

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES—COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Cape Henlopen Archaeological District

AND/OR COMMON

7S-D-8, 9, 22, 27, 29, 30 and 34

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Lewes

1

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Delaware

10

Sussex

003

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT	USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multiple Ownership – See Continuation Sheet

STREET & NUMBER

CITY/TOWN

__VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Sussex County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

The Circle

CITY/TOWN

Georgetown

STATE

Delaware

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Cape Henlopen Comprehensive Survey conducted by Section of Archaeology, Division of Historical & Cultural Affairs

DATE

1975-76

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Island Field Archaeological Museum and Research Center

CITY/TOWN

Box 126, R. D. 2, Milford

STATE

Delaware 19963

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State of Delaware
Department of Natural Resources and
Environmental Control
Tatnall Building
Dover, Delaware 19901

United States of America
Department of Defense
Engineering Command
Naval Base
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19112

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) APPEARANCE

Extensive geomorphological studies (Kraft 1971) indicate that this is an area of rapidly changing coastal features that have formed and changed in response to the Holocene marine transgression. The surveyed area was open water prior to 1200 B.C. The ancestral Cape Henlopen was located a considerable distance south and east of its present location. A combination of Atlantic longshore drift bringing sediment from the south and the rising sea level produced a movement of the Cape to the northwest, eventually reaching its present position. During this 3,000-year period, the Cape initially “entrapped” a section of the Delaware Bay forming a shallow sub estuary in the area of the present Lewes Creek Marsh. This movement of the Cape from south to north produced a consecutive and parallel series of sand spits that increase in age of formation from north to south. The bay slowly silted in as its outlets to the ocean were closed so that, at present, the area is dominantly tidal marsh with the ancient spits elevated above this level. The areas north of the district nomination have formed since European contact and, hence, do not contain any prehistoric sites. Our surveys have verified this. The implication of such for archaeological study are discussed under Item 8-Significance.

The Cape Henlopen Archaeological District is a discontinuous series of discrete shell middens of varying sizes and cultural affiliation. The shell is mostly clam and oyster with cultural material in the form of lithics, ceramics, and bone present in varying quantities. They range in temporal placement from approximately 500 B.C. to 1600 A.D. The middens are located on several elevated sand spits that project from the Atlantic coastline westward into the Lewes Creek Marsh. At the time of occupation, these spits projected into a shallow sub estuary of the Delaware Bay very similar to the modern Rehoboth and Indian River Bays to the south. Most of the occupation on these spits appears to have occurred at their western extremities. It is possible, however, that middens farther to the east have been covered by the actively moving dune complex.

The present condition of these sites is variable. In the south, sites 7S-D9 and 7S-D-22 have been altered to some extent. Site 7S-D-9 has been traversed by a power line right-of-way since the 1940's that effectively destroyed approximately ten percent of the site. In addition, some early archaeological work and limited “pot hunting” has altered a few areas, but these disturbed areas are readily discernible. The midden itself is continuous within its 200-meter-long boundaries and varies in thickness from several shells thick to 20 cm. Some wind erosion is occurring along the power line right-of-way, foot paths, and blowouts. At least one-half of the site is multi-component, in the Woodland Period. The primary component is represented by the Mockley ceramic series dated elsewhere in Delaware from 200-330 A.D. Some faunal remains, dominantly turtle carapace and fish, were recovered in the thicker parts of the midden. Approximately eighty percent of the site remains for further investigation. The exposed portions of the site D-22 have been subjected to heavy wind erosion. The site is severely deflated with scattered shell and artifacts appearing in an area 30 meters in diameter. Some grasses and small shrubs are growing on part of the site. Early excavations (Omwake 1965) indicate that the midden had been up to 20 cm. thick in some areas, but this was not the case in the exposed areas during the Section of Archaeology survey in August of 1976.

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It is probable that the actively moving coastal dune complex has covered a large portion of the site. There are indications that D-22 and D-9 may have been a single continuous site occupying one of the sand spits prior to being separated by the advancing dunes and modern disturbance. Culturally, the site is multi-component, specifically the Middle and Late Woodland time periods.

Site 7S-D-29 is heavily wooded with large pine and oak with an understory of poison ivy and blueberry. A woods road runs half the length of the spit, but has not damaged the site. Based on our limited test excavations and surface reconnaissance, the midden appears to be more or less continuous for at least 300 meters. The extreme western end of the site, however, is isolated from the main spit by a small stretch of marsh. Some of the shell midden continues under the present marsh surface in this area. The western "island" has been subjected in a small area to further intense "pot hunting" activities. Several undisturbed areas do remain here for future testing. The main portion of the site is virtually intact and is the largest and best preserved site in the district. Testing in both areas revealed abundant debitage, faunal material, and some ceramics of the Townsend Series, as well as an unknown ceramic type. Based on very limited test excavation, the western extreme of D-29 appears to be early Late Woodland (ca. 1100 A.D.), while the remaining portion of the site is late Middle Woodland (ca. 800 A.D.).

