



Children's Guide to The Knapp Trail

**Toltec Mounds
Archeological
State Park**





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First edition, 2001

Welcome to Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park!

You are about to go on a very special tour of a 1,000-year-old Native American site. The Knapp trail is almost a mile long and will take you about 30 to 45 minutes to walk. A map of the trail is located in the center of this booklet.

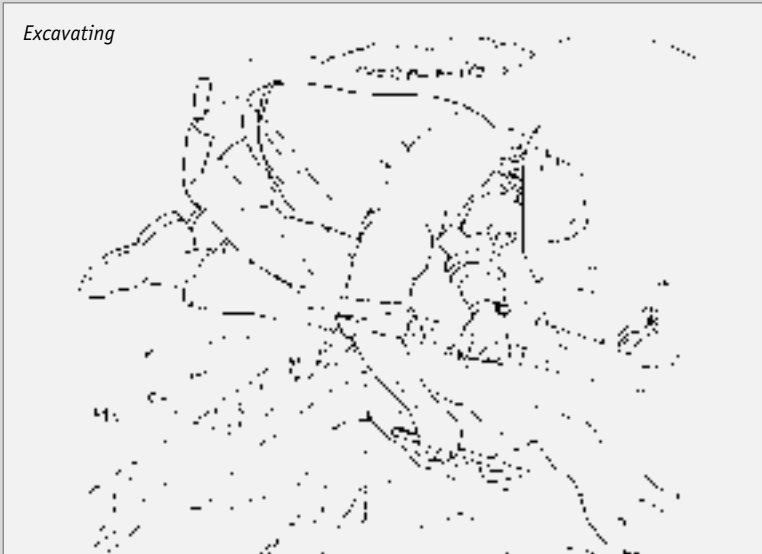


In order to preserve scenic beauty, it is important that you stay on the trail and do not disturb any of the plants, animals or the site. Therefore, do not dig on the site or climb any of the mounds. This is not only for the protection of the site, but for your safety as well. Have fun on your tour!

Marker 1

The land you are standing on is where Native American people lived, worked, and played long ago. This land is called an archeological site. A scientist called an archeologist studies people from the past. Many tools, weapons, and pottery that the Native Americans used have been found on this site. These objects are called artifacts. Archeologists spend many hours excavating or

Excavating



Cataloging



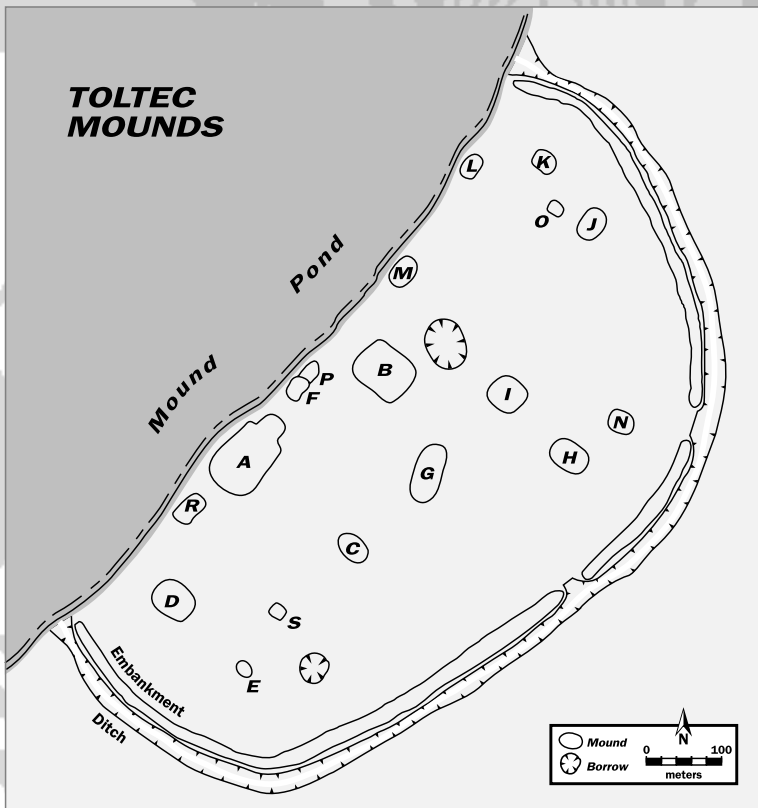
Artifact and pot sherd



digging for artifacts to gain information about how the artifacts relate to each other.

