

Bringing Baggataway Back to the Mounds

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Introduction

The Friends of Angel Mounds (FOAM) is a non-profit volunteer organization that provides support to the Angel Mounds State Historic Site in its mission to preserve and develop Angel Mounds as a cultural and educational resource. Every September, as part of Indiana's Archaeology Month, FOAM sponsors Native American Days, a three day event celebrating Native American history and culture. Events include Native American music, dancing, art, demonstrations of Native American technologies, etc.



In 2012, Native American Days expanded to include "Baggataway at the Mounds," an athletic event combining modern lacrosse and Native American stickball (also known as *baggataway* among the Anishinaabe). The event was a collaboration among four sponsoring organizations: Angel Mounds State Historic Site, FOAM, the Greater Evansville Youth Lacrosse Association (GEYLA), and the Woodland Alliance, a non-profit dedicated to educating the public about Native American culture and history.

In 2013, Baggataway at the Mounds included a full game of Cherokee stickball played by the Wolfstown team of Eastern Band Cherokee. This was the first full game of stickball played at a major Mississippian mound center in, at the very least, several centuries. This poster discusses the background, goals, and experience of combining sport and public archaeology.



The Event

The 2013 Baggataway at the Mounds took place on Saturday, September 28, beginning in mid-morning and continuing until late afternoon. Throughout the day, participants shifted between modern lacrosse and native stickball, playing both full games and demonstrations. Evansville middle school boys and high school boys each played games of modern lacrosse, and high school girls played a shortened game of native Double-Ball, the girls' version of stickball. Scores were not kept in the modern lacrosse games, and teams in all these games mixed players from various local schools' teams.



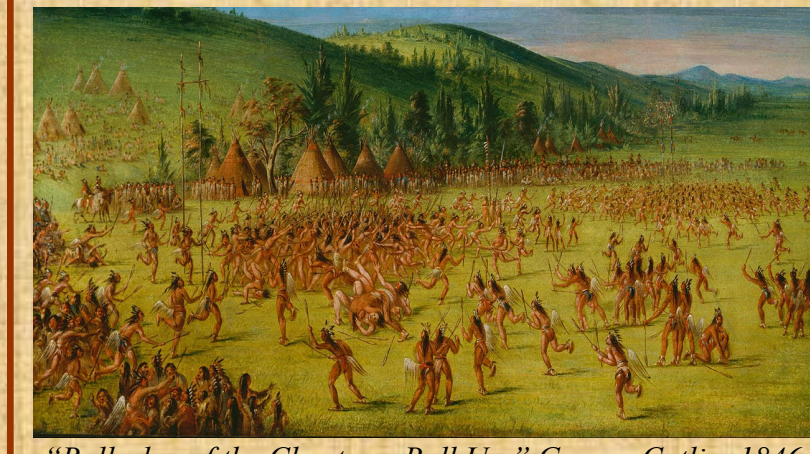
Evansville High School Boys play lacrosse.

The Sport

Lacrosse is one of the oldest continually played team sports in North America. French missionaries in what is now Canada reported the game being played by local Native American tribes as early as the early 17th century (Vennum 1994:9). Though historical records indicate versions of the game were played throughout the eastern half of North America, the sport seems to have been most popular in the Western Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River valley, and in the Southeast.

The native game varied widely from tribe to tribe, often including rules negotiated on a game-by-game basis. Team sizes also varied, with some historically documented games involving dozens or hundreds of players (Vennum 1994:182). The most common rules included that the ball must only ever be handled using the lacrosse stick (Vennum 1994:247), that points were scored by passing the ball through some form of goal (Vennum 1994:248-251), and play took place between teams of cooperating players. Other than that, native lacrosse was a chaotic, and often dangerous, affair.

The sport began to evolve into its modern form when Euro-Canadians adopted the Iroquois version of the game in the mid-19th century, instituted more formal rules, and created amateur leagues (Vennum 1994:266). Today, it is one of the fastest-growing team sports in the United States.

