

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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DATE ENTERED	

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC MD-143, THE BIG MEADOWS SITE

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN LURAY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 07

STATE VIRGINIA CODE 51 COUNTY MADISON CODE 113

3 CLASSIFICATION

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>OWNERSHIP</b>	<b>STATUS</b>	<b>PRESENT USE</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (if applicable) NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STREET & NUMBER 143 SOUTH THIRD STREET

CITY, TOWN PHILADELPHIA VICINITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. N.A.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE N.A.

DATE FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

#### Context:

MD-143, the Big Meadows Site, was one of a series of prehistoric sites discovered by foot survey [redacted] by a crew from the Laboratory of Archaeology of the University of Virginia. Initial location of MD-143 occurred through surface inspection of a spot and discovery of a few quartzite flakes under a stand of pine. Most of MD-143 was and is covered by thick meadow mat. Nevertheless, the topographic location of the site seemed ideal for prehistoric occupation and further test excavations were conducted in late Spring of 1976 (1976).. At that time, five one meter test squares were excavated in a gentle, grass covered slope, revealing what seemed at the time a fairly deep and undisturbed Archaic site. As part of a major cultural resource study of the Shenandoah National Park funded through the Mid-Atlantic Office of the National Park Service, intensive excavations of a five meter "section" were undertaken in July, 1978 (Hoffman 1979: 145-235). In addition to other things, these revealed an occupation ranging from late Middle Archaic through Early Woodland (ca. 3000 B.C. - 800 A.D.) with a major occupation in the Late Archaic through Early Woodland period (ca. 2500 B.C. - 1000 A.D.). A list of datable artifacts is appended to this report. In addition to a large number of datable points, and a total of 4,488 artifacts recovered during the 1978 season, MD-143 yielded 12 steatite vessel sherds, analyzed by Prof. Ralph Allen of the Dept. of Chemistry of the University of Virginia using neutron activation techniques. A feature believed to be a stone tent ring was identified and dated to Late Archaic - Early Woodland times. Finally, cleaning of a 1976 test square produced an incised slate of slate (also of Late Archaic - Early Woodland date) which constituted the oldest piece of art work found in the Shenandoah National Park.

A number of maps, artifact tables and stratigraphic profiles from the 1976 and 1978 seasons have been appended to this nomination form to illustrate the extensive data available from MD-143 (see also Miller 1976, Foss and Hoffman 1979: 145-235).

#### Environment:

MD-143 lies on a gentle grass covered slope [redacted]. Big Meadows is an upland basin attaining an average elevation of 3500 feet ASL. The underlying bedrock consists of Precambrian Catoclin Greenstone, while the Big Meadows massif itself is now believed by geologists to have originated as a massive volcanic flow. Archaeologically significant is the fact that the Catoclin Formation at Big Meadows was only occasionally exploited by prehistoric inhabitants for raw material for their stone tools; local greenstone constituting less than 1% of the stone artifacts found. The most common lithic material used at MD-143 was quartzite and had to be imported from quarries [redacted].

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES Late Archaic - Early Woodland BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As one of the most carefully explored sites in the Shenandoah National Park and the entire Blue Ridge province, MD-143 established a base line for future research into the long term carrying capacity of the Blue Ridge Mountains by revealing a formerly unknown population florescence in the Big Meadows area between about 2500 B.C. and 800 A.D. Based on typological evidence, it is probable that the major population movement into this area at the end of Middle Archaic or beginning of Late Archaic times began and continued on a seasonal basis. The significance of MD-143 is illustrated by a number of specific points:

