

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 09000533

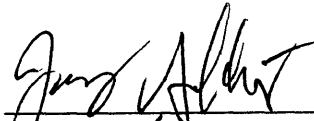
Date Listed: 7/10/09

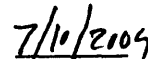
Property Name: Shelving Rock Encampment

County: Carter

State: TN

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper  
JA

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 6: Function

The Historic Function of the property is hereby amended to read: DOMESTIC/ camp

Section 10: Boundary Description

The nomination is hereby amended to read the following as a boundary justification:

The boundary includes land historically associated with the Shelving Rock Encampment. The nominated property consists of an open field and the rock overhang that served as an encampment site for the Overmountain Men.

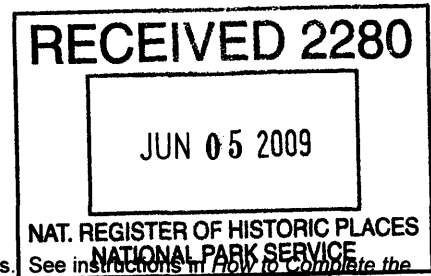
This information was provided by Brian Beadles of the TN/SHPO on July 10, 2009

The Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



533

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. *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 Shelving Rock Encampment  
other names/site number Resting Place

2. Location

street & number State Highway 143 and Smith Branch Road N/A  not for publication  
city or town Roan Mountain  vicinity  
state Tennessee code TN county Carter code 019 zip code 37687

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.)  
E. Patrick Miltner 6-3-09  
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

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other,  
(explain:)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action 7/10/2009

Shelving Rock Encampment  
Name of Property

Carter County, Tennessee  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input type="checkbox"/> district        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure       |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object          |

Contributing	Noncontributing	
	1	buildings
2		sites
		structures
		objects
2	1	Total

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

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DEFENSE / Military (militia) Encampment  
AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE / Agricultural field

VACANT

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

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.)

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Military

**Period of Significance**

September 26-27, 1780

**Significant Dates**

September 26-27, 1780

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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:

National Historic Trails System – Overmountain Victory  
National Historic Trail

Shelving Rock Encampment  
Name of Property

Carter County, Tennessee  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 10 acres White Rocks Mountain Tenn-NC 208 NE

### UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>403299</u>	<u>4004898</u>	3	<u>17</u>	<u>403576</u>	<u>4004686</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>17</u>	<u>403313</u>	<u>4004696</u>	4	<u>17</u>	<u>403578</u>	<u>4004883</u>

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas Burleson, owner  
organization Shelving Rock, LLC date 2/23/2009  
street & number 119 Orchard Meadows Lane telephone 423-534-5700  
city or town Roan Mountain state TN zip code 37687

### 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 location

A **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 Shelving Rock, LLC (Thomas Burleson and Aaron F. Burleson, owners)  
street & number 119 Orchard Meadows Lane telephone 423-534-5700  
city or town Roan Mountain state TN zip code 37687

**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.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Shelving Rock Encampment  
Carter County, Tennessee

## DESCRIPTION

The Shelving Rock Encampment site is located approximately 1.5 miles south of the unincorporated village of Roan Mountain, Carter County, Tennessee. Carter County is located in northeast Tennessee and shares its eastern border with North Carolina. The site, approximately one-quarter mile north of Roan Mountain State Park, is the location of an encampment on September 26-27, 1780, of volunteer frontier Revolutionary War Patriots known as the Overmountain Men. These men were enroute to North Carolina to participate in what has become known as the Battle of Kings Mountain. The property consists of an open field and an overhanging rock formation known as the Shelving Rock.

The field is bounded on the north and west by the Doe River; sometimes historically referred to as the Big Doe River. The two-lane State Highway 143 curves around the north and west boundaries of the field. On the north side of the State Highway 143 right of way is a cavernous rock outcropping, historically known as the Shelving Rock, where the volunteers stored their supplies on the night of their encampment in the meadow. The area sheltered by the Shelving Rock was reduced when the state highway was built in the 1960s, but it still retains integrity of setting, feeling, association, and materials.

