

“The Finest Example of its Kind”: How Newspapers Covered the Purchase of Angel Mounds

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Storytellers across the world romanticize the past by weaving stories of fantastic riches and supernatural rituals. Through the centuries since its “discovery” by European explorers, the North American continent served as the setting for a myriad of tales emphasizing the oddity and peculiarity of those who predated European contact –stories of Native peoples who possessed treasures ranging from lost cities of gold to fountains of youth. Rarely, if ever, did storytellers acknowledge Native residents as actual people rather than dramatized characters in a story. Indigenous residents of a region, despite being native to the area, were seen as the exotic ones, their lifestyles and practices foreign to the foreigners who came to force them from their homestead. The label of “Native” or “Indian,” once applied, marked a person or group of persons as different or dangerous. This allowed European settlers, and later Americans, to ignore the reality in favor of the myth or popular perception. An “Indian” was a relic of a long-gone past, something to be eradicated by the “modernity” of European society. Despite movements by Native groups to reclaim their identities in contemporary American society, this attitude to an extent exists today and ran rampant in the mid-20th century. One instance in 1938 proved exemplary of the distance between the identities of contemporary Native groups and the miscast memories of their ancestors. The purchase of the Angel Mounds site by the archaeological authority of Indiana, heavily covered in local press, pushed the narrative of an exotic, potentially lucrative site in the citizens’ own backyard.

From around 1100 to 1450 AD, a Mississippian culture group occupied what is now the Angel Mounds State Historic Site, which sits on a swampy bend of the Ohio River a few miles from the town of Evansville, Indiana. The circumstances surrounding the society’s departure from the land are unknown. Now, there stands a visitors’ center that explains what is known about the residents of the site, and displays some archaeological interpretations of what life

might have been.¹ Following the land's purchase, the Works Progress Administration first carried out archaeological excavations under the leadership of the Indiana Historical Society and archaeologist Glenn Black; later, students of Indiana University continued the work in annual field schools. Most of the artifacts excavated from the site in these digs are housed in the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology at Indiana University in Bloomington. Before its purchase in 1938, the Angel Mounds site was fertile farmland. Six families held title to tracts of the property, which straddled the line between Vanderburgh and Warrick counties. For years, various interested parties, including the Indiana Historical Society and the Evansville Society of Fine Arts and History, attempted to get their hands on the entirety of the site –some 400 acres.² The opportunity to fully acquire the property came at the end of 1938, with a two-part fundraising drive which came desperately down to the wire. Local press coverage overwhelmingly framed the purchase of the site in financial terms and attempted to appeal to the civic pride of Evansville's citizens. Despite dozens of calls for action, columnists were unsuccessful in rousing the city to deliver the needed monetary response.

Before continuing, it is necessary to acknowledge and thank the tribes indigenous to this land, on whose traditional homelands the Angel Mounds State Historic Site currently stands. Studying newspaper coverage allows for an analysis of the ways in which the purchase of Angel Mounds was presented to certain literate white residents of Indiana. Local reporters and editors produced articles for consumption by a public with little or no regard for the memory of the people who once lived and walked on the land their city occupied. This coverage undermined and ignored Native voices. The citizens and editors alike expressed even less of an understanding

¹“[Angel Mounds](http://indianamuseum.org),” *indianamuseum.org*, Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites, retrieved 29 Apr. 2019.

²“Angel Mounds, Site of ‘First Evansville,’” *Sunday Courier and Press (Evansville, IN)*, 26 Feb. 1939.

that descendant groups were not only present around the United States, but actively harmed by the proliferation of an incomplete narrative which erased both their existence and the memories of their ancestors. When studying an event or era, it is just as important to look at what is notably *not* present as what is. In this case, there was a notable lack of understanding that the residents of the Angel Mounds site were anything more than long-dead “mound builders” who left behind a legacy of material culture to be used for the benefit of modern Evansville citizens. This study, then, saw the coverage framed in terms of what newspaper staffs intended their audiences to consume. Though the narrative provided by the articles is incomplete, it grants insight into the contemporary, small-town American audience and its attitude toward cultural heritage and Native peoples.