- (1) It has provided the oldest evidence of a possible dwelling (a small circular tent ring) in the Blue Ridge.
- (2) It has yielded the oldest example of prehistoric art from the Blue Ridge.
- (3) MD-143 has produced large amounts of locally and regionally imported raw materials, indicating the extent to which its prehistoric occupants were exploiting a large and varied territory on a seasonal basis and the importance of local exchange networks.
- (4) Since Big Meadows constitutes a unique ecological niche within the Shenandoah National Park, the presence of a functionally interrelated congerly of prehistoric sites (including MD-138--also nominated to the National Register) illustrating a heretofore unknown highland adaptation, it should be accorded maximum legal protection and recognition.
- (5) The proximity of MD-143 to the Big Meadows Visitor Center with its prehistoric displays, type collections and interpretive program emphasizing the unique aspects of Big Meadows makes it an ideal spot for guided archaeological field tours. Moreover, its heavy meadow cover and closeness to Park facilities permit its protection from possible looting.
- (6) The population peak reached in Late Archaic - Early Woodland times and typified by MD-143 contrasts with the sparse use of the mountains by late Woodland peoples (ca. 800 - 1600 A.D. and suggests that the widespread myth that the Blue Ridge was largely an uninhabited "empty" zone in prehistoric times may have originated with tales told by Indians to early European settlers. These people, in turn, accepted the aboriginal use of the mountains characteristic of their times (17th and 18th centuries) as

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

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1979 "A Cultural Perspective on Blue Ridge Prehistory, Site MD-143 in Big Meadows," in Patterns in Time, (ed.), Mid-Atlantic Region, NPS, Philadelphia, PA.

Excavations at  
K... ..

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY over 3,000 square meters

UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			

B	ZONE	EASTING
D		

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

MD-143 lies on a gentle grass covered slope

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY

STATE	CODE	COUNTY
STATE	CODE	COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

DR. MICHAEL A. HOFFMAN

ORGANIZATION

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH LABORATORY, WESTERN

STREET & NUMBER

201 TILLMAN HALL

CITY OR TOWN

MACOMB

DATE

TELEPHONE

(309) 252-1111

STATE

ILLINOIS

**12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION**

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES  NO  NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register. The State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Historic Preservation Officer to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

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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Environment:

Jasper found at MD-143 was probably obtained at the western foot of the Blue Ridge [redacted] and the rarer blue-gray cryptocrystalline rock probably came from the Shenandoah Valley [redacted] [redacted]. Neutron activation analysis revealed all the steatite to be of local derivation, probably from the Piedmont, [redacted].

The soils at MD-143 are Myersville-Catoctin very stony silt loam, somewhat acidic and low in organic matter. Accordingly, organic matter of potential archaeological importance (including pollen) have not been preserved.

One of the principal questions posed by our excavations in 1978 involved the nature of the prehistoric environment and the antiquity of the meadow itself. Unfortunately, insufficient data were preserved to answer the question about the age of meadow conditions, although future analysis of phytoliths from remaining excavation soil samples might provide information on this matter. Indirectly and through analogy with modern conditions, we have been able to conclude that elevation-dependent factors like precipitation and temperature would have had important effects on the ancient availability of seasonal plants and animal populations.

Archaeological Investigations:

The initial discovery and testing of MD-143 occurred in the Spring of 1976 (Miller 1976). During the 1976 test excavations, five one meter test squares were excavated to a maximum depth of 50 cm. in arbitrary levels of 10 cm. and sufficient material recovered to suggest minimal disturbance and the possibility of vertical stratification (Miller 1976). Later analysis of the artifacts found in 1976 (Foss 1977: 116-119) suggested a low artifact density (ca. 260 artifacts per cubic meter) and indicated that most artifacts were concentrated in the upper 20 cm. of soil. Four distinct soil horizons were defined: An upper (A) horizon of grass and roots (meadow mat) about 2-3 cm. thick, an A horizon of brownish humic soil averaging 8 cm. thick, a B horizon about 15-20 cm. thick composed of reddish brown clayey soil and a C horizon of very pale brown to yellow clay with abundant gravel and cobble sized pieces of shale, greenstone and epidote.

