

# Project Future

## Archaeology

One advantage of using Whiteside as a case study as opposed to other Anglo-American settlers is the accessibility of his former property. Because it is now part of a public university, the land is available for study by historians, anthropologists, and archaeologists that work at SIUE.

My personal experience with the SIUE landscape certainly informed my argument about the Whitesides' impact on that landscape. Still, there is much more to be learned about that impact, and much of it could be told by the landscape. Aside from the Whiteside grave, their precise occupation of the land is unknown. This includes the location of their farmland and cabin, along with other possible structures.

Perhaps the Whitesides have left more behind than a grave. Yet whatever that might be, it has yet to be discovered, with the possible exception of a buckle.

The anthropology department at SIUE has conducted a number of excavations on the Edwardsville campus, uncovering both pre-contact and post-contact artifacts. The post-contact artifacts include brick and glass remains. Without doing more extensive study it is difficult to determine if these are from Whiteside's era, but likely most are from after his time.

One example is the discovery of a root cellar at the Gehring Site, believed to be from the 1870s. The Gehring Site, 11MS99, is an archaeological site located on the western floodplain of the SIUE campus and Whiteside's former property. More recently, it was on the property of farmer Wilbur Gehring until the land was bought for the SIUE campus in the 1960s, though Gehring continued to farm the land as a tenant farmer. It was first identified as an archaeological site by Patrick J. Munson and Alan D. Harn, who conducted an archaeological survey of the American Bottom, and SIUE in particular, in 1971. Since the early 70s, SIUE faculty have conducted a number of investigations at the Gehring Site. Starting in summer 2009, SIUE Anthropology Professors Julie Holt and Gregory Vogel have conducted annual archaeology field schools at the Gehring Site.<sup>1</sup>



Two possible artifacts from Whiteside's era found on campus are a buckle and a lead shot. I photographed them in 2015.

In the summer 2012 field school, the first historic structure was found at the Gehring Site: a root cellar. Archaeology student Anna Marie Wright wrote her senior project on the root cellar shortly thereafter, with the goal of determining who used the root cellar. She examined the artifacts found in the cellar: remnants of earthen ware, ironstone, and stoneware, and used secondary sources on when those particular ceramics were available and popular in America. This led to the 1870s estimate, nearly a half century after Whiteside's death. In 1873 Whiteside's former property was owned by William Tyler Brown, meaning the cellar was likely used by Brown, or, more likely, hired farm hands, as Brown

lived in Edwardsville.<sup>2</sup> Brown was the husband of Mary E. Swaggart, William Bolin's granddaughter, which is likely how he came to own the land.<sup>3</sup>

Numerous other post-contact artifacts have been found at the Gehring Site, which were analyzed in Jessica Robart's 2010 senior project. The only artifact she identified from Whiteside's era is what she identified as a belt buckle. She writes:

One buckle was found at the site. It appears to be a belt buckle from the 18th century after closely comparing it with other buckles found at historic sites in the area.<sup>4</sup>

Because the supposed buckle may have belonged to Whiteside, I examined and photographed it myself to show to history professors. SIUE history professor Robert Paulett believes it might have been a harness buckle for a horse, due to its large size. In any case, it is possible the buckle did not belong to Whiteside if it is, in fact, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as Whiteside did not arrive until 1802. It might be remains of French occupation.

Still, the buckle is an indication that Whiteside artifacts other than the obelisk have survived to the present. Robart analyzed many other post-contact artifacts, some of which she was unable to date. It is very possible some of them were Whiteside's. The root cellar too indicates that

structures relatively close to Whiteside's time have survived, meaning that the remnants of the Whiteside cabin might be waiting to be discovered.

My hope is that the anthropology department continues to excavate the SIUE campus, perhaps with greater collaboration with the history department. Having scanned the gravesite numerous times (as discussed on [Whiteside Cemetery](#)), perhaps they could scan other areas near the cemetery in search of the cabin. More generally, archaeology at SIUE could further enhance our understanding of the land's history, and not just William B. Whiteside's occupation. Many different groups of pre-contact Native Americans, post-contact Native Americans, French, and Americans after Whiteside.

