



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Baldwin's Ferry Mound

other names/site number 22Hi501

2. Location

street & number [redacted] publication

city or town [redacted]

state [redacted]

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] / State 8-5-1998  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Historic Preservation Officer

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

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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:)

[Signature] / Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

[Signature]

9/24/98

Baldwin's Ferry Mound  
Name of Property

Hinds Co., MS  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
1	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
1	_____	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: ceremonial site

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape: forest

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: platform mound

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other Earth

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Hinds Co., Mississippi

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DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

The Baldwin's Ferry Mound archaeological site (22Hi501) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The mound is a large, roughly rectangular platform earthwork [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The mound has a maximum height of approximately 7 m (23 ft.), a basal diameter of about 55 m (180 ft.), and a platform summit diameter of about 25 m (82 ft.). Presently covered with deciduous trees, the mound during its prehistoric period of use presumably was kept cleared by its users. Much of the top of the mound has been dug away to depths of as much as 2 m (6.5 ft.). According to undocumented local legend, this extensive disturbance is the result of the fortification of the mound during the Civil War. This relatively modern impact, while significant, nevertheless has affected only a fraction of the volume of the mound, which otherwise retains excellent overall integrity.

The mound was first recorded on June 17, 1927 during a visit to the site by Moreau B. Chambers and James A. Ford of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH). Chambers' archaeological survey notes for that date mention the excavation disturbances on the mound's summit, stating (without attribution) that "During the Civil War, the top of this mound was torn up for breastworks" (Chambers 1927).

Two additional, smaller mounds in the vicinity are mentioned in Chambers' field notes, "...300 yards apart and 200 yards from the main mound. Each is about four feet in height" (Chambers 1927). Only one of these other mounds could be found during archaeological reconnaissances of the area conducted by MDAH personnel on Dec. 10, 1996 and May 29, 1997. The remaining small mound is located in a cultivated field over 100 m (c. 110 yards) northeast of the large mound (not "200 yards" away as stated in Chambers' notes). The integrity of this small mound has been severely degraded by

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digging which has extended deep into its interior, reaching nearly to the base of the mound. As a result, the small mound's eligibility for the National Register is questionable. In any case, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] considered a separate site. The small mound is therefore excluded from the National Register property.

During the 1997 MDAH archaeological reconnaissance, a sparse prehistoric habitation area was found in the cultivated field north and east of the small mound. Consisting of a light scatter of ceramic sherds and lithic debris, no darkened midden soil indicative of intensive occupation is present, and evidently the cultural deposit does not extend beneath the disturbed plowzone. As such, the habitation area appears to lack integrity, and furthermore, its association with the large mound has not been demonstrated. As a result, the habitation area is excluded from the National Register boundaries. The large mound itself therefore constitutes the sole resource of the National Register property.

An excavation was conducted at the large mound at Baldwin's Ferry by Chambers and Ford from June 18 to 23, 1928, the year following their initial visit. The results of this excavation were not published, and only sketchy field notes and a very brief summary of the work were produced (Chambers 1928a, 1928b; Ford 1928). The available records indicate that a stepped vertical profile column was cut [REDACTED] n face of the mound [REDACTED] exposing distinct artificial stratification and features (Ford 1928; see accompanying figure). This excavation cut was still plainly visible in 1997, measuring approximately 3 m wide and extending about 2 m into the side of the mound. In this profile section about 0.6 m (2 ft.) from the top of the mound, Chambers observed a stratum of charcoal and ashes underlain by a hard-fired bed of clay. In addition, remains of a burned building, consisting of chunks of fired clay daub with cane and stick impressions, were found exposed on top of the mound, as were a few prehistoric ceramic sherds. The ceramics are not described or illustrated in the excavation records, and unfortunately neither it nor any other material mentioned in the field notes is now available for examination; apparently nothing was saved for curation, since there are no old collections or artifact accession records for this site at MDAH.

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The Baldwin's Ferry Mound was constructed and used during the Coles Creek and/or Plaquemine-Mississippian periods. The Coles Creek culture, which occupied most of the lower Mississippi River Valley between A.D. 700 - 1200, was a regional variant of the Late Woodland societies that inhabited much of what is now the eastern United States during the late first millennium A.D. The Coles Creek culture is notable in that it, unlike most contemporaneous Late Woodland variants, is characterized by the widespread construction of platform mounds (Steponaitis 1986:385). Although not the first culture to build flat-topped mounds in the lower Mississippi Valley (a few such mounds are known for the earlier Marksville and Troyville cultures), their construction became much more prevalent during Coles Creek times. As such, while the Baldwin's Ferry Mound has not yet been directly dated by either absolute or relative techniques, it can confidently be stated that it dates to no earlier than the Coles Creek period. This is further suggested by the occurrence of ceramic sherds of the Coles Creek period on the surface of the nearby habitation site, collected by MDAH in May 1997. These specimens consist of Coles Creek Incised, *vars. Blakely and Hardy*; and Mazique Incised, *var. Kings Point* (see Williams and Brain 1983 for description and chronology for these and the following ceramic types). The only definite pre-Coles Creek ceramic type found (Alligator Incised, *var. Oxbow*) is diagnostic of the Baytown culture, which is not characterized by the construction of large platform mounds.

