

7/27/89

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Prehistoric rock art in Kentucky, ca. 10000 B.C. - A.D.1750

**C. Geographical Data**

The State of Kentucky

See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

David L. Morgan  
Signature of certifying official      David L. Morgan  
State Historic Preservation Officer, Kentucky Heritage Council  
State or Federal agency and bureau

July 21, 1989  
Date

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

John J. Snow  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

7/8/89  
Date

## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

### Introduction

Throughout the world, artistic expression among preliterate peoples was executed through a wide variety of mediums, one of which is broadly referred to as rock art. The historic context, or theme, for this nomination focuses upon prehistoric rock art within the state of Kentucky. A total of 48 individual rock art sites is initially included in this nomination.\* Geographically, these sites

[REDACTED]

No distinct style zones can be identified, and hence the geographic focus is statewide. Explicit dating of rock art within the state is not presently possible; therefore, the time period under consideration here is broadly inclusive, spanning the known interval of prehistoric human occupation within the state (ca. 10,000 B.C.-A.D. 1750).

A large number of rock art sites are known in Kentucky, thanks largely to the efforts of two avocational rock art authorities, Fred E. Coy, Jr. and Thomas C. Fuller. They have published several articles on rock art sites in the state (Coy and Fuller 1966; 1967; 1968; 1969a; 1969b; 1970; 1971), and were the primary informants for James L. Swauger, who conducted a systematic survey and recording of Kentucky's rock art sites. Johnny Faulkner, an amateur [REDACTED] brought a number of sites in that area to the attention of Swauger and the archaeological community. Swauger's survey has been compiled into a draft form, for an eventual publication similar to those covering his other regional rock art surveys (Swauger 1974; 1984).

Prehistoric rock art is defined here as design elements on immobile rock surfaces (immobile in a primitive technological sense). These include either flat-lying outcrops, boulders, cliff faces, ledges, or rockshelter walls. Rock art is broadly divisible into two categories, petroglyphs and pictographs (Wellmann 1979:15-16). The distinction is based upon the method of execution, with petroglyphs defined as designs executed by pecking, carving, engraving, incising, or abrading the rock surface; and pictographs consisting of painted designs. In Kentucky, the vast majority of known rock art sites are petroglyphs; only two of the 48 sites included in this nomination are pictographs. This marked disparity is probably due in part to environmental factors; the wet, humid climate of Kentucky would quickly obliterate primitive paintings in all but the most ideal locational contexts.

### Geographical and Locational Contexts

The primitive level of technology employed in the execution of prehistoric petroglyphs, and the long-term preservation of such works require the presence of suitable grades of rock. In Kentucky, massive sandstones offered prehistoric (and historic) rock artists the most favorable surfaces for the execution of their works. The relatively even texture and medium to friable consistence of most grades of sandstone are

\*One site, the Trinity Rockshelter (15Wo26), was previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places (8/14/75), but is included as part of this thematic nomination.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number     E     Page   1  

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

E. Statement of Historic Contexts, continued

well suited to the techniques used in the execution of petroglyphs, and is the best surface for pictographs as well.

Sandstone and limestone are the most extensively occurring rock types in Kentucky. Kentucky limestones (most of which are Ordovician and Mississippian in age) are, overall, not well suited as rock art surfaces; they are generally of uneven texture (often fossiliferous) and, unlike sandstones, are highly susceptible to the effects of chemical weathering that can quickly damage and eventually obliterate rock art. Thus, it is no surprise that the distribution of rock art sites in the state corresponds to areas of extensive sandstone outcrops. Sandstone dominates the lithology of the Pennsylvanian-age "coalfields" in the eastern and west-central portions of the state, and also occurs significantly within upper Mississippian-age formations bordering the Western Coalfields.

Within these areas, rock art sites are concentrated in maturely dissected landscapes with narrow valleys and hollows flanked by sandstone cliff lines. These landscapes are most fully developed along the plateau escarpments bordering the coalfields (especially where major streams traverse these escarpments), and in many interior portions of the Eastern Coalfield, or Cumberland Plateau. As Figure 1 illustrates, the known rock art sites in Kentucky indeed tend to cluster along the three major escarpments within the state, and within the interior Eastern Coalfield.

In terms of specific locational context, rock art sites in Kentucky occur within both rockshelters and on exposed outcrops (boulders, ledges, and cliff faces). Included in the rock shelter category are sites in which the rock art occurs on boulders or cliff faces located outside of, but immediately adjacent to shelters. Within rockshelters, designs are most often found on boulders or blocks of roof fall, but commonly occur on the walls of the shelters as well.

