

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

CHUCALISSA SITE

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Chucalissa Site

Other Name/Site Number: 408Y1

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1987 Indian Village Drive Not for publication:___

City/Town: Memphis Vicinity:___

State: Tennessee County: Shelby Code: 157 Zip Code:38109

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private:___
Public-local:___
Public-State: X
Public-Federal:___

Category of Property
Building(s):___
District:___
Site: X
Structure:___
Object:___

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing
1
2 (mounds)
3

Noncontributing
12 buildings
sites
structures
objects
12 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 3

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this _____ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- _____ Entered in the National Register _____
- _____ Determined eligible for the _____
National Register
- _____ Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
- _____ Removed from the National Register _____
- _____ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic
Religion
Current: Landscape

Sub: Village Site
Ceremonial Site
Sub: State Park

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: N/A

MATERIALS:
Foundation:
Walls:
Roof:
Other:

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

Site Type: The Chucalissa Site (40SY1) is located on the Fourth Chickasaw Bluff overlooking the Mississippi River in southwestern Shelby County, Tennessee, within T.O. Fuller State Park, approximately 10 miles south of downtown Memphis, Tennessee. It is the best preserved civic/ceremonial center complex of the Walls Phase (A.D. 1400-1500), one of the best known Late Mississippian phases in the central Mississippi River Valley. The site includes a large platform mound on the north side of the plaza and a smaller mound on the west side. Small house mounds form a ridge around the south and east sides of the plaza. An extensive village area lies beyond the central core of the site to the north, east, and south (see Figure 1).

Environmental Setting: The Chucalissa Site (Tennessee site 40SY1, Harvard designation 11-P-2) (see Figure 2) is situated on the Fourth Chickasaw Bluff overlooking the northern end of the Yazoo Basin of the Mississippi River floodplain, a short distance east of the Mississippi River. Horn Lake Cutoff, formerly the lower end of Nonconnah Creek now a Mississippi River meander loop, lies to the west and below the Chucalissa Site.

The Chucalissa Site was located at the apex of a number of rich natural environments during its prehistoric occupation. The loess uplands to the east of the site were formerly an oak-hickory forest environment, with the Nonconnah Creek valley providing easy access from Chucalissa into the upland interior. West of the site existed a series of old Mississippi River channels with fertile low natural levee ridges and backslope environments.

The Horn Lake Cutoff and seasonal ponds provided aquatic resources. The Mississippi River has meandered back and forth across the area since the early Holocene, superimposing its meander belts on previous Late Wisconsin braided stream deposits. Shifting courses of the river provided varying amounts of potential fertile farmland and resource rich swamp environments. Zones of particular interest within this area would have been the silty/sandy natural levee ridges for agriculture fields; backwater ponds for fish, shellfish, and ducks; and both the Mississippi River and Horn Lake Cutoff/ Nonconnah Creek for transportation and additional aquatic resources.

Archeological Investigations: The Chucalissa Site was known to local collectors by at least the mid-1930s and entered the Tennessee archaeological site survey records in 1939 as 40SY1. It was recorded as a result of artifact discoveries by the Civilian Conservation Corps crew assigned to develop the T.O. Fuller State Park property after its purchase in 1938 as a segregated state park for blacks. The University of Tennessee sent George A. Lidberg and Charles H. Nash and a crew from the Kentucky Lake Reservoir salvage project to test the site in 1940.

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Dr. Jeff Chapman of the McClung Museum, University of Tennessee, researched the surviving records of the early work at the site and provided copies of important reports of work done and/or planned at the site during the 1940-1941 era. These included a preliminary testing report (Lidberg n.d.) apparently summarizing work done in 1940; a memorandum (Hay 1940) dated October 26, 1940, reporting to the National Park Service recommendations of a preliminary meeting about site development possibilities; a summary document (Lewis n.d.a) apparently written after that meeting, entitled "Proposed Plans for Archeological Development of Shelby Park"; an apparently later (Lewis n.d.b) "Master Plan Pertaining to the Excavation and Preservation in Situ of Prehistoric Remains Contained in Shelby Negro Park, Memphis, Tennessee"; and a handwritten sheet (Anonymous n.d.) summarizing the progress of excavations from July 16 to at least September 8 of an unrecorded year, probably 1941, judging from the extent of work reported. It appears that the initial unit numbering system of 1940 was revised by early 1941, a matter of concern in dealing with the surviving early records and collections, particularly since neither of those systems corresponds to the current system.

Lidberg and Nash's work included testing of the main mound on the north side of the plaza and excavating a series of trenches in the main village area to the north of the mound. The collections and detailed field records for this work are curated at the McClung Museum (K. Foster, personal communication 1993).

