

Field Notes

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Volume 4 Issue 1 Winter 2025



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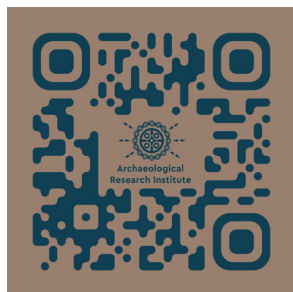
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Become a member today!

For more information on membership levels and discounts scan the QR code!

New Year, New Membership Levels! Becoming a member at ARI has all sorts of perks!

Each membership receives:

- 1 year FREE unlimited admission to ARI Open Days (Wednesdays & Saturdays)
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- Access to Member-only Days
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- Access to ARI Workshops
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Founding Members & Impactful Donor Recognition:

At the ARI holiday party this year all of our founding members and impactful donors were honored with "Trowels of Recognition". These will be put on display at the ARI Research & Exploration center in the coming months! Thank you to everyone on this list who has watched ARI grow and change into what it is today.

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Joshua Kruer



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126 W High Street
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Phone: 812-290-2966

Email: info@exploreari.org
Web: www.exploreari.org

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Building the Trebuchet for the Pumpkin STEM Challenge



Experimental Archaeology Manager Forrest Schmitt and spectators watch a pumpkin soaring into the distance at the Pumpkin STEM event

When the idea of building a machine that could throw pumpkins fifty or sixty yards in the air was first proposed, many of us at ARI weren't sure just what a trebuchet was, much less how to build one. But we all agreed that it would be great fun to stage an event that featured flying pumpkins. Fortunately, we had among our staff and volunteers people who had some knowledge of those big, medieval siege weapons and were up to the challenge of designing and building one. (See highlights from the Pumpkin STEM event on page 8.)

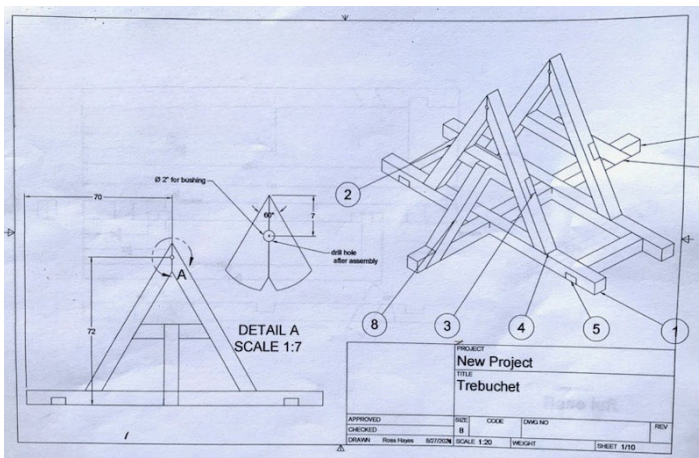


At the sawmill, turning a tree into lumber for the 19-foot-long-throwing arm

The trebuchet is basically a big lever – a throwing arm attached to an axle that is mounted in a heavy wooden frame. At the end of the throwing arm is a sling into which a projectile, such as a heavy rock is placed. At the other end is an even heavier counterweight. Manpower is used to lift the counterweight into the air. When a trigger mechanism is tripped, the counterweight drops to the ground and the throwing arm rotates on the axle and tosses the projectile into the air.



Building the trebuchet frame



Original plans for the frame of the trebuchet

Trebuchet - Continued bottom of page 5

You Can Learn a Lot from a Bag of Dirt!

(Using a lab process known as “flotation”)

By Tim Van Leeuwen

When people think of archaeology, their thoughts naturally go to the work done in the field with shovels, trowels, and brushes. But there’s much more to the science, both before and after the “dig.” It starts with the technologies to figure out where to dig (LIDAR, Ground Penetrating Radar, Magnetometry, as well as field walking, examining maps, and listening to locals who have valuable knowledge to share.) Then the digging starts – augers, shovel test pits, excavation units, and larger scale trenches. Almost all of the soil from the trench is processed on site—using a trowel to find and remove large items, then sifting the rest of the fill through a quarter-inch screen to find anything that may have been missed.



