

# THE MOUND BUILDERS

Educator's Guidebook



TRAVELLERS REST  
*Plantation & Museum*

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# The Mound Builders

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# **Important Information Regarding Your Visit to Travellers Rest Plantation**

## **We are delighted that you are planning a visit to Travellers Rest Plantation!**

The following information is provided to make your trip as pleasant as possible for all involved. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the Education Department at 615. 832. 8197.

Before your trip to Travellers Rest, please review with your students the purpose of the visit, the objectives of the lesson they are to learn while on site, and the importance of following museum manners.

### **MUSEUM MANNERS – for students participating in the house tour**

Travellers Rest is not merely an old house; it is an historic house museum. Because it is a museum, visitors are asked to follow some simple, but extremely important, rules.

- Please do not touch any items inside the house museum, unless instructed to do so by program staff.
- Please do not bring food or drinks into the museum.
- Please do not chew gum in the museum.
- Please do not take any photographs inside the house museum. Outdoor photography is permitted.
- Please remain with program staff at all times when on the grounds and in the museum. This includes teachers and chaperones as well as students.

### **GROUP SIZE**

Your group will remain together in the same building for the entire program. You will, however, be broken into smaller groups during part of the presentation. Please be prepared to separate into three or four groups of approximately 20 students each.

## **ARRIVAL TIME**

Your reservation time is when your program begins. It should not be the time that your group arrives on site. Because of the way that Travellers Rest's education programs are set up, groups that are not prepared to begin at their designated reservation time are not guaranteed a full program.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Please notify the Travellers Rest Education Department at 615. 832. 8197 immediately if you will be bringing any students with special needs.

## **ADMISSION FEES**

All admission fees should be paid upon your arrival at Travellers Rest. Your program presenter will ask for an accurate count of students and adults included in your group. Please be prepared to provide this information upon your arrival. **All fees (student and adult) should be made with a single payment to qualify for the reduced rate of admission.**

## **CHAPERONES**

Travellers Rest program presenters are responsible for educating the group while it is on site. Teachers and adult chaperones are responsible for the behavior and safety of the group while at Travellers Rest. If any students do not observe museum manners or if they become discipline problems, chaperones will be expected to remove them from the group and return them to the bus.

## **PICNICS**

Groups participating in Travellers Rest's educational programs are welcome to picnic on the grounds immediately preceding or following their visits. There are a few picnic tables on site, and groups may sit on the grass. We do, however, ask that you bring garbage bags with you and carry the garbage bags to the dumpsters at the back of the property. In essence, please leave the site as you found it.

## **TRAVELLERS REST**

### **A Thousand Years of Tennessee History**

As visitors enter the gates of Travellers Rest and ride up the winding, tree-lined drive, they are transported back to the earliest years of state and local history. Extensive archaeological work on the property has centered on evidence of a prehistoric Native American village believed to be approximately 900 years old. These early residents were called Mississippian Indians and are also known as the Stone Box Builders because they buried their dead in stone box graves. They were mound builders and chose the area around Travellers Rest for its fertile soil and abundant fresh water sources.

In 1799, Tennessee was a fledgling state, and Nashville was very much a frontier town. At that time, a young lawyer named John Overton built a white, clapboard, Federal-style home upon the remains of the ancient village. As evidence of earlier people was unearthed during construction, Overton was prompted to name his home "Golgotha," the Biblical term meaning "hill of skulls." Golgotha, later renamed Travellers Rest, was a veritable mansion in the wilderness.

John Overton came to Tennessee from Kentucky to establish a law practice, and he went on to serve the state in many capacities. He aided in the establishment of a state bank, became a Superior Court judge, served on the Tennessee Supreme Court, authored a series of books on Tennessee land law, and founded the Cumberland Masonic Lodge. He later became the wealthiest man and largest landowner in the state, and he joined with Andrew Jackson and General James Winchester to found and develop the city of Memphis, Tennessee. Overton was also a political power broker, and he guided the career of his lifelong friend, Andrew Jackson, to the White House in 1828.