Over half (66.6%) of the 48 sites included in this nomination occur within or directly adjacent to rockshelters. Several factors are responsible for this correlation. First, rockshelters are conspicuous natural features, and rock art sites located in such contexts are generally more easily discovered than those in open contexts. Second, rockshelters were attractive habitation sites for the prehistoric inhabitants of Kentucky. Thus, more rockshelter rock art sites (henceforth referred to as sheltered rock art sites) are known because rockshelters are frequently

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number     E     Page     2     Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

targeted for archaeological investigations, and are routinely inspected during archaeological surveys (though in many cases, the rock art itself is the primary target of investigations, and documentation of midden deposits is a secondary result). Differential preservation is probably another significant factor affecting the ratio of sheltered vs. open rock art sites, as the latter are subject to damage and eventual obliteration from weathering and erosion, whereas sheltered rock art sites are mostly protected from such destructive agents. On the other hand, rockshelters tend to attract pothunting and other vandalism (graffiti, etc.) that defaces or even destroys many sheltered rock art sites. Of course, vandalism is not restricted to sheltered rock art sites, and many open sites face (or have succumbed to) this menacing threat.

Open rock art sites are located on boulders, flat-lying surface outcrops, and cliff faces. The locational context of these range from river channels to high ledges, with the vast majority being situated in upland ridgetop settings.

#### Techniques

The execution of primitive rock art involved a variety of methods. Many of the petroglyphs in Kentucky, especially those in harder grades of sandstone, were executed through exclusive use of pecking or pounding of the rock surface. In most cases, igneous or chert hammerstones were used, either applied directly or (for greater precision) used in combination with a drift or chisel stone. Other designs were incised or abraded (with or without initial pecking), leaving a relatively smooth interior finish to the incised lines or intaglio surface.

The execution of pictographs involved, first, assembling and mixing the materials used for the pigments, binders, and vehicles. Pigments were derived mainly from mineral sources, the two most common being the iron ores hematite (red) and limonite (yellow). In Kentucky, these minerals are most abundant within the sandstone regions of the Western and Eastern Coalfields (McFarlan 1943:433-436), especially along the escarpments where rock art sites also tend to cluster.

Vegetal materials were probably used as binders (Wellmann 1979:17), but gypsum has been identified as a paint binder in some Great Basin pictographs (Koski et al. 1973; McKee and Thomas 1973), and the intensive gypsum mining

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ E Page 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

documented in Salts Cave (Watson 1974) was probably motivated in part by a similar usage of this material in the central Eastern Woodlands (Jackson 1982:34). Water or urine provided the vehicles used in rock art paint (Wellmann 1979:17).

During prehistoric times, there were no doubt many pictographs within the state. However, all but those in the most favorable locational contexts would have quickly weathered and disappeared, and only two aboriginal pictographs are known in Kentucky today.

Forms and Styles

Kentucky's prehistoric rock art sites include a variety of design elements. Representational and abstract motifs both occur. For the purposes of this nomination, the motifs identified in Kentucky rock art sites are subdivided into the following broad categories: tracks and foot/handprints; abstract (including both geometrical and random) elements; anthropomorphs; and zoomorphs. Animal tracks and human foot/handprints are the most common motifs, with 39 of the 48 sites included here containing such elements. The most common element within this category is the "bird track", or "turkey track" motif. A total of 250+ bird tracks occur at 24 of the 48 sites included here, and this is the only element at six of these sites. "Bear tracks" are the second most common design, with a total of 40 individual elements distributed among six sites. The remaining animal track motifs include "deer tracks" (more than 12 elements distributed among seven sites), and miscellaneous tracks, including rabbit, raccoon, and unidentified prints (more than 23 elements distributed among eight sites).

Human footprints are also fairly common rock art designs within the state. A total of 25+ individual footprints have been identified at eight sites, and one site includes a design representing a human left hand. All are intaglio. At most sites, the footprint designs are lifelike, often with an indication of an arch. At one site, there is even a representation of a bunion on the large toe and a hammer toe deformity on the fifth toe (Coy and Fuller 1966:54). Most of the footprints have been abraded in addition to (or instead of) being pecked.

At the Lake Cumberland Petroglyph site, we see an altogether different style of human footprint. Here, the designs are pounded and pecked with no

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 4

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

abrading, and the footprints generally more elongated and stylized than is observed elsewhere in the state.

