

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC

LANDMARKS) entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Ohio
COUNTY:	Adams
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

1. NAME

COMMON:

Serpent Mound (Great Serpent Mound State Memorial)

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Serpent Mound

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

On Brush Creek near Locust Grove

CITY OR TOWN:

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

sixth

STATE

Ohio

CODE

39

COUNTY:

Adams

CODE

001

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

Ohio Historical Society

STREET AND NUMBER:

Ohio Historical Center, I-71 & 17th Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:

Columbus

STATE:

Ohio

CODE

39

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Adams County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

W. Union

STATE

Ohio

CODE

39

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:

☐ Federal☐ State☐ County☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
OhioCOUNTY:
Adams

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The landmark designated as Serpent Mound includes the giant snake effigy as well as the mounds, graves, and archeological remains in its immediate vicinity. These related features lie on an elevated surface of land on the east bluffs of Brush Creek 100 feet above water level and are bounded on the north and northeast by East Creek. The vegetation of this flat hilltop consists mainly of grass with a few scattered groves of hardwoods.

Serpent Mound itself is an embankment of earth nearly 1/4 mile long representing a giant serpent in the act of uncoiling. Lying on the ~~crescent-shaped spur projecting into Brush Creek~~ (which is 150 feet below), the serpent--constructed at the very summit of the hill--winds back from the point of the projection following the curve of the land for 737 feet. The serpentine figure consists of open jaws, a body with seven deep curves, and a tail of three coils. From the northern jaw to the tip of the tail, following the undulations, the serpent proper measures 1,254 feet. It is 4 to 5 feet high with an average width of 20 feet. Its jaws measure 61 (southern) and 65 (northern) feet and are connected at their ends (which are 75 feet apart) by a crescent wall, 7 feet wide. Projecting into the serpent's open mouth is an oval figure represented by a mound 60 feet long, 25 feet wide, and 1/4 foot high.

About 500 feet southwest of the serpent's tail is a conical burial mound nine feet high and seventy feet in diameter. Two hundred feet west of the conical mound is a small burial mound. Fifteen hundred feet south of the serpent's head is another burial mound--oval in shape and originally 2 or 3 feet high. Clustered in an area about 1000 feet south of the conical mound are six stone graves and two fireplace areas. (See the accompanying map C.)

EXCAVATIONS AND EXAMINATION

The first careful examination of Serpent Mound was made by Ephraim G. Squier and Edwin H. Davis who described it in 1848 in Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley. Examinations followed by John P. MacLean in 1885, by Frederic W. Putman in 1886, and by William Henry Helms in 1886. The most important ~~paper~~ on the mound, written by Charles C. Willoughby, was published in 1919 in American Anthropologist.

Frederic W. Putman of Harvard University spent three seasons following 1886 excavating and restoring Serpent Mound and the related remains. These excavations will be described in the Statement of Significance.

INTRUSIONS AND DISTURBANCES

Despite the fact that the site has been extensively excavated and that plowing prior to 1886 has destroyed archeological provenience in many cases, further work could still yield valuable information about the

S E E I N S T R U C T I O N S

B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☒ Pre-Columbian☐ 16th Century☐ 18th Century☐ 20th Century☐ 15th Century☐ 17th Century☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

approximately 1000 B.C. - 200 A.D.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal☐ Education☐ Political☐ Urban Planning☒ Prehistoric☐ Engineering☐ Religion/Phi-☐ Other (Specify)☐ Historic☐ Industry

lasophy

☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☐ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art

Architecture

☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature

itarian

☐ Communications☐ Military☐ Theater☐ Conservation☐ Music☐ Transportation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overlooking Brush Creek in Ross County, Serpent Mound is one of the few effigy mounds in the State of Ohio and is the largest and finest serpent effigy in the United States. Judging from the associated mounds and burials (which have also been included in the landmark), the effigy probably dates from the Adena period (about 1000 B.C. to 200 A.D.). This giant snake--built with digging sticks and stone and shell hoes--cannot help but fire modern man's imagination and provoke thought about the lifestyle and mystical beliefs of these prehistoric people.

