

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 Emerald Mound Site
other names/site number Selzertown Mound (22-Ad-504)

2. Location

street & number Natchez Trace Parkway not for publication
city, town Stanton vicinity
state Mississippi code 28 county Adams code 001 zip code 39069

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site		buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		sites
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		structures
		<u>1</u>	objects
			Total
			<u>0</u>

Name of related multiple property listing: _____
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] _____ Date Sept. 29, 1988
Signature of certifying official
National Park Service
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
RELIGION/ceremonial site
FUNERARY/burials

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/park

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

NA

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation NA
walls
roof
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Site Type: The Emerald Mound Site, associated with the late prehistoric Plaquemine culture, and the historic Natchez culture, is the second largest late prehistoric ceremonial earthwork in the United States (Cox 1974). Located along the Natchez Trace Parkway, in Adams County, Mississippi, Emerald Mound is a massive, flat-topped platform mound. The top of the platform mound is surmounted by 2 smaller secondary mounds, located at the eastern and western ends of the platform mound with the area between them forming a large open plaza area (see Figure 1). The platform mound is oriented east-west and is 235 meters (730 feet) long and 133 meters (420 feet) wide. The height of the platform mound is 9.2 meters. The western secondary mound (see Figures 2 to 5) rises 9 meters above the plaza, while the smaller secondary mound (see Figure 6) on the eastern end of the plaza is only 3 meters high. Early accounts indicate at least 6 other secondary mounds once existed along the north and south edges of the platform mound enclosing the plaza area. These 6 mounds have since been destroyed by over 100 years of agriculture and erosion (Brown n.d.:39).

Environmental Setting: The Emerald Mound Site is located within the physiographic area of the Loess Hills, of Mississippi (see Figure 7). The Loess Hills are a relatively narrow (5 to 30 mile wide) strip of uplands that stretch from the northwestern to the southwestern borders of the State (Morgan MS:1).

The Loess Hills zone lie to the east of the Mississippi River alluvial valley, and rise abruptly at the eastern edge of the floodplain. The Loess Hills are constituted of loess, a tan-colored calcareous silt that forms a continuous deposit draped over the underlying topography. The accumulations in this mantle are thickest at the edge of the floodplain, as much as 90 to 100 feet in some places, and gradually thins out toward the east.

It is generally agreed that the Loess Hills were formed during the Pleistocene (20,000 to 18,000 years ago), but the manner of their origin has been the subject of debate. Some geologists believe the Loess Hills were formed by colluvial transport, while others believe them to be of eolian origin.

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)

Archeology Prehistoric

Archeology Historic - Aboriginal

Period of Significance

A.D. 1200 - 1730

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

Plaquemine culture

Natchez culture

Significant Person

NA

Architect/Builder

NA

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

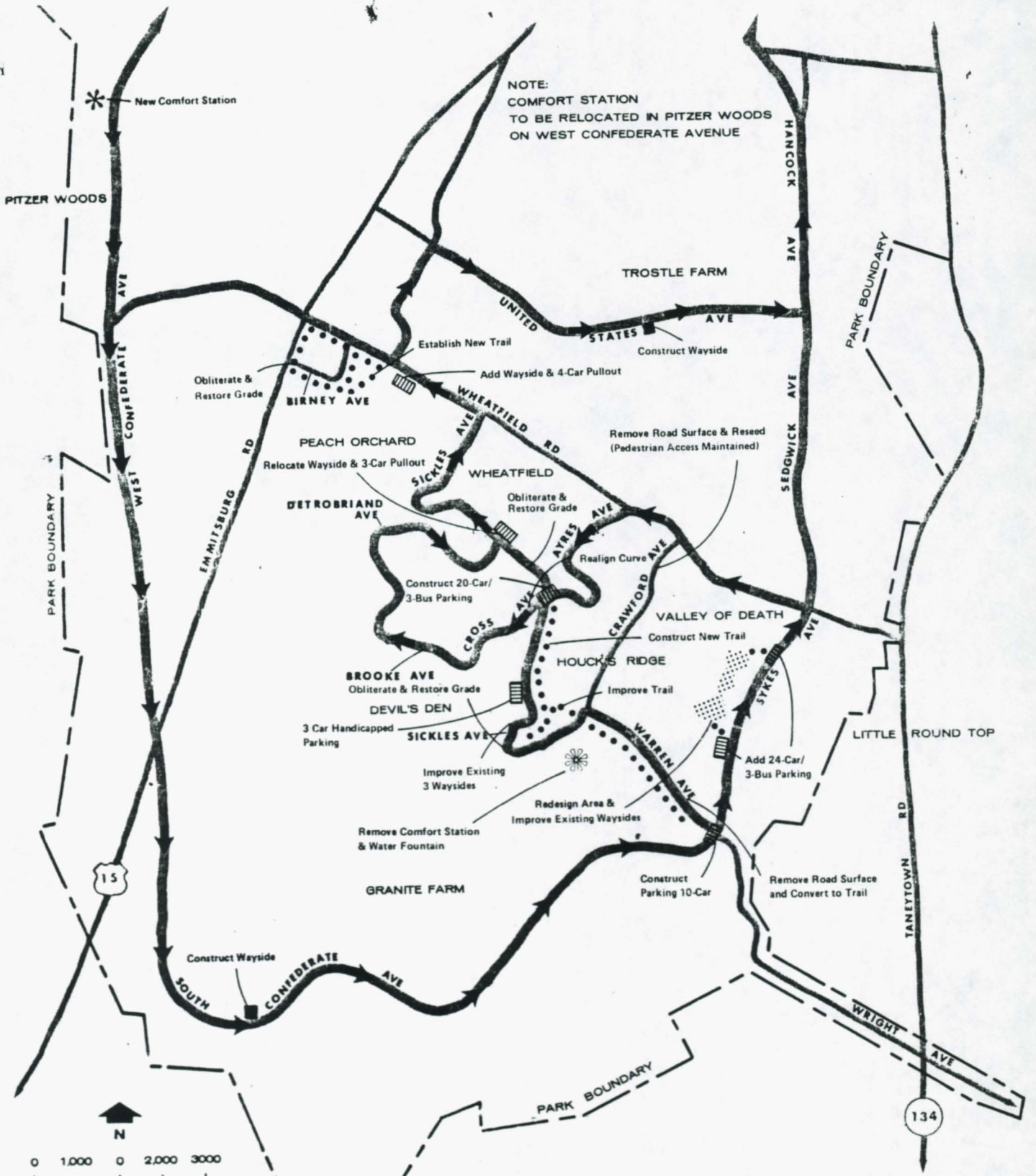
Summary Statement of Significance:

The Emerald Mound Site is a major late prehistoric Plaquemine and historic Natchez culture ceremonial center. This site, located in the Loess Hills area of southwestern Mississippi along the Natchez Trace Parkway, constitutes the second largest late prehistoric earthwork in the United States, after Monks Mound at Cahokia, Illinois. The florescence of the Plaquemine culture, resulting in the creation of major ceremonial centers like Emerald, is believed to be due to a combination of interaction with other prehistoric cultures, and a favorable subsistence environment. Archeological investigations at Emerald show that it was continuously occupied during the Plaquemine culture (1200-1680 A.D.) and the Natchez culture (1680-1730 A.D.). The Plaquemine culture, in the Lower Mississippi River Valley, evolved from small Coles Creek influenced villages to one of the major ceremonial center building cultures in the United States. According to the Mississippi Historic Context for the Loess Hills, Emerald Mound with its intact stratified archeological record has the research potential for explicating the subsistence base for the Plaquemine and Natchez cultures; the rationale for an observed relocation of Plaquemine villages from the Mississippi River Valley to the upland Loess Hills area; and assessing the relationship between the Plaquemine and Natchez groups and the effect of encounters with Europeans (Morgan Ms: 18-21).

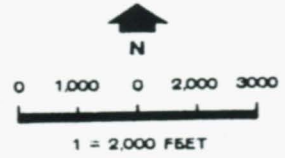
The Plaquemine and Natchez culture history

Plaquemine, and its succeeding Natchez culture, denote a particular florescence in aboriginal culture of the Lower Mississippi Valley. Generally dated between A.D. 1200 and 1730 (see Figure 11), it marks a period of massive mound building activity over a large portion of Mississippi and Louisiana, that grew out of the earlier mound

See continuation sheet



NOTE:
COMFORT STATION
TO BE RELOCATED IN PITZER WOODS
ON WEST CONFEDERATE AVENUE



LEGEND
← ← PROPOSED TOUR ROUTE

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT
GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK/PENNSYLVANIA

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

What is this?