In contrast to many other regions, anthropomorphs and zoomorphs are rare in Kentucky rock art sites. Of the few anthropomorphic elements, the most notable and striking is the one in the Asphalt Rock Pictograph in Edmonson County. The face and head of this figure have feline(?) features, and the hands are upraised. The nearby Reedyville Petroglyphs contains another "raised hand" figure, as well as an isolated right arm and hand, footprints, and pit and groove designs that may represent stylized masks or "ghost faces". More explicit examples of the "ghost face" or mask motif are found in the Sparks Indian Rock House in eastern Kentucky, which also includes a stick figure anthropomorph. The remaining anthropomorphic design consists of an outline head and torso at the Mantle Rock Petroglyph site in western Kentucky.

Zoomorphic motifs are even less common than anthropomorphs, and occur at only five sites. All are stylized, and include a fish at the Mantle Rock Petroglyphs (15Lv1); a small bird within the Asphalt Rock Pictograph; a possible serpentine motif at the Turkey Rock Petroglyphs (15Bt64); a simplified outline of a turtle at the Big Sinking Creek Turtle Rock Petroglyph site (15Le57); an insect-like motif at the Perdue Petroglyphs (15Le111); and a design at the Fincastle Petroglyphs (15Le120) representing either a mythical six-footed animal bisected by a vertical line, or two animals (bison?) in head-to-head combat.

Abstract designs and elements are found at 26 of the 48 rock art sites included here. Both geometric and apparently random designs occur, although there is no sharp distinction between these two subcategories. Within the geometric subcategory are circular, oval, and rectilinear designs in varying styles and combinations. Among the more distinctive geometric designs are concentric circles, occurring at seven sites; a similar circular spiral at the Tar Springs Petroglyphs (15Bc129); two rayed circles at the Sparks Indian Rock House; a "square cross" or "sun circle" at the Carter Caves Pictograph; the complex enclosed rectangular designs at the Turkey Rock Petroglyphs; and the shield-like and "hourglass" elements at the Asphalt Rock Pictographs.

Other abstract elements include simple incised circles (sometimes in combination with representational or other abstract motifs), scattered pits

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   5   Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

or punctations, random lines (some of which may be stylized herpetomorphs), the scroll-like elements at the Spratt's (15Mf353) and Indian Stairway (15Mf160) sites, the complex scroll-line-punctuation pattern at the High Rock Petroglyph site (15Po25), and the chevron-like motifs at the White Rockshelter (15Po154) and Nada Tunnel Rockshelter (15Po155). Finally, there are straight, linear incisions or grooves that occur in mass profusion at four eastern Kentucky sites; including Red Bird River (15Cy51), Red Bird River Shelter (15Cy52), Old Landing (15Le113), and Amburgy Hollow (15Po108).

There is little or no apparent geographical patterning among the various design motifs identified in Kentucky rock art sites. Tracks, footprints, anthropomorphs, zoomorphs, concentric circles, and other abstract elements occur in both western and eastern Kentucky. One notable variation of possible geographic significance is the unusual footprint motifs at the Lake Cumberland Petroglyph site. Of the recorded rock art sites in Kentucky, this site is the most geographically isolated, and the designs may be the product of a different rock art style zone cross-cutting the present-day Kentucky-Tennessee state line.

Dating

Unfortunately, it is difficult or impossible to determine the age of most prehistoric rock art. Rock art was probably practiced in Kentucky from at least the Archaic Period (ca. 8000-1000 B.C.) on, but it is impossible to estimate the age for virtually any of the rock art sites in the state. Elsewhere, rock art sites are occasionally dated by direct association with datable materials, such as carbonized soot in direct contact with rock art on rockshelter or cave ceilings. The co-occurrence of symbolic motifs in rock art and in materials from dated contexts (such as decorated pottery, shell gorgets, and other items) provides the most common means of estimating the age of rock art sites. However, almost all rock art sites in Kentucky lack such designs. One potential exception here is the "square cross" or "sun circle" design at the Carter Caves Pictographs site. The square cross and sun circle were common symbolic motifs that occurred on ceramic objects, shell gorgets, coppers, and other items dating from ca. A.D. 1200-1500. Sun circles and/or other Southeastern Ceremonial Complex symbols are found in rock art sites in the central Mississippi Valley in southeastern Missouri and southwestern Illinois, and in the middle Tennessee Valley. Many of the elements found in Kentucky rock art sites (such as concentric circles, random lines possibly representing herpetomorphs, and

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   6  

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

footprints) are often found in conjunction with Southeastern Ceremonial motifs at rock art sites in the central Mississippi and Tennessee Valleys. However, such designs could well date from earlier periods. For example, concentric circle petroglyphs at a site in Tallapoosa County, Alabama were dated to the Late Archaic Period by direct association with steatite mining debris (Henson 1986:89).

