GIS Data Modeling – Battle of the Wabash 1791

Gis data modeling used 2011 and 2014 ARPBP archaeological results in conjunction with the ARPBP KOCCA Analysis methodology to examine the battle tactics and strategies. Using the topography, least cost path analysis, field of fire, least visible paths, and the location of artifacts, models and maps were generated that reconstructed some of the key battle elements, particularly of the American Indians. The figure on the left shows the view of St. Clair’s encampment, outposts, and the Kentucky Miltina (in blue) from the American Indian staging area (red crescent). The lack of black shading indicates that St. Clair’s army was in full view of the American Indian forces. The figure on the right shows the starting crescent formations and yellow lines of the American Indian fighters. The gray shading in this case shows that the American Indian forces were not visible to St. Clair and his army. The red encirclement shows the probable American Indian alliance in order to surround St. Clair’s army in 15 minutes (per historic sources) without being detected. The clever use of the landscape allowed 1500 warriors to launch a “surprise” attack on St. Clair’s army.

Wayside Exhibit Planning and Design

In July 2015, Ball State University was awarded an ABPP grant for the planning and design of 15 wayside exhibits throughout the battlefield. The goals and objectives of the ABPP Wayside Exhibit Plan included: 1) using maps and images to emphasize the extent of the landscape involved in the battle and its role in shaping the outcome; 2) emphasizing the American Indian perspective and battle strategy; 3) providing battlefield interpretation to visitors when the Fort Recovery State Museum (FRSM) is not open in the non-summer months; and 4) stressing the importance of future preservation and protection of the battlefield. Numerous Fort Recovery community partners, including the Fort Recovery Historical Society (FRHS), were consulted on the best location and topics for wayside exhibits. Group members had strong opinions on where certain signs should be placed and wanted new wayside exhibits to work well with existing interpretive signage and historical points of interests within the battlefield. The wayside exhibit content borrowed heavily from over eight years of Fort Recovery research done by the AAL at BSU. A BSU architecture professor designed draft wayside exhibits from content provided by AAL archaeologists. Wayside exhibits were designed to match the colors, font, and general design of exhibits in the FRSM and will be accompanied by a tour map. Completed draft designs were reviewed by the FRHS, Ohio History Connection (OHC), village officials, and members of tribes who were present at the battle, specifically Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, and Potawatomie, incorporating all input. In collaboration with multiple descendant tribes and the OHC, the content of the Wayside Exhibits and all previous research is the basis of a recently awarded NEH Public Humanities Project “A New View of the Battle of the Wabash,” which, upon completion, will travel to tribal museums.

Mapping the Landscape for the Public

A 2018 Ohio Humanities Council grant was awarded to the Fort Recovery Historical Society to create an on-line map-based representation of these two battles using ESRI Story Map. The Story Map will function as a battlefield tour coinciding with the 15 wayside exhibits. This will provide a humanities-based interpretation of the two battles when the Fort Recovery State Museum is not open or for those who cannot visit the battlefield. ESRI Story Maps combine maps, narrative text, images, and other multimedia content to create user friendly web applications across multiple platforms (desktop, tablet, smartphone), effectively using the power of maps and the landscape to tell the story of the Battle of the Wabash and the Battle of Fort Recovery. Our previous research results are being used as a basis for our Battlefield Tour Story Map. The wayside exhibits and Story Map will give a comprehensive tour of the core battlefield and complement the current museum exhibits.

Conclusions

The Wayside Exhibit Plan and Design has been completed and approved by the ABPP. Wayside Exhibits are currently being manufactured and will be installed in November 2018, with Ohio Facilities Construction Commission funding procured by the Fort Recovery Historical Society. The Battlefield Tour Story Map is currently being developed by BSU’s Applied Anthropology Laboratories and will be available in November 2018 to coincide with the wayside exhibits.

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Wayside Exhibit Design by Krista Berry, Department of Archaeology, Ball State University

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NPS ABPP KOCCA Analysis

Key Terrain

Observation & Field of Fire

Cover & Concealment

Obstacle

Avenues of Approach & Retreat

Funding for this research was provided by the National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP). The Fort Recovery State Museum (FRSM) is an official unit of the National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) and is a unit of the Ohio History Connection.

Sample Wayside Exhibit at Fort Recovery photo-shopped into battlefield landscape. Will be manufactured of fused polycarbonate and painted aluminum. Size of wayside exhibit designs are 48” x 24”, tilted at 45-degree angle, so visitors can easily view landscape and wayside exhibits simultaneously.

(Above) The Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, and other tribes knew the area around the Wabash River well as this was their home. At St. Clair made camp, the Indian leadership acted quickly to refute an attack strategy. This visibility map for the American Indians shows their generalized locations (red crescent). St. Clair’s encampment is faintly visible on high ground.

(Below) The location of the 15 wayside exhibit and battlefield tour Story Map route on the core battlefield.