



KNAPP TRAIL GUIDE

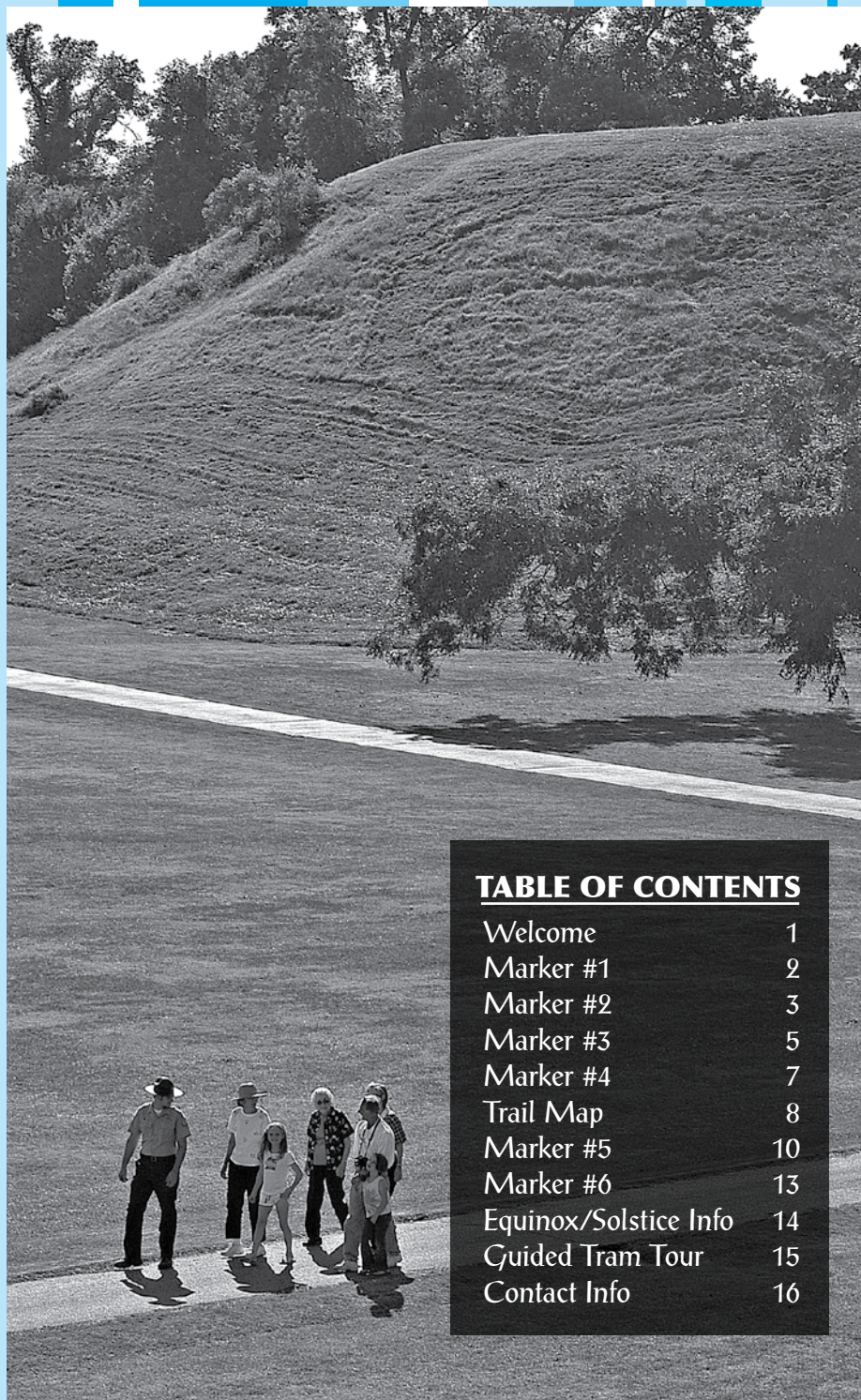


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	1
Marker #1	2
Marker #2	3
Marker #3	5
Marker #4	7
Trail Map	8
Marker #5	10
Marker #6	13
Equinox/Solstice Info	14
Guided Tram Tour	15
Contact Info	16

TOLTEC MOUNDS

ARCHEOLOGICAL STATE PARK



Welcome to Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park! You are about to embark on a very special tour of this prehistoric Native American site. The Knapp Trail is three quarters of a mile long, fully paved and accessible. Your first stop will be at the first marker on the trail just over the culvert. Each of the six stations has a corresponding marker located along the trail.

