

The Dowden's Ordinary Archaeological Site, MN-CPPC of Montgomery County, Maryland

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- III. History of Clarksburg, Maryland
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The Site you will be excavating is called the Dowden's Ordinary Site, owned and operated by Michael Ashton Dowden as early as ca. 1754.

Common Names to look for in the literature are:

Dowden's Ordinary/ Tavern/ Inn/ Public House of Entertainment
Sholl's Tavern/ Inn
Shael's Tavern/ Inn
Hammer Hill

Introduction

The Dowden's Ordinary Site is an old 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.

Plans were on the books to widen Route 355 (as it is commonly known) in Clarksburg to alleviate some of the traffic brought into Clarksburg due to the housing market. This development has the potential of to affect the Dowden's Ordinary archaeological site and therefore, as is stated in the current regulations, archaeologists given time to test for the potential of archaeological sites and finds, and to ensure that no cultural resources will be harmed as a result.

In the archaeological investigation of Dowden's Ordinary you will review what we know about the structure and the background research done before any archaeological investigation. Next, you will learn about the field methodology used to attempt to find and document the site, learn about the features identified and the artifacts that were retrieved from the site. Collectively, these data are used to create an archaeological interpretation.

The Dowden's Ordinary Structure

As is true with many Inns, Dowden's Ordinary was built of log construction, covered with a 7 ½ to 9 inch saw poplar or oak weatherboarding, and laid with an overlap. Dowden's Ordinary was one and one-half stories tall with gabled dormers and a shingled roof. These buildings were often twenty to thirty-six feet wide by twenty-four to fifty-four feet long with a covered porch. Dowden's Ordinary had two fireplaces, located on either end of the building and a separate kitchen for cooking called a **closeby** (Cissel 1987: 4).

A comparison of Inns in Montgomery County lists some of the items typically contained in these public houses. For example, in one Inn in Clarksburg, the owner had 22 wine glasses, 24 custard cups, and two mahogany card tables (Cissel 1987: 282).

Historic Context

Archival data says that Michael Ashton Dowden was born on September 3, 1737. At some point he became a large landowner in lower Frederick County, Maryland where he owned several tracts including Hammer Hill which was a forty acre parcel of land on Frederick Road patented to a Michael Ashton Dowden on November 10, 1752. According to Cutter (2001) the plat called Hammer Hill lies adjacent to the property entitled, "Moneys Worth Confirmed" which may have also been owned by Michael Dowden (MCHS Files).

While these data suggest Dowden was a rather young man when he owned Dowden's Ordinary and Hammer Hill, we do know that as an adult by 1752, Michael Ashton Dowden owned several tracts of land including the Ordinary on Hammer Hill or Money's Worth Confirmed.

These properties were located in Clarksburg, Maryland, near **Wafford's Branch** which flows into **Little Senaca** and was located on the Fredericktown-Georgetown Road which the traders called the **Old Sinnaca Indian Trail**.

Dowden established the Dowden's Ordinary in 1753 because as a landowner who lived along Route 355 he routinely received visitors or travelers on route from Washington to Frederick or Frederick to Washington and he decided he might as well establish his home as an Inn and profit from his position.

Clarksburg was located approximately 15 to 20 miles south of Frederick and north of Rockville. Therefore, it was common for travelers coming from Washington, D.C. to make the days ride from the City to Rockville, where they would stay at the Owen's Inn and make the second days journey (another 15-20 miles) to Clarksburg and stay at Dowden's Ordinary before moving on to Frederick.

Dowden petitioned the Frederick Courts for a license to operate an Inn in 1754. The hotel was designed as an L-shaped log building with two fireplaces, multiple dormers and seventeen rooms. Dowden was open for business in the spring of 1754.

Dowden's Ordinary provided food and shelter for travelers and operated as a social center for the town. The local magistrate often held court in the Inns. Stagecoaches stopped twice a week at Dowden's thus, bringing mail and news from Washington or outlying communities (Montgomery County Historical Society Files March 2005).

General Braddock stayed at the Inn while his troops camped on the adjacent hillside in Clarksburg from April 13 through April 15, 1755. On April 17, 1755 many of the troop's tents were blown down from the snow storm and by the following day the troops marched into Fredericktown (Martz 1954).

