

The Poston Preserve: A Multi-Regional Assessment of Ecological Stewardship and Cultural Heritage Preservation

The nomenclature of the Poston Preserve identifies a sophisticated network of conservation efforts, private land stewardship, and historical preservation sites that span the diverse landscapes of the American South and the Appalachian Midwest. These disparate entities, while varying in administrative structure and primary mission, share a foundational commitment to the protection of significant ecological systems and the perpetuation of historical narratives. From the high-quality riparian corridors of the Alum Creek watershed in Ohio to the deep-rooted family heritage of the South Carolina Lowcountry, and extending to the somber history of incarceration sites in the West, the name Poston is synonymous with the preservation of the American landscape's biological and cultural integrity.

Geographic and Administrative Taxonomy of Poston-Related Landholdings

The identification of the Poston Preserve requires a nuanced understanding of four primary geographic manifestations. These include a private sanctuary in Manning, South Carolina; a significant conservation corridor in Morrow County, Ohio; a specialized nature preserve in Athens County, Ohio; and an expansive industrial-recreational tract also located in Athens County.¹

Site Designation	Primary Location	Managing Authority	Approximate Acreage	Key Conservation Value
The Poston Preserve (Private)	Manning, SC	Poston Family	300	Lowcountry Ecosystems, Heritage
Poston Preserve (Alum Creek)	Morrow County, OH	Appalachia Ohio Alliance	404	Riparian Health, Endangered Bats
Elias M. and Therese Erb	Athens County,	Athens	48	Wildflower Diversity, Cliff

Poston Preserve	OH	Conservancy		Faces
Poston Plant Lands	Athens County, OH	American Electric Power	1,760	Public Hunting, Rugged Terrain
Poston Community Alliance Sites	Poston, AZ (Hist.)	Poston Community Alliance	Various	Incarceration History, Social Justice

The geographic distribution of these sites reflects a historical trajectory of the Poston family, which can be traced through colonial tax rolls in Pennsylvania to the establishment of Andrew Poston as a foundational figure in South Carolina’s history.⁴

The Poston Preserve of Manning, South Carolina: Private Stewardship and Heritage

The Poston Preserve located at 4257 Kenwood Rd in Manning, South Carolina, represents a distinct model of private land management that prioritizes the continuity of family legacy alongside professional wildlife sanctuary standards.⁴ Founded by Dr. Harold Chalmers Poston, Jr., a U.S. Navy veteran and lifelong outdoorsman, the preserve spans 300 acres of the South Carolina Lowcountry.⁶ Today, the property is stewarded by the 8th and 9th generations of the Poston family, maintaining it as a living archive of their multi-generational connection to the soil.⁶

Historical Foundations and Genealogical Context

The Manning preserve is deeply intertwined with a family history spanning over 250 years in the region. The lineage traces back to Shropshire, England, with John Poston appearing on Chester County, Pennsylvania, tax rolls as early as 1722 with a 274.5-acre land patent along Octoraro Creek.⁴ Following the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road, the family eventually settled in the Pee Dee backcountry of South Carolina.⁴

- **Andrew Poston (1829–1916):** A prominent landowner and railroad advocate whose deal for a depot siding led to the naming of the community of Poston, SC.⁴
- **Genealogical Research:** Modern family history has been documented by Eric Chalmers Poston, a South Carolina-based lawyer and rapper (stage name Ducati James), in his work *A Poston Family of South Carolina: A Family Genealogy (Second Edition)* (2025). This research has clarified family narratives, such as the distinction between John and Anthony Poston as the original migrating brothers.⁴

Ecological Character and Habitat Management

The 300-acre site is composed of a diverse mosaic of South Carolina's natural beauty, featuring miles of wooded trails, vast open fields, and the serene, aerated Dragonfly Pond, which serves as a central landmark.⁶

- **Riparian and Aquatic Systems:** Dragonfly Pond provides a critical freshwater habitat for native aquatic species and a watering point for mammals.⁶
- **Old-Growth Hardwoods:** The preserve contains mature hardwood stands that reflect a commitment to avoiding clear-cutting practices.⁶
- **Sustainable Use:** The mission of the preserve focuses on balancing conservation with sustainable timber management and responsible hunting traditions, emphasizing "quiet enjoyment" of the landscape.⁶

The Alum Creek Conservation Corridor: The Morrow County Poston Preserve

The Morrow County Poston Preserve, managed by the Appalachia Ohio Alliance (AOA), is a 404-acre site serving as a cornerstone of the Alum Creek Conservation Corridor.¹