Although Overton's career involved a great deal of travel, he did spend much of 1808 at Travellers Rest. That year, he built a two-room addition to the house to accommodate law clerks and students. During this period, he also devoted more attention to the development of his plantation. Travellers Rest grew to over 2300 acres during the Judge's lifetime and boasted fields of cotton and tobacco, as well as groves of peach, apple, and pear trees. The Judge owned over fifty slaves to help run the plantation, and those individuals are listed by name in Overton's death inventory.

In 1820, at age 54, Judge Overton married Mary McConnell White May, a 38-year-old widow with five children. Within a short time, three Overton children were born—Ann, John Jr., and Elizabeth. The four-room house was now home to a large family, and in 1828, a more elegant two-story red brick wing and gallery were added. The front of the home was re-oriented to the gallery side.

Like most women of the period, Mary stayed at home while her husband travelled, shouldering the myriad responsibilities that fell to the mistress of a plantation. Mary was well known for her medicinal and herbal knowledge and was often called upon to nurse her family, neighbors, and slaves. In an era when half of all children died before their tenth birthdays, the fact that all eight of her children survived to adulthood seems to corroborate reports of her medical expertise.

John Overton died at Travellers Rest in 1833, leaving Mary a widow again. Mary remained as head of the family until her death in 1862, when the Overtons' son, John Jr., took over the helm of the estate.

The Civil War came to Nashville during John Overton, Jr.'s time as master at Travellers Rest. The war affected everyone in Nashville, and the Overtons were no exception. Travellers Rest served as headquarters for General John Bell Hood for 13 days in December 1864, following the Battle of Franklin. During that time, plans for the ill-fated Battle of Nashville—part of which was fought in the Overtons' peach orchard—were conceived.

Members of the Overton family continued to reside at Travellers Rest until 1946. The house and grounds were rescued from threatened demolition in 1954 by The National Society of The Colonial Dames in the State of Tennessee (NSCDA-TN).

