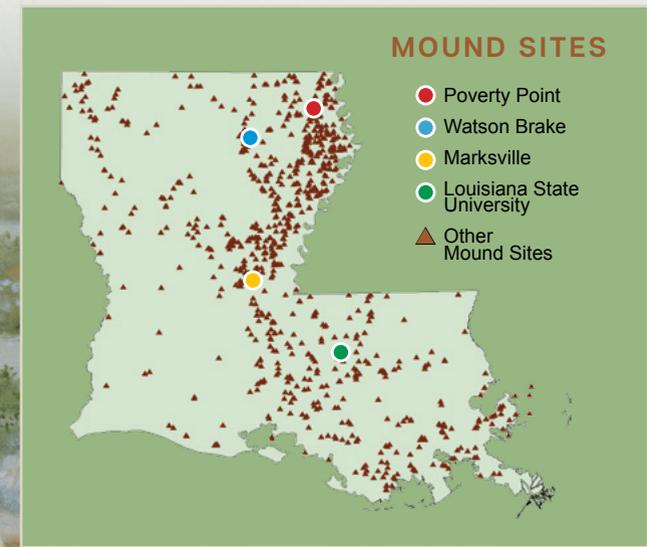


Ancient Mound Sites of Louisiana



Louisiana has some of the oldest, most spectacular, and best preserved Indian mounds in the world. Compared with other places, Louisiana has an unusually large number of mounds and earthworks, which span a long period of time. Although mounds are found across the state, they are concentrated in northeastern and central Louisiana.

American Indians first built mounds here by 5000 BCE, making them among the oldest in the Western Hemisphere. Louisiana has mounds older than the pyramids in Mexico and South America, older than Stonehenge in England, and older than the Egyptian pyramids. People still used these mounds even after European explorers first arrived in the Mississippi River Valley.

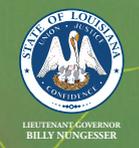


Louisiana's abundant natural resources led to this area being a center of American Indian mound construction. The mild climate and plentiful native plants and animals provided reliable, year-round food. The rivers, bayous, lakes, and wetlands supported mussels, fish, turtles, and other animals. Nuts, seeds, and fruits also were abundant. These foods allowed people to gather in one place, making it possible for them to work together to build the large earthworks.

The American Indians built the oldest mounds between 5000 BCE and 2500 BCE with round tops. They were not burial places, and they did not have temples or houses on top. Louisiana has 13 of these ancient mound sites, more than any other state in the nation.

American Indians built mounds in Louisiana for nearly 7,000 years. The mounds had many different shapes, sizes, and functions. The earliest sites had mounds with rounded tops. Later sites sometimes had flat-topped mounds with temples and chiefs' houses on them.

Painting by Martin Pate, courtesy of National Park Service, Southeast Archeological Center



LOUISIANA
Feed Your Soul.

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Louisiana has more than 800 archaeological sites with mounds.

The Campus Mounds site at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge is one of these early sites. The LSU site has two mounds, each nearly 20 feet tall. All other early mound sites in Louisiana are at least partially on private property and protected by the landowners.

The largest known early mound site is Watson Brake, located in northeast Louisiana. At Watson Brake, earthen ridges connect 11 mounds to form an oval. Currently, the state owns half of the site.

Around 1700 BCE, American Indians built ridges and mounds at a place now known as Poverty Point, in West Carroll Parish. In its time, it was the largest earthworks site in the Western Hemisphere. The site has semicircular rings of ridges that measure three-fourths of a mile from north to south. Bayou Maçon, which flows along the eastern side of the ridges, provided food and transportation for the people living there.

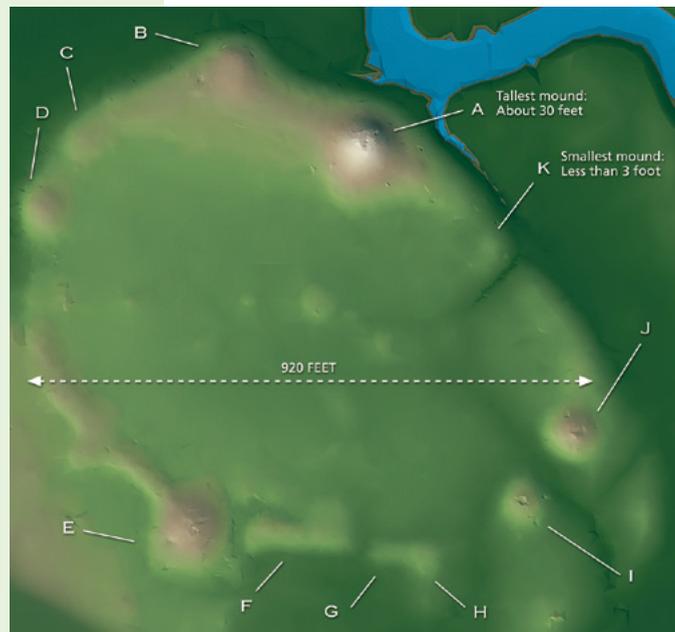
Poverty Point also has several mounds. Mound A, the largest in Louisiana, is 70 feet tall and about 700 feet long. The other Poverty Point mounds have several shapes, including conical, rectangular, and irregular. American Indians at the site lived and worked on the ridges and conducted ceremonies on top of the mounds.

