Survey Reports

Chessie Trail

Rockbridge County, Virginia

Thomas C. Gentner Jr.

Anthropology 378

Prof. McDaniel

Dec. 16, 1982
Name of site: Quasi's Site
Type of site: Historic Ruin
Map reference: USGS 7.5 min. quadrangle-Lexington

Latitude o ' north. Longitude o ' west.
U.T.M. Zone 17. Easting 639220 Northing 4182930
(or distance from printed edge of map: bottom edge __ right edge __)

Owner/address: Maurice Smith
Tenant/address:
Attitude toward investigation: Favorable
Informant/address:
Surveyed by: T. Gentner Jr.

Date: December 16, 1982

General surroundings: Approximately a mile to a mile and a quarter from the intersection of route 1037 and route 763, along the Chessie Trail. 400' north of the Chessie Trail. Structural walls made out of cutstone.

Nearest water: nature, direction and distance: Maury River, 600' south

Dimension of site: 100' by 100'

Description: depth, soil, collecting conditions: Inside of structure, four inches of topsoil on top of sterile clay; outside of structure, four inches of top soil on top of one inch of charcoal on top of sterile clay. Collecting were good to excellent throughout.

Specimens collected: kinds, quantities, materials: noted: 51 nails; 6 pieces of bone; 4 pieces of metal; 2 spikes; 2 pieces of undecorated whiteware; 1 piece of hinge; 1 piece of wire.

Specimens reported, owners, address:

Other documentation: reports, historical data:

Condition: erosion, cultivation, excavation, construction:

Recommendations: Intensive Testing

Photo:
Recorded by: TCG

Map:
Date: December 16, 1982

(Use reverse side of sheet and additional pages for sketches of site and artifacts)
Between September 14, 1982, and December 19, 1982, the students of the Anthropology 378 class of Washington and Lee University, under the instruction of Dr. John M. McDaniel, conducted a type II survey of the Chessie Trail between East Lexington and the town of Buena Vista. This report describes the methods, findings, and analysis of the survey, and future recommendations for the excavation of sites along the trail.

The Chessie Trail was owned by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, before it was given to the V.M.I. Foundation, Inc., as a railway line between the town of Lexington and the town of Buena Vista. The railway line followed the path of the "North River" (later changed to the Maury River after Commodore Matthew Fontaine Maury) on its way to meet with the James River. Before the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio railway, the Maury River, between Lexington and Buena Vista, was a canal system allowing horse drawn barges to move up and down the river.

During the middle 1800's, the James River Company, now called the James River and Kanawha Company, constructed a canal system consisting of a series of locks and dams along the Maury River between Lexington and Buena Vista. The James
River Company began the canal system in the late 1700's along the James River reaching the town of Lynchburg by 1840. Lynchburg wanted to remain as the western terminus of the canal system, but the enthusiasm of Rockbridge County residents who were anxious to see the canal system reach the County seat of Lexington, formed and incorporated the North River Navigation Company which funded the extension of the canal to Buena Vista and later to Lexington itself. On November 15, 1860, the canal system was completed and the first boats moved on to Lexington, 20 miles above the James River.

Prior to and during the construction of the canal system, between Lexington and Buena Vista, the area around the Maury River saw a great deal of activity. Because of this fact, Dr. McDaniel and Jim Adams, the Regional Archaeologists of the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology located at Washington and Lee University, feel that the site potential along the Chessie Trail is quite high. A number of prehistoric sites have already been located and both Dr. McDaniel and Jim Adams feel that many more prehistoric sites will be found during the course of conducting our surveys. Dr. McDaniel believes that the Maury River created an attraction for occupation, utilization, and travel during both the archaic and woodland periods of occupation.
The Chessie Trail is approximately seven miles in length. Jim Adams divided up the trail between 14 students. The section of the trail an individual was given varied in length depending on the number of known prehistoric sites that may have fallen into a certain area. I was given section number 2. My section of the trail was approximately 2100 feet in length. The beginning of my section of the Chessie Trail was almost a mile from the intersection of route 1037 and route 763. My section of the trail did not contain any locks, lock houses, or dam structures.

