

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

BOTTLE CREEK SITE

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **BOTTLE CREEK SITE**

Other Name/Site Number: **1Ba2**

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: **Township 1N, Range 1E, NW 1/4 of SE 1/4 of Section 54**

Not for publication: X

City/Town: **Stockton**

Vicinity: X

State: **Alabama** County: **Baldwin** Code: **003**

Zip Code:

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private:

Public-Local:

Public-State: X

Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s):

District:

Site: X

Structure:

Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

 1

 18

 19

Noncontributing

 buildings

 sites

 structures

 objects

 0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 16

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: **DOMESTIC
RELIGION**

Sub: **Village Site
Ceremonial Site**

Current: **LANDSCAPE**

Sub: **Conservation area**

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: **N/A**

Materials: **N/A**

Foundation:

Walls:

Roof:

Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Site Type: The Bottle Creek site (1Ba2) is a major Mississippian mound complex of the Pensacola culture (A.D. 1250-1550). It appears to have functioned as a social/political/religious/trade center for the Mobile Delta region and the central Gulf Coast. It is situated on Mound Island, a large, generally swampy tract in the heart of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta (figures 1 and 2). The site is located approximately 35 km northeast of Mobile, Alabama. Bottle Creek is the largest Mississippian mound complex on the Gulf Coast; in Alabama it is second in size only to Moundville (figures 3 and 4). The Bottle Creek site contains eighteen mounds plus various associated non-mound habitation areas and midden deposits (figure 3).¹ The tallest mound (Mound A) rises approximately 16 m above the swamp. A large borrow pit is situated immediately to the west of Mound A. It is possible a prehistoric canal or moat (no longer visible) once existed along the southern portion of the site.

Environmental Setting: An intriguing feature of the Bottle Creek site is its physiographic setting. Rather than being situated on a terrace overlooking a major river drainage, it occupies a natural levee system less than three meters in elevation in a large, perennially inundated swamp. Also to date, no secondary mound sites or even very large outlying villages have been found which can be related to Bottle Creek. These traits contrast with most models of river valley-oriented Mississippian settlement patterns. Perhaps the reason for the unusual setting may be geopolitical/economic as its location in the heart of a major delta near the juncture of two major river valleys places Bottle Creek in the geographical center of the northern Gulf Coast.

Archeologists have known for years that the Gulf Coast was a major thoroughfare in prehistoric times. There was probably as much interaction in an east-west direction as along north-south lines. Scholars have recognized similarities among the prehistoric and protohistoric cultures of the northern Gulf Coast for quite some time (Caldwell 1958:52-59; Ford 1951:66-67; Goggin 1949:34-39; Holmes 1903:104-107; Sears 1954; 1977; Willey 1949:553-570). Much of the past archeological work along the coast, however, has looked north to the Moundville area (figure 4) for contact and cultural stimulation, simply because the major river valleys in the Southeast are oriented in this manner (Davis 1984a:ix).

The Mobile Basin has been recognized as a cultural fulcrum for the entire northern Gulf Coast. In coastal Alabama areas east of the Mobile Basin there is clear evidence for contacts with Florida populations (Holmes 1903:104-107; Knight 1984:200-201; Moore 1905; Sears 1977:176-177; Willey 1949:463-466). West of this enormous estuary the interaction (as seen in the material record) was with Lower Mississippi Valley people (Davis 1984b:222-223; Fuller and Stowe 1982:48; Kniffen 1936:413-414; Lewis 1988:117; McIntire 1958:pl.13; Phillips 1970:951-953). It is clear that both prehistorically and historically the Mobile Basin was a cultural melting pot.

Today the Bottle Creek site is covered by bottomland forest, portions of which are accompanied by dense undergrowth. The latter areas are attributable to twentieth-century logging activities

¹ The original Bottle Creek site National Historic Landmark (NHL) study only identified 15 mounds within the site. Survey work conducted after this site was designated an NHL on April 19, 1994, and discussed in the following text, identified three (3) additional mounds along the western edge of the site (Mounds P, Q, and R) shown on figure 3 (Waselkov 1997). Figure 1 shows the original NHL boundary and the area containing Mounds P, Q, and R being added to this boundary expansion.

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and to tree-falls resulting from Hurricane Frederic in 1978. Much of the central portion of the site, however, is characterized by a relatively open forest canopy.

Previous Archeological Investigations: The Bottle Creek site (1Ba2) has a long pedigree in the archeological literature of the Southeast. It was first recognized and reported by Andrew Bigelow of the Wesleyan Institute in an 1853 article published in the *American Journal of Science and Arts*, and since then its importance has been noted in a number of works (Curren 1976:77-79; Holmes 1963; Knight 1984:206; Walthall 1980:266-269). The most detailed description of historical references and archeological research at Bottle Creek, prior to investigations conducted in the 1990s, can be found in Stowe and Fuller (1993).

Although Bigelow's work is the first definite reference to Bottle Creek, it is probable that it is also the site from which five pottery effigy figures were collected a century-and-a-half earlier. These figures were obtained in 1702 by Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville during a reconnaissance of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta and brought back to the French settlement at Twenty-seven Mile Bluff--or rather, Old Mobile.² Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, Bienville's older brother, examined the five "idols" and noted them in his journal (McWilliams 1981:168-169):

My brother came back this evening. He had observed several sites formerly occupied by Indians, which war with the Conchaque and the Alibamons had made them abandon. Most of these settlements become flooded to a depth of half a foot during high water. These settlements are on islands, this river being full of them for 13 leagues. He got an Indian to show him the place where their gods are, about which all the neighboring nations make such a fuss and to which the Mobilians used to come and offer sacrifices. The Indians claim that a person cannot touch them without dying on the spot and that they came down from the sky. A gun had to be given the Indian who showed where they were; he did not get closer to them than 10 steps away, and with his back turned. It took a search to locate them on a little hill among the canes, near an old village that is destroyed, on one of these islands. The gods were brought here. They are five images--a man, a woman, a child, a bear, and an owl--made of plaster in the likeness of Indians of this country. I personally think that some Spaniard in the time of Soto made the figures of these Indians in plaster. Apparently it was done a long time ago. We have them at the settlement. The Indians who see them here are amazed at our boldness and amazed that we do not die as a result. I am taking the images to France, though they are not particularly interesting [LeMoyne d'Iberville in McWilliams 1981:168-169].

Despite the brevity of Iberville's journal account, it contains the following archeological information and analysis: a description of the setting, "... on a little hill among the canes, near an old village that is destroyed, on one of these islands"; a description of their material culture, "... a man, a woman, a child, a bear, and an owl ... made of plaster"; and a culture historical interpretation, "I personally think that some Spaniard in the time of Soto made the figures ... a long time ago." Iberville's decision to send the specimens back to France also represents a very early example of antiquities acquisition in North America.

