
A Park is Born

Frederick Jr. died in 1901, leaving son Ransom in charge of the estate. In 1905, Ransom leased approximately 40 acres of land to The Indiana Union Traction Company with the option to buy in five years. The 40 acres are now the southern corner of Mounds State Park. The Traction Company, operators of the Interurban electric train system, built an amusement park called "Mounds Park" that ran successfully until the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The Traction Co. then sold the acres to the Madison County Historical Society, who promptly donated it to the Indiana Department of Conservation. After the acquisition of additional farm land from the Bronnenberg and Wil-liamson families, Mounds State Park was established October 7, 1930.

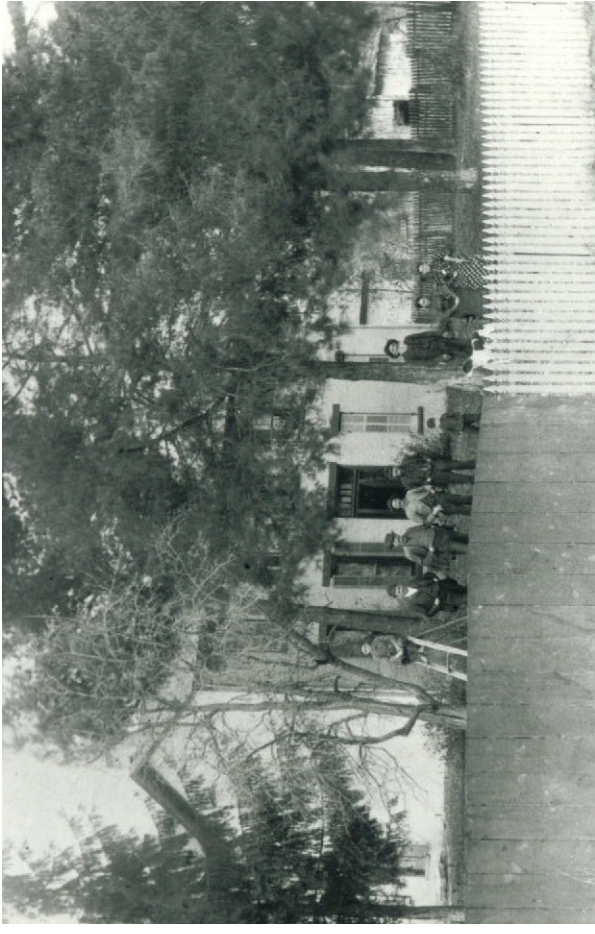


The Legacy

The Bronnenbergs recognized the uniqueness of the Mounds, and from the beginning fought to protect them against looters and farm plow destruction. Early generations passed on beliefs of stewardship and the need to guard the mounds. Even when an amusement park and railroad shared the same ground, the mounds were preserved and touted as an attraction to behold. The conservation efforts of the Bronnenbergs helped make the mounds in this park some of the best examples in the region.

The Bronnenberg house is a reminder of their diligence. Restoration efforts are currently under way. Contact the Naturalist if you wish to donate time, money, or historic items to this effort. 765-649-8128

The Bronnenbergs



A Brief History of the Bronnenberg family and their lasting impact on Mounds State Park.

The Bronnenberg House, built around 1850, is recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. Its cultural and architectural significance help capture the story of Mounds State Park.

Early Settlers

Frederick Bronnenberg Sr. arrived to America from Germany around 1800, supposedly sent by his mother to avoid military recruiting. His migration west led him to Pennsylvania where he met his wife Barbara Easter and soon had children. The family was destined for Illinois, but only reached now Madison County, Indiana around 1820.

There are many stories why the Bronnenbergs decided to settle here instead of going further. One likely story tells of broken down oxen and wagon. Another story cites the illness and death of a young daughter being too painful for Barbara to continue.

Whatever the reason, the family decided to stay in Madison Co. and with the help of early settler, William Dilts, they moved into an abandoned cabin in 1821. Later, Frederick Sr. purchased the acres of now Mounds State Park and built a new log cabin just west of the Great Mound.



Frederick Sr. and Barbara had twelve children, of which nine survived and prospered. The third child, Frederick Jr., built the brick, two-story Bronnenberg home around 1850. Frederick Jr. and his wife Hulda Free raised six children in the home and were survived by three.

The Bronnenberg family men were industrious and educated businessmen. Frederick Sr. ran a leather tannery and combination saw mill/grist mill/wool carding operation. Frederick Jr. farmed the large family homestead. These ventures made the family wealthy and well known in the Anderson area.

The House

The Federal style home was originally “ell” shaped, consisting of five rooms. The four main rooms, two up and two down, were connected by a central hall with stairway. Upon entering the home, the fifth room, the ell, was located on the first floor on the back of the house off of the left side room.

Around 1870, Frederick Jr.'s son Ransom added a second floor to the ell, enclosed the back porch, and added a second floor to it. The large step up through the door at the top of the stairs is because its actually an old window! This addition made space for Ransom's family of six children and created the house standing today.



Building materials used in construction were native and local. Tulip trees provided most of the wood in the home. The 14 inch thick brick walls are load bearing. The original floor, exposed in the first room to the right, is probably a species of Oak. The foundation is limestone, the window sills are sandstone, and local clay was fired for brick. Note on the front of the home the decorative eave of bricks jutting out at an angle. The home exterior was painted white and also green at some point.

The house is the only surviving structure from the Bronnenberg Farm. The original farmstead included a barn, corncrib, smokehouse, summer kitchen, spring house, and more.