

# Passion to Spare, Publications to Prove it: The Story of Frances Martin



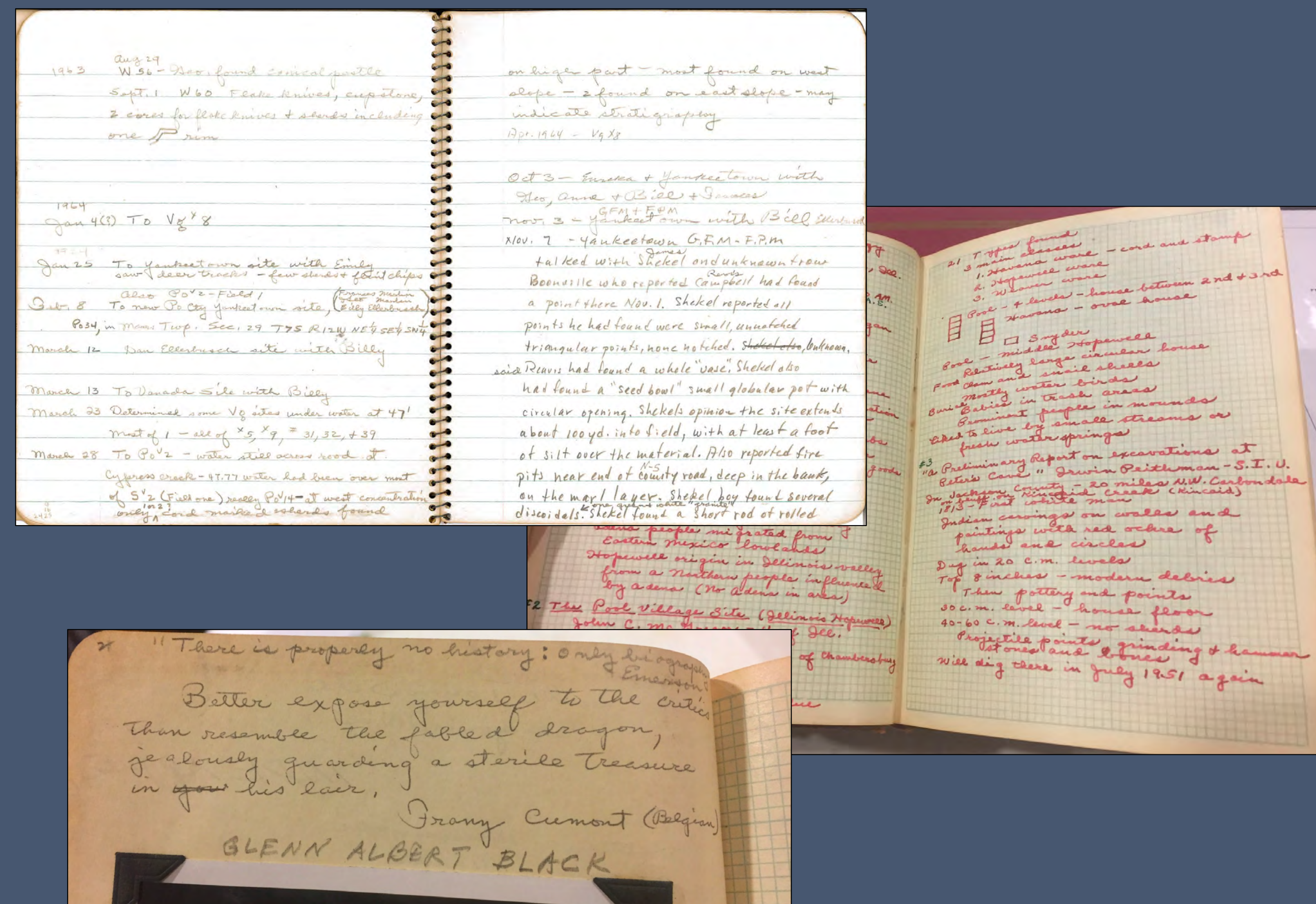
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Frances Louise Patton Martin was an active avocational archaeologist who worked and traveled to sites all across the Midwest with her husband, George. Though Frances and George were not formally trained or educated in archaeology, Frances can be seen in photographs working at Angel Mounds with Glenn Black as early as 1945, and she eventually took part in the all-women field school of 1954. Frances is present in pictures at Branchville Rockshelter in 1950, as well as Raaf Mound (better known as Crib Mound) and Yankeetown in 1951. Transcending the standards of her time, Frances was the sole author of two ceramic studies: one on her work at the Ellerbusch site in Warrick County, Indiana and another on site ‘Vg 44’ in Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Notably, both were published in the ‘Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science’.

