



## Menard Mounds Violated, Damaged, and Looted

According to Superintendent Ed Wood, looters, pothunters or just simply vandals damaged several of the mounds in the Menard Mound complex also known as the Osotouy Unit of the park. Sometime between noon January 7<sup>th</sup> and 9am on January 9<sup>th</sup> individuals dug holes in the mounds. The manner in which they dug and where they dug tends to indicate that they were clearly looking for artifacts.



Ed Wood (kneeling) records measurements while Charles Layton Mattmiller (left) and Archeologist Dr. John House assess damages during the investigation of the crime scene on one of the smaller mounds at Osotouy.

“There’s no way to put a monetary value on it, but from a historical perspective, the damage is significant,” said Wood. “The site is one of the most pristine archeological sites in the Mississippi Valley,” he said, “and could contain information about the Mississippian culture up to and including the Quapaw period (just before the first Europeans, French traders, visited the area and established the *Post of Arkansas* in 1686).”

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## Cemetery Preservation Workshop Planned

At 1:30 p.m., Saturday, February 10, Arkansas Post National Memorial will host an afternoon workshop demonstrating the proper and safe methods for basic cemetery stone cleaning and preservation.

Instructed by the park’s historian, Brian McCutchen, the workshop will display the various types of stone and metals used on cemetery gravestones and monuments. Sample items will be available for a hands-on demonstration of materials, techniques, and chemicals and equipment that tend to prove safer for a monument.

According to Brian, “Our goal is to demonstrate the safe alternatives to the traditional and often harmful practices used in cemetery cleaning. Many people, though they mean well, end up taking decades of life from the monuments by using cleaning materials such as bleach, acid, or wire brushes.”

As space for the workshop is limited, it is requested that those wishing to attend make reservations by calling the Post at (870) 548-2207.



Safe techniques for cemetery stone and monument care will be demonstrated February tenth at the Post.

## Hey! Who Turned Out the Lights?

Power outages, fallen trees, hanging limbs, and slippery surfaces proved the norm for much of December at Arkansas Post.

A series of winter storms, consisting of a combination of sleet and freezing rain, caused the park to close for several days, shutting off power to the park visitor center and one of the site's two employee residences.

Despite what seemed like overwhelming damage, determined employees and volunteers worked together in order to reopen the park's facilities and make the Post's numerous trails once again safe to walk and enjoy.



For the month of December slippery pavement, long-term power outages, and dangerous tree limbs were the norm for the Post.



It is estimated that it will take several weeks to remove the broken branches and fallen trees located in less traveled areas of the park.

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### *Vandalism, Continued from Page 1*

Seven holes were dug in the largest mound and five holes in a smaller mound at the site. Each hole violated the stratigraphy of the mounds and removed for all time the ability of archeologists to explain what happened at each location.

Since the land is still in the acquisition process and not yet owned by the National Park Service, the Arkansas County Sheriff's Department is pursuing the investigation. Jack Lock, the principal investigator, is currently reviewing evidence and developing suspects.



One of the holes that looters dug was into the side of the main Menard Mound at Osotouy. Overall, they dug seven holes along the western side of the main complex, some as large as three feet in diameter and nearly two feet deep.



As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, the park discovered that looters or “pot hunters” have been at work in the Menard Mound area of the park’s Osotouy Unit. This incident is unfortunate for a number of reasons, including loss of archeological information, the possible loss of artifacts, the desecration of ancient gravesites and destruction of the physical character of the mounds. These are all significant losses and are being investigated as a criminal act; the situation however, prompted me to think, not about the value of the resources at Osotouy, but rather about my personal attitudes toward historic significance.

My education is primarily in the natural sciences and thus I was not exposed to a strong advocacy for historic or cultural appreciation during my formative years. It was not until I joined the National Park Service that I developed an appreciation for historic or cultural integrity. So it is natural for me to question the concept of what is historically important to me. Obvious historic sites excluded, I tend to focus on places, people and events that had some influence on my family, my community or me. I have to admit that I do not get particularly excited about the founding fathers of Clotho, Minnesota. I am quite sure that it is a nice community — I have never been there nor do I have any idea of how it was founded, so it has no significance to me personally. Now if I lived there, I am quite sure that my attitude would be different.

