

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 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 Murphey Site

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 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
<u>1</u>	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
<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.

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

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

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/village site

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

AGRICULTURE/agricultural field

## 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 Murphey site is situated on a natural levee which is on the outside of each of these relict river channels. is a part of the stage two meander belt of the Mississippi/Ohio river system which was abandoned by 6,000 years before present. is part of the same river system's stage four meander belt which was abandoned by 2,600 years before present (Personal communication Roger Saucier, Geologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Waterways Experiment Station, Vicksburg, Mississippi). This natural levee setting is the usual type of location for sites of the Poverty Point/Gulf Formational period in the Yazoo Basin.

Pollen analyses of the area demonstrated that in the 5000 years ago until present era, the area was dominated by Quercus (Oak) and Carya (Hickory) trees (Holloway and Valastro 1983:196). Overstory vegetation on natural levees such as the setting of the Murphey site also included such trees as Cottonwood, Redgum, Hackberry, Elm, Blackgum, Beech Locust, Red Maple, Box Elder, Hawthorn, and Persimmon (ibid:22). The understory included such plants as Greenbrier, Morning Glory, Cattail, American Lotus, Swamp Violet, Pokeweed, Amaranth, Dewberry, Blackberry, Muscadine, and Nettle (ibid:62-71).

The testing of the Murphey site was accomplished by William Hony, a student working under the direction of Mississippi State University in 1969. The manuscript describing the testing of this site and other activities is on file at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. The whereabouts of the artifacts and skeletal material is unknown.

The site is a small midden approximately 180 x 105 meters (1.8 ha.) in area. The midden deposit is "black and sticky" (Hony n.d.) and ranges in depth from 18" to 22" as determined by two 5' square test pits, a 3' x 5' trench and numerous bore holes. It is in an agricultural field.

Occupation apparently began during the Poverty Point period and continued through the Mississippian period. Ceramics are abundant on the surface, bone including human bone fragments, and shell are present and a wide variety of artifacts including Poverty Point objects occur though not in abundance.

See continuation sheet

**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)  
Prehistoric Archaeology

Period of Significance  
1500 B.C.-100 B.C.

Significant Dates  
N/A

Cultural Affiliation  
Poverty Point, Tchefuncte

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 appropriate context for evaluating the significance of the Murphey site is that of the Poverty Point/Middle Gulf Formational in the Yazoo Basin. Accepted dates for the Poverty Point culture range from about 1700 B.C. to 600 B.C. Dates for the Middle Gulf Formational are thought to range from around 1200 B.C. to 600 B.C. The distribution of Poverty Point sites covers much of the Lower Mississippi Valley from the Gulf Coast to Southeast Missouri (Morgan n.d.:3), with the largest concentration being found in the Yazoo Basin. The date range generally accepted is between 1500 B.C. - 600 B.C., although one site in the Yazoo Basin (Teoc Creek) has dates that range back to 1700 B.C. (Connaway, McGahey, and Webb 1977:114). The culture takes its name from the type site in Northeastern Louisiana where a complex of concentric earthworks and associated mounds covers several hundred acres. The Poverty Point social system is thought to have been more complex than any culture preceding it and than anything which followed up until perhaps the Mississippian period. The subsistence regime is thought to have relied upon an extremely efficient exploitation of the rich natural environment of the area. Poverty Point sites are characterized by a wide array of exotic materials with sources as diverse as the Gulf of Mexico, the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountain area. There is considerable discussion as to whether or not the Chiefdom level of social organization was achieved by Poverty Point people (Morgan n.d.:3). It seems likely that there was a complex redistributive system which accounts for the wide spread presence of exotic materials.

