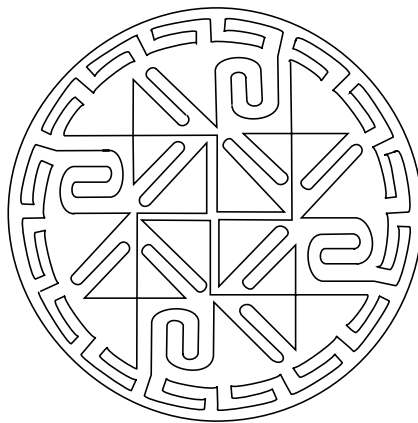


Archeological Parks



Arkansas Archeological Survey

Coordinating Office, 2475 N. Hatch Ave., Fayetteville, AR 72704, Phone: (479) 575-3556, Fax: (479) 575-5453
www.uark.edu/campus-resources/archinfo



ARCHEOLOGICAL PARKS

Do you want to visit an archeological site? It's easier than you might think, because many of the best archeological sites have been preserved as archeological parks that the public can visit and enjoy. Archeological parks not only help to preserve important sites, but also provide opportunities for archeological research and the sharing of information with students and the general public. See what they have to offer.

What Is an Archeological Park?

Very simply, archeological parks are archeological sites that have been preserved in a park setting and opened for public visitation. Virtually all parks have archeological sites on them, but not all parks are *archeological parks*, which are especially devoted to the preservation and interpretation of a particular site. Most people in the eastern United States think of archeological parks as Native American mound sites because, in this region, mounds are the type of site most frequently preserved as archeological parks.

Other kinds of sites, however, have also been preserved as archeological parks, such as the Native American pueblo ruins in the western U.S. and the

geometric earthworks of the Ohio Valley, as well as historic sites such as early Euro-American or African-American town sites and Civil War battlefields.

Few archeological sites are preserved as archeological parks. Those that are usually represent some of the larger, more visible or more complex sites. Archeological parks are frequently managed by the Federal government through the National Park Service or by states through their state park systems, museum systems, and universities.

Development at archeological parks varies. Some have little more than trails and interpretive signs. Others have more extensive development, which can include museums or visitor centers with exhibits, educational programs, and special events.

What Does Archeology Contribute to an Archeological Park?

Archeological research at archeological parks provides a greater understanding of the lives of the people who built, lived at, or used the sites. In the case of prehistoric sites—such as Toltec Mounds near Little Rock—the original inhabitants or builders

left no written records about the site and what it meant to them. By carefully studying the clues left in the soil, such as the remains of buildings or activity areas or cooking fires, as well as bits of broken tools and objects, archeologists may learn many things about the original inhabitants. How many people lived at the site? What kinds of houses did they live in? What foods did they eat? Were they hunters, fishers, or farmers? Did they have special areas or structures for religious ceremonies? Did they have royal rulers?

A large, grass-covered, prehistoric mound may look impressive sitting in a field. We can marvel at what it must have taken to build it when people were limited to stone tools and baskets. But how much more meaningful it is to have a fuller picture of the lives of those people; to be able to appreciate not just their architectural abilities, but also their struggles and successes. In doing so, we can reach a fuller appreciation for the richness of their lives and our shared humanity.

What if written records do exist, as is the case with historic sites, such as the park at Washington, Arkansas? Archeology can still contribute much to the understanding of historic sites, because many of the common details of life are not recorded in public documents or journals or histories. Things that everyone in the community accepted as part of ordinary life may not have seemed worthy to record, but these same things may have changed drastically after 100 years or more. Consider that at one time, kitchens were separate buildings and horses were used for everyday transportation.

Further, some aspects of society may have been considered irrelevant or unimportant to those writing about their own times. Slaves' interactions with each other and struggles for survival, and women's management of households and children, were on the periphery of what men knew and thought important to write about. Today, archeological research can broaden our knowledge of the stories of these people "without history."

At archeological parks, the information that archeology contributes to the understanding of a site is shared with visitors, educators, and students through tours, exhibits, films, trail signs, festivals, and publications.

What Interests Do Archeological Park Serve?

Archeological sites that become parks receive a special level of protection to ensure that they will be preserved forever. That doesn't mean, however, that the sites are locked away, never to be seen. One of the great advantages of archeological parks is that everyone can visit them, sharing in the beauty, mystery, and knowledge of the special places they preserve. At the same time, different people have different interests in how an archeological park is used. Balancing those different interests requires thoughtful management on the part of park staff.

Preservation

The primary concern at an archeological park is preservation of the site. To many people, especially descendants, these sites may have a personal connection, representing sacred places that are symbols of their heritage. In addition, the community's recognition of the historical importance of a place allows everyone to share in the site's heritage.

Preservation of an archeological park may limit the activities that can be undertaken there. For example, sometimes the location of playground areas or picnic shelters might disturb the feeling of a site or its religious aspects, and so wouldn't be appropriate. Popularity of an area might erode or damage a site. Illegal collecting of artifacts and vandalism destroys the site and what can be learned about it.

Visitors can help preserve the special qualities of archeological parks by observing guidelines of behavior and respecting restrictions on activities and access to certain areas.

Research

Archeologists are interested in archeological parks because of what they can contribute to our knowledge about the past. Contrary to popular

opinion, archeologists don't dig up sites to search for imagined treasures. Rather, they study the remains in the earth to uncover clues that reveal how people in the past lived.

