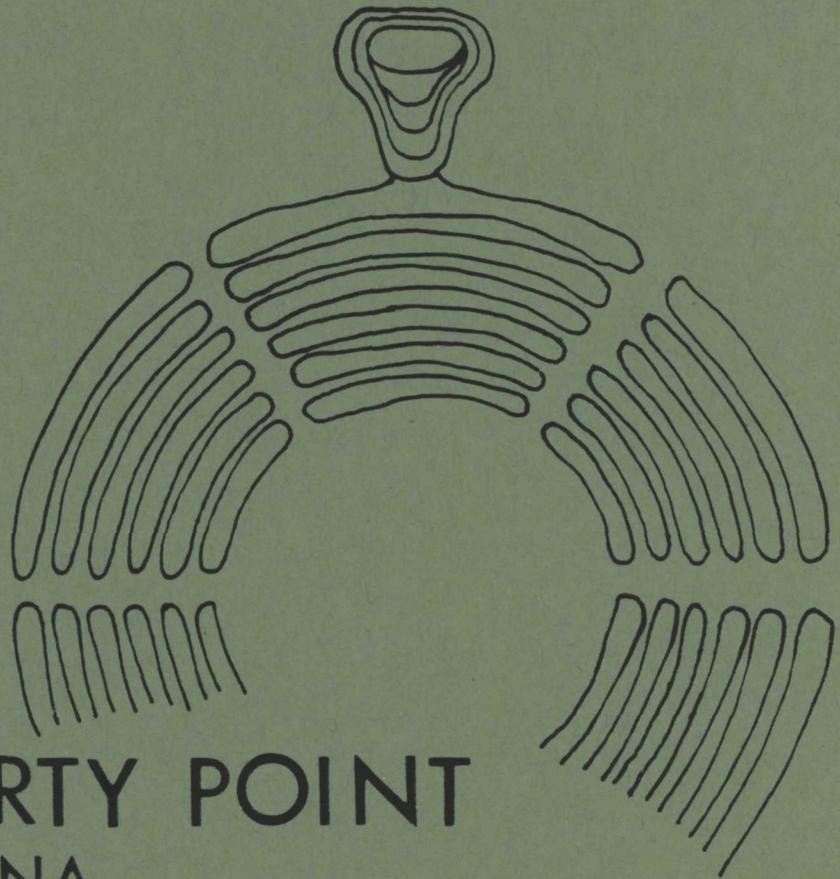


RECONNAISSANCE REPORT  
STUDY OF ALTERNATIVES



**POVERTY POINT**  
**LOUISIANA**  
FEBRUARY 1988

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RECONNAISSANCE REPORT  
STUDY OF ALTERNATIVES

"Poverty Point represents a charge and a commitment. The proud people who were carriers of Poverty Point culture are all dead. But the things they created, their magnificent achievements, their contributions to the saga of human development on this planet live on. Theirs is a legacy worth understanding."

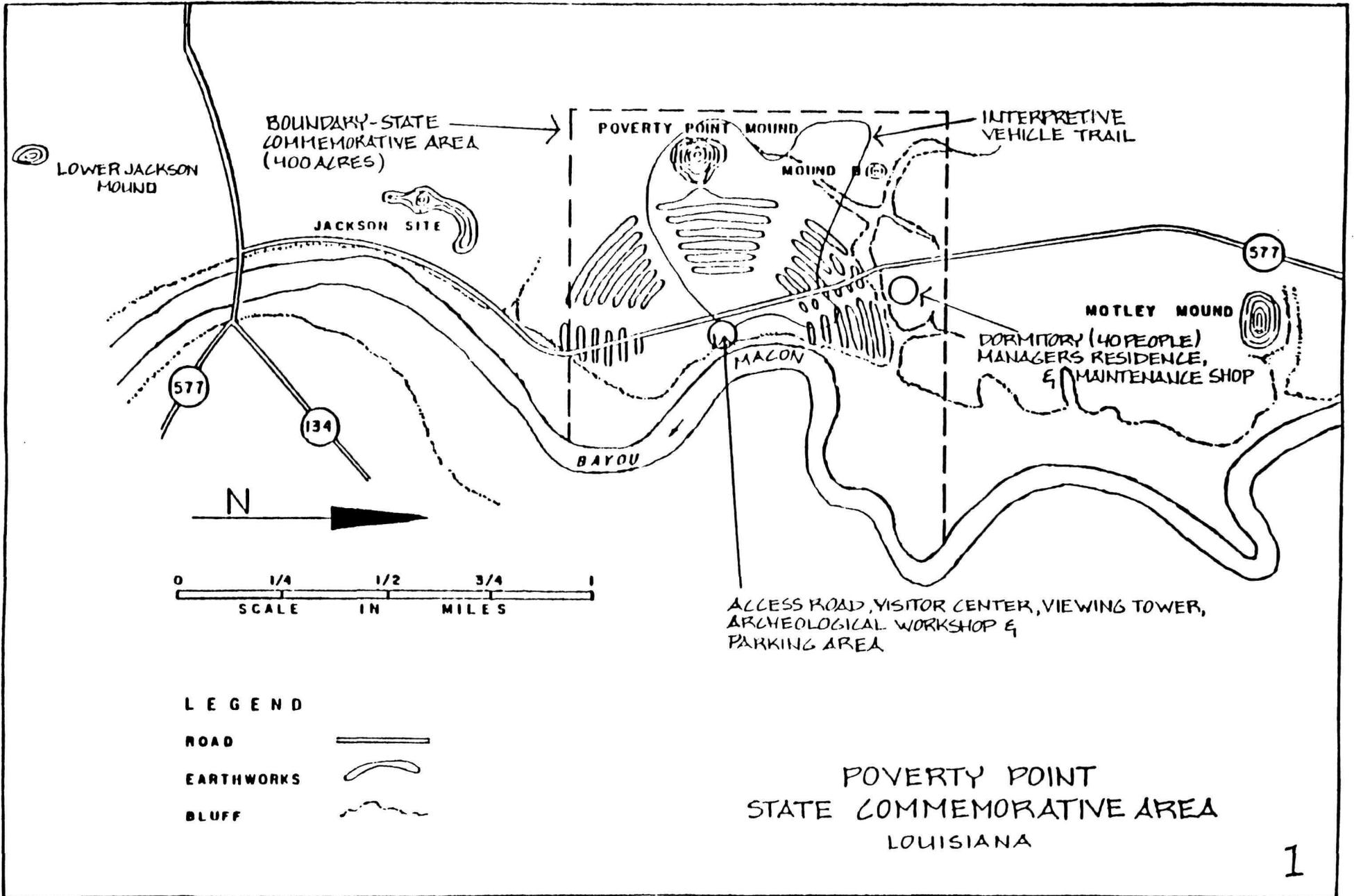
Jon L. Gibson, "Poverty Point"

By any measure, Poverty Point is remarkable. During the first and second millennia B.C. a native American culture developed and thrived in the lower Mississippi Valley. At Poverty Point, on the western bank of Bayou Macon (pronounced mason) in northeast Louisiana, they built their major town. At this site they constructed an intricate pattern of mounds and circular ridges that is the largest and most complex geometrical earthwork created by the early people of North America.<sup>1</sup>

Constructed as early as 1500 B.C., the spectacular earthwork consists of ridges, each originally about 150 feet wide and six feet high, arranged as six concentric semicircles which terminate at the edge of Bayou Macon. They are separated into segments by four aisles (Map 1). The largest of the ridges is 3/4 mile in diameter. In addition to the ridges there are several related hill-like mounds. The massive Poverty Point Mound (also known as Mound A), which dominates the site from the

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1

The word "ridges," although descriptively misleading, is generally used for want of a better term. They are not ridges, in the topographic sense, but low and very broad linear embankments. Throughout most of the site they are so reduced as to be virtually unrecognizable for what they once were.



western edge of the concentric ridges, rises 70 feet high, measures 700 by 800 feet at the base, and has the outline of a bird in flight. Mound B, a 20 foot high conical hill, is located some 700 yards north of Mound A. The Motley Mound, located one mile north of the ridges, is 55 feet high and covers an area 400 by 600 feet, and the 10 foot high Lower Jackson Mound is about 1 1/2 mile to the south of the ridges. Both of the latter mounds belong to the Poverty Point occupation but are not part of the formal geometric arrangement. The Jackson Mound Group ("Jackson Site" on the accompanying maps), which was just to the south of Poverty Point and was mostly obliterated by its owner, was not a part of the Poverty Point complex, but rather of a much later culture group.