Modern excavations began in 1952 with test work conducted in Unit 6 (see Figure 1) by the Memphis Archaeological and Geological Society. A mimeographed report of this work was published by Kenneth Beaudoin in 1953, but some of the field records and artifacts were lost during a series of relocations during the 1950s. The rest are housed at the Chucalissa Museum. This work and the surface collections reported in the Harvard University survey of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley (Phillps, Ford, and Griffin 1951) placed the site as a component of the then "Walls-Pecan Point" phase, since subdivided into the Walls, Nodena, and portions of perhaps two or more other phases.

In 1955 Charles Nash was appointed archaeologist for the site and long-term excavation work was begun. The plaza and mound area of the site were cleared of vegetation, a new grid and unit numbering system established, and excavations were commenced. The current unit designation system was begun at that time, which differs from the 1940 designations.

Excavations conducted by Nash from 1955 through 1967 included investigations of both major mounds, the three main village units, and testing of several areas beyond the central core of the site. Additional work was done by Gerald Smith from 1968 through 1987, emphasizing excavation of a large structure on the main mound, major expansion of Nash's block excavation in Unit 6, and smaller scale test work in various other parts of the site incident to public interpretation of the site (see Figure 1).

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Unit 1 (east of the main village area - see Figure 1) investigations consisted of salvage work under Nash first in 1963 and later under Smith in 1985, in both cases to mitigate the effect of staff housing construction projects on a portion of the archeological content of Unit 1. These excavations revealed a shallow Walls Phase (A.D. 1400-1500) midden (up to a foot or 0.3 m in depth). One partially definable house, a few postmolds and a few pits were present other than the midden itself.

Unit 2 (see Figure 1) is a small midden area south of the site museum. Investigations there were conducted primarily in 1960-61, with additional minor salvage work done since then as required by additional museum construction affecting the margins of Unit 2. This work revealed a midden without visible stratigraphy, but including Walls (A.D. 1400-1500), Boxtown (A.D. 1250-1350), Mitchell (A.D. 1200-1250), Ensley (A.D. 950-1100), and Woodland (pre A.D. 950) occupations. Of particular interest in this unit was the finding of a Mississippi Plain jar and a Baytown Plain jar (Woodland Period) in the same stratigraphic context. The 1960-61 work is reported in Lumb and McNutt's 1988 volume on part of the early excavations at the site.

Unit 3 (see Figure 1) is the circumplaza ridge, formed largely of superimposed house mounds, on the south and east sides of the plaza. This unit has had three major excavations, one in the southwest corner and two in the southeastern portion. Areas excavated during 1955-57 include a block excavation in the southwestern corner of the unit and a 65-foot long north-south trench extending from the southeastern corner of the plaza to the south edge of the midden. The block excavation revealed part of a series of Walls, Boxtown, and earlier (Esley Phase) houses and two Walls phase burial clusters suggestive of family cemetery plots. The long trench cut through several Walls house floors and superimposed small substructure mounds overlying Boxtown and Mitchell/Ensley Phase (A.D. 950-1350) midden deposits with additional houses of those phases.

Unit 4 (see Figure 1) is an eroded pre-Walls substructure residential mound adjacent to the southwestern corner of the plaza. A trench cut through it to subsoil in 1962 did not reveal definable floors, but did indicate construction stages and that it overlies midden dating up to the introduction of shell-tempered ceramics. A Walls Phase burial deposit was found to have been added to the eastern end of the mound. Additional excavations during 1963-66 to investigate the late addition revealed several flesh burials, including one with three apparent trophy skulls, and several partial and partially articulated bundle burials. The addition fill was ashy soil laced with unburned fragments of human skull.

Unit 5 (see Figures 1, 3 and 4) is a large platform mound on the north side of the plaza. Initial tests by Nash in 1940 revealed that the mound had been built over a ravine eroded to at least 10 feet below plaza level, and that it had a single stepped ramp down to the plaza centered on its south side. Additional work done in 1956-57 revealed part of a structure on the western side

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of the mound summit, but it was not possible to define its extent until the excavations of 1969-71. Extant data indicate that there was a series of superimposed construction stages on the mound, each with at least one large structure on the western side of its summit. The 1969-71 excavations (Smith 1988) revealed a structure approximating 50 feet (15 m) square on the western half of the mound. This building was supported by a set of interior cypress posts arranged in a rectangular pattern. Artifactual remains from the floor suggest high-status domestic use rather than a ceremonial context. Several large subfloor storage pits were found inside the structure, conforming well with the needs for ceremonial redistribution within a complex chiefdom as discussed by Steponaitis in his 1978 paper. Initial tests indicate a second, slightly smaller structure on the eastern half of the mound, with its floor set deeper below the mound surface than was the case with the western structure.

