

Indian Head Rock returned to Kentucky - subject of 3-year dispute has new home

Lexington Herald-Leader (KY) - November 5, 2010

Author/Byline: Associated Press Section: City/RegionPage: A5

The three-year battle with Ohio for an 8-ton boulder that state archaeologists say is steeped in Kentucky history concluded Thursday when the artifact was returned.

The boulder known as Indian Head Rock traveled about an hour via flatbed truck and is being stored in Greenup County, said Diane Comer with Kentucky's Heritage Council-State Historic Preservation Office.

Boaters were familiar with the rock that jutted out of the water on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River for generations. Its location was protected by the Kentucky Office of State Archaeology in 1986.

Then, in 2007, a group of Ohioans moved the rock to Portsmouth, Ohio, saying it needed to be protected. Kentucky sued to get it back.

The rock was located about 110 miles southeast of Cincinnati. Residents on both sides of the Ohio River had watched for it as far back as the 1800s.

People often visited the rock - some carved their initials into it - when the water level dropped and it became visible. The rock also bears a stick-figure carving of a face on it.

Some believe the smiley face and crude drawing of a house are part of an ancient petroglyph.

For a short time during the rock dispute, there was a question about whether the rock was authentic.

But state archaeologists said this summer they have no doubts that the rock is indeed Indian Head Rock and had charged that the Ohio group had taken it without seeking proper approval.

Mark Dennen, executive director of the Kentucky Heritage Council and the state's historic preservation officer, said the rock will not be returned to its original site because the site had been compromised.