Although the circular formation is 3/4 mile in diameter, its builders could not have seen the totality of their creation for lack of a high point from which to view it. For the same reason, modern Louisianans were unaware of the amazing design until it was discovered on aerial photos. Although archeologists have learned enough about Poverty Point to realize that it is among the most important prehistoric sites in the country, major questions about the place and its people remain to be answered.

Louisiana, in recognition of the area's significance to American prehistory, has preserved the major center of the Poverty Point site as a 400 acre state commemorative area. Congressman Jerry Huckaby, for the same reason, introduced H.R. 775 to establish Poverty Point National Monument. The proposed national monument would include the state park and approximately 1,000 acres of adjacent private property.<sup>2</sup>

The National Park Service agreed to conduct a reconnaissance study at hearings held by the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands. This report is the result of that study into the ways in which the cultural resources of Poverty Point could be protected and managed.

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The terms "state commemorative area" and "state park" are used synonymously in this report.



Poverty Point Mound (Mound A), showing the interpretive trail



Mound B



Mound A

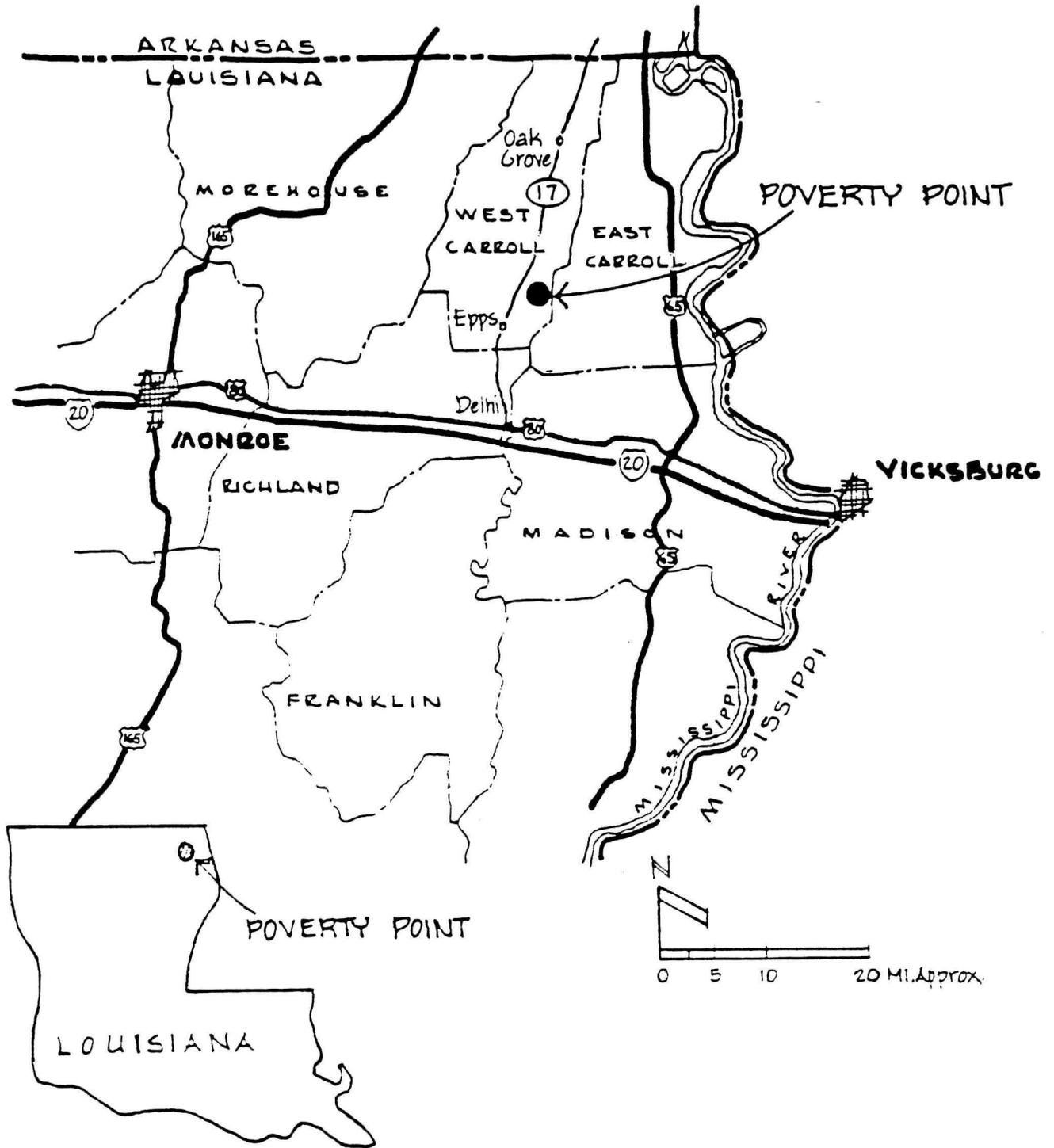
## BACKGROUND

Poverty Point is located near the town of Epps in West Carroll Parish, in the northeast part of Louisiana (Map 2). In addition to Epps, the small towns of Delhi and Oak Grove are nearby, and the large cities of Monroe, Louisiana and Vicksburg, Mississippi are located about 40 miles to the west and east, respectively. It is a gently rolling area, drained by sluggishly flowing streams. The commemorative area is connected by 14 miles of state road to Interstate 20, which runs between Vicksburg and Monroe and on westward across the state to Shreveport, providing ready access from all major north-south routes in Louisiana. The Poverty Point area is largely agricultural, devoted mainly to cotton with a small acreage of soybeans.

The four major mounds stand in bold relief, probably at close to their original heights. Because of their steep slopes they have not been farmed, and their forest cover has provided a degree of protection from erosion. The concentric ridges, however, with their low level and slight inclines, did not present an impediment to agriculture, and have been farmed for over 150 years. The annual plowing and the resultant erosion have reduced the ridges to a slightly rolling, almost flat landscape. Except for a few sections that escaped the plow, an uninformed observer would not recognize the alternating swales and slight rises as a pattern of ridges.

Although the widespread presence of artifacts at and near the ground surface suggested that the area was out of the ordinary, and some archeological investigations had been conducted, current scientific and public interest in Poverty Point began with the accidental discovery of the semicircular formations on an aerial photo in 1953. Subsequent investigations led to the recognition of Poverty Point's true nature and significance. In 1962 the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments recommended that Poverty Point be included in the National Park System. It was not added to the system, but it was designated a national historic landmark that same year. The first bill to create a Poverty Point National Monument was introduced in Congress in 1963 and the Park Service conducted a study of the area at that time.

In 1973 the state, with financial assistance from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, acquired the core area of the Poverty Point site and created a state commemorative area. The



# LOCATION OF POVERTY POINT

400 acre park (Map 1) includes Poverty Point Mound, Mound B, and almost the entirety of the circular ridges. One short segment of the outermost ridge extends outside the park's southern boundary, and Motley and Lower Jackson Mounds are completely outside. The park has a visitor center, an interpretive trail and interpretive road, a research lab, and administrative facilities. The park protects the cultural resources, encourages archeological research by universities, and provides a range of exhibits and activities that interpret the meaning of Poverty Point to the public.

H.R. 775, a bill to establish a Poverty Point National Monument, was introduced in the 100th Congress by Congressman Jerry Huckaby. At the hearings conducted by the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands in April, 1987, the Department of the Interior urged the subcommittee to defer action until the NPS could investigate the area and update its 1963 study. This report and its conclusions are the results of that investigation. H.R. 775 would authorize the Secretary of Interior to acquire lands and interests in lands within a boundary that includes the state commemorative area and approximately 1,000 acres of surrounding private land, although he could "except from any acquisition --- lands as may be administratively acceptable" to him (i.e., the state commemorative area). The area thus acquired would be designated a national monument and administered as a part of the National Park System.

