

The Families of Serpent Mound

My name is Delsey Wilson. My husband and I are a part of a long line of land stewards that have had the privilege to own land or live around The Great Serpent Mound. If you have never heard of The Great Serpent Mound, it is a park containing one of the largest earthen sculptures in the world, constructed over 2,000 years ago. It sits on a small peninsula of land in current day Bratton Township, Adams County, Ohio. This township was formed out of Franklin Township in 1877. Every Indigenous Culture throughout Ohio's prehistory and history has left artifacts and or remains within its borders. The 2014 carbon-dating study by archaeologists Edward Hermann, William Monaghan and William Romain published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*, places its construction sometime around 321 B.C.E., which puts it in what the archaeological community calls the Adena Cultural Period (1,000 B.C.E-100 C.E).

In historic times, four different families owned the property that housed the effigy mound. Captain Abraham Shepherd of Jefferson County, Virginia served in the military for over 8 years. As payment for his service, the Federal Government granted him several thousands of acres in "the County of Adams, and Territory North West of Ohio." One land patent he received in the Virginia Military District was Survey 1010 for 1,000 acres in 1798. In 1800, he sold that tract of land to his brother John's sons: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob Shepherd. Jacob later sold his share to his youngest brother John in 1809.

The history books of Adams & Brown Counties cannot agree as to which Shepherd in Shepherd's Crossing along Ohio Brush Creek and Shepherd's Trace. Some history books claim that Abraham built a temporary dwelling while he sold off sections of his Surveys, but I do not believe any of the Shepherd's ever built a permanent home on this property. They mainly lived along Red Oak Creek that later became a part of Brown County. It is possible that one of the Shepherds had a dwelling on Survey 1014. In 1812, Abraham, one of the brothers, sold 120 of the 1,000 acres to Peter Andrews, Sr. Andrews' descendants lived and farmed just southeast of the park until 1918, when it became a part of the Weaver Farm, located along Serpent Mound's southern border, also a part of the original 1010 Survey.

In 1815, John and his wife Elizabeth Shepherd sell 333 acres of Survey 1010 to William Hamilton. Hamilton is on the Wayne Township 1820 Census, and then in 1830 Census he is living in Franklin Township. I believe this family may be the first European settlers to live and farm on the Serpent Mound property. In 1841, William sold 160 acres to James P. Lovett. In subsequent years, Lovett purchased two more neighboring sections, increasing the acreage back to 396.5, and giving it the name Lovett Farm or Serpent Mound Farm.

By 1840, Serpent Mound was very well known to the locals, but after it debut in Squier and Davis' book "Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley" in 1848, it becomes world renowned.

Upon Lovett's death in 1864, his heirs, Abraham & Martha Newkirk, D.C. Lovett & Ann E. Lovett, E.A. Lovett and P.F. Lovett give Lovett's Serpent Mound Farm to their brothers John J. and David D. Lovett. David sells his half to John for \$6,000 in 1870.

On June 10, 1875, The *Highland Weekly News* wrote:

"Not long since, when at Chillicothe, we were nonplused, in not knowing anything about the "Great Serpent," about 4 miles from here, near the three forks of Brushcreek. With a couple of friends we have made a visit and a brief description may be of interest.

The "Serpent" rests upon a height on the farm of J. & D. Lovett, in Adams Co., and consists of a well-defined embankment of earth, representing the head, curvatures, and coiled tail of a huge viper. From the head to where the curves make a change of direction, the distance is 148 paces, and thence to end of tail, 85. The whole distance from the head, following the seven curves in the body, to the end of the tail, is 460 paces. Its construction by the Indians, or some primeval race, must have required much labor, and the object is enveloped in mystery.

Some years since an Englishman, with a view' of preservation, offered \$500 for the tract on which the Serpent lies. The offer was declined and the plow has since made some invasions, but the Serpent and the Indian mound nearby, will well repay a visit by the lovers of antiquity."

