

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Moundville Site

and or common Mound State Monument

**2. Location**

street & number Mound Parkway, Box 66

not for publication

city, town Moundville vicinity of

state Alabama

code 01

county Hale

code 065

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name University of Alabama

street & number Box 1964

city, town Tuscaloosa vicinity of

state Alabama 35486

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Tuscaloosa County Courthouse / Hale County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Tuscaloosa / Greensboro

state Alabama

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title None

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

There are 34 mounds in the central group at Moundville, 18 of which form a hollow square. The largest mound is 58½ feet high and covers about 1 and 3/4 of ground. It contains about 111,700 cubic yards of soil. The artificial plateau adjoining the northern base of mound B covers about 2 acres.

With the subsequent donation of the land to the State, Mound State Park was established in 1933. Its name was changed to Mound State Monument in 1938. The initial work of converting the site into a park was conducted by the Civilian Conservation Corps in cooperation with the National Park Service. The mounds and lakes were restored, and roads were constructed. By 1939, a museum had been completed, and in 1947, the archaeological laboratory was built. As previously indicated, much of the excavation conducted at the site involved salvage of materials prior to construction activities. In the 1960's and 1970's, after the park and the Alabama Museum of Natural History had become a part of the University of Alabama, a reconstruction of a temple was built on top of Mound B and several structures of a reconstructed village were built within park boundaries. These replicas are not in keeping with current preservation ideas, but seem to have some interpretive value for the public. Development of the site continues at the present time with plans for a new laboratory.

## Landmark Area and Condition

Moundville Site encompasses approximately 300 acres and consists of two non-contiguous areas: the major mound group along with related village and plaza areas, and a single mound structure situated northeast of the major mound group. This single earthen structure, a small platform mound, recorded as Tu-50, is located in the SW ¼ NW ¼ Section 31, T24N:R5E at the 150 foot contour line. The State holds a ninety-nine year lease on this mound. In 1975, Dr. Krause (with the University of Alabama) tested this mound. Results are inconclusive but suggest a direct association to the major mound group.

When visited in 1933 by W.B. Jones, this structure measured about 35 feet square at its base and 30 feet square at its summit with heights of 12 feet at the north side, 10 feet at the south side, and 21 feet at the east side.

The condition of this landmark is good. Between the two properties is an asphalt plant (appears to be inactive) and a chemical plant (newly constructed). The necessary activities involved with and for these plants have destroyed any resource within this area. Material culture is evident on the undulated surface, along with many holes which appear to serve as "spot dumps" for waste. For these reasons, this area is omitted from the Landmark boundaries.

The major mound area has been planted in grass and is well cared for. The numerous structures and facilities associated with the park (labs, museum, other smaller structures, roads, reconstructions, camping facilities, and etc.) do not contribute to the national significance of the property which is based on the intrinsic archaeological value of the site. However, many of them contribute an invaluable service to the public as interpretive aids, and exist out of necessity.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates N/A Builder/Architect N/A

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Moundville is a major representative of Mississippian culture in the southern portion of its distribution and acted as the center for a southerly diffusion of this culture towards the Gulf Coast. It is one of the three major southern cult centers and as such has produced a great quantity of very elaborate ceremonial material.

### History

Moundville was settled first in the tenth century, A.D., and its growth as a ceremonial center probably began in the eleventh century. From the twelfth through fifteenth centuries its massive mounds and hundred acre plaza gave focus to the economic, political, and ritual life not only for its own habitants but for the inhabitants of minor ceremonial centers and villages in a 240-mile area of the Lower Black Warrior River Valley as well.

By 1100 A.D. Moundville had been established as the major ceremonial center in the valley. In effect the pattern of a single large center, minor centers, villages, and hamlets marked the Moundville Phase from its beginning. Limited evidence from Moundville, and corroborative data from the Bessemer site which is located in the upper Black Warrior drainage network, shows that space and persons are now differentiated on basis other than subsistence and other household activities and roles that stem solely from age, sex, and achievement. The distinction between mound and village is one aspect of this differentiation, but at Moundville a further distinction is made between residential areas and sectors of the site containing public buildings.

Ascriptive, hierarchical ranking of persons can be seen in the mortuary remains from Moundville and other sites of this period, and at least one political office can be isolated from the mortuary ceremonialism. The distribution of artifacts on the site shows that various industrial and ritual activities paralleled the distribution of dwellings and other structures.

An analysis of over 2,000 burials showed that mortuary ritual divides the Moundville population into two clear-cut strata. Approximately 5% of the population were buried with copper and stone items associated with the "Southern Cult" and were interred either within or near the mounds. Key artifacts and symbols are found with men, women, and children of this group. The remaining 95% of the burials closely paralleled age and sex divisions within this population. Once the elite stratum is removed, the variability in mortuary ritual seems to have been based on life history and achievement rather than an ascriptive criteria.