# The Mound Builders



# THE MOUND BUILDERS

## Program Activities

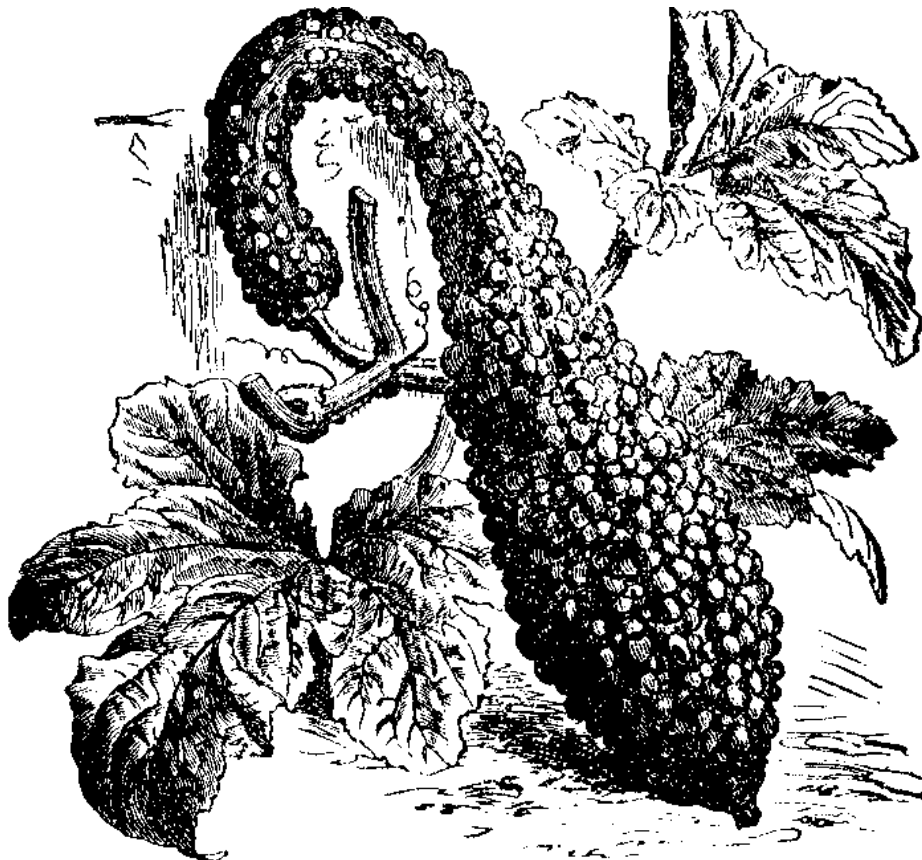
During their program, students will

- **Listen to an Informational Story** (five minutes)  
Program staff will share the story of a young Native American girl who might have lived on the land now known as Travellers Rest.
- **View and Share Reproduced Artifacts** (thirty minutes)  
Young people will see examples of the types of items the Mississippian Indians used in their daily lives.
- **View a Slide Show** (ten minutes)  
Students will have the opportunity to view slides taken during an archaeological dig at Travellers Rest.
- **Taste Foods** (five minutes)  
Participants will enjoy some of the treats that Native Americans would have eaten — sunflower seeds and dried meat.
- **Make Clay Gorgets** (ten minutes)  
Each student will make a clay gorget (Native American jewelry and armor) to take home.
- **Participate in the Green Corn Dance** (ten minutes)  
Put on your dancing shoes!  
Everyone will participate in the “Green Corn Dance.”

\*\*Please note: All program activity times are approximate.

# The Mound Builders

## Pre-Visit Information & Activity



# The Mound Builders

## Pre- and Post-Test **DIRECTIONS**

### **\*\*\*Note to Teachers\*\*\***

Please photocopy and administer to your students the quiz on page 9 before and after participating in **The Mound Builders** education program at Travellers Rest Plantation.

*We would greatly appreciate it if you would share your class's test results with us. We frequently use student comments and program statistics in public relations materials and funding requests.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# The Mound Builders

Directions: Circle TRUE or FALSE to answer each question.

- |  |      |       |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. Mississippian Indians were prehistoric Native Americans.              | TRUE | FALSE |
| 2. Mississippian Indians were named for the state of Mississippi.        | TRUE | FALSE |
| 3. Travellers Rest was the site of a Mississippian Indian village.       | TRUE | FALSE |
| 4. Mississippian Indians are alive today.                                | TRUE | FALSE |
| 5. Stone boxes were never used as graves by the Mississippian Indians.   | TRUE | FALSE |
| 6. Mississippian Indians never wore jewelry.                             | TRUE | FALSE |
| 7. Corn, squash, and beans were part of the Mississippian Indians' diet. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 8. Skunk was the Mississippian Indians' favorite food.                   | TRUE | FALSE |

# The Mound Builders

## KEY

- |  |      |       |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. Mississippian Indians were prehistoric Native Americans.              | TRUE | FALSE |
| 2. Mississippian Indians were named for the state of Mississippi.        | TRUE | FALSE |
| 3. Travellers Rest was the site of a Mississippian Indian village.       | TRUE | FALSE |
| 4. Mississippian Indians are alive today.                                | TRUE | FALSE |
| 5. Stone boxes were never used as graves by the Mississippian Indians.   | TRUE | FALSE |
| 6. Mississippian Indians never wore jewelry.                             | TRUE | FALSE |
| 7. Corn, squash, and beans were part of the Mississippian Indians' diet. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 8. Skunk was the Mississippian Indians' favorite food.                   | TRUE | FALSE |

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Glossary**

**archaeology** – scientific study of past human cultures through analysis of material remains left behind

**archaeologist** – social scientist who studies ancient peoples through excavation

**artifact** – object made, shaped, or used by humans

**culture** – set of learned beliefs, values, and behaviors shared by the members of a society

**gorget** – Mississippian Indian jewelry worn around the neck both as a decorative and a defensive piece

**Mississippian Indians** – prehistoric Native Americans who lived from approximately 800 to 1500 CE (Common Era)

**shard** – broken piece, especially of pottery

**sinew** – tendon, often used by Mississippian Indians as thread

Many definitions taken from Webster's *New World Dictionary*, 1995 edition

# **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

## **The Mound Builders: The Mississippian Indians**

### **STORY OF THE MISSISSIPPIAN INDIANS**

40,000 years ago, following migrating animal herds, humans crossed the Bering Strait from Asia into North America. Once on the continent, these groups of early humans spread fan-like to the southeast and southwest, eventually making their way to the area now known as Tennessee. These people settled in river valleys, where food and water were plentiful. The Mississippian Indians lived from the period 800 to 1500 CE (Common Era) and were one of the groups of prehistoric Native Americans. They are considered prehistoric because they lived before the era of European settlement, and they had no written language of their own.

