

Background

For many years, the Wayne National Forest has been studying and preserving the vestiges of early African American history on public land in south-eastern Ohio. The work has been accomplished through partnerships with the Friends of Freedom Society, the Multicultural Genealogical Center, and several Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCU).

Research focused on two early nineteenth century African American settlements - Paynes Crossing on the Athens Ranger District, and Pokepatch on the Ironton Ranger District. Both settlements were formed by freed African Americans, whites, mulattoes, and Native Americans. Neither of them were "towns" per se, but each was rather a system of farmsteads spread out on a rural landscape.

These settlements existed primarily between the 1820s and 1880s. Both are now largely archaeological sites. Only a church and two cemeteries remain.

Website Information

The information the Wayne has collected, is located on the Forest website. Over several years



(continued inside)



The Wayne has three offices open 8 - 4:30 Monday - Friday.

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Phone: 740-753-0101

Marietta Unit, Athens Ranger District
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Marietta, OH 45750
Phone: 740-373-9055

Ironton Ranger District
6518 State Route 93; Pedro, OH 45659
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Federal relay system for the deaf and hearing impaired: 1-800-877-8339
website: www.fs.usda.gov/wayne

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Wayne National Forest Underground Railroad



the information collected on Pokepatch and Paynes Crossing has created an ongoing need to develop innovative techniques to organize the information.

In 2003, Historic Black College and University (HBCU) students organized a considerable amount of Paynes Crossing data into a Forest web site. A screen shot of this information is shown on the opposite side of this brochure. (Go to www.fs.usda.gov/wayne, select Learning Center, History and Culture, Early African American Settlements).

The web site includes site and project history, historic land plat maps, birth and death records, cemetery and funeral records, census data, and individual family summaries. The web site was developed in response to the public demand for detailed information on the Forest's research, and offers a quicker and more effective way to disseminate these results.

Past collaboration with Ohio University's Department of African American Studies has utilized students to organize archival collections and conduct oral history interviews of Paynes Crossing and Pokepatch family descendants.

The ongoing study and preservation of these resources helps the Forest fulfill its mission of "Caring for the Land and Serving People."

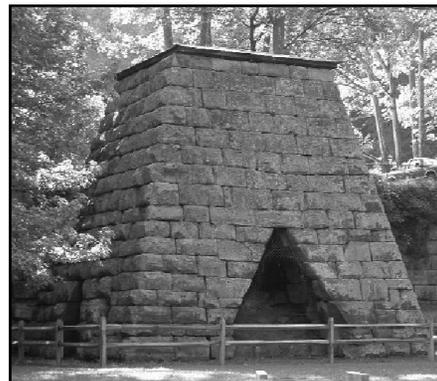
Pokepatch



Union Baptist Church 1879

Pokepatch was a well-known "station" on the Underground Railroad (UR) and seemed to have been settled for the sole purpose of harboring fugitive slaves on their journey northward to freedom. After the Civil War when the Underground Railroad movement was no longer necessary, many of the Pokepatch families moved out.

Research by the Forest Service has consisted of archival study, field reconnaissance, consultation with local historians and UR research groups, and informal conversations with several of the descendants. Examination of the Pokepatch area land records from 1827-1878 showed a considerable amount of iron furnace company ownership. This revelation helped to confirm that many of the iron furnace owners were not only known abolitionists, but actually subsidized the UR activities in the Hanging Rock Iron Region.



Paynes Crossing

Paynes Crossing exhibits many similarities to Pokepatch and years of comparative research guided by UR historians now indicates that it probably also served as a "station". The Payne Cemetery (1852-1927) is the primary remnant of the settlement. The cemetery is shown below.



The individuals buried in the cemetery were freed from plantations in the Virginia territory in the early 1800s. Five of the men enlisted in the Ohio Regiments of the U.S. Colored Troops and fought in the Civil War. One of their stones is in the photo below.

The cemetery was restored and re-dedicated in 1995, and a historic marker was installed in 2010. Family members have been interviewed and their stories archived.

The entire Forest Service tract has been inventoried for archaeological resources.

