

Microscopic analysis of wear on stone tools showed that the people used the tools to work on hide during the Early Archaic period. Middle Archaic period stone tool wear patterns demonstrated that people used those implements to scrape harder materials, like bone, wood or antler. Phytoliths, which are microscopic-sized plant fossils found in the soil, show that corn was grown at or near the site, most likely during the Late Woodland period, by which time the plant, native to Mexico, had been introduced to Virginia.

Travel and Trade

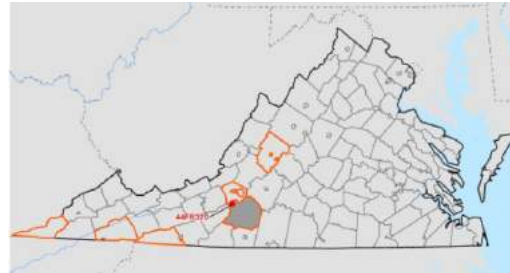
Quartz and quartzite stone was used for making tools. Both of these stone types are widely available in the local area, so the prehistoric occupants of the site did not have to travel far or trade with other peoples to find those rocks. However, chalcidony, chert, and rhyolite stones also were collected to make tools. These stones were gathered in a variety of areas, including distant ones, as part of seasonal-to-annual travels to hunt animals, to quarry tool stones, or perhaps by trading with others. These hunting/stone-gathering rounds (or trade alliances) apparently extended west of the Blue Ridge Mountains from Lee, Washington and Grayson counties in the south, to Roanoke County in the west, and Rockbridge County in the north.

**Quartz, chert
and
chalcidony
cores**



The travel and/or trade ranges of the Early Archaic people were wide and appear to have extended from Washington County in the southwest to Rockbridge County in the north. Middle Archaic people appear to have journeyed as far as across Washington and Grayson counties in the southwest to Rockbridge County in the north.

Only a few distantly collected stone artifacts were associated with the remaining prehistoric occupations of the site, so the extent of these hunting/collecting or trading ranges is impossible to reconstruct.



Lithic sources

Conclusions

These excavations taught archaeologists about when the site was occupied, how far people traveled or traded, and something about their diets. The evidence showed that this was an important, popular place for people to camp and settle. This site was occupied repeatedly over thousands of years. Moreover, the stone tools found at the site demonstrate that the residents not only made use of locally available stones, but made a considerable effort, through trade or long-distance travel, or both, to obtain different and/or better raw materials for some of their tools. The tools they made varied through time and for their intended purposes. The people made a range of formal, meticulously worked points and knives, less intricate knives, and they also used naturally sharp but informal flakes of stone. These tools were put to a variety of uses, from working with hides and other animal products, to woodworking. The food evidence demonstrated that in the early prehistoric periods the people were at least semi-nomadic, staying at the site long enough to harvest, store, and consume hickory nuts. Late in prehistory, by the Late Woodland period, the population no longer were nomadic. They stayed to plant, take care of, harvest, and eat the corn they grew in nearby fields.



Site 44FR0370

Archaeological Data Recovery at Site 44FR0370 —Virginia

Introduction

Natural gas pipelines certificated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission require compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, which mandates that archaeological sites eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places must be documented when they are impacted by new projects. As a result of the pipeline's projected effects to archaeological sites, R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc., a private company dedicated to the preservation and documentation of our country's heritage, explored two archaeological sites in Franklin County, Virginia.



Below is a summary of the results of archaeological investigations at Site 44FR0370 (the site's assigned Virginia state site number), which was excavated during the spring of 2018.

Site 44FR0370

Natural Setting and Excavation Overview

Site 44FR0370 lies at the eastern approaches to the Adney Gap, a natural pass through the Blue Ridge Mountains. That gap permitted east-west travel through the mountains for thousands of years, specifically from the piedmont region in the east to the high plateau region of Bent Mountain, and beyond to the Roanoke River valley further west. The northern portion of this site where archaeological excavations were completed was made up of three land forms: a narrow terrace of stream sediments (known to geologists as an alluvial terrace) along the North Fork of the Blackwater River; a wide flat area on the slope above the river (known as an upland bench); and the north-south oriented valley edge (also called a valley wall). During the investigations, archaeologists dug almost 6,000 square feet of soils through careful hand excavation.

Artifacts found at this site included over 250 stone tools with chipped surfaces on both sides. Known to archaeologists as “bifaces,” such tools often are called “arrowheads” by others. In addition, approximately 100 broken pieces of pottery; three dozen stone cores (rocks from which tools were made); 18 flake tools (informal, unshaped cutting tools made from thin pieces of stone); a dozen chipped stone knives with only one side chipped into shape (“unifaces”); three rock fragments burned and cracked in an ancient campfire; two tools with signs of wear from use; and nearly 12,000 rock flakes—the waste material from stone tool manufacturing, were found. Aside from stone, archaeologists discovered specimens of plant seeds and other floral remains. These tiny pieces of evidence were either spotted by archaeologists while excavating, or found when soil samples were sifted using fine screens and water to separate the seeds from the dirt.

Archaeologists also discovered two in-the-ground indications of ancient inhabitation, known as features. One, found beneath the plowzone, was the actual



Remnant living surface

buried ground surface lived and worked on thousands of years ago. In places, that buried old surface was speckled with charcoal left by the site’s ancient population. The archaeologists sent the wood charcoal to a laboratory for radiocarbon dating. The results of these tests told the archaeologists how long ago the wood was burned. Those dates proved that the now buried stable surface was used repeatedly from the time periods archaeologists call the Middle Archaic (6,500-3,000 B.C.), Late Archaic (3,000-1,000 B.C.), Middle Woodland (500 B.C.-A.D. 900), and Late Woodland periods (A.D. 900-1607).

Likewise, stone (lithic) artifacts of shapes distinctive to specific time periods were found from the Early Archaic (8,000-6,500 B.C.), Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, and Middle Woodland periods. Middle



Early Archaic points



Middle Archaic points

or Late Woodland pottery sherds also were collected. This wide range of artifacts from multiple periods of prehistory matches with the radiocarbon dates.

Another feature discovered during the excavations was a cylindrical pit dug into the earth. This feature contained charcoal radiocarbon dated to the Middle Archaic period. Archaeologists also recovered an Early Archaic-period biface tool.

Site Chronology

This site was a Native American camp for thousands of years. The valley wall part of the site had the longest range of artifacts that could be dated. They dated all the way from the Late Paleo-Indian (10,000-8,000 B.C.) through the Late Woodland periods (A.D. 900-1607). The upland bench was occupied during the Early, Middle, and Late Archaic, and the Early Woodland (8,000-500 B.C.) periods. The alluvial terrace only showed evidence of pre-Contact occupation during the Late Woodland period.

Use of Plant and Animal Materials

Food remains from the site showed that the site occupation was not year-round. Instead, people lived there mainly during the fall months. Archaeologists came to this conclusion from nuts found in the site during excavation. The nuts ripen during the fall, so people must have been there during those months to collect and bring them to where they lived. However, nuts can be stored, so it is possible that the Native Americans could have lived there into the winter months.

People ate hickory nuts during at least the Middle Archaic, Middle Woodland, and Late Woodland occupations of the site. To fuel their



Burned hickory nuts

hearths, people gathered a variety of hardwoods. During the Middle and Late Archaic, and the Middle and Late Woodland periods, hickory wood was used for fires. During the Middle Woodland, Black Locust, maple or birch, American Chestnut, and Red Oak were used. Ash fueled the fires of the Middle Archaic and Late Woodland periods, and White Oak those of the Late Woodland period.