It can be argued that most of the open rock art sites in Kentucky are not of any great antiquity. Probably few, if any, pre-date the Woodland Period (ca. 1000 B.C.-A.D. 1000). The effects of Kentucky's humid climate would have probably obliterated exposed rock art sites within a couple of thousand years or less. Several factors would affect the rate of weathering on petroglyphs, such as the relative hardness and textural consistence of the base rock, the angle of exposure, locational context (i.e. protruding, prominent ledges and boulders as opposed to flat, leaf-covered outcrops), and the relative depth and sharpness of the petroglyph's incised lines or intaglio surface.

An example of on-going observation of historically recorded petroglyphs indicates the damaging effects of the humid eastern North American climate. At the Indian God Rock Petroglyph in western Pennsylvania, Swauger (1974:108-109) notes that the designs have sustained very noticeable weathering damage since they were initially sketched and recorded by French explorers in 1749.

Assessing the age of sheltered rock art sites is even more difficult than dating open sites. The protection afforded by the shelter overhangs could have preserved many of these rock art sites for thousands of years. Rockshelter sites in Kentucky have yielded materials from the entire 11,000-year span of human occupation in the state, and many shelters were occupied repeatedly. It would seem probable, therefore, that rockshelter petroglyphs represent a broad time span of Kentucky's human prehistory.

In summary, it is virtually impossible at present to explicitly date Kentucky rock art sites (with the probable exception of the Carter Caves Pictograph). This condition, however, does not diminish the aesthetic quality of such sites, and does not preclude their historical or research value as significant markers of Native American symbolism and lifeways in prehistoric Kentucky.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   7  

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

Meaning

While many interested researchers stop short of interpreting rock art, many others have used ethnohistoric records, ethnographic data and analogy, and archaeological comparisons to extract from these sites some idea of their purpose and meaning. At a very general level, most rock art can be viewed as communicative symbols connected with widely varying aspects of ideology and ritual. Interpretive categories for rock art sites have been summarized by Wellmann (1979:18-20) and Grant (1983:12-14), and include clan symbols, prayer rocks for individual supplication, hunting magic, astronomy, puberty and fertility rites, visions, recording of historical events, shamanism, warfare symbolism, directional markers, and "doodling". Within the context of preliterate cultures, only "doodling" can be safely considered outside the realm of ideology and ritual, and Wellmann (1979:19) argues strongly that, at most, only an extremely limited number of North American rock art sites could be explained as the result of meaningless scribbling.

The nature and frequency of design motifs in Kentucky's prehistoric rock art sites prompt a more focused consideration of possible interpretations. The prevalence of animal tracks highlights the possible significance of hunting ritual in connection with Kentucky rock art sites. The common location of such petroglyphs within upland rockshelters (many of which were probably used as bases for hunting-related activities) and on ridgetop outcrops (many of which, no doubt, lied along important game trails) would seem to support a hunting ritual connection for animal track petroglyphs. Track motifs and human footprints may also be the products of storytelling or other ritual activity involving mythological characters drawn from the animal kingdom. Given the interconnectedness of mythology, the spirit world, and everyday life among preliterate peoples, all of these possible meanings (and more) may well have applied to animal track petroglyphs and other designs.

The few zoomorphic motifs in Kentucky's rock art sites may represent mythological figures, clan symbols, and/or guardian spirits. The turtle (the only clear example from a Kentucky rock art site being the Big Sinking Creek Turtle Rock Petroglyph) was a fertility and earth symbol for many Native American groups (Wellmann 1979:19, citing Conner and Conner 1971:30; Renaud 1948; and Vastokas and Vastokas 1973:107); and the snake (possibly represented at the Turkey Rock Petroglyph Site, and by random, irregular

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   E   Page   8   Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

lines at a number of sites) was a major symbolic character among Southeastern tribes, and represented the monstrous domain of the underworld (Hudson 1976:122-183). The overall paucity of zoomorphic designs, in contrast to many other areas in North America, emphasizes the relatively unimportant role of such symbols in the prehistoric rock art of Kentucky.

