

Form 10-300
(July 1969)UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries in complete applicable sections)

STATE: Ohio	
COUNTY: Warren	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME **(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**

COMMON:

Fort Ancient (Fort Ancient State Memorial)

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Fort Ancient

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

on State Route 350

CITY OR TOWN:

southeast of Lebanon**6th Congressional District**

STATE

Ohio

CODE

39

COUNTY:

Warren

CODE

165

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☐ Building ☒ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☐ Private ☒ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☐ Restricted ☒ Unrestricted ☒ No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☒ Park	☐ Transportation	☐ Comments
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☒ Private Residence	☐ Other (Specify)	_____
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious	_____	_____
☐ Entertainment	☒ Museum	☐ Scientific	_____	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:

State of Ohio and Ohio Historical Society (continued)

STREET AND NUMBER:

Ohio Historical Center, I-71 at 17th Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:

Columbus

STATE:

Ohio

CODE

39

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

Warren County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Lebanon

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

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

*public portion unrestricted
private portion not accessible

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☒ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☒ Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	☒ Altered	☐ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fort Ancient is located on the east side of the Little Miami River on a bluff rising 270 feet above the valley floor. The walls of the structure follow the contour of a hilltop that is nearly isolated from the general upland area by deep ravines. The west side of the hill slopes steeply toward the Little Miami River. Cowen Run forms the east and southeast borders, and Randall Run lies directly to the north.

Constructed primarily of earth which is sometimes reinforced by slabs of limestone, the walls range from 4 to 23 feet in height and enclose an area of approximately 100 acres. At the present time, the walls contain about 70 openings or "gateways," many of which have probably been caused by erosional processes. The enclosed area exhibits many depressions; these were probably the sources for much of the earth which was used in the wall construction.

The structure is divided into three sections, which have been labeled North Fort, Middle Fort and South Fort. The North Fort contains 6 burial mounds, one of which is stone-covered; a crescent-shaped wall; two areas where a stone pavement was exposed; and several examples of stone circles. Two crescent walls separate North Fort from Middle Fort which lies on a narrow ridge between the North and South Forts and contains one small burial mound and an area of exposed stone pavement. An opening in the walls between the South and Middle Forts marks the entrance into South Fort. One burial mound, a Fort Ancient village site, a cemetery of the Fort Ancient culture, and remains of a stone pavement are located within this southernmost enclosure. The hillside surrounding South Fort contains several burials and a spring.

Adjacent to the fort on the east and separated from it by a branch of Cowen Run are seven small burial mounds. To the east of North Fort are the remains of a Hopewell Village. Two parallel walls connect two burial mounds east of this village to a third small mound almost 1/2 mile to the northeast. The walls themselves have been mostly eroded away but their remnants would definitely be noticeable if excavated. (Unlike the rest of the site which is state-owned, these walls are in private ownership & not accessible to the public.) The Anderson Village Site of the Fort Ancient culture lies on the west side of Fort Ancient adjacent to the Little Miami River. A gravel knoll also lies to the west of the structure, but it may be a natural phenomenon. Refer to map C to clarify the locations of these features.

EXPLORATIONS

The first plan and description of the earthworks appeared in Port Folio magazine in 1810. In 1815 Daniel Drake reported that Joel Wright had conducted the first survey of the site, and in 1820 Caleb Atwater published his description of it. The site was again surveyed in 1843 by John Locke whose description was published in 1848 in Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley by Squier and Davis. In 1874, Lewis M. Hosea

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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) 300 B.C. to 250 A. D. approximately, 1200-1600 A.D.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

losophy

☐ Agriculture☐ Invention☐ Science☐ Architecture☐ Landscape☐ Sculpture☐ Art☐ Architecture☐ Social/Human-☐ Commerce☐ Literature

itarian

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Ancient has been called "the outstanding enclosure of its kind in the country."¹ Located on the bluffs of the Little Miami River in Warren County, the 100-acre area, surrounded by 4-23 foot walls and bounded almost entirely by deep ravines, operates as a public park. The early discoverers of the structure classified the site as a fort; for the earthworks, consisting of a walled area on a high bluff, certainly appear to have the characteristics of a fortification. However, although the so-called "fort" may have been used for defensive purposes at some time, its primary function was probably ceremonial.