Unit 6 (see Figure 1, 5 and 6) is the main village area, north of the Unit 5 platform mound. Some of the earliest excavations on the site were conducted here, by the Memphis Archaeological and Geological Society (MAGS) (Beaudoin 1953), and by Nash in 1962-66 (Nash 1972, Lumb and McNutt 1988). The MAGS excavations exposed at least part of a house floor and provided basic data on midden contents. Nash opened two 10-foot (ca. 3 m) wide test trenches and a 40-foot (12 m) square block excavation extending from the side of one of the test trenches. This work revealed multiple structures and over 4 feet (1.25 m) of stratified midden deposits with excellent bone preservation. Major stratigraphic units include those assignable to the Walls, Boxtown, and Ensley Phases (A.D. 950-1500). Additional work by Smith during 1977-85 expanded Nash's block excavation eastward to include the eastern half of a series of superimposed structures partly excavated by Nash, and ultimately another, atypical structure.

Unit 7 is a small shelf extending southward into a gully from the southwestern portion of Unit 3. It lies about 15 feet (5 m) lower in elevation than the edge of Unit 3. This unit has had no excavation work.

Unit 8 (see Figure 1) north of Unit 6 across a swale between the heads of two gullies and is essentially a continuation of Unit 6. The University of Tennessee conducted extensive trenching there in 1940, but most of the records and materials disappeared during World War II. Surviving data housed at the McClung Museum indicate a shallow Walls midden in the area.

Unit 9 is an area of Late Woodland or Early Mississippian midden which extends northward from beyond Unit 8, across Plant Road, to the northern terminus of the north-south portion of the bluff line. It includes a topographic anomaly north of Plant Road which may be a small mound.

Unit 10 (see Figure 1) is a well preserved borrow pit east of the main site occupation area. Limited testing indicates that this is a Walls Phase (A.D. 1400-1500) feature. The pit is irregular,

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approximately 10 feet (3 m) deep and about 30 feet (10 m) by 50 feet (15 m) in extent.

Site Analysis: The earliest evidence of human activity at Chucalissa appears in the form of Archaic Period projectile points and Woodland ceramics, but any occupational deposits from these periods appear to have been destroyed by later Mississippian Period activities.

An Early Mississippian Ensley Phase (A.D. 950-1100) midden zone is at the base of Units 2, 3, and 6. This occupation is characterized by Baytown Plain, accompanied by low frequencies of Mazique Incised, Evansville Punctated, and Larto Red Filmed pottery in the standard Mississippian bowl and jar forms, along with long triangular arrow points and wall-trench houses. Coles Creek trade ceramics are also present, indicating trading contacts with the Lower Mississippi River Valley cultures to the south. Radiocarbon dating (Lumb and McNutt 1988) suggests an A.D. 950-1100 span for this occupation.

A brief Mitchell Phase occupation (ca. A.D. 1200-1250) was characterized by the addition of shell tempering to the ceramic repertoire. This included simultaneous use of vessels with grog, grog and coarsely crushed shell, and all crushed shell tempering. A burial from Unit 2 was accompanied by one grog tempered and one shell tempered jar, each of apparent local manufacture. This occupation appears to have been responsible for the construction of the Unit 4 mound on the southwestern corner of the plaza.

The next major occupation was of the Boxtown Phase, about A.D. 1250-1350, present in Units 2, 3, and 6. This occupation includes wall-trench houses, triangular arrow points, and shell-tempered ceramics in various bowl, jar, and carafe-neck bottle forms. Other items include celts and bone awls. Ferruginous sandstone, presumably used for general grinding and abrading purposes, is frequent in midden deposits from this phase. No mound construction on the site has been attributed to this phase, although it is possible that an early portion of the Unit 5 mound on the north side of the plaza could be of Boxtown Phase origin.

An extensive Walls Phase occupation of about A.D. 1400-1500 is the final major occupation of the site. Walls Phase materials are the most extensive and are the defining elements of the main site occupation area. Houses are built with individually set posts, the later ones often in shallow basins with shallow trenches between posts into which the wall base extended, presumably to seal out surface water. Short triangular and Nodena arrow points, chipped and ground stone celts, bone awls, and shell tempered pottery in a wide range of vessel forms with a wide range modelled, incised, and engraved decorative motifs comprise the primary artifact assemblage (see Figures 7-10).

The Walls component provides the most extensive data from the site regarding social structure, in the form of site organization, differential structures, and artifact distribution.

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Paramount status on the site is represented by the large multistage Unit 5 platform mound on the north side of the plaza with its pair of large structures, including subfloor storage facilities in at least the western series, and peak incidence of trade in decorated ceramics. Secondary status is represented by the small single-stage substructure mounds around the south and east sides of the plaza, with intermediate sized houses. These have apparently associated family cemeteries including males with fronto-occipital cranial flattening and highly differentiated grave goods from one burial cluster to another. Tertiary status is represented on the rest of the site by the smallest houses, lack of substructure mounds, lack of cranial deformation, and lowest incidence of trade and decorated ceramics. The entire system is particularly consistent with Steponaitis' 1978 model for a complex chiefdom.

