

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name \_\_\_\_\_  
other names/site number Beasley Mounds (preferred); 40SM43

## 2. Location

street & number \_\_\_\_\_  not for publication  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_  vicinity  
state Tennessee code TN county Smith code 159 zip code \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
I hereby certify that the property is:		
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____		
_____		
_____		

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing Noncontributing

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing and 4 rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Mississippian Cultural Resources of the Central Basin (AD 900-AD 1450)

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious structures

FUNERARY: graves/burials

DOMESTIC: Village/habitation site

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: Conservation area

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations** N/A

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHAEOLOGY: prehistoric

**Period of Significance**

A.D. 900 to A.D. 1450

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

Late Prehistoric, Mississippian

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Tennessee Division of Archaeology

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property 6.5 acres**UTM References**

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1                                   
 Zone Easting Northing

2                                 

3                                   
 Zone Easting Northing

4                                 

 See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

**Boundary Justification**

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS.

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title Kevin E. Smith, Professor and Emily L. Beahm, Project Co-Directororganization Middle Tennessee State University date January 31, 2010street & number MTSU Box 10 telephone (615) 898-5958city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132-0001**Additional Documentation**

submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's locationA **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Beaverdam Investment Company, LLC, ATTN: Thomas W. Beasleystreet & number 2982 Highway 96 telephone 615-446-3400city or town Burns state TN zip code 37029**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1Beasley Mounds (Mississippian Cultural Resources of the Central  
Basin AD 900-AD 1450)  
Smith County, Tennessee

## 7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

### Summary Paragraph

The Beasley Mounds (40SM43) consists of a prehistoric Mississippian period mound complex, habitation areas, and cemeteries (ca. A.D. 900-1450) situated on an approximately 6.5 acre triangular point of land. The earthworks include remnants of five earthen mounds and adjoining ridges around an apparent open plaza. Although the potential exists for earlier prehistoric components within the property boundaries, these are at present only minimally documented and cannot currently be confidently established as potential contributors to the significance of the site. The well established and primary occupation of significance for the site is during the late prehistoric Mississippian period (ca. A.D. 900-1450). Although several descriptive terms have been used to refer to this site, there is no published historic name. The site is now locally referred to as the Beasley Mounds after the current landowner,.

### Site History and Antiquarian Observations

The earliest documented mention of the Beasley Mounds is found in John Haywood's *Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*:

*There is a burying ground near to the fortification. In this burying ground 15 years ago were many skeletons, and with many of them were found pipes and water vessels of earthen ware. Near to the burying ground is a deep creek running into the river, forming an acute angle. At some distance from the junction is a ditch from the creek to the river, and the remains of a parapet. Opposite to the entrance way and about six feet from it, is the appearance of a wall in the inside, so formed as to turn those who entered to the right or left. In the interior were several mounds.*<sup>1</sup>

More substantive maps and notes are found in the unpublished records of William Edward Myer (1862-1923) in the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>2</sup> A native of Carthage, Smith County, Tennessee, Myer was fascinated with the prehistoric peoples of the Cumberland River valley from boyhood. He retired in 1917 from his commercial pursuits to pursue full time his interests in Cumberland Valley prehistory -- eventually holding a position with the

<sup>1</sup> John Haywood, *The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee: Up to the First Settlements Therein by the White People in the Year 1768*. (Nashville: George Wilson, 1823), 158.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin E. Smith, "William Edward Myer," in *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, ed. Carroll Van West (Nashville: Tennessee Historical Society, 1998), 665; Samuel D. Smith, "Tennessee Archaeology Awareness Week: Some Smith County Connections," *Smith County Historical and Genealogical Society Newsletter* 10(1):1-5, 1998. See documentation package for the Fite-Williams-Ligon House, Carthage, Smith County, Tennessee (NRIS 030000663, NR 7/17/03) for additional discussion of Myer's contributions to transportation improvements in the Smith County area.

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Bureau of American Ethnology from 1919 until 1923. Myer died of chronic myocarditis on December 2, 1923, leaving several thousand pages of notes, manuscripts, and photographs unpublished. Myer records the following observations :<sup>3</sup>

*Mound No. 1. Circular oval mound 180' over top, Height 8'. It is 660' from center of No. 1 to point between river & creek at low water. This outline gives a clear idea of its shape. It probably was originally flat on top & was used as a house mound. Mr. Sam Stone Bush dug into this mound. This mound is 280' from Creek on the N. (measured from center of mound to top of creek bank)*

*Mound No. 2. Circular oval mound – 125' across top x 3' high. It is 335' E of Mound No. 1 (center to center)*

*Mound No. 3 circular oval mound – 120' across top x 2' high. It is 207' south of Mound No. 2 (center to center).*