During prehistoric times, Fort Ancient was occupied by two distinct cultural groups, the Hopewell and the Fort Ancient people. Sometime between 300 B.C. and 250 A.D., the Hopewell people settled in the area and built the giant earthwork structure using digging sticks and shell hoes. Excavations have revealed that these first occupants probably had small, relatively permanent settlements both within the "fort" and in a small village next to it and that they engaged in complex burial ceremonies on the site. Then, hundreds of years after the site had been abandoned by the Hopewell, the Fort Ancient people settled in the area establishing villages on the South Fort of the earthworks and at the Anderson Village Site sometime between 1200 and 1600 A.D.

THE HOPEWELL OCCUPATION

The discovery of diagnostic Hopewell artifacts (such as platform effigy pipes; long, beautifully-worked flint points, sometimes ceremonially broken; mica sheets and cut-outs; and copper ornaments) in the depressions on Fort Ancient has enabled archeologists to determine that the Hopewell were indeed the builders and first occupants of the site. Best known for their complex and highly developed burial cult, the Hopewell conducted some of their ceremonies on Fort Ancient. They laid out the body of a deceased person--probably someone of importance in their society--inside a wooden post construction which was eventually burned and covered with a mound of earth. With the dead person were included such grave goods as large sheets of copper, mica cut-outs, ear spools, engraved human and animal bones, effigy platform pipes, bird stones, flint and obsidian blades and points (some of which are large and ceremonially broken and were obviously not tools or weapons), and occasionally pottery.

¹Richard Morgan, Fort Ancient, Ohio Historical, Columbus, 1965 (revised edition)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Morgan, Richard, Fort Ancient, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, 1965 (revised edition).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	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		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW		16.749140.4367490	0 ' "							
NE		16.752440.4366740	0 ' "							
SE		16.752560.4365890	0 ' "							
SW		16.749700.4363790	0 ' "							

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 800-900 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Francine Weiss, Staff Archeologist, Landmark Review Project	
ORGANIZATION Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service	DATE 1/13/75
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

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:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

((NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS))

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____
(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

((NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS))

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Designated: July 19, 1969 date

Boundary Certified: _____ date

Date _____

ATTEST: _____

Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys

Boundary Affirmed: _____ date

Keeper of The National Register

Director, OAHIP

Date _____

9/25/75

date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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4. Refer to plat map (B):

Parcel #45: Gregory, W. Jr. and Matilda
6606 State Route 350
Oregonia, Ohio 45054

Parcel #46: Absher, Allen and Hazel
Box 992
Middleboro Road
Oregonia, Ohio 45054

Parcel #47, 48 and 52: Kiski, Leo Louis
P.O. Box 12195
Norwood, Ohio 45212

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7. Description second page

made note of a stone pavement between the parallel walls, described the Fort Ancient village site on South Fort, and recognized the presence of the Hopewellian remains.

The first systematic excavations of Fort Ancient and the nearby Anderson Village Site were conducted by Warren K. Moorehead intermittently between 1887 and 1891. Moorehead's publication concerning this work, entitled Fort Ancient, appeared in 1890 and contributed a great deal to the archeology of the locality. Moorehead recognized that two cultural groups had occupied the area, but did not know which had built the earthworks and erroneously thought that the two groups were contemporaneous. The Anderson Village Site was re-examined during 1893-1936 by Clifford Anderson. In 1908, William Mills explored the Fort area and stated erroneously that the Fort Ancient Indians had built the earthworks and that Hopewell and Fort Ancient people occupied the area at the same time.

Explorations by the Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society in 1939 and by a combined team of the Ohio State Museum and the State University in 1940, however, revealed the Hopewell village east of the Fort. Moreover, the excavators found that some of the depressions within the enclosed area contained Hopewell pottery and artifacts which indicated that the Hopewell were actually the builders of Fort Ancient.

INTRUSIONS AND DISTURBANCES

Cultivation and explorations by untrained excavators have disturbed many areas of the site. Erosional processes have changed the site's appearance decreasing the sizes of the mounds and cutting gullies through some of the walls.

The site is cut by State Route 350 and by roads through the park and to the museum. The museum building, although within landmark boundaries, is not part of the landmark. Likewise, the picnic tables, shelters, concession stand, garages, residences, **etc.** are extraneous to the landmark.

On the whole, however, the walls, mounds, and other structures are in a good state of preservation. Most of the landmark (with the exception of a large portion of the parallel walls) is state-owned. Indeed, the State bought the first parcel of land (180 acres) in 1891 and has since acquired another 500 acres in eight successive purchases. The greatest effort toward the site's preservation was carried out from 1933-35 when the Civilian Conservation Corps along with the Ohio Historical Society attempted to restore many of the earthworks to their original condition.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Refer to the black line on Map A (USGS) and the green line on Map B (plat) for a clarification of the boundary description.

