This paper explores issues of land in terms of history and memory while focusing on a specific case study of land in southwestern Ohio in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It not only illuminates how land acquires meaning, but also questions the role of the archive in the research process and the construction of narrative. The paper details the methodology and constraints of putting forth an historical argument in an exhibit format, and provides specific examples of that exhibit. From the perspectives of white settlers, local Native Americans, and people associated with Miami University, the exhibit argues that memory of land is constructed of both distinct and overlapping conceptions of land specific to residents of the land. Images of land and its ownership structure the use of land, which then shapes memory. These memories of land underlie our own modern institutions and conceptions of land.
GEODÆSIA: LAND AND MEMORY

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I. Introduction

My forefather kindled the first fire at Detroit; from thence he extended his lines to the headwaters of the Scioto; from thence to its mouth; from thence, down the Ohio, to the mouth of the Wabash; and from thence to Chicago, over Lake Michigan. These are the boundaries within which the prints of my ancestors’ houses are everywhere to be seen. – Miami leader Little Turtle

The boundaries of the land are viz: Beginning at the mouth of the Great Miami River, and thence running up the Ohio to the mouth of the Little Miami River, thence up the Little Miami to a place where a due West line to be continued from the Western termination of the Northern boundary line of the grant to Messrs Sargeant Cutler and Company shall intersect the said Little Miami River, thence due West continuing the said Western line to the place where the said line shall intersect the Main branch or stream of the Great Miami River, thence down the Great Miami to the place of beginning. – John Cleves Symmes

Land is often a character of importance in historical narratives. It is often the silent spirit that brings historical narratives to life. Because of this role, land plays a part in what makes us who we are. We have historically identified ourselves in respect to our relationships with land, and remember land according to those relationships.

The exhibit Geodæsia: Land and Memory illuminates the complicated production of memory of land through a case study of the Symmes Purchase in southwestern Ohio during the late eighteenth century. It demonstrates how the Symmes Purchase acquired meaning, how its significance was contested, and which elements construct the worth associated with this land.

II. Research

Archives and Special Collections

The exhibit Geodæsia interrogates the structure of archives in relation to historical research. An archive is “materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator.” Its structure organizes its evidence or materials chronologically, showing change over time of traditionally patriarchal institutions. It thus privileges specific viewpoints – usually that of the dominant, and often, white male, society. It leaves little room for questions of context or alternate groups of people; but asking those questions is possible when one purposefully asks what is left out of the archive and actively probes its structure. Gaps in the evidential record then become more apparent and anomalies previously overlooked become venues through which to ask further questions.

3 Geodæsia is an antiquarian term meaning the measure of land, or the survey of a large tract of land. See definition in Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which The Words Are Deduced From Their Originals, and Illustrated In Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers. To Which are Prefixed A History of the Language, and an English Grammar, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Moses Thomas, 1818), GEO.
Housed in the exhibit space of the Walter Havighurst Special Collections at Miami University Libraries, *Geodæsia* primarily incorporates source material found in its collections. Special collections are materials unified by a single topic or subject. Walter Havighurst Special Collections consists of more than 65,000 volumes and over eighty collections. For the purposes of this exhibit, however, the Walter Havighurst Special Collections served the function of an archive.

**Modified Research Process**

Scholars cannot simply survey the shelves of the collections to determine potentially promising material when researching in a special collections library. The finding aid is the primary tool. Research for this project was no different. In the beginning, research for the exhibit started with pulling various documents to explore some of the collections. As an exploration of landscape and memory though, the research had to answer several questions about the physical and cultural realities of owning land. What did owning land actually mean? – was it buying land with paper currency and signing a piece of paper; or was it occupying and using the land over many generations? What was land’s role and significance in each society? With the archive set up to investigate only a white perspective of land ownership, successfully answering these questions meant finding sources outside it. The use of outside sources such as indigenous maps and interviews shed light on the Native American perspective of land as shared space not found in the archive.

Diverse ideologies and realities of land in the archive revealed issues of power and identity. People usually create archives to preserve the memories of particular types and groups of people. The archive shows the change over time for institutions and chronicles the lives of its subjects, preserving its evidence for specific purposes. Only documents deemed “important” by the subject in question are there; usually these are legal documents. These documents establish positions, property, and precedent using time-honored metaphors that suggest unending perpetuity; they also make the claim to be official memory – that which receives sanction because it was preserved. Researchers trying to find context over content must read between the lines for alternative experiences or ideologies. The exhibit examines the role of the archive in the construction of image and memory by questioning what the archive does and does not represent.

John Cleves Symmes frequently appeared in the archive as a somewhat prosperous and well-known landowner. Not only did the archive hold his legal documents, but also held published collections of his letters and secondary accounts of his life from many sources. These documents tell the story of Symmes’ life as a delegate to the Continental Congress, a militia colonel in the Continental Army, and a New Jersey Supreme Court judge turned land speculator. After the passage of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787,

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6 Indeed, this project depended on a great deal of luck – finding aids only exist for some of the collections at Walter Havighurst Special Collections, and these finding aids are of varying degrees of completeness. Uncataloged collections also posed a challenge. The aid and insight of the head of the Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Janet H. Stuckey, in researching in the collections is deeply appreciated.

Congress opened for sale land in the future states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, believing that this could help pay off war debt from the late Revolution and would satisfy promises of reimbursement for Continental soldiers. With land at a cheap price and himself a veteran, Symmes petitioned Congress for one million acres in the Ohio territory between the Miami Rivers. He arrived at his purchase in 1788 with plans to build a stately home for himself, and a city, settlements, and an academy for higher learning—all while selling tracts of his land to settlers in order to pay the price for the purchase. However, bad deals and poorly kept records left Symmes in debt and facing lawsuits. The United States government reduced his purchase to those acres actually paid for, a decision which Symmes perpetually tried to reverse. His intended academy of learning fell inside a piece of land already sold, no longer his own, and led to a dispute over its new location. When Symmes could not provide the land or funds for a substitute site, the new University’s trustees located it in a new township in Butler County. This university became Miami University.

Influential Secondary Themes

The archival records on Symmes are delineated by the “Indian Boundary Line” that divided his land. Sources written after Symmes’ death provide greater detail about the Myaamia—or the Miami of Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois—and other native peoples in the area, but these observations on Native American culture extend only as far as outsiders understood themselves. Instead of providing scholarly information about native cultures, white settlers’ observations reflect their own cultures and beliefs. Because Native Americans passed on traditions and memories in an oral format, there are no primary sources from the late eighteenth century written from a Native American’s point of view in the archive. For this exhibit, information on the Myaamia and other peoples came from carefully reading the often prejudiced secondary works from the period, or from much later twentieth-century works. The archive obscured the voices of Native American peoples living in the Miami Purchase in the late eighteenth century. Only by scouring contemporary sources with a critical eye and then seeking out modern-day Myaamia Tribal scholars were their voices uncovered.

