

NEW DEAL, NEW SERPENT: PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS AT SERPENT MOUND STATE MEMORIAL

Rory Krupp

Abstract

Archival research has identified documents at the Ohio History Connection related to Serpent Mound archaeology. The current understanding of the site is that Frederic W. Putnam restored Serpent Mound in the 1880s and converted the surrounding property into a public park. The Ohio History Connection's State Archives series and New Deal agency records indicate that the Serpent Mound was again restored in 1934–1935. Consequently, today's Serpent Mound and its surrounding landscape are in reality a New Deal construct based largely on landscaping principles developed by the National Park Service in the 1920s and 1930s. Depression-era agencies' financial prioritization on wages and not materials seems to indicate that fill used in the restoration originated in the park to save money and may have been associated with restroom construction in 1934–1935. Consequently, the Fort Ancient Baum Focus material located in the Serpent Mound appears to originate from elsewhere within the park and is in the mound as a result of the New Deal restoration.

Background

Serpent Mound was first recorded by Ephraim G. Squier and Dr. Edwin Davis in 1846, and it was included in their *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* in 1848 (Squier and Davis 1848). It is a serpent-shaped effigy mound. Four Woodland Period mounds are located to the south in the park. In 1859, a tornado denuded the promontory containing the site, and subsequently Serpent Mound was exposed to plowing and livestock grazing for a number of years.

In 1883, the curator of Harvard's Peabody Museum, F. W. Putnam, visited Serpent Mound for the first time; he returned in the summer of 1888. In the interim, hundreds of tourists had visited the mound, causing damage. The mound had also

suffered from wandering cattle and looters who failed to backfill while looking for artifacts. These actions, exacerbated by rain, had promoted the mound's erosion.

Prompted by Putnam, who was alarmed by the mound's rapid deflation, a group of Boston society ladies purchased the site by subscription in 1886 on behalf of Harvard College. Putnam conducted excavations there from 1886–1889, camping at the site over the summer months (Putnam 1890). He trenched the Serpent and excavated a number of the Woodland mounds. He also discovered a habitation site, a village, located north of the current parking lot, which would later be classified by archaeologist James Griffin as a Baum phase, Fort Ancient site.

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By 1888, Putnam had restored Serpent Mound to address the degradation from plowing, looting, and erosion (Willoughby 1919:159). He restored the mound by “heaping” soil from the area adjacent to the mound onto the mound itself, raising the cross-section height. Contemporary accounts in the Hillsboro News-Herald note that Putnam’s intention was to “throw up the mound to its original height; it having through the thoughtlessness of the owners of the farm, plowed down considerable” (Lovetts 1887). A 1900 reprinted Cincinnati Enquirer article mentions before Putnam’s restoration the mound, “was rapidly wearing down to the soil on either side” (TP 1900). The article states that the restoration was assisted by local residents, “In this, the recollection of old residents who remembered it before the agricultural steel had scarred it was called upon to guide the scientists” (TP 1900). One recorded local resident who assisted in Putnam’s restoration was future site custodian, Daniel Wallace. The notice of his death at the OSAHS annual meeting stated that he worked from “the beginning of Prof. Putnam’s explorations, and improvements, and was therefore familiar with everything connected with its recent history” (OAHQ 1917:109).

Putnam also designed the original park landscape for the rest of the property, although the larger circulation pattern was essentially dictated by existing roads, topography, and mounds. He envisioned the park as a place of quiet contemplation and constructed a picnic area and spring house in the southwest corner of the park, away from the mounds, which were accessible by a gravel path from the plateau (Figure 1).

After Putnam’s restoration, the Serpent and the rest of the park suffered from neglect because they were so far from the Peabody Museum that its officers were unable to provide the proper care (Randall 1905). In 1894, Ohio State Archaeological and Historic Society (OSAHS) Secretary E.O. Randall brought the mound’s poor condition to Putnam’s attention and suggested that ownership be transferred to OSAHS, which could better care for the Serpent and the park. Putnam and the Peabody Museum agreed in 1899, and an

appropriation request was made to the Ohio General Assembly Joint Finance Committee for “the repair and care of the Serpent Mound” (Randall 1905:108–109).

The park was transferred to OSAHS in December 1899. The Ohio legislature joint finance committee appropriated \$500 for “repair and care of serpent mound” in 1900 (State of Ohio 1900:108). Randall’s letters enumerate the problems that had led him to request the ownership transfer: erosion, wandering livestock, and prohibited visitors. An 1899 Pittsburgh Press article about cycling through southern Ohio notes that the mound was wide open to anyone hardy enough to brave the hilly clay road from Locust Grove (PP 1899).

OSAHS hired Putnam’s former employee, Daniel Wallace, as site custodian in 1901. There were two immediate problems. The park road was on the verge of washing out and a neighbor’s hogs had done “considerable damage to the premises,” including the Serpent, by “rooting up the ground.”¹ Wallace reported directly to Randall. The Secretary, seemingly content with the knowledge that Wallace had worked with Putnam, did little to interfere with the park’s day to day operation. The minimal direction was provided by letters with Randall often far behind in his correspondence and planned visits. Wallace appears to have fixed the damage to the Serpent without supervision or direction. While it may be assumed that he followed the same technique he and Putnam originally used, heaping the dirt back up on the mound and growing grass on it, there is no definitive record. However, Wallace was certainly aware of the archaeological nature of the park and some archaeological methodology. He wrote Randall in December 1901, that while making the foundation for Putnam’s monument in one of the Woodland mounds he located an arrowhead. He did apologize for locating the point in the back dirt and not in situ and therefore he was unsure of the original depth. In the same letter, Wallace states, “I enclose a minute arrow point I found at the head of the serpent in fixing a drain.” The exact meaning of “drain” in this instance is unclear. In his

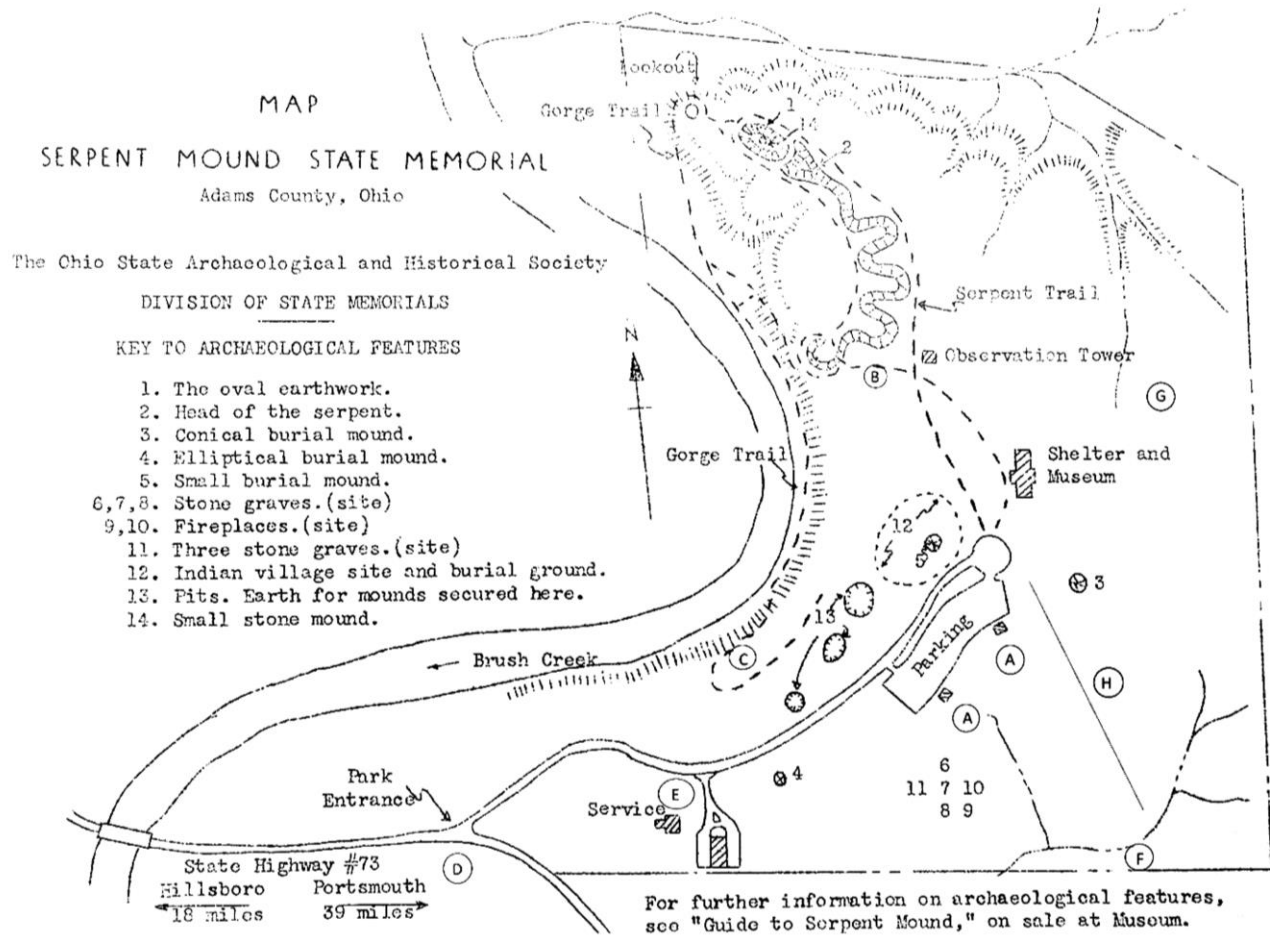


Figure 1. c.1946-1949 Serpent Mound map with locations of construction episodes.