*Mound or present moundlike end of low wide ridge No. 4. This mound like object is 125' across top, measured E & W & 2' high. It is the present southern terminus of a low ridge extending nearly N&S – as shown in map. This ridge is about 100' across top, (measured on E&W line) and about 1 ½ ft high. No present trace of it can be found further than shown on map or a distance of 450' in length N&S. The mound like terminus No. 4 is 555 ft S.E. of mound No. 1 (center to center).*

*Mr. Bradley Denny now about 55 years of age has lived within a mile of this place all his life. He remembers faintly a very low wall like ridge in this old town. He was unable to now definitely locate it, (he kindly went with me to endeavor to locate it). From the best of his recollection he thinks it probable that No. 4 & its connecting ridge may possibly be the remains of the wall or embankment he so dimly remembers. He does not remember any gateway. There is no doubt that this ditch & parapet & gateway existed & I feel reasonably certain No. 4 represents the old gate way & the ridge a part of the wall. The field has been in cultivation for 75 years or more and it is not to be wondered at that all trace of ditch & wall should be utterly obliterated.*

*Mound No. 5 is 216' between S & S.E. of Mound No. 1 (center to center). It is a low oval mound – 100' across top and 1 ½' high.*

*All these mounds are in cultivation and have been much reduced in height thereby. All who know them agree that they were from 1' to 2' higher 40 years ago than now.*

<sup>3</sup> MS 2570, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution. Smithsonian Museum Support Center, Suitland, Maryland. This portion of the collection includes a large number of documents in a "Subject File" apparently maintained by Myer from the late 1800s through his death in 1923. The Beasley Mounds notes were filed in Volume 2, M-Z under the subject heading of "Mounds" and are undated.

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*There is a low (seemingly natural) ridge running from Mound No. 1 to No. 2 – thence to No. 3 & thence to No. 5. It has the appearance of having been left when the earth from the space enclosed by this ridge & mound was removed to make the mounds. The space enclosed is lower than the present surface of the field by 1' to 2'. This ridge is now about 1 to 2' high and about 75 to 100' across. Its location & size is shown by the dotted lines...*

*There was a cave in the low bluff on River, due south of Mound No. 1. It was a favorite spot with fisherman. It is now permanently covered by the lock water.*

Mr. Sam Stone Bush, an acquaintance of Myer, completed unsystematic explorations of the site in the mid-1890s. Bush's wife, Mary Allen, was born at the Springs, providing his connection with the site.<sup>4</sup> In another unpublished manuscript, Myer records information provided by Bush concerning these investigations:<sup>5</sup>

*Mr. Bush ran a tunnel into this mound. He found several bodies. He also explored some of the other elevations in the field. One of these was evidently the site of a circular dwelling. At the edge of the circle there was much litter, consisting of broken pottery, animal bones, and other household refuse. In the center of this wigwam circle was a clay fireplace. Mr. Bush dug beneath the fireplace and found human bones and some relics. He found the radiating traces of charcoal, as if this circular dwelling had been made of poles, meeting at the top, and the dwelling had burned and the poles fallen toward the center.*

*In the field surrounding the mound he found a number of stone slab graves. The bodies were buried extended at full length. One of the graves contained the bodies of two infants.*

*In the mounds and graves he found about one dozen earthenware vessels...*

*He also found several pipes, and one quartz discoidal about 3 inches in diameter, in the mounds or graves. He states that the mounds and ridges appear to have been taken from the surface of the soil immediately around them. He reports that he found evidences of an earthen wall or parapet paralleling Creek.*

Five vessels illustrated in a period photograph include a variant of jars known to archaeologists as Matthews Incised (Figure 4). These types of decorated jars were generally produced between A.D. 1275 and 1425 in the Central Basin of Tennessee. Among the other vessels illustrated is a compound vessel combining a bowl with notched appliqué rim strip and cylindrical bottle form. Compound vessels of this sort generally appear in post-A.D. 1325 phases in the southeastern United States. Although appearing infrequently earlier, bowls with notched appliqué rim strips peak

<sup>4</sup> C. Kerr, *History of Kentucky*, 5 volumes (Chicago, American Historical Society, 1922).

<sup>5</sup> MS 2566, pp. 399-401. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution. Smithsonian Museum Support Center, Suitland, Maryland. Myer worked on various portions of this manuscript from 1917 until his death in 1923.

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in frequency during the post-A.D. 1325 phases in the Central Basin. While this small and unsystematic collection of mortuary artifacts does not reflect the full occupation span of the site, they do indicate that people were being buried at the site until at least the 1300s and possibly early 1400s.