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From a point at the easternmost intersection of the boundary of Fort Ancient State Memorial with State Route 350, the landmark boundary follows about 4000 feet east along the north side of Route 350, then northwest along the eastern edge of Parcel 48 (about 800 feet), then nearly due north along the eastern edges of Parcels 47, 52, and 46 (about 1400 feet), then in a general westerly direction along the northernmost side of Parcel 46 (about 2400 feet), then due west across Parcel 45 (about 1500 feet) to its intersection with the Fort Ancient Memorial Park boundary, then counter-clockwise around the park boundary to the point of beginning. (The park boundary is not described in detail; it has been surveyed for the USGS map. Likewise the plat map (B) is exact for the description of landmark property outside of the park.)

The landmark boundaries are based on present knowledge of archeological remains in the area under study.

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Although Fort Ancient does not represent a typical Hopewell earthwork, it probably served a similar function. Other Hopewell structures similar to Fort Ancient do exist, but Fort Ancient is probably the finest and most spectacular example. Generally, Hopewell structures are geometrical in form (circles, squares, or octagons) and are situated on river valley floors. The walls of Fort Ancient, however, follow the contour of the land and are located on a high, isolated bluff. Nevertheless, when one compares the features of the Fort Ancient Site to those of the geometric earthwork sites, distinct similarities become apparent. Both types of sites contain enclosures which surround burial mounds. There are also mounds located outside of the earthwork walls. Moreover, parallel walls like those at Fort Ancient are observed associated with many of the geometric earthworks. It thus seems logical to assume that the enclosure at Fort Ancient served a function similar to the circles and octagons at other Hopewell sites and that, like those other sites, Fort Ancient was used as a ceremonial center.

Fort Ancient is located in southern Ohio, the center of the florescence of Hopewell culture (although not necessarily the place of its origin). Hopewell sites have been noted in Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and northern Florida. Thus, Hopewell cultural influence was felt over a large area. Indeed extensive trade was carried on throughout great portions of what is now the United States as is evidenced by the large amount of exotic material found at Fort Ancient and other Hopewell sites. These prehistoric inhabitants utilized obsidian from the Rocky Mountains, shark teeth from the Gulf of Mexico, copper from the Lake Superior region, and mica from the Carolinas.

Aside from the inference of a strong cohesive force necessary to construct the complex earthworks, along with a vigorous trade and a rich aesthetic tradition, little is known about the Hopewell. The discovery of the Hopewell village site adjacent to the Fort Ancient earthworks is important. Until recently few Hopewell villages had been located; for attention generally was focused on the burial ceremonies and exotic grave goods. With the increased excavation of village sites, more information about Hopewell culture is becoming available. It is now generally assumed that the Hopewell were agriculturalists who supplemented their diet with hunting, fishing, and gathering.

The reasons for the decline in the Hopewell culture are not fully understood. With the end of the complex Hopewellian burial practices in the Ohio area about 250 A.D., Fort Ancient was deserted.

THE FORT ANCIENT PEOPLE

The next occupants of the site were the Fort Ancient Indians who lived

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8. Significance third page

on and next to Fort Ancient sometime between 1200 and 1600 A.D. These prehistoric people established a small village in South Fort and one at Anderson Village in the valley along the east bank of the river. They had no contact with the Hopewell. As the name of the site indicates, these latter inhabitants were originally ~~thought to be the builders of~~ the earthworks; it is now known that this was not the case.

The Fort Ancient people were prehistoric farmers who supplemented their vegetable diet with game and wild crops. This dietary information was determined from the animal, bird, and fish bone excavated from the site. Excavations have also revealed that refuse at the Anderson Village Site is 4 to 5 feet in depth.

