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Searching for "missing" mounds: investigating the landscape of the 1730 battlefield at the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians

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ABSTRACT

We describe investigations at the Fatherland site (22Ad501) in Natchez, Mississippi, conducted to better understand an important battle that took place there between the Natchez and the French in 1730. Eighteenth-century documents indicate that two "missing" mounds – that is, ones no longer visible today – figured prominently in this battle. Both mounds were relocated through fieldwork that used a combination of remote sensing, coring, and excavating. Knowing the locations of these mounds allows us to correct previous reconstructions of the battlefield and shows that the history of the Grand Village was much more complicated than previously thought.

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In the early eighteenth century, a town the French called the "Grand Village" was the political capital of the Natchez people, one of the most powerful Indian groups in the Lower Mississippi Valley at the time.[1] Three hundred years later, in the early twentieth century, archaeologists identified the Fatherland site (22Ad501) on St. Catherine Creek in modern Natchez, Mississippi, as the location of the Grand Village (Ford 1936:60). This was the setting for many well-documented encounters between the Natchez and the French. It also was the site of a 1730 battle in which the Natchez were attacked and besieged by a large force of Choctaw and French combatants. During this battle, the French occupied the central precinct of the Grand Village and besieged two wooden forts that the Natchez had built as refuges. Although most of the Natchez people escaped after a month-long siege, this battle ultimately led to the Natchez being permanently driven from their homeland. The site is now operated by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) as a historic park called the "Grand Village of the Natchez Indians" (GVNI).

Here we report on our investigations at the Grand Village that used remote sensing, coring, and excavating to search for features connected with the 1730 battle.[2] Funded by the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP), this work was undertaken to evaluate a recent map-based reconstruction of the 1730 battlefield in which Steponaitis used features still visible on the landscape – primarily St. Catherine Creek and Mounds A, B, and C – that also were depicted in eighteenth-century maps to propose potential locations for multiple battlefield features that are not visible today (Brown and Steponaitis 2017; Steponaitis 2026). These include two mounds (Mounds D and E) that were occupied by French forces, as well as a siege trench, called a sap, that was dug to approach one of the besieged Natchez forts. Steponaitis's reconstruction is based on an argument made by Brown and Steponaitis (2017) that the cultural landscape seen at the Grand Village today is very different from the one that existed some 300 years ago. Although only three mounds (A, B, and C) are currently visible at the site, eighteenth-century French maps indicate that six mounds (Mounds A–F) were present in the early 1700s (Figure 1). Brown and Steponaitis (2017) make the case that these "missing" mounds were covered by alluvium during the nineteenth century and likely are still present below the modern surface. We were successful in relocating Mounds D and E, which are both within GVNI's boundaries (Figure 2). Both figured prominently in the 1730 battle during the French occupation of the Grand Village as they used a building on the summit of Mound D as a field hospital, placed a two-cannon battery on top of Mound E, and started a sap next to Mound E that would extend approximately 500 m to the west toward one of the Natchez forts (Figure 3). Although the sap and the two Natchez

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Figure 1. Detail from Ignace-François Broutin's 1723 map of the Natchez area, showing six mounds at the Grand Village. The modern mound designations (A–F) are added. Map is oriented with north at the top. The original scale of 100 *toises* (fathoms) and compass rose are inset at the bottom. Inset at upper left shows the full map with area of detail outlined, north at lower left. (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des cartes et plans, Ge DD 2987–8834 B.).

forts were not located during the study, finding Mounds D and E allows us to better project their probable locations.

The now known locations of Mounds D and E and the projected locations of other features allow us to present a reconstruction of the 1730 battlefield that is very different from previous interpretations. In addition to fundamentally changing our understanding of the landscape of this battle, confirming the presence of additional mounds at the Grand Village also shows that its history is more complicated and grander than we thought. Rediscovering the presence of multiple, previously unknown mounds at the Grand Village is ironic because it arguably is one of the best-known and most thoroughly investigated archaeological sites in the region. The profound revisions to our understanding of the 1730 battlefield and the Grand Village's history discussed here highlight the challenges that all archaeologists face in reconstructing past landscapes that have been obscured by large-scale cultural and natural processes.

Archaeological background

The history of the Natchez Indians and their ancestors in the Natchez Bluffs extends back at least to approximately AD 1200 and the beginning of the Mississippi period (Steponaitis 1981:6–7). The ceramic material culture of the Natchez and their ancestors, especially their practice of tempering ceramic clays with finely ground grog, places them within the Plaquemine variant of Mississippian culture, which is found in the Lower Mississippi Valley south of Vicksburg and along adjacent parts of the Gulf Coast (Griffin 1967:190; Lorenz

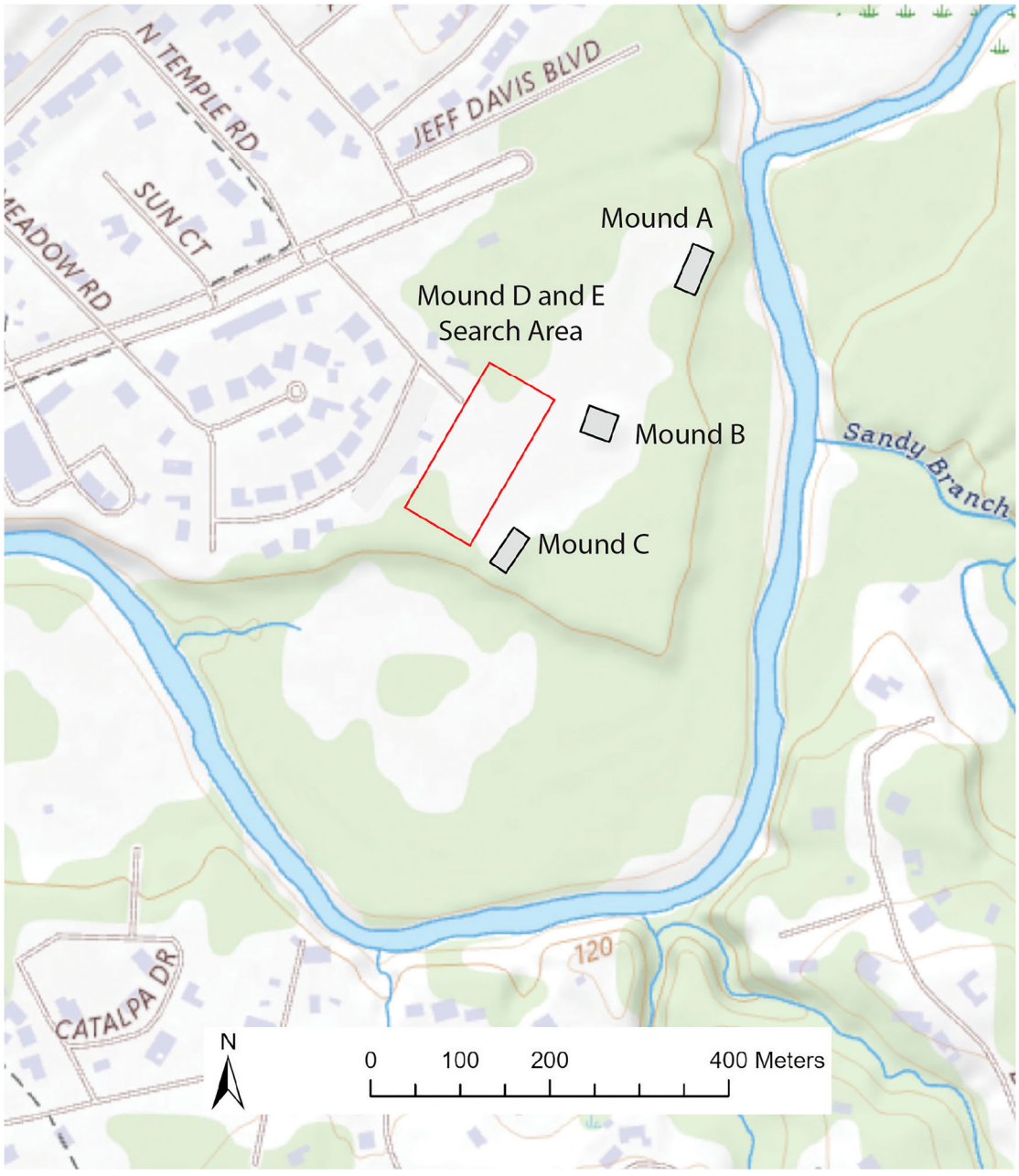

Figure 2. Map showing Mounds A–C (*black rectangles*) and the search area for Mounds D and E (*red rectangle*). GVNI's boundaries include the mound search area and extend to St. Catherine Creek.

2000:145; Phillips 1970:967; Quimby 1951:128). Archaeologists have divided the Plaquemine occupation of the Natchez region into four phases: Anna (AD 1200–1350), Foster (AD 1350–1500), Emerald (AD 1500–1680), and Natchez (AD 1680–1730; Brown 1985:Table 2; Neitzel 1983:118–125; Steponaitis 1974, 1981:7; Steponaitis et al. 1983). Over the course of this sequence, political dominance shifted among a series of large, multiple-mound sites that were built in the Natchez Bluffs. Earliest among these was Anna (22Ad500), which rose to prominence at circa AD 1200. Sometime around AD 1500, Anna was eclipsed in size and importance by Emerald (22Ad504). Mound building at Fatherland began during the Foster phase and continued into the Emerald phase (Brain 1978:356; Brown 1998a; Brown and Steponaitis 2017:185; Lorenz 2000:149; Neitzel 1965, 1983:129). When the French first arrived in 1682, Emerald was no longer occupied, and Fatherland was the principal center. It remained the Grand Village during the Natchez phase (AD 1680–1730), when the site was one of many Native settlements concentrated along St. Catherine Creek, Fairchilds Creek, and the

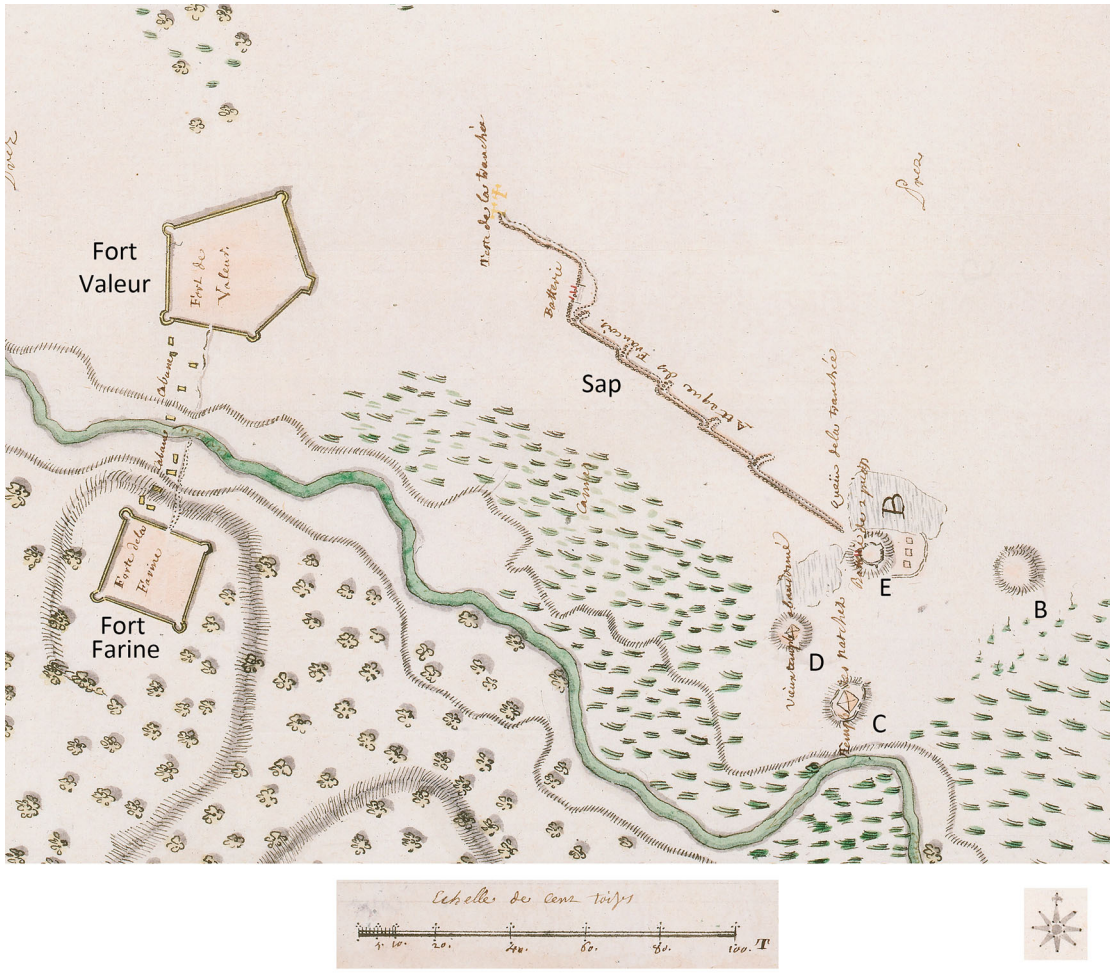

Figure 3. Detail from Pierre Baron's 1730 map of the Grand Village battlefield, with labels for Mounds B–E and other key features added. Map is oriented with north at the top. The original scale of 100 *toises* (fathoms) and compass rose are inset at the bottom. (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Estampes, Vd 21 (3) Fol.).

