



Serpent Mound

The Arc of Appalachia Preserve System

Serpent Mound is managed by Ohio History Connection and is operated by the Arc of Appalachia Preserve System.

3850 State Route 73, Peebles, Ohio 45660
1-800-752-2757; serpentmound@arcofappalachia.org

www.arcofappalachia.org

Directions: Serpent Mound is located on State Route 73 near Peebles, Ohio. From SR 41 in Locust Grove, take SR 73 West for 4 miles. From Hillsboro, take 73 East for 18 miles. Look for the sign for Serpent Mound on SR 73.

Park Information & Regulations

There is a parking fee of \$8/car.

Please do not walk on the earthworks or leave the asphalt path to approach the serpent effigy. Serpent Mound and the park's three burial mounds are ancient Native American sites which were sacred to past cultures, and remain sacred to many people today.

Park Open: The park is open from dawn to dusk throughout the year. The parking lot and entrance lane are not plowed in the winter, so please consider weather conditions prior to planning a winter visit.

Museum Open: The museum is open daily in from April through October, and on weekends in March, November and most of December. See our website for hours: www.arcofappalachia.org.

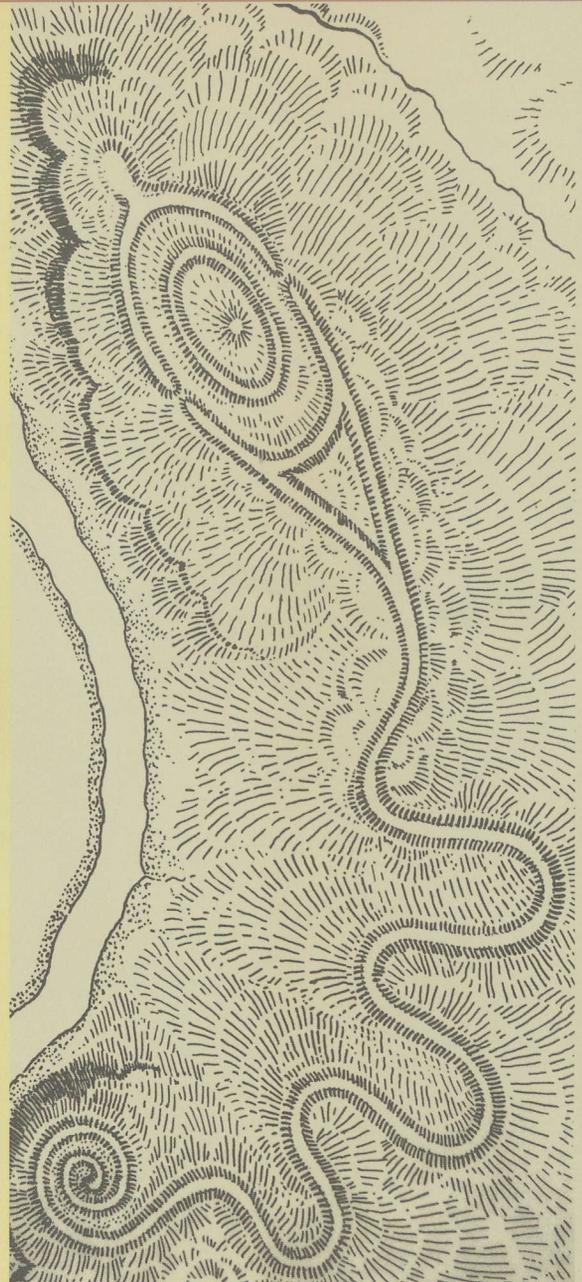
Dogs are permitted on leash only.

No defacing or disruption of earthworks, stones, or soil is permitted anywhere on the grounds. Archaeological searching and collecting of artifacts is strictly prohibited.

Group Visits and Ceremonies: To assist our staff in facilitating and welcoming groups, we request that any group sponsoring a private or public event notify us in advance. School groups are welcome. See our website at www.arcofappalachia.org, or call for more information.

Please do not pick the flowers! The 1/3 mile trail at Serpent Mound is rich in wildflowers, particularly in the spring. Please let the flowers bloom freely so that others can enjoy them. No off-trail hiking permitted in the natural areas of the park.

The picnic shelter is available for private events for a small rental fee. Please enquire.



The Great Serpent Mound

What is Serpent Mound? Serpent Mound is the world's largest surviving example of an ancient animal effigy mound. Stretching 1,348 feet over the ground, the beautifully preserved ancient earthwork depicts the form of an undulating serpent with an oval shape at the head. Many native cultures called America's eastern woodlands home for thousands of years prior to European contact, producing sophisticated art and large-scale earthworks. Nearly all of these landscape-scale earthworks have been lost in recent centuries to development and agriculture. We are fortunate that 19th C. visionaries took the necessary steps to protect the singular Serpent Mound.

