

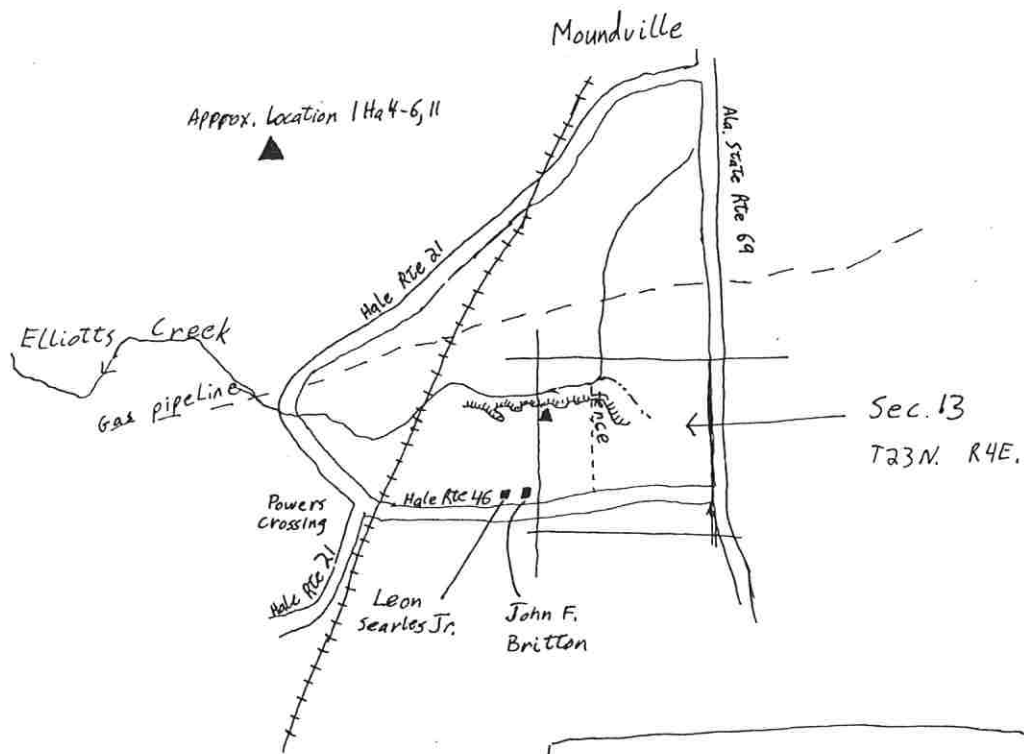
University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology
Moundville Archaeological Project

24 July 1980

After visiting the Alabama site files to look at the site forms for 1Ha9 and ~~NX100~~ Ha 10, I went out to try to relocate the site. The site forms have two maps showing the location of the sites, one of which shows the site on the north side of Elliotts Creek while the other shows the site on the south side. Both, however, agree that the site is in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 13, T²₃N R4E . The owner as of 1933 was named Searles. I drove out to the area and stopped at a house to the south of the site location, along Hale Co. Rte. 46. The house owner was Mr. John Britton, whose wife was a Searles. He owns the land between Elliotts Creek and Hale Rte. 46 starting at the east edge of Sec. 14 and running west some distance. The land between Elliotts Creek and Hale Rte 46 running east of the Sec. 13/14 line is Mr. Buster Chandler of the Chandler Bros. cotton gin in Moundville. Chandler, it seems, married another Searles woman. Mr. Britton's house is some 50 feet west of the section line, and the house to the west of that belongs to Mr. Leon Searles Jr., who flies crop dusters and air photos.

Mr. Britton clearly remembers the mound out on the south (not the north) side of the creek. It was plowed down by his grandfather (actually his wife's father) before the old man died at an extremely advanced age which I think was mentioned as 96. The old man died in 1935, according to Mr. Britton. The plowing was done by mule teams, since the first tractor in the area was the one brought onto the Searles farm in the mid 1940's. According to Mr. Britton the mound is completely plowed down and no trace remains, such that he does not think even he could accurately relocate it. As to the village seen by W. B. Jones in 1933 and labelled Ha 10, Mr. Britton had no idea where that might be. He had never seen any pottery or village refuse out there. Mr. Britton had no objection at all to me tromping around looking for the site. The land in Sec. 13 being owned by the Chandlers, who last summer gave us permission to collect at 1HaM2 (Wilks Swamp site), I thought that it would be permissible for me to look around on that land also. Most of the land between Hale Rte 46 and Elliotts Creek is in cotton and soy beans, but just before the edge ~~xx~~ of the terrace south of the creek the row crops stop and the land is in pasture. I checked the ~~xx~~ north edge of the row crop fields and doubled back across the pasture. I saw no trace of the mound and found no archaeological debris of any kind. The village site could be out in the middle of the row crops, but today was certainly not the day to find out because just as I was about to leave the field Leon Searles Jr. arrived and began to spray the cotton. From the plane, that is. So, the day's work results as follows: we know fairly closely where the mound was, we know definitely that it was destroyed and when that happened and who did it, and we still know nothing more about the village site than recorded by Jones in 1933 ~~xx~~ (i.e. that it was south of the mound, that it had pottery, and that he thought ~~xx~~ that it was the occupation site for the builders of the mound).