Women too, were hidden by the organization of documents in the archive. In the patriarchal society of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, women existed

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legally in the persons of their husbands or fathers. Only as widows did women own or control property. Thus, the archive once again favored a specific person – the white male – making it difficult to uncover women’s conceptions and memories of land. Symmes married three different women over the course of his life and was father of two daughters. Glimpsed through personal letters, Symmes’ family’s considerable role in his life reveals that women aided their husbands in the domestication of the land, dealt with hardships, brought up children, and traveled. Although legal transactions record women as just witnesses, their role was not limited to this. They were important actors and helpmates in the territory. Myaamia women, like their white sisters, appeared only in outsiders’ observations on Native Americans. Once again, their experience of and relationship to working the land emerged from twentieth-century sources and communications with scholarly representatives of the Myaamia.11

Maps lend an air of authority and finality to discussions of land, and remain in the archive as numerous examples of an era of national expansion. However, maps structure knowledge about land as they depict it. Mark Monmonier points out maps “are authored collections of information and are also subject to distortions arising from ignorance, greed, ideological blindness, or malice.” Significantly, maps misrepresent reality. Cartographers generalize and highlight critical information while suppressing other details which they deem of lesser consequence.12 Research for the exhibit uncovered numerous contemporary maps from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but all of these maps were created in perspective with white interests at heart. These maps were scrutinized for what they were actually depicting and saying about the land in question. Often times they revealed not necessarily the reality, but instead the cartographer’s projected or anticipated future reality. Again, because of the prevalence of white chronological evidence in the archive and a lack of written documentation of Native American sources, Native American visual representations of land were non-existent in the archive. For a balanced point of view, the only map known to be drawn by a Native American man related to the Myaamia in the Northwest Territory was brought into the exhibit at the suggestion of Myaamia scholars.13

Uncovering women and Native Americans in the archive added depth to the project. Time and space, however, limited the parameters of the actual exhibit. Because this research was for a physical exhibit scheduled to open January 2011, research on new perspectives was restricted to fresh analysis of sources already pulled from the archive. The available exhibit cases limited the amount of material suitable for display, but the exhibit also had to successfully provide interpretation and context for the material. Thus, a balance between space and proper interpretation was achieved through the use of several


documents that highlight new perspectives while accomplishing the larger goals of each case.

**Areas of Secondary Research**

As the exhibit explores the construction and meaning of memory of land, the exhibit research covers such varying academic topics as memory, geography, Native American studies, museum studies, and material culture, among others. A primary goal of the exhibit was exploring the intersection of history and memory, so sources on memory formed the first group of sources. Pierre Nora writes that the archive is a modern memory palace where memories accumulate and are externalized. Michel Foucault agrees with Nora, stating that archives are repositories of memories defined by their contents and organization. Archives today focus on and debate both the relationships between the representation of events and their reality, and history and memory’s role in shaping history. 14 Patrick Hutton argues that memory constructs views of the past because recollected images are not the real past, but representations of it. Memory also shapes present identity through the repetition of the habits of mind constantly brought forward that continue to mold present understanding and through the recollection of efforts to evoke the past. 15

Several works played an influential role in the research process in terms of landscape in history and memory. Part of the move to social and cultural history seen in the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, these works demonstrated the importance of getting at the daily life and experience of the past. Since this exhibit emphasizes that ideas and memories of land play an active role in its everyday experience, the techniques of these social and cultural histories resonated with it. Richard L. Bushman’s *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* analyzes the rise of gentility and refinement in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century American culture through the acquisition of household luxury items. In *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich analyzes fourteen household material culture objects to draw the intersections between themes of everyday life and the larger world of international Atlantic commerce. By doing so she reveals underlying connections passively seen but not often actively recognized. Keith Basso’s *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* afforded another example of the way studies of such ordinary things as place names shed light on the ties of landscape and environment to larger ideas of self, society, and preservation of the past. 16

Simon Schama’s *Landscape and Memory* was the initial catalyst for this exhibit’s investigation of the relationship between history and memory pertaining to land because of his intriguing investigation into conflicting and coinciding memories of landscapes that

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still structure identity and memory today. Schama suggests that usually land is an unquestioned given, but despite this, historical memory forms around notions of place. Landscapes are cultural products, and sifting through layers of memory brings a better understanding of memory and identity. As cultural products, landscapes possess layers of memories and representations that address the realities of absence and presence, and explore national identity through examinations of cultural traditions.\(^\text{17}\) E.P. Thompson’s *Whigs and Hunters* does similar work with landscape and social history and reveals important aspects of British culture as exemplified in forest societies by investigating the confusing archival evidence left from the infamous Black Act trials.\(^\text{18}\)

An example of the issue of image creation and its impact on everyday life, seen in the exhibit through the ways ideas of land structure its use and control, was found in Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo’s *Mexico at the World’s Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*. Tenorio-Trillo uses various forms of archival evidence, such as maps, to illuminate assorted representations of reality. Tenorio-Trillo also draws attention to the cultural work and influence on national identity arising from the differences between reality and image in several World’s Fair representations of Mexico and its attendant realities.\(^\text{19}\) In all, these works taken together served as a guide from which to craft an investigation of memory and culture through such an everyday thing as landscape.

To write an analysis of landscape and memory, research into cartography and geography provided another point of insight into the study of land. Information on surveying techniques and tools illuminated the practices used to mark off and distribute land, while later sources explained the various sections into which Ohio’s land became divided. Twentieth-century geographical works painted the picture of southwestern Ohio’s deciduous forests interspersed with prairies and swiftly-flowing rivers. Modern discussions on cartography and maps described the eighteenth and nineteenth century map-making process and established the presence of ideological agendas in virtually all maps. Cartography truly is about representation.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{17}\) Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 6-7, 9, 14-17, 25, 199, 574.


Settlement and life in the Northwest Territory arose from contemporary descriptions of settlement, legal documents, and modern histories of the settlement and statehood process. Ohio’s landscape emerged through travel accounts encouraging American settlers to move west and take advantage of the limitless opportunities found in the region’s fertile and natural resources, and described the ease with which settlers obtained land. Pamphlets offered land for sale while legal documents gave the laws proscribing settlement of and payment for land. Andrew R. L. Cayton’s several works on the settlement of the Northwest Territory emphasize the nature of settlement as one in which many types of white men took part in the wealth of opportunities of the Ohio Valley – speculators seeking to promote order and civility and ordinary men seeking independence and a future. He further argues that the importance of relationships in the new territory – both among people and between people and the land, led to the negotiation of settlement and the formation of a new republican society.21

A perspective on Native American life, the Myaamia in particular for this study, came from interviews conducted with staff of The Myaamia Project at Miami University and their published works. From personal discussions with living descendants of Myaamia leaders and materials written by scholars of Native Americans, the Myaamia came to life. The Myaamia consisted of related bands known as the Miami, Piankeshaw, and Wea who spoke a common Miami-Illinois language. Their traditional homelands encompassed the modern-day states of Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, and Michigan; they lived along the Wabash River in northern Indiana, the Illinois River in northern Illinois, the southern shore of Lake Michigan, and the Great Miami River in western Ohio. They shared this homeland with neighboring Shawnees, Delaware, Potawatomies, and other tribes. Villages shared language and culture, but made decisions for themselves; they were not, however, nation-states. Men and women shared decision-making responsibilities in which village consensus was the norm. They farmed from spring until fall and hunted in winter. Land for the Miami was ancestral geography – or the maps in their minds.22


To understand the Miami’s relationship to land, one must consider their subsequent history after initial white settlement in the Northwest Territory. After the Treaty of Paris in 1783, droves of squatters rushed to take “free” land in the Northwest Territory. Many illegally settled on indigenous lands, angering Native Americans, who consequently raided and attacked white settlements. After twice defeating U.S. armies in the early 1790s, the Miami and their allies lost their edge in the fight and succumbed to the armies of General Anthony Wayne in the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. The 1795 Treaty of Greenville drastically opened up the Myaamia’s and their neighbors’ lands to white settlement, paving the way for thirteen more treaties between 1795 and 1840 that left decreasing amounts of land to the Native Americans.

Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, which eventually removed all remaining Native Americans to lands west of the Mississippi River. After much negotiation, the rest of the Miami homelands passed into American hands in 1840 in a treaty for five hundred fifty thousand dollars. Six years later half the Miami were removed under force to a reservation in Kansas, while three hundred stayed in Indiana; this separation continues today. The western Miami stayed in Kansas for twenty-four years before their last treaty with the government forced them to move to Indian Territory in Oklahoma. Those who stayed in Kansas lost their tribal status, while the Indiana Miami lost their federal tribal recognition in 1897. After 1846, the Western and Eastern Miami recognize different subsequent tribal histories. Today the Miami still work to overcome the negative consequences of the forced removal by efforts to restore their language and acquire land for cultural purposes.

Miami University’s eventual role in the landscape and memorial fabric of the Symmes Purchase appeared through its enabling laws and modern-day histories. Symmes originally intended to build an academy for higher learning within his purchase. When Congress reduced his lands to include only those for which he had paid, land north of his purchase became the chosen site of the new university in 1803. Lying outside the Symmes Purchase, the trustees waited six years for formal purchase of the property by the state of Ohio. Named for the Miami Rivers, which take their names from the Miami villages located along their banks, “An Act to Establish The Miami University” took effect on February 17, 1809. Officially located in a deciduous forest, the town of Oxford came into existence in 1810 to support the fledgling university. The trustees of the university relied on proceeds from the rent and sale of land ceded in the Treaty of Greenville (once hunting ground for the Myaamia and their neighbors) to support the University. By 1820, Oxford
boasted a population of only 1,658 – but remarkably survived a proposed move of the university to Cincinnati two years later. When the addition of a second building in 1824 followed the grammar school erected in 1818, between fifty and sixty students began classes at Miami University on November 2, 1824. The university grew and survived the Civil War and a period of closing in the late nineteenth century to become a prominent feature in the region in the twenty-first century.\(^24\)

In order to formulate ideas on how best to put these disparate sources together into a meaningful display, museum studies and attendant literature on the nature of exhibitions was the last topic of secondary research. David Dean’s *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice* provided technical information about the correct amount of text and font-size for text labels, the various components of storylines, and general suggestions for effective organization. He writes that “the specific goals of museum exhibitions involve the desire to change attitudes, modify behavior, and increase the availability of knowledge;” this observation conformed well to the goals of this exhibit.\(^25\)

Works such as *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* presented practical guidelines and argued that exhibitions can accomplish more than presenting objects to the public. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine point out that there are two strategies for museum exhibition: the museum as temple and the museum as forum. Many museums in the twenty-first century choose the latter strategy, as did this exhibit. This strategy sees the nature of museum exhibition as one of educational experimentation and expansion, as opposed to the glorification of material culture objects. Lavine states that thoughtfully presented historical material need not play a secondary role to objects on display, arguing that narrative possibilities of artifacts in exhibitions “can encourage visitors to think more broadly about things and their meanings.” In fact, by choosing the right level of narrative to go with corresponding objects and providing the audience with the proper amount of context to contemplate the ideas presented, museum exhibitions hold the potential to help the audience reorganize their knowledge and construct new notions of identity.\(^26\) Taken together, the literature stresses the need for exhibition themes that address issues of identity formation, power – between historical actors, audience, curator,
and exhibition - and education. They emphasize the challenge of reorganizing knowledge for the audience. Finally, they question the merits of an exhibition’s voice as object or idea-driven, arguing that there is a place for both types of exhibition and that each can be successful.

**Arriving at an Argument**

Because this was a project intended to probe the limits and characteristics of an archive, historical questions were addressed in a different manner than in a traditional historical investigation. Symmes operated within existing legal and societal structures in perceiving the land in his purchase. The exhibit examines these structures and those other perspectives that challenged them. It investigates the formation of memory of land through its perception and use, through the viewpoints of John Cleves Symmes, owner of the Miami Purchase; the Miami Tribe; and people associated with the Miami University. The exhibit presents information in a visual format, explores the meanings of land, and insists that there are specific reasons why we view land as we do.

The exhibit’s argument was the result of a combination of several factors. Primary research in the archive on the settlement of Ohio together with secondary literature such as the works by Andrew R. L. Cayton and works on the theory of maps produced the above interpretation that Symmes considered land in a way specific to Euro-American culture of the time period. The Myaamia perspective challenging white notions of land arose from extended discussions with George Ironstrack on Myaamia life and history and from critical attention to secondary sources he recommended. The exhibit argues that the memory of land is made up of both distinct and overlapping conceptions of land specific to the groups of people living on the land. Conceptions of land and its ownership structure the use of land, which then shapes the formation of memory. These memories of land endure and underlie our own modern institutions and conceptions of land. The notion of distinct, yet overlapping memories guided the selection of materials from the archive and outside sources, while the idea of specific images, uses, and memories of land supplied the organization. Portraying history and memory together in an exhibit is not an easy task, though. Because the memories of multiple publics come into play in an exhibit, the historian chooses how and to what extent a particular public’s memories come to life. Caution is necessary in developing interpretation. What one public sees as an event worthy of celebration, another public might view as tragic and painful. Therefore, prudence and understanding should guide the use of a commemorative voice.

**Arriving at Themes**

Coming up with an organizational framework fostering critical thinking was a major test for this exhibit. I considered interpretive approaches such as tacking back and forth through time comparing experiences, organizing the exhibit chronologically, or using a thematic organization. I also chose between such options for themes as one having overall theme, or several themes that coalesced into a larger overarching one. The issue of narratives and characters presented the same choices as did those of the question of theme. In the end, a thematic organization best portrayed the argument that memory’s role in the construction of identity tied to place revealed three themes through which one explores land and memory. These themes - image, use, and memory of land - examine aspects of

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land and memory as they challenge the archival evidence to yield information outside a chronological structure.