Research at archeological parks always should be conducted with much care and forethought. Excavation destroys what it studies, so research plans must be specific and limited, preserving as much of the site as possible, restoring excavated areas when finished, and reporting on what was learned. The growing use of *remote sensing equipment* may one day allow archeologists to look into the earth and see what's there without disturbing it at all.

Education

Knowledge gained through archeological research is shared with the public through a park's public education—or interpretive—program. Educators or interpreters at archeological parks develop programs for teachers and students, families, seniors, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and visitors of all sorts. Programs may include slide shows and videos, guided tours, crafts classes, interpretive trail signs, and festivals, as well as exhibits and popular publications. A good education program can make a visit to an archeological park much more meaningful and fun.

Tourism

An increased interest in tourism to archeological parks—called Heritage Tourism—has been growing over the past few years, as people seek vacations that are not just recreational, but also provide authentic experiences and opportunities to broaden their knowledge. For example, guided tours of an area's archeological parks or participation in a professionally directed excavation at a park can provide new opportunities for tourists to a region.

As outlined above, people have differing interests in the use of archeological parks. Careful management of archeological parks is very important in order to balance these many interests with the preservation of the site for generations to come.

Where Can I Find Archeological Parks?

Archeological parks are located all over the United States. If we include in our definition historic parks that make use of archeology, then archeological parks can be found in every state. One doesn't have to go far afield, however, to find archeological parks. Not only are there important ones near Arkansas, but our state park system also has a number of very fine archeological parks.

We will begin with a brief description of several nearby archeological parks and conclude with a more detailed description of Arkansas's archeological parks. Keep in mind that the Native American builders of these prehistoric sites did not have the state boundaries we have today, so many ancient Arkansans may well have visited or participated in the activities at these sites.

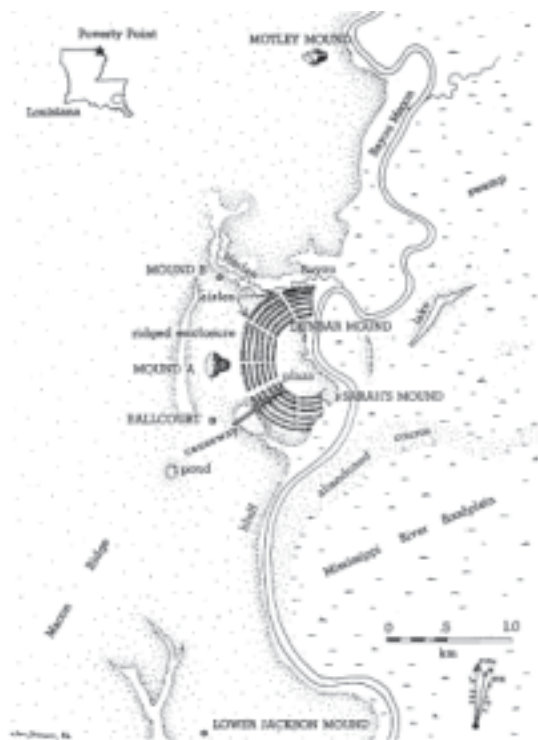
Cahokia, Illinois

Cahokia, located in Illinois, across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, was the largest prehistoric city in North America north of Mexico. People lived at Cahokia from about A.D. 800-1300 during the period archeologists call the Mississippian. The city included mounds, plazas, temples, and a stockade, as well as neighborhoods and suburbs that covered some five square miles. It has been estimated that by A.D. 1100, as many as 15,000 people may have lived there.

Over 120 mounds were built at Cahokia, but the site is best known for Monks Mound (you can see it from Interstate 55/70), which covers 14 acres and rises to a height of 100 feet—the largest prehistoric earthen structure in the United States. Cahokia was an amazing capital of politics, religion, commerce and art in the heart of North America.

Poverty Point, Louisiana

This unique Archaic-period mound site is located at Epps, Louisiana, about 30 miles south of Arkansas's southeast corner. The site consists of six concentric earth ridges that form a C-shape facing the wall of the Mississippi River flood plain and stretching nearly three-quarters of a mile at the widest arc. Several mounds are located in the area, the largest of



which—Mound A—sits just outside the ridges and is thought to represent a bird. It stands more than 70 feet high, with a 640-foot wingspan.

The people who lived at Poverty Point, from about 1750-1350 B.C., conducted a lively trade in imported minerals and stones, including soapstone, galena, copper, and various cherts, and are known for the beautiful, polished tools and ornaments they made from these materials. Until recently, Poverty Point was the only Archaic-period site known to have mounds, which had long been associated with the later Woodland and Mississippian periods. More Archaic mound sites have come to light in recent years, but Poverty Point remains the largest and grandest of them all.

Spiro Mounds, Oklahoma

Nestled in a bend of the Arkansas River, the Spiro Mounds site is located only about 10 miles west of Fort Smith. From A.D. 900-1400, Spiro

Mounds was a seat of political, religious, economic, and artistic life that may have served as gateway for trade between the peoples of the Plains and the Southeast. The site covered over 100 acres and included a town and mound areas on both the river bottomlands and the upland ridges. The leaders of Spiro society displayed their wealth through burial rituals. Decorated ornaments, cups, and batons made of imported conch shell, copper, quartz and other exotic materials were included in the graves.