Who built Serpent Mound? Early excavations of Serpent Mound revealed a complete absence of artifacts which would have helped identify which Native American culture constructed this immense earthwork. It is possible that several different cultures used and even amended the site successively over time, regardless of the identity of the original builders. Three conical burial mounds are associated with the ridgetop that bears Serpent Mound, offering tantalizing clues, but no certainty. Two of the mounds belong to the Adena Culture (800 BC-100 AD), and one to the Fort Ancient Culture (1000-1650 AD). A nearby village site was occupied by both the Adena and the Fort Ancient Cultures.

Carbon dating of organic material from inside the Serpent Mound has provided conflicting dates for both Fort Ancient and Adena time periods. Investigation and speculation continues in both archaeological and less formal circles in an attempt to explain the Serpent's mysterious origins and use. More recent excavations in 2012 revealed what appears to be the buried foundations of a fourth coil near the head that, at some point in the effigy's history, was removed to create the elegant design we see today.

What was the original purpose of Serpent Mound? Serpent Mound's value to its first builders remains unknown, lost to fragmented oral traditions over the centuries. There are many modern theories regarding what the original intent may have been. Striking astronomical correlations with the serpent's sinuous coils, the most defensible being the perfect alignment of the serpent's head with the direction of the setting solstice sun, demonstrate the builders' earthly acknowledgment of celestial events. The nearby burial mounds, and the serpent's timeless ability to elicit awe and humility to those who witness it, suggest the mound was once a site of sacred ceremony.

The serpent motif has a symbolic connection in many cultures throughout the world to the cycles of birth and death, resurrection, and the higher and lower worlds. Modern visitors are encouraged to contemplate the mysteries of our land's ancestors, feel a connection to the past, and experience the wonder of early people's physical and artistic accomplishments. Mystery, rather than certainty, remains this site's greatest gift to present generations, and all visitors are welcome to enter the circle of conjecture and speculation.

What is the recent history of the site? Serpent Mound was known to American Indians and early settlers of Adams County for many years, but was brought to general attention of the country in the 1840's by the famous pair of surveyors, Squier and Davis, who made a broad survey of many of Ohio's greatest earthworks. In the 1880's, Massachusetts archaeologist Frederic Ward Putnam became interested in the site and noticed that it was being degraded by erosion and vandalism. He succeeded in raising the funds to purchase the farmlands in the name of Harvard University, and the land was soon dedicated as a public park.

In 1900 the site was turned over to the Ohio Historical Society,



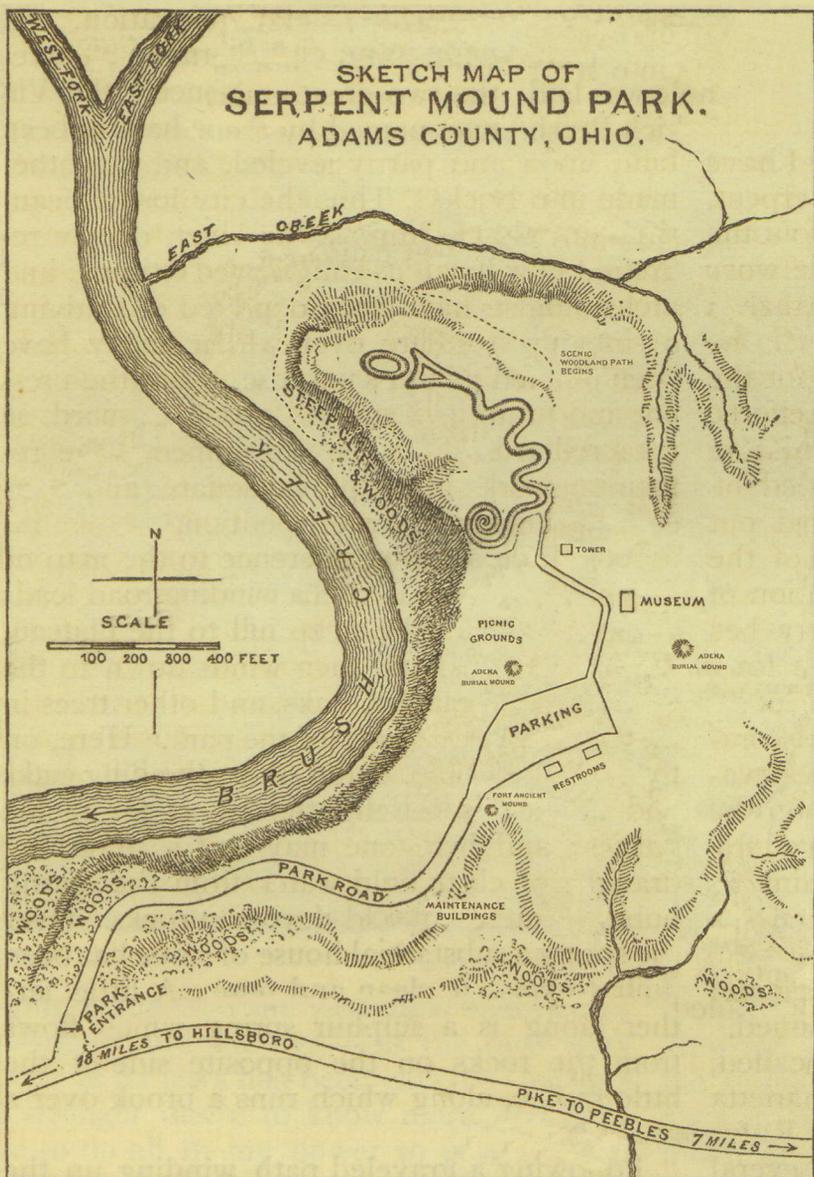
who supervised the construction of the observation tower overlooking the effigy, and later in the 1930's, most of the park's current facilities. The first interpretive exhibits in the museum were added in the mid-1970's, and the non-profit Arc of Appalachia Preserve System began managing the park on behalf of the Historical Society, now Ohio History Connection, in 2009.