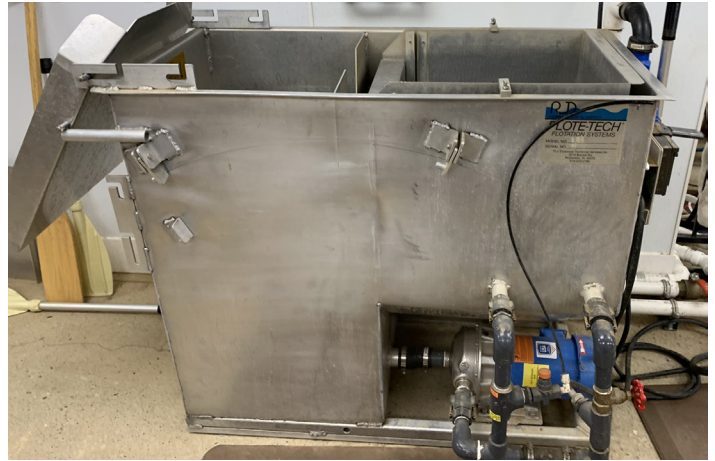
Archaeologists mapping the locations of artifacts in an excavation unit.

If you’ve been to an ARI dig site, you may have also noticed small white plastic bags tied up with carefully



All bags of soil are labeled to record the exact location where each artifact, no matter how tiny, was found.

labeled pink tape. They are bags of soil on their way back to the lab for what we call Flotation (or FLOT). At ARI, we have a large, specially designed sink (the FLOT tank) designed to separate the artifacts from the soil by using a series of wash processes. Depending on the sample volume, soil type, and artifact, the process can take from one to three hours.



The ARI FLOT tank is specially designed to separate minute artifacts from the soil.

It starts in the flotation chamber where the bag is emptied. It takes a lot of water, air bubbles, baking soda and mashing (the FLOT operator breaking the dirt into smaller and smaller pieces while being careful not to damage small fragile items). The mashing step is complete when all the soil is in solution and separated from the artifacts.



Mushing the soil requires a willingness to get your hands dirty and your arms wet up to your elbows!

The next steps involve recovering the artifacts by using very fine mesh cloth in two rounds known as light and heavy fractions. The light fraction is what floats to the top and is captured in the FLOT screen in the first round. The light fraction often includes seeds, pollen, nuts, carbon (burnt items), very small animal bones, and small chert flakes. The heavy fraction is what sinks to the bottom and is captured in the second round. It often includes larger pieces of bone, pottery, tools, shells, chert, other stones, and baked clay or daub. Once the contents are collected and dried, the next step is fraction



Light fraction on the left and heavy fraction on the right

analysis to identify and categorize the artifacts for further study. This step requires patience and careful attention, but it is well worth the effort, for it allows the researcher to see and identify archaeobotanical details that would otherwise have been too small to be captured.

Trebuchet - Continued from page 3

The gravity-powered trebuchet was first used in Europe and the Middle East in and around the 12th century. (A less powerful version powered, not by gravity, but by men pulling ropes goes back to sixth-century China.)



Using planers to sculpt the throwing arm



The author at work on the ARI FLOT tank

Through this process, for example, we capture tiny seeds and nuts that provide insights into what the inhabitants of a site harvested and ate.

The next time you see archaeologists excavating a trench, remember that digging is just one step in the process of studying a site. Back in the lab, artifacts will be cleaned, examined, and cataloged, and the loose soil will be run through the FLOT tank to capture the finest details. Together the archaeologists in the field and the lab form an important team as they each glean insights into the lives of the people who once lived in the area.

Our main trebuchet uses gravity to launch 15-pound pumpkins. It stands 20.67 feet high with a powerful 19-foot throwing arm. A smaller scale trebuchet was built and successfully used to toss mini pumpkins.



Visitors were wowed by the experience of pulling the trigger cord and sending a pumpkin some 60 yards in the air.

