Heroes of Indian Head Rock
Rep. Henry T. Bannon

Henry Bannon was born in Portsmouth. He attended Ohio State University and received his law degree from the University of Michigan in 1889.

Bannon practiced law in Portsmouth and was elected to Congress as a Republican and served from 1905 to 1909.

Bannon served as a director of the First National Bank, National Bank of Portsmouth, Oak Hill Savings Bank, and the Selby Shoe Co. He also served as legal representative for Norfolk and Western Railroad, guiding that corporation through a period of great expansion.

Bannon was well known for his lectures and books about the history of Portsmouth and Southern Ohio.

Bannon’s home, built in 1923, still stands at 1923 Franklin Avenue. He is buried at Greenlawn Cemetery.

Henry Bannon wrote about the history of Portsmouth and Scioto County in his two books: Scioto Sketches (1920) and Stories Old and Often Told (1927). He also wrote about the Indian Head Rock for an article for the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society in 1921.

In 1920, Henry Bannon and his brother Arthur took the first ever photograph of the face on Indian Head Rock.

In the late 1800’s on one of rare occasions when the Indian Head Rock was visible, Henry Bannon and his brothers, Arthur and James, swam across the Ohio River carved their initials into the rock. Their initials, HB, AB, and JB, can still be seen in the rock today.

As a future congressman, the presence of Henry Bannon’s initials on the rock is just another reason why it is an important historic object, worthy of preservation.
Heroes of Indian Head Rock
Henry A. Lorberge

Henry Lorberg was a strong advocate for the public appreciation of the Indian Head Rock.

In 1908, he made a proposal that the City of Portsmouth remove the Rock from the river and display it in a shelter at York Park. His proposal was published in the Portsmouth Times but was not acted on.

Lorberg used his thriving souvenir business to promote the Rock and his proposal to salvage it in at least two versions of his popular postcards.

Lorberg wrote about the Rock in several of his Portsmouth/Scioto County history books:

“Indian Rock’ on the Kentucky shore opposite Court Street, could be seen in 1875… Many young men carved their initials on it, and an Indian head was also cut in the stone. The Rock could only be seen when the Ohio was extremely low--about once in a decade; but since the River Dams have been built, it is now entirely out of view, and has probably been seen for the last time by the present generation. It served as a good diving point for boys who went swimming in the River.”

(“Recollections of Half a Century in Portsmouth, Ohio: 1875-1925” by H. A. Lorberge)

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Lorberg worked as a reporter for the Portsmouth Times and other newspapers and published several books of local history.

Later in life, Lorberg devoted himself to his business interests, including the publication and sale of very popular post cards featuring over 2500 local landscape scenes. He sold souvenirs and had coin-operated scales around the city in the early 1900s.

Lorberg was responsible for the construction of the Portsmouth Public Library. The library was built in 1906 with a $50,000 grant that Lorberg acquired from millionaire Andrew Carnegie. He had a popular bandstand and fountain built in Portsmouth as well.

As an early means of sharing photographs, postcards were a popular and important means of communication in the early 20th century. Lorberg’s postcards of Portsmouth spread the knowledge of the Indian Head Rock to friends and relatives across the country.

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Henry August Lorberg (1856-1943)
- Journalist, entrepreneur, and local historian of Portsmouth and Scioto County
- Reporter for Portsmouth Daily Times and Ironton Tribune
- Son of German Immigrants
Indian Head Rock
Widey Known

The illustration on the right appeared in the Kansas City Journal on August 21, 1898, in an article entitled:

“Indian Head Rock: Curiously Carved Bowlder in the Ohio River near the mouth of the Scioto”

The initials JB and HB are visible on the rock. These initials were carved by Congressman Henry Bannon and his brother John when they were boys in the late 1800s.

The sketch on the left appeared in an article in the St. Lawrence (NY) Herald on Sep. 23, 1898 and other newspapers.

It was clearly drawn by someone who had never seen Indian Head Rock!

Articles about the Indian Head Rock have appeared in numerous U. S. newspapers, including the following:

_Natchez (Miss.) Weekly Courier_, Oct. 4, 1854: “Just opposite Portsmouth, there is a water mark called the ‘Indian Head’ from its being supposed to have been cut by the Indians many years ago.”

_Pittsburgh (PA) Commercial Gazette_, Sep. 13, 1894: “Indian Head Rock, which for years has been the low water mark on the Kentucky shore, is now two feet out of water.”

_Maysville (KY) Public Ledger_, Oct. 23, 1895: “Becoming Serious: The Ohio River Lower Than Ever Before Known. The Indian’s Head, sculptured in a great rock more than a quarter century ago when the river was so very low near Portsmouth, O., can now be clearly seen, as old rivermen declare, for the first time in twenty five years.”

_Zanesville (OH) Times Recorder_, Oct. 21, 1895:
“Indian Head Rock Visible. It gets its name from the figure of an Indian head cut in its flat top.”

