



Great Serpent Mound

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

Serpent Mound, located in Adams County, Ohio, is the largest surviving effigy mound in the world. It was built in the shape of an uncoiling serpent and measures over 1300 feet long. The mound was known to early settlers of Adams County, but was not popular in the scientific community until 1848. Since radiocarbon testing was done in 1991, Serpent Mound is believed to have been built by the Fort Ancient culture sometime between the years 1000-1500 A.D. The head of the serpent is aligned with the sunset during the summer solstice, while the coils are aligned to the summer and winter solstice and equinox sunrises, leading to the theory that this was used in spiritual ceremonies, although the actual intended purpose is currently unknown.

Important Dates

- 1848: Ephraim G. Squier and Edwin H. Davis survey the mound and publish their work in *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*.
- 1883: Archaeologist Frederick Ward Putnam of Harvard University visited the site. Concerned about vandalism and erosion, he returned to Massachusetts where he raised enough money to buy the site and turn it into a public park.
- 1887-1889: Putnam spends three summers excavating Serpent Mound and nearby conical mounds. He also restored the mounds to what he believed were their original forms.
- 1900: Harvard University deeds the site to the Ohio State Archaeological & Historical Society (now the Ohio History Connection).

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in combination (as an "all" word search), proximity or as phrases: serpent, mound, Frederick Putnam, park, Adams County, mound builders, effigy.
- Use specific date ranges when looking for articles about this event in order to narrow your results.
- Search newspapers in all states, not just Ohio. If searching all states, be sure to use "Ohio" as a search term, as another serpent mound was discovered in Canada around 1896.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Serpent Mound](#)" *News-Herald* (Hillsboro, OH), June 9, 1887, Image 1, col. 5.
- "[The Great Serpent Mound](#)" *News-Herald* (Hillsboro, OH), December 6, 1888, Image 2, col. 2.
- "[Preservation of Grand Monument](#)" *Times* (Richmond, VA), October 21, 1900, Image 13, col. 1-2.
- "[Baptist Preacher Contends That Ohio Was The Site Of The Garden Of Eden](#)" *Saint Louis Republic* (St. Louis, MO), September 1, 1901, Image 2, col. 4-7.
- "[Toilers of an Unknown Age](#)" *Minneapolis Journal* (Minneapolis, MN), July 16, 1904, Image 23, col. 4-6.