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:

Southeastern Archeological Center - NPS
Tallahassee, Florida

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 8 acres

UTM References

A
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The eight acre boundary includes just the Emerald Mound Site, where past archeological investigations have uncovered intact cultural resources. The village area to the south of the mound is not included as previous site investigators have determined the village area has been obliterated by erosion due to over a hundred years of agricultural use.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark R. Barnes, Ph.d (original form by Mr. William Cox, Natchez Trace - 1974)
 organization National Park Service date September 1988
 street & number 75 Spring St., SW telephone (404) 331-2654
 city or town Atlanta state Georgia zip code 30303

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Loess soils have a great deal of strength due to their calcareous nature. The lime within the soil cements individual particles together and gives the loess soils the ability to form steep angles of repose. Leaching, however, serves to weaken this cohesiveness through the removal of the lime leading to erosion and severe gullyng. This natural process has caused the topography in areas of thick accumulation to become extremely rugged, commonly having 75 to 100 feet of local relief.

Soils derived from loess parent materials of the Loess Hills have a high fertility and are easy to work. If the problem of erosion is kept under control, such soils are capable of producing high crop yields (Steponaitis 1974:6-8).

Archeological Investigations: The Emerald Mound Site (22-Ad-504) was originally known as the Selzertown Site, after the early 19th century town of Selzertown, Mississippi, located a mile from the site. This name continued to be used into the 20th century. However, as the Selzertown Mound Site was located on Emerald Plantation, the site began in the 1850s to be referred to as the Emerald Mound Site and this latter name has become its common reference name (Jennings 1952:51). In the archeological literature, the Emerald Mound Site has different site numbers. It was originally noted by John Cotter as (MAd-5) (1951a:18), while Harvard University has published its designation as (26-L-1), as part of their Lower Mississippi River Valley study (Brown n.d.:3). Site number as designated by the Mississippi Division of Historic Preservation is (22-Ad-504), and should be the site number used when referring to the Emerald Mound Site (David Morgan, personal communication, 1988).

Because of its enormous size and location near the heavily traveled Natchez Trace, Emerald Mound was frequently visited and described throughout the 19th century. Beginning in 1801, James Hall, in his "A Brief History of the Mississippi Territory," described the platform mound of Emerald Mound as being 45 feet high and surmounted by eight secondary mounds. Besides the large mounds at the western and eastern ends of the platform, which are currently extant, there were "three of a smaller size (standing) at regular intervals along the north side, and three others along the south side, nearly opposite to those on the north" (Hall 1802:52). These six smaller secondary mounds Hall measured as being "from four top six or eight feet high, but they, together with those on the ends, appear to be considerably washed down" (Hall 1801:52). Hall also noted what he believed was a wide ditch encircling Emerald Mound (Hall 1801:51).

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Henry M. Brackenridge, who visited Emerald Mound a few years after Hall, undertook detailed measurements of the mound and confirmed the size of the platform mound, eight secondary mounds, and encircling ditch (1814:118). This description was utilized by Squire and Davis in their "Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley," but not visiting the site themselves, they mistakenly noted ten instead of eight secondary mounds (1848:118).

By the 1830s, only six secondary mounds were noted, the other two having eroded away (Ingraham 1835:222-226; Monette 1838:189-191). At the same time that these secondary mounds were eroding away the sides of the main platform mound were slumping. When John Monette described the sides of Emerald Mound in 1838 they were quite steep, "not more than thirty-five or forty degrees from the perpendicular" (Cotter 1951a:19). When John Cotter investigated the site one hundred and ten years later the sides of the platform had slumped to an angle of 60 and 70 degrees from the perpendicular (Cotter 1951b:19).

By 1838, in addition to the loss of two smaller secondary mounds to erosion, the slumping of the side of the platform mound had filled in and obliterated all traces of the encircling ditch (Cotter 1951a:35). Based on the modern archeological work by Cotter it is believed that the early accounts mistook the "ditch" encircling the platform mound for large borrow areas that supplied the construction fill for the platform mound (Steponaitis 1974:24). In Cotter's excavation report, his profile drawings show a "ditch" or borrow pit that had been excavated into the natural loess hill to provide fill for the platform mound. These borrow areas, however, have since been filled back in by the slumping of the platform mound due to erosion (see Figure 8).

When Dr. Edward Palmer visited Emerald Mound in 1884 & 1887 to gather information for Cyrus Thomas' "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology," two more of the original six smaller secondary mounds had been lost to erosion (Figure 9) (Thomas 1894:265). During Palmer's visit, in 1887, the method of construction of such a large earthwork began to be understood as a natural loess hill that had been modified and enlarged by the prehistoric peoples to its present shape.

...Dr. Palmer expresses the opinion very confidently that it [Emerald Mound] is chiefly a natural formation. This based upon the following facts: The sudden bend and

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enlargement of the ridge at the point; the fact that natural knolls, or mound-like elevations, are not uncommon on the ridges of this section...and the evidence obtained by excavating, which, so far as it was carried, sustains this view. They think it quite probable that the original form was artificially modified so as to make the top more uniformly level and the margins more abrupt than they were formed by nature (1894:265).

By 1917, all traces of the six lateral mounds along the north and south edges of the platform mound were gone leaving only the two largest secondary mounds situated at the western and eastern ends of the platform mound (Brown 1926:37). Besides the loss of six lateral mounds and the filling in of the borrow pits by slumping of the platform mound, it is estimated that the platform mound has lost about ten feet of its original height. Similarly, the west mound has been reduced by anywhere from 5 to 15 feet, while the east mound has lost about seven feet of its height (Steponaitis 1974:23-24).

The first archeological observations at Emerald were by John Sibley, in 1803-04, who noted the platform mound top was covered by a "baked clay dressing" (Cotter 1951b:19). John L. Cotter believes that this dressing "was probably rubble from wattle-and-daub structure walls that were erected laterally on the primary platform or on the flat tops of the small lateral mounds" (Cotter 1951b:19).

Although Emerald Mound was undoubtedly dug into by casual visitors throughout the early 19th century, like John Sibley, the first excavations were carried out by Monette in 1838. His excavations are described as follows:

The sides of the larger foundation mound are to a considerable extent, if not wholly, encased about one foot beneath the surface of the soil, with a sort of rubble resembling slack-baked bricks. The soil above this rubble was filled with fragments of pottery, pieces of human and animal bones, charcoal and the debris from the top of the mound and of these smaller towers which would seem to have been entirely washed away. Beneath the rubble, on digging into the sides of the mound, no remains of pottery or bones were to be found (Cotter 1951a:35).

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Clearly, the "rubble resembling slack-baked bricks" was daub associated with the lateral secondary mounds, which apparently were domiciliary structures. In describing some of the pottery that was found "upon the surface of the sides, or from one or two feet below the surface," Monette states that:

It is generally in broken pieces. The outsides of most of the vessels were ornamented with lines, sometimes drawn parallel to the brim, five or six circles, in the space of an inch in width, extending around the bowl; or by figures of triangular lines and checker work, elaborately covering most of the outside of the vessels. Pieces were found that were made of sea shells, ground into fine laminae, and held together with some affinitive ingredient not yet analyzed (Cotter 1951a:36).

The types of decoration Monette refers to are reminiscent of Fatherland Incised and Mazique Incised wares. Such sherds are consistent with the terminal occupation of the Emerald Mound Site. His description of shell-tempering in the pottery clearly indicates the presence of Mississippian Plainware sherds (Steponaitis 1974:24).

A few years after Monette, Dr. M. W. Dickeson "explored" Emerald Mound. "On digging into it," Bartlett reports, "vast quantities of human skeletons were found. Numerous specimens of pottery, including finely finished vases filled with pigments, ashes, ornaments, and beads, were also found" (1847:8). Bartlett also reported on a certain Dr. Benbrook who sank a shaft forty-two feet into the platform mound to determine whether or not it was artificial, "and found it artificial or made ground to that depth" (1847:8).

In the Smithsonian's monumental study of the prehistoric mounds of the United States, Cyrus Thomas noted that the western secondary mound had in the late 19th century been explored to a depth of 15 or 16 feet on the behalf of Dr. Joseph Jones of New Orleans, but that the results were "not known with certainty" (1894:266). This excavation was probably the cause of the depression in the summit of the west mound noted in Cotter's map of the site (Figure 10).