Paul D. Welch



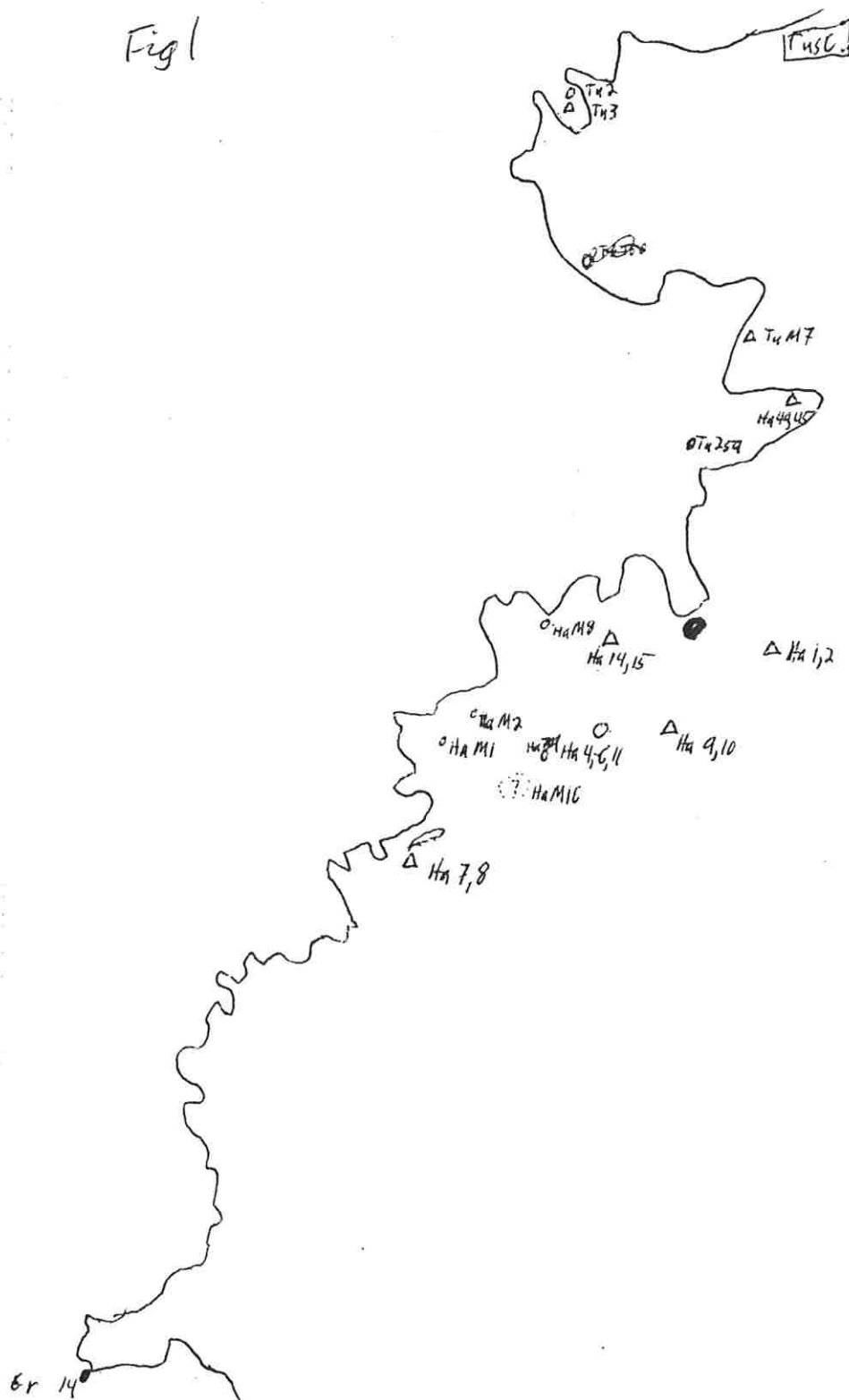
N↑ scale approx. 1 inch : 1 mile
▲ Location of 1 Ha 9