What is the Natural History of the Area? Ohio Brush Creek runs through the park—a haven for many species of aquatic life, both rare and common. The rock cliffs below Serpent Mound are of a dolomitic limestone, a bedrock that provides the classic karst features of grottos, sinkholes, and springs in the larger region.

The earthwork itself sits atop a narrow flat ridge at the edge of an ancient crater that is at least four miles in diameter. The crater was formed by a meteorite impact that occurred 250 million years ago, long before the land was occupied by human cultures. Today, the crater is greatly eroded and softened by the forces of rainwater, but is still noticeable, especially in the jumbled rock layers characteristic of the area.

At the ancient crater's center, the bedrock has been pushed upward at least a thousand feet from its original position. Throughout the bowl of the structure there are massive cracks, faults, and places where the rock layers are jumbled, or even upsidedown.

It is not known whether any of these natural features formed a reason for the placement of Serpent Mound.



Map amended from Country Illustrated Magazine, F.W. Putnam, Nov. 1889.

“The most singular sensation of awe and admiration overwhelmed me at this sudden realization of my long-cherished desire, for here before me was the mysterious work of an unknown people... I mused on the probabilities of the past; and there seemed to come to me a picture as of a distant time.”

— F.W. Putnam at the Serpent Mound, 1883

Nature Preservation and Sacred Sites... a perfect combination.

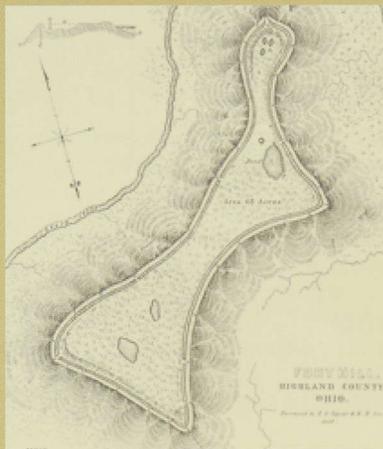
The Arc of Appalachia Preserve System manages 15 preserves and 5000 acres of natural areas & ancient historic sites in southern Ohio. We invite you to visit two of our other preserves:



Nature & Hiking

at the Highlands Nature Sanctuary

The Highlands Nature Sanctuary is the headquarters of the Arc of Appalachia Preserve System, protecting 2200 acres along the stunning vertical-cliffed Rocky Fork Gorge. At the Sanctuary's *Appalachian Forest Museum*, eight fine-art murals teach visitors the world significance of America's Eastern Hardwood Forest. Three trails lead into the beautiful rock formations of the canyon and an old-growth beech forest. The Museum and its trail complex are open from 9:30 to 5:00 on weekends only, from April through October. Admission is free. Members, for a minimum annual donation of \$35/year, may access trails anytime during the week or year, including 14 miles of additional back-country trails, as well as free parking at Serpent Mound. The Sanctuary is a 24 mile drive north from Serpent Mound.



Hiking & Earthworks

at Fort Hill

Fort Hill protects a 2000 year old earthen-walled ridgetop enclosure which most likely originally served as a gathering ground for ceremonies. The wall has a circumference of over one and a half miles, is interrupted with 36 gateways, and encompasses an interior space of 35 acres. A total of eleven miles of hiking trails exist at Fort Hill, offering some of the best hiking in the entire state of Ohio. Fort Hill protects the largest, oldest, and most unfragmented block of native forest in southern Ohio. Preserve lands are owned by The Ohio Historical Society and managed by the Arc of Appalachia Preserve System. Admission is free. The park is open every day from dawn to dusk, except during winter deer hunts. Dogs permitted on leash. Fort Hill is a 16 mile drive north from Serpent Mound.

Directions: From Serpent Mound, turn left or east on 73 to Locust Grove. Turn north or left on 41. Take 41 through Sinking Springs. For Fort Hill, four miles north of town turn left on Fort Hill Road and follow park signage. Fort Hill is one mile down on your left. For the Sanctuary, continue north on 41 to the next town, Cynthiana. Turn left in the middle of town on Barrett's Mill Road. 3.25 miles further, turn right on Cave Road. Follow Cave Road approximately two miles. The Museum will be on your left and parking on your right.

For more information see www.arcofappalachia.org