- A. Men's and women's restrooms. Built 1933-1935 by the Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Transient Division.
- B. Approximate location of log house. Removed c. 1938-1939 by the WPA and Civilian Conservation Corps, Camp Pine Gap, Soil Conservation Service.
- C. Gorge Trail, improved in 1938-39, by the Civilian Conservation Corps, Camp Pine Gap, Soil Conservation Service.
- D. Park entrance, c. 1936-1937 constructed by Works Progress Administration.
- E. Superintendent's house and garage, c. 1936-1937, Works Progress Administration.
- F. Location of Putnam's partially removed springhouse and relocated stream done by the Society in c. 1923. Stream improvements by Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration, 1933-1935.
- G. Approximate location of 1902-1904 custodian's house, barn, chicken house, and summer kitchen. House renovated by Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Transient Division. Outbuildings removed by Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, Camp Pine Gap, Soil Conservation Service in c. 1937-1938.
- H. Approximate location of Putnam's path to springhouse.

letters Wallace discusses erosional features in the park and Serpent but refers to them as "washes." Wallace, however, sent a number of letters describing installing drain tile around the 1902

custodian's home, where he located prehistoric pottery.² A barn, chicken house, and summer kitchen were also constructed c. 1902-1904 in the same area. The extent of Wallace's drainage

activities remains unknown and appears to be concentrated around the farmstead, but installing tile and digging ditches occupied a better part of the last half of 1902.

Wallace quickly repaired the livestock damage in the first year and the repairs were judged a success by the Society. The April 1902 OAHQ Editorialana by Secretary Randall states, "Since its acquisition by the Society, the Serpent and Park have been thoroughly restored and placed in the most excellent and attractive position" (OAHQ 1902:75). The Society's 1902 annual meeting minutes mention a visit to Serpent Mound on May 30, 1902, noting, "The Secretary paid another visit to Serpent Mound for the purposes of inspection.

He found that it had been most excellently cared for by the custodian, Mr. Daniel Wallace, who lives in a log hut just back of the mound park. The serpent has been restored to serpentine perfection, and was never, speaking after the manner of snakes, in so 'charming' a condition thanks to the faithfulness and efficiency of his keeper, Mr. Wallace" (OAHQ 1902:75).

By 1904, the park appears to have been completely stabilized. Randall notes the mound was in perfect condition and covered in a thick layer of sod that prevented erosion (OAHQ 1904). Fencing was also installed "where necessary" during this period (Figure 2). The OSAHS Serpent Mound committee visited the park in 1905 and noted that

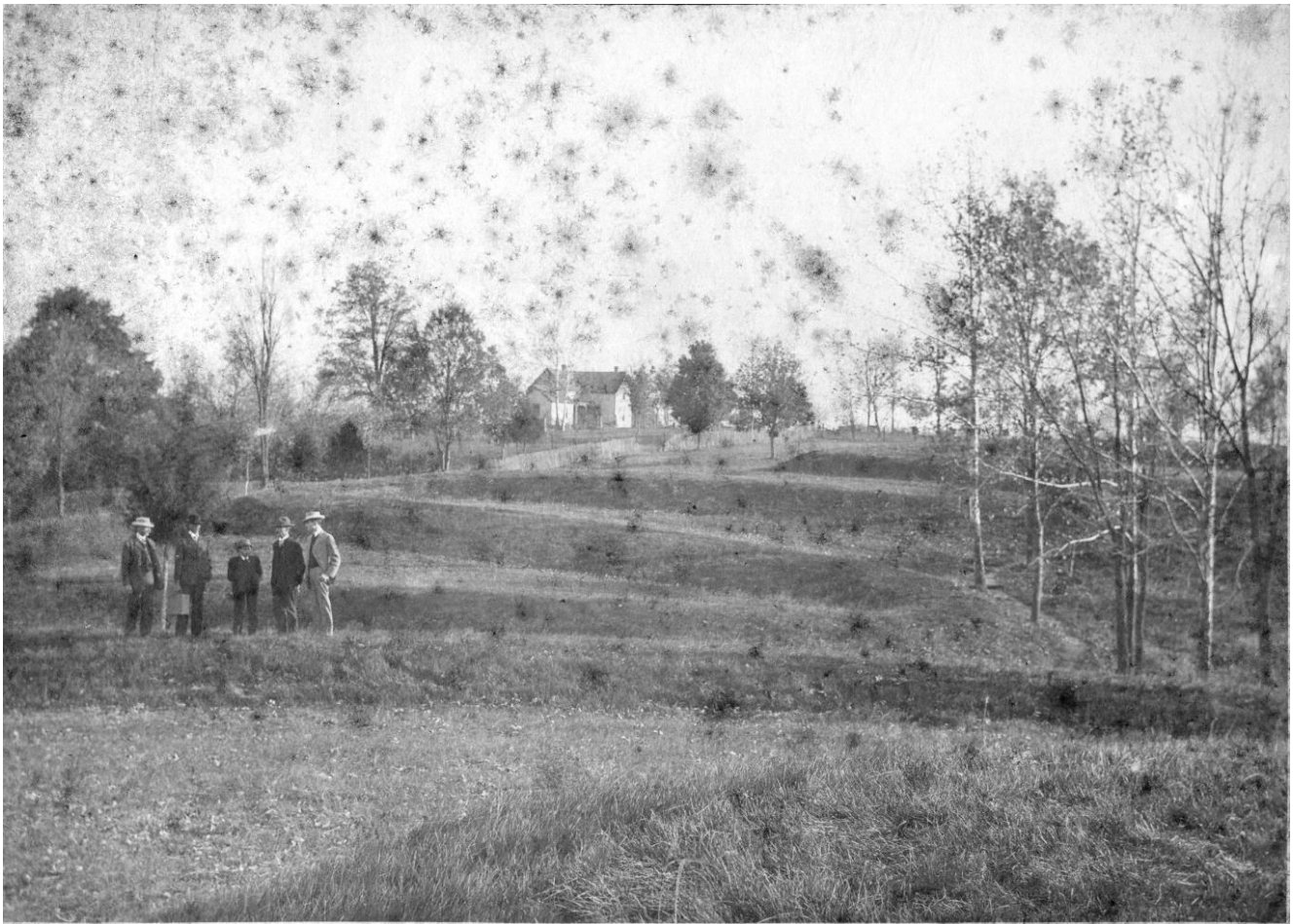


Figure 2. David Gardner photograph showing fence built around Serpent after 1901 restoration and custodian's house and summer kitchen, but before observation tower. Wooden fence removed by OSAHS in c. 1923. (Courtesy of Columbus Metropolitan Library Image Collection).

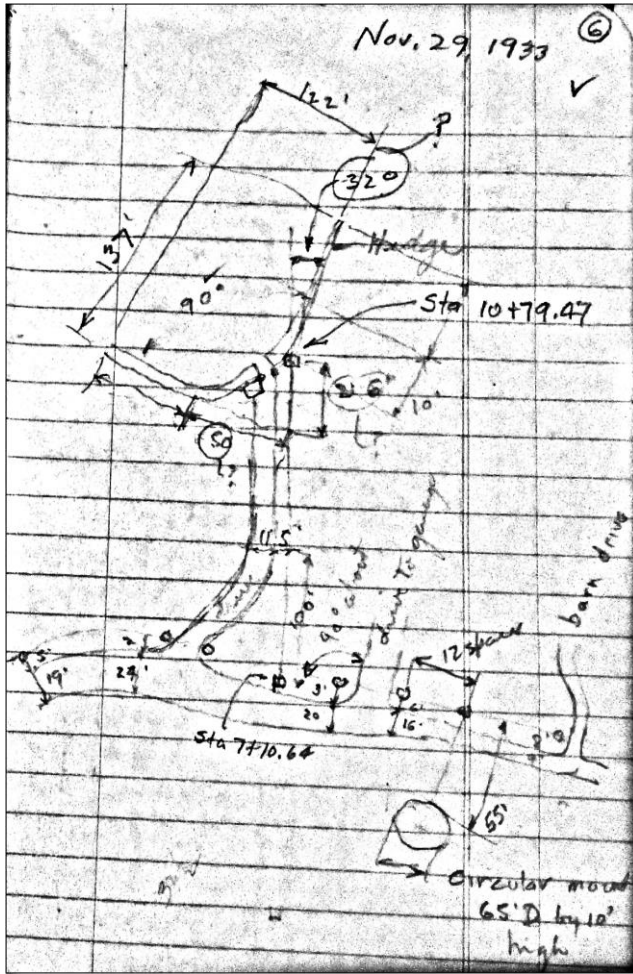


Figure 3. 1933 CWA survey map showing location of Mill’s 1923 privet hedge. (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection)

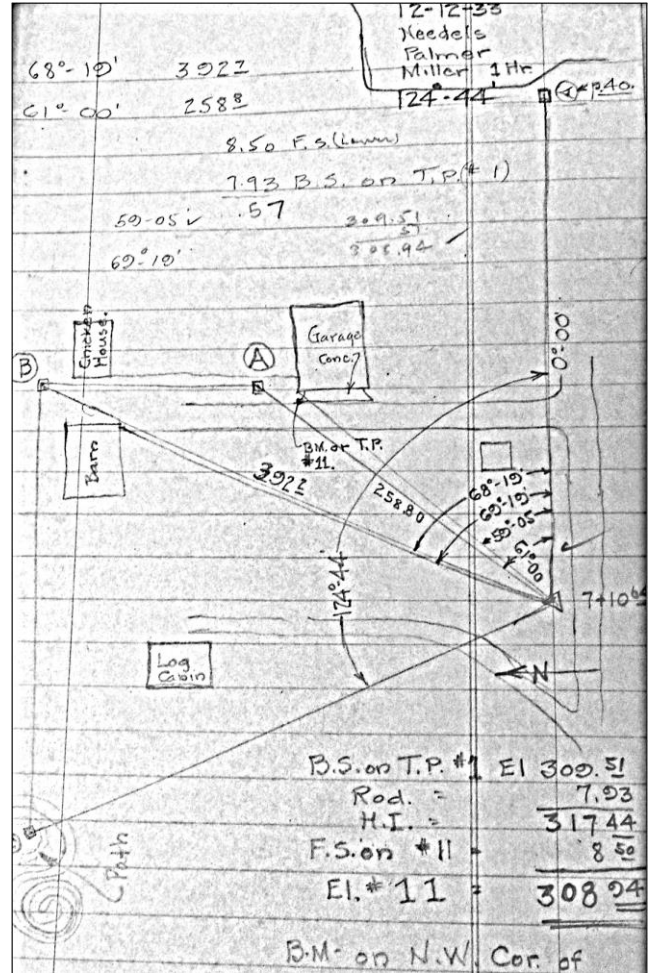


Figure 4. 1933-1934 CWA survey notebook showing barn (1902), chicken house (1902) custodian’s house (1902) garage (1927) and log cabin (date unknown). (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection)

a discussion was held with Wallace concerning his unnamed methods of preventing “injury being done by improper intruders” (OAHQ 1905:92).