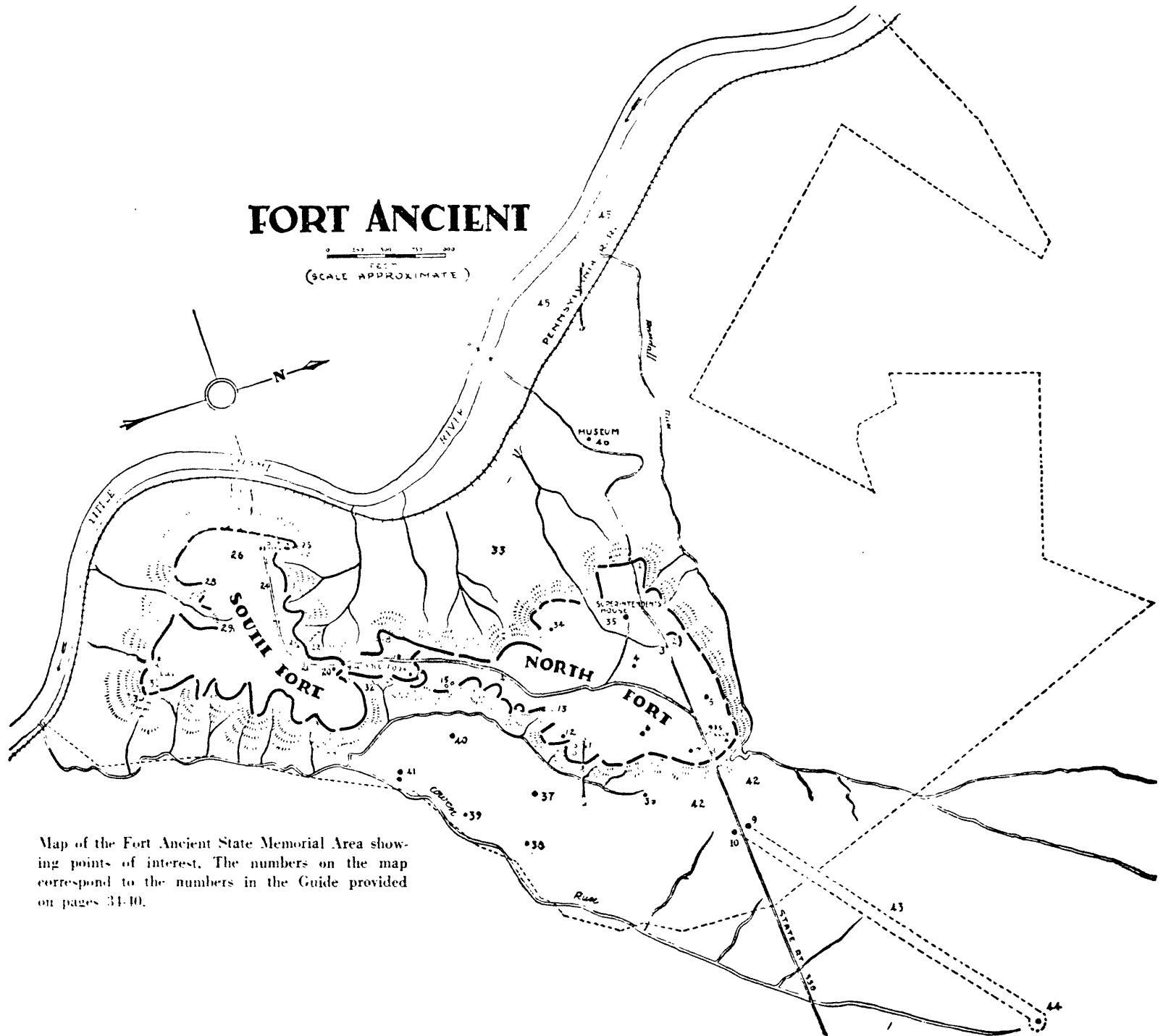
Archeologists have unearthed 150 burials from Anderson Village along the river bank. There the dead were usually buried in an extended position on their backs. Some graves were lined with bark, others with limestone. In contrast, burials on the South Fort assumed flexed positions and were made in abandoned storage pits.

Burials, refuse and storage pits have yielded triangular flint points, flint tools, antler points, bone awls, shell hoes, spoons, beads, and shell-tempered pottery.

The Fort Ancient people left the site shortly before the arrival of European colonists. Other sites (such as Madisonville) which exhibit traits and artifacts diagnostic of the Fort Ancient culture do show some signs of European contact and were therefore later habitation sites of people with Fort Ancient cultural affinities.

FORT ANCIENT

0 100 200
FEET
(SCALE APPROXIMATE)



Map of the Fort Ancient State Memorial Area showing points of interest. The numbers on the map correspond to the numbers in the Guide provided on pages 34-40.

