



Agriculture and Rural Development Committee  
The Honorable Rep. Brian Hill, Chairman

Proponent Testimony in support of House Concurrent Resolution 33  
Brad Lepper, Ohio History Connection Curator of Archaeology  
May 3, 2016

Chairman Hill, Vice Chairman Burkley and Ranking Member Patterson:

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the enthusiastic support of my colleagues and myself for House Concurrent Resolution 33 and our state's nomination for inclusion on the World Heritage List. My name is Brad Lepper and I have worked as an archaeologist at the Ohio History Connection since the late 1980s.

Let me start by thanking State Rep. Gary Scherer, the Resolution's sponsor. I had the pleasure of spending some time with him and others recently at a wonderful event put on by a group of elementary school students at the Hopewell Culture National Historical Park. To my great surprise – and delight – Rep. Scherer had a copy of my book on Ohio archaeology with him that I had the pleasure of signing for him.

As you know from reading the Resolution and from Rep. Scherer's sponsor testimony, the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks nomination is a tremendous opportunity to put Ohio on the world stage. There are no World Heritage sites to be found today in Ohio. We're trying to change that. This Resolution helps us do that by demonstrating that there is strong support from the Ohio House of Representatives when it comes time for us to formally submit our nomination to UNESCO sometime (we're hopeful) in the next year or so.

There is a great deal I could say about the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, the World Heritage process and what it means. Instead, please allow me to simply highlight for you what I think you may find most significant about our nomination and why we are confident these sites demonstrate "outstanding universal value" to humanity:

The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks is a serial nomination consisting of seven monumental American Indian earthen enclosures used as ceremonial centers in southern Ohio nearly 2,000 years ago. The seven sites include two owned by the Ohio History Connection: the Newark Earthworks, in Licking County, which are the largest and best preserved set of geometric earthworks ever built, and the Fort Ancient Earthworks in Warren County, which is the largest and best preserved hilltop enclosure in North America.

The remaining five sites are encompassed by Hopewell Culture National Historical Park in Ross County. Mound City Group and the Hopeton Earthworks are a complementary pair of earthworks located three miles apart on opposite sides of the Scioto River. The Mound City Group is the largest concentration of burial mounds in North America. The Hopewell Mound Group includes both the largest single enclosure and the largest Hopewell mound ever built. Seip Earthworks is the best example of a kind of earthwork referred to as a "tripartite" geometric earthwork, since it includes a large circle connected to both a square and a smaller circle. Finally, the High Bank Works is a large circular earthwork connected to an octagonal enclosure.

These seven sites are unique and exceptional among ancient monuments worldwide in their enormous scale, geometric precision, astronomical alignments, and broad geographic distribution. Associated deposits of ritual artifacts contain exceptionally finely crafted objects fashioned from exotic raw materials, such as copper from the upper Great Lakes, mica from the Carolinas, and obsidian from Montana. The Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks in Ohio were the center of an influential network of interaction that linked together distinct societies scattered across half the continent. These enormous sacred places were built and used by societies without hereditary leadership or intensive maize agriculture. It is still a mystery how these societies were able to achieve what they did without these things. And that mystery is part of what brings the outstanding universal value to these sites.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today in support of HCR 33. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you might have for me.