

**Please Pass This Notice On To Anyone You Feel May Be Interested!**



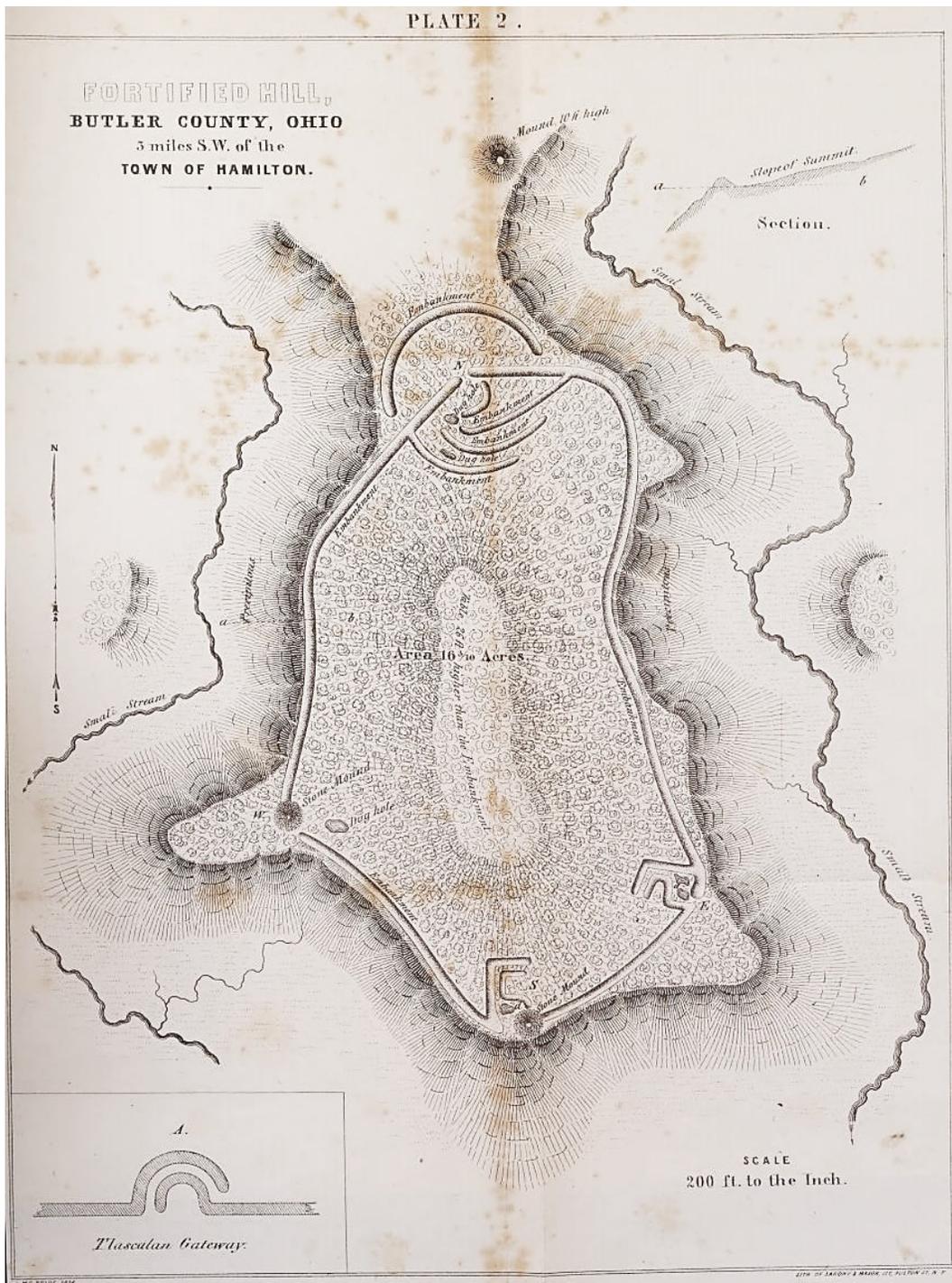
Dear All,

**This urgent letter is to inform everyone of the critical need for assistance in saving one of Ohio's special ancient earthworks. The **Butler County Fortified Hill earthworks are in immediate danger** from potential development or outright destruction due to the site going up for sale in an auction September 28, 2019.**

The **Butler County Fortified Hill** earthworks are one of Ohio's last remaining prehistoric groups of mounds and ceremonial earthwork enclosures and are considered by archaeologists to have been built by peoples of the Hopewell culture approximately 2,000 years ago. The **Butler County Fortified Hill** is listed on the **National Register of Historic Places** (1974), and is located on a 250-foot-high hill overlooking the Great Miami River. The earthworks' walls of stone and earth enclose just over 16 acres. This ancient, sacred, ceremonial earthwork enclosure site is similar to other, more well-known Hopewellian earthworks such as Fort Ancient, located 27 miles to the east – a site recently put on the U.S. list of nominations to become a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the Miami Fort located 20 miles to the south at the mouth of the Great Miami River. The **Butler County Fortified Hill** is especially notable for its unique, elaborate gateways not found at the other 'hilltop enclosure' earthworks.

