

Field Notes

Magazine of the Archaeological Research Institute

Volume 5 Issue 3 Summer 2026



A flag celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence flies in front of the Dearborn County Courthouse in Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

In This Issue:

America at 250

Our History from a Local Perspective

From the Executive Director	Before the Europeans Came	Statehood & Indian Relocation	Pioneers in the Tri-State	Search for the Rowdy Camp	The Civil War Comes to the Tri-State	A History of Preservation	A Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers	Early Archaeology in the Midwest	Latest Happenings at ARI
2	3	4	5	6	8	10	11	12	15



From the Executive Director

America at 250

Celebrating a Young Nation in an Ancient Land

As our nation celebrates the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, we have a remarkable opportunity to reflect on the story of America, not just the last 250 years, but the thousands of years that came before them.

At ARI, we often say that America's story did not begin in 1776. It didn't begin with the arrival of Europeans in 1492. It began more than 15,000 years ago, when the first people settled this landscape, adapting to changing climates, building communities, creating vast trade networks, and leaving behind the archaeological record that continues to shape our understanding of the past today.

The history of our nation is richer, deeper, and more complex than any single date can capture. This issue of Field Notes celebrates that full story.

You'll journey through the archaeological periods that shaped the Ohio Valley before European settlement, explore the lives of Native communities who called this region home, and follow the pioneers who established early settlements in our corner of the Northwest Territory. You'll discover ARI's search for the lost military outpost known as Rowdy Camp, revisit the Civil War as it unfolded across southeastern Indiana and southwestern Ohio, and learn why preserving places like the Micajah Dunn Cabin matters just as much as preserving archaeological sites. You'll also read about the history of historic preservation in America, the pioneers of Midwestern archaeology, and the exciting research, discoveries, and educational programs happening at ARI today.

As we celebrate America's 250th, we also find ourselves at an important crossroads. Proposed changes to the federal Section 106 review process could weaken long-standing protections for archaeological sites and historic places across our country. These laws have helped preserve countless pieces of our shared heritage, ensuring that growth and progress can occur without unnecessarily erasing the stories of those who came before us. Once these places are destroyed, the knowledge they contain is gone forever.

History belongs to all of us. So does the responsibility to protect it.

Thank you for believing in ARI and for being part of this extraordinary community of members, volunteers, researchers, educators, donors, and advocates. Your support makes it possible to explore, preserve, research, and share the stories of this remarkable place we call home. Together, we are ensuring that future generations inherit not only the history of America, but the landscapes and archaeological sites where that history still lives.

I hope you enjoy this special issue of Field Notes and that it inspires you to look at America's 250th anniversary through a broader lens, one that celebrates our nation's history while honoring the thousands of years of human stories that made America possible.

Liz Sedler
liz@exploreari.org

Field Notes Staff

Editor

Larry Sandman

Associate Editor

Lee Strange

Design Artist

Molly Miniard

ARI Leadership

Executive Director & Visionary

Elizabeth Sedler

Vice President of Operations & Integrator

Dominic Cossentino

Vice President of Archaeology, Research & Preservation

Rachel Sharkey

Vice President of Finance & Institutional Advancement (Interim)

Hugh Ralston

Director of VALOR Program & Archaeology

Louis Herzner

Director of Land Stewardship

Nathan Thomas

Assoc. Director Membership & Donor Relations

Brandon Reynolds



Archaeological Research Institute

Field Notes is published quarterly by the Archaeological Research Institute

126 W High Street
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025

Phone: 812-290-2966

Email: info@exploreari.org

Web: www.exploreari.org

The Archaeological Research Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization working in cooperation with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

All fees collected are used to offset the costs of programs offered.

Before the Europeans Came...

A Chronology of Archaeological Periods in the Central Ohio Valley

12,000+ years before there was a United States of America, there were people living and hunting in the places we now call Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. The land, the rivers, and the forests of the area provided everything people needed to live and thrive – water for drinking and cooking, trees for shelter and firewood, plants for food and medicines, animals for food and hides, chert for hunting points, drills, and hide scrapers, and hardstones for axes, hammers, and other tools. Over those several millennia, many distinct cultures were born, flourished, declined, and died out, only to be replaced by new cultures. Archaeologists divide these cultures into the following archaeological periods. Dates are approximate, but generally accepted. - Ed

Period	Date Range	Major Developments
PALEOINDIAN	12,000 BCE. - 8,000 BCE	- o First people to populate the Ohio Valley at the end of the last ice age. - o Nomadic hunter-gathers, who lived in small hunting bands. - o Hunted large game animals like mammoths, mastodons, giant ground sloths, and sabretooth cats. (They no-doubt hunted smaller animals as well.) - o Crafted well-made lance-shaped knives and projectile points out of high-quality chert. - o Perfected Clovis-style “fluted” points, so named because of thin, longitudinal flakes (flutes) removed from the base toward the tip to facilitate attachment to the spear shaft.
ARCHAIC	8,000 BCE - 1,000 BCE	- o Adapted to changing environment, as climate warmed, and the coniferous trees and tall grasses gave way to deciduous forests. - o Changed hunting habits as megafauna (giant animals) died off and were replaced by bison, antelope and other species that exist today. - o People became more sedentary, hunting over smaller ranges. - o Designed more function-specific stone tools such as grooved stone axes, grooved hammerstones, and atlatl spear-throwing devices. - o Adopted many new styles of projectile points, including side-notched, corner-notched and bifurcated points. - o Developed regional trade for such items as copper and shell.
WOODLAND	1,000 BCE - 600 CE	- o Settled into more permanent villages, usually small and scattered. - o Built more permanent shelters. - o Began early stages of horticulture (small-scale farming). - o Introduced pottery for cooking and storage; stored food in pits. - o Started the mound-building tradition. - o Created huge geometric earthworks that functioned as lunar and solar calendars. - o Built many hilltop earthworks believed to be ceremonial centers that brought people together from great distances. - o Spread religious beliefs and burial practices across much of North America. - o Expanded trade networks, reaching as far as Yellowstone for obsidian, Lake Superior for copper, Canada for silver, the Carolinas for mica, and the Gulf Coast for seashells.
MISSISSIPPIAN/ FORT ANCIENT	1,000 CE - 1,600 CE	- o Became first large-scale farmers, growing corn, beans and squash. - o Lived in large villages, often surrounded by wooden stockades. - o Crafted finer thin-walled pottery, tempered with ground shell. - o Hunted with bows and arrows rather than spears. - o Believed to be ancestors of some modern day tribes.