As noted above, some archeologists and historians believe that the site where the statues were collected, this sacred place of the Mobilians, "about which all the neighboring nations make such

² The Old Mobile site (1702-1711) was the first major French occupation of the Gulf Coast. This site was determined to be nationally significant by the Secretary of the Interior on January 3, 2001 (Waselkov & Barnes 2000).

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a fuss,” is Bottle Creek (Hamilton 1976:56; Higginbotham 1991:70; Knight 1984:206). Support for this is provided by a 1718 map by Guillaume Delisle which identifies what probably is Mound Island as “Isle aux Statues” (figure 5).

During the nineteenth century, the Bottle Creek site was part of a plantation belonging to the McMillan family, who until the 1980s still owned and maintained the property. The higher elevations on Mound Island were under cultivation for some time when it was visited by Andrew Bigelow in the early 1850s (Bigelow 1853:186-193). Bigelow described the central portion of the site as follows:

The plantation before spoken of, lies on the Tensaw and Bottle creek, and has a crescent shape; at its southern extremity the eye is attracted through an opening in the forest, by an elevated mound nearly in the center of a large field ... This mound is now oval, but has the appearance of having been somewhat rectangular when built. It is a striking object in the landscape, both from its size and elevation. It has a wide base and gradually tapers to the summit, which is 104 feet long by 46 feet wide and elevated about 49 feet above the river at mean tide. The mound stands on ground a little below the surface of the river banks; its sides are covered with trees 40 feet high, and with shrubs and a few palmetto bushes. It has been frequently cultivated in corn, and as its sides have been worked with the plough and hoe, as well as furrowed and washed with rains, we may suppose, that it has been thereby changed in figure and elevation. Near to this is a large rectangular mound of small elevation, one-half its breadth, about five feet higher than the other, and about six feet above high water. On the north and west side of these is a series of low mounds, so connected as to form a ridge of raised earth, extending along one side of a rectangle and part of another till it ends near the swamp. The diameters of the high mound lie in the same directions with the sides of the other mounds; and the whole arrangement is so regular and nearly rectangular, as to induce one to suppose it laid out by a compass. But I think it to have been done by the eye, according to the position of the ground and river [Bigelow 1853:188-189].

Bigelow published the first known map of the site (figure 6). This map depicts nine mounds, a borrow pit, and an “ancient canal,” the latter perhaps another borrow area. Bigelow also observed that additional mounds were concealed by the forest. This may refer to two small mounds east of the central cluster, three mounds south of the large mound, or other reported but unverified mounds located on Mound Island (Rushing 1976).

Bigelow did very little digging at the site, but he did do some,

On the left is a small mound F [now called Mound O], in which were found the bones of an Indian, together with a large collection of beads and other articles usually attending an Indian interment. The beads are globular, three-quarters of an inch in diameter, having a large hole for the string; they are of glass, translucent, and of a bluish color [1853:189].

These beads probably are equivalent to Brain’s type WIA1 or WIA2 (Brain 1979:107, Pl. III) which primarily date to the middle part of the eighteenth century. For the small mounds north of the large mound (designated Mounds F-I), Bigelow described a fire hearth, animal bones, plus “many images [pottery rim effigies?], beads, and pieces of copper” (1853:189). Also his mound BB’ (now called Mound B) produced “great quantities of broken crockery, which evince considerable skill in modeling and finishing” (Bigelow 1853:190).

In 1905, Clarence B. Moore briefly described the Bottle Creek site (Moore 1905:294-295).

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Although Moore claimed he did not dig there, he obtained a collection from a large pit that had been made in the western side of the big mound by “former diggers.” Today, a large trench is still evident in the upper western slope of Mound A. Although it probably has been expanded a number of times over the years, this trench might represent the early digging reported by Moore. Moore also reported three burials and fragments of wooden coffins from the top of one of the mounds north of Mound A. This might have been Mound H, where several burials were later disturbed by looters (figure 7).

The first controlled archeological excavations at Bottle Creek were conducted in the early 1930s by the Alabama Museum of Natural History (AMNH) under the direction of the David L. DeJarnette (photos 1 and 2) (Jones and DeJarnette 1933). According to Nicholas H. Holmes, Jr.:

In the plaza area around the base of the principal mound [Mound A] DeJarnette’s crew dug a primary trench some 30 feet long and 15 feet wide and sank several 5-foot square test pits ... They encountered sterile soil at from 1.5 to 3.5 feet. Though not digging in definite increments, they noted the depth of each artifact or cluster of artifacts and bagged the material separately with information that permitted subsequent stratigraphical analysis [Holmes 1963:20].

The pottery from David L. DeJarnette’s excavations at Bottle Creek was classified and analyzed by Holmes three decades after it was recovered (Holmes 1963). This study of the DeJarnette collection represents the only complete analysis of Bottle Creek pottery prior to the reanalysis by Fuller and Brown (1993). In addition to identifying various pottery types, Holmes also listed a number of pottery items in the DeJarnette collections, including loop handles, strap handles, sherds with nodes, and discoidals, as well as several duck head and duck tail rim effigies. Other materials included *Rangia cuneata* (brackish water clam) shells, oyster shells, one projectile point, nine other worked stone fragments, two deer ulna awls, a bone needle, seven additional worked bone fragments, and some pieces of daub (1963:23-24). Unworked bones of deer, alligator, catfish, and turtle, plus numerous remains of unidentified birds and small mammals were also recorded.

Holmes concluded that check stamped and cord marked sherds in the DeJarnette collection represented a “Santa Rosa-Swift Creek Culture” component preceding the Mississippian occupation at the site (1963:24-25). Subsequent re-examinations of these sherds have shown them to be primarily grog tempered and, thus, classifiable as Pontchartrain Check Stamped and Mulberry Creek Cord Marked (Fuller and Brown 1993). Therefore, the majority of the pottery without shell tempering probably represents a Late Woodland period component rather than a Middle Woodland period Santa Rosa-Swift Creek component (Tables 1 and 2).

Edwin B. May conducted a study of Holocene sediments in the Mobile Basin in the 1970s (May 1976). In addition to dating a number of core samples from the region, May obtained three radiocarbon dates on *Rangia cuneata* shell from the Bottle Creek site. The uncalibrated dates are as follows:

Sample No. I-7656A, from a midden in a one-meter pit 30 meters northwest of Mound A, 1440 ± 85 B.P. (A.D. 510);

Sample No. I-7656B, from a midden in a one-meter pit near the base of Mound A, 1440 ± 85 B.P. (A.D. 510);

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Sample No. I-7141, from a midden in a one-meter pit near Mound A, 1090 ± 85 B.P. (A.D. 860) (May 1976: Table 16).

Although no artifact or other associate information is given in May's report, these dates probably relate to the Late Woodland component inferred from the check stamped and cord marked wares. However, all of the dated samples consisted of shell and the associative contexts are unclear. Additional dates are needed to pin down the site's earliest culture history more securely.