A handful of newspapers published dozens of articles across the state of Indiana in the nine month period between June 1938 and February 1939. The majority focused on the deadline to purchase the land in October ‘38. All 35 articles used in this study are found in the Glenn Black miscellaneous papers housed in the Kellar Library at the Glenn Black Lab. Glenn Black, a self-taught archaeologist instrumental in early Midwestern archaeology, was heavily involved in the purchase and later excavation of the Angel Mounds site. Though not much is known about exactly who collected his papers –some was likely done posthumously by Ida Black or Eli Lilly, both of whom were vital to the excavation of Angel Mounds– it is clear these articles were purposefully handpicked from the dozens published statewide during the period. The coverage gave a different view of the decade’s end in Evansville, a town hard-hit by the Great Depression and a devastating flood in 1937. One early article in the folder detailed a proposed flood control project prompted by the flood’s destruction, intended to protect Evansville by raising levees around low-lying parts of the city. Near the beginning of the proposed levee route stood what

would eventually become the Angel Mounds historic site.³ Though rising unemployment and high suicide rates from the Great Depression marred the beginning of the decade, outlook in the city eventually began to improve. Following the development of a highway and the 1938 discovery of oil, Evansville's previously agriculture-based economy was hailed as one of the first nationwide to break the Depression's hold. As scholar James E. Morlock described in his book *The Evansville Story: A Cultural Interpretation*:

In spite of the depression, bank failures, hard times, and a disastrous flood, the city made great improvements and remarkable progress during the thirties. In fact, there have been few decades, if any, that faced such great difficulties, and few that produced great achievements.⁴

Conversely, scholar James Lachlan MacLeod described an Evansville "badly affected" by the Great Depression until America's entry into World War II transformed the city into a center for military construction, with a booming business centered on plane construction and a large shipyard.⁵ Prominent figures in state archaeology demanded a major fiscal commitment from Evansville citizens, the magnitude of which was often recognized by columnists. Studying articles regarding the purchase of Angel Mounds adds to the understanding of the decade. Providing no conclusive resolution to the narrative split, the coverage instead adds another perspective to conflicting reflections on the decade produced by later scholars. Columnists both acknowledge the devastating effects of the Great Depression and the 1937 flood, and support Morlock's claims of the city's relatively rapid recovery. The economic toil caused by the Depression did not, however, overwhelm coverage as MacLeod's interpretation might suggest;

³"Routes of Levees to Meet 56.7 Flood Mark Mapped," *Evansville Courier (Evansville, IN)*, 5 Jun. 1938.

⁴Morlock, James E. *The Evansville Story: A Cultural Interpretation* (Evansville, IN: Creative Press, 1981), 197.

⁵MacLeod, James Lachlan. *Evansville in World War II* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2015), 12.

rather, editorials focused on the economic benefits proffered by the purchase and development of the Angel Mounds site.

The flood of articles about the two-part purchase effort began with two columns published in local papers, the *Evansville Courier and Press*. The earliest article collected in Black's papers appeared in the June 30, 1938, edition of the *Press*, and introduced the fundraising campaign with little fanfare—a mere 110 words announcing the beginning of the drive on the following Tuesday. In the process of acquiring the site, it was announced the head of the local fine arts and history society, Paul H. Schmidt, would work with state archaeologists Glenn Black out of Indianapolis and E.Y. Guernsey out of Bedford.⁶ The first figures put the cost of the site at \$80,000, of which the Indiana Historical Society (IHS) expected to raise two-thirds. The society made no mention of where it expected the remaining third to come until the following article, from the *Courier* of the same day. The lead notified Evansville's citizens that the society expected \$35,000 of them.⁷ Rapidly expiring options for purchase gave the city just two weeks to raise the money.⁸ Once received, the IHS expected to use the money to establish a state park and restore the Angel Mounds site as it was some 900 years before. This marked the first mention of the site's archaeological value and promise as a state park. The author drew parallels with state parks across the river in Kentucky and Ohio, describing the economic prosperity that would surely follow the development of the Angel Mounds land as a designated park.⁹ Fundraiser leaders did not expect a mass fundraising campaign from ordinary Evansville citizens: "A general campaign is out of the question; but with the civic interest and importance in

⁶"Campaign to Raise Mounds Park Fund," *Evansville Press (Evansville, IN)*, 30 Jun. 1938.