Site Integrity: Chucalissa has an unusually high degree of integrity due in part to its relatively isolated location and its early acquisition as part of a state park. The site had only a relatively small amount of pothunting activity during the 1930s, primarily affecting Units 3 and 6. Cultivation was done only with mules and with minimal effect prior to state acquisition in 1938. The Unit 4 probable platform mound was plowed and eroded into a dome shape, the front and rear of the Unit 5 mound were dragged down, and a field road eroded a cut into Unit 3 where the present service drive is located. Construction of the original site museum building removed some marginal deposits from Units 2 and 3. Floor slabs of staff housing units constructed during the 1950s and 1960s sealed some deposits in that area; accessible deposits under the 1984 housing units were excavated prior to their construction.

The museum, equipment shed, shop, and staff housing constitute the permanent noncontributing structures. Reconstructions of eight Late Mississippian buildings and a partial stockade have superficial impact on Units 3 and 5. The Unit 5 structure and the garden exhibit area are on previously excavated locations.

The stockade was erected by Nash on the basis of topographic considerations; no archeological data relating to such a structure on the site has yet been recovered. The Unit 5 structure is on the location of a prehistoric structure of the same architecture excavated by Smith, but was scaled down slightly to prevent erosion damage to the extant mound from dripline drainage.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D X

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria: **Criterion 6**

NHL Theme(s):

- I. **CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS: INDIGENOUS AMERICAN POPULATIONS**
 - C. **Prehistoric Archeology: Topical Facets**
 - 3. **Prehistoric Social and Political Organizations**
 - 7. **Prehistoric Diet**
 - 21. **Major Contributions to the Development of Culture Histories**

Areas of Significance: **Archeology (Prehistoric)**

Period(s) of Significance: **A.D. 950-1500 (Mississippian Period)**

Significant Dates: **N/A**

Significant Person(s): **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation: **Mississippian Period (A.D. 950-1500)**
 Ensley Phase A.D. 950-1100
 Mitchell Phase A.D. 1200-1250
 Boxtown Phase A.D. 1250-1350
 Walls Phase A.D. 1400-1500

Architect/Builder: **N/A**

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State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

Summary Statement of Significance: From the standpoint of integrity, variety of preserved remains, professional excavation, existing documentation, and potential for future research, Chucalissa is easily one of the most significant sites on the Mississippi River between southeast Missouri and the Winterville Site in the Yazoo Basin of Mississippi.

Chucalissa is a Walls Phase (A.D. 1400-1500) prehistoric mound and plaza complex, a residential area of small house mounds encircling the plaza, and several adjacent residential areas. Chucalissa is the best known and preserved of all the Walls Phase sites in the Central Mississippi River Valley. The Walls Phase, in turn, is regarded by Phillips as "perhaps the most satisfactory phase dealt with in this entire study" (Phillips 1970:936).

Following early testing at the site by the University of Tennessee and the Memphis Archaeological and Geological Society (Beaudoin 1953), the bulk of the excavations have been conducted by Memphis State University under Charles Nash and Gerald Smith. The occupational sequence extends from the Emergent Mississippian Ensley Phase (ca. A.D. 950-1100) through the Mississippian Mitchell Phase (A.D. 1200-1250), Boxtown Phase (A.D. 1250-1350), and the Walls Phase (A.D. 1400-1500) occupations. The major periods of significance are those of the Boxtown and Walls Phases.

Chucalissa has not only provided the main anchor for the west Tennessee ceramic sequence (Smith 1969, 1972; Lumb and McNutt 1988), but it is also known for its excellent preservation of architectural, floral, faunal, and human osteological materials. A number of scholars (Blake n.d.; Dye 1976; Lahren and Berryman 1984; Nash 1972; Robinson 1977; Smith 1975) have taken advantage of Chucalissa's non-ceramic resources.

The major mound at Chucalissa is on the north side of the plaza. The plaza itself is somewhat elongate with its long axis aligned roughly north-south. The mound is in an excellent state of preservation and one of the latest preserved structures on top of the mound was excavated by Smith (1990). This mound was the focus of social and ceremonial activities during the Walls and perhaps the Boxtown occupation. An earlier Mitchell Phase mound is located at the southwest corner of the plaza.

Although much research has been conducted at Chucalissa, the site still contains vast potential for significant studies that will be of crucial importance to understanding the complex cultural dynamics of the Mid-South during the Mississippian Period.

