



# The Conservancy Preserves An Ancient Pennsylvania Site

*Ebbert Spring has been a source of water for thousands of years.*



Researchers with the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology work at Ebbert Spring.

RON POWELL

Nestled in the Great Valley, just north of the Mason Dixon line in south-central Pennsylvania, is the scenic town of Greencastle, where the first Union soldier was killed on northern soil during the Civil War. Greencastle is also home to the Conservancy's newest acquisition, the Ebbert Spring site.

Ebbert Spring is one of several springs in the area that emanate from limestone outcrops. When Europeans first arrived in this section of the Great Valley, they referred to it as "the Barrens" because of the many limestone outcrops that dot the valley, and the large swaths of open grassland found here. These springs provided a vital source of water to both prehistoric people and European settlers, and the latter often constructed their farmhouses in close proximity to, and sometimes on top of, these springs. An 18th-century brick house with a limestone foundation currently sits atop Ebbert Spring. It's one of the larger of the springs in the area, producing approximately 700 gallons of water per minute and maintaining a year round temperature of 52 degrees. To this day, the spring serves as a source of potable water for people in the region.

The Ebbert Spring site was first recorded in 1994. However, it wasn't until 2003, when a developer purchased much of the land surrounding the spring, that the local chapter of the Society for Pennsylvania Archaeology began test excavations there. The researchers were looking for evidence of a French and Indian War fortification that was thought to have been built near the spring, but instead they discovered an array of prehistoric artifacts and features, including a major american archaeology

Late Woodland occupation featuring a palisaded village.

For the next several years the society conducted extensive excavations on private land adjacent to the Conservancy's property. The researchers recovered tens of thousands of lithic, ceramic, and bone artifacts as well as intact postmolds, hearths, and refuse pits from the Late Woodland period. This data shows that Ebbert Spring was used by people from Paleo-Indian times until today.

Atapco Properties, Inc., which now owns much of the land surrounding Ebbert Spring, has agreed to donate over three acres of the site to the Conservancy for permanent preservation. While this portion of the site has not been excavated, a preliminary survey of the property has produced an extensive prehistoric artifact assemblage, as well as evidence of a French and Indian War-period occupation. The information recovered from Ebbert Spring has added to our knowledge of how springs were used over time and their importance to the people in the Great Valley. —Andy Stout