OSAHS took full advantage of their acquisition and publicized it widely. A large drawing and enlarged photographs of Serpent Mound were displayed at the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis. Cowen’s 1901 survey was used to make a model of the Serpent and park for the 1907 Jamestown Exposition.

In 1908, a \$500.00 observation tower was constructed by Columbus Steel and Wire that allowed an unobstructed vista of the entire Serpent Mound

for the first time. In 1919, OSAHS archaeological curator William C. Mills reported that Serpent Mound’s caretaker was reforesting the plateau, “thus fully justifying the name ‘Park,’” and had transplanted more than 200 trees into the park from the surrounding forests during the past few years (OAHQ 1919:542). However, some portion of the park remained in agricultural use as late as 1917, when Mills reported that the corn crop had failed at Serpent Mound Park. Through the mid-1920s, OSAHS maintained Putnam’s cultural landscape of quiet bourgeois reflection, focused on the Serpent Mound vista formed by the

caretaker's plantings on the plateau. However, Mills did make some alterations. A combination museum and shelter house was constructed in 1919 (OAHQ 1919). The OSAHS Serpent Mound committee decided in 1919 to remove the grotto of Putnam's springhouse. This was done by 1923 and the ephemeral stream near it was also rerouted. During high water episodes, the stream would flow into the springhouse resulting in unsanitary conditions (OAHQ 1923). However, removing

the grotto essentially made the springhouse into a well or improved spring. In the early 1920s, Mills made another addition to the landscape by planting a privet hedge that replaced Wallace's fence near the tail of the Serpent (OAHQ 1924) (Figure 3). OSAHS constructed a garage near the custodian's house in 1927 (Figure 4), and in that same year a "substantial railing" was constructed near the head of the Serpent at the Lookout (OAHQ 1927:633).

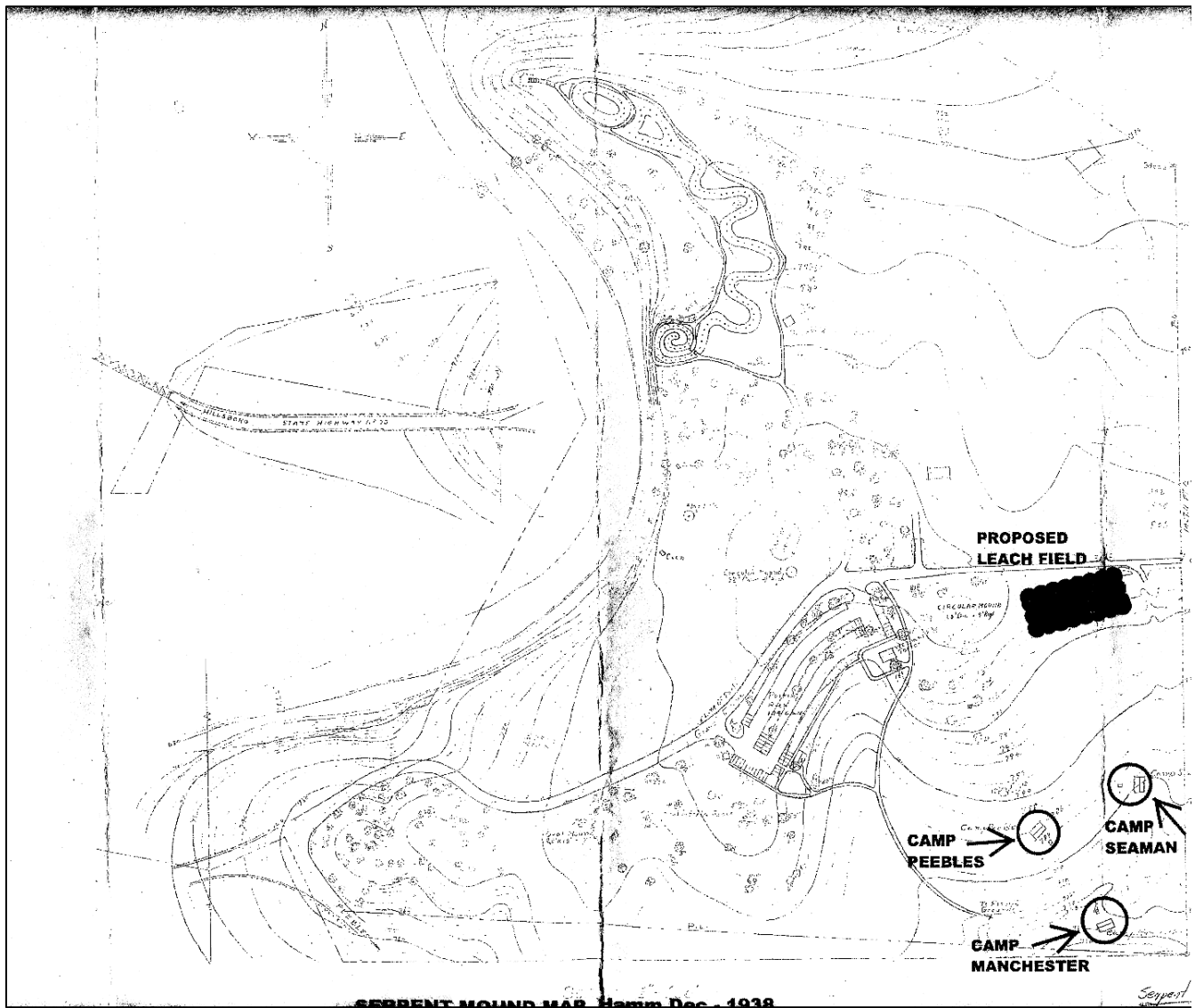


Figure 5. 1938 Hamm topographical map showing unknown affiliation camp buildings. (Courtesy of Ohio State Historic Preservation Office)

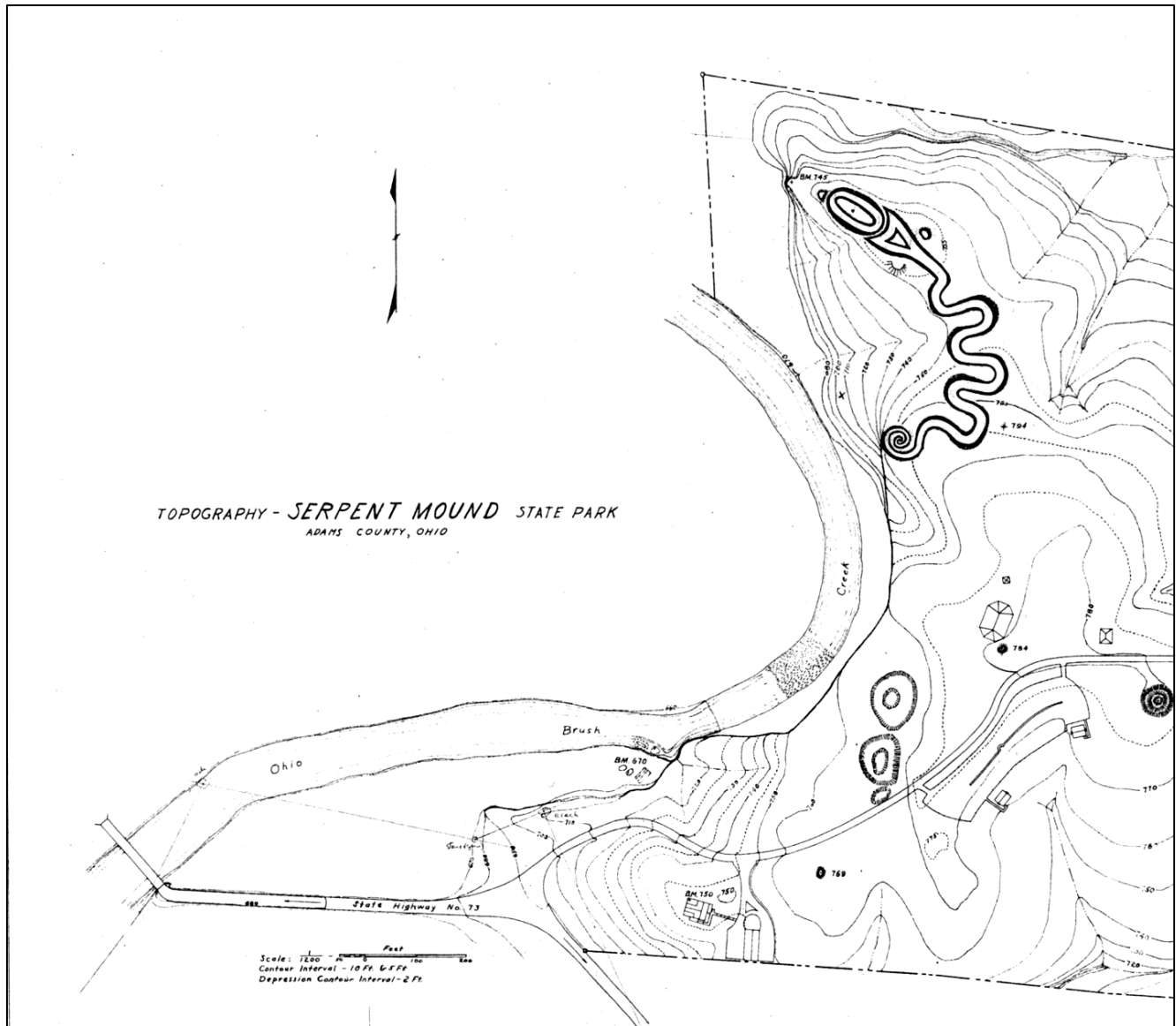


Figure 6. 1939 University of Cincinnati Department of Geology topographical map. (Photo Credit: Courtesy of Ohio State Historic Preservation Office)

Archaeological investigation at the park largely ceased after Putnam's restoration until recently. Ohio legislature appropriations were earmarked for Serpent Mound field work from 1900–1913, but whether these appropriations were actually used for field work is in question. However, some other activities of archaeological interest did take place. A topographical map was made in 1938 that indicates the location of some type of unknown camp, perhaps leftover from the

FERA transient division camp (Figure 5). References to these camps were not located in any other archival sources. Students from the University of Cincinnati's Department of Geology created a topographical map of the park in 1939. This map does not show the camp buildings (Figure 6).

