

NOTES FROM UNDER THE PRAIRIE



The Newsletter From The
SANGAMO ARCHAEOLOGICAL CENTER
Summer 2003

WELCOME...

to the first edition of *NOTES FROM UNDER THE PRAIRIE* - the newsletter for members of the SANGAMO ARCHAEOLOGICAL CENTER. As the center is a privately operated organization, and receives no financial support from state agencies, your membership is crucial to the ongoing research and interpretation of the archaeology of the Midwestern frontier.

July will mark the first anniversary of the museum at Elkhart. The opening of the exhibits received much media attention, and attendance has been growing rapidly. The enthusiastic response to the museum is much appreciated! Aside from the public museum, the center's curation facility is busy as well, hosting scholarly research and graduate student thesis studies.

If you have not already visited our new web site, be sure to have a look (www.undertheprairie.com), and watch for a new "research" section later in the year.

The Center has also launched our *Research Bulletin Series* - a publication series devoted to disseminating information regarding our collections, sites, and archaeological research. The bulletins can be purchased at the museum, along with a selection of other archaeological titles relating to the early history of Illinois.

Spring and early summer is busy time in archaeology, and there are several new fieldwork projects for 2003. Stay tuned!

ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS



As you may have read in the papers, the Center recently conducted salvage excavations at the site of the first commercial building in downtown Springfield. The site, located at the corner of Jefferson and Second Street, is being developed by Isringhausen Imports, as part of an expansion of their automobile dealership.

In the spring of 1821, Elijah Iles constructed the first commercial building in what would become Springfield, along an old Indian trail. Today, that trail is known as Jefferson Avenue, and the area surrounding Second and Jefferson is the oldest part of Springfield, predating the "Old Square" by ten years.

The two story log building built by Iles was the only store within 75 miles, and during his first years of business, Iles' clientele consisted of both white settlers and Native Americans.

Our excavations encountered the partially preserved remains of a stone walled cellar beneath the store, as well as features in the back of the lot that contained artifacts dating to the 1820s and 1830s.

The report on our work will be published in an upcoming issue of our Bulletin Series, in conjunction with a special exhibit of artifacts at the Museum.

FIELDWORK AT THE BERRY SITE

One of the earliest houses in the region - the home of the Reverend John Berry in rural Menard County - was recently demolished. Built in 1825, the once-impressive frame structure had long ago been converted into a barn, and had stood in ruins for the last 30 years. The owner, Robert Sampson, was recently forced to dismantle the unstable building, saving portions of one wall for possible display in the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.

Although the early nineteenth century structure had been destroyed, the property still contained intact archaeological deposits and features, including a substantial stone cellar associated with the original construction of the house. As no state funding was immediately available for an examination of the site prior to its impending modification, the Sangamo Archaeological Center raised private funds for a limited archaeological investigation of the property.

Our investigations at the site documented the 1825 stone cellar beneath the house, and located several features located behind the building. One of these, a large circular pit, contained chimney rubble and domestic artifacts believed to be associated with the Berry family's first dwelling - a log cabin- dating to 1822. The results of our work have been published in our new Research Bulletin Series (see back cover).



The John Berry house as it appeared just prior to demolition. The light colored siding on the right is actually original weatherboarding - hand split and whitewashed - dating to 1825.



Illinois State Historian Thomas Schwartz and land owner Robert Sampson screen soil for early nineteenth century artifacts behind the 1825 house. A large pit feature dating to the early 1820s was encountered nearby.



The crew removes the turn of the century fill from a stone walled cellar, which was constructed beneath the kitchen of the original house.



View of the cellar after removal of the fill. Note the rubble-filled exterior entryway, and the original clay floor, which had been finished with a coat of plaster and whitewash.

CURRENT PROJECTS

- **EARLY SPRINGFIELD**

Along with the archaeology of the Iles Store Site in downtown Springfield, the Center is currently working on a second project related to early Springfield and Sangamon County. This project, however, involves digging through 175-year-old documents instead of soil. Recently, researchers located several important and unpublished documents relating to the first settlers and property owners in Sangamon County, circa 1821. The Center has asked Curtis Mann, of the Sangamon Valley Collection at Lincoln Library, to provide an analysis and overview of these documents for an upcoming Bulletin. Curtis has extensive knowledge of the early families and businesses of Sangamon County, and his report on the documents will provide a fresh look at the settlement of the Sangamo Country frontier.