Following the Poverty Point/Middle Gulf Formational stage in the Yazoo Basin is the Tchula/Late Gulf Formational (Morgan n.d.:17). The subregional cultures for this stage are Tchefuncte in the southern Yazoo Basin and Tchula in the northern part of the basin. Sites of this period are the first in the area with abundant ceramics. Although ceramic vessels were used in the preceding period, they do not appear to have played a major role in the

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Historic Preservation Division,  
Mississippi Department of Archives  
and History, Jackson, Mississippi

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

E

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Samuel O. McGahey, Archaeologist  
organization Miss. Department of Archives and date June 25, 1993  
History P. O. Box 571 telephone                       
street & number                      state Mississippi zip code 39205  
city or town Jackson

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Murphey Site (22-Lf-518)  
Leflore County, Mississippi

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material culture. Basically the same area and settlement pattern applies to the Tchula/Late Gulf Formational period as for the Poverty Point/Middle Gulf Formational. There are however, fewer sites, scarcely any exotic materials and no large imposing sites such as Poverty Point or Jaketown. The date range for this period is thought to be between ca. 600 B.C. and A.D. 100 (Morgan n.d.:22).

## Research questions potentially addressable:

Since the Murphey site has been cultivated for a number of years and the ----- was disturbed, it is doubtful if much of the deposit above that level retains its integrity. The significance of the site then is primarily with the lower levels which should yield undisturbed contexts containing Gulf Formational ceramics (Alexander, Wheeler and Tchefuncte) and Poverty Point features. The cultural provenience of the two recorded burials has not been determined. Currently there are no osteological remains known from the Poverty Point culture nor from the Gulf Formational within the Yazoo Basin. There is only one recorded house pattern from either culture in the Yazoo Basin. Unfortunately neither Poverty Point nor Gulf Formational people in the Yazoo Basin seem to have used wattle and daub construction for houses. If they did, apparently the houses didn't burn. Concentrations of fire hardened daub on the surface of many Yazoo Basin sites marks the sub-surface manifestation of Mississippian period house patterns. Earlier house patterns must be located by excavation. The Murphey site could contain house patterns and/or burials from one or both cultures although they probably won't be numerous. Only the excavation of the lower portion of the midden will answer the question.

The place of early ceramics such as those cited above has never been thoroughly understood with relation to the Poverty Point culture. Were Wheeler, Alexander or perhaps Tchefuncte a part of the material culture of late Poverty Point? Williams and Brain (1983:355) named a tentative McGary phase which includes five sites including the Murphey site. The McGary phase consists of sites which could represent a transition from Poverty Point to Gulf Formational. McGary, then is one of five sites important in investigating the nature of the transition.

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Leflore County, Mississippi

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- Connaway, John M., Samuel O. McGahey, and Clarence H. Webb  
1977 Teoc Creek: A Poverty Point Site in Carroll County,  
Mississippi. Mississippi Department of Archives and  
History Report 3.
- Holloway, Richard G. and Sam Valastro  
1983 Palynological Investigations Along the Yazoo River, Item 4,  
Pages 159-204. In Robert M. Thorne with Hugh K. Curry,  
Cultural Resources Survey Yazoo River, Items 3 and 4, and a  
Paleoenvironmental Model of the Lower Yazoo Basin.  
Archaeological Papers of the Center for Archaeological  
Research Number 3. Center for Archaeological Research.  
University of Mississippi. University.
- Hony, William  
n.d. A Preliminary Archaeological Survey of Leflore County,  
Mississippi. Unpublished manuscript on file, Mississippi  
Department of Archives and History, Jackson.
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n.d. Draft. The Post-Archaic Prehistory of Mississippi.  
Department of Archives and History, Historic Preservation  
Division, Jackson.
- Walthall, John A. and Ned J. Jenkins  
1976 The Gulf Formational Stage in Southeastern Prehistory.  
Southeastern Archaeological Conference Bulletin 19:43-49.
- Williams, Stephen and Jeffrey P. Brain  
1983 Exvacations at the Lake George Site, Yazoo County,  
Mississippi 1958-1960. Peabody Museum Papers. Vol. 74.