

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wisconsin	
COUNTY: Jefferson	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: Aztalan

AND/OR HISTORIC: Aztalan

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 17 & NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Sec. 20, T.7N, R.14E
Near Lake Mills on Wisconsin B, Aztalan State Park

CITY OR TOWN: Aztalan, Lake Mills vicinity Congressional District: Ninth

STATE: Wisconsin CODE: 55 COUNTY: Jefferson CODE: 055

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (continued)

STREET AND NUMBER: 4610 University Avenue

CITY OR TOWN: Madison STATE: Wisconsin CODE: 55

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Jefferson County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Jefferson STATE: Wisconsin CODE: 55

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Wisconsin

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FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Aztalan is located near Lake Mills, Wisconsin, on the banks of the Crawfish River several feet above river level. Covered with grass and a few groves of trees, the partially reconstructed archeological site operates as a State Park. The landmark, which is mainly on the west side of the river, was once a bustling village and ceremonial center surrounded by 12-foot high walls and associated with numerous mounds.

The palisade with watchtowers at regular intervals surrounding this large fortified village was one of the major causes for the early interest in the site. Originally thought to have been of brick, the walls were considered unique. It was not until 1919 when Dr. S. A. Barrett excavated the site that post molds were discovered which indicated that the stockade had been constructed of wooden poles covered with clay plaster. In some areas, the walls showed evidence of burning, and it is understandable that the burnt clay plaster could have been mistaken for brick. This new understanding of the wall's construction revealed that Aztalan was not unique but was similar to other sites in the Midwest and Southeast (such as Cahokia). Portions of this stockade which have been reconstructed by the Wisconsin Archeological Survey are identified by the green line on Map B.

Within the stockade were three platform mounds in the northwest, southwest, and northeast corners of the site. In the southeast corner, a slight rise has been determined to be natural. In 1850, the mounds were surveyed by I. Lapham who described the earthen structure in the southwest as 53 feet square at the top. At that time, the mound in the northwest was 60 feet by 65 feet at its summit, and the top of the mound in the northeast corner measured 50 feet north/south running at an angle to meet the ground surface at the west.

Excavations by Dr. Barrett around 1920 and by the Wisconsin Archeological Survey in 1951 indicate that the southwest mound had three to five different stages of construction. Likewise, the northwest mound, excavated by the Survey in 1954, had three building stages. The third earthen structure, excavated by Barrett and by the Survey during the 1964, 1967, and 1968 seasons of their investigation, was completely built at one time. The mounds in the southwest and northwest portions of the site have been reconstructed.

On the second stage of the southwest mound was a 42 foot square wooden post structure. Below the structure, a charred pole was found centered on the top of the mound. Similarly, a crematorium surrounded by a wooden post structure was discovered on the second building stage of the northwest mound. The northeast mound was built over a cleared area which had once contained a 45' x 90' structure; a similar structure, also 45' x 90', was then built on top of the mound.

Nineteenth century descriptions of the interior features of the stockade include depressions and ridges indicative of houses. Barrett's

(continued)

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) approximately 1100-1300 A.D.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Situated on the banks of the Crawfish River in Jefferson County, Wisconsin (T. 7N, R. 14E, Secs. 17 & 20), Aztalan represents an important northern extension of the Cahokia phase of the Middle Mississippi Culture. The largest site known in Wisconsin, Aztalan was probably the most populous prehistoric center in the area during the period of its occupation (about A.D. 1100-1300). The site consisted of a 21-acre village surrounded by a stockade of wooden posts, 12 feet high plastered with clay. Within the village walls were two earthen truncated pyramids and a third low platform mound used for ceremonial purposes. Outside the stockade were associated burial mounds, some of which are still in excellent condition. Now owned by the State of Wisconsin, two of the platform mounds and parts of the stockade have been reconstructed as integral to the development of Aztalan State Park.

The History

Aztalan was first discovered in 1836 with the initial white colonization of the Wisconsin Territory. In that year, it was described by Judge N. F. Hyer in an article in the Chicago American. In 1837, this initial report was amplified in an article in the Milwaukee Advertiser. Hyer named the site Aztalan because he erroneously thought it was the original homeland of the Aztecs who later migrated to Mexico.