Initially, I thought my section only contained 2 strata. The first strata was primary terrace or floodplain. The second strata was secondary terrace which was above the Chessie Trail. The secondary terrace was primarily a cow pasture. After surveying my entire area by foot, I discovered a structure.

The structure consisted of cut stone walls no higher than 5 feet. Surface search turned up neither artifacts nor structural timbers. The structure frame was about 50 to 60 feet in length and 15 to 20 feet in width. The structure appeared to consist of three chambers with the middle chamber open. (see Map 2) Initial consultation with Jim Adams led to the belief that the structure may be some type of barn. Further surveying by foot, I discovered
a water supply approximately 300 yards from my structure. The water supply was located on section number 3 of the Chessie Trail which was being surveyed by sophomore Gary Duncan. The water supply was a well of some sort. The well at the present time has a water level of between six and seven feet below the surface of the ground. The top of the well, which is just at surface level, is constructed of cement and brick but I do not know if the cement construction leads all through the well. Experimentation that I performed, suggests, that the well is quite deep, however, exact depth is not known. The location of the well in relation to my structure is about 300 yards southeast of my structure.

Before a type II survey could really be performed, some preliminary work was done. A datum point was established about 1 foot northeast of the Chessie Trail using 3 reference points. The first reference point was a tail cylindrical chimney 42.2° due west of north. The chimney was located on top of the cliffs across the river. The second reference point was a floodplain utility pole 180° due west. The third reference point was a secondary terrace utility pole 166° due east. My datum point, I thought, was located in a prime position, the highest point in my section. However, from this point, I could only see one test pit. Therefore, in order to record my test pit locations and shovel
cut lines, a great deal of geometry was used which primarily dealt with the two reference point utility poles. My section was very hilly which created the problem of locating my test pits from my datum point.

In both the floodplain and the secondary terrace I chose shovel cut lines that cut both strata in half horizontally and vertically. I chose to make shovel cuts at 50 feet intervals in both stratas. The shovel cuts turned up no significant data. I made the shovel cut intervals so large because of the length of my section (2100 feet) and the time available to me. The vertical shovel cuts in the flood-plain were made at 20 foot intervals.

From the shovel cuts, I went on to digging test pits. The test pit selection for both the floodplain and the secondary terrace was based on random choice. In order to randomly pick test pit areas, I divided both stratas into a series of 50' grid squares. I drew a grid system that was spatially equivalent to 50' squares onto a map of my section of the trail. Taking each strata, floodplain and secondary terrace, separately, I numbered each square, cut each square out, and placed the cut squares into a hat. I chose three squares for the secondary terrace and two for the floodplain. The numbers on the squares decided where the test pit would be placed.
The three test pits in the secondary terrace didn't produce any artifacts. There was between 8 to 13" of top soil on top of sterile clay in each of the three test pits.

The two test pits in the floodplain did not produce any artifacts either but did seem to indicate that the ground may have been disturbed by farming. The grass that grew alongside the river bank was the same type of grass that grew alongside the railroad bed, but the grass growing in between, in the field, was of a different type. The grass was smaller, not as wild, and did not contain as many weeds. This suggests that the ground may have been broken up in the field. Also, the east wall of my second test pit in the floodplain, showed two layers of topsoil cut in half by 23/4" of clay. (see drawing of test pit 2) The topsoil could have been disturbed by plowing. I did not receive any confirmation from the landowner that the floodplain was in fact plowed. I imagine that this could have been done by flooding, but the flooding would not explain two different types of grass. All of my test pits were three foot squares.