In 1898, Rufus Taylor was plowing the Beasley Mounds site and discovered five Mississippian stone statues and a head fragment that were either donated to or purchased by William Myer. Myer described the statues and their discovery (numbers refer to Myer's personal catalog):

*No. 523, 14 inches in height, was standing upright, with the head so near the surface that the plow struck it under the chin. It was about thirty feet west of the base of Mound No. 1. Images Nos. 524 and 521 were found about 30 feet north of 523. 524 was standing upright, within 8 inches of the surface of the soil. No. 521 was about 5 feet from No. 524; it was lying on its side, and within 6 or 8 inches of the surface of the soil. Nos. 520 and 522 were found within 10 or 15 feet of 523. No. 520 is 12 inches in height. The head, no. 525, was ploughed up about 50 feet from 523. A careful search was later made for the body belonging to the head, 525, but so far we have never been able to find it.<sup>6</sup>*

Four of the statues were purchased by the Bureau of American Ethnology from Myer's widow in January 1927. The disposition of the fifth statue and the head fragment is unknown. Another statue in Myer's collection was also plowed up at the Beasley Mounds sometime prior to 1923. The statue was presented to Myer by his friend, Mr. Joseph Eason.<sup>7</sup> Two of the five surviving statues share sufficient similarities to suggest a pair created by the same sculptor (Figures 5-6).<sup>8</sup>

From at least the mid-1800s until the early 1980s, the Beasley Mounds were plowed extensively for various crops. James V. Miller visited and photographed the site in the 1980s when it was still serving as pasture (Figure 7). At that point, Mound 1 was still clearly visible with some possible remnants of the other mounds and earthworks traceable. In 1991, the site was planted in a stand of yellow poplar as part of a Forest Stewardship Plan.<sup>9</sup> The trees are planted on a grid about three paces apart (roughly 2.5-3 meters or 8-10 ft). From the south side of the site, the rows run approximately 20 degrees east of current magnetic north (Figure 8).

<sup>6</sup> MS 2570, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution. Smithsonian Museum Support Center, Suitland, Maryland.

<sup>7</sup> These statues are curated by the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, USMNH Catalog Numbers 334007, 334008, 334011, 334012, 334013.

<sup>8</sup> Kevin E. Smith and James V. Miller, *Speaking with the Ancestors: Mississippian Stone Statuary of the Tennessee-Cumberland Region* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Jim Repogle and Dick Conley, "Forest Stewardship Plan, April 19, 1991", prepared for Tom W. Beasley. Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

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Smith County, Tennessee**Modern Archaeological Investigations**<sup>10</sup>

During March 2008, a small-scale mapping and excavation project was conducted at the Beasley Mounds in conjunction with the Middle Cumberland Mississippian Survey Project.<sup>11</sup> Topographic mapping indicates that most of the smaller earthwork features documented by W.E. Myer are still at least marginally extant, although not clearly visible to the eye in the current poplar grove (Figure 9). Mound 1 remains a very prominent feature of the landscape despite centuries of plowing. A significant visible remnant of Mound 2 is extant. The ridges flanking the central "plaza" are also marginally extant. Mound 3 appears to be largely deflated, although basal remnants are potentially preserved. Portions of Mound 5 also appear to be preserved. Due to time constraints and intervening trees, the topographic map could not be extended to include Mound 4 and its associated ridge -- these features were not clearly visible during a surface inspection. Although speculative, the low elevations adjacent to the southeast flank of Mound 1 may represent spoil piles from the "tunnels" placed by Sam Stone Bush in the mid 1890s. Based on Myer's sketch, Mound 4 and the associated earthwork are located within the boundaries of the nomination.

In addition to mapping, ten 1x1 meter test units were placed intuitively across the core of the site to retrieve some general information about artifact and feature. Units were oriented with magnetic north and labeled with letters A through J (Figure 10). Due to the stand of mature poplars, it was not feasible to place these units on a consistent archaeological grid. The precise location and orientation of the test units was recorded using a total station and tied in with a permanent concrete benchmark placed on the summit of Mound 1 at the close of the project.

***Site Integrity Observations***

**Mound 1 Stratigraphy (Test Units A+F, B+C).** In Test Unit A, we encountered the disturbed remnants of a human skeleton (evidenced by a molar, fragments of cranium, and a mandible fragment). Based on associated artifacts (two cut iron nails and an iron screw), the burial was determined to date to sometime during the mid-late 1800s. The presence of at least one additional historic burial was noted by a former owner of the property who exposed a skeleton on the mound summit several decades ago. This skeleton was reportedly accompanied by gold coat buttons and a copper shoe plate. Who these skeletons represent is unknown at this point – none of the informants were aware of any historic cemetery on the property. Pursuant to Tennessee state

<sup>10</sup> Kevin E. Smith and Emily L. Beahm, "Archaeological Investigations at the Beasley Mounds (40SM43): Preliminary Results of the March 2008 Field Project," Report on file, Division of Archaeology, Department of Environment and Conservation, Nashville, Tennessee, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> The Middle Cumberland Mississippian Survey Project was formed in the early 1990s with a primary mission to obtain and disseminate information on Middle Cumberland Mississippian sites. Primary records of the survey are maintained at the Division of Archaeology, Department of Environment and Conservation, Nashville and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

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cemetery statutes,<sup>12</sup> the probable disturbed burial in Unit A was covered and excavations terminated. Unit F was subsequently opened adjacent to Unit A. Beneath the plow-disturbed upper soil zone, a mound construction stage consisting of basket loaded fill was identified. The basket-loaded fill extended to a depth of 60 cm below the current surface, where the excavation was terminated.

