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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 23 1992

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name West Mound

other names/site number 22Ca502

2. Location

street & number _____ not for publication

city, town _____

state _____

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
_____	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
<u>1</u>	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously

listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Kenneth H. D'Paul
Signature of certifying official Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Oct. 19, 1992
Date

Mississippi Department of Archives and History
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

Janet E. Jansen

12-2-92

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Religion-ceremonial mound

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not In Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The West Mound (22-Ca-502) is a medium-sized rectangular platform mound

The site was first recorded in the early 1950s by archaeologist William G. Haag, then of the University of Mississippi, and was briefly described by him as follows:

For an area of perhaps 1000 feet [300 m] radius about the mound sporadic artifacts are seen. At the time of the survey all the surrounding area was in pasture, so that but few potsherds and flints were revealed. Six sherds of Tishomingo Cord-marked and three sherds of Tishomingo Plain were found, and one side-notched, bevel-edged projectile point (Haag 1952:2).

The site was revisited in June 1991 by a crew led by Keith Baca of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. This reconnaissance was followed up by limited test excavation of the mound conducted in January of 1992. These new findings are summarized below.

Currently, the West Mound is thickly covered with second-growth deciduous trees, consisting predominantly of sassafras, sweetgum, and oak. The four corners of the mound are oriented to the cardinal directions. No ramp was reported by Haag and no evidence for such an appendage was detected during the 1991 visit. A relic hunter's pit measuring 2 m in diameter and 1.2 m deep occurs at the top of the mound ca. 2 m to the north of the southern corner of the platform summit.

The maximum horizontal and vertical dimensions of the mound have apparently changed little since the early 1950s. However,

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inspection revealed that the original contours of the northern half of the mound have been disturbed. This is not mentioned in the 1952 report, and judging from the size of the trees on the disturbed area (ca. 25-35 years old), may have taken place subsequent to Haag's visit. Although he could not recall the year, leaseholder Mickey West informed the writer of a vague recollection from his boyhood that the damage occurred when a portion of the platform summit was plowed by his father in an attempt to cultivate the mound. This apparent effort at cultivation, which evidently was soon abandoned, left a continuously sloping, rounded flank extending from the east-west centerline of the mound north to the basal edge. However, since the south half of the platform summit retains its level configuration and the southwest and southeast sides the mound remain relatively straight and steep, the original truncated pyramidal form of the structure is still quite evident.

In June 1991, two 7-cm diameter core samples were taken from the mound in an attempt to reveal stratigraphy. The first core column was placed at the top center of the mound and the other ca. 4.5 m to the north of the south summit corner. A single clay-grit tempered, plain potsherd was recovered from the latter sample column at a depth of 1.25 m below the summit. In general, testing revealed that soil color and texture varied only slightly between the top of the mound and the original ground surface. No darkened soil horizons indicative of humus were noted in the column samples, which suggests that no extended time intervals had elapsed between construction episodes.

The most conspicuous indicator of differential stratigraphy was encountered in the form a 2-cm thick horizontal band of yellowish-gray silt, which was revealed about 90 cm below the summit in the south core column. The layer of silt was subsequently found to extend to a point 2.5 m to the southwest of the south core column, where it reappeared at approximately the same depth in the cleaned-off north profile of the relic hunter's pit. This silt layer contrasted sharply with the otherwise reddish-brown to strong brown clay-loam mound fill seen in the balance of the looter's pit walls and in the core samples.

In January of 1992, a 1x1-m test unit, placed between 10 and 11 m to the east of the center point of the mound summit, was

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excavated to a depth of 2 meters. The same distinctive stratum of silt was encountered at approximately the same depth beneath the mound summit as in the previously dug core samples and the looters pit (ca. 1 m). Apparently, this band of light soil forms a horizontally extensive capping layer.

In addition to the horizon of light-colored silt, excavation of the single test square also revealed a 15-cm-thick zone of fill which contained a dense concentration of charcoal. This deposit, occurring between 90 and 110 cm beneath the mound summit, was underlain by a fire-hardened lense of soil. A second, more discrete charcoal-containing feature was found in the west wall of the test pit at about 190 cm depth.

Artifacts recovered from the test pit were limited to sand- and sand/clay-tempered plain ceramic sherds (totalling about 20), along with a few lithic flakes. All of this material was found in secondary context in mound fill.

The ceramics excavated from the mound are not particularly sensitive chronological markers, denoting a generalized Middle to Late Woodland (ca. 100 B.C. - A.D. 1000) time range. In the absence of materials diagnostic of later occupations, however, these specimens do not contradict a radiocarbon date obtained from 98 g of charcoal found in the 1x1-m test unit at a depth of ca. 1 m. This sample (Beta-51398) yielded a date (uncalibrated) of A.D. 640 \pm 50. Results of C-14 testing of a second charcoal sample taken from a depth of 190 cm are pending. The temper and paste characteristics of the recovered ceramics, taken together with the radiocarbon date, suggest affinity with the Late Woodland Baytown culture which is well documented to the west of the North Central Hills (Phillips 1970).

More horizontally and vertically extensive excavation will be required to resolve questions regarding the mound's internal structure and function, but it is probable that either civic and ceremonial activities took place atop the mound, or some honored personage was domiciled there. Platform mounds sometimes served secondarily as funerary structures; although no evidence for human burials has been detected at the West Mound so far, the possibility cannot be ruled out.

