

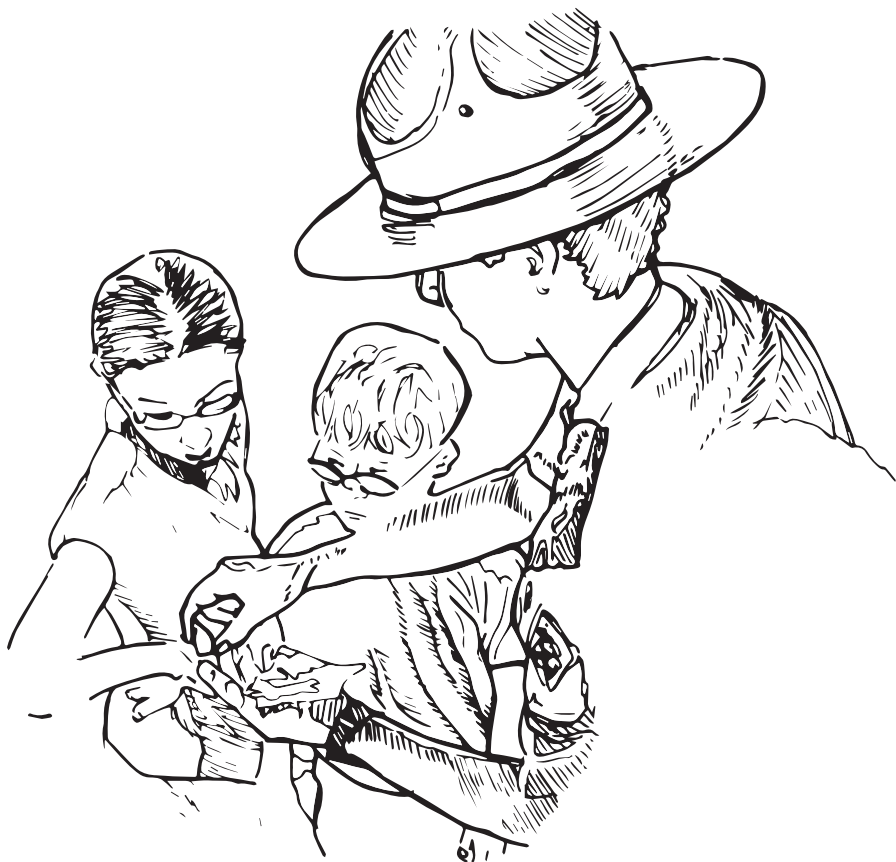
Children's Guide to
the **KNAPP**
TRAIL



**Plum Bayou Mounds
Archeological State Park**



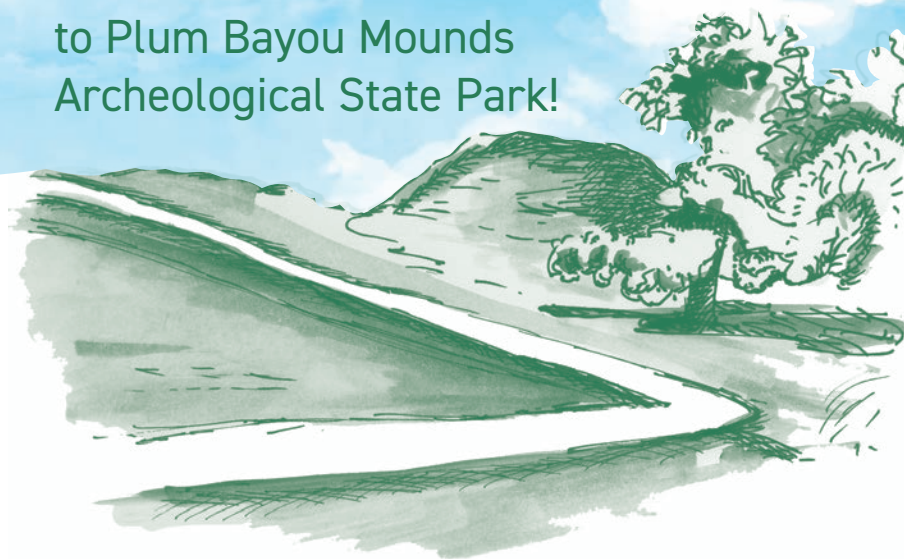
Investigate and



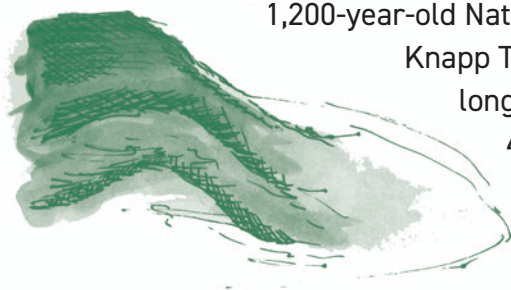
Explore

welcome

to Plum Bayou Mounds
Archeological State Park!