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THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

- I. CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS: INDIGENOUS AMERICAN POPULATIONS
 - C. Prehistoric Archaeology: Topical Facets
 - 3. Prehistoric Social and Political Organizations

Prehistoric Social and Political Organization in the
Central Mississippi River Valley

Chucalissa provides a rare opportunity to examine the development and internal dynamics of a regional prehistoric center within a Late Mississippian Period chiefdom. Beyond the classic treatments of chiefdom societies by Service (1962) and Fried (1967), work by Peebles and Kus (1977), Steponaitis (1978), and Anderson (1990) have provided models of particular regional relevance for archaeological study of societies at this level of social and political organization. While all deal with entire social systems, basic elements of these systems are represented at prehistoric regional centers and thus are amenable to study on a site-level basis within the larger social context.

Key elements of such a social system for Peebles and Kus (1977) are:

1. ascribed ranking as the primary ranking system;
2. a hierarchy of settlement sizes and/or sociopolitical importance;
3. local subsistence autonomy of communities within the settlement system;
4. organized productive activities beyond the household level; and,
5. society-wide provision for dealing with major environmental hazards, such as flood, drought, or warfare.

Steponaitis adds the concept of simple vs complex chiefdoms, defining simple forms as those with only one level of status above the local level. A complex system will have two or three levels, with a well-defined class system, and symbolic redistribution rather than attempted large-scale redistribution of goods throughout the population. Furthermore, the system will have a hierarchy of paramount and local chiefs in which the local chiefs collect tribute from their respective districts and forward it to the paramount chief. Anderson (1990) notes that in the South Appalachian area at least, early Mississippian Period chiefdoms tend to emphasize sacred/ideological means of social control and later ones tend to emphasize secular/military means. Ideological systems included ancestor/mortuary cults for the nobility (often symbolized by exclusive charnel houses), warrior cults (symbolized by the eagle/falcon warrior), and communal earth/fertility cults.

Within this composite set of concepts, Chucalissa has the potential to provide data particularly relevant to the development and function of a class/stratification system at a

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regional center including such factors as site plan, sumptuary rules, inheritance of status, and tribute/redistribution; suprahousehold activities such as mound construction and incipient craft specialization; and ideological systems as represented at the local level.

Current data indicate that paramount status is represented on the multistage main mound, where the largest structures, subfloor storage pits, peak incidence of trade and decorated ceramics, and peak variability of faunal species usage are to be found. Secondary status is represented around the plaza on the low, overlapping single stage platform mounds which include intermediate-sized structures with moderate amounts of decorated ceramics and adjacent apparent family cemeteries showing a high degree of differentiation from one to another and regularly including males with fronto-occipital cranial deformation. Tertiary status is represented on the rest of the site by the smallest houses, lack of substructure mounds, lack of cranial deformation, and the lowest incidence of trade and decorated ceramics. The occurrence of suspected iron deficiency lesions in skeletons from this population only (David Stevenson, personal communication, 1992) suggests that status differentiation may even have reached the level of affecting health and diet.

All of these patterns are derived from the Walls Phase component at the site; their earlier development, however, should be reflected in the much lesser known Boxtown Phase component at the site. Additional relevant concerns include the Walls Phase burial complex on the east side of the Unit 4 mound, potentially from a high-status mortuary context, and the position of Chucalissa within the larger polity of which it was a part. Major advances in the understanding of Mississippian sociopolitical systems in the Mid-South/Central Mississippi River Valley are possible through careful use of the data contained in the Chucalissa site.

THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

- I. CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS: INDIGENOUS AMERICAN POPULATIONS
 - C. Prehistoric Archaeology: Topical Facets
 7. Prehistoric Diet

Prehistoric Diet in the Central Mississippi River Valley

Chucalissa affords a rare opportunity for the study of prehistoric diet in that it combines excellent bone preservation, even including tiny fish and rodent bones; plentiful charred plant remains; and soil colorations permitting unusually clear evaluation of the stratigraphic contexts in which the remains are found. Primary initial studies of plant remains from Chucalissa have been conducted by Hugh Cutler and Leonard Blake (n.d. 1965) while Paul Parmalee (1960) and Bruce Smith (1975) have conducted faunal analyses.

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Most data analyzed so far relate to the Walls Phase, but comparable analysis of Boxtown Phase floral and faunal remains should also be possible. The diet of the Walls Phase occupants of Chucalissa emphasized corn and deer, with a wide range of secondary domestic and wild food sources also represented. Beans and sunflower are present as apparent cultigens, with persimmons, acorns, hickory nuts, and butternuts also represented. Particularly notable faunal species other than deer include raccoon, turkey, Canada goose, and snapping turtle. Fish are clearly important, particularly catfish, but current methods of analysis permit effective evaluation of the proportions of fish to bird or mammal meat in the overall diet. A wide range of plant, bird, reptile, fish, and mammal species, drawn from the full range of local habitats, appear on a sporadic basis.

