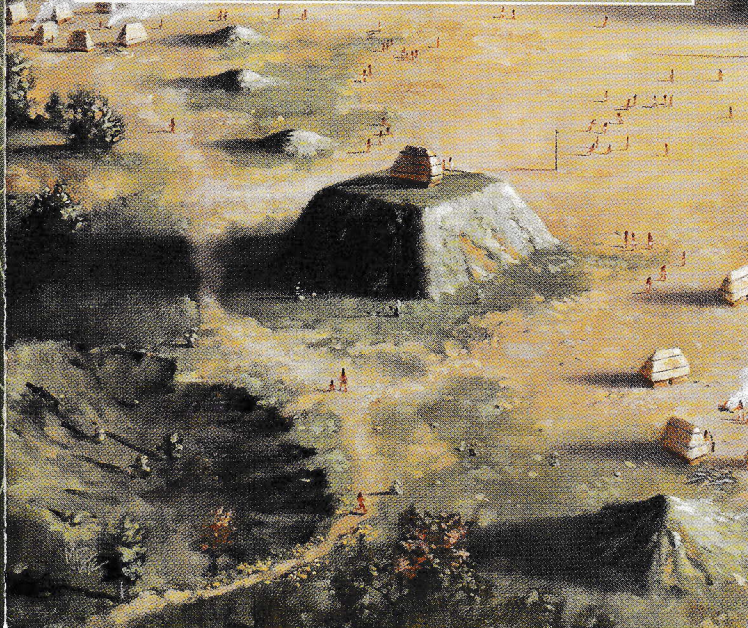
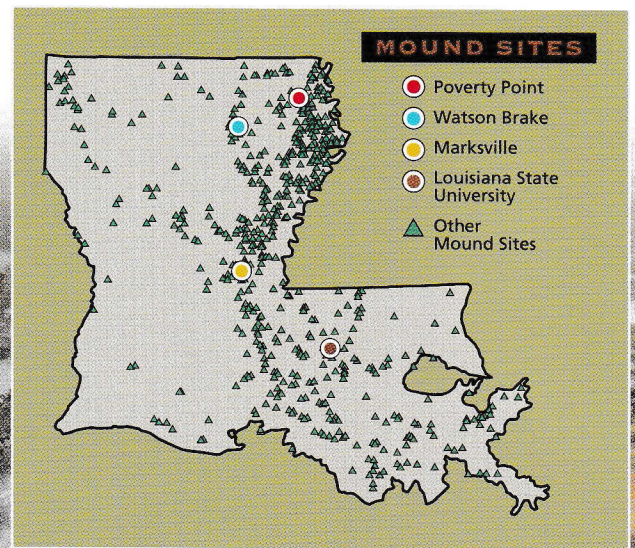


ANCIENT MOUND SITES OF LOUISIANA



LOUISIANA has some of the oldest, most spectacular, and best preserved Indian mounds in the world. Compared with other places, Louisiana has an unusually large number of mounds and earthworks, which span a long period of time. Although mounds are found throughout the state, they are most densely concentrated in northeastern and central Louisiana.

Indians first built mounds here by 4000 B.C., making them among the oldest in the Western Hemisphere. Louisiana has mounds older than the pyramids in Mexico and South America, older than Stonehenge in England, and older than the Egyptian pyramids. People still used mounds even after European explorers first arrived in the Mississippi River Valley.



Louisiana's abundant natural resources led to this area being a center of Indian mound construction. The mild climate and plentiful native plants and animals provided reliable, year-round food. The rivers, bayous, lakes, and wetlands supported mussels, fish, turtles, and other animals. Nuts, seeds, and fruits also were abundant. These foods allowed people to live in one place for a long time, making it possible for them to work together to build the large earthworks.

The oldest mounds were built between 4000 B.C. and 2500 B.C. These mounds have round tops and were probably used for ceremonies. They were not burial places, and they did not have temples or houses on top of them. Louisiana has eight of these ancient mound sites, more than any other state in the nation.

Indians built mounds in Louisiana for about 5,500 years. The mounds had many different shapes, sizes, and functions. The earliest sites had mounds with rounded tops. Later sites sometimes had flat-topped mounds with temples and chiefs' houses on them.