The most fortuitous discovery during the project was several well preserved and distinctive mound construction stages identified in Test Units B and C on the northwest flank of Mound 1. At least two and possibly four different stages of flat-topped mound construction were noted (Figure 11). The base and profile of an early stage of mound construction was clearly identified (marked "F" on Figure 12). Although not clear from the current excavations, it is possible that this represents the initial stage of mound construction. A clear second mound stage overlying F was also identified (marked C, D, E, and H in Figure 12). Although more extensive excavation would be necessary to corroborate, it appears that strata E+H represent a second construction stage and C+D represent yet a third construction stage. Overlying all of these stages was a dense charcoal packed deposit that appears to represent the displaced remnants of a burned structure. Stratum B terminated in the plowzone, making it unclear whether this represents another mound construction episode incorporating a burned structure from the summit of Mound 1 (likely in researchers opinion) or a "midden" of charred logs and cane accumulating during use of the mound summit. A charred wood sample analyzed from stratum B/C yielded a calibrated radiocarbon date of A.D. 1280.<sup>13</sup> Working on sites of a similar time frame, David Hally found that the average use life of platform mound summits was 15-20 years.<sup>14</sup> With two and possibly three preceding summits documented, mound construction probably began at the site at least by the early 1200s.

Test Unit D. This 1x1 meter unit was placed near the center of what appears to be an open plaza. The only artifacts recovered from this unit were a small amount of chert debitage, supporting an interpretation that this area was kept clean of debris. Although not clearly supported, the stratigraphy of this unit also would tend to support Myer's assertion that this area served as a borrow area for moundfill (upper strata noted in other units were relatively truncated).

Test Unit E. This 1x1 meter unit was placed near the center of the "ridge" remnant on the south central portion of the site. The plowzone yielded a few artifacts, but no significant concentration of artifacts was noted.

<sup>12</sup> Tennessee Codes Annotated 46-4-101 et. seq. prohibits the intentional disturbance of graves without a Chancery Court order.

<sup>13</sup> University of Tennessee Center for Archaeometry and Geochronology, UTCAG 08-023 V1. Radiocarbon years before present 730 +/-70. Calibrated range using OxCal4.0: A.D. 1220-1380 (1 S.D.); A.D. 1160-1400 (2 S.D.).

<sup>14</sup> David J. Hally, "Platform Mound Construction and the Instability of Mississippian Chiefdoms," in *Political Structure and Change in the Prehistoric Southeastern United States*, ed., J.F. Scarry (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1996), 92-127.

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Test Unit G. Test Unit G yielded a dense and concentrated prehistoric refuse deposit containing significant quantities of ceramics, lithics, and fauna. The midden extended to a depth of 50-55 cm. At the base of the midden, a short segment of what appears to be a wall trench for a Mississippian-era structure was identified and excavated (Figure 13). No postmolds or stains were noted in the feature.

Test Unit H. Test Unit H was placed near the remnants of Mound 2. No evidence of deliberate earthwork construction was noted, and relatively few artifacts were recovered. Although clearly additional investigations would be necessary to confirm, the results of this unit would tend to support Myer's notion that the ridges were created by borrow of fill from the "plaza" area rather than deliberate construction.

Test Unit I. Test Unit I was placed to the west/southwest of Mound 1 on a relatively flat area. The unit contained dark black midden from the plowzone down to about 40 cm. No ceramics were identified in this unit, but significant amounts of lithics, burned limestone, and faunal remains were recovered. A possible posthole was identified at the base of the excavation unit.

Test Unit J. Test Unit J was placed east of Test Unit G to determine if the midden continued in this direction. Midden was not noted in these excavations, and indeed artifacts in general were very sparse.

### ***Artifact Assemblage***

The 2008 archaeological investigations recovered approximately 500 prehistoric ceramic sherds, 2700 stone tools and fragments of tool manufacturing debris, 2 kilograms of animal bone, gastropods, and bivalves, along with numerous other bulk artifacts (burned clay, cannel coal, unmodified stone, etc.). The vast majority of the ceramics were tempered with crushed mussel diagnostic of Mississippian occupations in the Central Basin. Shell tempered cordmarked ceramics comprised almost 16% of the sample, a type restricted for the most part in the Central Basin to pre-A.D. 1200 assemblages although continuing in other adjacent regions through the 1400s and 1500s.<sup>15</sup> Most distinctive in the assemblage is the presence of a significant number (15.3%) of shell tempered sherds exhibiting square and diamond shaped checkstamping (Figure 14). This type of surface treatment on shell tempered ceramics is virtually undocumented from the Central Basin of Tennessee.<sup>16</sup> In addition, several sherds of shell tempered red-filmed ceramics