The Mississippian Indians were among the prehistoric peoples that settled along the Mississippi River because of the fertile soil located there, and they are named for the areas in which they lived.



## MISSISSIPPIANS' DAILY LIVES

The Mississippian Indians lived off the land, and they were the first Native Americans whose culture was based on an agricultural system. The Mississippians' staple crops were beans, corn, and squash.

These Native Americans also hunted the abundant wildlife of the Mississippi Valley using weapons fashioned from materials in their surroundings. Pieces of stone were converted into spearpoints and arrowheads, and sticks and plant fibers became bows and strings. Using these handmade weapons, the Mississippian Indians hunted animals such as bear, buffalo, deer, elk, rabbit, and squirrel. The only type of animal that the Mississippians did not actively hunt was the one with the odiferous defense mechanism — the skunk.

Because of the time and energy the Mississippians expended on hunting animals, they utilized as much of the animals as possible. After the flesh was eaten as meat, the skin was used as clothing, the teeth and fur were used as adornments, and the bones were fashioned into tools and household items. The Mississippian Indians also used the skins and furs of larger animals to cover themselves while they slept.



# LESSON

## What Do Those Words Mean, Anyway?

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

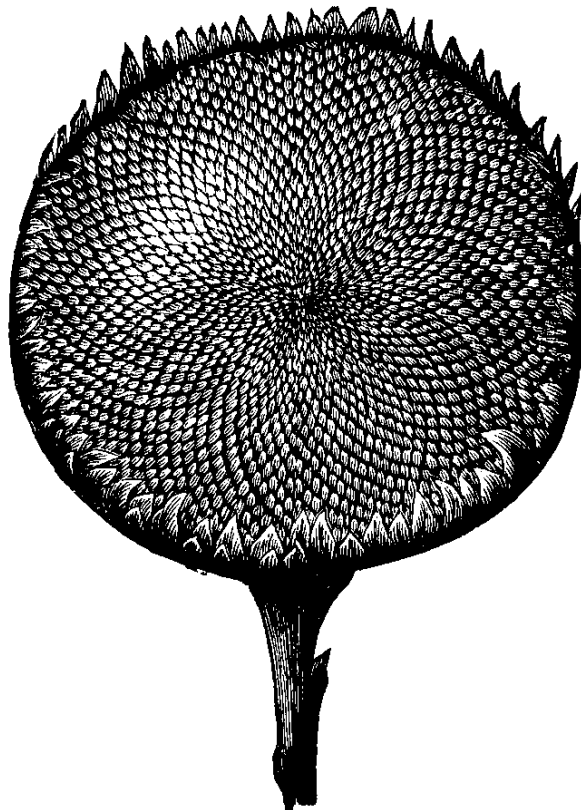
The learner will define key vocabulary words that will be used during **The Mound Builders** program. The learner will make a vocabulary book in which to record and define the given terms.

### SUMMARY

**The Mound Builders** program includes terminology with which some students may not be familiar: **awl**, **ceremony**, **mound**, and **prehistoric**. An understanding of these terms is critical to the students' appreciation of their program. An **awl** is a small tool used for preparing animals hides and punching holes in them. A **ceremony** is a set of formal acts used for a particular reason, especially religious rites. A **mound** is a pile of dirt or soil. Mounds can be natural or human-made, and students may be familiar with baseball pitchers' mounds. **Prehistoric** is an adjective that refers to matters related to the time before recorded history. The Mississippian Indians were prehistoric Native Americans because they had no written language (and could not, therefore, record their history) and because they existed before European settlement in this country (Europeans documented the activities and cultures of Native Americans in their written histories).