In the early part of the 20th century Vincent Perrault of Natchez conducted excavations at the southern base of the eastern secondary mound. Here he discovered a number of burials from which he recovered five limestone effigy pipes, a Fatherland incised bowl, and a Mazique Incised Jar (Brown 1926:38, 256-264, Steponaitis 1974:51-53).

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In 1924, Warren K. Moorehead conducted work at Emerald Mound. He sank several large pits into the platform mound and, in the same area where Perrault had made his finds earlier (around the eastern secondary mound), Moorehead found a Maddox Engraved Jar in association with a burial (1932:161-162). Moorehead's work was the first to observe that the Emerald mound was built up in a series of occupation middens over the original natural outcrop of loess, which indicated Emerald Mound was probably first occupied as a village site before being modified into a ceremonial center (Steponaitis 1974:27-28).

In 1948, John L. Cotter undertook the first major scientific examination of the Emerald Mound Site, just prior to its inclusion in the Natchez Trace Parkway. This work was designed to recover information on the area to the south of the mound where a National Park Service visitor access highway would be constructed and, to conduct stratigraphic tests on the platform mound to aid in interpretation and restoration. Three areas of the site were investigated. Test 1 was a stratigraphic cut in the south flank of the platform. Test 2 was located to the southwest of the mound, where Cotter expected to find an associated village site. Test 3 was sunk into the north flank of the platform.

Test 1 was a long trench dug into the south side of the platform mound that showed at least three occupations existed on the loess outcrop during which the prehistoric occupants began to add fill dirt to create the platform mound (1951b:22). Ceramic analysis indicated to Cotter that the earliest occupants used Plaquemine Brushed ceramics, and in later occupations began to use Manchac, Barton, Fatherland, and Natchez Incised wares. In the last occupation, engraved wares, e.g., Maddox Engraved began to show up in the excavations.

Test 2 hoped to uncover the location of a village associated with Emerald Mound south of the platform mound. Unfortunately, as described by Cotter:

Whatever village occupation once may have existed upon this area, erosion of over a hundred years of intensive cotton cropping has obliterated every vestige of village features, leaving only small and worn sherds in the plow zone (1951b:22).

The occurrence of late prehistoric Manchac Incised, Fatherland Incised, and Maddox Incised sherds made Cotter believe that the Test 2 area;

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...was occupied only after the primary mound was built and the first village site beneath the fill on the original hilltop had long been abandoned (1951b:23).

Test 3 on the north side of the platform mound produced similar results as Test 1. Brushed Plaquemine Plainware sherds were from the first village occupation on the original loess hilltop. Later occupations switched to Incised and Engraved types of wares. The village occupations were then buried under several feet of fill to create the platform mound.

In addition to resolving the sequence of occupation of the Emerald Mound Site, Cotter was able to suggest that the Brushed Plaquemine Plainware sherds from the first village occupation indicated that the Plaquemine people were influenced by the Coles Creek culture to the south in Louisiana, and the evidence of incised and engraved wares using shell tempering in the later occupations during construction of the platform mound showed the Emerald Mound area fell under the influence of the Mississippian culture to the north (1951b:29-30).

For the first time dating for Emerald was put forward, with the initial village occupation starting in the early 15th century, and abandonment occurring in the late 17th century. No historic artifacts had been found at Emerald, leading Cotter to feel that it was abandoned in the 17th century before the French began establishing trading posts in the 1680s (1951b:29).

In 1972, Vincas P. Steponaitis, undertook a series of seven small excavation units on the platform mound at Emerald. This work was to further clarify the sequence of construction, and determine if the site was occupied in the early historic period (1974:28-29). Steponaitis identified four distinctive occupations at Emerald which represents the latest interpretation of the strata at Emerald.

1. An Anna Phase village (1200-1350 A.D.) of the Plaquemine culture was located upon the gently sloping natural ridgetop. The people used primarily Plaquemine Brushed pottery that shows cultural affiliations with the Coles Creek culture to the south.

2. A Foster Phase (1350-1500 A.D.) occupation began with start of the first large-scale construction activity. During this second occupation, a layer of fill was deposited

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around the edges of the ridgetop that in effect served to flatten the summit of the natural ridgetop, and create a platform mound, but smaller than the present one. Plaquemine Brushed ceramics continued, but incised varieties, e.g., Anna, Mazique, Manchac, and Fatherland appear in this occupation. Also, various Mississippian varieties with shell tempering begin to appear. At this time of transition the ridgetop village was changing into a major ceremonial center.

3. During the third occupation (Emerald Phase 1500-1680 A.D.) the platform mound attained its present form, through the deposition of massive amounts of earth and debris fill. The platform mound with its eight secondary mounds became a ceremonial center, with the village being established to the south. During this time, incised wares, in particular, Fatherland Incised with shell tempering completely replace the earlier Plaquemine Brushed wares as the dominant ceramic types.

4. Little is intact from the fourth occupation (1680-1730 A.D.) because of the severe erosion of the top of the platform mound in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The finding of Fatherland Incised, Maddox Engraved, and Barton Incised ceramics argue for a late 17th or early 18th century demise for the site. Although no historic trade artifacts have yet be produced from Emerald, Steponaitis believes this to be a Natchez site visited by LaSalle in 1682, and the Natchez village of Jenzanque, destroyed in the conflict with the French in 1730 (1974:85-87).

Site Integrity:

The Emerald Mound Site has experienced erosional and agricultural damage in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, as indicated by numerous historical accounts. Six of its secondary mounds, approximately ten feet of the top of the platform mound, and the village to the south of the platform mound, have been lost. The platform mound, with its remaining two secondary mounds present a well-preserved appearance due to the fact that the National Park Service did an extensive stabilization in 1955, following Cotter's excavations.

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Large erosional gullies were filled in and the sides of the platform mound were straightened. A large pothunter's pit in the top of the west mound was filled in, and wooden steps were installed leading from the platform mound to the west mounds newly reconstructed summit. Finally, the entire mound was covered with a blanket of Bermuda grass to prevent further erosion and stabilize its sides. No attempt was made to rebuild the original height of the platform mound or reconstruct the missing six secondary mounds.

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building Coles Creek Culture. The first description of the culture was based on the Medora Site excavations, located in Plaquemine Parish, Louisiana, which gave the culture its name.

Plaquemine culture, at its peak during the Anna Phase (1200-1350 A.D.), extended over a large portion of Louisiana and Mississippi. The geographical shape of its distribution forms a large triangle, with the Louisiana Delta representing its base and Greenville, Mississippi, in the central Yazoo Basin, its apex (see Figure 11). Plaquemine clearly has its roots in the earlier Coles Creek Culture that occupied the Lower Mississippi Valley, based on similarities of ceramics and construction of ceremonial centers. From the perspective of the Loess Hills, where the Emerald Mound Site is located, it is apparent that Plaquemine resulted from the cultural contact of Mississippian peoples, technologies, and ideas from the north. Plaquemine is neither Coles Creek nor Mississippian, but a blend of both.

The Plaquemine culture represents a major growth in activities at ceremonial centers. Ceremonial centers existed in the Coles Creek Culture, but only after 1200 A.D. in the Plaquemine culture area did the platform mounds become so immense, as illustrated by the size of the platform mound and number of secondary mounds at Emerald. The Plaquemine peoples applied very thick mantles of earth and debris upon the existing village sites and even earlier Coles Creek mounds; and increased the number of mounds built at Plaquemine ceremonial centers. Major sites like Winterville and Lake George, in the Yazoo Basin of Mississippi had 15 and 30 mounds, respectively, erected by Plaquemine peoples, between 1200-1350 A.D., when Emerald was only a good sized village on a loess hilltop. Unlike the Mississippian pattern of population nucleation around these centers, the Plaquemine mound sites seem to have had a relatively small residential population. Although the large scale earthwork center is a Mississippian culture trait, the "vacant" ceremonial center is a continuation of the Coles Creek settlement pattern.

After 1350 A.D. the Plaquemine culture went into a decline. Major sites like Winterville and Lake George were subjected to such heavy Mississippian influences, and probably movements of peoples from the north, that parts of the Tensas Basin and all of the Yazoo Basin were eventually replaced by the Mississippian culture during the Foster phase 1350-1500 A.D. As the Plaquemine domain in the alluvial Mississippi Valley shrank in the face of the advance of Mississippian culture during this time, Plaquemine sites in the upland Loess Hills

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began to increase in size (e.g., the first platform mound construction at Emerald), and to orient their major sites away from the Mississippi River Valley and more toward the inland Loess Hills area.