Professor Fredrick Ward Putnam, from Massachusetts, had visited in 1883 and again in 1885. After his 1885 visit, he talked to Lovett about acquiring the property around the effigy mound, but Lovett wanted to sell the whole farm. Philanthropist and Ohio Representative, John T. Wilson purchased the entire farm in August of 1885. By May of 1887, the Ladies of Boston raise enough funds to purchase Serpent Mound in an effort to preserve it. They present that money to the Trustees of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology and Ethnology in connection with Harvard University, who then bought 58.75 acres from John T. Wilson in June 1887 to preserve Serpent Mound. On Oct. 1, 1887, the Peabody Museum Trustees then purchase two additional acres from Jacob F. & E. J. Weaver. For the next three years, Putnam and hired hands explore the property and convert it into a park. The Peabody Museum retains the Serpent Mound property until 1900. Then, on Oct. 6, 1900 the trustees turn over the 60.75 acres now "known as the Serpent Mound Park" to the "Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, a corporation..." The deed holds three revertible conditions that the Grantee Corporation shall: "...provide for perpetual care...", "...keep the Serpent Mound Park as a free public park forever...", and "...place and maintain in the park a suitable monument or tablet upon which shall be inscribed the record of the preservation of the Serpent Mound and the transfer of the property..."

What is fascinating is how many people have said to me, "My family lived at Serpent Mound." I know the families that worked and lived on the park grounds for more than 6 decades, but when I ask if they are related to those names, they say they are not. Join me next time as we explore the families that lived and worked at Serpent Mound.

Date	From	To	Acrerage
6/12/1798	Virginia Military District Patent	Abraham Shepherd	1000.00
6/10/1800	Abraham Shepherd	Abraham, Isaacs, and Jacob Shepherd	1000.00
11/27/1809	Jacob Shepherd and wife Nancy	John Shepherd	333.00
4/14/1815	John Shepherd & Elizabeth, wife	William Hamilton	333.00
4/5/1841	William Hamilton & Elizabeth, wife	James P. Lovett	160.00
2/5/1864	Abraham & Martha Newkirk, DC Lovett & Ann E Lovett, E.A. Lovett and P.F. Lovett (heirs of James P. Lovett)	David D. and John J. Lovett	396.50
4/9/1870	David D. Lovett	John J. Lovett	340.00
1877	Bratton Township Established from Franklin		
8/15/1885	John J. Lovett and Catherine, wife	John T. Wilson	340.00
6/4/1887	John T. Wilson	Trustees of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology & Ethnology in Connection with Harvard University	58.75
10/1/1887	Jacob F. Weaver & E.J. Weaver, wife	Trustees of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology & Ethnology in Connection with Harvard University	2
10/6/1900	Trustees of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology & Ethnology in Connection with Harvard University	The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, a corporation...	60.75

The First Era at Serpent Mound

In the last article, I discussed the families that owned the lands that the Great Serpent Mound effigy was a part of until it officially became a park in 1887. Now, let us visit those families that had a part in the beginning years of Serpent Mound as a "Public Park". Frederick Ward Putnam came back to Adams County in May of 1887 to oversee the purchase. He acquired the 58.75 acres for \$3,525 from John T. Wilson, and they closed on the property on June 4th. His first objective was to hire locals to improve the hitch post and spring area, improve or create a better road from the Peebles Turn Pike, and install fencing around the main effigy mound. Peter S. Covan, a Street Mason, from Elmville, Highland County won the bid to update the Springhouse Area. Charles Lovett, John J. Lovett's son, receives a contract "for the finishing and graveling of the road through the Park from the Pike to the hitching posts at the grove near the spring." Putnam hired William Wallace to oversee all of the multiple jobs that needed doing to turn the grounds into a park.

In a letter to Putnam on Nov. 25th, presumably 1887, Mr. Wallace describes those tasks as: "straightening up the embankment of the Serpent, marled the path around the tail...cleaned up where the tents (were)...sowed grass seed...I have built a fence along Lovett's prairie road, hauled the pieces of rail to wood pile and straightened up the line fence between you and Weaver. I planted trees." I believe Mr. Wallace lived close by, with his new wife and young family, as the letter states it is from "Lovetts Adams Co O", which was the name of what we now call Loudon, a tiny hamlet just west of Serpent Mound on St. Rt. 73. The letter also describes finding the gates open in the morning and cattle or sheep on the premises. By hiring out these jobs, Putnam was free to turn his focus on researching the site or other mounds in the area when in Ohio, and then he would take all the collected artifacts back with him to Boston for the rest of the year.