The Northern Gulf Coast Archaeological Research Consortium, Inc. conducted archeological surveys, aerial photography, and some mapping in and around the Bottle Creek site in the 1970s (Rushing 1976). Surface collecting and, possibly, some excavations were performed as part of that project, but the results of this work are not generally available.

Another collection was made at Bottle Creek in 1980 by archeologists conducting a cultural resources study of the Black Warrior-Tombigbee (BWT) System Corridor (Brose et al. 1983). Part of that study incorporated a portion of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, including an investigation of sites in the Mound Island area. Although the Bottle Creek site was visited and a collection was made during the survey, the results were not presented in a report on the BWT project. However, a student at Oberlin College analyzed 291 sherds from that collection (Pyle-Spring 1989). According to his report, most of the pottery came from a looter's pit 30 to 40 m north of Mound A (Pyle-Spring 1989:3). This would be in the vicinity of Mound G. The remaining few sherds apparently derived from another looter's area on or near Mound H. The descriptions, analysis, and illustrations in the report suggest an assemblage dominated by Bottle Creek phase wares (Pyle-Spring 1989: Plates 1-3, Table 1). Additionally, several sherds indicate a minor component dating to the Protohistoric or Early Historic period. Apparently, no pre-Mississippian pottery was present in the collection.

In the summer of 1990 Gregory Waselkov of the University of South Alabama made a contour map of the Bottle Creek site, which mapped fifteen mounds at the site.³ Waselkov also excavated three 1 x 2 m test units in various parts of the site (Mound E, between Mounds F and G, and Mound O). These tests provided useful stratigraphic information as well as data concerning the material culture, and subsistence practices of the prehistoric inhabitants of Bottle Creek (Gremillion 1993; Waselkov 1993; Waselkov and Silvia Mueller 1991).

In 1991 the Gulf Coast Survey (GCS) archeological program of the Alabama Museum of Natural History conducted investigations at Bottle Creek (Brown and Fuller 1991; 1993b; Fuller and Brown 1992). This work was funded by the Research Grants Committee of the University of Alabama and set the stage for research sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the State of Alabama, and the Baldwin County Historic Development Commission, with the majority of this field work conducted from 1993-1995. There were three goals for the investigatory work undertaken by the GCS in the summer of 1991. First, in order to tie together past research with present endeavors, all of the Bottle Creek collections stored at the University of Alabama were reanalyzed (Fuller and Brown 1993). This entailed the reclassification of several thousand potsherds from DeJarnette's 1932 excavations and from two large surface

³ A later survey of the Bottle Creek site, also by Waselkov, would find three mounds (Mounds P, Q, and R) along the western edge of the site (figure 3) (Waselkov 1997).

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collections made at the site in the 1970s.

The other two goals for the 1991 GCS research related to actual fieldwork--one involved survey and the other excavation. Because a systematic surface collection had never been made at Bottle Creek, it was felt that such a survey was in order. All of the mounds at the site were surface collected, as were the areas between and around the mounds. This initial survey provided information on what areas would be productive for testing, in terms of culture historical data. It also revealed which areas were relatively untouched by pothunting activities and which areas would be important in yielding settlement and subsistence data.

Two test units were opened in Mound L, with excavations continuing down to subsoil in one of the units, a depth of 2.5 m below the present ground surface (figures 7, 8 and 9). These excavations were not only significant in revealing culture historical information, but they produced extremely valuable data relating to mound construction and various social activities. The bulk of Mound L is believed to date to the Bottle Creek phase (A.D. 1250-1550). In its early stages it supported a lithic workshop that involved the manufacture and/or use of microtools. A wall trench structure was observed low in the mound as was a series of thin burned layers, some of which were actually hearths. In the top 50 cm of one of these two units, above the final clay cap (there were a total of two caps applied to the mound), two post structures were erected. One of these structures may date to protohistoric times (A.D. 1550-1650) while the other is believed to be historic (post A.D. 1650). The earlier structure burned, resulting in a thick layer of daub. What makes these house structures so critical is that their occupations bridge the time between the first Spanish expeditions to the area (Pineda expedition of A.D. 1519) and the establishment of the French colony (A.D. 1702) at Old Mobile. This was a period when major changes occurred in Native American lifeways, but for this portion of the Gulf Coast archeological evidence has thus far been minimal in contributing to an understanding of this very dynamic time.

The Bottle Creek Project of 1993-1994 was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Alabama Historical Commission, the Baldwin County Historic Development Commission and the University of Alabama. Its principal goals were to explore the culture-history of the site and the changing lifeways of its inhabitants (Brown 2003b). Three 2-meter square test excavations were made in middens of two house mounds (C and D) and in another midden at the base of the principal Mound A in order to identify changes in material culture through time. This work also examined spatial distinctions in diets as represented in these deposits. It was reasonable to assume that the occupants of Mound A were the principal nobility at the site, so it was expected that their trash would be different from that which was produced by the residents of the house mounds. The latter people may have been retainers for the principal elite, or they may have been second-order nobility themselves. It seemed plausible that the artifacts obtained in the two contexts might be different, and that the foods consumed might vary.

Another focus of the Bottle Creek research was to continue the investigation of Mound L. In the 1991 investigations it was determined at least two buildings were erected on the top of Mound L in its last stage of construction. Although only a small part of these structures were uncovered, they dated to post-1550 or protohistoric/historic times (Brown and Fuller 1993a). As these were the first aboriginal houses of this period to be isolated and studied in the whole of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, it was a fundamental part of the research to expose these structures. Diane Silvia started the excavation of a 6 x 8 m block in 1993 and completed the isolation of these structures

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in the 1994 season, data that eventually contributed to her doctoral dissertation (Silvia 2000:255-300).

A final topic was to explore the construction of the central portion of the site. The large, lobe-shaped terrace, which comes off the northeast end of Mound B, had to have been artificial. In order to understand how it was constructed and what purposes it might have served, a 12 meter-long trench was excavated in the north edge of the Mound B Terrace in 1994 (Morgan 2003).⁴

In February of 1993, the National Park Service and the University of Alabama, at Tuscaloosa, completed a National Historic Landmark nomination for the Bottle Creek site, which, based on then available information was known to consist of 15 mounds. On April 19, 1994 the Secretary of the Interior designated the Bottle Creek site a National Historic Landmark.

During this time period, the Gulf Coast Survey expanded the geographical scope of its investigations by surveying Mound Island and the surrounding area between Middle River and the Tensaw River. A new earthwork, Mound P was discovered during the 1993 season and later Mounds Q and R were found in the fall of 1994. All of three of these earthworks were located on the western edge of the Bottle Creek site (figure 3).