⁷"Mounds Fund Drive Slated," *Evansville Courier (Evansville, IN)*, 30 Jun. 1938.

⁸"Saving the Angel Mounds," *Evansville Courier (Evansville, IN)*, 30 Jun. 1938.

⁹Articles frequently alluded to sites in Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky such as memorials at Vincennes, Lincoln City, and New Harmony; parks at Audubon and Santa Claus; and a Mounds site at Wickliffe.

view, some wealthy public-minded citizen or group of citizens might do worse than give the money for the purpose.”¹⁰

July 4 marked the first appearance of news about Angel Mounds outside of Evansville; the *Indianapolis News* published an article on that day emphasizing the personality of those archaeologists involved in the site’s purchase. “Excitement is a quality not generally associated with archeologists—those prying gentlemen (and ladies, too) who poke their spades into ruins in an effort to add a few more years to the known history of the world,” the article began, “Yet Glenn Black, archeologist of the Indiana State Historical Society, is as excited as it is possible for an archeologist to be.”¹¹ The excitement came from the archaeological promise of the site, and the potential economic benefits. With the reconstruction of an authentic village –or, at least, the closest archaeological guess at what the village may have been– would make Evansville the only site in the United States to do so. The same day, a similar article emphasizing the novelty of a reconstructed prehistoric Native village appeared in the *Kokomo Tribune*, signaling that news of Angel Mounds had reached northern Indiana, on the other side of the state from Evansville.¹² In an attempt to drum up local support, articles declared the site exemplary, “the finest example of its kind obtainable anywhere.”¹³ The initial July 10 deadline arrived, and with it the news that the Historical Society managed to acquire a third of the land. The society entirely funded the \$12,000 purchase; articles made no mention of civic support, or the lack thereof.¹⁴ Picked up by the Associated Press, a syndicated piece about the partial purchase appeared in cities across Indiana –Anderson, Kokomo, Muncie, and Gary. A few days later, variations on the article

¹⁰“Saving the Angel Mounds,” 30 Jun. 1938.

¹¹“Archaeologist Eager for Mound Purchase,” *Indianapolis News*, 4 Jul. 1938. There is a discrepancy in the spelling of “archaeologist” in the collected newspaper articles, something which persists in press coverage today.

¹²“Propose To Preserve Prehistoric Mounds,” *Kokomo Tribune (Kokomo, IN)*, 4 Jul. 1938.

¹³“‘Finest Example’ of Kind Afforded by Angel Mounds,” *Evansville Courier (Evansville, IN)*, 6 Jul. 1938.

¹⁴“First Steps Taken to Establish State Park at Evansville,” *Anderson Bulletin (Anderson, IN)*, 14 Jul. 1938.

appeared in Poseyville, Bristol, and Lafayette. The remaining tracts of land, owned by four other families, seemed to disappear from coverage until October 1938. An *Evansville Press* article of October 9 began with a direct appeal to “civic-minded, public-spirited and financially-able citizens” for \$24,000, funds the IHS needed to complete the final part of the deal.¹⁵

Archaeological authorities attempted to emphasize the historical value of the cultural heritage that would be studied and preserved after Angel Mounds came into IHS ownership. Dr. Carl E. Guthe, former chairman of the National Research Council Committee on State Archeological Surveys, put it plainly as a matter of preservation:

The history of the American Indian is a part of the history of the United States, and for this reason should be recorded and preserved for future generations of American citizens. During recent years public-spirited organizations and individuals have come to realize the importance of preserving these Indian records.¹⁶

As coverage continued, both archaeologists and columnists grew gradually more desperate for civic engagement. The most striking piece from October 1938 came from *Courier* staff writer Ben Lieberman. In it, Lieberman repeatedly insisted it would be “sickening” for Evansville to lose Angel Mounds due to an inability to pay the needed \$24,000 to ensure the IHS’s purchase, something he and other supporters of the project saw as a small price to pay.¹⁷ Lieberman felt strongly the amount should not stop Evansville citizens from supporting the venture:

¹⁵“Appeal Made for Funds to Buy Site of Mounds,” *Evansville Press* (Evansville, IN), 9 Oct. 1938.

