

were also skilled craftsmen and built strong homes, usually with clay-plastered walls and thatched roofs. They produced a wide variety of attractively decorated pottery and devised ingenious tools and weapons from materials at hand—stone and wood.

They traded with other tribes who brought them shells from the Gulf of Mexico and copper from the region of Lake Superior, and wove cloth, tanned leather, and enjoyed comforts and conveniences unknown to the simple hunters and gatherers who were their ancestors.

The builders of Emerald Mound were not a primitive people. The construction of ceremonial mounds of such great magnitude implies that the Mississippians had a complex way of life. Not only did they develop their religion to a high point, but they also had a high degree of social and political organization. Such a large scale construction required leadership and an efficient organization to direct the work.

**WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE INDIANS?** When De Soto passed through the Southeast in the 1540's the Mississippians were still numerous and powerful. The flat-topped temple mounds were still in use. Spanish horsemen mentioned riding to their tops. When the French came in about 1700, only the Natchez were still following the old Mississippian way of life. Nearly all of the villages and ceremonial centers seen by De Soto's men had been abandoned.

What happened to the teeming thousands of people, thickly scattered villages, and great ceremonial centers that De Soto saw?

We don't know what caused this rapid decline. There were probably several factors: disease introduced by the De Soto party, the arrival of new, more vigorous tribes which drove the Mississippians out, and internal strife.

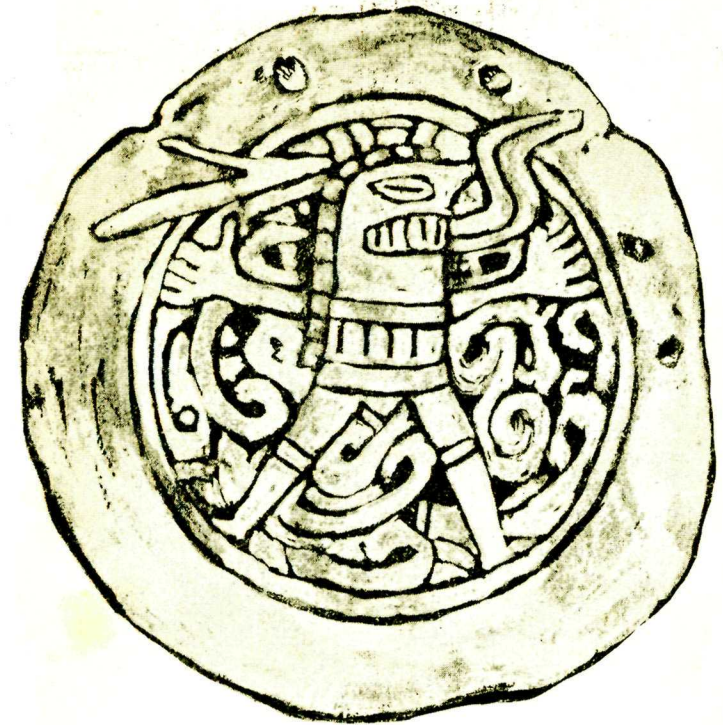
**ADMINISTRATION**—The Natchez Trace Parkway, established on May 18, 1938, is administered by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this parkway is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 948, Tupelo, Miss. 38801, is in immediate charge of the parkway.

