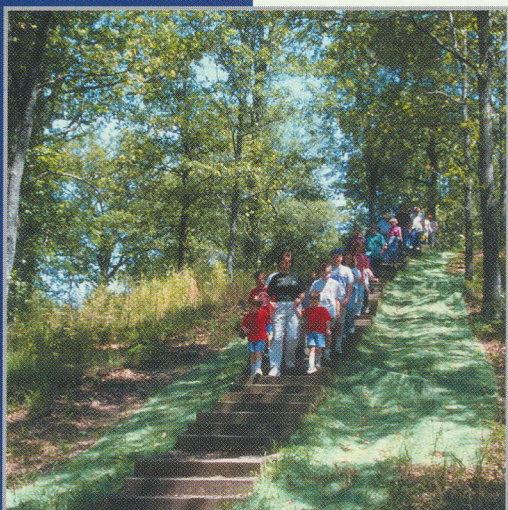


# Poverty Point State Historic Site



*L*ouisiana  
STATE PARKS



# History

A Rich Culture Flourished 12 Centuries Before Christ

The time was eight centuries after Egyptian slaves dragged huge stones across the desert to build the Great Pyramids, and before the great Mayan pyramids were constructed. The place was a site in what is now northeastern Louisiana. The people were a highly civilized group who left behind one of the most important archaeological sites in North America.

The Poverty Point inhabitants, like the ancient Mayans, set for themselves an enormous task as they built a complex array of earthen mounds and ridges overlooking the Mississippi River flood plain. This accomplishment is particularly impressive for a pre-agricultural society. The central construction consists of six rows of concentric ridges, which at one time were five feet high. The five aisles and six sections of ridges form a partial octagon. The diameter of the outermost ridges measures three-quarters of a mile. It is thought that these ridges served as foundations for dwellings although little evidence of structures has been found. However, features and midden deposits uncovered during excavations support this theory.

Earthen mounds were also built on the site. Immediately to the west of the concentric ridges lies Poverty Point Mound, a spectacular bird-shaped mound measuring about 700 by 640 feet at its base and rising 70 feet into the sky. To the north is Mound "B," a 20-foot-high conical mound, which was constructed over a bed of ash and burnt bone fragments.



*LOOKOUT POINT—In front of the Visitor Center is an observation tower which offers a panoramic view of the site, including Poverty Point Mound. At the base of the tower is a scale model of the entire facility which can be seen from atop the tower. The model gives visitors a perspective they are unable to gain from the ground.*

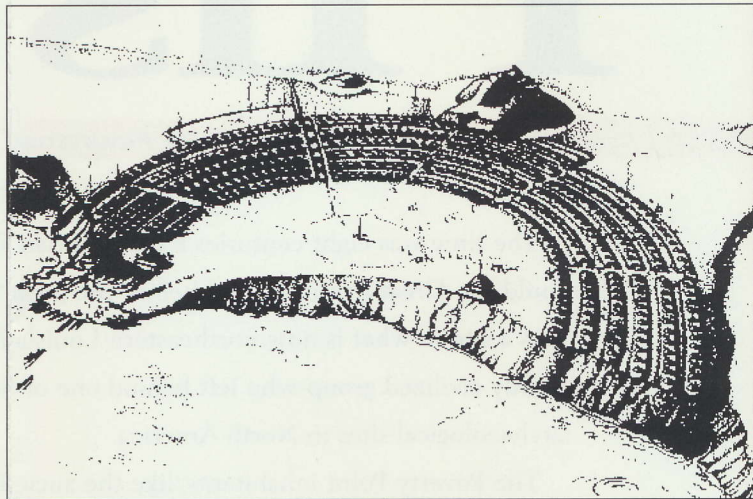
# Poverty Point

## State Historic Site

Poverty Point's inhabitants imported certain essential supplies from great distances. Projectile points and other stone tools found at Poverty Point were made from raw materials which originated in the Ouachita and Ozark Mountains and in the Ohio and Tennessee River valleys. Soapstone for vessels came from the Appalachian foothills of northern Alabama and Georgia. Other materials came from distant places in the eastern United States. The extensive trade network attests to the complex and sophisticated society that built the Poverty Point earthworks.

To prosper, an ancient culture had to be able to adapt to its environment. One adaptation of the Poverty Point people was made in the field of food preparation. Other peoples at this time used heated stones for stone-boiling liquids or in earth ovens or hearths as a method of cooking.

Because there were no stones at Poverty Point, the people ingeniously molded earthen balls for this purpose.



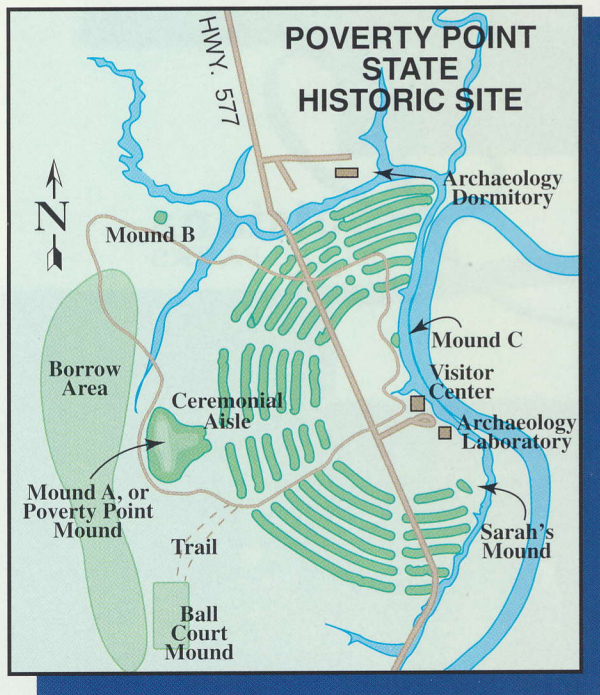
*Artist's reconstruction of the central ridged enclosure at the Poverty Point site as it may have appeared in 1350 B.C. Drawing by Jon Gibson.*

Made by hand and hardened by firing, these balls were a perfect substitute for stones in the earth ovens. Thousands of the balls, in many shapes and designs, have been found at the site.