_Times Picayune (New Orleans)_ , Oct 25, 1895:
“For the first time in 25 years, pilots see the Indian’s Head, near Portsmouth, Ohio.”

_Jeffersonville (IN) News_, Oct. 28, 1895: “An Unknown Artist: Indian Head Rock, in the Ohio river, opposite Portsmouth, O., is high and dry for the first time for years...”

_Minneapolis Tribune_, Sep. 12, 1898: “Carved by Mound Builders: An Indian head, carved in deep and distinct lines, which have stood the attrition of years and are to this day a testimony to the aborigines of America.”

_Gallipolis (OH) Journal_, Nov. 26, 1898: Called Indian Head Rock “A Singular Stone.”
The year 1908 was a banner year for Indian Head Rock. Even the Portsmouth Times mascot, “Billy Butt-In” visited the Rock that year.

Portsmouth Times illustrator, J. Harvey Shonkwiler, drew the sketch on the left. Shonkwiler’s daily editorial cartoons and comic strips were very popular. At a time when newspaper photography was limited, he illustrated meetings, sporting events, and other happenings around Portsmouth.

“Billy Butt-In” was his most popular creation, a cartoon goat who served as the mascot of the Portsmouth Times.

Indian Head Rock continued to be visible throughout the summer and fall of 1908. It was reported that “1500 Visited Indian Rock” in one day, Sundays being the most popular for sightseers.

1908 was also the year that Henry Lorberg first proposed removing the Rock from the river and displaying it in a park in Portsmouth.

The Indian Head Rock was always celebrated in Portsmouth newspapers whenever the river was low enough for it to appear:

_Portsmouth Inquirer_, Sep. 26, 1851: “The river is now within three inches of the Indian Head.”

_Portsmouth Tribune_, Sep. 5, 1854: “Just opposite Portsmouth there is a water mark called the Indian Head”

_Portsmouth Tribune_, Nov. 26, 1868: “A stone on the Kentucky beach of the Ohio River having the Indian head cut upon it.”

_Portsmouth Times_, Aug. 26, 1871: “The Indian Head on the Kentucky shore, above Springville, is out of water.”


_The Portsmouth Times_, Nov. 5, 1892: “The Indian Head is peeping above the water and is being visited by many. The names of some of our old time citizens can plainly be seen cut thereon.”

_The Portsmouth Blade_, Sep. 22, 1894: “THE INDIAN ROCK. Covered with inscriptions, Some of Them of Early Date—Is Your Name Written There?—Who Has Seen the Indian Head?”

_The Portsmouth Times_, Sep. 29, 1908: “One Thousand Visited The Indian Rock. The historic relic is plainly visible to the naked eye.”

Oct. 5, 1908: “Throng go to Kentucky Sunday to see the famed Indian Rock.”

Oct. 12, 1908: “1500 Visited Indian Rock. Every gasoline launch on the river front was in commission.”


_The Portsmouth Times_, Sep. 9, 1909: “Indian Rock is Visible…and that means dead low water.”


_The Portsmouth Times_, Oct. 25, 1920: “Many Pictures Taken of Indian Rock. Hundreds of Portsmouth people Sunday took advantage of an opportunity to view the famous Indian Rock.”
Charles Ellsworth Molster (1862-1946)
-Born in Portsmouth, Moved to Washington DC
-Commerce Department Official
-Friend of Herbert Hoover
-Active in Washington society

Charles E. Molster was born in Portsmouth in 1862. Several of his family members worked at the Gaylord Rolling Mill in Portsmouth, one of the city’s early steel manufacturers. His father, Martin, was the chief engineer of the Portsmouth Fire Department. Charles lived briefly in Springville (now called South Portsmouth) before moving to Washington DC. He was an official in the Herbert Hoover Administration.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT.**

[September 15, 1922.]

Secretary of Commerce...............HERBERT HOOVER.
Assistant Secretary of Commerce.....CLAUDIUS H. HUSTON
Assistant to the Secretary...........D. W. MULVANE.
Private Secretary to the Secretary....RICHARD S. EMMETT.
Chief Clerk and Superintendent.....EDWARD W. LIBBY.
Disbursing Clerk......................CHARLES E. MOLSTER.

Charles and his wife, Helen, were well-known in Washington. The couple’s parties were popular social events and their frequent trips to visit family in Portsmouth were reported on in DC society pages.

One of Charles descendants, Margaret Molster Bush, is married to Marvin Bush, the youngest brother of George and Jeb Bush.

Charles Molster is one of several historic names seen in a sketch that appeared in the Portsmouth Blade newspaper, Sept. 22, 1894. The name can still be seen on the rock today.

RIGHT: Charles’s brother, Walter Molster, on Indian Head Rock, c. 1897.

LEFT: Walter and Charles Molster, viewing the City of Portsmouth from the hills of Kentucky.

A handwritten note on the photo says, “Papa and his brother Walter admiring the most beautiful view in the world to them.”