The locations for Moundville phase sites were apparently chosen on the basis of a number of criteria. Peebles (n.d.) analysis indicates that ecological considerations weighed heavily in the choice, for all Moundville phase sites are located in valleys with high agricultural potential and in areas of great ecological and physiographic diversity. The Moundville inhabitants apparently needed sandy loam soils to produce substantial harvests of corn, squash, etc. through their primitive agricultural techniques. In addition, the site is situated

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 230

Quadrangle name Fosters

Quadrangle scale 1=24,000

### UTM References

A	<u>16</u>	<u>441330</u>	<u>3652560</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<u>16</u>	<u>441570</u>	<u>3651780</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>16</u>	<u>441240</u>	<u>3651340</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D	<u>16</u>	<u>440360</u>	<u>3651640</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E	<u>16</u>	<u>440300</u>	<u>3652410</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F	<u>16</u>	<u>440390</u>	<u>3652410</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>	<u>  </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state Alabama code 01 county Hale code 065

state Alabama code 01 county Tuscaloosa code 125

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul Hawke, Historian (from original by Francine Weiss)

organization National Park Service, Preservation Services date March 14, 1986

street & number 75 Spring Street, Suite 1150 telephone (404)331-7719

city or town Atlanta state Georgia

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

For NPS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

date 9/30/86

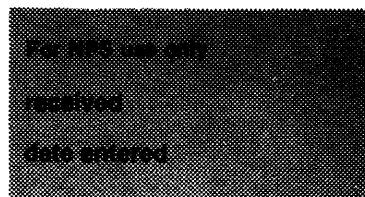
Attest:

Chief of Registration

date \_\_\_\_\_

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

between two major physiographic zones--the Cumberland Plateau and the Coastal Plain, thereby affording its inhabitants, who supplemented their diets by hunting and gathering, access to a wide variety of resources. Certainly, the riverine environment was also exploited for the additional food it could provide. Other factors, such as access to trade routes and suitability for defense, were probably taken into account as well when choosing the site's location. It should be pointed out that many archeologists believe that warfare among Mississippian peoples resulted from competition for the best territories (Larson 1972) and that the palisades, characteristic of many Mississippian sites, stem from a need for protection. Moundville, with its location on a high bluff and its stockade could have served well for defensive purposes, for a person on top of the largest mound commanded an excellent view of the surrounding countryside (Peebles, n.d.).

By 1700 A.D., the Black Warrior River Valley had become a buffer zone between Upper Creeks on the east and the Choctaw and Chicasaw on the west. The struggle in 1560 for the fealty of the Napochies, a Choctaw-speaking group resident in this area by Coza, may signal the beginning of this disengagement. The extant archaeological data from Moundville are well-suited for a further exploration of the utility of each of these conceptual models.

Significance

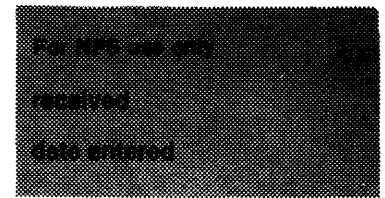
Physical anthropological studies have yielded valuable information concerning the people who occupied Moundville (Watthall, n.d.). Adult males averaged 5'5" while the average female was 5'1". There was a high infant mortality rate and an average life expectancy of from 35 to 40 years. Skull deformation was practiced, and many of the occupants suffered from arthritis and dental cavities.

In addition, the burials along with their accompanying grave goods have been analyzed in an attempt to gain information about the social organization of the community (Peebles, 1974). Peebles suggests that the society was ranked. Certain burials contained exotic artifacts, many of which exhibited great skill in their manufacture. The items associated with the Southern Cult fall into this category. Burials with these grave goods were generally concentrated in the mounds or on the north side of the plaza constituting about 10% of the burial population. These individuals apparently achieved their rank by ascription, for children as well as adults were often accompanied by these exotic grave goods. A social order existed even among those of this ascribed rank and adults accompanied by copper axes may have been at the apex of the social hierarchy. Burials containing such grave goods as ceramic objects, points, awls, etc. represent an achieved dimension of the ranked society, for these goods are generally associated only with adults. Some 60 percent of the burials at Moundville did not contain any accompanying artifacts.

