

BAUM'S LANDING (12C700), CARROLL COUNTY, INDIANA

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An archaeological site south of Delphi in Carroll County gives an excellent portrait of what life was like in the early to mid-19th century, as well as a glimpse into a late 19th and early 20th century dairy farm.

Dr. Christopher Moore and students from the University of Indianapolis (UIndy) investigated the site, named Baum's Landing, from 2013 to 2017. The location was home to the Daniel Baum family farmstead, according to early to mid-19th century remains found on the site. Late 19th and early 20th century artifacts and structural remains document the use of the site by the Thomas Smith family as a barn lot for the Smith Dairy Farm. These remains include a road bed constructed by the Smiths and a portion of the Peru-Lafayette interurban line.

The family of Daniel Baum, his wife Ascenith, and their children was one of the first to settle Carroll County, arriving at the mouth of Deer Creek by keel boat on April 30, 1825. The Baums traveled with four other families, all of whom camped on the bank of Deer Creek, and immediately set about planting 4 acres of corn. Daniel Baum purchased the land at the General Land Office in Crawfordsville the previous December, and over the next six months the Baums constructed their house and improved their farm.

Located along the Wabash River and crossed by the heavily traveled Lafayette Trail, the Baum farmstead soon became a focal point for the early Carroll County community. The first store was opened in one of Baum's cabins by Dr. Daniel F. Vandeventer in the spring of 1827, and a small shantytown occupied by travelers and prospective settlers grew up on the property in the mid-1820s. When Carroll County was officially organized in 1828, Baum's residence was selected as the site for the first courts. Daniel Baum was elected county treasurer and coroner that same year.

Archaeological investigations at Baum's Landing included mapping with a digital total station, surface survey, the systematic excavation of shovel test probes, and the excavation of several 1 x 2 meter excavation units. Unfortunately, much of the site was heavily disturbed by construction of Thomas Smith's Dairy Farm, a railroad, the Peru-Lafayette interurban, drainage ditches and a trail system. The upper levels in every unit contained disturbed fill and mixed sediments from these later uses of the Delphi bottoms; however, several units yielded an intact buried ash layer containing both burned and unburned artifacts and animal bones dating to the 1830s and 1840s. This ash layer, thought to be the remains of a burned structure, perhaps a summer kitchen, provided archaeologists with a wealth of knowledge regarding the Baum family.



Figure 1. The ash layer exposed in Unit 11.

A wide variety of early 19th century ceramics was found among the artifacts in the ash layer, including blue edge-decorated and transfer-printed pearlware and whiteware plates, a variety of dipped ware vessels and redware and stoneware crocks. The presence of transfer-printed vessels and early stoneware confirms historical evidence that the Baums were a family of means. Small artifacts provide insight into the Baums' personal lives and include buttons, straight pins, a hand-blown perfume bottle, clothing clasps, utensils, pipes, buckles, and furniture tacks. Recovery of both hand-wrought and cut nails are consistent with the structure being one of the earlier buildings built on the site, while flat glass confirms that it had windows, and the presence of reddened earth, brick, and fire-cracked stones suggests a chimney or hearth.



Figure 2. Bone-handled knife from the ash layer.

Daniel Baum died in 1857, and his son Daniel sold the farm to William Stranathan in the late 1860s. Thomas Smith purchased the property in the 1880s. Archaeological investigations at Baum's Landing documented the remains of the Smith Dairy Farm, which operated from 1888 to 1953, when it was purchased by Sunshine Farms in Lafayette.

The Smiths built a large barn with a silo at the site, the foundations of which are still present. Excavations indicated that the Smiths modified the land by constructing an elevated road and platform upon which they built their barn. They also filled low areas around the barns and leveled the barnyard. This process of cutting and filling disturbed many Baum era deposits, as all levels containing Smith Dairy artifacts also contained early to mid-19th century domestic artifacts from the Baum occupation. Artifacts that could be associated with the Smith Dairy Farm include agricultural implements as well as jars and bottles found near the barn foundations and in a distinct Smith Dairy refuse disposal area at the edge of the site. A number of early 20th century liquor bottles were found near the barn, hinting at the use of alcohol by the farmhands.

While the excavation data have provided archaeologists with a wealth of information about the site and how it was modified over time, ongoing investigations by University of Indianapolis students will continue to reveal the site's secrets for years to come. UIndy faculty and students are studying the Baum era pottery to learn more about site formation processes and the Baum's social status and economic position. Analysis of nails will help archaeologists better understand the kind of structure that is represented by the ash layer, zooarchaeological analysis will reveal what kinds of animals were butchered and eaten by the Baums, and the study of buttons and clasps should provide insights into the kinds of clothing the Baums wore. Much more remains to be learned about the Baums and the early settlement of Carroll County from this amazing collection.

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REFERENCE

Moore, Christopher R.
2018 *Early Pioneers of Carroll County, Indiana*. University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Indiana.