Creation of the States of Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana and the Relocation of Native Americans

By Samantha Foster

The paths to statehood for Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana were as unique and varied as the states themselves. In June of 1792, Kentucky was ratified as a

state, four years after Virginia agreed that the District of Kentucky had outgrown its status as a district. It became one of the first states admitted under the new constitution and paved the way for future states. At the turn of the 19th century, Ohio, exploding in population, easily gained recognition as a state in 1803—so easily, in fact, that Congress forgot to ratify Ohio's state constitution. Congress rectified this in 1953 when they



This depiction of an 1810 meeting between the Shawnee leader Tecumseh and Indiana territorial governor William Henry Harrison over treaties that took away Indian Lands, illustrates the tension that existed between the U.S. and the native people.

voted to ratify the state constitution, officially admitting Ohio to the Union. They retroactively dated the admission to March 1st, 1803, so that Ohio remained the seventeenth state. Indiana had an easier go of it. Their constitutional convention convened in June of 1816, meeting beneath the shade of an elm tree, and the state was recognized and admitted in December.

For many, the history of Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana begins with the arrival of European-American settlers in the “pioneer period” of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. But at the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War, many Native American tribes already called this area home. The Miami people lived along the Maumee, Wabash and Big Miami Rivers in Western Ohio and Central and Western Indiana. The Potawatomi inhabited land along Lake Michigan. The Wea lived in the middle Wabash Valley, and the Piankeshaw lived near the French village at Vincennes. The Wyandots (Huron) dwelled in Northern Ohio, the Mingo and Lenape (Delaware) were in Central Ohio, and the Shawnee populated the central and south parts of the state. In the late 1700s white settlers, looking to acquire land of their own, began spreading westward into the Ohio Valley. As immigrants flooded into Indian homelands, conflict inevitably occurred. In Ohio and Indiana, the federal government negotiated a series of treaties purchasing land from Native tribes. Many of the treaties were negotiated under threat of violence, and some were made with people who

were not authorized to represent their tribes. With each treaty, the Natives gave up more of their land.

The policy of the U.S. government changed over time. During Thomas Jefferson's administration, the government's approach was to force assimilation – encouraging Indians to own and farm land individually like the white settlers. Many Miami people chose to adopt that lifestyle. When Andrew Jackson took office, his view was to acquire all of the Indiana lands.

In 1830, ignoring all prior treaties and agreements, Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act which led to the forced evacuation of Native Americans to lands west of the Mississippi River. Lawrenceburg journals wrote about the Indian Removal Act, often in opposition. Even the *Indiana Palladium*, a pro-Jackson publication, declared that the president must have been misled regarding the brutal nature of the act.

Many Native Americans, weary from years of fighting, and seeing little hope to continue their lifestyle, chose to move westward peacefully, with several Miami people able to remain in Northern Indiana on land they privately owned. The threat of violence hung over the heads of those who refused to go. When Chief Menominee of the Potawatomi tribe refused to sign the Treaty of Yellow River, which would have forced him to cede land protected in treaties a few years prior, a state militia ambushed members of the Potawatomi in their chapel and from there gathered members of the tribe to begin a march that would become known as the Potawatomi Trail of Death. Of the eight hundred fifty-nine people who were forced all the way to Kansas, forty-two died en route, twenty-eight of whom were children. Even now, a federally recognized subset of Potawatomi people remains in Northern Indiana and Michigan.

In 1840, local attention was focused elsewhere—a number of canals and other public works had reached a funding crisis, nearly bankrupting the state treasury. By 1840, Indiana considered its Indian removal complete.

Pioneers in the Greater Lawrenceburg Area

and the Micajah Dunn cabin restoration project

By Molly Miniard & Larry Sandman



The Micajah Dunn Cabin as it stood in Shawnee Lookout Park, circa 2024, before being dismantled and transported to ARI for storage.

In 1788, purported Revolutionary War Captain* Hugh Dunn, his wife Mercy, and their family left New Jersey by flatboat to begin a new life in the Ohio Valley. After settling briefly at Columbia Station near present-day Cincinnati, the family relocated to North Bend before establishing Dunn's Station along the Great Miami River in what is now Elizabethtown, Ohio.

Around 1795, Hugh's son Micajah Dunn built a remarkable log cabin using hand-hewn oak, maple, ash, and hickory, secured with wooden pegs rather than nails. Complete with two stories, an attic, and fireplaces on both levels, the home reflected the ingenuity and determination of early settlers. Although the Dunn family eventually moved on, the cabin remained occupied for more than 150 years before being abandoned in the 1950s.

Recognizing its importance, local advocates launched a "Save the Log Cabin" campaign in the 1970s, restoring the structure and relocating it to Shawnee Lookout Park, where it became a centerpiece for historical interpretation and educational programming.