Many more fascinating details of the Poverty Point lifestyle are on exhibit for visitors to enjoy. A large number of beads of various shapes and sizes, including bird effigies, have been found at the site. There are also many small stone tools, called "microliths," which are unique to this culture.

Poverty Point is indeed a rare remnant of an exceptional culture. It has been estimated that it took at least five million hours of labor to build the massive earthworks. Considering that the laborers carried this dirt to the site in baskets of about a 50-pound capacity, it is obvious that this

was a great communal engineering feat. The age, size and character of the Poverty Point earthworks clearly place them among the most significant finds in America today. Dated between 1700 and 700 B.C., this site of more than 400 acres is unique among archaeological sites on this continent. In 1962, Poverty Point was designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior. An interpretive museum, special events, programs and guided tours highlight activities at the park.



#### Nearby Attractions:

**Chemin-A-Haut State Park**—(East of LA 139, 10 miles north of Bastrop)—This 503-acre state park is situated on a high bluff overlooking scenic Bayou Bartholomew along an old Indian trail once used for seasonal migrations. Chemin-a-Haut is French for "high road." Located near the Louisiana/Arkansas state line, the park offers 26 improved campsites, 6 vacation cabins, a rally camping area, and a day use area with a swimming pool, picnic area and 2 playgrounds. Two barrier-free nature trails and a conference room make this a popular area year-round.

**Lake D'Arbonne State Park**—(5 miles west of Farmerville on LA 2)—A fisherman's paradise, this 655-acre state park is nestled in a pine forest and rolling hills along the shores of Lake D'Arbonne. The park features 65 improved campsites, 50 picnic tables and grills, 3 fishing piers, a boat ramp and a fish-cleaning station.

**Louisiana Purchase Gardens (Bernstein Park)**—(Standifer Rd. off US 165 South, Monroe)—Formal gardens, moss-laden trees, winding paths and lagoons surround naturalistic habitats of many rare and exotic animals that live in the zoo. Tour by boat and train.

**Tensas National Wildlife Refuge**—(Off I-20 via US 65 [Tallulah Exit] or off I-20 via LA 577 [Waverly Exit])—This refuge encompasses 57,000-acres of bottomland forest. Hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing, canoeing, interpreted trails, a boardwalk and educational programs abound. A Visitor Center contains brochures, exhibits, species lists and regulations.

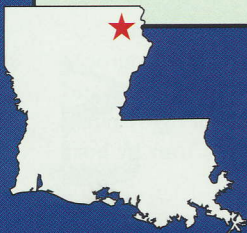
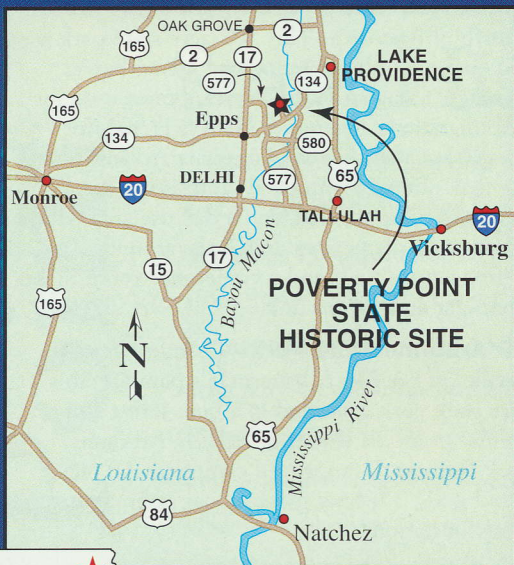
**Handy Brake National Wildlife Refuge**—(6 miles north of Bastrop on Cooper Lake Road)—Wildlife viewing is made easy with an observation tower. The site is open daylight hours only.

**Bienville Trace Scenic Byway 1**—links significant natural, cultural and recreational attractions and activities in the northeast part of state.

**Bayou Macon, Russell Sage and Georgia Pacific Wildlife Management Areas**—Outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy a variety of activities including waterfowl and game hunting, day-hiking, birding, fishing and camping at these nearby areas. Call ahead for specific information.

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### Poverty Point State Historic Site

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1-888-926-5492

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Poverty Point State Historic Site is located in West Carroll Parish, east of Monroe on LA 577. From I-20, take the Delhi exit and travel north on LA 17, east on LA 134 and north on LA 577. The site features ancient Native American earthworks which date back to 12 centuries before the birth of Christ. A museum includes an audio-visual presentation and numerous artifacts found on the site. An archaeological laboratory, picnic areas, an observation tower, restrooms and self-guided hiking trails complete the facility.



## State of Louisiana

Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism

### Office of State Parks

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