Sadly, in 1933, a group of treasure hunters leased the privately owned site and mined the largest mound for grave goods, removing hundreds of artifacts made of wood, cloth, copper, shell, pottery, basketry, and stone. No effort was made to observe or record the context in which the artifacts were found, and much information about the Spiro people was destroyed for all time. In order to prevent further destruction of Spiro and other Oklahoma sites, the state legislature passed an antiquities preservation law in 1936. Since then, scientific research has been conducted at the site by the Historical Society and state universities, and the largest mound has been reconstructed.

Chucalissa and Pinson Mounds, Tennessee

Just across the Mississippi River from West Memphis is Chucalissa, a Mississippian-period village that was occupied from about A.D. 1000-1500. The site consists of a plaza around which were placed a large flat-topped temple mound and a series of smaller house mounds. The temple mound held a large building nearly 50 feet square that was supported by cypress posts 12-18 inches in diameter. The large building on the temple mound and several smaller thatched-roof houses have been reconstructed by museum staff, providing a suggestion of what a Mississippian-period village might have looked like.

About 90 miles northeast of Chucalissa, near the town of Jackson, is the unique, 400-acre Middle Woodland ceremonial center of Pinson Mounds. Dating about 1-500 A.D., this large and complex Middle woodland site is without parallel. The site consists of at least 12 mounds, including the 72-foot

tall Sauls Mound--the second-tallest mound in the country—several flat-topped mounds, which are more usually associated with Mississippian sites, and joined twin burial mounds. In addition, the site has a 16.5-acre circular earthwork, which is similar to the geometric earthworks of Ohio but unusual in the Southeast. Pottery found at Pinson Mounds shows that people from as far away as the Gulf coast and the Tennessee River valley visited the site. Special items placed with the dead included fresh-water pearls, a sheet of mica, a ground-stone pendant, and a pair of engraved bone dance rattles.

Where Are Arkansas's Archeological Parks?

Virtually every state park in Arkansas includes archeological sites, even if they weren't the sole purpose for which the park was developed. These sites include ancient Native American mounds and rock art locations, early settler homesteads or towns, lumber or grist mills, and Civil War battlefields. Archeological research contributes much to the understanding of these sites and provides park staff with information to protect and interpret them.

In addition, Arkansas has archeological parks that were established specifically to preserve certain prehistoric and historic sites. Four of them are highlighted below.

Toltec Mounds State Park

Toltec Mounds, located southeast of Little Rock near the town of Scott, is a unique site of the Transitional Late Woodland/Mississippian period, which was built and used from about A.D. 700-1050 by a Native American cultural group now called the Plum Bayou people. The site originally consisted of a cluster of 18 mounds covering 100 acres; the two largest mounds measure 49 feet and 39 feet in height. Many of the smaller mounds have been worn down by agricultural practices, but markers assist visitors in finding their locations.

Situated beside a lake, the site is enclosed on three sides by a ditch and earthen embankment. The builders used a standardized unit of measurement, in modern terms equal to 47.5 meters, to lay out the site. A number of the mounds, which were arranged around two rectangular plazas, appear to be placed to



mark the sunrise and sunset on the solstices and equinoxes.

Probably no more than 50 people lived at the site at any one time. These were most likely the religious and social leaders of the community and their families. The rest of the community lived in small villages or farms in the surrounding countryside. The Plum Bayou people hunted, fished, and gathered nuts and wild plants. They grew native seed plants and some corn. Their tools included axes, knives, drills, awls, and scrapers. They fashioned clay bowls and jars with flaring rims, decorating the vessels with incised lines or notches.

Research conducted at Toltec Mounds has provided modern Arkansans with a better understanding of the lives of the Plum Bayou people and brought to light their architectural accomplishments and knowledge of astronomy.

Parkin Archeological State Park

The Parkin Site, located in Cross County in northeast Arkansas just west of Memphis, is repre-



representative of a period in Arkansas's past that bridges the time from prehistory to history. This large Native American town, spanning the years from A.D. 1100-1550, is especially important because many scholars believe it to be the town of Casqui visited by the expedition of Hernando de Soto in the summer of 1541.

The four written accounts of the de Soto expedition are important sources of information about the Native Americans living in the Southeast when the first Europeans arrived. When information from the de Soto chronicles is combined with that from scientific excavations, it is possible to tell a more detailed story of life in this Mississippian-period community than either source would offer alone.

The strongest evidence for Parkin being the town of Casqui comes from that combination of clues. According to the de Soto accounts, at Casqui, the Spaniards erected a cross on the summit of the large mound; at Parkin, archeologists have uncovered the base of a large, bald cypress post on the largest mound. Radiocarbon dating of the wood falls between 1515 and 1663, within the time of de Soto's visit and providing concrete support to the historical account. Other historic period finds include a brass bell and a sixteenth-century glass bead, which are the kinds of objects the Spaniards brought on their journey.

The town covers about 17 acres, and was once surrounded by a defensive ditch and palisade wall. Physical remains visible today include a large, two-level mound and portions of the ditch. Agricultural fields, in which the townspeople grew corn, beans, squash, and other seed plants, were located outside the wall. Deer, fish, and other animals provided meat. During the Mississippian period,

populations were large and there was competition for land and resources, so people protected themselves from raiders by enclosing their towns. Inside the palisade were the houses and granaries that supported life.

The visit by Hernando de Soto and the Spaniards changed life forever for the peoples of the New World *and* the Old World. Today, research at Parkin seeks to uncover the story of this ancient town thrust into history by unexpected visitors.