In order to preserve scenic beauty, it is important that you stay on the trail. As this is a state park, all plants, animals and artifacts are protected by state law. Therefore, please do not disturb any of the plants or animals, remove any artifacts, dig on the site, or climb any of the mounds. Please keep an eye on your children at all times, and pets must be kept on a leash. Thank you for helping to protect this window to our past. Enjoy your tour!

MARKER #1

Before you begin your journey through this prehistoric site, it may interest you to know that the name “Toltec Mounds” is actually a misnomer. Gilbert Knapp, who owned this site from 1848 to 1905, mistakenly thought the mounds were associated with the Toltec people of Mexico. In 1883, this idea was disproved. Investigations by archeologists at that time showed that these mounds, like others in North America, had been built by the ancestors of North American, not Mexican, Indians.



Drawing by Henry Lewis Late 1882-1883

More than a century ago, early visitors reported that sixteen mounds stood at this site within an earthen embankment wall. Today, eighteen mound locations have been identified. Farming activities over the past 150 years have caused considerable destruction to the archeological site, destroying nearly all of the mounds and a large portion of the embankment wall. In 1975, this land officially became an Arkansas state park, protecting the earthworks from further damage.

Due to a lack of written records, the builders of this site cannot be associated with any modern Native American tribe. For this reason, the prehistoric people who inhabited this site from approximately 650 AD to approximately 1050 AD have been named the Plum Bayou culture by archeologists. Plum Bayou refers to the name of a local stream. For unknown reasons, the site was abandoned around 1050 AD. The Plum Bayou culture grew and flourished at this prehistoric ceremonial center for approximately four hundred years and left mysteries that still attract us today. Throughout this tour you will learn more about this ceremonial center and these mysteries.



Toltec Mounds circa late 1970s

Marker two is located in front of the embankment wall to your left.

MARKER #2

As you look out over the site before you, you will see what remains of this cultural and ceremonial site. Due to the farming and plowing conducted at this location, archeologists were left piecing together the mystery of how this site would have appeared when the Plum Bayou culture was thriving. When this land became protected within Arkansas' State Park system, only the locations of the three largest mounds were known. These mounds can easily be seen before you. Mound A, the tallest mound in Arkansas at forty-nine feet, is located between Mound B on the right and Mound C on the left. Through sketches and written accounts made of this area before it was farmed, archeologists knew that originally there had been more than just the three visible mounds. Using these sketches and accounts, along with aerial photographs and soil sampling, archeologists were able to solve one mystery and determine the locations of the other mounds. In all, archeologists located fifteen additional mounds. These mounds are designated by the red and white letter markers.



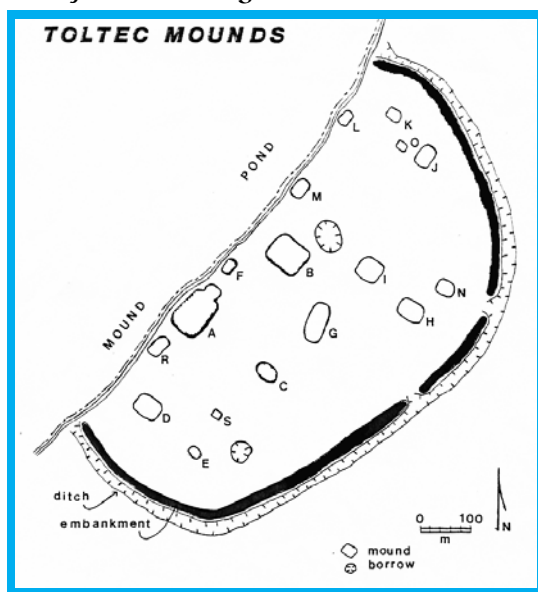
Mounds A & B

Another mystery left by these Native Americans can be seen behind you at this location. On the left side of the trail, a portion of what archeologists call the embankment wall is still visible. A ditch filled with water once stood on the outside of the embankment wall. Except for this small section in front of you, and another area in the woods to the south, the majority of the embankment wall was destroyed by plowing and the ditch filled in. Archeologists used the same techniques to locate the destroyed mounds to determine where the embankment wall originally stood. When the Plum Bayou culture occupied this ceremonial center, the ten-foot high embankment wall and adjacent ditch encircled three sides of the site. The fourth side was, and still is, bordered by an oxbow lake named Mound Lake.

