

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received _____
date entered _____

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Bessemer Archaeological Site (44 BO 26) (VHLC 11-188)

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number N/A XX not for publication

city, town Eagle Rock XX vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~

state Virginia code 51 county Botetourt code 23

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. Kathryn Stull

street & number 1619 Persinger Road, SW

city, town Roanoke N/A vicinity of state Virginia 24015

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Botetourt County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Fincastle state Virginia 24090

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

"An Archaeological Assessment of the Bessemer Site
title (44BO26), Botetourt County, VA" has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Virginia Research Center for Archaeology, P.O. Box 368

city, town Yorktown state Virginia 23690

7. Description

<input checked="" 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 N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Bessemer Archaeological Site (44B026) is located west of the James River on a well-developed first terrace 400 yards east of the community of Bessemer in Botetourt County, Virginia. Archaeological excavations conducted by the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology and James Madison University in 1977 documented the presence of intact prehistoric subsurface features. The state of preservation of organic materials within these features was good. Based on datable lithic and ceramic artifacts recovered, the principal occupation at the Bessemer Site occurred during the Late Woodland Period (AD 800-1600). Only the western periphery of the site has undergone severe disturbances resulting from the relocation of State Route 220. The principal portion of the site to the east, an area used for agricultural activities, is largely intact.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The Bessemer Site was discovered in 1975 by an archaeologist of the Virginia State Library. It was subjected to limited test excavations by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission in 1977 as a result of plans to relocate State Route 220 along the site's western edge. Surface examinations documented the presence of prehistoric artifacts over an area measuring approximately 750' north-south and 200' east-west. Two areas, totaling approximately 1,000 square feet, were cleared of their fourteen inches of topsoil, revealing undisturbed subsoil. Ten post molds were found within this subsoil. Datable lithic and ceramic artifacts indicated that the principal occupation at the Bessemer Site was during the Late Woodland Period.

More intensive archaeological tests were conducted at the Bessemer Site by James Madison University later in 1977. This research was largely restricted to the western periphery of the site, the area to be adversely impacted by the relocation of State Route 220. After performing controlled surface collections over 45,000 square feet of the site, test excavations, including both test pits and trench cuts, were completed for an area of approximately 15,000 square feet.

Twenty-nine archaeological features were identified during the James Madison University excavations. These included one rectangular longhouse measuring approximately 50' x 20', one possible drying rack, eleven fire hearths, nine storage/trash pits, one human burial, and six shallow soil discolorations and artifact clusters. Numerous post molds were also identified which could not be assigned to any specific structural features. The presence of animal, fish, and human bones, charcoal, shell, nut fragments, and one possible squash seed suggests good organic preservation within the site's features.

At present, over 50% of the Bessemer Site is preserved intact due to its being situated in a field used for agricultural activities, an area the archaeological research of James Madison University indicates to be the principal portion of the site. The western periphery of the site, in contrast, has undergone severe disturbance due to the relocation of State Route 220, although the possibility exists that portions here are still intact, covered by extensive fill during road construction.

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
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> invention				
Specific dates	N/A	Builder/Architect	N/A	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bessemer Archaeological Site (44B026) near the community of Bessemer in Botetourt County contains intact prehistoric subsurface features and well-preserved organic materials dating to the Late Woodland Period (AD 800-1600) that represent a northern expansion of the Dan River culture of the central Piedmont along the Virginia/North Carolina border into western Virginia. Further archaeological research at the site should yield significant new data on Late Woodland settlement patterns, community organization, subsistence, and cultural interactions in the region. Enhancing the significance of the site is the presence of a well-defined, Late Woodland, rectangular longhouse, the only structure of its type yet identified in western Virginia.