Today, the Dunn Cabin represents one of the oldest surviving structures in the region, predating both Ohio and Indiana statehood. It is far more than an old building—it is a rare, tangible connection to the earliest years of settlement in the Northwest Territory. While archaeologists often piece together the past through artifacts like

pottery sherds, square nails, and worked stone, an authentic eighteenth-century cabin provides an unparalleled window into the lives of the families who shaped this landscape.

Now, that connection is at risk. If lost, the Dunn Cabin would take with it an irreplaceable piece of our shared history—one that continues to inspire research, education, and conversations about the people who called this region home more than two centuries ago.

* The claim that Hugh Dunn was a Captain in the Revolutionary war, comes from secondary sources. There is no known primary source to either validate or refute the claim. However, the fact that the cash-strapped federal government did use land grants to pay off revolutionary soldiers adds credence to the claim.

The story of the Micajah Dunn Cabin is far from over. Since ARI assumed stewardship of the cabin and its contents in 2024, plans have been taking shape to ensure this remarkable piece of early Ohio Valley history has a future worthy of its past. Now, with the creation of ARI's Historic Research and Preservation Department, that vision is becoming a reality.

In partnership with Carriage House Farm, the Dunn Cabin will find a permanent home where it can once again serve as a place of learning, gathering, and discovery. The goal is not simply to reconstruct a historic building, but to recreate the environment that surrounded it. Planned additions include a traditional kitchen garden showcasing the foods, medicinal plants, and useful crops early settlers relied upon, as well as a welcoming porch that will host educational programs, music, and community events—bringing new life to a place that once served as the heart of everyday frontier life.

Construction is anticipated to begin in 2027 with the generous support of Carriage House Farm. As ARI continues to pursue grant funding, the focus remains on making this a true community preservation project. Through hands-on workshops, volunteer opportunities, and public programming, community members will have the chance to take part in preserving one of the region's oldest surviving structures. Just as the cabin has connected generations to the past for more than two centuries, its next chapter will ensure it continues inspiring generations to come.

Searching for Rowdy Camp: A Forgotten Outpost of the Northwest Indian War

By Louis Herzner, Archaeology Coordinator &
VALOR Program Director

History often remembers great battles, famous leaders, and the aftermath that changed the course of nations. What is easier to forget are the small places that made those events possible. Hidden beneath the silt and sediment in fields near the mouth of the Great Miami River is one of those places—a small military outpost known as Rowdy Camp. Although nothing is visible today, this forgotten encampment played an important role during one of the most significant conflicts in the early history of the United States.

Following the American Revolution, the newly formed United States claimed the Northwest Territory, a huge swath of land that included present-day Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. While the United States viewed the land as its reward for winning independence, Native American Nations who had lived there for many thousands of years saw the situation very differently. They had not participated in the treaty that ceded the land and refused to recognize it. To them, nothing had changed except that a new nation now claimed ownership of lands that had always been theirs.

As American settlers steadily moved west, many started moving into the region before authorized by the American government, and conflict became unavoidable. Native nations, including Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, Wyandot, and others, formed a powerful alliance known today as the Northwestern Confederacy to defend their homes, traditional hunting grounds, and ways of life. Leaders such as Little Turtle (Miami) and Blue Jacket (Shawnee) inflicted several devastating defeats on the young United States Army, exposing the weakness of the nation's frontier defenses and forcing the government to rethink its military strategy.

In response, President George Washington appointed General Anthony Wayne to rebuild the army and bring stability to the frontier. Unlike previous commanders, Wayne understood that victory depended on more than winning battles. His army needed to be properly trained from rag-tag militias to a well-trained, orderly force with secure supply lines capable of delivering food,

ammunition, equipment, and reinforcements into the wilderness. Without reliable logistics, even the best-trained soldiers could not survive.

Rivers played an important role in supplying General Wayne's Army. The Ohio River and its tributaries, like the Great Miami River, became a critical link in the system of supplying westward expansion. During the winter of 1793–1794, Major Byrd was ordered to establish a stockaded outpost on the first high ground west of the Great Miami River, just above its confluence with the Ohio River. From this location, soldiers protected keelboats carrying supplies from Cincinnati up the Great Miami River to Fort Hamilton and eventually to Wayne's advancing army further north. The river offered a much more practical transportation route than the primitive overland trails, which often became nearly impassable during the winter months. This small outpost became known as Rowdy Camp.



Artist's rendering of Fort Hamilton on the Great Miami River. Built in 1791 and used by General Anthony Wayne in 1793 on his march to Fallen Timbers, the fort's supply route was protected by the regiment stationed at Rowdy Camp. Source: Butler County Historical Society, Hamilton, Ohio.

Despite its catchy name, the origin of "Rowdy Camp" remains uncertain. One tradition claims the soldiers stationed there earned a reputation for their lively behavior and became known as the "Rowdy Regiment." Another suggests the regiment took its name from one of its officers rather than from any unruly conduct. Like many frontier stories, the truth has become blurred

over more than two centuries of retelling.

Regardless of how it acquired its name, Rowdy Camp remained occupied until the Treaty of Greenville was signed on the 3rd of August 1795, ending the Northwest Indian War and pushing the Native American Nations further west. During the two years of occupation, the outpost quietly supported the military campaign that ultimately reshaped the future of the Northwest Territory. While historians often focus on Wayne's victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, outposts like Rowdy Camp made that victory possible by ensuring the army remained supplied throughout the campaign.

Today, however, the exact location of Rowdy Camp remains one of the area's enduring archaeological mysteries.

Historical records consistently place the camp on the first high ground west of the Great Miami River, just above its mouth, but the landscape has changed dramatically since the late eighteenth century. River channels have shifted, floodplains have evolved, railroads have been built, and modern development has transformed much of the surrounding area. What was once a strategic military position is now hidden beneath nearly 230 years of natural and human change.