Not only was the location of the embankment wall a mystery for archeologists, but so was its purpose. One idea was that it was used for flood control. Since no embankment wall was found along the bank of

Mound Lake, that idea was disregarded. Another thought was that it was constructed for protection from invading tribes. As stated earlier, this wall was only about ten feet tall. There is also no evidence to suggest that a palisade or fence sat atop it. In addition, there were several gaps in the embankment wall, allowing people to freely enter and exit. Since only about fifty people lived at this site, it would have been improbable that individuals were stationed on the wall for defensive purposes. For these reasons, it is unlikely that this embankment wall was constructed for protection from enemies. Instead, archeologists have come to think that the embankment wall was built as a boundary marker. Research indicates that this site was used first and foremost as a religious gathering center. So, it is thought that the embankment wall was used to indicate the boundary between the inside sacred land from the more secular world outside.

Earlier it was mentioned that archeologists believe only about fifty people lived within the boundaries of this site. These individuals who actually lived within the boundaries of the embankment wall are thought to have been the religious and civic leaders of the Plum Bayou people and their families. The general population, it is believed, lived in scattered villages and farmsteads in the surrounding area. Archeologists speculate that several times a year the whole population of the Plum Bayou culture would have traveled to this site for special ceremonies and to renew social and family ties. Looking at what remains of these impressive earthworks, try to



imagine this site overflowing with Native Americans — the food, the smells, the noise. What must it have been like?

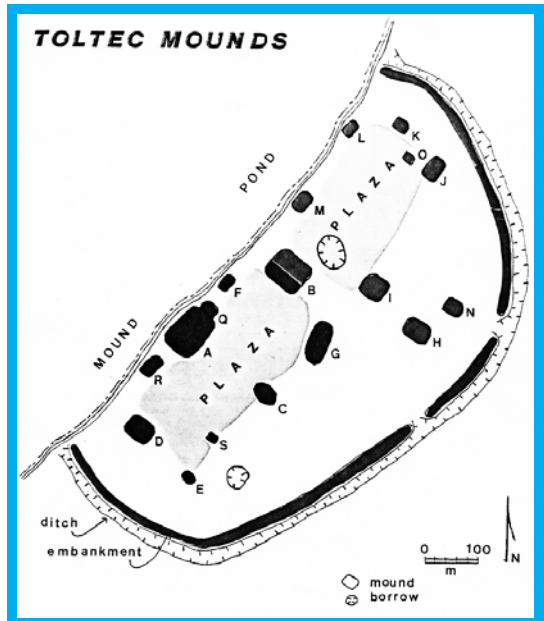
The next stop on your tour will be at the heart of this ceremonial center, one of two central plazas. As you continue, stay to your left and on the pavement at this trail junction. Marker three is located on the right side of the trail near Mound C.

MARKER #3

Before you is a rectangular area called a plaza. As mentioned at the previous station, Toltec Mounds was first and foremost a ceremonial center for the Plum Bayou culture. The plaza, the heart of the ceremonial center, may have been used for dances, festivals, feasts, ceremonies or games. A Native American game called "Chungke" was played by many tribes throughout the southeast and may have been played in this plaza at Toltec. In 'Chungke,' two men played against each other, sometimes representing two clans within a tribe. A person would roll a round stone, called a chunkee stone, and then both men would run after it with long poles called 'chung-kee's. The object of the game was to throw your pole as close to the stone as possible before it stopped rolling. Archeologists can only make educated guesses as to what the plaza was used for. The details of the activities are unknown and will always be a mystery.

It may be difficult to visualize, because most of the mounds are not present, but this plaza is surrounded by mounds. As you walked to this marker, you passed one of these mounds on your right. This mound is referred to as Mound C. The shape of this mound created another mystery for archeologists. As you have probably noticed, the two larger mounds have flat tops. For this reason, they are called platform mounds, and it is believed that residences or temples sat atop them.

Mound C, however, has a rounded top. At other mound sites in the Southeastern United States, mounds with rounded tops are known to have been used for burial purposes. By comparison, archeologists hypothesized that Mound C was also used for burial purposes. Through the partial excavation of



Mound C in the 1960's, archeologists gained evidence in support of their hypothesis. They learned that the mound itself was constructed by placing individuals at a single location and then covering them with soil. This was done over a period of time, resulting in the low dome-shaped mound you see today. The partial excavation of Mound C helped to solve the mystery behind the shape of this mound.