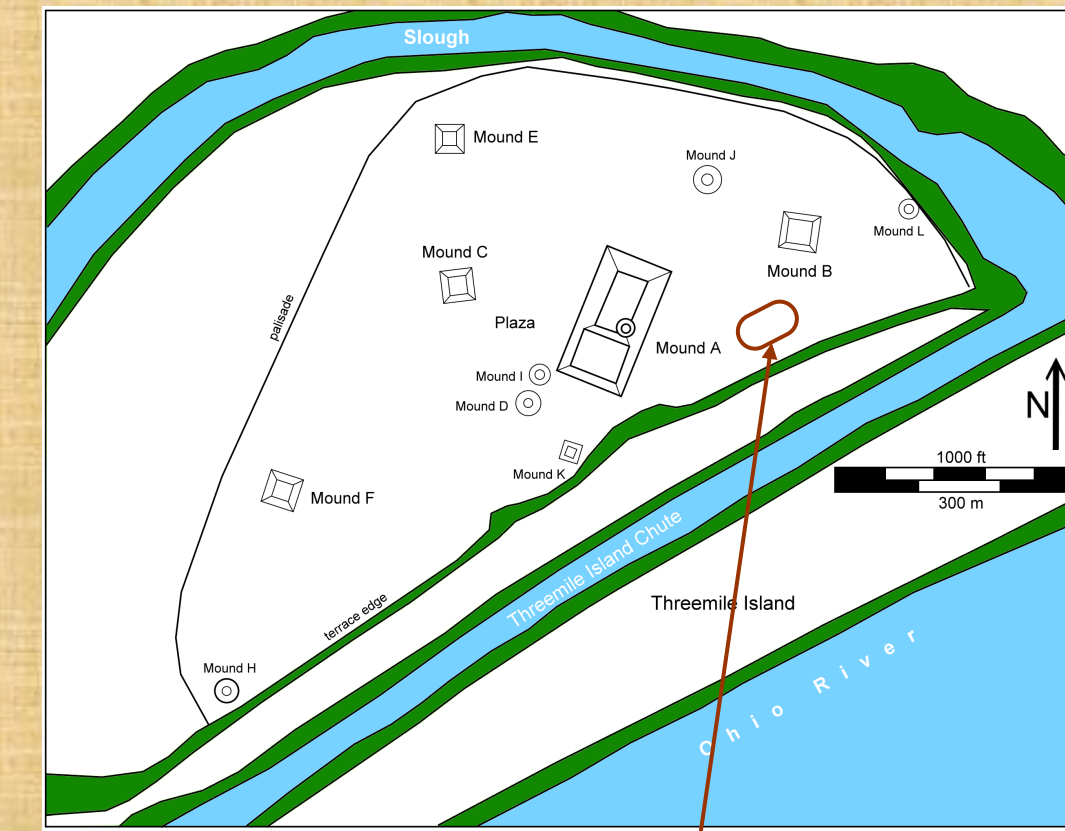


"Ball-play of the Choctaw--Ball Up." George Catlin, 1846

The Site

Angel Site was a large Middle Mississippian town on the Ohio River in southwestern Indiana, occupied roughly from A.D. 1200 to A.D. 1450 (Hilgeman 2000:226-227). Estimates of Angel's resident population, at its height, range from as low as several hundred (Muller 1986:207) to several thousand (Green and Munson 1978:312-313). The village area, surrounded by a palisade wall, covers about 40 hectares (roughly 100 acres; Hilgeman [2000:4]).

The site was first excavated by Glenn A. Black in the late 1930's, when it was purchased from private ownership by the Indiana Historical Society. Ownership was transferred to the state of Indiana in the 1940's. Today, the site operates as part of the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites, with excavation rights falling to Indiana University. The Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology at Indiana University continues regular excavations.



Area of Lacrosse Field

Funding

GEYLA donated equipment, officials, and volunteers, and Angel Mounds and FOAM also donated equipment, but there were still substantial costs. Around 100 Evansville youth and teenagers played over the course of the day, and they and all volunteers were fed a full lunch. This was graciously donated by a combination of several local sponsors.

The major expense lay in the travel and lodging of the Wolfstown team, who travelled from North Carolina, and several other Native American players and educators associated with the event. Travel expenses were funded through grants from the **Indiana Humanities Council** and **Evansville Convention and Visitors Bureau**. The former grant was awarded for cultural activities; the latter was from funds targeted at sports.



The Wolfstown team at play.

Conclusion

Baggataway at the Mounds is the product of a growing commitment by Angel Mounds State Historic Site and FOAM to engage the local community in new and exciting ways. It combines the core goals of education about and promotion of Native American culture and the site with the draw and excitement of team sport. It also represents a unique opportunity for native communities to both raise public awareness of their cultures and to engage with their own Mississippian heritage. We hope to continue sponsoring the event for many years to come.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere thanks to everyone involved in Baggataway at the Mounds, and especially to the Indiana Humanities Council and Evansville Convention and Visitors Bureau for their generous financial support.



WITH SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

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Sponsors	Role	Goals
	Provide a venue for the event, logistical support, etc.	Promote interest in the site and public education about Indiana's rich Native American heritage by drawing a wider range of visitors than otherwise likely.
	Sponsor larger Native American Days event, publicity, volunteer coordination	Fundraising to support Angel Mounds' mission. (Players are admitted to Native American Days free, but spectators pay an admission fee.)
	Provide equipment, officials, etc., and coordinate local youth and high school players	Promote interest in the sport and provide players an opportunity to play the sport in the off-season.
	Coordinate Native American participants and educational components	Promote public education and awareness of Native American cultures and heritage. (Native American Days is the highest-profile Native American cultural event in Southwestern Indiana)



Watch the action! Scan this code to watch clips of the Evansville youth and high school games, as well as the entire Cherokee stickball game. Or point your browser to <http://goo.gl/yPRIB8>