BACKGROUND

Archaeological excavations at the Bessemer Site have documented the presence of intact prehistoric subsurface features dating to the Late Woodland Period. These include a rectangular longhouse, a possible drying rack, a human burial, as well as numerous fire hearths, storage/trash pits, post molds, and shallow soil discolorations and artifact clusters. Associated with many of these features are well-preserved organic materials such as animal, fish, and human bone, charcoal, shell, nut fragments, and one possible squash seed. The state of preservation of both features and organic materials makes the Bessemer Site significant for local and regional studies on Late Woodland settlement patterns, community organization, and subsistence. Western Virginia during the Late Woodland Period was characterized by major increases in population and the development of increasingly complex socio-cultural institutions. The formulation of scientific explanations for such changes is dependent upon research at sites such as Bessemer where significant archaeological data on settlement patterns, community organization, and subsistence are well preserved.

The Bessemer Site is also significant for archaeological studies on cultural interactions in the region. Ceramic studies by James Madison University indicate that the Bessemer Site represents a northern expansion of the agriculturally oriented Dan River culture of the central Piedmont along the Virginia/North Carolina border into higher altitude areas in western Virginia with less agricultural potential. Further research at the Bessemer Site should significantly increase our knowledge of the mechanisms involved in such regional interactions during the Late Woodland Period.

Archaeological excavations at the Bessemer Site revealed the presence of a Late Woodland rectangular longhouse. It consists of 193 well defined post molds forming parallel walls with curved ends and measuring 50' x 20'. This is the only clearly identified structure of this type for western Virginia and contrasts markedly to the typical Late Woodland circular house patterns identified on numerous sites in the region.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Benthal, Joseph L. "Archaeological Investigations of the Shannon Site, Montgomery County, Virginia." Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1969.
- Clark, Wayne E. "An Archaeological Assessment of the Bessemer Site (44B026), Botetourt County, Virginia." Williamsburg: VRCA, 1977. (See Continuation Sheet #1)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 3.75 acres

Quadrangle name Eagle Rock, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	7	6	0	4	7	4	0	4	1	6	7	5	3	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

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Zone			Easting				Northing							

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Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point approximately 125' W of the James River and approximately 1200' E of the town of Bessemer; thence extending approximately 125' W; thence approximately 400' N; thence approximately 200' NE; thence approximately 250' ENE; thence approximately 100' S; thence approximately 600' WSW to point of origin.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries (See Continuation Sheet #1)

state	code	county	code
N/A		N/A	

state	code	county	code
N/A		N/A	

11. Form Prepared By

name/title J.T. Moldenhauer with Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

organization Archaeological Society of Virginia date August 1982

street & number 939 Welton Avenue, SW telephone (703) 982-7903

city or town Roanoke state Virginia 24015

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature H. Bryan Mitchell
H. Bryan Mitchell, Executive Director
title Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission date SEP 16 1982

For NPS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
date
Keeper of the National Register
Attest:
date
Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

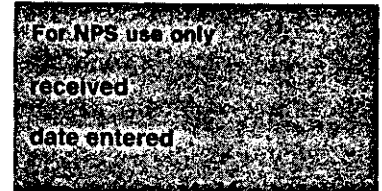
**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

BESSEMER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE (44BO26), BOTETOURT COUNTY, VA

- Continuation sheet #1

Item number 8, 9, 10

Page 1, 1, 1



8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Background

The structure may represent interactions with Algonquian and/or Iroquoian Late-Woodland societies to the east and north where longhouses are more characteristic or may be directly related to community organization at the Bessemer Site, serving a specialized function which at present cannot be accurately defined. Additional excavations at this site should further clarify this situation. Given the uniqueness of this structure in western Virginia, such information will be of significance to regional studies on Late Woodland cultural interactions and community organization.