Site Survey and Testing

The grant proposal (Peebles et al 1977) called for surface collection and mound tests at 18 floodplain sites in the first field season, plus a systematic survey of the uplands near the river during the 1979 field season. As explained in the progress report after the first field season (Peebles et al 1979) the total number of floodplain sites had been drastically underestimated, causing abandonment of the plans for an upland survey. The revised schedule for the 1979 season called for test excavation at as many of the remaining 7 mounds ~~xx~~ as possible, plus surface collection of roughly 10 village sites. Our score at the end of the season was 9 villages collected and 4 mounds tested. In addition, we discovered and collected 18 Mississippian hamlets or isolated farmsteads, site types heretofore scarcely known in the Black Warrior floodplain.

The location of sites visited during the 1979 field season is shown in Figure 1. Mounds were tested by excavation of 1x1 m or 1x2 m pits, using a combination of arbitrary and natural levels and screening all material through 1/4 inch hardware cloth. Village sites were surface collected in 20x20 m grid squares, with all visible material collected. All village sites were in row crops with good to excellent artifact recovery conditions, with the exception of 1Ha7,8, which is in forest. Brief summaries of the sites are presented below.

Fig 1



Mound and village sites

1Tu2

The village is situated on the floodplain along the right bank of the river, 600 m northeast of the 1Tu3 mound. Only that portion of the site currently in open fields was collected, and this measures 1.1 ha. Overall site size probably does not exceed 1.25 ha. Artifacts recovered indicate West Jefferson phase occupation and Moundville phase occupation probably but not certainly of the Moundville II/III subphases.

1Tu3

This large, well preserved mound is located on a levee along a currently dry slough. Basal dimensions are 42 x 42 m, height 3.5 m, and the flat mound surface measures 26 x 27 m. There is some indication of a ramp on the NNW side of the mound, opposite the slough, but the matter is uncertain due to the presence of a bulldozed access ramp in the same area. A 1x2 m ~~pit~~ test pit was dug on the NE side of the mound extending up slope from the base. Several building phases are shown, with a possible house floor near the base of the ~~mound~~ mound. A 1x1x.6 m pit was excavated in the top center of the mound, with no stratigraphy revealed. Two 1 m high profiles were cleaned along the bulldozed access ramp, again showing uniform fill for the top 1 m of the mound deposit. Ceramics indicate Moundville III occupation of the upper parts of the mound and a carbon sample from the last fill episode is being dated.

1TuM7

The mound at 1TuM7 was tested in the 1978 field season but crop cover prevented surface collection of the adjacent

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village at that time. The site was revisited ~~this~~ this summer and the village collected. The surface scatter covers .6 ha to the north and east of the mound. Ceramics are predominantly West Jefferson phase, but Moundville phase material is also present. The north margin of the mound suffered considerable bulldozer damage this spring, apparently during clean-up operation after the flood. Pottery recovered from this area was diagnostically Moundville I.

1Tu44,45

An error has resulted in this site being listed twice in the Alabama site files, the site we know as 1Tu346 apparently ~~being~~ being identical with the 1Tu44,45 mound and village pair. The mound no longer exists, the record floods this past spring having eroded away all but the back margin of the mound, When the site was visited ~~xxx~~ in the spring of 1978, 0.5 to 1.0 m of mound was still standing along the river bluffs, but only 20 cm remained in 1979.

At the time of our visit to the site in 1979 a shell-filled pit and a human burial were exposed in the river bank beneath the mound remnant. Excavations were begun directly atop these two features. The burial was mostly but not entirely articulated, supine, and probably extended though river bank erosion had removed everything below a line running from the left elbow to the right shoulder. There were no grave goods accompanying this 20-21 yr old female (?). The burial was in a pit at least 20 cm deep, which not certainly but probably antedated the 40 cm of mound and wash deposits above it.

Mound stratigraphy was better defined in the profiles of the excavation above the shell-filled pit. Beneath the plow zone was the outermost edge of the latest mound fill, and below this were wash deposits indicative of erosion of an earlier mound surface. Beneath the mound ~~■~~ was 40 cm of village midden, of which the upper half contained West Jefferson and Moundville I phase ceramics while the lower half contained only West Jefferson phase ceramics. The shell-filled pit originated in the pure West Jefferson phase deposits and along with ~~■~~ West Jefferson sherds contained abundant and widely varied subsistence remains. A charcoal sample from the pit is being radiocarbon dated.

