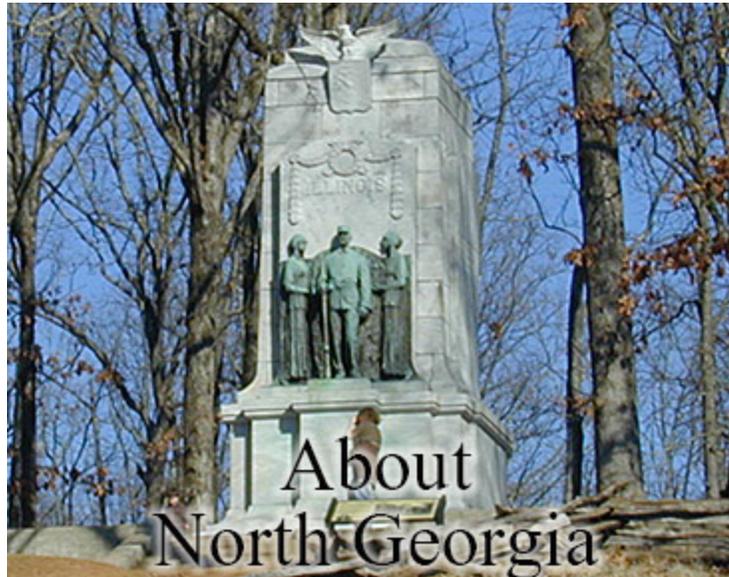


Moundbuilders

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Moundbuilders

About North Georgia

America's first civilization

Were the Moundbuilders America's first civilization? Although the word civilization comes from the Latin *civilis*, the definition ascribed to the word by historian Will Durant is:

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Civilization is social order promoting cultural creation. Four elements constitute it: economic provision, political organization, moral traditions and the pursuit of knowledge and the arts.

Economic provision

The trading network of the Moundbuilders is astounding. Salt water sea shells found at inland Moundbuilder sites. Beryl from present-day Maine found at a Tennessee Moundbuilder site. Copper from Georgia found at a Minnesota site. A trading network this size would indicate "economic provision"

Political Organization

Without a written language, historians must rely on archeologists to determine the organization of a Moundbuilder community and the relationship between communities. But the mounds themselves speak of the political organization of a village. To build the mounds a large number of workers had to be fed, clothed and housed. A social order would oversee the determination of the workers and the "supervisors." It would be nearly impossible to construct a mound without some form of political organization.

Moral Traditions

The continuity of the Moundbuilder culture was especially important to this American culture, and their mounds illustrate this.

Pursuit of Knowledge

Moundbuilders introduced numerous technical changes to the making of fired pottery, hunting, agriculture and day-to-day life. For example, they domesticated a number of crops and herbs, dramatically improving their diet. Many mounds are constructed based on astronomical observation. For example, the Newark (Ohio) Ceremonial Complex is aligned with the northernmost rise of the moon.

Pursuit of Arts

Moundbuilders contributed to the American Indian pre-Columbian art especially in pottery, intricate weaving, basketry and carving.

History

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The earliest record of Moundbuilders is from Archaic times, along the Southern Mississippi. From a site known as Poverty Point (present-day Louisiana), these Indians spread along waterways to the northern Mississippi River and the Ohio River. Two later developments were the Adena Moundbuilders, named for the Ohio town where the first artifacts were identified and the Hopewell Moundbuilders, named for the Ohio farmer where a number of artifacts were found. Although the Hopewell culture was the first "identified," in 1892, the Adena Culture (identified in 1902), predated it. The Adena Culture rose before Christ and ended around 200 AD. The Hopewell Culture then followed, controlling a vast portion of the Eastern United States from 400 to 800 AD.

Around 950 AD came the rise of the Mississippian Moundbuilders, the most advanced of all Moundbuilder cultures. From 950 AD to roughly 1600 AD these Moundbuilders controlled most of present-day Georgia and much of the Southeast. Archeologists refer to this group as the "Southern Cult" or the "Southeastern Ceremonial Complex" because of their sophisticated religious beliefs.

By the time Hernando deSoto arrived in 1541, the Moundbuilder population was in steep decline. It is believed that the remaining Moundbuilders were assimilated into nearby [Woodland Indians](#) cultures, who at the time were developing into tribes.

Early Mississippian Period

Trade among Moundbuilders increased dramatically. Craftsman improved designs and techniques including the formulation of slip to create clay pots and materials added to clay to improve firing. Some of these materials were trade goods, taken from hundreds of miles away. Changes in agriculture include introduction of new types of crops, including corns that could be planted as early and late crops. New strains of beans and squash were also developed.

Middle Mississippian Period

Artistic gorgets and crafted religious icons illustrate the increase in free time for the Moundbuilder civilization. Towns expanded their perimeter earthworks and their population, and elaborate religious ceremonies, marking the hey-day of the Southern Cult.

Late Mississippian Period

During the decline of the Moundbuilder civilization chiefdoms ruled and had less trade with distant groups. War became the means by which political disputes between settlements were handled. Farmers raised smaller crops and periods of drought increased.

Location in Georgia

In Georgia, only the Kolomoki Mounds shows some evidence of a Hopewell occupation. They do have a close relationship with Mississippian Moundbuilders and are believed to be one of the few "transitional" sites in the United States. Ocmulgee National Park was an Early Mississippian site, rising around 950 AD and losing its power by 1200 AD. Etowah Indian Mounds, a Georgia State Park, rose around 1100 AD and had fallen about 1400AD, representative of the Middle Mississippian period. Finally, Coosa rose near the dam at Carter's Lake, and is representative of the Late Mississippian period. Only the Coosa chiefdom was known historically.

More Information on Moundbuilders

Georgia's Moundbuilders

Golden Age of Moundbuilders

Moundbuilders and Modern Man

Fort Mountain State Park

Etowah Indian Mounds State Historic Site

American Indians of Georgia

Moundbuilders, Creek and Cherokee all called North Georgia home

Georgia Moundbuilders

An advanced pre-Colombian people who inhabited most of the present-day United State

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