- **EVOLUTION OF A FAMILY FARM**

In rural Logan County stands an impressive frame "I-house" built by the Lawrence family in the early 1840s. Many original aspects of the building are unusually well preserved, and the home is owned by descendants of the Lawrence family. The center is currently documenting the evolution of the house over time, and archaeological work in the backyard of the house has encountered evidence of a possible log cabin that may predate the construction of the frame house.



- **THE FRONTIER IN SOUTHWESTERN WISCONSIN**

The center has been conducting archaeological research in the French Canadian community of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin for several years. Several pre-1830 sites have been documented, including one associated with the Winnebago War of 1827. Unfortunately, that site was recently destroyed by the construction of a Wal-Mart. The center is now working on recording and publishing other such sites in the area, in hopes that they will be better preserved.

In addition, the center recently analyzed the ceramic and glass artifacts from the excavation of the Second Fort Crawford (also in Prairie du Chien), conducted by the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center. Their report will be issued later in the year.



THE RESEARCH BULLETIN SERIES

NOW AVAILABLE

- "QUEENSWARE BY THE CRATE" : CERAMIC PRODUCTS AS ADVERTISED IN THE SAINT LOUIS MARKETPLACE 1810-1850
By Robert Mazrim and John Walthall

An overview of the ways in which china and pottery were described and sold by St Louis merchants during the early 19th century, using period newspaper advertisements.
\$ 7. 00 (members = \$ 6.30)

- UNDER THE HOUSE AT ROCK CREEK: ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE JOHN BERRY HOMESTEAD, MENARD COUNTY, ILLINOIS.
By Robert Mazrim

The report on our work at the Reverend Berry Site, which documented an impressive stone cellar built in 1825, and a small sample of artifacts from a pit sealed during the mid 1820s.
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- NEW LIGHT ON THE OLD FRENCH VILLAGE AT PEORIA: ARCHEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE "OLD VILLAGE" LOCALE IN PEORIA, ILLINOIS.
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Report submitted to the Illinois Transportation Archaeological Research Program on excavations funded by the Illinois Department of Transportation. The first archaeological evidence of French Peoria, including a small wall-trench structure.
\$ 10.00 (members = \$ 9. 00)

FROM CURATION

Selected artifacts from the archaeological collections, not currently on display.



YELLOWWARE PITCHER
Circa 1845

"Yellowware" is a semi-refined earthenware that was popularized by American potters beginning in the late 1830s. At first, a range of tablewares and kitchenwares were made in yellowware, but over time this type of ceramic became more focused on utilitarian kitchen bowls and chamber pots. This pitcher is decorated in clay slip banding referred to as a "dipt" decoration during the early 19th century. To modern collectors of pottery, such designs are generically known as "mocha wares".

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Volume 1, Number 2 Winter 2003

Into the Lab for the Winter...

We would first like to thank the many new members of the Sangamo Archaeological Center - it is no exaggeration to say that your contributions directly support the study and display of archaeological materials here at the museum.

We are now in our second year here at Elkhart, and the horizon continues to expand. Educators are beginning to discover the museum, and we encourage teachers to bring their students out for a visit.

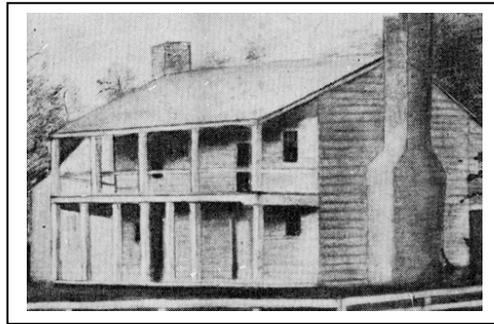
The Bulletin Series is off to a running start. Two new publications will be available before the end of the year. These include Curtis Mann's study of the recently discovered 1821 list of taxable inhabitants of Sangamon County, as well as the report on our excavations at the important Ebey-Brunk pottery kiln in southern Sangamon County.

We also hope to complete our study of the Iles Store artifacts this winter. These were recovered from salvage excavations in Springfield last March. In conjunction with a publication on the findings will be a special exhibit of the artifacts themselves.

If you have not been in the museum in while, stop by sometime- we have two new permanent exhibits, and are continually adding to the displays. Make use of that membership card!



ARCHAEOLOGY NEWS



Elkhart Hill, in present-day southern Logan County, has been a landmark for those travelling across the central Illinois prairies for centuries. One of the first individuals to capitalize on this traffic was Richard Latham, who operated a tavern at his residence at the base of the hill as early as the-mid 1820s. By the 1840s, the tavern was known as the "Kentucky House" (pictured above).