You are about to go on a very special tour of a 1,200-year-old Native American site. The Knapp Trail is almost one mile long and will take you about 45 minutes to walk.



A map of the trail is located in the center of this booklet.

In order to preserve scenic beauty, it is important that you stay on the trail and do not disturb any of the plants, animals, or the site. Therefore, do not dig on the site or climb any of the mounds. This is not only for the protection of the site but for your safety as well.

**Step back in time and have
fun on your tour!**

Stop at each numbered marker and follow along with the information on the following pages.

Marker 1

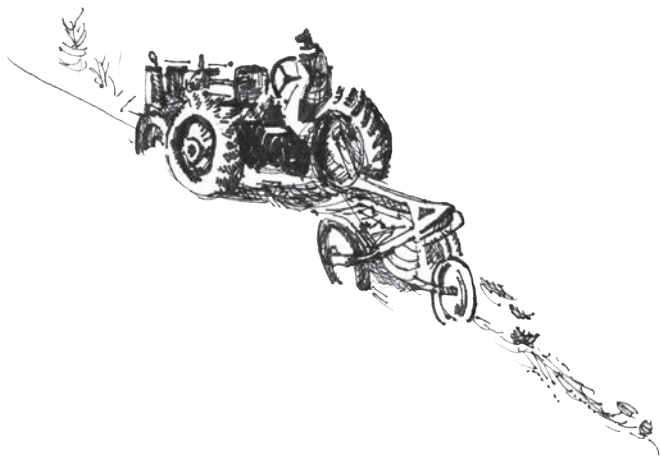
The land you are standing on is a ceremonial center where Native American people lived, worked, and played long ago. **Plum Bayou Culture** is the name given to the people who lived here by archeologists who study them. Many of the tools, weapons, and pottery that the Plum Bayou people used have been found right here in the area you are standing. These objects are called **artifacts**.

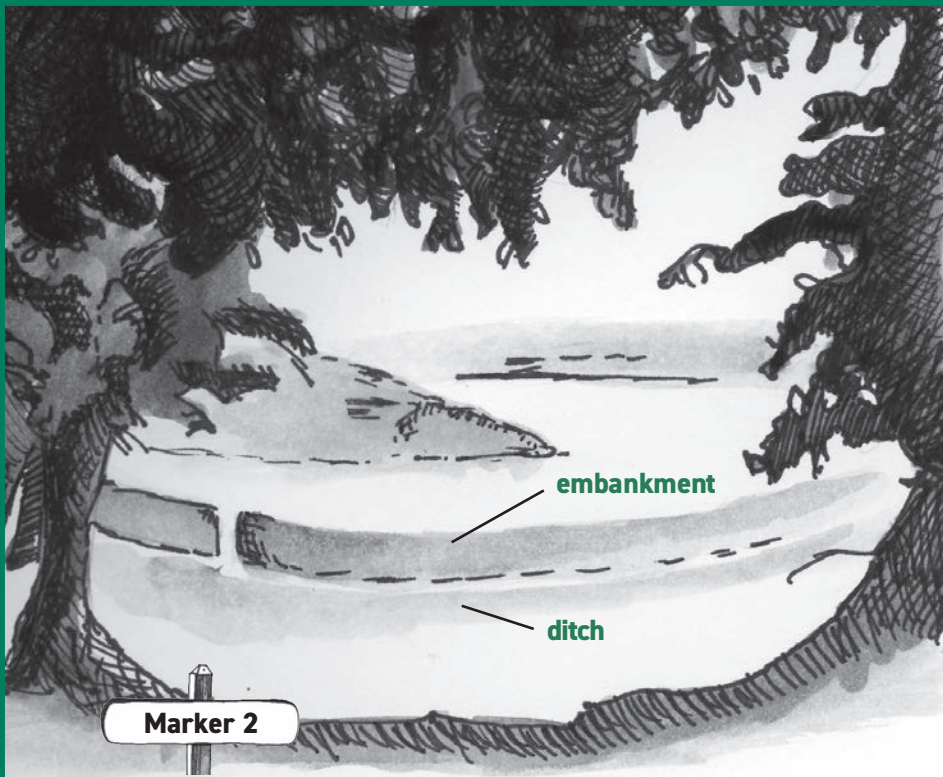
Archeologists are scientists who spend many hours excavating or digging for artifacts to gain information about the people who made them.