Intensive excavation of a five meter "section" took place between July 6, and August 11, 1978, as part of an overall strategy aimed at exploring the settlement pattern and cultural history of the Shenandoah National Park (Hoffman et al. 1979). The excavations were designed to test the pos-

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Archaeological Investigations:

sibility of vertical stratification and determine the existence of features and horizontal components. Although significant vertical stratigraphy was absent, excavations have shown the likely existence of a Late Archaic to Early Woodland component associated with a stone tent ring and several broken steatite vessels.

Excavation of the five meter section was carefully controlled to maximize the locational information available for each artifact unearthed. The section was sub-divided into 25 one meter squares and bisected along both axes by 50 cm. wide cross-balks to aid in stratigraphic control. Levels consisted of arbitrary 5 cm. units within natural soil zones (cultural stratification not being in evidence). All backdirt was sieved through  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch mesh. Since excavation was by means of trowels, it was possible to locate and map a high percentage of the artifacts in situ on specially printed forms. Along the cross-balks, additional directional information was recorded on each artifact over 2 cm. in length to determine the effect of possible down slope movement (creep) on artifact position. All piece plotted artifacts were recorded on artifact data forms in the field and given a separate number. Lot numbers, also recorded on the same artifact data form, were assigned to sieved material.

Although it was not clear stratigraphically whether or not plowing had ever occurred at MD-143, historically this seems unlikely. The major historical disturbance occurred just to the northwest of MD-143 at the site of a CCC camp during the 1930's. Analysis of the locational data recorded on artifacts along the cross-balks indicated little or no displacement by downslope movement. We conclude, therefore, that the horizontal positions of buried artifacts can be used for reconstructing activity areas.

Analysis of the lithic assemblage from MD-143 has raised a number of possibilities concerning the role of the site as part of an extensive and hitherto unknown Late Archaic-Early Woodland population explosion into the Blue Ridge (Hoffman 1979:145-235 and Hoffman and Foss 1980). Additionally, the presence of mostly imported lithic materials has shown the extent to which this peak period of prehistoric exploitation was dependent upon the resources of an extensive region and suggests a level of cultural sophistication not normally associated with pre-agricultural peoples in the Mid-Atlantic region. Explanation of this cultural florescence in the mountains involves both environmental and technological changes and suggests a new focus for regional prehistoric, problem-oriented research.

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Intrusions and Data Limitations:

As already mentioned, careful stratigraphic soundings and historical research into recent land utilization in the MD-143 area suggests that no significant disturbance, either cultural or natural, has occurred there since Archaic to Early Woodland times. A shallow depression noted in the upper levels during 1978 excavations is almost certainly a path of 19th or early 20th century vintage. It is improbable that the site was ever plowed and historical accounts suggest that it was used as a seasonal pasture since at least the late 18th century.

As at other sites in the Shenandoah National Park, there seems to be little vertical stratification so that any archaeological investigation must rely on piece plotting and slow, had excavation. Demonstrating the value of such techniques were the close matches between none joining sherds from steatite bowls--a fact that helps show the minimal extent of horizontal dispersion of artifact clusters.

The soil acidity and lack of significant soil buildup has destroyed all organic matter including pollen. Environmental inference must, therefore, be done through analogy (Hoffman and Foss 1980 and Hoffman 1979: 145-235). Although precise figures are not yet available, we estimate that MD-143 covers an area of several thousand square meters, only a small portion of which has been sampled. Thanks to the present meadow mat, this area is well protected but any construction activity would surely destroy such a fragile site.

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typical of all "Indians." The peculiar Colonia-centric (or anglophile) attitude of official Virginia history and historical archaeology helped perpetuate, ironically, the prejudices of the equally short-sighted late Woodland aborigines toward the Blue Ridge.

(7) MD-143 may be the first site in the world on which the techniques of neutron activation analysis were performed on a precisely controlled and relatively large number of steatite sherds from a small area. The result was to show that, in addition to tracing origins, this radio-geo-chemical technique may be used to match non-mending sherds and test the degree of horizontal integrity characteristic of archaeological sites.

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- Foss, Robert W.  
1977 Man and Mountain: An Archaeological Overview of the Shenandoah  
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