My focus is on the families that oversaw the day-to-day operations at Serpent Mound, so let us take a moment to learn a bit more about William Wallace. He was born Oct. 20, 1862 in Brown County, the son of Alexander Wallace (1819-1893) and Martha E. Ferguson Wallace (1824-1881). By 1870, Alex and Martha moved their family to Jasper in Pike County. In 1880, Wallace was in his parents' household in Pike County and in the home of Creighton Newman, who lived in Franklin Township, Adams County. Newman was a farmer, and Wallace was a laborer. On December 2, 1886, Wallace marries Bertha A. Humphreys in Pike County, but they live in Adams County where, in 1887, Wallace was clearly the muscle behind those beginning days of converting the Serpent Mound grounds into a public park.

There is no mention of erecting a dwelling at the park in those first few years, in fact, a letter from one of Putnam's fellow researchers, John Jackson states that their tents and supplies of his science-minded colleagues were stored in Weaver's barn, during the time he was in Boston. From an article written July 15, 1890 in *The Evening Bulletin*, Maysville, KY entitled "The Serpent Mound", it was suggested that one "...seek such hospitality as they may offer at the old farm house on the grounds, or return, if you like, to the hotel at Peebles for the night." The "old farm house" is referring to the original Lovett's farmhouse.

Remember, John T. Wilson had bought the complete Lovett Farm of 340 acres and had only sold 58.75 acres to Harvard to turn into the park. On June 2, 1888, Wilson sold the rest of the farm to Frank M. Stultz, a resident of Elmville, in Highland County, less than five miles north of the park. Five days later, *The News Herald* reported that Mr. Stultz was "hauling lumber from his property here (Elmville) to Serpent Mound, preparatory to building a new front to his residence there." Then on June 21, 1888, *The News Herald* in an article titled "The Serpent Mound" states, "Mr. F. M. Stultz, who owns the adjoining farm, has the superintendency of the grounds. He has also opened his house to guests, and no one stopping with him will ever complain of want of care or fare. He is erecting a large addition to his building and expects to have a commodious summer resort ready by August." A later article, in *The News Herald* on Dec. 19, 1888, stated Stultz was making "...preparations to have a large hotel erected for the accommodation of the many visitors who are attracted there to see the Serpent Mound. - *Adams County New Era*" By Nov. 15, 1894, *The News Herald* has a travel story where the group was in the Sinking Springs Area and visits "...the home of Frank Stultz, who used to have charge of the Serpent Mound Park."

In *Records of the Past* V.5 No. 3-5, an article entitled "The Serpent Mound, Adams County, Ohio" states, "In 1894 Mr. E. O. Randall, Secretary of Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society (OAHS), called Prof. Putnam's attention to the fact

that the mound was not receiving sufficient attention and proposed that the Ohio Society should assume the care of it." Yet, in 1897, Dr. Charles L. Metz, one of Putnam's friends and the Secretary of the Trustees of the Ferris Memorial Library, was told by his Trustees, "...to notify the Peabody Museum of their formal acceptance of the latter's offer, by which act one of the most interesting ancient monument in the world becomes subject to their supervision." – *New Herald*, 27 May 1897. The next day's copy of *Science* magazine states, "The custodianship of the Great Serpent Mound in Adams County, Ohio, has been transferred by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University to the Ferris Memorial Library of Madisonville." I have not been able to track down any records on the Ferris Memorial Library's activities at Serpent Mound.

In the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publication* Vol. VIII & IX, their *Annual Report* states that in August 1899 Putnam visited the OAHS Trustees on behalf of the Trustees of the Peabody Museum and offered to transfer Serpent Mound to them if "they would accept, repair and hereafter suitably preserve and guard" the property. On November 12 [1899], Messrs. Wright (G.F.), Randall (E.O.), and Mills (W.C) visited Serpent Mound. Their report was "...that the proposition should by all means be accepted..."