It should be remembered that the Moundville Site was a center for numerous smaller villages and communities nearby. A study of the settlement pattern of the Moundville phase by Peebles (1974) indicates a hierarchy of sites, with the major center at Moundville, serving a number of minor centers and the minor centers in turn serving surrounding villages. Peebles' (1974) analysis of burials also indicated that Moundville, the most important center in the area, contained a greater percentage of high ranked individuals than did the outlying communities.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

Analysis of features and artifacts from Moundville has indicated that the site was a planned community. (Peebles, 1974). Apparently, certain areas were set aside for domestic occupation, for dwellings appear to be concentrated near the edge of the river and in the area between the palisade and the plaza. Other areas exhibit a concentration of public structures. For instance, large buildings were situated near the northern end of the plaza; specialized structures such as mortuary houses bordered the plaza; and a structure which may have been a sweathouse was located within the plaza. Judging from the distribution of discoids or chunky stones, there may have been several areas used as game courts. In addition, certain areas of the site were set aside for industrial activities such as pottery-making or shell-bead manufacture as indicated by the distribution of large hearths and various artifacts (Peebles, 1974).

There has also been some speculation that the mounds were aligned on the basis of correlations with astronomical phenomena, but the pattern does not appear simple (Peebles, 1974). The orientation of the individual mounds and of the burial mounds and of the burials within the mounds do indicate awareness of the cardinal directions (Peebles, 1974).

The origins of the Moundville phase are still unclear. McKenzie postulated that the site represented an extension from the Walls-Nodena area of the Lower Mississippi Valley. But Peebles (1974) has pointed out that early Mississippian sites have been found in Alabama which could easily have been predecessors of the Moundville phase. He thus postulates in-situ development of the Moundville phase out of local Late Woodland communities.

The reasons for the decline of Mississippian culture remain an enigma. Although some Mississippian traits persisted until historic times, the major centers such as Moundville had been abandoned by about A.D. 1500. There may have been some occupation in the vicinity of Moundville during protohistoric times, but little is known of it.

It is clear that Peebles' (1974, n.d.) work on social organization, activity area analyses, settlement pattern analyses, etc. has provided a strong basis for understanding the nature and complexity of the Moundville Site. The work is far from complete, however.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCERS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Moundville

Item number 9

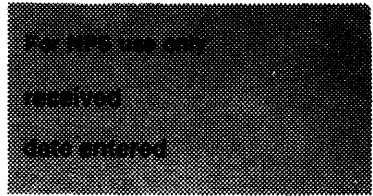
Page 1

Item #9 - Bibliography:

- Griffin, John W., 1964 "Moundville,  
Alabama, Form 10-317, " National Survey of Historic Sites  
and Buildings, ms. on file at Office of Archeology and  
Historic Preservation, Dept. Interior, Washington, D.C.
- Larson, Lewis H., Jr., 1972, "Functional Considerations of Warfare in  
the Southeast During the Mississippian Period,"  
American Antiquity, vol. 37, pp. 383-393.
- McKenzie, Souglas H., 1964, The Moundville Phase and its Position in  
Southeastern Prehistory, Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1966, "A Summary of the Moundville Phase,"  
Journal of Alabama Archaeology, vol. 12, pp. 1-58.
- Moore, Clarence B., 1905, "Certain Aboriginal Remains of the Black  
Warrior River," Journal of the Academy of Natural Sciences,  
2nd series, vol. 12, pt. 2, pp. 124-244.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1907, "Moundville Revisited," Journal of the Academy  
of Natural Sciences, 2nd series, vol. 13, pt. 3, pp. 334-405.
- Peebles, Christopher S., 1973, Excavations at Moundville, 1905-1951, ms.,  
copies at Mound State Monument, Alabama; Museum of Anthropology,  
University of Michigan; Peabody Museum, Harvard University.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1974, Moundville: The Organization of a Prehistoric  
Community and Culture, Ph.D. dissertation, University of California  
at Santa Barbara.
- \_\_\_\_\_, n.d., "Moundville: The Sites and Their Setting," ms. on  
file at Mound State Monument, Alabama, to be Chapter 2 of Moundville:  
The Organization of a Prehistoric Community and Culture, to be  
published by Academic Press.
- Squier, E. G., and E. H. Davis, 1848, Ancient Monuments of the  
Mississippi Valley, Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, vol. 1.
- Walthall, John, n.d., "Moundville, An Introduction to the Archaeology of a  
Mississippian Chiefdom," ms. on file at University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa.
- Wiley, Gordon R., 1966, An Introduction to American Archaeology, Volume 1  
North and Middle America, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at Point A where Carthage Brook flows into the Black Warrior River, follow the west bank of the brook in a southerly direction about 3000' to the Southern Railroad tracks, Point B. Follow the railroad 1875' southwest to Point C. Thence northwest 3000' to Point D. North 2500' to Point E, and then east 250' to the Black Warrior River, Point F. Follow the south bank of the river 3500' to the mouth of Carthage Brook and Point A.