Lower Jackson Mound is not within the boundary described in H.R. 775. The mound is clearly a product of the Poverty Point culture, and the NPS study shows it to be of national significance in that context. Because of this importance and its proximity to the area described in H.R. 775, it is included in this report and the options for Congressional action.

## THE ARCHEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF POVERTY POINT

### Archeological Significance

The Poverty Point site is the largest and most complex ceremonial earthwork in North America and the largest settlement of comparable age known in the United States. The significance of this site was recognized over two decades ago when it was designated a national historic landmark.

The mounds were presumably used for ceremonial purposes, but the ridges are thought to be the original location of the village site. Very little evidence of houses has been found, though, and archeologists have been led to believe that the ridges served as habitation areas because of the large concentrations of artifacts and debris there.

Hallmarks of the Poverty Point culture are the clay cooking balls (known as Poverty Point Objects, or PPOs) that are found by the thousands at Poverty Point sites. Other characteristic artifacts include stone plummets used for bolas or as net weights, soapstone or sandstone cooking bowls, stone and clay figurines, beads and pendants, and small blades called microflints.

Over one hundred sites of the Poverty Point culture have been located in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi, and there are related sites in Alabama, Missouri, Tennessee, and Florida. The sites are located in areas where the prehistoric inhabitants could exploit a wide variety of natural resources, as well as take advantage of streams as trade routes.

The Poverty Point site was the largest regional center of the Poverty Point culture, probably its "capital". Its location between the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers enabled its inhabitants to use those rivers, as well as the Ohio and Red Rivers and land routes to trade with people as far away as Illinois, Virginia, and Florida.

The engineering feat represented by the earthen structures at Poverty Point could only be accomplished by a large, highly organized society, requiring a plentiful and reliable subsistence base. Yet there is no evidence of agriculture in the Poverty Point culture, a development that would normally be expected in a society of such size and complexity. Instead, Poverty Point sites were apparently located in areas where hunting and gathering could provide this level of subsistence.

The magnitude of the earthworks constructed by the Poverty Point Indians is a significant achievement by these early, nonagricultural people. An estimated 3/4 million cubic yards of earth were used to build Mounds A and B and the concentric ridges, which would probably require 30 million basket loads of 50 pounds each.

The significance of the Poverty Point site is not derived solely from the physical remains that represent a major achievement of these people. The site is the type site for the Poverty Point culture, a unique cultural phenomenon. The development of the Poverty Point culture, beginning about 2000 B.C., from small dispersed hamlets to large ceremonial centers, with their widespread trade networks and the requisite highly organized society, is extremely interesting and important in the study of prehistory. Thus, the Poverty Point site is highly significant because of its research potential.

There remain a number of research questions that need to be addressed through investigations at Poverty Point. Most of the information obtained about the Poverty Point site will also be valuable for its application to the other Poverty Point sites throughout the Southeast. The three basic research needs for Poverty Point are chronology, subsistence, and settlement patterning.

- The problem of chronology is recognized as the highest priority for research. The Poverty Point culture covers a very large time span (2000 B.C. to 600 B.C.) and the Poverty Point site was occupied during most of that time. This long time span needs to be broken down into more manageable units. The need is to establish what is Early, Middle, and Late Poverty Point, what the markers are for these periods, and their dates.
- How did the inhabitants of Poverty Point subsist? For years it was thought that they were agriculturists. It now appears that these people were hunters and gatherers, but a number of questions remain on how such a large sedentary population could be supported by hunting and gathering.
- Information on intra-site settlement patterning will help interpret the Poverty Point site and also help explain other Poverty Point culture sites. The types of information needed are: The location of habitations, the locations of other activities, the length of occupation, the location of middens, and whether or not the ridges were built for house sites.

As the earthworks of the Poverty Point site are impressive and represent a high achievement, the artifacts from the site are likewise significant for the same reasons. Like the earthworks, the artifacts are significant because of their potential for

research. In fact, controlled surface collections were the basis for distribution studies regarding the occupational history of the site. These studies involved the examination of 18,000 Poverty Point Objects, 30,000 microflints, 12,000 projectile points, and thousands of other artifacts. The artifact collection from Poverty Point can provide information on activity areas, craft specialization, trade, and subsistence. The artifact collection actually controlled by the state park, either through ownership or long-term loan, consists of over 60,000 items.

Other research topics that should be studied include (1) the nature of the cultural deposits of the plaza of the Poverty Point site and the distinction between the cultural and natural deposits, (2) The function of the posts located east of the west sector of Ridge 1, (3) information on why the ridges were built, whether they were truly house platforms, and whether they were used by different social classes or kinship groups, and (4) what were the functions of features such as the causeway, ballcourt, Dunbar Mound, Sarah's Mount, and the aisles.

Two of the most intriguing questions needing investigation are the culture's socio-political organization and the nature and extent of Meso-American influence on the development of the Poverty Point culture.

A moderate amount of research has been conducted in the state park, but very little on the adjacent land. (See appendix 1) Research is encouraged in the park, and facilities are provided. Prospective researchers submit an application to the Office of State Parks, describing their research goals, methodology, schedule, etc. The application is reviewed by them and by the State Archeologist, and a research permit is issued by the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism.

Archeological research by universities is normally conducted in the summer, but organized school groups -- people who would gain a wonderful understanding of the area if they could observe the digs -- come to the park during the fall and spring. The park is attempting to conduct in-house research projects during those periods frequented by students, and to make these digs a part of the interpretive program presented to them.

### Integrity of the Site

Although the central part of the Poverty Point site was farmed for many years until the creation of the commemorative area and the private land surrounding it continues in agriculture, and although archeologists have conducted a number of excavations over the years, the site still possesses a high degree of integrity. For the most part, cultivation has repeatedly disturbed the same uppermost portions of the cultural remains, but has left the lower strata undisturbed and intact. Recent test excavations of "localities" on the peripheries of the Poverty Point site by New World Research revealed that there are intact middens and features in the cultivated fields. However, the report stated that these are being destroyed. The archeological excavations that have been done on the site have disturbed less than 1/2 of 1% of the site. The physical developments -- road, buildings, parking lot, etc. -- likewise constitute a minimal effect on the physical integrity of the site. Because of the level terrain, the visual effect of these facilities is greater than the physical impact.

Motley Mound and the Lower Jackson Mound have not undergone any archeological excavations. Cemeteries located atop both mounds have probably resulted in some protection for these earthworks. There has been some encroachment by farm equipment on the perimeter of Lower Jackson Mound, but as yet the integrity of the site has not been significantly affected. Some damage was done to the side of Motley Mound when it was used for a borrow area, but this borrow excavation provided an opportunity for archeologists to examine the stratigraphy in that part of the mound. As with the Lower Jackson Mound, there has been relatively little effect on the integrity of this mound.

### CURRENT CONDITIONS

#### Disturbance to the site

For well over 150 years the Poverty Point site was subjected to agricultural use. For that period of time the land was plowed, usually on an annual basis. The inevitable result of the repeated excavation by plows, the passage of farm machinery, and the laying bare of the soil that attends the growing of cotton was the erosion of the built-up ridges into the swales between

them and the surface erosion of the entire area. The visible result was the lowering of the ridges and the filling-in of the swales, creating a very gently rolling landscape. The acquisition of the state commemorative area and the preservation management that ensued arrested the agricultural disturbance to the cultural resources within the 400 acre park. It is assumed that the disturbance -- and possibly outright destruction -- of the cultural resources down to plow depth has been complete. At the very least, the resources have been thoroughly churned vertically, transported horizontally, and in many cases broken. While this disturbance repeatedly effected the same upper level of soil, it is very possible that damage below plow depth was minor. Farming continues on the land not included in the state park.

State route 577, a two lane paved road, runs south to north through the area and bisects the semicircular ridges and plaza of the state park. Construction of the road probably caused considerable damage to the surface and shallow cultural resources, but its continued existence and use probably cause no additional damage. Route 577 provides the only vehicular access to the park.

#### Natural Gas Operations

The Epps area was an active natural gas field for many years, but is now largely or entirely inactive as a producing field. Two gas wells existed on the land acquired by the state, but they have been permanently sealed and capped and are surrounded by high fences.