Mound P is a circular tumulus, between 35 and 40 meters in diameter and about 2.5 meters tall. A borrow pit occurs southeast of and immediately adjacent to the mound slope. Pottery collected from tree-fall disturbances on and around Mound P suggests it dates to the protohistoric Bear Point phase (A.D. 1550-1700). A buried midden deposit was detected almost due north of Mound P during the 1994 survey. The shape and alignment of Mounds Q and R are reminiscent of Mounds C and D. Mound Q is about 20 meters in diameter while Mound R is slightly smaller at around 16 meters in diameter. They are each about 3 meters tall. As a logging road runs between Q and R, it is possible they may once have been joined (Fuller and Brown 1998:100-103; Waselkov 1997).

Site Analysis: This site analysis is based on the 1990s excavations conducted at Bottle Creek, and from a study of materials (both excavated and surface collected) made in the past six decades. The earliest recognizable component of the material from Bottle Creek dates to the Late Woodland period (figure 10) and contains a significant quantity of grog tempered sherds. This assemblage is probably indigenous having derived from a long history of grog tempering which began near the end of the Gulf Formational period and which ultimately was integrated into the Gulf Tradition (figure 10). The grog tempering subtradition was largely centered west of the Mobile Basin, as represented by phases related to the Marksville, Troyville, and Coles Creek cultures in coastal Louisiana and Mississippi. It played an important though not dominant role in eastern Gulf Tradition phases as well.

Weeden Island pottery is, at best, very poorly represented in the Bottle Creek collections. Curiously, the McLeod and Tensaw Lake phases are not represented at all. This absence merits further investigation, since numerous sites in the vicinity of Mound Island are dominated by Tensaw Lake ceramics.

The remainder of the pottery from the three earlier collections (DeJarnette (early 1930s), Blake

⁴ For an illustration that shows the location of the 12 meter-long trench in Mound B, see Figure 3.1 in Brown 2003b:65.

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(1966), and Curren (1976)) is almost pure Pensacola Mississippian. Based on very little stratigraphic or chronometric data, the time-depth for the Pensacola component at the site is estimated to be about 250-350 years, starting perhaps around A.D. 1200/1250 or so. The presence of Moundville Incised, *vars. Carrolton, Snows Bend*, and, especially, *Moundville* indicates an initial Mississippian occupation sometime prior to A.D. 1300. However, there are no certain Moundville I-related diagnostic ceramic markers in any of the collections.

To summarize, a reanalysis of preexisting Bottle Creek collections, along with a review of data from other excavations at the site, has revealed a potential maximum span of Native American occupation from ca. A.D. 500 to A.D. 1700 (Fuller and Brown 1993). Specific components identified are:

Late Woodland, ca. A.D. 500 to 900;

“early” Bottle Creek phase, ca. A.D. 1200/1250 to 1350/1400;

“late” Bottle Creek phase, ca. A.D. 1350/1400 to 1550;

and, Late Prehistoric--Early Historic, ca. A.D. 1650-1700.

Other possible components are: Moundville I, ca. A.D. 1050/1100 to 1200/1250; European Colonial, ca. A.D. 1700-1800; and Late Historic, ca. A.D. 1800 to 1920. These latter, tentative component identifications are based on limited artifactual and historical evidence. What may be said with confidence is that the Bottle Creek site was mainly occupied between A.D. 1200/1250 and A.D. 1500/1550.

There are also some significant gaps at Bottle Creek: terminal Woodland, ca. A.D. 900-1100; early Mississippian, ca. A.D. 1100-1200/1250; and early protohistoric, ca. A.D. 1550-1600/1650. Although the maximum span of Native American occupation at the site has been estimated at A.D. 500 to A.D. 1700, for much of that time Bottle Creek probably differed little from most other settlements in the region in terms of occupation size. Before and after a postulated “climax” period of occupation around A.D. 1250-1500, the site may have been inhabited only seasonally by relatively small groups. The Late Woodland occupation at Bottle Creek, for example, must have been very minor. In the collections examined there are only 54 grog tempered sherds representing a four-century time interval between A.D. 500 and A.D. 900.

What happened after the Bottle Creek phase at the type site is a topic of considerable interest. Arguments for the terminal period of Native American occupation of Bottle Creek are often based on the fact that when Bienville reconnoitered the area around Mound Island in the early 1700s he found it abandoned (McWilliams 1981:168-169). Also, no village fitting the location and description of the Bottle Creek site is mentioned in the documents of the Tristan DeLuna expedition (1559-1561), even though several parties of that expedition explored “Bahia Filipina” (Mobile Bay) and the rivers of “Nanipacana” (the Alabama) and the “Tome” (the Tombigbee) for food (Priestly 1928). French maps of the early eighteenth century do not show any Indian habitations on Mound Island, although Mobilien villages are depicted at the confluence of the Mobile and Tensaw Rivers about five kilometers northwest of Bottle Creek (figure 5). Bigelow’s discovery of a historic burial at the Bottle Creek site obviously demonstrates the site was utilized to some extent during the early historic period.

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An early protohistoric component, ca. A.D. 1550-1650 seems to be only weakly represented in the collections from the site. However, the recent investigations by the University of South Alabama in 1990 and by the Gulf Coast Survey of the Alabama Museum of Natural History in 1991 have demonstrated that a substantial late protohistoric/early historic occupation occurred at Bottle Creek. At any one time between A.D. 1650 and 1700 there might have been small groups of Indians at Bottle Creek, perhaps just seasonal occupants, but the site still continued to be attractive to the local population. They distributed their artifacts, although sparingly, over several mounds at the site and apparently constructed two buildings on Mound L. Whether these were direct descendants of the people who designed and inhabited the site as a major prehistoric mound center is not known. It is possible that they were relatively recent arrivals to the Mobile Basin, perhaps Mobilien from the Alabama River Valley. The setting and the apparent distribution of this late component at Bottle Creek brings to mind the dispersed settlement system described for the Mobile-Tensaw Delta by early Frenchmen such as Iberville (McWilliams 1981:169) and Levasseur (Knight and Adams 1981).

During French colonial times (1702-1763), the site seems to have been abandoned in terms of Indian habitation, although Mound O appears to have been used for Indian burial purposes as late as the mid-eighteenth century. Mound Island and the Bottle Creek site almost certainly were included in the European plantation system that predominated in the Delta as early as the 1720s. This plantation system, in one form or another, continued for Mound Island and its environs well into the twentieth century.

Site Integrity: The fact that the Bottle Creek site is isolated in a large swamp and often difficult to reconnoiter has contributed to its overall integrity and its occasional vulnerability to looting.

As noted above, there is a looter's trench in the top of Mound A. It may date as early as C.B. Moore's visit (1905), and has probably been expanded over the years. Portions of the village area (Mounds F and G) near the base of Mound A have been affected by looters, as have the small mounds northeast of Mound A (Mounds H and I). As recently as the mid-1970s individuals from Tennessee dug at the site for artifacts, and more recently, looters probed Mound O, leaving large holes in the top.

Several archeologists and other responsible individuals have salvaged information from this destruction by collecting and analyzing the looters' discarded artifacts. Analysis of this material has been completed and the results are summarized above.