South Fork of Coles Creek (Brown 1985:2–3; Lorenz 2000:143; Steponaitis 2018). Thus, three different political capitals existed at different times through the late precolonial and early colonial Native history of the Natchez Bluffs, with the Grand Village at the Fatherland site being the last (Brain 1978; Cotter 1951; Neitzel 1965; Steponaitis 1974). Hereafter in this article, we use Grand Village to refer to the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century settlement at Fatherland. The Grand Village was the home of the Great Sun, the paramount chief of the Natchez, and it was an important central place for large public ceremonies and other gatherings (Barnett 2007; Milne 2015:133; Swanton 1911). Archaeologists have been successful in correlating observations in historic accounts with aspects of the archaeological record at Fatherland (Ford 1936:60; Neitzel 1965:91; cf. J. Brown 1990). For example, Neitzel (1965:91) identified Mound B as where the Great Sun lived and Mound C as the location of the Natchez temple based on his fieldwork in 1962.

The 1730 battle and siege

As French settlements on the Gulf Coast grew throughout the early 1700s, there was increasing pressure for the movement of settlers up the Mississippi River to inhabit interior areas such as the Natchez territory. The Natchez were the most powerful Indian group in the Lower Mississippi Valley during the early eighteenth century, and the French could not have established settlements in Natchez territory without their consent and support. After several decades of a turbulent alliance that produced constant tensions and several armed conflicts, factions of the Natchez led coordinated attacks on November 28, 1729, against French colonists in the Natchez area and against the French garrison at Fort Rosalie (Barnett 2007:104–106; Giraud 1987:388–403; Milne 2015:175–182; Sayre 2002:382; Swanton 1911:223–230). Some 250 colonists, mostly men, were killed, and the French, at least temporarily, were expelled from Natchez territory. Additionally, two

French men, a number of French women and children, and a large number of enslaved Africans were taken captive by the Natchez, who demanded a ransom for their release. French colonial leaders almost immediately began preparing to attack and punish the Natchez (Barnett 2007:109–111; Giraud 1987:403–410; Milne 2015:182–191; Swanton 1911:232–237). Much of their efforts involved diplomacy to enlist the aid of the Choctaws because the French did not have the manpower to move against the Natchez at that time (Giraud 1987:403; Milne 2015:188–189). Although the force that eventually besieged the Natchez included approximately 200 French soldiers and colonists, it was overwhelmingly composed of Native combatants. These included 500–700 Choctaw warriors and 300 warriors from the *petites nations*, the smaller Indian tribes of the Louisiana colony (Barnett 2007:110; Sayre and Zecher 2012:239).

Anticipating retaliation by the French for their 1729 attacks, the Natchez built two wooden forts near the Grand Village that they could retreat into and more easily defend (Barnett 2007:111–112). The French called these forts "Valeur" and "Farine." *Farine* was the name of a Natchez town, the "Flour village," and the term *Valeur* was associated with the Grand Village as a synonym for "grand" or "important" (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:203; Steponaitis and Prickett 2014:75; Vezina 2021; cf. Sayre 2005:222–224). This suggests that each fort was the refuge for a specific town and that other Natchez towns did not participate in this battle (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:203). The French officer Delaye described these forts as "well-placed in terms of security, and each flanked with four bastions" (Sayre 2026). The Natchez clearly were familiar with the practice of building fortifications. In addition to the long-standing tradition of Mississippian peoples in the Southeast building wooden palisades around their settlements (e.g., Krus et al. 2013), many Natchez had assisted the French during the construction of Fort Rosalie in 1716, and the Natchez had used forts during their war with the Choctaws in 1726 (Milne 2015:188).

The battle and siege at the Grand Village lasted approximately four weeks, from January 27 or 28 to February 25, 1730 (Barnett 2007:114–117; Milne 2015:191–195; Swanton 1911:237–241). Our understanding of the battle that took place around these forts rests on a number of primary sources (Steponaitis 2026). At least three eyewitness accounts have survived and are available in published form: ones by Delaye (Sayre 2026), Merveilleux (De Ville 2003), and Baron (Claiborne 1880:46–47; Gayarré 1846:1:253–258). A number of secondhand accounts also were written by contemporary authors who had access to reliable information about the events surrounding the battle. These included the commandant of the French garrison at Mobile, Diron d'Artaguiette (Gayarré 1846:1:258–261; Rowland and Sanders 1927:76–81); the Jesuit missionary Le Petit (1731, 1900); the Jesuit historian Charlevoix (1744:2:478–483, 1872:6:95–100); the soldier Dumont de Montigny, who left two narratives, one in manuscript (2008:247–258, 2012:238–249) and a second, heavily edited, in his book (1753:2:170–191, 1853:84–94); and the colonist Le Page du Pratz (1758:3:262–303, 2010: Chs.15–16). Although they differ in many details, all agree on the general outline of the events that took place. In the description that follows, we rely mainly on the primary narratives of Delaye and Charlevoix, as well as the recent syntheses by Barnett (2007) and Milne (2015), with other sources cited as needed.

We are also fortunate that two French maps of the 1730 battlefield have survived. One was drawn by Baron, who was present at the siege, to accompany his narrative of the conflict. And a second was drawn by Caillot, who was not at the battle, to illustrate a manuscript memoir of his time in Louisiana. The latter map is clearly derivative and lacks a scale. Hence, Baron's map is considered the more reliable of the two for present purposes (see illustrations and references in Steponaitis 2026).

The battle began with the arrival of the Choctaws at the Grand Village on January 27, 1730. This must have caught the Natchez unaware, as the Choctaws were able to capture 54 French women and children and over 100 Africans before the Natchez made it into their forts (Milne 2015:191). With the Natchez surrounded in their forts by Choctaw and *petites nations* warriors, a French colonial force of 200 men with nine cannon occupied the Grand Village after they arrived several days later. The French placed two cannon on top of Mound E, and they used gabions – woven containers filled with earth (Le Blond 1759:12, 14) – to protect this battery (Dumont de Montigny 2012:245). They also used an existing building on top of Mound D for housing their wounded (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:198–200). Although the French cannon on top of Mound E were in range of the Natchez forts, their firing was not effective. In fact, according to Delaye, "The enemy gathered up all the balls and sent them back at us with much greater effect" (Sayre 2026). It is possible that the balls "sent back" were fired by several Africans who had been taken by the Natchez during the 1729 attacks and who chose to fight against the French in 1730, having served as gunners for the cannon that the Natchez had captured from Fort Rosalie (Dumont de Montigny 2012:245). In fact, the actions of two Black cannoneers appear to have been critical in delaying the Choctaw forces long enough during

their initial attack to allow the Natchez to reach their forts (Milne 2015:191).

During the night of February 19 and the predawn hours of February 20, the French started excavating a siege trench, or sap, toward Fort Valeur. Saps were a common part of laying siege to a fortified position. They were started beyond the range of enemy cannon, and they often were dug to a depth of around 1 m below ground surface, with soil from the trench then piled on the side closest to the enemy's fort so that the excavators, or sappers, were shielded from cannon and musket fire (Le Blond 1759:45–48). At the Grand Village, gabions and mantlets – a kind of rolling wooden fence on an axle that could be easily repositioned (Le Blond 1759:14; Muller 1770:13) – were used to protect the sappers working in the trench. Sappers used angles in these trenches to prevent enfilading fire down the entire trench if the position was breached. The battlefield maps of the Grand Village show that the angles in the sap also included lunettes, short trenches that extended away from the trench where soldiers with muskets could be positioned to protect the sappers. The purpose of a sap was to be able to move cannon into position close enough to an enemy's fort so that its walls could be breached and ground troops could attack through the breach (Le Blond 1759:53). Both battlefield maps show a location near the end of the trench where a battery of French cannon was emplaced close to Fort Valeur.

According to the battlefield maps, the sap began just to the northwest of Mound E, under the protection of the French cannon on its summit (see Figure 3). The sap was dug by *habitants* (French settlers) protected by around 30 soldiers and two cannon in the trench. Despite this and their proximity to the cannon on Mound E, the sappers were subjected to constant harassment and frequent attacks. Part of this was due to the landscape of the Grand Village and the familiarity of the Natchez people with the terrain of their homeland. Delaye was critical of the decision to camp at the Grand Village because he saw it as "a veritable death trap . . . surrounded by canes and brush, from which the enemy could ambush at any moment" (Sayre 2026). Natchez attacks on French positions, aided by the former's ability to use thickets and canebrakes to sneak up within musket range, were constant. An incident that took place on February 22, 1730, is noteworthy because the Natchez were able to successfully, although briefly, drive the French from the sap (Sayre 2026).

Despite the French struggles with protecting the sappers, the cannon in the sap were close enough to fire effectively at Fort Valeur on February 24. The cannon were fired for six hours the next morning against the fort, and according to Charlevoix (1872:97–98), the French threatened "to reduce the besieged to powder if they did not surrender the prisoners they held." At this point, the Natchez began to parley, agreeing to deliver their French and African prisoners the next morning if the French would remove their cannon. Although the exact circumstances are debated, the Natchez were able to evacuate their forts and escape from the French during these negotiations (Dumont de Montigny 2012:247; Milne 2015:195).

The aftermath of the 1730 battle and siege included devastating consequences for individual Natchez Indians and for the Natchez people as a whole. Several Natchez who had been captured were publicly executed in the colonial capital of New Orleans (Milne 2015:198). Almost one year later, in January 1731, a French force of over 800 men found and besieged another fort, at Sicily Island, Louisiana, that had protected many of the Natchez who had escaped the Grand Village in 1730 (Milne 2015:200; Steponaitis and Prickett 2014:75–76). The results of this second siege were that approximately 450 Natchez women and children and 46 warriors surrendered to the French and were held captive in New Orleans until they were sold into slavery. Some were enslaved in the Louisiana colony, but most, including the last Great Sun, were enslaved on sugar plantations in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, in what is now modern Haiti (Barnett 2007:134; Milne 2015:202; Smyth 2016).

The 1730 battle at the Grand Village marked a major turning point in the history of the Natchez people and in colonial America. This conflict drove the Natchez from their homeland, and, after the second battle by the French at Sicily Island in 1731, began a diaspora in which the remaining Natchez people, those who had not been enslaved, ultimately dispersed across the South in efforts to seek refuge among larger Indian nations such as the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Muscogee, and Catawba (Barnett 2007:128–133; Charlevoix 1872:115; Cobb 2019:126–127; Lieb 2008; Milne 2015:204, 207–208; Steponaitis and Prickett 2014:75, 124; Swanton 1911:252–256). The settlement of a Natchez enclave among the Chickasaws in northeast Mississippi led to two punitive expeditions by the French against the Chickasaws in 1736 and 1740, and the disastrous outcomes of both campaigns for the French compromised their colonial ambitions in southeastern North America (Atkinson 2004:14; Lieb 2008). For the Natchez, their defeat at the battle of the Grand Village effectively ended their political power in the Lower Mississippi Valley.

Preliminary archaeological investigations

The landscape surrounding the Fatherland site has changed significantly since the Natchez left there after the 1730 battle. In the early nineteenth century, some mounds were incorporated into a levee along St. Catherine Creek, while others were used as sources of fill to complete its construction (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:194–195). This levee ultimately was unsuccessful as flooding in the nineteenth century deeply buried the original ground surface of the Grand Village under approximately 2.5 m of silt (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:186; Neitzel 1983: Figure 5). These profound alterations confounded Neitzel (1983:128) during his fieldwork at Fatherland in 1962 and 1972, when he struggled to reconcile the cultural and natural features depicted on Baron's 1730 map of the Grand Village with the modern landscape (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:186–187; Neitzel 1965:62, 1983:48–49, Plate IIA). Neitzel (1983:55) identified Mound B as the location of the French cannon that fired on Fort Valeur, and he placed the beginning of the sap near the base of Mound B (Figure 4; Barnett 2007:110–112; Neitzel 1983:55). His reconstruction also placed the two Natchez forts to the south of the Grand Village (Barnett 2007: Figure 8). Subsequently, an archaeological site (22Ad591) was identified as the location of Fort Farine based on this reconstruction (Barnett 2007:111).

Neitzel's reconstruction has since been reevaluated and revised, based on the rediscovery and subsequent study of Broutin's 1723 map, with its comprehensive depiction of the Natchez region (Steponaitis 2026). Whereas Neitzel understandably assumed that the mounds depicted in Baron's map are Mounds A–C, the only mounds he knew of at the site, Brown and Steponaitis (2017) were able to use Broutin's map to argue that three of the mounds depicted by Baron in 1730 are no longer visible at the Fatherland site and that the Natchez forts were located north of the Grand Village (contra Barnett 2007:Figure 8). The ABPP-funded investigations at GVNI were undertaken to evaluate this map-based reconstruction of the 1730 battlefield that proposes potential locations for multiple battlefield features that are not visible today (Brown and Steponaitis 2017). These include Mound D, with a summit building that was used as a field hospital; Mound E, where a two-gun battery was emplaced; the sap that extended from the base of Mound E; and the two Natchez forts named Farine and Valeur. For two reasons, much of our efforts during the ABPP work was focused on searching for the "missing" Mounds D and E. First, the projected locations of these mounds were within the boundaries of GVNI, an undeveloped area amenable to remote sensing. Second, if the locations of Mounds D and E could be determined, then this would allow us to more accurately orient and scale the French battlefield maps, which would then allow us to better project the locations of the sap and the two Natchez forts (Boudreaux and Harris 2022; Steponaitis 2026).