The 2024 ARI Field Season Recap

By Rachel Sharkey & Tessa Wilk



Co-author Rachel Sharkey discussing work at the Boarding House site with visiting students from the University of Louisville

With the weather turning colder, it is almost time for archaeologists to pack up their supplies and bury their heads in lab work. It has certainly been a productive season with plenty of information unearthed. Several of our 2024 project areas were continuations of work completed in 2023. Through the help of hundreds of people who have come through our doors, field students, volunteers, and the staff here at ARI, we have been able to make significant progress at multiple project areas to better understand the land we work and steward.

We have moved further west from our suspected location from last season, hoping to determine if we are in the right location based off historical records. This season we have surveyed a 5-acre area, which has turned up no evidence supporting the location of Rowdy Camp. Instead, we have continued to find evidence of the pre-European-contact Indigenous sites that could be related to or even predate our home site, Guard.

2024 Research Questions

- 1) Can we find evidence of the Rowdy Camp in the field near Guard Site? If not Rowdy Camp, what do we find in that area?
- 2) Can we find more evidence of the historical Boarding House along the Ohio River?
- 3) What archaeological resources are present in the access corridor to the Guard Archaeological Preserve?

Rowdy Camp

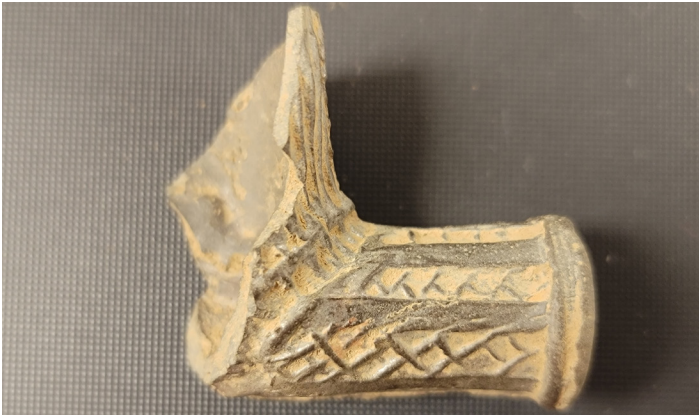
Beginning this project in the summer of 2023, we continue the search for Rowdy Camp, a post-revolutionary war camp that was active from 1793-1795. With very little known, we used what information we do have to determine the most likely location, but have yet to discover any evidence that points to the camp.



One of over 200 Shovel Test Pits dug in 2024 in search of the Rowdy Camp

Artifacts that have turned up include debitage (cast off materials from stone tool making), pottery fragments, burned bone fragments, and a considerably large amount of carbon. We are currently looking for funding to help us date these samples to better tell the story

of the area. In addition to these telling artifacts, we also continue to find evidence of heavy influence from agriculture and flooding, such as concrete which is likely from the installation of multiple power towers in the field.



A 19th Century Point Pleasant clay pipe fragment found at the Boarding House site

Boarding House

This year we have expanded our search for a mid-1800s boarding house which would have acted as an inn for people to stay in during their travel up the Ohio River. We wanted to determine if we were in the correct area where the foundation of the house may have once stood, and in order to do so we had to conduct a survey of the land around the suspected location.

We surveyed an approximately 1.5 acre area surrounding our previous excavation units which revealed artifacts such as brick fragments, slag, metal, and even a bone button. The pattern present throughout all these shovel test pits (STPs) tells us that the further away we move from the 2023 excavation area, the less artifacts turn up. This trend supports the belief that we are excavating in the correct area of where the boarding house may have once stood.

During last season's excavations we found a densely filled feature, or immovable pieces of the unit, which contained artifacts such as nails, broken ceramics, brick, and slag. Wanting to continue this investigation, we excavated a 1x3m long trench to uncover the rest of the feature found in 2023. In this trench we continued to find pieces of ceramics (decorated as well as plain white), nails, slag (cast off material from metal working), carbon, mortar, and lots of tiny brick fragments. However, exciting as those findings might be, the feature turned up several large and heavy pieces of metal, which we are continuing to do analysis on to determine what they are and what they may have been used for.

In addition to the trench, we opened three more 1x1m units further away from the trench to look for any pattern in artifact density away from the main area we were searching. While we found more of the same artifacts, there were noticeably less

found in all three of the single units no matter their position away from the trench. This indicates to us that we are likely in the proper area to find the boarding house. The question now is whether there is any piece of the foundation left to find.