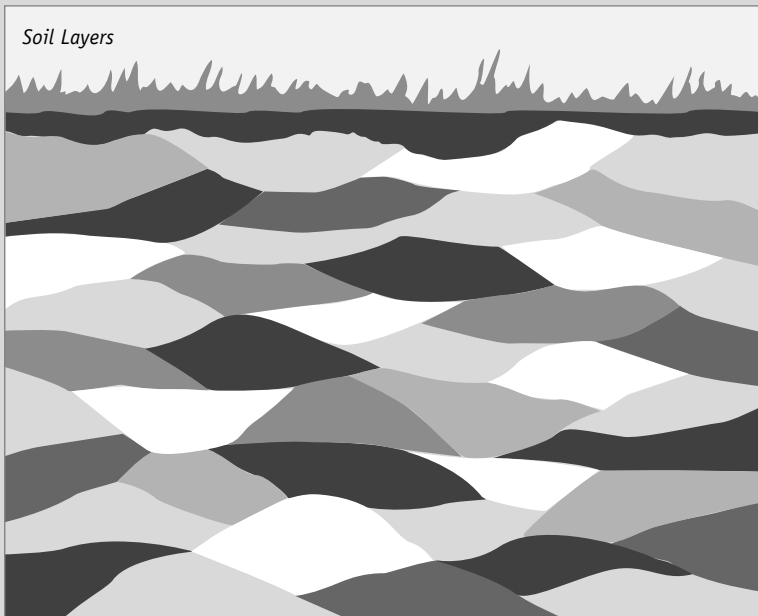
However, cleaning and cataloging the artifacts are even more time consuming than excavation. An artifact is a portable object made and used by humans. The pottery vessel on page 4 is an artifact and the broken pieces are called pot sherds.

A group of Native Americans that we call the Plum Bayou people built the mounds on the Toltec site. The Plum Bayou people built 18 mounds, but today you can only see three of taller mounds easily. We call them Mound A, B, and C. Farming over the past 150 years has cut down the smaller mounds. We put big red signs on the mounds so you can see where they were.



Marker 2

The Plum Bayou people dug a ditch and piled soil to form an earthen embankment around the site on three sides (see the map on page 5). The fourth side along Mound Pond did not have an embankment. Since there was no embankment along the lake bank we know it was not used for flood control. This embankment was not very tall, about 10 to 12 feet, and did not have a fence on it. Therefore, it was most likely was not used for protection from enemies. Archeologists think the embankment and ditch was a boundary marker. Native Americans who walked through the forest and came upon this clearing in the woods saw the ditch and embankment first. It separated this special place, where the chief or priest lived, from the outside areas where the common people lived.



The embankment, like the mounds, was made of soil. That's why we call them earthworks. The people who lived here built the mounds by piling thousands of basketloads full of soil on the ground. Archeologists sometimes can see where each basketload was placed as they excavate, because the basketloads were filled with different soils. We know this because different soils have different shades or colors.

