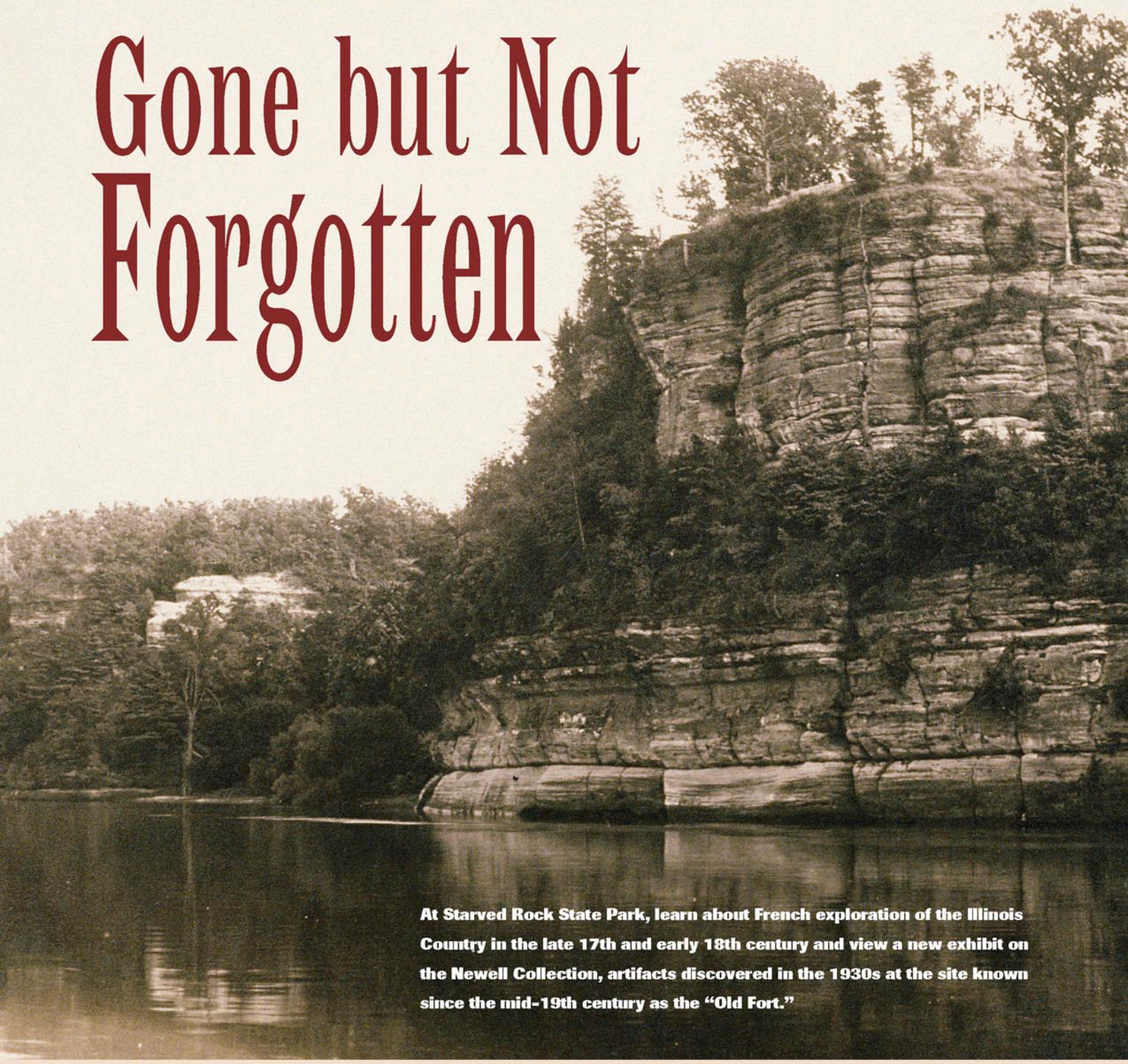
A special edition of *Outdoor*Illinois helps unearth some of Illinois' places of the past.