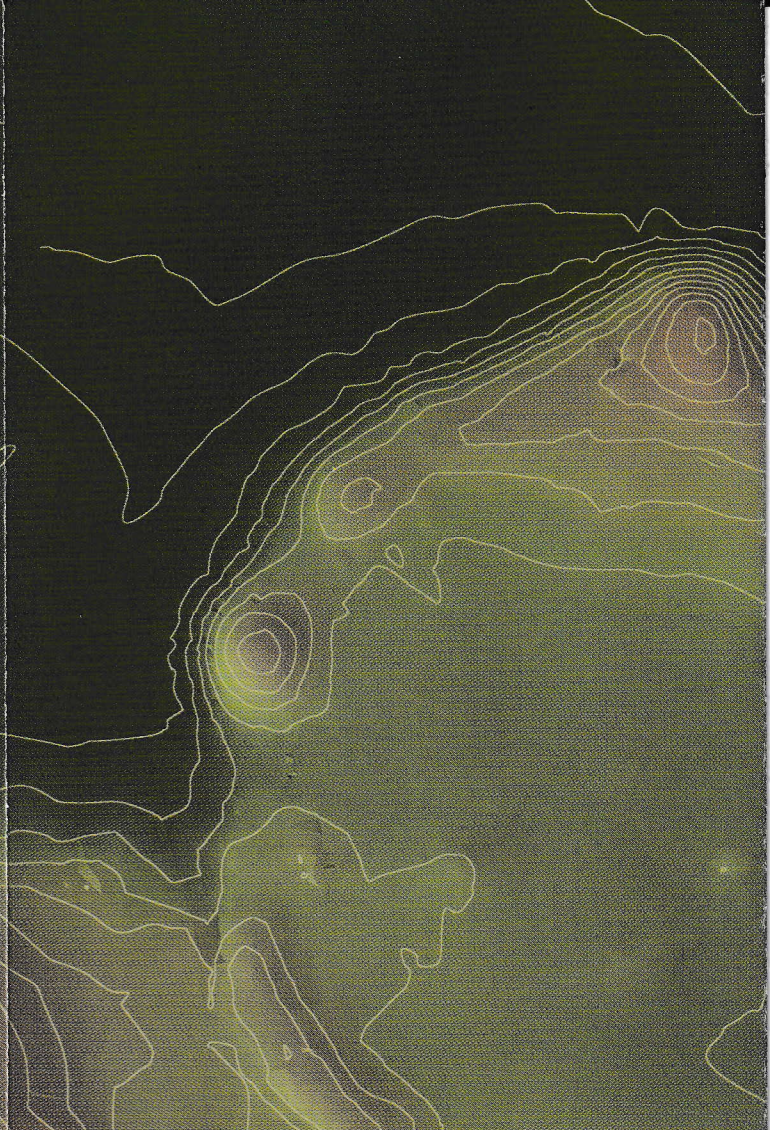


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12,500 B.C.
People crossed from Siberia to
Alaska via the Bering Land Bridge

3000 B.C.
Watson Brake Mounds and
LSU Campus Mounds built

2500 B.C.
First stones
erected at Stonehenge

4000 B.C.
First mounds built in Louisiana

2650 B.C.
First Egyptian pyramid built

LOUISIANA has more than 700 archaeological sites with mounds.

The Campus Mounds site at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge is one of these early sites. The LSU site has two mounds, each nearly 20 feet tall. All other early mound sites in Louisiana are at least partially on private property. These mounds are well protected by the landowners.

The largest early mound site ever identified is the Watson Brake site in northeast Louisiana. At that site, earthen ridges connect 11 mounds to form an oval. Currently the state owns half the site, and efforts are underway to acquire the remainder, so the site can be opened to the public.