In the late 1970s, Trunkline Gas Company constructed a pumped gas storage project on some of the properties adjacent to the park. Gas from distant sources is pumped into the no-longer productive geologic structure of the field when gas is plentiful, stored there, and retrieved later for transport and sale. The system consists of injection/withdrawal wells, water disposal wells, observation wells, pipelines, and access roads to the wells. The largest concentration of these wells and pipelines is found on the properties to the north of the state park, between it and Motley Mound. There has been little formal archeological research conducted on the lands outside the state park that are being considered for inclusion in the national monument. Most of the limited knowledge of the cultural resources on those lands comes from the extensive archeological

survey conducted for Trunkline Gas Company by New World Research prior to the construction of the Epps Gas Storage Project. (See appendix 1)

### Erosion

The NPS study report of 1963 noted that gully erosion in what is now the state park was a threat to the archeological zone. Accelerated headward erosion was found on at least two gullies that lead through the bluff from Bayou Macon and into the central plaza of Poverty Point. In order to stop the gullies' headward erosion, the park staff, with the aid of the Soil Conservation Service, has constructed a low berm (referred to locally as an "agricultural terrace") several feet in from and parallel to the edge of the bluff. At several locations drains were installed under the berm. Surface runoff, rather than running uncontrolled over the edge of the gullies, now pools behind the berm and is then conducted harmlessly through the drains into the gullies.

Although the circular ridges were already extremely reduced in height by the time the state park was established in 1973, the result of many years of tilling and row crop erosion, the state took steps to prevent any further soil loss. Grass was planted over the previously bare areas, including a contrasting red clover along the ridges. This ground cover has served to slow (if not halt) sheet wash, and the contrasting bands of grass also make the otherwise almost-invisible ridges apparent to the visitor.

## POVERTY POINT STATE COMMEMORATIVE AREA

### Park Administration

Poverty Point State Commemorative Area is administered by the Office of State Parks, an agency in the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. Within the state park system, "commemorative area" is the term used for those parks that preserve historic or prehistoric places. A park manager, who resides in the park in park housing, is responsible for the management of the area. He reports to a district manager, who

is located at Lake Claiborne State Park at Homer, who in turn is responsible to the Office of State Parks in Baton Rouge.

There are no special rules or regulations pertaining to Poverty Point or to commemorative areas as a group. Rather, all units of the state park system - parks, commemorative areas, and preservation areas - are administered by the same rules and regulations, a set of comprehensive controls that protect all park resources and all park facilities. The manager and park ranger have full Louisiana law enforcement commissions and are empowered to enforce park regulations.

The park consists of 400 acres on the west bank of Bayou Macon. It includes the entirety of the semicircular ridges (except for one small part of the outermost ridge that extends outside the south boundary), Poverty Point Mound, Mound B, and a number of other lesser surface features.

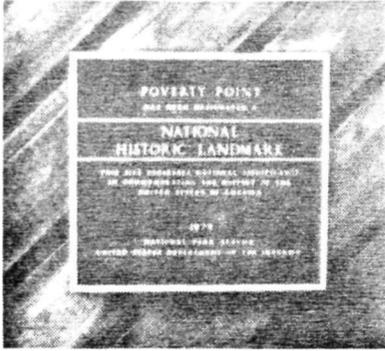
In addition to the manager and the park ranger, who serves as an interpreter as well as a law enforcement officer, the park staff includes a tour guide, a curator, and two maintenance employees. During the April to September season four seasonals are added, two interpreters and two maintenance employees. The park's current operating budget is \$156,000.

### Visitors

There are approximately 30,000 visits to the park per year. The staff estimates that about 50% of them come from within an 80 mile radius, which includes the cities of Monroe, Louisiana and Vicksburg, Mississippi. The remaining 50% is thought to be about equally divided between those from the rest of Louisiana and from out of state. The visitation for 1987 was lower than normal years because Poverty Point (and a number of other state parks) was closed for budget reasons from September, 1986 to July, 1987.

### Facilities

The visitor's stay in the park centers on several facilities that interpret the park and conduct him through it. (Map 1) The visitor center houses an auditorium in which an orientation and interpretive film is shown. The rest of the modern structure is devoted to exhibits that explain and illustrate all



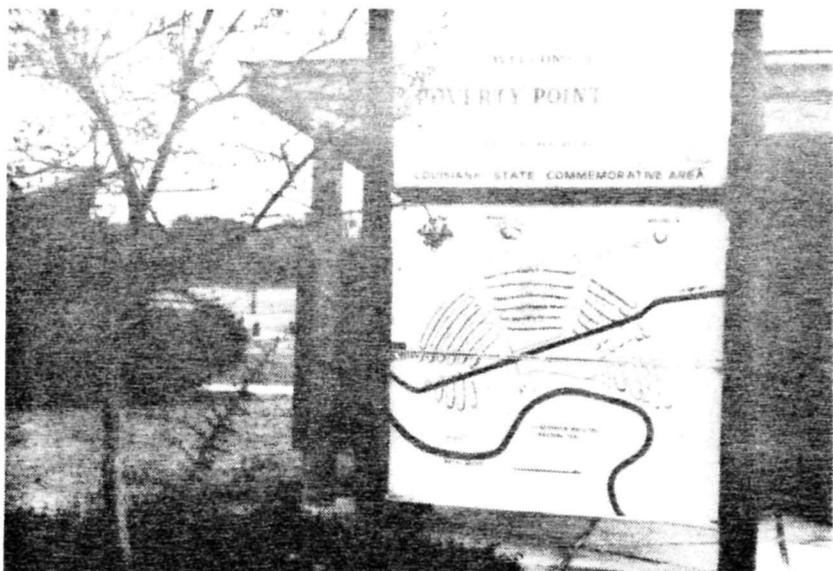
Entrance to the visitor center complex. The park logo is representative of Mound A, the circular ridges, and Macon Bayou.



Through most of their extent, the circular ridges are so reduced as to be almost unrecognizable. At various places (here, along the interpretive road) the individual ridges are identified for park visitors.



The visitor center has a modern auditorium for interpretive programs, and extensive exhibit space.



The visitor center complex is the first contact the visitor has with the park. It includes a viewing tower and outdoor interpretive exhibits.



aspects of the Poverty Point story. The staff has conducted innovative experiments into the ways in which the Poverty Point people might have done things. The results of those interesting experiments are made available to the visitors in demonstrations of ground cooking, stone knapping, use of the atlatl, and stone drilling. In front of the visitor center is a viewing tower from which the visitor can look out over the plaza and main area of ridges to Poverty Point Mound in the distance. Immediately below the tower is a scale model of Poverty Point. Looking down on it the visitor has a view of Poverty Point as it might have looked from the air 1,500 years ago.

The other two facilities are a tour road and an interpretive trail. Both convey visitors across the ridges and around Poverty Point Mound and Mound B (the trail goes over the former). Those using the road are carried in small trams with a tour guide providing interpretation. (The road is closed to private vehicles.) The trail has numbered posts and a comprehensive printed trail guide that describes the natural and historic points of interest along the way, as well as the archeological ones. Nearly 100% of the visitors enter the visitor center, and considerably fewer take the tram ride. A very small percentage of visitors take the trail walk.

The Office of State Parks encourages archeological research in the park by universities and others who are self-financed. (See the section on the research program and Appendix 1 for previous research.) Modern facilities have been provided for this purpose. Close to the visitor center is a large archeological workshop and laboratory, and in the northern section of the park is a 40 bed dormitory. Both of these are provided to approved researchers, the only cost being that of the utilities in the dormitory.

The park also has a modern residence for the park manager and a maintenance building, both located close to the dormitory.

#### LAND OWNERSHIP AT POVERTY POINT

The 400 acre core of the Poverty Point site constitutes the state park. The land was purchased by the state from the West Carroll Tourist Development Corporation, which acted as a

middleman between the previous owner and the Louisiana State Parks and Recreation Commission.

All of the lands under consideration in this report are privately held (see the ownership chart below and refer to Map 3). Except for two parcels owned by an insurance company, the private properties are all owned by individuals. State route 577 runs through the proposed national monument. The acreage of its right-of-way within the study area is 20.9, an unmeasured amount of which is within the boundaries of the state commemorative area. (The total acreage within the park boundaries is therefore some amount over 400.)