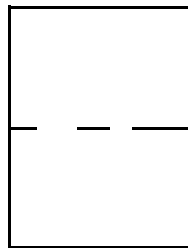
## ACTIVITY

1. Have each student make a vocabulary book using colored copy paper or construction paper (instructions are on page 16).
2. After the students have made their vocabulary books, have them write one vocabulary word on each of the four cut strips: “awl,” “ceremony,” “mound,” and “prehistoric.”
3. Each student should locate the definitions to all four of the vocabulary words, either using the Internet or a dictionary.
4. Once the students have found the definitions, they should write them in their vocabulary books behind the appropriate vocabulary word strips.
5. The back side of the vocabulary book can be used for the student’s name, the class, and the date.

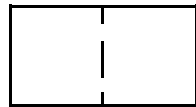


**LARGE VOCABULARY BOOK**  
**From Dinah Zike's *Big Book of Books and Activities***  
(used with permission)

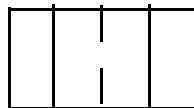
1. Fold an 8 ½ x 11" sheet of paper in half, horizontally (see drawing).



2. Once the paper has been folded horizontally, fold it again vertically (see drawing).



3. Carefully cut one half of the horizontal fold into four roughly-equal strips. The vertical fold you just made should serve as the divider between strips two and three (see drawing).



4. You should now have four strips equal to half the length of the paper, backed with the other half of the page in a solid piece.

# The Mound Builders

## Post-Visit Activity



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## HOW MUCH DO YOU REMEMBER?

Using the material you learned during **The Mound Builders**, answer the following questions about the Mississippian Indians. After you have answered the questions, find your answers in the word puzzle on the next page.

The Mississippian Indians are called that because they lived along the \_\_\_\_\_ River.

\_\_\_\_\_ were very valuable to the Mississippian Indians because they had to be brought to Tennessee from the seashore.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the study of humans from long ago and is the way we know so much about the Mississippian Indians.

Mississippian Indians used \_\_\_\_\_ antlers as rakes in their fields.

Travellers Rest is built on a Mississippian Indian burial \_\_\_\_\_ .

The \_\_\_\_\_ was the only type of animal the Mississippian Indians would not hunt because of its odor.

Mississippian Indians used rocks to grind \_\_\_\_\_ into meal for use as food.

\_\_\_\_\_ meat was the Mississippian Indians' favorite food, and boys would often sleep under its skin.

The Mississippian Indians were \_\_\_\_\_ . They were the first Native Americans to grow their own food.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Z P Q N A N B E N R L I D V R E N M S K  
W T E I O P E L K V Q X N M O Z G T T Y  
U F F P O J A P L H W M P S V L P L S D  
I R B D Q M R G B Q B W O D M O W Q O S  
K N M M R N E I X W V E M O U N D P D X  
A M C J T L U K A B J Q N Q B S N V F D  
S K W F Y A I H Z V E I M I J M P L E Z  
H L C O R N S R S I U S S O E D Q W K L  
E O L R U R D E S E Z D W B R B K L M N  
L W P W N U O U I C A I J N T V B N V B  
L Q S Q J K E D S X S K U N K W W E R Y  
S B T D S P Q S S Z Q O I V W Q S D E Q  
O F W U W L I Q I L K P B C M E I E J A  
I H M N E E K M P O A L N B E R O Q K L  
W K Z M K U L Q P E B M Q Q H P H J D M  
M L X R K J W K I M H E W G W N W H N E  
S D A N C E Q O S K L W L C R O L N V B  
N C J E L K M C B Q M Q S D N I B M B W  
S V K R U L E V U G S M F A R M E R S P  
A R C H A E O L O G Y D W N Y D S U M O

# KEY

## HOW MUCH DO YOU REMEMBER?

Using the material you learned during **The Mound Builders**, answer the following questions about the Mississippian Indians. After you have answered the questions, find your answers in the word puzzle on the next page.

The Mississippian Indians are called that because they lived along the M I S S I S S I P P I River.

S H E L L S were very valuable to the Mississippian Indians because they had to be brought to Tennessee from the seashore.

A R C H A E O L O G Y is the study of humans from long ago and is the way we know so much about the Mississippian Indians.

