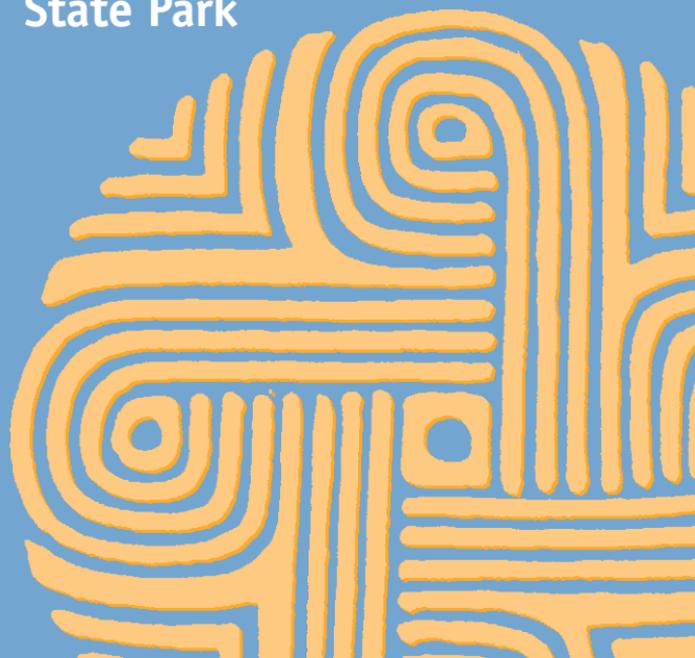




# Children's Guide to The Knapp Trail

Toltec Mounds  
Archeological  
State Park





Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism  
State Parks Division  
1 Capitol Mall  
Little Rock, AR 72201  
501-682-1191  
[www.ArkansasStateParks.com](http://www.ArkansasStateParks.com)



Revised, 2009



# Welcome to Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park!

You are about to go on a very special tour of a 1,200-year-old Native American site. The Knapp trail is almost a mile long and will take you about 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 a ceremonial center where Native American people lived, worked, and played long ago. The people that lived here have been named the Plum Bayou Culture by archeologists. Many of the tools, weapons and pottery that they used have been found on this site. These objects are called artifacts. Archeologists spend many hours excavating or digging for artifacts to gain information about the people who made them.