Currently the Bottle Creek site is owned by the State of Alabama and is under the stewardship of the Alabama Historical Commission which is developing a long-range preservation and research program for the site.

Overall, the immense size of the ceremonial mound complex at Bottle Creek and its isolation made it impossible for looters with hand tools to greatly affect the integrity of the site. This site is considered to possess a high level of integrity both in terms of its research potential and earthwork structures.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: __ Locally: __

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A__ B__ C__ D__ X

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A__ B__ C__ D__ E__ F__ G

NHL Criteria: **Criterion 6**

NHL Theme(s): **I. Peopling Places**

1. migration from outside and within

IV. Expanding Science & Technology

1. scientific thought and theory

Areas of Significance:

Archeology - Prehistoric

Archeology - Historic - Aboriginal

Period(s) of Significance: **ca. A.D. 500-1750**

Significant Dates: **N/A**

Significant Person(s): **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation: **Pensacola Culture (A.D. 1250-1550)**

Architect/Builder: **N/A**

Historic Contexts:

I. CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS: INDIGENOUS AMERICAN POPULATIONS

B. Post-Archaic and Pre-Contact Adaptations

23. Gulf Coast

C. Prehistoric Archeology: Topical Facets

21. Major Contributions to the Development of Culture Histories

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance: As the type site for the Pensacola culture of the Mississippian Period on the northern Gulf Coast, the Bottle Creek site is a key to understanding the history and culture of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta in late prehistoric/protohistoric times. The site is believed to have had its principal occupation between A.D. 1250 and 1550 and served as the focal point for interaction with other Mississippian culture areas along the coast and the interior of the Southeast. Being situated near the intersection of major east-west trails and north-south water routes, Bottle Creek was in a unique position to affect the course of history east, west and north of southern Alabama. As such, the Bottle Creek site merits attention on both regional and national levels of significance, under National Register Criterion d and National Historic Landmark Criterion 6.

The Place of the Bottle Creek Site in the Pensacola Culture

It is most probable that the gulf coastal zone had chiefdom level societies at certain times in its prehistoric development, but most of the people who inhabited the area were hunter-gatherers (Larson 1980:222). It is rare to find a high level of sociopolitical development among such people, the Calusa of Florida, Chumash of California, and the coastal tribes of British Columbia, and southeast Alaska being some notable exceptions. Except for a few "authority nodes" like the Bottle Creek site in Alabama, Fort Walton in Florida,⁵ and the Sims site in Louisiana (Davis 1981; Fairbanks 1965; Giardino 1985; Scarry 1985; 1990), Mississippian Period mound centers are rare on the northern Gulf Coast of the United States. Isolated mounds do exist, however, and many have been investigated, but there is still much that needs to be learned about how the activities at these sites differed from those at nearby non-mound sites occupied by contemporary peoples. It is important to understand the relationships between the "common folk" and the people who "ruled" (or managed, inspired) their lives.

It is most probable the people who lived at these mound centers had intermittent and/or long-term contacts (either directly or through representatives) with distant populations. How these local and regional polities developed, either from internal or external influences (or, more probably, both), is a fundamental topic for future research at Bottle Creek.

Bottle Creek can tell us much about the development of chiefdoms in the Southeast, primarily because it is such an anomaly. There are no other sites quite like Bottle Creek on the northern Gulf Coast--certainly nothing on this scale. Although it is a complex site, it is not as complex as certain contemporary interior mound centers like Moundville in Alabama (Peebles 1978; Steponaitis 1983), Etowah in Georgia (Larson 1971; Moorehead 1932; Stuart 1991), or the Holly Bluff (Lake George) site in Mississippi (Williams and Brain 1983), all of comparable age.⁶ These last three sites experienced large populations, centuries of political growth, and changing alliances with surrounding polities. Despite the fact that these sites have contributed immensely to our knowledge, because of the size of the populations and the length of time involved, it has been a major challenge for archeologists to grasp the nature of political development at these large centers.

⁵ Fort Walton Mound, Florida was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) by the Secretary of the Interior on July 19, 1964, as a result of a nationwide theme study of late prehistoric sites (Haag 1963).

⁶ The Moundville site, Alabama; Etowah Mounds, Georgia; and Holly Bluff (Lake George) site, Mississippi, were all designated by the Secretary of the Interior on July 19, 1964 as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs), as a result of a nationwide NHL theme study of late prehistoric sites (Haag 1963).

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It is suspected that at Bottle Creek and at other major mound centers in the coastal zone we are not dealing with a great amount of time depth for any one site. These centers probably were established rapidly and with certain goals in mind. Bottle Creek, for example, may have been involved in controlling the flow of goods east-west along the Gulf Coast and north-south from the coast into the interior. Its position in the center of the Mobile-Tensaw delta would seem to suggest as much. Archeologists have a much better chance of understanding certain aspects of sociopolitical development in prehistory by examining centers, such as Bottle Creek, where the cultural variables (like time, resource possibilities, and population size) are more manageable.

The large size and compactness of the Bottle Creek site reflects a certain amount of nucleation and sedentism. Certainly an earth-moving project on the scale of Bottle Creek required a fairly large population, and it is difficult to conceive that these people did not have a subsistence based on maize agriculture (Knight 1984:209). It is known that the Bottle Creek inhabitants utilized maize in their diet (Gremillion 1993), but there is no evidence at this point to determine the role of domesticated crops in the lifeways of the Bottle Creek people. From an investigation of Spanish accounts, Larson (1980:216-218, 222) argued that horticulture played a negligible role west of the Apalachicola River. However, the discovery of two pits filled with burned maize cobs at the D'Olive Creek site (1Ba196) on Mobile Bay showed that maize horticulture did exist in protohistoric/historic times in this region (DeJarnette 1976:38-39; Knight 1984:207, Fig. 8.2; Knight and Adams 1981:45-46). Fundamental questions for future investigations at Bottle Creek will be:

- 1) when was the cultivation of maize and other domesticated plants introduced to this site and to other Pensacola sites on the coast; and
- 2) what impact did this economic "revolution" (if that is what it was) have on coastal lifeways?

It is important to understand the full range of coastal resources because there were certain items desired by interior populations that could only have been acquired along coastal waters. Understanding the kinds and locations of such resources can help explain the nature of contact between interior and coastal populations. For instance, salt is a resource found in the coastal zone which would have been important to interior populations in late prehistory when they had made the transition to agriculture as a principal subsistence strategy (Brown 1980). Two salines in Clarke County, Alabama, located approximately 50 km north of Bottle Creek were major attractions to interior people and were the stimuli for intensive interaction in Mississippian times (Barksdale 1929; DeJarnette 1952:283; Walthall 1980:164-165; Wentowski 1970:22).

