The Mounds Awaken:

Mound State Monument and the Civilian Conservation Corps

by

Joy D. Baklanoff
Arthur F. Howington

The University of Alabama State Museum of Natural History
Special Publications No. 3

SCARRY

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October 1989

To all the young men who worked in the
Civilian Conservation Corps at Moundville.

J.D.B.
A.F.H.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOREWORD

Today we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Moundville Archaeological Site as a national treasure. Completion of the first phase of work at Mound State Monument is reflected in part by the physical facilities one can see from this spot.

We recognize first the advanced culture represented by the thousands of Native Americans who made Moundville one of the most important religious, political, economic, and cultural centers of North America a thousand years ago. We also recognize the efforts of the hundreds of men and women who saved this site from destruction and who toiled through the heart of the Great Depression to create for all generations the opportunity to revisit a part of the prehistory of Alabama and the Southeast.

A viable metropolis for some 500 years, Moundville was the center for a large population occupying smaller towns and hamlets along the Warrior River Valley from Tuscaloosa to Demopolis. Here was a complex and creative culture noted for its artistic and agricultural accomplishments. From this point, trade routes extended across the Mississippi Valley and beyond. That this population was important to the religious and commercial life of the New World is not disputed.

Since systematic archaeological work began here sixty years ago, probably less than ten percent of the site has been investigated, but from these data we recognize the importance this place held throughout its active existence. The artifacts excavated here constitute one of the largest assemblages collected from any single site in North America. The individuals responsible for leaving this important prehistoric record and the men and women who have brought it to light for our benefit are those we recognize today.

Moundville is here because people thought that it was important enough to save and develop for the education and pleasure of generations to come. The University of Alabama has a profound responsibility to Moundville and its future. It is a state and national treasure for which we are proud to serve as stewards.

E. Roger Sayers
President
The University of Alabama

INTRODUCTION

It has been almost fifty years since the last Civilian Conservation Corps workers answered their final roll call here at Moundville. From 1933 to 1942 almost $500,000 dollars were expended in archaeological excavations, facilities improvement, and other vital and necessary work to make Mound State Monument what it is today.

What generally is not known is that during this period these activities were duplicated throughout our nation. Literally hundreds of archaeological projects were undertaken by the CCC and their counterpart, the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Much of what we know about American archaeology may be directly attributable to these workers. To all of these people we owe a debt of gratitude for preserving a segment of American heritage for generations to come.

Carey B. Oakley
Assistant Director (Archaeology)
The University of Alabama
State Museum of Natural History

GREETINGS FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

We, the staff of Mound State Monument, are delighted that you are able to help us celebrate the anniversary of the park. The people of Alabama are fortunate to have inherited Mound State Monument as a sacred trust; it is our perpetual responsibility to protect its resources and to enhance its educational potential. We hope you will help share this responsibility and return often to visit Mound State Monument.

Boyce Driskell
Superintendent
Mound State Monument

MOUNDVILLE MILESTONES TO 1942

1942	CCC Camp at Moundville abandoned.
1939	Archaeological Museum dedicated, May 16.
1938	Mound State Park renamed Mound State Monument. Civilian Conservation Corps, directed by the National Park Service and the Alabama Museum of Natural History, began large scale development of the site.
1938-9	Alabama Museum of Natural History purchased additional land which enlarged Mound State Park to its present acreage and included all the mounds in the area.
1935	Temporary Burial Museum building constructed at Mound State Park.
1933	Mound State Park established. CCC work started.
1929	Alabama Museum of Natural History purchased approximately 175 acres near Moundville, which included most of the mounds, and began archaeological investigations. Efforts were largely due to the work of Dr. Walter B. Jones.
1923	Moundville Historical Society organized to arouse interest in preservation and protection of the mounds. Mrs. Jeff Powers, Jr. served as first President.
1905-6	Clarence B. Moore of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science conducted the first major archaeological excavations at the Moundville site.
1897	Nearby town of Carthage renamed Moundville because of numerous Indian mounds located nearby.
1848	Mounds at Moundville first reported in Squire and Davis volume, Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley.
1800-36	Historic Alabama Indian groups settled briefly in the Warrior Valley prior to their removal to Oklahoma.
1540	DeSoto likely crossed the Black Warrior River south of Moundville but made no mention of the great mound complex.
1450-1500	Moundville thought to have been abandoned.
1200-1400	Moundville flourished--major Mississippian ceremonial center established in the Black Warrior Valley.
900-1000	Moundville area settled by Late Woodland peoples.

CHAPTER 1

"We robbed the Indians of everything they had, and the least we can do is to preserve this wonderful monument which they left behind."
[Walter B. Jones, May 1929]

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MISSISSIPPIAN INDIANS

Along the banks of the Black Warrior River lie the remains of a unique culture of a prehistoric Indian people. This Native American group enjoyed its greatest time of prosperity between A.D. 1200 and 1400. Man had lived in the Middle South for over 10,000 years since the first families of hunters entered the region in search of the now-extinct large game animals such as the bison and mastodon. During these millennia aboriginal culture underwent changes; intensifying in some areas, waning in others. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans in the Middle South, the last major wave of change resulted in the cultural apex for the prehistoric Southeast--a developmental stage which is referred to as "Mississippian."

These cultures of the Mississippian stage produced impressive ceremonial centers including Etowah in Georgia, Spiro in Oklahoma, Cahokia in Illinois, and, of course, Moundville in Alabama. Certain features identify the Mississippian Indians. These include: 1) distinctive forms of pottery containing crushed shell in the clay; the construction, on or around a central plaza of large earthen pyramids which served as platforms for temples, houses of the elite, and civic buildings; 2) the employment of flood plain agriculture primarily based upon the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash; 3) long distance trade; 4) religious ceremonialism associated with agricultural production which perceivably centered around a fire-sun deity; 5) territoriality and warfare; and 6) the emergence of highly organized chiefdoms. All these features and others helped to support the notion of many archaeologists that these Mississippian cultures were the greatest in North America in extent of ceremonialism, technology, architecture, and overall richness.

At Moundville, the bustling ceremonial center was at its zenith around A.D. 1250 with a population which archaeologists place at approximately 3,000 with an

additional 6,000 to 10,000 living in the surrounding area. These outlying villages apparently were linked to Moundville through intermarriage, economic and political ties, and mutual religious observances. Although a once-thriving ceremonial center, the Moundville location was abandoned, probably, by 1540 when DeSoto crossed the Warrior River just south of Moundville. There is no mention of the mounds in DeSoto's travel records.

From the evidence the early inhabitants of Moundville left us--bones, pottery, and even their garbage--we can ascertain a great deal.