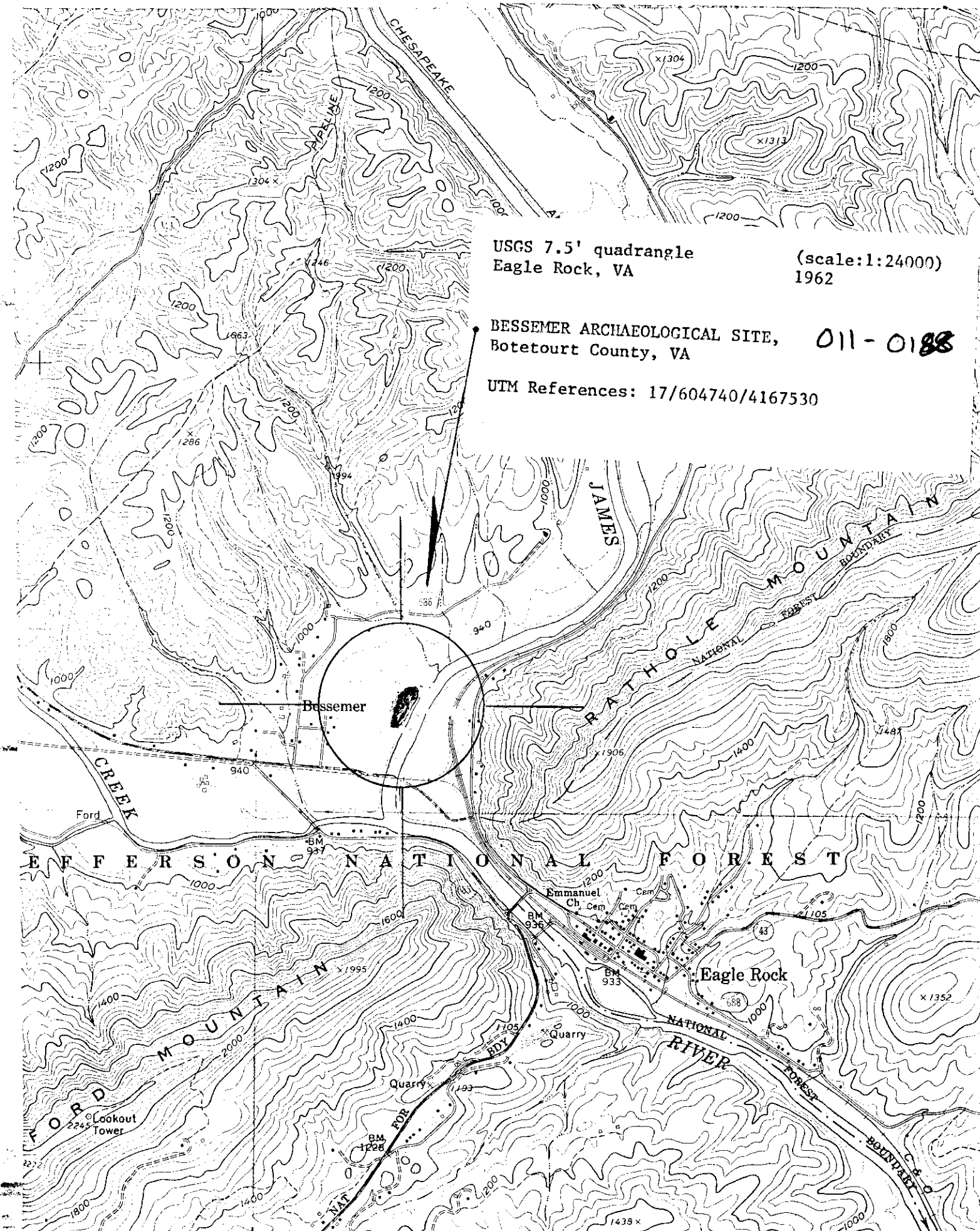
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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Geier, Clarence R. and Moldenhauer, J.T. "The Bessemer Site (44BO26): A Late Woodland Dan River Cultural Component in Central Western Virginia." Harrisonburg, 1977.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA--Boundary Justification

Boundary Justification: The bounds have been drawn to conform to an oblong site consisting of 3.75 acres measuring approximately 750' x 200'.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle
Eagle Rock, VA

(scale:1:24000)
1962

BESSEMER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE,
Botetourt County, VA

011-0188

UTM References: 17/604740/4167530

Bessemer

Eagle Rock

Ford

Emmanuel
Ch. Cen.

Lookout
Tower

Ch. Cen.

Cen.

BM 936

BM 933

Quarry

Quarry

EDY

BM 1228

1438 x

1105

688

43

1481

1352

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