Mound C

Without archeology, we would not be able to learn about the people of long ago. However, most people believe that the remains of their ancestors and grave goods must be treated with respect and remain in the earth forever. In recent years, Native Americans have protested the digging of remains and artifacts. The 1990 passing of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act now provides a way for Native Americans to reclaim remains and special artifacts and have them returned to their tribes. In Arkansas, by way of the 1991 Arkansas Act number 753, it is illegal to disturb or excavate human burials except in special circumstances with permission. Help to protect the cultural heritage of Arkansas. Report any violation or suspected violation you observe to law enforcement.

Another mound that borders the plaza and can be easily seen on the other side of the trail, is Mound S. Over a decade ago, this mound was fully excavated and then reconstructed to form the low, flat mound you see today. The results from this excavation provided another piece to the

overall mystery that is Toltec Mounds. During the excavation, archeologists uncovered a large amount of animal bone, mostly white-tailed deer, as well as an abundance of charred seeds and nuts. In fact, there were more animal remains found on this one mound than could have been consumed by the few people living here. This discovery led archeologists to believe that Mound 5 was the location of many feasts.

The fourth stop on our tour will be on the boardwalk. As you are walking along the boardwalk, remember to keep an eye out for turtles, ducks, and other aquatic wildlife. The fourth marker is located on the observation deck with the replica dugout canoe.

MARKER #4

You are standing on what was the Arkansas River over 4,000 years ago. Although the Arkansas River is now four miles away, when the Plum Bayou culture was thriving, it was only a mile from this site. When the Plum Bayou people inhabited this area, they would have seen this waterway as