Archeological investigations at sites associated with these salines have revealed great quantities of thick basin-shaped clay vessels that were associated with the production of salt (Curren 1982; Fuller et al. 1984:162-182; Trickey 1958; Wimberly 1960:30-32, 185-188). It is probably no coincidence that salt pan sherds are common finds at the Bottle Creek site too (Holmes 1963; Waselkov and Silvia Mueller 1991), as this major center probably had some control over the distribution of this valued resource in this portion of the Gulf Coast. This subject has been explored to some extent by Penelope Drooker (1993), and it will continue to be a concern in future research at Bottle Creek.

In considering settlement patterns, the two structures recorded on top of Mound L at Bottle Creek are believed to bridge the gap between A.D. 1500 and 1700, a period of time for which little is recorded about Native Americans of this region. Because the earlier building burned, there is a great potential to reconstruct the relative arrangement of features of at least one of these structures. These, in turn, should reflect the types of activities which occurred on Mound L at this time. When compared to excavations elsewhere on the site, it should be possible to determine whether or not the occupants of these two structures descended directly out of the late prehistoric Bottle Creek phase, or whether they represent one or more protohistoric intrusions related to

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the great upheaval in native lifeways which resulted from European contact.

If there was a break in ethnicity, as represented by distinct material culture and different settlement patterns, this has major ramifications with regard to the fate of the Bottle Creek phase descendants. The Bear Point phase (A.D. 1550-1650), as a complex of material traits, seems to have been a linear development out of the Bottle Creek II phase (A.D. 1400-1550), but up to now the connection has not been demonstrated by excavation (only by pottery studies). It is possible that the protohistoric structure was built by the direct descendants of the people who constructed the bulk of Mound L, but remain to be demonstrated. It is also possible that the latest structure was erected by the Mobilians or some other group, because by the seventeenth century there was a great shift in population in the region and many of the earlier ethnic groups were driven out.

To summarize, future archeological research at the Bottle Creek site has the potential for addressing a number of problems relating to this site and its place within Pensacola culture. More specifically, the relationships of Pensacola culture to Moundville culture to the north, Fort Walton culture to the east, and the Bayou Petre phase and Plaquemine culture to the west may be examined. The site also can contribute significantly to the following research concerns:

- 1) Late prehistoric to early historic culture-history in the Mobile Basin and the north-central Gulf Coast region;
- 2) Mississippian social, political, economic, and religious systems in a region located far from the so-called Mississippian "heartland;"
- 3) Pensacola subsistence practices and settlement patterns in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta;
- 4) Pensacola technological developments;
- 5) the role of the Bottle Creek site and Pensacola culture in the procurement and trade of specialized commodities such as salt and marine shell;
- 6) the dynamics of the Woodland to Mississippian transition in the Mobile Basin; and
- 7) late prehistoric diet, health, and overall physiology in the region.⁷

Since the Bottle Creek site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1994, continuing work at the site has helped refine the regional culture chronology in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta for late prehistoric times. As a result of Fuller's (2003) work, we now have an excellent understanding of the material culture of the Bottle Creek I (A.D. 1250-1400) and II phases (A.D. 1400-1550), especially its pottery. Whereas the Bottle Creek I and II phases were merely hypothesized prior to the Gulf Coast Survey work (Fuller and Brown 1993), now we can demonstrate significant material changes in the stratigraphic record. Mound C has been particularly useful in this study, with supplemental information having come from Mound A. Controlling time is essential for understanding how other Pensacola culture sites in the Mobile Bay region and the Mobile-Tensaw Delta relate to Bottle Creek and to each other.

⁷ Presently, too few burials have been recovered in past excavations to extensively test this research concern. However, it is possible future investigations may determine that Mounds P, Q, and R, which are being proposed to be added to the Bottle Creek site NHL, are burial mounds. Should this prove to be the case, the inclusion of these three mounds in the NHL boundary enhances their potential for contributing to this research concern.

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Through the analyses of Irvy Quitmyer (2003) and C. Margaret Scarry (2003a; 2003b), it has become apparent how valuable it has been to undertake studies of dietary remains. Analysis of such remains from Bottle Creek, for example, has demonstrated how common tiny schooling fishes were to the subsistence of the Bottle Creek inhabitants. And, it has been shown these same people basically ignored mast foods, such as acorns and hickory nuts.

Research confirmed the presence at Bottle Creek of the gladiator elimia (*Elimia hydei*) snail, which came from the Black Warrior drainage, in northern Alabama, and detected evidence for yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*) berries on the small house mounds. Quitmyer (2003) believes the gladiator elimia came to Bottle Creek attached to the hull of a dugout canoe that had come from north-central Alabama. If it came from Moundville, the great Mississippian center on the Black Warrior (figure 2), this might imply strong connections between the two culture areas. Researchers now have hard evidence that direct contact did take place between the Black Warrior drainage and Bottle Creek (Rodning 2003).

The presence of yaupon seeds at Bottle Creek raises a host of questions. The Black Drink was one of the prime ritual beverages of Mississippian peoples in the Southeast, and yaupon is the evidence for its existence (Hudson 1979). At Bottle Creek the seeds were found on the house mounds surrounding the central area of the site. Scarry (2003a; 2003b) has argued that the seeds serve as evidence for the beverage, rather than its ingredients, as the seeds came from berries that were attached to branches. The branches, in turn, held the precious leaves that were brewed to make the Black Drink. Scarry believes the berries were merely discarded with the branches on the mounds where the brewing occurred. What is significant is that the yaupon seeds were not found in the Mound A deposits, not necessarily because the Black Drink was not consumed there, but more importantly, because it was not prepared there.

The presence of yaupon perhaps implies something about who produced certain foodstuffs and who then used them, but this is slim evidence, to be sure. Further support comes from the pottery that was employed in the preparation and serving of food. Hunter Johnson (2003) has shown us that there is a significant difference between the vessel shapes in the assemblages in Mound A. Before mound construction began in the Mound A unit (D100), the frequency of jars and pans was similar to that observed throughout the Mound C deposits (C100). These food preparation containers were much more common than bowls and bottles in these non-elite contexts. As soon as the D100 unit began to take on an elite status, however, what with the first mound construction stage of Mound A, bowls and bottles increased markedly. The implication is that the inhabitants of Mound A, presumably the principal nobility on the site, were served either by the occupants of Mound C or by the people who lived on the other house mounds that form a ring around the western and northern periphery of the elite center.

As a result of Quitmyer's (2003), Scarry's (2003a; 2003b), and Johnson's (2003) research, there is ample evidence to suggest that the people who lived on the surrounding house mounds were retainers for the nobility who resided in the central part of the site. This is not to say that food was never consumed on the house mounds or, conversely, that meals were never prepared on Mound A, as it is logical to presume these activities occurred in both areas. What may be known for certain is that vessel shapes and plant remains form a well-defined pattern that requires an explanation. The principal pattern observed is that food preparation, relative to serving, was more common on the house mounds than on Mound A.