The Indians who dwelled in the ancient city, though of medium stature, were likely well built and muscular. They considered flattened heads to be a mark of beauty. Head flattening was achieved by strapping the infant to a wooden cradle board. The pressure of the leather throngs on the soft bones of the baby's head caused a flattening of the back of the head which remained throughout life. In some cases, both the front and the back of the head were flattened. From the evidence of skeletal remains, archaeologists have determined that approximately eighty-five percent of the Indians who lived at Moundville had some kind of cranial deformation.

Most probably, the Indians wore garments fashioned from leather or fabrics woven from vegetable fibers. In extremely cold weather, it is likely that a privileged few wore feather robes over the rest of their clothing. It appears that both men and women were fond of personal adornment. For example, they wore ear plugs and bracelets as well as beads and pendants made from bone, stone, shell, and copper. Many of these pendants were carved with beautiful intricate and delicate designs. The Indians made long hair pins of bone, indicating that they gave considerable attention to hairdressing.

The houses of the Indians were small, but efficient. Generally the hut measured ten feet by thirty feet and was rectangular in shape. Logs and poles were gathered from the surrounding virgin forests and used to construct the framework for the dwelling. They wove house walls from reeds and canes gathered along the river, and plastered the walls with thick coatings of a mixture of moistened sand and clay. Once hardened, this outer shell provided both a warm and dry habitat. Thatched roofs were made of heavy swamp grass and constructed on a steep incline to assure proper drainage during wet weather. The Indians likely left a hole in the center of the roof to serve as a chimney. The typical dwelling was of a one-room design and sparsely furnished. Archaeological evidence suggested that a pit for cooking was dug in the clay floor of the hut.

In all likelihood, the Moundville Indians ate well. Their food supply was based upon three major activities: 1) the cultivation of crops such as corn, beans, squash, pumpkin, and sunflower; 2) the collection of native plants and foods, especially nuts and fruits; and 3) the hunting of game and the trapping of fish. Living in a temperate climate, the Indians had little difficulty in obtaining food from forests teeming with wild

game and streams abundant with fish. This climate, combined with fertile soil, also produced an ample supply of vegetables, fruits, and nuts with little human effort.

The Moundville Indians have been known for their skill as artisans. They fashioned many tools for obtaining food, constructing shelter, and sewing clothes as well as creating art for its own sake. As examples, they caught fish from nearby streams and lakes using nets woven of vegetable fiber and barbless fish-hooks of bone and copper. With small, skillfully chipped arrow heads they brought down game. Ingeniously designed traps ensnared both small and large game. Stone fleshers were used for stripping the meat and dressing the leather. The Indians sewed leather garments with bone awls and needles sharpened on stones. Stone and wooden mortars and pestles pulverized their grain. With the aid of fire, stone adzes, and axes the Indians felled trees for their homes and temples. Among their cooking and eating utensils were cups, bowls, and spoons carved from shell.

The pottery of Moundvillians has long been admired as a significant part of their culture. Generally, it is accepted that this craft was perfected due to the long periods of leisure time available to the Indians. In any case, the Indians manufactured great quantities of pottery for domestic use. Clay, taken from the river bank, was moistened and kneaded together with particles of coarse crushed shell which provided a crack-resistant texture during the drying and firing process. Domestic wares--jars, bottles, pots, bowls--typically were not decorated.

It was the non-utilitarian ware which the Indian decorated in what only can be called an exquisite manner. A number of motifs were used such as Cross and Sun Circle, Feathered Serpent, Bilobed Arrow, Forked Eye, Open Eye, Skulls, Human Figures, Figures of Animals, and the Hand and Eye. The potter worked with only the finest clay mixed with small shell particles for this ware. On occasion a process of engraving was used for the most intricate designs. This process was accomplished after the vessel was dry, but prior to the firing process. Also, pigment occasionally was rubbed into the engraving. Art and religion appeared to have been closely intermingled as evidenced by the use of certain pottery motifs which decorated the circumferences of the works.

Ritual and ceremony were an important part of life for the Mississippian Indians. The Busk or Green Corn ceremony (still practiced by many Southeastern Indians) is believed to have been one such tradition. The health and welfare of the group, the appeasement of the spirits, success in hunting and warfare, and reinforcement of group solidarity were all important elements of the ceremony. Most archaeologists believe that the celebration of Busk marked the end of the ceremonial year.

The Indians built their mounds by carrying basket upon basket of earth to one spot, dumping the earth, and then returning for another load. One of the twenty mounds in the central area of present-day Mound State Monument (MSM), is

Uncleared mound with plowed field in foreground.

approximately sixty feet high and covers nearly two acres of land at its base. It is estimated that this mound contains over four million cubic feet of earth! It took many hours to build one of these mounds.

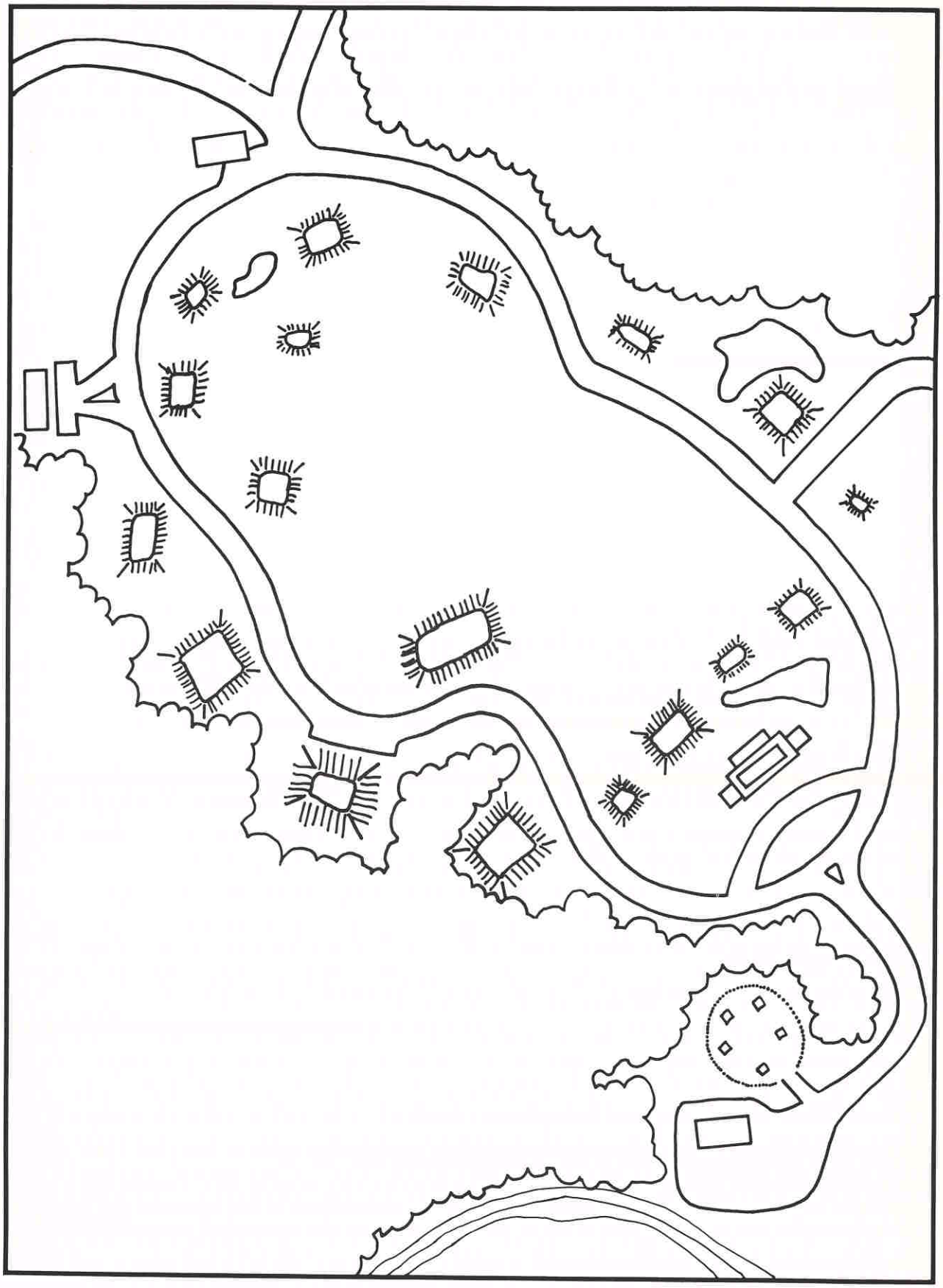
The several lakes within the present-day park area are restorations, made after considerable research of prehistoric reservoirs. The forty to sixty foot bluff at the ancient city's river front made the Black Warrior River an impractical source of water. The lakes, therefore, may have been employed for catching and holding the water supply as well as used for fishing. It is probable, however, that the digging of the lakes was incidental to obtaining dirt for mound construction.

