence was located that would indicate any occupation of the property until the mid-nineteenth century, when it was occupied by the Dove family.



Gunflint, Clay Pipe Fragments

Artifacts recovered include an eighteenth or nineteenth century gunflint, clay pipe stem and bowl fragments, nineteenth century bottle glass, and numerous early cut nails along with later wire nails. The artifacts were displaced and scrambled in all but one of the units excavated. Modern debris or artifacts, such as plastic doll boots and pearlware ceramics, were found along with eighteenth century artifacts. In one unit located against an undisturbed pier that supported a corner of the house, a number of artifacts and signs of the burning of the house in 1927 were found.

Further work on the historic site was not recommended or undertaken because the excavations indicated that two of the structures did not predate the 1940s and that the oldest house site had been seriously altered or disturbed during the razing of the structures sometime between 1953 and 1960.

Excavations in the prehistoric area identified three areas with high concentrations of lithic debitage and two possible hearth areas. Additional excavations did not uncover any other areas of interest. Because of the high density and undisturbed nature of the lithic concentrations, further work to completely excavate them, as well as to examine the possible hearth areas, was undertaken.

The excavation yielded thousands of artifacts, almost all debitage, i.e., lithic flakes produced by the reduction of quartz and quartzite cobbles to projectile points. Several preforms, or cobbles that had been partially reduced to projectile points, were found associated with the debitage. These preforms appear to have been discarded because they were defective. Two later stage bifaces, projectile points with both sides finished, were also recovered. Two halves of a projectile point found may represent a point broken in the final stages of manufacture. A white quartz awl/drill and a possible knife/scrapper were found near the lithic concentrations.

The results of the investigation of the two possible hearth areas were inconclusive. Both showed a concentration of stones, but no discoloration of the rocks that could be clearly attributed to burning. The cultural purpose, if any, of both of these clusters remains undetermined.

Two storm drain outfalls and a portion of the area designated for a proposed storm water retention pond, which are part of the infrastructure for the development, were also

investigated. These investigations revealed a cultural occupation along the 100-year flood plain of the creek at the southern boundary of the property.

Shovel tests along the southwest and northeast outfall corridors yielded a number of artifacts, primarily lithic flakes, a scraper, a biface fragment, and a projectile point fragment. Investigations in the southwest corner of the storm water retention pond yielded numerous artifacts from the Early Woodland Period, including lithic flakes, projectile points, and aboriginal ceramic sherds.

## CONCLUSION

The Stonegate development located on the western side of Alexandria represents one of the last large areas to be developed in the city. Cultural activity occurred on the site as early as 5500 B.C., and the principal prehistoric occupation of the area occurred along the flood plain of the creek next to an abundant source of water. An interpretive station is planned to explain the function of the storm water retention pond, and the entire area has been set aside as an archaeological preserve and nondisturbance area. This will save for generations an invaluable source of information about the prehistory of the city and its earliest inhabitants.

The historical records have provided little information about how the property was utilized, if at all, by mostly absentee landowners. Research on the members of the Dove family met with limited success, because the family was characteristic of rural residents living on the western side of Alexandria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They seemed to remain virtually anonymous, going about their work and raising families while neither paying taxes nor voting. The property may be best characterized by the comments of Samuel M.

Janney, who traveled by stagecoach through the area in 1854:

*In passing through that unfrequented part of Fairfax, which lies between the Little River Road and the Middle Turnpike [within which territory the Stonegate tract lies], the traveller finds himself in a wilderness of pines and journeys for miles without seeing a single habitation. In a distance of twelve miles which we travelled through this district, we saw but two*

*or three cabins, and nothing that is entitled to the appellation of a comfortable dwelling for a civilized man.*

[Wrenn, Tony P., Falls Church: History of a Virginia Village, 1972:12.]

***This summary is based upon a 1993 report by Robert M. Adams with contributing authors Martha W. McCartney, Michael F. Johnson, and Lawrence E. Moore.***