

465 - National Register Criteria

The criteria are the National Register's standards for evaluating the significance of properties. The criteria are designed to guide the states, federal agencies, the Secretary of the Interior and others in evaluating potential entries (other than areas of the National Park System and National Historic Landmarks) for the National Register.

"The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguish-able entity whose component may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history."

Briefly, what the above means, is that there are two factors to consider when evaluating a property (identified as a site, district, object, building, or structure). These are its integrity and one or more of the four criteria. For the field archeologist dealing with archeological properties, Criterion D is the most relevant to apply. The ways in which Criterion D may be applied have been examined by the National Park Service who have since developed Criterion Guidelines (in addition to integrity, properties being assessed must qualify for one or more of the guideline standards to be of National Register significance). When applying Criterion D Guidelines, it is important (according to NR officials) to keep in mind, (1) does the property contain information that will contribute to current knowledge of history or prehistory and (2) is the information important.

CRITERION D GUIDELINE

1. It must be possible to verify the human origin, modification, and/or utilization of the property.
2. A general knowledge of cultural affiliation and/or period of use should be identifiable.
3. Properties (defined above) must be or must have been the principle source of important data.
4. Excavated sites and other properties that no longer retain additional research potential are assessed as historic sites and are eligible under Criterion A.
5. Partially excavated or otherwise disturbed sites (i.e. vandalized, eroded, recreational) should be considered for their potential to yield additional information from their remaining portions.
 - 6a. Important information relates to: (1) research designs addressing current data gaps, defensible new models or theories; (2) priority areas identified under a state or federal agency management plan, and; (3) the correction of misapprehensions in current understanding of history and prehistory.
 - 6b. Once the possibility of yielding important information is established, it is necessary to explicitly demonstrate the connection between the important information and a specific property.

6c. In support of the assertion that a property has the necessary data to provide the important information, the property should be investigated with techniques sufficient to establish the presence of relevant data categories.

7. Integrity of a property is not necessarily visual. It is more important that significant data the property contains remains in a sufficiently intact condition to yield the expected important information if the appropriate study techniques are employed to obtain the data.

For detailed information, consult:
National Park Service
1982 "How to apply the National Register criteria for evaluation."
Department of the Interior, Washington D.C.