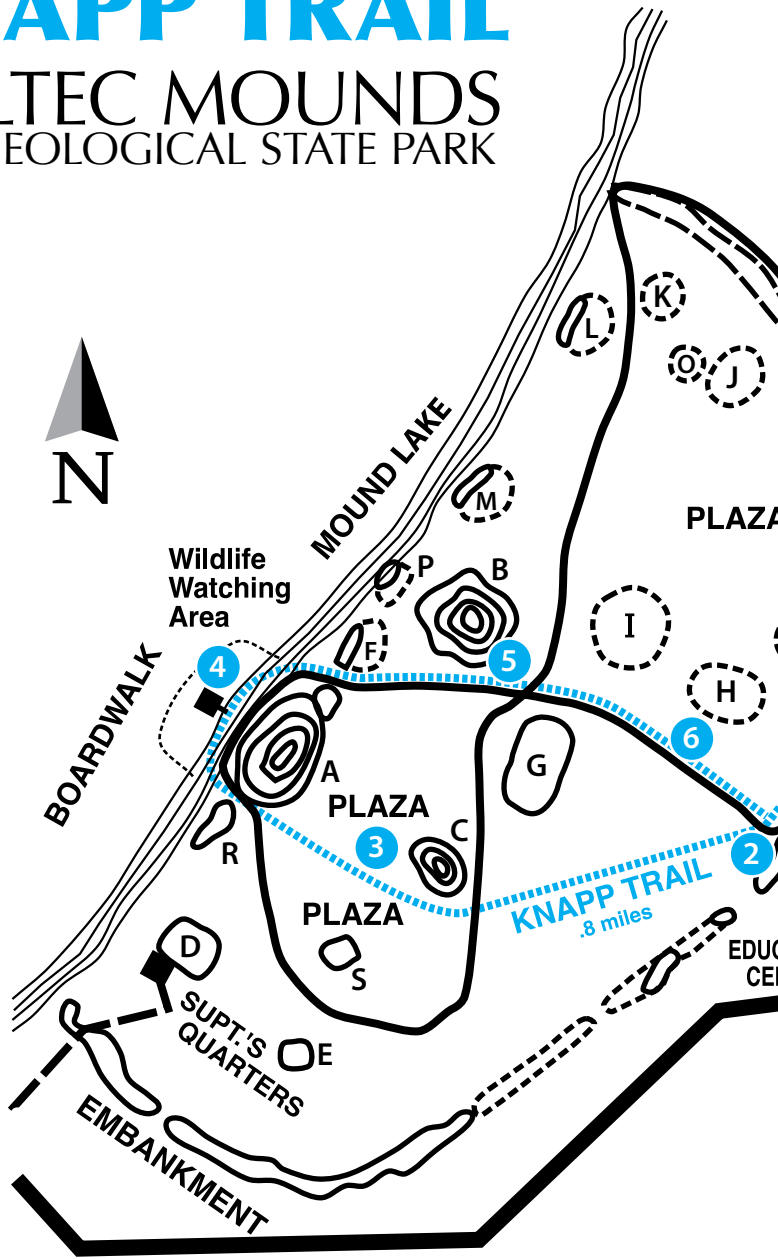
Boardwalk overlooking Mound Lake

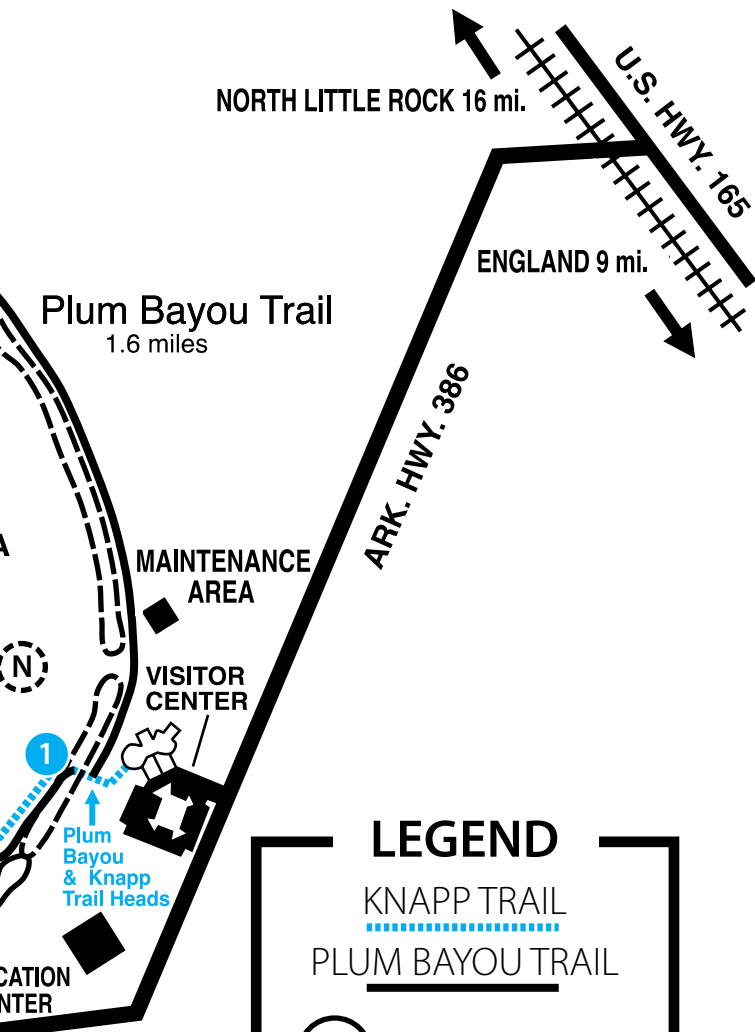
you see it today, as an oxbow lake. Over time, rivers and their channels meander back and forth within their floodplain. This meandering eventually creates lakes such as this one. This oxbow lake is known as Mound Lake.

Waterways, such as the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers, were an important part of life for Native Americans at this site. It is quite likely that many of the Plum Bayou people would have used the surrounding waterways to reach Toltec Mounds for their ceremonies. Dugout canoes, such as the one in the visitor center and similar to the one here on the

KNAPP TRAIL



TOLTEC MOUNDS ARCHEOLOGICAL STATE PARK






LEGEND

..... KNAPP TRAIL
 PLUM BAYOU TRAIL

 EARTHWORKS
 DESTROYED EARTHWORKS

0 50 100

 meters

observation deck, are believed to be the main mode of transportation for these Native Americans when they traveled by water. These canoes were made from a variety of trees, including pine and bald cypress. The large trees you see at the edge of the lake, with the spreading trunks, are bald cypress.



Excavated dugout canoe

During excavations, archeologists uncovered fragments of a conch shell from the Gulf of Mexico as well as copper from the Great Lakes area. This discovery provides another sliver of insight into the mystery of the lives of the Plum Bayou people. It does so by presenting evidence that the Native Americans who lived here had contact and traded with people along the Mississippi River.