Site 7S-D-30 consists of four discrete shell middens on the same spit. Area A, on the western end of the spit, is partially overgrown with scrub pine, while two areas are exposed. It is 30 meters x 40 meters in surface area. Wind erosion is moderate in the exposed locations. The midden varies from a surface scatter of shells and debitage in the open areas, to a 20 cm. thick deposit in the vegetation. Cores, flakes, fire-cracked rock, and faunal debris were recovered but the cultural affiliation is uncertain. A ceramic pipe stem located in the midden appears to be of a Late Woodland style. Area B is severely deflated and only three flakes were found on the surface, in an area approximately 20 meters x 20 meters. The midden does appear to be better preserved in the adjacent vegetation. Area C was tested with abundant debitage and a few Late Woodland ceramic sherds (Rappahannock Fabric Impressed) recovered. The midden ranges from a surface scatter to 25 cm. thick near the center of the spit. It is in the larger shell concentration in the complex at 60 meters x 30 meters. Area D, the only site on Navy land found during the survey, consisted of a thin shell scatter with isolated patches of thicker midden covering about 35 square meters. The cultural affiliation appears to be Late Woodland, based on the two body sherds of Rappahannock Fabric Impressed ceramics (ca. 1000-1600 A.D.). Many relatively undisturbed areas remain in the 7S-D-30 complex for future work.

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A small shell midden, 7S-D-34 is located on a small brush-covered rise in the marsh, several hundred meters to the north D-30. The site is bisected by a mosquito control ditch and is apporxmiately 60 meters square in the area. The midden is 25 cm. thick in the center and contained some bone fragments. No lithics or ceramics were found.

Sites 7S-D-8, A, B, & C and 7S-D-27 are the remaining parts of a once-larger shell midden. The “Lewes Sand Flats” sites referred to a large number of shell heaps once located in the area. James Leidy reported this site on the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia in 1865 and it was again referenced by Francis Jordan in a Wilmington, Delaware newspaper in 1888. During historic times, much of the shell was mined for roads and limekilns. In this century, the Lewes town dump and subsequent sand pitting operations have obliterated all evidence of prehistoric occupation in the central part of this area. Sites D-8, A & B are the best preserved examples of the prehistoric occupation. Area A is 46 meters x 14 meters x 15 centimeters and is culturally very Late Woodland (ca. 1400-1600 A.D.). The site is covered with scrub vegetation. Area B, though severely deflated over most of its area, contained sufficient cultural material to place it in the very Late Woodland as well. Area C is located sightly to the north and is a very thin and scattered shell deposit containing several flakes. 7S-D-27 was not definitely relocated during our survey. Earlier collections by our office indicate that it, too, is a Late Woodland site, though with an early historic component as well. Together, the D-8 and D-27 complex represent the northernmost sites in the district nomination.

All sites, with the exception of 7S-D-30, Area D, are on the State of Delaware lands in or adjacent to the Cape Henlopen State Park.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE—CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	ART	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	COMMERCE	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1800-1899	COMMUNICATION	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
1900-		INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 500 B.C. – 1600 A.D.

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

The proceeding cultural and geomorphological description of the Cape Henlopen Archaeological District provides the basis for its significance. There are three primary areas of significance for this complex. Initially, these sites provide the most complete remaining example of prehistoric adaptation to Delaware's rapidly shifting coastal ecology. From south to north, sites 7S-D-9 to 7S-D-8 represent a temporal sequence adapting to the formation and changing morphology of the Lewes Creek sub estuary. Seasonal occupation in the summer and early fall is suggested by the faunal remains, though further analysis is necessary. The faunal and floral preservation in these middens is such that a great deal of subsistence information is obtainable. More extensive sampling at some of the better preserved middens can also contribute to the problems of temporal placement and settlement type.

The process of coastal change in the Cape Henlopen area also provides unique possibilities for cross-checking established cultural sequences for southern Delaware. Assuming that the spits on which the sites lie formed in sequence throughout time from south to north, and geological evidence supports this, the sites should show a time trend in the same direction. Basal dates for the southern middens are near 500 B.C., while those for the northernmost middens are around 1600 A.D. The entire cultural sequence spanning this 2100-year period should be represented in the district for both the study of changing adaptation through this period, as well as establishing a local culture sequence. A myriad of research problems come to mind. How, for example, did the introduction of horticulture documented for this period in the East affect coastal utilization? How did the prehistoric peoples take advantage of this newly-formed resource area circa 1200 B.C., and what were the consequences of the eventual silting in of this lagoon towards the end of the prehistoric period? In addition, such findings can be neatly compared with similar studies in the west side of the Lewes Creek Marsh at the Wolfe Neck site (a National Register nomination).

The Cape Henlopen Archaeological District demonstrates the utility of the multidisciplinary approach to archaeological problems. The dynamic interplay between studies of coastal geomorphology on the one hand and archeological studies on the other have been mutually beneficial in the understanding of the history of this complex area on Delaware's coast.

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Omwake, H. Geiger “The Lighthouse site, 7S-D-22, Cape Henlopen, Lewes, Delaware”,
In Bulletin of the Archaeological Society of Delaware, Number 4, New
Series.

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UTM References:

E	18	_____;	_____
F	18	_____;	_____
G	18	_____;	_____
H	18	_____;	_____
I	18	_____;	_____
J	18	_____;	_____
K	18	_____;	_____

RESTRICTED INFORMATION