During the Emerald phase of the Plaquemine culture (1500-1680 A.D.), Emerald Mound became the single largest Plaquemine earthwork constructed, and the second largest late prehistoric earthwork, after Monk's Mound, at Cahokia, Illinois. The Natchez culture, first contacted by the French in the 1680s, developed directly from the Plaquemine culture. In fact, the only visible difference archeologically between the Emerald phase of the Plaquemine culture and the Natchez culture (1680-1730 A.D.), is the inclusion of historic European trade artifacts (Brown n.d. 1-9). The encounters between the French and Natchez led to a series of wars that ultimately destroyed all of the Loess Hills ceremonial centers, including Emerald Mound, which some authors have identified as the historic Natchez site of Jenzanque.

Plaquemine Subsistence

According to the Historic Context for the Mississippi Plaquemine period, the subsistence orientation of Plaquemine peoples is not well known, largely because the major research projects of the past have concentrated on the reconstruction of Plaquemine culture history as a primary goal (Morgan Ms: 19-20). Major Plaquemine sites in the Loess Hills are typically situated on well-drained, coarse-textured loess soils, excellent locations for people who had a heavy reliance on agriculture. The Anna phase (1200-1350 A.D.) of the Plaquemine culture, when the initial occupation of the Emerald Mound site occurred, was part of general expansion of population caused by a new and better agricultural base. The introduction from Mississippian culture of Northern Flint maize, beans, and squash is believed to have been the impetus for this population explosion. However, faunal remains from Plaquemine sites, such as Mud Island Complex, Gordon Mounds, and Fatherland reveal that although corn agriculture is evident, mixed foraging and agriculture may characterize the subsistence strategy for the Plaquemine culture (Morgan n.d.:19-20).

With the Emerald Mound Site containing intact and well preserved archeological strata dating from all of the Plaquemine and Natchez culture phases, there is a high potential for this site to explicate the Plaquemine subsistence base and any changes in it from 1200-1730 A.D.

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In the Emerald phase of the Plaquemine culture (1500-1680 A.D.), the Plaquemine sites in the alluvial valley of the Mississippi River were abandoned, as the late prehistoric inhabitants moved into the Loess Hills, where Emerald Mound appears to have become the major ceremonial center during its final phase of construction. It has been proposed that this move was a conscious attempt by Plaquemine people to avoid the primary route of communication of Mississippian influences, that is the Mississippi River. This reorientation from routes of trade along the Mississippi River to the development of interior trade routes may have been the origin of Indian paths that developed into historic roads, such as the Natchez Trace, which is located a short distance from Emerald Mound (see Figure 12).

During this time period, the southern frontier of the Mississippian culture had moved closer to the heartland of the Plaquemine culture, and the rate of interaction between Emerald phase and Mississippian peoples appear to have increased accordingly. Not only did Mississippian ceramics begin appearing at Emerald Phase site, but the use of shell tempering in locally made ceramics (a Mississippian ceramic technic) made its appearance.

In addition, Plaquemine peoples began to bury their dead with grave goods, a custom of northern inspiration. Some of the burials recovered at Emerald phase Plaquemine sites have objects associated with the Mississippian "Southern Cult." At Emerald Mound Perrault found two limestone pipes representing a winged serpent, in association with burials on the platform mound. Additional evidence of the "Southern Cult" are ceramics from Emerald Mound which exhibit the characteristic "forked eye" motif.

Faced with increasing Mississippian culture influences, the Plaquemine appear to have abandoned the Mississippi alluvial valley sites and moved into the Loess Hills area. The results of this relocation is evident in the increase in size of Plaquemine ceremonial centers like Emerald Mound, during the Emerald Phase (1500-1680 A.D.). At present, this cultural interpretation of the archeological record represents a reasonable yet untested hypothesis. According to the Mississippi Historic Context for the Plaquemine Period, in the Loess Hills, the type of archeological data needed to test this hypothesis at Emerald would involve changes in ceramic style and technology, inclusion of Mississippian influenced mortuary goods with burials, and changes in the use of Emerald mound during the different sequences of construction (David Morgan, personal communication 1988).

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Relations Between the Plaquemine and Natchez Cultures and Europeans

Further work is needed in assessing the relationship between the late prehistoric Plaquemine and early historic Natchez cultures, in the Loess Hills area. Past work with ceramic typologies have demonstrated the similarities between the two groups, which have led most investigators to conclude that the Natchez Indians are the direct descendents of the late prehistoric Plaquemines. The main observable difference between the material culture of the Emerald phase (1500-1680 A.D.) and the Natchez phase (1680-1730 A.D.), is the inclusion of Historic European trade items in the latter phase. In fact, the ceramic typologies for the two phases are consistent to the point that, without the presence of European trade items at a site, the two ceramic assemblages can often not be distinguished. More in-depth ceramics analysis is necessary in order to determine what (if any) characteristics are distinctive, according to the Mississippi Historic Context for the Plaquemine and Natchez cultures (Morgan Ms: 20).

The most recent interpretation of the stratigraphic sequence at Emerald Mound site, based on ceramic analysis, indicates an occupation that covers the transition from the Emerald phase through the Natchez phase. Although no historic trade items have yet been found at Emerald, it is believed that Emerald is one of the sites that LaSalle visited during his voyage down the Mississippi River in 1682. A contemporary account of this visit reads as follows:

M. de LaSalle went with seven men to their village three leagues distant from the (Mississippi) river on rising ground. He remained there three days, the chief giving him to understand that he had sent to ask other chiefs to speak to him...this nation is called the Nathe (Brown n.d:86).

The distance of 3 leagues from the Mississippi River corresponds with the location of Emerald Mound, and the remark that the site was situated on "rising ground" coincides with Emerald's position atop the highest ridge in the Loess Hills area. This same author also contends that Emerald was the early 18th century Natchez village of Jenzanque, which was destroyed by the French in the Third Natchez War, in 1730 (Brown n.d.:88).

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The transitional phases between the late prehistoric Emerald phase and the early historic Natchez phase covered the time period when the Lower Mississippi Valley underwent a dramatic decrease in population, perhaps brought on by the introduction of European diseases in the 17th century. One of the regions affected the most was the Yazoo Basin, which was left almost entirely uninhabited. Although the Natchez Indians also suffered a considerable depopulation, they were able to make up for their demographic losses by the incorporation of refugee Mississippian groups from the north, according to French accounts. Investigations in the later phases of occupation at Emerald could be important for identifying the cultural factors that allowed the Plaquemine-Natchez peoples to maintain their culture in the face of major depopulations, incorporating northern Mississippian groups, and the effects of their encounters with Europeans. According to the Mississippi Historic Context for the Natchez culture, the archeological data needed to test these hypotheses from the Emerald Mound site would be skeletal data to show affects of European diseases, a greater variety in the cultural assemblage, and the finding of European trade goods (David Morgan, personal communication, 1988).

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Verbal Boundary Description follows the boundary outline on Figure 10 a copy of the Park Service Topographic Survey Map for Emerald Mound. The scale is one inch to 300 feet. The boundary begins at Point A (see Figure 10), on the north side of a county road near the southwest corner of Emerald Mound. From this point the boundary proceeds due east along the north side of the county road for 750 feet, to Point B. From Point B the boundary runs due north for 500 feet to Point C. From Point C, the boundary runs due west for 750 feet to Point D. From Point D, the boundary runs due south for 500 feet to Point A. This property is totally owned by the National Park Service.