INTERPRETATION

With its graceful undulating form and the oval near its mouth, the serpent has been the subject of various interpretations throughout the years. It has sometimes been thought to be in the act of striking at a frog, which leaped away leaving its egg. The oval mound has also been described as a stylization of the head and eye of the serpent or as the serpent's heart. The most frequently mentioned interpretation envisions the reptile in the act of swallowing an egg. Excavations have tended to support this latter interpretation; and the mound's present restoration therefore conforms to it.

The serpent has played an important role in religions throughout the world, and it seems logical to assume that this giant effigy possessed mystical significance for its builders. However, any further statement involving the mound's purpose and its role in the people's religious life would involve a great deal of conjecture.

Although these spiritual beliefs cannot be adequately discerned by the archeological remnants of the 2,500 year old culture, the excavations by Putnam in 1886 of the mound and its immediate vicinity have yielded other valuable information about the construction of Serpent Mound and the life style and burial practices of the site's occupants.

Serpent Mound contained very little occupational debris. Its construction was very obviously carefully planned. The builders outlined the structure with stone and lumps of clay and then poured dirt over them.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Greenman, Emerson F., Guide to Serpent Mound, Ohio
Historical Society, Columbus, 1964 (revised edition).
2. Squier, Ephraim G. & Edwin H. Davis, Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley, Smithsonian, contributions to knowledge, vol. 1, 1848.
3. Willoughby, Charles, American Anthropologist, vol. XXI, no 2, 1919.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	UTM LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE			LONGITUDE	
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		
NW	17.289400	4322420						
NE	17.289860	4322320						
SE	17.289840	4321820						
SW	17.289200	4321900						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **60 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Francine D. Weiss, Staff Archeologist, Landmark Review Project

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service** DATE: **12/26/74**

STREET AND NUMBER:
1100 L. Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: **11**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>_____ (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Name</p> <p>_____ Title</p> <p>_____ (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Date</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Landmark Designated: July 19, 1964 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Boundary Certified: Date: 9-18-75 Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys</p> <p>ATTEST: _____ Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>_____ Boundary Affirmed: 9/25/75 Director, OAHIP</p> <p>Date: _____</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Ohio	
COUNTY Adams	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description second page

people who constructed Serpent Mound. Moreover, the mounds themselves are certainly structures worthy of preservation.

Intrusions into the area designated as the landmark include a road leading into Serpent Mound State Memorial and a parking lot. A steel observation tower has also been erected to allow visitors to view the effigy from a height. A museum, barn, residence, service building, and shelter are also located within landmark boundaries, but are not part of the landmark.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

Beginning at the point of intersection of Brush Creek and U.S. Route 73, the boundary of the landmark follows the present boundary of Serpent Mound State Memorial Park. The borders of this park have been surveyed and officially placed on the U.S.G.S. map. Refer to the black boundary lines on accompanying maps A and B.

The boundary is based on present knowledge of archeological remains in the area under study.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Massachusetts	
COUNTY	
Nantucket	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

