

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC MEADOWCROFT ROCKSHELTER

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 48.27 air km Pittsburgh, 4.02 surface
km Avella, North bank of Cross Creek

CITY, TOWN

Avella

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
22nd

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE
42

COUNTY

Washington

CODE
045

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME The Meadowcroft Foundation

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Avella

VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania 15312

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Delvin Miller, et ux. & Albert Miller, et ux. to the Meadow-
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. croft Foundation, D.B.V. 1402, p. 265 - Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Washington County

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Archaeological Site Number 36WH297

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Center for Prehistoric and Historic Site Archaeology

CITY, TOWN

California (State College)

STATE

Pennsylvania 15419

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" 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

General Setting - Location and General Geology ¹

Meadowcroft Rockshelter (36WH297) is a stratified, multi-component site located 48.27 air kilometers (78.84 km via road) southwest of Pittsburgh and 4.02 surface kilometers northwest of Avella in Washington County, Pennsylvania. The site is situated on the north bank of Cross Creek, a small tributary of the Ohio which lies some 12.16 km to the west. The exact location of the site is 40°17'12" N, 80°29'0" W (USGS Avella, Pennsylvania 7.5' Quadrangle).

Meadowcroft Rockshelter is oriented roughly east-west with a southern exposure and stands some 15.06m above Cross Creek and 244.92m above sea level. The area protected by the extant overhang is ca. 65m² while the overhang itself is some 13m above the modern surface of the site. In addition to the water potentially available from Cross Creek, springs are abundant in the immediate vicinity of the shelter. The prevailing wind is west to east across the mouth of the shelter providing almost continuous ventilation and ready egress for smoke and insects.

Geologically, Meadowcroft is located in the unglaciated portion of the Appalachian or Allegheny Plateau, west of the valley and ridge province of the Appalachian Mountains, and northwest of the Appalachian Basin. The surface rocks of this region are layered sedimentary rocks of Middle to Upper Pennsylvania Age (Casselman Formation). The predominant lithologies are shale, quartz, sandstone, limestone, and coal in decreasing order of abundance. Deformation is very mild with a regional dip of 3° to 5° to the southeast.

Physiography - Topographically, the region within which Meadowcroft is located is maturely dissected. More than 50 o/o of the area is in valley slopes with upland and valley bottom areas in the minority. The stream pattern is dendritic with drainage running northwestward to westward toward the West Virginia-Ohio border and the Ohio River. Present topography was probably generated during the Pleistocene when increased precipitation and runoff caused extensive downcutting. Since the Wisconsin Glacial boundary only extends southward to northern Beaver County (some 40 odd km north), the Cross Creek Valley and Meadowcroft Rockshelter probably existed in nearly their present configuration well before the close of the Wisconsin, ca. 11,000 B.P.

Geology of Site - Meadowcroft Rockshelter is formed beneath a cliff of Morgantown-Connellsville sandstone; the Morgantown-Connellsville is a thick fluvial or channel sandstone within the Casselman Formation (Upper Conemaugh) of the Pennsylvania Period. This sandstone varies from a sub-graywacke to protoquartzite in composition. It is an immature sandstone composed predominantly of quartz grains with minor amounts of mica, feldspar, and rock fragments.

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The rock unit immediately underlying the Morgantown-Connellsville sandstone was not observed in the field but is undoubtedly a less resistant lithology, most probably a shale. Thus, a re-entrant is formed beneath the sandstone cliff. The ceiling of this re-entrant or rockshelter is gradually migrating upward and cliff-ward as erosion occurs both on the rockshelter ceiling and the cliff face. Within the face of the shelter excavation, the recession of the drip line representing the cliff edge position, can be plainly seen. Most typically, erosion results in the dislodgement of individual sand grains. More rarely, rock fragments up to the size of a small house have fallen.

1 - Abstract, Excavations Meadowcroft Rockshelter, 1973-74, Pennsylvania Archaeology

U SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

PREHISTORIC
 1400-1499
 1500-1599
 1600-1699
 1700-1799
 1800-1899
 1900-

ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC
 ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC
 AGRICULTURE
 ARCHITECTURE
 ART
 COMMERCE
 COMMUNICATIONS

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

COMMUNITY PLANNING
 CONSERVATION
 ECONOMICS
 EDUCATION
 ENGINEERING
 EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
 INDUSTRY
 INVENTION

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
 LAW
 LITERATURE
 MILITARY
 MUSIC
 PHILOSOPHY
 POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

RELIGION
 SCIENCE
 SCULPTURE
 SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
 THEATER
 TRANSPORTATION
 OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES 14,000 B.C. + 16,000 B.P. BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Meadowcroft Rockshelter is a deeply stratified, multi-component site in Washington County, Pennsylvania. The 11 well defined stratigraphic units isolated at the site span some 15,000 years of intermittent occupation by groups representing all of the major cultural stages/periods now recognized in northeastern North America. Throughout the sequence the site served as a locus for hunting, collecting, and food processing activities which involved the seasonal exploitation of the immediately adjacent Cross Creek Valley and the contiguous uplands.

Occupation and utilization of Meadowcroft was initiated circa 13,000 B.C. by a population who possessed a relatively sophisticated lithic technology which included the production of prismatic blades, unifacial scrapers, bifaces and delicately fluted knives. From these early Paleo-Indian occupations, eleven occupational strata have been identified by radiocarbon dating.

Excavation and research indicates that Meadowcroft Rockshelter was more or less continuously utilized as a center for hunting, collecting and food processing from at least the late 14th millennium B.C. to the Historic Period. As such it represents not only the oldest well dated site in eastern north America but also one of the longest stratified occupational sequences in the northern hemisphere of the New World.

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"Ice-Age Pennsylvanians", 1977 Nature/Science Annual, 1977 Edition, Time Life Books, pp. 158-159.

"Earliest evidence of human habitation in eastern U.S.", Patricia Plants, Popular Archaeology, Life and Lettres Publishers, pp. 48-53

Clues to America's Past by Jeffrey P. Brain, et al., The National Geographic Society, pp. 2237, 48, 56, 57, 58, 59.

Description of incident involving John Mark Scott, Jr., professor of Russian Language and Literature, Washington & Jefferson College, Washington, PA and tour guide in Leningrad, Russia

News Release from University of Pittsburgh, Department of News and Publications, "Pitt's Meadowcroft Dig Yields Earliest Eastern Corn/Project Receives Additional National Geographic Grant; Earlier Report of Recovery of Extinct Animal Found In Error", dated May 19, 1977

Article from Science News of the Week, Vol. 106, "Ice Age people in eastern America", dated August 10, 1974

Front page article from the August 5, 1974 edition of The Washington Post, "Ice Age Man Trod Pa. Area"

Topographical Map of Meadowcroft Rockshelter, 36WH297

"The Avella Discovery", Columbia Today, 1975

Site Location Map of Meadowcroft Rockshelter, 36WH297

"Archeologists Finding Ancient Man Evidence", article from June 20, 1976 edition of Greensburg Tribune Review

"Inside/Outside" by Lee Gutkind, Pittsburgh Magazine, March 1977

"Digs Reveal That Man Lived Along Cross Creek In 14,225 B.C." July 26, 1975 edition of Washington Observer-Reporter, Washington, Pa.

"Boyhood Imagination Leads To Prehistory-Making Find" by Jerry Sharpe, July 21, 1974 edition of The Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, Pa.

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- March, 1976 edition of Science Digest
- April, 1976 edition of Pennsylvania Game News
- September, 1975 edition of the Pennsylvania Archaeologist