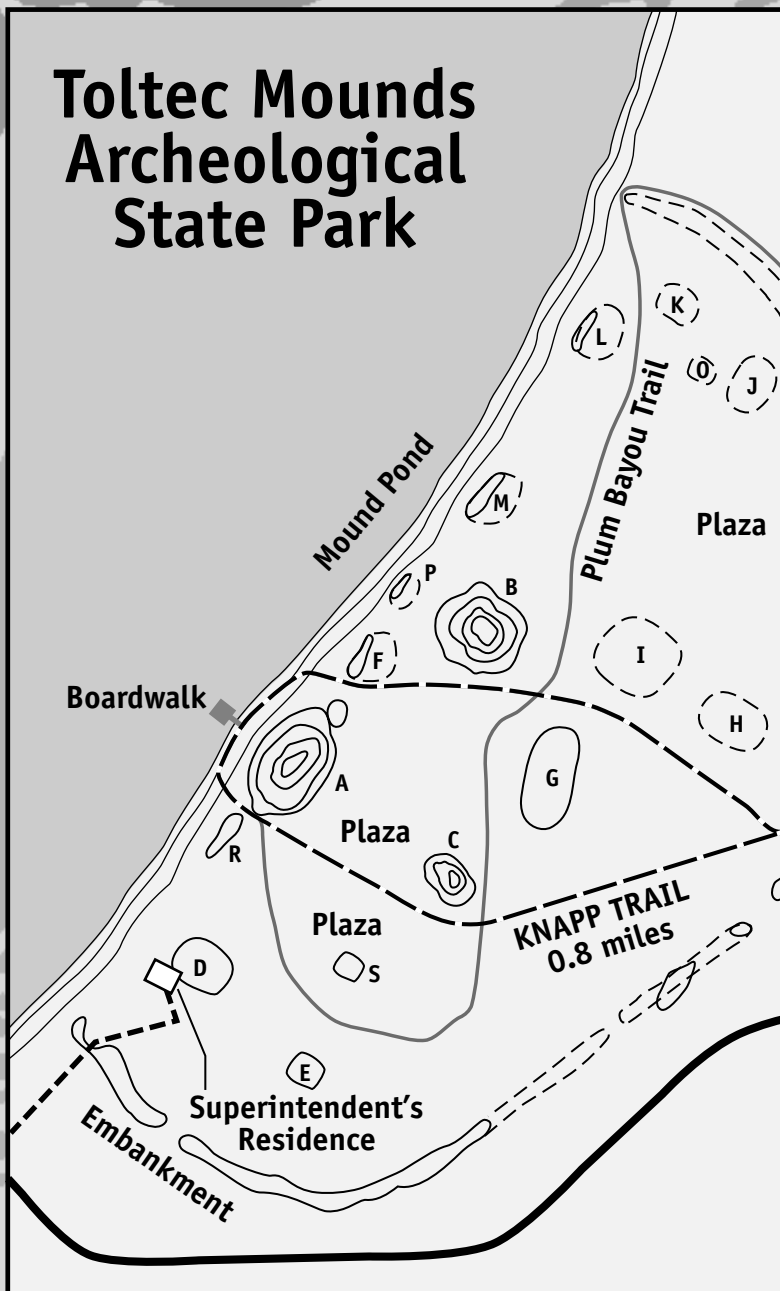
Marker 3

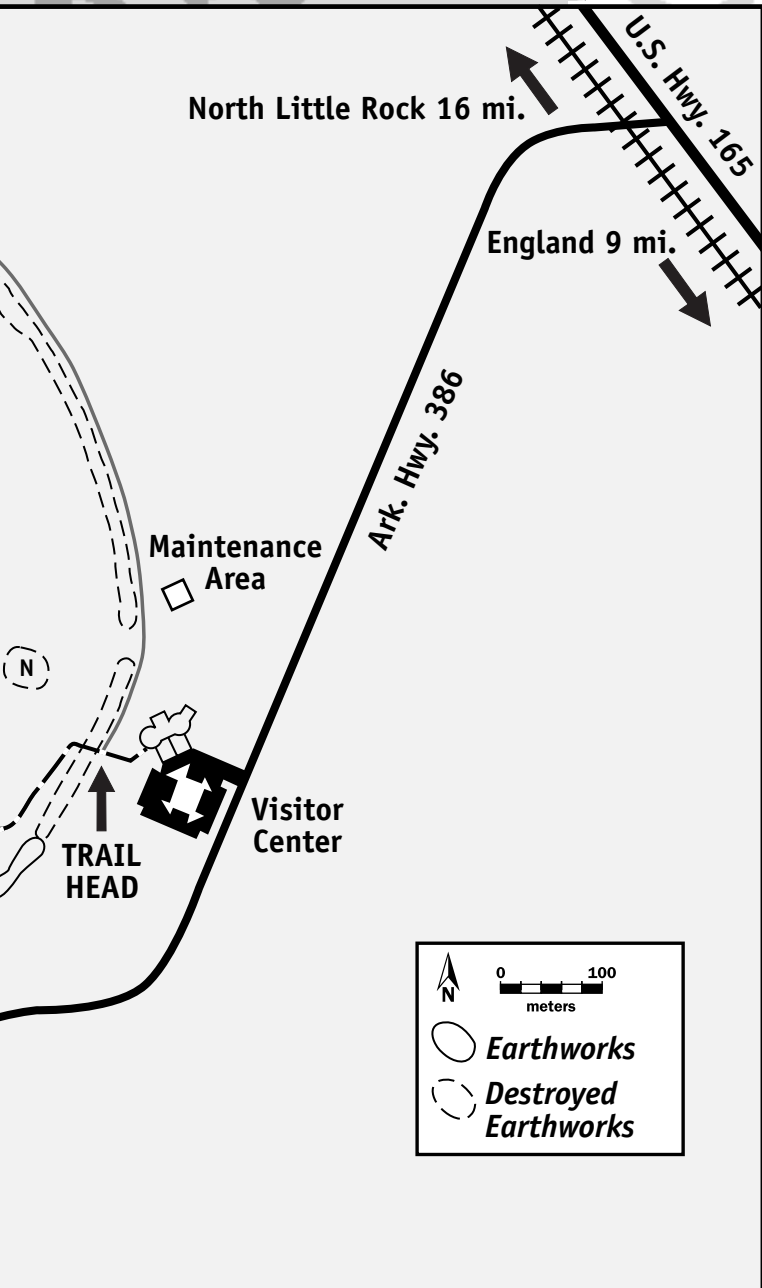
The mound on your right is called Mound C. This mound is very special because it is the only known burial mound at Toltec. This is a cemetery where the Plum Bayou people buried some of their relatives. Many people can be buried in the mound. Over many years the layering of bodies and soil created a mound with a rounded top. The Native Americans covered some of the mounds with a red-orange clay.



Without archeology we would not be able to learn about the people of long ago. However, most Americans believe that the bones of their ancestors and objects buried with them must be treated with respect and should remain in the earth forever. In recent years, Native Americans have protested the digging of bones and grave goods to learn more about the past. Federal law now provides the way for Native Americans to reclaim bones and special artifacts to be returned to their tribes. In Arkansas, it is now against the law to dig up any human remains except in special circumstances and with permission.

Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park

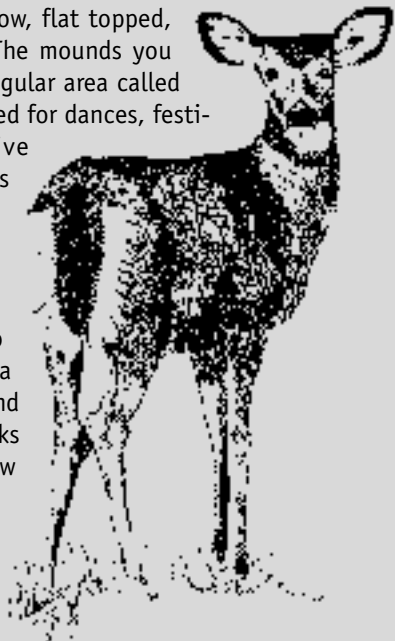






Marker 4

Most of the mounds at the site were low, flat topped, and were used in a variety of ways. The mounds you find here are built around a flat rectangular area called the plaza. The plaza may have been used for dances, festivals, feasts or ceremonies. A Native American game called “Chunkey” was played by many tribes throughout the southwest and could have been played by several people in the plaza here at Toltec. Two men played against each other—sometimes representing two clans within a tribe. One person rolled a round stone called a chunkey stone and both men ran after it with long sticks called chung-kes. The men had to throw their sticks as close as possible to the stone before it stopped rolling to win the game.



Mound S, a low and flat mound, was excavated several years ago. Archeologists did not find a house or other structure built here. However, a large amount of animal bone, mostly deer, was found. In fact, there was more food butchered on this mound than was needed by the few people living here at any one time. This discovery leads archeologists to believe that Mound S was a location for ceremonies that included feasts. To your left are mounds D and E. Both have been partially excavated uncovering more animal bone and possibly a house.



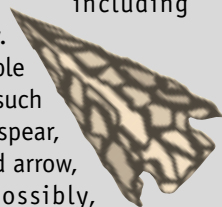
Across the plaza you see Mound A, which stands 49 feet tall and is the tallest mound in Arkansas. This mound has not been excavated so its use is unknown. It was probably a ceremonial mound.

Marker 5

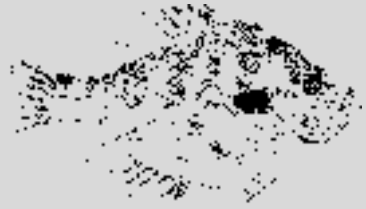
The Plum Bayou people ate many different types of foods. They hunted all kinds of mammals including deer, squirrel, and raccoon. They also ate turkeys, geese, ducks, and a variety of other birds including the passenger pigeon which is extinct (gone) today.

How do you think they killed their food? The people who lived here probably used a variety of weapons such

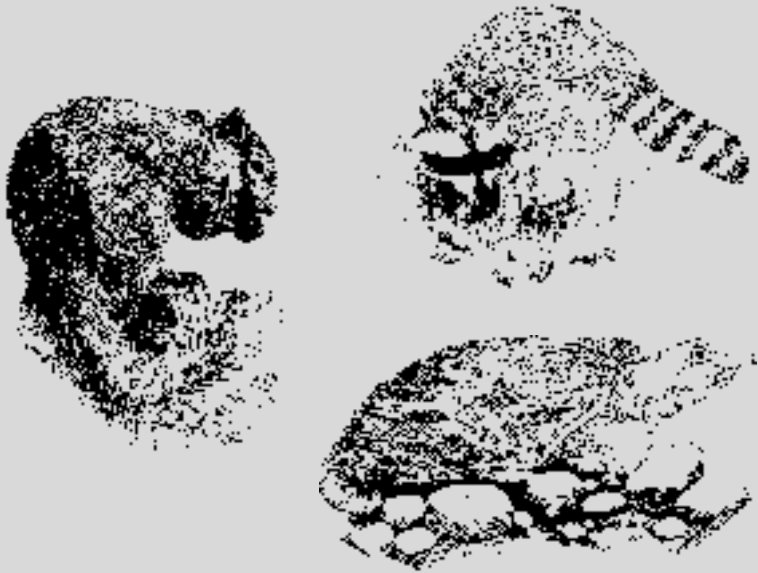
as the spear, bow and arrow, and, possibly, the blowgun for hunting big and small animals. Archeologists at this site have uncovered many projectile points (stone points).



From excavations we also know that the people here fished and collected turtles and other aquatic life from Mound Pond.



In addition to hunting and fishing, the Plum Bayou people gathered greens, squash, gourds, nuts, and berries. Maize (corn) is rare and was not commonly eaten at this site. They also made pottery, or clay bowls, that were used to hold and store food.



