

“The Brentwood Library Archaeological Site, 40WM210”

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

The information in this article was compiled primarily from the following:

1. *The Brentwood Library Site: A Mississippian Town on the Little Harpeth River, Williamson County, Tennessee* by Michael C. Moore, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Division of Archaeology, Research Series No. 15, 2005 and Revised 2012.
2. *Archaeological Expeditions Of The Peabody Museum In Middle Tennessee, 1877-1884* by Michael C. Moore and Kevin E. Smith, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, Division of Archaeology, Research Series No. 16, 2009 and Revised 2012.
3. *The Cumberland Stone-Box Burials Of Middle Tennessee* by John T. Dowd *Tennessee Archaeology*, Volume 3 Fall 2008 Number 2.
4. *Mississippian Culture* by Gerald F. Schroedl, University of Tennessee.
5. *Prehistoric American Indians In Tennessee* by Jefferson Chapman, PhD Frank H. McClung Museum, *Research Notes No. 27*, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.



Outside the T. Vance Little Brentwood Room the Brentwood Historic Commission, with funding from the Friends of the Brentwood Library, has on display information about the Mississippian era prehistoric Indian village that was rediscovered when the library was constructed in 1997.

Go by the library before Labor Day and learn how the peoples that occupied this site and surrounding area lived and played.



June 2014

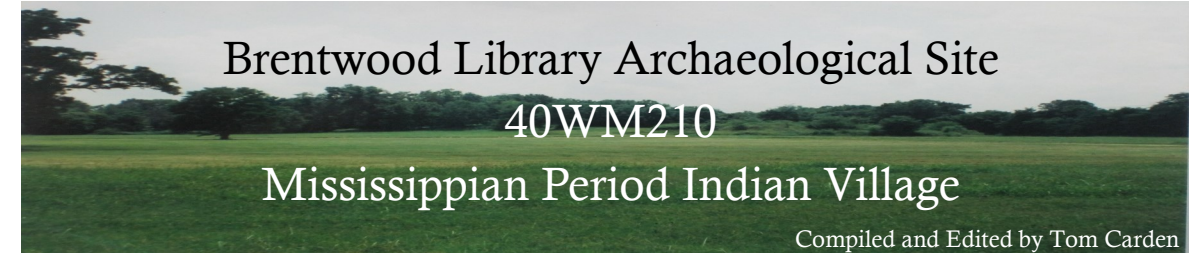
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THE BUGLE



HISTORIC BRENTWOOD

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The Brentwood Library sits atop a Mississippian period Indian village dated to between AD 1298 and AD 1465. At the time of construction in 1997 it was quite a surprise when heavy equipment scraping top soil off the site uncovered a stone box grave. Construction was briefly halted while the Tennessee Division of Archaeology (TDOA) conducted an investigation. Through the Fall of 1997 the TDOA and a private consulting firm hired by the City of Brentwood documented and collected information on over 65 prehistoric structures, including a portion of a palisade surrounding the village, more than 2,500 non-mortuary features and

over 80 grave sites.

Given the size of this discovery, one might wonder how our Mississippian period village site remained hidden from the professional archaeological community. At the time of the discovery there was no known reference to this site in any of the



The first stone box grave found during library construction.

Source: 2005 TDOA report.

antiquarian published academic or scientific record, even though the Middle Tennessee area was extensively explored for such sites during the latter half of the 19th and early 20th century.

During a 1998 research trip to Peabody Museum at Harvard University, to gather information on another Mississippian site, State Archaeologist Michael Moore and Dr. Kevin Smith of MTSU found field notes and diagrams about a site near Brentwood.

“ I was able to take the field in person, and under my immediate direction explorations have been made of...an ancient cemetery in Brentwood, Tenn...”

“ ...on the rising ground upon which stands the house of Dr. W H Jarman, are the remains of what was formerly an extensive cemetery, covering several acres...In the immediate vicinity of Dr. Jarman’s house, I opened eighty graves which had not been disturbed.”

These field notes were written by Frederic W. Putnam, Curator of the Peabody Museum.

Could the Jarman Farm site be the mysterious Mississippian town found the year before during the new library construction? A deed research subsequently established that Dr. William H. Jarman at one time owned the Brentwood Library property. This

confirmation, in combination with the site records from Harvard, provided unequivocal proof that the Brentwood Library site location was in fact the same Jarman Farm site explored by F. W. Putnam in 1882.

