

*More from the Illinois Frontier:  
Archaeological Studies of Nine  
Early-Nineteenth-Century Sites in  
Rural Illinois*

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tables. \$20.00 paper.

*More from the Illinois Frontier* summarizes and synthesizes archaeological excavations at several pre-1850, frontier-context archaeological sites in rural Illinois. These excavations, conducted between 2002 and 2005 as part of various CRM transportation projects, examined nine short-occupation domestic sites from the American frontier period of Illinois; one site also contained a dwelling converted into a blacksmith shop. The volume, no. 2 in the "Transportation Archaeological Bulletin" series, is a publication of the Illinois Transportation Archaeological Research Program (ITARP) in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Transportation. ITARP has long worked to disseminate the results of its CRM projects to both professional and public audiences. As such, the "Transportation Archaeological Bulletin" series focuses on bringing together, into a single volume, research on similar topics that offers scientific analysis and theoretical insight of import to the broad professional community. The volume under review expands on Mazrim's 2002 publication, and no. 1 of the series, "*Now Quite Out of Society*": *Archaeology and Frontier Illinois*.

*More from the Illinois Frontier* is organized into 11 chapters. An introductory chapter sets out the volume's overall approach, and each site is presented as a separate chapter. A summary chapter provides observations on the clear patterns and apparent discontinuities in the data, organized within a series of frontier-context research themes. Each chapter is divided into three sections: the archival history of the site, the results of the excavations, and the results of artifact analysis. Author Robert Mazrim notes that he intends the volume to "provide

the reader with a thorough discussion of the features, artifacts, interpretations, and apparent patterning at each site" (p. xiii). Importantly, the analysis at these sites was completed using a consistent analytical methodology and reporting scheme facilitating intrasite comparison and synthesis; Mazrim notes that these research protocols are also consistent with those employed in his previous volume (*Now Quite Out of Society*), allowing an "opportunity to revisit certain themes and hypotheses" developed in this previous study (p. xiii). Mazrim expresses disappointment at the lack of similar summaries offering meaningful comparison among pre-1850, frontier-context sites in the Midwest, and challenges colleagues to provide similar studies.

The investigations at each site are well contextualized in terms of local, typically county-level, historical developments. Mazrim also places each site within a series of broader regional and national themes such as the evolution of frontier communities from initial settlement to the "closing" of the frontier, government land survey and sale, transportation infrastructure and commercial linkages, and the development of government institutions. The author cautions against the generic periodization of sites from this era, using terms like "pioneer" and "frontier" for site inventory reporting, pointing out that both terms are "laden with meaning and connotation well beyond the temporal bracketing for which they are used" (p. 3).

The archaeological investigations at each site consisted mainly of feature excavation. The majority of the features at the sites consisted of subfloor cellars, exterior cellar/storage pits, cisterns and wells, privies, postholes, and activity-related pits. Mazrim does an excellent job of comparing these features, showing how their use, function, and abandonment changed over time on the Illinois frontier.

In terms of the artifact analysis, Mazrim focuses on providing clear comparative data within and between the sites, drawing on minimum vessel counts for "each significant feature sample" (p. 4). He notes that in general "each site produced one or two such samples ... for the discussion of consumer behavior at the site"

(p. 4). While Mazrim draws on a suite of standard sources for sorting and identifying refined ceramic vessels, his work points to the lack of any well-developed system for consistently reporting and analyzing artifacts at the regional and national level. That said, the author goes to great lengths to consider the compatibility and comparability of feature types, deposition history, and artifact-sampling approaches.

In laying out his interpretive agenda for the sites in terms of their ability to address various research themes, Mazrim cautions the reader about the types of information that archaeology is both effective and ineffective at retrieving from sites of this period. For example, he doesn't embrace "certain traditional topics" like socioeconomic status in his analysis, as he argues that "they have been shown to be largely invisible in most historical material-culture assemblages in rural Illinois" (p. 7).

Overall, this study is well written, clearly organized, accessible to multiple audiences, and nicely illustrated. The volume provides excellent contextual data, particularly at the local level, and is thorough in its analysis of the sites without getting overly enmeshed in quantification. A comparative study of early-19th-century sites in this region is welcome indeed, particularly given the overall paucity of contextual models and frameworks for rural 19th-century farmsteads in the Midwest and elsewhere. This study covers resources that are ubiquitous, but gives close

and thoughtful attention to their significance. This is valuable research that is made even more important because resources of this type are often written off based on a lack of well-conceived frameworks and research themes. With this study Mazrim makes an eloquent contribution of contextualized data from each site in order to build "a foundation to enhance our overall understanding of early-nineteenth-century Illinois lifeways" (p. 7). He clearly mines the potential of each site to contribute to larger research topics, themes, and patterns. The collection of sites in this volume illustrates the nuances of lifeways on the Illinois frontier, and provides a clear appreciation of what sites—even those represented by a single feature—can contribute to the larger story of the region. Mazrim is to be commended for demonstrating the value of CRM research data for regional analysis and synthesis.

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