Ground-penetrating radar survey

Ground-penetrating radar (GPR) was used to search for Mounds D and E because its effective depth is sufficient to reach the eighteenth-century ground surface that is deeply buried at the Grand Village (Figure 5; Conyers 2006:133). GPR works by using reflected electromagnetic energy to create a cross section that shows the depths and locations of anomalies along a single traverse, and the data from multiple traverses can be combined to create three-dimensional images that can be sliced horizontally to show a plan view of anomalies at different depths (Conyers 2004, 2006; Conyers and Goodman 1997). The 1.4 ha (3.5-acre) area identified as most likely to include Mounds D and E was surveyed using a 400 MHz antenna, but this antenna did not consistently reach the buried eighteenth-century ground surface, which is approximately 2.5 m below the modern surface (Figure 6). A second survey of a 0.8 ha (2-acre) area in the highest probability portions of the original search area was conducted using a 270 MHz antenna, which has a greater effective depth. Slices 6 and 9 from the 270 MHz antenna best show the anomalies that might be related to the cultural landscape of the Grand Village at the time of the 1730 battle (Figures 7 and 8). A concrete drainage pipe buried at a known depth of approximately 2–2.5 m below surface (Barnett 1984) is clearly visible, which indicates that the other anomalies in these slices are present at about the same depth. A rectangular anomaly in the southwest corner of the survey area may be a deeply buried structure that measures roughly 3×6 m. This anomaly was not investigated. An oval anomaly measuring 12×19 m at the center of the survey area was identified as a potential location of one of the missing mounds based on its shape and position. Another anomaly located at the western edge of GVNI property was considered a potential candidate for the sap based on its location and depth.

Coring

The possible mound and sap anomalies were investigated by Rachel Stout-Evans and Thurman Allen, soil scientists with the National Resources Conservation Service in Louisiana. Using a Giddings coring rig, they took twelve 2-inch soil cores, ranging in depth from

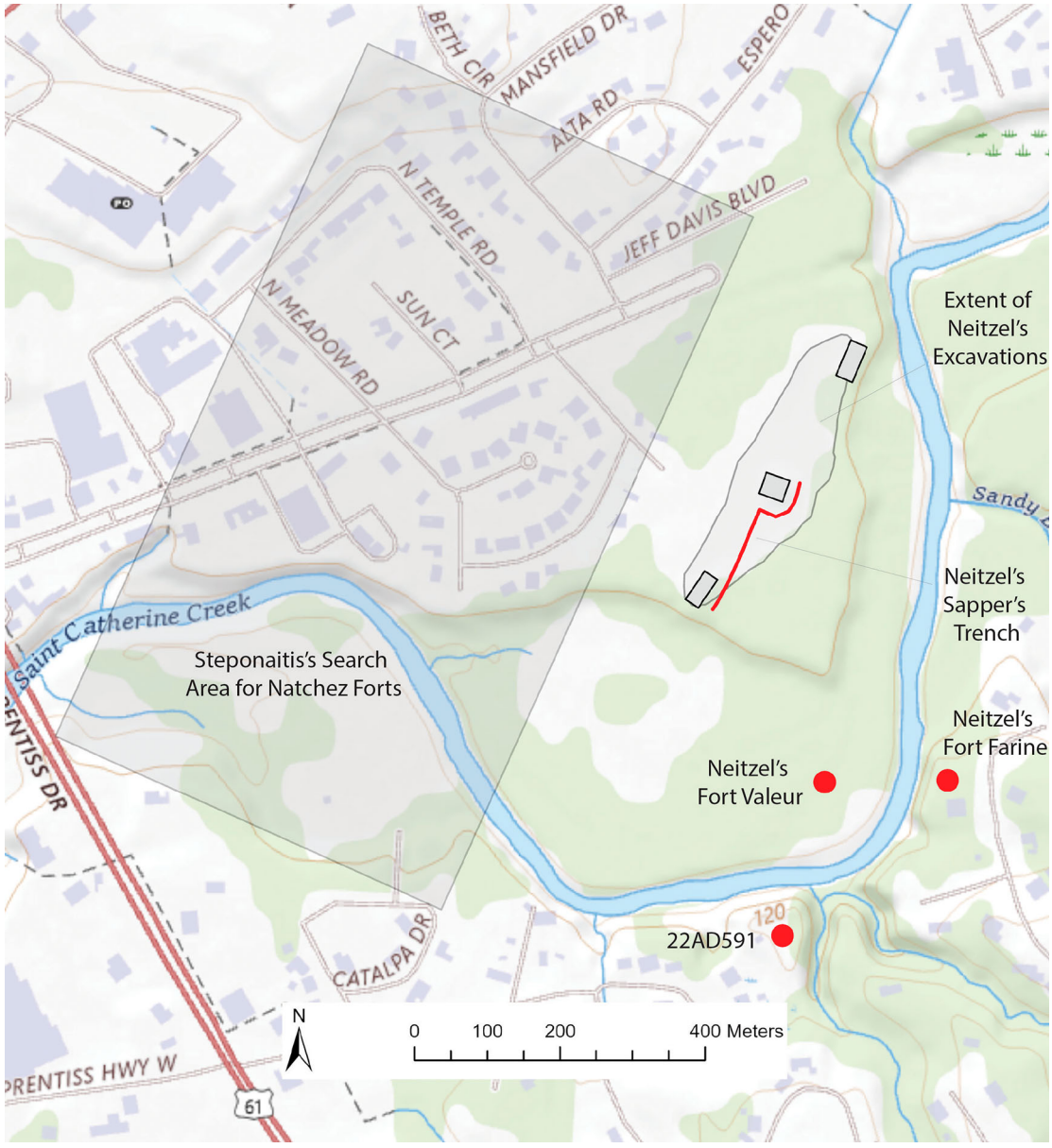

Figure 4. Topographic map showing the locations of Neitzel's (1983) and Steponaitis's (Brown and Steponaitis 2017) battlefield reconstructions.

1.5 m to 4.5 m (Figure 9). Nine of these cores were used to investigate the possible mound anomaly. Seven of these were placed in an approximately east–west line across the anomaly, and two were placed at its northern edge. These cores showed that the eighteenth-century ground surface is deeply buried beneath approximately 2.5 m of alluvium in this area (Boudreaux and Harris 2022:Table 3.1). In some areas, however, the alluvium was shallower, and it covered layers of mixed fill and midden consistent with the presence of an intentionally constructed mound. From west to east, the depths at which the mixed-fill layers were encountered indicate that the possible mound sloped upward to a summit that was only about 25 cm below the surface (cmbs) and then sloped downward on its eastern side. Sloping fill deposits also were detected to the north of the possible summit.

Three additional cores were placed to investigate the possible sap anomaly. These cores were aligned north–south across part of the anomaly, and they were pushed to depths of approximately 4.5 m. These cores showed soils that were deposited under wet conditions, possibly within standing water (Stout-Evans, personal communication 2019). Although coring alone could not establish that this anomaly represented part of the sap, the results were intriguing because a wet area might have developed in a trench that was left open for some time.

Figure 5. GPR survey at the Grand Village using the 400 MHz antenna with Mound B in the background, facing east.

Excavations and additional coring

The preliminary GPR survey and coring provided a number of targets for us to investigate further to confirm whether a missing mound and the sap had been located and to better determine their limits and orientations. This stage of our work was focused on test excavations and manual coring (see Figure 9).

Mound E excavations

Based on the location of the potential mound anomaly, our assumption was that it might be Mound E, the northernmost of the two mounds used by the French. A magnetic gradiometer was used to survey a 2,400 m^2 area that encompassed the potential Mound E anomaly (see Figure 6). The gradiometer, which detects differences in magnetism that may indicate the locations of buried archaeological features, was of limited value on most of this project because its effective depth of 1.5 m or less is too shallow to penetrate the alluvium that covers the site (Kvamme 2006). However, once the coring demonstrated that a buried mound summit was present at 25 cmbs, the gradiometer was used to see if any features associated with this mound could be identified. Unfortunately, no anomalies were visible in the gradiometer data (Boudreaux and Harris 2022:43).

Excavation units were placed in two locations to investigate the mound anomaly (see Figure 9). Each unit was identified by the coordinates of its southeast corner. The primary purpose of these units was to determine beyond any doubt the presence of a mound. If a mound was present, secondary objectives were to determine its orientation so that it could be related to the battlefield maps and to reconstruct its history of construction and use so that it could be related to the Grand Village's history in general and the 1730 battle in particular. The soil layers revealed in the 2-inch Giddings cores and several additional probes made with 0.75-inch split-core Oakfield augers were used to trace the extent of the buried mound's summit, as well as its slope and base along north–south and east–west transects. These cores indicate that the buried mound measures approximately 35 × 45 m in horizontal extent and about 2 m high (see Figure 9). Although the exact orientation and shape of the mound could not be determined from these cores, we placed one excavation unit where our best guess indicated it would encounter the mound's summit. Two other units were placed farther to the west to encounter the base of the mound near its western edge.

Unit 1 (N832 E866) was a 1 × 2 m unit placed on what we estimated to be the mound's summit.[3] Intact mound fill deposits were present across the entire unit at 25 cmbs (Figure 10). It was excavated in four levels

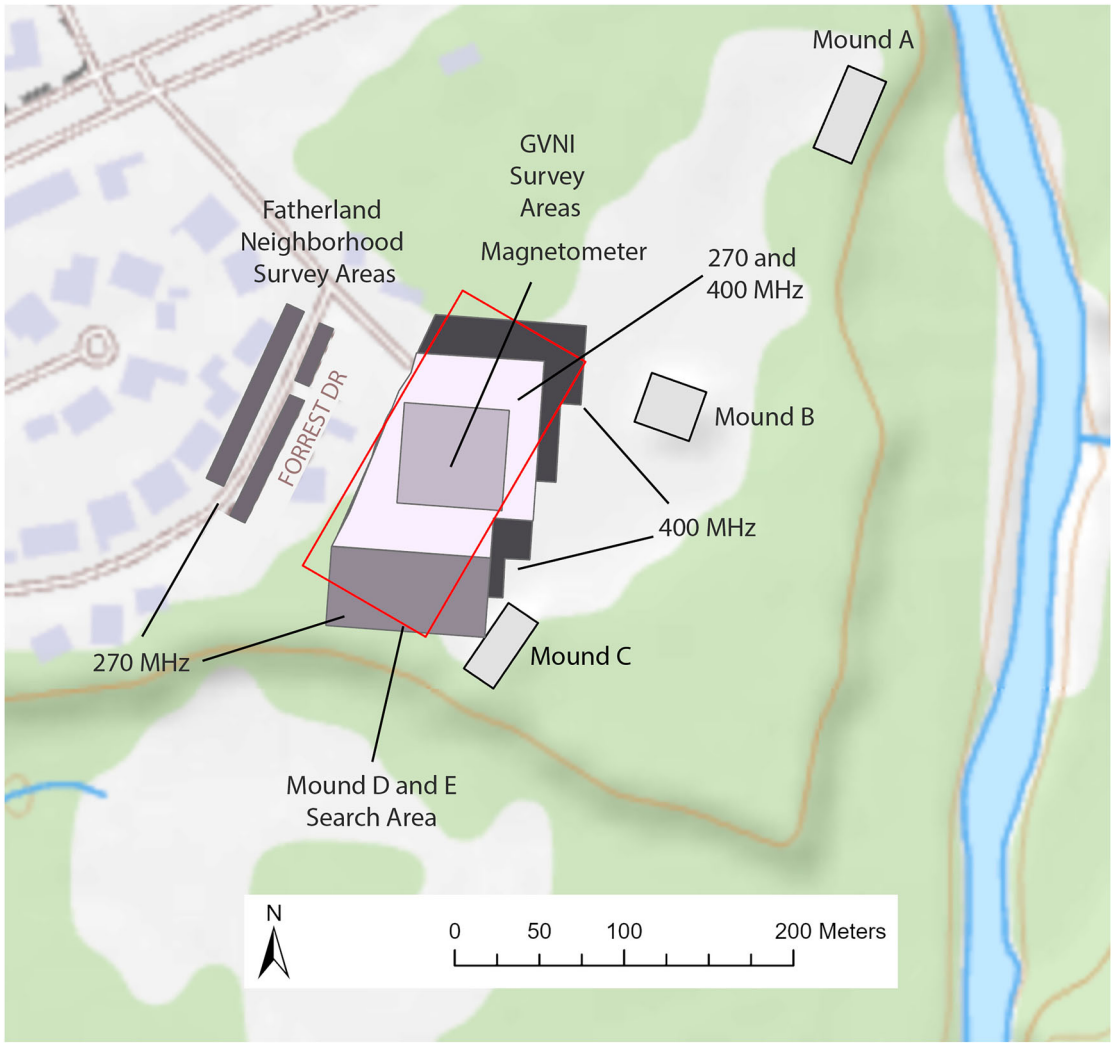

Figure 6. Map showing all the areas surveyed through remote sensing from 2019 to 2021 as part of the ABPP project at the Grand Village.

(Levels 1–4) to a total depth of 100 cmbs (Figure 11). A northeast-to-southwest oriented wall trench (Feature 1) was encountered at 30 cmbs, and this feature extended to approximately 75 cmbs (Figure 12). Unit 2 (N831 E857) consisted of two adjacent 1 × 2 m cuts placed in an area where coring suggested the interface between the mound slope and the original ground surface should be. Coring showed at least 1.5 m of alluvium in this area, so a backhoe was used to remove most of the overburden in these two units. Shovels were then used to straighten the walls, expose the top of the intact mound deposits, and level the unit floor. Our goal in excavating these units was to catch the western edge of the mound and some submound deposits so that early and late mound deposits and submound deposits could be encountered in the same unit. Following a mound excavation method used by Knight (2010:75–76), the northern half of Unit 2 was excavated in 25 cm arbitrary levels as an exploratory cut. The southern half was then excavated stratigraphically by zone based on the soil layers identified and documented in the profile shared by the two cuts. This excavation method allows the examination of soil layers in profile so that their deposition can be understood prior to their excavation by layer (Knight 2010:75). The major soil layers identified in the northern half and excavated as discrete layers in the southern half consisted of topsoil, more than 1 m of alluvium, multiple mound-fill layers, a mound-flank midden, and a buried A horizon (Figures 13–14).