In 1850, the site was surveyed by Increase Lapham who described it in his "Antiquities of Wisconsin" published by the Smithsonian Institution. His map, a copy of which accompanies this form (Map B), was completed before cultivation destroyed any of the site and therefore serves as a useful guide for the site's reconstruction.

Aztalan is a frequently excavated site. The first scientific excavations, by Dr. S. A. Barrett in 1919, 1920, and 1932, identified the site as a close relative of Cahokia and placed it in its position as an important northern extension of the Middle Mississippi Culture. In 1848, the site became State property; and since that time intermittent excavations by the Wisconsin Archeological Survey (1949, 50, 51, 52, 54, 64, 67, 68) have been conducted in an attempt to gain enough scientific information for its proper reconstruction and development.

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wisconsin Archeologist, Special issue on Aztalan, vol. 39, no. 1, 1958.
 Barrett, S. A., Ancient Aztalan, Bulletin of Public Museum of City of Milwaukee, vol. XIII, 1933.
 Freeman, Joan, unpublished report.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES					
CORNER	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE			
A	UTM	16.348840	4770370		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
B		16.348620	4769120		°	'	"	°	'	"
C		16.348050	4769300							
D		16.348380	4770380							

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **approximately 120 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Francine Weiss, Staff Archeologist, Landmark Review Project

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service** DATE: **Jan. 8, 1975**

STREET AND NUMBER:
1100 L Street NW.

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** ZIP: **20240** CODE: **11**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Landmark Designated: **July 19, 1964**

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
 Boundary Certified:

Date: **8 Oct 31 1977**

ATTEST: **W. Shultz 2**
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: **12/7/77**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. Description: (1)

Aztalan

excavations identified the northeast sector as the village site; there he uncovered a circular house and a rectangular wall trench house. Three more house sites were excavated in 1949 by the Wisconsin Archeological Survey. They included a roughly rectangular house outside of the stockade, a circular house with its wall extended to screen the winds at the entrance, and a rectangular pit house. The 1964 and 1967 excavations yielded the location of additional houses, both rectangular and circular. One of these was reconstructed in 1972 but was destroyed by vandals shortly thereafter. Numerous refuse and fire pits containing artifacts, bone and shell fragments, seeds, and human bone were scattered in and among these houses.

The early 1850 map of the site by Lapham indicates that 44 mounds were located on a terrace to the west and north of the stockade. Only 10 of these remained in good condition by the time of Barrett's 1919 excavations, which revealed large post pits in the centers of the mounds at their bases.

Artifacts recovered from the numerous digs at Aztalan include: grit- and shell-tempered pottery, small triangular points, knives, drills, scrapers, a large number of celts, abraders, a stone cup, an ear spool, shell hoes, shell ornaments, bone awls, antler points, and a discoidal "chunkey" stone.

The Development of Aztalan Park

At the present time, the site consists of the partially reconstructed stockade, the two reconstructed mounds inside the stockade, and the remaining associated mounds north and west of the fortified village.

Roads, parking lots, picnic areas and any future buildings associated with park functions which fall within landmark boundaries are intrusive; for they do not belong to the period of prehistoric Indian occupation.

The landmark designation also includes a small zone not located within the park. Part of this area is owned by Aztalan Historical Society and the rest is presently for sale. This portion of the site contains one mound and is therefore included within the landmark boundaries. The residences and other buildings on this property are intrusive.

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7. Description: (2)

Aztalan

Boundaries

Refer to the lines on Maps A and B for a clarification of the landmark boundary. Beginning at a point at the southeast corner of the intersection of Town Road with State Route B, the boundary proceeds east about 1100 feet along the south side of Route B to its intersection with the east bank of the Crawfish River, then generally south along the east bank of the Crawfish River for about 4000 feet to a point due east of the mouth of a small creek or draw which runs east/west through Aztalan State Park, then west about 200 feet to the mouth of this small creek, then generally west up the creek and draw about 1500 feet to its intersection with the east side of Town Road, then generally north along the east side of Town Road to the point of beginning.