Marker 6

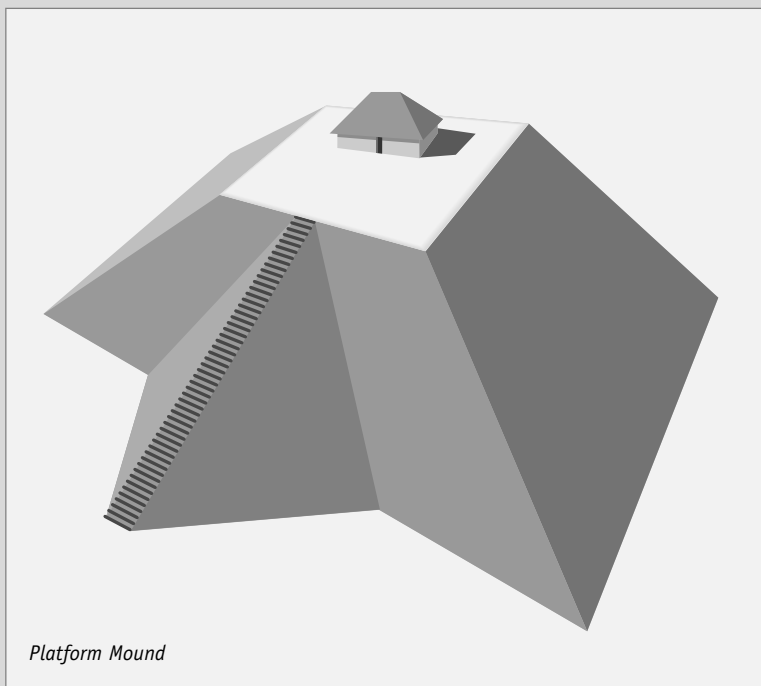
The water you see in front of you is called Mound Pond. It is an oxbow lake. This waterway is a U-shaped lake that was formed when a channel from the Arkansas River was running through here several thousand years ago. Over time, rivers and their channels meander (move) and lakes are formed.

Waterways such as the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers were an important part of life for Native Americans at this site. They used dugout

canoes, such as the one in the visitor center and similar to the one on the observation deck, to travel the waters to trade goods with other tribes. We know that the Native Americans who lived here may have had contact with people along the Mississippi River because we found fragments of a conch shell that would have come from the Gulf of Mexico (South) and copper which would have come from the Great Lakes area (North).

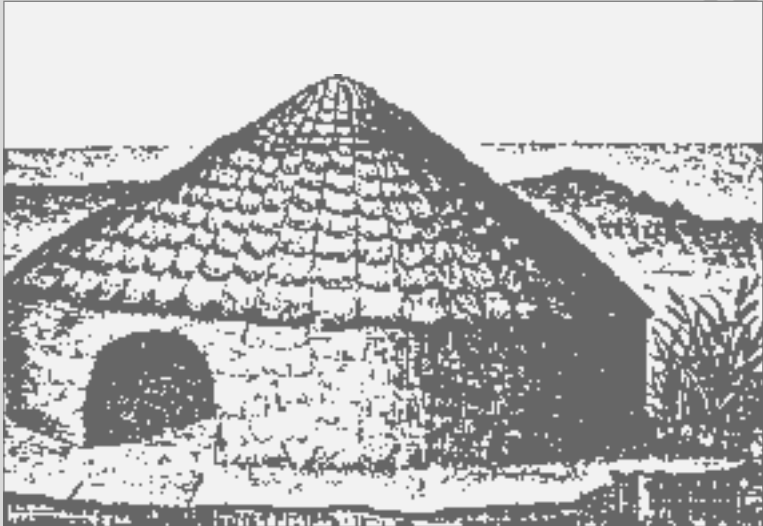
Marker 7

Mound B on your left stands 39 feet tall and is called a platform mound because it is flat on top. In 1979, it was partially excavated and studied. Because of this study we know this mound was not built all at one time, but in several different stages. Archeologists found trash called midden in several layers of the mound. This trash tells archeologists that this mound probably had a house on top where maybe the chief and/or a priest might have lived.