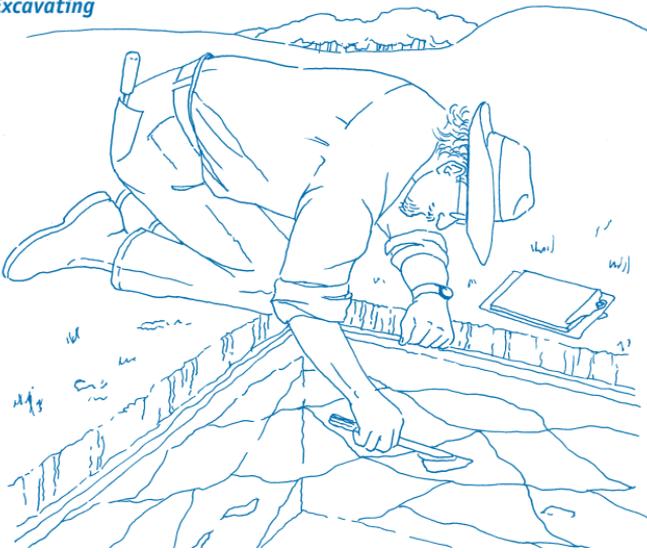
*Artifact and pot sherd*



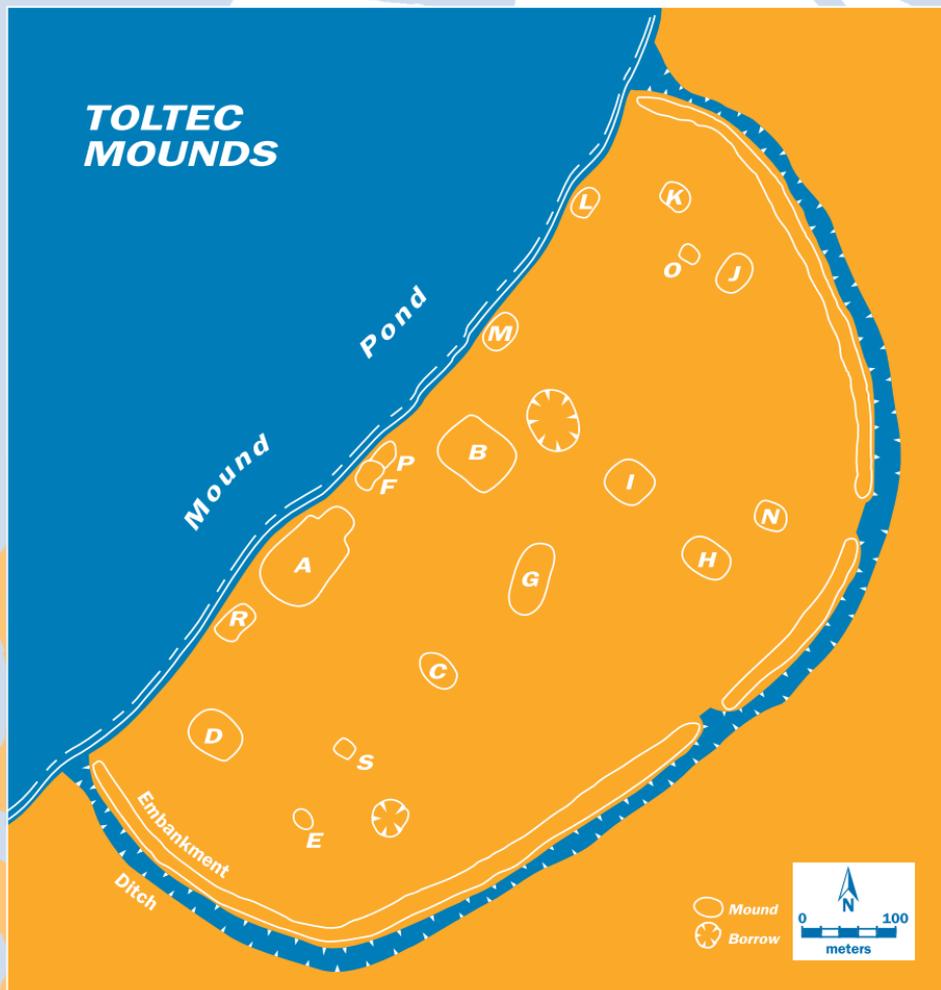
*Cataloging*



*Excavating*



## TOLTEC MOUNDS



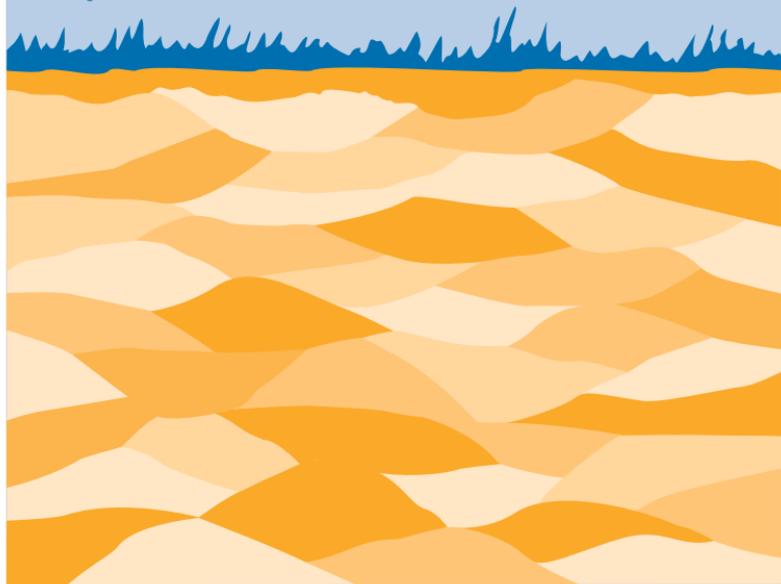
The Plum Bayou people built 18 mounds but today you can only see three of the taller mounds easily. We call them Mound A, B, and C. Farming over the past 150 years has cut down the smaller mounds. We put red signs on the mounds so that you can see where they were.