Mapping at the Boarding House site

Access Corridor

As you drive into the Guard Archaeological Preserve, you will notice a large field of soybeans with a small section of uncultivated land immediately adjacent to the gravel drive, which we call the Access Corridor. We conducted an (STP) survey leading towards the Guard site as a way to determine what kind of cultural resources were preserved as well as the distribution of these artifacts. 90 completed STPs revealed artifacts such as debitage as well as near-complete stone tools, brick, slag, and rock from the nearby railroad. Through the information gathered from this work, we are able to mitigate the amount of disturbance and damage caused to any cultural resources. Moving forward, it is possible to continue further excavation as a way to learn more about the extent of artifacts and determine the significance of the area. We are hoping to develop this area into an interactive walking path for visitors and will be working with our Land Stewardship Team to make this plan a reality in future seasons.

Overall, this has been a very productive summer that has revealed a lot of new information that can be used to help tell a more complete story of what life on this floodplain has looked like over the centuries. We hope to find the first definitive evidence for Rowdy Camp and locate the boarding house foundation next season, so don't forget to book your field experience with us next June. If you want to have an up-close look at what we have found during our excavations this summer, book a lab experience with us to handle real artifacts or just stop by for a tour of our lab.

The 2024 Pumpkin STEM Challenge Is a High-flying Success!

When the ARI leadership team first met with the Carriage House Farm's staff to discuss the idea of hosting a pumpkin chunkin' event at the foot of Mount Nebo Road, just across the Great Miami River from Elizabethtown, Ohio, the big question was, "Can we engineer and build a trebuchet powerful enough to hurl full-sized pumpkins 60 yards or more?" On a beautiful Saturday afternoon in early November, we learned that the answer was a resounding, "Yes!"



Over 350 adults and kids came out to see the pumpkins launch high into the sky before falling back to earth with a crowd-pleasing "SPLAT!" Two trebuchets, one small and one full-sized, flung the pumpkins. In addition to the pumpkin launching, several artists and craftspeople were on hand to demonstrate blacksmithing, chert-knapping, pottery making and other arts. Music, good food, and even a petting zoo for kids added to the fun day!

The success of this year's event led to talk about expanding the program next year to include a pumpkin chunkin' contest featuring throwing devices designed and built by local school classes and interested organizations. Such a contest would provide a great learning opportunity as well as a chance to showcase school or organizational pride. And it's consistent with ARI's aim of providing "hands on" history experiences using technologies of the past.



Next year's Pumpkin STEM Challenge is scheduled for Saturday, November 1, 2025. We hope you'll come out and enjoy the event with us.





The Midwest Archaeological Conference

By Rachel Sharkey, Director of Public Archaeology



Pictured left to right: Betsy Dulle, Tessa Wilk, Forrest Schmitt, Louis Herzner, Rachel Sharkey and Gus Lehmann

In October, the Archaeology Department was fortunate enough to attend the 2024 Midwest Archaeological Conference (MAC) held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Betsy Dulle, Forrest Schmitt, and Tessa Wilk represented ARI by presenting their Brick and Daub research (see Field Notes Volume 3, Issue 2) at a podium presentation as part of the conference. Their research was well received and garnered lots of positive feedback. We suspect there are a lot of archaeologists in the Midwest who are heading back to their labs and testing their precontact pottery for magnetic susceptibility or adding magnets to their field kits!

The team has taken this research to other, smaller scale venues such as the Kentucky Heritage Council annual meeting (KHC) and even our very own Happy Hour History series. But for most of them, this was their first large-scale, regional archaeological conference – both as attendees and as presenters. They pushed their nerves aside and were able to serve as amazing ambassadors for our organization.



Archaeology Coordinator, Louis Herzner, reuniting with ARI Alumni Christina Youngpeter and Allison Sherman at MAC

Personally, I love attending conferences for the multitude of sources of inspiration and for the networking possibilities they can provide. ARI was able to introduce ourselves to researchers from the University of Notre Dame, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, University of Southern Indiana, Townsend University, Michigan State University, Illinois State Archaeological Survey, and the University of Northern Iowa, to name a few! We were able to recruit new potential ArchaeoCorps members, and we even saw a few familiar faces.