Ephraim George Squier, included the first complete survey of the earthwork in *Observations on the Aboriginal Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* published in the second volume of *The Transactions of the American Ethnological Society* in 1847. The **Butler County Fortified Hill** gets its name because of the title given to the woodcut of this earthwork from *Aboriginal Monuments* surveyed in 1836 by James McBride, the first mayor of Hamilton, Ohio (which is located just three miles NE of the earthworks). Very little study has been done of this unique collection of earthworks, the most notable efforts were by Rev. J.P. MacLean reported in *The Moundbuilders; The Archaeology of Butler County, Ohio* (1879), and further in "Mounds in Butler County, Ohio" published in the *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1883*. This farm was also once known as the "Signal Hill Farm," and the original farm sign still exists in a barn on the property:





Fortified Hill, Butler County, Ohio (E.G. Squier, *Observations on the Aboriginal Monuments of the Mississippi Valley*, 1847, Plate 2).

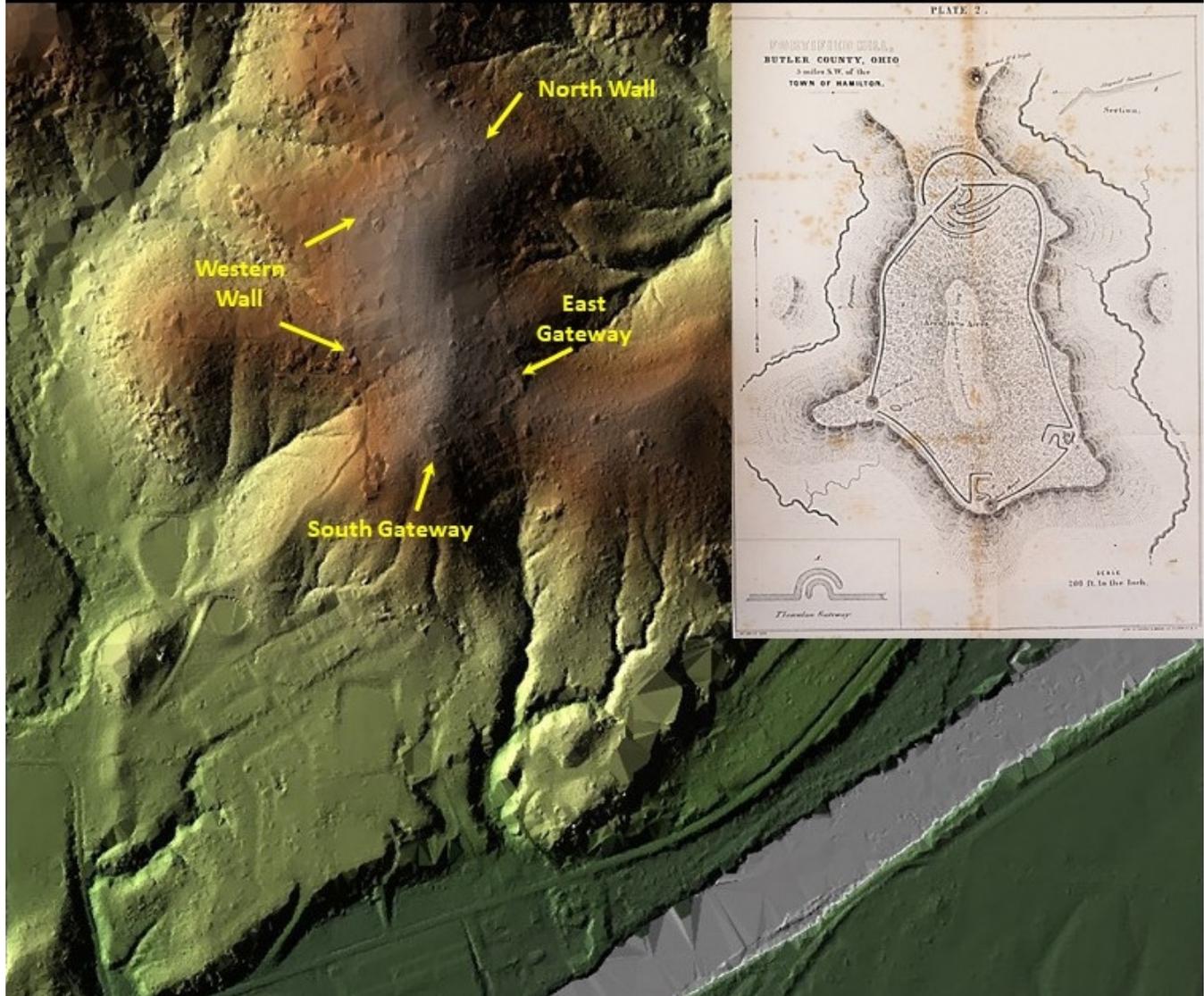
Many of the Hopewellian earthwork constructions throughout Ohio have incorporated significant astronomical alignments in their designs, but it is unclear whether the Butler County Fortified Hill earthworks might have any such connections because archaeo-astronomical studies of the site have not been conducted. However, the site has four main gateways – one toward each of the cardinal directions – North, South, East and West.