Because of the regionally unprecedented investment in mound construction at many sites, it has been postulated that the Coles Creek culture had developed an incipient ranked social organization, in contrast to earlier egalitarian groups in the region, among which mound construction was not nearly as intensive (Steponaitis 1986:385-386). Such social stratification presumably would have been required to direct and allocate the communal labor necessary for the large-scale, institutionalized moundbuilding projects that characterized Coles Creek.

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Although the mound may be primarily of Coles Creek cultural affiliation, its span of use may have extended into the subsequent Plaquemine-Mississippian period (A.D. 1200 - 1600), or the mound may even be solely of Plaquemine-Mississippian affiliation. A possible Plaquemine affiliation for the mound is indirectly suggested by the occurrence at the nearby habitation site of the late Coles Creek/early Mississippian ceramic type Plaquemine Brushed, *var. Plaquemine*. There is in any case little indication for much cultural discontinuity between the Coles Creek and Mississippian periods in general; the prevailing model for the lower Mississippi Valley holds that indigenous Coles Creek populations readily adopted material culture traits from the Mississippian core area, in effect creating a regional cultural hybrid known as Plaquemine (Brain 1978:345; Williams and Brain 1983). The classification Mississippian, under which Plaquemine is subsumed, designates the late prehistoric climax of cultural complexity across much of the Southeast, and is characterized by such material traits as shell-tempered ceramics, rectangular wall-trench houses and platform mounds. Also defining Mississippian is the predominance of agriculture in the economic - subsistence system, as well as the consolidation of regionally centralized sociopolitical organization with distinctly hierarchical, hereditary leadership (Steponaitis 1986:387-392).

In the case of the Baldwin's Ferry Mound, the question of whether it is Coles Creek, Plaquemine-Mississippian, or both, can be determined only through further archaeological excavation of the mound. The 1928 excavation did ascertain that it, like other excavated Coles Creek and Mississippian mounds in the region, is composed of multiple construction stages, with the remains of a wattle-and-daub building present at the summit. These buildings served as ceremonial temples and/or as residences for elite members of the population. Whatever their specific function, Coles Creek and Mississippian mound sites are seen to represent centers of political and economic authority over regional populations, which were dispersed across the landscape in small settlements (Brain 1978; Steponaitis 1986; Williams and Brain 1983).

In addition to its primary prehistoric Native American component, inconclusive evidence suggests that the mound at Baldwin's Ferry may have

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been used as a military defensive position and observation point during the Civil War, as mentioned previously. Baldwin's Ferry was a strategic crossing point

The option was open for a Confederate force from Vicksburg to attempt crossing at Baldwin's Ferry to strike the Federal left flank or rear. Although such an assault never occurred, Baldwin's Ferry was the scene of skirmishes on May 12 (the day of the Battle of Raymond) and May 13 (Bearss 1959:97). A third skirmish is recorded for September 11, indicating that Baldwin's Ferry was contested well after the close of the Vicksburg campaign (Bearss 1959:102).

Numerous references to Baldwin's Ferry are contained in the dispatches of Federal and Confederate commanders (see Scott 1889 [ed.], *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. XXIV, Part III). Among the most notable are orders issued on May 11, 1863 by Major General John A. McClernand, commander of the Federal XIII Corps, in which Brigadier General A.J. Smith is directed to "make such disposition of a part of his force as will enable him to prevent the enemy from passing troops at or near Baldwin's Ferry" (Scott 1889:295). Soon thereafter, Confederate pickets of Brigadier General Lloyd Tilghman's brigade were driven at Baldwin's Ferry by the 95th Ohio Infantry, which then took position on the east bank (Bearss 1986:477), the side of the river on which the mound is located. On May 14, Confederate Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton learned that "Smith's division is at Baldwin's Ferry, and they are still re-enforcing [sic]" (Scott 1889:879). On July 4, the day Vicksburg surrendered, Confederate cavalry Col. Wirt Adams informed his superiors that "From an intelligent and reliable scout...I learn that the enemy has sent a re-enforcement [sic] of 5,000 to Baldwin's Ferry..." (Scott 1889:987).

Stories of the mound's use as a Civil War military position have circulated in local folklore; Chambers' 1927 notation that the large depressions on the top

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of the mound were military works (see above) cites no source, which implies that he was repeating such undocumented information. No other references to the mound's alleged use during the Civil War have been found, and oral tradition must be regarded with great caution. It is recognized, however, that the extensive, deep entrenchments on the summit of the mound provide some indication, although inconclusive, that the mound may have been put to military use. Whatever the origin of the trenches atop the Baldwin's Ferry Mound, it is highly unlikely that they were dug by relic hunters, because most disturbances caused by such vandalism are confined to relatively small, discrete holes, far less extensive than the massive depressions present on this particular mound. Furthermore, these entrenchments, though irregular and eroded, form an apparent pattern: much of the interior of the platform summit has been dug away to a depth of about 1.5 meters, leaving a raised embankment several meters thick around the perimeter of the summit. In general form, this enclosure resembles a protective breastwork or parapet, a key feature of earthen Civil War fortifications (Mahan 1862:1,2). In addition, this embankment is broken at intervals by several gaps, suggesting possible embrasures through which artillery pieces could have been aimed. Certainly, this mound's commanding elevation on an otherwise flat landscape, in a locality known to have been occupied by large numbers of troops, would have made it naturally attractive for use as a field fortification.