The Plum Bayou people built 18 mounds when they lived here over 1,000 years ago, but today you can only see three of the taller mounds easily. We call them Mounds A, B, and C. Before this site became a state park, the smaller mounds were cut down by farming over the past 150 years. We put red signs on the mound areas so you can see where they were even though they look like flat land now.





Marker 2

The Plum Bayou people dug a ditch and piled soil to form an earthen embankment wall around this area on three sides (see the map on pages 8-9). Archeologists think the embankment and ditch were boundary markers. Native Americans who walked through the forest and came upon this clearing in the woods saw the ditch and embankment first. These things separated this ceremonial center where leaders lived from outside areas where common people lived.

The embankment, like the mounds, was made of soil. That's why we call them **earthworks**. The people who lived here built the mounds by piling thousands of basketloads full of soil on the ground. Archeologists sometimes can see where each basketload was placed as they excavate because the baskets were filled with soils of different colors.

Marker 3

Most of the mounds here were low, had flat tops, and were used in a variety of ways. The mounds are built around a flat rectangular area called the plaza. The plaza may have been used for dances, festivals, feasts, or ceremonies.

A game called **chunkey** was played by many tribes throughout the southeast and could have been played by people in the plaza here.

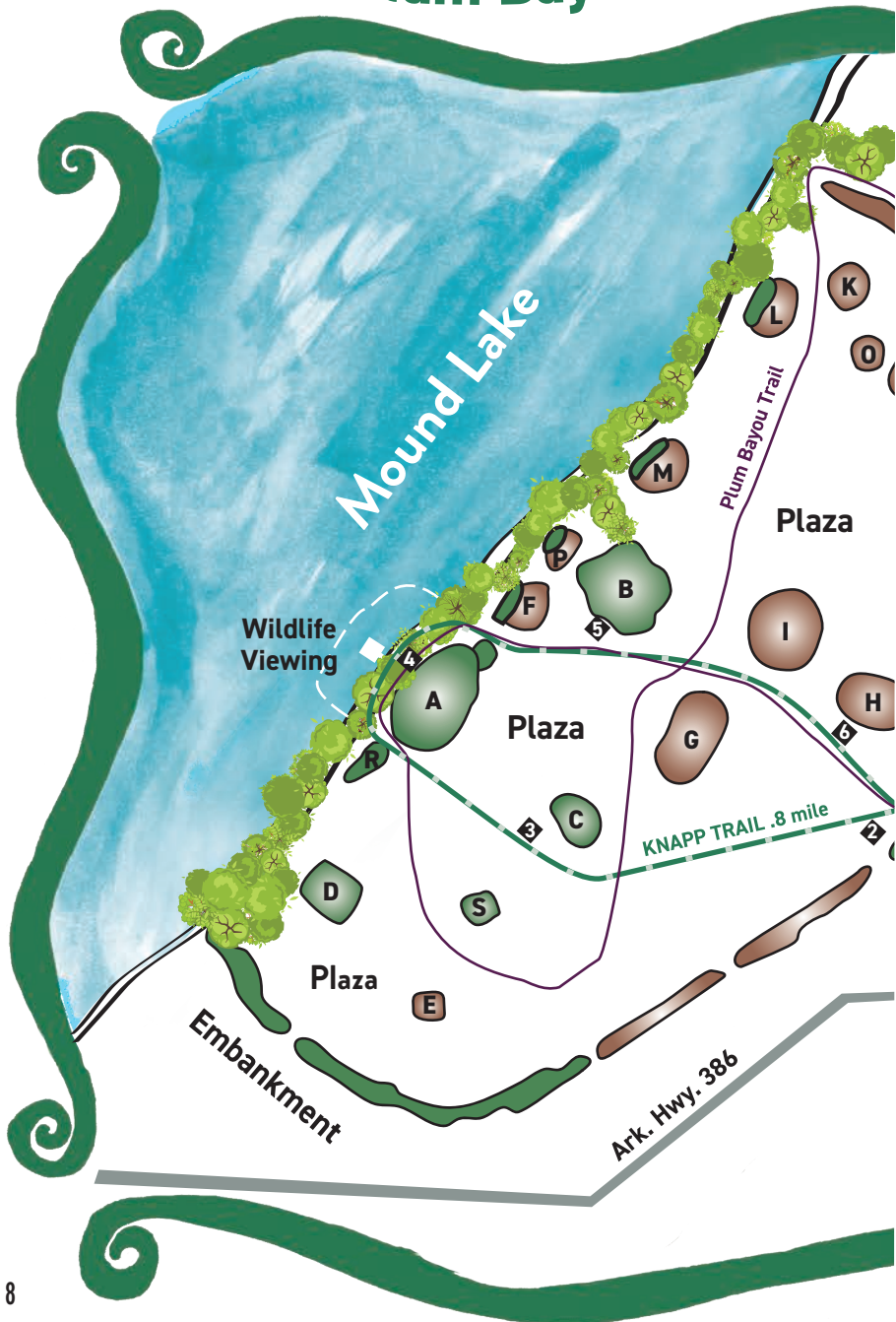
Usually two men played against each other, sometimes representing two clans within a tribe. One person rolled a round stone called a chunkey stone and both men ran after it with long sticks called chung-kes. The men had to throw their sticks as close as possible to the stone before it stopped rolling to win the game.