On top of many such mounds archaeologists have discovered the remains of a building. These remains are seen only as hard clay floors outlined by small dark areas where wall posts once stood. Roofs of these buildings were probably of grass thatching and walls were formed of woven cane plastered with mud. These structures atop the mounds served most likely as temples or council chambers rather than living structures.

Similar structures, without mounds, were scattered through the fields surrounding the mounds, and around them can be found such housekeeping refuse as pottery, mussel shell, and animal bones.

There are several explanations concerning the construction of the mounds. Apparently, the Moundville Indians knew only one type of architectural design. Moreover, in order to show a difference between their temples and council chambers, and their dwellings, these Indians built tall earthen mounds and then put their temples and council chambers on top. The largest mounds grew by accretion. Archaeologists have discovered the possibility of as many as ten building phases in some mounds. Conceivably, the mound construction was a type of public works project--an effort on the part of leaders to harness the leisure time of men during the off-season and redirect this time and energy toward a common goal. We also can speculate on the payments and rewards for the laborers: food, goods for trading, and status.

One of the most frequently asked questions concerning the mounds is "Did the Indians bury their dead in the mounds?" Usually, they did not; although recent archaeological evidence indicates that at least some of the remains of the elite were placed in burial mounds. The commoner, however, was buried throughout the village, often directly beneath the clay floors of the dwelling huts. Early explorers in eastern Alabama saw the Creek Indians burying their dead in the same manner. We can surmise that the Indians believed in immortality because food was placed near the deceased and treasured belongings, usually pottery, beads, bracelets, and other ornaments, were buried with the body.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MOUNDVILLE SITE

Mound State Monument (MSM) is located on the banks of the Black Warrior River which runs through Hale and Tuscaloosa Counties. This southwest Alabama prehistoric Indian site, listed as a National Historic Landmark, is a State Monument administered by The University of Alabama State Museum of Natural History.

Some 317 acres form what was once a large and powerful Southeastern Indian community. Located within the present-day park are twenty earthen mounds, arranged principally around a central plaza. The largest of these, named Mound B, has a height of about sixty feet and a base which covers approximately two acres.

The ecology of Moundville is likely the primary reason that the Indians settled the site in the Black Warrior Valley over 1,000 years ago. The prehistoric inhabitants had access to an abundance of game animals such as turkey and deer as well as a wide variety of wild foods including nuts, berries, roots, and greens. In addition, there has been a plentiful supply of fish from small lakes, streams, and of course, the river.

We do not know if, or when, Moundville may have been discovered by early European explorers. On the other hand, we do know that the Moundville site captured the attention of investigators during the nineteenth century. The first known excavation was in 1840 when Thomas Maxwell dug a trench into the largest mound and noted the stratification and features inclusive in this mound. Then Moundville received national attention in the 1848 Squire and Davis volume, Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley. This account recognized the site as one of the largest mound groups in North America. Then, in 1869 Nathaniel T. Lupton made excavations which the Smithsonian Institution sponsored. As far as we know, this

was the earliest funded archaeological research at Moundville. Lupton and his crew of five workers spent four days mapping and excavating the site. His maps were accurate, complete, and drawn to scale.

The first large-scale excavations at Moundville were carried out in 1905 and 1906 by Clarence B. Moore of the Academy of Natural Science in Philadelphia. Moore made his initial trip to Moundville up the Black Warrior River in his stern-wheeler, the Gopher. What he saw--in quantity and quality of remains--impressed him greatly, for he returned the following year. During a two month period, Moore along with a twenty-man crew excavated into many of the mounds as well as made excavations in adjacent areas.

One result of Moore's extensive diggings helped to make Moundville nationally prominent as one of the country's most famous archaeological sites. Another result, unfortunately, was to alert the relic and antique collectors to this bountiful site. For the next two decades, Moundville tragically was looted and vandalized. Subsequent erosion and cultivation compounded the pending destruction of the site.

Fortunately, in 1923 due to the foresightedness of Mrs. Jeff Powers and other citizens from the nearby Moundville community, a drive was launched to preserve and protect the site. These local residents, together with Dr. and Mrs. Walter B. Jones, led a tireless effort to save one of our state's and nation's most valuable treasures--Mound State Monument. This initiative resulted in the formation of the Hale County Historical Society of which Mrs. Powers was the first president. Their primary goal was to arouse public interest and save the ancient site.

With this preservation program underway, it was possible by 1929 for the University of Alabama Museum of Natural History Board of Regents to obtain funds mainly from private donations, and begin to purchase the land surrounding the mounds--piece by piece. It was largely due to the indefatigable efforts of Dr. Walter B. Jones, State Geologist and Director of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, that we have MSM today. Dr. Jone's dedication and commitment to preserving the site was so extraordinary that on more than one occasion he mortgaged his home to secure capital for purchasing land adjacent to the park.