To compound my confusion of my definition of historic significance, you have to understand that I have often been characterized as a “pack rat.” That is to say that I have a very hard time throwing things away, even when they are broken or beyond repair. I have a strong aversion to wasting anything and too often I view broken items as a source of salvageable parts. The trouble is, I never seem to get around to collecting the good parts and am left with piles of broken items awaiting my attention. The reason I mention this is because I find that after nearly fifty years of collecting such “rubbish,” some of these things have become collectors’ items. I also view them as a record of my past and of historic importance to me.

In addition to my collection of broken and salvageable things, I have amassed a fair amount of papers (ranging from letters and drawings from each of my kids throughout their growing up years to ticket stubs and photographs of special events and places I have visited), books and magazines. These too define who I am. Each one holds a reminder of a period of my life. Although most of these items are worthless to other people, they give me a feeling of value and gratification. Now, if I become famous for one reason or another, these tidbits will become historic artifacts – more than likely, they will be tossed out when I die.

I guess my idea of historic significance remains a question. Is it historic because it is old? Is it historic because it is associated with someone famous? We conduct archeological investigations of “historic” trash piles and vigorously protect them from destruction but abhor the trash piles in vacant urban lots. What is historic and what is junk? I urge you to judge for yourself – what do you consider historic?

*Edward E. Wood, Jr.*

## “GHOSTS” Abound At Arkansas Post

“Ghosts” from over three hundred years of Arkansas Post history met with the public during the Post’s annual *Ghosts of the Past* event. The popular night time, candle-lit walk through the site’s historic village area allowed visitors to experience five distinct historic periods.

The theme for this year’s event was “*Arkansas Post – Learning from the Past*,” tying the event to Arkansas Archeology Week that coincided with the October 28 program. According to Superintendent Ed Wood, “This year we wanted to tie archaeological findings to the events of the past.”

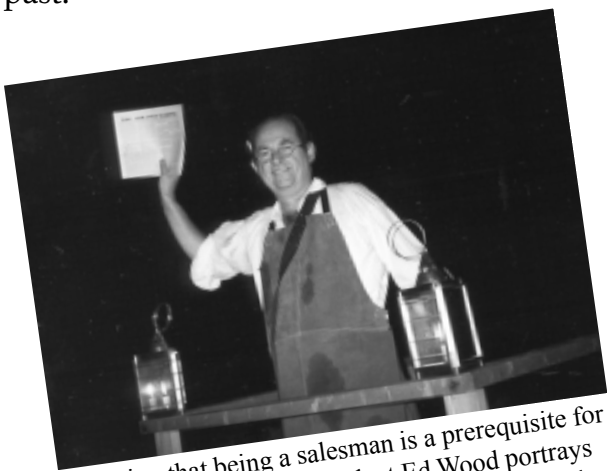
Many of the items that visitors saw in use at the various period stops were later “excavated” during a mock archeology dig. According to Ed, “The archeologists ‘unearthed’ objects that visitors had seen used in previous scenes. This was intended to help them make the connection between what researchers are finding today and what they tell us about how people lived in the past.”



Army nurse Vicki Sebree and Union soldier Lynn Gaines stand over a burial in progress, one of the hundreds of



Not to be forgotten for his participation, “the dead guy,” consisting of a pair of period trousers, shoes and a rubber hand buried in dirt, provided a realistic representation of a Civil War burial.



Proving that being a salesman is a prerequisite for the position, Superintendent Ed Wood portrays William Woodruff, peddling his first issue of the *Arkansas Gazette*.



Looking something like a throw back to the “British Invasion” of the 1960s, Kevin Eads demonstrates to visitors the use of the “juice harp.”

