

## **Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

### **Summary**

Frogmore is a single platform mound and village midden site that dates to the Ballina-Balmoral phases (ca. A.D. 900-1050) of the Coles Creek period (A.D. 700-1200) (Cusick et. al. 1995). The site is adjacent to U. S. Highway 84 approximately 100 m south/southeast of the confluence of Otto Bayou and Brushy Bayou. It is set in a wetlands environment on a historic cotton plantation of the same name. (The main house and a cotton gin moved to the property are listed on the National Register – the main house under the name Gillespie and the gin, Piazza Cotton Gin. The candidate is outside the nominated areas of these two listings.) The mound is generally oriented to the cardinal directions, with the long axis running east-west. A buried village midden is on the north side of the mound.

The Frogmore site is next to an old meander scar of the Mississippi River and an abandoned channel of the Tensas River (Saucier 1994). The mound is constructed on Mississippi backswamp sediments that overlap point bar deposits of Mississippi Meander Belt 2 that are between 4400-2400 years in age (Saucier 1994). Archaeologist James Ford speculated in 1936 that Frogmore was abandoned when the Tensas River shifted approximately 2 miles to the west, or to its present course (Ford 1936:238).

Coles Creek ceramic types, the method of construction of a submound walled structure, and one radiocarbon date from the midden have established the age of the mound.

### **Physical Characteristics**

The site area is approximately 50 m x 80m. The long axis, composed of the mound and the village midden north of the mound, is oriented to the northeast and southwest. The platform mound is rectangular in plan view, measuring 5 m. The mound is constructed in two states and made with sandy and clay fill that covers a double walled circular structure and associated village midden.

### **Current and Past Impacts**

The topography between the mound and Brushy Bayou has been altered by the construction of U. S. Hwy. 84. The west side of the site has been modified by the construction of a paved farm road. An east-west railroad ran approximately 150 m south of the mound. A brick home is approximately 25 meters east of the mound. It is reasonable to assume that these historic features impacted the site. However, the abundant historic activities near and on the site did not impact the mound, thanks to the owners' dedication to preserving the mound. An 1899 hand-painted map of Frogmore Plantation and a 1912 photograph show little change in the morphology of the mound. The only known modification to the mound is two unmarked African-American burials in the north flank (Cusick et al. 1995:12-1).

### **Previous Archaeological Investigations**

State files note that James Ford visited the mound in 1936. He described it as being 100 x 100 feet and 8 feet in height. The form states that no pottery was collected. A handwritten note on the site form says the "Coles Creek-Troyville" ceramics were in the artifact collection of the Godbold family (property owners).

In 1964 the Lower Mississippi Valley survey visited the site. The mound was described by David J. Hally as 33 x 37 m at the base and approximately 4.3 meters in height (LMS AO-L site form). A small surface collection was made and the site was placed in the early Coles Creek period. Philip Phillips attributed a Sundown-Ballina-Balmoral phase of the Coles Creek period in

Figure 446 of his 1970 publication. Pete Gregory also made a small surface collection, but the date is not listed (State site form).

In 1994 James Cusick et al. (1995) of Earth Search, Inc. began the extensive testing of Frogmore. Their work was conducted in three phases: limited shovel testing, topographic mapping, and excavation. Twenty-six shovel tests were excavated around the base of the mound and in cardinal directions from the mound in 10 m intervals. Their purpose was to define the extent of the midden around the mound. Shovel tests were excavated to a depth between 50 and 65 cm. Twenty of the shovel tests were positive. Testing identified a buried midden deposit that extended 25 m to the north of the mound, but it was absent on the other sides of the mound. It is likely that road construction on the west and southwest side of the mound destroyed the midden deposits.

Shovel testing of the mound's base encountered the highest artifact density along the southwest quadrant. Consequently, a 1 x 3 m trench was excavated at that location. The unit was placed on the lower mound flank, with a difference of 1.45 m between the E and W ends of the unit. The unit was excavated as three 1 x 1 units labeled as A, B, and C (Cusick et al. 1995:12-7).

