Indian Mounds Park stands in memory of those who created it, and centuries of residents working to preserve it.

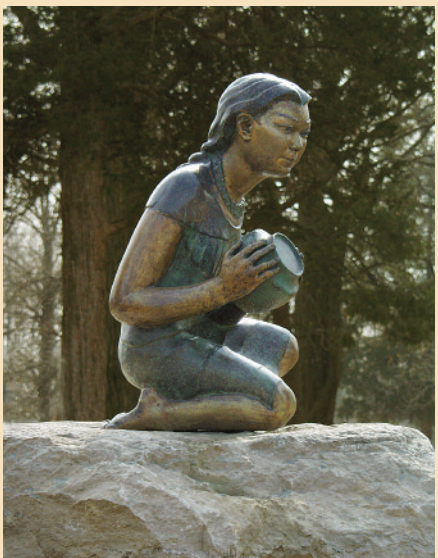
Places of the Past

Story by Janet Conover and Michael Wiant

(Photo by Gary Andrashko.)

At one time more than 10,000 were scattered across Illinois. Today, few remain, and most have been damaged by illicit excavation. Thanks in part to the citizens of Quincy, Indian Mounds Park is one of the few public places in the state where visitors can reflect on the sacred Native American tradition of burials.

On 10 July 1894, E. J. Park, president of the Quincy Boulevard and Park Association, encouraged the city council to purchase the rugged bluff land comprising the west portion of what is now Indian Mounds Park. Following a petition drive calling for the preservation of the Indian Mounds, the city council purchased 10 acres in 1897. By 1906, the park encompassed 37 acres.



(Photos courtesy Tom Yates Photography, www.portfolios.com/TomYatesPhotography)

In 1928-1929, the University of Chicago undertook an archaeological survey of Adams County. Thorne Deuel, who later became director of the Illinois State Museum, mapped the mounds and an unusual horseshoe-shaped earthwork in the north end of Indian Mounds Park. The mounds range from less than 3 feet in height and 10 feet in diameter to more than 12 feet in height and 24 feet in diameter.

In 2002, the replacement of an existing swimming pool prompted citizens of Quincy to again draw attention to the Native American heritage of the park. Today visitors can take a self-guided tour through the park and respectfully view the eight remaining mounds. The tour includes eight wayside exhibits that introduce the history of the people who built the mounds. Nearby are a modern statue of a Native American girl, a stained glass window titled "Sunset in Indian Mounds Park" above the door of the bathhouse and a border of blocks that portray stenciled designs of artifacts found in the area. Two panels illustrate a nearby village and mound building, and a third panel reminds us that Native American culture remains vibrant today.

Visit Dickson Mounds Museum and Pere Marquette State Park to view other mounds. For more information about the Native Americans of Illinois visit www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/index.html.

Janet Conover is the co-chairman of the Friends of Indian Mound Pool and Michael Wiant is the director of the Dickson Mounds Museum.