In 2011, Jeffrey Wilson used LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data collected by the Ohio Department of Transportation to create a surface map of the earthworks (as seen in the figure below). The data showed that the earthwork walls have survived largely intact, and notably the South and East gateways are very much visible (see photo from an August 30, 2019 visit below).

# Butler County Fortified Hill –

LiDAR Map: Jeffrey Wilson (Jan 2011), ODOT

Dataset: Fortified Hill Surface Model created from LIDAR Survey, Ohio Department of Transportation; Rendered by Jeffrey Wilson, 2011, using Quick Terrain Reader, Applied Imagery, Johns Hopkins University



Overhead LiDAR map and the McBride Survey map of the Butler County Fortified Hill (© Jeffrey Wilson, Friends of Serpent Mound, 2019).



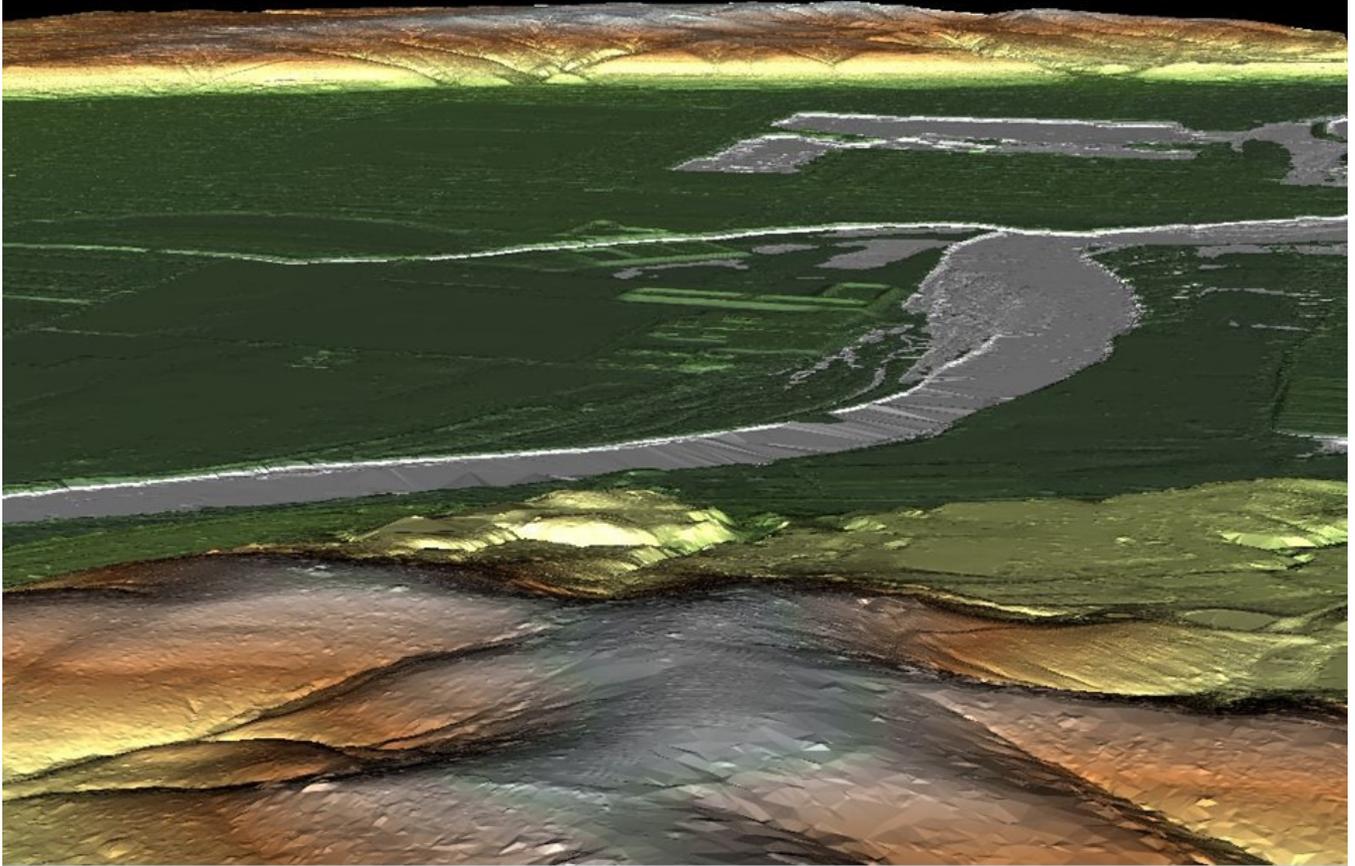
*Two views of the East Gateway of the Butler County Fortified Hill. The lower photo has a 5ft 11in man on top of the wall for scale. Photos © Jeffrey Wilson, 2019.*