In the process of excavating^{ng} down onto the shell-filled pit a second burial was encountered. This was a supine, fully extended, ~~XXXXX~~ female who was 22-30 years old at death. The skeleton ~~was~~ very badly preserved, and only the cranium and the very fragmentary long bones were recovered. There were no grave goods and no visible burial pit (it would have been entirely within the village ~~midden~~ midden and ~~thus~~ thus invisible), and the burial clearly antedated the mound and wash deposits above it.

Due to a combination of impassable roads, lush weeds, lush soybeans, and ~~■~~ a lack of time, the village debris to the south and west of the mound remnant was not surface collected. A systematic sample of roughly 10% of the .5 to .8 ha site was collected, and reveals West Jefferson and Moundville I occupation.

1Tu259

This is a .85 ha multicomponent site located on a sand ridge beside a cypress swamp. In addition to ~~x~~ several small patches of Moundville phase ceramics, there was a .85 ha West Jefferson phase village, a smaller Middle Woodland component, and a scatter of Late Archaic lithics.

1Tu50

The Moundville Project did not visit this site, but some material ~~xx~~ collected from it was given to us by Mr. Clay Wiggins, son of the landowner/farmer of nearly a third of our Tuscaloosa Co. sites. The material ~~xxx~~ from 1Tu50 is uniformly of Moundville I date.

1Hal,2

This site was our biggest surprise and an even bigger disappointment. It is a mound and village pair located on a hilltop nearly 3 km from the floodplain, 5 km exactly ~~xxxx~~ east of the plaza at Moundville. The mound is a well preserved cone of 20 m diameter, approx. 1.75 m high. We contour mapped the mound, but were denied permission either to dig test excavations or to surface collect in the vicinity of the mound. Thus we are unable to say anything about the date of mound construction or the size and date of occupation of the associated village. Of eight or ~~xxx~~ ten sherds seen around the mound base, about half were West Jefferson and half Moundville phase sherds.

1Hal4,15

The mound, 1Hal4, at present measures roughly 40 x 26 m at the base and stands 1-2 m high. It is difficult to be precise about the mound dimensions since the mound is constructed

on a rolling sand levee, is much plowed down on the southern half, and is ^{not} visibly ~~to~~ distinguishable from the sediments beneath it. The northwest section of the mound was cut away ~~for~~ for construction of a county road, giving the mound its present oblong shape. Examination of the road profile ~~plus~~ plus the profiles of a 1 x 1 m test pit on the south side of the mound failed to show any stratigraphic differences within the mound or between the mound and the subsoil. Ceramics within the mound were sparse but suggest a Moundville II/III date.

The village associated with the mound ~~is~~ lies to its southwest and measures 1.4 ha. Ceramics are mostly West Jefferson phase, with scattered Moundville phase sherds.

1HaM8

This hamlet or village lies on high floodplain deposits bounded on the north by the river and on the west by a slough. Though the surface scatter has fairly clear boundaries on most sides, the ~~edge~~ edge of the slough extending towards the south has ~~fairly~~ a continuous light to moderate surface scatter for .5 km. This linear scatter was not collected, ~~our~~ our ~~efforts~~ efforts instead being focussed on the wider area of the village. The apparent area of the site is .6 ha though as the site lies on the outside of an actively eroding river meander an unknown amount of the site has certainly been removed. Ceramics are a mix of West Jefferson and Moundville phases, the latter not being diagnostic to subphase on preliminary analysis. The site contained an unusually high density of worked and unworked greenstone fragments.

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1HaM1

This 1.2 ha village lies on the east side of a cutoff lake. Our collection was sparse and generally non-diagnostic of subphase, though the material is definitely Moundville ~~phh~~ phase. A locally resident amateur has been collecting on the site repeatedly for several years, and his collection suggests the site is principally Moundville II/III.

1HaM2

This site was another of our disappointments. It is a large, 1.5 to 2.0 ha, West Jefferson phase village located ~~x~~ beside a dry slough in a soy field. The field had been in pasture for ~~xxx~~ 30-odd years before this spring, consequently the material was minimally broken-up by plow action. Repeated attempts to surface collect the site were forestalled by weather conditions, it being nigh useless to collect a freshly weeded field until rain has washed artifacts out of the dust.

1HaM16

Located on the left bank of Elliott's Creek, currently a small and slow-moving stream, this 1.8 ha site has Archaic, Middle Woodland, West Jefferson phase, and Moundville phase components. The West Jefferson component extends all across the site while the Moundville phase material localizes in several small ~~patches~~ patches. A low density scatter of Archaic and West Jefferson phase material extends to the east, covering an additional 2-3 ha. Only a small grab sample was collected from this light scatter.