So how did Mr. Putnam come to learn

Archæological Discoveries.
Dr. W. H. Jarman, of Brentwood, yesterday brought in a collection of rare and interesting Indian relics, recently unearthed on his place. One of his field-hands, plowing up a piece of ground, run his plowshare under a flat stone. The Doctor observing it, and struck by the peculiar square shape of the stone, had it lifted, and discovered the walls of what proved to be an Indian grave. With his own hands he proceeded carefully to explore it, and in a short time resurrected a number of exceedingly interesting relics of Indian handiwork, consisting of unusually fine specimens of pottery, a dozen very perfect flint arrow-heads, small discoidal stones of a variety not familiar to our Tennessee geology. Some of the specimens of pottery, well preserved, were supplied with ears for hoops or hangers, and others with regularly scooped edges, and as perfectly round as if gauged with a compass. One of the most interesting specimens in the collection was the fragment of a musical or wind instrument, constructed of the bone of some animal, with key-holes as perfectly formed as if executed with a steel implement. These relics were not taken from any of the tumuli or mounds about Brentwood, but from a grave in a flat field near a fine spring. The Doctor has donated them to the museum of the State Historical Society, with the privilege of reserving such specimens as are duplicated in the State Society's collection.

1881 Nashville newspaper, *Daily American*, article.

The Brentwood Historic Commission

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We invite you to join us in our efforts to preserve Brentwood’s past with a donation to the Brentwood Historic Commission. Your donation includes receipt of the Historic Commission’s newsletter, *The Bugle*, and information regarding events and activities.

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| ___Individual | \$ 15 |
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The Brentwood Historic Commission’s activities include the Boiling Spring Academy School Program, the Cool Springs House, the Annual History Bowl, the Brentwood Room at the library, the Ravenswood House, Historic Markers and is dedicated to the study and preservation of Brentwood’s history and culture.

due to its' availability. Practically every stream has a limestone outcrop somewhere along its banks. Such outcrops usually display thin, tabular layers that made them ideal for the native occupants to use as burial materials.



Limestone outcropping along River Park path.
Photo by Tom Carden.

Archaeological Time and the Mississippian Period

Archaeologists divide the time people have been in the Americas into a series of major Periods. Paleoindian Period is a term given to the time when the first peoples who entered, and subsequently inhabited, the American continents during the final glacial episodes of the late Pleistocene period, 10,000+ BC to 8,000 BC.

The Archaic Period is the name given to generalized hunter-gatherers in the American continents from approximately 8,000 BC to 1,000 years BC.

For Eastern North America, the

Woodland Period is used for the time between the Archaic hunter-gatherers and the agriculturalist Mississippians. The major technological advancements during this period were the widespread use of pottery and late in the period bows and arrows replaced the use of spears and atlatls from 1,000 BC to AD 900.

The Mississippian period was the final chapter of human prehistory in Eastern North America, AD 900 to AD 1500. Throughout the Southeast it was the pinnacle of religio-socio-political complexity of the prehistoric Native American societies.

Beginning in the mid 1500s, European incursions into the interior of North America by the Spanish, the French, and the English brought massive change to the Indian cultures. Physical brutality and the introduction of European diseases decimated the native populations. These disruptions broke down the traditional alliances and undermined the social and political order of the native societies.

By the late 1600s we have left prehistory and entered recorded history. In the Southeastern U.S. the story now becomes one of the Cherokee, Yuchi, Shawnee, Creek, Chickasaw, among others and their relationships with Euro-Americans. The ancient societies that preceded them are ancestral to the native peoples of today, however the ethnic and tribal affiliations of these ancient societies are unknown at this time.

about the site? In 1881, Dr. Jarman discovered several stone box graves while plowing. Having explored these graves Dr. Jarman shared his discovery with the Editor of the Daily American, a Nashville newspaper. The newspaper editor ran an article in the September 18, 1881 issue and strongly encouraged Dr. Jarman to contact Mr. Putnam at Harvard.

After exchanging several letters with Dr. Jarman, Putnam arranged to come to Tennessee in May of 1882. Putnam excavated the Jarman Farm between May 26 and June 5, 1882. George Woods served as Putnam's foreman for the excavation and by request continued explorations in December 1882. Mr. Putnam provided a presentation of his exploration results in the 1883 Annual Report to the Peabody Museum Trustees.

Subsequently, the results were published in a *Science* article, titled "Stone Graves of the Cumberland Valley" and an article in the *Kansas City Review of Science*, entitled "The Stone Graves of



A limestone tool used as an ax or weapon.



Human face medallion from a bowl or pipe.



Lug handle pottery vessel.



Notched rim pottery vessel.



Ceramic ear lobe plug.

All artifacts on this page found during 1997 TDOA investigation. Photos by Heather Carden.

Brentwood, Tennessee".

Putnam dug a total of 87 stone-box graves, 33 of which included grave goods or mortuary artifacts (pottery, tools, etc.). He also explored and documented a burnt structure exposed in a gully by natural runoff and erosion. In total Putnam shipped the remains of 110 individuals and over 400 artifacts back to the Peabody Museum. Though this wasn't Putnam's first exploration trip to the Nashville area it was his last.

The 1997 TDOA salvage archaeology effort documented 2,559 non-mortuary features, the majority of which were post holes associated with the 67 structures and the palisade but also included hearths, limestone clusters and pits. In addition over 10,000 artifacts were recovered, including 6,440 ceramic pieces, 1,400 lithic or stone pieces, 1,600 animal bones and many carbonized floral remains.