Many sections of the earthwork walls of the Butler County Fortified Hill appear to be as intact as they were reported by Rev. J.P. MacLean in 1879, although more heavily shrouded in forest today. In the above photo showing standing water in the East Gateway, that detail was also reported by both James McBride (1836), and J.P. MacLean (1879) as a feature they both noted. Very few earthworks today that are left in Ohio have this level of original preservation.

# Fortified Hill *Butler County, Ohio*

LiDAR Map: Jeffrey Wilson (Jan 2011), ODOT

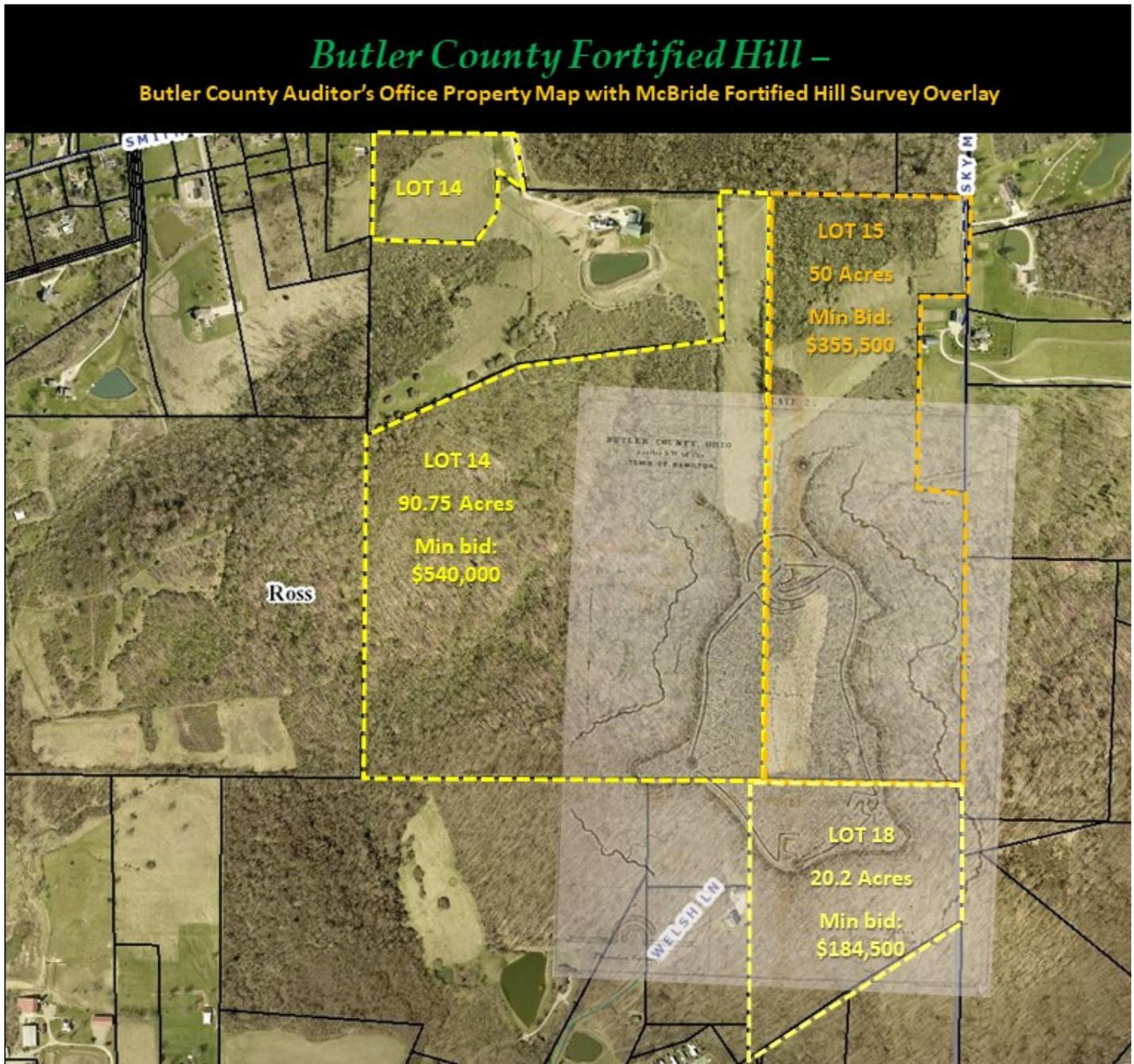
Dataset: Surface Model created from LiDAR Survey, ODOT;  
Rendered by Jeffrey Wilson, 2011, using Quick Terrain Reader