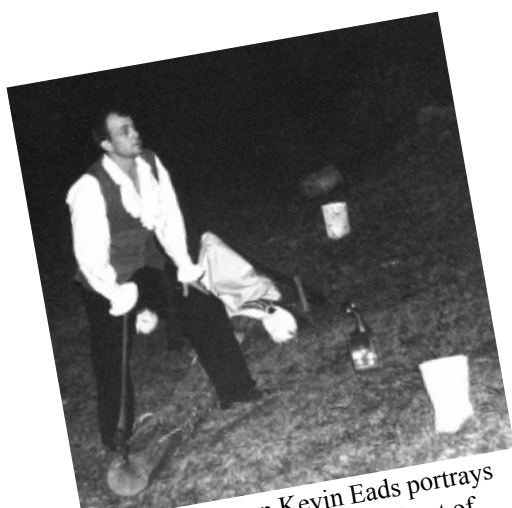




Representing the period when "cotton was king" and slavery was the norm, (front row) Sharon McCutchen, Marliegh Murphy, Della Jamison, and Keesa Phillips. (back row) Christi Murphy, Dale Jamison, and Charles Layton Mattmiller.



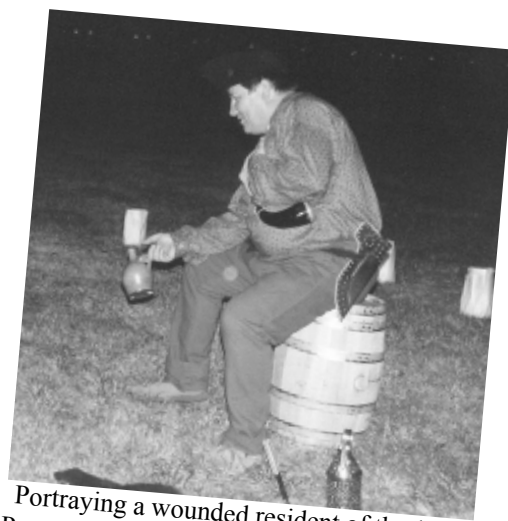
Selling the first issue of the *Arkansas Gazette*, Superintendent Ed Wood portrays William Woodruff. Tobe and Andy Wood accompanied their father, distributing the paper to visitors.



The Post's own Kevin Eads portrays Jean Couture, lead inhabitant of Tonty's Post of 1686.



For the second year in a row, Marliegh Murphy accompanied her mother, Christi, in the event.



Portraying a wounded resident of the 1783 Post of Arkansas, Lyle Cunningham explains to the visitors of the surprise British attack and the Revolutionary War engagement that occurred in April of that year.



Archeology at Arkansas Post was the theme for this year's event. Visitors observed a mock excavation, revealing historic items that the tours had observed in use by other period stops.

The program, larger than previous events, covered several different historic periods and topics ranging from the 1686 establishment of the Post of Arkansas to present day studies of the archaeological resource. Several notable characters were also portrayed, including William Woodruff and the establishment of Arkansas' first newspaper.

Additional periods represented included the 1686 construction of the first Post of Arkansas, the 1783 Revolutionary War attack against the Spanish-held Post, the operation of an 1840's cotton gin and slavery, and burials of the casualties of the Civil War battle of Arkansas Post.

## Knowledge of Post History Keeps Growing, and Growing, and . . .

With the assistance of a staff of dedicated volunteers, the knowledge base concerning the Civil War Battle of Arkansas Post continues to grow by leaps and bounds. Additions to the park's files, computer images/records, and microfilm collection have allowed researchers to better understand the decisive attack by National forces upon the heavily defended Post of Arkansas during the earliest days of 1863.

For the past several years, Charles Silsbee, of nearby Gillett, has spent many hours per week researching the engagement, its causes and significance. Through his efforts, "Chuck" has compiled volumes of copied regimental rosters, naval records, illustrations, photographs, and maps collected from archives, donations and internet resources.



Chuck Silsbee, a Volunteer Historian for the Post, has spent many hours documenting the 1863 Battle of Arkansas Post.

Not to be outdone, Pine Bluff's husband and wife team of Lynn and Elizabeth Gaines has likewise been long-time supporters of assisting the Post's information base in growing exponentially. Lynn and Elizabeth, who are active with the curation of the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County Museum, are long-time Civil War aficionados who have contributed greatly to all periods of the Post's three-hundred plus year history.

According to the park's historian, Brian McCutchen, "It's hard to imagine where our archives and records base would be without the many years of dedication provided by our volunteer staff." The contributions are evident by the numerous file cabinet drawers, boxes, and microfilm rolls of information acquired by the volunteer staff.