Anthropomorphs are significant designs that probably communicated powerful ideas in connection with mythology and/or ritual. The feline(?) facial features of the raised-hand figure in the Asphalt Rock Pictograph are suggestive of a masked shaman or supernatural being (or both); and the accompanying circular shield-like symbol possibly connotes warfare, or it may be a cosmological representation. At the nearby Reedyville Petroglyphs, the raised-hand anthropomorph is also associated with a circular motif; in this case, a bisected circle upon which the figure is "dancing". The stylized "ghost faces" at the Sparks Indian Rock House (and possibly also at the Reedyville site) suggest spirit images and are reminiscent of the shell masks found in late eastern Mississippian and Madisonville Horizon Fort Ancient contexts. An ideological and ritual association for these anthropomorphic representations appears obvious; but, like zoomorphic motifs, the rarity of these design elements emphasized their marginal role in Kentucky rock art (unless, of course, such motifs were more common in now-destroyed pictograph art).

Abstract rock art design elements are, in most cases, particularly difficult to extract meaning from. Most, if not all, are probably symbolic motifs, and a number may be stylized representation of beings, objects, or concepts drawn from the natural and supernatural worlds. It is, however, difficult to correlate any of the abstract symbols from Kentucky rock art sites (with the exception of the square cross/sun circle from the Carter Caves Pictograph) with ethnographically or archaeologically documented native design motifs.

The locational contexts of Kentucky rock art sites may also hold some interpretive significance. Rockshelters, caves, and outcrops may have contributed more than just suitable surfaces for rock art. Many of these natural features are visually conspicuous and are associated with distinctive microenvironments, and were perhaps ascribed mythological significance within the animistic belief systems of the local inhabitants. The presence of rock art may thus, in some cases, have a direct ideological connection with the natural rock features and formations upon which they

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   E   Page   9   Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

occur. [REDACTED] comes immediately to mind in this context. This area is characterized by a maze of towering cliff lines, rockshelters, and other geological formations unparalleled in the state; and, perhaps not coincidentally, contains the highest density of recorded rock art sites in Kentucky. Native Americans often associated caves (and rockshelters?) with the netherworld, and the possible connection of this belief with cave and shelter rock art is obvious.

Finally, there is the interpretive problem of the "linear groove" petroglyphs, consisting of straight, incised lines often grouped in mass profusion on cliff faces or rockshelter walls. These and similar petroglyph sites have been the subject of some of the most fanciful and unfounded interpretations of North American rock art, involving purported trans-Atlantic excursions from Europe (Fell 1976; 1980). More serious investigators (e.g. Olafson 1950:7, 11; Swauger and Milburn 1977; 1980) have suggested that linear groove or "grooved rock" petroglyphs are the result of sharpening tools such as axes and knives. This idea suffers, however, when one considers that sharpening axes and knives requires abrasion that is directed perpendicular to the working edge, and linear grooves could in no way result from such action. Alternatively, linear grooves in sandstone would be quite suitable for sharpening acute tipped implements such as awls or projectile points of wood and bone.

Other lines of evidence argue against a tool sharpening function for these sites. For example, linear groove petroglyphs in Kentucky and elsewhere tend to be situated in prominent locations; that is, on cliff faces and the side walls of rockshelters, usually at or above chest height. Sharpening tools (especially heavy axes or celts) at such heights would require considerably more energy than using nearby rock surfaces closer to ground level.

Comparisons with other rock art sites are potentially more productive in assessing the interpretive significance of linear groove petroglyphs. Multiple linear grooves are found in many petroglyph sites throughout North America. While frequently occurring as apparently abstract elements, linear grooves are often used as stylized representations of rib lines and feathers in both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic designs. Of particular interest here are the linear incisions at a petroglyph site in White County, Tennessee (Henson 1986:93-95, Plate XXII, lower), and the incised lines forming the wing and tail feathers of a stylized owl in Mud Glyph Cave, Tennessee

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   E   Page   10   Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

(Muller 1986:64, Plate XV). These designs show striking resemblance to portions of the Red Bird River Petroglyph panel, and this site (and possibly other linear groove petroglyphs) may well be stylized representations of feathers connected with mythological or naturalistic subjects.

Prospects

Rock art sites are a unique archaeological resource. Kentucky is one of only a few states where a systematic survey of rock art sites has been conducted. More detailed geographic, stylistic, and technological analyses of the state's rock art sites could contribute significantly to our understanding of the state's prehistoric cultures. But these sites need protection in order to carry out further research and to preserve them for the benefit of future generations.