Aerial Photo © 2019 Jeffrey Wilson

*Oblique LiDAR map and oblique aerial photo of the Butler County Fortified Hill looking south (© Jeffrey Wilson, Friends of Serpent Mound, 2019).*

As seen in the above aerial photo, the walls of the earthwork are completely shrouded in forest. It is quite fortunate and amazing that this prehistoric construction has survived as much as it has considering it has been farmed for the past 200 years or so, and has never undergone urban development by remaining intact through private ownership – **UNTIL NOW.** **On September 28, 2019, the Signal Hill farm is going up for auction. The Fortified Hill earthwork is divided among 4 properties -- of which three tracts are going up for auction:**



Tracts of the Louis Barich farm going up for auction – Tracts #14, 15, and 18 contains most of the Fortified Hill Earthworks.

Why is there a danger to this site? Because the area up for auction includes more than one hundred acres of prime undeveloped land that developers are eager to obtain due to the close proximity to the city of Hamilton. **Understand and recognize that the ancient peoples who built these structures aren't making any more of them – we need to do what we can to preserve what few remain!**

**How can you help?** Several organizations are making an effort to save this important site: the *Friends of Serpent Mound (FoSM)* ([www.serpentmound.org](http://www.serpentmound.org)) FoSM (a registered 501c3 non-profit organization) is one of the organizations working to raise the funds necessary to buy and protect this valuable cultural resource. **PLEASE** consider making a contribution – however large or small - to this worthy effort! Details can be found at this webpage: "Saving the Butler County Fortified

Hill"-- <http://www.serpentmound.org/savebutlercountyhilltopfort.html>. **100% of all funds collected will be directed to the effort to preserve the Butler County Fortified Hill.** In the event that this site cannot be obtained at auction, all funds will be retained towards the preservation of other earthworks.

Other organizations and individual contributions are desperately needed to join this cooperative effort by lending their voice and financial support. Please do all you can as the window of opportunity (only about four weeks away) is very short and rapidly closing! Please forward this notice to your contact e-mail lists, and give it to anyone you feel may be able to help. We will be extending this notification to representatives in the Ohio Legislature, Congress, various archaeological and nature preserve organizations, as well as several news organizations. We urge you to also contact as many as you can to voice your support. Only a large collective effort will be able to accomplish saving the **Butler County Fortified Hill** in this short window of time!

**Thank you for your consideration, and any assistance you might contribute!**  
**You can donate directly via PAYPAL from the link above or here:**  
**<https://www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1484040>**

Sincerely,

**Jeffrey and Delsey Wilson**  
**Friends of the Serpent Mound, Adams County, Ohio**

**Who to Contact with Questions:**

**For more information on the Friends of Serpent Mound**

[www.serpentmound.org](http://www.serpentmound.org)

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