¹⁶“Appeal Made for Funds to Buy Site of Mounds,” 9 Oct. 1938.

¹⁷Lieberman, Ben. “Angel Mounds Threatened; \$24,000 Short of Goal,” *Evansville Courier* (Evansville, IN), 9 Oct. 1938.

From any standpoint—dollars and cents to educational to maybe nothing more than mere civic pride—how can any community the size of Evansville let \$24,000 destroy a thing of historic value that can never be had again?¹⁸

Estimates of the site's potential value ranged from \$50,000 to \$100,000 in revenue expected from tourists coming to visit the reconstructed village. Articles constantly compared the prospective value as a tourist attraction to that garnered by nearby parks and memorials at Lincoln City and New Harmony, frequently drawing upon the theme of civic pride and citizens' duty to their city. In addition to these comparisons, Lieberman emphasized cultural heritage, something rarely seen in other articles; instead of framing the site as Native heritage, though, he posed it to modern Evansville as its own, something that brought with it a sense of ownership he intended as motivation to support the project. Reconstructing the village and establishing a state or federal park, he argued, was necessary "so that the modern Americans may know what the earlier ones were like." It was rare for columnists to acknowledge the site's original Native residents as Americans, instead usually opting to describe them as ancient peoples unrelated to current Indianans, or omit them entirely.

As acknowledged in Lieberman's article, the purchase and subsequent excavations of Angel Mounds concerned the sensitive subject of cultural heritage. There is no single definition for such a complicated term. UNESCO recently refined their definition to include both tangible and intangible aspects of a culture, from physical artifacts to oral tradition, rituals, and knowledge about traditional crafts and skills.¹⁹ Expanding the definition helped to ensure more aspects of a culture are regarded as important and deserving of preservation, but introduces a new set of difficulties in preserving them. Previously, outside scholars dominated the gathering and preserving of a group's culture. A notable example comes from ethnomusicologist Alan

¹⁸Lieberman, "Angel Mounds Threatened; \$24,000 Short of Goal," 9 Oct. 1938.

¹⁹"[What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?](#)," *ich.unesco.org*, UNESCO, retrieved 2 May 2019.

Lomax and his recording of “race records,” musical and spoken works by African-American performers and others. His methods were comparable to the journalistic phenomenon known as “parachute journalism,” in which an event draws a large number of media outlets and reporters to a location. After a few days, weeks, or months of intense reporting, the national and international media leaves and the local residents are left to pick up the pieces. While some argue this form of media coverage is done with the best of intentions –to cover a tragic or incredible event in a place not often receiving of such in-depth coverage– the method portrays an incomplete story. With local papers, the editorial staff and their constituents build a level of trust and a sense of community. Year-round coverage grants a better picture of the town and its citizens, rather than representing them with a smattering of soundbites and news clips of them at their most vulnerable or grief-stricken. Citizens are more involved in the process, rather than simply being part of the product. While folksingers and musicians certainly participated in Lomax’s recording process, their involvement beyond that point was constrained to a voice on a recording device. Their traditions and crafts were shared without context, in a way that could easily –by accident or otherwise– be made to misrepresent its creators. To remedy this exclusion of the creators’ voice, groups began to create their own memorials and educational centers. Take for example the Citizen Potawatomi Nation’s Cultural Heritage Center in Shawnee, Oklahoma, which seeks to preserve, exhibit, and explore the Nation’s culture and traditions. Its mission statement emphasizes the need to educate both tribal members and others about the intersection of past and present in tribal tradition.²⁰ A study of cultural heritage enters a world of contradiction and raises the need to balance and include different voices in order to tell a more complete story. Press

²⁰“[Cultural Heritage Center](http://potawatomi.org),” *potawatomi.org*, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, retrieved 2 May 2019.

coverage of culturally sensitive issues rarely reflects the multi-dimensional nature, something especially true of the 1938 coverage of Angel Mounds.