Poverty Point is a National Historic Landmark and a World Heritage Site. The Louisiana Office of State Parks maintains the Poverty Point World Heritage Site, which is open to the public.

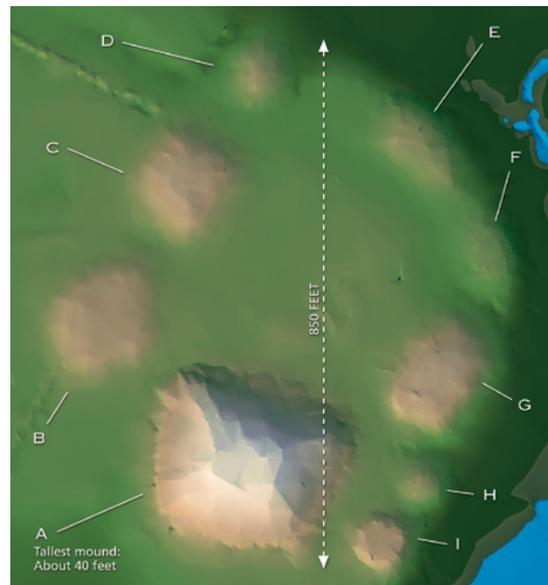
The Marksville site in Avoyelles Parish is also a National Historic Landmark. Beginning around 1 CE, American Indians constructed five mounds there, surrounded by a low earthen embankment. Some of the mounds are conical with rounded tops, and others have flat tops. Ceremonies may have been held on some mounds.

The American Indians used one Marksville mound as a burial place. Those living at the site made artifacts and built mounds very similar to those in the Ohio River Valley. This shows that the two groups of people were in contact with each other.

▼ The Watson Brake site is unusual because of its size, shape, and 5,000-year-old age.



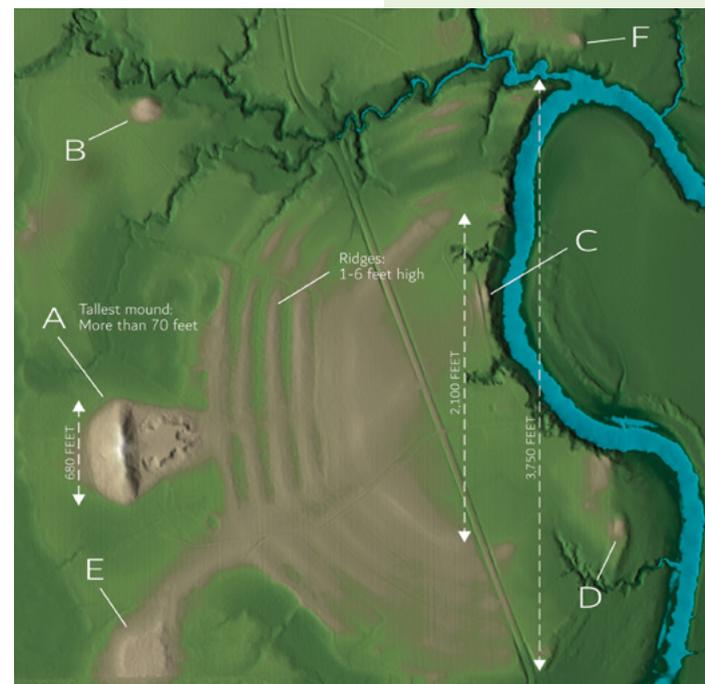
▼ This privately owned site has mounds of various shapes and sizes surrounding a central plaza.



▲ Poverty Point's largest mound is 70 feet tall.

◀ The LSU Campus Mounds are older than the Pyramids of Egypt.

▼ At the Poverty Point site in West Carroll Parish, American Indians built rows of ridges, as well as mounds.



By 700 CE, American Indians built mounds that were platforms for temples and leaders' houses. They also continued building conical mounds during this time. Some sites in Louisiana had multiple mounds around a central plaza, or open space, with villages and gardens nearby.

American Indians were still constructing mounds in Louisiana in the mid-1500s, and possibly later. During the 1800s, some

American Indian groups used mounds in south Louisiana for traditional religious activities. Today the mounds continue to represent sacred and powerful places.

Louisiana has more than 800 archaeological sites with mounds. The Indian Mounds of Northeast Louisiana Driving Trail includes 39 mound sites. Each site has a marker with information about the site and a Driving Trail Guide provides directions to the site and additional information. The Guide is available online (www.crt.la.gov/discoverarchaeology), from the Division of Archaeology, or at Welcome Centers.

▼ Around 1 CE, American Indians built the mounds at Marksville.



All sites and mounds on public land are protected from digging and artifact collecting. Access to sites on private property is completely under the control of the landowner, and trespassing is forbidden by law. The Division of Archaeology and the people of Louisiana work together to preserve and recognize the nationally significant mounds of our state.

The Division of Archaeology invites owners of mounds to contact the office at archaeology@crt.la.gov or 225-342-8166. Archaeologists are available to visit sites, assess their age and importance, and offer suggestions about preservation methods.