The site consists of approximately 10 contiguous acres of open bottom in a narrow valley. To the south is a significant mountain ridge which protects the small river valley. The site has never been the subject of an organized archeological study; however, the previous owners have collected hundreds of Native American artifacts such as arrowheads, stone axe heads and a stone pipe. The only building on the property is a wood frame barn on a concrete block foundation built circa 1955 (NC). Until recently, the property has been in the same family since the 1880s, and has been used primarily for subsistence farming. In the past 20 years, the property has been part of a larger Christmas tree farming operation. The trees have all been removed and the land presently lies vacant.

The property was purchased from the heirs of the original owners in 2007 by Shelving Rock, LLC for the purpose of developing the property into home sites. Approvals from the Carter County Planning Commission, and the State of Tennessee have been granted to develop the property. However, development plans are on hold since the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation and the Overmountain Victory Trail Association (OVTA) have expressed an interest in purchasing the site as an addition to the Sycamore Shoals State Historic Site (NHL 3/20/1985) and Roan Mountain State Park. The site could be used as an interpretive center to relate the story of the Overmountain Men and the Overmountain Victory Trail, a part of the National Park Service, Historic Trails System and possible Native American archeological site.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Shelving Rock Encampment  
Carter County, Tennessee

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### SUMMARY

The Shelving Rock Encampment site is historically significant under criterion A for its role as a site of Revolutionary War activity. The site is one of only a handful of Revolutionary War activity sites in Tennessee and west of the Appalachian Mountains. In September 1780, approximately one thousand Patriot Militia responded to a call to duty and mustered at Sycamore Shoals (NHL 7/19/1964) at Fort Watauga, near what is now Elizabethton, Tennessee. The force of one thousand militia was extremely large for that time considering the sparse population on the frontier. The militia force left Fort Watauga on the morning of September 26, 1780, and marched to Shelving Rock, also known as the Resting Place, near the present community of Roan Mountain, formerly known as Crab Orchard, where they encamped for the night and into the next day. Around noon of September 27, 1790, after slaughtering several cattle and having some horses shod by a local blacksmith, they proceeded on their march east across the highlands of Roan Mountain at the Yellow Mountain Gap and into North Carolina. In North Carolina at Quaker Meadows, they joined with an additional 500 militia and continued their march to victory at the Battle of Kings Mountain; the pivotal battle that signaled the beginning of the end for the British war effort.

### THE SITUATION:

While the War of Colonial Revolution against Great Britain raged in various places in the northeast and along the southern coast, the area west of the Southern Appalachians was relatively quiet, except for the occasional skirmish with the Indians native to the area. For the most part, the people along the frontier were supportive of the colonial cause of freedom, but were not actively involved. That was about to change.

Military stalemate in the Mid-Atlantic region in 1778 encouraged British commanders to reconsider their strategic policy. It was then that the war shifted to the South and entered its final (1779-1783) phase. The southern campaign started auspiciously for the British. In Late 1778 and 1779, British forces under General Lord Charles Cornwallis, re-conquered Georgia, the only state completely subdued during the war. The British restored the royal governor and displaced the radical unicameral legislature that had assumed power in the state in 1776. Georgians who supported American independence were arrested by British authorities. Early in 1780 Georgia became a launching pad for a serious British offensive in the Carolinas that seemed likely to result in the complete re-conquest of these states as well. In May 1780 General Henry Clinton captured Charleston, South Carolina and over 3,000 American troops under the command of Benjamin Lincoln. Resistance to the British in South Carolina collapsed. Alarmed by these developments, General Washington and the Congress dispatched the hero of Saratoga, Horatio Gates, with reinforcements. Gates, with ill-trained and ill-armed troops, rushed to engage Cornwallis without

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3Shelving Rock Encampment  
Carter County, Tennessee

proper preparation and the subsequent battle at Camden, South Carolina, is generally regarded as the single worst defeat in American military history. A bayonet charge by the Redcoats put Gates' army to flight, and Gates himself galloped off the battlefield on horseback. After this disaster, guerrilla war waged by Francis Marion, Thomas Sumner, and several other American commanders, with followers in the Carolina countryside, was the only visible sign of American resistance to the British in South Carolina.<sup>1</sup>

Colonel Patrick Ferguson was ordered by Cornwallis to secure his western flank while he proceeded deeper into North Carolina. Ferguson's move into North Carolina forced the small partisan groups deeper into the hills. Tories of this section were flocking to the king's standard. They thought the British were absolute victors. With the fall of Charleston and the total rout of Gates army at Camden, South Carolina, a cloud of gloom hung over the country. Colonel Charles McDowell and Colonel Andrew Hampton of North Carolina, realizing the impossibility of opposing Ferguson with their small force, led 160 men across the mountains to the Watauga Settlement in what is now East Tennessee. McDowell told the overmountain people of the high-handed methods and destruction by Ferguson. Some of the men on the western side of the mountains had driven their stock deep into the mountain gorges and caves, in an effort to save their limited supply of food. Many men moved their entire families across the mountains. The plight of the Patriots is summed up in a quotation from Theodore Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West*.