Though Lieberman's article nodded to the issue of cultural heritage and was more apt to reflect the view of locals as he himself was a staff reporter for an Evansville paper, it still provided a description of the issue that put stark distance between current and former residents of the area. This distance continued through the coverage to frame the issue as a matter of territorialism: Evansville citizens versus outsiders. Evansville needed to prove it would not rely entirely on out-of-city help, and instead could help itself. The Sunday morning feature emphasized the necessity of quick action on the part of citizens to finance the remaining money by the approaching deadline—the following Saturday. The IHS raised the majority of the money upstate, and relied upon Evansville to provide the remainder. Earlier opinions that only wealthy Evansville citizens should be approached for donations had changed. Paul Schmidt, head of Evansville's Society of Fine Arts and History, explained the society's reasoning:

With the recession being felt strongly, and many persons in need...we did not feel that we ought to ask for money. But now that the economic and war clouds are lifting, and the mound project becomes a now-or-never proposition, we feel that anything which can help secure the property ought to be tried.²¹

Despite the publicity surrounding the fundraising drive and the "heroic" work of the historical society, the citizens seemed largely unresponsive. Lieberman reacted strongly, attempting to incite readers to action by reminding them it was not just the duty of the IHS to acquire the site:

[E]veryone seems interested except Evansville. And to be fairly blunt about it, some of the upstate donors think it a little unusual (to say the least) that a project which would benefit Evansville so directly should be financed entirely by outsiders. One-third of the money is hardly more than a fair share, at worst...The point is the money must be got, and Evansville is the only place it can come from—if it comes at all.²²

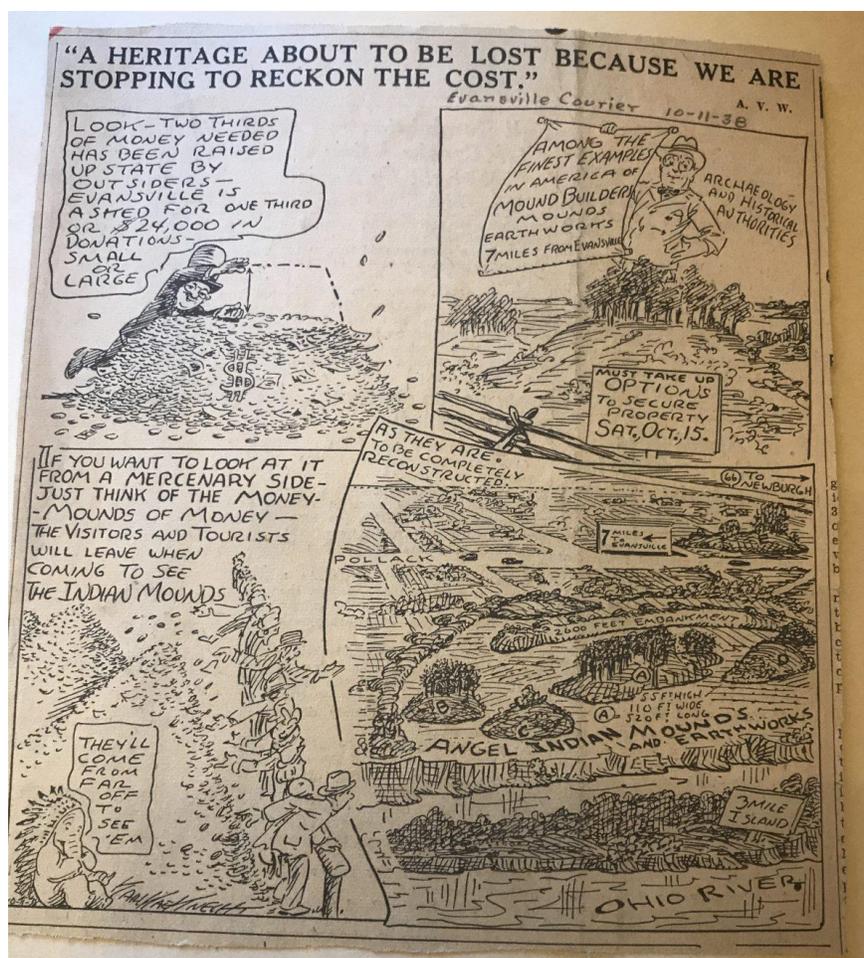
²¹“‘Informal Drive’ to Raise \$24,000 Needed To Save Angel Mounds Started Locally,” *Evansville Courier*, 10 Oct. 1938.