Then on Oct. 6, 1900, the "Trustees of the Peabody Museum of American Archeology & Ethnology in Connection with Harvard" turned the park over the OAHS, "a corporation", now known as the Ohio History Connection, Inc. In Vol. X, the OAHS *Annual Report* states, "A custodian, Mr. Daniel Wallace of Sinking Springs, had been selected and was now residing at and overseeing the Mound and Park." From the previously mentioned *Records of the Past* article, "The Society [OAHS] has faithfully carried out its part of the contract, and has built a good house near by for the care-taker. This gentleman, Mr. Daniel Wallace, is most careful and efficient." In the 1900 Census, Daniel's family of seven, are in Bratton Township, and according to the names around them, they are living on the Serpent Mound property.

Daniel Wallace was also born in Brown County on Dec. 17, 1849, and is the brother of William Wallace, mentioned earlier. After the family moved to Jasper in 1870, Daniel marries his first wife, Martha Adabelle Tolle from Franklin Township on Sept. 27, 1871. They have Lucy Alberty Wallace on July 2, 1872. Unfortunately, his wife dies on Nov. 11 1875, during either childbirth or following the birth of their son Isaac Alton/Allen who was born that same year. Sadly, his daughter Lucy dies on Nov. 2, 1876. Daniel is in the 1880 Census in Franklin Township, alone and listed as a widower. His Parents, Alex and Martha Wallace have Allan with them in Pike County. His second marriage is to Celia Maharg on June 23, 1881 near Mineral Springs and Peach Mountain. Their daughter "Lizzy" Elizabeth Martha is born Feb. 23, 1883. The small family moves to Nebraska with Celia's parents and siblings in 1885. On July 23, 1886, he loses his second wife, and he and Lizzy move back to Ohio. He then marries Jennie Fleetwood Morris in November, either in 1886 or 87. Tragedy would strike him again, when his son Allen dies on March 9, 1887, at the age of 11. Daniel and Jennie's first child is a girl named Pearl, born in that same year. I believe she may have been a stillborn or died infancy, as I did not find a death date but in 1910 Jennie says she has 8 of 9 children living and eight are listed in the household. They have five more children born to them before moving to Serpent Mound: Guy Everett Wallace (1891-1960), Burch Clifton (1892-1981), Jennie Gladys (1894-1972), Vernon Orlando "Mose" (1895-1975), and William Denver (1897-1983). Daniel's first child to be born at Serpent Mound Park was Ernestine Ivy (1901-1946), along with Earl Kenneth (1904-1981) and Mary Hazel (1906-2003). Daniel dies at Serpent Mound of typhoid fever on Nov. 9, 1916. OAHS permits Jennie to stay on and oversee things after Daniel's death. Her occupation in the 1920 Census is Manager, with her sons: Guy, Vernon, and William as laborers and her daughter, Iva as launders, her two youngest have no occupation.

By 1930, Guy Wallace is the Superintendent of Serpent Mound with his wife Grace Ellen Havens. They were married in Hillsboro, Highland Co. on July 15, 1916, but the military drafted Guy into WWI in 1918, possibly making the couple estranged after his return from war, as his marriage status is single in the 1920 census, taken in January. Fortunately, there is a second record of them remarrying on July 15, 1920. Then the 1930 Census shows their family, with Jennie, all living at Serpent Mound and his occupation is still Superintendent. I found an article from the *Portsmouth Times*, dated 22 May 1934, which confirms Guy was still "the superintendent of the park", but by 1936, there is a new superintendent.

Through supervision, blood, sweat, and tears, those three Wallace's helped turn the Serpent Mound site into the park it is today. They taught and shared their legacy, heritage, and pride with their community and to their decedents. It was in the last few years of Guy's supervision, that the park received 1,000's of man-hours of change. All supported from programs initiated from President Roosevelt's New Deal, but that will be in the next installment.