<sup>15</sup> W. Steven Spears, Michael C. Moore and Kevin E. Smith, "Evidence for Early Mississippian Settlement of the Nashville Basin: Archaeological Explorations at the Spencer Site (40DV191)," *Tennessee Archaeology* 3(1):3-24, 2008. Published electronically: <http://www.mtsu.edu/~kesmith/TNARCH/tennesseearchaeology.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Michael C. Moore and Kevin E. Smith, *Archaeological Excavations at the Rutherford-Kizer Site: A Mississippian Mound Center in Sumner County, Tennessee*. Tennessee Division of Archaeology, Department of Environment and Conservation, Report of Investigations 13.

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were recovered from the site. This surface treatment has not been previously reported from Mississippian sites in the Central Basin.

Although few of the Mississippian sites on the River east of the Beasley Mounds have been investigated in Tennessee, some potentially comparable Mississippian assemblages have been noted along the Cumberland River in Kentucky. Investigations at the Rowena Mounds in Russell County prior to inundation by the Wolf Creek Reservoir/Lake Cumberland yielded significant quantities of shell tempered cordmarked (cf. McKee Island Cordmarked) and shell tempered checkstamped (cf. Wolf Creek Checkstamped).<sup>17</sup> Red-filmed ceramics were not observed in the Rowena assemblage, although a few sherds of probable black filmed ceramics were noted. More recent excavations at the Croley-Evans site in Knox County, Kentucky also yielded assemblages potentially comparable to the Beasley Mounds ceramics including shell-tempered plain, cordmarked, checkstamped, fabric impressed, and red filmed examples.<sup>18</sup>

Tentatively, the ceramic assemblage suggests that the occupants of the Beasley Mounds were not closely affiliated culturally with similar sites to the west in the Central Basin. Current observations suggest closer affiliations with Mississippian groups to the east in the upper Cumberland region and Norris Basin. At this point in the analysis, it is difficult to assert whether this distinction is purely spatial or may also involve time differences in the occupation of the sites.

<sup>17</sup> M.K. Weinland, "The Rowena Site, Russell County, Kentucky," *Kentucky Archaeological Association Bulletin*, 16&17:1-150, 1980.

<sup>18</sup> Kentucky Archaeological Site Survey Number 15KX24; NRIS 85002975 (NR 11/30/85 as Crowley-Evans Site [15KX24]). Richard W. Jeffries, Emanuel Breitbug, Jennifer Flood, and C. Margaret Scarry, "Mississippian Adaptation on the Northern Periphery: Settlement, Subsistence, and Interaction in the Cumberland Valley of Southeastern Kentucky," *Southeastern Archaeology* 15(1):1-28, 1996; Richard W. Jeffries, "Living on the Edge: Mississippian Settlement in the Cumberland Gap Vicinity," in *Archaeology of the Appalachian Highlands*, eds. Lynne P. Sullivan and Susan C. Prezzano (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 198-221.

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## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Beasley Mounds archaeological site is an approximately 6.5 acre property in Smith County, Tennessee. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion D for its local significance, because it has yielded and retains the potential to yield significant information on prehistoric Mississippian lifeways.

The property meets the registrations requirements for Property Type I Mound Complexes in the Mississippian Cultural Resources of the Central Basin of Tennessee, A.D. 900 to A.D. 1450 MPS (NRIS 64500611): "Due to the variety of research topics this property type can address, as well as their rapid rate of destruction, all undisturbed and partially disturbed mound complexes should be considered eligible for listing."<sup>19</sup>

### MPS Data Requirements for Registration

The MPS lists seven data requirements for registration of mound complexes, each of which is addressed individually below.<sup>20</sup>

#### 1. The site must contain features, artifacts or other data that can be used to temporally identify the site as Mississippian.

Historic collecting and digging, along with modern archaeological investigations, have documented significant surviving features temporally identifiable as Mississippian (platform mound and other earthworks, and wall-trench structures); artifacts (diagnostic late prehistoric ceramic vessels and fragments; stone statuary); and a radiocarbon date of Mississippian age.

#### 2. The site must contain features or other cultural materials that can be used to infer the activities of the site residents.

The site contains partially intact public architecture (mounds and earthworks), structures, and intact sub-plowzone midden (refuse) deposits associated with residential areas. The Beasley Mounds site is particularly significant because it has produced "more stone statuary than any other area of comparable size in Tennessee."<sup>21</sup>

#### 3. The site must contain faunal, floral, or shell remains that may potentially be used to establish subsistence patterns, processing methods and/or season of site occupation.

<sup>19</sup> Multiple Property Submission, page F-3.

<sup>20</sup> Multiple Property Submission, page F-8.