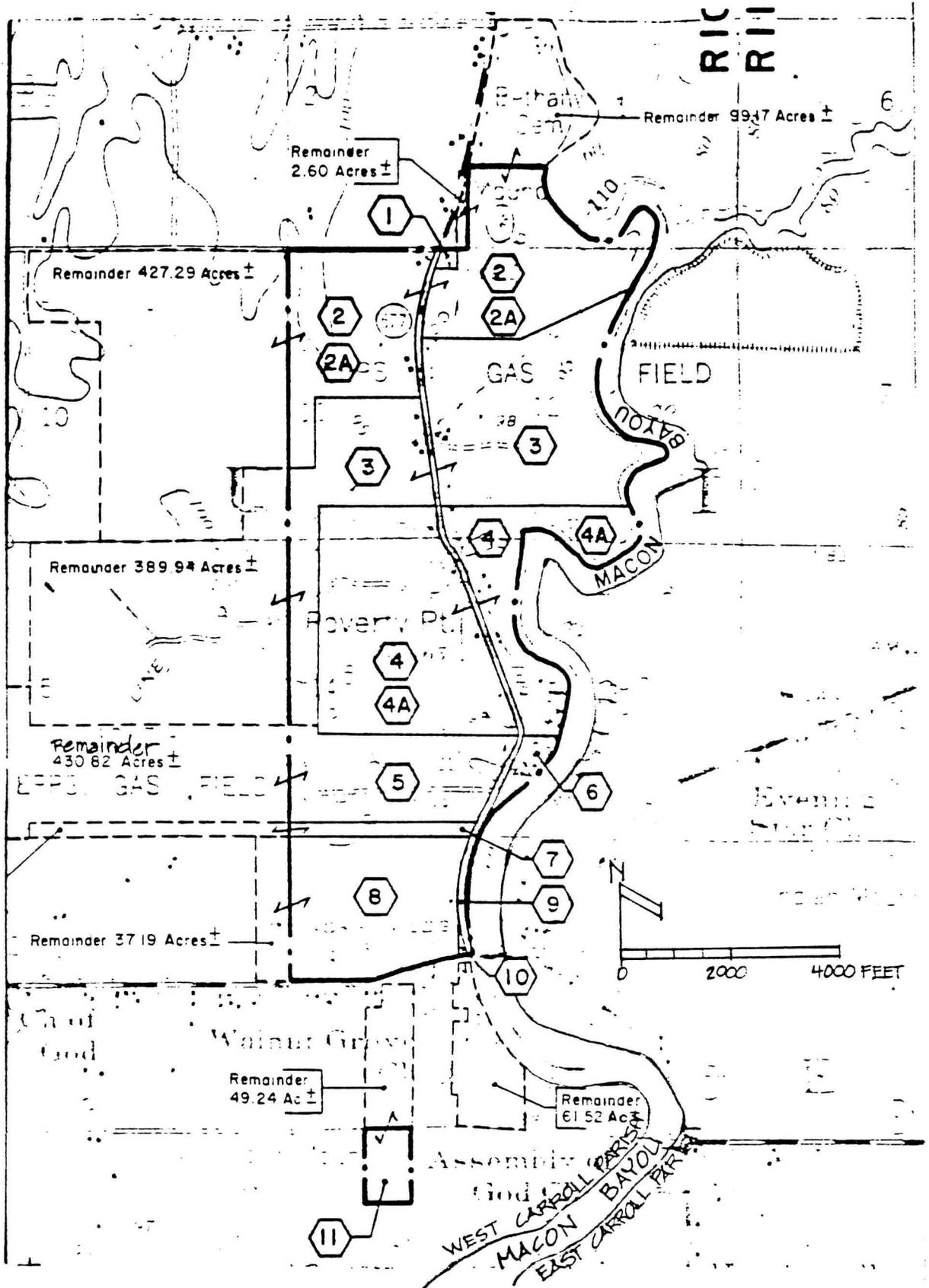
On two of the properties the mineral rights have been separated from the surface ownership. The West Carroll Tourist Development Corporation retains mineral rights to the land owned by the state, and Conley Hale retains those under one of the parcels (#2) owned by the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company. The deeds recorded in the Parish are not always specific as to mineral ownership, so the above statement may be incomplete. Title searches would be required to determine such ownership with certainty.

The land considered in this report consists of the following acreages:

State Commemorative Area	400.0
State road right-of-way	20.9
Private property within the H.R. 775 boundary	<u>1122.9</u>
Subtotal	1543.8
Private property outside the H.R. 775 boundary (parcel #11, Lower Jackson Mound)	<u>24.8</u>
Total	1568.6

LAND OWNERSHIP CHART

PARCEL	OWNER	ACRES	STATUS
1	Randy Gene Miller and Gayle Hale Miller (Vol. 116, p. 639)	2.43	Private
2	John Hancock Mutual Life Ins. Co. (Vol. 115, p. 909)	353.54	Private
2A	Conley Hale (no volume or page listed)	353.54 Minerals	Private
3	Randolf F. Marston, Jr., et al (Vol. 84, p. 53)	417.91	Private
4	Louisiana State Parks and Recreation Commission (Vol. 76, p. 338)	400 Surface	State
4A	West Carroll Tourist Development Corp. (Vol. 76, P. 338)	400 Minerals	Private
5	John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company (Vol. 114, p. 424)	142.17	Private
6	B-J Farms, Inc. (Vol. 85, p. 31)	13.4	Private
7	Julius D. Hines, et ux (Vol. 42, p. 29)	13.46	Private
8	Stephen A. Neal (Vol. 50, p. 501)	175.39	Private
9	Louisiana State Highway ROW	20.89	State
10	James T. Rusk (Vol. 113, p. 886)	4.6	Private
11	Levon F. Morrow (Vol. 65, p. 596)	24.79	Private