The excavations identified three major stratigraphic divisions: mound fill, a submound midden, and structural remains. The mound appears to have been constructed in two stages, with a brief hiatus between Stage 1 and Stage 2. The base of the mound contained a thin layer of fill covering the submound midden and evidence of two circular walled structures (Cusick et al. 1995:12-21-12-22). The excavations uncovered a 25 m curving wall trench. Five 15-18 cm posts were spaced at approximately 20 cm intervals. Five cm deeper was another wall trench with ten smaller posts (8-18 cm) also spaced at approximately 20 cm intervals. The total number of posts associated with the walls of the submound structure was 18. To the southeast was the floor surface (Feature 5) of the structure. Three interior posts were identified in the floor. Very few artifacts were recovered from the floor. An extensive midden was outside of the walled structure. Cusick concluded that the two wall trenches were part of the same structure, and that it was between 6.5 and 9.1 m in diameter. The data also suggested to him that the structure had been burned and covered with dirt before Frogmore mound was constructed (Cusick et al. 1995:12-21).

The excavations recovered 1,574 sherds –833 (48 decorated) from the structure and the submound midden and 571 (40 decorated) from the mound hill. The submound ceramic types indicated an early-to middle Coles Creek age (Ballina to Balmoral phases, ca A.D. 900-1050) (Kidder 1993b) for the structure. Early ceramic types including Coles Creek Incised, vars. *Busby*, *Phillips*, and *Stoner* were mixed with later ceramic types Coles Creek Incised, vars. *Coles Creek* and *Choctaw Bayou* (see Patrick Jones in Cusick et al. 1995:14-24). Middle Coles Creek ceramic types *Mazique* Incised, var. *Mazique and Coles Creek Incised*, var. *Coles Creek/Mott* may indicate that the structure is a little later than the midden deposit. Brown (1985:289) has suggested that the circular post-in-trench style tends to predate A.D. 1000. Finally, an AMS date on charcoal from the submound midden was determined to date to A.D. 1170 ± 60 (Beta-72930), with a 2-sigma calibrated range of A.D. 1020-1260 (95% probability).

SIGNIFICANT DATES:	NA
ARCHITECT/BUILDER:	NA
CRITERION:	D

**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

Frogmore is one of the best preserved platform Coles Creek period mounds in north Louisiana. Except for two graves and the 1994 archaeological investigations, the mound appears

to be undisturbed. The pristine condition of the summit makes it very possible that non-invasive surveys can identify structural features that may have been associated with mound summit use. Secondly, the intact nature of the mound increases the likelihood that architectural information on how mounds were constructed exists. Cusick *et al.*'s (1995:12-11) trench excavation identified a thin layer of organic material at 40 cm BS, thereby indicating that organic preservation is good. Third, their work also identified the undisturbed remains of a submound walled circular structure. The style, size, and method of construction compares favorably with other ceremonial circular Coles Creek period structures (Brown 1985; Cusick *et al.* 1995; Ford, 1951; Neuman 1984; Woodiel 1993), suggesting that this structure too was ceremonial. Finally, an intact midden under the mound and the buried midden north of the mound have been identified. Macrobotanical remains were common in the midden fill, indicating that dietary, economic, and seasonal data on a Coles Creek village remains undisturbed.

Dr. Cusick's concluding remarks on Frogmore noted that under Criterion D, the site addresses a number of cultural themes and research goals of the Comprehensive Archaeological Plan (Smith *et al.* 1983) of Louisiana:

These include definition of settlement strategy and subsistence in the Coles Creek period, and the construction of models for the rise of ceremonialism and hierarchical social systems. In addition, the plan expresses the desirability of preserving representative examples of Coles Creek mound sites (1995:12-29).

Frogmore's excellent state of preservation is rare for any period of prehistory.

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