

EXCAVATIONS AT MOUNDVILLE

1905 - 1951

by

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To David DeJarnette
with respect and
admiration
Chris

To David, Tom and James DeJarnette
Their loyalty to Archaeology and to Moundville made
this volume possible.

PREFACE

The major archaeological research programs of the 1930's grew out of the Great Depression. War in the early 1940's ended not only these archaeological programs but also the lives of many archaeologists. As a result many of the sites excavated during this period were neither analyzed nor published; artifacts and records were stored to await better days.

Many of these stored materials subsequently were destroyed; others, either through the dedication of a few or through luck pure and simple, have been passed to the present generation intact. The Moundville materials are among those that are intact; they were conserved and maintained through the efforts of W. B. Jones, David DeJarnette and E. H. Chapman.

This volume focuses on the written notes and records left by the Moundville excavators. It is a "data" volume. It was conceived and executed as a necessary first step in the analysis of the Moundville material.

Several exemplars have guided the preparation of this volume, especially The Angel Site (Black 1967); Spiro Studies (Brown 1966a, 1966b); Hiwassee Island (Lewis and

and Kneberg 1946); and Archaeology of the Funeral Mound, Ocmulgee National Monument, Georgia (Fairbanks 1956).

These monographs presented significant amounts of data clearly and concisely.

All dealt with field notes which had grown "cold" through time. As at Moundville each of the excavations they report was guided by an essentially common paradigm of method and technique. That is, the classes of features and artifacts recognized by the excavators, the ways of excavating the site and the printed forms used to structure the recording of data were broadly similar.

In order to be useful all the information contained in Moundville's excavation records had to be marshalled into a consistent format. This volume was designed to present in an efficient manner a factual narrative of the excavations at Moundville; that is, to report on the artifacts and features along with their associations and context. Where the excavators recognized ambiguity in the archaeological record, this ambiguity has been reported and no attempt at resolution has been made. However, where ambiguities are artifacts of the records proper, every attempt has been made to resolve them. Gaps in the records have been filled in through field diaries, the

correspondence of the excavators and through the present day memories of the individuals who worked at Moundville in the 1930's.

My work at and on Moundville was made possible by innumerable kindnesses of colleagues, friends and teachers. Although these debts can never be fully repaid, they can be acknowledged. The dedication of this volume to David, James and Tom DeJarnette is only a small token of my obligation to these men. Elizabeth DeJarnette, who cheerfully and graciously extended truly "Southern" hospitality to Joan Peebles and myself, is the fourth DeJarnette to whom I owe a great debt. Lewis Binford, David DeJarnette, Charles Fairbanks, James B. Griffen, William Sears and Albert Spaulding are in large measure responsible for my knowledge of archaeology and of the Southeast. Joan Peebles, who put aside part of her anthropological career to aid in my research, shares in any credit which accrues to this volume. To these individuals and others to be mentioned below, my thanks.

My interest in Moundville began early in 1962 when Lewis Binford suggested that I see what data I could develop on Mississippi Period burial practices from the interior of the Southeast. The data I collected, garnered

mostly from C. B. Moore and Cyrus Thomas, were presented as part of a seminar on prehistoric mortuary practices at the University of Chicago during the winter quarter, 1963. Criticism of this paper by Binford, Carl-Axel Moberg and my fellow students James Brown, William A. Longacre and Robert Whallon demonstrated that a cross-cultural, shotgun approach to mortuary practices was premature.

In January of 1964 I enrolled at the University of Florida to study Southeastern prehistory under Charles Fairbanks. At Fairbanks' suggestion, the ideas I had developed in the Chicago seminar were focused on Moundville and on several sites related to Moundville. I rewrote the paper and sent it to Binford for his comments. A second critique resulted and I rewrote the paper again. It was essentially this version of the paper that was presented at the 65th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association (Peebles 1966).

By this point I was generally dissatisfied with the published material on Moundville, including the then recently published works by Douglas H. McKenzie (1964, 1965a, 1965b, 1966). Fairbanks suggested that I write David DeJarnette, Curator of Mound State Monument and Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of

Alabama, in order to find out exactly what materials were available at Moundville. Thus began a professional correspondence, friendship and later collaboration between David DeJarnette and myself.