⑦ Numbered parcels refer to accompanying ownership chart

LAND OWNERSHIP AT  
PROPOSED  
POVERTY POINT NATIONAL MONUMENT

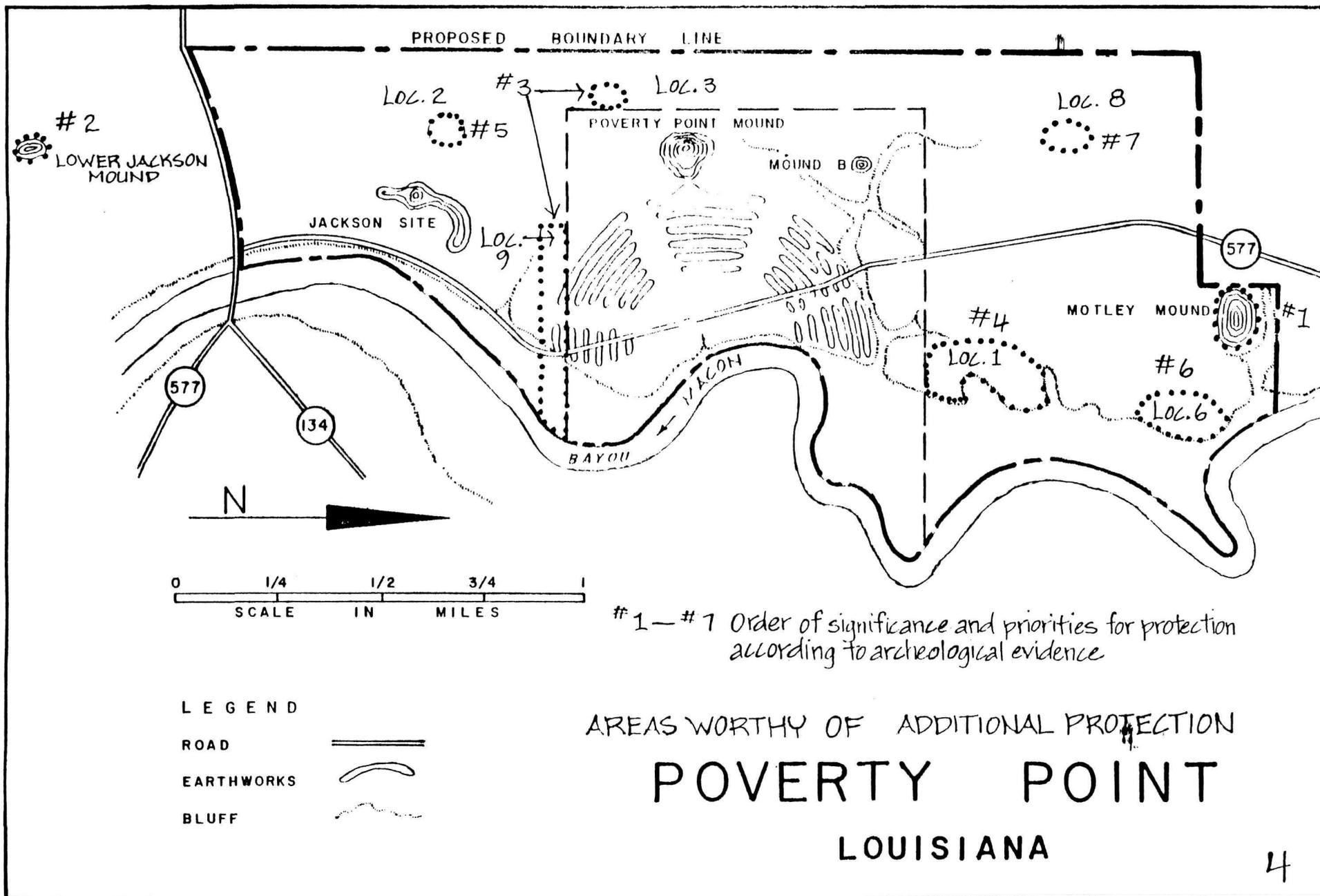
OPTIONS FOR MANAGING AND PROTECTING  
THE POVERTY POINT CULTURAL RESOURCES

Areas Worthy of Additional Protection

Within the study area there are several "localities" recently identified as significant Poverty Point sites. These localities were mapped and investigated by New World Research, Inc. in conjunction with the Epps Gas Storage Project. That project provided a great deal of information on the archeology of the peripheral areas of Poverty Point, that is, areas outside the state park. The localities that were identified are extremely important to an understanding of the Poverty Point site and culture.

Following are the sites that are considered the most important from the standpoint of archeological evidence and of the information they could provide on the Poverty Point culture. (Map 4)

- Priority 1: Motley Mound (Site 16WC7). Located 1 1/2 miles north of the center of the Poverty Point site, this large mound is part of the complex and appears to be a smaller, unfinished version of Mound A. The base of the mound covers an area of 400 by 600 feet and is 55 feet high. An old cemetery is located on the southwest side. The west side has been damaged by a borrow pit.
- Priority 2: Lower Jackson Mound (Site 16WC10). This southernmost structure of the complex is located 1/2 mile south of state highway 134 and 1.6 miles south of Mound A. The low conical mound is about 10 feet high and 105 feet in diameter. A small cemetery (6-8 graves) of the Jackson family is located on top. Plowing has encroached on the perimeter of the mound. Although no test excavations have been conducted, a steatite bowl and projectile points recovered from the vicinity are attributable to the Poverty Point culture. The mound is on a north-south axis with Mounds A and B, which suggests an astronomical alignment to some scholars.
- Priority 3: Loc. 3 & 9. Loc. 3 is located southwest of Mound A and is apparently not part of the geometrical settlement plan of the complex. Instead, this area is the



locus of specialized activities. In 1935 a large cache of fragments from 200 - 300 steatite vessels was discovered and excavated there. Functions other than cache or storage are indicated by the presence of cooking pits and a variety of lithic tools and microblades. Post molds indicate the possibility of a structure in this area. Test excavations revealed no evidence of mound or ridge construction in the area.

Loc. 9 contains a part of the outer concentric ridge which extends outside the state park, and thus is a logical addition for protection. There is a dense concentration of artifacts on the surface in the east part of the locality, in the same area as the concentric ridge remnant, and a light surface scatter in the west part.

- Priority 4: Loc. 1. This locality is adjacent to the northeast corner of the state park, at the edge of the terrace. Test excavations in this locality revealed undisturbed midden deposits and subsurface features. Fill dirt was used by the Poverty Point people to build up low areas to a level terrace surface for habitation purposes. Trash was deposited on these living surfaces. Archeologists recorded a cooking pit that had been excavated into the fill. Quantities of plant remains were found at this locality, including fragments of two possible cultigens, although these may relate to later cultural deposits.
- Priority 5: Loc. 2. This area is situated on a low rise located approximately 1/2 mile west of the bayou. Although it is part of the Poverty Point complex, it, like Loc. 3, is an area of specialized activity, and not part of the geometric settlement plan of the complex. The recovery of thousands of microflint bladelets here suggests that the artifacts were either manufactured or stored here. This function may link this area to the south and southeast sectors of the main site where finished tools were produced.
- Priority 6: Loc. 6. This area is located on the edge of the terrace about 1 1/4 miles north of the center of the site and east of Motley Mound. Test excavations revealed evidence of undisturbed subsurface deposits and features.
- Priority 7: Loc. 8. This locality is located about .8 mile north of Mound B. Dense concentrations of artifacts on the

surface indicate a high potential for significant subsurface deposits or features.

### Resource Protection Alternatives

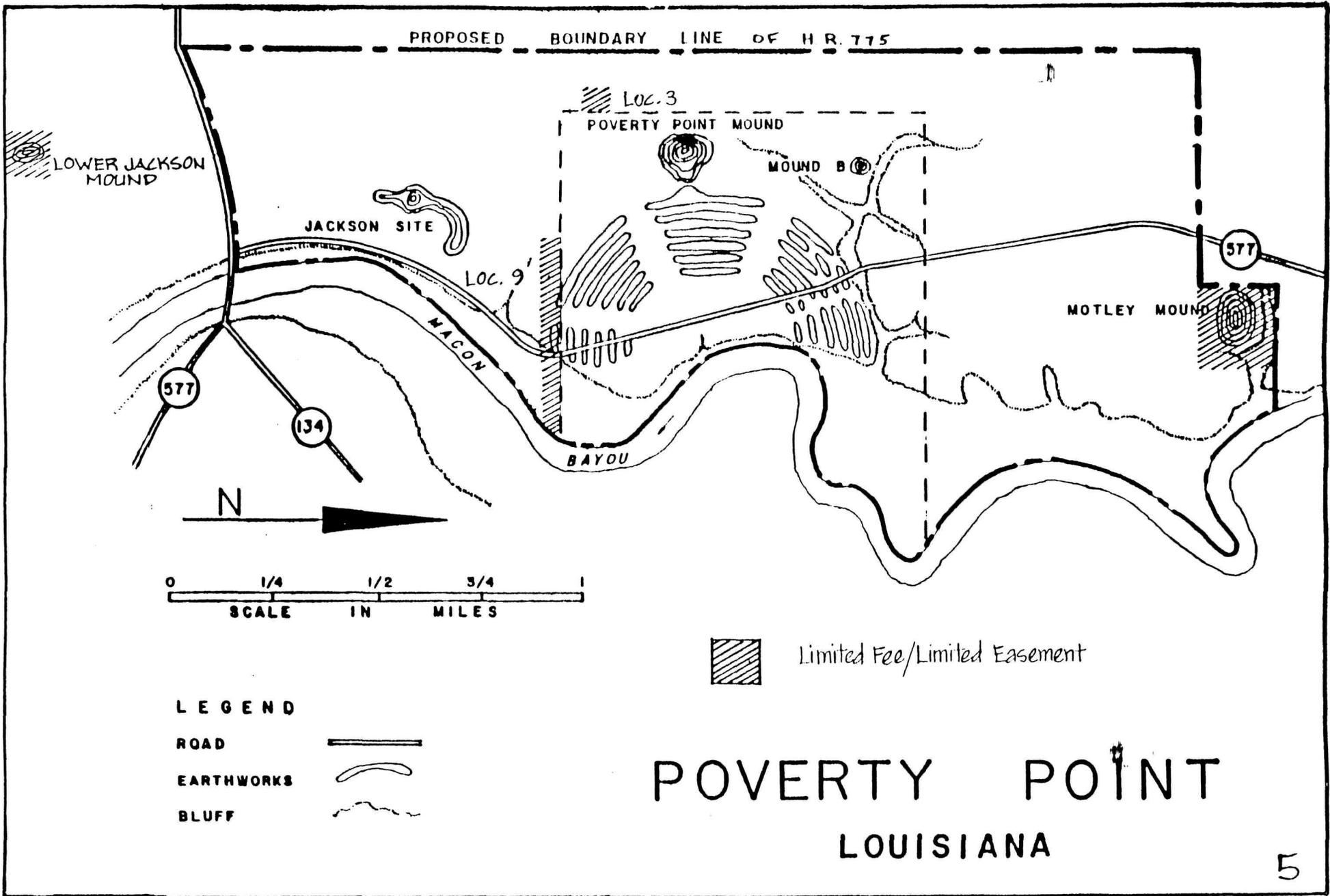
Two types of protection would be appropriate at Poverty Point: fee ownership or conservation easements.