In the late 1930s, James B. Griffin produced a synthesis of known Fort Ancient material and classified Putnam's Serpent Mound artifacts using a taxonomy based on McKern's system of

classification. While Griffin classified archaeological material from the park, he did not excavate there. Published in 1943, “The Fort Ancient Aspect” placed the park’s Fort Ancient component into the Baum focus, one of four Fort Ancient foci classified by Griffin.

In 1987, the park manager noticed prehistoric artifacts when he began to trench the area east of the picnic shelter for a new waterline (Kelley 1991). The park manager immediately ceased excavating and called OHS with the news, which led to an archaeological investigation of the waterline’s route. Between 1989 and 1994, OHS staff archaeologist Don Bier and assorted volunteers excavated two intersecting transects with both 0.5 m x 0.5 m units and 1.0 m x 1.0 m units, resulting in a total of 58 units. However, the exact number of each size of unit was not consistently recorded (Thompson et al. 2013). The excavation’s final results were not immediately written. In 2001, Ohio State University honors student Katherine A. Velsky conducted a preliminary analysis of some artifacts for a senior thesis project (Thompson et al. 2013).

OHS conducted an archaeological investigation in 2005 in conjunction with making a new roof for the picnic shelter. William Pickard and Linda Pansing conducted a series of shovel tests around the structure in 2005. Pickard noted the area was disturbed, most likely associated with the shelter construction. The shovel testing located one chert flake and numerous historic artifacts, such as bottle glass fragments and pull tabs (Pickard and Pansing 2005). Fieldwork continued in 2006 when Pickard and Pansing monitored the mechanical removal of the original concrete floor (Pickard and Pansing 2006). The original gravel and sand base layer was moved to one end of the pavilion and the substratum was mechanically removed in thin, arbitrary layers to bring the surface down to the required grade elevation for the new construction. This investigation did not reveal any features (Pickard and Pansing 2006).

In 2008, archaeologist Jarrod Burks, working for Ohio Valley Archaeology, Inc., conducted a geophysical survey east of the parking lot as part

of a restroom upgrade project. Burks indicated that the area northwest of the Early Woodland mound was historically disturbed (Burks 2008:12–13), but indications were present of a burned layer off the north side of the mound noted by Putnam.

In 2011, Archaeological Services Consultants (ASC) conducted an investigation for the restroom renovation and associated sewer line. Kevin Schwarz placed 0.5 m x 0.5 m units N-S roughly from the museum to the women’s restroom, running between the parking lot and the Early Woodland mound. A series of trenches and units were excavated east of the Early Woodland mound and south of the access road. Schwarz noted some historically disturbed areas. Some excavation units in the parking lot’s proximity contained one or two man-made horizons. Areas stripped of topsoil were evident around the restroom, while soil had been added in flatter areas (Schwarz 2011:49–50). An Early Woodland period cultural feature was found near the southwestern edge of the parking lot.

In 2013, Amanda D. Roberts Thompson, Robert Cook, and Victor D. Thompson completed the analysis of Bier’s 1989-1994 waterline excavation project. They surmised that the excavation located a portion of a Fort Ancient village site and that the location corresponds with the location of the Fort Ancient village Putnam identified in 1887 (Thompson et al. 2013). They also noted an Adena component at the site. A contemporary news article notes Bier’s excitement at a possible Late Woodland component identified through the presence of grit-tempered pottery shards. An undetermined Archaic component is also mentioned in the article (Kelley 1991).

New Deal Programs and Serpent Mound State Memorial

Change in the park’s use prompted the first changes in Putnam’s landscape. In 1929, Columbus residents who had originally come from Adams County started the Adams County Reunion at the park. The event became increasingly popular, attracting up to 10,000 people in 2,500

cars each year. Bands played, and political speeches were given by state and national politicians attracted by the annually increasing crowds.³ A picnic shelter constructed in 1929 was the first step in the change of the park's function from quiet contemplation to recreation. After an appropriation for the shelter was passed by the state legislature, Ohio State Representative Don C. Corbett predicted that the shelter would soon be surrounded by "hot dog stands and filling stations." In doing so, Corbett highlighted the connection between the appropriation and a nationally known 1911 Adams County vote-buying scandal in which 2,000 Adams County citizens were fined for selling their votes (PDT 1929). Legislators recognized that in a climate where open vote-buying was no longer considered acceptable, the Serpent Mound Adams County Reunion would take on greater importance for visiting and local politicians; the event attracted politicians from around the state, spreading messages of national import. In 1931, several thousand people gathered to hear Ohio Secretary of State Clarence Brown tell rural voters that the Depression was not the government's problem, but a societal issue (DNJ 1931). However, the park's infrastructure was not capable of handling the crowds generated by the Adams County Reunion; parking and restrooms were lacking. As political pressure mounted on OSAHS to improve facilities for the event, park infrastructure improvements were proposed and promoted.

Contemporaneously, OSAHS's landscaping goals shifted as part of a national trend toward park facility improvements. Following the available funding sources, OSAHS transferred its focus for archaeological sites in Ohio state parks from scientific investigation to park improvements. The Great Depression's high unemployment rate provided both skilled and unskilled labor for park upgrades. Importantly, OSAHS's change in goals essentially shifted control of the state memorial's landscapes and archaeological sites from archaeological curators like William C. Mills to administrators focused on public accommodations, such as Henry R. McPherson, a landscape

architect who served as the curator of state memorials operating under the aegis of OSAHS.

By 1933, the financial condition of both the State of Ohio and OSAHS was dire. OSAHS director Henry Shetrone was forced to dismiss six employees, and archaeological investigations radically slowed (Kardulias 1989). In addition, OSAHS's focus had fully shifted from archaeological fieldwork to park improvements in order to serve a larger audience that was more interested in the recreational aspects of the parks. McPherson himself personally resented the switch in cultural landscapes. He advocated in his 1934 annual report "that effort be centered toward the gradual retirement of the Society from the field of 'recreation' in the properties under its control. Let us creep out from under the old idea of large shelter houses, out-door furnaces, reunions, big picnics and what not which have been in vogue during the past."⁴ However, McPherson's position—a return to Putnam's focus on quiet contemplation—was politically untenable.

The main goal of the federal response to the Great Depression in Ohio was to employ as many people as quickly as possible while avoiding the provision of direct relief, which was thought to demoralize the populace. Throughout the spring and summer of 1933, state officials on the Ohio State Relief Commission acting through the Work Project and Development Committee urged local municipalities, counties, and other potential works project applicants to plan for public works projects in anticipation that relief efforts would shift away from direct payments to the unemployed and toward work relief (United States 1936). Applicants were urged to plan projects that could be initiated as soon as funding was available—within just days of legislation granting an allocation for a project. The OSAHS Work Project and Development Committee's May 1933 application lists "reforestation, establishing trails, restoration of the Serpent effigy etc. etc." as the immediately desired projects at Serpent Mound State Memorial.⁵ The Society also made a similar application to the Emergency Conservation Works division of the National Park Service in late May 1933,

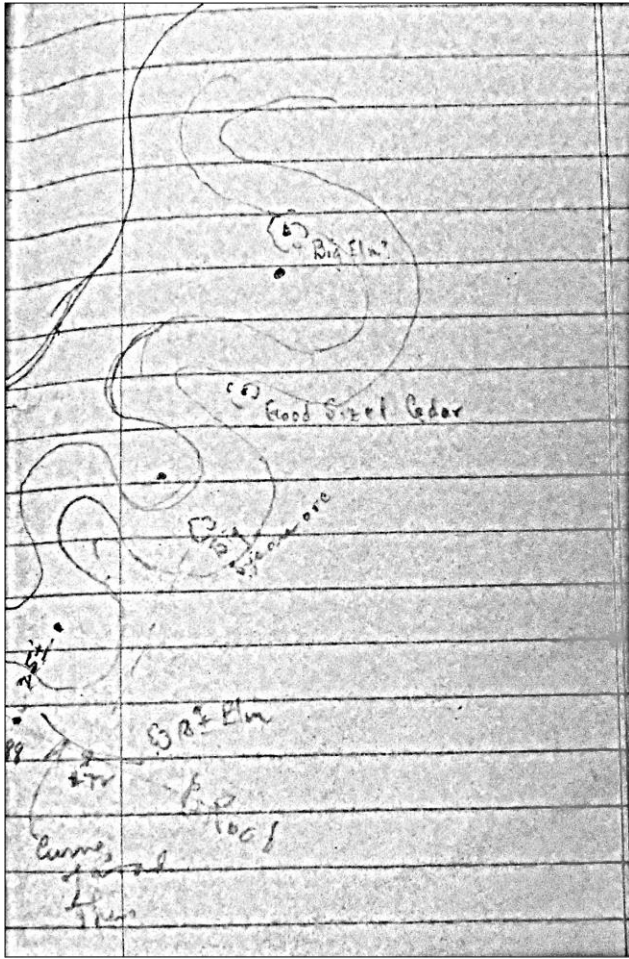


Figure 7. 1933-1934 CWA topographical map survey notebook illustrating trees in vicinity of Serpent. Trees removed by Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration 1934-1935. (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection)

combining the Serpent Mound restoration with another project at nearby Fort Hill. In this application, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) would supply labor. The application narrative enumerated the problems at Serpent Mound: “The Serpent itself needs restoration; paths needed around it; restroom facilities are most urgent; erosion control in the way of gulleys [sic].”⁶ An undated application by the Society to the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works noted that “considerable work must be done at the head of the Serpent to prevent further erosion. The head of the Serpent ends on a rather sharp

declinat [sic] of a cliff and erosion due to rainfall must be stopped and certain restorations effected.”⁷