My experience at the Midwest Archaeological Conference:



Forrest: Experimental Archaeology Manager

Attending the Midwest Archaeological Conference was an extremely gratifying and validating experience for me. On a personal level, I gained a ton of confidence from presenting with my colleagues to an audience of our peers. It was an amazing experience to hear more about the current state of archaeology in the Midwest, and being surrounded by so many passionate people within my field was rejuvenating and inspiring. I am grateful to have experienced it and I look forward to attending more conferences in the future.

Gus: Field Manager (GIS)

Attending the MAC conference allowed me to take a look into the world of professional archaeology. I now have a much better vision of what I want to accomplish and what role I can fill in the community. I really enjoyed being able to see all the maps that other archaeologists made, and it gave me a lot of ideas for my own maps.



Betsy: Field Manager (VALOR)

At first, I was highly awe-struck being surrounded by individuals who impacted and continue to impact the extensive history of the Midwest. As the conference progressed, I became less nervous and was able to make some connections and get advice from students and professionals in the field. Upon presenting my research with my cohorts, I was able to have worthwhile conversations about the research that we are undergoing at ARI.

Tessa: Lab Manager

Public speaking has never been something I have enjoyed, so the thought of attending a conference where I would be presenting to other, more experienced archaeologists terrified me. It wasn't until the welcome reception that I realized this conference was so much more than presentations. Yes, we presented our research on the differences between brick and daub which not only validated our own skills as scientists, but also has opened the door for others to look through their collections and learn more about their areas of study. We also learned so much valuable information from other researchers, information and tools that can be used to develop our own work here at ARI. The networking opportunities available not only provided me guidance during my time here at ARI, but have also helped me develop a better idea of what I would like to accomplish in my future career. Although I was initially nervous, this experience is one that has validated me as an archaeologist and is something I will cherish always.



I foresee this conference being a catalyst to highlight the amazing work being done at ARI. In 2025, we plan on attending KHC and MAC again. We will also have a unique opportunity to attend the second-ever Conference on Public Archaeology in August. We cannot wait to bring our brand of public archaeology to our peers and to continue our research.

Observation on the History of Forestry

By Blake Hon, ARI Land Steward



From the very beginning, humans have sought the comfort and security that trees provide. Trees are often a symbol of protection, healing, and sustenance. Trees provide us with fruit, wood for our fires, and protection from wind and from the harsh rays of the sun. Trees are a staple part of human history, and enjoying their presence is a special part of the human experience.

Ancient Forestry/Ecological Living

Trees are directly interwoven with the development of human civilization. Cultures around the world have special ties to trees, and often regard places with high concentrations of trees as “sacred” or “special.” Examples include the cedar woodlands of Lebanon, the Shaman forests in south Peru, and groves tended to by Buddhists and Shinto monks (Wilson). And right here in our own backyard, trees are at the heart of our local, state and national parks. In addition to trees serving as holy places for many cultures, trees are often deeply rooted in language and society. An example of this lies in ancient Irish culture. Discussion about the history of forestry would be incomplete without mentioning the ancient Ogham language. Ogham is the inscribed language system utilized by the Celts. The system consists of twenty letters with each letter being based on a tree native to Ireland. Although Celtic people communicated mostly through word of mouth, they used letters as inscriptions on landmarks.