## The Early Years

Frances Louis Patton Martin was born October 27, 1916 in Indianapolis, Indiana to Hubert and Anna Pearl Patton. Always one to be outside, Frances was heavily involved with the Girl Scouts where she became involved in archery. After attending Butler University and graduating at the top of her class in 1938 with a B.S. in Business Administration, Frances’ love for archery put her in contact with George Martin, who shared her passion. Francis and George married after a successful long distance relationship, and bought their first home together in Evansville, Indiana around 1944.



Figures 1, 2, 3: According to a short biography written by the couple’s niece, Frances and George lived with “depression mentality,” collecting, documenting, and labeling everything.<sup>1</sup> Along with their mutual love of the outdoors, archaeology became a natural passion.<sup>5</sup>

## Influences, Fieldwork, and Publications

Living within close proximity to the Angel Mounds Site allowed for a growing relationship with Glenn and Ida Black over the years. Although Frances and her husband George were never formally trained or educated in archaeology, photos of Frances working at the site start showing up around 1945. From these photos, Francis can be seen working with the students of the 1949, 1950, 1951 and 1954 field schools. In addition to Angel Mounds, Francis can be seen in photographs working at Branchville Rockshelter in 1950, Raaf Mound (or Crib Mound) and Yankeetown in 1951, and published an article in 1953 on her findings from a surface collection at site “Vg 44”, located in the southeastern section of Vanderburgh County, Indiana and an additional article on and excavation at the Ellerbusch Site in 1958.

