

(Townsend—continued from page 11)

⁷ The National Park Service has included both the prehistory and historic periods in “history” since at least 1936. Verne E. Chatelain, Acting Assistant Director, National Park Service, introductory statement in minutes of 23 January 1936 meeting of the (Educational) Advisory Board. National Park Service, History Division, National Historic Landmarks files, Washington, DC: 1-3.

⁸ Glass, “The National Preservation Program,” 456.

⁹ Glass, *The Beginnings*, 363, fn 56.

¹⁰ Richard W. Sellars, a National Park Service historian, characterized Park Service archeologists as “not in power, as far as Washington goes, and yet independent and sort of carrying on their own programs.” Robert Utley agreed that this was an accurate description of the archeologists and their participation in the Park Service’s historic preservation program—especially in the early days of OAHP. See Richard Sellars and Melody Webb, *An Interview with Robert M. Utley on the History of Historic Preservation in the National Park Service—1947-1980*

(24 September 1985 - 27 December 1985), Professional Papers No. 16, Southwest Cultural Resources Center, Santa Fe (1988): 80-81.

¹¹ National Register criteria A, B, and C also are based on the 1966 national significance criteria used by the National Park Service’s Historic Sites Survey. In 1967, for example, when the criteria were established, national significance Criterion 1 read as follows: Structures or sites at which events occurred that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified prominently with, or which outstandingly represent, the broad cultural, political, economic, military, or social history of the Nation, and from which an understanding and appreciation of the larger patterns of our American heritage may be gained. Criterion 1 became Criterion A. Note that prior to 1960, Criterion 1 referred to “broad aspects of prehistoric and historic American life.”

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Research, Stewardship, Visibility, and Planning

Four Reasons to Nominate Archeological Sites to the National Register

John H. Sprinkle, Jr.

Today, archeological sites make up only a tiny fraction (substantially less than 10%) of the more than 62,000 historic properties included in the National Register of Historic Places. In Virginia, for example, there are more than 26,000 recorded archeological sites—only 142 are listed on the National Register under Criterion D. There are four major reasons why archeological sites should be nominated to the National Register: research, stewardship, visibility, and planning.

Research: The utility of the National Register in anthropological, archeological, and historical research has been poorly explored. The Register is a natural resource for cross-cultural, geographical, functional, or comparative studies. Jurisdictional boundaries that would hamper multi-state investigations are easily overcome with databases such as the National Register Information System (NRIS). If, for example, you were researching the archeology of 18th-century military sites in Virginia, you could easily learn through the NRIS that the Old Dominion contains 14 out of 165 recorded military sites in the original 13 colonies.

Stewardship is an important goal for the private landowners and public sector land managers of signifi-

cant archeological sites. Listing on the National Register assures these land trustees that the archeological site on their property is worthy of protection and preservation. National Register nominations spell out exactly what is important about an individual site and where that site is located within the owner’s property. For land owners and managers, this is an invaluable service.

Visibility: Historic buildings enjoy a unique advantage over most archeological sites, they are generally visible—and hence inherently more understandable—to the tax paying public. The National Register is an effective means to elucidate the importance of “underground” resources. Could thieves have excavated over 250 holes on the Yorktown, VA, battlefield recently, if the general public was more aware that our historic places also contain important archeological remains?

Planning: The National Register is a unique preservation planning tool that decision-makers at the local, state, and federal levels can use to effectively manage our archeological heritage. Knowledge about the potential extent and character of archeological resources within a given project area would greatly improve the chance that sites would be preserved early in the development process, rather than being an unfortunate discovery during construction.

Listing archeological properties in the National Register of Historic Places serves a variety of constituencies, including archeologists (research), land owners (stewardship), the general public (visibility), and land use decision-makers (planning).

As the only nationwide database that documents the quantity and quality of our country’s cultural resources, the National Register should be an important tool in the preservation of archeological sites. However, until the miss-representation of archeological properties within the National Register is corrected through more nominations, the potential of this information resource is limited.

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