Property Line-
Fort Ancient
State Memorial

Parallel Walls

State Rt. 350

Middleboro Road

500A

20.13

75

83

16
29A

17

52

18

48

15

19

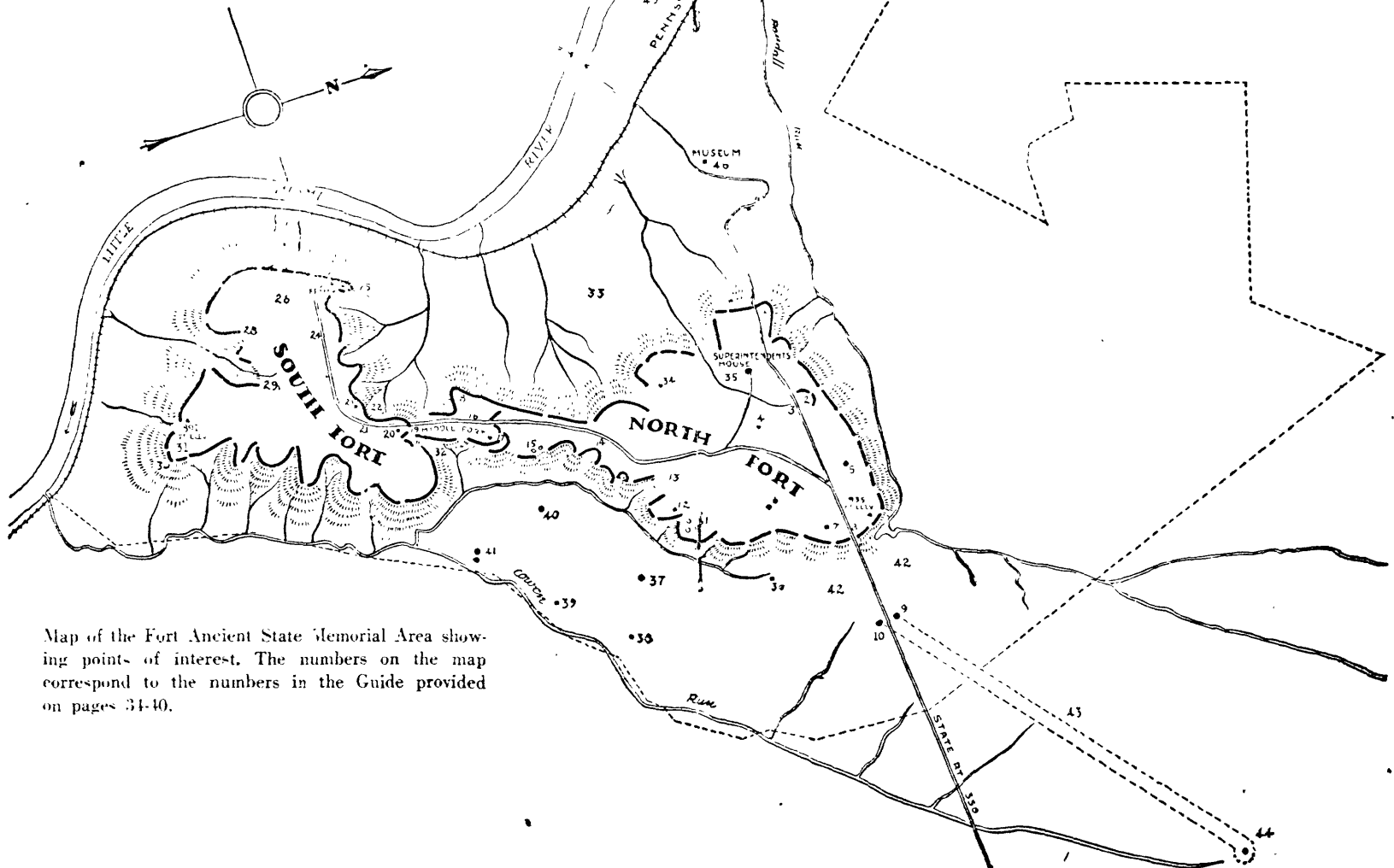
Fort Ancient - Plat for Parallel Walls - Map B

Map C

From: Richard Morgan, Fort Ancient,
Ohio Historical Society,
Columbus, 1965 (revised edition).

FORT ANCIENT

0 250 500 750 1000
FEET
(SCALE APPROXIMATE)



Map of the Fort Ancient State Memorial Area showing points of interest. The numbers on the map correspond to the numbers in the Guide provided on pages 34-40.