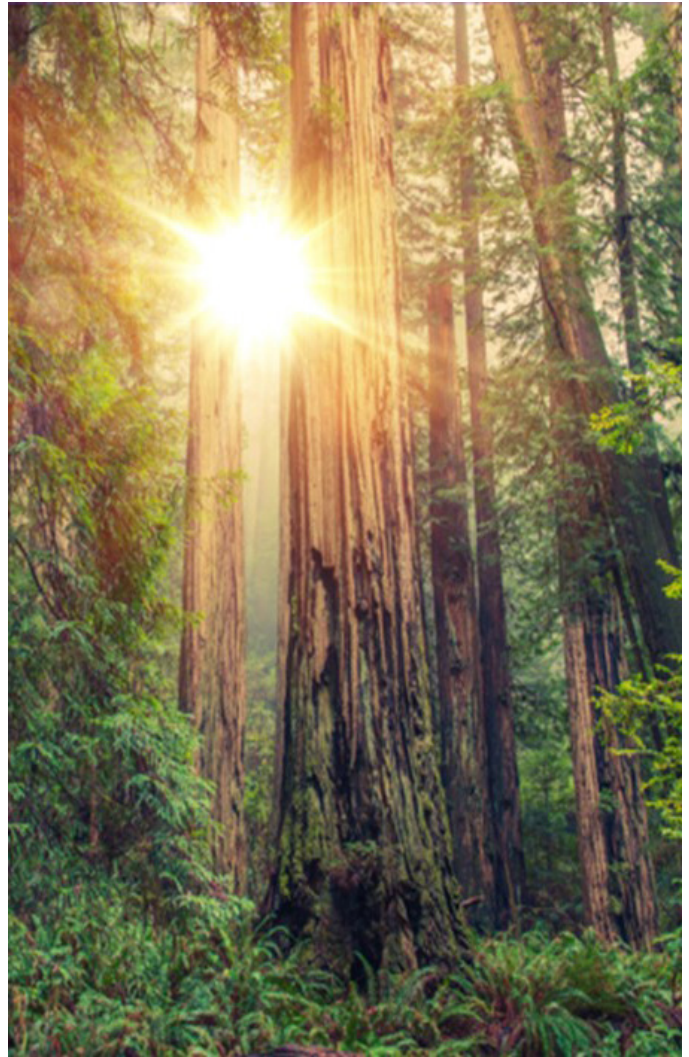
Many stones marked in Ogham can still be found throughout Ireland (Pfeifer). In addition to the alphabet, Celts also followed a societal system with several laws linked to the unlawful damage of trees or shrubs. Ancient Celts divided trees into four different classes. These classes were dependent on how much the tree contributed to society. Tree classes were determined by such criteria as the tree’s capacity for producing fruit or timber, or the size of the tree once it was fully grown. The severity of the crime, and the class of tree determined the punishment. For example, if someone was found guilty of cutting down a tree in the nobility (highest) class, the penalty was the surrender of two and a half milk cattle (Pfeifer).



Indigenous American Forestry

Long before Europeans settled in North America, forestry was an integral part of Indigenous lifestyles. Native people made use of America's wealth of timber, but the true achievement of indigenous forestry lies in the controlled burnings that shaped North America into the landscape it is today. Although wildfires can prove detrimental to an ecosystem if left unchecked, fire can be used as a powerful tool to regulate ecosystems and promote stronger and more sustainable growth. Controlled fire has been linked to increasing the production of berries, clearing understory vegetation, and driving the success of certain tree species (National Park Service).

Throughout the eastern and midwestern regions of the United States, Indigenous people drove the success of oak and chestnut trees, and likely routinely burned tall grass prairies to maintain the area as pastureland for herd animals (National Park Service). Controlled burnings provided habitat essential to species such as bison that rely on open grazing area. The decline of bison in Indiana is linked to factors such as loss of habitat due to agriculture, development, and the lack of controlled burnings. Bison were considered extirpated (completely removed) from the state of Indiana in 1830 (Miller).



The Current State of Forestry in the United States

Currently, nearly all forest-related affairs are overseen by the United States Forest Service (USFS). The USFS was initially established in the early 1900s to assist in the protection of natural resources, including the conservation and management of lumber and pastureland, and wild-fire prevention. However, during the 1960s popularity of famous authors including Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, and Bob Marshall, furthered the environmental movement and shifted the main focus from natural resource protection to environmental stewardship and ecological balance. Currently, the USFS is made up of a diverse group of federal employees who specialize in the protection of timber, soil, human and community development, fish and wildlife, wilderness, recreation, water, minerals, and overall environmental health. (U.S. Forest Service)



Pictured above and the bottom of page 12, are Blake Hon (ARI Land Steward) and Julie Rizzo (Oxbow Inc. Land Steward) attending three-day Indiana Land Protection Alliance (ILPA) chainsaw training at Morgan Monroe State Forest.