²²Lieberman, “Angel Mounds Threatened; \$24,000 Short of Goal,” 9 Oct. 1938.

At this point in the fundraising drive, with the final deadline looming, completion of the “now-or-never proposition” was not assured. Supporters of the deal, including state archaeologists, local civic leaders, and newspaper columnists, took strong stances in editorials and public speaking engagements to spur –or, in the case of some, guilt and shame– Evansville into action. As put in Lieberman’s passionate editorial: “[I]f the Mounds are lost to us, sickening would be the word.”

In addition to the strong words of Lieberman’s column, the *Courier* drove home the necessity of saving Angel Mounds through an editorial cartoon. A popular local cartoonist, Karl Kae Knecht, affectionately referred to by readers as “K.K.K.,” produced cartoons for the *Evansville Courier* from 1906 to 1960. He served as a near-constant presence in Evansville homes, and was often able to influence locals through his work.²³ Knecht often took on the role of activist in his cartoons, calling for change at a local, national, and global level on subjects ranging from maritime safety after the 1912 *Titanic* disaster, to sinking American morale during World War II, to –in October 1938– the purchase of Angel Mounds. The passionately-worded cartoon began with the headline “A Heritage About To Be Lost Because We Are Stopping To Reckon The Cost.”

²³MacLeod, James Lachlan. *The Cartoons of Evansville’s Karl Kae Knecht: Half a Century of Artistic Activism* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2017).



Knecht echoed Lieberman's sentiment that \$24,000 was not an excessive price tag for the potential value brought by the site. Again, the upcoming Saturday deadline was prominently placed to remind Evansville citizens of how dire the situation had become. Pictured archaeological and historical authorities proclaimed Angel Mounds "among the finest examples in America" of prehistoric settlements created by so-called "Mound Builders." Knecht clearly placed himself on the side of those wishing to purchase the site:

If you want to look at it from a mercenary side, just think of the money –mounds of money– the visitors and tourists will leave when coming to see the Indian Mounds.²⁴

²⁴"A Heritage About to be Lost Because We are Stopping to Reckon the Cost," *Evansville Courier* (Evansville, IN), 11 Oct. 1938.



Standing often in the bottom corner of his cartoons was Kay, a cartoon elephant which came to be recognizable as Knecht's signature. In this panel, Kay, dressed in a cartoonish exaggerated headdress, was clearly meant to mimic the Native residents of the site. The design brings to mind another feature of K.K.K.'s cartoons and of the coverage of the time –the romanticizing of archaeology and ancient civilizations. As insinuated in Lieberman's description of the historical society's work as "heroic," writers often framed archaeological work in the 1930s as exciting and 'exotic' for the outcome, neglecting the reality of long, hard days of excavation work in the field. The 1938 coverage came just a few years after Howard Carter's widely-publicized excavation of King Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt, something that entertained and enraptured interested parties across the globe. Articles focused on the potential value, usually monetary, of artifacts, rather than on the people to whom they once belonged and about whom they could inform. Lieberman's article and Knecht's cartoon especially pander to that romanticized view of the study of the past.