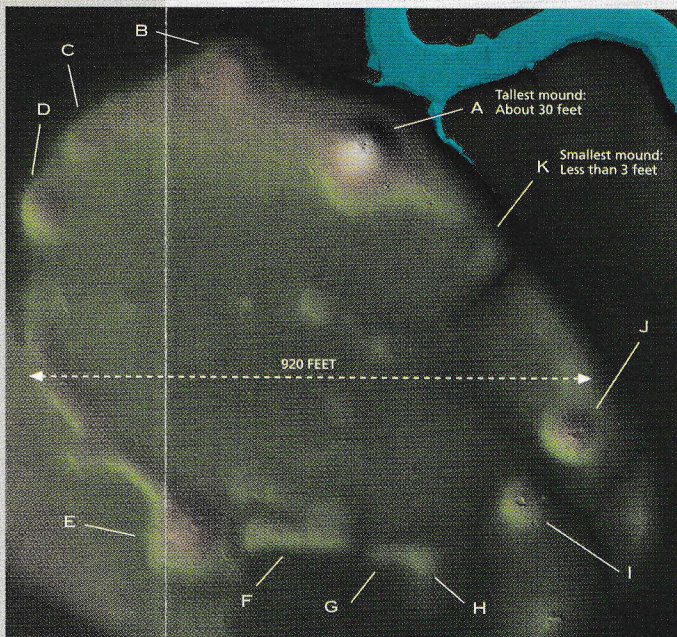
Around 1500 B.C., Indians built ridges and mounds at a place now known as Poverty Point, in West Carroll Parish. In its time, it was the largest earthworks site in the Western Hemisphere. The site has semicircular rings of ridges that measure three-fourths of a mile from north to south. Bayou Macon, which flows along the eastern side of the ridges, probably provided the food and part of the transportation network for the people living there.

Several mounds are also at Poverty Point, including one that connects with the outer ridge on the west. This mound, the largest in Louisiana, is 70 feet tall and about 700 feet long. The other Poverty Point mounds have several shapes, including conical, rectangular, and irregular. Indians at the site probably lived and worked on the ridges and conducted ceremonies on top of the mounds.

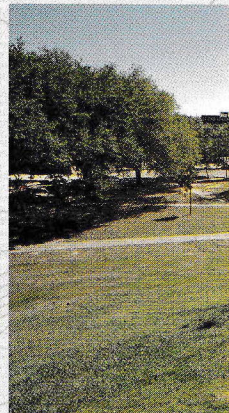
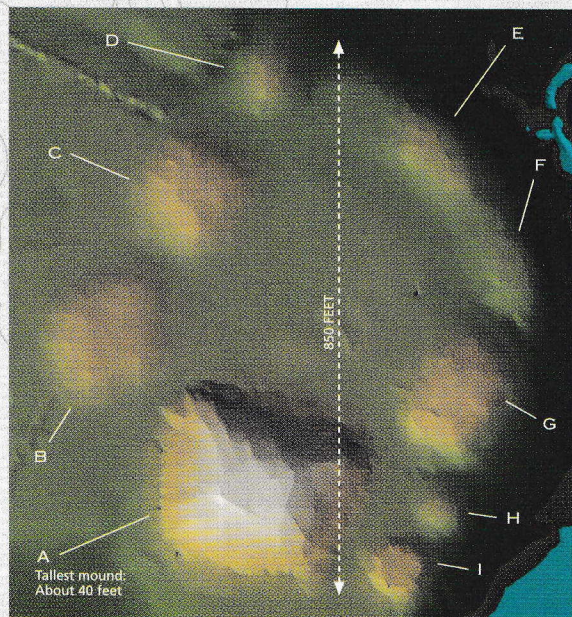
The site is owned by the state and is maintained for the public by the Office of State Parks as the Poverty Point State Historic Site. The federal government has designated Poverty Point as a National Historic Landmark.

Another mound site that is open to the public is the Marksville State Historic Site in Avoyelles Parish. It also is a National Historic Landmark. Beginning around A.D. 50, Indians constructed five mounds there, encircled by a low earthen embankment. Some of the mounds are conical, with rounded tops, and others have flat tops.

▼ THE WATSON BRAKE SITE IS UNUSUAL BECAUSE OF ITS SIZE, SHAPE, AND 5,000-YEAR-OLD AGE.



