- **8,0000-1,000 B.C. Archaic Period**. The steep rocky creeks of the Giant City area could no longer be counted on for year-round water. The land became drier and there was less rainfall than in the past. During this period, groups settled in the floodplains of the bigger creeks and rivers, and made seasonal excursions for hunting and gathering. Life became more stationary, and communities grew in size as proximity to water became all important. Large mammals, like mastodons, were now extinct.
- **1,000 B.C. – A.D. 900 woodland Period.** With a more stationary life came cultural developments and the beginning of a social system. It was in this period that people began to practice agriculture and to use stone hoes. It is probable that the most important cultural development of the period was the appearance of the bow and arrow.
- **900-1200 A.D. Mississippian Period**. These people were well organized into complex social and political organizations. Their subsistence was based mostly on farming, mainly corn with some squash and beans.
- **1200-1673 A.D. Protohistoric Period**. Archaeologists have developed a sketchy account of Native American life during this time. This was a time of continued cultural change with many Native Americans moving in and out of the area.
- **1673-1830s A.D. Post-Contact Period**. In 1673 a Jesuit priest named Pere Jacques Marquette accompanied a mapmaker named Louis Jolliet to explore the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. They were the first Europeans to record a meeting with the Native Americans in Illinois. Due to the European influence in this new land, diseases broke out, and the pressures of colonization halted the traditional Native American way of life. The culmination of 12,000 years of development had faded away.

Please carry out what you carry in.

CIGARETTE BUTTS ARE LITTER!
PLASTIC BOTTLES AND SODA CANS ARE LITTER!!

Thank you for visiting Giant City State Park.

Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and those funded by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source's civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer IDNR, 524 S. Second, Springfield, IL 62701-1787; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the IDNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance.

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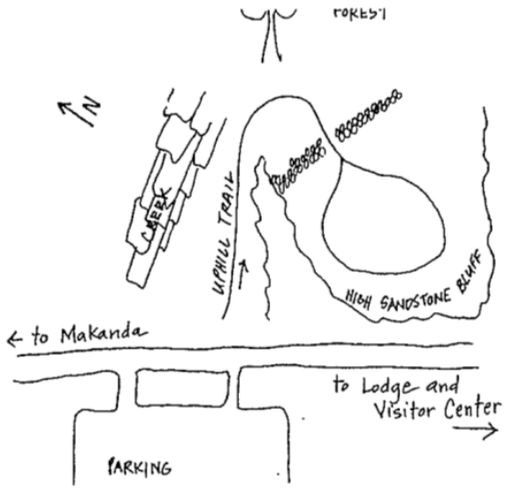
Stone Fort Nature Trail

Photo compliments of Janet Sundberg

Length: 1/3 mile
Difficulty: Moderate
Walking Time: 30 minutes

Giant City State Park
235 Giant City Road
Makanda, IL 62958
618-457-4836
http://www.dnr.state.il.us



Stone Fort Nature Trail

Be careful – steep cliffs are dangerous and sandstone can be slippery.
Please stay on designated trails
Poison ivy exists on this trail.
Copperhead snakes (venomous) hibernate in the sandstone cliffs

All plants, animals, and artifacts are protected by law in your state parks.

NATURE TRAIL

The short, but steep, climb up to the stone wall contains large sandstone boulders in the trail, so please use caution when walking. The steepness of the slope and the large number of visitors to the trail are causing a great deal of erosion. The erodible surfaces are actually wind-blown loess: soft, fine-grained material blown in as dust during the later part of the Ice Age or Pleistocene. The small tributary creek lying next to the trail offers spectacular water falls during rain events, and unique ice formations in the winter. However, this creek is considered intermittent – flowing only during and after a storm event.

STONE FORT

The trail will take you back around 1,000 years to when Native American cultures were enjoying the area's abundant resources (water, wildlife, nuts, berries, and roots). The massive stone wall was at one time 285 feet long, six feet high, and nine feet thick. The appearance of a "stone fort" or stone wall here at Giant City is one of at least ten in southern Illinois. The stone wall that you see today is a modern reconstruction of the original wall. Early residents of the area had moved the stones for building purposes. During the 1930s the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corp) workforce gathered the scattered stone and rebuilt the wall in its original location. An explanation for the large hole in the front of the wall is unknown, although it most likely represents the work of treasure hunters. The hole was there when the site was officially recorded as an archaeological site in 1956.

WHO BUILT THE STONE FORT?

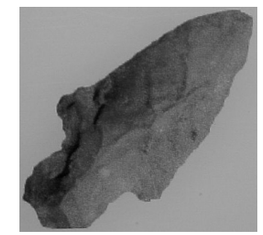
The stone fort is thought to have been built by prehistoric Native Americans during the Late Woodland Period (A.D. 400-900), probably between A.D. 600 to 800. Most of these sites are not habitation sites (villages) in the usual sense. There is only a modest amount of artifacts, which is common among places of sporadic use for short periods of time. Debris found on this site includes sherds of grit or grog-tempered cord-marked pottery and stone tools, like projectile points. Some Late Woodland peoples lived in large, intensively occupied villages located near major streams. Late Woodland groups had a mixed economy of hunting, gathering, and cultivation (gardening) of a series of native plants (barley, sumpweed, maygrass, squash).

WHY WERE THEY BUILT?

For years archaeologists have wondered about the stone fort's true meaning. Some say that these are "sacred spaces" reserved for periodic activity. Archaeological digs have located items that prove early residents of Southern Illinois were part of an extensive trading network. They believe the trading network followed the trails in Southern Illinois that became the early pioneer roads centuries later. Archaeologists suggest the possibility that stone forts were designated areas where different groups could meet, socialize, and trade on neutral ground.

STONE FORT'S FUTURE

In the fall of 2000, archaeologists from Southern Illinois University Carbondale conducted an investigation of the Stone Fort site. Of the 153 shovel tests executed south of the wall, all were positive for prehistoric artifacts. This led the scientists to nominate Giant City's Stone Fort for the National Register of Historic Places. Site managers are happy that the site has received this status, and interpretive signage brings this Native American relic the attention it deserves.



Native Americans in Southern Illinois

Southern Illinois was home to Native Americans at least 12,000 years ago. After the last advance of glaciers, Illinois was left with lush and fertile country. Scientists named the following cultural time periods for purpose of study. The original names by which the groups knew themselves have long been forgotten.

- **10,000-8,000 B.C. Paleo-Indian Period.** These were the first inhabitants of North America. They consisted of small bands that hunted and gathered their food. They traveled frequently responding to the migratory habits of the animals they hunted. These people had no pottery, no bow and arrows, and they did not practice agriculture.