---

## F. Associated Property Types

---

I. Name of Property Type Prehistoric Rock Art Sites

### II. Description

For the purpose of this nomination, the property includes both rockshelters and open sites on exposed outcrops (i.e. boulders, ledges, cliff faces, etc.). They are treated here as a single property type because of shared physical characteristics, generally similar locational contexts, and presumably related functions. (continued)

### III. Significance

Rock art sites are a unique property type relating to the prehistoric cultures of Kentucky. Detailed study of these sites could contribute significant information on the prehistoric archaeology of the state. Prehistoric rock art sites in Kentucky are significant under Criteria A, C, and D. Under Criterion A, rock art sites are important symbols of the animistic ideology that guided the belief systems of Kentucky's prehistoric inhabitants, and indeed permeated their lives. Thus, they stand as a record of the cultural lifeways that prevailed during prehistoric times in the state. The artistic quality and aesthetic value of Kentucky's prehistoric rock art sites qualifies these sites as significant under Criterion C. Within Criterion D, there is the scientific value of the state's Native American rock art (and the research potential of these sites remains largely (continued)

### IV. Registration Requirements

Rock art sites must be demonstrably or arguably identified as prehistoric, and must not be damaged to the extent that the information potential of the site is destroyed. Determining the prehistoric integrity of rock art sites in Kentucky is sometimes a highly subjective undertaking, but is usually based upon the style and subject matter of the design element(s), and (for petroglyphs) the morphology of incised lines, which often indicates the material type (metal vs. stone, bone, or wood) of the tools used to execute the designs. Locational context may also be used to assess the integrity of pictograph sites, since these sites do not normally survive for long periods of time when exposed to weathering agents.

Primary agents of rock art disturbance include graffiti, intentional removal, construction, mining, wheeled traffic, natural weathering, and even well-meaning, but misguided individuals who touch up or highlight (spray painting, recarving, etc.) rock art with an assumed preservational intent. (continued)

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet for additional property types

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

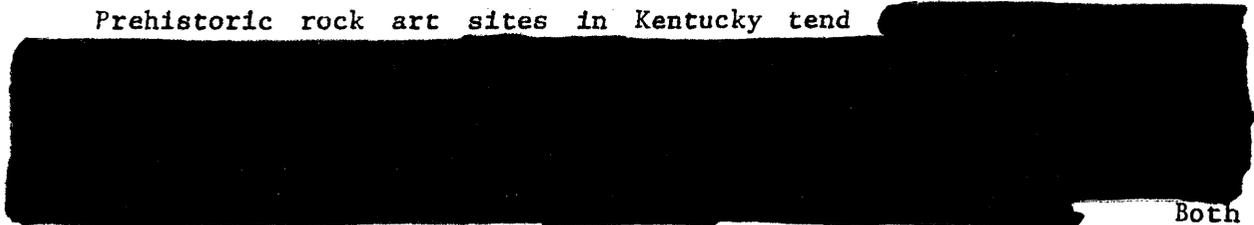
National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F.II Page 1 Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

Property Type: Prehistoric Rock Art Sites

Description, continued

Prehistoric rock art sites in Kentucky tend



Both rockshelters and open rock art sites tend to occur in upland settings, usually near ridge tops. Some open sites, however, occur in river channels and other locales.

For rockshelter sites, the nominated property includes the entire floor area of the shelter, since the shelter is obviously an intergral element of the rock art site. In sites where the rock art is located on boulders or cliff lines just outside shelters the boundaries also include the shelter area as well as the rock art. Boundaries for open sites vary. For petroglyphs on small or medium-size boulders, the nominated property includes the entire boulder, since it is a well-defined and (usually) conspicuous feature. For rock art on more extensive and ill-defined outcrops and on cliff faces, the property boundaries are restricted to just those areas covered by the rock art designs.

A variety of design elements are represented, but the vast majority consist of animal tracks, human footprints, and abstract designs. Anthropomorphs and zoomorphs are rare. There is very little geographic variation in terms of styles and motifs, and temporal variation (if present) cannot yet be identified.