Nevertheless, more conclusive evidence, ideally consisting of military artifacts from the mound, would be required to dispel uncertainty as to the alleged Civil War origin of the mound-top depressions. Accordingly, on July 10, 1997, an MDAH party inspected the mound and the immediately surrounding area with a metal detector. The results of this investigation, however, were negative: only 20th-century metallic objects, consisting of 5 brass shotgun shell bases, a zinc canning jar lid, part of an automobile steering wheel, and a steel file were found. In conclusion, although the depressions on the mound resemble military trenchworks, the mound's identification as a Civil War site must be considered unverified due to the lack of adequate documentary or archaeological evidence.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
removed from its original location.
a birthplace or grave.
a cemetery.
a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
a commemorative property.
less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Archaeology: Prehistoric

Period of Significance

A.D. 700-1600

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Coles Creek

Plaquemine Mississippian

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Baldwin's Ferry Mound archaeological site is significant statewide under the Prehistoric Archaeology Area of Significance of National Register Criterion D, in that it has yielded, and retains the potential to yield, information important to knowledge of the prehistory of Mississippi. Although the mound has experienced extensive excavation disturbance on its summit, this amounts to only a fraction of the total volume of the earthwork; ample intact deposits remain in undisturbed portions of the mound. As such, the site is an invaluable resource for the investigation of the timing and nature of the increase in sociopolitical complexity [REDACTED] as signified by the mound centers that proliferated in the region during the Coles Creek and Mississippian periods.

Although numerous Coles Creek and Plaquemine-Mississippian mound sites have been recorded in the lower Mississippi Valley, very few have ever been excavated. A primary research objective of pan-regional relevance which could be addressed through further archaeological investigation of this site would be to determine whether the mound is the product of a Coles Creek occupation, a later Plaquemine-Mississippian occupation, or both. As previously discussed in Section 7, a general pattern of cultural stability and continuity has been postulated for the Coles Creek to Plaquemine-Mississippian transition, although Brain (1978:342) has suggested the possibility of an occupational hiatus or abandonment of numerous Coles Creek mound sites [REDACTED], which were then "reoccupied" by later Mississippian groups, who may not have enlarged the mounds at all (Brain 1978:341-342). Brain's hypothesis could be confirmed or refuted only through excavation of a sample of regional mounds, but little such work has been accomplished; the only adequately excavated mound site anywhere in the region is the Holly Bluff/Lake George site (22Yz557), a National Historic Landmark [REDACTED]. The excavations at that site, conducted in 1958-1960 (Williams and Brain 1983), documented that construction of several mounds there continued in numerous stages throughout both the Coles Creek and Mississippian periods. However, such long-term, interperiod expansion of the same mounds at the Holly Bluff complex, the preeminent multimound center in

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the region, may well not be typical of smaller mound sites such as Baldwin's Ferry. As such, whether late prehistoric platform mounds in the region represent a general pattern of continuity, i.e., were expanded and used by descendants of Coles Creek predecessors (as at Holly Bluff), or reflect a trend of a shift of ceremonial activity or elite residential use to newer mound sites during the Mississippian period, has not been addressed. A site such as Baldwin's Ferry Mound, which is known to contain abundant intact cultural deposits (e.g., distinct mound construction stages, remnants of a burned summit structure, associated carbonized organic remains, ceramics, etc.) would be well suited for investigating this question through stratigraphic testing and the use of absolute dating techniques.

Although the extensive depression on the mound's summit allegedly resulted from use of the mound during the the Civil War as a field fortification, there is insufficient documentary or archaeological evidence available to conclusively identify this disturbance as such; therefore, the site is not currently eligible for National Register listing under Criterion A for association with the Civil War; nor is it eligible under the Historic Archaeology Area of Significance of Criterion D.

In summary, the Baldwin's Ferry Mound is an important repository of information which could assist in addressing questions pertaining to the rise of complex social organization and political centralization among late prehistoric Native American groups [REDACTED] is relatively well-preserved site's significance is magnified given the ongoing destruction of so many other mounds in the region.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The National Register boundary of the Baldwin's Ferry Mound archaeological site is coterminous with the maximum horizontal extent of the mound itself   


**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The Baldwin's Ferry Mound itself forms the sole contributing resource, because 1) it is spatially discrete from two other archaeological resources in the vicinity, a sparse habitation site and a small mound remnant; and 2) the association of the latter two sites with the main Baldwin's Ferry Mound has not been determined, and, in any case, their integrity is questionable. Therefore, the horizontal spatial limits of the Baldwin's Ferry mound itself define the National Register site boundary.