Arkansas Post National Memorial

Established as a trading post and later serving as a military outpost, frontier settlement, and territorial capital, Arkansas Post played an important role in the state's earliest history. For nearly 200 years, it served as an outpost for three nations—France, Spain, and the United States. Arkansas Post was moved several times during its existence, but the park is located where it existed the longest, which is on the Arkansas River in Arkansas County, in the southeast part of the state near the town of Gillett.

The first Post was established in 1686 by Henri de Tonti as an Indian trading post near the Quapaw town of Osotouy. In the colonial period, the population of the small town was mostly Frenchmen intermarried with Quapaw women. But people of other nationalities and races were also residents, including a number of enslaved blacks among whom were skilled artisans and clerks.

The United States acquired Arkansas Post as part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. By 1819 it became the territorial capital of Arkansas, which made it the seat of political life in the state and the first home of Arkansas's oldest newspaper, the *Arkansas Gazette*. In 1821, the capital was moved to Little Rock and the Post began a slow decline.

Today there are architectural footprints marking the locations of several buildings. Signs and a visitor center at the park headquarters provide information. Archeologists continue to study Arkansas Post and its environs. The most recent work was done in 1997 and 1998 on the part of the site thought to be the Quapaw town of Osotouy, during the Arkansas Archeological Society's summer Training Program.

Old Washington Historic State Park

The nineteenth-century town of Washington has been preserved as a state park with many of its original buildings and landscape features intact. It is located in southwest Arkansas, just nine miles northwest of Hope, off Interstate 30.

Washington was established in 1824 as a county seat and served as a convenient stop for travelers on the Southwest Trail leading to Texas. It became a center for political and economic life in Hempstead County and served as the state's Confederate Capital during the Civil War. When the railroad bypassed the town in 1874, its importance declined and it remained largely unchanged. In the middle twentieth century, local residents, realizing its unique historic character, organized to preserve the town. The resulting state park is designated *Old Washington*.

Because the town changed so little, evidence of its nineteenth-century history still lies in the yards and around the houses. Archeological research has been conducted at the park since 1980, exploring 12 of the properties, including the Sanders house kitchen, the Confederate Capitol, and the Block-Catts house, once owned by the town's most prosperous Jewish merchant. Studies have examined the townspeople's use of space, such as where outbuildings, detached kitchens, and walkways were placed 150 years ago. Thousands of artifacts from the 1800s have been recovered, including fragments of glass, dinnerware, buttons, and nails. Much of the dinnerware is decorated with transfer-print patterns, indicating the styles and scenes favored by the community. Some pieces are even marked with the name of the New Orleans importer from whom they were purchased.

Archeological research at Old Washington contributes much to the interpretation and reconstruction of the town and its buildings. In addition, it supplements what can be known about the town from written documentation, providing a fuller picture of life in this early Arkansas community.

Educational Opportunities at Arkansas Parks

Park interpreters at Arkansas's archeological parks invite teachers and students to visit them and learn first-hand about Arkansas's past. Guided tours, educational programs, festivals, and hands-on activities are offered by park interpreters throughout the year. Museums and visitor centers with exhibits are available at the parks.

Consider taking your class for a field trip to a nearby archeological park to enhance the students's knowledge and appreciation of Arkansas history. *Always be sure to call the park in advance to make reservations for class visits so the park staff can best serve your students.*

Ideas for Classroom Activities

Research Prehistoric Archeological Parks: Have each student or team of students select a different archeological park to research and then prepare an exhibit or report. Illustrate mounds or other above-ground remains, as well as artifacts recovered from the sites. Describe what life was like for the people who lived at or used the site. Was the site used for people's homes or religious purposes? Summarize the archeological research and what was learned. Students can find information on the Internet and in magazine articles or encyclopedias.

Research Historic Archeological Parks: Students may prefer to study historic archeological parks, such as historic townsites or Civil War battlefields. Report on what archeology has added to the understanding of these sites. Compare the kinds of information that can be learned from historic sources (courthouse records, archives) with the kinds of information provided by archeological research. Compare Arkansas sites with similar ones in other states.

Compare and Contrast: Look for information on archeological sites in other areas of the world where people built mounds or earthworks, or constructed stone monuments (such as passage tombs in Ireland, standing stones in Italy, or megaliths in France).

Learn about the cultures who built them. How are they similar to or different from Native American examples?

Make a Collage: Gather pictures of different archeological parks from throughout the U.S. Make a collage of the pictures, or paste them in their proper regions on a map.

Build a Model: Study the layout of a mound site or historic town at an archeological park. Make a model of the site out of clay, cardboard, or other materials. Identify the different areas and how they were used.

Write a Story or Journal: Choose a historic or prehistoric archeological park and learn about it. Let students pretend they are living at the site during its most active period, and write a story about a day in their lives. Students should describe what they see as well as what they are doing. Or for a longer project, let students keep a daily journal about their lives at the site over one or more weeks.

Make a Craft: Study the kind of pottery or ceramics (plates and dishes) once used at a particular prehistoric or historic archeological park.

Try to make similar styles using clay. Decorate the prehistoric styles by copying the patterns in the clay with a pointed stick or paints. Decorate the historic styles by painting similar patterns or cutting patterns out of magazines and pasting to the pottery.

Take a Tour: Plan a visit to a nearby archeological park. Call the park office in advance to make reservations for a guided tour and to request any background materials and student activity sheets. Have the students research the site before their visit, and assign different topics to study while at the park. Have students write reports of their topics after the visit. Write thank-you notes to the park staff.