The landmark at Aztalan, as reflected by the accompanying boundary, is the Aztalan Site proper--that is, the large village with its associated platform mounds, burial mounds, and palisades. The village of Aztalan lies on the west bank of the Crawfish River and roughly parallels the river. The eastern bank of the Crawfish serves as the eastern landmark boundary. Despite the fact that the village proper lies on the west bank, the portion of the river adjacent to the site has been purposely included within landmark boundaries; for it is conceivable that portions of the site have been eroded away by the river and that the river itself may contain some cultural material. Town Road is the western boundary of the landmark. Like the site, this street roughly parallels the river, and current knowledge of the extent of the village remains indicates that it lies between the river and the road. Tests on the western side of the road have not yielded cultural materials. The northern boundary of the landmark has been determined by the location of the northernmost mound of the mound group in the northwest corner of the site. This mound group lies at the southeast corner of Route B and Town Road, and thus Route B has been chosen as the convenient northern boundary. The southern boundary of the site is the small creek in the State Park. Test excavations have revealed that the village is confined to the north of this creek.

There are numerous other sites scattered along the banks of the Crawfish River. If and when an intensive survey of the area is done, it may be possible to nominate a National Register district based on the settlement pattern along the river. At the present time, however, there is not enough data accumulated for this type of nomination, and the landmark includes only the currently identifiable remains of the village of Aztalan itself. It should be pointed out that survey data about the area is being acquired (See Stuebe, 1976, addendum bibliography), but the survey teams appear to be concentrating several miles upstream from Aztalan proper. There have been some sites discerned in the more immediate vicinity of Aztalan; if the limits and potential significance of these can be determined, they should perhaps be studied individually by the State for inclusion on the National Register.

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7. Description: (3)

Aztalan

Boundaries - (Continued)

A mound group directly across the river from Aztalan has not been included within landmark boundaries; for according to Joan Freeman, the Wisconsin State Archeologist, it does not relate to the occupation at Aztalan. This area may also be eligible for listing as a National Register property of State or local significance and should perhaps be studied by the State.

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8. Statement of Significance: (1) Aztalan

Interpretation of the Site

As explained in detail in section 7, Physical Description, the site consists of a large stockaded village which once contained three platform mounds and was associated with numerous nearby mounds. The mounds, along with the buildings and post pits associated with them, probably served some ceremonial purpose. Rectangular and circular houses, hearths, and refuse pits mark the interior of the fortification. Artifacts unearthed at the site include: small triangular points; knives; drills; scrapers; shell hoes; bone awls; antler points; an earspool; a chunky stone; a large number of celts; and shell- and grit-tempered pottery decorated with indentations, incised lines, and basket and net markings. Skeletons and burned bone have also been recovered from the Aztalan excavations.

Hunting, fishing, gathering wild plant foods, and farming supplied the Indians at Aztalan with their dietary needs. Plant remains found at the site include: corn, squash seeds, choke cherries, and wild grass and weed seeds. Deer bones comprise the majority of the animal bones excavated; and the identification of water mussels, and pigeon and fish bones provide evidence for the use of other animals.

Human bones, obviously cannibalized, have also been found at Aztalan. Broken for the extraction of marrow and charred from baking, these bones have been excavated from refuse pits along with similarly treated bone and shell of other animals. The extent of the role cannibalism played in the diet of these Indians has not been accurately determined. The most recent estimation indicates that the number of human individuals is small in comparison to the number of deer bones, perhaps suggesting some ceremonial significance to the cannibalism.

Historic accounts of Southeastern Indian villages contribute to the archeologist's understanding of Aztalan. The use of the structures on top of the mounds as houses for the chief of the village, repositories for the property of a chief, repositories for the dead, sanctuaries, or meeting houses is known from accounts of early travelers. The excavation of chunky stones from the site indicates the possibility of locating a village square at Aztalan used for playing the chunky game, for such a plaza is known from historical records.