Hope for the Future of Our Forests

Humans have had a long and complicated history with our world's forests. For decades, our planet's forests have been under threat due to human intervention. Deforestation, pollution, and climate change have caused our world's forests to decline. Despite the sometimes-grim reality of the environment, people around the globe are working hard to make a difference. There is always hope for a brighter future; the trees we grow today will provide shade tomorrow.

Sources:

Wilson, Ruth. "People and Trees: An Intimate Connection." American Forests, 12 Sept. 2013 www.american-forests.org/article/people-and-trees-an-intimate-connection/

Pfeifer_A. "Ogham." Forestry Focus, www.forestryfocus.ie/social-environmental-aspects/cultural-heritage/trees-and-folklore/ogham/

National Park Service. "Indigenous Fire Practices Shape Our Land." Wwww.nps.gov, 4 Feb. 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/fire/indigenous-fire-practices-shape-our-land.htm>

Miller, Matthew L. "Conserving Bison in Indiana. Yes, Indiana." Cool Green Science, 26 Sept. 2016, <https://blog.nature.org/2016/09/26/bison-return-indiana-kankakee-prairie-restoration-wildlife/>

Learn about the history and the mission of the Society of American Foresters at: <https://www.eforester.org/Main/About/History/Main/About/History.aspx>

The Christmas Tree

Long before the evergreen tree took root as a staple in American Christmas tradition, it had a lengthy history all across the world. In many cultures in the Northern Hemisphere, people decorated their homes in the coldest months of winter with evergreens to remind them of the coming of warmer weather. Evergreens are often associated with everlasting life due to their persistence through the roughest parts of the winter. Germany is credited with being the source of the Christmas tree tradition.

By the 16th century, history records devout Christians bringing decorated trees into their homes (History.com Editors). Christmas trees were first observed in the United States in the late 1700s. Despite their popularity among German immigrants, most of the rest of the country regarded Christmas trees as an unholy symbol.

Although there was initial pushback on the Christmas tree, most Americans had accepted it and regularly adorned their homes with evergreens by the late 1800s. Now, Christmas trees are a staple in the American household and around the world.



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History.com Editors. "History of Christmas Trees." HISTORY, A&E Television Networks, 12 Sept., 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas-trees>

Latest Happenings at ARI!

By Samy Norris & Molly Miniard

Happy New Year from ARI! 2024 has been a fun-filled, busy year. We've added some new faces, grown into our bigger building and even had some new events along the way. Thank you so much to everyone who joined us in 2024. We can't wait to have you back in 2025!



ARI Holiday Party 2024! Hosted at Opal Haus in downtown Lawrenceburg.



Bob Genheimer, George Rieveschl Curator of Archaeology at the Cincinnati Museum Center, presenting a class on historic period pottery at ARI in November 2024



The last of the tents being brought in, finally putting the 2024 season at the Guard Archaeological Preserve in the record books.



The new cohort of ArchaeoCorps members that started January 7th. Left to right Garrett, Samm and Jack.



ARI co-founder Mike Sedler (second from right) receiving the Lifetime Contribution to Archaeology Award from the State Line Chapter of the Archaeology Society of Ohio in October 2024



The ARI team finishing up augers in their search for Rowdy Camp for 2024!



February

7th.....Lawrenceburg MainStreet's Sips & Shops

8th.....Artifact, Rock, & Fossil Identification Day 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

11th.....Happy Hour History Speaker Series: Dr. Brenda Hunda 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

28th-March 2nd....Kentucky Heritage Council Archaeology Conference

March

8th.....Artifact, Rock, and Fossil Identification Day 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

11th.....Happy Hour History Speaker Series: Bob Genheimer 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

April

8th.....Happy Hour History Speaker Series: Dr. Sharyn Jones 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

10th.....Great Miami Heritage Tour (GMHT) Morning Tour Starts at 10AM | Afternoon Tour Starts at 1PM

12th.....Artifact, Rock, and Fossil Identification Day 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

26th.....Annual Speakeasy Fundraiser Gala 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

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9am-5pm

Tuesday - Saturday