

Digging for History in Sheridan

The 2008 Archaeology Field School Digs up Traces of 19th Century Life in Sheridan

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Transcript

[C. Glidden] We've been doing archaeology in Ransom Place directed by Dr. Paul Mullins, and being out there for so many years investigating the African Americans, we've found a unique opportunity in Sheridan to continue that line of study. So we have last year held our field school in Sheridan, Indiana at the site of the Boxley Cabin.

We fought rain and cold weather a lot this year, and I think it really did slow down our excavations. I had hoped to get down to the level of George Boxley's occupation, but in only one excavation unit was I able to do that. And in that excavation unit we've found these glass bottles, and this is a very nice one even though it's been broken. It's Halls Balsam for the lungs, and in preliminary investigations these are dating back to pre-1880. However, although tightly context with the entire level, we also found two coins. They are one cent and a dime, and after we get them cleaned up, I hope to verify the date a little bit better. But I think that it is dating to 1860.

A lot of times, on some digs, I have hit 1850 within 40 centimeters. Your hand is 10 centimeters so 40 is putting it at just about a foot. However, in this instance where we are dealing with an old hole that was already dug in the ground for a privy and then filled up with trash and burned over the years, I could have that 1850 date six feet down in the ground.

We had hoped to find a tight enough stratigraphy, those are the layers of the ground, in the privies that we would be able to either verify or correct the folklore that is associated with this site. Part of the folklore that is associated with this site has come from a book called *A Man With a Price on His Head*. It is anonymously authored. We have no idea who did it. Although, it's dating back into the early 1900s. In that book it gives a full story of his family and of their time in Indiana following even his sons as they mature and have households, but without an author we no way of knowing how based on fact this is. And we're hoping to get some artifacts, and to be able to look at the stratigraphy and be able to say that the chronology that is given in that book is indeed accurate in going along with the archaeological record.