Think Like An Archeologist: Pretend your classroom is an archeological site. Which items do you think would survive hundreds or thousands of years; which items would not? Can you tell from what remains which items belonged to girls and which to boys? If only part of an object survived, would you be able to determine what it was used for? Discuss what an archeologist would learn about the class from the items that would survive. Would that tell the whole story?

Credits

The historic drawing used on the first page is from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, May 26, 1883. The illustration of the Knapp Mounds, which are now called Toltec Mounds, takes considerable artistic license.

This educational flyer was written and designed by Mary L. Kwas. It was produced by the Arkansas Archeological Survey, University of Arkansas System, 2475 N. Hatch Ave., Fayetteville, AR 72703, 501-575-3556. Visit the Survey web site for more information about archeology, Indians, and historic and prehistoric Arkansas sites: www.uark.edu/campus-resources/archinfo/.



FURTHER READING ON ARCHEOLOGICAL PARKS

In compiling the following list, we have tried to suggest publications intended for the general public rather than research reports for professional historians or archeologists. In a number of cases, however, such research reports are the only information available about the sites. All the publications can be acquired through Arkansas libraries and many can be purchased at the related archeological parks. Works published by the Arkansas Archeological Survey can also be purchased directly from the Survey by calling 501-575-3556.

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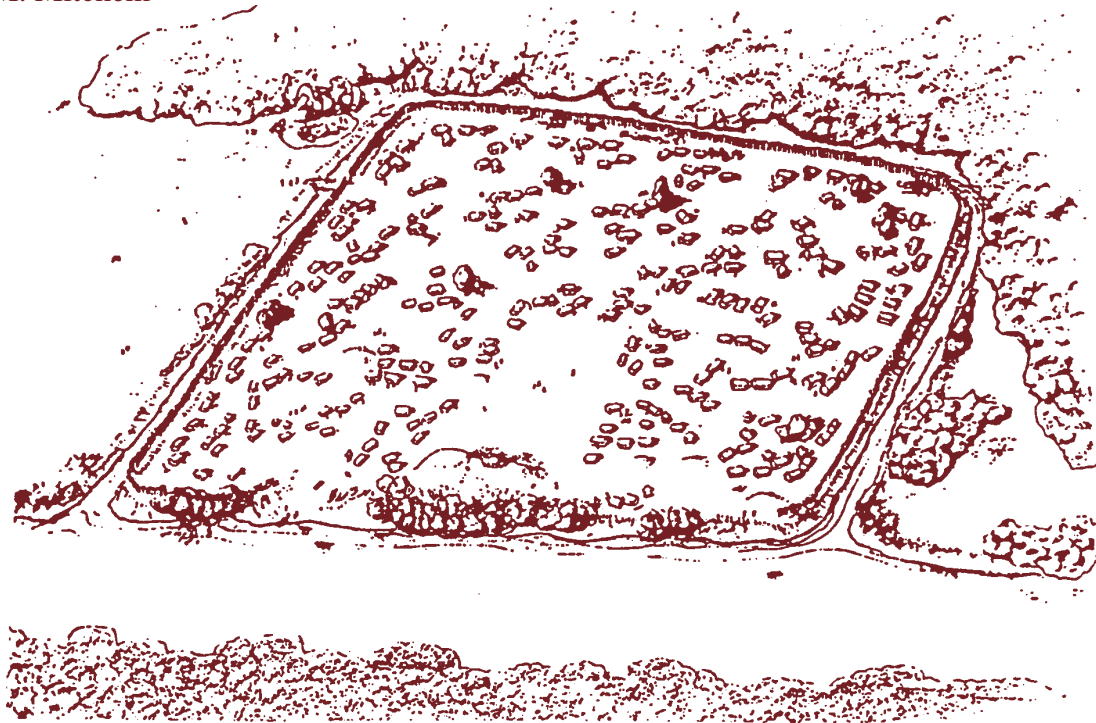
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THE PARKIN SITE: HERNANDO DE SOTO IN CROSS COUNTY, ARKANSAS

Jeffrey M. Mitchem

revised May 2003



Artist's reconstruction of how the Parkin site may have looked about A.D. 1500

Archeologists and historians have long been interested in the route of the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto, who traveled through the southern United States for four years in the middle 1500s. After landing in Florida with a force of around 600 soldiers, the expedition traveled over a large area in the southern states, eventually reaching Arkansas in 1541.

Four chronicles of the expedition have survived, and they include interesting details about the Native American groups encountered by the Spaniards. The accounts are incomplete, however, and researchers disagree about the exact route of the expedition. We do

know that the expedition crossed the Mississippi River in June of 1541. The crossing place has long been debated, and several possible locations have been proposed.

Archeology as a Tool for Learning about Arkansas's Past

As a unique technique for finding evidence of the expedition, archeology can be used to fill in some of the gaps in the chronicles. Research in other southern states, especially Florida, has demonstrated that archeology can locate clues that help us understand where the expedition traveled and what effects the Spanish