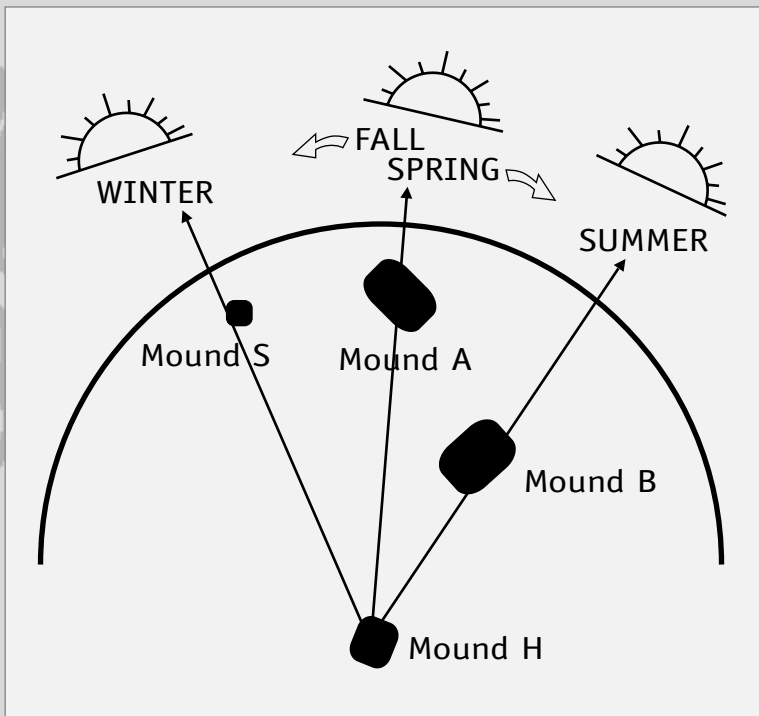
Marker 8

Mound G is to your right. This mound is unusual because it is so long. It is over 300 feet long and 150 feet wide and may have been 4 to 5 feet tall. It is considered to be a platform mound because it is flat topped. This mound was added on to or made larger over a long period of time. Archeologists have even discovered that a circular building was built here before the mound was constructed.



Marker 9

The Plum Bayou people at Toltec built the mounds in special places. Mound H was used as a place for observation or for looking at the other mounds. On the first day of summer you can stand on Mound H and see the sun set behind Mound B. On the first day of fall and on the first day of spring the sun will set behind Mound A. In the winter the sun will set behind Mound S. So, by standing on Mound H the Native Americans here could tell what season it was by looking where the sun set. This “natural calendar” was important to the Plum Bayou people and was possibly used to tell when to plant and harvest their crops.



Every year Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park encourages visitors to experience the Spring Equinox, Summer Solstice and Fall Equinox on Mound H the way the Plum Bayou culture did over 1,000 years ago.

We hope you enjoyed your tour through a part of Arkansas history. If you have any questions please ask park staff at the visitor center, or call (501)961-9442.

Toltec Activity Books for children are sold in the visitor center. Also inquire about other educational activities for children offered at Toltec including Exhibit Explorer, Site Explorer and Junior Naturalist.

Special programs for groups are available upon request. Contact the park for reservations or additional information.

Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park

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www.ArkansasStateParks.com



Notice: To preserve scenic beauty and the ecology, fences and warning signs have not been installed in some park locations. Caution and supervision of your children are required while visiting these areas.

Park Hours

Open: Tues.–Sat. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Sun.–Noon to 5 p.m.

Closed: Mondays (except Labor Day and Memorial Day),
Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New
Year's Day