II. The Three Themes

Illustrating Themes through Primary Sources

The archive yielded some of the primary sources and objects illustrating each of the three themes of image, use, and memory of land. Sources illustrating material not found in the archive came from other institutions such as The Myaamia Project, the William Holmes McGuffey Museum, and the Miami University Art Museum. *Image of Land* presents visual representations of land. It highlights different ways of knowing and using land and the construction of these representations. Maps from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries show how white settlers constructed images of land as measurable and transferrable property with clear boundaries. Legal documents such as deeds and indentures also illustrate the legal cast land could be given and the ease with which land was transferred from person to person. Land for the white man was a means by which to declare independence, wealth, and stability.\(^{28}\)

The same question of image creation is viewed from the Native American perspective when one sees the difference between a white map and a map made by a Native American. The native man’s map shows the alien quality written maps had in an oral culture. Days of travel rather than mathematical units measure distances, and boundaries are not clearly marked. What comes through is the Myaamia perspective of shared space, where a village’s land radiated out in concentric circles with shared land in between spheres of influence. A replica of a 1795 Indian peace medal from the Treaty of Greenville again captures the difference between Native American and European ways of seeing land as the native man stands in front of a tree, (much like that found in southwestern Ohio forests), smoking the peace pipe with George Washington, who ushers in the new era as a farmer tills the land in the background. Physical property weighs against the intangibility of a culture closely identified with its landscape.\(^{29}\)

*Use of Land* examines the ways in which different uses and meanings of land emerge through various groups of peoples’ needs and images of it. It articulates the ways people experienced, measured, and used land. A map of the cultural homelands of the Myaamia with native place names and without borders, illustrates the Native American use of land for livelihood and cultural perpetuation. Myaamia people farmed the fertile river valleys and fished and traded on the navigable rivers. Instead of arbitrary names, their place names connected to land told stories that conveyed community knowledge and taught Myaamia people their way of life. In contrast to the Myaamia’s intimate interaction with land, Euro-American uses of land and actions upon it come to life through a nineteenth-century surveying transit, surveys, and period surveying texts. These objects emphasize the notion of land as measurable personal property needed to create and sustain farms, homes, communities, and institutions. Surveyors both performed the vision of land as


transferable property and made it possible through their actions of measuring and charting.  

*Memory of Land* illustrates how particular groups of people exist within the memory of land and coexist with these memories. *Memory of Land* features documents and photographs that demonstrate the complicated effects of memory on our modern conceptions of land. Two word clouds of Miami place names and Symmes place names show the tension between land ownership and memory. Symmes bought large amounts of land ceded to the United States from the Myaamia and their neighbors, gave his name to the purchase and became a sort of founding hero of the region. The Myaamia, their name westernized as Miami, lost physical possession to the land, but not their memory of or cultural ties to it. Landscape and its native Myaamia place names still perpetuate their culture and the Miami place names now assigned to rivers, roads, and towns remind current residents of a once prominent people. Where the Myaamia were once removed, their name and legacy lives on. Maps and photographs of the founding and early years of Miami University are also found in this section. Its name, residence halls such as Symmes Hall, and ongoing programs like The Myaamia Project speak to the land’s past contested ownership and complex memory. This section illustrates the many underlying and overlapping memories that form our own modern conceptions of land.  

**Secondary Themes Dropped**

Before image, use, and memory, of land were decided upon as themes of the exhibit, several other themes remained interpretive possibilities. At first, only a discussion of Symmes and the corresponding legal issues tied to ownership of land made up the exhibit narrative. Expanding this theme beyond legal issues, though, turned the exhibit away from traditional chronological history and provided it with a cultural depth it otherwise would have lacked. Different representations of land, particularly maps and art, were also considered as a topic for interpretation. Rather than framing the whole narrative, these representations were included within the image and use themes to illustrate several peoples’ specific viewpoints rather than general tendencies of maps and art.

**Choice of Objects**

The objects in the exhibit faced careful scrutiny and were chosen for specific reasons. Not only did they successfully illustrate the theme assigned to them, but they also provided a splash of color, a visual contrast, or a telling example of a point made. The two word clouds, for example, were lists of names centered on proper nouns that presented a visually striking comparison of the place names associated with both the Miami and Symmes. They accomplished their purpose of showcasing the many difficult and conflicting claims to memory in the Symmes Purchase while avoiding explicit interpretation of the point. The peace medal represented the work the medal sought to do and what its presenters actually did – its creators sought to bring peace at the same time white notions of land came to the fore in the area. The surveyor’s transit, like the peace medal, brought physical elements of material culture to the exhibit and presents visitors with objects encountered by people in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It connects visitors with the tools used to render the land into the towns, roads, and properties we now know. Even traditional evidence like legal documents was used to show

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31 *Mihtohseenionki (The People’s Place)*, 69.
specific things. The deed to the Trustees of the University of Cincinnati was selected because of Susan Symmes’ signature at the bottom of the document. Her signature sets this deed apart from the other deeds, and points to the fact that women too played important roles in the Northwest Territory. This deed though, was not cataloged or noticed prior to this exhibit.

There were many more objects and documents available than were chosen for the exhibit. An exhibit made up entirely of legal documents would not be appealing to the public. The exhibit needed a visual element that simply could not be accomplished by legal documents alone. The same is true with an exhibit made up entirely of maps. A predominance of one type of evidence would also not reflect the variety in the archive. In order to avoid a monopoly of one type of media, I decided on certain maps for the exhibit over others. Daniel Drake’s 1815 map of Cincinnati showing the early city and Indian trails was not included; instead I selected two maps depicting what settlers saw in coming to the Northwest Territory. The maps of Ohio and the United States from the 1805 A New and Elegant General Atlas displayed both the supposedly empty region available for settlement and the patterns of towns and villages in Ohio. The Map of Miami College replaced the document “Conditions of Sale for the Miami College Lands,” again to provide a visual element and to help visitors draw correlations in their minds between the land of Miami University in the past and in the present.

III. Exhibit Presentation

Thematic versus Chronological Organization

My goal for this exhibition was to encourage visitors to rethink their understanding of land. I wanted to convey some sense of the realization occurring to me as I learned to rethink what I knew about land. As I encountered my own cultural biases and considered what I found and did not find in the archive, I began to see that land is not just a physical entity or simply transferred between people. Its meaning and representations fluctuate from culture to culture and over time. I wanted the exhibit’s organization to foster a similar revelation in the audience. A chronological narrative would have reinforced the viewpoint of the white colonizers and suppressed alternate views. A circular organization with many themes was not feasible in the exhibit space. Thus, the exhibit has three themes: Image, Use, and Memory. Each of the three exhibit cases presents one theme and the viewer moves through horizontally layered stories in each case.

Physical Constraints

Space was a key concern in the exhibit in that there are only three large cases available for display. Because of this, documents in the exhibit were first carefully measured and then scanned to determine the best size for the exhibit space. Some documents were copied and shrunk to meet an appropriate size or to highlight a particular point of interest. Other documents were enlarged in order to make text and handwriting legible from a distance or to highlight important details. Some documents and objects even lost their place in the exhibit for lack of space. Other documents made it into the exhibit as digital copies of the originals due to the exhibit room’s tendency for temperature fluctuations. Like museums, Walter Havighurst Special Collections monitors its department for constant stable temperature and humidity to protect its collections. Light too, is an important factor affecting exhibit objects on display. Objects in original form
only appear in this exhibit if they are not under direct light. As a result of these constraints, only a small number of documents and objects seen in the exhibit are originals.  

