

Wright State University 2013 Field School in Archaeology (ATH 4650/6650)

Course Description Dates: May 6 – June 14, 2013; 6 credits (semester system) Director: Dr. Robert Riordan (robert.riordan@wright.edu) tel 937-775-2667

The Field School runs Monday-Friday between 9am-4pm. We spend the first two days on campus in Dayton in orientation activities, followed by 1-2 days devoted to site location survey work, when we walk local agricultural fields to detect artifact scatters that represent previously unrecorded sites. The excavation phase begins on May 10.

Fort Ancient is the largest Hopewellian hilltop earthwork enclosure, dating to c. AD 1-400. It is a State Park and also a National Historic Landmark. Remote sensing conducted there in 2005 detected a large and previously unknown circular feature almost 60m diameter in the enclosure's North Fort. The Ohio Historical Society subsequently invited Wright State to begin its investigation of the feature in 2006. The circular feature has since been named the Moorehead Circle after the pioneering archaeologist Warren K. Moorehead, who worked at Fort Ancient in the late nineteenth century.

WSU's work since 2006 suggests that the Circle contained over 200 vertically-set wooden posts around its perimeter, many of them tipped into postholes. Some of these used shallow adjacent slip trenches which were subsequently filled with about 100kg of rocks each. Work done in 2008-09 indicates that on the western perimeter there are three concentric rings of posts, although it is possible that not all were in place concurrently.

Just inside the perimeter rings of postholes meter-wide concentric clay floors embedded with limestone slabs were uncovered, each one separated from those adjacent by gravel-filled trenches. A ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey done in May of 2010 suggests that these floor/trench features extend across the entire south half of the Circle. Nothing like them has ever been described at another Hopewell site.

At the center of the Circle is a large, shallow pit, 4m in diameter and almost 1m deep, that was filled with a bright red heated soil. Pottery vessels had been deposited around its edge, perhaps as a ritual offering. In 2010-11, using the GPR data, we began to find large, deep postholes that we believe constitute the edge of a large structure or unroofed enclosure adjacent to the pit, which was probably related to the ritual use of the pit and the Circle. We will be returning our attention to this feature in 2013. At this point, we know that it was rebuilt at least twice, and soil profiles show that there was episodic burning across its floor space.

The Circle also had a formal entranceway on its south side. In 2012 we opened over 30 square meters in this location and have uncovered what are believed to be two superimposed limestone slab pavements. This excavation will be expanded in 2013.

We will take 1-2 trips to visit other sites in southern Ohio, including an all-day trip to the Scioto Valley Hopewell earthworks. On rain days, students can expect to spend the time processing artifacts in a lab at Fort Ancient.

Applications are available starting in November 2012 and can be submitted at any time thereafter. No more than 15 students will be accepted. We welcome applications from students at institutions besides WSU, and in the past seven years we have had students from 12 other schools in attendance. While we do not maintain a field camp, housing is available at Wright State's campus in Dayton, located about 45 minutes from Fort Ancient.

Contact: Dr. Robert Riordan, Dept. Sociology & Anthropology, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio 45435 robert.riordan@wright.edu tel. 937-775-2667

Wright State University's 2013
Field School in Archaeology
ATH 4650 and 6650
6 credits, Summer A term



All majors welcome, no prereqs
No experience needed; excavation will occur at the
2000 yr-old Fort Ancient Earthwork in Warren County,
Ohio

Apply now to: Dr. Robert
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