As part of the Center's ongoing study of the archaeology of Elkhart Hill, we began testing at the presumed site of the tavern this summer. The site is located in the forest that stills covers the hill. Because of it location, the site was not plowed after its abandonment - and unplowed archaeological sites are very rare in Illinois.

Our initial investigations have encountered a rich archaeological deposit that appears to reflect the remains of the tavern. Thus far, we have identified a large cellar feature, and an unlined cistern that was abandoned before 1845. Additional excavations are planned, but much of this important site will be left in preservation. The results of the archaeology at the tavern will be featured in an upcoming publication.

FIELDWORK AT THE ELIJAH ILES STORE SITE

Most residents of central Illinois do not realize that the oldest part of Springfield is not located around the "Old State Capitol". There is an even older neighborhood in town. The original commercial activity that spawned the city of Springfield began at the intersection of modern-day Jefferson Avenue (once an old Indian trail) and Second Street. It was here, in the spring of 1821, that Elijah Iles built the first commercial structure in what would become Springfield - a two-story log store building.

Last winter, we were alerted to the fact that construction was occurring at the site, and we immediately contacted the property owner - Isringhausen Imports. The Isringhausen family graciously agreed to allow archaeologists on to the property, to look for intact archaeological deposits that may be threatened by the redevelopment of the lot. With hours, our crew located not only the stone-lined cellar of the store Iles built 182 year ago, but also a cellar associated with a small building that may have served as a warehouse. That feature produced a number of artifacts dating to the earliest years of Springfield's history. These include several glass tumblers, used to serve liquor by the serving, as well as a rare brass "hawk bell". Such bells were commonly used in the Indian trade, and Iles himself recalled that during his first years of business, half of his clients were Native Americans.



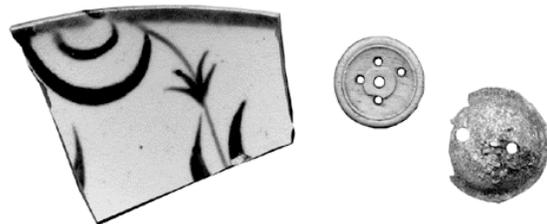
The Iles store building as it appeared during demolition in the 1890s. The store had long since been converted into a dwelling.



Excavation view (looking northwest) with store cellar and warehouse locations highlighted. The deposits were found just below the surface.



Intact fragment of the limestone cellar wall built in the spring of 1821 - perhaps the oldest historical feature in the city of Springfield?



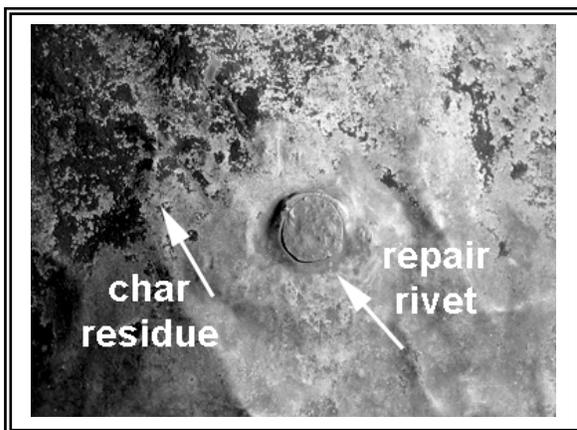
Examples of artifacts found behind the store: a painted pearlware saucer (circa 1815-25), a bone button, and a brass "hawk" bell. Although heavily damaged by urban development, the site produced an excellent sample of 1820s and 1830s material.

FROM CURATION: AN IMPORTANT PEORIA AREA ARTIFACT

Although Peoria, Illinois has a rich French and Native American legacy dating back to the late 1600s, archaeology has only recently begun to uncover traces of the city's 18th century past. Many of our members are familiar with the recent discovery (in the fall of 2001) of the first archaeological traces of French Peoria - a small, wall trench dwelling owned by a fur trader and farmer named Louis Chatellereau (see SAC Fieldwork and Technical Report Bulletin #3). Precious few 18th and early 19th century artifacts from Peoria, however, are known.