Data from the Unit 6 village area compared with material from a structure on the main mound (Unit 5) suggest that secondary species were much more important in the diet of those using the mound structure than that of residents of the main village area. Additional status-related dietary differences may also exist on a significant level. David Stevenson (personal communication, 1992) has noted an extremely high incidence of localized cranial osteoporosis possibly related to iron deficiency in skeletal remains from beyond the circumplaza portion of the site but not in those from within the plaza zone (Unit 3).

The site thus provides important potential data regarding Late Mississippian cultigens, the use of wild plant and animal food sources, and possible dietary differences corresponding to sociopolitical status differences. These are all crucial issues in the understanding of both Late Mississippian and long-term subsistence-settlement systems drawing on varying proportions of wild and cultivated food sources, and on the nature of status differentiation taking place in regional sociopolitical systems.

THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

- I. CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS: INDIGENOUS AMERICAN POPULATIONS
 - C. Prehistoric Archaeology: Topical Facets
 - 21. Major Contributions to the Development of Culture Histories

Cultural Chronology of the Mississippi River Valley

One of Chucalissa's greatest research assets is its potential contribution to an understanding of late prehistoric (i.e. Mississippian) chronology and cultural dynamics in the upper Mid-South/Central Mississippi River Valley. Excellent preservation of materials associated with middens and architectural features permitted application of a wide variety of dating techniques - radiocarbon analysis, paleomagnetism, and thermoluminescence to name the more obvious ones. Only by utilization of a number of independent techniques can a truly satisfactory chronology be reconstructed, and this can certainly be accomplished at Chucalissa with its unusually clearly visible stratigraphy.

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Research already accomplished by Dr. Robert Mainfort has demonstrated that materials from the Boxtown and Walls Phases in particular are present in considerable abundance. While most dating so far has emphasized radiocarbon work, there is also an abundance of archaeomagnetic dating material in the form of superimposed fired clay house floors which can be expected to yield a closely dated sequence of events in the course of future research.

The Boxtown Phase (Smith 1972, 1990; Lumb and McNutt 1988) has no better representation than the component at Chucalissa. This pre-Walls Phase is characterized by a distinctive, thin variety of plainware, sortable on the basis of paste as well as thinness, that only occurs in small quantities at sites in both Arkansas and northwest Mississippi. In the latter areas there is little indication that satisfactory chronology and cultural definition can be accomplished. The Boxtown chronology at Chucalissa is, in this respect, not only important but also of unique potential.

Chucalissa is also crucial to understanding the chronology of the Walls Phase. Lumb and McNutt (1988) felt that they could distinguish an early and a late Walls occupation at Chucalissa. They further observed that the last Walls component at Chucalissa corresponded to the penultimate Walls Phase occupation at the Walls site itself, hence their somewhat awkward terminology of "Chucalissa-Bell I" and "Chucalissa-Bell II" for the components at Chucalissa rather than a simple "Early" and "Late" Walls. Phillips' "latest possible Walls" (1970:936) does not appear to exist at Chucalissa. This suggests that a tripartite subdivision of the Walls Phase can probably be accomplished only with the firm foundation of early and middle segments which exists at Chucalissa and the late one at certain sites in northwest Mississippi (cf Lumb and McNutt 1988). Such a subdivision, which will require fine stratigraphic control of intact cultural deposits, can probably be accomplished only with the potentially firm foundation which exists at Chucalissa. Such a fine subdivision will in turn provide the brief chronological segments necessary for understanding the internal dynamics of the phase during a period of apparent rapid cultural change in the region.

Proper understanding of the Walls Phase sequence is far from an academically trivial matter. The Walls Phase represents a key portion of a well defined regional Mississippian tradition extending from the Missouri Bootheel through northeastern Arkansas and northwestern Mississippi to the Arkansas River (Smith 1990). Further work at Chucalissa may well provide an important key to understanding the late Mississippian influences that permeated the Yazoo Basin, and in particular the significance of the more southerly and poorly defined Parchman Phase (Phillips 1970). To the northwest it can be expected to shed further light on the apparent expansion of the power of the Nodena Phase, strongly implicated (Morse 1990) as the archaeological manifestation of the imperialistic Pacaha recorded by the Soto expedition in 1541. The chronology at Chucalissa is also crucial to understanding the poorly known portion of west Tennessee, particularly in the Reelfoot Basin.