Fee ownership would provide complete protection, as well as public access.

Easements, while they would not necessarily provide as complete protection and would not admit public access, would be less expensive. Because farming has been practiced for well over 150 years, the disturbance to the cultural resources is complete down to plow depth, but damage below that level is probably minor, if at all. Therefore, the easements would permit the continuation of farming where it has been practiced, but prevent it where it has not been practiced (Motley and Lower Jackson Mounds). The easement would also prevent subdivision or construction activities that would place permanent structures on the surface (other than homestead improvements or replacements) or would disturb the ground below plow level. Research would be permitted. The technical specifications of any archeological investigation would be subject to NPS approval, in order to protect the resources, but all other conditions (financial arrangements, scheduling, etc.) would be between the owner and researcher.

If action is to be taken to protect some or all of the priority resources described above, four resource protection alternatives are suggested:

- LIMITED FEE (Map 5) The three highest priority sites (Motley, Lower Jackson, and localities 3 & 9) would be acquired in fee, but only if the owners were willing to sell. The first and third are owned by the John Hancock Insurance Co. In each case, only the part of the property containing the high priority cultural resource would be needed, not the entire property. This alternative would provide full protection and public access, if needed, to the most important sites not now protected.
- LIMITED EASEMENT (Map 5) This provides the same resource coverage as limited fee, but protects the resources through



conservation easements instead of fee purchase. This would provide partial protection to the high priority sites, and no public access.

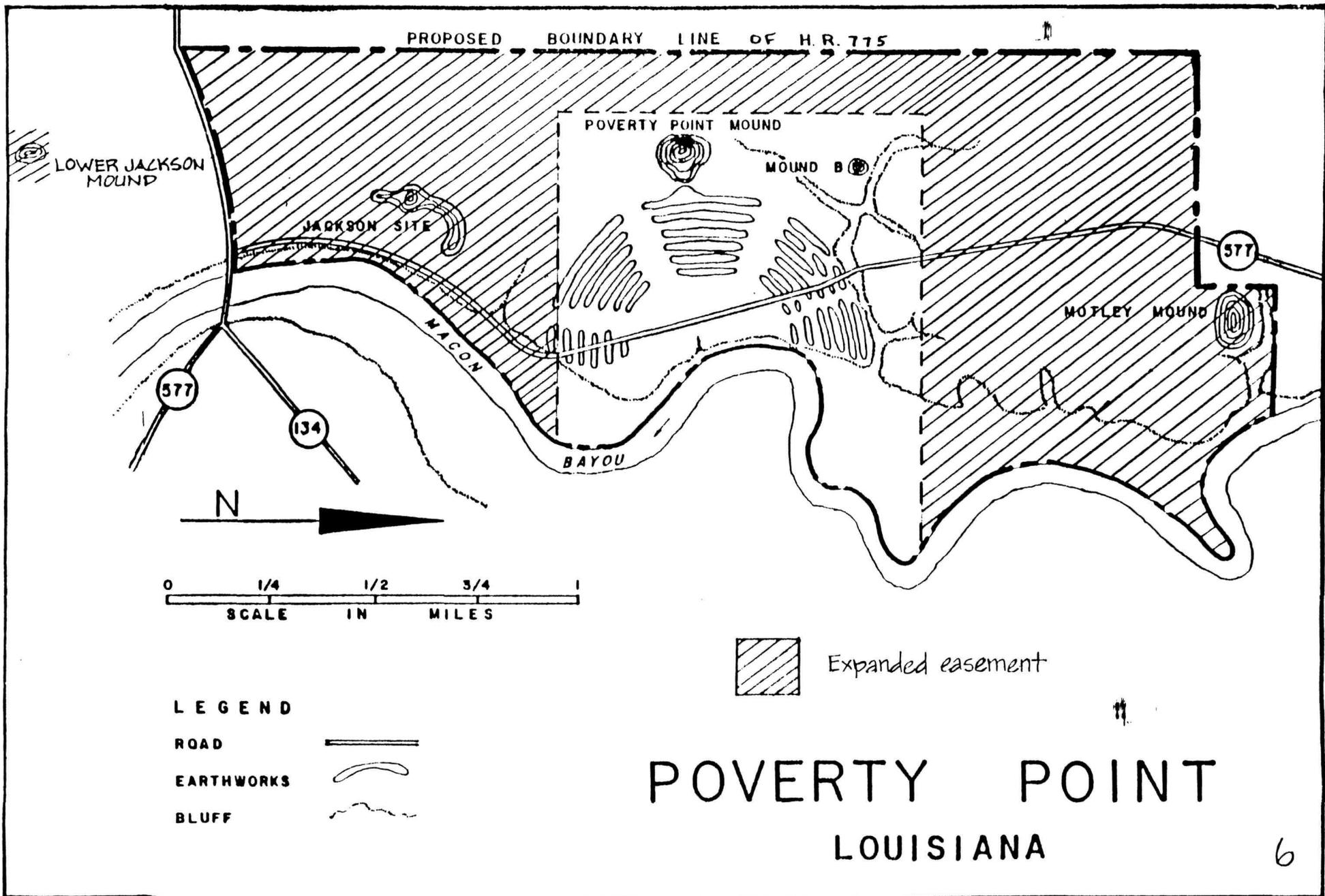
- EXPANDED EASEMENT (Map 6) Easements would be acquired on all the land under consideration (the H.R. 775 boundary plus Lower Jackson Mound). This would provide partial protection to all of the resources not now protected, but with no public access to any of them.
- COMBINED FEE-EASEMENT (Map 7) This would provide fee acquisition for the highest priority sites if the owners are willing to sell (as in limited fee) and conservation easements on the remainder.

#### Management Options

The state is doing an excellent job in protecting the cultural resources within Poverty Point State Commemorative Area and in interpreting them to the public. The National Park Service sees no reason to change the state's role within the existing park. Each of the following options, therefore, envisions a state role that is either unchanged (options 1, 2, and 4) or enlarged (3).

1. NO ACTION. The state commemorative area contains and protects some 80% of the above-ground Poverty Point features. That protection would continue unchanged. Motley and Lower Jackson Mounds, a short section of one ridge, and an unknown (but presumably great) quantity of surface scatter and subsurface resources would be left unprotected and subject to whatever purposes the owners might decide on for the land.

2. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT (CURRENT BOUNDARIES). The National Park Service and the state would enter a formal agreement to cooperate in the state's management of the existing state park. Under this agreement, NPS would provide technical assistance in archeological research and protection, interpretation, training, and planning. This could be accomplished through existing programs, or Congress could authorize special technical or financial assistance. This option would provide the same resource protection as #1, No Action. The state park could be classified as an affiliated unit of the National Park System, pending the outcome of a current study of criteria for such areas.



PROPOSED BOUNDARY LINE OF H. R. 775

LOWER JACKSON MOUND

POVERTY POINT MOUND

JACKSON SITE

MOUND B

MOTLEY MOUND

NAGON

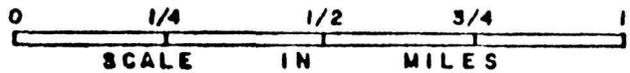
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LEGEND

- ROAD
- EARTHWORKS
- BLUFF

- Easement
- Fee
- Combined fee-easement*

# POVERTY POINT

## LOUISIANA

3. COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT (EXPANDED BOUNDARIES). This option would include the existing state park and the additional land necessary for protection of outstanding archeological sites. The National Park Service would acquire, or provide assistance for state acquisition, of land or conservation easements to protect the cultural resources (depending on which of the above resource protection alternatives was selected). The state would be responsible for management of the entire area, with technical assistance from NPS as outlined in #2. Congressional action would be required to authorize land or easement acquisition by NPS and their administration by the state, or to authorize the transfer of the lands to state ownership. The area could be classified as an affiliated area as described in #2.