Figure 15 is a composite profile of Mound E derived from coring and excavation profiles along the N833 line. Here, we attempt to reconcile the stratigraphy in the two excavation areas by relating the fills found in both units to each other. Our objective is to discuss the construction and chronology of Mound E, but there is some

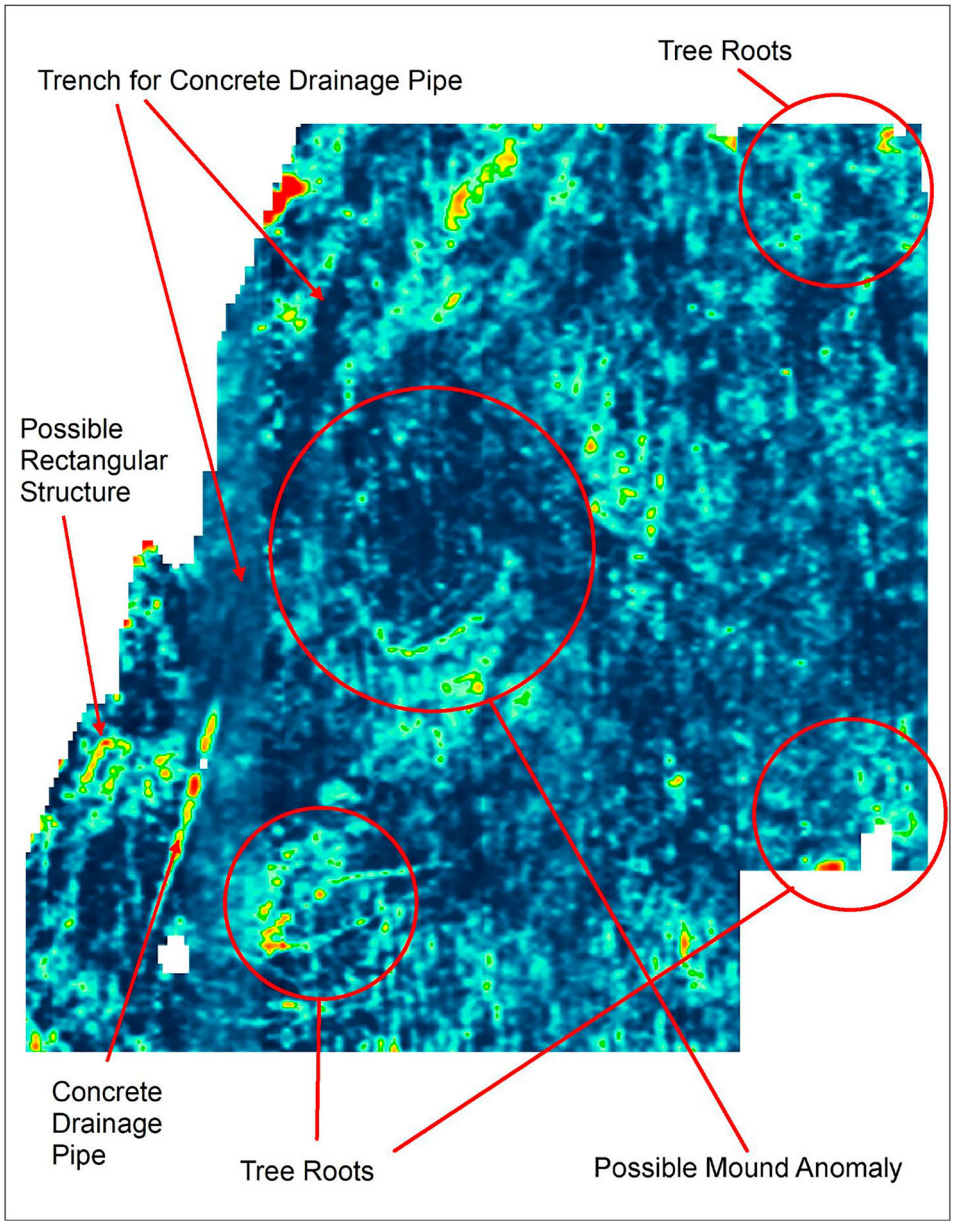

Figure 7. GPR Slice 6 showing anomalies 1.5–2.0 m below surface.

uncertainty because these unit profiles, which are 7 m apart, cannot be unambiguously reconciled. The original ground surface on which the mound was built is approximately 2.5 m below the current surface. Mound E was built in multiple stages. The earliest of these stages, at least of the ones we encountered, is represented by Fill 1 in Unit 1, which created a platform approximately 2 m tall. An AMS date from the wall trench (Feature 1) on the summit of Fill 1 indicates the presence of a building having been there sometime during the first half of the fifteenth century, circa AD 1405–1450 or later (Table 1). This summit was later covered by another mantle of earth, Fill 2, which was truncated by the plow zone in Unit 1 but is clearly visible in profile, lying atop the flank of Fill 1 (see Figures 11 and 15).

More stages are evident in Unit 2. The earliest of these, here designated Fill 3, rises about 60 cm above the original surface in the north profile and slopes down to the south. It is covered by a flank midden, Midden 1, which likely consists of refuse from mound-summit activities that was tossed downslope, a common occurrence with Mississippian mounds (Knight 2010:75–76; Smith and Williams 1994). This midden gets thicker near the base of the slope, and it is stratified into at least three distinct layers (1a, 1b, and 1c) that were recognized in the field (see Figures 13 and 14). AMS dates from the three layers are consistent with

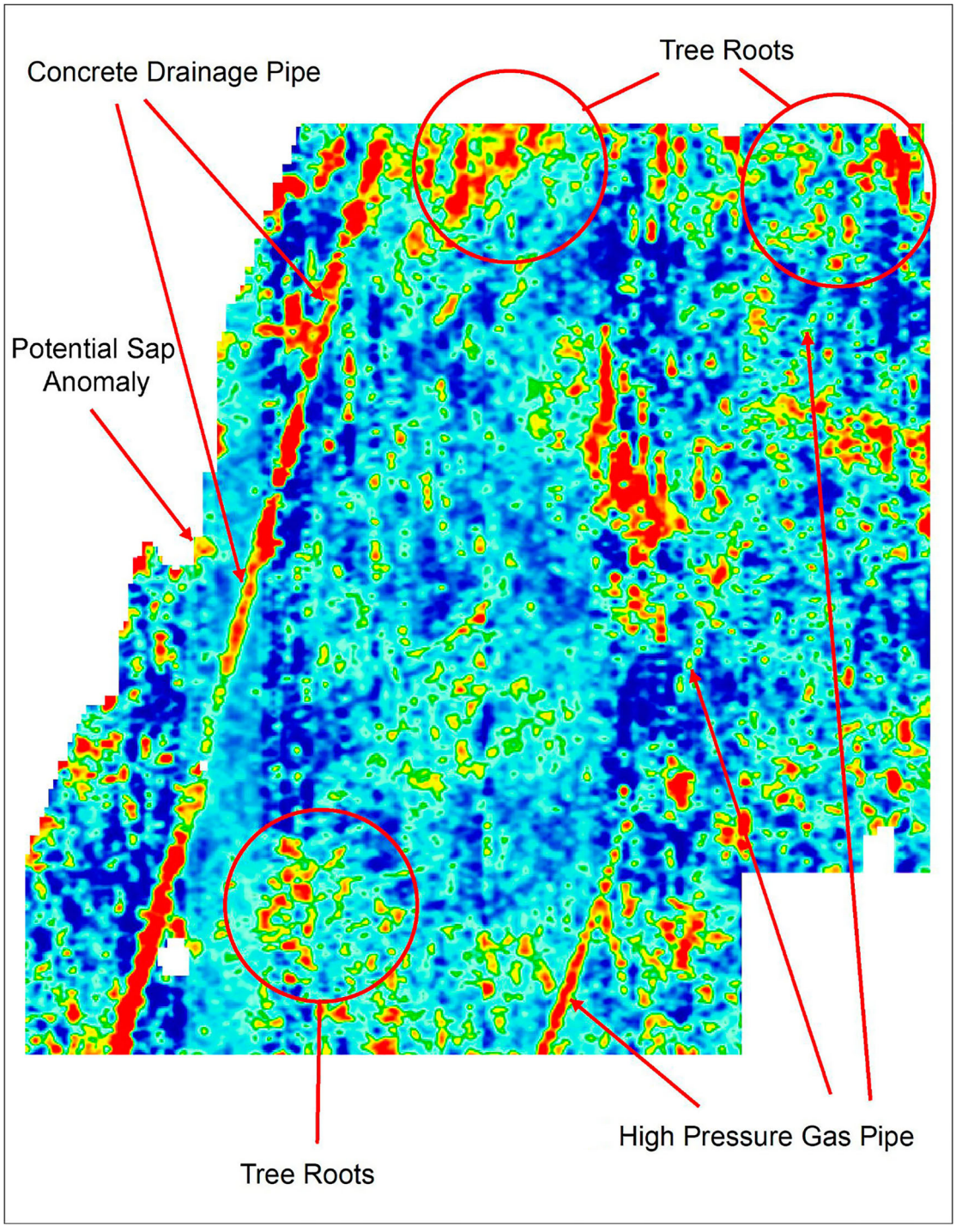

Figure 8. GPR Slice 9 showing anomalies approximately 2.0–2.5 m below surface.

the visual stratification of these midden deposits, and they indicate that the summit of Fill 3 was used throughout the 1400s (see Table 1).

Yet another stage of mound construction is indicated by Fill 4 in Unit 2. This stage is subdivided into two episodes, 4a and 4b, separated by a horizontal surface that is clearly visible in profile (see Figure 13). In the absence of an associated midden or a building, it is not clear whether this surface represents a distinct occupation or simply a temporary break in construction. Whatever the case, Fill 4 was likely the final mantle on Mound E as its surface was buried by the thick alluvial deposits that covered the entire site sometime in the early nineteenth century (Brown and Steponaitis 2017).

In sum, our evidence suggests that Mound E had at least four major stages of construction – two seen in

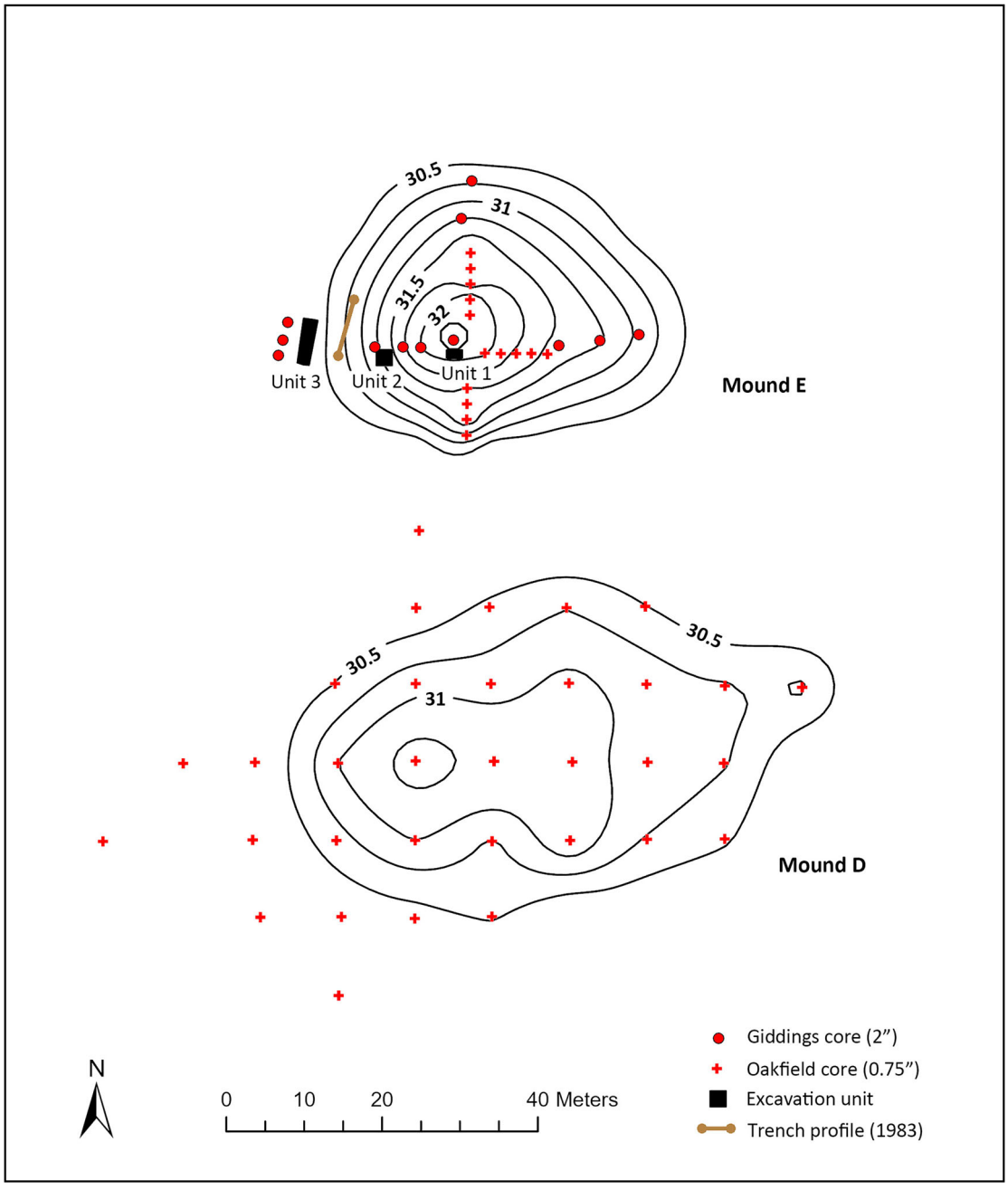

Figure 9. Map showing the subsurface topography of the buried Mounds D and E, as revealed by coring. Contour interval is 25 cm, with absolute elevations given in meters. The elevation of the original ground surface on which these mounds were built is about 30.2 m.

