

INDIAN MOUNDS TRAIL GUIDE

Welcome to the Indian Mounds Trail. The wood chip covered trail is a 1 1/2 mile loop. Points of interest are marked by numbered wooden posts. The numbers correspond to the text below. The trail covers rolling terrain with limited climbing. Wheelchairs are not recommended. Please, "Take Pride in America" by taking only pictures and leaving only footprints.

Scientists believe that Indians lived in this area from 100 BC to 1000 AD. Thirty mounds ranging in height from 5 to 15 feet remain as evidence of this culture. It has not been possible to connect the builders of this mound group with any definite historic tribe. The Indians used this village for defense, ceremonies, burials and a trade center. The Civil War soldiers used this area for defensive purposes also.

1. Palisade Wall - This mound of earth is what remains of a stockade built by the Indians for defense. Posts were placed on end and banked with earth to hold them in place. The village was surrounded on three sides by the river and deep ravines. This palisade fence completed the defensive perimeter.

As you walk quietly down the trail you will hear the songs of many different bird species. They are abundant in this area. The significance of birds is ceremonially displayed in many artifacts of the Indians of this region.

2. 17th Kentucky Infantry Camp - There were

154 Union infantry, artillery and cavalry units camped at Shiloh on April 6, 1862. Brigadier General Sherman selected the area around Shiloh Church as a camp stating, "I am strongly impressed with the importance of the position, both for it's land advantages and its strategic position. The ground itself admits of easy defense by a small command and yet affords admirable camping ground for a hundred thousand men". The 4th Division was camped in this area. They used Cloud Field for training.

The Indians used this field for growing food, hunting and defense. From the palisade wall enemies could be visually detected.

3. Gage's Alabama Battery - Their Commander stated, "I cannot speak too highly of the energy and labor displayed by the men of this battery throughout the day in cutting their way through a thickly wooded country over ravines and hills". They fought in almost every attack and now supported the advance on Grant's last defensive line, but the Confederates encountered another foe, Dill Branch ravine, which made the final approach to Grant's last line of defence a task equal to scaling the wall of a fortress.

4. Dill Branch Ravine - The Indians used this ravine for defense. It also played an important role in the defense of Pittsburg Landing. The Confederate soldiers charged through ankle deep water enduring rifle and cannon fire from Grant's last defensive line and a barrage from the Gunboat's *Tyler* and *Lexington* anchored in the river at the mouth of the ravine.

5. Ceremonial Mound - Temples were constructed on the top of the flat mounds. Religious ceremonies and tribal councils were conducted there. The Chief made decisions, resolved disputes, and ran matters of importance to the tribe as a whole. Perhaps the Indians built the mound in this location to observe the approach of travellers on the Tennessee River.

The Tennessee River added to the defense of the Indian village, provided a means of transportation, and established trade routes. The Northern Armies used the River to invade the South and eventually cut the Confederacy in half. Also, flooding due to spring rains, prompted the Federal soldiers to camp on the high ground at Pittsburg Landing.

It was from this area that Colonel Nathan Bedford Forrest and his scouts watched as General Don Carlos Buell's men were ferried across the river to join Grant's army at Pittsburg Landing. This information could have changed the outcome of the battle, but it was not received by General Beauregard who assumed command at the untimely death of General Albert Sidney Johnston.

Close your eyes for just a moment. In this stillness you can almost hear the activities in the Indian village. Men chipping flint, children playing games that will enhance their hunting skills, or the tribal medicine man singing his healing chants beside a ceremonial fire.

6. Burial Mound - This dome shaped mound was a burial place for the most important people in the village. It contained 12 skeletons. Weapons, beads and food were also found. The Indians believed in life after death, and provided the deceased supplies for his continued journey.

As you continue the trail you will walk through a decaying tree on the ground. Decay is a stage in the process of life. The tree will now return vital nutrients to the soil to be used by later generations of plant life. If this process did not take place soil would soon become non-productive because of the lack of food, which new plants must have to grow. Without plants there could be no animals including man. Thus, decaying logs lend vitality to new generations.

7. House Mounds - These smaller mounds of earth are where the conical shaped mud and straw houses were located. The design was similar to tents used by the Federal soldiers. Both had the same shape and used a hole in the roof for smoke. The soldiers were lucky because the stoves they used had a pipe which extended through the hole. The Indians just built a fire and let the smoke find its own way out.

We hope you enjoyed your walk. If you do not need the trail guide, please return it to the box on the main trail sign. This will allow others to use the same map and help conserve our natural resources. Thank you.

