

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Alan Harn

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Historians Speak – Illinois Pre-History Oral History project

Interview # HSP-A-L-2019-038

Alan Harn, Curator Emeritus of Anthropology, Illinois State Museum, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Historians Speak – Illinois Pre-History* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Jun 17, 2019 Location: Dixon Mounds Museum, near Havana, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark Flotow, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 4:50 / 4.83 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on February 18, 2020.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Alan Harn, *Pre-History of Illinois*, HSP-A-L-2019-038

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Alan D. Harn was born on March 12, 1941, in Canton, Illinois. His father was a farmer and an upholsterer near Lewistown. In high school, Alan Harn was athletic, bright and strong-minded, graduating from Lewistown High School in 1959. By that time, he and friend Patrick Munson were already experienced area archaeologists. He had learned to take careful records of both his archaeological investigations and artifacts he discovered. In essence, he had become a professional archaeologist as a teenager, working as a field assistant starting in 1958 on archaeological excavations for the Illinois State Museum while still in high school. In 1960-62, he was involved in some of the early important discoveries about the Mississippian culture at the massive Cahokia Mounds site and related prehistoric satellite communities. He also conducted a site survey project in the adjacent American Bottom, locating a plethora of new archaeological sites. In 1962 a new position was created for him as a lecturer and researcher at Dickson Mounds Museum. While there, he finished his first publication, a sketchbook in 1966 of burials and artifacts at Dickson Mounds, published by the Illinois State Museum Society. Eventually, he had more than 120 published monographs, technical reports, and papers on archaeology and forensic anthropology.

At Dickson Mounds Museum, Alan Harn became a senior technician in anthropology (1971), an Assistant Curator (1980), Curator of Anthropology (2010), and Curator Emeritus in 2017. Besides Dickson Mounds he compiled a long list of work at other Illinois archaeological sites including Eveland, Larson, Cahokia, Morton, and Norris Farms. He has worked collaboratively with a host of eminent Midwestern archaeologists and anthropological theorists, including Thorne Deuel, James B. Griffin, Howard Winters, Stuart Struever, Melvin Fowler, Warren Wittry, Charles Bareis, Jim Porter, James A. Brown, Georg Neumann, Kenneth B. Farnsworth, Michael D. Wiatt, Terry Martin, and R. Bruce McMillan. He was at the forefront of the transformation of the Dickson Mounds Museum from what was primarily a burial site to a regional prehistoric and environmental interpretive center. He later conducted surveys and excavations on the Emiquon Archaeological Project, located on the Nature Conservancy property adjacent to the Dickson Mounds Museum. Retiring in 2016 after fifty-five years of service, Harn still maintained an office at Dickson Mounds Museum while continuing his research and writing.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Archaeology as a profession; the Dickson family and history of Dickson Mounds; archaeology at Cahokia and adventures in the early 1960s; Menard Prison honor farm project; evolution of the Dickson Mounds Museum; Governor Thompson; forensic archaeology/anthropology; changes in the nature and funding of archaeology in Illinois; Emiquon Archaeological Project; and professional colleagues at the Illinois State Museum.

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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