Except for occasional small guerilla parties, there was not a single organized body of American troops left south of Gates; broken and dispirited army. All the southern lands lay at the feet of the conquerors. The British leaders, overbearing and arrogant, held almost unchecked sway throughout the Carolinas and Georgia; and looking northward they made ready for the conquest of Virginia. Their right flank was covered by the waters of the ocean, and the left by the high mountain barrier chains, beyond which stretched the interminable forest; and they had as little thought of danger from one side as the other.<sup>2</sup>

## THE CHALLENGE:

Colonel Ferguson was riding high with his successful campaign. An energetic officer, he was seeing a victorious end in the South. The only remaining obstacle seemed to be the pioneers living west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Samuel Phillips, a prisoner of war in the Tory camp, was a distant cousin of Colonel Isaac Shelby of Tennessee and lived in the Holston settlement in East Tennessee. Ferguson, thinking to throw a scare into those uncouth barbarians from the overmountain country, wrote a message to Shelby and the other frontier militia leaders. He sent

<sup>1</sup> Paul S. Boyer, *The Oxford Companion to United States History* (Oxford University Press 2001) p. 668.

<sup>2</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West, Volume Two* (ebook:

<http://manybooks.net/titles/rooseveltth11941194211942-8.html>) Web site accessed 5/26/2009. Pgs 95-96.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Shelving Rock Encampment  
Carter County, Tennessee

the message by Phillips; a message that proved to be his death warrant. The message read in effect: if he, Shelby, and the other backwater leaders did not desist from their opposition to the British Arms, he, would march his army over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay waste to the country with fire and sword. Upon receipt of the message, Colonel Shelby rode to the home of Colonel John Sevier and for three days they entered into discussions with other leaders regarding their response to Ferguson's threats. They decided not to wait for Ferguson to come over the mountains; they would take the battle to him.<sup>3</sup>

## THE MUSTER AND MARCH

On Monday, September 25, 1780 a rendezvous was held at Sycamore Shoals at Fort Watauga near what is now Elizabethton, Tennessee. Colonels William and Arthur Campbell of Virginia arrived with two hundred men each and joined Colonel Shelby and Colonel Sevier of Tennessee with about two hundred forty men each. Colonel McDowell of North Carolina had been in camp for some time with a force of approximately two hundred. The total force at that point was approximately one thousand men. The men's families also came to the muster. It was decided the younger boys and older men would be drafted to stay at home to protect the frontier settlements.

Mostly armed with the Deckard or Dickert rifle, made in Pennsylvania, and extremely accurate for long shots, the barrel having grooves to spin the rifle ball, they regarded themselves the equal of Ferguson's practiced riflemen. They carried little baggage—each with a blanket, a cup by his side, and a sack of parched corn meal, mixed with maple sugar for a healthy and tasteful meal full of nourishment. An occasional skillet was taken along for a mess, in which to warm their parched meal and cook the beef they were driving and the wild game taken during the march. Many of the men were well mounted on horseback and the horses would pick their way along and be hobbled at night to keep them from straying. A few head of steer were driven along the rear, but impeding the rapidity of the march, they were abandoned after the first days march.

