

were also skilled craftsmen and built strong homes, usually with clay-plastered walls and thatched roofs. They produced a wide variety of attractively decorated pottery and devised ingenious tools and weapons from materials at hand—stone and wood.

They traded with other tribes who brought them shells from the Gulf of Mexico and copper from the region of Lake Superior, and wove cloth, tanned leather, and enjoyed comforts and conveniences unknown to the simple hunters and gatherers who were their ancestors.

The builders of Emerald Mound were not a primitive people. The construction of ceremonial mounds of such great magnitude implies that the Mississippians had a complex way of life. Not only did they develop their religion to a high point, but they also had a high degree of social and political organization. Such a large scale construction required leadership and an efficient organization to direct the work.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE INDIANS? When De Soto passed through the Southeast in the 1540's the Mississippians were still numerous and powerful. The flat-topped temple mounds were still in use. Spanish horsemen mentioned riding to their tops. When the French came in about 1700, only the Natchez were still following the old Mississippian way of life. Nearly all of the villages and ceremonial centers seen by De Soto's men had been abandoned.

What happened to the teeming thousands of people, thickly scattered villages, and great ceremonial centers that De Soto saw?

We don't know what caused this rapid decline. There were probably several factors: disease introduced by the De Soto party, the arrival of new, more vigorous tribes which drove the Mississippians out, and internal strife.

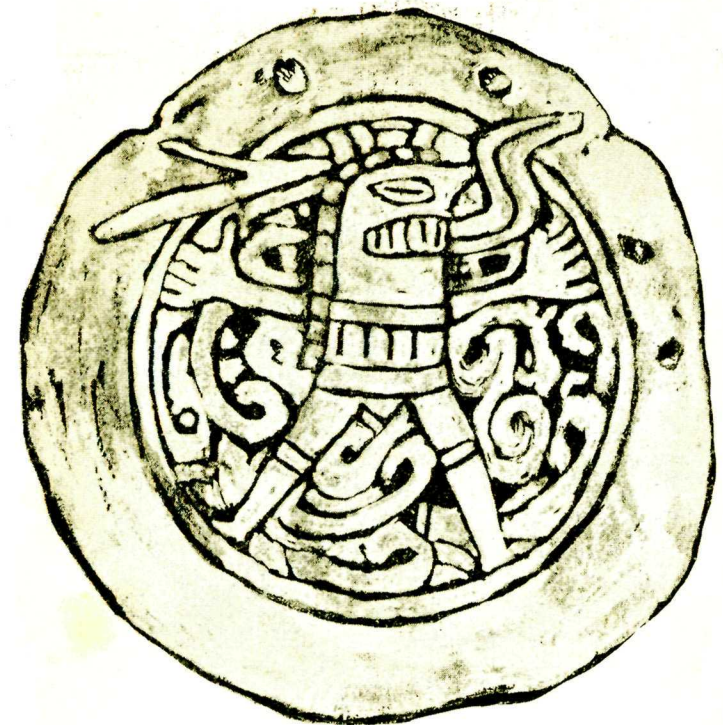
ADMINISTRATION—The Natchez Trace Parkway, established on May 18, 1938, is administered by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior.

The National Park System, of which this parkway is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and inspiration of its people.

A superintendent, whose address is Box 948, Tupelo, Miss. 38801, is in immediate charge of the parkway.

AMERICA'S NATURAL RESOURCES—Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior—America's Department of Natural Resources—is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water, wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States—now and in the future.



EMERALD MOUND

on the NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY

12 miles Northeast of Natchez, Mississippi



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

REPRINT 1968

☆ GPO: 1968—306-122/96

