

## **Fieldwork at the Dowden's Ordinary Site**

The Dowden's Ordinary Site was an inn or hotel that is located on the west side of Frederick Road in Clarksburg, Maryland. The inn was popular for travelers coming from Washington, D.C. to Frederick, Maryland or those traveling south from Pennsylvania along Route 355 or Frederick Road.

Plans are underway to widen Route 355 in Clarksburg to alleviate some of the traffic brought into Clarksburg due to the current housing market. This development has the potential of to affect the Dowden's Ordinary archaeological site and so the MNCPPC-MC was investigating the area to locate the remains of the Inn and determine the site parameters.

### **Methodology**

Workshop participants were given the opportunity to excavate at the Dowden's Ordinary site for one and a half days during each course. Previous investigations by the ASM revealed a large stone in one of the trenches which park archaeologists thought could mark a part of the foundation to the Inn. The purpose of our investigation was to determine if we can find the foundation of the Inn. As a result, Trench 5 was excavated perpendicular to the stone in the existing Trench 3.

Previous investigations by the ASM also uncovered a trash pit containing oyster shell and other artifacts on the opposite side of the site. We laid an additional trench (Trench 6) adjacent to the trash pit to determine if we could find evidence associated with the Inn. Excavators skimmed off the root mat with their shovels and troweled the rest of the soil in their units. All artifacts were collected and features were mapped, photographed and drawn to scale.

### **Findings from Seminar I**

Excavations by teachers during Workshop I revealed stone and brick feature running East–West along the southern end of Trench 6 adjacent to the trash pit. Bricks and stones appeared in an orderly fashion (unlike much of the rubble layers in the site) suggesting the excavators may have come down on a possible foundation or fireplace. Excavation unit 9 was placed directly south of the brick feature in an attempt to follow it out. Bricks and stones were placed in an orderly manor across the unit and were about the size of stone fireplace. The feature was mapped to scale and photographed.

Trench 5 ran perpendicular between Trench 3 and Trench 4 and was excavated. Excavators shoveled the root mat off and troweled the soil underneath. Large stones which may have helped support the house were identified and pedestaled in the trench. Excavators troweled out a rubble layer and under the rubble, lay wood floor boards running in a general north – south direction along the east half of the trench. The boards

were cut, relatively flat and contained iron nails in the building material associated with the wood floor. The wood planks were burned in places and we found black kaolin pipe stems in the floor in the north east corner of the trench. It is suggested that these boards represent the interior of the Inn because the floor boards run in a general north – south direction. Previous archival research identified floor boards running in a general east-west direction as the front porch of the Ordinary. Photographs and drawings were done at each level and features were drawn to scale and mapped.

Because we found the floor to the Inn in the excavation, we decided to open up the adjacent unit located east of Trench 5 (Trench 7, later called excavation units 7A and 7B). Excavators shoveled the root mat off and troweling the soil layer under the root mat.

Artifacts found in both trenches dated to as early as 1762 with the evidence of Creamware and thinly potted salt glazed stoneware. Investigators also found porcelains, utilitarian earthenware and stoneware, and butchered bone. Large iron stakes were present in the floor identified in Trench 5.

Eleven teachers attended the class and excavated for one and half days over the course of the workshop. Teachers washed and bagged the artifacts for three hours. They were very excited about being a part of the Dowden's Ordinary investigation.

It is suggested that future excavations follow the brick/ stone feature out in Trench 6 by putting in an additional trench directly south of the Trench 6. Future excavations should also consider focusing on finishing Trench 7 to see if the floor continues and if we can identify the limits of the structure. This should expose more of the burned wood floor that I believe to be the Dowden's Ordinary.

## **Findings from Seminar II**

During the second seminar we continued to excavate Trench 7, dividing it in half (i.e., 7A and 7B, running north and south, respectively). Excavators digging in Trench 7A and 7B did not find the extension of the wood floor from Trench 5 as anticipated. We opened excavation unit 8 directly north of Trench 7 and northeast of Trench 5. The purpose of excavating the unit was to see if we might find an extension of the floor to the Inn. We identified a dark brown-black stain in excavation unit 8 which may be residue from floor boards. We also found a very sizable stone adjacent to the stain which we believe may be the remains of a foundation support.

Excavators also opened a new excavation unit south of the Trench 6 which we called excavation unit 9. The purpose of opening this unit was to see if we might find more of the stone feature found in Trench 6 (i.e., possible fireplace). Excavators in unit 9 came down on stones running east-west along the northern end of the excavation unit. This is an extension of the feature found in Trench 6 or one of the fireplaces located on opposite ends of the Dowden's Ordinary house. A variety of architectural artifacts were recovered from the site including brick, stone, wood and metal. In addition both refined

and utilitarian ceramics were identified, as well as butchered bone, bottle and flat glass, as well as a variety of other domestic artifacts.

In summary, teachers worked for two days in the field at the Dowden's Ordinary Site during Seminar II. A total of twenty-nine people including: twenty-seven educators, four archaeologists and two ASM volunteers participated on this project from June 20, 2005 to July 26, 2005. Participants in the Integrating Archaeology into Culture and History Program found the floor, a possible support stone and a fireplace from Michael Ashton Dowden's Inn that was in operation as early as 1753 in Clarksburg, Maryland.

Source:

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