**AMERICA'S NATURAL RESOURCES**—Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.



## EMERALD MOUND

on the NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY

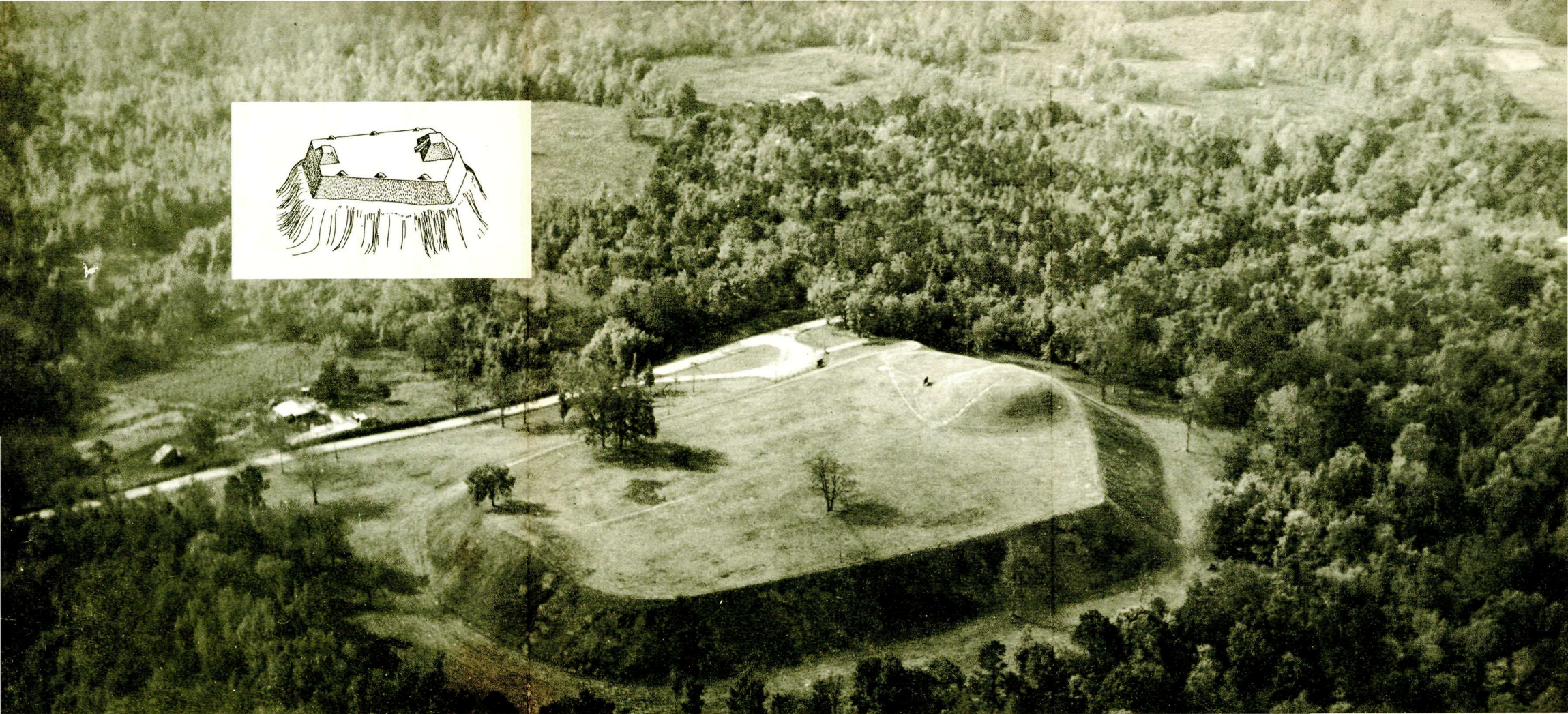
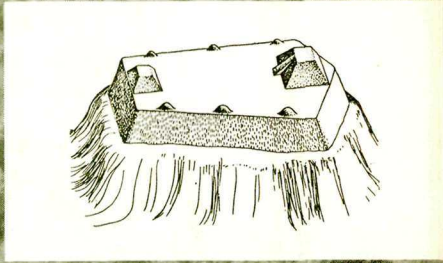
12 miles Northeast of Natchez, Mississippi



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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*Emerald Mound is the third largest mound in the United States, surpassed only in size by Monk's Mound in Illinois and Poverty Point Mound in Louisiana. It covers nearly 8 acres and measures 770 by 435 feet at its base. The secondary mound, which seems dwarfed atop its huge platform, is in its own right a large mound when compared with others found in the Southeast.*

*Who built these mounds? When and why? These questions occur to everyone who sees this majestic earthwork. The builders of Emerald have been dead for centuries and wind and rain have softened its contours, but its massive bulk still arouses interest and imagination.*

*Most Mississippian mounds were built between A.D. 1000 and 1600; Emerald Mound, begun later than some, roughly spans the period of 1300-1600.*

**THE PEOPLE**—The people who built Emerald Mound were part of a widespread Indian population residing in the Mississippi Valley and the adjacent Southeast in the centuries immediately preceding the coming of the Europeans. Divided into many tribes and speaking different languages, they nevertheless shared a common way of life, much as do the nations of Europe. We know that these Indians were the ancestors of the historic tribes—Natchez, Creek, Choctaw, and others—found by the Europeans, but it is impossible to know that a particular mound or village was built by the ancestors of a particular tribe. Let us, then, call them all Mississippians—not for the State of Mississippi but for the concentration of their village and mounds in the Mississippi River Valley.

**THE MOUNDS**—The villages of the Mississippians are marked by flat-topped earthen mounds, which are scattered throughout the Mississippi Valley and the Southeast. Sometimes, as in the case of Emerald Mound, a single

large mound marked the village or ceremonial center. More often the mounds occur in groups, arranged around a rectangular plaza area. More than a dozen groups are located within 25 miles of Emerald. The most noteworthy is the Anna Mound Group, located 12 miles north of Natchez.

Unlike the smaller and earlier mounds which were constructed to cover tombs and burials, the mounds of the Mississippians were built to support temples and ceremonial buildings. On important occasions they were the scene of elaborate civic processions, ceremonial dances, and intricate and solemn religious rituals where worshipers sought favor of their gods.

**HOW THEY LIVED**—The Mississippians were skillful farmers, producing enough corn, beans, and pumpkins to feed a dense population. Their crops were supplemented with game, fish, wild roots, fruits, berries, and nuts. They