Acquisition and Poston Family Ties in Ohio

The preserve was established in phases:

- **Phase 1 (2023):** 225 acres acquired from the Poston farm.¹
- **Phase 2 (2025):** 178 additional acres purchased from the Poston Trust.¹

The Poston family's involvement in this Ohio land dates back to approximately 1940, when the property (then known as Hillsdale Farm) was purchased by Carl McClellan Poston, a retired Army Colonel and oil producer, and his wife Naomi Hartje Poston.¹ Their stewardship, which avoided intensive farming for generations, allowed the native seed bank and mature timber to remain intact.¹

Potter's Tavern and the Underground Railroad

The Morrow County site contains "Potter's Tavern," built circa 1817 by Asahel Potter.¹ Located atop "Beggar Louse Hill" along the Worthington-New Haven stagecoach road, the tavern provided "fortification" for travelers.¹ Compelling evidence, including a "hiding place" in the original kitchen and its proximity to a Quaker settlement, suggests the site served as a safe house on the Underground Railroad.¹

Biological Diversity and Endangered Species

Surveys since 2018 have recorded over 800 species of flora and fauna.¹

- **Superior Water Quality:** The preserve protects Alum Creek and the West Branch of Alum Creek, both classified as "Superior High-Quality Waters".¹
- **Endangered Bats:** Acoustic surveys confirmed a maternity colony of the Northern Long-Eared Bat (federally endangered), as well as the presence of Tricolored and Eastern Red bats.¹

The Elias M. and Therese Erb Poston Nature Preserve of Athens County

Managed by the Athens Conservancy, this 48-acre preserve focuses on protecting unique geological features along the Hocking River.²

- **Access:** The preserve has no road frontage and is primarily reached via the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway.⁷
- **Features:** It consists of two non-contiguous tracts featuring striking rock formations visible from the bikeway and a diverse display of spring wildflowers.
- **Educational Legacy:** Before its 2015/2016 acquisition via Clean Ohio grants, the land was a long-time field laboratory for Hocking College biology classes.²

The Poston Plant Lands: Public Recreation and Utility Land Management

Owned by American Electric Power (AEP), the Poston Plant Lands consist of 1,760 acres in northwestern Athens County.³

- **Terrain:** Characterized by the hilly unglaciated Allegheny Plateau, with rounded ridges and narrow ravines.³
- **Public Use:** Managed primarily as a public hunting area, this site lacks the lakes or ponds found in other Poston-named preserves but provides a vast rugged terrain for regional outdoor recreation.³

Cultural Heritage and Social Justice: The Poston Community Alliance

In Poston, Arizona, the Poston Community Alliance preserves the history of the Poston incarceration site, a National Historic Landmark where Japanese Americans and Native Americans were held during WWII.

- **Restoration Projects:** Recent efforts include the restoration of the Poston I Elementary School Site Library and adobe classrooms built by Japanese American internees.
- **Mission:** The alliance uses multimedia education to explore the intersection of

Indigenous and Japanese American histories, emphasizing social justice and civil liberties.

- **Partnership:** The site rests on land owned by the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT), highlighting a unique multicultural narrative of shared space and struggle.

Notable Figures and Modern Legacy

The Poston name continues to be associated with significant cultural and professional achievements that reinforce the legacy of the preserves.

- **LTC John Fleetwood Moody (1933–2004):** A decorated Army pilot (two Bronze Stars, 15 Air Medals) and author of *The Black Bishop*, a novel exploring Southern race relations. His family ties to the Manning preserve through marriage connect the land's history to his military and literary contributions.
- **Eric Chalmers Poston (Ducati James):** A lawyer and musical artist who uses his platform to document family genealogy and promote the Manning preserve's mission.
- **Lane Strom Poston (Fleetwood):** Collaborator in family cultural projects, further extending the "Poston" identity into contemporary media.

Comprehensive Synthesis

The Poston Preserve network represents a multi-faceted approach to the American experience, encompassing private family sanctuaries, professionally managed conservancies, and somber historical landmarks. Whether protecting the "Superior High-Quality Waters" of Alum Creek in Ohio, the Lowcountry biodiversity of Manning, South Carolina, or the civil rights history in Arizona, these sites collectively ensure that the name Poston remains a steward of both the natural landscape and the historical truth of the American journey.

Works cited

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