The British attempted to impose taxes on colonists and proprietors, like Michael Dowden. When the Dowden and other merchants rebelled and refused to pay the tax, it resulted in a court action eventually called the Repudiation Act of 1765 (Martz 1954).

In 1760 Michael Dowden deeded an adjacent parcel called Dowden's Luck to his son and daughter-in-law, John and Mary Dowden. Michael Dowden died shortly after and Hammer Hill and Dowden's Ordinary was passed onto his son, John Dowden.

John Dowden operated the hotel through the Revolutionary War. However, the onslaught of the depression immediately following the Revolutionary War caused John Dowden to close the hotel and change it into a tavern (Martz 1954). The Dowden's Ordinary then turned into more of a gathering place and became a meeting place for groups, including the Sons of Liberty who convened there beginning in 1770 (MCHS Files).

In Michael Dowden's last will and testimony he left property called the Harmitage to son in law, Phillip Coffee, a tract called Lucksall to James Coffee, and to his daughter, Dorcas he left a tract called Black Oak thicket, as well as her choice of horses, a cow and his dresser. Finally, to his namesake Ashford Dowden Michael Dowden left Hammer Hill (directly adjacent to Dowden's Ordinary). M. A. Dowden Jr. is listed in the Sugarland Hundred in 1777.

Sometime after 1770, possibly as late as the 1780's John Dowden sold the hotel and tavern to Basil Roberts (n.d.). John Dowden was still registered as a tavern keeper in 1780

Basil Roberts changed Dowden's Ordinary to Robert's Tavern. Stage coaches that traveled through Clarksburg would stop and passengers would stay at Robert's Tavern.

By the early nineteenth century, Basil Roberts sold Hammer Hill and Dowden's Ordinary to Frederick Scholl. By the 1820's Catawba grapes which were used to make Catawba wine were being sold by Jeremiah Orme in a Georgetown Grocery (Cutter 2001). Scholl took cuttings and planted them at Scholl's tavern which he turned into wine to sell at the tavern.

Scholl operated the tavern for years before passing it on to his son, Jacob Scholl. A picture by architect and planner, Benjamin Latrobe on October 10, 1811, shows the Scholl's Tavern (i.e., Dowden's Ordinary) on the top of a hill adjacent to a group of people looking at Haley's Comet and an elephant (Papers of Benjamin Latrobe 1811).

Jacob Scholl sold the Ordinary to Leonard D. Shaw. Shaw changed the name to “Shaw Hill.” Shaw built a blacksmith shop and converted the rooms in the tavern to apartments which he then rented to local farmers and workers (Martz 1954; Cutter 2001).

By this time Hammer Hill had been sold to George W. Hutton and he hired Shaw to manage his farm and labor (Cutter 2001). Shaw needed to find a way to ensure inexpensive labor. It is suggested that he used Inn for the purposes of maintaining a labor force. Shaw converted the tavern into living space by 1880 because by that time, farm laborers such as; John Snowden, John Porter, William Porter, and John Wims were living on the premises.

In 1891 James Edward and Sarah Isabella Henderson Deets bought Hammer Hill while James finished medical school at the University of Maryland. The couple built a Queen Anne style house on Hammer Hill by 1899. Dr. Deets bequeathed Hammer Hill to their son, Edward and his wife, Nelle. It is likely that Edward died in the house since the couple owned it until 1963 when Nelle sold the property to the Atherly family.

During the Deets’ tenure on Hammer Hill, James Titus Bennett and his two sons lived at the Inn in 1906. Later, Jack Mason and Will Brown and his family also lived in Dowden’s Ordinary and by 1910 Asa Hyatt Welsh operated the Dowden’s Ordinary as a distiller and grocery shop.

In 1915 the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) placed a large boulder on the edge of the property next to Route 355, Frederick Road to mark the location of the Dowden’s Ordinary in Clarksburg. This stone was placed on the property in May 1911 when the Inn was still standing (Washington Star May 11, 1915). The dilapidated tavern was torn down in 1924.

What are Inns and what functions to they serve

These Inns and taverns provided a place for people traveling between Frederick and Washington to stay for the night or to receive a hot meal. However, taverns served many functions in addition to food and lodging. They provided the community with a place to socialize. Locals would frequent the Inn to receive the latest news from Washington or from the local community and they acted as a political and financial center for the community (Cissel 1987: 280). Inn keepers, like Michael Dowden found themselves in the role of acting as judge where they could witness legal documents such as bills of sale and wills.