<sup>21</sup> Kevin E. Smith and James V. Miller. *Speaking with the Ancestors: Mississippian Stone Statuary of the Tennessee-Cumberland Style* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 53.

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Soil conditions on at least portions of the site are highly conducive to the preservation of faunal, charred floral, and shell remains. The small portion of the refuse midden examined during 2008 produced over two kilograms of well preserved animal remains, including mammals, birds, fish bones/scales, along with large numbers of freshwater gastropods and bivalves. Several kilograms of charred wood samples from structures were recovered, along with small quantities of charred seeds.

4. The site must contain the remains of one or more individuals in a sufficient state of preservation to determine sex, age category, and/or pathologies.<sup>22</sup>

Although no prehistoric interments were identified during modern investigations, we infer from historic documentation that several prehistoric cemeteries once existed on the site. Although heavily impacted by antiquarian and avocational digging during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the potential exists for portions of these cemeteries to remain intact.

5. The site must exhibit evidence of wattle and daub structures or other features that can be inferred to represent areas of domestic residence.

The refuse midden deposit and portion of a probable wall trench structure identified during the 2008 archaeological investigations indicates the presence of intact domestic residential areas within the site boundaries.

6. The site must retain undisturbed (or partially disturbed) spatial relationships among features and artifacts, or demonstrate that reconstruction of these relationships is possible.

Although plowing has partially disturbed upper portions of mounds, earth "ridges," and other features on the site, test investigations clearly demonstrate that substantial portions of the primary platform mound (Mound 1) remain intact. In addition, documented sub-plowzone refuse deposits and structural remains indicate the potential for reconstruction of spatial relationships through additional research.

7. The site must contain exotic raw materials or artifacts whose source can be postulated to be outside the Central Basin.

<sup>22</sup> Since approval of the MPS in 1989, the Tennessee legislature has extended protection to all human burials, regardless of temporal age. Current state law does not allow for excavation of human interments on state or private lands for research purposes, although it does provide a process by which landowners can petition the Chancery Court to remove and relocate burials when proposed land uses are inconsistent with proper reverence for the deceased. As a result, although the potential exists theoretically to meet this registration requirement, in practice, this data category is currently unrecoverable. See Michael C. Moore, "An Updated Review of the Tennessee State Cemetery Law and Other Statutes Regarding Prehistoric Burial Removal," *Tennessee Anthropologist* 23(1&2):58-68, 1998.

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Archaeological testing at the site in 2008 yielded small quantities of Dover chert or flint, a stone source available only from quarries in counties to the west of the Central Basin of Tennessee. This exotic raw material was widely traded throughout the southeastern United States during the Mississippian period in the form of agricultural and woodworking implements (hoes, chisels, adzes) and elite symbols of rank and status (primarily ceremonial hypertrophic weapons such as maces and swords). Although the limited modern investigations have not confirmed the presence of other exotic materials, confirmation of the site as the center of a Mississippian polity clearly indicates the probability that other exotic materials such as copper, marine shell and greenstone are present at the site.

In sum, the Beasley Mounds has the potential to contribute substantial information pertinent to all eleven of the Research Questions and Objectives outlined in the MPS.<sup>23</sup> Since approval of the MPS in 1989, substantial additional research on Central Basin Mississippian sites has been conducted and numerous publications produced. The Beasley Mounds is now established as a substantial contributor to our understanding of Mississippian peoples in the Central Basin of Tennessee and has the potential to produce even greater information in the future. The Beasley family has ensured future preservation of the site through conservation stewardship agreements prohibiting construction of buildings or other substantive improvements on the property.

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<sup>23</sup> Multiple Property Submission, Pages E-8 through E-10.

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## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

**Photographs by: Kevin E. Smith and Emily L. Beahm**  
**Middle Tennessee State University**

**Digital Files: Tennessee Historical Commission**  
**Nashville Tennessee**

- 1 of 11 Property from outside east boundary. Photographer facing southwest.  
February 16, 2008.
- 2 of 11 Closeup of Forest Stewardship sign in Photograph 1. Photographer facing  
southwest.  
February 16, 2008.
- 3 of 11 Property from southeast corner (UTM 3). Photographer facing west.  
December 17, 2007.
- 4 of 11 Southwest corner of property (UTM 1). Photographer facing west/southwest.  
December 17, 2007.
- 5 of 11 Cumberland River from southwest corner of property (UTM 1). Creek entering from  
right of photograph). Photographer facing west/southwest.  
December 17, 2007.
- 6 of 11 View from northern property boundary across Creek toward inactive Hartsville  
Nuclear Plant cooling tower (0.6 miles away). Photographer facing northwest.  
December 17, 2007.
- 7 of 11 View from southwest corner of property (UTM 1). Photographer facing northeast.  
December 17, 2007.
- 8 of 11 View from southern boundary of property towards Mound 1. Volunteers in  
background are ascending the southern slope of Mound 1. Photographer facing  
north.  
March 5, 2008.
- 9 of 11 Mound 1 during volunteer project. Photographer facing south.  
March 6, 2008.