These lands which comprise the Moundville site were donated to the State of Alabama and in 1933 Mound State Park was established. In 1938 the name was changed to its present form, Mound State Monument. On May 16, 1939, the museum dedication was held. Mr. Robert Fechner, Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), presented the museum to Dr. Jones. As part of the ceremony, the following words were read, "This building was constructed by the CCC under the direction of the National Park Service. The work has been sponsored from the beginning by the Alabama Museum of Natural History."

Robert Fechner and unidentified CCC worker (courtesy of National Archives).

Since 1962, MSM has been a part of The University of Alabama. Today, in addition to the museum, MSM contains village and temple reconstructions, other public facilities including a camp ground, the Nelson B. Jones Conference Center, and a picnic area. Also located within the park is the David L. DeJarnette Laboratory of Archaeology which houses the Alabama State Museum of Natural History, Archaeology Division. This Division is responsible for the principal efforts to continue to interpret Alabama's prehistory through summer archaeological field schools, contract archaeology, and cooperative programs with other institutions.

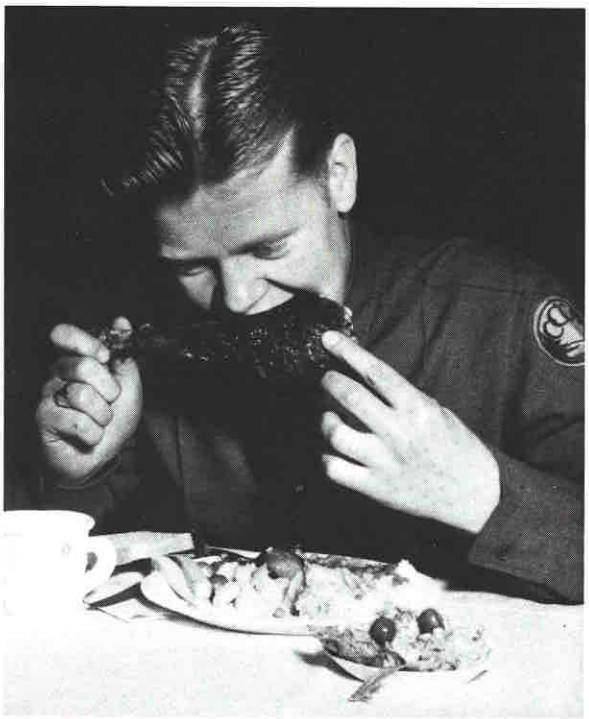
Franklin D. Roosevelt (courtesy of National Archives).

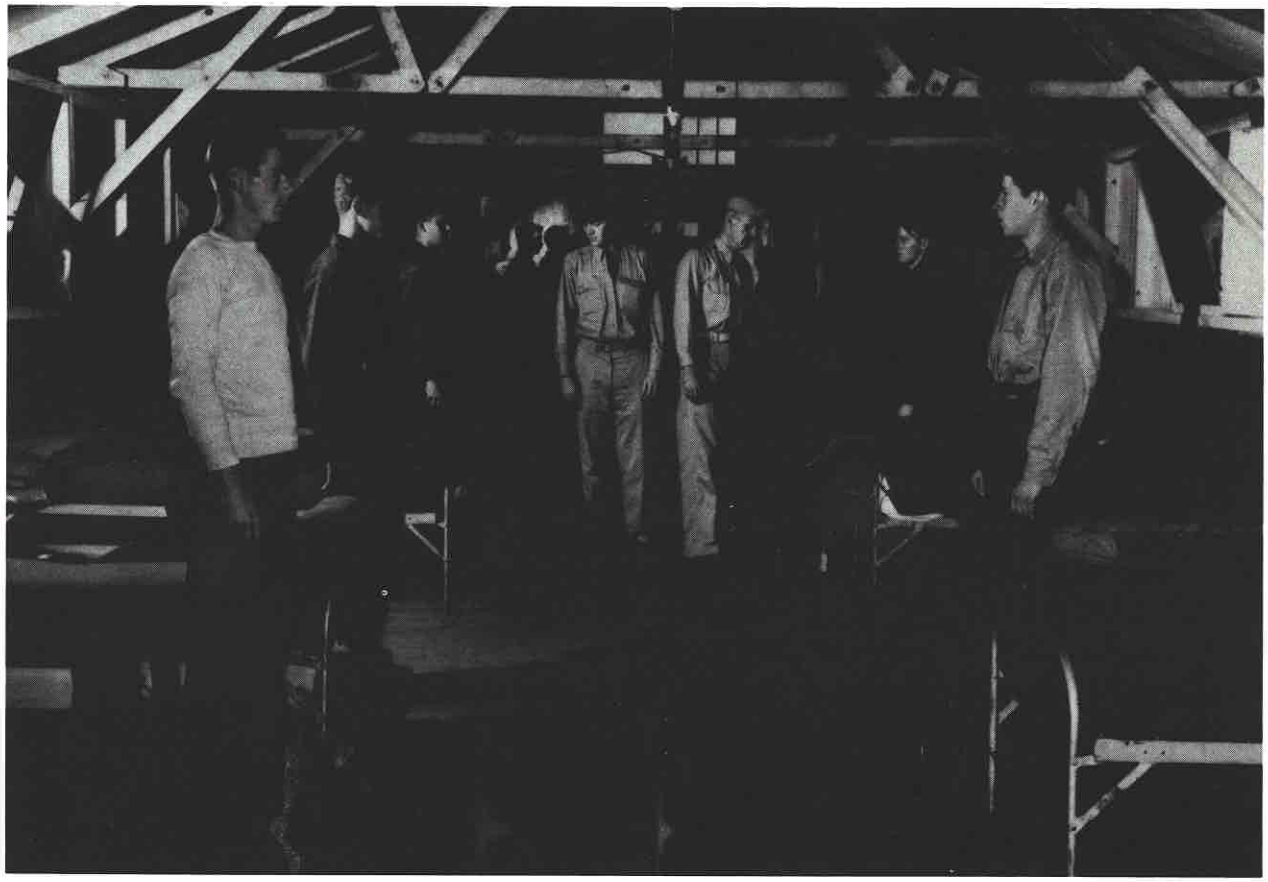
CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS: INTRODUCTION

The Civilian Conservation Corps was born in the chaos and turmoil of the Great Depression. Among other things, the economic crisis of the 1930s produced hundreds of thousands of unemployed and underemployed young people, youth with dashed or vanishing hopes for a prosperous future. The nation also faced troubles of a different sort--troubles with the environment. By the 1930s, wasteful exploitation had depleted millions of acres of American forest and uncontrolled soil erosion had devoured millions of acres of field and pasture.

