

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED OCT 31 1985

DATE ENTERED DEC 13 1985

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC MD-112, THE GENTLE SITE

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

CITY, TOWN LURAY

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 07

STATE VIRGINIA

VICINITY OF  
CODE 51

COUNTY MADISON  
COD 113

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES, RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES, UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, MID-ATLANTIC REGION

STREET & NUMBER

143 SOUTH THIRD STREET

CITY, TOWN PHILADELPHIA

VICINITY OF

STATE 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 DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

## Context:

MD-112, the Gentle Site, was originally located by a park ranger in the Shenandoah National Park and occasional reports of visitors and park personnel who made small collections that were later housed in the Big Meadows Visitor Center. In 1975 these collections were inventoried and the site visited and lightly collected twice by personnel of the Laboratory of Archaeology of the University of Virginia as part of a survey of past archaeological work in the Shenandoah National Park sponsored by the Denver Service Center of the NPS (Hoffman, Cleland, Funk & Vernon 1975). Test excavations were undertaken at MD-112 in the Spring of 1976, as part of an archaeological [REDACTED] (Miller 1976).

Unlike many sites in the Shenandoah National Park, MD-112 is well dated by a large number of diagnostic points and some pottery. In 1975, 13 points in the Big Meadows Visitor Center were examined and typed (Hoffman, Cleland, Funk & Vernon 1975: 55) and 2 badly decayed potsherds examined. All of these diagnostics dated to late Woodland times. The 1976 test excavations and controlled surface collections produced another 37 identifiable points and 25 potsherds. The former included: 18 Levanna Triangular points and 7 crude triangular points (Holland 1955) [type D]. These points and 23 sherds of Albermarle and 2 of Radford Series pottery date the principal occupation at the Gentle Site to ca. 1300 ± 1600 A.D., while 1 Clarksville Small Triangular point of quartz crystal suggests that the site may have been used into proto-historic times (ca. 1600 ± 1760 A.D.). A minor late Early Archaic occupation is indicated by a Stanly-Morrow Mountain transition type point (ca. 5500 - 4500 B.C.).

It is easy to find archaeological material at MD-112 (in contrast to many other prehistoric sites in the Park) because of the lack of ground cover (due to the presence of coniferous trees) and minor erosion caused by heavy visitor traffic. MD-112 is the most accessible important prehistoric site in the Shenandoah National Park where artifacts can be located easily by amateurs as well as professionals.

## Environment:

The Gentle Site lies on the eastern escarpment of the Blue Ridge on an [REDACTED]

Today MD-112 is covered by coniferous trees which restrict undergrowth and increase visibility. The Gentle Site allows equal access [REDACTED]

water but a degree of protection often valued by late Woodland peoples. Its situation makes it one of the most attractive and comfortable sites in the Shenandoah National Park.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input 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 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 late Woodland & late Early Archaic BUILDER/ARCHITECT N/A

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gentle Site raises a number of tantalizing questions concerning its relationship to fairly well known late Woodland sites in the Piedmont and the role of late Woodland peoples in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Sites like MD-112 might well have been connected with large scale fire hunts and trading and raiding expeditions regularly conducted by the large Piedmont (and Valley horticultural village peoples along this cultural frontier. By raising the question of the identity of the Blue Ridge as a frontier zone in late Woodland times (Holland, personal communication) MD-112 also provides a theoretic link to early European settlement of the Blue Ridge from different directions by different ethnic groups. The specific qualities of the Gentle Site which illustrate its importance include the following considerations:

- (1) In terms of finished artifacts, it is one of the most (if not the most) productive sites in the Shenandoah National Park.
- (2) Large amounts of imported stone artifacts and pottery allow us to trace directly the relation of MD-112 to adjoining regions, especially the Piedmont.
- (3) MD-112 is the largest late Woodland site in the Shenandoah National Park.
- (4) [REDACTED] MD-112 can be studied in relation to a local settlement system over several millennia (Hoffman 1979).
- (5) Because of the fairly large number of sherds found there, MD-112 invites comparison with other late Woodland sites (like the Horizon I occupation at AU-158) on the opposite face of the Blue Ridge where ceramics are found.
- (6) Because of its easy accessability and high visitor impact, MD-112 is educationally significant and might easily be integrated into a Park interpretive program.
- (7) There is a possibility that features and even habitations dating to late Woodland times might be preserved at the Gentle Site, especially in the middle of the terrace on which it sits. Since well preserved features are virtually unknown in prehistoric sites in the Park, MD-112 may prove a critical resource to future generations of archaeologists equipped with better field and analytical techniques.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Hoffman, M.A.; J.H. Cleland; T.C. Funk & R.W. Vernon  
 1975 The Shenandoah National Park as a Cultural Resource. Denver  
 Service Center, NPS, Denver, Colorado.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY [REDACTED]  
 UTM REFERENCES

A [REDACTED]			B [ ] [ ] [ ]			[ ] [ ] [ ]		
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]			D [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]			[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]		

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION  
 [REDACTED]

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

STATE	<i>N/A</i>	CODE	COUNTY	<i>N/A</i>	CODE
STATE	<i>N/A</i>	CODE	COUNTY	<i>N/A</i>	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE  
 Dr. Michael A. Hoffman