The original interpretations (e.g. Hyer's and Lapham's) of Aztalan noted similarities between the Aztec villages and Aztalan, attributing them to either a migration to Aztalan from Mexico or a colonization of Mexico from Aztalan. They often ignored the similarities of the site to other Midwestern and Southeastern prehistoric and historic Indian villages. Present interpretations, however, recognize this important relationship and discount the early explanations. Based on striking similarities of pottery and art style, and

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8. Statement of Significance: (2)

Aztalan

platform mound and stockade construction, the relationship becomes obvious when one compares Aztalan to such sites as Cahokia, Dickson Mounds, and Angel Mounds. Indeed so close in style are features of Cahokia and Aztalan that some archeologists view the latter as a settlement of people who migrated from the former. It should be noted, however, that some of the pottery at Aztalan also closely resembles styles of Woodland cultures in the vicinity. Therefore perhaps Aztalan represents a migration of Mississippian people into the area accompanied by an assimilation of the Woodland people living there; or perhaps it is a manifestation of the diffusion of Mississippian ideas into what was a general Woodland culture. Whatever the case, Aztalan represents a northward settlement of a culture known as Middle Mississippi. The Mississippian Period derives its name from its location in the Mississippi Valley and is characterized by platform mounds, agriculture, permanent villages, and artifacts similar to those found at Aztalan. Middle Mississippi refers to those sites located in the central regions of the Mississippi Valley.

Thus, the relationships between Cahokia and Aztalan and between the Late Woodland cultures local to the area and the intrusive Mississippian culture are among the major aspects in need of clarification at Aztalan. One approach to these questions might involve studies of the other smaller contemporaneous sites in the Crawfish Valley to determine what affect the village of Aztalan had on the outlying communities, for Aztalan appears to have been the major center of this area. It is possible that Aztalan served as a trading center to gather resources for export to the southern Mississippian villages such as Cahokia, but the degree of political and economic control which Cahokia had over the Aztalan area is unclear.

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ADDENDUM to Aztalan National Register Form

Aztalan
September 8, 1977

#7 - Since the 1974 NPS visit, there have been some test excavations between Town Road and the road leading into the State Park in an area on which a parking lot is to be built. The area apparently did not yield significant cultural material.

#8 - More recent work interpreting some of the excavated materials from Aztalan has indicated that the site was probably occupied only for a short period of time. Radiocarbon dates fall between 900 and 1620 A.D., but the upper and lower limits appear to be inaccurate, and the rest of the dates appear to cluster between 1075 and 1175 A.D. (Stoltman, 1976). In addition, a comparison of the Aztalan pottery types with those of dated Cahokia types indicates occupation from about 1000 - 1150 A.D. (Peters, 1976). The fact that there is little documented cultural change at the site lends credence to the idea of a short-term occupation as does the abrupt disappearance of Mississippian tracts from this area. It has been suggested that this short-term occupation did not allow the Mississippian culture to take a firm hold in this northern outpost region (Stuebe, 1976). The intrusive elements may have belonged to a minority group of specialists who migrated from Cahokia and attempted to control the trade and trading routes from the north to the more southern Mississippian sites (Peters, 1976). Some archeologists (e.g. Peters, 1976) view this trade as a primarily one-way movement of luxury goods from the north to the south, for there are numerous northern goods found at southern sites but few southern goods at the northernmost Mississippian outpost of Aztalan. Of course, as Peters (1976) himself points out, the goods traded to the north may have been perishable items such as food. Nevertheless, the evidence seems to point to the fact that the intrusion of Mississippian cultural ideas into the Aztalan region was short-lived, perhaps because the local people didn't like the arrangement and were strong enough to resist it (Peters, 1976).

#9 - Bibliography

Peters, G. R.

1976 "A Reevaluation of Aztalan: Some Temporal and Causal Factors," The Wisconsin Archeologist, 57(1):2-11.

Stuebe, F.K.

1976 "Site Survey and Test Excavations in the Aztalan Area," The Wisconsin Archeologist, 57(4):198-259.

Stoltman, J. B.

1976 "Two Late Woodland Radiocarbon Dates from the Rosenbaum Rockshelter and their Implications for Interpretations of Wisconsin Prehistory," The Wisconsin Archeologist, 57(1):12-28.