

Report of an Archeological Investigation
of a Site Designated as TOWNSEND II,
Situated on Canary Creek, near Lewes, Del.

H. G. OMWAKE

Greenwood, Delaware

January, 1954

Privately distributed to members of
the Sussex Archeological Association.

Report of An Archeological Investigation of A Site,
Designated As Townsend II, On Canary Creek, near
Lewes, Delaware

H. G. Omwake

Situated on the north side of the road which leads from Murray's Corners to Westcoat's Corners, near Lewes, Delaware, the site designated as Townsend II represents another of the scattered small occupation areas which occur on both sides of Canary Creek, extending inland from the larger habitation concentrations of the Russell, Derrickson, and Miller-Toms sites. It was discovered during the course of our exploratory surface survey of the eastern side of the creek above tide-water and was investigated on April 6 and 7, 1953, by the author, accompanied by Mr. Carl Hill, instructor of social studies at the Greenwood School, and Mr. Vincent Lobo, a student. The site derives its name from the fact that it is the second archeological station to be discovered on lands under the control of the J.G. Townsend, Jr., and Sons Company interests. It should not be confused with the original and far more extensive Townsend village site which was explored several years ago under the sponsorship of the Sussex Archeological Association.

Location Townsend II is situated on an elevated knoll on the eastern side of Canary Creek, just north of the black-top road which forms a cut-off from Kingshighway at Murray's Corners to the Lewes-Milford highway at Westcoat's Corners. Kingshighway follows a land bridge which separates the Potex (Wolfe's) Creek drainage system, along which the original Townsend site is located, from that of Canary Creek. The cut-off road crosses Canary Creek about midway between Murray's and Westcoat's Corners.

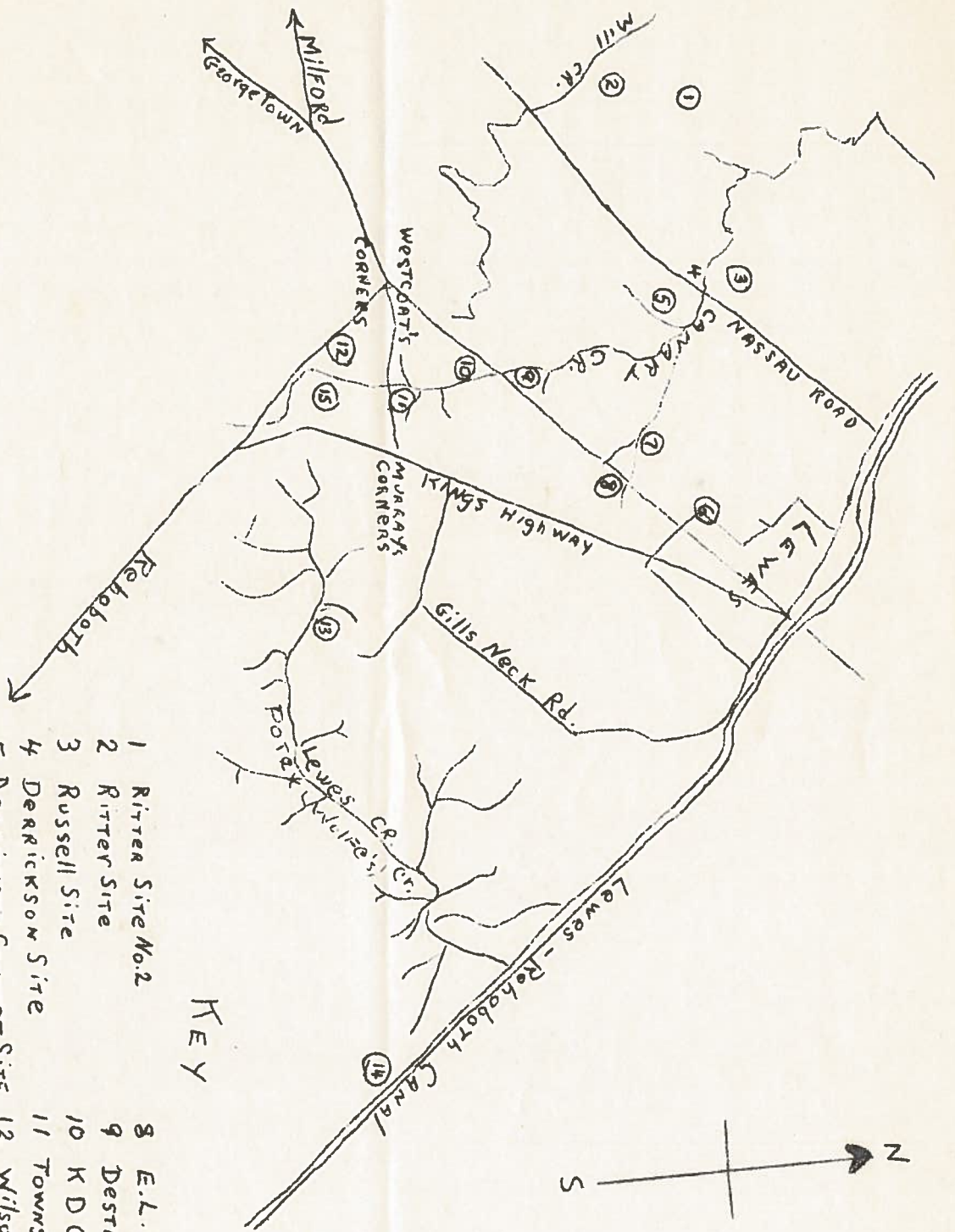
The location of Townsend II (number 11) in respect to the larger sites and the scattered small concentrations in the Lewes area and to the original Townsend site (number 13) is indicated on the accompanying map.

