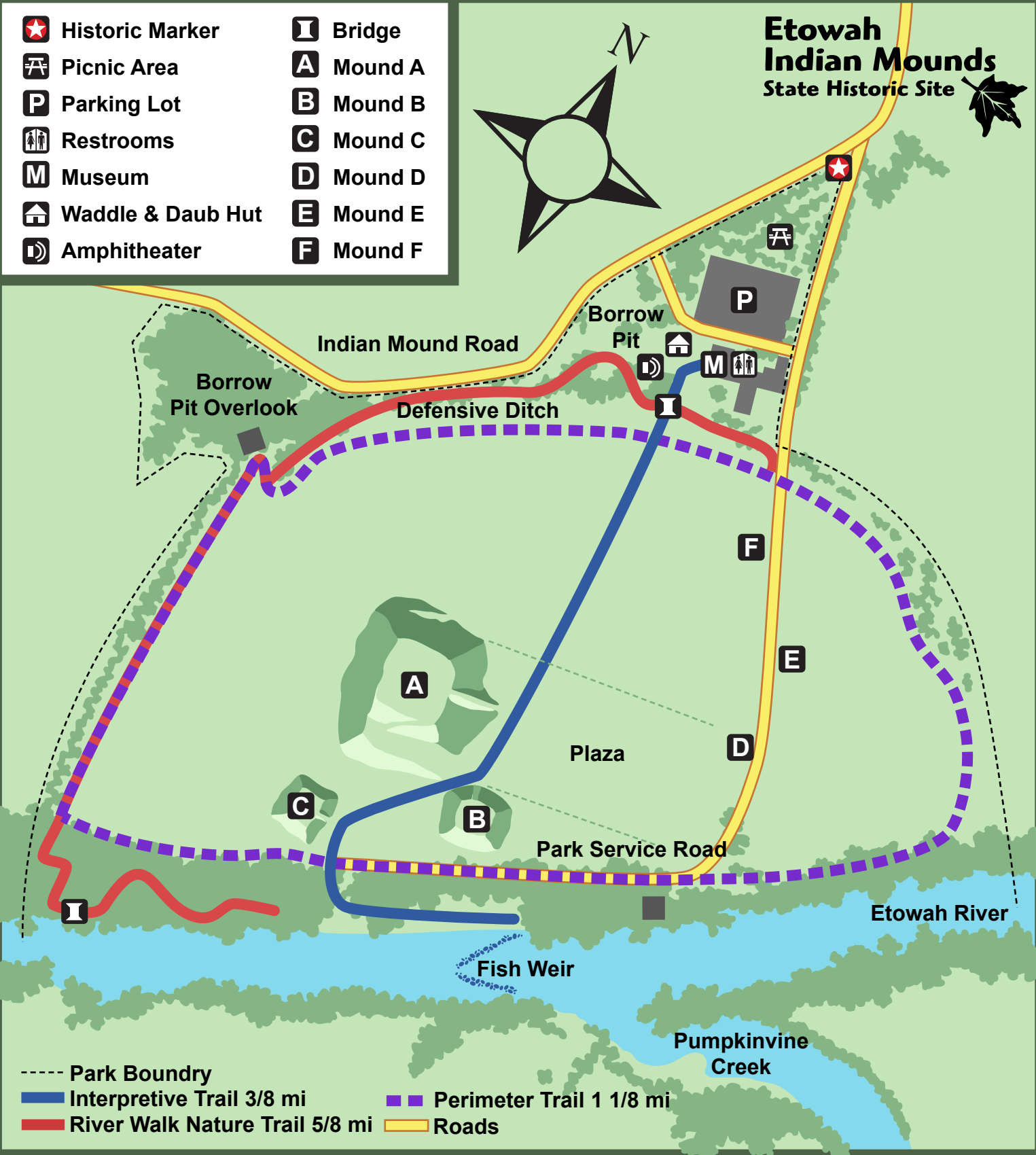


Etowah Indian Mounds

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An Ancient Indian City

Etowah Indian Mounds, rising on the north bank of the Etowah River near Cartersville, GA., is the largest Native American settlement in the Etowah Valley. The flat-topped earthen knolls were used from about 900-1550 A.D. as a platform dwelling to the chief/priest, an elite mortuary ground, and temple areas. Etowah was originally known as "Itawa" and is referred to as "Idaba" in the Hernando De Soto chronicles. The site was visited by the Spanish explorer and 1,000 of his men in August of 1540. In a very short time, the town's population drastically decreased in response to European diseases (smallpox and measles) which the inhabitants had no natural immunity. After fleeing their towns, the survivors joined other surrounding groups and eventually became known as the Creeks. Neither the Creeks, who had lost their oral tradition of passing down history to later generations, or the missionary Elias Cornelius mentions this fact in his memoirs after visiting this site in October 1817. In the year 1832 Col. Lewis Tumlin drew a land lot in the Georgia Land Lottery, and then from 1838-1955 the Tumlin family owned and worked the grounds as farmland until they sold a portion of their farm to the state for conservation as protected land. In 1964 the 68 acre site became recognized as a Registered National Historic Landmark, which is still maintained by Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

Rules & Reminders

Our goal is to preserve and conserve the site of Etowah for future generations, and you can help us by:

- ➊ Staying on trails and keeping off slopes of mounds and defensive ditch to help control erosion.
- ➋ Do not collect any artifacts or natural resources (feathers, rocks, leaves, plants, etc.) as it is prohibited.
- ➌ Dogs are welcome but must be on a 6 foot leash.
- ➍ As a reminder the outside mound area closes at 4:30 pm while the museum is open until 5 pm.