The notable differences between the occupants of the house mounds and the Mound A should not detract from the fact that there is also a lot of similarity between these people. With regard to pottery, for example, it should be stressed that the same types and varieties occur throughout the site. Also, there is no marked difference in

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the quality of the wares in the various contexts, and everyone seems to have eaten the same food. Quitmyer (2003) has demonstrated that the majority of the people on the site ate shellfish and fish. Although the Mound A occupants tended to consume somewhat larger clams and had a preference for freshwater species, there really was not a great disparity in the kinds and quantities of food eaten by the inhabitants of Bottle Creek, and this does not seem to have altered through time.

Corn (*Zea mays*) was found everywhere at Bottle Creek. Scarry (2003a, 2003b) believes it to have been the principal plant food consumed at the site, and what is most interesting is that the kernels were generally removed from the cobs at off-mound locations, perhaps even away from the site itself. What this may mean is that the corn that came to Bottle Creek was already in a prepared state, even that which came to the people who lived on the house mounds. By implication such remain may have constituted tribute from another social class within the Bottle Creek world. This may imply that there were at least three social classes in the local expression of Pensacola culture, with the true commoners having lived off-site. This is probably the case, but without having household data researchers cannot say for sure. Nevertheless, it is a strong working hypothesis that is based on some solid material evidence.

Excavations in Mound L in 1991 revealed that a lot more construction activities took place at Bottle Creek than was once thought to have been the case (Brown and Fuller 1993). Mound L itself sits upon an artificial platform and it is possible that other mounds on the site are similarly placed. Mound L was built using temporary walls of vertical posts. As earth was piled on, and the mound grew in size, these posts were removed and other lines were positioned at higher elevations. In this manner, the soil stayed in place long enough for the mound to attain the desired shape. David Morgan (2003) has shown that the same form of earthwork construction that was used to build Mound L was employed in the design of the Mound B terrace. First a clay platform was erected to set the form. Then, sequential walls of vertical posts were applied as alternating thin layers of silt and sand were piled on, thereby giving the mound bulk. To hold it all in place, a clay cap was applied to the Mound B terrace, as was also the case with Mound L. For both mounds, there was evidence for some form of temporary usage of the mound surfaces, perhaps reflective of feasting, as the various soil layers were applied. A series of stacked hearths marked such uses in Mound L, most of which had microliths in association. As shown by Paul Jackson (2003), these tools are reflective of a very different function for Mound L in its early history, one that was probably focused on the production of artifacts made of shell. Why this mound should have changed its function in its later history bears further investigation.

Once a clay cap was applied to the surfaces of both Mound L and the Mound B terrace, structures were then built on top. For the Mound B terrace, evidence exists for wall trench buildings that were constructed during or after the Bottle Creek II phase (A.D. 1400-1550). The multitude of post features that occurred on the top of Mound L reflects frequent and heavy usage of this mound. As Silvia (2003) has revealed, several buildings were constructed on Mound L both during and after the Bottle Creek II phase. Who these people were, who occupied the structures atop Mound L remains a mystery, but they certainly made a lot of buildings. Probable structural forms include circular single set post, rectangular single set post, and rectangular wall trenches arrangements.

At least one of the Mound L houses had daub walls. Penelope Drooker's (1993; 2003) study of fabric impressions in the daub recovered from Mound L has shown that mats were sometimes applied to the walls of the houses at Bottle Creek. According to Drooker

The impression on daub could have come from an actual house wall structure, or from a mat woven separately and then fastened to a framework. Because this impression is so deep and well-formed, it seems more likely that it was made from weaving to which wet clay was applied (i.e., a structure within a wall) rather than from

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weaving applied to the outside of a previously-constructed wall. The woven structure obviously was very stiff and sturdy. The elements from which it was fabricated were relatively thick and very sharp-edged and fresh. The stiffness and apparent newness of this woven material provide a strong contrast to the matting impressed on pottery, which was more flexible and often showed signs of wear [2003:181].

Drooker's detailed study of fabric impressed ceramic vessels sherds also demonstrates that through time the Bottle Creek people shifted from using pliable fabrics to using basketry in fashioning such vessels, but we do not know whether this change was due to cultural or functional factors. All in all, we now know a great deal about the history and lifeways of the Bottle Creek people.

The Pensacola Culture

The principal occupation at Bottle Creek occurred during the Pensacola culture period (A.D. 1250-1550) (figure 10). "Pensacola" is an archeological culture identified by a shell tempered pottery complex and a geographic region. This culture exhibits many Mississippian characteristics (with analogies to Moundville) and it dates from A.D. 1250 (possibly earlier) until protohistoric times (Brose et al. 1983:154-156,219; Fuller and Silvia 1984:3-5; Knight 1977:147-148; 1984:199-204). Pensacola stretches along the coast from western Florida to the Louisiana Delta and it represents a major peak of interaction in the Gulf Coast zone. Although it is distributed extensively along the coast, its greatest concentration is in the Mobile Basin region. It is still not clear whether it was totally an indigenous development or whether the region experienced direct contacts from Moundville populations.

Of particular interest with regard to the question of origins is a focus on the pre-mound levels and early stages of mound-building at Bottle Creek. Knowing who was responsible for these accomplishments and why these people devoted so much of their energy to create a mound center in the swamps of the Mobile-Tensaw delta are two issues which should be illuminated by future work at the site. One major issue which needs to be resolved is whether the Bottle Creek mounds were constructed by local Late Woodland populations that were "inspired" by Mississippian achievements to the north (DeJarnette 1952:283), or built by the descendants of Moundville-related people who migrated into the area (Jenkins in Brose et al. 1983:219; Sears 1977:283-284).

Related to this issue is the mystery of the whereabouts of the McLeod and Tensaw Lake Phase peoples at Bottle Creek. These Late to Terminal Woodland phases (ca. A.D. 500 to A.D. 1100), especially Tensaw Lake, are well represented in numerous sites in the Mobile Basin, but they have not yet been recognized at Bottle Creek. This is a curious absence. In many ways the Bottle Creek site as a mound center appears to have emerged with very little previous prehistoric occupation. It is suspected that Bottle Creek did not derive out of local Late Woodland populations, but that the stimuli lay far to the north. Looking to the Moundville site and region certainly is not a new idea, as it was anticipation of such a connection which stimulated DeJarnette's excavations at Bottle Creek in the 1930s. The Moundville ties certainly appear strong in the pottery collected at Bottle Creek. Future investigations should reveal more about this question.

