

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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VLR 04/16/1985
NRHP 05/09/1985

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic OTTER CREEK ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE (DHL FILE #33-288)

and or common N/A

2. Location

street & number N/A

XX not for publication

city, town Ferrum vicinity of

state Virginia code 51 county XXXXXXXXXX code 067

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: forest

4. Owner of Property

name Leonard C. Brown

street & number Route 3, Box 257

city, town Ferrum N/A vicinity of state Virginia 24088

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Franklin County Courthouse

street & number N/A

city, town Rocky Mount state Virginia 24151

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

DIVISION OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS

title Survey (Site #44FR31) has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date April 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records DIVISION OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS' RESEARCH CENTER FOR ARCHAEOLOGY
P.O. Box 368

city, town Yorktown state Virginia 23690

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>N/A</u>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Otter Creek Archaeological Site (44FR31), a prehistoric hamlet, is situated in an upland location [REDACTED]. Occupational debris is distributed over a side spur [REDACTED] in an area 95 meters by 85 meters. Test excavations conducted in 1984 at 44FR31 determined that the site has well preserved floral and faunal remains, numerous ceramic and lithic artifacts, and intact subsurface cultural features. Principal occupation at the Otter Creek Archaeological Site dates to the last half of the Late Woodland Period (AD 1300-1650).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The Otter Creek Archaeological Site is located on a densely wooded upland spur [REDACTED] (Photo 1). This site, with a southern and western exposure, [REDACTED]. While the elevation is [REDACTED] above sea level at the site, [REDACTED]. Nominated acreage is currently in a stand of trees, approximately thirty-five years in age. Evidence for prior cultivation at this location includes a large rock pile, scattered quartz boulders, and slight ledge, all marking the edge of a former field (Photo 2). The Otter Creek Archaeological Site has been designated 44FR31 in the state's official inventory of archaeological sites.

Occupational debris at 44FR31 is lightly distributed over an area measuring approximately 95 meters long by 85 meters wide, roughly corresponding to the relatively flat land on the mountain spur at this location (Figure 1). A heavy concentration of cultural debris measuring approximately 25 meters long by 8 meters wide is situated at the western edge of the site. The site contains cultural material dating principally to the last half of the late Woodland Period (AD 1300-1650), although early Late Woodland Period (AD 1000-1300) sherds and Early and Late Archaic periods projectile points (8000-6000 BC and 3000-1000 BC, respectively) have been found in small numbers at the site.

In August 1984, the Archeological Society of Virginia and the Division of Historic Landmarks' Research Center for Archaeology conducted a joint investigation at 44FR31. A block of six one-meter squares (Photo 3) as well as nine two-foot test squares were excavated.

The block of squares, excavated within the heavy concentration of cultural debris, documented that this portion of the site is in an excellent state of preservation. In this area, the plow zone is extremely rich in pottery and lithic artifacts and well preserved bone and shell remains, mainly due to the fact that the land was last plowed more than thirty-five years ago. One human burial in an intact subsurface feature was encountered during this excavation and contained lensing of debris with well preserved floral remains.

(See Continuation Sheet # 1)

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates N/A **Builder/Architect** N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Otter Creek Archaeological Site (44FR31) in [REDACTED], Virginia contains undisturbed prehistoric cultural features and well preserved faunal and floral remains that could contribute significant information on regional environmental adaptations and settlement patterns during the late Woodland Period. Of particular significance, the site is situated on a remote upland spur [REDACTED] and represents the only known prehistoric hamlet ever identified in the region in such a location. The preponderance of Dan River ceramics indicates 44FR31 also should provide valuable comparative data when studying Dan River cultural manifestations elsewhere in both Virginia and North Carolina.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Otter Creek Archaeological Site is the only known site in the region with intact subsurface cultural features and a heavy concentration of cultural debris that has been identified as a hamlet located on a remote upland spur [REDACTED]. The human burial and a possible postmold uncovered during limited test excavations indicate that cultural features do exist at the site and that they could provide important data on intensity of occupation and community organization at this unusual location for prehistoric semisedentary occupation.

