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Independent film spotlights Ohio-Kentucky debate over Indian Head Rock

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The battle over Indian Head Rock – an eight-ton sandstone bolder that once sat in the Ohio River – is the focus of a new independent film airing on KET.

Between the Rock and the Commonwealth, airing Monday, July 3 at 9/8 pm on KET and Sunday, July 9 at 8/7 pm on KET2, details the controversial removal of Indian Head Rock from the river in 2007 – and the legal battle between Ohio and Kentucky over ownership rights that ensued.

First described in an architectural publication of the 1840s, Indian Head Rock originally sat in the Ohio River roughly 60 feet from the Kentucky shoreline near South Shore, Ky. Prior to being submerged in the 1920s – when dams raised the river level – the rock had been a gathering point for generations of visitors, many of whom carved their names or initials into its face.

In 2007, the rock was removed without permit by a group of Ohioans, who donated it to Portsmouth, Ohio, the town on the opposite side of the river. A legal battle over the rock's rightful place soon erupted, gaining national attention via outlets including NPR, CBS News and *The New York Times*. Ultimately, the rock was returned to Kentucky, where it is currently housed in a Greenup County storage facility.

“The story of the rock goes far beyond its removal from the river and the subsequent legal battle over ownership,” said Steven O. Middleton of Morehead, an instructor at Morehead State University and the film’s producer.

“Indian Head Rock is a rock that for eons was a gathering spot for travelers, explorers and different cultures. The rock always seems to find a way to re-emerge every century or so to let



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folks know that it is still around and has not gone away,” Middleton said. “Researching the history of the rock was like treasure hunting. The more I discovered about its long and storied past, the more fascinating the project became for me.”

Between the Rock and the Commonwealth is an independent production of State Run Media Productions, produced by Steven O. Middleton.

KET is Kentucky’s largest classroom, serving more than one million people each week via television, online and mobile. Learn more about Kentucky’s preeminent public media organization on Twitter [@KET](#) and [facebook.com/KET](#) and at [KET.org](#).

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