

Ocmulgee Mounds

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Ocmulgee Mounds NHP



The Lamar Mounds and Village



THE LAMAR CULTURE

This important prehistoric town is located in the river floodplain about 2 ½ miles south of Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park's main unit. The site was named for an early landowner and, in turn, lends its name to a distinctive Late Mississippian Period Culture that was first recognized here. The Lamar Culture blanketed Georgia and portions of five neighboring states from about 1300 CE until at least 1650 CE. This particular site was established by 1350 CE.

The material culture of the people associated with the Lamar site included a pottery that incorporated decorative elements of both the ancient Woodland complicated stamping tradition and later traits such as incised designs on the shoulder of "cazuela" bowl forms. Aside from its unique ceramics, the culture is characterized by numerous compact towns with paired mounds separated by open courts, and certain artifacts that are diagnostic of the Southeastern Ceremonial Complex, which reached its zenith around 1250 CE.

MOUNDS AND BUILDINGS

The Lamar village was set up near the river and fortified by a stockade of upright logs. Swamps surrounded it and the inhabitants cultivated agricultural fields throughout the floodplain. Here the people built two mounds for their temples, facing each other across a central plaza. Lamar's spiral mound is unique in all of America. The ramp to the summit of the mound circles counterclockwise in four complete

traverses. They also built rectangular houses grouped about the mounds and nearby court. The house construction consisted of a framework of light poles interlaced with cane, which was plastered with clay and roofed with a variety of grass thatch or sometimes covered with sod. Some homes, possibly those of the headmen or rulers, were raised on low earthen platforms.

CULTURAL DISRUPTION

Lamar cultural life continued in an uninterrupted fashion until the arrival of Spaniard Hernando de Soto's expedition into the interior of the southeast in 1540. This exposure to foreigners left a legacy of depopulation among native inhabitants. It is believed that epidemic diseases introduced by the Europeans

decimated as much as three-fourths of the original Lamar population. The survivors of this catastrophe and their descendants banded together to form the groups that historically were known to the early English settlers as the Ochese Creeks and today are known as Muscogee Creeks.

PRESENT-DAY LAMAR

Presently, the Lamar site is undeveloped and closed to the general public. This is both for the protection of the site and the average visitor. The site lies within the floodplain river swamp and is annually flooded during the rains of late winter and early spring. This condition leaves the area strewn with debris deposited by

the receding floodwaters. Annual floods also increase soil fertility, and the area is densely populated with undergrowth throughout the forest. Low areas with standing pools of water provide many breeding places for mosquitoes and other insects that call the swamp their home.

LAMAR CULTURAL SITES

Many other Lamar Culture sites have been developed into parks, monuments, and museums. These sites have easy access

and often contain excellent interpretive material on the particular site and the Lamar Culture. Such sites include:

LAMAR
CULTURAL SITES
(CONTINUED)

- Fort Watson-Santee Mound in Summerton, South Carolina
- Town Creek Mound in Mount Gilead, North Carolina
- Etowah Mounds in Cartersville, Georgia
- Lake Jackson Mounds in Tallahassee, Florida
- Mound State Monument in Moundville, Alabama



(AERIAL VIEW OF THE LAMAR SITE)