Adams County Heritage Center
Adams County Historical Society &
Adams County Genealogical Society, Inc.
P. O. Box 231
507 North Cherry Street
West Union, Ohio 45693
Phone: 937-544-8522
Hours:
Thursdays & Saturdays, 12:00 - 4:00

Manchester Historical Society
307 Pike St
Manchester, Ohio
Phone: 937-549-3888
Hours: Saturday, 12:00 - 4:00 and by appointment.

Here are directions to view these historic sites...

Harshaville Covered Bridge
Cherry Fork Creek & Wheat Ridge Rd
Harshaville, OH

Kirker Covered Bridge
East Fork Eagle Creek & State Route 136
West Union, OH

Bentonville Anti-Horse Thief Society Monument
State Route 41
Bentonville, OH

Buckeye Station
East of Manchester off of U.S. 52
Manchester, OH

Cairn of Peace
Center of Peebles on Main St
Peebles, OH

Covenanter Church Historical Marker
St Rt 136 in Cherry Fork Cemetery
Cherry Fork, OH

Counterfeit House
Off 247 on Gift Ridge Road
Manchester, OH

Dr. A. C. Lewis House
103 South Street
Winchester, OH

Governor Thomas Kirker, Homestead
12250 St Rt 136
West Union, OH

John T. Wilson, Homestead
Old St Rt 32, across from the Tranquility Com. Church
Tranquility, Ohio

House of Phacops (Fossil & Rock Shop)
29894 St Rt 41
Peebles, OH

Kinfolk Landing & Historical Marker
6352 US 52
Manchester, OH

Manchester Islands
Ohio River
Manchester, OH

Massie Station Historical Marker
US 52 & Cemetery St
Manchester, OH

The Olde Wayside Inn
222 W Main St
West Union, OH

The Page One-Room Schoolhouse Museum
Page School Rd
West Union, OH

Serpent Mound
3850 St Rt 73
Peebles, OH

The Treber Inn
Around 17800 St Rt 41
West Union, OH

West Union United Presbyterian Church
104 S Second St
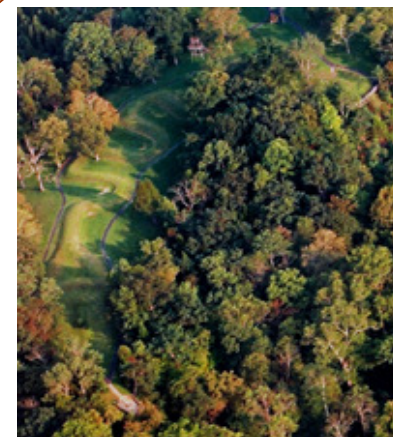West Union, OH

Wickerham Inn
28100 St Rt 41
Peebles, OH

William Lafferty Memorial Funeral and Carriage
Collection
205 S Cherry St
West Union, OH

Wilson's Soldier's Monument
300 N Wilson Dr
West Union, OH

Zanes Trace Monument
Along St Rt 41 monument sets next to the Treber Inn.
Dunkinsville, OH

A Brief History of Adams County

Adams County Travel and Visitors Bureau

SERPENT MOUND

THE THIRD OLDEST COUNTY IN OHIO
EST. 1797

Adams County, Ohio – 1797
By Stephen Kelley

Adams County, Ohio, was established by proclamation on July 10, 1797. It was named in honor of the incumbent president, John Adams. Adams County was carved out of what was then known as the "Territory North West of the River Ohio," now referred to as the "Old Northwest." It is the third oldest county in Ohio, predating the formation of the state by more than five years.

The earliest known humans to inhabit this area were the Palaeo Indians. It is believed these peoples moved into the area about 11,000 years ago. One of the largest Palaeo Indian encampment sites discovered thus far in North America is near the Adams County community of Sandy Springs on the Ohio River. Subsequent prehistoric groups making their homes in Adams County included the Adena and Hopewell cultures who left behind a number of burial mounds and earthen enclosures, several of which can yet be seen. The Fort Ancient Culture was the last of the prehistoric peoples to live here. They left us one of the most intriguing and significant earthworks known in the New World—the Great Serpent Mound. This world-class monument of the past is preserved in a park owned and operated by the Ohio Historical Society.