President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved the Civil Works Administration (CWA) on November 8, 1933. Organized and administered locally by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration of Ohio, the CWA immediately initiated the relief projects that had been proposed by the Works Project and Development Committee, including the Serpent Mound restoration. The CWA used local labor taken from relief rolls and supervised by technical personnel gathered from around the state. While the majority of previous literature has identified New Deal park construction activity of the early 1930s, particularly construction of restrooms, as a CCC project, there was no CCC camp at the park (cf. Pickard and Pansing 2006, Schwarz 2011). CCC projects were staffed by young men aged 17–23 who lived in racially segregated camps near their work. However, a wide range of New Deal agencies left their mark on the park landscape and the Serpent itself, and the CCC did play a minor role later in the decade.

The construction of the park’s restrooms was initiated by the CWA between November 11, 1933, and March 31, 1934, and completed by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) Transient Division. Because at least half of the CWA labor lived nearby, originating from local relief rolls and professional and technical labor from major cities such as Columbus and Dayton, construction of a CCC-style worker’s camp at Serpent Mound State Memorial park was unnecessary. However, harsh winter weather slowed the work, and not all the projects listed in the CWA application were completed. The planned dismantling of the 1908 observation tower and its subsequent move and reassembly at Seip Mound were canceled, as were plans to construct a taller observation tower so visitors could see over Mills’ reforested plateau. (The trees from the reforestation campaign had grown enough that they blocked the vista.) It appears that the offending trees (see Figure 2) were removed instead



Figure 8. Restroom being constructed at Serpent Mound, c. 1934, by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration Transient Division (Photo Credit: Dick Dreyer in *State Relief Commission of Ohio and its Activities*, 1935)

(Figure 7). The 1908 observation tower is still standing at the park today.

The CWA restroom project was started but not completed (Figure 8). The Serpent's restoration was not completed over the winter of 1933–1934; it may not have even been started by the CWA that winter. The local CWA workforce was replaced by the FERA transient division in the spring of 1934, so it is possible that one or both groups participated in the restoration as the works projects' populations changed. In contrast, earthwork restoration at Fort Ancient was completed in July 1934 by the CCC.⁸

However, a CWA project that was completed and is of particular interest to archaeologists is the topographic map of the park and Serpent Mound

made over the winter of 1933–1934 prior to the restroom construction and Serpent Mound restoration. The CWA hired civil engineers to survey and demarcate the park's boundary, and the civil engineers conducted themselves in the best public works tradition of making the task fit the allotted time. After finishing the boundary survey, the civil engineers proceeded to make a topographic map of the park, including the Serpent. They also mapped the trees and other natural features (Figure 9). While the tracing cloth topographic map itself has not been found in the OHC archives, the civil engineers' field notebooks have been located.⁹ The 1933–1934 field notes record the Serpent Mound State Memorial park topography before it was altered by New Deal improvements

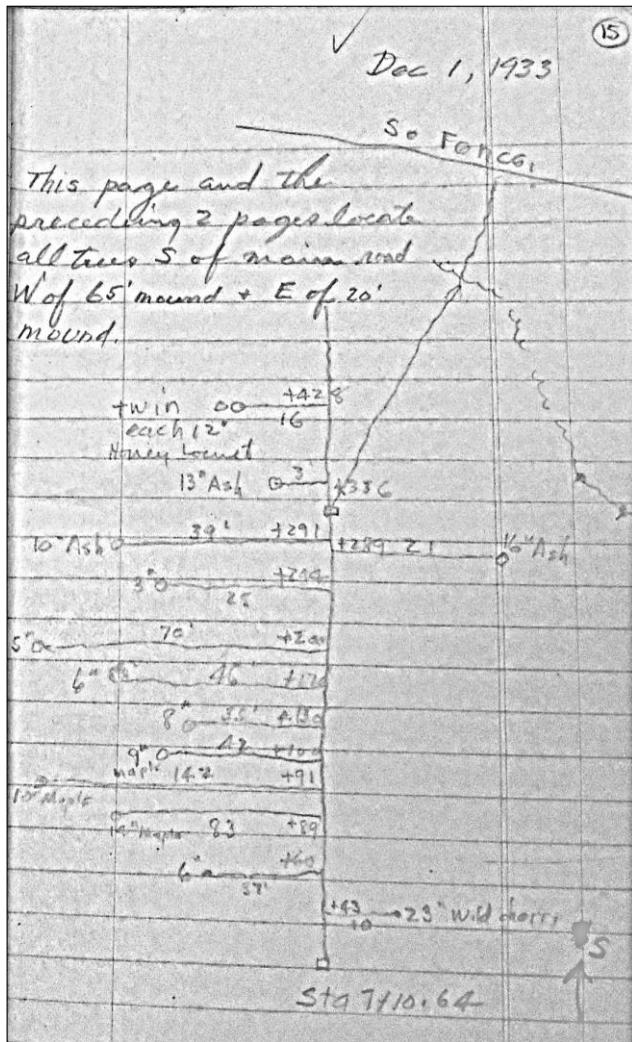


Figure 9. Trees mapped by CWA survey team in 1933. (Courtesy of the Ohio History Connection)

to the landscape. The field notes consist of the raw survey data, instrument heights, stadia rod readings, and shot angles (Figure 10).

It may be possible to reconstruct the FERA mound restoration and park landscape alterations through comparisons of these surveyor's notes with later topographic maps. The sketch maps in the surveyor's notebook show the last incarnations of the Mill's landscape before New Deal alterations. The museum and refreshment stand are mapped, along with the 1924 privet hedge near the Serpent's tail (see Figure 3). It also shows the road, now removed, mentioned by former park supervisor Andy Davenport in the 2011 ASC report

(Schwarz 2011:45) (see Figure 3). The notes also show a number of trees in close proximity to the mounds and one tree growing in the Serpent itself (see Figure 7).

When the Ohio CWA program ended in March 1934, only 3,000 of the 6,000 proposed projects had been completed. Unfinished CWA projects were either shelved or passed to FERA for future completion (United States 1936). A camp was planned by May 1934 and in operation by June 1934 for the FERA Transient Division to carry out future projects at the Serpent Mound State Memorial park (ZS 1934). A 1935 camp photograph shows conical tents in the background for living quarters (Figure 11). Heated with woodstoves and illuminated with gaslights, they were comfortable even in the winter. It appears from the 1938 Hamm topographical map that three other structures or buildings were constructed between the mound group and the cistern near the site of Putnam's former spring house. According to accounts of other FERA transient camps, these buildings may have been quickly and easily assembled for use as dormitories and for administrative purposes. Whether these replaced or augmented the 1934–1935 tents is unknown, although other camps used tents when the buildings were at capacity (McAlear 2015).

The park's existing buildings may also have been pressed into service. In Missouri, a rural transient camp used an existing barn for a mess hall and dormitory. At Serpent Mound State Memorial park, buildings and barns restored by the CWA in the previous year could have served similar administrative and residential purposes, especially since electricity was installed. This FERA camp at Serpent Mound State Memorial differed in population and purpose from the nearby CCC camp at Fort Hill State Park. While CCC camps were constructed to keep a youthful population busy, FERA transient camps were constructed to keep their workers in one spot. Transients, who were gathered at shelters in large cities and had no particular final destination in mind, could only be encouraged, not required, to participate in the camp program. FERA camp members worked six-hour

days and spent the rest of their time engaged in recreational and educational activities; the thought was that overwork would drive them away. The transient division's work was aimed to benefit the general public as much as the workers themselves; "it was recognized from the very beginning of the program that constructive labor was a safety valve for nervous systems overcome with worry and trouble, and directing thoughts of the boxcar and jungle to ideas of work and education was the first step to rehabilitation" (United States 1936:167). FERA transient camp workers were, at least initially, thought to be more capable and require less supervision than the young CCC workers. In some instances, OSAHS preferred to leave CCC work undone rather than complete it in a substandard fashion or waste valuable materials.¹⁰ The supposedly higher skill level of the Serpent Mound transients enabled the restroom construction and improvements to Serpent Mound to move forward in 1934.

The predominant race of Ohio transient camp populations also differed from that of nearby CCC camps. Serpent Mound and other transient camps held sizeable contingents from Kentucky and West Virginia, all white, who had flocked to Ohio because it was rumored to have better benefit and relief packages than their home states (FERAO 1936). The segregated CCC camps at Fort Hill and Fort Ancient were populated by African Americans (Figure 12).

The CWA application allotted 480 man hours for Serpent Mound restoration using only hand tools and wheelbarrows. A shortage of experienced personnel may have hampered the work, as

Az.	Cont'd			Contour 272.	
	Lower	Upper	Inter.	Red.	Distance.
234°15'	6.73	6.84	.11	578	
264°20'	5.65	5.91	.26		
279°25'	5.57	6.00	.43		
289°45'	5.46	6.06	.59		
299°10'	5.40	6.15	.75		
310°50'	5.35	6.20	.85		
316°50'	5.35	6.29	.99		

Figure 10. 1933-1934 CWA topographical map survey notebook raw survey data. (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection)

it did at other sites. During the FERA work at Serpent Mound, McPherson lamented the lack of qualified supervisory personnel for grading activities.¹¹

According to the 1934-1935 OSAHS Report of the Curator of Archaeology, the archaeology curators made "several trips to Fort Ancient, Serpent Mound, Fort Hill, and the Newark Earthworks for advisory purposes in the work of restoration being carried out by the Department of State Parks of the Museum." In addition, a report "setting forth in considerable detail the policies which should govern all restoration work on aboriginal sites was compiled and given to the Director."¹² Whether the restoration techniques detailed were reactive or could serve as an account of the restoration is not known. The document was not located in the OHC archives.