The Center recently acquired an impressive "trade" kettle, found many years ago in the vicinity of Bartonville, south of Peoria. The large copper (rather than brass) kettle was designed for cooking over an open fire. It measures 20 inches in diameter and 13 inches tall. It is finished around its rim with a flat iron band that is fitted with two handforged iron "ears" where the carrying handle is attached. Such kettles were manufactured in France as early as the 17th century, but this example probably dates to the late 18th or very early 19th century. The construction of the kettle is unusual, as it is made of a sheet of copper that has a vertical, dovetailed "seam" along one side. Most such kettles were made of a single, round sheet that was shaped with a hammer.



each season. This kettle was probably forgotten by its owner, and remained hidden in the former grove until the mid 20th century.

Evidence of the use life of the kettle appears in the form of two holes, which have been patched with brass rivets. The outside surface of the vessel still exhibits traces of a charred residue from its use over many fires. Its provenience - found in a forested upland setting away from the principal villages at Peoria - suggests that it was probably used at a sugaring camp, where maple sap was harvested and boiled down for making sugar. Such kettles were often left buried in maple groves, so that they could be used



THE RESEARCH BULLETIN SERIES

UPCOMING BULLETINS!

- **THE FIRST CITIZENS OF THE SANGAMO COUNTRY : A STUDY OF THE 1821 LIST OF TAXABLE INHABITANTS OF SANGAMON COUNTY**

By Curtis Mann

An annotated study of the first list of property holders in central Illinois - over 350 heads of households. An intriguing glimpse into the settlements and genealogies of the Sangamo Country frontier.

- **THE EARTHENWARE OF COTTON HILL: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY OF REDWARE FROM THE EBEL-BRUNK KILN SITE IN SANGAMON COUNTY, ILLINOIS 1827-1855.**

By Robert Mazrim

A richly illustrated study of some of the earliest redware made in Illinois. A surprising combination of utilitarian pots and slip decorated tablewares. A must for any reference library!

NEW PRINTER! LOWER PRICES!

- **"QUEENSWARE BY THE CRATE" : CERAMIC PRODUCTS AS ADVERTISED IN THE SAINT LOUIS MARKETPLACE 1810-1850**

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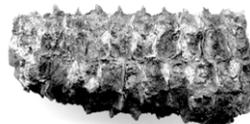
The beginning of 2004 has been remarkably busy here at the Sangamo Archaeological Center, in part due to the early arrival of spring. The big news for spring has been the center's discovery in April of the first archaeological deposits associated with "*La Ville de Maillet*" (or the "New Village") in downtown Peoria. What were designed to be limited exploratory trenches soon encountered unexpectedly well-preserved archaeological deposits predating 1820, in the heart of urban Peoria. Laboratory analysis is underway, and more work awaits. The Center is also preparing to return to the Kentucky House Site here in Elkhart, in an effort to understand the layout and growth of the tavern established in the 1820s by the Richard Latham family. Our members should watch for a members-only invitation this summer!

We have a brand new research bulletin! *The Earthenware of Cotton Hill* is an in-depth study of some of the earliest redware pottery made in Illinois. Potters from the Royal, Ebey, Newcomer, Ramsey, and Brunk families made a variety of utilitarian wares at Cotton Hill (in southern Sangamon County) between 1826 and 1855. The material was recovered during our excavations at the site in the 1990s.

As the village of Elkhart looks forward to its sesquicentennial next year, the SAC will release a new research bulletin on the frontier community and material culture associated with Elkhart Hill. The publication should be released after the New Year, and Elkhart is planning a celebration for the summer of 2005. Even closer to release is our report on our excavations at the Iles Store Site in downtown Springfield - watch for it and a special exhibit (in our new rotating display area) later this summer.

Readers will also notice that the SAC newsletter will now be featuring more in-depth articles. This will provide an outlet for some of our short subject research, as well as a more substantive newsletter for our membership (which now includes several libraries). Finally, on the subject of more to read, our director Robert Mazrim has contracted with the University of Chicago Press for a publication on the archaeology of the Sangamo Country. Just don't ask him when it will be ready.....

P.S. Our 2003-2004 memberships are expiring! The generosity of our members has provided CRUCIAL funding for the museum and our research activities. We receive absolutely *no public funding*, and we continue to rely on private support. Please consider renewing your membership. THANK YOU!



Burnt corncob from pre-1820 contexts (70 inches below ground surface), downtown Peoria.



A Second Pottery-Making Community in the Sangamo Country

By Curtis Mann

In the Sangamo Archaeological Center's new publication on the Ebey-Brunk redware kiln site in the Cotton Hill area of Sangamon County, initial research indicated a relationship between the owners of the Cotton Hill pottery and another pottery in nearby Athens, Illinois. Further research has revealed a strong familial connection between the two sites, and has also pushed back the founding of the Athens pottery well into the early 1830s.