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The chronological sequence at Chucalissa has the demonstrated potential to associate a tremendous variety of cultural information with a well developed chronological sequence that is critical to understanding of the maximal prehistoric cultural development over a wide area of the central United States. In short, the chronology demonstrated to exist at Chucalissa will be a necessary element in understanding the very complex Middle and Late Mississippian cultural dynamics of the Central Mississippi Valley and their interaction with adjacent regions.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been
requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. **1972**
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office **Tennessee**
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository): **C.H. Nash Museum, Chucalissa, 1987 Indian
Village Drive, Memphis, Tennessee 38109**

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATAAcreage of Property: **160 acres**

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A	15	761660	3882920	B	15	762540	3883350
C	15	762570	3883680	D	15	762740	3884000
E	15	762000	3884180	F	15	762450	3884060
G	15	762800	3883700	H	15	762340	3883600
I	15	762000	3883840	J	15	762000	3883350
K	15	761800	3882920				

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary of the nominated property follows the Illinois Central-Gulf Railroad northward from point A to the old bed of Mitchell Road, thence eastward along that roadbed to Plant Road, thence westward along Plant Road to point I, southward to point J, then southward along the gully separating Chucalissa from T. O. Fuller State Park to point K, and finally west to point A.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary for Chucalissa is based on the maximum known extent of the main site and outlying areas based on excavated and artifactual evidence of human occupation.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: **Gerald P. Smith, Ph.D.
Director Chucalissa/Associate Professor Anthropology
Charles McNutt, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology
(Revised by Mark R. Barnes, Ph.D.
Senior Archeologist
National Register Programs Division
National Park Service, SERO
75 Spring Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404) 331-2638)**

Org.: **Department of Anthropology, Memphis State University**

Street/#: **N/A**

City/Town: **Memphis**

State: **Tennessee**

ZIP: **38152**

Telephone: **(901) 678-2618**

Date: **November 3, 1992 (Revised January 29, 1993)**

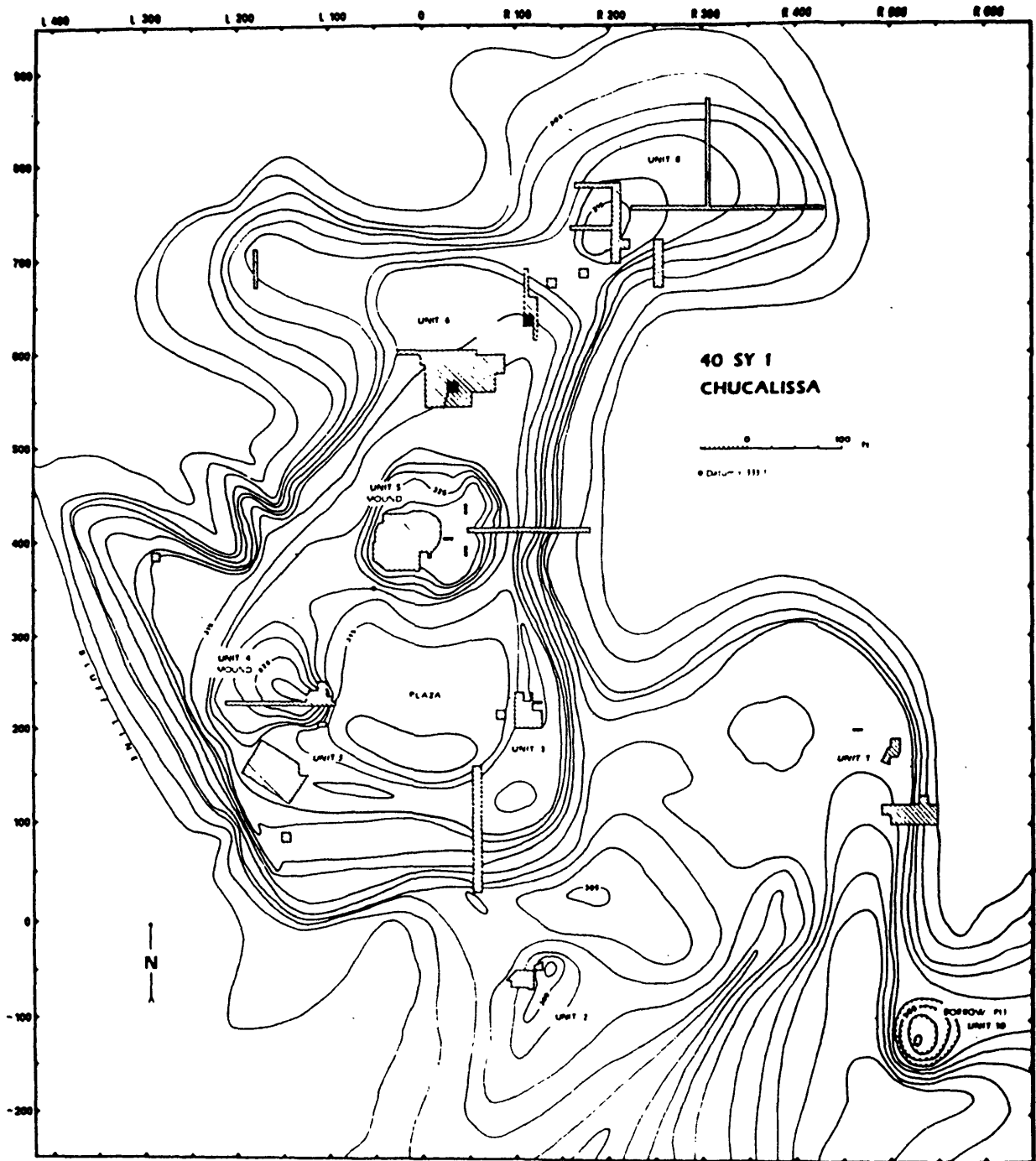


Figure 1. Site Plan Map of the Chucalissa Site, Tennessee, showing the Excavation Units making up the site. Site Plan provided by Dr. Gerald Smith.