Mississippian Indians at Travellers Rest used E L K antlers as rakes in their fields.

Travellers Rest is built on a Mississippian Indian burial M O U N D .

The S K U N K was the only type of animal the Mississippian Indians would not hunt because of their odor.

Mississippian Indians used rocks to grind C O R N into meal for use as food.

B E A R meat was the Mississippian Indians' favorite food, and boys would often sleep under its skin.

The Mississippian Indians were F A R M E R S . They were the first Native Americans to grow their own food.

# KEY

Z P Q N A N **B** E N R L I D V R E N M S K  
W T E I O P **E** L K V Q X N M O Z G T T Y  
U F F P O J **A** P L H W M P S V L P L S D  
I R B D Q M **R** G B Q B W O D M O W Q O S  
K N M M R N E I X W V E **M O U N D** P D X  
A M C J T L U K **M** B J Q N Q B S N V F D  
**S** K W F Y A I H I V E I M I J M P L E Z  
H L **C O R N** S R S I U S S O E D Q W K L  
E O L R U R D E S E Z D W B R B K L M N  
L W P W N U O U I C A I J N T V B N V B  
L Q S Q J K E D S X **S K U N K** W W E R Y  
**S** B T D S P Q S S Z Q O I V W Q S D E Q  
O F W U W L I Q I L K P B C M E I E J A  
I H M N E E K M P O A L N B E R O Q K L  
W K Z M K U L Q P E B M Q Q H P H J D M  
M L X R K J W K **I** M H E W G W N W H N E  
S D A N C E Q O S K L W L C R O L N V B  
N C J **E L K** M C B Q M Q S D N I B M B W  
S V K R U L E V U G S M **F A R M E R S** P  
**A R C H A E O L O G Y** D W N Y D S U M O

# The Mound Builders

## Appendix



# The Mound Builders

## Evaluation **DIRECTIONS**

### **\*\*\*Note to Teachers\*\*\***

Please photocopy pages 24, 25, & 26. Fill out the teacher evaluation and distribute copies of the student evaluation to the young people for them to complete. Once all the evaluations have been prepared, please return them to:

**Education Department  
Travellers Rest Plantation  
636 Farrell Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37220**

*We frequently use student comments and program statistics  
in public relations materials and funding requests.*

**Travellers Rest Plantation  
Education Programs**

**TEACHER EVALUATION FORM  
THE MOUND BUILDERS**

	<b>EXCELLENT</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	<b>FAIR</b>	<b>POOR</b>	<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
Reservation Process					
Timeliness of Reservation Confirmation					
Quality of Pre-Visit Materials					
Knowledge Level of Program Presenters					
Relevance of Educational Program to Classroom Curriculum					
Quality of Post-Visit Materials					
<b>OVERALL QUALITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE</b>					

	<b>IMPORTANT</b>	<b>SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT</b>	<b>NOT IMPORTANT</b>	<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>
Educational Materials to Prepare Classes for Your Visit				
Subsidized Transportation Costs				
Hands-On Activities				
Educational Materials to Follow Up Your Visit				

What do you see as the greatest strengths of **The Mound Builders** program?

What do you see as the greatest weaknesses of **The Mound Builders** program?

What other kinds of educational programs would you like to see offered by Travellers Rest?

Other comments

In which type of school do you teach?  
Home                      Parochial                      Private                      Public

Was this the first time you participated in Travellers Rest's education programs?  
Yes                      No

Will you participate in Travellers Rest's education programs in the future?  
Yes                      No

Will you recommend Travellers Rest's education programs to your colleagues?  
Yes                      No

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this program evaluation.  
Your feedback and comments are important to us.**

**Travellers Rest Plantation  
Education Programs**

**STUDENT EVALUATION FORM  
The Mound Builders**

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Have you ever heard of Travellers Rest before?		
Did you know anything about the Mississippian Indians before the program?		
Did you learn anything during <b>The Mound Builders</b> program?		
Name one thing you learned.		
Name one thing about Mississippian Indians you would like to learn more about — in the library, on the Internet, or in your classroom.		
Did you enjoy <b>The Mound Builders</b> program?		