

Kentucky officials get serious about getting rock back

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FRANKFORT -- Nearly nine months since the Indian Head Rock saga began with its abrupt removal from the Ohio River, a group of Kentucky officials is calling for its return.

The 8-ton sandstone rock had been submerged since about the 1920s. That was until last September, when an Ohio historian led efforts to have it extracted.

Now, the mammoth boulder sits in a Portsmouth, Ohio city garage, while officials in Kentucky and Ohio argue its fate. "The theft of antiquities from the Commonwealth of Kentucky robs all of us," said Rep. Reginald Meeks, D-Louisville.

Meeks spoke at a Wednesday press conference with Kentucky state officials and Cliff Duvall, a commonwealth's attorney who's pursuing the matter. The state attorney general's office is also involved.

Since at least the 1800s, residents on both sides of the river would follow the rock 110 miles southeast of Cincinnati.

When the water level dropped, the rock became visible and people often visited it. Some carved their names or initials onto it. The rock also has a carving of a face on it, which some say could be a petroglyph.

The rock was on the south shore near Kentucky until local historian Steve Shaffer found it and led efforts to remove it.

Meeks said state and federal laws were broken when the rock was taken from the river, and said the rock could be in danger if it's not preserved properly.