Only the wealthiest of landowners would have owned an Inn since they had to have financial backing to obtain tavern licenses. Strict rules governed the licensing of Inns by the State Assembly. In fact the location, site, and the accommodations offered were established by the government. For example, the 1780 Act Regulating Taverns was one of several acts guiding Inns, so that an Ordinary located within the county seat had to guarantee six good feather beds with sufficient covering and 10 stables. While taverns in

the rural area could offer three feather beds and stabling for six horses (Cissel 1987: 280). These laws also governed the liquors served and the prices charged for food and drink.

Research on tavern licenses between 1750 and 1800 in Montgomery and Lower Frederick Counties reveals that many of these Inns were located 15 to 20 miles apart. These Inns ran along the Rockville Pike (then known as the Frederick to Georgetown corridor) or other large crossroads like Darnstown Road (Route 28). Travelers could stop and stay the night at Inns in Rockville and in Clarksburg.

By 1844 passenger mail stops were added in Tennallytown, Middlebrook and Hyattstown. Mail couriers made the twenty-two hour trip between Frederick and Rockville during the day and ran the turnpike to Washington during the evening (Cissel 1987: 283). The Revolutionary War was followed by a depression causing financial depression among consumers. Shortage of cash made financial ventures like owning and operating a tavern a risky business. Data from Cissel's study on tavern history suggests that this had a direct correlation on the number of new taverns that opened during the 1780's and 1790's (1987:286).

How does this fit within the larger historic context of Clarksburg, Maryland

Clarksburg was originally a trading post where peddlers from Pennsylvania would travel down to its crossroads and set up camp to sell their wares as early as 1730. The town was situated on a forty-acre land grant named Hammer Hill that was surveyed for Dowden in ca. 1750.

By ca.1780 John Clark built his house on the site of the original Indian trading post. Clark was the son of William Clark who came from Harford County, Maryland where he married Ann Archey in October 1781. The couple traveled to Clarksburg where they built one of the first houses in Clarksburg. John Clark was the Deacon of his church in 1792, as well as a prominent merchant. John was appointed to Justice of the Peace on April 6, 1798 and eventually became County Commissioner in 1799 (Sween 1954).

In the 1790s the town of Clarksburg was surveyed and laid out into lots along Route 355. The town was formally named after Clark by 1800 (Sween 1954). The first Post Office in Clarksburg was owned and operated by John Clark and opened for business in 1800. By 1800 Clarksburg had four general stores, two hotels, the academy of learning, a printer, and its own town band (Soderberg 1992).

A drawing by Benjamin Latrobe entitled, Clarksburg and Sugarloaf on August 2, 1810 shows the rolling hills and community of Clarksburg and Sugarloaf Mountain off in the distance (Papers of Benjamin Latrobe 1810).

Benjamin Browning was one of the first blacksmith in Clarksburg; Dr. Horace Wilson was the local physician and Luther B. King operated a distillery and settled near Clarksburg in 1825. The main industries included leather tanning, fertilizer production, blacksmithing, carpentry and winemaking.

By 1850 Clarksburg was rumored to be the third largest city in Montgomery County, behind Rockville and Poolesville. By 1873 the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad was built, but the location they chose was too far west for Clarksburg to take advantage of the prosperity the railroad brought to rural communities. Towards the end of the 1880s and 1890s, Clarksburg began to decline. After the turn of the century the tanneries and fertilizer businesses that once made Clarksburg prosperous also closed (Soderberg 1992). Dowden's Ordinary was in poor condition by 1915 (Washington Star 1915). However, many families continued to live in the rural community so that by ca. 1909 a two-room school house was built (this was later placed on the National Register in 1975).

Inns like Dowden's Ordinary provided a means for towns like Clarksburg to offer services to travelers and bring in business. Whether as a hotel, tavern or as part of the Hammer Hill farm, it operated as a local business in the small town Clarksburg, Maryland. While during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Clarksburg thrived as a place to stop, stay the night and get a warm meal and some company between what was a long trip between Washington and Frederick, Maryland. The growth of new transportation mechanisms like the Canal and the B&O Railroad and their decision to locate in other parts of the County meant Clarksburg would return to the sleepy little rural town it once was through much of the twentieth century.