Borrow Pits & Defensive Ditch

Two large pits (located by the Museum and Nature Trail and a ditch resulted from the removal of thousands of baskets of earth that were "borrowed" from one location and utilized to build the mounds. The bridge crosses over part of the 9-10 ft deep ditch which once encircled the site by stretching from one riverbank to the other. This provided an effective first line of defense along with the embedded 12 foot upright logs

lining its edge, which created a palisade. There were towers (or bastions) projecting towards the ditch which allowed villagers to propel their weaponry from a safe vantage point while the attackers were forced to climb in and out of the ditch under intense fire thus not allowing an effective return. This defense made the village almost invulnerable to attacks from the principle weapons of the Southeastern Indians (spears, arrows, and war clubs).

Central Plaza

Just before reaching Mound A there will be a small rise in the path indicating your entrance into the central plaza, which is outlined on the map. Since leaving the bridge you have walked through the village area that was once crowded with waddle and daub huts. Surrounded by a short rock wall, this plaza was created by hand packing red clay for the purpose of being a ceremonial center to the mound complex. It was a clean swept area that was used much like a modern day town square. It was a public gathering space for a variety of activities such as games (stickball and chunky), ceremonies, and a bazaar for trade goods. To the left of the plaza edge are the small rises of the other Mounds that surround the plaza labeled D, E, and F. Only D and E have been archaeologically tested.

Mound A

For adventurous climbers there is a trek up the staircase to Mound A, which is approximately the height of a six story building (63 ft high). At the top, the plaza outline is visible along with the approximate ditch outline marked by a modern fence. Agricultural fields of corn, beans, and squash were beyond this section of the ditch. On the horizon were forests abounding with wild game. The site lies within the Etowah River Valley, which has sandy soil that could be tilled with primitive stone hoes and digging sticks. To the south lies the Piedmont Physiographic Region with its different plants and animals. The great temple that housed the chief and his family stood on top of this platform mound. Here the chief presided over ceremonies that took place in the plaza below. Located on the south side of the mound is a lower platform thought to be an unfinished section, as Etowah is an abandoned site. The top of the mound was farmed starting in the 1880's causing ground disruption, and in the early 1930's two dog statues were uncovered. With the exception of the stairway ramp in 1994, Mound A has not been fully scientifically excavated.

Mound B

Like Mound A, Mound B was also a temple platform and has never been completely excavated. A test pit dug on its west side base revealed burials and midden (trash) pits containing remains of deer, turtles, fish, and plants. In addition to the

remnants, a large building, possibly belonging to that of a council house, were found. Most likely a lesser chief or priest resided on top of Mound B.

Mound C

This burial Mound has been completely excavated and reconstructed. The 350 burials unearthed here told scientists much about burial and ceremonial practices, classes of people, dress, diet, diseases and trade patterns of the peoples at this site. This mound was built in layers, with changes in temple structures, fences, and burial practices. These date from the earliest, at its center, to the most recent, located in outer layers. Near the edge of the mound is where our famous Georgia marble effigy statues were found. Most of the artifacts you will see in the museum came from Mound C.

Shoals and Fish Trap

Fish traps were created by piling stones in V-shaped formations in shallow river areas, with large woven baskets (trap) placed at the open point of the V to catch fish. Bass, catfish, freshwater mussels, and turtles were important sources of protein for Etowah's inhabitants. Today, when the Allatoona hydroelectric plant is not generating electricity and the water level is low and clear, the gravel shoals and fish trap may be seen.

Etowah River Walk Nature Trail

The Nature Trail begins at the trailhead signs near the river and will follow the river downstream for several hundred feet before turning to join the south side of the perimeter trail where it will lead to the borrow pit overlook. It will take you along the defensive ditch, which may flood in heavy rain, back to the museum. Make sure to look for the large sassafras along the defensive ditch! While you are walking along this trail you will see many trees including: walnut, birch, hickory, oak, and persimmon that once provided food for the people of Etowah. Near the entrance to the Nature Trail you will see a rivercane reestablishment area. Rivercane was used to create arrow shafts, thatch roofs, basket splits, floor mats, and numerous other objects. Other plants and trees along the river include river oats, hackberry, sweetgum, sourwood, sycamore, elm, stinging nettle, and yaupon holly. Plants you may see that were introduced by Europeans are the privet, honeysuckle, paper mulberry, and mimosa.

Free online information

- ➊ Monumental Remains of Georgia-1861 C.C. (Chuck) Jones -PDF files
- ➋ http://cherokeeregistry.com/etowah_indian_mounds.pdf