That is where archaeology becomes invaluable.

At the Archaeological Research Institute (ARI), we are combining historical documents, early maps, subsurface imagery, and archaeological survey techniques to narrow the search for the camp's exact location. Every historical account provides another clue, and every piece of evidence helps us better understand how this landscape looked during Wayne's campaign. The information we have collected has given us a few locations for archaeological investigation. These investigations may reveal the remains of the stockade (postholes or charred wood), military artifacts (buttons, pins, ammunition), or other evidence left behind by the soldiers who occupied the site.

Finding Rowdy Camp would do more than place another point on a map. It would provide an opportunity to better understand the movement and interactions in the eighteenth-century frontier, how supply networks supported military campaigns, and how this region became a crossroads of conflict between Native nations and the expanding United States. Equally important, it would remind us that the history of the Northwest Indian War extends beyond famous battles and



ARI archaeologists, field school students, and volunteers work side-by-side in the search for artifacts that could help us identify the location of the late 18th century "Rowdy Camp."

treaties. It is also preserved in forgotten places where ordinary soldiers lived, worked, and waited while history was being made because of them.

Archaeology is not about discovering something no one has ever known; it is about rediscovering places that communities once remembered but have gradually faded from memory. Rowdy Camp is one of those places, and with continued research, ARI hopes to put this important chapter of our shared history back on the map and fill in the blanks in our history.

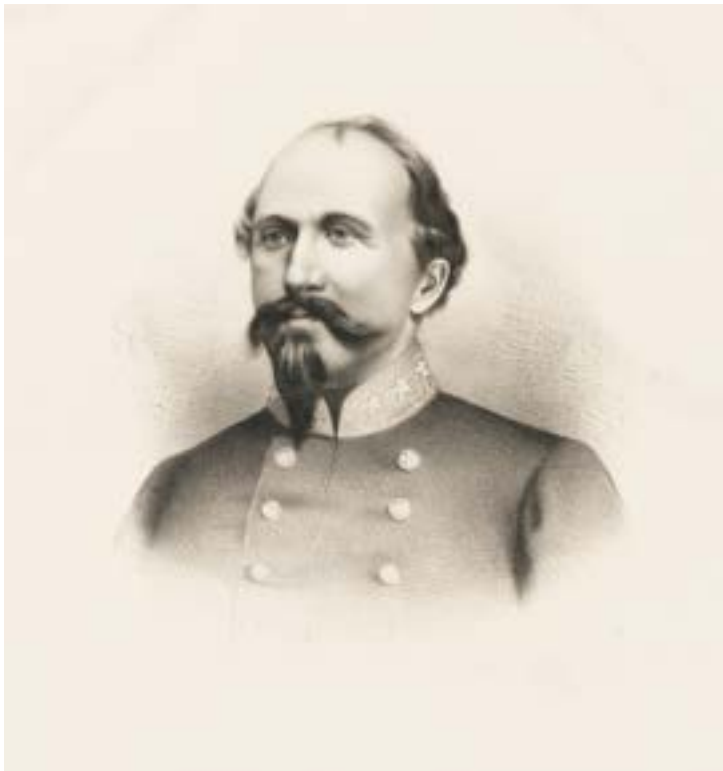
Sources:

1. Black, G. A. (1934). *Archaeological Survey of Dearborn and Ohio Counties*. Historical Bureau, Library and Historical Division, State Department of Education.
2. F.E. Weakley & Co. (1885). *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana: From their earliest settlement: Containing a history of the counties, their cities, townships, towns, villages, schools, and churches ... biographies, preliminary chapters on the history of the north-west territory, the state of Indiana, and the Indians*.
3. River, C. (2020). *Little Turtle's War: The history and legacy of the 18th century conflict between the United States and Native Americans in the North-west Territory*. Charles River Editors.
4. thehistorynetwork.org. (2022, June 5). *The North-west Indian Wars episode*.

The American Civil War Comes to the Tri-State

By Larry Sandman, Field Notes Editor

It's the first week of July, 1863 and the Civil War is raging across the much of Eastern North America. Within the past four days, Confederate General Robert E. Lee's invasion of the North was turned away at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and the U.S. army under General Ulysses S. Grant has captured Vicksburg, Mississippi, giving the United States control of the Mississippi River. The Confederacy is badly in need of good news.



Portrait of John Hunt Morgan by J.L. Giles from a photo by George S. Cook, now in the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Meanwhile, in Kentucky, Confederate Brigadier General John Hunt Morgan, at the head of 2,100 cavalymen, is dashing around the state, raiding Union outposts that protect railroads, steamboats and supply wagons. His objective is to disrupt enemy supply lines and cripple the Union's ability to wage war. Morgan is having so much success that southern newspapers are calling him, "Thunderbolt of the Confederacy."

John Hunt Morgan was a daring, if somewhat reckless commander. His immediate superior, General Braxton Bragg described him after the war, saying, "Morgan was an officer who had few superiors...but...he was a dangerous man, on account of his intense desire to act independently."

It was that independent streak that led Morgan to go beyond his assignment to lead a cavalry raid on the Union supply post at Louisville, and in defiance of Bragg's orders, to cross the Ohio River and commence a raid through Southern Indiana and Ohio. Morgan was convinced that such a raid would create so much fear in the minds of people residing north of the river that they would demand protection, forcing Union commanders to send troops in pursuit of Morgan, thereby weakening their forces in Kentucky.