40 SY I-5

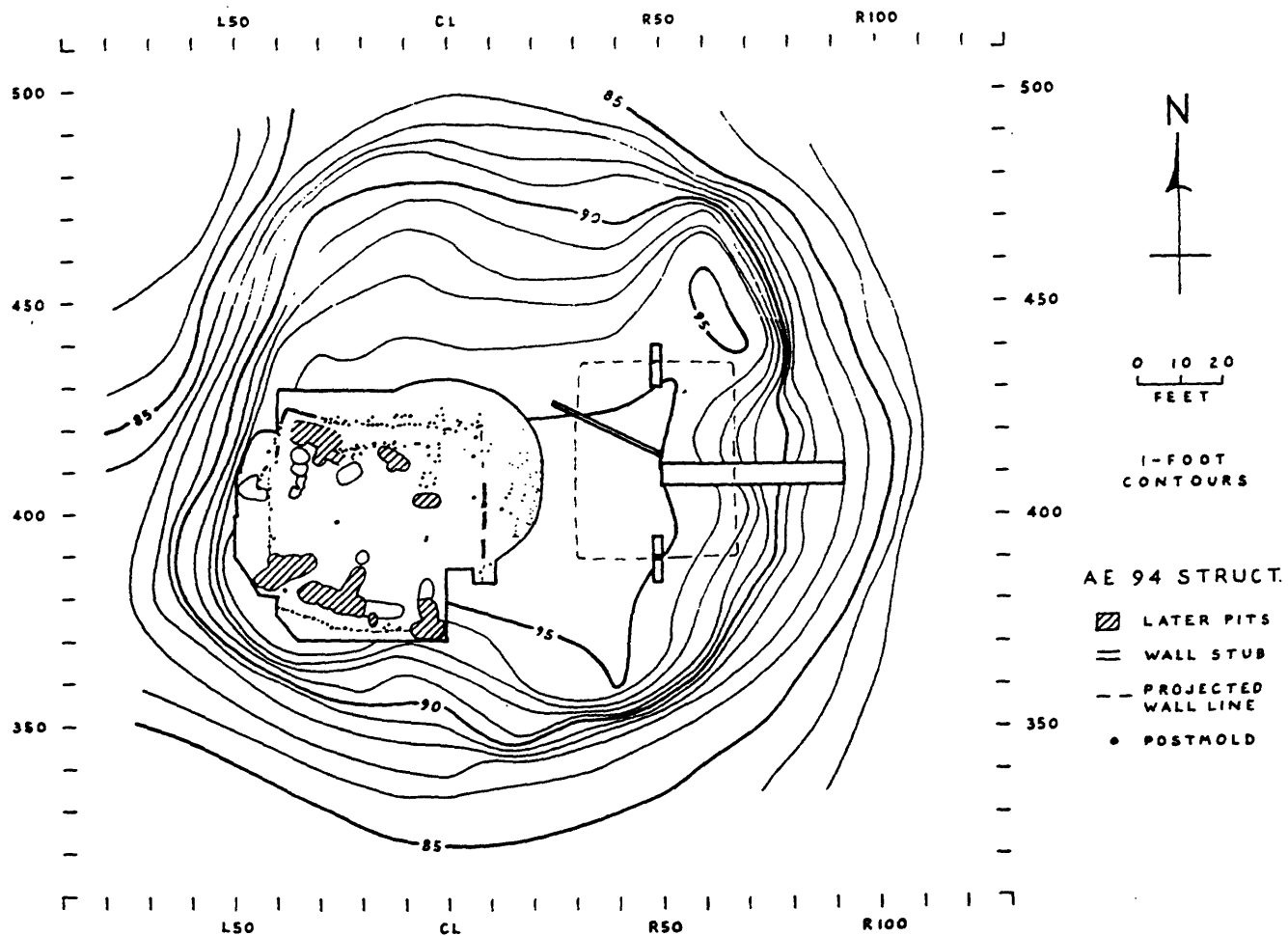


Figure 3. Site Plan of Unit 5, the main mound at the Chucalissa Site. Site Plan provided by Dr. Gerald Smith.