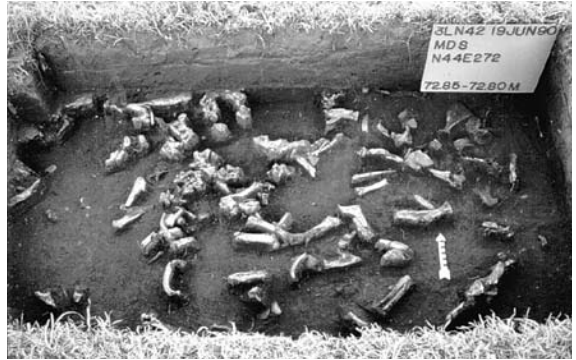
Please take your time on the boardwalk. When you are ready, continue on to the fifth marker on the left side of the trail near Mound B.

MARKER #5

During this tour, you have heard about a few excavations that have helped to solve certain mysteries at Toltec Mounds. Not only have excavations helped to determine the purpose of the embankment wall, the reason for the shape of Mound C, and the feasting location at Mound S, but excavations have also shed light on the actual building of the mounds, the kind of food the Plum Bayou people consumed, the weapons they used for hunting, and the type of pottery made and used by the Plum Bayou culture.

You are now standing beside Mound B, the second tallest mound here at Toltec at thirty-nine feet. An excavation on the southeastern corner was

conducted in 1979. Through this study, archeologists learned that Mound B was not built all at one time but in several stages. Other excavations showed this to be true of several of the other mounds as well. At Mound B, three different stages were identified by the presence of midden, or trash. Layers of midden typically indicate the location of a residential structure.



Excavation site at Toltec

Through the excavation of several of the mounds, it is known that the Plum Bayou people ate a variety of foods both wild and domestic. They hunted many different kinds of mammals including deer, squirrel, and raccoon. They also ate turkeys, geese, ducks, and a variety of other birds including the passenger pigeon which is extinct today. Archeologists have found evidence that these people also ate fish and turtles as well as acorns, nuts, berries and greens. They cultivated several native grasses such as maygrass, little barley, pigweed, amaranth, squashes and maize. Although maize or corn was consumed at the Toltec site, it was only a small part of their diet.



Resources used by the Plum Bayou Culture

Excavations indicate that the Plum Bayou people used several types of weapons for hunting but primarily relied on the bow and arrow. River cane growing nearby was most likely used to make shafts for arrows. Archeologists at this site have uncovered many stone tools including arrow points, knives, drills, awls, axes, and adzes. These tools were made through the process of flintknapping.

A sharp point or blade was created by prehistoric people by knocking off flakes around the edges of one rock with another rock or by using a billet made from an antler of a deer. The people at the Toltec site commonly used a type of rock called chert collected from river gravel bars to make their stone points. Less commonly, they used novaculite and quartz crystal, found in rock formations near the Ouachita Mountains.

Evidence also shows that the Plum Bayou people made and fired pots from clay they collected locally. The containers they made were commonly bowls and deep jars that were used for cooking and for holding and storing food. Most of the decorations on the pottery were simple, with a few incised lines or notches placed around the upper edge. Some of the bowls were coated with a slip or film of red clay.



Excavated pot crafted by Plum Bayou People

Had excavations never been conducted, most of this information would still remain a mystery to us today. Examples of artifacts, found through excavations at Toltec, can be seen in the museum located in the visitor center.

The sixth marker is located on the left side of the trail beside Mound H.