## Future Scholarship

My hope is that I am not the last history student to write about William Bolin Whiteside. In particular, I invite future students to analyze and critique the argument I presented on this website. No doubt there are flaws or gaps in evidence, some of which I am aware of. For example, I am wary of my over-reliance on the writings of John Reynolds and on primary sources that relate to Whiteside directly. There are numerous other primary sources from frontier Illinois that would further shed light on the natural relationships of Anglo-Americans. These include, but are not limited to:

- Lawrence, Barbara and Nedra Branz, eds., [The Flagg Correspondence: Selected Letters, 1816 - 1854](#). Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986.
- Edwards, Ninian W., [History of Illinois from 1778 to 1833 and Life and Times of Ninian Edwards](#). Springfield, Il.: The Illinois State Journal Company, 1870.
- Carter, Clarence Edwin, ed. [The Territorial papers of the United States: Volume II, The Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, 1787 - 1803](#). (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), 252 - 253.

- Carter, Clarence Edwin, ed. [\*The Territorial papers of the United States: Volume XVI, The Territory of Illinois 1809 - 1814\*](#). Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1948.
- Philbrick, Francis S., ed., [\*The laws of Indiana Territory, 1801-1809\*](#), volume 21 of *Collections of the Illinois State Historical Library*. Springfield, Il.: Illinois State Historical Library, 1930.
- Buck, Solomon Justus, [\*Illinois in 1818\*](#). Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1918.
- [\*History of Madison County, Illinois, Illustrated, With Biographical Sketches of Many Prominent Men and Pioneers\*](#), Edwardsville: W. R. Brink & Co., 1882.
- *The Edwards papers: being a portion of the collection of the letters, papers, and manuscripts of Ninian Edwards*, ed. E. B. Washburne, vol. 3 of Chicago Historical Society Collection. Chicago: Fergus Printing Company, 1884
- [\*Illustrated Encyclopedia and Atlas Map of Madison County, Ill.: Carefully Compiled from Personal Examinations and Surveys\*](#). St. Louis: Brink McCormick & Co., 1873.
- Johnston, Bob, ed., [\*Court Records of Madison County, Illinois 1818 – 1821, Complete with Index\*](#). Edwardsville: Madison County Genealogical Society, 1983.
- Johnston, Bob, ed., [\*Records and Indentures Madison County, Illinois 1813 - 1815 Volume 1: Complete with Index\*](#). Edwardsville: Madison County Genealogical Society, 1982.
- Dexter, Darrel, [\*Bondage in Egypt: Slavery in Southern Illinois\*](#). Cape Girardeau, MO: Center for Regional History at Southeast Missouri State University, 2011.
- Vandervelde, Lea, [\*Redemption Songs: Sung for Freedom before Dred Scott\*](#). New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- [\*Sangamo Journal\*](#)

I used many of those as sources, but I primarily used them for documents directly related to the Whitesides in general and William Bolin in particular. Expanding the focus to other settlers would enhance further studies on the settlers' relationship with nature.

In addition, Whiteside could be used as a case study for a number of other topics. These include:

1. Slavery in the supposedly free territory of Illinois
2. The agency of African Americans in frontier Illinois
3. Relations between Anglo-Americans and Native Americans in frontier Illinois
4. Relations between Anglo-Americans and the French in frontier Illinois, including the causes of the French disappearance in Illinois
5. Women's role in Anglo-American society in frontier Illinois
6. Divorce in frontier Illinois
7. Children's role in Anglo-American society in frontier Illinois
8. Religious practice in frontier Illinois
9. Early trade and capitalism in frontier Illinois
10. The persistence and mutability of southern culture in frontier Illinois
11. An analysis of Winny Whiteside's freedom suit, which set the legal precedence broken by the Dred Scott decision
12. How frontier Illinois settlers could both be agents and transgressors of the law

No doubt there are others. However future scholars study the Whitesides, I hope they continue to enlighten our understanding of frontier Illinois.

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1. Julie Zimmermann Holt, *SIUE 2013 Field School Investigations at 11MS99*, October 2013. Published Online.
2. Anna Marie Wright, "Who resided at the Gehring Site? A Historic Archaeological Look into the People Who Occupied 11MS99, the Gehring Site," (senior project, SIUE, 2010s).
3. William R. Whiteside, "The Family of William Bolin Whiteside."
4. Jessica Robart, "The Gehring site: An Analysis of the Historical Artifacts Found on the Site," (senior project, SIUE, 2010).