Imagine a tribal leader standing on top of one of the mounds leading a ceremony for a crowd of people gathered in the plaza. Music, dancing, chanting, games, eating, and socializing were a few of the things that could have been happening where you are standing now.

(Continued on page 10.)

Plum Bayou Mounds



Archeological State Park





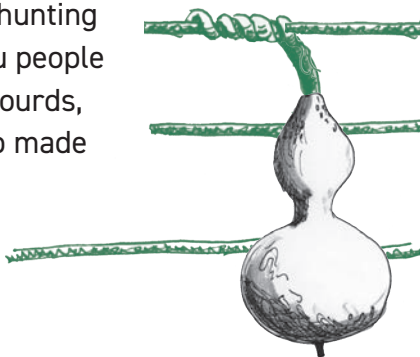
Marker 3 continued

Behind you is the location of Mound S. This was a low platform mound that was excavated several years ago. A large amount of animal bone was found, mostly from deer. In fact, there was more food butchered on this mound than was needed by the few people living here at any one time.

This discovery leads archeologists to believe that Mound S was a location for ceremonies that included feasts.



From excavations, we know that the people here fished and collected turtles and other aquatic life from Mound Lake. In addition to hunting and fishing, the Plum Bayou people gathered greens, squash, gourds, nuts, and berries. They also made pottery or clay bowls that were used to hold and store food and water.





Marker 4

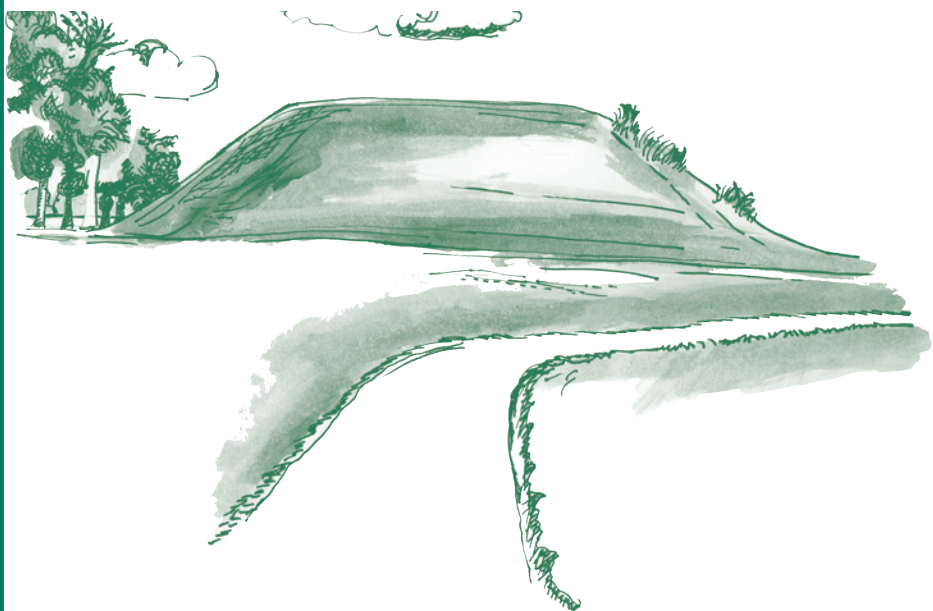
The water you see in front of you is called Mound Lake. It is an oxbow lake. This waterway is a U-shaped lake that was formed when a channel from the Arkansas River was running through here several thousand years ago. Over time, rivers and their channels meander (move) and lakes are formed.