**Label Writing**

Preparing the text for the exhibit proved to be one of the most time-consuming aspects of the whole exhibit installation process. At first, the label texts were too long and wordy, and read too much like a text book. The writing for both the interpretive labels and individual object labels needed to be no more than 150 words and 75 words respectively. Lively and attention-getting text still needed to communicate relevant arguments and facts. The exhibit labels saw six versions before the final product went into the cases. The text of the labels also came under the review of scholar George Ironstrack at The Myaamia Project in order to make certain that the text correctly represents the beliefs and views of the Myaamia and does not perpetuate incorrect cultural biases or misunderstandings. Lastly, the label text had to meet specific in-house style rules for the Special Collections. All labels need to be in a font size eighteen point or larger for individual object labels and size twenty-four point or larger for interpretive labels to promote easy reading for visitors. All fonts also need to be clearly legible and of a color able to be read from a minimum of three and one half feet away. In this case, some titles in the exhibit were font size thirty-six point to make them stand out and all labels had bold text to make the text more readable.

**Developing a Brochure**

The last element of the exhibit installation was the development of an accompanying brochure. This necessitated a different form of writing than writing a prospectus or label copy. Instead of the detailed argumentation presented in a prospectus or research paper, or the condensed writing of the label text, the writing of the brochure needed to be a mix of the two. It provides an overview of the exhibit’s argument and themes, and helps visitors remember the content of the exhibit without going into all of the specific facts and details. It includes only a few photographs of objects featured in the exhibit and a selected bibliography. An initial run of twenty-five copies of the brochure accompanied the opening of the exhibit, with additional printings as needed.

The brochure also had an online format. The overall format and text was identical to the paper copy, but the online version contains links to the Special Collections website and a different title photograph. In addition, the online brochure features a page with transcriptions of each of the manuscript documents in the exhibit for interested visitors to peruse at their leisure or while visiting the exhibit. A third page contains photographs of the exhibit. Visitors reach the online version in the exhibit space via a Quick Response code that links to the Walter Havighurst Special Collections website when a photo of it is taken by a smart phone. Both the hard copy of the brochure and the exhibit itself have QR codes that link to the website. *Geodæsia* is the first exhibit in the Special Collections to use a QR code.

**V. Conclusion**

*Geodæsia: Land and Memory* approaches the question of the construction of meaning and memory attached to land through a traditional case study, traditional archive, and traditional evidence but with a new interpretive schema. By exploring, interrogating,
and interacting with the framework of the archive, the exhibit uses materials from the Walter Havighurst Special Collections to construct an historical narrative not confined to explicit evidence found within the archive’s framework. Through the exhibit’s employment of such themes as *Image of land, Use of land, and Memory of land,* it demonstrates that memory of land consists of both distinct and coinciding conceptions of land specific to residents of the land. These images of land and its ownership shape the use of land, which then contributes to the formation of memory. These memories of land still endure and come face to face with us in day-to-day encounters with place names, buildings, people, and the landscape itself. *Image, Use, and Memory of Land* also demonstrate the possibility and promise of examining aspects of land and memory by the ways they challenge the archival evidence to yield information outside its traditional chronological and institutional structure. In the end, *Geodesia* challenges us to think critically about the land surrounding us. Land is then, both the land of our forefathers and the foundation of our livelihoods, with its borders establishing our cultural heartlands and reflecting the memories of our experiences.
Exhibit Objects - September

Symmes objects:
Diderot surveying engravings
*Elements of Geography, Ancient and Modern* - 1830
“Fort Washington, Cincinnati, 1789” engraving from *Sketch of the Life and Times of Col. Israel Ludlow* – 1885
*Geodesia* – Surveying book from 1760
George Washington surveyor engraving
Harrison, William Henry; Silk portraits ca. 1898-1911
A Map of Symmes’ Survey, Heaton, 1847
*Natural and Statistical View, or Picture of Cincinnati and the Miami Country, Illustrated by Maps. With an Appendix, Containing Observations on The late Earthquakes, the Aurora Borealis, and South-west Wind.* by Daniel Drake  Cincinnati: Looker and Wallace, 1815.
*A New and Elegant General Atlas.* 1805.
Northwest Territory. Resolution on the subject of giving instruction to W. H. Harrison… Aug. 18, 1799
Surveying tool – transit
Symmes, John Cleves – Certificates paid to Subscribers of land purchases
Symmes, John Cleves – Indenture March 1, 1801
Symmes, John Cleves. Letter from the Attorney General…Relative to the Contract Entered into between the U.S. and John Cleves Symmes. May 5, 1796
Symmes, John Cleves to Richard McCain May 4, 1831-deed
Symmes Pamphlet and Manasseh Cutler pamphlets
Symmes patent No. 7 and No. 14, 1797
Symmes Portrait – Charles Willson Peale
Uncataloged 1750 European map of North America with nothing in the western part of the continent
U.S. Congress – Resolution to William Henry Harrison regarding John Cleves Symmes May 5, 1792

Miami Tribe objects:
Atlas showing the Miami lands in Ohio - 1776
William Henry Harrison’s *Discourse on the Aborigines of Ohio*
Historical Miami Place Names GIS map
Indian Peace Medal – replica – 1795 Treaty of Greenville
J.O. Lewis’ *Aboriginal Portfolio*
Miami Tribe images from the Myaamia Project
Team of Oxen toy
Volney map-1792
Treaty of Greenville Painting
Wea map – only map known to have been drawn by a Miami man for a treaty

**Miami University objects:**
Aerial photograph of Hueston Woods 1943 – by Frank R. Snyder
Aerial photograph of Miami University, c. 1950 – by Frank R. Snyder
“Conditions of Sale for the Miami College Lands”
John W. Browne to Gentlemen of Miami University, August 8, 1811 letter
John W. Browne to Trustees at Miami University, 1810 letter
Joseph Cannon Smith: Photograph of Miami University Campus, ca. 1854-1860
*Laws & Ordinances, of ‘The Miami University.’ Published by Order of the Board of Trustees.*
1810 Miami College map
Miami University Board of Trustees minutes
Photographs of Symmes Hall
Symmes place names list

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**Exhibit Objects - Opening Day January 24, 2011**

**Image:**
Symmes Indenture to William Henry Harrison. Miscellanea Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.
Certificates paid to Symmes. Miscellanea Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.
Symmes Deed to Richard McCain. Miscellanea Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.
Joseph Delaplaine to Trustees of Cincinnati University deed. Miscellanea Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.

1774 Wea Map- Map image © Trustees of the British Museum.


Use:

*muyaamiaki eehi mihtoseeniwiciki*: Historical Landscapes of the Miami, 1650-1850. Used with permission of The Myamia Project.

Slocum daughters painting-“Frances Slocum and Her Daughters, 1839” painting by George Winter.


1847 Symmes survey by Charles Heaton. Special Folio Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.


*Geodesia: Or, the Art of Surveying and Measuring of Land Made Easy*, by John Love, 1760. 1841 Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.

Memory:


Miami place names word cloud
Symmes place names word cloud

Miami College 1810 map by James Heaton. Special Folio Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.


John Browne letter to Trustees at Miami University, 1810. John W. Browne Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.

John Browne letter to Gentlemen of Miami University, August 8, 1811. John W. Browne Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.

1854 photo of MU campus - Joseph Cannon Smith, Photography of Miami University Campus, ca. 1854-1860. Miscellanea Collection, Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.

1950 aerial photo of MU campus - Frank R. Snyder Photograph Collection. Miami University Digital Archive.

2010 photo of Symmes Hall

2009/2010 photo of Miami tribal students. Use with permission of The Myaamia Project.
Exhibit Labels

Exhibit: Geodæsia: Land and Memory

“Geodæsia: the art of surveying and measuring land.”

I: Images of Land

A. Storyline: Introduction

a. Interpretative Label: Land is surveyed, measured, and mapped. It plays a dominant role in our personal histories and lives and the history of the United States. Ideas of land ownership and control structure use of the land, which in turn shape memories of land. In the Miami Purchase, white settlers such as John Cleves Symmes saw the land as personal property and opportunity; the Miami Tribe saw land as a communal heritage stretching from time immemorial. These ideas and memories of land endure and underlie our own modern institutions and conceptions of land. What we remember of the land both reveals and hides the past.

i. object: 1805 map of Ohio

1. object label: Maps like this one would have been typical for settlers to the Ohio frontier. A New and Elegant General Atlas, published by Thomas & Andrews, 1805.

ii. Object: Map of Ohio – Counties and Original Purchases

1. object label: A modern map of Ohio, this map also shows the boundaries of the original land purchases in Ohio. The Symmes Purchase is located in the southwest corner of the state. James A. Rhodes, A Short History of Ohio Land Grants.

b. Interpretative label: Maps reflect the maker’s ideological beliefs. Indigenous maps communicated knowledge of resources and relationships between communities. Maps can also draw lines, set boundaries, and indicate the control of land. Through maps, the new United States expanded its nation-state and claimed rights of personal property by asserting its legitimacy and setting boundaries.

i. Object: 1805 Map of U.S.

1. object label: This early nineteenth century map depicts the interior of the country as empty. This symbolizes not only ignorance of native peoples’ presence, but also the negation of their legitimacy as peoples with land and the land’s potential as personal property for white settlers. A New and Elegant General Atlas, published by Thomas & Andrews, 1805.

B. Storyline: Freedom & Fortune: Purchasing the Land
a. Interpretative Label: As soon as the Northwest Territory became the possession of the United States in 1783, land was the nation’s ticket out of war debt and an opportunity for fame and fortune for others. For men such as John Cleves Symmes, land was a commodity to be bought and sold, through which he earned a fortune and built up his reputation in the East. For other men, land was an opportunity for personal independence, whether from actual enslavement or freedom from debts and taxes. In contrast to the preferred ordered settlement and fair compensation for land advocated by prominent men, eager squatters saw the seemingly open land as free for the taking - from the constraints of government, large landowners, and the claims of Native Americans.

i. Object: Certificates paid to Symmes
   1. object label: These certificates make up a list of land transactions taken at Limestone, Kentucky on November 23, 1788. Symmes could dispose of lands as he saw fit, as long as his transactions did not conflict with existing laws set by the U.S. government. Purchasers paid for their parcel of land with specie or continental certificates given to veterans of the American Revolution for their services.

ii. Object: Symmes Indenture
   2. object label: In this indenture, Symmes transfers land to William Henry Harrison. Harrison and Symmes became national figures possessing thousands of acres of land. In contrast, many squatters who farmed and traded in the area resented men like these two for buying and selling so much land that could have been had for free.

iii. Object: Symmes Deed
   3. object label: Settlers in the Symmes Purchase had two years in which to improve their property, or suffer a portion of it to be returned. Some settlers found the rising prices of land and the poor recording keeping of Symmes to be disastrous. When Symmes sold land outside his purchase to which he had no legal title, many settlers were forced to pay the government a second time for their land.

iv. Object: Susan Symmes deed
   4. object label: Symmes came to Ohio the father of two daughters and was later grandfather of thirteen children. His third wife, Susan Livingston Symmes, traveled throughout the territory to see her stepdaughter, Anna
Symmes Harrison, and witnessed several land transactions.

v. Object: Symmes Purchase patent

5. object label: After Congress reduced his initial purchase of one million acres in the Northwest Territory to that surveyed and paid for, Symmes felt the original one million acres should be restored to him. In these patents to Congress dated 1797, Symmes make a claim for the western boundary of the Virginia Military lands in Ohio as the eastern border of his Miami Purchase. This new border, he reasoned, provided him with the acreage he sought.

“...it follows as a matter self evident, that if there be a million of Acres south of that Indian cession line, and between the Great Miami and the western limits of the Virginia Military Lands which follow up the waters of the Little Miami to its Source, and then take a northerly direction to the head of a west branch of Scioto river, this is the million of acres always had in view from the beginning of the Miami negotiations to the present day, and which the purchaser hath Never relinquished.”

C. Storyline: Myaamionki: Homelands of the Miami

a. Interpretative label: The historical homelands of the Miami in the modern day states of Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois possessed no concrete boundaries and allowed many tribes to share the land. Ownership for the Miami was through use of land and the interaction of communities of people. Instead of the rigid lines associated with white images of land ownership, the Miami ownership of land radiated out in concentric circles from their village centers into space shared with other tribes. Land shared among communities and tribes allowed the land to really be seen for what it was: important for life.

i. Object: 1774 Wea Map

1. object label: This deerskin map was drawn by a Wea man as his understanding of the 1774 treaty between the Wea, a related band of the Miami, and the Wabash Land Company for territory in Indiana and Illinois. It remains the only map drawn by a Miami. It is notable for its use of community knowledge of land and groups of people to denote geographical features and distances and the absence of fixed boundaries. Mathematically measured distances commonly found in American maps were
instead verbally communicated measurements of travel time. Map image © Trustees of the British Museum.

ii. Object: Treaty of Greenville map
1. object label: Native Americans in the Old Northwest Territory signed the Treaty of Greenville in August 1795 after defeat at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. The United States gained the northeastern and southern portions of Ohio for white settlement, furthering white notions of individual property and promising Native Americans continued hunting rights in the area. Dwight L. Smith, *Wayne’s Peace with the Indians of the Old Northwest*, 1795, 1955.

iii. Object: Treaty of Greenville Peace Medal (reproduction)
1. object label: Native participants signing the Treaty of Greenville received medals like these, signifying their willingness for peace with the United States. The medals also reflect the desires and goals of the United States government in regard to expansion and settlement. George Washington gives a peace pipe to a Native American chief dropping the war tomahawk, while a farmer plows fields in the background on the obverse. Facsimile. Gift from member of Miami Tribe of Oklahoma.

iv. Object: Portrait of Pinšiwa (Jean Baptiste Richardville)
1. object label: Pinšiwa (Jean Baptiste Richardville), a leader of the Miami, received peace medals from treaty negotiations with the United States. Richardville used the American legal system to set aside individual allotments of land as a means to keep his people in their homelands. J.O. Lewis, *The Aboriginal Port Folio, or A Collection of Portraits of the Most Celebrated Chiefs of the North American Indians*, 1836.