## SHELVING ROCK ENCAMPMENT

They began their march southeast through Gap Creek stopping for lunch at Matthew Talbot's mill. Then they continued up Gap Creek, crossing the Little Doe River, and reaching the noted Resting Place, at the Shelving Rock, about a mile beyond the Crab Orchard. Since they had marched some 20 miles that day, they made their camp for the night. The Big Doe River, a bold and limpid mountain stream, flowing hard by, afforded the campers, their horses and beef cattle, abundance of pure and refreshing water. A local man named, John Miller, shod several of the horses that evening and the next morning.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Pat Alderman, *The Overmountain Men* (Overmountain Press, Johnson City, TN 1970), p. 81

<sup>4</sup> Lyman C. Draper, *Kings Mountain and its Heroes: History of King's Mountain, 1780, and the Events Which Led to It*. (Peter G. Thompson, Publisher, Cincinnati, 1881) pp 175-177

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Shelving Rock Encampment  
Carter County, Tennessee

A council held under the Shelving Rock, made plans for crossing the mountains and a faster march. The herd of cattle was slowing the progress of the men; so it was decided to slaughter and cook sufficient meat for the mountain crossing. The remainder of the herd was driven back to the settlements. Much time was consumed the morning of September 27 in butchering and cooking the meat. The militia continued their march to the Yellow Mountain Gap in the highlands where they drilled in a one hundred acre meadow in "shoe mouth" deep snow.

The location of the encampment proved fortuitous for the overmountain men. The Shelving Rock provided a natural dry shelter for the men to protect their powder and other dry goods from the rain of that evening.

## ON TO KINGS MOUNTAIN AND VICTORY

On September 30, the force reached Quaker Meadow located near present Morganton, North Carolina. There they were joined by additional forces from the North Carolina piedmont settlements of Wilkesboro and Elkin. On October 1 the march resumed toward the east to engage Ferguson as soon as he could be located. After some days of wilderness maneuvering, Ferguson was located at King's Mountain, a long, wooded hill which lay on the border of North and South Carolina. Some 900 of the best mounted frontiersmen were sent ahead. They tethered their horses in the tree thick lands at the base of the hill, and swarmed up to attack. Using trees as cover, the overmountain men worked up the steep slopes, keeping up a deadly fire until they reached the crest with modest casualties. The end came quickly. Ferguson was shot down, panic struck the embattled survivors, and soon the entire Tory command was nothing but a mere battle statistic of killed, wounded, and prisoners.<sup>5</sup>

In 1781, a renewed American army took the field in the South. Greene's army engaged Cornwallis at Guilford Court House near Greensboro, North Carolina, in March, inflicting heavy casualties on the British. After recovering in North Carolina, Cornwallis marched north to Virginia's Yorktown peninsula where he was soon trapped by combined American and French land-sea forces. After a final assault of October 17, 1781, the British forces asked for terms and on October 19, 7,000 British soldiers surrendered as their musicians played the old tune, "A World Turned Upside Down."<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Shelving Rock Encampment site remains one of only a few intact sites associated with the Revolutionary War in Tennessee. It is a recognizable landmark along the Overmountain Victory Trail developed by the National Park Service and is annually used by Revolutionary War reenactment groups.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Lancaster, *The American Revolution* (ibooks (Simon and Schuster) 1971 & 2003, pp 326-327

<sup>6</sup> Paul S. Boyer, *The Oxford Companion to United States History* (Oxford University Press 2001) p. 668.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 6

Shelving Rock Encampment  
Carter County, Tennessee

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alderman, Pat. *The Overmountain Men*. (Overmountain Press, Johnson City, TN, 1970)
- Boyer, Paul S. *The Oxford Companion to United States History*. (Oxford University Press, 2001)
- Draper, Lyman C. *Kings Mountain and its Heroes: History of King's Mountain, 1780, and the Events Which Led to It*. (Peter G. Thompson, Publisher, Cincinnati, 1881)
- Lancaster, Bruce. *The American Revolution* (ibooks Simon and Schuster) 1971 & 2003.
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<http://manybooks.net/titles/roosevelth11941194211942-8.html>) Web site accessed  
5/26/2009



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number PHOTOS Page 8

Shelving Rock Encampment  
Carter County, Tennessee

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Shelving Rock Encampment  
Carter County, TN

Photographs by Brian Beadles on 4/3/09  
Digital files at Tennessee Historical Commission

Encampment site, photographer facing east.  
1 of 8

Encampment site, photographer facing southeast.  
2 of 8

Encampment site, photographer facing east.  
3 of 8

Encampment site, photographer facing north.  
4 of 8

Shelving Rock, photographer facing north.  
5 of 8

Shelving Rock, photographer facing northeast.  
6 of 8

Shelving Rock, photographer facing northwest.  
7 of 8

Plaque on Shelving Rock, photographer facing north.  
8 of 8