It should be noted that ground-disturbing activities were not limited to shovels and graders. Dynamite was listed in the CWA application, and its cavalier handling by state workers caused a local farmer to narrowly escape serious injury when his mower detonated the blasting caps—but not the dynamite itself—placed in a hay field adjacent to Serpent Mound (WNJ 1934).

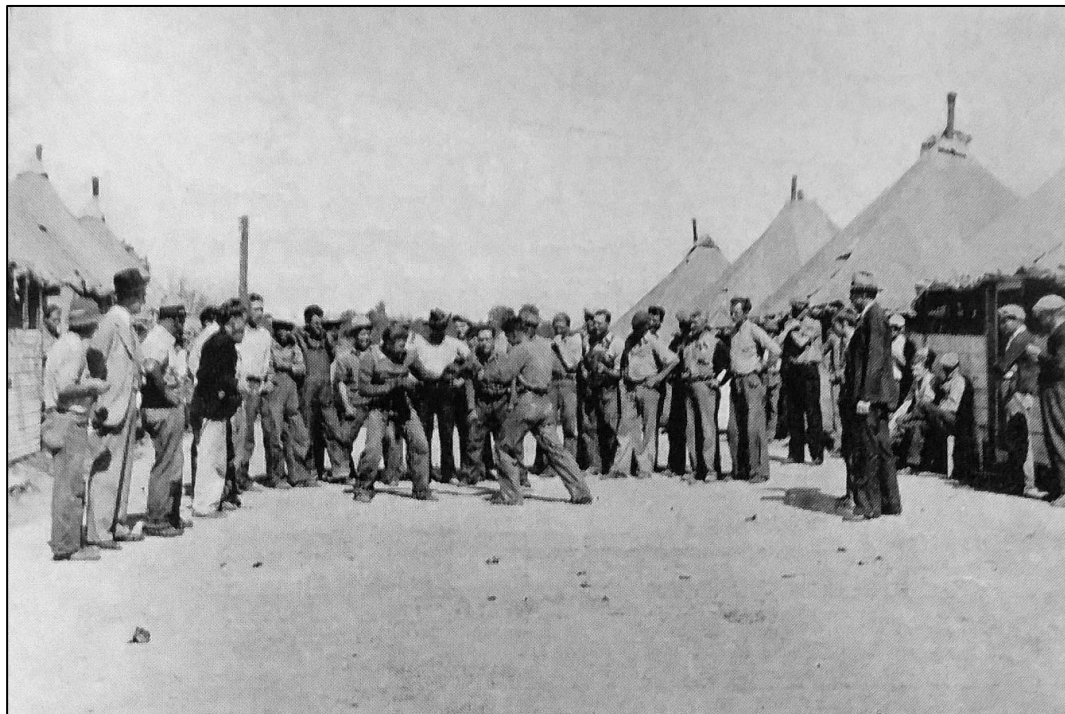


Figure 11. FERA transient camp residents engage in a recreational activity, boxing. (Dick Dreyer, from *State Relief Commission of Ohio and its Activities*, 1935)



Figure 12. Restored mound at Fort Ancient, January 1934 with CCC workers. (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection)

An intriguing question is where the fill used for the Serpent Mound restoration originated. A restoration at Newark Earthworks and Fort Ancient may provide a model. FERA activities at Newark contemporaneous to the Serpent Mound restoration included construction of a restroom facility and a terraced parking lot with stacked stone walls (Daugherty 1935). Both projects involved grading and foundation excavation, and the grading was likely a source for mound restoration fill. Documentary evidence and public works policy both point to fill topsoil for mound restoration coming from the park grounds. Federal public works officials were loath to authorize the purchase of any supplies during this period; instead, they substituted labor for capital expenditure at any opportunity and encouraged the re-use of building materials. For example, the brick used in the Serpent Mound State Memorial restrooms is from the 1823 Second Baptist Church in Clarksville, Ohio, which was purchased and dismantled by the CWA. The churches' bricks were used at Fort Ancient and Fort Hill, as well. Limestone for stream improvements at Fort Ancient was gathered from streams and surrounding areas, a practice that also seems to have taken place at Serpent Mound State Memorial.¹³

The park's ECW application instructions noted in regard to purchased materials: "This item must be kept to the absolute minimum. Therefore your project should be planned to eliminate the purchasing of material as much as possible."¹⁴ In addition, the approved CWA application form does not include topsoil in the materials lists for the projects.¹⁵ In contrast, records of earthwork restorations at Fort Ancient during 1934–35, a project that seems much larger in scale, note the purchase of fill material for earthwork restoration. A similar restoration approach at Serpent Mound would have likely resulted in the appearance of numerous repair episodes, with possibly different soil types from different areas of the park, all in actuality part of a single overall restorative effort. It is important to note that while the workforce was different at each park, overall project direction was provided in all instances by Curator of

State Memorials McPherson and directly managed by OSAHS landscape architect Erwin Zepp, with the archaeological curators operating in an advisory capacity. Consequently, some continuity in restoration techniques may be assumed across various parks.

Therefore, it appears likely that fill material for the Serpent Mound restoration came from the restroom construction and parking area. Indeed, the fill's most probable original location appears to correspond with a portion of Putnam's Fort Ancient Village. Burks noted an area of historic disturbance northeast of the parking lot that may contain prehistoric features (Burks 2008:13).

The repairs were intended to last as long as possible.¹⁶ Both the Serpent Mound restoration and the Fort Ancient restoration stretched over a period of months, from December 1933, to March 1934, as CCC supervisors and workers restored earthworks and then waited to see how the repairs would weather in the elements. National Park Service experience in the 1920s had shown that erosion of manmade landforms could be prevented by flattening slopes and building "well-rounded cross-sectional contours" (McClelland 1998:232). It appears that New Deal mound restoration under the supervision of the landscape architects followed this advice. Maintaining the Serpent Mound Park's naturalistic landscape and the Serpent's gentle contours after the restoration may have affected archaeological sites within the park and also resulted in additional localized stratigraphic changes to the mound.

McPherson's actions at Newark Earthworks provide hints about landscape maintenance techniques at Serpent Mound. McPherson seems to have followed the National Park Service's tendencies in landscape surface treatment; smooth curves were his desired outcome in landscaping (Figure 13). At Newark Earthworks, where a more rustic and naturalistic topography had been maintained, McPherson instructed OSAHS landscape architect Erwin Zepp to fill large "well holes" around trees on the east of the circle. A haphazard placement of sod had made the north wall of the circle "rough," so the area was to be graded till smooth. "Some

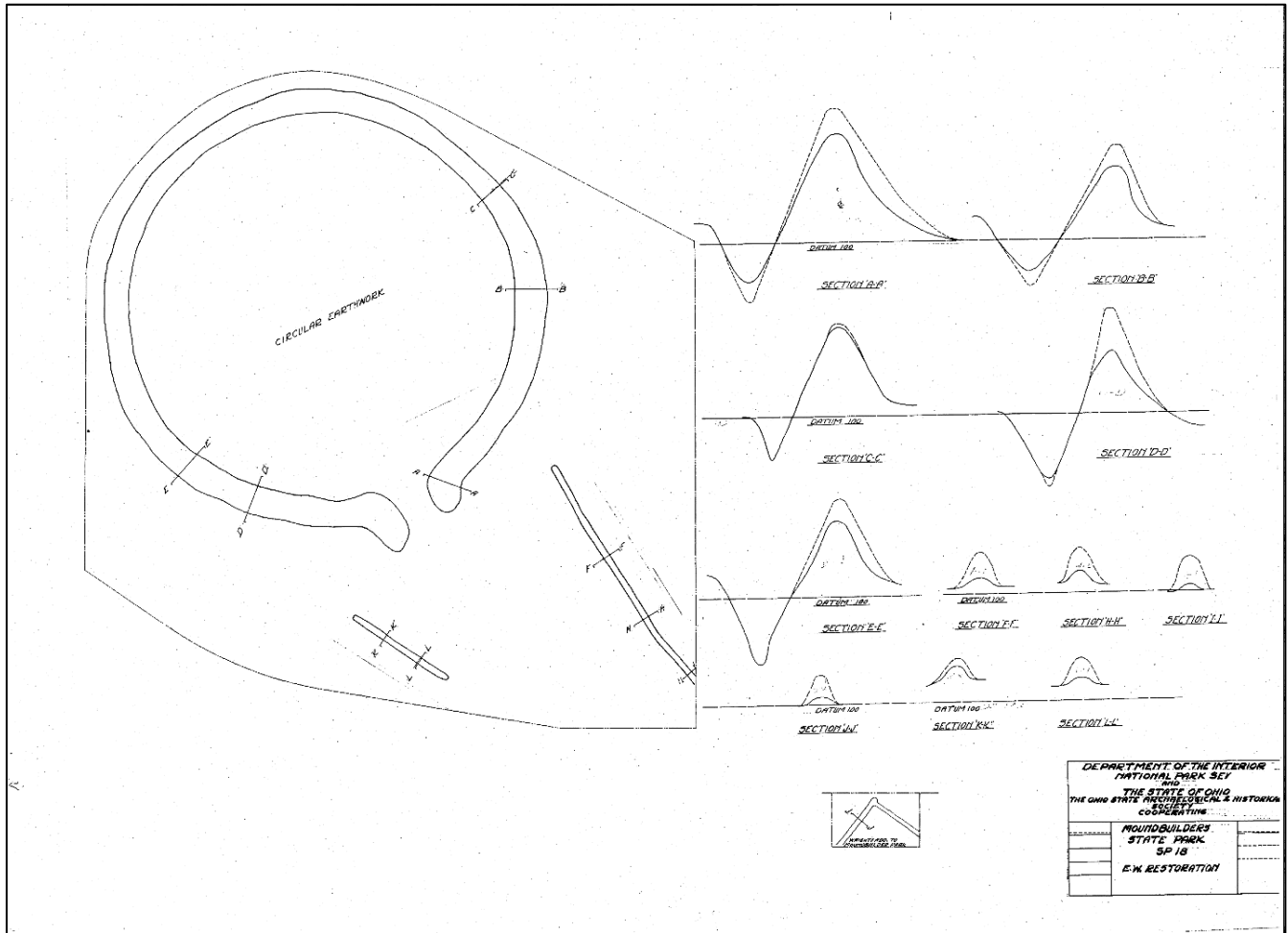


Figure 13. c.1934 CCC restoration profiles at Newark’s Great Circle, formerly Moundbuilders State Park. (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection, Dept. of Facilities Management)