And so, on July 8, 1863, Morgan and his cavalymen crossed the Ohio River at Brandenburg, Kentucky on two captured steamboats. Landing in Indiana near Mauckport, the raiders launched a six-day invasion of Southern Indiana, travelling through seven counties: Harrison, Washington, Scott, Jennings, Jefferson, Ripley, and Dearborn before crossing into Ohio at Harrison. On the way, they ransacked businesses for food and supplies, stole horses, burned bridges, tore up railroad tracks, cut telegraph lines, captured Union soldiers (most of whom Morgan paroled on the promise that they would never again take up arms against the Confederacy), and caused panic among local residents. At times Morgan was confronted by state militia or quickly assembled local home guards who were typically outnumbered and able to offer little resistance. But of greater importance, Morgan was pursued relentlessly by the Union Cavalry of Brigadier General Edward Henry Hobson under orders from Major General Ambrose E. Burnside.

Hobson's dogged pursuit forced Morgan to stay on the run. But Morgan had one advantage over his pursuers – when his horses grew too tired to maintain a quick pace, he stole new horses, or swapped out his exhausted mounts for fresh ones. Nevertheless, the sheer number of Union soldiers and militiamen who positioned themselves between Morgan and the Ohio River prevented him from crossing back into Kentucky, and what started out as a daring attack on the North quickly turned into a desperate race to find a way back to Kentucky to reunite

with Confederate troops. For Morgan and most of his cavalry, the river crossing wasn't about to happen.

On July 19th, in Meigs County, Ohio near Buffington Island in the Ohio River, Union cavalry, supported by militia and gunboats, closed in around Morgan and won a decisive battle. 1025 of Morgan's men were taken prisoner. Morgan and 400 rebels escaped, but they were constantly harassed, and on July 26th, after another defeat, Morgan was captured near West Point in Columbiana County, and was taken to the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus. True to his reputation for cunning, on November 27th Morgan, with six of his officers, tunneled from an air shaft beneath their cells, emerged in the prison yard, scaled a wall, and escaped. Two were recaptured, but Morgan and four others made it back to the Confederacy. Morgan's luck ran out less than a year later in Greenville, Tennessee when Union cavalry surrounded the home where he was staying. During a desperate attempt to escape, Morgan was shot and killed.

Though unquestionably daring, Morgan's Raid was not of lasting consequence, and in the end, most of his cavalymen were captured. Nevertheless, Morgan's exploits left a lasting impression upon the people of Southern Indiana and Ohio. In three weeks' time, Morgan captured and paroled an estimated 6,000 US soldiers and militia. He took out 34 bridges, damaged railroads in at least 60 locations, stole 2,500 horses and tens of thousands of dollars in food and supplies, but all for naught.

While Morgan's Raid may have had little effect on the war, it left a lasting impression on the communities he passed through in Indiana and Ohio. Today, over 80 roadside markers commemorate Morgan's Raid along the John Hunt Morgan Heritage Trail in Indiana and Ohio. And Morgan's exploits have been the subject of countless presentations at local schools and historical societies.



Roadside markers like these in Versailles, IN and Miami-town, OH chronicle the route of Morgan's Raid.

Additional Reading:

Simmons, Flora, *A Complete Account of the John Morgan Raid Through Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio* (1863). Self Published

Mowery, David L., *Morgan's Great Raid* (2013). The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

Ramage, James A., *Rebel Raider, The Life of General John Hunt Morgan* (1986). The History Press, Charleston, SC

For the John Hunt Morgan Heritage Trail:

Historical Marker Database for Indiana: <https://www.hmdb.org/results.asp?Search=Series&SeriesID=291>

Historical Marker Database for Ohio: <https://www.hmdb.org/results.asp?Search=Series&SeriesID=364>



Signs like this one at the corner of Harrison Avenue and State Street in Harrison, Ohio, guide travelers along the John Hunt Morgan Heritage Trail.

A History of Preservation

By Rachel Sharkey, Director of Public Archaeology

As America celebrates its 250th anniversary, it is striking to remember how young our nation truly is. Those 250 years represent only a small chapter in the much longer human history of this continent - a history shaped by countless generations whose stories of family, resilience, ingenuity, hardship, and belonging stretch back thousands of years. Humans have always preserved the past through storytelling, passing knowledge from one generation to the next. Today, archaeology and historic preservation continue that tradition by protecting the places and objects that connect communities to their shared heritage.

Some of the earliest preservation efforts focused on landmarks associated with the nation's founding, including the protection of Independence Hall in 1816 and George Washington's Mount Vernon in 1853.



The author leading a tour of the Guard Archaeological Site.

By the early twentieth century, preservation efforts expanded beyond Revolutionary-era landmarks to include a broader range of cultural and natural resources. The American Antiquities Act of 1906 became the nation's first major preservation law, authorizing the President to establish national monuments on federal lands. The creation of the National Park Service in 1916 further strengthened preservation efforts, and during the New Deal, programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration employed archaeologists across the country, documenting and excavating sites while providing much-needed jobs during the Great Depression.

Following World War II, rapid development brought new challenges. The Federal Highway Act of 1956 and the growth of suburban communities transformed transportation and housing but also resulted in the destruction of countless archaeological sites and historic buildings. In response, Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, establishing the State Historic Preservation Offices and creating a review process that requires federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects to consider their effects on cultural resources. Today, much of American archaeology and architectural history is conducted

through this Cultural Resource Management process, helping ensure that important sites are identified and considered before development occurs. These protections, however, have limits. Because federal law applies only to projects involving federal funding, permits, or licenses, significant sites on private property may remain vulnerable. Recognizing this, several states have adopted additional safeguards. In Indiana, state law protects archaeological sites even on private property and provides review of projects using state funds that could affect historic resources.