Like the pottery at Cotton Hill, Menard County histories provide little information about the Athens pottery. While many of the families mentioned in the histories did live in Athens and were potters by trade, their exact roles are poorly understood. From a closer look at primary documents (such as land, census, and voting records), the history of the Athens pottery is now becoming clearer, however.

Although the Sangamo Archaeological Center has conducted limited archaeological testing at Athens, the wares of the Athens potters are thus far best reflected in assemblages from excavations at domestic sites located just outside of town (Figure 1).

The town of Athens was laid out by Harry Riggin in 1831. One of the earliest lot sales was to William Royal on November 26, 1831, who purchased four lots in the northwest part of town for \$40. Royal, as discussed in *The Earthenware of Cotton Hill*, was an earthenware potter who established a pottery shop at Cotton Hill with his brother Charles around 1826. The Royal brothers were probably responsible for training many of the potters who worked at Cotton Hill. Family records indicate that William left the pottery trade to become a Methodist preacher during the early-to-mid 1830s. Before this career change, however, he apparently became interested in the Athens area, perhaps for its clay resources.

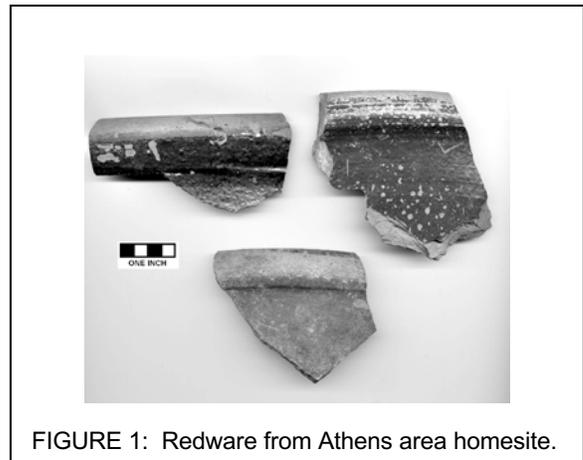


FIGURE 1: Redware from Athens area homesite.

While there is no record of the construction of a pottery kiln on William Royal's Athens property, the deed record for an adjacent lot does refer to a pottery shop on Royal's lot. Although Royal may have retired from the business and moved away from the area around 1832 or 1833, he appears to have retained ownership of the pottery, which may have remained active. Royal sold the Athens property in October of 1835 to John Shepherd for \$300. There is no record of John Shepherd working a potter, however.

Voting and census records provide the names of several Athens residents who were members of pottery-making families. Among the voters in an October 1833 election are three possible potters: Samuel Sackett, James B. Goble and Henry Ebey. Henry Ebey was a younger brother of John Ebey, who was the owner of the Cotton Hill pottery between 1829 and 1831, as well as a short-lived pottery in downtown Springfield. Samuel Sackett's sons, David and Alfred, played founding roles in Galena-area potteries during the mid 19th century, as did members of the Goble family. The

wares of the long-lived Galena potteries are perhaps the most familiar to scholars and collectors of Illinois redware (Figure 2).

Menard county histories indicate that the firm of "Gabel and Sackett" operated a pottery in Athens - very probably a reference to the *Goble* and Sackett families. It is plausible that Samuel Sackett and James B. Goble were in business together, and may have leased the pottery from William Royal during the early-mid 1830s.

John Shepherd sold the pottery site to brothers Barnett and William Ramsey in October of 1837 for \$500. The Ramseys had been in the area at least as early as 1836, when Barnett voted in an election in the Athens precinct. They had purchased a five-acre tract north of Athens in January 1837. William made additional land purchases in April and May 1837.

