

south into Louisiana. These agricultural people had an organized political system and well-developed religious beliefs. The mounds were their religious center and the principal abode of their leaders. Most of the common people lived in small hamlets and farmsteads scattered over the surrounding countryside; they came to the mound center for religious ceremonies and social occasions. In the rich land of the Yazoo Delta they must have led a successful and rewarding life.

In about A.D. 1200, people from an even greater cultural tradition, the Mississippian, arrived. Their mound center at Cahokia influenced a vast area, and their effects upon Winterville were dramatic. The small mound group was transformed into a great center that towered over the flat, alluvial land — the reigning queen of the delta for the next 200 years. During these centuries Winterville was primarily a ceremonial center; probably only the social elite, the priests, and their retainers lived there year-round. Their houses, on and around the lesser mounds, were of wattle and daub with thatched roofs. The largest structure was the tribal temple on the great central Mound A, where they kept their sacred objects. In the center was a fire — the symbol of the sun — maintained by the priests and elders. At death the most important people were interred in the mounds with pottery vessels, tools, and other personal effects.

The people left before Hernando de Soto arrived, and there is no evidence of a great catastrophe. It is probable that they moved away because the fields were worn out or the banks of the river were no longer safe and attractive places to live. The preservation of Winterville honors them today.

FURTHER READING: *Winterville: Late Prehistoric Culture Contact in the Lower Mississippi Valley*, by Jeffrey P. Brain

131. Angel Mounds State Historic Site, IN

Off I-164 at exit 5 to Pollack Ave., Evansville

Native American Museum and Education Center

Between A.D. 1100 and 1450, several thousand Mississippians lived in a village along the Ohio River and raised crops in the rich soil. They built ten platform mounds (the temple mound has been reconstructed) and surrounded the village with a stockade enclosing 105 acres. There is a mound nearby built by earlier people.

132. Moundville Archaeological Park, AL

Vincas P. Steponaitis

East of Rte. 69 and north of County Line Rd.,
Moundville

Jones Archaeological Museum

Moundville is a remarkable place, not only because of the scale of its earthworks but also because these ancient monuments are so well preserved. The large scale is a testament to the ancient builders; the preservation is a happy consequence of the foresight of local citizens who worked together in the 1920s and 1930s to protect the site as a 185-acre state park. This ancient town was built by Mississippian people who lived here from the eleventh through the sixteenth century. Most of the mound construction took place between A.D. 1200 and 1300, a time when the town reached its largest size. It was the political capital and religious center for a province that included thousands of people, many living in outlying communities.

Today visitors are struck by the majesty of the earthworks that surround the plaza. Twenty of these mounds are still clearly visible. Most, if not all, had wooden buildings on top. Some were temples, and others were the residences of chiefs. The mounds were arranged around a

large rectangular plaza used for public ceremonies and other gatherings. The mounds and plaza were at one time surrounded by a bastioned stockade made of pine logs that defended all approaches to the site. The people dug and hauled thousands of cubic yards of earth, basketload by basketload, to build the mounds. Archaeologists estimate that the stockade, which was rebuilt several times, consisted of more than 10,000 logs, 10 to 14 inches in diameter. Without modern machinery or even metal tools, the labor required to build these monuments and fortifications was staggering and is evidence of the ingenuity of the people who once lived here and the power of their chiefs.

FURTHER READING: *Archaeology of the Moundville Chiefdom*, edited by Vernon J. Knight, Jr., and Vincas P. Steponaitis

133. Wickliffe Mounds State Historic Site, KY

Kit W. Wesler

94 Green St., Wickliffe

Welcome center, museum

Mississippian people built a village on the bluffs near the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers about A.D. 1100. It was a commanding site for the river trade and included rich bottomlands. It was also on a major migratory bird flyway. The people constructed a plaza with a large building on the west side and a smaller one on the north. About 100 years later they built platform mounds over the earlier buildings, successively raising similar buildings higher than the rest of the village. The thatched wattle and daub houses and the gardens were on the high ground of the ridge. Their pottery included flared bowls with incised decoration on the rims, negative-painted pottery, and elaborate effigy vessels. The Mississippians traded widely—

for pottery from Cahokia, for marine-shell gorgets reflecting styles from eastern Tennessee and northern Alabama, for mica from the Appalachians, for copper from the Great Lakes, and for shark's teeth from the Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic.

After 1250 the people expanded the village along the bluff, but mound building slowed. The villagers molded the final caps over the platform mounds and constructed buildings on top of them. They built a few small mounds, perhaps as burial areas for chiefs. After 1350 they left their village, and within the next hundred years the Mississippians left the region. A shroud of silence hung over the area until Europeans and Americans arrived in the eighteenth century.

Today the historic site works with Native Americans, including Shawnees, Chickasaws, and Choctaws, and is a center for Native American culture and education. In the 1990s researchers from Murray State University uncovered a hard-fired clay floor north of the plaza and a rare red and white painting of a Sun Circle, the cross-in-circle symbol characteristic of the Mississippians.

FURTHER READING: *Excavations at Wickliffe Mounds*, by Kit W. Wesler

134. Santee National Wildlife Refuge, SC: Santee Indian Mound

On Rtes. 301/15 south of Summerton: Bluff Unit

Visitor center

According to the Paleoindian Database of the Americas (<http://pidba.tennessee.edu/>), the first people came into this area more than 13,000 years ago (11,000 radiocarbon years B.P.) and began to hunt and camp. The river swamps of today began to form about 8,000 years ago. Between about A.D. 1200 and 1450 a major Mississippian chiefdom was centered at the edge of