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While the rectangular platform mound configuration has been considered a hallmark of the late prehistoric Mississippian cultural tradition across much of the Southeast (Willey 1966:294-304), recent investigations have disclosed the existence of flat-topped mounds in the region which date to as early as the Middle Woodland period (ca. A.D. 1-500 [Knight 1990; Mainfort 1986; Rafferty 1990]) and possibly the terminal Late Woodland period (ca. 800-1000; see Johnson and Atkinson 1985). The credible absolute date obtained for the West Mound indicates a temporal placement within the early Late Woodland period, the only known mound of such an age in north Mississippi. In light of the Woodland artifact assemblage as corroborated by the recently obtained radiocarbon date, the West Mound can be placed on the small but growing list of recognized pre-Mississippian platform mounds in the Southeastern U.S.

According to Haag (1952:2), only a few artifacts were collected from the field adjacent to the mound. The low recovery of artifacts was attributed by Haag to the fact that the land was in pasture at the time of his visit, thus reducing surface visibility. At the time of the 1992 site visit, however, the field around the mound had recently been cultivated, providing optimal surface visibility and artifact collecting conditions. Nevertheless, as had been the case at the time of Haag's visit, artifact occurrence was quite sparse, as described below.

A pedestrian survey was made of the field surrounding the mound by walking north-south transects spaced 30 m apart. An area falling within a 400 m radius of the mound was examined. Wherever concentrations of artifacts were noted on the surface, shovel test holes approximately 30 cm wide by 25 cm deep were dug to check for possible subsurface features, midden or artifacts. The soil removed from each test hole was passed through 1/4-inch screen to ensure recovery of small artifacts. Although 18 shovel tests were dug in high probability areas, no evidence for subsurface features or midden was seen; in all cases, other than for an occasional lithic flake, the soil was quite sterile below the thin upper sod layer.

Although Haag (1952:2) implied that surface artifacts had been found in proximity to the mound, [REDACTED]

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The assemblage recovered in these areas included a sparse amount of chert debitage, a few ground sandstone fragments, and several pitted stones. The few ceramic sherds recovered from these off-mound areas consisted of 1 clay-tempered plain, 2 sand/clay-tempered plain, and 3 sand tempered plain specimens. These sherds indicate a Woodland stage temporal placement, as do those found by Haag (1952:2). The side-notched, bevel-edged projectile point mentioned by Haag (ibid.) is diagnostic of an Early Archaic period occupation (ca. 8000-5500 B.C.), predating the West Mound by at least 6000 years.

Although contemporaneity between the West Mound and the off-mound occupation loci is suggested by the presence in all three areas of Woodland ceramics, the fact that the surface artifact scatters are located a considerable distance from the mound necessitates their designation as separate sites. In addition, it is quite apparent that the off-mound occupation areas have little depositional integrity as evidenced by the absence of sub-plowzone cultural deposits. Accordingly, the National Register property is confined to the West Mound itself.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Archaeology-prehistoric

Period of Significance

A.D. 500-1100

Significant Dates

A.D. 640±50

Cultural Affiliation

Late Woodland (Baytown)

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The West Mound possesses significance under National Register Criterion D, in that it is capable of yielding information important to knowledge of the prehistory of Mississippi. Due to the unusual nature and integrity of the site, its potential to contribute to understanding of regional prehistoric chronology, site function, and social organization is substantial.

The rectangular platform mound at [redacted] site is one of only a handful known to exist in [redacted] Mississippi. Such a prominent site warrants more intensive investigation than it has so far received. Information secured from the mound and its environs could add significantly to archaeological knowledge of an area of the state which is currently poorly known; [redacted] the North Central Hills region has received little archaeological investigation in general (Morgan n.d.). Preliminary attempts at securing absolute chronological data have proven quite successful. As a result, it is clear that the West Mound has the potential to play a key role in the more detailed delineation of the culture-historical sequence of the North Central Hills, which has been only rudimentarily defined.

Effective inquiry into archaeological problems of any given region requires detailed chronological control as a point of departure. Because the West Mound is a promising source of absolute and relative chronological data, investigation of the settlement system in which the mound was presumably a focal point could thus be facilitated as the next step of a research program. Systematic survey of the outlying areas could be conducted to

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determine contemporaneous site distribution of the support population of the mound and the range of functional variation of those sites.

Because artifact occurrence is very sparse at nearby sites, it seems likely that the West Mound had no large, permanent population nearby during its span of construction and use. Such a "vacant" ceremonial center may have been inhabited by a small elite or caretaker group on a regular basis, if at all; sizable groups may have gathered at the mound only during periodic episodes of construction and ceremonialism or other activities which did not generate habitation refuse in any great quantity.

This vacant mound center aspect of the settlement system raises questions concerning the sociopolitical organization of the society which erected the mound. The existence of such large monuments as the West Mound suggests an elaborated social structure which enabled the diversion of labor from normal economic/subsistence activities at the outlying sites. The managerial authority which would have been required to schedule and direct the sizable labor force needed for mound construction implies at least some degree of centralized organization and probably social stratification within the society. Further survey and excavation could be directed toward determining if the mound was used solely for ritual functions to maintain social cohesion within the regional population, or also as a center for economic regulation and redistribution. This question could be approached, for example, through analysis of differential distribution of non-local trade materials and/or food remains which may be present at the mound and at coeval sites in the area.

In summary, further archaeological fieldwork at the West Mound and its environs could undoubtedly provide key data to assist in the investigation of the currently little-understood Woodland stage settlement system of the area. In addition, the regionally unusual occurrence of a platform mound provides an outstanding opportunity to explore the timing and nature of prehistoric activities involving the construction and use of mounds during the Late Woodland period in a relatively uninvestigated region of Mississippi.

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The site boundaries encompass the West Mound itself, and exclude off-mound occupation areas

[REDACTED]