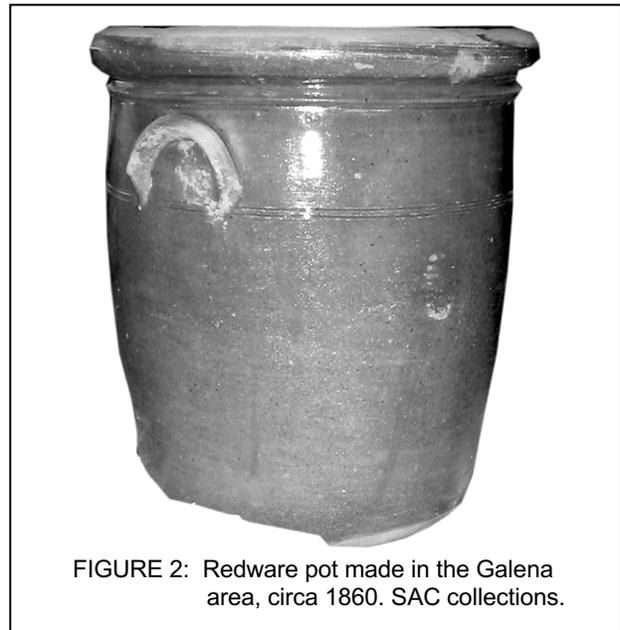


FIGURE 2: Redware pot made in the Galena area, circa 1860. SAC collections.

The Ramsey brothers were related by marriage to many of the potters located at the Cotton Hill pottery. William Ramsey, who purchased the Cotton Hill pottery from John Ebey in October of 1831, was married to Maria Brunk in May of 1830. Maria's brother, David, was working at Cotton Hill with William, and later purchased the pottery shop there. David Brunk was also related to Barnett Ramsey through marriage, each man having married daughters of Jacob Shoup.

By the time of the 1840 census, both Barnett and William Ramsey were living in Athens. No other names of known potters were found in the Athens precinct. William Ramsey apparently sold his portion of the pottery prior to 1843 when he moved his family to Iowa. He remained there until the early 1850s. Barnett Ramsey remained at the Athens pottery until the early 1850s. The 1850 census of Menard County lists Ramsey as a 36-year-old potter worth \$3,000.

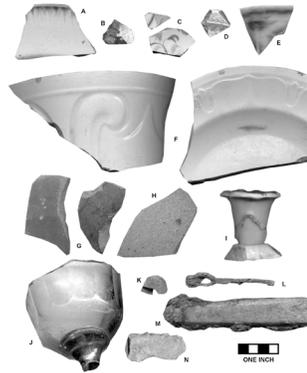
The Athens pottery apparently remained active into the mid 19th century, as three additional households in the Athens precinct were headed by potters. In 1851, J.W. Frackelton bought the pottery from Barnett Ramsey and announced his intention to carry on the business at a large scale. Mr. Ramsey took his family to the Oregon Territory, where he is credited as establishing one of the first potteries there. His brother William eventually joined him as well. The last known potter working at Athens is John Pierson, a 62-year-old Ohio native, who is enumerated in the 1860 census as a potter. The shop at Athens was probably closed during or after the Civil War.

The recent research into the Athens pottery reaffirms the importance of the Cotton Hill pottery - and the Royal brothers - in the origins of the redware pottery industry of Illinois. The shop at Cotton Hill trained a large number of young potters, who would later establish new potteries across central and northern Illinois. In fact, it would now appear that the Cotton Hill and Athens potteries were the ancestors of the redware made in Galena throughout the second half of the 19th century, as well as some of the earliest pottery to be produced in the Oregon Territory.

FOLLOW-UP: THE LAWRENCE FARM SITE

This winter, we completed our excavation and architectural evaluation report on the historic Lawrence family farmstead, located just east of Elkhart Hill. The current house on the property was constructed around 1840. Inside the house, we found evidence of two substantial remodeling episodes, dating to circa 1860 and 1890. The core of the house, however, represents an unusually well-preserved example of 1840s "I-house" architecture, and includes original doors, mantle pieces, cabinetry, and trim.

In the yard of the house, we identified several archeological features dating to the early-to-mid 19th century. One of these appears to be the footprint of a log dwelling that predates the 1840 construction of the frame house. The owner of the farm is currently planning to open a bed and breakfast in the historic home. When the project is completed, guests will have a unique opportunity to spend time in a little piece of 1840s Illinois.

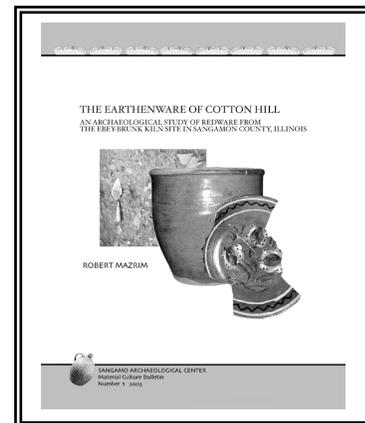


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\$ 12. 00 : plus \$ 3 shipping, Illinois residents add .75 sales tax



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