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- 10 of 11 View from Mound 1 across "plaza" towards Mounds 2 and 3. Photographer facing east.  
March 11, 2008.
- 11 of 11 View from Mounds 2 and 3 across "plaza" towards Mound 1. Photographer facing west.  
March 11, 2008

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## PHOTOGRAPH KEY



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**FIGURE 2. Location of Beasley Mounds Archaeological Site on March 11, 1997**



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**FIGURE 3. Sketch map of Beasley Mounds by William Edward Myer, ca. 1917-1923 (**

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**FIGURE 4. Five ceramic vessels. Handwritten notes on back of photograph reads Pottery from old town. 5 pots from Mound & Graves on townsite at Creek, excavated by Sam Stone Bush 1895 - 2&3 show rounded, indented, lotus conventional form - (*Photograph in William Myer collection, Courtesy Samuel D. Smith*).**



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**FIGURE 5. Right profile of stone statue from Myer Collection, USMNH 334008.**





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**FIGURE 7. Beasley Mounds Archaeological Site, ca. 1985 facing east. Mound 1 is visible at the upper left of the photograph (*Photograph courtesy James V. Miller*).**



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**FIGURE 8. Poplar stand planted in 1991. Photographer is facing west from the eastern boundary of the site on February 26, 2008.**



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**FIGURE 9. Topographic map generated during March 2008 project with overlaid interpretation of surviving mounds and ridges shown in Myer map.**



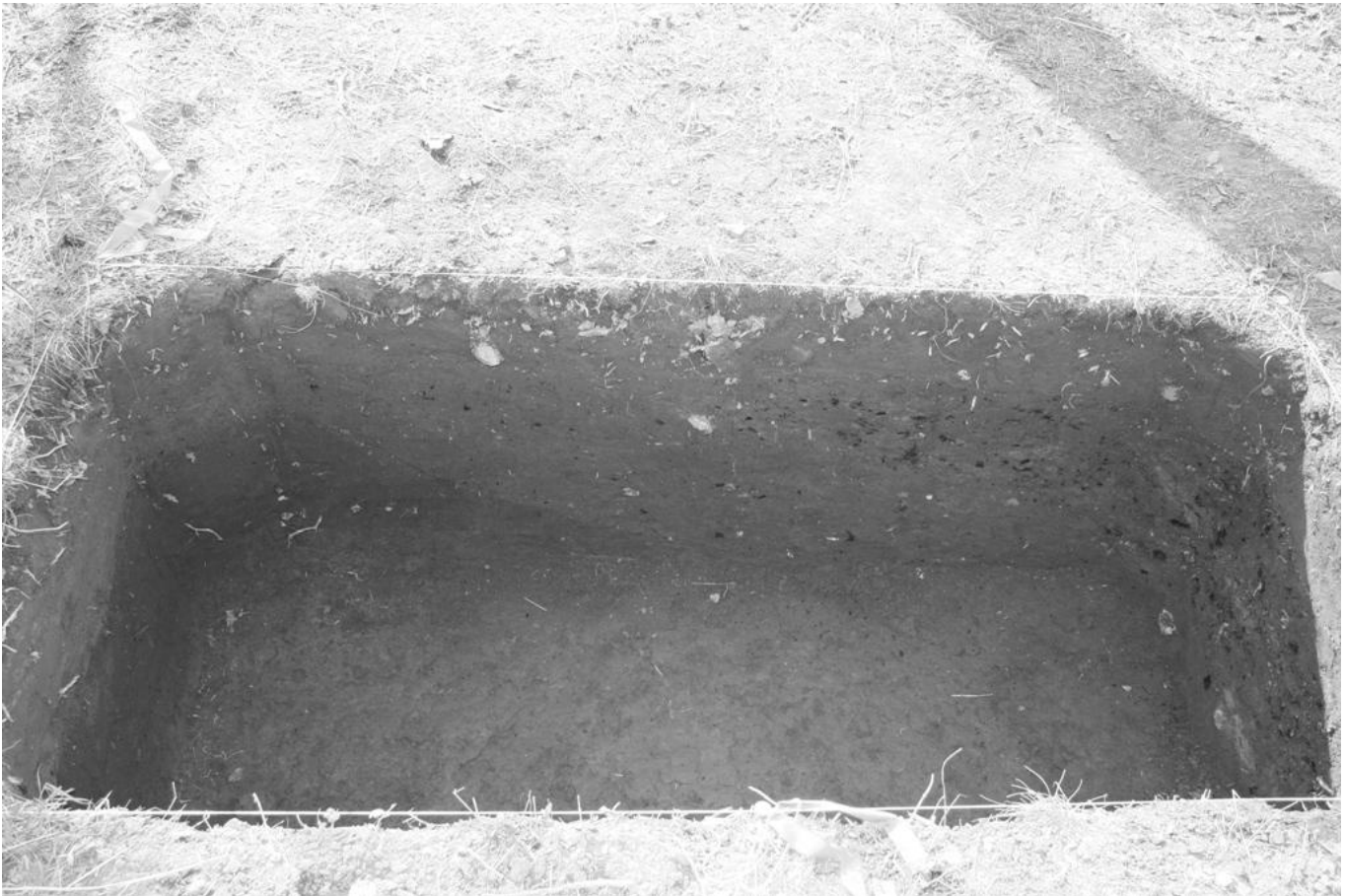
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**FIGURE 11. Test Units B and C, West profile showing mound construction stages.**