▼ THIS PRIVATELY-OWNED SITE HAS MOUNDS OF VARIOUS SHAPES AND SIZES SURROUNDING A CENTRAL PLAZA.



1500 B.C.
Poverty Point
Earthworks built

250 B.C.
Great Wall of China begun

A.D. 80
Colosseum built in Rome

A.D. 1492
Columbus reached
the Bahamas

A.D. 1803
Louisiana
Purchase

1323 B.C.
Pharaoh Tutankhamen died

440 B.C.
Parthenon built in Greece

A.D. 50
Marksville Mounds built

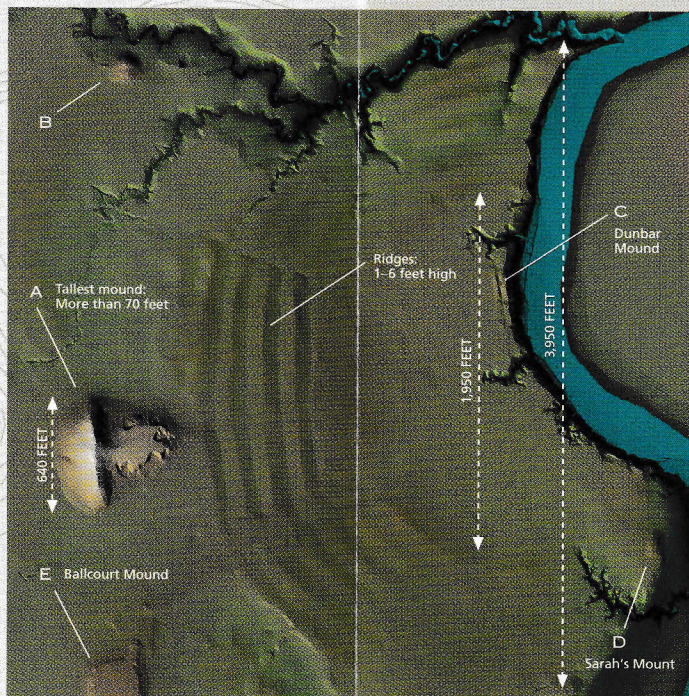
A.D. 1541
DeSoto's crew reached the Mississippi



◀ THE LSU CAMPUS MOUNDS ARE OLDER THAN THE PYRAMIDS OF EGYPT.



▼ AT THE POVERTY POINT SITE IN WEST CARROLL PARISH, INDIANS BUILT ROWS OF RIDGES, AS WELL AS MOUNDS.



▲ POVERTY POINT'S LARGEST MOUND IS MORE THAN 70 FEET TALL.

▼ AROUND A.D. 50, INDIANS BUILT THE MOUNDS AT MARKSVILLE.



At least some Marksville mounds were used as burial places. Indians living at the site made artifacts and built mounds very much like those in the Ohio River Valley. This shows that the two groups of people were in contact with each other.

By A.D. 700, Indians built mounds that were platforms for temples and leaders' houses. They also continued building conical mounds during this time. Some sites in Louisiana had multiple mounds around a central plaza with villages and gardens nearby.

Mounds were still being constructed in Louisiana in the mid-1500s, and possibly later. During the 1800s, some mounds in southern Louisiana were actively used for traditional religious activities. Today the mounds continue to be sacred and powerful places.

Louisiana has more than 700 archaeological sites with mounds. To help protect and interpret these sites, the state legislature formed the Ancient Mounds Heritage Area and Trails Advisory Commission. The commission is working to identify, recognize, preserve, and link mound sites so that residents and visitors can better understand and appreciate them.

Owners of mound sites are invited to contact the commission through the Division of Archaeology at 225-342-8170. Archaeologists are available in all areas of the state to visit sites, to assess their age and importance, and to offer suggestions about preservation methods. Private landowners whose mounds are visible from public roads, and who would like to have their mounds listed in a trail guide, are also invited to contact the commission.

All mounds on public land are protected from digging and artifact collecting. Access to all sites on private property is completely under the control of the landowner, and trespassing is forbidden by law. The Ancient Mounds Commission, the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, and the people of Louisiana are working together to preserve and recognize the nationally significant mounds of our state.