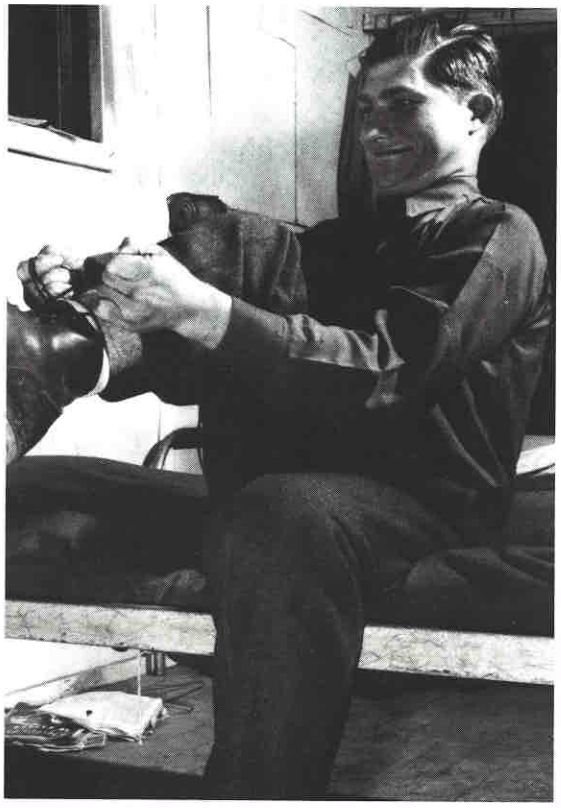
Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps to bring together these "two wasted resources, the young men and the land, in an attempt to save both" (Salmond, 1967:4). Signed into law on March 31, 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps was among the very first programs enacted during the famous One-Hundred Days. A favorite of Roosevelt's, the CCC also was one of the most popular and the most successful of the measures of the entire New Deal.

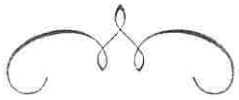
Life in the CCC
(Photos courtesy of National Archives).





One Federal agency involved in the administration of the CCC was the U.S. Army. Within the CCC camp, the Army was responsible for all aspects of life. The Army provided the CCC boys with food, clothing, housing, and medical care. The Army also was responsible for the recreational and religious activities of the CCC enrollees.





CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS: ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES

Single men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five were enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). They were chosen primarily from families on public relief. The initial CCC quota for Alabama was 5,500 men, and the first enrollment took place during May, June, and July 1933. These Alabamians, along with over 240,000 other young men from across the country, were put to work on projects designed to conserve the nation's forests, its pastures, and its fields.

In addition to conservation work, the CCC also provided relief from economic distress. Sidney Barringer, who served in the CCC at Moundville, recalled, "My Pa was about to lose his farm, and I had to go to CC [sic] camp to pay it off." Each man enrolled in the CCC received wages of thirty dollars per month. Most of this money, however, had to be sent home to dependents. The amounts involved, and thus the relief provided, were substantial. During 1937, for example, Alabama CCC boys sent over two million dollars to their families.

Roosevelt appointed Robert Fechner, a highly regarded labor leader, Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Fechner served until his death in December, 1939. As administered by Fechner, the CCC depended heavily on four other Federal agencies.

First, the Department of Labor supervised the selection of young men for the CCC, but Federal officials delegated the actual operation of this responsibility to the welfare agencies of the various states. In Alabama, this important duty was performed initially by the Alabama Relief Administration and, after February 1936, by the newly created State Department of Public Welfare. Within Alabama, the CCC selection process was administered at the county level, with individuals being

chosen for the CCC by the staff of the county Department of Public Welfare. County officials had to determine if an applicant was in need of public assistance. If the applicant was not known personally by the county "welfare lady," a home visit was necessary to verify the needy status of the applicant.

The second Federal agency involved in the administration of the CCC was the War Department, specifically the U.S. Army. Once enrolled in the CCC, a young man was sent to a camp. Within this camp, the Army was responsible for all aspects of life except for the actual work that the CCC performed. The Army provided the CCC boys with food, clothing, housing, and medical care.

The Army treated CCC youths in a quasi-military fashion. The camps were commanded and manned by military personnel, usually reserve officers called into active duty for this specific purpose. The CCC boys wore uniforms; they slept in barracks, and they ate in mess halls. Wesley Logan, a member of the CCC at Mound State Park, remembered that the food was quite ample. When he joined the CCC, Logan recalled, he weighed around 130 to 150 pounds. "I came out a-weighing a hundred and eighty," said Logan. "That tells you about the food."

The Army also was responsible for the recreational and religious activities of the CCC enrollees.

At the CCC camp in Moundville there was a library containing books, newspapers, and magazines. Facilities were provided for pool, ping pong, dominoes, and checkers. "Sound" motion pictures were shown in camp, and the recreation hall had a radio and a piano. Enrollees could climb into the boxing ring, pitch horseshoes, or go swimming; they could play baseball, basketball, volleyball, and softball. A truck was provided for recreational trips to Tuscaloosa, and there was a dance in camp occasionally.

Religious services were held once a week. Some services were directed by a CCC chaplain, others by volunteer clergymen. In 1940, the CCC inspector reported regarding religious activities at the Moundville camp--one hundred percent attendance and excellence [sic] results."

In cooperation with the United States Office of Education, the Army also ran the CCC camp educational program, the curriculum of which included remedial education, traditional academic subjects at both the high school and college level, and vocational instruction.

The curriculum at Moundville began with basic education. In 1939, according to the Camp Education Report, twenty enrollees had learned to read and write during the year. Those who already possessed literacy skills could take elementary or high school subjects. In August 1938, for example, camp officials reported that fifty enrollees had progressed one grade level, including eleven who had moved from the eighth to the ninth grade.

Math and vocational education (courtesy of National Archives).

The educational program at Moundville also contained a strong vocational component. Among other things, enrollees could take courses in auto mechanics, bee keeping, cooking, surveying, typing, truck driving, radio technology, woodworking, and archaeological field methods. In 1940, officials reported that ninety percent of the men in the Moundville camp had taken vocational training courses of three to twelve months duration.

The Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior were the two other Federal agencies associated with the CCC. These two agencies selected, planned, and supervised the actual work which the CCC performed. Within these two departments, the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the Soil Conservation Service directed most of the projects of the CCC.

CHAPTER V

THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS COMES TO MOUNDVILLE

The CCC was active in Alabama. During 1933-1942, there were over ninety different 200-man CCC camps established in Alabama. A number of these were Black camps. The leading historian of the CCC, John A. Salmond, singled out Alabama as having one of the most "well-rounded" CCC programs for African-American youths.

Among the first Civilian Conservation Corps activity in West Alabama was a Black CCC camp, established by the U.S. Forest Service, in Northport. It was from this camp that the first work was done at Mound State Park.

By the 1930s, the mounds had suffered from decades of neglect and misuse. Farmers had turned the areas between the mounds, and even some of the mounds themselves, into fields, plowed up and planted year after year to produce cotton and corn. The forest had taken other mounds, covering them with stands of brush and large trees. Erosion had done its damage throughout.

It would take enormous resources to restore the mounds, but, as Dr. Walter B. Jones quickly recognized, the CCC could provide what was needed. Almost immediately after the CCC was established, Jones began lobbying state and Federal officials to get a camp assigned at Moundville.