Unit 1 and another two, in Unit 2. Of course, it is possible that additional stages exist beneath Fill 1 that our excavations in Unit 1 did not reach. It is also unclear how many stages may exist between Fills 2 and 3, and we cannot categorically eliminate the possibility that Fills 2 and 3 represent the same constructional stage – although that seems highly unlikely given the horizontal separation between the two in relation to the typical slope of mound flanks (see Figure 15). We have direct evidence, in the form of a wall trench, of a wooden building on the summit of the first stage and indirect evidence, based on the presence of a flank midden containing daub, of a similar building atop the third stage. Interestingly, Mound E lacked a wooden building on its final summit in the 1720s and during the 1730 siege, as indicated by the surviving French maps (see Figures 1 and 3; Brown and Steponaitis 2017). If our reconstruction is correct, then all the stages after Fill 1 were truncated and their summits were destroyed sometime after 1730. An 1842 account describes how several of the

Figure 10. GVNI summer camp students visiting the 2019 excavations showing the intact mound deposits below plow zone and Feature 1 after excavation in Unit 1 (N832 E866), facing west.

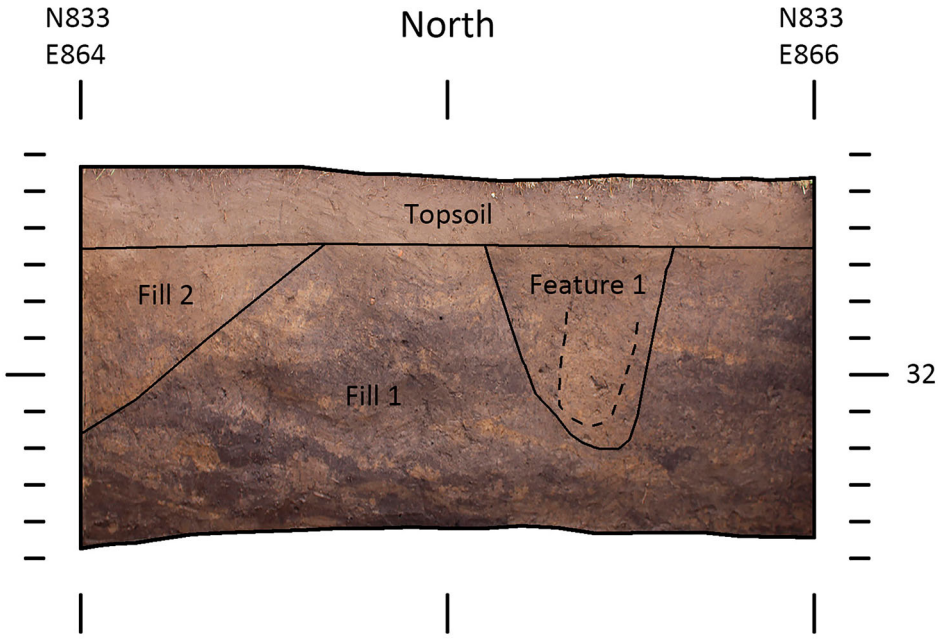

Figure 11. North profile of Unit 1 (N832 E866), showing the wall trench (Feature 1) on a summit of Mound E.

mounds at the Grand Village were mined for fill to build a levee along St. Catherine Creek that connected Mounds A, B, and C (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:194–195), and it is possible that this is when the upper portions of Mound E were destroyed.

It is worth noting that evidence of Mound E had been encountered previously, although not recognized as such. In 1983, a large trench was dug along the site's western margin to install a concrete drainage pipe. This trench, some 3.3 m wide and 2.6 m deep, was easily

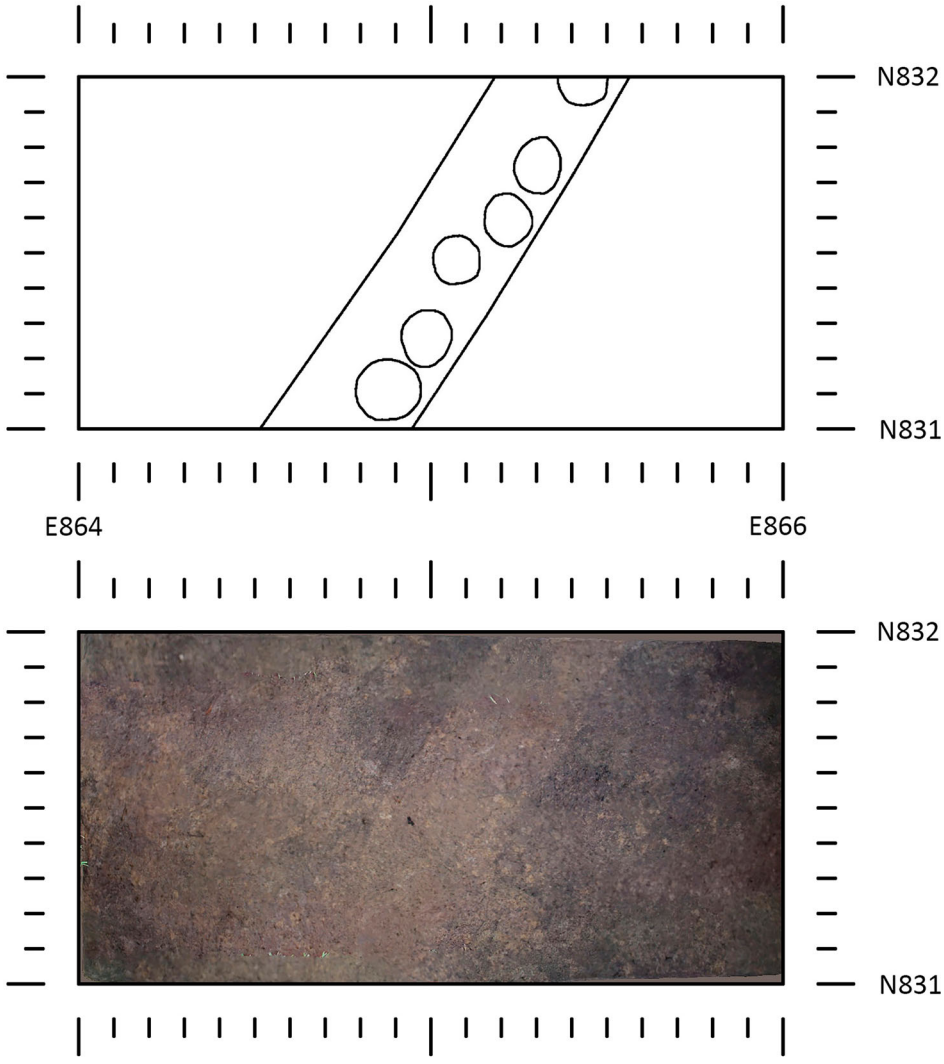

Figure 12. Plan of the wall trench (Feature 1) at the base of Level 2 in Unit 1 (N832 E866), showing individual posts within the trench.

detected by our GPR survey (see Figures 7 and 8). Near the excavations reported herein, the trench cut through "a black-dark brown midden layer containing large quantities of fired daub, some charcoal, and other cultural debris" (Barnett 1984:2). The "midden" was interspersed with thin, sloping lenses of burned material and thicker lenses of lighter soil (Figure 16, top). It was about a meter thick at its highest point but sloped to the west and feathered out before reaching the trench's opposite wall. A line of postholes was found in the floor of the trench alongside this feature (Figure 16, bottom).

In reading its description, one is struck by this deposit's similarity to the flank midden in Unit 2, the one atop Fill 3. There can be little doubt that the trench hit Mound E's western edge and a flank midden associated with its terminal stage – likely Fill 4. This deposit was halfway between our Units 2 and 3. Interestingly, the waterborne sediments that covered the midden were described as "a fairly homogeneous soil layer of light gray-tan colluvium overlain by ca. 1.6 meters of sterile colluvium" (Barnett 1984:2). Setting aside the question of exactly how these sediments were deposited,[4] the pattern of "gray-tan" soils, presumably gleyed, underneath a thick layer of lighter-colored "sterile" soils matches exactly the sequence observed in Unit 3 (to be described presently).

Sap anomaly excavations

A backhoe was used to excavate Unit 3, a trench oriented roughly north–south and about 6 m long, positioned to cross-section and evaluate the potential sap anomaly (see Figure 9). It was taken to a depth of 2.6 m (Figure 17), and several 0.75-inch Oakfield augers were pushed into the bottom of this trench so that deposits in this area were investigated to a total depth of 4.3 m below the modern ground surface.

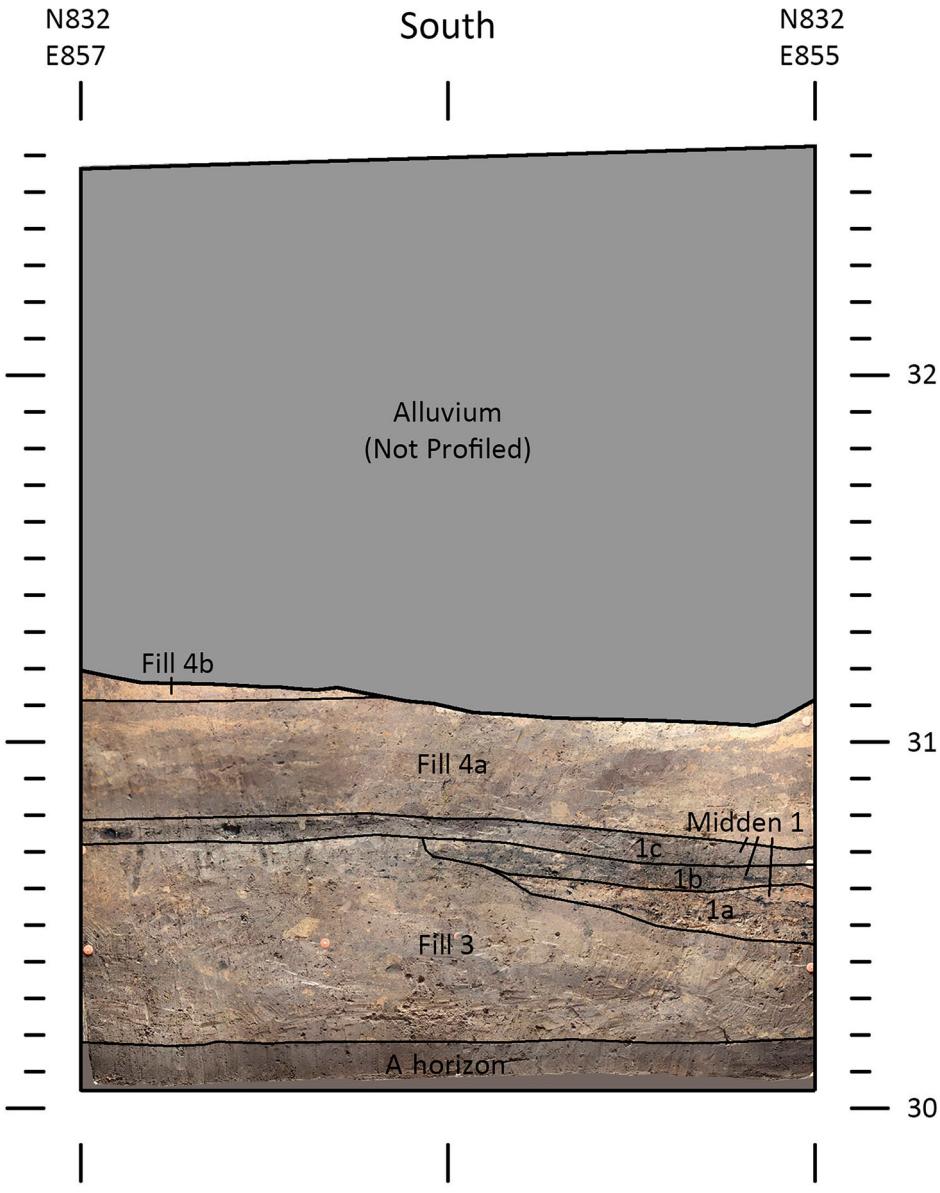

Figure 13. South profile of the north half of Unit 2 (N832 E857), showing strata at the edge of Mound E.

