



Mr. and Mrs. A.F. Griggs and former Park Superintendent James Mullins with canoe.

This canoe was discovered exposed in a bank of the Saline River in the winter of 1982-1983 on the property of Mr. and Mrs. A.F. Griggs. The Arkansas Archeological Survey and state park personnel were impressed with the condition of the canoe and pleased when the Griggs offered to donate it to the state. The Griggs Canoe is an excellent example of the southeastern Indian's fascinating culture and their close association with the natural world around them.

Wooden objects rarely are preserved for long periods of time, so the discovery and preservation of this canoe is unusual. The canoe may have been preserved by being quickly buried in mud and cut off from air. Wooden objects will decay if covered by soil that is alternately wet and dry. The wood of the canoe is fragile and many techniques for its preservation and display were evaluated.

One of the most commonly asked questions is "How old is it?" The first

attempt to answer this difficult question was the use of tree-ring dating. A sample of wood showing the tree rings was taken from the canoe and compared to a sequence of rings of known age. The necessary samples were difficult to obtain from the canoe and were not in good enough condition to provide an exact date. Two tentative dates were suggested -1680 and 1840.

A thin slice was removed from the exterior to the core of the canoe to provide a complete sequence of samples for the tree-ring dating technique as well as specimens for radiocarbon dating. The intention was to use the two methods together to establish a date. Unfortunately, the radiocarbon analysis did not result in useful dates.

Funding for the exhibit was generously donated by Mrs. Lawrence B. Burrow Jr. and Christopher B. Burrow in memory of Lawrence B. Burrow and Frank E. Chowning.

Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park preserves, researches, and interprets the archeological contexts within its boundaries and its associated Native American culture.

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THE GRIGGS CANOE

A Treasure
From
Arkansas
Past

TOLTEC MOUNDS
ARCHEOLOGICAL
STATE PARK

When the Spanish and French explored and settled the New World in the 1500's and 1600's they found Native Americans using dugout canoes for transportation. French settlers in the Mississippi River valley and along its tributaries quickly adopted the efficient dugout canoe for their own transportation. The French used European-manufactured metal adzes and axes to make the canoes and traded these tools to the Indians.

The interior of the Griggs Canoe clearly shows the tool marks of a metal adze, therefore it must have been made after the introduction of metal tools from Europe. In the Mississippi River valley, this was after 1680. The canoe may have been made and used by either Native Americans after contact with Europeans or by French or Spanish trappers, traders, or settlers.

Pirogues, still used today in Louisiana, are an adaptation of dugout canoes used by Indians in the southeastern United States and in the Caribbean. The word **pirogue** is based on a Carib Indian word for large dugout canoe.

Dugout canoes were made of pine or cypress. After felling a suitable tree, a canoe could be shaped with an axe and an adze. Before European tools were available, Native Americans felled a tree by burning it around the base. The shaping and hollowing was done with controlled burning and stone tools.

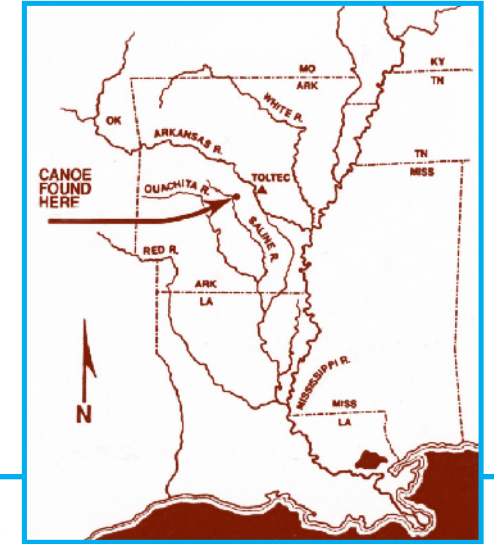
The Griggs Canoe is made of southern pine, which grows throughout the lower Mississippi River valley and in the Gulf Coastal Plain. This canoe is 23 feet 11 inches long, 22 inches wide, and 12 inches high on the exterior. The base of the dugout is flat and slopes up symmetrically at both ends. The base is 5.5 inches thick. The interior is 19 feet, 4 inches long, 19 inches wide, and 7.75 inches deep. Both ends have a platform and one end has a small seat or step. The end with the stepped platform is thought to be the stern.

Depending on the size and form, canoes could be used in shallow water and smaller streams as well as on large rivers or on the Caribbean Sea. In large rivers

or swift streams the canoes were paddled, but in shallow, quiet water they could be poled. Reports from the Hernando de Soto Expedition in Arkansas in 1542 indicate that the Indians had war canoes on the Mississippi River large enough to carry 50 warriors.

Canoes were the easiest means of transporting goods, supplies, and people on the many rivers in the southeastern United States. Indians also used them to help spear and net fish. Canoes were important for trade and transportation to the Native Americans and the French and Spanish hunters and settlers.

Canoes were used to travel waterways in the Mississippi Valley.



Shaping of a canoe by controlled burning.



Tool marks on the Griggs Canoe indicate it was partially shaped by a metal adze.



Canoes were used for travel and to transport goods.