Jones wanted a full camp with its complement of 200 men, but for many years he was not able to get that. He was able, however, to get work done in Moundville from camps established elsewhere. In fact, until June 1938, all the CCC work at Moundville was done by "side camps." A side camp was a contingent of up to fifty men who were set up in some location apart from their main camp.

Moundville side camp installation.

The first efforts of the CCC in Moundville began in the fall of 1933 through a side camp assigned to the Black unit which was established in Northport. Initially, considerable time was lost in travel. The superintendent of the Northport camp complained about the necessity of "trucking about thirty men a distance of thirty-six miles over roads that are dangerous, unpaved and almost impassable after rains." Even "under favorable conditions" daily driving time, he reported, required "exactly three hours, one and one-half hours each way."

In 1934, the unit in Northport was disbanded and thus was no longer available to provide assistance to Moundville. Fortunately, the National Park Service had become interested in Mound State Park, and in November 1934, established a side camp there. This was a thirty man unit detailed from the CCC camp stationed in the Cheaha State Park in northeast Alabama.

The Moundville side camp was named "Camp Baltzell" in honor of the commanding officer of CCC District D at Fort McClellan. Colonel George F. Baltzell had taken a great interest in the project and was instrumental in getting a unit established here (Photo courtesy of National Archives).

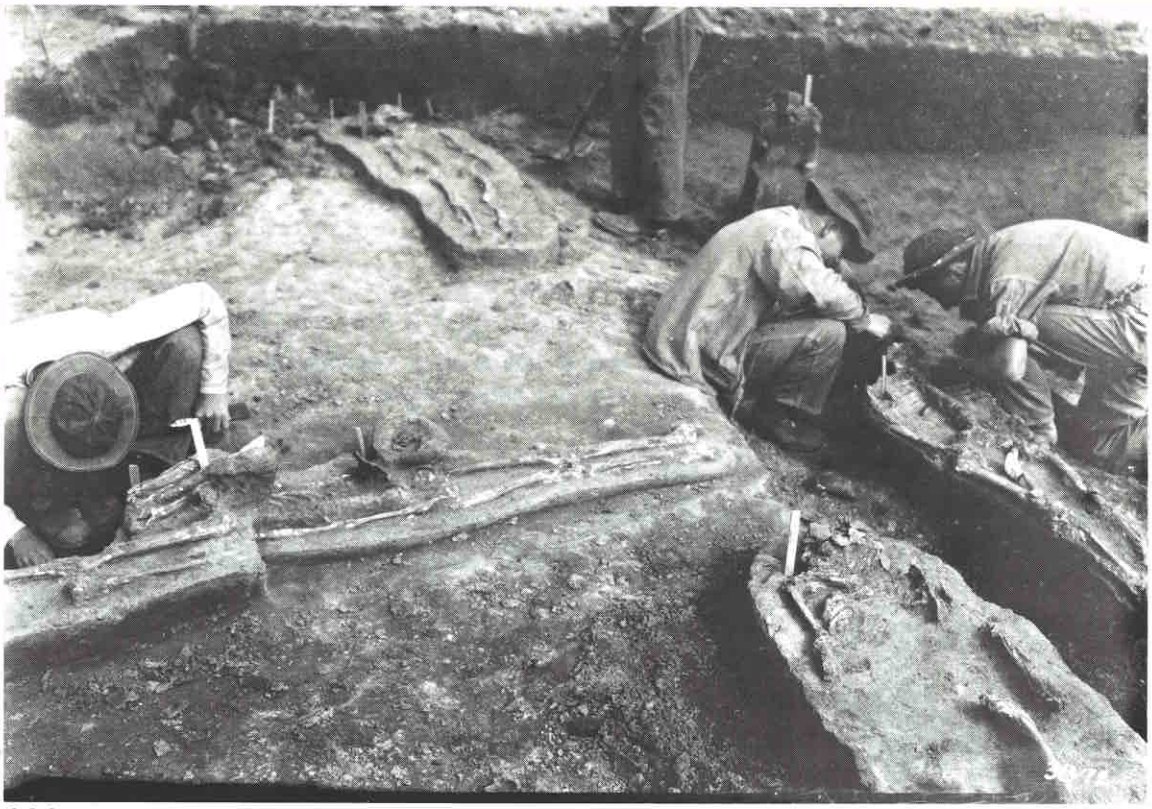
This first National Park Service side camp was followed, in turn, by side camps from main camps at Oak Mountain State Park near Birmingham, and then from Valley Creek

State Park near Selma. These smaller units performed all the work at Mound State Park for a number of years. Side camps, however, did not provide sufficient resources to accomplish all that Dr. Jones and the Board of Regents had planned. For that, a full CCC camp was needed.

Jones continued doggedly to pursue that objective and in 1938 he was finally successful. The CCC assigned a 200-man main National Park Service camp to Mound State Park. The first men began moving into their quarters on May 28, "a red letter day," Jones wrote. "We are profoundly grateful that fortune is so cheerfully smiling upon us and we can now look forward with utter confidence to the realization of our fondest dreams and hopes for Mound State Park."

The full unit transferred to Moundville in 1938 was the camp which had been assigned to Valley Creek State Park. After moving to Mound State Park, the unit, Company 444, remained there until the CCC was liquidated in 1942.

The Project Superintendent, who would direct the work performed by Company 444, was James T. DeJarnette, the brother of David L. DeJarnette, retired Curator of the Alabama Museum of Natural History. Dr. Jones had long sought James DeJarnette's involvement in the Moundville project. As early as September 1935, he had officially requested that James be transferred to Moundville and placed in charge of field work there.



CCC workers excavating skeletal remains.

Burial museum with corn fields in foreground.

THE WORK OF THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS AT MOUNDVILLE

Mound State Monument, as we know it today, was created largely by the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Of critical importance was the assistance which the CCC provided to the scientific exploration of the Moundville site. According to Dr. Jones, the CCC helped to excavate over 45,000 square feet of land at the Moundville site. During these excavations, Jones reported that workers recorded seventy-five structures, recovered more than 2,500 burials; and collected over 1,000 whole ceramic vessels and some 250,000 pieces of broken pottery.

The CCC, however, did much more.

Through tens of thousands of man-hours of labor, they brought erosion under control and shaped the landscape to its current contours. These young men removed stumps, sloped the banks, graded the fields, planted acres of grass and hundreds of trees, shrubs and saplings.

The CCC restored the mounds themselves. Over the years, the mounds had deteriorated badly. They had to be cleaned and cleared. After the archaeologists determined the early dimensions of the mounds, the workers actually reconstructed them to their original size and shape.

They also rebuilt three "aboriginal" lakes. Filled in by debris and sedimentation from years of cultivation of the nearby land, these lakes had disappeared since the time that the Indians had occupied the area.