II. Uses of Land
   A. Storyline: Land as Life
      a. Interpretative label: The competing ideas of land as personal property and communal space in the Miami Purchase were practiced by the ways in which the Miami people and white settlers used the land. Myaamia (Miami tribal) farmers produced their famous white corn from the fertile soil found in the region, traded, and hunted in the area side by side with the Shawnee, Delaware, Potawatomies, and other tribes. As a way of life, the land taught generations of Myaamia people key aspects of their
culture. Surveyors established the personal property of white settlers, enabling the creation of farms, homes, communities, and institutions.

i. Object: myaamiaki eehi mihtoseeniwiciki: Historical Landscapes of the Miami, 1650-1850.
   1. object label: In southwestern Ohio, the Miami primarily used the dense forests for hunting. The region’s fertile river valleys also promoted farming and navigable rivers provided easy transportation. Land supported human life and perpetuated culture. Place names connected to land taught and reminded Miami people their way of life and conveyed community knowledge. Used with permission of the Myaamia Project.

ii. Object: Slocum daughters painting
   1. object label: Women and men were important leaders and community members in Miami villages, as seen here by Frances Slocum and her daughters. Consensus decision making was the norm. Women and men agreed upon courses of action for whole villages, including actions of war and peace. (Objecting to the painting of this portrait, the daughter on the left turned her back to refuse permission and disapprove of Winter’s use of their image.) George Winter, “Frances Slocum and Her Daughters, 1839.”

B. Storyline: Surveying: Drawing a Territory
   a. Interpretative label: Without surveyors, the Euro-American vision of land as personal property, expanding empire, and wealth was not possible. For these visions to become reality, they had to have form on paper as legal property. Surveyors used the land to support their own livelihoods, but also made possible the siting of towns, farmsteads, roads, and canals.
      i. Object: Diderot Engravings of surveyors
         1. object label: Surveyors took the measurement of the land and drew maps for the creation of boundaries and borders. Specialized tools measured, charted, and drew surveyors’ maps. Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, 1751-1772.
      ii. Object: George Washington as surveyor
         1. object label: Surveyors in the eighteenth century could expect good pay due to high demand for their services. They enjoyed the opportunity for travel and exploration,
and after were able to select valuable lands for themselves. George Washington, here portrayed as a young man with transit in tow, certainly knew this to be true. *Great Moments in the Life of Washington*, by Irving Bacheller and Herbert S. Kates, 1932.

iii. Object: 1847 Symmes survey
   1. object label: This survey of the Symmes Purchase is one example of a surveyor’s hard work. The physical properties and boundaries of the tract of land are shown, and the grid system for laying out land to be sold dominates the work.

C. Storyline: Tools of the Trade
   a. Interpretative label: Surveyors needed the tools and knowledge to correctly do their jobs. Precise measurements of lines, angles, and distances were a must for the plans of settlers waiting to buy land. Different visions and uses of land depended on a surveyor’s faithful measurement and representation of the land.
      i. Object: *Elements of Geography*

ii. Object: Surveyor’s transit

iii. Object: *Geodesia*
   1. object label: Books such as this one provided handy guides for surveyors, providing them with almost everything they needed to know from mathematics, symbols, and tools such as chain, plain, table, field book, and protractor used for surveying land. John Love, *Geodesia: Or, the Art of Surveying and Measuring of Land Made Easy*, 1760.

III. Memories of Land
   A. Storyline: Foundational Memories
      a. Interpretative label: A foundational layer of memory endures and shapes the land that is now Miami University.
i. Object: Miami place names word cloud
   1. object label: Myaamia (Miami) people did not perceive land as a nation-state and did not name places after themselves. Instead, the Shawnee, Ojibwa, Ottawa, and others gave places the name “Miami.” Today the Miami are embedded in these local place names and encountered by people every day. These place names are constant reminders of one of the original inhabitants of this area – the Myaamia (“the downstream people”).

ii. Object: Map of Miami land cessions & canal
   1. object label: Between 1795 and 1867 the Miami signed 13 treaties with the United States government. Slowly but surely, these treaties ceded almost all of the Miami’s traditional homelands. In 1846 half of the Miami Tribe traveled the canals of rerouted rivers that ripped through their land to a reservation in Kansas Territory. The now-abandoned canals serve as a reminder of the government’s attempt to forget the removal and the Native American people. J. Calvin Smith, The Western Tourist and Emigrant’s Guide, 1840.

iii. Object: Miami land cessions

iv. Object: Symmes place names word cloud
   1. object label: As a testament to the staying power of his vision of settlement, many place names in southwestern Ohio bear the name of Symmes.

v. Object: John Cleves Symmes Portrait

B. Storyline: Projections into the Future
Interpretative label: John Cleves Symmes intended to build an academy for higher learning within his original purchase of one million acres in the Northwest Territory. A lack of funds, poor record keeping, and questionable land sales blocked this goal. Congress reduced the size of his purchase in 1792. When no money or substitute township was selected for the establishment of a university in Symmes’ purchase, the future Board of Trustees of Miami University located it in a township of Butler County. The location of the University at its present location remained uncertain until 1822.

Object: Miami College 1810 map
1. object label: The first known map of what became Miami University reflects the Board of Trustees’ vision of Miami University and Oxford. Lettered and numbered sections were University property sold to settlers for proceeds to the University. The DeWitt cabin, the eventual location of the first campus buildings, and State Road (now Highway 27 and State Highway 732 appear here.

Object: James McBride Engraving
1. object label: James McBride was the first secretary of the Miami University Board of Trustees, surveyor of the area’s ancient indigenous burial mounds, and active supporter of the University. He articulated the Board’s vision of the University to the Ohio state legislature and oversaw the land surveys and construction of buildings that made the vision a reality.

John Browne letter to Trustees at Miami University, 1810
1. object label: Reverend John W. Browne canvassed the eastern states to raise money to build Miami University. In this letter to the Board of Trustees, Browne asks for a plan of the town to show to donors.

John Browne letter to Gentlemen of Miami University, August 8, 1811
1. object label: Browne’s sketch of a possible model for Miami University based on his tour of the buildings at Princeton College reveals his hopes for the University not yet funded or built.

C. Storyline: Living Memory

Interpretative label: The layers of memory from different groups merge and build upon one another to shape our modern conceptions of the land. These memories are living recollections of actions and
interactions, ideas and beliefs, and diverse communities of people which we encounter today through place names, buildings, people, and the landscape itself.

i. Object: 1854 photo of MU campus
   1. object label: The first known photograph of Miami University shows the three first buildings on campus. Elliot and Stoddard Halls, still in use, house students and connect them to Miami University’s founding years. Joseph Cannon Smith, Photography of Miami University Campus, ca. 1854-1860.

ii. Object: 1950 aerial photo of MU campus.
   1. object label: From just three buildings, Miami University grew to include that shown in this aerial photograph ca. 1950, and fulfilled the vision for which its trustees once hoped. Frank R. Snyder Photograph Collection.

iii. Object: 2010 photo of Symmes Hall
   1. object label: Symmes Hall, built in 1949, memorializes John Cleves Symmes on campus today.

iv. Object: 2009/2010 photo of Miami tribal students with Myaamia Project
   1. object label: Myaamia tribal students pursue their education and participate in classes through the Myaamia Project at Miami University and learn about their history and heritage. Used with permission of the Myaamia Project.
Geodæsia: Land and Memory