topsoil” was also to be placed on the walls in the court.¹⁷

Archival material appears to show a difference between mound restoration and maintenance. Mound restoration, as performed at Newark and Fort Ancient, involved raising the mound’s height with additive material, whereas maintenance involved a more localized filling of holes caused by trees or erosion (Figure 14). There is no mention of archaeology curators supervising maintenance activities on mounds, unlike the recorded mound restorations.

FERA was discontinued in September 1935, and its unfinished projects were transferred to the Works Progress Administration. The transient camp at Serpent Mound State Memorial operated

until March 20, 1936 (United States 1936). In most instances, the camps were transferred to the WPA, although residents of Ohio were sent to be the charity charges of their home counties while residents from other states remained. Although OSAHS wanted to retain the building materials from the Serpent Mound camp, it appears that at least the lumber was sent to the WPA warehouse in Chillicothe. It seems possible that part of the camp was dispatched to Chillicothe and part of it was retained for the WPA activities, as buildings are noted in the 1938 Hamm topographical map of the park.

The buildings and landscape at Serpent Mound State Memorial were changed after 1936 to reflect National Park Service village design

precepts, transitioning from an American bourgeois leisure landscape to a village design with naturalistic landscaping. Landscape and construction activities during the WPA period focused on moving farm buildings, which had previously been restored by the CWA, away from the Serpent or razing them. For example, the log house east of the Serpent's tail was razed at this time (Figure 15). Local WPA workers also constructed a new

Pine Gap in Peebles and was not based at Serpent Mound State Memorial.²⁰

Archaeological Implications

The CWA and FERA New Deal Serpent Mound restoration and grading of the surrounding areas have doubtless had some effect on the pre-historic and historic archaeological record there.

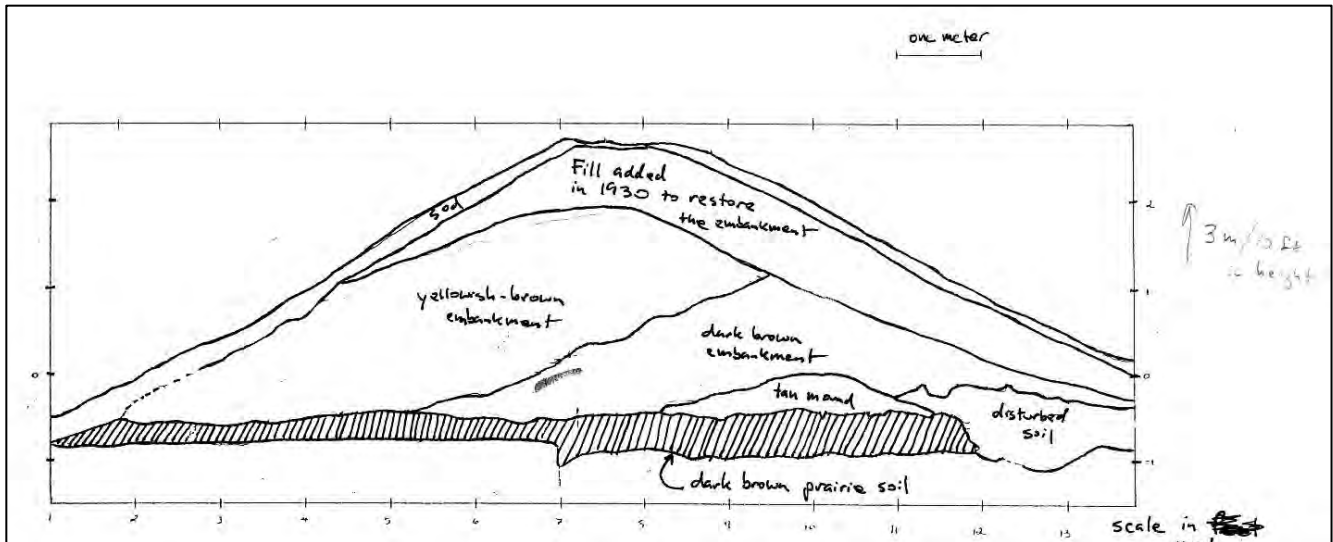


Figure 14. Cross-section of Great Circle from 1992 excavation. (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection and Brad Lepper)

park entrance, with a new superintendent's residence, entrance gateway, and garage nearby.¹⁸ OSAHS landscape architect Zepp chose the location of the new service building.¹⁹ These razing and building projects may have produced additional cut and fill material that affected archaeological deposits in the immediate area. It seems likely that there were landscape alterations associated with each of the razing and building projects, as well (see Figure 1).

The CCC did work in the park in the spring of 1938 when a lack of WPA funds left the cleanup work associated with the supervisor's house incomplete. CCC labor also contributed to the improvements of the Gorge Trail around the lower portion of the plateau in the same year. However, it appears that the CCC contingent came from the nearby Soil Conservation Service CCC Camp

Research currently working from the assumption that the Serpent Mound has not been restored since the 1880s will have to account for different stratigraphic sequences in at least some portions of the mound. In addition, historical accounts of bioturbation and erosion may also affect stratigraphic interpretation.

New Deal restoration and maintenance techniques may explain a number of stratigraphic questions at Serpent Mound. Griffin noted that Putnam did not locate any artifacts within Serpent Mound (Griffin 1943). In this paper I suggest that the Fort Ancient component located by Fletcher et al. (1996:122) in their Stratum I and Stratum II within the Serpent originated in the area around the restrooms and parking lot south of Serpent Mound, not as a result of Putnam's restoration or Wallace's later 1901 restoration. These additional



Figure 15. 1936 Dache Reeves aerial photograph with buildings later removed by WPA and CCC. (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection)

sediments were added to the Serpent as a result of New Deal construction grading and mound restoration. Hermann et al. also surmised that some type of historic restoration had taken place at Serpent Mound, but did not put the restorative matrix into context (Herrmann et al. 2014:120, 122). In 2008, during a geophysical survey ahead of a proposed sewer and water line upgrade, Burks noted finding an area of several historic disturbances west and northwest of the Adena mound located east of the restrooms (Burks 2008:13). This area appears to have been graded for restroom construction, and the previously mentioned lack of fill in the material lists suggests a park source. Possible natural intrusions, or bioturbation, into Serpent Mound after Putnam's excavation and restoration

are indicated in a 1935 letter in which state memorial curator McPherson urges the superintendent at Fort Ancient, L. J. Gray, to have a laborer catch moles, noting they are "very destructive" in state parks. McPherson also notes that the current Serpent Mound mole catcher had not only been quite successful, having caught 30 moles, but was also quite happy in his work and thrilled to be able to keep the pelts "to make a muff or something for his girl."²¹

The location of the transient camp also has implications. The camp was placed in the vicinity of the gravel path to Putnam's spring house and picnic area. In addition, a delayed CWA project for stream improvements seems to have taken place in



Figure 16. 1933-1935 improved ephemeral stream near site of Putnam's springhouse. (Photo Credit: Rory Krupp)

the direct vicinity of the camp, resulting in ephemeral streams being lined with still-extant dry-stacked limestone (Figures 16 and 17). These

improved ephemeral streams and the FERA campsites themselves would constitute a contributing element to the historic New Deal landscape.



Figure 17. 1933-1935 improved ephemeral stream near site of Putnam's springhouse. (Photo Credit: Rory Krupp)

A similar erosion control project was initiated at Fort Ancient in 1934, when the CCC gathered limestone from local stream beds and dry stacked it to control erosion and stabilize banks²² (Figure

18). Gathering local limestone also helped control costs, allowing more funds to be spent on laborers—in other words, relief—rather than on purchasing materials. The transient camp also

