



Foundation Document Overview

Arkansas Post National Memorial

Arkansas



Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of ARKANSAS POST NATIONAL MEMORIAL is to commemorate and interpret the peoples and cultures that inhabited the successive settlements at the confluence of the White, Arkansas, and Mississippi Rivers. The park preserves and studies the history of human interaction and the complex environmental history of its environs over centuries.



Significance

Significance statements express why a park's resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system. These statements are linked to the purpose of Arkansas Post National Memorial, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Statements of significance describe the distinctive nature of the park and why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. They focus on the most important resources and values that will assist in park planning and management.

- Geography and natural resources combined with the forces of global economy, politics, and society at Arkansas Post to create dynamic interactions of diverse cultures with each other and the landscape over time.
- Arkansas Post National Memorial commemorates the first permanent European settlement in the Lower Mississippi River Valley, and represents, in a tangible way, the struggle by European powers for dominance in the Lower Mississippi River Valley.
- Arkansas Post was where the United States gained control of the Arkansas River Basin following the Louisiana Purchase by replacing Fort Carlos with Fort Madison in 1805.
- Arkansas Post served as a major temporary internment point along the water route of the Trail of Tears in 1831.
- The Civil War battle in January 1863 at Arkansas Post enabled the United States to reestablish control of the Lower Arkansas, White, and Mississippi River systems.
- The Arkansas Post environs represent the spiritual center of the Quapaw tribal homeland and the culture of these American Indians as it existed in the late 17th century.
- The Osotouy Unit preserves an archeological area consisting of Woodland, Mississippian, Quapaw, and European cultural resources that have retained a high degree of integrity over a long period of time.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Value of Remote and Natural Setting**
- **American Indian Heritage and Significance**
- **High Ground of the Memorial Peninsula**
- **Archeological Resources at the Memorial Unit**
- **Osotouy Archeology**
- **Town Site**
- **Civil War Battlefield**
- **Museum Collections**

Arkansas Post National Memorial contains other resources and values that are not fundamental to the purpose of the park and may be unrelated to its significance, but are important to consider in planning processes. These are referred to as “other important resources and values”

- **Animal Species**
- **Botanical Resources**
- **Resources of the Post-Civil War Period**
- **State Park-Era Landscape Features**



Interpretive Themes



Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **A Gathering Place**
- **American Indian Heritage**
- **Colonial to Civil War History**
- **Humans and the Environment**
- **African and African American Experience**
- **Significance of the Three Rivers**
- **Personal Connections**
- **Environmental Issues and Climate Change**

Description

Arkansas Post National Memorial near Gillett, Arkansas, was established by Congress in 1960. The park is in the delta lowlands of Arkansas approximately 100 miles southeast of Little Rock and comprises two units—the Memorial Unit and the Osotouy Unit. The Memorial Unit is on a peninsula flanked by the Post Bayou, Post Bend, and Arkansas River and includes 389.2 acres of open lawns, wooded areas, and several bodies of water. The Osotouy Unit is 360 acres in size and is approximately 5 miles by air or 30 miles by road from the Memorial Unit.

American Indian groups, including the Quapaw Tribe, inhabited the landscape that is now within the park's boundaries, and the site is historically and culturally significant for the Quapaw. In 1686, the French established a trading post later known as Post de Arkansas near the Quapaw village of Osotouy, in or near the park's Osotouy Unit. It was the first semi-permanent European settlement in the lower Mississippi River Valley.

Within the Osotouy Unit is the Menard-Hodges Site, a national historic landmark that includes the largest known civic-ceremonial center of the Mississippian culture along the lower Arkansas River. Two large ceremonial mounds and smaller house mounds arranged around a central plaza made up the heart of a prehistoric town.

The area of the Memorial Unit was first used by Europeans in 1749, before Arkansas Post was moved twice to other locations. In 1763, the French ceded control of the post to the Spanish as a result of the French and Indian War. The Spanish returned the post settlement to what is now the Memorial Unit in 1779, and it did not move again. On April 17, 1783, the British Colbert Raid on Arkansas Post was the only Revolutionary War action in Arkansas. In 1800, France regained the Louisiana Territory, including Arkansas Post, from Spain, and, in 1803, France sold the Louisiana Territory to the United States.

By 1810, the population of Arkansas Post was about 500, mostly French with some enslaved African Americans and free people of color. The Quapaws, who ceded the area surrounding Arkansas Post to the United States in 1818, were forced to relocate in 1824.

Arkansas Post served as Arkansas's territorial capital from 1819 to 1821, and, although the town experienced a downturn after the capital was moved to Little Rock, its economy rebounded as a center of cotton production and a river port in the 1830s and 1840s. In 1831, Arkansas Post served as a major temporary internment point along the water route of the Trail of Tears.

During the Civil War, Confederate troops, using slave labor, constructed a massive earthen fortification known as Fort Hindman at Arkansas Post. On January 10, 1863, Union troops attacked and prevailed. The once proud town that withstood decades of the harsh environment was reduced to nothing in a mere two days and never recovered. The once bustling community was replaced by a few scattered farms.

Few above ground physical traces of Arkansas Post's early colonial and American frontier periods are visible at the Memorial Unit. Past excavations demonstrate, however, that a rich and extremely significant subsurface archeological record of both later periods exists at the memorial. Investigative methods are still revealing new information about the location, occupancy periods, material culture, and lives lived at what is today Arkansas Post National Memorial.

Over the 300 years of the Arkansas Post's history, the area has been greatly changed by natural forces and human intervention. Flooding, erosion, and a natural change in the river's course have altered the site of the old posts and town, as have attempts to improve navigation and control of the rivers with levees, dams, and a canal.