Most sites are in a good to excellent state of preservation. Many sites have been defaced by modern graffiti, though in most cases, these recent markings have not directly scarred the prehistoric designs.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F.III Page 1

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

Property Type: Prehistoric Rock Art Sites

Statement of significance, continued

untapped). Information from these sites could be used to address a wide variety of research topics, including classification, cultural history, dating techniques, primitive technology, art forms and styles, interaction spheres, ideology, ritual, and other issues (see Wellmann 1979:14-25 for some pertinent examples and discussion of research on Native American rock art sites). The following list provides some examples of research topics and issues of relevance to prehistoric rock art sites in Kentucky:

- 1) Identify and employ a range of field techniques for recording rock art sites in Kentucky, and apply them consistently when documenting these sites.
- 2) Identify designs and motifs that are temporally diagnostic, and assess the significance of these with respect to cultural history and other research issues.
- 3) Identify stylistic categories through detailed and formal analysis of rock art design elements, and assess their significance with regard to other research categories.
- 4) Using ethnographic and replicative data, assess the significance of different techniques for executing petroglyphs.
- 5) Conduct X-ray diffraction analysis of pictograph paints, and identify the materials used for pigments and binders.
- 6) If present, identify "style zones" that Kentucky rock art sites relate to, and assess the significance of these with regard to regional interaction spheres.
- 7) Conduct locational analysis of rock art sites and assess the significance of geomorphic context and proximity to important natural features and archaeological sites.
- 8) Explore the ideological significance of Kentucky rock art sites, systematically assessing each possible interpretive category (i.e. clan symbols, prayer rocks for individual supplication, hunting ritual, astronomy, puberty and fertility rites, visions, historical recording, shamanism, warfare symbolism, directional or territorial markers, etc.)

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F.III Page 2

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

- 9) Use ethnographic comparisons and ethnohistoric accounts to identify possible rituals associated with rock art sites.

All but one of the sites included in this nomination are assessed significant at the state level. In general, these sites are stylistically simple, and exhibit little overall variation in design motifs. One site, the Asphalt Rock Pictograph (15Ed24) has been assessed significant at the national level. This site is only one of two prehistoric pictographs identified within the state, and pictographs are generally rare in eastern North America, where the humid climate tends to quickly obliterate such works in all but the most ideal locational contexts. Furthermore, the design elements of the Asphalt Rock Pictograph are elaborate and are thus distinguished from the majority of Kentucky rock art sites. This site has been illustrated in two internationally published books on North American rock art (Grant 1983:Figure 112; Wellmann 1979:Figure 803), and should be treated as a national treasure.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F.IV Page 1 Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

Property Type: Prehistoric Rock Art Sites

Registration Requirements, continued

Steps should be taken to preserve rock art sites from destructive agents. Educational efforts can be used to notify landowners of the historical value of rock art sites located on their properties, and periodic inspection of these sites by the landowner and professional archaeologist can monitor the effects of vandalism, and possibly curb or prevent intentional destruction of these sites. State or federal acquisition of the more impressive rock art sites (such as the Asphalt Rock Pictograph) could solidify preservation efforts. Studies of weathering effects could lead to non-destructive methods of stabilization. Also, professional archaeologists must be alerted to the potential for encountering rock art sites during survey projects.

Procedures for identifying and preserving rock art sites in Kentucky need to be implemented soon. Otherwise, these unique resources from the state's prehistoric past may not survive the destructive onslaught now threatening them.

## G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

The multiple property listing in Kentucky initially includes all known prehistoric rock art sites in Kentucky that meet the criteria established in Section F, IV. Documentation of nearly all sites listed in this nomination is provided by data from the Kentucky Rock Art Survey, conducted by James L. Swauger of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Dr. Swauger is an authority on Native American rock art in eastern North America, and has published two books (Swauger 1974; 1984) and a number of articles on the subject. His survey of Kentucky was based largely on information and field assistance provided by two amateur rock art authorities, Fred E. Coy, Jr. and Thomas C. Fuller, who themselves have published several articles on the state's prehistoric rock art (Coy and Fuller 1966; 1967; 1968; 1969a; 1969b; 1970; 1971). Another informant was Johnny Faulkner, who directed Dr. Swauger [REDACTED] Cecil R. Ison, Chief Archaeologist for the Daniel Boone National Forest, has also recorded rock art sites in eastern Kentucky.  
(continued)

See continuation sheet

## H. Major Bibliographical References

Conner, Stuart W. and Betty Lu Conner  
1971 Rock Art of the Montana High Plains. The Arts Galleries,  
University of California, Santa Barbara, California.

(continued)

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University of Kentucky

Other (see below)

Specify repository: Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburg, PA

## I. Form Prepared By

name/title Jimmy A. Railey, Staff Archaeologist  
organization Kentucky Heritage Council date April 20, 1988  
street & number 12th Floor, Capital Plaza Tower telephone (502) 564-7005  
city or town Frankfort state KY zip code 40601

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   G   Page   1  

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

Dr. Swauger made initial visits to several Kentucky rock art sites in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In 1984, the Kentucky Heritage Council awarded Swauger a federal survey and planning sub-grant for his systematic survey and recording of Kentucky rock art, which was carried out in 1984 and 1985. Swauger's survey methods involved recording, photographing, and in most cases, sketch mapping the rock art sites (including several historic examples). General information regarding environmental context was usually recorded (including land use setting, rockshelter dimensions, and type of rock upon which the art works were found). Swauger provided no description or evaluation of other archaeological resources (such as rockshelter midden deposits) associated with the rock art sites.