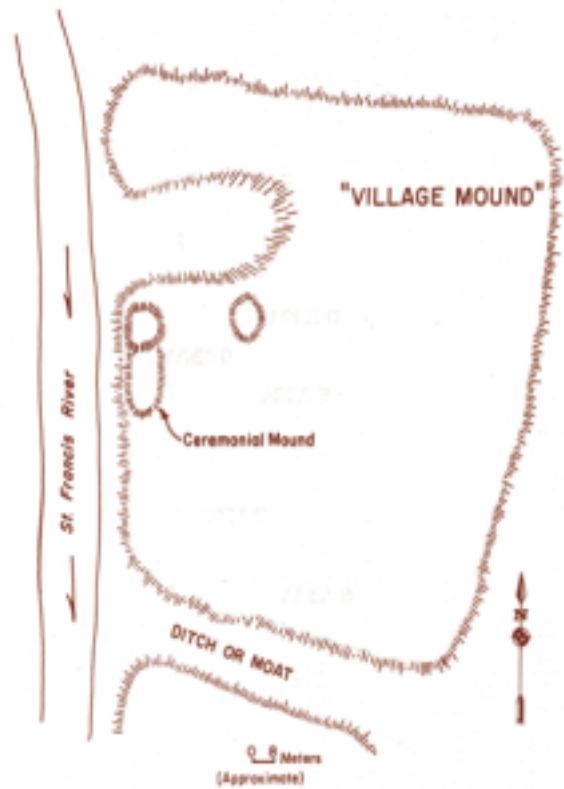
presence had on the Native American inhabitants.

Very little evidence of the de Soto expedition has been found in Arkansas. The most convincing evidence so far has been found at the Parkin site, a village site near the present town of Parkin on the St. Francis River. It is now located in Parkin Archeological State Park. In the 1960s, a small bead made of several layers of glass was found at the site, and we know from archeological work on other de Soto

contact sites that this type of bead (called a chevron bead) was carried by the expedition for giving or trading to the Indians. In addition, a brass bell was dug up at Parkin in the 1960s. A little over an inch in diameter, it was

what is sometimes called a hawk bell or a Clarksdale bell. Bells of this distinctive style were also carried by the expedition.

Excavations by the Arkansas Archeological Survey since 1990 have uncovered more artifacts associated with the expedition. Two fragments of Clarksdale bells were discovered, and two lead shot from the Spanish matchlock rifles were found. One of these was .61 caliber (the other was too damaged to measure). An intriguing artifact that



Map of the Parkin Site

might have come from the de Soto expedition is a bronze coin. It had been hammered and abraded by someone, so no designs or writing are visible. While it may have been a Spanish coin, it could also be an Indian Head Cent. It was found in a part of the site that was disturbed in recent times, and people were living on the Parkin site in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In addition to these excavated objects, a complete Clarksdale bell was donated that was picked up from disturbed soil on the site in the 1960s or 1970s.

Can these few artifacts demonstrate that the de Soto expedition actually visited the Parkin site? By themselves, the answer is no, because the artifacts could have been brought to the site by Indian traders. On the other hand,

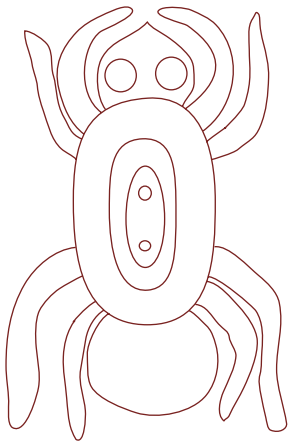


Brass Bell From Parkin

when we combine the presence of these objects with information in the expedition accounts, it may be possible to identify the Parkin site as one of the native towns mentioned by the writers.

Hernando de Soto and the Casqui Indians

After crossing the Mississippi River in June of 1541, the expedition passed through an Indian province called Aquixo. The residents of this region told de Soto of a great chief named Casqui, who lived in a town three days' journey from there. The expedition traveled to Casqui's town, passing through many smaller towns that were ruled by him.



Upon arriving, Casqui himself greeted the Spaniards, and friendly relations were established. After both leaders exchanged gifts, the Spaniards stayed two nights outside the town before proceeding on their journey. While at the town of Casqui, de Soto preached to the residents and had a large cross built from two tall trees. This was erected on top of a large mound at the village, the same mound where Casqui's house was located.

Parkin, Capital of the Casqui Province?

Archeologists believe that the Parkin archeological site is the main town of the Casqui province, where the chief resided. The native towns in the area are described in the chronicles as being surrounded by moats and log palisade walls. The Parkin site is surrounded by a moat or ditch, which is still visible today. Excavations in the 1990s located portions of a defensive log palisade or stockade wall at the edge of the village. The site is located on the east bank of the St. Francis River, and a large earthen mound is situated near the river. All of these features of the site agree with the descriptions of Casqui in the expedition accounts.

The Spanish artifacts mentioned earlier support the identification of the Parkin site as the Indian town of Casqui. Similar archeological sites in the region were probably villages under the rule of the chief, Casqui. Unfortunately, most of these other towns have been destroyed or so badly disturbed by recent farming that little information about the original residents is left intact.

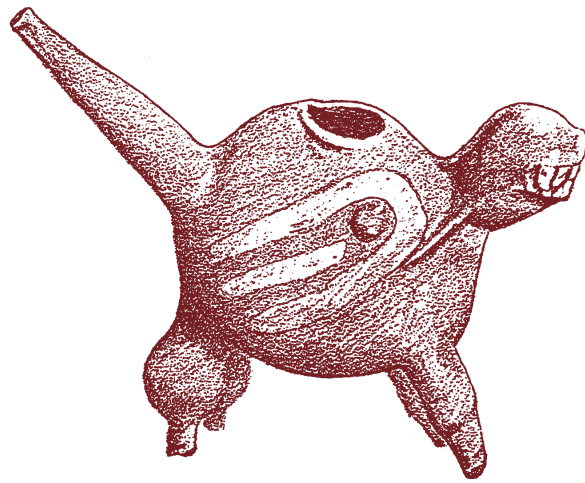


Parkin State Park
60 Highway 184 N
P.O. Box 1110
Parkin AR 72373
Telephone: (870) 755-2500

The Parkin Archeological State Park

The Parkin site is preserved and is now part of Parkin Archeological State Park. Many researchers believe that Parkin is the most intact archeological site of this period in all of northeast Arkansas. An ongoing program of archeological research is being conducted at the site by the Arkansas Archeological Survey, and visitors can see the results of careful excavations and laboratory research as we learn more about the original residents of this part of Arkansas.