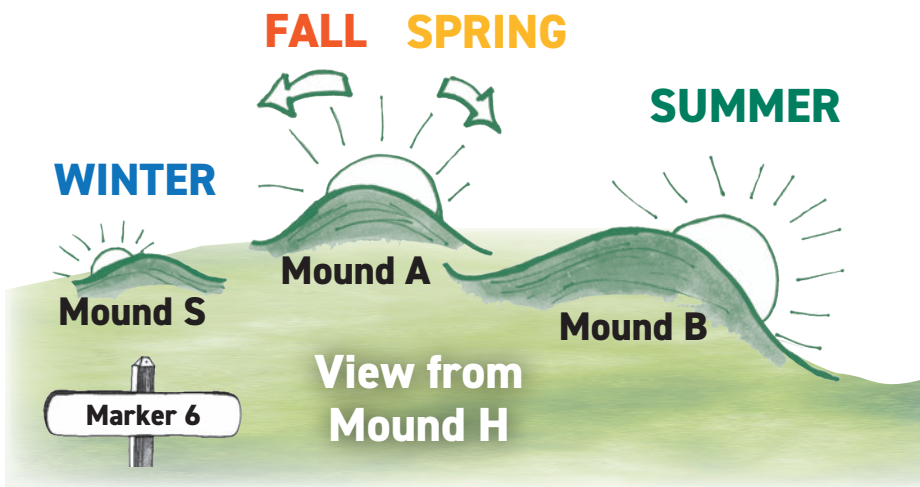
Waterways such as the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers were an important part of life for Native Americans at this site. They used dugout canoes, such as the one in the visitor center and similar to the one on the observation deck, to travel the waters to trade goods with other tribes. We know that the Native Americans who lived here may have had contact with people along the Mississippi River because we found fragments of a conch shell that would have come from the Gulf of Mexico to the south and copper which would have come from the Great Lakes area to the north.

The Plum Bayou people could have arrived here for their gatherings by way of dugout canoes. Imagine standing on Mound A and watching canoes make their way here for an approaching ceremony.

Marker 5

Mound B, on your left, stands 39 feet tall and is called a **platform mound** because it is flat on top. The shape and location (the north end of the plaza) suggest that ceremonies would have been held on top of this mound. Archeologists partially excavated this mound in 1979 and found trash called **midden** in several layers of the mound. This midden tells archeologists that this mound probably had a house on top where a leader might have lived.





The Plum Bayou people built the mounds in specific places. Mound H was used as a place for observation or for looking at other mounds. On the first official day of summer you could stand on Mound H and see the sun set behind Mound B. On the first day of fall and on the first day of spring the sun will set behind Mound A. In the winter, the sun will set behind Mound S. So, by standing on Mound H, the Native Americans here could tell what season it was by looking where the sun set. This “natural calendar” was important to the Plum Bayou people and was possibly used to mark the time to have the gatherings and ceremonies that took place here. It would also be useful in telling them when to plant and harvest their crops.

Each year Plum Bayou Mounds Archeological State Park encourages visitors to experience the spring equinox, summer solstice, fall equinox, and winter solstice on Mound H the way the **Plum Bayou Culture** did over 1,200 years ago. Staff lead special programs on these days and visitors have special permission to go on Mound H.

We hope that the tour through this piece of your Arkansas history was fun! If you have any questions please ask park staff at the visitor center or call (501) 961-9442. Also inquire about other educational activities for children offered including Exhibit Explorer, Site Explorer, and State Park Explorer. Special programs for groups are available upon request.



Contact the park for reservations or additional information.
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Scott, AR 72142
PlumBayou@arkansas.com
www.ArkansasStateParks.com

NOTICE

Parents & Guardians: To preserve scenic beauty and ecology, fences and warning signs have not been installed in some park locations. Caution and increased supervision of your children and others in your care are required when visiting these areas.

**Sketch a picture or
write your favorite memory
of walking the trail.**



updated 4/2025