From this point, I went over to my structure where I dug three test pits. Under the instruction of Jim Adams, I placed one test pit within the structure, one where I
believed there was a window, and the last where I believed there may have been a door or an entrance of some type. (see map 2) The three test pits, all three foot squares, produced a total of 67 artifacts. (Appendix 1) The most popular artifact found were nails of different shapes, sizes, and forms, 51 total. Other artifacts found were a piece of wire, several pieces of bone, several pieces of metal, one broken hinge, two spikes, and two pieces of undecorated whiteware. By the examination of the spikes and numerous nails, Jim Adams believes that the structure could date back to the early 1800's. The discovery of the two pieces of undecorated whiteware may nullify the original hypothesis that the structure was a barn of some sort.

By a careful examination of test pit #2, believed to be located where there may have been a window, I noticed that below 4" of topsoil there was an inch layer of charcoal on top of hard packed sterile clay. (see drawing of north wall of test pit number two of the structure) This may suggest that the structure was burned down many years back. This would explain the absence of timbers around the structure.

If I had more time available, I would put two more test pits in and around the structure, one within the northeast
Act of 1966 also provides for the Federal government to subsidize the state for providing the preservation of a historical site. This law also requires each state to list all sites deserving of national register nomination or status. All work completed and future excavation along the Chessie Trail is under the jurisdiction of the Virginia Research Center for Archaeology which is an arm of the archaeological branch of the National Park Service as established by the Executive Order #11593 of 1971. The Moss-Bennitt Bill of 1974 requires that 1% of the budget of the agency performing either public or private construction can be used towards an archaeological survey of the area to be destroyed if warranted.
The Antiquities Act of 1906 was the first real law concerned with the protection of historical archeological sites ("monuments"). This law imposed a fine if the site was damaged in any way. This was a very successful law because it was a deterrent psychologically. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 called for the establishment of the National Register of Nationally Significant Sites. The national park service became responsible for protecting and investigating sites. Very important stepping stone for archeology because this let the public know what was going on. The 1960 Reservoir Salvage Act has little to do with our survey primarily because we are not constructing a dam. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 regulated environmental and cultural resources if federal money was involved. This increased the number of jobs. This law is not very helpful to our survey either since we are not financed by federal money. The 1977 amendment of the Historical Preservation Act of 1966 declared that any site is protected until decision to be accepted to National Register. An 1980 amendment to this agreed only if land owner consented.
Drawing of East Wall of Test Pit #2 of the Floodplain

36"

Topsoil - Sandy

Orange Clay

2 1/2"

Topsoil - Sandy

Grey Clay
Drawing of North Wall of Test Pit #2 of the Structure

36"

Topsoil

Charcoal

Orange Clay
APPENDIX 1

Total Number of Artifacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nail</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bone</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spikes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecorated Whiteware</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Structure

**Test Pit #1**

- Nails: 24
- Undecorated Whiteware: 2
- Spikes: 2
  - **Total**: 28

**Test Pit #2**

- Nails: 4
- Metal: 4
- Hinge: 1
- Bone: 1
  - **Total**: 10

**Test Pit #3**

- Nails: 23
- Bone: 5
- Wire: 1
  - **Total**: 29
APPENDIX 2

Location of Test Pits

Floodplain

Floodplain Utility Pole is 100° due west of north from Secondary Terrace Utility Pole and 300’ away

First Test Pit

105° due east and 110'5" from Floodplain Utility Pole

Second Test Pit

60° due west and 388'8" from Floodplain Utility Pole

Secondary Terrace

First Test Pit

27° due west of north and 269' from Secondary Terrace Utility Pole

Second Test Pit

64° due west and 617'5" from Secondary Terrace Utility Pole and 470'3" from Datum Point

Third Test Pit

77° due west and 185'6" from Datum Point

Structure

First Test Pit

45° due east of north and 531'6" from Secondary Terrace Utility Pole

Second Test Pit

47° due east and 518'6" from Secondary Terrace Utility Pole
APPENDIX 2 (con't)

Third Test Pit

48° due east and 535'4" from Secondary Terrace Utility Pole
BIBLIOGRAPHY