Not only does archeology promise to tell us more about the de Soto expedition, but we will be able to learn much about the everyday life of the Casqui people. Since Arkansas Archeological Survey archeologists began working at Parkin in 1990, we have learned a great deal about the



Effigy pot (probable dog)

kinds of houses they built and the foods that they ate. Painstaking excavations of house floors and trash pits, and analysis of animal bones and plant remains by specialists have taught us much about the day-to-day existence of the original Arkansans at the time of their first contact with Europeans. One ultimate aim of research at the site is to learn the fate of the Casqui people after the de Soto expedition left the area.

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Arkansas Archeological Survey

Coordinating Office, 2475 N. Hatch Ave., Fayetteville, AR 72704, Phone: (479) 575-3556, Fax: (479) 575-5453
www.uark.edu/campus-resources/archinfo

TOLTEC MOUNDS

Martha Ann Rolingson



Toltec Mounds is one of the largest and most impressive archeological sites in the Mississippi River valley. The immense man-made mounds and an embankment similar to a modern levee fascinated the first modern owners of the land in the 1850s. The site is large both in the area covered, 100 acres, and in the size and number of mounds. The two tallest mounds are 49 feet (14 meters) and 39 feet (11.5 meters) high, while sixteen other mounds are smaller. The site is situated on the bank of a lake. A ditch and an embankment made of earth form an enclosure on three sides. The embankment was once eight to ten feet high (2.5 meters) and more than one mile (1615 meters) long.

Learning about the people who built the mounds and lived in the area is a long process. Archeologists are still busy studying the artifacts and other data uncovered in the last 20 years. Excavations will begin again once these results are made available to the public and to the scientific community.

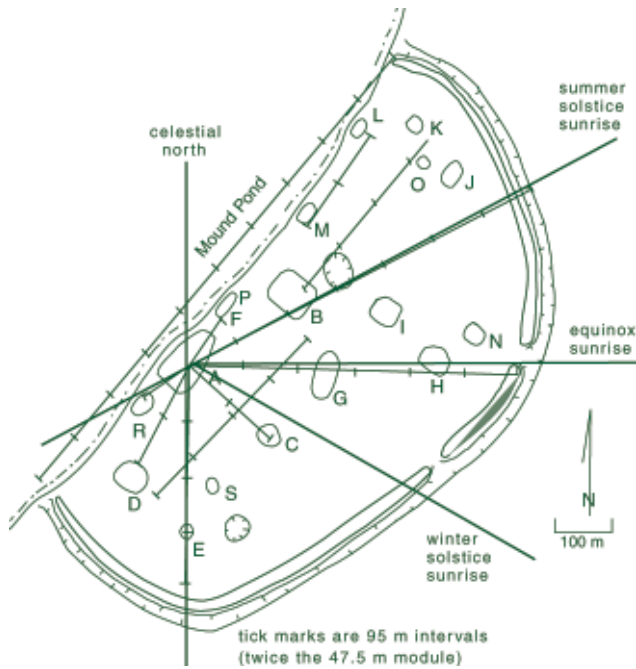
Who Were the People Who Built the Mounds?

People started living at this place sometime before A.D. 700. Distinctive aspects of the culture of the people who lived here are the arrangement and construction of the mounds, the style of decoration on the pottery, and the kinds of stone tools. The distinctive

culture at Toltec Mounds is given the name Plum Bayou, which is the name of a local stream. We do not know what the Indians who built the mounds called themselves because they did not have writing. The people seem to have abandoned Toltec Mounds and this area sometime around A.D. 1050. We do not know where they went nor do we know who their descendants were.

How and Why Did They Build the Mounds?

We do know that the people were impressive builders and that they planned the construction of this center. Excavations of the mounds at the Toltec Mounds site have shown that they were built up of soil into platforms that were flat on top. These were not all used at the same time, instead, some were built, used and abandoned, and then others were built. For example, Mound S was built and used about A.D. 750 to 800 while Mound D was used about A.D. 950 to 1050. The platform mounds were apparently used for ceremonies or as the location of a building such as a temple or residence for an important person. The 39 foot high Mound B was also a platform. It was built up in stages with each stage used for a period of time, so the mound was increased in height gradually and it may have been used for 300 years. The highest mound, Mound A, has not been excavated. Only Mound C is known to have been a place of burial.



Some mounds were placed to line up with each other and with the positions of the sun on the horizon at sunrise and sunset on the solstices and equinoxes. A person standing on Mound A saw the sun rise over Mound B on the summer solstice, June 21, and rise over Mound H on the equinoxes, March 21 and September 21. Standing on Mound H, an observer saw the sun set over Mound B at summer solstice and over Mound A on the equinoxes. From Mound E, the north star could be seen directly above Mound A.

The position of the sun on the horizon changes throughout the year and a person watching the sunrise or sunset can observe the changes. The changes can be used to mark different seasons and to schedule activities such as planting crops and holding ceremonies. Initially, posts set in the ground may have been used to mark the sun's positions on the solstices and equinoxes and the mounds were later built on these locations. Mounds that were important in the social and religious life of the people may have been placed in these same positions to mark the importance of the position.