Geodæsia: the art of surveying and measuring land
A Master’s Thesis Exhibit

Miami University Libraries
Walter Havighurst Special Collections
321 King Library
http://spec.lib.muohio.edu
513.529.3323
IMAGE OF LAND

Ohio in 1787 was part of the new Northwest Territory acquired from England in the Treaty of Paris of 1783. Its heavily wooded land and dispersed prairies made transportation to the territory difficult and only available by river or trails carved through the wilderness. Despite these wild qualities, Americans wanted land in Ohio for many reasons. Land sales provided the new government with a cash flow to relieve its Revolutionary War debts. For veterans of the war, the land in the Territory became their compensation. For other men, land was an opportunity for fame and fortune. John Cleves Symmes - Revolutionary war veteran, member of the Continental Congress, and New Jersey Supreme Court judge - petitioned Congress for one million acres in the southwestern Ohio Territory in what came to be called the Symmes Purchase. Owning and selling so much land would, he hoped, earn him a fortune and build up his reputation in elite Eastern circles. For most men, land in the territory was a fresh start – an opportunity for personal freedom. It meant a chance to live their lives free from actual slavery and free from debts and taxes. It was, in the case of squatters, also seen as free for the taking – both from the government and Native Americans.

Typical maps of the time reflect this belief in opportunity. Maps reflect their makers’ beliefs, communicating bodies of knowledge, setting boundaries, or indicating ownership of land. Because of their relationship to the makers’ beliefs, maps portray the makers’ sense of reality. In the case of the Northwest Territory, maps of the area showed the region’s potential for settlement by leaving out mention of other inhabitants.

The Ohio country already had inhabitants though. Native Americans such as the Miami, Shawnee, Potawatomie, and Delaware shared the land in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Boundaries were fluid. To them, land was important for life and owning land meant something different. Using the land signified its ownership. Land was where people lived – not quantifiable or easily owned and sold.
USE OF LAND

Ideas about land were put into practice by the ways in which people used land in the Northwest Territory. Believing that to use was to control, Myaamia (Miami) people hunted in the forests of Ohio, sharing the land with neighboring tribes. They also traded and farmed, growing white corn in the fertile valleys and traveling on navigable rivers. Place names and stories about land connected people to the land, conveyed community knowledge, and taught Myaamia people their way of life.

Surveyors brought to life the settlers’ notion of land as personal possession. Their work allowed land to be property, wealth, and expanding states by measuring the land and giving it form on paper as legal property. Using specialized tools, surveyors took the measurement of the land and drew maps for the creation of boundaries and borders. This line of work provided opportunities for travel, exploration, and individual livelihoods, while also making possible the location of towns, farmsteads, roads, and canals.
MEMORY OF LAND

With so many diverse conceptions and uses of land, naturally there are memories of the land structured according to these ideas and uses, layered among one another. Memories of Native Americans such as the Myaamia and settlers like John Cleves Symmes present the first two layers of memory of land from which we construct our own modern notions of land. Slowly but surely, the settlers’ ideas of land clashed with those of the Myaamia and other Native American peoples. After signing thirteen treaties over a period of seventy years, the Myaamia lost their homeland and were forced to relocate to Indian Territory in the West. Although they were sent away, their stories, place names, and memory in the region live on. Reminders of their presence exist in the many Miami place names given by the Shawnee, Ojibwa, and Ottawa to denote the homes of the Miami.

Symmes’ name remains familiar through the place names bearing his name in southwestern Ohio. He is also associated with the university he intended to build in his purchase. When he lost some of the land originally claimed in his purchase and no substitute presented itself, the proposed university was located in the specially created Oxford Township of Butler County and incorporated by the Ohio state legislature in 1809. Miami University took its name from the Miami rivers and the Miami people of the area. Because the university and town of Oxford had to be built from scratch, classes did not begin until 1824. The prior views of land as shared space for communal use and land as personal opportunity were the primary building stones of a vision of quality education and advancement.

Today at Miami University, memories of former conceptions and experiences of land are living recollections encountered through people, buildings, place names, and the landscape itself. From Myaamia Tribal students, to Symmes Hall, to Elliot and Stoddard Halls, we see the memories of actions and interactions, ideas and beliefs of diverse communities of people who shaped the land and provided it with a depth to make it what surrounds us now.
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Aaron M. Steele, Department of Computer Science
Exhibit Website

Figure 1. Exhibit homepage.
Figure 2. Transcript page.
Figure 3. Exhibit Photos page – Top: Complete exhibit. Middle: Settlers’ images of land. Bottom: Native Americans’ images of land.
Figure 3.1 Facsimile of Indian Peace Medal from Treaty of Greenville, gift of member of Miami Tribe of Oklahoma, as seen in *Image of Land* exhibit case.
Figure 3.2 *Use of land.*

Figure 3.3 Survey of Symmes Purchase drawn by Charles Heaton, 1847.
Figure 3.4 Surveying tools in *Use of Land* case.
Figure 3.5 Top: Illustration from J.E. Worcester’s *Elements of Geography, Ancient and Modern*, 1830. Bottom: Surveyor’s transit, William Young & Sons, Brass, ca. 19th century, Philadelphia.

Figure 3.6 Surveyor’s transit, William Young & Sons, Brass, ca. 19th century, Philadelphia.
Figure 3.7 Title page of John Love’s *Geodæsia: Or, the Art of Survey and Measuring of Land Made Easy*, 1760.

Figure 3.8 Top: Illustration from Love’s *Geodæsia*. Bottom: *Memory of Land*. 
Figure 3.9 *Memory of Land*. 

Figure 3.10 Potential model for Miami University based on that at Princeton College as seen by Reverend John W. Browne. Detail from John W. Browne to Gentlemen of Miami University, August 8, 1811, as seen in *Memory of Land* case.
Exhibit Installation

Figure 4. Empty exhibit cases in exhibit room of Walter Havighurst Special Collections, Miami University Libraries.

Figure 4.1 Preparing fabric for background of exhibit cases.
Figure 4.2 Exhibit labels waiting to be cut.

Figure 4.3 Cutting exhibit labels.
Figure 4.4 Digital copies of documents ready for separation and cutting.

Figure 4.5 Cutting and trimming digital copies of documents.
Figure 4.6 Testing visual layout of exhibit.

Figure 4.7 Preparing objects and documents for exhibit installation.
Figure 4.8 Checking space and object sizes.

Figure 4.9 Completed test installation.
Figure 4.10 Hanging background fabric.

Figure 4.11 Securing background fabric.
Figure 4.12 Finished exhibit.
Figure 5. Image of Land – Introduction and settlers’ perspective.

Figure 5.1 Image of Land – Native American and Myaamia perspective.
Figure 6. *Use of Land* – Myaamia and settlers’ perspectives.

Figure 6.1 *Use of Land* – Surveyors’ tools.
Figure 7. *Memory of Land* – Myaamia and settlers’ memories and founding of Miami University.

Figure 7.1 *Memory of Land* – Underlying memories of modern conceptions of land.
Figure 8. Side case – *Image of Land* continuation featuring 1797 Symmes Purchase patent.
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