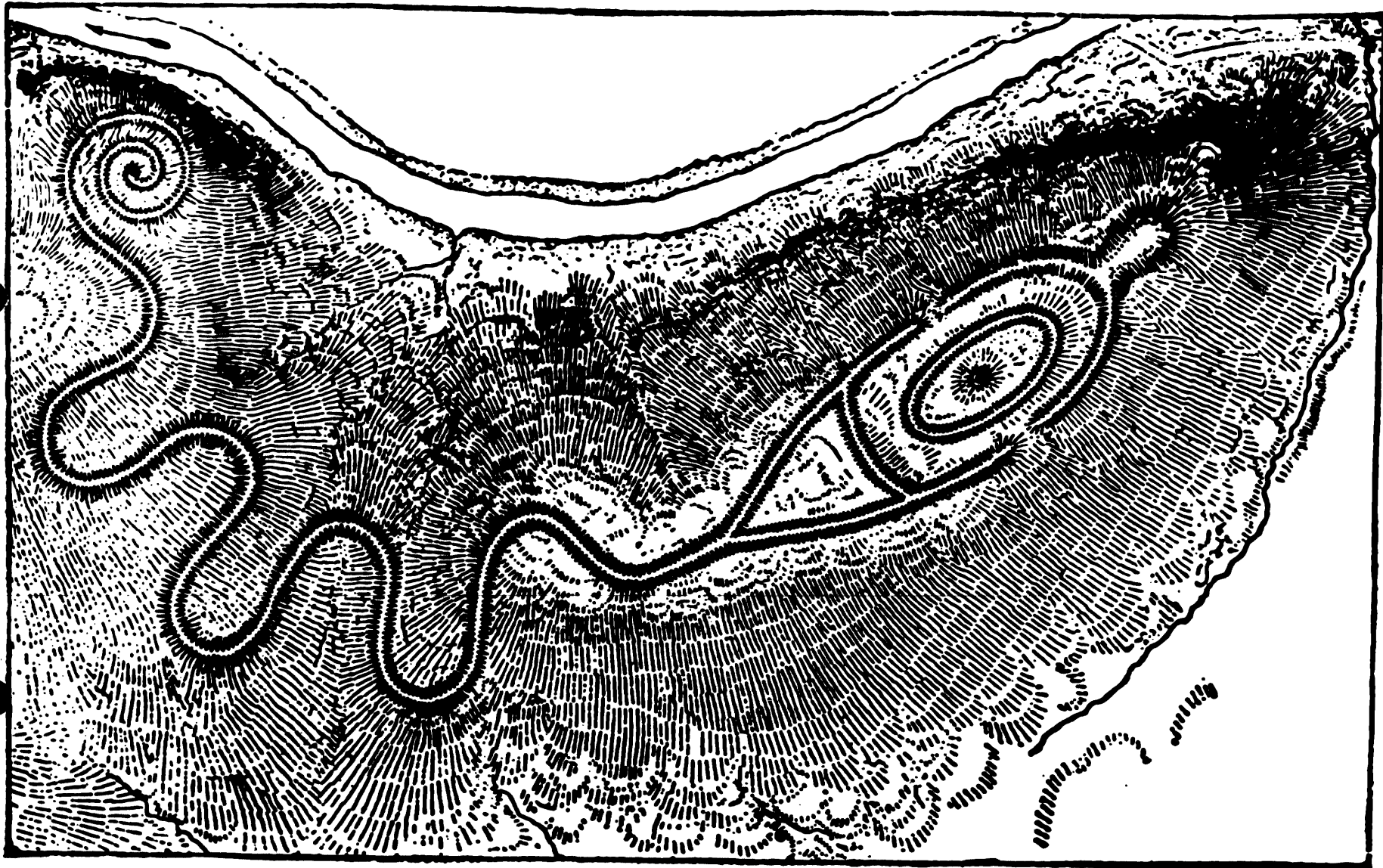
(Number all entries)

8. Significance second page

Excavation of the mounds in the serpent's immediate vicinity have yielded insight into the cultural practices of the former inhabitants of the area. The conical mound southwest of the serpent shows definite Adena affinities and is one of the reasons for attributing the giant effigy to the Adena period. Putnam's excavations during 1886 indicate that a platform was built, and the body of an adult male was placed upon it and partially cremated. Clay was thrown on the cremation fire thereby preventing complete incineration. **Artifacts** associated with the 30 by 35-foot ashy area caused by this fire include potsherds, burnt bone, stone chips, broken stone implements, 12 unbroken ones, and pieces of clam shell. In direct association with the cremated body were: flint points, a hematite core, a stone celt, two three-quarter grooved axes, and several bone awls. Later investigations of other Adena sites indicate that Putnam had probably uncovered a house site. The floor of the mound would have been the original floor of the house. Excavations around the perimeter of the mound might have revealed post molds of the house. The Adena tended to bury someone--perhaps the most important member of the household--in a mound erected over the house site and move elsewhere. Nine burials were also placed in graves near the surface of the mound some time after its erection.

The oblong mound to the south of the serpent contained four individuals buried in stone graves below ground level. Other graves on the site have yielded large numbers of artifacts; indeed ~~one~~ the grave contained 30 points, a grooved sandstone, 3 awls, 2 celts, and a mass of red ochre.

The mounds have been identified as Adena because they contained the following traits generally characteristic of that particular culture: stemmed and leaf-shaped flint points, pieces of sandstone bearing grooves (shaftsmoothers?), bone tubes or handles, and red ochre. The conical shape of one of the mounds along with the single central burial located within it and the burials below ground level in the oblong mound likewise indicate Adena affinities. Other features--such as copper breastplates, stone axes, stone graves, and bundle burials--occasionally occur in Adena mounds but are more often associated with other cultures.



A CONTOUR SKETCH OF THE SERPENT MOUND, OHIO