The mounds were arranged around two rectangular areas that were probably kept clear for ceremonies and other activities. These areas

are called plazas. This arrangement resulted from the use of a standardized measurement that in modern terms is 155.8 feet or 47.5 meters. We do not know why this measurement was important or how it was made. The platform mounds were spaced using multiples of the standard measurement. The length of the main plaza was eight times the standard measure, 1246.7 feet or 380 meters. The distance between the ends of the embankment on the lake bank was 20 times the standard measure, 3117 feet or 950 meters. The length of the embankment and ditch was 5298 feet or 1615 meters, which is 34 times the standard measure.

The number of people living at Toltec Mounds at any time was small, perhaps no more than 50 people. These were probably the religious and social leaders and their families. Most of the people lived in small villages or on farms in the surrounding country. Many small archeological sites—the remains of these villages and farms—are present on the flood plain of the Arkansas River. The people probably came to Toltec Mounds several times every year to participate in religious ceremonies and renew social and family ties.

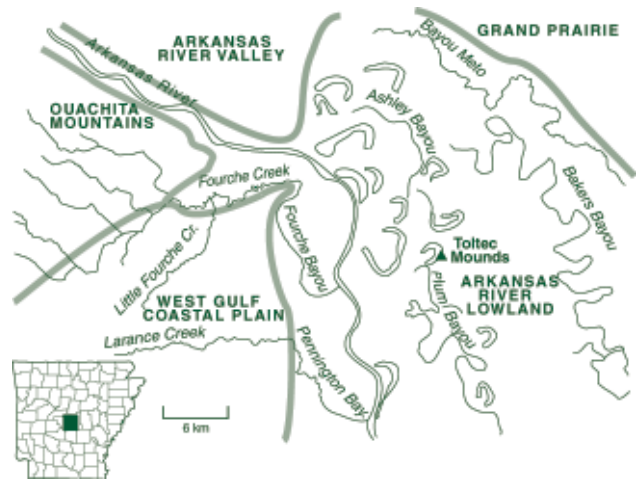


What Was Their Way of Life Like?

The Toltec Mounds are situated on the bank of a horseshoe shaped lake that was once a channel of the ancient Arkansas River. The location is in the flood plain of the river and floods deposited a new layer of soil each year making the land good for farming. The people who lived here and in the surrounding country used a variety of resources for food. They hunted deer, turkey, and other game with the bow and arrow; fished in the lakes and gathered acorns, hickory nuts, and other wild plants. Plants that produced numerous starchy seeds, such as little barley and maygrass, were cultivated along with some maize or corn. Wood, cane, and other plants were used to make many things. Houses were built with a frame of wood poles covered with cane mats for the walls and thatch for the roof.

The floodplain of the Arkansas River, the Arkansas River Lowland, is composed primarily of fine silt and clay soils but gravel deposits are present. Tools were made of rocks collected from these gravels and from the West Gulf Coastal Plain and Ouachita Mountains to the west. People made woodworking tools such as adzes and axes, and a variety of knives, drills, awls, scrapers, and arrow points. Containers for cooking, serving and storing food were made of local clay and fired hard to make them durable. Common vessel shapes were bowls and deep jars with flaring rims. Surfaces of bowls were occasionally coated with a film of red clay. Most of the decoration was simple, with incised lines or rows of nicks or notches placed around the upper edge.

The people who lived in the area around Toltec Mounds were not isolated from their neighbors. They traded stone for making tools to people living along both the Arkansas and White rivers and their tributary streams. Some distant trade



also took place; objects made of marine shell from the Gulf of Mexico and copper from the Great Lakes region are found here.

Who Discovered the Mounds?

French and American explorers and visitors to the Arkansas country in the early 1800s knew about the mounds and two descriptions were published in 1821. The Quapaw tribe lived in several villages along the Arkansas River and knew about the mounds, but had not built them. During the 1800s, many mound sites in the southeastern United States were so impressive that people thought the local Indians could not have built them. Historians and anthropologists thought the mounds had been built by mysterious people who then moved away and that the Indians came later. The Toltecs of Mexico were one of the ancient people named as possible builders of the mounds. An archeological study of mound sites in the 1880s proved that the mounds were not built by people from Mexico, but by ancestors of the Indians who lived in the southeastern U.S. The owners of the Toltec Mounds site knew about these ideas concerning mound building. In 1891 they used the name Toltec for the local railway station and community and the name continues in use. We know, however, that the Toltecs of Mexico had nothing to do with building these mounds.



Toltec Mounds
Archeological State Park
490 Toltec Mounds Rd.
Scott AR 72142
Telephone: (501) 961-9442



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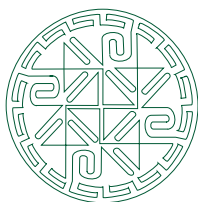
On the Web

Arkansas State Parks, www.arkansasstateparks.com

Arkansas Archeological Survey, www.uark.edu/campus-resources/archinfo

follow this to web pages for Toltec and Parkin Archeological State Parks (Research Stations), and to related websites about archeological parks in the U. S.,

Arkansas Archeological Society, www.uark.edu/depts/4society/index.html



Produced by:

Arkansas Archeological Survey

2475 North Hatch Avenue

Fayetteville, AR 72704

479-575-3556

This Project is supported in part by a grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities