

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Big Crab Orchard

AND/OR COMMON

Pisgah Church - Fort Witten - Big Crab Orchard

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Intersection of Rte 19/460 with Rte. 632

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Tazewell

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

9th, William C. Wampler

STATE

Virginia

VICINITY OF

CODE

51

COUNTY

Tazewell

CODE

185

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

A J. Higginbotham, Jr.

see nomination sheet

STREET & NUMBER

Rte. 3, Box 332

CITY, TOWN

Tazewell

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 24651

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Tazewell County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Tazewell

STATE

Virginia 24651

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Virginia Research Center for Archaeology site survey files

DATE

1968-72

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Virginia Research Center for Archaeology

CITY, TOWN

Wren Kitchen, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia 23186

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Six prehistoric sites and two historic sites within a limestone valley three miles west of Tazewell, Virginia comprise an archaeological complex traditionally known as the Big Crab Orchard. These sites are situated near the Clinch River in Tazewell County in an area currently bisected by Routes 632 and 19/460.

All of the prehistoric sites date to the late Woodland Period (900-1600 A.D.) and are representative of three distinct settlement types: rock shelter, palisaded village, and non-nucleated village or campsite.

The Big Crab Orchard rock shelter, designated as 44TZ23, is located on the south bank of the Clinch River. A six foot by ten foot area was partially excavated in the 1950's by former landowner Jeff Higginbotham, who recovered subconical pots with strap handles from the Late Woodland Radford Series.

The remains of a palisaded village, 44TZ1, lie 400 feet south of the rock shelter. Excavations conducted by Howard A. MacCord in 1972, prior to the construction of Route 632, revealed that this village is over 400 feet in diameter and consists of two, possibly three, concentric palisade lines, eleven circular house patterns and at least 180 pits and sixty-seven burials. A ninety foot wide strip through the center of the village and a larger area on the northern and southern perimeters were examined with a variety of artifacts being recovered. Ceramics, predominately of the Radford Series, were revealed along with fragments of Late Woodland New River and Wythe Series. Marine shell beads, two pieces of copper, and bone artifacts in an excellent state of preservation were also recovered. Approximately fifty percent of the site has been preserved in an undisturbed condition.

Grading operations west of the village site revealed additional pits and burials in a location designated 44TZ19. The distribution of these features and the recovery of Radford Series pottery, with leached limestone temper, suggests that pre-palisaded occupation may have existed along the entire terrace edge. Although this area was surveyed archaeologically, it was subsequently destroyed by grading operations. However, a similar non-nucleated campsite, 44TZ24, remains preserved in a cultivated field; this site extends 100 feet by 200 feet along the base of the hill, in the small stream valley southwest of the previously described site. Field reconnaissance revealed a thin scatter of Late Woodland projectile points and flakes.

Evidence of additional prehistoric occupation exists in the eastern portion of the area now used as a rest stop. Archaeological features consist of eight postmolds in a curved line; a sparsity of pottery suggests limited occupation.

On a limestone knoll southeast of 44TZ1 is a burial cave dating to the Late Woodland Period. This feature, 44TZ5, consists of a fifty foot vertical shaft which terminates in a gradual slope. In 1947, thirty skeletons were retrieved from the bottom of the shaft, along with shell beads and platform pipes, which formed the basis for dating the skeletal remains. Some of this unique feature survives intact.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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Big Crab Orchard, Tazewell County, Virginia

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According to local historians, two sites of the historic period lie within the nominated area. The site of the First Pisgah Church, circa 1793, is located on the north side of the Clinch River, whereas the site of Fort Witten, a fortified cabin used as a border outpost, is in the southeast corner of the nominated area.

The Big Crab Orchard archaeological complex is now divided north-south by Route 632 and east-west by Route 19/460. In the southwest corner of the nominated area, the Daughters of the American Revolution have simulated a frontier settlement by constructing a log fort and a number of log buildings, one of which will become a museum for artifacts from the Big Crab Orchard site.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Big Crab Orchard site, a part of the rich bottomlands along the Clinch River, is significant because the area was extensively utilized by prehistoric Indians as well as early Virginia frontiersmen. Because much of the nominated area remains undisturbed, it holds valuable archaeological research potential relating to its several phases of occupation.

The Big Crab Orchard complex of Late Woodland Indian sites documents the evolution of settlement types from that of the non-nucleated campsite to the complexity of the palisaded village. The presence of at least two successive palisade lines at 44TZ1 suggests an occupation of considerable duration; undisturbed portions within the palisade potentially may demonstrate internal differences between activities areas and chronicle expanding intra-site patterning.