Procedure Investigation consisted of probing for shell refuse pits, determining their location, fixing suitable permanent markers for the site, making a scale map on which all the pits and the permanent markers were indicated, and exploring each of the pits.

Four shell pits, three of them concentrated closely together, were discovered. Following removal of the top soil, initial entry into each was made from the western side in order to secure the maximum light advantage from the passing sun. Excavation was carried forward by trowelling the refuse horizontally and vertically. The location of each of the pits in right angle respect to an arbitrary axis run due north from a telephone pole along the cut-off road to a permanent galvanized iron marker driven into the wooded area beyond the northern limits of the site, represented as stake A, is shown on the accompanying map.

Features Each of the four refuse pits was considered a separate feature of the site and was assigned a number corresponding with the order of discovery.

Pit #1 was excavated by Hill and Lobo. Surface appearance, following removal of the top soil whose average depth was eight inches,



KEY

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Ritter Site No.2 | 8 E.L. Hudson Site |
| 2 Ritter Site | 9 Destroyed Refuse Pit Site |
| 3 Russell Site | 10 K D Givan Site |
| 4 Derricksom Site | 11 Townsend II Site |
| 5 Derricksom CONTACT SITE | 12 Wilson Site |
| 6 Lewes School Site | 13 Townsend Site |
| 7 Miller-Toms Site | 14 Moore Shell Heaps Site |
| 15 BAKER Site | |

was virtually round. The east-west diameter measured forty-eight and the north-south forty-four inches. The vertical profile at the midpoint of the pit revealed a generally conical shape, the bottom, however, being rounded rather than pointed, and a maximum depth of thirty inches.

Refuse consisted of a deposit of mixed oyster, clam, and mussel shells among which large quantities of charcoal particles and fire-pulverized shell fragments were scattered. At the top it was very compact, becoming much more loose at a depth of about twelve inches. Broken deer, small animal, and bird bones were observed. Underlying the shell refuse was a fill of dark, stained, sandy earth which contained charcoal particles.