## 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). 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 ceremonial center where the leaders 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 baskets were filled with soils of different colors.

*Soil Layers*



## Marker 3

Most of the mounds at the site were low, had flat tops 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.

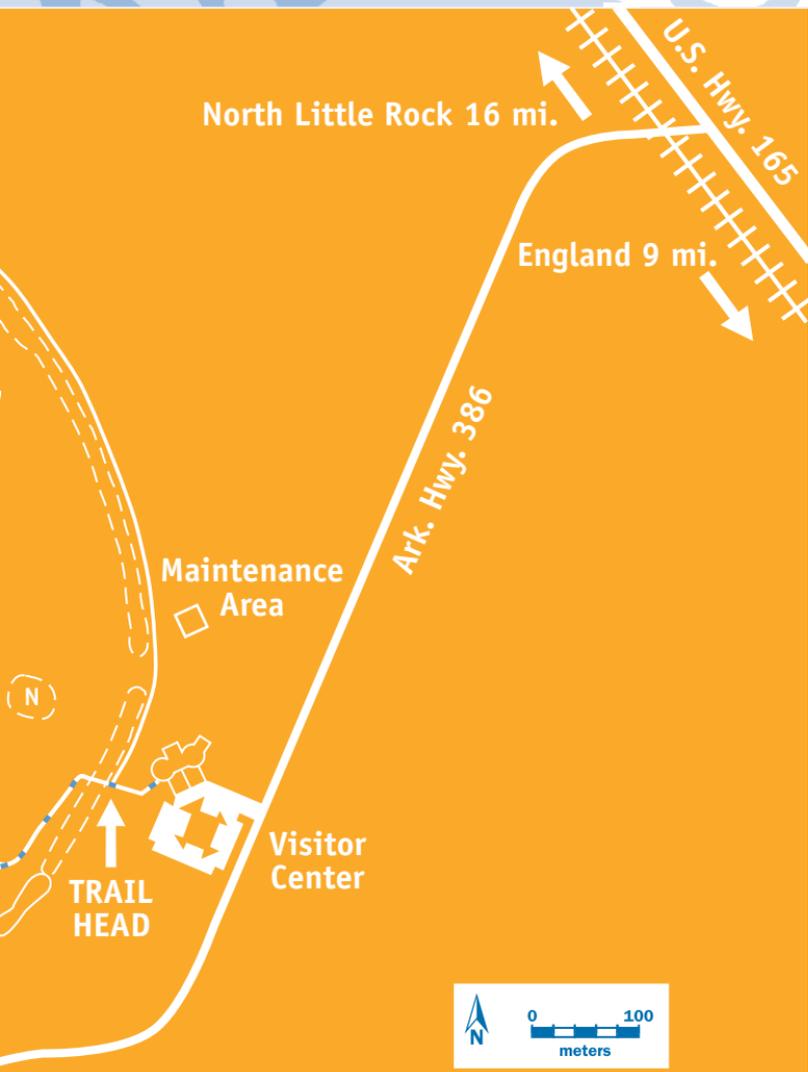


A Native American game called “Chunkey” was played by many tribes throughout the southwest and could have been played by several people in the plaza here at Toltec. Two men played against each other—sometimes representing two clans within a tribe. One person rolled a round stone called a chunkey stone 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. Imagine a tribal leader standing on top of one of the mounds leading a ceremony to a crowd of people gathered in the plaza. Music, dancing, chanting, games, eating and socializing were a few of the things that could have been happening where you are standing now.



# Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park



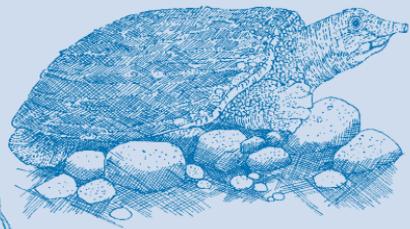
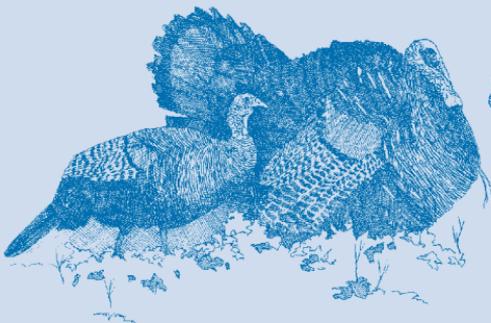


-  *Earthworks*
-  *Destroyed Earthworks*

Behind you is the location of Mound S. This was a low platform mound that was excavated several years ago. 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 any one time. This discovery leads archeologists to believe that Mound S was a location for ceremonies that included feasts.



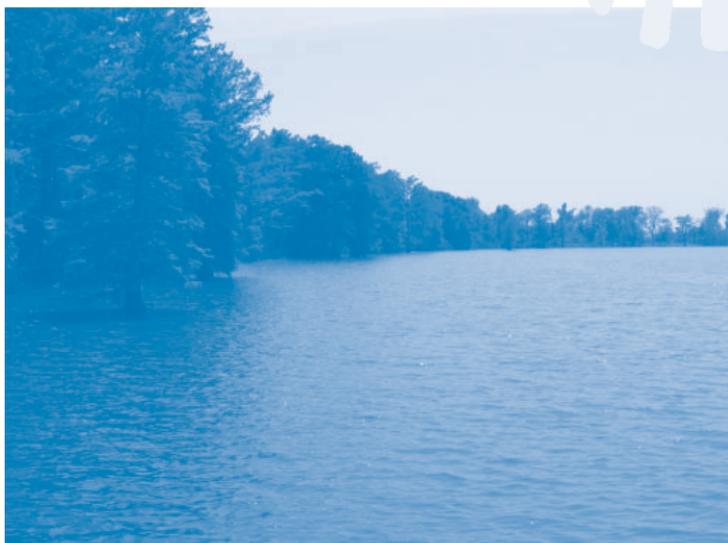
From excavations we know that the people here fished and collected turtles and other aquatic life from Mound Lake. In addition to hunting and fishing, the Plum Bayou people gathered greens, squash, gourds, nuts and berries. Maize (corn) is rare and was not commonly eaten at this site. They also made pottery or clay bowls that were used to hold and store food.



## Marker 4

The water you see in front of you is called Mound Lake. 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.

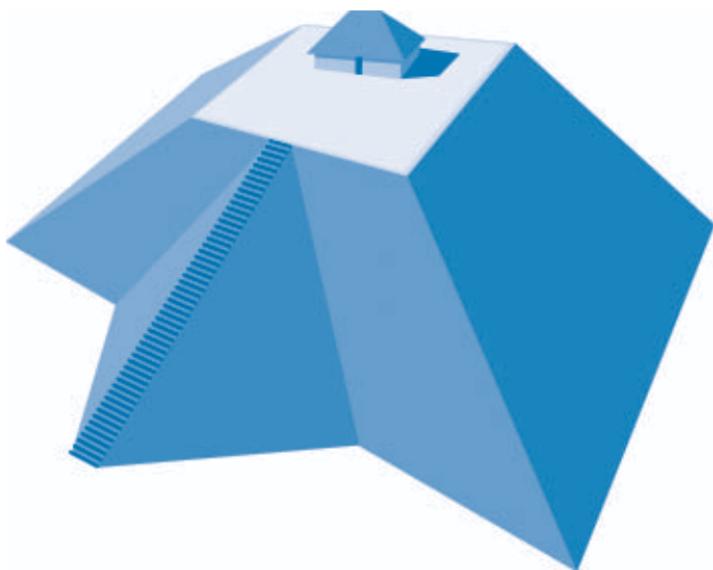
Waterways such as the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers were an important part of life for Native Americans at this site. They used dugout canoes, such as the one in the visitor center and similar to the one on the observation deck, to travel the waters to trade goods with other tribes. We know that the 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). The Plum Bayou people would have arrived at this site for their gatherings by way of dugout canoes. Imagine standing on Mound A and watching canoes make their way here for an approaching ceremony.