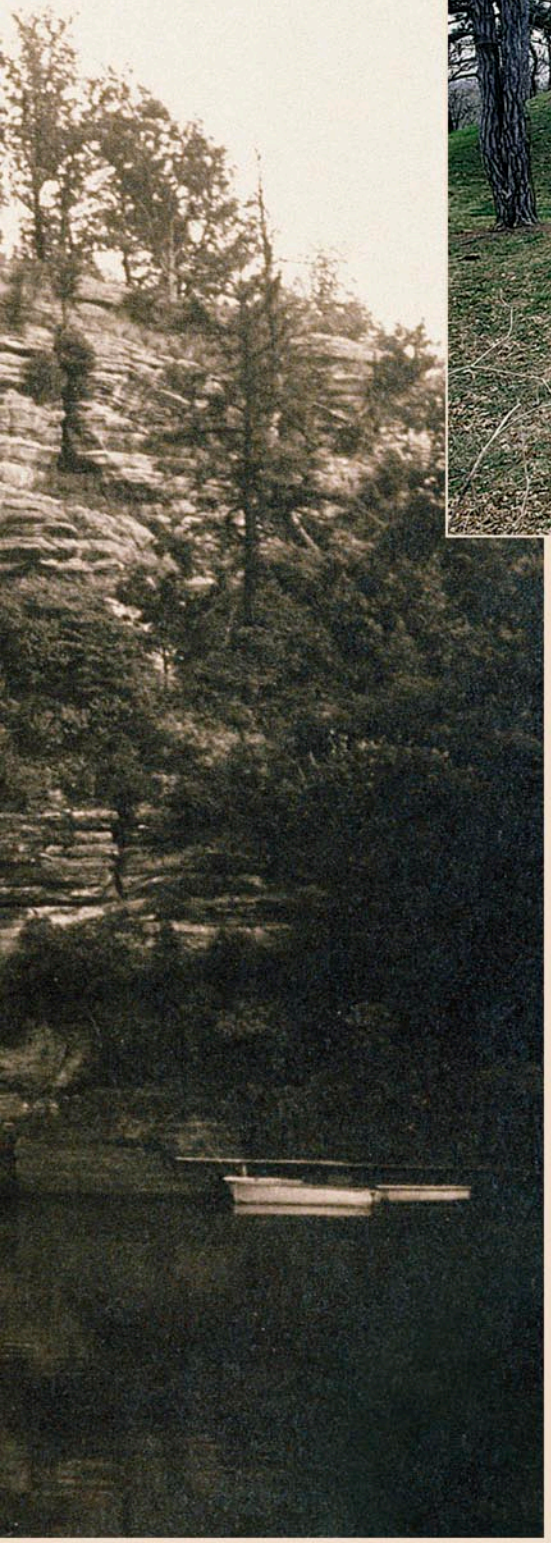
Gone but Not Forgotten



At Starved Rock State Park, learn about French exploration of the Illinois Country in the late 17th and early 18th century and view a new exhibit on the Newell Collection, artifacts discovered in the 1930s at the site known since the mid-19th century as the "Old Fort."

Story By Michael Wiant

For more than a century, archaeologists have toiled under the hot Illinois summer sun, searching for artifacts—foundations, spear points, bits of pottery and animal bone. Their world-class discoveries have shed light on places of the past—the 12,000-year development of Native American culture, arrival of 17th-century French explorers, pioneer life on the Illinois prairie, a 19th-century African American town in Pike County and much more.



(Photo by GaryAndrashko.)

View eight 1,100-year-old mounds and an unusual U-shaped earthwork along a trail system at Indian Mounds Park at Quincy.

Regardless of our heritage, humans seek to sustain and enrich our lives. The need for food, clothing and shelter, and the companionship of family, friends and neighbors remains constant; but the means by which we meet these and other challenges have changed significantly. Archaeologists seek to understand how people adjust to new situations and why civilizations rise and fall. Answers are not easy to find, but these scientists have the advantage of being able to explore much of human history to unlock secrets of the past.

Illinois' past may be found in documents—written accounts, maps and photographs. But the oldest documents that recount Illinois history are only 300 years old. To understand the distant past, archaeologists must "read" artifacts instead of words.

Much of Illinois' rich cultural heritage has been preserved. Places associated with important events or persons, distinctive examples of architecture and scientifically significant artifact-bearing deposits have long been recognized as valuable, and, like natural resources, they are protected by federal and state laws. Many Illinois state parks were created around such sites as a way to preserve these significant resources and memorialize peoples of the past.

This special edition of *Outdoor*Illinois profiles Illinois' diverse historical

(Photo by Joe McFarland.)

The Stone Fort (right) at Giant City State Park has long been of interest to archaeologists and laymen alike. Native Americans erected a rock wall across a narrow ridge, isolating a point of land with precipitous sides that juts into a narrow stream valley. Southern Illinois University archaeologists have excavated artifacts that provide clues about use of this mysterious "fort."

(Photo by Hal Hassen.)

At Pere Marquette State Park, more than 50 known mounds are visible along trails and roadways. This 1,100-year-old mound (left) is perched on the crest of a bluff overlooking the lower reach of the Illinois River and the Pere Marquette State Park Lodge. Nearby is the Duncan Farm site, a complex of large mounds in the floodplain of the Illinois River. Two thousand years ago this was a principal community at the mouth of the Illinois River. Artifacts found here provide evidence of a far-flung trade network encompassing much of North America east of the Mississippi River.

resources. Whether you attend some of the educational programs offered throughout the state in September in celebration of Archaeology Awareness Month, tour one of Illinois' many historical museums or visit the remarkable and readily visible earthworks created by Native Americans, you will be intrigued and inspired by our "places of the past."

Hardly recognizable today for the forest that now covers the area, this 1880s photograph (above) from the collection of the Department of Anthropology, Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, shows the massive 2,000-year-old mound found at Ray Norbut State Fish and Wildlife Area in Pike County.

It is illegal to collect artifacts and/or disturb an archaeological site on public lands. Public lands are defined as land owned by the State of Illinois or a municipality or local unit of government.

Interpretive signs along the trail at Millstone Bluff, in the Shawnee National Forest 11 miles northeast of Vienna off Illinois Route 147, identify artifacts of the Late Mississippian period (A.D. 1450), such as rock carvings of a thunder bird, bear's paw and sun wheel, and a stone box grave (right).

(Photos by Gary Andrashko.)