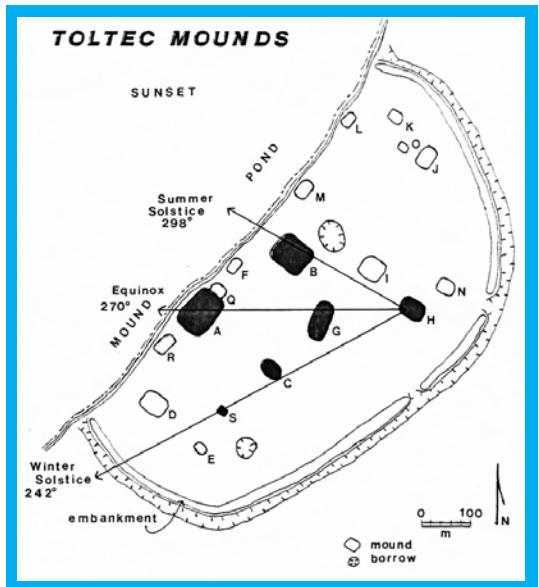
MARKER #6

You have learned, during this tour, that the Plum Bayou people were very concerned about the size and shape of their mounds. In addition to these factors, the Native Americans at Toltec Mounds were also concerned about the placement of these mounds. Some were placed to line up with each other, while others mark the position of the sun at sunrise and sunset on the solstices and equinoxes. The Plum Bayou people most likely aligned the mounds to the shifting sun in order to identify the change of the seasons for the planting and harvesting of crops as well as for the scheduling of ceremonies and feasts.

It is from Mound H, also known as the observational mound, that, on the Summer Solstice, you can watch the sun set directly behind Mound B. On the Spring and Fall Equinoxes, from this mound, the sun sets behind Mound A, and, on the winter solstice, the sun will set behind Mound S. Therefore, by standing on Mound H, the Plum Bayou people could mark the changing of the seasons just by watching where the sun set. Although archeologists have been able to determine how these mounds align, the full extent of their astronomical and solar knowledge will always remain a mystery.

The biggest mystery of all, surrounding the Plum Bayou culture, is why they abandoned the Toltec site around 1050 AD. After all the hard work put into this site and the countless ceremonies held here, these people simply disappeared from the site. We do not know where they went or why they left.

As you come to the end of the trail, take a moment to look back at the mounds. Imagine this village more



a thousand years ago when the Plum Bayou culture was still thriving. Imagine how it must have been to see an overflow of Native Americans all coming together for a ceremony. Men are returning from a successful hunt, children are listening to the stories of their elders, everyone was coming together to play games and to participate in dances and feasts. Many mysteries still remain about the people who flourished here and the ceremonies they held at this site, but the mounds at least give us clues and allow us to take a glimpse into the past.

Thank you for taking this journey through a part of Arkansas's history. We hope you have enjoyed your visit. If you have any questions or comments, our staff in the visitor center will be happy to talk with you.

Spring Equinox, Summer Solstice & Fall Equinox



Each year Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park encourages visitors to experience the Spring Equinox, Summer Solstice, and Fall Equinox sunsets on Mound H the way the Plum Bayou culture did over 1,000 years ago. Please make plans to bring your family and friends this year!

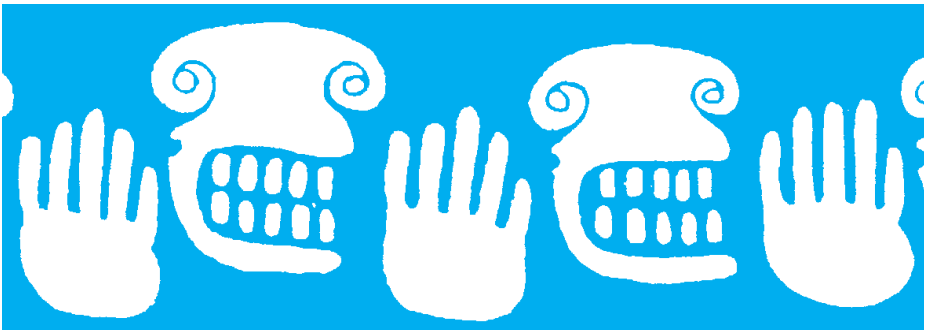
Guided Tram Tour



Guided Tram Tours:

Sunday, Wednesday, & Saturday at 2 P.M.
(in lieu of special events)

Join a park interpreter for a guided tram tour of the largest prehistoric mound complex in Arkansas. This unique mound complex was the cultural center of the Plum Bayou people, who interacted with their environment and each other much as we do today. Contact the park for information about tram fees.





To share your stories about Toltec or show us artifacts you have collected, contact Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park or the Arkansas Archeological Survey. We would love to hear your stories!

Arkansas Archeological Survey
Toltec Station
490 Toltec Mounds Road
Scott, Arkansas 72142
phone: (501) 961-2420

PARK HOURS

Open:

Tuesday - Saturday 8 A.M. to 5 P.M.

Sunday 1 P.M. to 5 P.M.