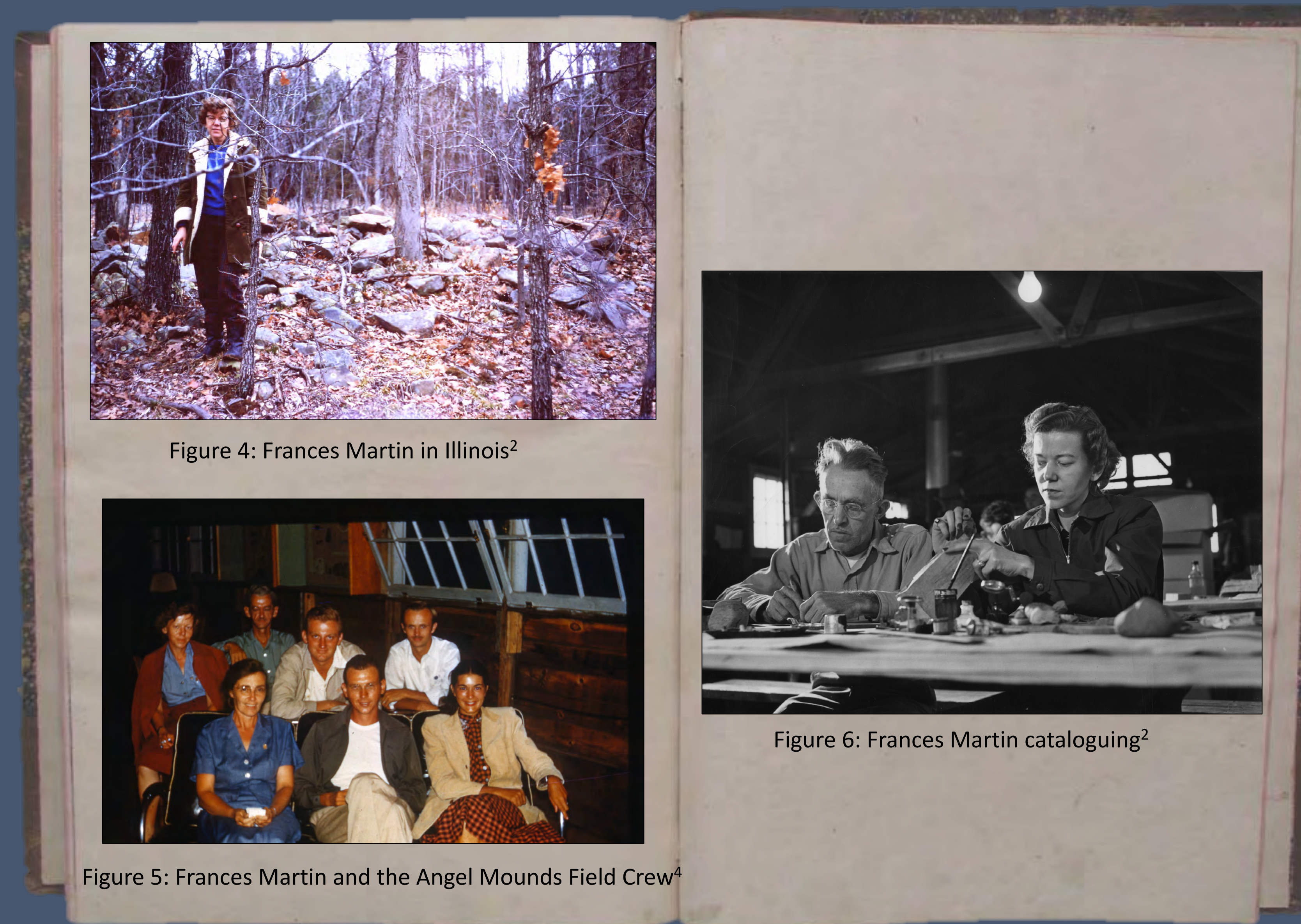


Figure 4: Frances Martin in Illinois<sup>2</sup>

Figure 5: Frances Martin and the Angel Mounds Field Crew<sup>4</sup>



Figure 7: Frances Martin cataloguing<sup>2</sup>

Figure 8: Frances Martin cataloguing<sup>2</sup>

Figure 9: Frances Martin reconstructing ceramics<sup>2</sup>

## Later Life

Notably, Glenn A. Black, the State of Indiana’s first archaeologist, recognized the talents and knowledge of Frances Martin. In a letter sent to Frances dated March 9, 1961 he wrote, “I wish you would quit that A.A.U.W. nonsense and come over here more often where your talents can be put to good use! . . . let’s get your sites on the map at least!”<sup>3</sup> Glenn was no stranger to having women work on archaeological digs and supported their efforts in the field- he even organized an all-women field school of which Frances took part (Fig. 10). The hard work of Frances Martin was eventually recognized in a small, and long overdue, way: she received her first paycheck at Angel Mounds on December 29, 1964- at least 15 years after she began her archaeological pursuits.

At 83 years old, Frances Martin passed away on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1999, fifteen years after her husband George (Fig. 11). She left behind two journals and three binders of slides at Angel Mounds Historic Site, and a large collection of archaeological documents and a large personal collection of artifacts with the Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology. The remainder of Frances’ expansive set of personal notes are now gone, having been set out on the curb after her passing.

Figure 10: Frances Martin participates in Glenn Black’s 1954 all women field school<sup>2</sup>



Figure 11: Gravestone in Park Lawn Cemetery and Mausoleum in Evansville, Indiana. Is that a concentric circle design in the Swift Creek style or perhaps an archery target?

## Bibliography of Frances P. Martin

Martin, Frances P.  
1954 A Vanderburgh County Site with Southern Affinities. *Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science* (1953) 63:57-58  
Martin, Frances P.  
1958 Southern affinities of the Ellerbusch site, Warwick County, Indiana. *Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science* (1957) 67:90

### References Cited:

- <sup>1</sup> Unpublished biography of Frances Martin written by her niece. Provided by Angel Mounds Historical Site archives.
- <sup>2</sup> Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology Historic Image Collection.
- <sup>3</sup> G. Black to F. Martin, March 9, 1961, Glenn A. Black Papers, Glenn A. Black Laboratory of Archaeology, Indiana University, Bloomington
- <sup>4</sup> Frances Martin slide collection, Angel Mounds Historic Site archives, Evansville, Indiana.
- <sup>5</sup> Frances Martin personal journal, Angel Mounds Historic Site archives, Evansville, Indiana.

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