Lake reconstruction.

Restored lake.

In addition, picnic shelters, tables and benches were built. They carved out foot trails and constructed new roads. They installed a modern concrete water, sewage, and drainage system, for which they manufactured all the pipe and culvert themselves.

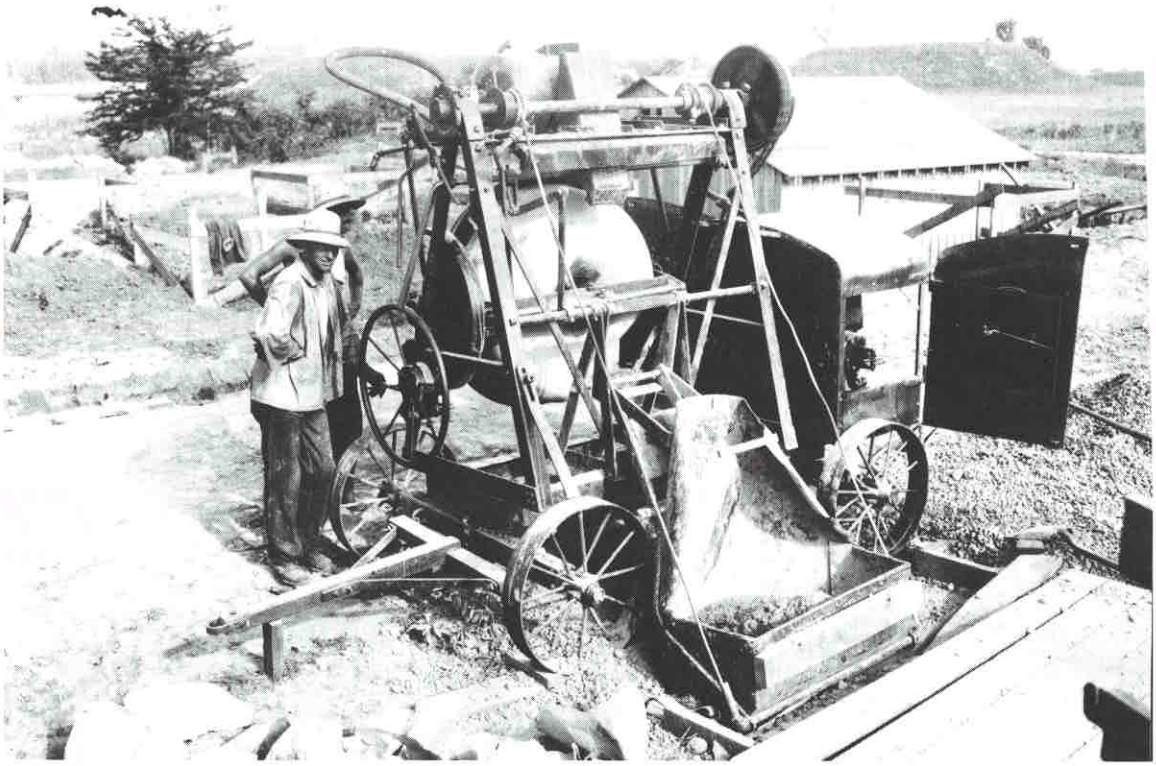
A CCC-constructed drainage ditch.

They built the caretaker's home, the administration building and, their crowning achievment--the Moundville Museum.

Early in the excavations at Moundville, a temporary wooden structure had been built to shelter a burial site containing skeletons and associated artifacts. It was this burial museum which Robert Fechner, Director of the CCC, inspected on his visit to Mound State Park on April 5, 1936. Fechner told the news media, "I am greatly

impressed at the possibilities of this project." Tuscaloosa Congressman William B. Oliver had told him "a great deal" about Mound Park, Fechner said, "but I certainly had no real grasp of the undertaking until this visit today."

Later that same year, Dr. Jones reported that "we have definitely sold the Park Service the museum idea" and that he had obtained a special allotment of funds to begin the project. In February 1937, the National Park Service announced its official approval of the new museum and construction got underway.

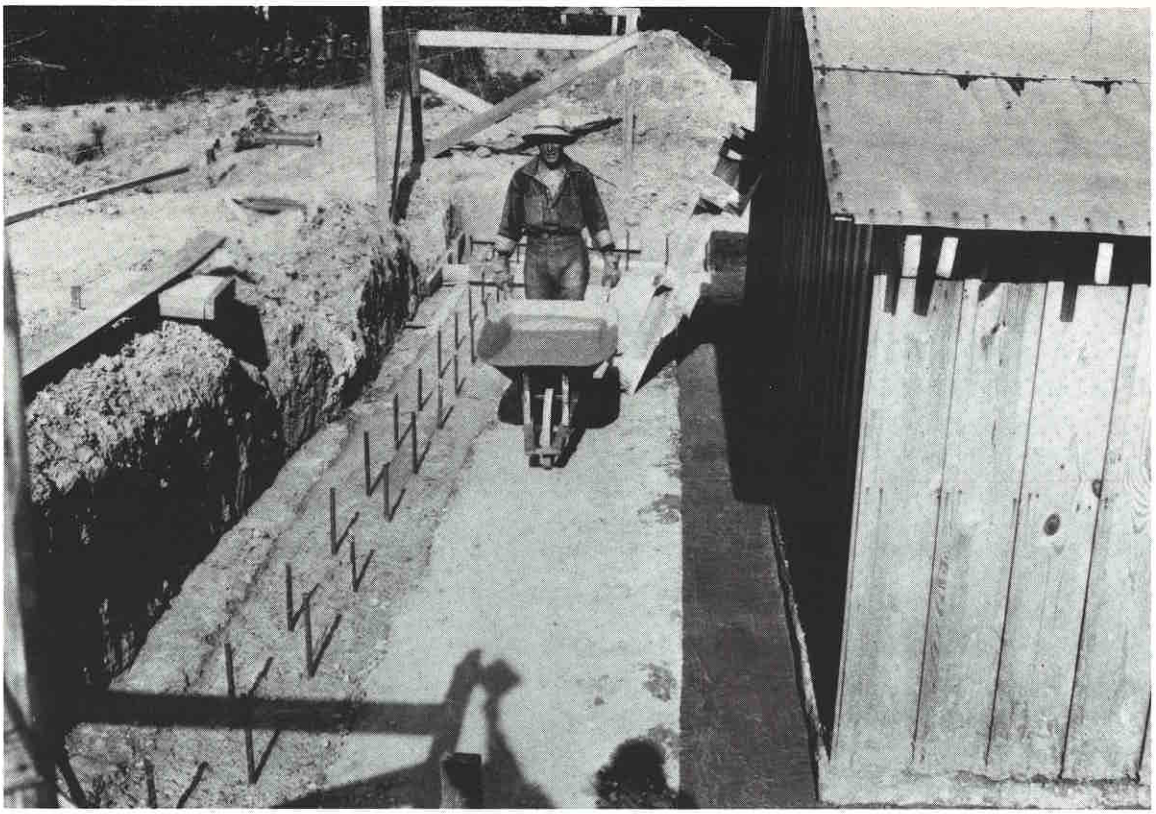


Mixing the first batch of concrete for the museum.