EMERALD MOUND SITE

Natchez Trace Parkway, Adams County, MS
Side of platform mound, view looking west
along south side of platform mound
Photo by Mark Barnes, NPS, February 1988



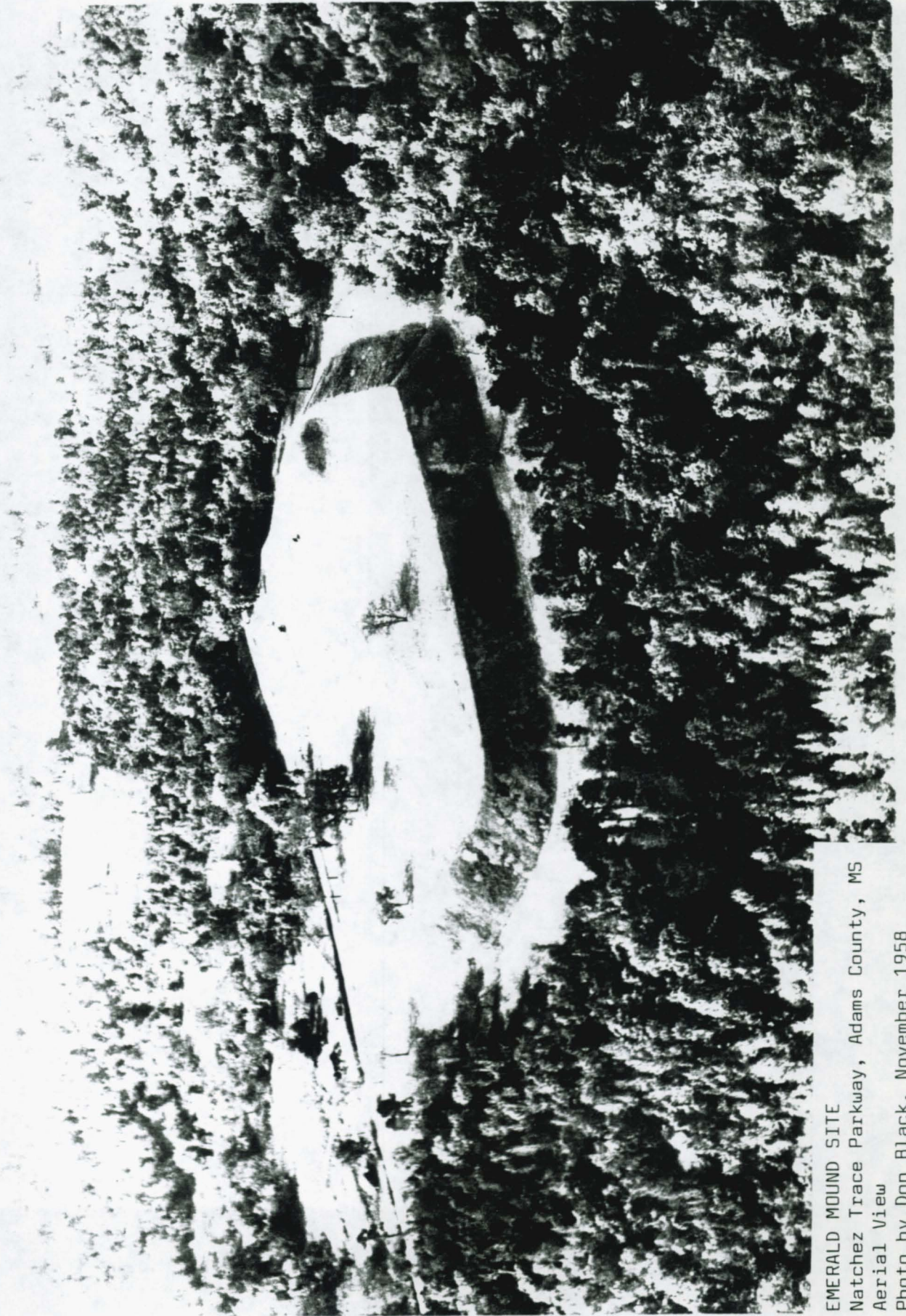
EMERALD MOUND SITE
Natchez Trace Parkway, Adams County, MS
Western mound on top of Emerald Mound, view
facing west from center of plaza
Photo by Mark Barnes, NPS, February 1988



EMERALD MOUND SITE

Natchez Trace Parkway, Adams County, MS
Eastern Mound on top of Emerald Mound, view
facing east from plaza area

Photo by Mark Barnes, NPS, February 1988



EMERALD MOUND SITE
Natchez Trace Parkway, Adams County, MS
Aerial View
Photo by Don Black, November 1958

Figure 1



EMERALD MOUND SITE
Natchez Trace Parkway, Adams County, MS
Aerial View
Photo by Don Black, November 1958

Figure 2

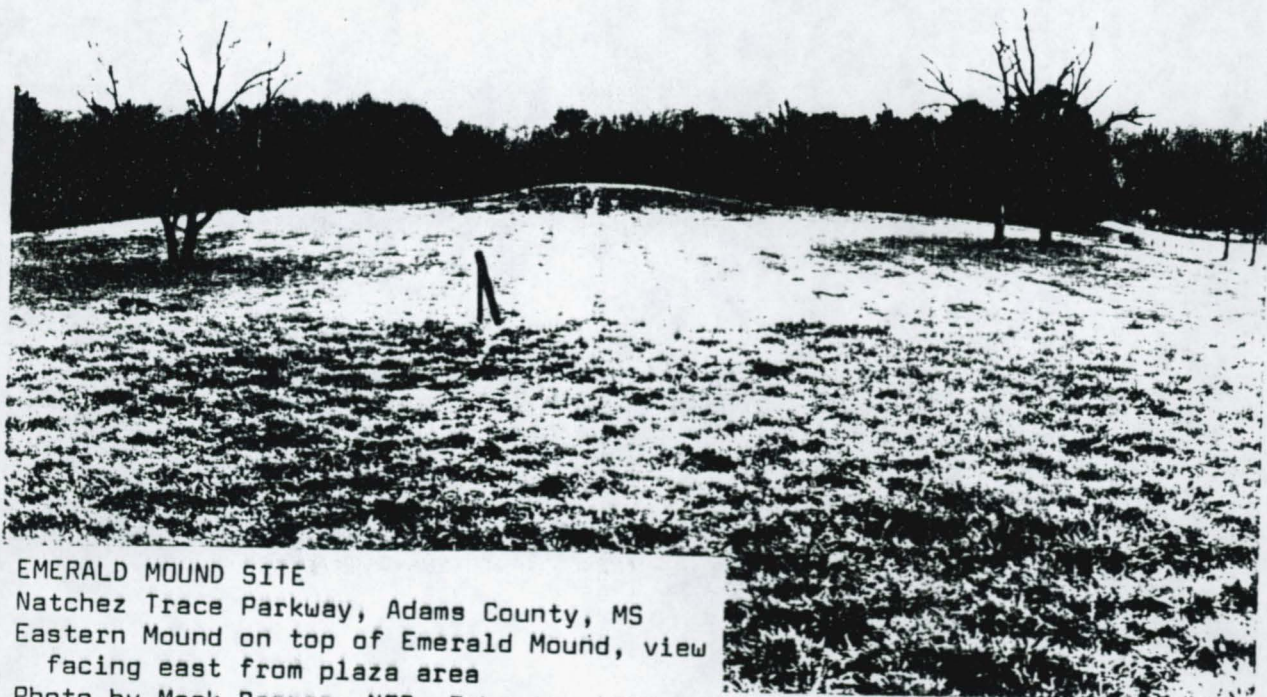


Figure 3



EMERALD MOUND SITE
Natchez Trace Parkway, Adams County, MS
Western mound on top of Emerald Mound, view
facing west from center of plaza
Photo by Mark Barnes, NPS, February 1988

Figure 4



EMERALD MOUND SITE
Natchez Trace Parkway, Adams County, MS
Eastern Mound on top of Emerald Mound, view
facing east from plaza area
Photo by Mark Barnes, NPS, February 1988