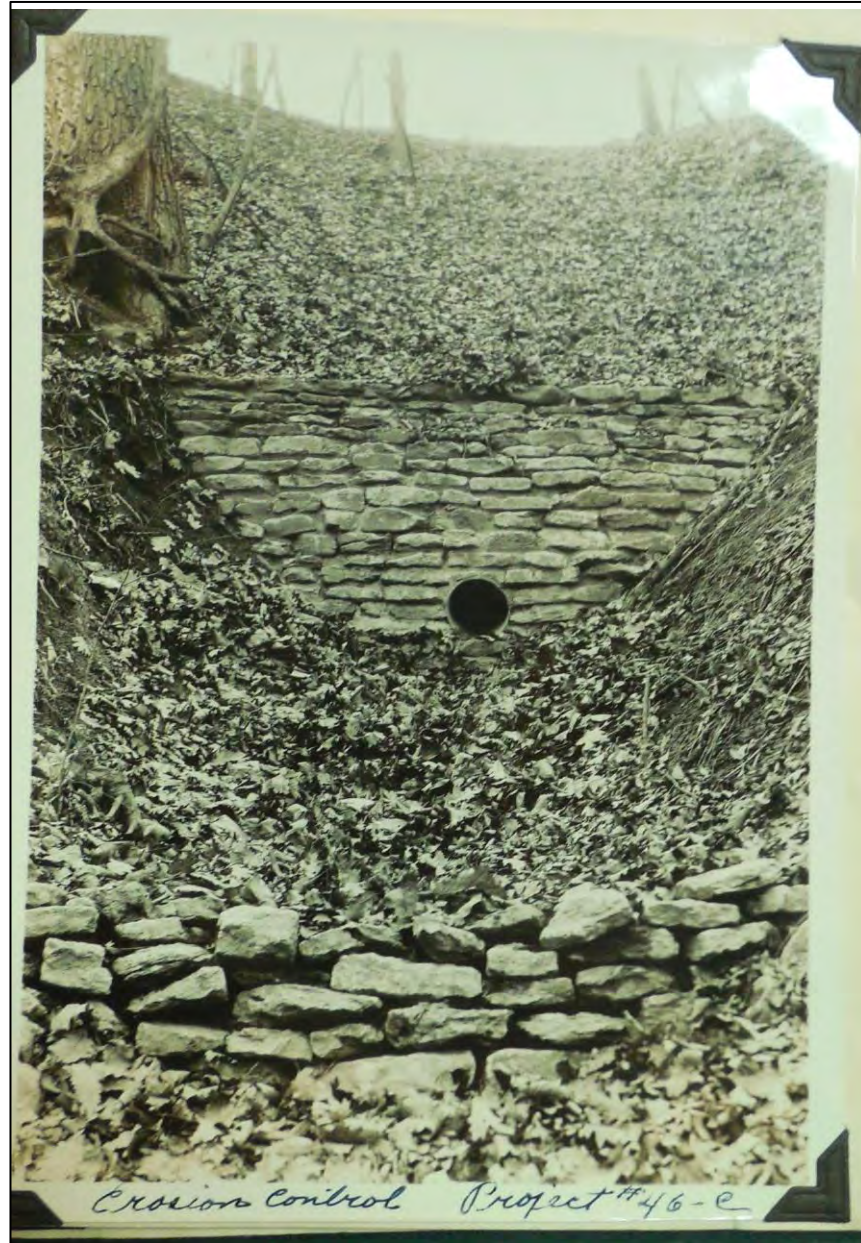


Figure 18. CCC Fort Ancient erosion control from locally gathered dry-stacked limestone. (Courtesy of Ohio History Connection)

required a steady supply of water, which had been problematic in previous years. However, it was noted that water was still hand-pumped as late as 1940.²³ A cistern or improved spring type feature is located near the springhouse's location marked on the 1901 park map and is capped with a piece of sandstone that bears historic petroglyphs of

initials and dates from the early 1930s with some dates prior to the New Deal programs (Figure 19 and Figure 20). However, the 1901 map indicates the springhouse was very near the stream (Figure 21). The cistern-type element is most likely what remains of Putnam's springhouse after the grotto was removed in 1923. Its current location south of



Figure 19. Cap over improved spring with historic petroglyph. (Photo Credit: Rory Krupp)

the ephemeral improved stream is consistent with rerouting the stream in conjunction with removing the grotto from the springhouse.

Historic archaeology and cultural landscape studies should note the veritable alphabet soup of New Deal agencies that worked at Serpent Mound State Memorial and the park modifications associated with each agency. Landscape modifications during 1933–1934 can be attributed to CWA landscaper George Siebenthaler, a landscape architect and nurseryman later associated with Siebenthaler Nursery in Dayton, Ohio.²⁴ The unskilled work itself was done by local labor. The restored Serpent can be associated with a complicated combination of continuing local political machinations, as well as the New Deal's CWA and FERA Transient Division. Historic artifacts and disturbed soil horizons located during recent investigations related to the restroom improvements are likely to be associated with the FERA Transient Division No. 3 camp and not the CCC (cf. Schwarz 2011). This adds a well-defined, previously studied social

group that contributed to the park's archaeological record and landscape (Downs 1934). The superintendent's house, garage, and entrance gateway are associated with the WPA, although they were constructed with a mix of local and transient labor. The trail stonework down to and around the plateau's base, the Gorge Trail, was the handiwork of the CCC (Figure 22).

In each instance, a different demographic group was involved: CWA used local labor from Adams County supervised by skilled personnel gathered from around the state. FERA used transients with many originating from nearby border states. The WPA briefly relied on the same FERA transients, but without the Ohio citizens, who had been sent back to their home counties when WPA activities were initiated; subsequent WPA labor was locally based (United States 1938:7–8). Later CCC laborers, who cleaned the area around the new superintendent's house and garage, were requested from the Soil Conservation Service CCC camp at Sinking Springs, Ohio, when WPA funds



Figure 20. Sandstone cap and picnic area near site of Putnam’s springhouse.

were exhausted.²⁵ Each construction episode with its disparate groups of participants has distinct ramifications for the historic archaeological record.

Today, landscape changes and alterations to mound stratigraphy continue. Recent changes in lawn treatments—in other words, less mowing—to create a more naturalistic landscape may obscure the New Deal CWA and FERA landscape, which was based on a clear forest understory and

gently smoothed landscapes constructed to control erosion around the previously mowed Serpent Mound plateau vista.

In addition to the new landscape treatments, recent and unfortunate additions to the Serpent Mound itself by enthusiastic New Agers have altered the Serpent Mound again. As noted by Herrmann et al. (2014:124) in their article detailing a new chronology for the Serpent Mound, “Renovating or reuse of cultural monuments is not

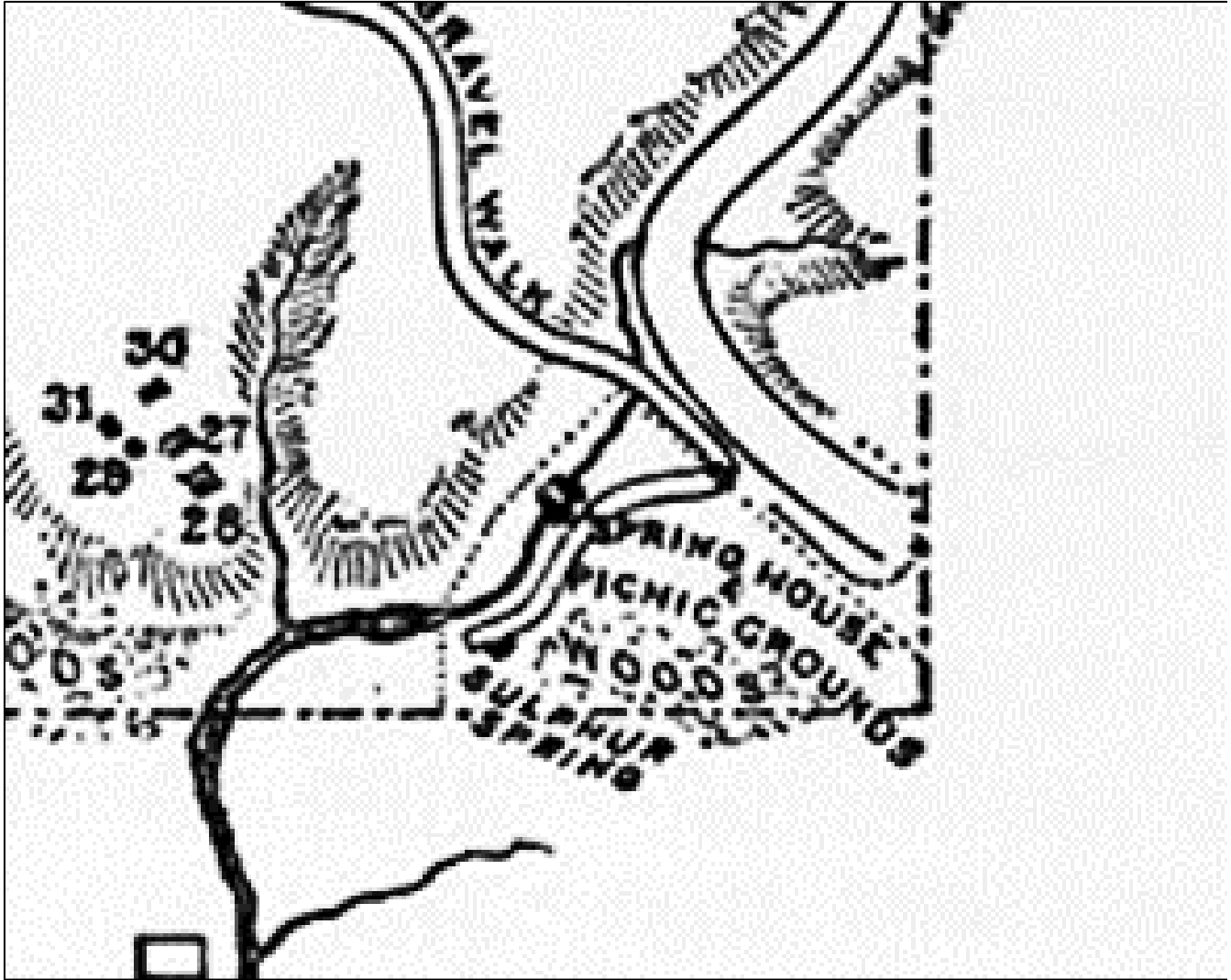


Figure 21. 1901 Serpent Mound park map detail showing original location of ephemeral stream, relocated in c. 1923. (*Century Magazine*)

unusual worldwide and often occurs when a new culture enters the region.” This cycle continues.

In the case of the New Deal alterations, a new cultural landscape paradigm at the park prompted by political considerations, the Great Depression,

and the New Deal affected the park’s landscape and altered the stratigraphic sequences of the Serpent Mound, as well as the larger archaeological record of Serpent Mound State Memorial itself.



Figure 22. Top of the Gorge Trail, rehabilitated by CCC in 1938.

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