Cultural material recovered consisted of one broken arrowpoint, probably of triangular shape, found imbedded in the surface of the refuse deposit, and numerous broken pot sherds, all of which occurred in the upper eight inches of the shells. There was no cultural evidence recovered from the lower part of the refuse deposit nor from the stained fill which underlay it.

Pit #2 was excavated by Omwake. Its surface appearance was round and its diameters, north-south and east-west, fifty-four and fifty-two inches respectively. Top soil thickness averaged seven inches. The cross section profile at the center of the pit revealed the vertical side walls and flat bottom of the original excavation, a saucer-shaped deposit of shell refuse whose maximum thickness was about eight inches, an underlying fill, sixteen inches thick, of brown colored, stained, sandy soil in which occasional isolated shells occurred, and a deeper fill, eight inches thick, of very black, sandy soil in which there were also noted a few isolated shells.

Refuse consisted of badly broken and fire-pulverized oyster, clam, and mussel shells, the latter in large quantity, mixed with soiled earth and charcoal particles. Broken bones of deer, small animals, and birds were present, as were both sea and land snails. At a depth of fifteen inches in the center of the pit a solid bed of charcoal was noted in the brownish, sandy fill. Accurate measurements of this sub-feature were not taken.

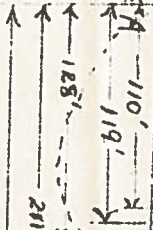
For the most part, cultural evidence consisted of broken pot sherds which appeared near the surface and in the upper three inches of the shell deposit. Three pieces of a broken bone awl were also found on the surface of the refuse. Eight inches from the south-eastern perimeter, at a depth of six inches, the bowl of a native clay pipe, having a partial stem attached, was recovered. Ten inches from the south-western perimeter and at a depth of five inches was located a bone awl, unbroken. At a depth of nine inches, near the southern wall of the pit, a complete, undamaged beaming tool, made from the leg bone of a deer, was recovered from the brownish fill which underlay the shell refuse. A small, triangular, black arrowpoint, having one edge serrated, and a brown jasper spall showing evidence of primary chipping were found at random depths. At a later time, as the bone fragments from the pit were being washed and cleaned, the broken point section of an awl manufactured from a large hollow bird bone was found. Its position in the pit is, of course, unknown. No objects, except the beaming tool, were discovered in either the brownish colored nor the lower black sandy layers.



CULTIVATED AREA

CANARY CREEK

STAKE A



wooded Border of field

600'

Telephone pole

CUT-OFF ROAD

MURKRY'S CORNERS

Westcoat's CORNERS

Townsend II Site

Lewes.

DELAWARE

Scale 1" = 100'

Pit #3 was investigated by Hill and Lobo. Its surface was exactly round, both cardinal diameters being thirty-six inches. The cross-section at the center indicated a conical shape and a slightly rounded bottom. Maximum depth was twenty inches.

The refuse deposit completely filled the original excavation, there being no fill beneath the shells nor any dividing the refuse into layers. Refuse consisted of oyster and clam shells among which the remains of badly pulverized mussels were scattered. Two conch shells were noted. Both charcoal particles and fire-cracked stones were observed throughout the deposit. Fragmentary animal and bird bones were present.

Cultural evidence consisted entirely of a few broken pot sherds deposited at random depths.

Pit #4, investigated by Omwake, was somewhat removed from the other three, which were clustered together, and was the smallest of all. Top soil covering it was about eight inches thick. The surface appearance was round, both cardinal diameters measuring twenty-four inches. The side walls were almost vertical and the bottom was flat.

Refuse consisted of large oyster and large clam shells, among which were scattered the pulverized and burned fragments of many mussels. Charcoal particles were observed. No bone fragments were recovered.

Pit #4 was completely sterile of all manufactured cultural evidence.

