

Pioneer Hall of Fame: Michael D. Wiant, class of 1967



Upon graduation from U-High in 1967, Mike majored in Social Sciences at Illinois State University, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in 1971. In 1977, he earned a Master of Science in Sociology-Anthropology from Illinois State University and a Master of Arts in Anthropology from Northwestern University. Ten years later, in 1987, he was awarded a Doctor in Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Anthropology from Northwestern.

As an undergraduate at ISU, Mike became interested in archaeology and particularly the history of Native American cultures in Illinois. Following graduation, he spent the next three years doing archaeological fieldwork along the lower reach of the Illinois River valley, before returning to ISU in 1974 and Northwestern in 1975 to complete graduate work. While in graduate school, he continued fieldwork and in 1976 became the Field Director of the Koster site excavation, a site that gained national prominence.

Mike's career began with the Center for American Archaeology, which was associated with Northwestern University, when he accepted the position as Principal Investigator of the Napoleon Hollow site excavation in 1979. In 1982, he joined the staff of the Illinois State Museum, was promoted to Associate Curator in 1983, Head of the Anthropology Section in 1987, and Curator of Anthropology in 1991.

During his tenure at the Museum, he directed the Contract Archaeology Program and headed the team that created the Illinois Inventory of Archaeological sites, a Geographic Information System-based file system. He has been awarded grants from the Institute of Museum Services, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the United States Geological Survey, and two from Save America's Treasures, the most recent of which totals \$325,000, to preserve an extraordinary collection of Native American artifacts.

In 1990, Mike became a lecturer at ISU and in 1994 an adjunct assistant professor in Sociology-Anthropology where he continues to teach a course on museums. In 2003, he accepted the position of Interim Director of Dickson Mounds Museum, a branch of the Illinois State Museum, and in 2004 was appointed Museum Director. He oversees the day-to-day activities of a museum dedicated to the history of Native American cultures in the Illinois River valley.

Over the period of his career, Mike has published more than 30 articles in scientific and popular journals, and has written more than 50 technical reports. He has also presented numerous scientific papers at professional meetings and hundreds of public lectures on Illinois archaeology. In 1991, he started a public lecture series on archaeology at the

State Museum and annual fieldtrips to archaeological sites in the Midwest; both programs continue today.

In addition, Mike has twice been President of the Illinois Archaeological Survey and has served as a member of several national committees on the curation of archaeological collections. He is currently a member of the Illinois Humanities Council Road Scholars. He received the E. Burton Mercier Service Award from ISU in 1999. In 2006, the Illinois Association for Advancement of Archaeology presented Dr. Wiant their Professional Archaeologist Service Award.

Mike has a step-daughter, Elizabeth Eckert Barney.

For Mike's significant accomplishments in his field, he is being inducted into the U-High Pioneer Hall of Fame.