The Archaeological Research Institute (ARI) was founded because of one family's commitment to preservation. In the late 1980s, the Sedler family purchased the Guard Site to protect it from development, ensuring that this important Native American village

would survive for future generations. ARI has since expanded those efforts by preserving additional properties, including land containing Native American mounds at Hidden Valley Lake. As we commemorate 250 years of American history, archaeology reminds us that our shared story is far older than the nation itself. Every preserved site helps safeguard the lives, traditions, and experiences of those who came before us. By protecting these places, we ensure that their stories continue to enrich our understanding of the past and strengthen our connection to the communities we call home.

An important update...as of July, 2026, proposed federal changes to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) could weaken protections for historic resources and limit the voices of Tribal Nations, preservationists, archaeologists, and communities who have worked for generations to protect them. These changes could put irreplaceable cultural resources at risk by allowing decisions about our shared heritage to be made without meaningful public input. At ARI, we are deeply concerned because the archaeological sites and historic places we work to protect hold stories, knowledge, and connections that cannot be recovered once they are destroyed. Protecting our history requires all of us to stay informed, learn about important places in our communities, participate in public discussions, and support efforts to preserve our shared heritage. By speaking up today, we can help ensure that future generations inherit not only the stories of the past, but the places where those stories live.

Exploring the Archaeology of Care at the NHDVS

By Gage Huey, Lab Manager - Veterans Curation Program

Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is well known for healthcare, benefits, and memorial services available to Veterans, but do you know how far back their history stretches?

Abraham Lincoln's inaugural promise "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" manifested in 1867 as the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS), the first facilities of their kind in the United States.

The NHDVS pioneered domiciliary care in eleven Homes across the country, places where thousands of Veterans healed, worked, and lived. Records from this period demonstrate how the unique relationship between the Federal Government and Veterans evolved, but even the most comprehensive documentation cannot record everything. Archaeological data can help "fill in" information that is not found in paper histories. Because archaeological and written resources exist on VA properties, VA Historians have multiple lines of evidence to trace the development of the National Homes.

terry; in recent years, remote sensing technologies were able to confirm its location and now that data is used to digitally reconstruct portions of the Funeral Tunnel.

Archaeological materials recovered from VA properties need to be managed according to historic preservation law. Aiding this work, the Dayton VA History Office Veterans Curation Program (VCP) employs Veterans to bring these collections into compliance and build artifact catalogs to make data accessible to researchers and the public.

What starts as a dusty bag of artifacts in an old box becomes an opportunity for Veterans to connect with their own archaeological heritage and to learn more about the VA's unique history. Responsible management of this heritage is essential for its preservation and contributes to the ongoing legacy of the NHDVS through opportunities for archaeologists, archivists, and curators to work together with communities of Veterans and caregivers alike.



Lab Manager Gage Huey presents NHDVS artifacts from the VCP teaching collection to VA Historians.



VCP Lab Technician Samantha Burnette filling out an artifact tag for a horseshoe recovered on the Dayton VAMC Campus.

Spanning over six decades, these facilities were centered on Care; the Homes established hospitals, mess halls, gardens, workshops, even recreation facilities, all for the benefit of the disabled Veterans living there. Many VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) have incorporated remnants of historic buildings from this period into their campuses. Below ground, archaeological investigations generate additional categories of evidence to answer questions, new and old, about life at the Homes.

For example, long-standing rumors and records at the Dayton VAMC alluded to a "Tunnel of Death" which carried deceased residents from the hospital to the ceme-

To learn more about the Dayton VA History Office VCP, please visit our website by scanning the QR code to the right.



Early Archaeology in the Midwest

By Tessa Wilk, Public Archaeologist & Lab Manager

On October 14, 2023, when the Ohio Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Tri-State area gained worldwide recognition for its many important archaeological sites. Though international recognition was late in coming, the impressive earthworks of ancient cultures in the Middle Ohio Valley have been a subject of interest to both amateur and professional archaeologists since the birth of our country.

Among the pioneers of American archaeology, president Thomas Jefferson notably conducted archaeological work on an Indigenous mound located on his property in Virginia in 1783, earning him the title of the “First American Archaeologist.” His work differed

from previous excavations in that Jefferson did not only collect the artifacts he found, but he documented his process and used it to answer questions he had about the people who lived there in the past (Zechmeister, G., 2010).

After Jefferson’s excavations brought attention to

archaeology in the United States, others began to take note throughout the rest of the country. Well-preserved artifacts and structures in the Southwest became hotspots for collectors. In the Midwest specifically, the focus was squarely set on the numerous mounds and earthworks that dotted the landscape. These structures offered the opportunity for those newly inhabiting the new world to explore something Europe already had: the mysterious unknown (McManamon, F. P., Cordell, L. S., Lightfoot, K. G., & Milner, G. R., 2008).

To white settlers, the mounds and earthworks were something that they did not understand. They didn’t know who built them, or when, or why. Archaeological excavations of these sites became the way for many to attempt to answer these questions.

Some prominent figures to come out of this archaeological boom include Ephraim George Squier (1821-1888) and Dr. Edwin Hamilton Davis (1811-1888). Neither had any formal training in archaeology, but both

shared a curiosity about the mysterious archaeological remnants that dotted the landscape in which they grew up. The two met in Chillicothe, Ohio in 1845 and, upon discovering that they shared similar interests, decided to team up to survey hundreds of mounds and earthworks throughout Ohio (National Park Service, 2015). Their completed work titled *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* was published in 1848. While this publication ultimately supported the popular myth of the Mound Builders being an extinct race, the work provided an impressive list of the cultural resources of Ohio and served as inspiration for future archaeologists.