Scientific archaeological investigation of the burial cave may determine its relationship to the adjacent prehistoric sites. Previously recovered artifacts suggest that there was an interaction between the Indians at Big Crab Orchard and cultures further to the east.

The Big Crab Orchard archaeological complex is historically significant because it was an area of early permanent settlement as well as the site of a frontier fort and church. It is, therefore, of both military and ecclesiastical significance.

According to local historians, the Big Crab Orchard site first appears in extant records when the original 650 acre tract was granted to John Shelton of Hanover County, Virginia in 1750. It is considered one of the first tracts of land surveyed in Tazewell County. Shelton conveyed the land to his son-in-law, Patrick Henry, who subsequently sold it to William Ingles. In 1768, Ingles, a frontiersman who made his home on land along the New River, sold the Big Crab Orchard property to Thomas Witten and John Greenup, Witten's son-in-law. Witten built his home at Big Crab Orchard in 1770.

This cabin was subsequently reinforced and served as a fort during the period of Indian unrest from 1774 to 1792. An idea of frontier living conditions during those years may be gained from a petition to the Governor signed by Thomas Witten and his son, stating that they, along with other inhabitants of the upper Clinch River area, did not march against the British because of their constant vulnerability to Indian attack.

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The first reference to Fort Witten as a border fort occurs on August 13, 1774 when Robert Brown, Thomas Jones, and Richard Breeze were garrisoned there. An October 6, 1774 letter of Major Arthur Campbell to Colonel William Preston lists Fort Witten among a group of military outposts being inventoried. This census included "three men, Ensign Cambell in charge." On the back of the letter, cartographer Daniel Smith sketched a map on which Big Crab Orchard, or Witten's, is depicted. The site is again mentioned in a military context during March 1778.

In marked contrast to its military significance, the Big Crab Orchard tract became the site of the first Pisgah Church, established in 1793. This early log church was located within a four and one-half acre plot of land donated by the Witten and Greenup families and lying within the acreage nominated. The unmarked graves of Thomas Witten, Senior, and his wife, Elizabeth, are, according to tradition, located within the property boundaries.

Archaeological excavations within the area nominated have the potential of yielding considerable insight into the military and religious life and architecture of frontier settlers as well as valuable data on their daily lives. Excavation would reveal how a frontier cabin could be modified into a military structure. Artifacts recovered from the site would indicate the socio-economic status of these early frontiersmen and furnish insight on their response to their environment. Excavation of the Pisgah Church site would yield architectural information on a vernacular frontier ecclesiastical structure, a subject on which there has been little scientific research.

1. Draper Manuscripts, Colonial Williamsburg Research Library Microfilm 4xx62.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bundy, N.W. Sketches of Tazewell County. Crab Orchard: 1976.

Draper Manuscripts. Wisconsin State Historical Society. Microfilm, Colonial Williamsburg

Eastern States Archaeological Federation Bulletin. No. 31, "The Crab Orchard Site, Tazewell County, Virginia." 1972 SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 110 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	17	449600	4108510	B	17	449680	4108410
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	17	448810	4107960	D	17	448660	4108500
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The northern boundary extends along the southern edge of the Clinch River except for a northern extension which includes the original site of Pisgah Church. The eastern boundary extends from the bend in the Clinch River to a point 300 meters east of 44TZ4. The boundary continues from this point westward 200 meters and slightly south of Witten's Fort and then proceeds north to the west edge of the site of the first Pisgah Church.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Wayne E. Clark, Archaeologist and Martha W. McCartney, Historic Landmarks Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Research Center for Archaeology

STREET & NUMBER

Wren Kitchen, College of William and Mary

CITY OR TOWN

Williamsburg,

DATE

TELEPHONE

804-253-4836

STATE

Virginia 23186

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

TITLE Tucker Hill, Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE FEB 21 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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MacCord, H.A. "The Crab Orchard Site." n.p. Virginia Research Center for Archaeology files.

Quarterly Bulletin, Archaeological Society of Virginia, Vol. 5. "Archaeological Investigations in Western Virginia." 1951

Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology, No. 12. "An Archaeological Survey of Southwest Virginia." C.G. Holland, 1970.

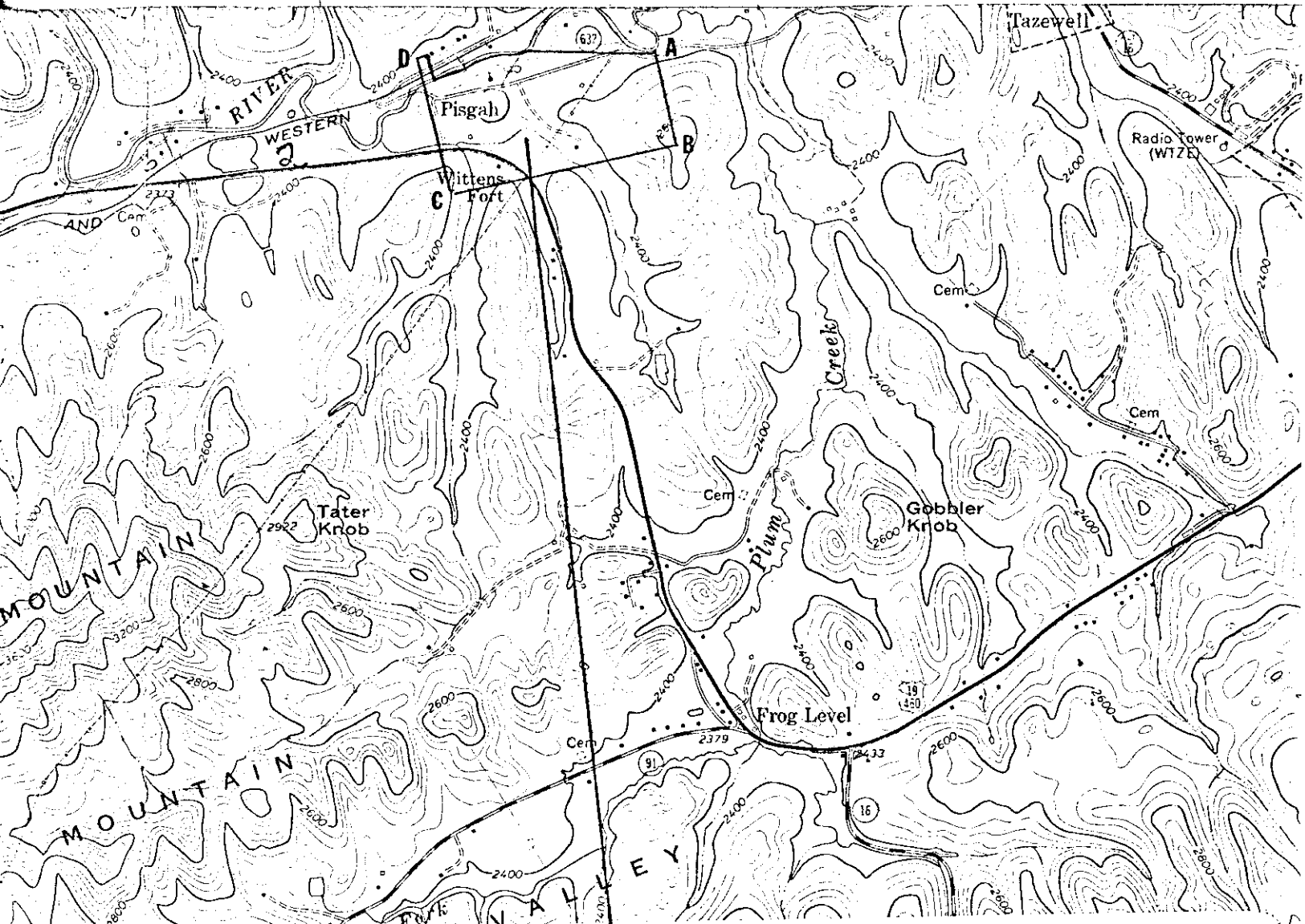
Summers, L.P. Annals of South West Virginia, 1769-1800: Bickley's History of Tazewell County, Virginia, 1856. Kingsport Press: Abingdon, 1929.

Summers, L.P. History of Southwest Virginia, 1746-1786. J. Hill: Richmond, 1903.

Tazewell County Deed Book 1, page 225.

Thwaites, R.G. and L.P. Kellog. Documentary History of Dunmore's War, 1774. Wisconsin Historical Society: Madison, 1905.

Virginia Magazine of History and Biography. Virginia Historical Society: Richmond.



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale: 1:24000)
 Tazewell South, Virginia 1968
 BIG CRAB ORCHARD SITE, TAZEWELL COUNTY, VA.
 UTM References:

- A - 17/449600/4108510
- B - 17/449680/4108140
- C - 17/448810/4107960
- D - 17/448660/4108500