Closed:

Mondays (except Monday holidays)

Thanksgiving Day

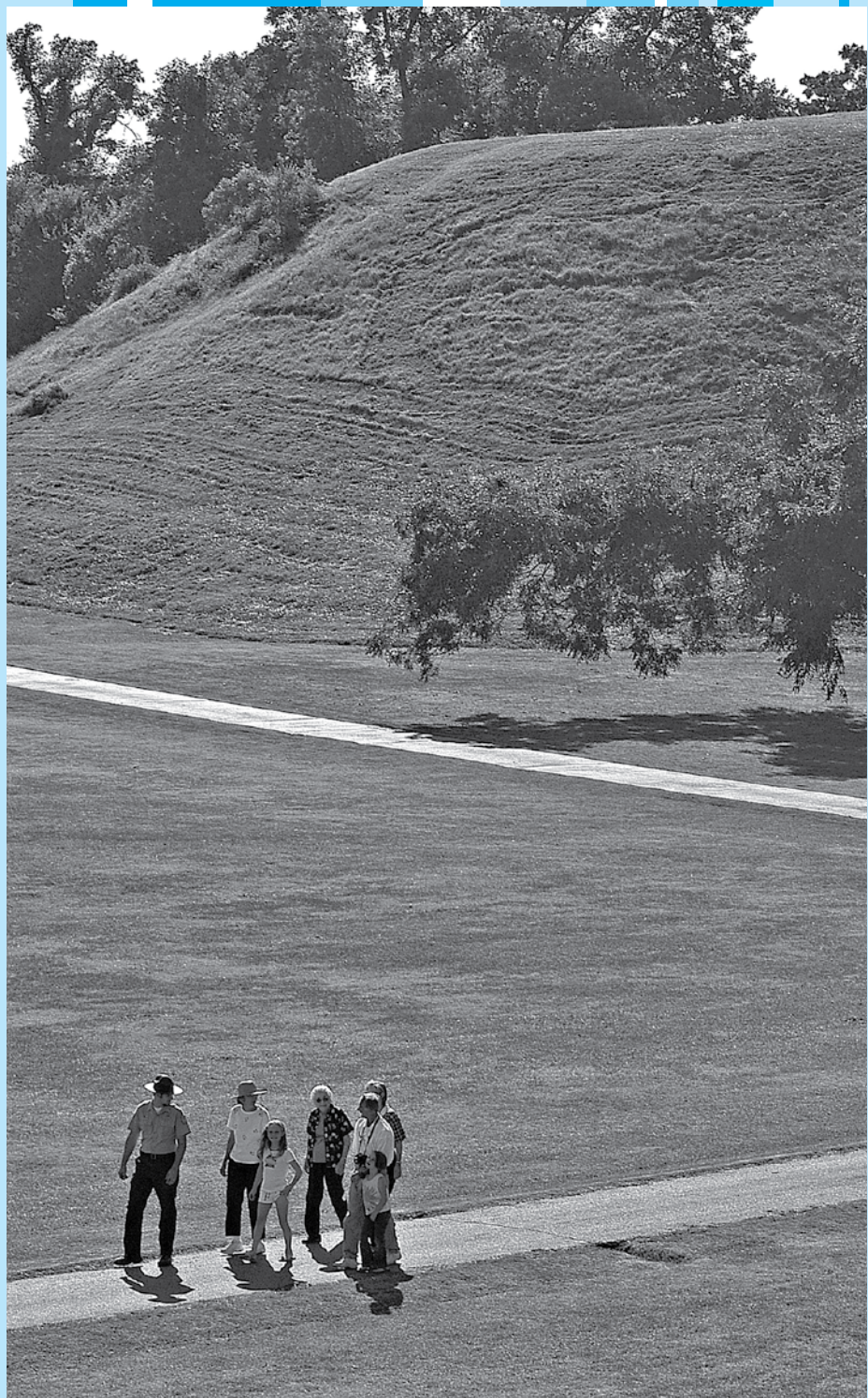
Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

New Year's Day

For a list of upcoming activities and interpretive programs at Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park, please pick up a Calendar of Events in the visitor center or visit us on the web at www.ArkansasStateParks.com.

We encourage you to get out and explore YOUR Arkansas State Parks!





490 Toltec Mounds Road • Scott, Arkansas 72142
Phone (501) 961-9442 • Fax (501) 961-9221
email: toltecmounds@arkansas.com
www.ArkansasStateParks.com