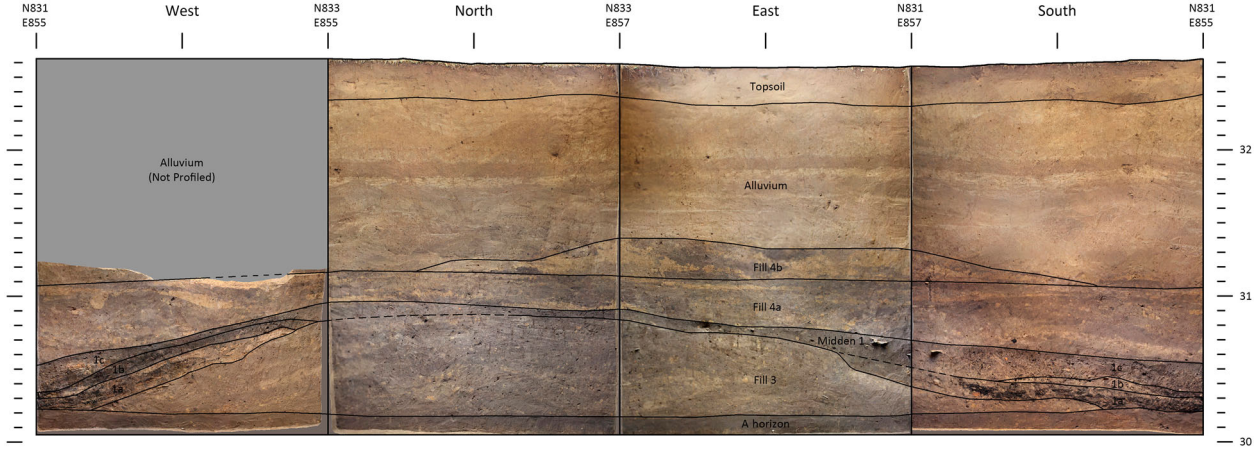

Figure 14. Photomosaic profile of all four walls in Unit 2 (N832 E857), showing the stratification of Mound E.

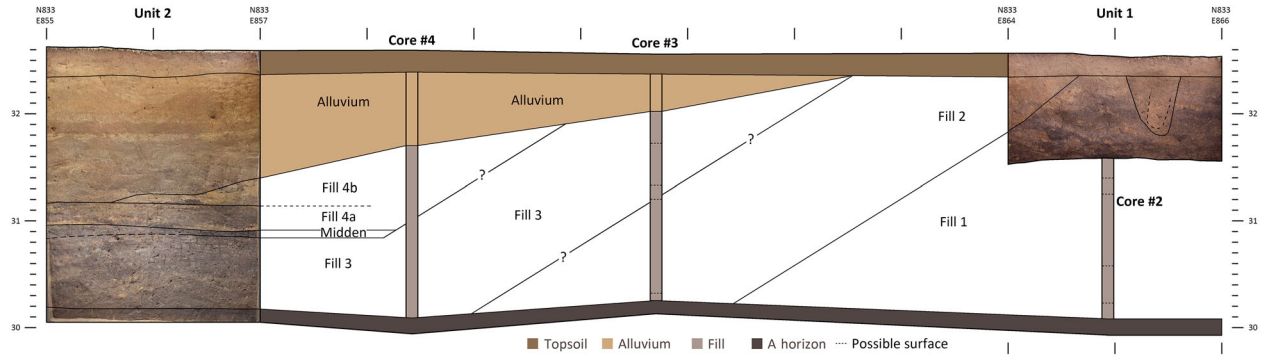

Figure 15. Composite profile of Mound E along the N832 line that integrates profiles from Unit 1 (N832 E866) and Unit 2 (N832 E857), as well as stratigraphic information from Cores 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1. Unmodeled calibrated AMS dates from Mound E.

Sample	Context	Description	Age (BP)	σ	Calibrated Dates (AD)		
					Median	1σ Range	2σ Range
Beta 593691	E831 N857, Midden 1c	flank midden	340	30	1561	1494–1631	1474–1638
Beta 593692	E831 N857, Midden 1b	flank midden	400	30	1480	1446–1614	1437–1625
Beta 593693	E831 N857, Midden 1a	flank midden	470	30	1436	1424–1448	1407–1460
Beta 593694	E832 N866, Feature 1	summit feature	490	30	1429	1417–1442	1404–1452

The upper 2.1 m of deposits in the backhoe trench consisted of a thin topsoil layer and a thick deposit of alluvium, very much like the uppermost layers in Unit 2 (Figure 18). The alluvium was laminated and gradually changed in color from brown to grayish brown as the depth increased. Below this was a 30 cm layer of gleyed alluvium – laminae of gray and light-brown silt that had been deposited by flooding or had been in standing water for some time. At the base of the profile was an A horizon containing charcoal and daub that represented the 1730 surface, the same layer we encountered at the base of Unit 2 and in many of our cores. Interestingly, the A horizon here was about 20 cm lower in absolute elevation than in Unit 2. Thus, it was a low spot on the natural terrace, which may explain why this area remained wet and the soils became gleyed as the alluvium began to accumulate. No evidence of the sap was found.

Mound D coring

Once the location of Mound E was confirmed through excavations, the known locations of Mounds A, B, C, and E were used to orient the French battlefield maps to identify an approximately 60 × 90 m search area for the potential location of Mound D. An additional 3,200 m^2 was surveyed with the 270 MHz GPR antenna in this area, but no anomalies consistent with a buried mound were observed (see Figure 6). The same area was then systematically explored using a 0.75-inch Oakfield auger, with 34 cores spaced 10 m apart (Figure 19; see Figure 9). This survey identified an area where alluvium was present at various depths over mixed fill that is consistent with the presence of a buried mound. We interpret this as the location of Mound D. A map of the elevations at which mixed fill was encountered reveals a low hump of earth, about 70 × 40 m in horizontal extent and 1 m tall at its highest point above the original surface (see Figure 9). This is different from the buried Mound E, which is approximately 2 m tall. It is not known if Mound D originally was built smaller than Mound E or if the former has been altered since it was built. Mound D's smaller size and uneven contours are consistent with it also having been used as a source for fill for levee building during the nineteenth century (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:194–195).

Fatherland neighborhood GPR survey

When the French maps are oriented to the modern landscape based on the locations of Mounds B, C, D, and E, the projected location of the sap passes through the Fatherland subdivision, a modern housing development located adjacent to and northwest of GVNI. Through the help of Lance Harris, director of GVNI, we contacted and obtained permission from seven landowners with adjacent, open front yards that could be surveyed using GPR along Forrest Drive, a north–south oriented street in the neighborhood that is

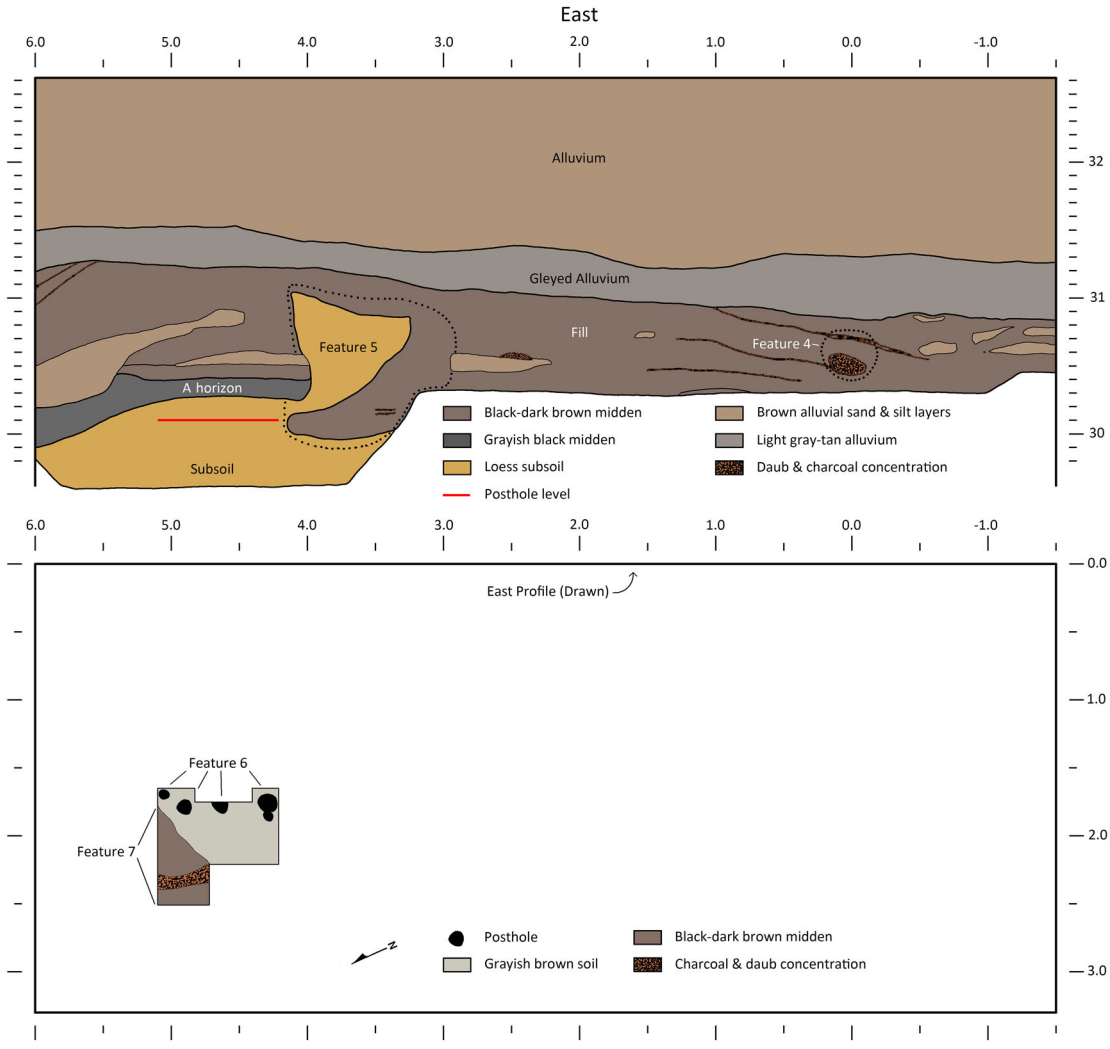

Figure 16. Profile (*top*) and plan (*bottom*) of the drainage trench excavated in 1983, located midway between Units 2 and 3 (see Figure 9). The soil descriptions in the key are taken directly from Barnett (1984), except that "colluvium" has been replaced by "alluvium" to reflect our present understanding of these sediments. The descriptions on the profile itself reflect our current interpretations. (Redrawn from Barnett 1984:Figures 2 and 3.).

perpendicular to where our projections suggest the sap should be located. Three survey grids were laid out, two on the east side (1,150 m^2) of the street and one on the west side (1,050 m^2; see Figure 6). Unfortunately, no anomalies consistent with the French sap were visible in the 0.2 ha surveyed (Boudreaux and Harris 2022:71–77).

Discussion

One important objective of the ABPP-funded investigations at GVNI was to evaluate two contradictory reconstructions of the 1730 Grand Village battlefield. Neitzel's (1983) reconstruction linked Mounds B and C with the battle; it placed the start of the sap at the base of Mound B; and it located the two Natchez forts south of GVNI (see Figure 4; Barnett 2007:111–112). In contrast, Steponaitis hypothesized that the French had utilized the previously unknown Mounds D and E, and he placed the Natchez forts north of GVNI (Brown and Steponaitis 2017). Mounds D and E were rediscovered within the search area defined by Steponaitis, indicating that his reconstruction of the battlefield is correct (Figure 20). Mound D, which is depicted with one building labeled "old temple" in the 1723 and 1730 maps (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:191), is the southernmost of the two mounds used by the French during the battle. A building on its summit in 1730 appears to have been utilized as a field hospital during the siege based on the Caillot map (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:Table 9.1). Mound E, the northernmost of the two mounds, is not shown with any buildings in any of the eighteenth-century maps, but it is depicted with a parapet (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:198). It is

Figure 17. Mapping of the west profile of Unit 3 (backhoe trench), facing southwest.

the mound on which the French set up their cannon to fire at the Natchez forts (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:188, Table 9.1). This is also where the French started their sap toward Fort Valeur, the northernmost of the two Natchez forts, located approximately 400 m to the west.

Multiple lines of evidence indicate that the portions of Mound E excavated in 2019 predate the 1730 battle. First, only two European artifacts were encountered during the excavations. One is a hand-wrought iron nail from the alluvium above Unit 2 at the mound's base, and the other is a kaolin pipe stem from Unit 2 in a layer of redeposited soil that washed downslope from the mound's terminal summit (Boudreaux and Harris 2022:83). The complete absence of European trade materials from intact mound deposits, especially from a site where thousands of such objects have been recovered (Neitzel 1965, 1983), suggests that the portions of Mound E excavated in 2019 predate European contact. Second, the artifacts that are present indicate a Late Mississippian date for the mound deposits. Ceramics were classified based on the type-variety system, which emphasizes temper and surface decorations (Table 2; Brain 1988, 1989; Brown 1998b; Phillips 1970; Williams and Brain 1983). For the Natchez area, a sequence of four phases spanning AD 1200–1730 has been defined largely based on the presence, absence, or relative proportions of diagnostic pottery types and varieties (Table 3; Brown 1985:Table 2, 1998b:7; Steponaitis 1974, 1981). The presence of Fatherland Incised, Leland Incised, and Maddox Engraved in Zones 5–6, as well as the abundance of Plaquemine Brushed in Zones 2–3, strongly suggests that this mound initially was built and used during the Foster phase (AD 1350–1500). A Foster-phase designation is consistent with four AMS dates, all based on nutshell, which indicate that Mound E was first built during the early 1400s or earlier and that its use continued throughout the

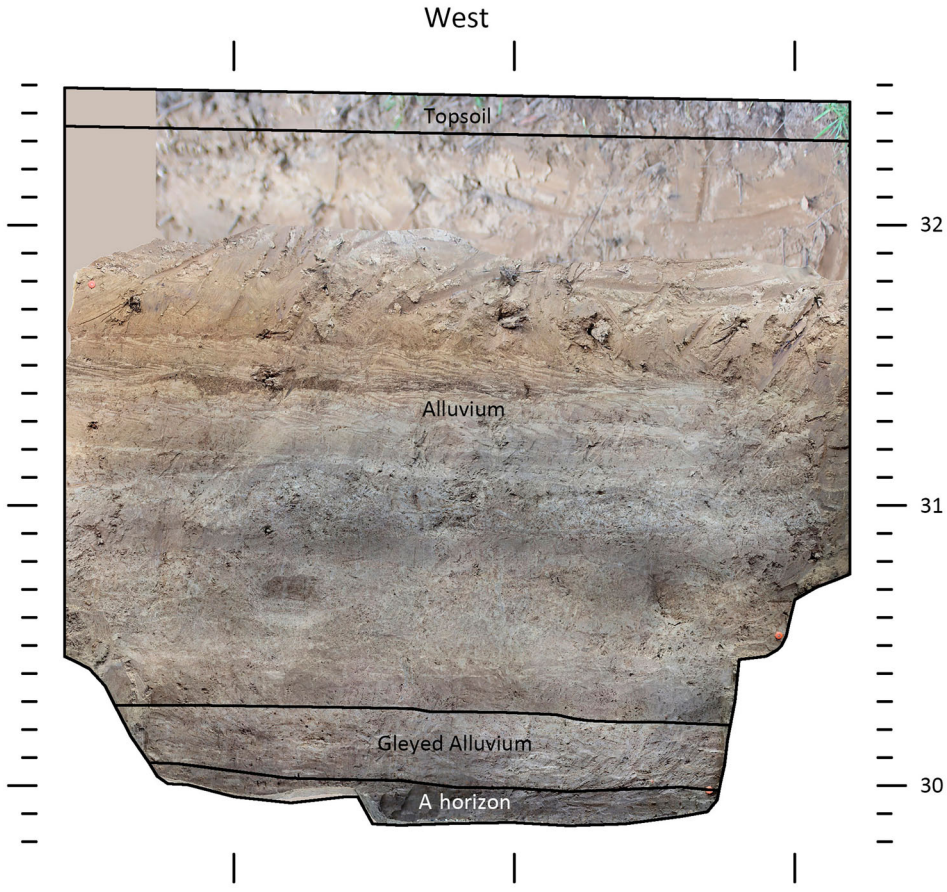

Figure 18. West profile of Unit 3 (backhoe trench).