This study approached the purchase of Angel Mounds as a historiography, rather than in archaeological terms. Incorporating journalistic approaches into historical study adds a new

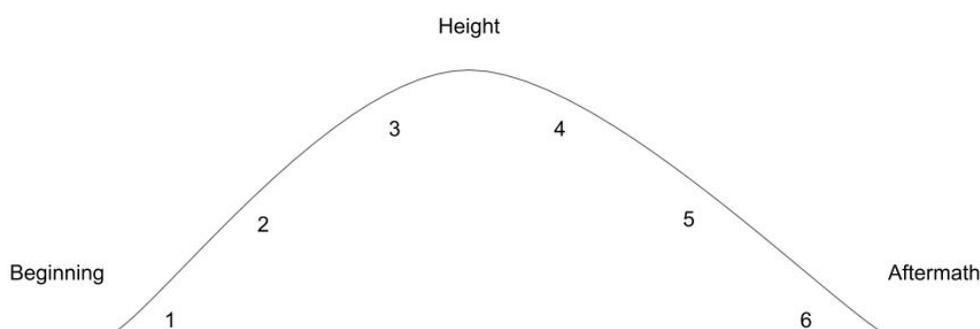
dimension, providing a sense of how contemporary readers consumed the news. Editors framed the news in terms of how important they themselves found it, balanced with how important they determined it would be to readers. Whereas the current journalism community generally agrees the policy should be to clearly label opinion-based content, early American journalism did not always draw such clear distinctions. After the penny press revolution of the mid-nineteenth century made printing more accessible, a wider range of people could share their voices and grow followings of similar-minded readers. The growth of the local paper following the Civil War ensured the place of the newspaper as the main source of information for the average American.²⁵ The editorial staff of these papers rose to be respected and influential figures in a small town's political and social scene for their insight and attention to local news, something unavailable in papers imported from more urbanized regions. Personal commentary took over much of the paper, flowing over the margins of the designated editorial page. The Great Depression cemented the role of the editorialist in small town America, as described in Leonard Ray Teel's history of American journalism: "Sensing an appetite for serious analysis, the press offered an array of thoughtful editorialists and columnists who commented on aspects of the political, economic, and social situation and often offered solutions."²⁶ The editorial page transformed into a marketplace of ideas, a place some Americans looked for solutions and comfort in the midst of nationwide suffering. This reliance by their readers allowed columnists to hold remarkable power, and the ability to sway local affairs to their own ends. Due to the importance of the newspaper as a local political and social authority, features pertaining to the purchase of Angel Mounds should be considered "calls to action" in which the columnist directly

²⁵Tebbel, John. *The Compact History of the American Newspaper* (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1969), 125.

²⁶Teel, Leonard Ray. *The Public Press, 1900-1945: The History of American Journalism* (Westport, Ct.: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 130.

urged action of their reader. Sides of an issues were clearly defined, with special emphasis placed on the side with which the columnist agreed.

In a time before the Internet allowed ready access to outside reporting, the editorial staffs of Evansville's papers wielded their influence in reporting the purchase of Angel Mounds. In additions to frequently-quoted sources who appeared across multiple articles, columnists also used unnamed sources. Quotes from these they presented in such euphemistic terms as "the *Courier* learned authoritatively," phrasing which suggested someone close to the purchase spoke to the press on the grounds they not be identified by name.²⁷ Using their sway within the community, the *Courier* and *Press* staffs could present the words of these unidentified individuals as fact and likely not face questions about the statements' validity or the source's authority. In an event with such local importance as the purchase of Angel Mounds, press coverage follows a similar parabolic pattern.



1. Introduction of Issue/Mention of Human Interest Aspect
2. Sense of Urgency
3. Further Information/Call to Action
4. Event Itself
5. Follow-up/Next Steps
6. Wrap-up/Reminder (if appl.)

²⁷"Deal Completed for Angel Mounds," *Evansville Courier*, 15 Oct. 1938.