The Archaeological Fieldwork performed at the Dowden's Ordinary

A number of testing strategies were completed in an attempt to find the footprint of the Inn. For example, archaeologists completed a phase I, also known as a controlled surface collection or survey. The survey was performed within the project area at the Dowden's Ordinary Site. A number of 1X1 test excavation units were completed at points across the site to get a better look at the deposition of the site and find the foundation. In 2005 a trench was placed across the site, hoping to find the foundation.

Surveys and excavations were performed by the Maryland National-Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) and Montgomery College (MC) with the assistance of the Archaeological Society of Maryland (ASM). Soil was screened in a ¼" mesh screen which is consistent with industry standards. Artifacts were bagged and inventoried and sent to the laboratory for processing.

Laboratory Processing

Artifacts were cleaned, dried, labeled, stored in archival bags and stored in archival boxes. Artifacts were identified and preliminary dates were given to some of the typed artifacts to give the archaeologist in the field an idea of what date range they may have come across and what occupation they may be observing. Artifacts are in the process of being cataloged and entered into the computer.

Artifact (Material Culture) Data

The material culture excavated from the Dowden's Ordinary site includes a variety of food consumption and serving vessels and bottles, faunal remains suggesting something about dietary practice, as well as fragments of buttons, hardware, and a coin. These objects range in date from ca. 1740 creamware fragments from the plates and bowls some of Dowden's guests may have eaten on to later dating pearlware (ca. 1750), to annular utilitarian wares, late dating porcelains, and yellow wares.

Ceramics are analyzed by first identifying the paste (body), the glaze and decoration. Some simple tests can help to tell the analysts what the ceramic was probably used for and pattern books help to provide key information to date the ceramic.

Some of the ceramics represent fragments of food serving bowls signifying the use of ceramics to prepare meals, while many decorative refined wares were also present (Table 1). Bottle glass fragments indicate the presence of beer and wine bottles, as well as clear bottle fragments which may have been used to store liquor. These findings are consistent with what you would expect to find at a tavern or hotel site. The fact that we found creamware indicates we may have retrieved some of the material used back in the day when Michael A. Dowden owned the Ordinary. Interestingly enough, the archaeologist did retrieve one salt glazed stoneware fragment. Salt glazed stone ware was the first refined ceramic to be used among the early colonists in the New World, making this a very exciting find to have at Dowden's Ordinary.

Given the location of the site, in Montgomery County, at least a day's ride from the Chesapeake Bay, it is not surprising to find artifacts dating back to 1740. Dowden may not have had the opportunity to purchase the latest ceramic style given his location in rural Montgomery County.

Only a few faunal remains were identified from the testing phase of the investigation. These artifacts include a sheep/goat long bone, a pig long bone and a small mammal long bone. Each of the long bones were butchered using earlier butchery techniques (and they were not sawn which would date the bone to post 1863). For example, the bones were butchered vertically, down the center of the fragment and they were butchers at the epiphyses (ends of the bones).

Note that artifacts are first broken down into types which date the ceramic. Then the archaeologist identifies the decoration (and the components of the motif) to get a better idea of the date of manufacture. The vessel fragment is also identified because it can help you date the object and determine the function of the ceramic. This area of archaeology presents many opportunities for young students to learn about culture by learning how to read the artifacts.

Feature Data

Archaeologists found one trash pit (or feature) at the Dowden's Ordinary Site. The trash pit yielded a wide range of artifacts ranging from the 1760s to the 1770s to date.

Table 1: Some Artifacts from Dowden's Ordinary

Ceramic Type & Function	Vessel Fragment & Decoration	Date Range
Slipware, Utilitarian ware	Rim, bowl	n.d.
Handpainted Pearlware	3 colors, floral	1795-1815
Shell edged, Pearlware	Plates & Hollowware	1780-1830 if incised 1800-1835 general
Hand painted Pearlware	Rim, bowl Lines, dots, flora center	1795-1815
Blue Transferprint Whiteware		Ca. 1828
Redware	Glazed, undecorated	n.d.
Many Pearlware	Flatware, Hollowware	1779-1830
Creamware		1762-1820
Painted Creamware	Geometric Pattern Blue w/Black (squares)	1785-1815
Painted Porcelain		n.d.
Whiteware	Hand painted blue motif	1820-present
Wine & Beer Bottles	No real diagnostics	1898 if machine manufactured Could be blown in mold

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