ORGANIZATION  
 Archaeological Research Laboratory, Western Illinois University

STREET & NUMBER  
 201 Tillman Hall

CITY OR TOWN  
 MaComb

DATE  
 [ ] [ ] [ ]

TELEPHONE  
 (309) 298-1188

STATE  
 Illinois 61455

**12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION**

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES  NO  NONE

*[Signature]*  
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE *[Signature]*

TITLE *Chief Keshawan, Volcanic Park Service* DATE *10/27/85*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*[Signature]* DATE *12/13/85*  
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Archaeological Investigations:

After our 1975 study of collections from the Gentle Site present in the Big Meadows Visitor Center, two visits to the site enabled first hand inspection and resulted in the collection of a greater range of material, including debitage (Hoffman, Cleland, Funk & Vernon 1975:55,58-59). In 1976 it was decided that the critical location of MD-112 [redacted] as well as the possibility of structural remains of late Woodland vintage required further, sub-surface testing. It was felt, even at this time, that MD-112 almost certainly merited National Register status and that additional data were needed to support its nomination.

Accordingly, in Spring of 1976 limited test excavations were undertaken (see map). A temporary site datum was established [redacted]

and a grid system divided into two meter squares imposed on the site (see map). Due to limitations of time and funds, it was only possible to excavate four two-meter squares and surface fourteen others in the southwest end of the site (see map and photo) and finish one square in the center of the occupation area. Although this procedure provided useful data, it did not allow us to assess the nature of horizontal variation (almost certainly present) or determine whether features were preserved in optimal areas. Thus, only about 1.33% of the site has been sampled and this, not representatively. Proof of the existence of late Woodland features and structures awaits future research.

Nevertheless, the systematic excavation and surface collections did produce sufficient data to evaluate the importance of MD-112. The two-meter squares were excavated with shovels and trowels to a depth of 10 cm. and only diagnostic specimens piece plotted. A single deep probe was undertaken in the corner of one square to a depth of 34 cm, revealing a shallow B horizon of yellow-brown clayey loam mixed with gravel. Most artifacts were confined to the A horizon.

In all, the 1976 excavations produced a total of 5,444 stone artifacts (see appended table) and 25 potsherds. (Foss 1977: 105-112). The estimated artifact density was a high 2,388 per cubic meter (a figure inflated by the emphasis on surface collection and shallow excavations). Of the lithic material, 74.4% was quartzite, 12% quartz, and 12% cryptocrystalline. The high frequency of quartz reflects contacts with the Piedmont, while the large amount of cryptocrystalline materials is typical of the late Woodland lithic industry.

Analysis of the MD-112 assemblage by Foss (1977: 105-112) produced the following conclusions:

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Archaeological Investigations:

"The single most important attribute of the assemblage's morphological distribution was the overwhelmingly high percentage of micro-flakes which numbered 4,521 or 83.0% of the total. Again, this figure does not reflect the true situation which is that probably as many as 98% of the flakes were less than 2.5 cm. (long), and a great majority of these were extremely small chips, many less than 1 cm. (in length). Such a preponderance of these small flakes is indicative of two related factors: (1) that resharpening of bifacial, tools was a major activity at the site, as many of these tiny chips could be classified functionally as "edge resharpening" flakes, and (2) that artifacts being produced were generally small in size. The low frequency of cortex flakes (7.4%) can be interpreted as meaning that objects were brought to the site either completed or as "preforms." The remnants of 38 cores in the sample, all very small, indicated that some core reduction was occurring at the site.

"The presence of ceramics at the site may be interpreted as representing activities related to the gathering of wild plant foods which were stored and transported from the mountains in these containers. The lithic assemblage, with its low frequency of worked and utilized flakes (5.7%), is difficult to functionally classify. Nearly 80% of the tools recovered from the site were projectile points or point fragments. In addition to these, there were two small scrapers, two scraper/knife combination tools, one drill, and a large greenstone chopping tool. This latter specimen is also noteworthy because one face showed possible evidence of utilization as a grinding stone, perhaps for the preparation of meal from nuts."

ITEM 9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Foss, Robert W.

1977 Man and Mountain: An Archaeological Overview of the Shenandoah National Park. M.A. Thesis, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

Hoffman, Michael A.

1979 A Cultural Perspective on Blue Ridge Prehistory: Excavations at Site MD-143 in Big Meadows. in Patterns in Time, by M.A. Hoffman (ed.), Mid-Atlantic Region, NPS, Philadelphia, Pa.

Miller, James

1976 Prehistoric Archaeological Investigations in the Big Meadows and Rose River Area. in Man in the Blue Ridge, by M.A. Hoffman (ed.), Mid-Atlantic Region, NPS, Philadelphia, Pa.

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Intrusions and Data Limitations:

The still incomplete information available for such a large and complex site makes it difficult to assess with the accuracy of more carefully tested localities. Nevertheless, the impact from historic disturbance seems fairly light and today is restricted to hikers passing over the southern edge of the terrace. No historic building activity is evident but small out-buildings may have existed. If plowing did occur, it would have been shallow and had little effect on the horizontal distribution of artifacts. Due to incomplete areal sampling of MD-112, it is not possible to locate horizontal clusters or determine whether features might be preserved. The only natural erosion that occurs is very limited and