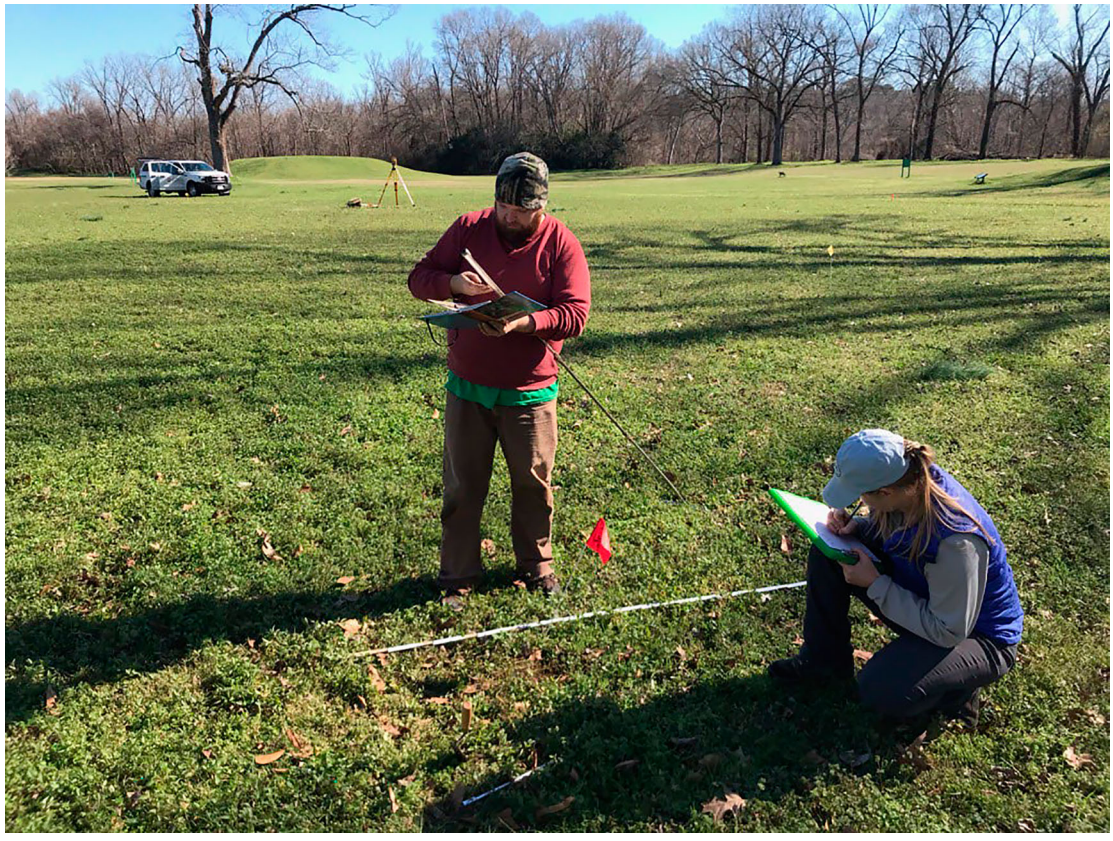

Figure 19. Coring in the vicinity of Mound D, facing northeast. Mound B appears in the background.

1400s (see Table 1). A wall trench (Feature 1) on the summit of Fill 1, possibly the first stage of construction, produced a date of AD 1405–1450. Three dates acquired from the stratified midden on the flank of Fill 3 suggest that the third stage of Mound E may have been used into the 1500s. Overall, these dates indicate that the construction and use of Mound E began during the Foster phase and likely continued into the subsequent Emerald phase.

The absence of intact eighteenth-century contexts in association with Mound E likely reflects significant alterations to the landscape during the nineteenth century. An 1842 account suggests that Mounds D and E may have been used as sources of fill during a project that incorporated Mounds A, B, and C into a levee along St. Catherine Creek (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:195–197, 201). Mound E's irregular eastern face – the side facing the creek – and Mound D's overall uneven surface as indicated by coring may be evidence of damage caused by these levee-building efforts. Additionally, although the 2019 excavations showed that significant portions of Mound E are still intact, it appears that much of the top of the mound is missing. The only fill deposit associated with an intact mound summit is Fill 1, possibly the earliest stage of mound construction in Mound E, which dates to the first half of the fifteenth century or earlier. All subsequent mound summits, including the one that supported the French cannon during the 1730 battle, have been destroyed based on the fact that each of the subsequent fills appears to be truncated (see Figure 15).

Although we were unable to confirm the location of the sap, its eastern end should be located in the vicinity of Mound E, somewhere near the northern edge of GVNI property, and it should extend to the northwest, through the Fatherland neighborhood adjacent to GVNI (Figure 21). Investigations of a GPR anomaly that we initially thought was part of the sap did not confirm its presence but instead suggest that the anomaly may have been caused by gleyed soils associated with a natural wetland. Although we did a GPR survey in a portion of the Fatherland neighborhood where

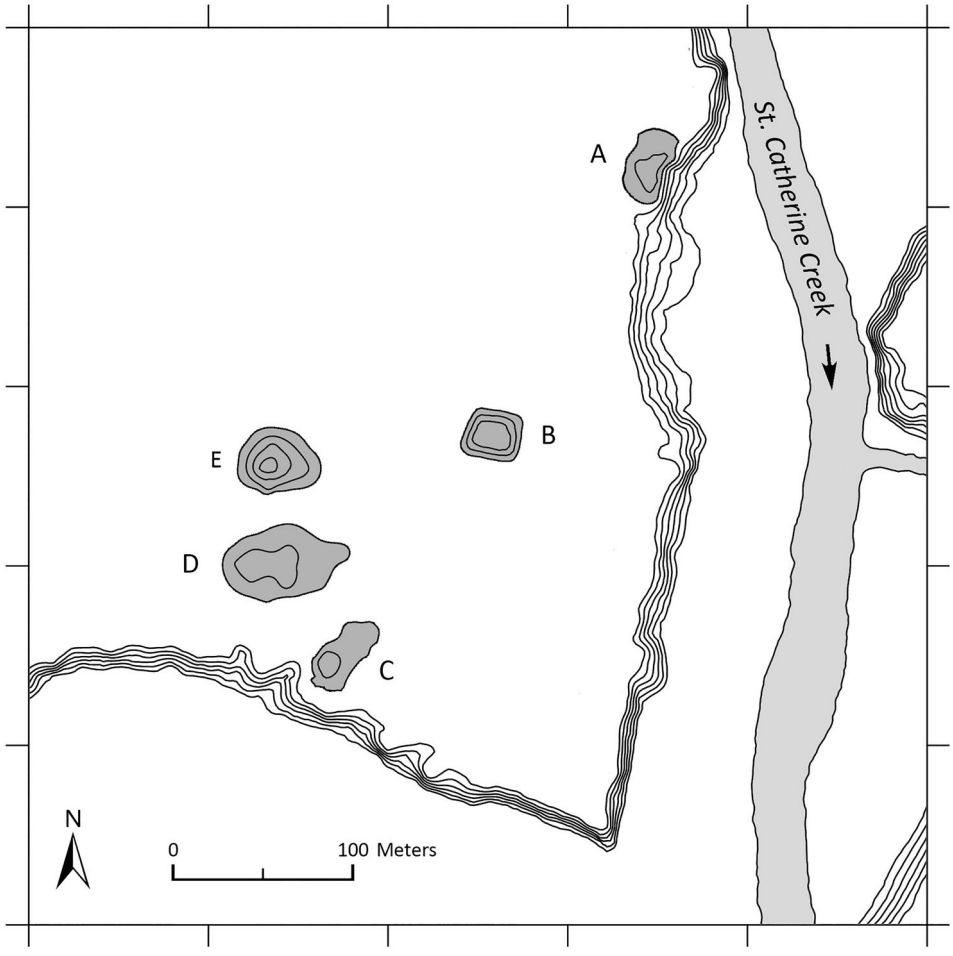

Figure 20. Map of the Fatherland site, with the buried Mounds D and E placed in relation to Mounds A–C. The contours are schematic, indicating only mounds and major topographic features.

Table 2. Pottery types and varieties from Mound E by context.

	Mound E Base																		Mound E Summit						
	N831 E857											N832 E857						N832 E866						
	General	Level 1	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 3/ 4	Zone 4	Zone 4, Level 2	Zone 5	Zone 6	Zone 7	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Zone 2	Feature 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Backhoe Trench	Total
Grog Tempered																								
Addis Plain, *var. unspecified*	6	1	9	72	92	15	4	4	35	41	12	21	92	47	46	8	4	2	4	27	5	30	–	577
Coleman Incised, *var. unspecified*	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Evansville Punctated, *var. unspecified*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2
Fatherland Incised, *var. Nancy*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Fatherland Incised, *var. unspecified*	–	–	–	5	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	12
Leland Incised, *var. unspecified*	1	–	1	2	6	1	1	1	2	5	–	–	5	–	4	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	30
Maddox Engraved, *var. Emerald*	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	2	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	6
Maddox Engraved, *var. unspecified*	–	–	1	2	–	–	–	–	1		–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	5
Mazique Incised, *var. unspecified*	–	–	–	3	4	–	–	–	–	1	–	1	3	2	2	–	–	–	1	1	–	2	–	20
Plaquemine Brushed, *var. Plaquemine*	–	–	–	20	10	1	–	–	3	11	–	4	9	8	5	–	–	–	–	1	2	5	–	79
Unclassified decorated	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Unclassified engraved	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Unclassified eroded	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Unclassified incised	–	–	1	6	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	4	1	–	–	1	1	2	1	1	20
Shell Tempered																								
Barton Incised, *var. unspecified*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	3
Bell Plain, *var. unspecified*	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	1	1	–	–	3	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	8
Mississippi Plain, *var. unspecified*	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3
Wallace Incised, *var. unspecified*	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Unclassified incised	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1
Unclassified Small Sherds	3	2	5	60	121	5	4	3	30	44	6	28	73	57	24	18	5	–	16	18	24	–	1	547
Total	11	3	17	173	236	22	10	8	77	106	18	56	191	121	88	30	9	2	22	48	36	40	3	1,327

Table 3. Chronology of diagnostic pottery types from Mound E by phase.