An issue is first introduced with an emphasis on human interest, something which appeals to local readers. Then, as coverage progresses or a deadline approaches, a sense of urgency is added through feature pieces and calls to action. The event itself marks a peak in the coverage, with papers both within and outside of the local coverage area publishing stories. After this point, follow-up pieces continue the narrative to inform readers of the event's aftermath. As time passes, other wrap-up or reminder pieces may be published, sometimes in longer features, especially if further action is needed or desired from locals. The purchase of Angel Mounds fell within this pattern, with the first pieces appearing two weeks before the initial deadline, four months before the final October 1938 cut-off. The coverage peaked in the week leading up to the October purchase date with a dozen articles from local and cross-Indiana papers. Coverage began to fall off as further financial aid from the IHS allowed the successful completion of the purchase; interest from the Works Progress Administration triggered a brief resurgence of coverage in December.²⁸ The final piece came in the combined *Sunday Courier and Press* of February 26, 1939, five months after the Mounds came into IHS hands.²⁹ A long-form feature, the author summarized the drama of the purchase from June to December of the previous year, and spun a tale –claiming basis in the guesswork of archaeological authorities– about the previous Mississippian inhabitants of the site. The article also provided information about the extent of Evansville's financial contributions to the Mounds' purchase:

These funds were furnished by the Indiana Historical Society...with the exception of \$127, contributed by local people, as follows: Paul H. Schmidt \$100; Mrs. George S. Clifford \$25,000; Robert M. Leich \$1; anonymous \$1.³⁰

²⁸“WPA Finances Mound Study,” *Indianapolis News*, 8 Dec. 1938.

²⁹“Angel Mounds, Site of ‘First Evansville,’” 26 Feb. 1939.

³⁰“Angel Mounds, Site of ‘First Evansville,’” 26 Feb. 1939.

Of the necessary \$24,000, Evansville citizens donated \$127 –.5% of the requested total. In a city which at the time had a population of around 97,000, a donation of \$1 by each citizen would have reached the requested total four times over.³¹ Factoring in the fiscal fallout of the Great Depression, even if each citizen donated a quarter, the city still would have reached the goal – and surpassed it by \$250.³² Despite what is quantitatively a failure on the part of both newspaper staff to drum up support and the townspeople to provide it, the article ends rather optimistically: “What lies under the soil at Angel Mounds is a mystery, but science is going to try to find out as soon as possible.”

There were no further articles saved in the Black Misc. papers; perhaps Angel Mounds appeared in pieces after February 1939, but none were deemed important enough by Glenn Black or his associates to merit saving in this file. The event therefore provides a useful example of historic press coverage, themes of which carry over into modern journalistic norms. Coverage of an event tends to rise quickly along an upward curve, with pieces picked up by national and international media outlets spreading the news far outside the local coverage area. It is on this upward slope that the afore-mentioned “parachute journalism” reaches its height. After the peak, though, coverage begins to drop off as interest wanes. Eventually, only local readers are left to follow the aftermath. In the case of Angel Mounds, escalating global tensions and America’s entry into World War II in 1941 likely provided an important diversion for Evansville citizens. As the town became a center of war production, local archaeological sites fell off citizens’ radar.

Further cross-discipline studies are necessary to provide a more rounded look at historical events. Combing journalistic and historical perspectives encourages scholars to understand how

³¹\$1 (1938) is equal to roughly \$18 today.

³²25¢ (1938) is equal to roughly \$4.50 today.

editors and their newspapers framed events, and for what purpose. Coverage of Angel adds to the social context surrounding archaeology in the interwar period, and the treatment of archaeological sites and cultural heritage at the time. Reporters deemed sites and artifacts as belonging to those who currently occupied the site from whence they came, as opposed to the original occupants. Financial benefits outweighed the invaluable promise of preservation. The study of these articles adds to preexisting work about interwar Evansville, and emphasizes the important dimensions of press coverage efficacy and the erasure of certain narratives. Future scholarship of sites like Angel Mounds in the Midwest and across America must include Native voices, and recognize when, as in the case of this study, their presence is notably lacking. Descendant groups must be involved in the formation of a narrative including and emphasizing the Native interpretation of events, providing a way to take back the narrative of their history which has been so thoroughly coopted by non-Native persons. Overall, work must be done across fields to recognize the value of studying Midwestern journalistic history in regards to local events, and include those who have previously been left out of the discussion altogether.