When the first whites began exploring this region, they found it well occupied by the Shawnee Nation. They were among the most war-like of the eastern Indian tribes and put up a fierce resistance to the encroachment of white settlers. They relinquished their claims to southern Ohio only after their crushing defeat in 1794 at the Battle of Fallen Timbers.

The first permanent white settlement in Adams County was a fortified community first known as "Massie's Station," built on the banks of the Ohio River at "Three Islands." Its founder, Nathaniel Massie (1763-1811), later became one of the largest landholders in Ohio and a prominent politician who helped pave the way for Ohio statehood. Built in the winter of 1790-91, Massie's Station is known today as Manchester and ranks among the oldest towns in Ohio.

One of the first "forters" to permanently settle outside Massie's Station was Thomas Kirker (1760-1837), an Irish immigrant who later served two terms as Ohio's second governor.

The first county seat was established at Manchester, but because of political differences, some of the judges named Adamsville (that was sited near present-day Rome) the county seat. To ease the tension between the Manchester and Adamsville factions, the governor of the Territory, Arthur St. Clair, had a new seat of justice platted at the mouth of Ohio Brush Creek. Named "Washington," this pioneer log cabin settlement served as the county seat from 1798 to 1804.

In April 1803, only two months after Ohio was admitted to the Union, the new state's legislature passed an act that provided for the "permanent establishment" of a county seat for Adams County. Three commissioners were chosen to select the site for the new town. The land they chose was purchased and, in the spring of 1804, the lots were surveyed and sold at public auction. Thomas Kirker, who was then serving as Speaker of the Ohio Senate, named the new seat of justice, "West Union."

In 1796, Congress authorized the blazing of a road through the Northwest Territory from Wheeling, (West) Virginia to Limestone (Maysville), Kentucky. Work was begun in 1797 by Ebenezer Zane and his son-in-law, John McIntire. This was the first "official" road blazed in the territory and became known as "Zane's Trace." The trace passed through Adams County from the northeast to the southwest. Much of it followed an ancient buffalo trail and Indian path known by the Shawnee as "Alanant-O-Wamiowee."

Adams co. Heritage Center

Zane's Trace became the first mail road in Ohio and was a stagecoach route for several decades. Several historical figures traveled over this route through Adams County including General and President Andrew Jackson, statesman and Senator Henry Clay, Senator Thomas Hart Benton and Mexican General Santa Anna.

For about three decades preceding the Civil War, there was much abolitionist activity in the county. Many residents, especially those of the various branches of the Presbyterian Church, became involved in the Underground Railroad. Many ministers such as William Williamson, John Graham and Dyer Burgess helped fan the flames of the anti-slavery movement throughout the region.

Following the outbreak of hostilities between the North and South in 1861, many companies of volunteers were raised in Adams County. Most of the 70th Ohio Volunteer Infantry regiment was composed of men from Adams and Brown counties. They trained on the old fair grounds—renamed "Camp Hamer"-- on the south side of West Union before marching south to the battlefields. Confederate General John Hunt Morgan—the "Thunderbolt of the Confederacy"— and his raiders passed through much of the county in July of 1863, creating much fear and havoc.

Many Adams County homes, farms and businesses were looted and the raiders killed one civilian at Eckmansville during their daring incursion.

In 1910-11, the county received much on-going (and unwanted) national attention when almost 2,000 Adams County voters were disfranchised when one of the nation's largest vote-buying scandals was exposed.

In September of 1957, the county received much better national publicity when it hosted the fifth World's Conservation Exposition and Plowing Contests. Fourteen nations participated in this four-day event that drew an estimated quarter million visitors.