In addition to field work, Swauger conducted a comprehensive literature search to glean all available information on rock art sites (extant, destroyed, or inundated) in the state. All information gathered from the field survey and the literature search was recorded on standardized archaeological site survey forms provided by the Kentucky Office of State Archaeology. These, along with photographs (color, black and white, and color slides) and other materials were provided to the Kentucky Heritage Council upon completion of the grant project. A draft manuscript for eventual publication was also provided.

Not all rock art sites recorded by Swauger are of Native American origin. The criteria used by Swauger, Coy, Fuller, and others to distinguish Native American from Euro-american rock art was based upon the subject matter of the design elements and the apparent method of carving used (for example, sharply cut lines in certain grades of sandstone indicate use of metal tools). Obviously, in the lack of any controlling factors (such as direct dating methods), the distinction is not always readily apparent. If the prehistoric integrity of a rock art site or design element was seriously questioned by Swauger or by a majority of those involved in the survey (Swauger, Coy, Fuller, and Faulkner), then the site or design was not considered to be Native American for the purposes of this nomination.

In compiling this nomination, only those rock art sites judged to be of prehistoric affiliation, and are preserved in a condition sufficient to assess the nature of the design elements were included. Although some obviously Euro-american petroglyphs may be of historic significance, the antiquity of these cannot, in most cases, be established. Furthermore,

(continued)

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

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number   G   Page   2   Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

Euroamerican rock art in Kentucky is a product of a completely different cultural system than that of their prehistoric counterparts, and they do not conform to the historic context established for this nomination in Section E.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   H   Page   1  

Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

- Coy, Fred E., Jr. and Thomas C. Fuller  
1966 Petroglyphs of North Central Kentucky. Tennessee Archaeologist 22:53-66.
- 1967 Turkey Rock Petroglyphs, Green River, Kentucky. Tennessee Archaeologist 23:58-79.
- 1968 Tar Springs Petroglyphs, Breckinridge County, Kentucky. Tennessee Archaeologist 24:29-35.
- 1969a The Asphalt Pictograph, Edmonson County, Kentucky. Tennessee Archaeologist 25:37-46.
- 1969b Red Bird River Petroglyphs, Clay County, Kentucky. Southeastern Archaeological Conference Bulletin 10:27-31.
- 1970 Reedyville Petroglyphs, Butler County, Kentucky. Central States Archaeological Journal 17:101-109.
- 1971 Petroglyphs of Powell County, Kentucky. Central States Archaeological Journal 18:112-122.
- Fell, Barry  
1976 America B.C.: Ancient Settlers in the New World. Quadrangle Books, New York.

(continued)



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   H   Page   3   Prehistoric Rock Art Sites in Kentucky

---

- Olafson, Sigfus  
1950 Rock Carvings in Boone County. The West Virginia Archaeologist.
- Renaub, Etienne B.  
1948 Kokopelli, a Study in Pueblo Mythology. Southwestern Lore 14:25-40.
- Swauger, James L.  
1974 Rock Art of the Upper Ohio Valley. Akademische Druck-und Verlagsanstalt, Graz, Austria.  
1984 Petroglyphs of Ohio. Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio.
- Swauger, James L. and mark Milburn  
1977 Grooved Rock Petroglyph Sites in West Virginia and the Sahara. The Arkansas Archaeologist 16, 17, and 18:81-84.  
1980 Grooved Rock Petroglyphs as Tool-Sharpening and Polishing Locations. The Arkansas Archaeologist 21:29-33.
- Vastokas, Joan M. and Romas K. Vastokas  
1973 Sacred Art of the Algonkians: A Study of the Peterborough Petroglyphs. Mansard Press, Peterborough, Ontario.
- Watson, Patty Jo  
1974 Prehistoric Miners. In Archeology of the Mammoth Cave Area, edited by Patty Jo Watson. pp. 231-232. Academic Press, New York.
- Wellmann, Klaus F.  
1979 A Survey of North American Indian Rock Art. Akademische Druck-und Verlagsanstalt, Graz, Austria.