The reinforced concrete structure was designed by architects from the National Park Service, working on suggestions from Dr. Jones and his staff and from the National Park Service Historian. It was, in Jones' words, the "latest word in that sort of building."

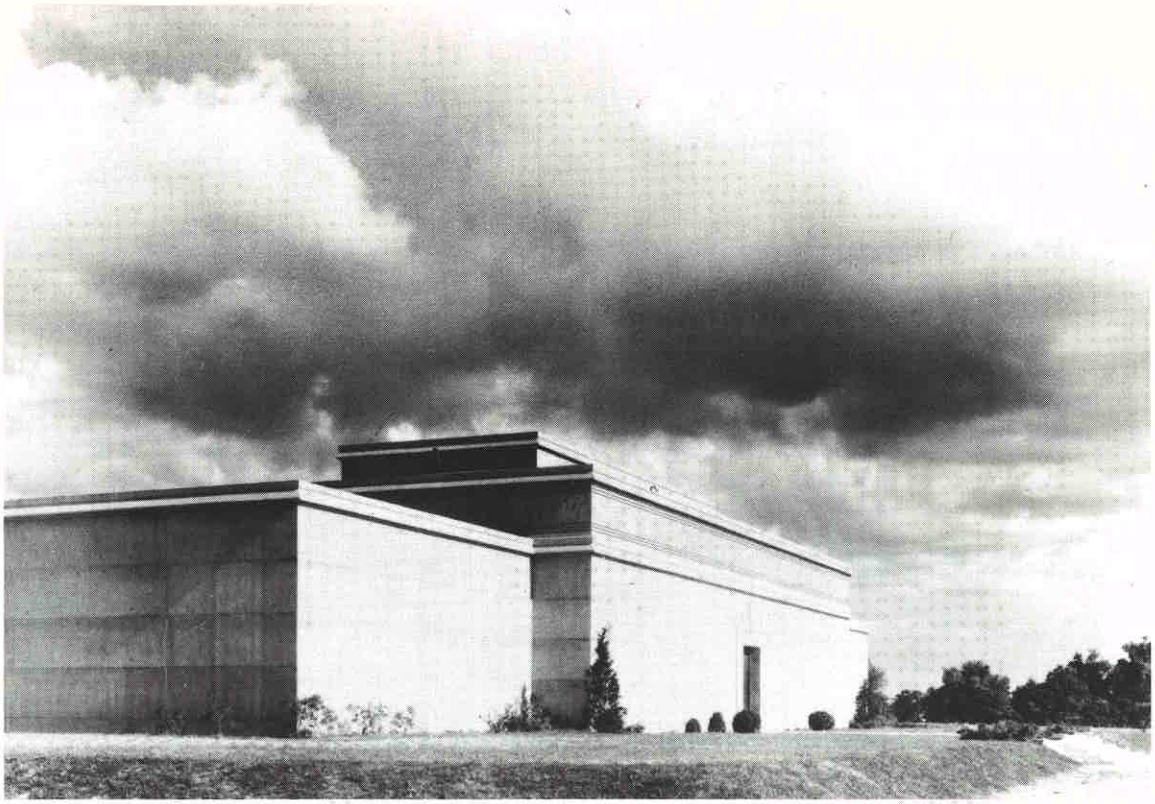
The museum was to be 160 feet long and 60 feet wide. It consisted of a central gallery and two wings. The central portion of the museum would house displays interpreting the culture and characteristics of the Indians who lived at Moundville. The wings were placed over what Jones called "two lovely burial groups" which recent excavations had exposed. The display of *in situ* burials in the museum was, Jones reported, "the first time this has been attempted."

In February 1937, when construction of the museum began, the only CCC contingent at Moundville was the side camp from Valley Creek State Park in Dallas



Pouring the first batch of concrete.

Constructing the under flooring for the museum.



Museum prior to dedication.

County. They went to work, however, as Jones described it "building the forms, tieing the steel, washing the sand and gravel, running the mixer, and pouring the concrete." Sydney Barringer recalled his job on the museum: "I boiled. . . had to go out at six o'clock and start boiling the tar in barrels. Every morning before I went out I'd grease my face with Vaseline, but on the weekends, I'd be yellow and start to peel off and start over again on Monday."

When the 200-man CCC unit arrived in June 1938, the foundation of the museum had been completed and within less than a year, with a full camp on hand, the project was finished. The museum cost approximately $40,000 and took almost 6,000 man-days of labor. "It is to their everlasting credit," Dr. Jones said of the effort, "that there is no better concrete job anywhere."

On May 16, 1939, at the dedication of the museum, Robert Fechner, Director of the CCC, gave the keys of the museum to Dr. Walter B. Jones, an act poignantly symbolic of the deep truth in Jones' declaration: "If it had not been for the CCC. . . there would be no Mound State Monument."

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AFTERWORD

During the Great Depression, joint efforts by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Park Service and the Alabama Museum of Natural History resulted in the restored mounds, perimeter road, museum and other buildings evident here today. With the outbreak of World War II the further exploration of the Moundville site, as with most other public projects, awaited the successful end of hostilities.

After the war, work revived at Moundville under the supervision of David DeJarnette. Although no excavations comparable to those of the 1930s have been undertaken since, activity above surface was extensive. The maintenance shop, conference building and archaeological storage facility were constructed by the late 1940s. (I recall that the digging of footings frequently required the removal of burials).

Under DeJarnette's direction, archaeology students at the University of Alabama were integrated into work at Moundville. From this place began the first of Alabama's cultural resource management investigations, an important enterprise today for the Museum's Division of Archaeology which is housed on the site.

In 1961, coincident with the retirement of Walter B. Jones as State Geologist and Director of the Museum of Natural History, the Alabama Legislature transferred to The University of Alabama all assets and properties of the Museum, including Moundville. Building upon earlier work, The University has developed here in recent years a first-class facility to provide long-term curation for the extensive Moundville collection, and those of a number of Federal agencies, for use by investigators around the world.

A major development plan for Moundville is presently underway. This includes totally new museum exhibits, a renovated visitor center, a redesigned road system and a number of interpretive exhibits throughout the site to orient visitors to the importance of this prehistoric site.

Today, public programming, curation and research at Moundville surpass that of earlier years. A formal research plan to guide investigations at Moundville has been implemented, and a field school program initiated. With the developments planned here, Moundville can achieve its rightful place in the eyes of the world as one of North America's premier archaeological sites. The University of Alabama is committed to this end.

Douglas E. Jones
Director
Alabama State Museum of Natural History

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