Dr. Charles Louis Metz (1847-1926) was born during



Frederick Ward Putnam (Left) and Warren King Moorehead

the time Squier and Davis were conducting their survey across Ohio. Metz’s family owned a copy of this book and fostered an interest in archaeology, especially since Metz grew up surrounded by the mounds listed, but also many that weren’t. Though Metz became a medical doctor as an adult, he continued to

indulge in personal studies of archaeology. Eventually, it was one of his own patients that offered him the opportunity to excavate an archaeological site on their property, now known as the Madisonville site. Metz gave lectures, published articles, and produced many exhibitions about his work at this site, which eventually caught the attention of another well-known figure: Frederic Putnam, (Tankersley, K. B., & Newman, R. B., 2016).

Frederic Ward Putnam (1839-1915) attended Harvard University where he studied as a naturalist. Putnam’s continued interest in natural history led to the study of archaeological materials, and the knowledge he acquired earned him the position of curator with the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in 1875 as well as a professor of ethnology at Harvard in 1887 (Britannica Editors, 2026). It was during his time with the Peabody Museum that Putnam was responsible for the excavations of many significant sites such as Fort Ancient and Serpent Mound. Putnam regularly published and presented on his work, showcasing a level of detail that was unlike previous

excavations done by most archaeologists of the time. The way in which he conducted work became the standardized methodology. He trained many students who would later develop into more prominent figures within archaeology and mentored many others (Dexter, R. W., 1965). For this reason Putnam was recognized by many as the "Father of American Archaeology".

Warren King Moorehead (1866-1939) had been interested in archaeology throughout Ohio where he collected many artifacts as a child. Moorehead continued collecting into his adult years, including conducting his own digs at places such as Fort Ancient. It wasn't until after spending time on the Sioux Reservation just before the massacre of Wounded Knee that Moorehead developed more meticulous methods of excavation out of respect for the Indigenous communities whose mistreatment he had personally witnessed. Moorehead became a vocal advocate for Indigenous communities, especially in Washington D.C. (Gill, J., 2011). Peabody Museum curator Frederick Ward Putnam took notice, and when Putnam was put in charge of developing an archaeology exhibit for the World's Columbian Exhibition in 1891, he hired Moorehead to excavate and provide artifacts for display. It was through Putnam that Moorehead met George Peabody of the Peabody Museum who created a position specifically for Moorehead at Phillips Academy in 1901. Moorehead conducted excavations at multiple sites during his time at the academy, most notably at Cahokia, the great Mississippian period Native American city located outside modern-day St. Louis. (Christenson, A. L., 2011).

In 1931, Moorehead was invited to Indiana by Eli Lilly Jr., president of the pharmaceutical Eli Lilly and Company (founded by his grandfather, Eli Lilly). Lilly was a philanthropist who showed interest in the history of Indiana and was a member of the Archaeology section of the Indiana Historical Society (IHS). Lilly invited Moorehead to investigate some archaeological sites around Indiana. At the time, there was no one more knowledgeable about Indiana archaeology than Glenn Albert Black (1900-1964). Black was a hobbyist in archaeology and, in his twenties, extensively studied every publication about Indiana archaeology he could get his hands on. Black was hired by Lilly to act as a guide and field helper for Moorehead during his survey of archaeological sites. Due to his knowledge and dedication to Indiana archaeology, just a month after his work with Moorehead and Lilly, Black was appointed the first Indiana Historical Society Archaeologist. During his time with IHS, Black excavated many sites of great importance throughout Indiana, including the Angel Mounds site at Evansville. When Indiana University

added archaeology in 1944 Black was hired as head of the department, professor of archaeology, and head of field school excavations at Angel Mounds in conjunction with IHS. (Indiana University, 2026)

Artifact collectors have been around as long as people have been and they hold a wealth of information that may otherwise be lost. It is due to their work that we began to see the shift from personal collecting to more scientific research with these discoveries. The knowledge learned from these excavations has helped to bring the Indigenous community back into the field where they can regain control of their own history and we can learn more than artifacts alone can ever tell us. Now, in the 21st century, the field of archaeology continues to change and develop to this day as we learn more about the people who lived before us by working with those who live alongside us.

Sources:

Britannica Editors (2026, April 12). Frederic Ward Putnam. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frederic-Ward-Putnam>

Christenson, A. L. (2011). Who were the Professional North American Archaeologists of 1900? Clues from the Work of Warren K. Moorehead. *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology*, 21(1), 4-22. <https://doi.org/10.5334/bha.2112>

Dexter, R. W. (1965). Contributions of Frederic Ward Putnam to Ohio Archaeology. Dublin, OH; *The Ohio Journal of Science* 65(3): 110.

Gill, J. (2011, December). Warren King Moorehead at Wounded Knee. <https://www.ohiohistory.org/warren-king-moorehead-at-wounded-knee/>

Indiana University (2026). The Glenn A. Black Collections. Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. <https://iumaa.iu.edu/collections/archaeological-collections/black.html>

McManamon, F. P., Cordell, L. S., Lightfoot, K. G., & Milner, G. R. (2008). History of Archaeology in the Midwest. *Archaeology in America: An Encyclopedia*, 2, 20-24. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9798400613999>

National Park Service. (2015, April 10). Historic figures in Hopewell Archeology. Hopewell Culture: National Historical Park Ohio. <https://www.nps.gov/hocu/learn/history-culture/historic-figures-in-hopewell-archeology.htm>

Tankersley, K. B., & Newman, R. B. (2016). Dr. Charles Louis Metz and the American Indian archaeology of the Little Miami River Valley. Little Miami Publishing Co.