Type, Variety	Phase				
	Gordon (1000–1200)	Anna (1200–1350)	Foster (1350–1500)	Emerald (1500–1650)	Natchez (1650–1750)
Fatherland Incised, *var. unspecified*			X	X	X
Maddox Engraved, *var. Emerald*			X	X	x
Maddox Engraved, *var. unspecified*			X	X	x
Leland Incised, *var. unspecified*		x	X	x	
Barton Incised, *var. unspecified*	x	x	x	x	x
Mazique Incised, *var. unspecified*	X	x	X	X	X
Plaquemine Brushed, *var. Plaquemine*	x	X	X		
Coleman Incised, *var. unspecified*	X	x			
Evansville Punctated, *var. unspecified*	x	–			

Key: X, common; x, present; –, present in trace amounts.

our projections showed the sap should be, there was no indication of its presence in the data. There are two possibilities as to why this is the case. The first, and most obvious possibility, is that the sap is not located in the area that was surveyed. The second possibility is that the sap actually is present in the survey area, but the contrast between the trench and the surrounding matrix is not strong enough for the GPR to detect (Conyers 2006:145). This is a plausible explanation since the digging and subsequent filling of the sap would have produced a dirt-on-dirt feature that may be difficult to identify since the fill in the trench and the walls of the trench consist of the same type of soil. This also may explain why Mound D was not visible in the GPR data, whereas Mound E was. Excavations showed that Mound E is associated with a substantial midden deposit that includes large amounts of pottery, animal bone, and other artifacts. Although Mound D was not

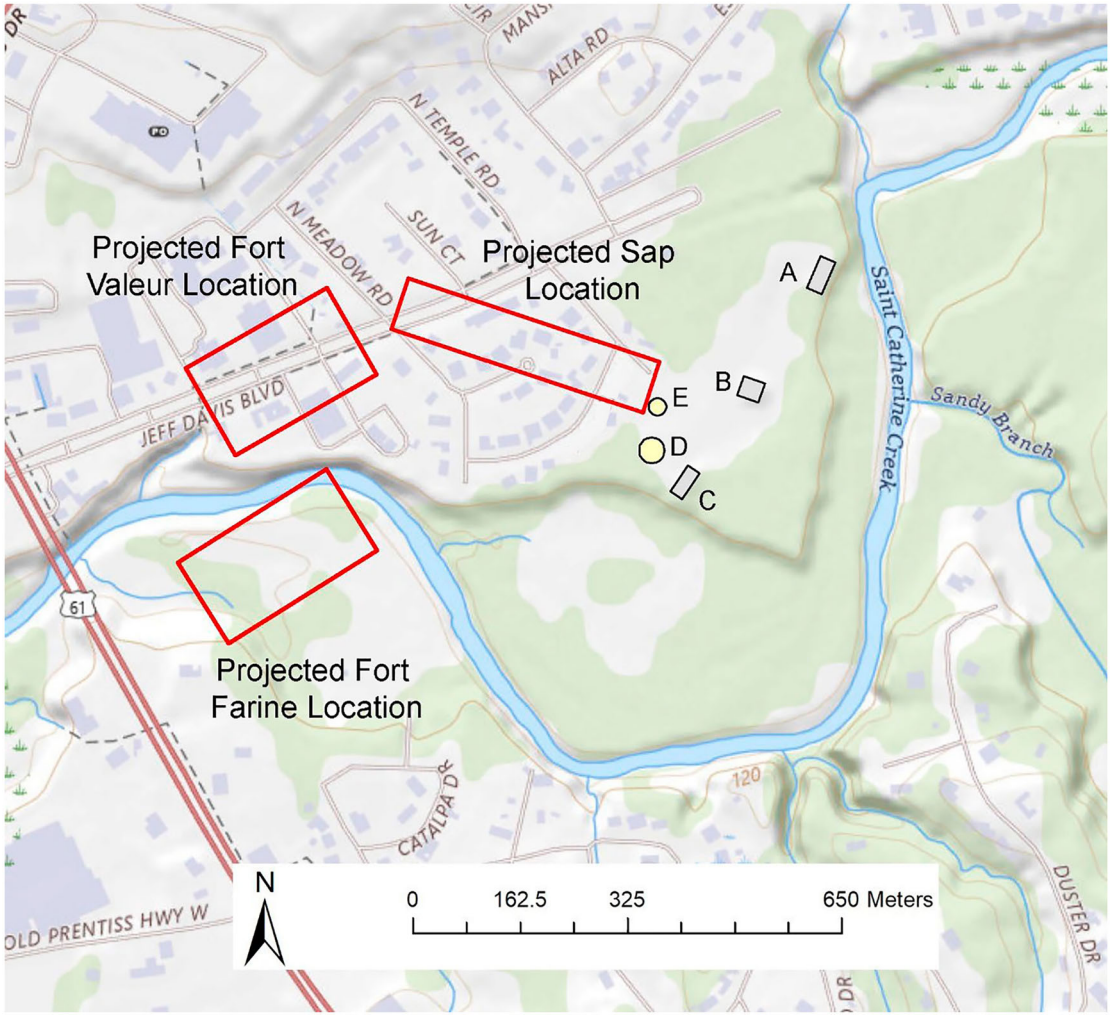

Figure 21. Map showing the projected locations of the French sap and the two Natchez forts, in relation to Mounds A–E.

examined through excavations, it was systematically cored and no large midden deposits were detected. It could be that the visibility of Mound E in the GPR data is based on its associated midden or middens, and the lack of visibility of Mound D is due to the absence of midden deposits. Mound D and the sap may be largely invisible in the GPR data because they do not contrast strongly, if at all, with the surrounding soils.

When the French battlefield maps are oriented based on the locations of Mounds B–E, potential locations of the two Natchez forts can be proposed (see Figure 21). The projected location of Fort Farine includes portions of the floodplain and adjacent higher ground on the south side of St. Catherine Creek. The narrative descriptions and the battlefield maps make it clear that Fort Farine was situated on high ground. If that location was a high spot within the present floodplain, as seems likely, then it is surely gone, having been scoured away by the creek. However, if Fort Farine was located on the bluff along the south side of the floodplain, then some portions of it may still be present. The projected location of Fort Valeur is on the north side of St. Catherine Creek, mostly beneath Jeff Davis Boulevard, the street along which modern visitors approach GVNI. If the depositional history of this area is the same as within the boundaries of GVNI, then the remains of Fort Valeur may still be present but deeply buried.

While the rediscovery of Mounds D and E has allowed us to more accurately reconstruct the 1730 battlefield, it also has fundamentally changed our understanding of the Grand Village's overall history. For some time, our interpretations of the Grand Village have focused on Mounds B and C. The Great Sun lived in a building on the summit of Mound B, where he ritually greeted the sun each morning, while, across the plaza, Mound C supported a temple that housed the sacred fire and the remains of past Natchez chiefs (Barnett 2007:45–48; Neitzel 1965:64–85). We now know that GVNI's precolonial history is more complicated than previously thought. It appears that Mound E initially was built in the early 1400s during the Foster phase (AD 1350–1500), which fits with the construction histories of Mounds A, B, and C, all of which were first built and used then as well (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:185; Neitzel 1965:Figure 13, 1983:129). Mound F is an additional mound that was present at the Grand Village, although the only thing known about it is its approximate location based on its depiction in the Broutin map (see Figure 1).

This more complicated history persisted into the colonial period as well because the use of these mounds, along with Mound D, continued into the eighteenth century. The French maps show that, in addition to Mounds B and C, Mound A – which was thought to have been abandoned prior to European contact (Neitzel 1965:63–64) – and the previously unknown Mound D had buildings on their summits during the early eighteenth century. Mound A is depicted with four structures on its summit, Mound B has two structures and is labeled "cabin of the great chief," and Mound C has one building labeled "new temple." Mound D, the southernmost of the rediscovered mounds, is depicted with one building labeled "old temple" (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:197–200). Mound F is not depicted with any buildings on its summit, so it may may no longer have been in use by the early eighteenth century (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:200). Although no buildings are shown on the summit of Mound E in any of the French maps, it clearly supported at least one building during the 1400s.

The rediscovery of Mounds D and E, which were at least partially and perhaps wholly contemporaneous with Mounds B and C, and the indication that Mound A was used into the eighteenth century show that the Grand Village was more than two contemporaneous mounds facing each other across a plaza. Instead, six mounds were present at the Fatherland site, which is more in line with the number of mounds present at earlier political capitals located at the Anna and Emerald sites (Brain 1978; Brain et al. 1995). It is not clear yet how the six mounds at Fatherland were related to each other or how they were integrated with the community or communities that were centered on the Grand Village. Mound D is labeled "old temple" on the French maps, so perhaps Mounds D and E supported a temple and chief's residence, respectively, similar to the much better documented Mounds C and B.

Conclusions

The archaeological rediscovery of two "missing" mounds at the Grand Village has resulted in several important outcomes. One is that we now have a more accurate understanding of the landscape across which the 1730 battle occurred. Although no contexts that date to the battle were encountered, confirming the locations of Mounds D and E supports Steponaitis's reconstruction of the Grand Village landscape. Mound D, whose summit building was repurposed by the French and used as a hospital during the battle, was located through coring. Mound E, whose summit was used as a position for two French cannon, was relocated through remote sensing, coring, and excavating.

While Mounds D and E are preserved within the boundaries of GVNI, most of the rest of the battlefield is located outside the park. Although the sap and the two Natchez forts were not located during this project, the rediscovery of Mounds D and E allows us to more accurately project their probable locations (see Figure 21). The sap, dug by the French from near the base of Mound E toward Fort Valeur, likely is located beneath the Fatherland neighborhood to the north and west of GVNI. Although not detected during a GPR survey, it is possible that portions of the sap are deeply buried beneath alluvium and unaffected by modern construction. Fort Valeur, the fortification that was used by the residents of the Grand Village (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:203), likely was located along what is now Jeff Davis Boulevard to the west of GVNI. Fort Farine, which was used by the residents of the Flour Village (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:203), likely was located west of GVNI on the opposite side of St. Catherine Creek. No archaeological sites have been recorded in either of the projected fort locations, but battlefield features may be deeply buried there if present. Geophysical methods with an effective depth of 2 m or more, such as GPR or electrical resistivity tomography, might successfully be used to survey these areas in the future. Even if present, the archaeological signature of these forts may be ephemeral because they were occupied for little more than a month, although substantial archaeological materials have been associated with other Indian forts that also were occupied only briefly (Jennings 1941:166; Ward and Davis 1999:275), including the 1731 Natchez fort at Sicily Island (Steponaitis and Prickett 2014).

Two other important outcomes of this project are cautionary tales regarding archaeological practice. One of these is the importance of using remote sensing as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, other field investigations. Although GPR was an essential tool for identifying the location of Mound E, it was not sufficient for finding Mound D or the sap, and excavations showed that the potential sap anomaly identified by GPR is a natural feature. Additionally, a magnetometer survey of the area encompassing the summit of Mound E did not identify any anomalies, although excavations show that architectural features are present at approximately 30 cmbs. Remote sensing is an important part of modern archaeological practice, and its use was essential to the success of this project, but it is important to acknowledge its strengths and limitations (Hargrave 2006). Important features would have been missed or misidentified and wrongly interpreted at the Grand Village if our field methods had included only remote sensing.

A second cautionary tale is the realization of how much we do not know about a place that we thought we knew quite well. No Native site in the early colonial South is better known from the historical record than the Grand Village. The Natchez received much attention from the French, and the many accounts of French visitors comprise a robust documentary record of extraordinary and quotidian events at the Grand Village during the early eighteenth century (Barnett 2007; Charlevoix 1872; Le Page du Pratz 2010; McWilliams 1988; Milne 2015; Sayre 2026; Steponaitis 2026; Swanton 1911). Archaeologically, there are few sites that have been investigated as much as the Grand Village, with several major excavations having been conducted there during the twentieth century (Ford 1936; Neitzel 1965, 1983). Even so, it was not until Steponaitis's map research (Brown and Steponaitis 2017; Steponaitis 2026) and the ABPP-funded fieldwork that we became aware of the existence of three additional mounds at the site, two of which are located on GVNI property, with one of these being only 25 cm below the modern ground surface. The presence of six mounds at the site profoundly alters and complicates our understanding of the last Grand Village regarding its scale and history. The scale of mound building at the eighteenth-century Grand Village is more comparable to earlier political capitals in the region than we thought (Brown and Steponaitis 2017), and at a minimum, previous interpretations that focused on the two mounds associated with the Great Sun and the Natchez temple are insufficient. We are in no way disparaging previous investigations of the Grand Village for not recognizing the existence of these "missing" mounds; the researchers conducting those studies had little, if any, reason from the documents or the archaeology to suspect their existence. Instead, we want to emphasize the importance of developing new insights about and continuing investigations into places and histories that we think we already know so well.

Notes

1. The term *Natche* or *Notchee* sometimes appears in ethnohistoric accounts, and this is how modern descendants refer to themselves (Lieb 2008:331; Van Tuyl 1979:i). In this article, we use the term Natchez to be consistent with usage in archaeological publications about the Grand Village and the Natchez area.
2. This project was a collaboration among Mississippi State University (MSU), the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), GVNI, MDAH, and the University of Mississippi (UM). The field investigations were conducted through the Center for Archaeological Research at UM. The final report was completed at

MSU's Cobb Institute of Archaeology (Boudreaux and Harris 2022).

3. The grid used for the 2019 investigations is not the same grid used by Neitzel (1965, 1983) in his excavations. Instead, all the excavations and geophysical surveys conducted as part of the ABPP project at GVNI and a 2016 magnetic gradiometer survey (Boudreaux and Harris 2022:43, 46) were based on a UTM-based grid used by UNC archaeologists when they created a map of GVNI for the Mississippi Mound Trail (MMT) project (Nelson et al. 2013). They left two benchmarks from their mapping at GVNI, and we oriented our fieldwork grids to them. After the Neitzel datum was relocated in 2019, it was mapped on the MMT grid so that the two excavation grids can be related to each other. Additionally, multiple points on the MMT grid were burned in with a global positioning system to relate them to the global UTM grid.
4. In describing the waterborne deposits that blanket the Fatherland site as colluvium – sediments that accumulate by being washed downslope or by slow downslope creep – Barnett (1984) was following the conventional wisdom at the time as articulated by Neitzel (1983). Given the broad, flat terrace on which the site is located, there is no obvious source nearby for such a process to unfold. Alluvium – sediments deposited by floods – strikes us as a much more apt description, especially given the historical documentation of massive flooding along St. Catherine Creek in the early nineteenth century (Brown and Steponaitis 2017:192–197).

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Data availability statement

Artifacts and associated documents from this project were transferred in 2024 to MDAH, which also curates materials from Neitzel's (1965, 1983) 1962 and 1972 excavations at the Grand Village. Digital files will be stored at MDAH and the Cobb Institute of Archaeology at MSU. These include remote-sensing data and GIS files that were generated as part of the ABPP project. The GIS files are especially important for future research because for the first time they integrate all the excavation maps generated by Neitzel (1965, 1983) during his fieldwork at the Grand Village.

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