Artifacts All objects of cultural nature, pottery excluded, were recovered from pit #2 except for the one broken triangular (3) arrowpoint which occurred on the surface of the deposit in pit #1. The complete list includes:

- 1 small, black, triangular arrowpoint having one edge serrated
- 1 broken, grey chert, triangular, arrowpoint
- 1 brown jasper, triangularly shaped spall bearing primary chipping
- 1 awl, length 4-1/4", made from split leg bone of deer, point damaged
- 1 awl, three pieces, length 2-5/32", made from small, hollow bird bone, point damaged
- 1 awl, fragment, good point, length 1-17/32", made from large, hollow bird bone
- 1 complete, undamaged beaming tool, length 8-12/32", made from leg bone of small deer
- 1 small, crudely made, native elbow-type pipe, bowl asymmetrical, having short section of stem attached; surface finish "scratched" or "brushed"

Examination of the surface area of the site yielded one grey chert triangular point having prominent tangs and one badly weathered, stemmed argillite arrowhead having one pronounced barb, the opposite shoulder being rounded.

Pottery Ten separate pottery vessels were indicated by rim sherds, most bearing various combinations of horizontal, vertical, chevron, and oblique incised lines. Incising was done, in all cases except one, by a blunted instrument while the clay was in a soft, moist stage. The lines on two sherds, non-matching but obviously coming from the same vessel, appear to have been incised with a more sharply pointed tool.

Twisted-cord and cord-wrapped stick impressions were absent. Decoration was applied only around the rim of each vessel and in no case extended down the side wall more than 2-3/8". Nine of the vessels bore some combination of incised line ornamentation while the tenth was plain.

All body sherds were fabric impressed, some indicating a greater degree of subsequent smoothing than others. All sherds were shell tempered and ranged in texture from fine to medium coarse. Colors ran from light tan to reddish brown to greyish black. The smallest vessel was the most finely textured and contained the least quantity of pulverized shell. Maximum thickness of the walls of this vessel was 5/32". Maximum thickness of all body sherds was 12/32", the average being about 9/32". The single basal sherd recovered indicated a slightly flattened bottom and side walls which joined it at a wide obtuse angle of approximately 150°.

Rim sherds revealed no neck constriction or rim eversion. In only one case was indicated oral diameter less than the indicated maximum body diameter. This vessel had an estimated oral diameter of 5-3/4" and an estimated maximum body diameter of 8-1/4", the upper walls sloping toward the center. The decorations on the rim, consisting of nine chevron lines in horizontal sequence between series of horizontal and vertical lines on either side of the chevron zone, were the most elaborate of all which were noted. The typical so-called Townsend shape was not present. Maximum estimated oral diameter was eleven inches. Minimum estimated oral diameter was 2-3/4", indicating the presence of miniature vessels similar to those recovered at the Townsend site and at other sites in the Lewes area.

Conclusions

1. The absence of the constricted neck, slightly everted rim, associated with the so called typical Townsend shape vessels is probably not significant because of the relatively small sample of pottery sherds yielded by the four pits.
2. The few examples of bone implements which occurred did not differ in any respects from those recovered from shell refuse pits at other sites in the vicinity. The presence of an undamaged beaming tool can probably be attributed to accidental loss in the sandy fill which underlay the shell deposit in pit #2.
3. The extreme meagreness of stone arrowpoints is consistent, as is their general triangular shape, with the observations made at other shell refuse pit sites in the vicinity.
4. The presence of large amounts of charcoal particles, fire-cracked stones, and fire-pulverized and burned shells probably indicates that fires were built right on top of refuse in the pits and used as an agent for opening the oysters, clams, and mussels.
5. The three pits clustered closely together probably served a single dwelling, as, possibly, did the fourth, although it was removed from the others by some little distance.
6. Townsend II was probably only one of a number of small outposts of the far more extensive settlements at the Russell, Derrickson, and Miller-Toms sites and there is no evidence to suggest that it was not occupied contemporaneously with them, except the absence of the so-called typical Townsend shape, which evidence is not reliable because of the smallness of the sample.