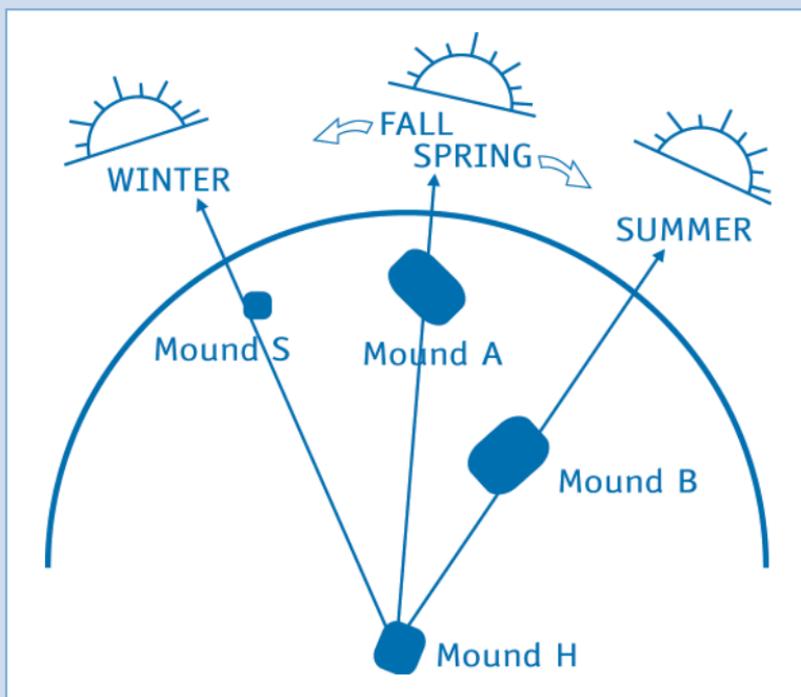


## Marker 5

Mound B, on your left stands 39 feet tall and is called a platform mound because it is flat on top. The shape and location (the North end of the plaza) suggest that ceremonies would have been held on top of this mound. Archeologists partially excavated this mound in 1979 and found trash called midden in several layers of the mound. This trash tells archeologists that this mound probably had a house on top where a leader might have lived.

*Platform Mound*

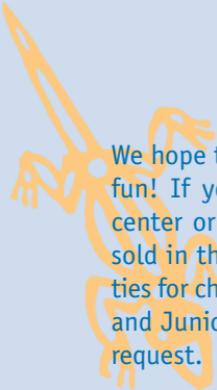




## Marker 6

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 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 mark the time to have the gatherings and ceremonies that took place here. It would also be useful in telling them 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 1,200 years ago.



We hope that the tour through this piece of your Arkansas history was fun! 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  
490 Toltec Mounds Road  
Scott, AR 72142  
[toltecmounds@arkansas.com](mailto:toltecmounds@arkansas.com)  
[www.ArkansasStateParks.com](http://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:** 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Tuesday–Saturday);  
1–5 p.m. (Sunday)

**Closed:** Monday, except Monday holidays; New Year’s Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve through Christmas Day