In 1965 I went to the University of California, Santa Barbara to again work under Binford, this time as a doctoral student. My correspondence with DeJarnette continued and plans were laid for me to go to Moundville to gather material for my dissertation. When Binford left the Santa Barbara campus, Albert Spaulding took over direction of my research.

I was admitted to candidacy in 1967 and in the same year was offered a teaching position at Florida Atlantic University by William Sears. Joan and I moved to Boca Raton, Florida in the fall of 1967 and we began commuting to Moundville to work with the records there.

Contrary to implications in McKenzie's dissertation, we discovered tens of thousands of pages of notes and thousands of maps, drawings and photographs. The staggering extent of these records made me realize that I would have to change my initial research strategy. At first it seemed that I would have to choose between unemployment and full-time research at Moundville or

employment and a change in thesis topic.

A solution to the dilemma came from an unexpected quarter. The Xerox Corporation through their representative in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Charles Giles, provided me with a Xerox copier at no charge. (The machine I was given had just been returned by the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan to protest Xerox's sponsorship of the television program Of Black America).

Over the span of two weeks of eighteen-hour days (which included our first wedding anniversary) Joan and I copied the primary records from some one-half million square feet of excavations. In all there were almost one hundred thousand Xerox copies, two tired people, a quantum jump in Mound State Monument's electric bill and one well-used Xerox machine. Without the generosity of Charles Giles and the Xerox Corporation I would not have been able to write this volume.

Joan and I returned to Boca Raton with our copies and I began the process of learning about the excavators and the excavations at Moundville. Each excavation, each set of notes was a challenge. Because no master grid system had been constructed, I had to tie each excavation to local, micro-topographic features. It took me over one year of full-time work to locate and plot these excavations

on a master map of the site. Many artifact and feature numbers were duplicates; a few were missing. Excavation technique, method and style changed through the years of work at Moundville. From 1929 to 1932 (the earliest Alabama Museum of Natural History excavation) the evolution of archaeological expertise took quantum jumps. I had to learn to discriminate each of these changes in archaeological method and technique. Where solutions to these many and varied problems in the record could not be resolved on the basis of "internal" textual evidence, questions were collected and forwarded to David DeJarnette for answers. In almost all cases his memory provided not only answers, but the means of cross-checking his recollections.

During 1967, 1968 and 1969 William Sears alternately assigned the teaching position to Joan and to me. He also allocated a student assistant, Jeanne Adams, to the Moundville project. An N. S. F. Predoctoral Grant (GS-2837) awarded in 1969 also helped support this work.

By the end of 1970 the first draft of this manuscript had been typed. Dorothea Barton, Susan K. Weinberger and Carole Smith were responsible for the production of the first typed draft.

The analysis of the materials from Moundville began in 1970. The burials and other features were coded and reduced to punched cards. In September 1970 we moved to the University of Windsor and the project moved with us. As computer print out piled up, this manuscript was set aside. Several peripheral articles were published, including an expanded mortuary practices paper, or were read at meetings (Peebles 1970, 1971, 1972a, 1972b, 1973). I had originally planned to use this manuscript as appendices to a final report on the analysis of the features. However, the project and manuscript grew to the point where this manuscript could stand as a monograph in its own right. As such it serves as the data-base for the analytical articles already published as well as for forthcoming monographs on the settlements and their ecological relationships and on burial structure at Moundville.

Throughout the later phases of this project I have benefited from the advice and counsel of James B. Griffin. I appreciate the time and knowledge he has shared with me.

Lastly to the three people who have read this manuscript in its entirety, Joan Peebles, Albert Spaulding

Note check
this spelling of Griffin

and Henry Wright, my admiration. Also to Kathy M'Closkey, who supervised preparation of the final manuscript, my thanks. To those individuals inadvertently left out of this litany, my apologies and thanks.

Windsor, Ontario
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