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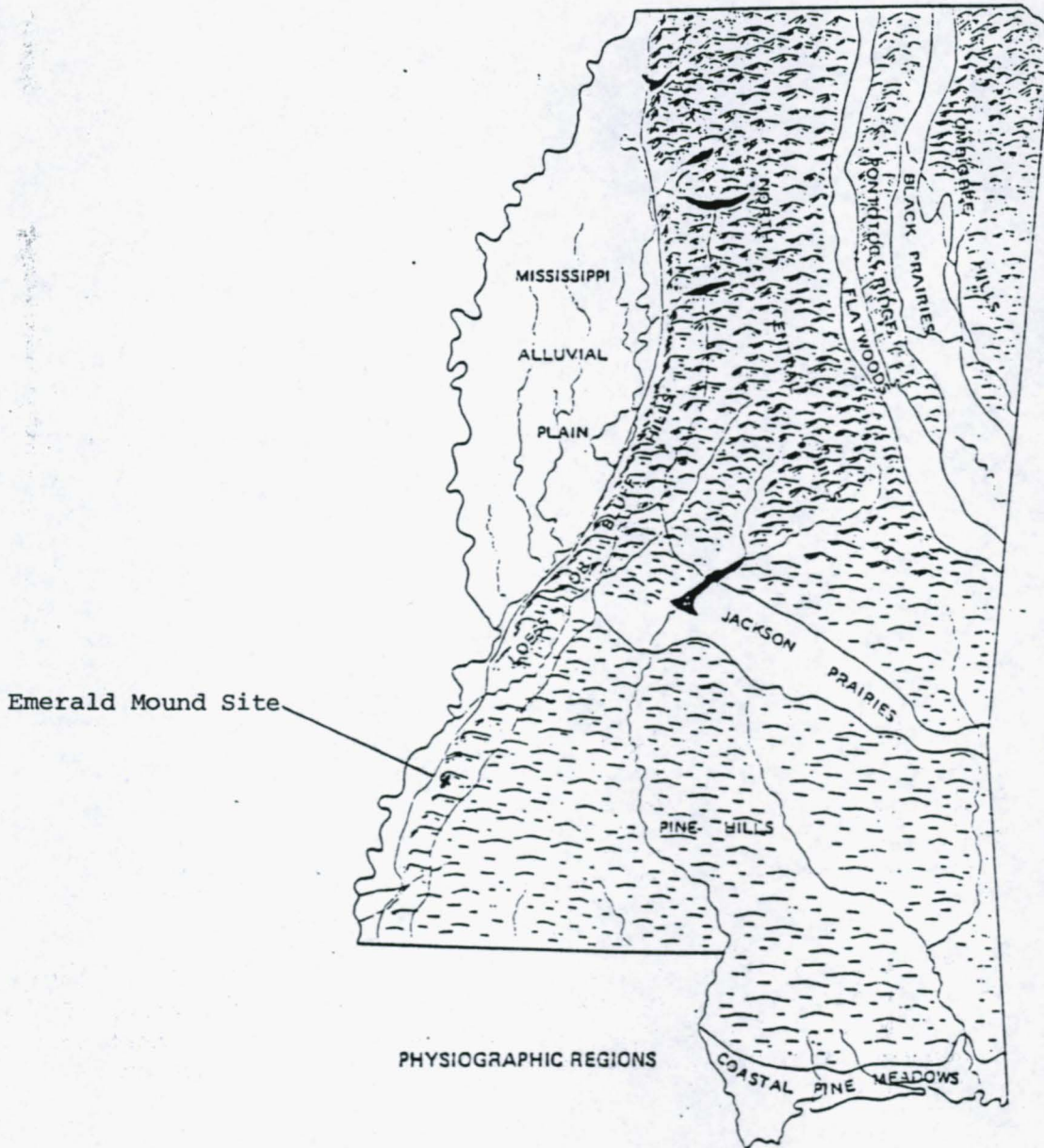
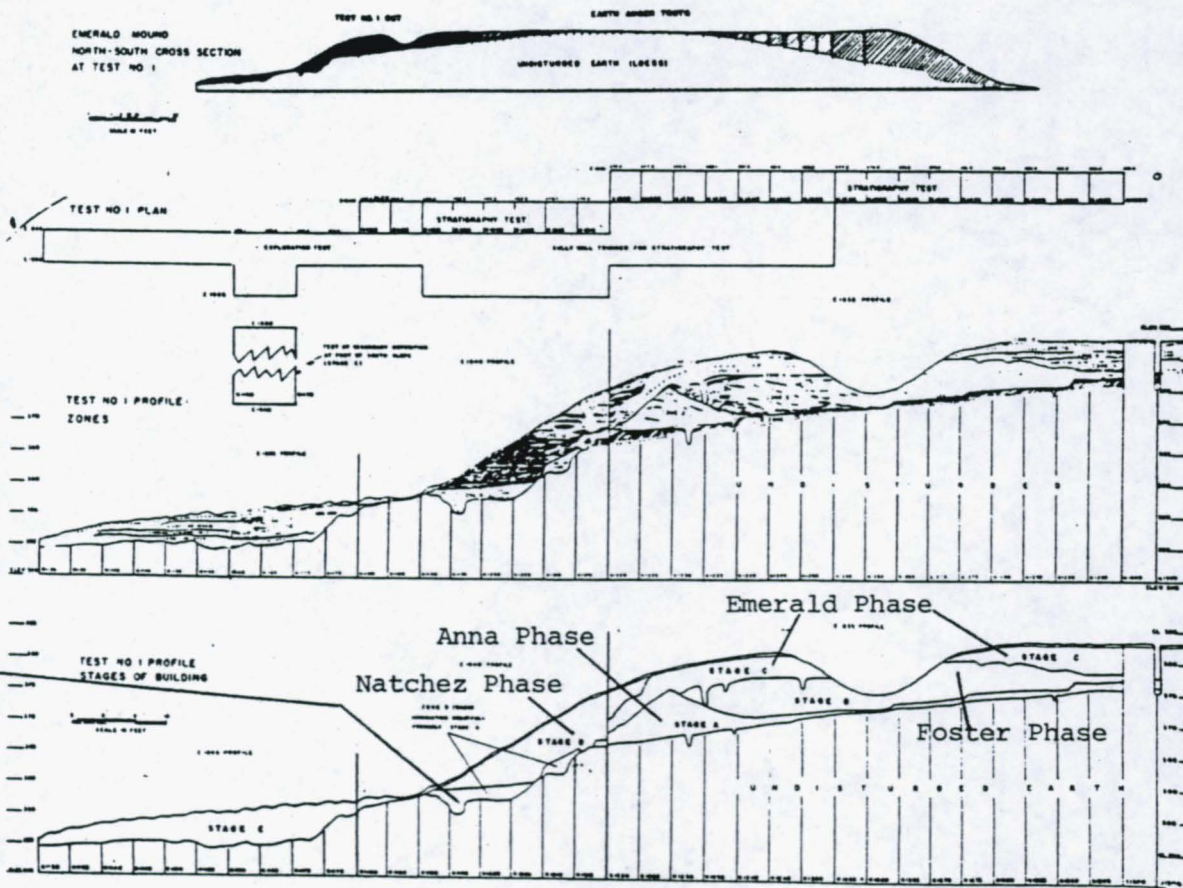


Figure 5. Physiographic regions of the State of Mississippi, indicating the locations of the Loess Hills Region and the Emerald Mound Site.

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Borrow pit or 'ditch' noted by in the early descriptions of Emerald Mound.

FIG. 11. Cross section of test 1, Emerald primary mound.

Figure 6. Cross section of the Emerald Mound Site (from Cotter 1951a:21). Profile indicates stratigraphic sequences of the construction of the platform mound. It also shows the 'ditch' or borrow pit that once surrounded the mound, but has been filled in by the slumping of the sides of the mound.

COTTER

THE EMERALD AND ANNA SITES

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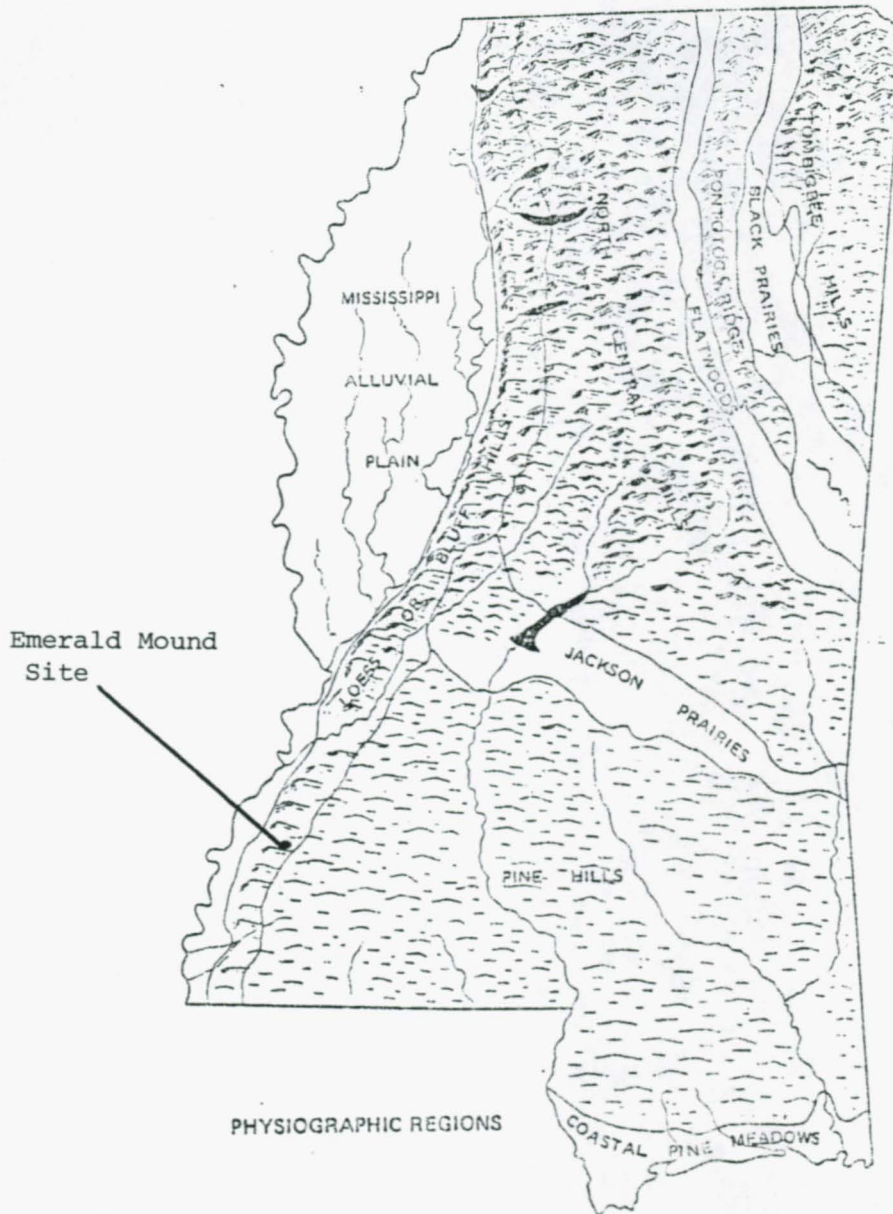