4. NATIONAL MONUMENT. Congress would establish Poverty Point National Monument as a unit of the National Park System. The existing state park would continue to be managed by the state, and the NPS would be authorized to acquire land or easements on some or all of the area shown on Map 6. The state would retain the responsibility for management of the state park portion of the national monument, but NPS would be responsible for the added lands, and would provide protection, interpretation, and visitor services on them. Any one of the four resource protection alternatives above could apply to this option.

Estimated Costs

The costs of acquiring the conservation easements and/or fee titles on the properties described in this report have been estimated for each of the four resource protection alternatives.

These estimates assume a willing seller (that is, no use of condemnation) and that no mineral rights are acquired. Where fee acquisition is involved, there would be no improvements (buildings, etc.) acquired. These costs are estimates and were calculated in January, 1988.

<u>Limited fee alternative (Map 5)</u>	
Motley Mound	40.0 acres
Lower Jackson Mound	24.8
Locality 3	4.0
Locality 9	20.0
	<hr/>
	88.8 acres, fee acquisition
	\$100,000 to \$125,000

Limited easement alternative (Map 5)  
Same properties and acreage as above, conservation easements  
\$45,000 to \$60,000

Expanded easement alternative (Map 6)  
All properties within the H.R. 775 boundaries plus Lower  
Jackson Mound  
1147.7 acres, conservation easements  
\$650,000 to \$700,000

Combined fee-easement alternative (Map 7)  
Fee: same properties as in limited fee  
88.8 acres \$100,000 to \$125,000  
Easement: all the remainder  
1058.9 600,000 to 650,000  
1147.7 acres \$700,000 to \$775,000

## APPENDIX 1

### PREVIOUS RESEARCH AT THE POVERTY POINT SITE

The presence of the large earthworks at Poverty Point has been known for over a century, but it was not until Clarence B. Moore reported on the site in 1913 that scientific interest was awakened. Moore's findings did not coincide with the established cultural sequences, so archeologists were at a loss to explain the information. Consequently, they ignored it or discounted it.

Clarence H. Webb made many field trips to the site in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1935, he excavated the cache of steatite vessel fragments southwest of Mound A (in Locality 3). Webb established the chronological placement of Poverty Point in a report published in 1948.

In 1953, Dr. James A. Ford was examining aerial photographs of the area and discovered the concentric ridges. This early use of remote sensing in archeology renewed interest in the site and stimulated investigations which led to the recognition of the true nature of the site and of the Poverty Point culture.

Numerous test excavations by several archeologists were conducted at the site in the early 1950s. These investigations were of various locations on the ridges and on Mounds A and B. In 1955, Ford conducted test excavations in the south portion of Mound B and found that the mound was built over Poverty Point culture deposits.

In 1972, the Louisiana State Parks began an intensive program of test excavations. This program was designed to serve three purposes: Obtain data that could be used to answer research questions about the site and the Poverty Point culture; provide information for the interpretive program; and the excavations would themselves serve as interpretive exhibits.

In 1972-73 Carl Kuttruff and William Haag conducted test excavations of the ridges in the northeast sector of the site. They concluded that the ridges had been used as habitation areas, as had been postulated earlier by Ford and Webb. However, their excavations found only one post mold. The first excavations of the plaza area occurred during this period. In

1975, Haag tested the plaza area just east of the west segment of Ridge 1 and found very large post molds, some earth ovens, and an abundance of artifacts. In 1978, Deborah Woodiel tested the plaza area where the museum and archeological laboratory were to be constructed. No cultural resources were found in the museum area, but her excavations in the laboratory area revealed a depression that had been filled with refuse.

Prior to the construction of the Epps Gas Storage Project on lands adjacent to the state park, New World Research conducted an extensive archeological survey of the places that would be disturbed by the project (wells, access roads, pipelines, etc.). This survey, "The Peripheries of Poverty Point," provided the bulk of extant archeological data on the private lands surrounding the park.

In recent years, investigations have been geared toward determining the location and depth of cultural deposits, with the goal of differentiating the cultural from the natural components of the landscape. During three field seasons, 1980-1983, Sharon Goad excavated in Ridge 1 in the northwest sector and found that the ridge was built in two or more stages. The investigations located features both on and off the ridge. Post molds were found that probably represent structures, and a definite pattern of post molds was traced in the area off the ridge. In 1983, Glen Green and Jon Gibson tested various areas of the site, and monuments were set as geographic references for past and future investigations. Gibson tested the Dunbar Mound (also known as Mound C, an inconspicuous feature a short distance north of the visitor center) and determined that this low rise was definitely a mound. He also completed small tests in various areas to determine if certain landscape features were cultural or natural. The same year, Green excavated in Ridge 1 in the northeast sector at the edge of the bluff overlooking the bayou. This excavation was to a depth of six meters. The investigations revealed three separate midden deposits separated by basket loaded fill.

Both the Green and Gibson excavations found deposits that appeared to be lake sediments, giving rise to speculation that a shallow lake existed here at the time the site was inhabited. In 1985, Mitchel Hillman tested an area in the southeast sector that he suspected was a dock. This investigation again identified lake sedimentation and Hillman interpreted this as remnants of a back swamp area of a lake. Also in 1985, Jon

Gibson conducted several tests in the high area of the southwest sector, and in the cemetery in that area.

Currently, an intensive augering program is beginning with coring in the plaza area. This should provide a great deal of information on the stratigraphy over a wide area, with minimal disturbance to the cultural deposits.

## APPENDIX 2

### THE NPS THEMATIC FRAMEWORK FOR CLASSIFYING HISTORIC PLACES

The thematic framework was developed to show the extent to which units and cultural resources of the National Park System, affiliated areas, and national historic landmarks reflect the nation's past. All parks and landmarks are assigned to appropriate themes. By this method the comprehensiveness of the national park system and the needs for additional parks can be determined. A given site will often fit within two or more of the framework's classes.

#### THEMATIC FRAMEWORK (partial)

##### THEME I: CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS - Indigenous American Populations

###### Subtheme A: The Earliest Inhabitants

###### Facet 12: Archaic adaptations of the Mississippi Valley Region

###### Subtheme B:

###### Subtheme C: Prehistoric Archeology - Topical Facets

###### Facet 2: Prehistoric Technology

###### Facet 5: Prehistoric Arts and Handicrafts

###### Facet 8: Prehistoric Economics and Trade

As a prehistoric site, Poverty Point falls into Theme 1, Cultural Developments - Indigenous American Populations. The site would then be assigned to Subtheme A, The Earliest Inhabitants, which covers the period of the Archaic hunters and gatherers up to about 3000 years ago. Under this subtheme the site would be assigned to Facet 12, Archaic Adaptations of the Mississippi Valley Region.

Poverty Point would also be assigned to Subtheme C, Prehistoric Archeology - Topical Facets, under Facet 2 (Prehistoric Technology), Facet 5 (Prehistoric Arts and Handicrafts), and Facet 8 (Prehistoric Economics and Trade).

The framework is an attempt to fully categorize U.S. history and cultural development. The existing units of the National Park System are then fitted to those categories. Any category without park units suggests an aspect of U.S. history not represented or preserved in the system.

The thematic framework was recently revised and no assignments have been made as yet. Three NPS areas, however, will logically be assigned to Subtheme A, Facet 12: Ocmulgee National Monument (Georgia), Piscataway Park (Maryland), and Russell Cave National Monument (Alabama). None of these is similar to Poverty Point. The cultural resources of Poverty Point represent a facet of our prehistory not now preserved in the National Park System.

APPENDIX 3

THE STUDY TEAM

Don Goldman, team leader, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Ron Ice, Regional Archeologist

Nicholas DiCroce, Cartographer

Joyce Fox, Visual Information Specialist

Doug Faris, Chief, Division of Planning and Design

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and Cultural Resources

All members are with the Southwest Regional Office of the  
National Park Service in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

This report has not been reviewed by the Department of the Interior or cleared by the Office of Management and Budget. Publication of this document should not be construed as representing either approval or disapproval by the Secretary of the Interior.

Department of the Interior, National Park Service