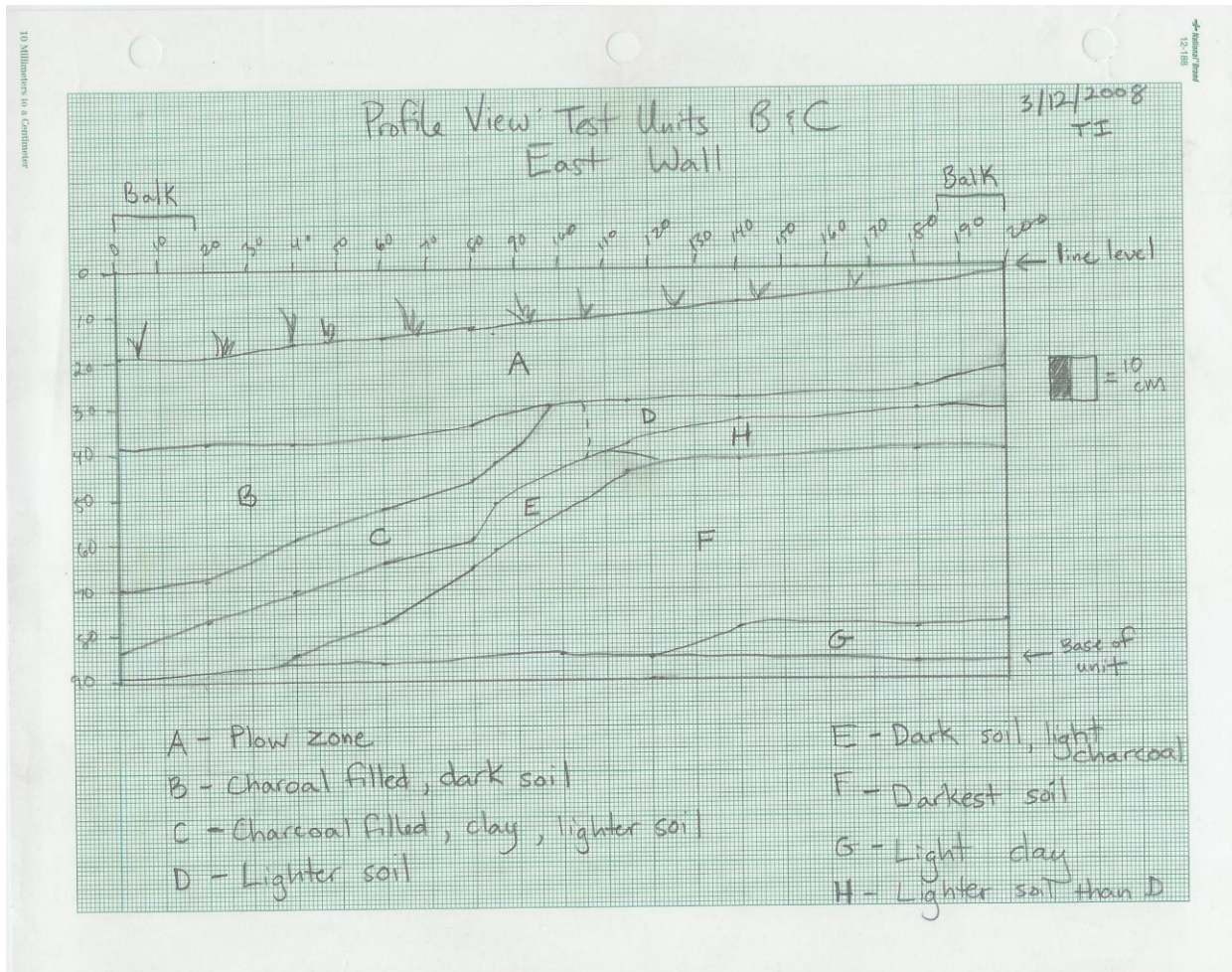
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**FIGURE 12. Profile drawing of east wall of Test Units B and C, showing flat-topped mound construction stages.**



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**FIGURE 13. Test Unit G after excavation facing south. Note the probable wall trench for a structure at upper left of the excavation unit.**



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**FIGURE 14. Shell tempered check-stamped ceramics from the Beasley Mounds.**

