



Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri

Excavation and Resource Evaluation of the Miller Cave Complex (Sites 23PU2, 23PU255, and 23PU235)

93-585

Background

In 1994, the University of Illinois conducted excavations and site evaluations at the Miller Cave Complex on the Fort Leonard Wood Military Reservation, Missouri for the United States Army Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (USACERL). The complex had been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Some of the locations had been vandalized and it was hoped that additional archaeological work could determine if the site retained integrity and subsequently, offer protective measures for the area.

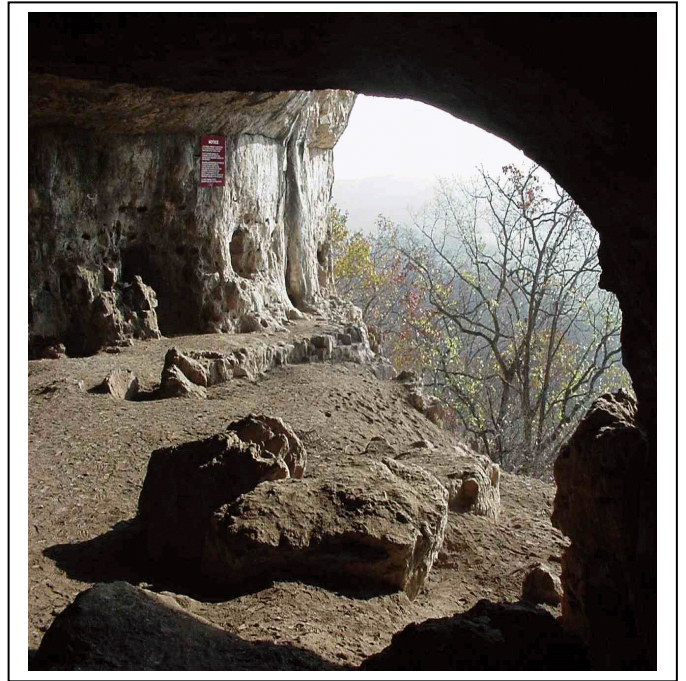
Objective

The project objective was to assess the current state of preservation and scientific potential of the sites, collect information that contributes to regional research issues, and develop appropriate site preservation plans.

Summary of Approach

The Miller Cave Complex is a series of six closely spaced and potentially functionally or temporally related sites located on the crest and face of the southeast facing bluff overlooking the Big Piney River Valley in Pulaski County, Missouri. Three of the Miller Cave Complex sites have been subjected to Phase II evaluation to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP. Miller Cave was the focus of one of the Smithsonian Institute's intensive cave excavations in 1920. The excavation produced thousands of lithic, ceramic, bone and shell artifacts as well as over 40 human burials. Additionally, looters have impacted the remaining deposits.

Despite these accumulative impacts, integrity of deposits remained within the sites. One of the research goals was to verify that sites within the area were related and did not function independently of each other. Although many of the occupation loci had separate functions, they appeared to have been occupied simultaneously in many cases. The second research goal was to collect enough data from undisturbed contexts at all sites to address the primary research objectives. Data analysis of materials and collection procedures followed an interdisciplinary approach to maximize interpretative potential. The third goal was to use existing site documentation and new data collected to formally evaluate the integrity and condition



of each site. These actions were initiated, resulting in an assessment of damage incurred at each site as a result of scientific investigations and unsystematic artifact collection.

Benefit

The information gleaned from the archaeological sites has increased our knowledge about prehistoric culture in Missouri. Additionally, the preservation measures proposed will help preserve a valuable and delicate cultural resource.

Accomplishments

All three of the major research goals outlined were met from archaeological testing and artifact analysis. Since the potential for intact deposits and data remain, site protection plans were developed and submitted for adoption.

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