Since the above was written in 1993, further archeological investigation and analysis have occurred which may explain the function of such a large mound complex at Bottle Creek. It is quite probable that Bottle Creek's primary purpose changed over the years. Considering its central location in the middle of a regularly-flooded swamp, there is a strong possibility that religion played a role in site selection. Bottle Creek may have been a sacred place from the first time Mississippian people ventured on the site around A.D. 1100, but it most certainly served a mix of secular and sacred activities for much of its history (Brown 2003a). During the Pensacola Culture, between A.D. 1250-1550 when most of the mound construction seems to have taken place Bottle Creek probably was the political, economic, and spiritual center of Pensacola culture, but there is

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evidence to suggest that the site itself experienced some major changes after the mid-sixteenth century. Richard Fuller noticed that the mounds constituting the eastern and western edges of the Bottle Creek site (Mounds O, P, Q, and R) (figure 3) are very different from both the central mounds and the house mounds. These peripheral mounds are conical shaped and built of a sandy soil, much like Bear Point phase burial mounds of the Ginhouse Island complex that date between A.D. 1550-1700 (Fuller 1998:30-32; Fuller and Brown 1998:100; Fuller et al. 1984:134-160). Mound O probably contained the burial reported by Bigelow (1853:189), although Stowe was not able to confirm this in his excavations (Stowe and Fuller 1993:19). None of the other three mounds (P, Q, and R) have been excavated as yet, but surface collections have revealed materials dating no earlier than the Bear Point phase (post-A.D. 1550) (Fuller and Brown 1998:100-103).

If these peripheral mounds are indeed sixteenth or seventeenth-century burial repositories, it raises an interesting research issue regarding post-Pensacola Culture site formation and function. These mounds would have been erected shortly after the main part of the Bottle Creek site was depopulated, or at least after it had suffered a significant population reduction. However, it should be pointed out Bottle Creek lacks data normally used for population studies, such as the kind of archaeological information that exists at Moundville for estimating population (Powell 1991; 1998; Steponaitis 1998). In lieu of extensive block excavations that would reveal settlement data and mortuary remains, interpretation must rely on the study of middens and surface collections to address the scale of occupation, which is not the best way to support conclusions. What can be determined at this point is that after the Bottle Creek II phase, at about A.D. 1550 refuse drops off dramatically on the site. This would be indicative of a reduction in population.

Bottle Creek appears to have been occupied as late as the mid-eighteenth century, but mound use by this time had diminished and mound construction was negligible. Interestingly enough, it was during Bottle Creek's final one-to-two centuries of occupation, when it had only a small residential population that the site became a repository for the dead. It is probably not without coincidence that this same development occurred at Moundville, but a couple of centuries earlier (Knight 1997:240-241; Knight and Steponaitis 1998:18-19). Perhaps, the late prehistoric/protohistoric native people wished to be buried at or near a major site occupied by their ancestors. It should be noted, however, that these interpretations for changes in Bottle Creek site function are predicated on Mounds P, Q, and R actually being burial mounds, and this has not yet been proven. Extending the National Historic Landmark boundary of the Bottle Creek site to include these peripheral mounds, on the western edge of the site, is critical to comprehending Bottle Creek's political and religious development as a part of Pensacola culture, and into the historic contact period.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register. **October 1, 1974**

Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.

Designated a National Historic Landmark. **April 19, 1994; Boundary Expansion Approved April 5, 2005**

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

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Primary Location of Additional Data:

State Historic Preservation Office - **Alabama**

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University - **University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa**

Other (Specify Repository): The primary repository for material culture and documentation from excavations at the Bottle Creek site, is the Alabama Museum of Natural History (AMNH) at the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa). There are three discrete collections: 1) from the excavations by David L. DeJarnette in the early 1930s; 2) a collection acquired by Mike Blake in 1966; and 3) a collection obtained by Caleb Curren in 1976. Additional collections from the site exist, perhaps the largest being at the University of South Alabama in Mobile (Stowe and Fuller 1993; Waselkov and Silvia Mueller 1991). Other collections from Bottle Creek are at the Northern Gulf Coast Archeological Research Consortium in Mobile and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. Smaller collections have been made by local individuals who have visited the site over the years.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreeage of Property: **182 acres**

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
	A 15	3430800	411140	B 15	3430760	410840
	C 15	3430600	410920	D 15	3430460	410900
	E 15	3430440	409510	F 15	3430720	409540
	G 15	3431070	410310			

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon whose vertices are marked by eight reference points, designated A-G (figure 1). UTM designations for these points are listed above.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the nominated property corresponds to the boundary delineating the property which is presently owned by the State of Alabama. Archeological survey has shown that this boundary encompasses the maximum known extent of the cultural resources associated with the Bottle Creek site, including the 18 mounds and various other features and deposits.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

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Date: February 16, 1993

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Date: May 25, 2004

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Figure 1. Map showing the location of the Bottle Creek site and boundary of property being nominated for National Historic Landmark status. Note reference points A-G and associated UTM points. The shaded area on the west side of the landmark boundary indicates the proposed boundary expansion area containing Mounds P, Q, and R. The unshaded area is the original boundary for the Bottle Creek site.

Figure 2. Location of the Bottle Creek site in relation to Mobile Basin, of Alabama, and the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

Figure 3: Contour Map of the Bottle Creek Site, provided by G. Waselkov (1997), showing the location of all eighteen (18) earthen mounds. This map shows the location of Mounds P, Q, and R on the west side of the site. These three (3) mounds were located and mapped after the Bottle Creek Site was designated an NHL (April 19, 1994). NOTE: This contour map replaces the 1990 Contour Map of the site submitted with the original NHL nomination (Map also in Brown 2003b:4).

Figure 4. Location of the Bottle Creek site in relationship to the Moundville Site, both located in the state of Alabama.

Figure 5. “Isle aux Statues” (Island of the Statues) as depicted on the Delisle 1718 map. This is believed to be Mound Island, Baldwin County, Alabama, and location of the Bottle Creek site.

Figure 6. The Bottle Creek site, as depicted by Bigelow (1853) in his article “Observations on Some Mounds on the Tensaw River” (1853).

Figure 7. Schematic plan of the Bottle Creek site, adapted from a 1990 contour map by Gregory Waselkov. This schematic plan does not include Mounds P, Q, and R, located along the western edge of the site and found surveys conducted in 1993 and 1994. The 1990 Waselkov contour map was updated to include Mounds P, Q, and R, and is included in this study as Figure 3.

Figure 8. Contour map of Mound L, at Bottle Creek showing the locations of Trenches A100 and A102, excavated by the Gulf Coast Survey of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, in 1991 (See also Silvia 2003:85, Figure 4.1 for the 1993 and 1994 excavations).

Figure 9. Section drawing of the south wall of Trench A100 excavation of Mound L. Section drawing shows post holes of buildings constructed on top of Mound L. Trench A100 was excavated by the Gulf Coast Survey of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, in 1991.

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Figure 10. Chart showing the chronology of Native American cultures in southwest Alabama, from c. 1400 B.C. to the Historic Period (Fuller & Brown 1998:143; Brown 2003b:6).

Table 1. Indian pottery from Bottle Creek at the Alabama Museum of Natural History – Counts of all sherds, appendages, effigies, and other pottery items.

Table 2. Indian pottery from Bottle Creek at the Alabama Museum of Natural History – Percent of each decorated variety, by individual collection and by total collection.

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
March 28, 2019