Figure 7. Physiographic regions of the state of Mississippi, indicating the location of the Loess Hills region and Emerald Mound Site.

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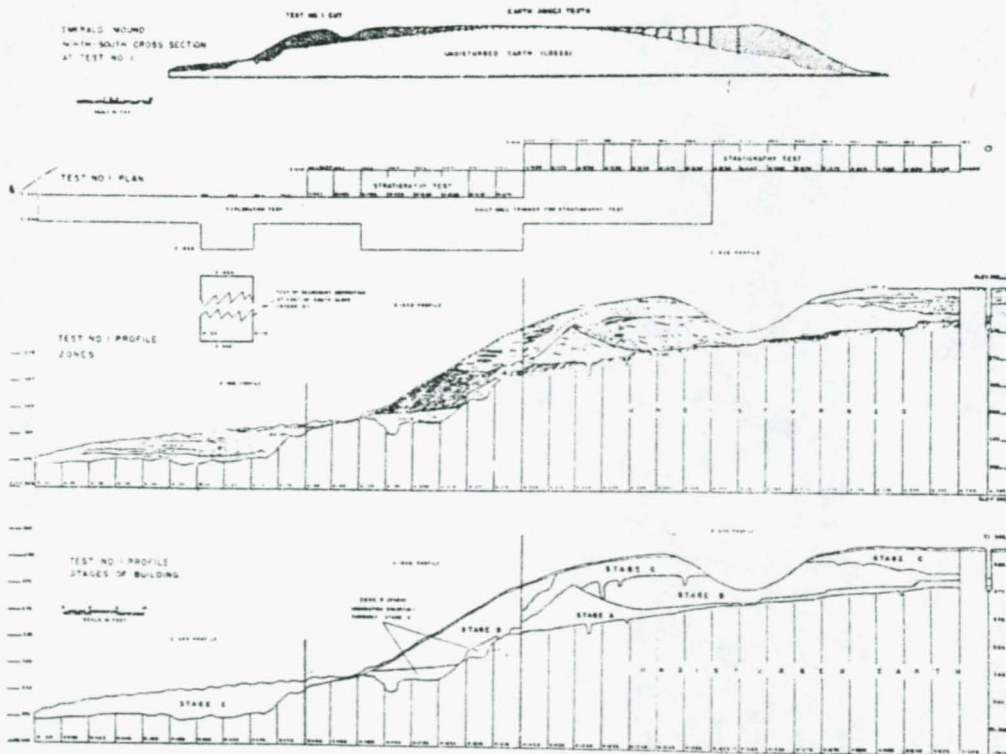


FIG. 11. Cross section of test 1, Emerald primary mound.

Figure 8. Cross section of the Emerald Mound Site, from Cotter (1951a:21). Profile indicates stratigraphic sequence of the construction of the mound and the 'ditch' or borrow pit that has been filled in by the slumping of the sides of the mound.

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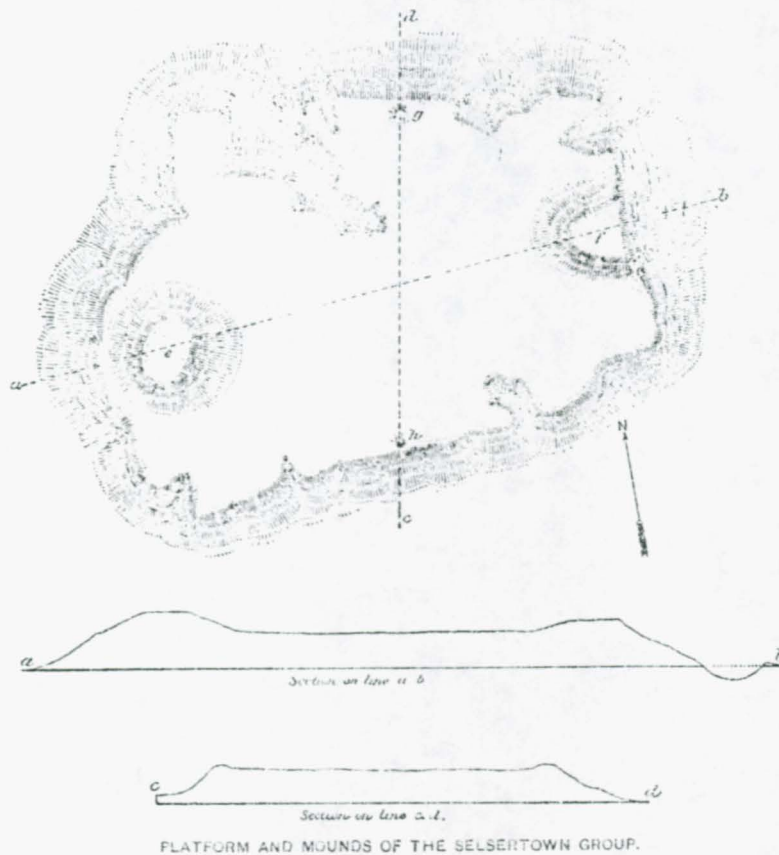


Figure 9. Map of Emerald Mound Site, drawn by Dr. Edward Palmer, in the 1880's for Cyrus Thomas' 1894 Smithsonian publication "Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology". Map shows substantial erosion along the north and south edges of the platform mound, which resulted in the loss of four secondary mounds along the north and south edges of the platform mound. Only the large secondary mounds on the western end (designated c) and the eastern end (designated f) of the platform mound, and two small secondary mounds (designated g and h) were extant at this time.

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Figure 10.

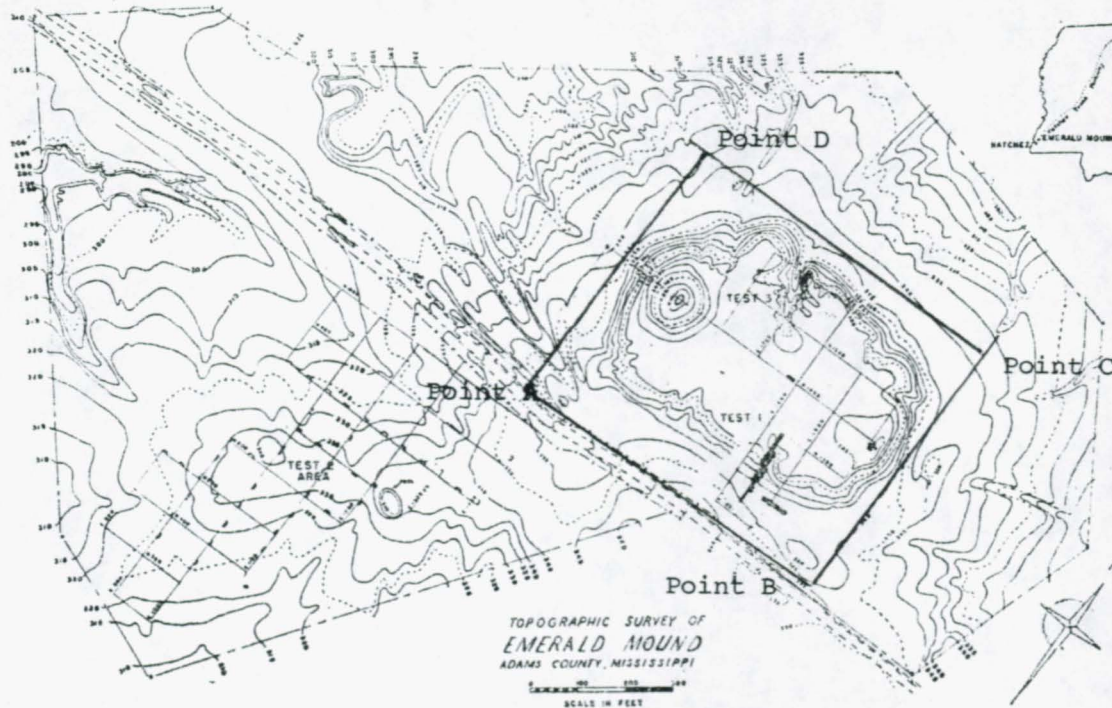


Fig. 10. Topographic map of Emerald mound.