The great variety of well preserved faunal remains in association with some floral remains is unusual for such a remote site and should provide significant information on subsistence strategies and environmental adaptations in the region during the Late Woodland Period. Of particular interest in identifying local prehistoric riverine ecosystems and the dramatic change to the present-day hydrology is the occurrence of numerous freshwater snails, fish remains, and some mussel shell, all of which no longer occur naturally along the headwaters of Otter Creek. Possibly related to recovered floral specimens are unexpectedly numerous pitted blocks of schist, or anvil stones, found at 44FR31 which could provide additional information on subsistence and/or technology at the site. Unfortunately, the age and function of the stones currently are uncertain. They could date to either the Archaic or Woodland Period. Further, they may have served as nutting stones in the subsistence system of exploiting upland nut resources on a seasonal basis, or they may have functioned as anvils for the technological production of tools made from the local white quartz.

The wide array of cultural debris, similar to the debris associated with a bottomland village, should provide comparative data for Virginia and North Carolina Dan River culture sites found to the east and west in the Piedmont and the Ridge and Valley physiographic provinces. The fired lumps of pottery clay and coil fragments, which suggest onsite manufacture of vessels and pipes, and diversity in vessel size and decoration would be of immense value for Dan River Ware ceramic studies. Further, the site's unusual and perhaps strategic location may provide data that help to identify networks of communication and trade that connected Dan River related cultures [REDACTED] during the Late Woodland Period.

9. Major Bibliographical References

*N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 2 acres

Quadrangle name Ferrum, VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	B	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	F	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	H	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Verbal boundary description and justification The Otter Creek Archaeological Site is a triangular-shaped tract approximately 95 meters N/S by 85 meters E/W

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title DIVISION OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS STAFF

organization DIVISION OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS date 1985

street & number 221 Governor Street telephone (804) 786-3144

city or town Richmond state Virginia 23219

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, Director

title DIVISION OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS

date February 19 1985

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

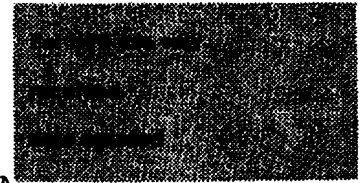
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



OTTER CREEK ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE (44FR31), FRANKLIN COUNTY, VA

Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7, 10

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7. DESCRIPTION -- Archaeological Analysis

The nine two-foot test squares distributed across the site along with the artifacts found on the surface of the site determined the site size as shown in Figure 1. One test square uncovered what appeared to be a postmold.

What is particularly unusual about the Otter Creek Archaeological Site is the abundance and variety of cultural debris left in such a remote area. Besides a heavy density of flakes, triangular quartz projectile points, potsherds, and pipe fragments, there is a remarkable diversity of small pottery vessels and fired lumps of pottery clay and coil fragments, suggesting that some of the pottery and pipes were made on the site. The small triangular points (Photo 4) and elaborately decorated Dan River Ware pottery (Photo 5) suggest that the major occupation of 44FR31 dates to AD 1550-1650, although one radiocarbon analysis on charred wood resulted in a date of AD 1320±50. A wide variety of faunal remains was uncovered from the site, including deer, small animals, turtle, mussel shell, numerous freshwater snails, and fish. The last three no longer occur in nearby Otter Creek. Remains of charred seeds and/or nuts also were identified from the limited test excavations at the site. Numerous examples of pitted blocks of schist (anvil stones) occur at the site, but cannot be directly associated with either the Woodland or Archaic Period occupation. Veins of white quartz commonly occur in the bedrock of the area and may have been used as a lithic source for the triangular points. Closest sources include boulders of white quartz which can be found just to the east of 44FR31 and small chunks of unmodified white quartz common in the plow zone at the site.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA -- Boundary Justification

Boundary Justification: Site boundaries for the nominated acreage are based on observed surface distribution of prehistoric artifacts and subsurface testing.