

Barbara Westfall & Renee Miller  
*Those Who Came Before*, 1995  
Governor Dodge State Park, Dodgeville, WI  
Willow, grapevine, cattail fiber, ceramic and terra cotta pot shards  
12' long x 9' tall

Barbara Westfall and Renee Miller, commissioned by the Friends of the Military Ridge Trail, created an original work of art, titled "*Those Who Came Before*". The commission was intended for the dedication of the newly built bicycle trail, which links the Military Ridge Bike Trail into Cox Hollow at Governor Dodge State Park in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. The steep hills, sandstone bluffs and deep valleys hosts ten miles of challenging off-road bicycle trails in the park. Many of the paved bike trails that traverse the magnificent park, are set over original foot trails made by first nation peoples—including the Fox, Sauk and Ho Chunk Indians.

The sculpture flanks both sides of the bike trail and is made from bent willow and twisted grapevine, which was harvested from the park. Attached to the structure with handmade cattail fiber twine, are ceramic potshards with delicately hand written messages about the people, animals and plants that have inhabited the park over the years. Written on a broken English teacup, is a reference to the Cornish settlers that immigrated to the park to mine lead for shot. A coinciding message, written on terra cotta potshard details the displacement of Native American peoples in the 1850's during the Black Hawk wars, which were fought over land and mineral rights. Other potshards eloquently pay homage to the extinct passenger pigeon, which once flew over the skies of the park in clouds as thick as smoke and a recollection of the bison and pronghorn antelope that once made the park their home.

As bicyclists peddled along the trail, they came upon numerous 6 ft., colorful chalk drawings drawn by the artists on the pavement in the shapes of bird, turtle, bear and other effigies. The trail also crossed a spring fed stream. Attached to the streams guardrails, the artists created an accurate geologic timeline where viewers could learn more about the history of the park dating back 450 million years ago, when vast, warm seas covered the area, and ancient flat seabeds carved deep valleys into the park.

Art Shegonee, a member of the Menominee and Potawatomi tribes of Wisconsin, was invited to speak at the dedication, about the Native American history of the park. Shegonee is an experienced performer, teacher and peacemaker. An ambassador of Milwaukee, Wisconsin's Indian Summer and Call for Peace Drum & Dance Company, Shegonee specializes in teaching tools of respect, nonviolence, conflict resolution and peace. Art has provided over 400 schools, libraries, businesses and community centers educational programs that demonstrate and teach Native American history.