1Ha4-6, 11

A series of sites, or a single very large site ~~is~~ divided by low swales, we were prevented from collecting here by a dense growth of sorghum. Both West Jefferson and Moundville phases are present, and there is almost certainly at least one plowed-down mound.

1Ha9, 10

~~We~~ were unable to relocate this mound-village pair. The original field notes are not very ~~site~~ specific, and it is possible that the mound is actually the obtrusive rise interpreted as a plowed-down mound at what we otherwise believe to be 1Ha4-6, 11.

1Ha7, 8

Probably the best-preserved Moundville phase site in the valley, the forest covering the site was logged in the 1930's and has been undisturbed since then. The mound measures 44 x 36 m at base and has a two-level platform. The larger, lower platform stands 2.7 m above floodplain level and measured 16 x 20 m. The upper platform is 8 x 20 m and stands at 3.3 m above floodplain ^{capping} ~~mound~~ the western end of the mound. A 2 x 1 m test unit at ~~the~~ the eastern margin of the mound revealed 20-30 cm of sub-mound ~~midden~~ village midden. While the mound fill did display stratigraphy, it did not definitely indicate any break in fill deposition. Mound stratigraphy was clarified by a second test unit, 1 x 1 m, on the lower platform just upslope of the 2 x 1 unit. The mound base was not reached in this ~~unit~~ 1 x 1 unit, but a set of 3-4 closely ~~superimposed~~ prepared ~~in~~ sand floors were encountered at

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a height of 2.1 m above floodplain level. A third test unit, 1 x 1 m, was located on the upper platform. Time permitted only a 70 cm excavation, which displayed homogeneous fill indistinguishable from the uppermost meter of lower platform deposits. Ceramics from the mound indicate Moundville II/III dates. A charcoal sample from one of the 2.1 m sand floors is being radiocarbon dated.

Though the site is forested, we were able to ~~xxx~~ define the village perimeter by a series of shovel tests. The mound sits on the eastern edge of an oxbow lake, and the village forms a semi-circle on the lake edge with the mound displaced slightly to the north of center. The area of Moundville phase occupation is an indeterminate ~~xxx~~ amount smaller than the underlying 1.3 ha West Jefferson phase village. Sherds found eroding from the lake edge beneath the mound suggest that the West Jefferson phase occupation is early in the phase, or possibly there is a distinct, earlier, Late Woodland occupation.

1Gr14

Time did not permit us to visit this large Mississippian mound located on river bluffs considerably downriver of the other known Moundville phase sites in the valley.

Hamlets and Farmsteads

Mississippian hamlets and farmsteads, representing probably 1-4 structures, were not well known in the Black Warrior valley. Several had been located in a small University of Alabama survey (Walthall and Coblenz 1977). Four were

~~found~~ encountered accidentally by the Moundville Project in 1978. To ascertain ~~whether~~ whether this site type is common in the valley, in 1979 we spent some time searching for them. In fact they are common, but had gone unnoticed due to ~~the~~ their low visibility. Our survey technique was to search large fields by walking transects 20-40 m apart. The selection of fields was entirely purposive, with the purpose being maximum number of sites discovered for minimal investment. Sites encountered were generally light sherd scatters 10-20 m in ~~diameter~~ diameter. All visible ~~material~~ material at such a site was collected in a single bag. Roughly 4 km² were surveyed in this fashion, with a yield of 18 farmsteads and hamlets. The sites belong to the Moundville phase, but ~~the~~ their lack of diagnostic sherds make them impossible to date more precisely.

Analysis

The survey collections ~~xx~~ were washed and catalogued prior to delivery to Mr. Tandy Bozeman. He is analyzing the collections as a dissertation project at the University of California at Santa Barbara. At the time of writing, sorting and classification of artifacts is nearly complete.....

In addition to the data actually gathered by the site survey and testing operations, the Moundville Project has acquired the material excavated from a large (1-2 ha) West Jefferson phase village in the floodplain below Moundville. This site, 1Ha39, was the scene of test excavations by a University of Alabama field school in 1976. At that time much of the site had already been destroyed by an encroaching sand quarry. Sixteen 2 x 2 m pits were excavated and a ~~42~~ 40 m² area was stripped to expose a house postmold pattern. Features were excavated and after screening for artifacts the ~~feature~~ feature fill was saved. The fill from the larger features was floated and will be included in Ms. Margaret Scarry's ethnobotanical analysis reported elsewhere in this paper. A charcoal sample from a large bell-shaped pit is being radiocarbon dated. The artifactual remains will be ~~analyzed~~ analysed by Mr. Paul Welch, a graduate student at the Univ. of Michigan.