"Chuck is such an in-office feature here that we've provided him with his own desk and computer in my office," Brian added. "Likewise, you never know what Lynn and Elizabeth will discover next. It is not unusual to receive a packet of material or a roll of microfilm in the mail with newly discovered information . . . We are truly blessed to have such a wonderful and dedicated staff."



Post Volunteers, Lynn and Elizabeth Gaines are a primary staple to the research and operations of special events.

## Comings and Goings From Resource Management Division

Many things have transpired both in Resource Management and park wide, since I last wrote for this newsletter. And, as in most cases, there is good news as well as bad news. Because I like to get things out in the open, the bad news comes first.

Brian McCutchen, the park's historian, has, unfortunately for us, accepted a new position as an architectural historian with the regional office in Omaha, Nebraska. Don't get me wrong, I am extremely happy for Brian and his wife, however things will not be the same.

Although I am a mere 33 years old, I have yet to meet a more enthusiastic, hard working, good natured person who regardless of the situation, is willing to lend a hand for any type of project - whether it requires gloves and a shovel or high level computer skills. Brian has been invaluable to the resources management division particularly in the realm of GIS and data manipulation.

Brian will be sorely missed from this division as well as from the rest of the park. He brought with him a work ethic that greatly improved the interpretive division and expanded, and clarified, our historical understanding of past events. The regional office will benefit from this ethic, as well as from his presence and genial personality.

On another front, Resource Management is still moving along with planned and existing projects. If you have visited the park lately, you may have noticed a University of Arkansas truck pulling a boat around. No they are not lost, nor are they duck hunting, it's our local alligator expert, Mark Roth, who is still tracking and locating alligators. "In the middle of winter?" you may ask!

## A "Brief" Goodbye Message from Brian

As there is a great deal of material to be placed in this issue of the *Arkansas Post Gazette*, I wish to use just a small (*I'm not known for my brevity*) section of the publication before transferring to the agency's regional office in Omaha, Nebraska.

In short, the past eighteen months that I have spent at the Post have been by far my most wonderful and rewarding. The amazingly rich and diverse history of this site, combined with its often under appreciated wealth of historic resources, makes me extremely proud to have been involved with the site's research, preservation, and interpretation.

Though my wife Sharon and I are excited about the move and new experiences to come, there are several aspects of the Post that I will miss greatly; most notably the site's wonderful staff, dedicated volunteers, regular researchers, and, of course, educating visitors from all over the world.

Having transferred here from Shiloh National Military Park - itself an amazing experience, my move to Omaha, I believe, will be equally as enjoyable and rewarding.

To all of you that I have had the privilege of working with and getting to know over the past eighteen months, thank you. It has been a wonderful time and I hope that you keep in touch



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Sure, believe it or not, valuable data is being collected - some of which is on the cutting edge for our area. For example, one 12-foot alligator has evidently decided to “tough it out.” Instead of tunneling into the bank, like the majority of the other marked alligators have, he is lounging languidly about in about 3 foot of water. If the water freezes, no problem, he sticks the end of his snout out of the water and lets it freeze around it. In this manner he can still breath but has the “insulating effect” of the warmer water underneath. Although these mannerisms have been seen and written about before, it is believed that they have never been photographically documented anywhere, or written about in Arkansas, until now!

There are many things that are known about our natural settings. Just think about all of the information that has been gathered over the last 20 years. However, everything that we “know” is basically equivalent to a single grain of rice in a 50 acre field of rice when compared to what we don’t know, like the actions of the alligator above. This is one reason why research is so important. If we don’t know the “what’s and why’s” of our environment then we can’t even speculate as to the outcomes of what we do, or have done to our surroundings. National Parks, in many cases, are the last vestiges or strongholds of what once was. Research occurring on these units helps not only the managers at the park, but other government and state agencies as well. It is my hope and endeavor that the planned and ongoing projects benefit not only Arkansas Post National Memorial but the surrounding community as well.

*Kevin Eads*  
*Resource Management Specialist*



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**THE ARKANSAS POST GAZETTE**

NEWSLETTER OF ARKANSAS POST NATIONAL MEMORIAL

January - March 2001 • Volume 2, Issue 1

1741 Old Post Road • Gillett, AR 72055