Zechmeister, G. (2010, November). Jefferson's excavation of a Native American Burial Mound. Thomas Jefferson Monticello. <https://www.monticello.org/encyclopedia/jeffersons-excavation-native-american-burial-mound>

The Boarding House on the Ohio River

By Forrest Schmitt, Experimental Archaeology Manager

In the mid-1800s, the Ohio River and its tributaries were major arteries of transportation between cities as close as Cincinnati to Lawrenceburg or as distant as Pittsburgh to New Orleans. As boats traveled up and down the Ohio River, the people aboard them had several options when it came to sleeping arrangements. Some boats would have rooms and other sleeping accommodations on board. These boats could tie up at night or potentially even continue through the darkness. In the earliest days of travel along the Ohio River, this was not always the safest option. In fact, until the days of the steamboat, you may even find yourself falling prey to pirates or brigands. So, travelers may have chosen to stop instead at one of the many river towns that developed along this important route. Here, they may even find a room at a hotel or a boarding house.



Passengers line up in the rain to board the Delta Queen (left) and the Mississippi Queen steamboats during the Tall Stacks event in Cincinnati, Ohio, in October, 1992. 557 such Steamboats carried passengers and goods on the rivers in 1845.

Boarding houses were, and remain, important places. They were generally communal sleeping arrangements, which offered a less comfortable but much more affordable place to stay than a hotel. Sometimes, these boarding houses also contained a kitchen and dining hall. During the 1800's, a large percentage of the urban poor population lived in boarding houses for at least part of their lives. It stands to reason that they would have also been a common site in the bustling river towns of the Ohio River. It was brought to ARI's attention that such a structure may have existed just outside of Lawrenceburg, near the old channel of the Great Miami River.

On land owned by the Oxbow Nature Conservancy, locals spoke of a spot they called "The Boarding House." An old painting of a woodcut was discovered that appears to show a large building standing in approximately this same area.



Image source: Louie Del, H. 1856. Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana: Near the Mouth of the Great Miami. M. F. Schmidt Collection.

A site survey, likely done in the 90's, collected artifacts and noted apparent foundations. All of this helped prompt ARI to lead excavations at the site. While we were unable to locate the foundations ourselves, the amount of brick and other artifacts recovered during our excavations leads us to believe that a large brick structure did stand on that site at one time. We are not able to say for certain what the exact nature of this structure was from excavation alone, but the artifacts tell us that it is indeed possible for this building to have been a boarding house. Among the thousands of fragments of brick, we also un-



earthed many pieces of ceramics dating from the mid-1800's, as well as square-cut nails. Clay pipe fragments and a button carved from bone give us insight into daily life. Did these artifacts come from a homeowner? Or were they perhaps lost by some traveler, on their way to a new life?

Latest Happenings at ARI!

By Molly Miniard

Happy Field Season from ARI! We are so excited to finally be back outside and back in the dirt. While we could have done without some of the early season rain we received, we have pushed past and are making the most of what is turning out to be a busy summer season. Check out what we have been up to for the past few months!



This has been one of the wettest field seasons we have experienced in the history of ARI. While opening up new types of units called trenches which are 3 meters by 3 meters, our field school students have gotten really good at performing a bucket brigade.



Summer camps were packed full this year. From harvesting clay and cleaning artifacts, to sifting with our field school students and archaeologists there was plenty to do and learn!



The Lawrenceburg MainStreet's Farmer's Market is back up and running again for the summer. Our Stew Crew has been doing fantastic at this event selling all different types of native plants that they have been growing in their greenhouse. Way to go!



Our third annual ARI Adventure Trek was a hit! Thank you to everyone who came out. Our 5K trail run through the Oxbow was the most attended one yet. Our Adventure Trek stations involved everyone from archaeology to landstewardship and even started getting people excited for Pumpkin STEM again.



Seven-year-old Abe Strassell found an 18-inch cephalopod (an ancient squid) in a creek in Milan, Indiana. He had no idea what it was — so he and his family brought it to ARI's Artifact ID Day. And just like that, a backyard mystery became a window into deep time.



Archaeological Research Institute

Calendar of Events

September

HARVEST & COVER CROP WORKSHOP

SAT 9/26 | 1:00PM - 4:00PM

Explore gardening, harvesting, and food storage techniques while discovering indigenous knowledge and seasonal agricultural practices.

October

HANDS-ON HISTORY: TREBUCHET

SAT 10/10 | 1:00PM - 5:00PM

Participants will learn how to safely operate & maintain a trebuchet, gaining an understanding of the engineering principles and historical significance of siege engines in past cultures.

November

PUMPKIN STEM

SAT 11/07 | 11:00AM - 6:00PM

Come out to Carriage House for the 3rd Annual Pumpkin STEM Festival, where we launch pumpkins with our giant, home-made trebuchet. Check out exploreari.org/pumpkin-stem/ for more details!

For more information and a full calendar of events please go to our website exploreari.org or scan the QR code.



Artifact Identification Day is always hosted on the second Saturday of every month from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Guard Site Tours are hosted on Fridays during the summer

ARI Speaker Series is FREE for ARI Members! These are hosted on the first Tuesday of every month with Happy Hour starting at 5:30 and the talks beginning at 6:30

Check out the Midwestern Archaeology Podcast! Hosted by Lee Strange, our Adult Educational Programming Coordinator.

Listen to the newest episode: The Adena Cultural Complex, wherever you get your podcasts.



Explore ARI Outfitters



Hours of Operation:

Sunday & Monday CLOSED

Tuesday - Saturday 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Located inside the Archaeological Research Institute, ARI Outfitters is more than a gift shop — it's an extension of our mission to Explore, Preserve, Research, and Educate. We have unique apparel, merch, and gifts to fit everyone's needs. Every purchase supports our work at ARI.