Copied from Cotter (1951a:19), this shows the condition of the Emerald Mound Site prior to stabilization. It also shows the locations of the archeological investigations conducted by Cotter.

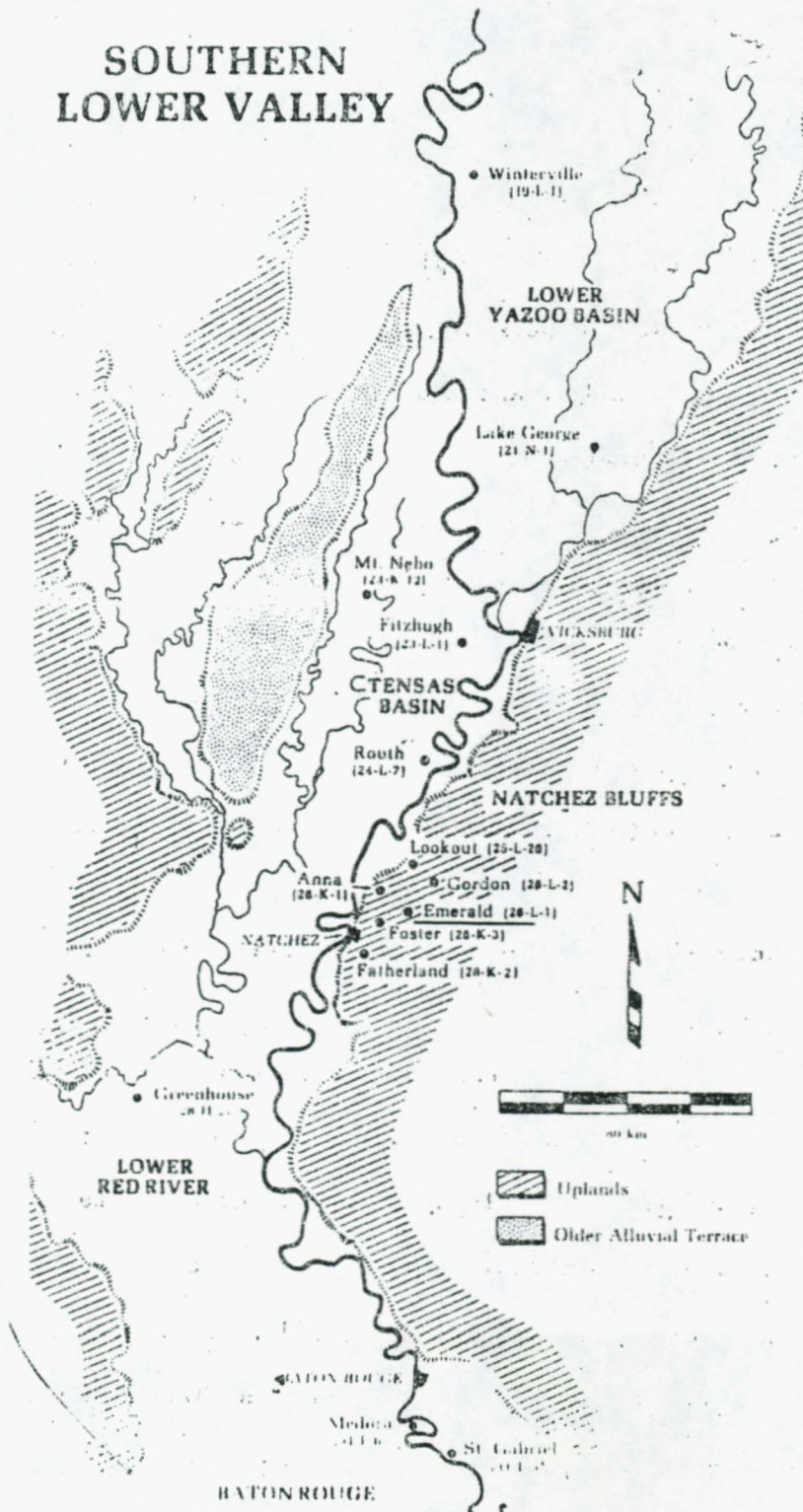
(Note: the boundary outlined by Points A-D refer to the Verbal Boundary Description in Item 10).

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Figure 11. Map showing the location of the Emerald Mound Site in relation to other Plaquemine and Natchez period sites in the Lower Mississippi River Valley (from Brown n.d.:2).



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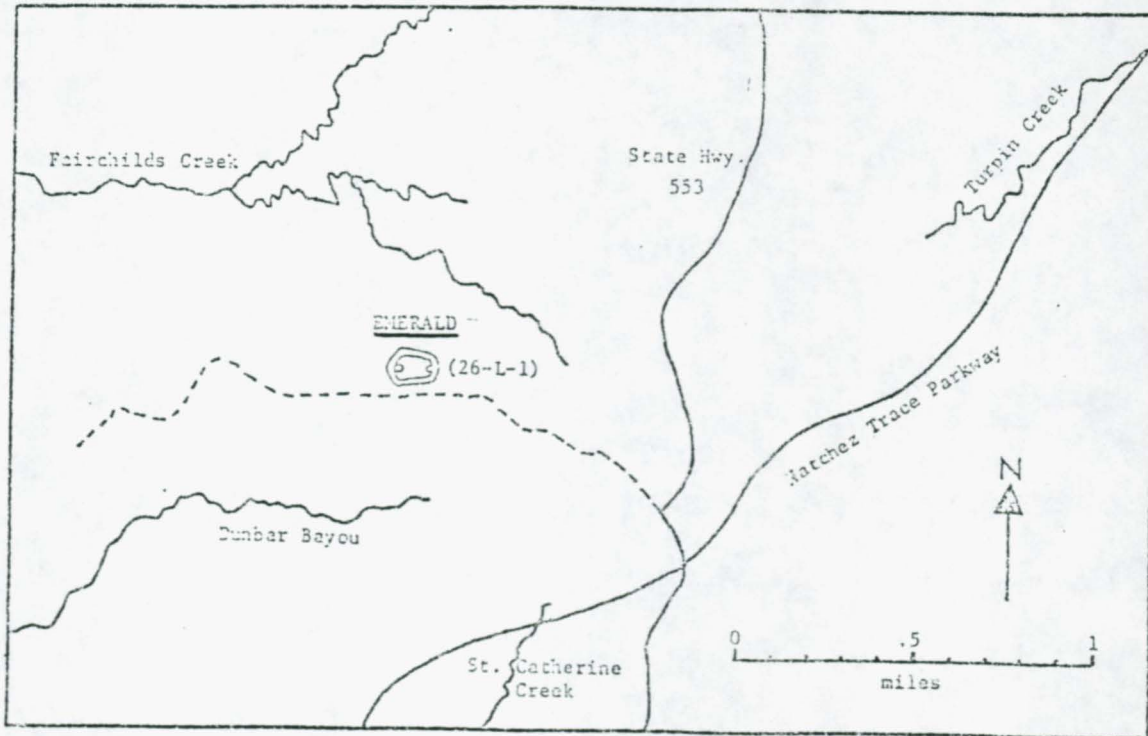


Figure 12. Map showing the location of the Emerald Mound Site in relationship to the Natchez Trace Parkway and other major routes of communication (from Steponaitis 1974:21).