Sixty-six graves containing 75 individuals were removed by a private consultant and

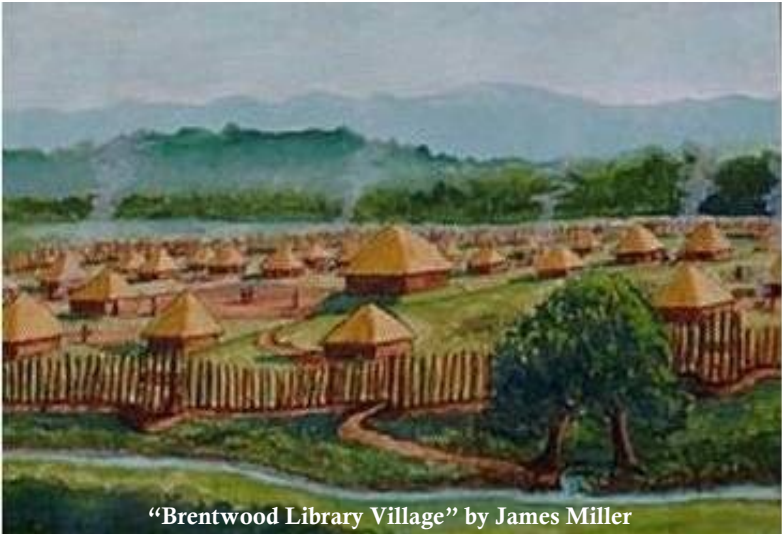
transferred to the TDOA for analysis. Upon completion of the analysis, the Division held these remains for reburial in consultation with the Chickasaw Nation. On June 11, 2004, representatives from the Chickasaw Nation reburied the removed individuals and mortuary artifacts on the Brentwood Library grounds.

Mississippian Culture, Tradition and Society

The late prehistoric societies of the Eastern U.S. dating from AD 900 to AD 1600 comprise the Mississippian “tradition”. At its peak, the Mississippian tradition is characterized by: (1) the construction of earthen platform mounds on which were erected temples, elite residences, and council buildings; (2) the arrangement of mounds and individual household structures around open plazas; (3) increased population and more stable settlements; (4) the emergence of organized chiefdoms; (5) elaborate and well developed religious ceremonialism and symbolism; (6) a dependence upon new and improved strains of corn; and (7) changes in ceramics.

Based on differences in cultural traits, particularly ceramics and mortuary

patterns, distinct Mississippian societies developed across Eastern North America. Increasing social complexity and population density resulted in a socio-political level called chiefdoms. In such a system, social organization was clearly stratified with one’s position defined by hereditary ranking. The chief and his lineage and related lineages were set off from the rest of the people, forming in a sense hereditary nobility. Certain sites became centers from which the chief would



coordinate social, economic, and religious activities. These centers were connected through a web of alliances and were also ranked, with lesser centers subject to a principal chief at a primary town.

Medium towns, like the Brentwood Library site, were often enclosed by a palisade and occupied two to ten acres.

Within the village were square or rectangular wattle and daub houses and their associated work and storage areas for two hundred to six hundred people.

There is evidence that after AD 1450 much of West Tennessee and large parts of the Cumberland and Tennessee valley were either abandoned by Mississippian societies or their settlements were so fundamentally reorganized that occupation is difficult to detect. What might have led to such an occurrence is not known. In East Tennessee and other Mississippian locales, no comparable abandonment pattern is evident.

Site Designation—40WM210

The Smithsonian Institution developed the site number system in the 1930s and 1940s. Smithsonian trinomials are unique identifiers assigned to archaeological sites in most of the U.S.. Most states use trinomials of the form “nnAAnnnn”. They are composed of either one or two digits codes for the state (nn), typically two letter codes for the county within the state (AA), and one or more sequential digits representing the order in which the site was listed in that county (nnnn).

At the start, the Smithsonian registered and assigned the site numbers for each archaeological dig. Now the trinomials are assigned by the individual states. The 48 states then in the union were assigned numbers in alphabetical order. Alaska was

assigned number 49 and Hawaii was assigned number 50 — after those states were admitted to the union. Tennessee is the 40th state alphabetically, WM stands for Williamson County and the Brentwood Library site was the 210th site given a trinomial in our county. Therefore, we have 40WM210 to designate the Mississippian period prehistoric Indian village at the Brentwood Library site.

Stone Box Graves

The Nashville Basin has long been recognized for the stone-box type of burial found on Mississippian period sites. Whether this mode of burial started here or not is a matter of conjecture. But an interesting fact to consider is that thousands of stone-box burials have been recorded in the Nashville area. Stone-box burial is a description often used in the archaeological community for Mississippian period burials. Some archaeologists have used the term for any burial where stone was used to manufacture the grave. A stone-box grave is just what the name implies, a coffin of stone slabs shaped like a box.

Limestone was the most common material used in Middle Tennessee

