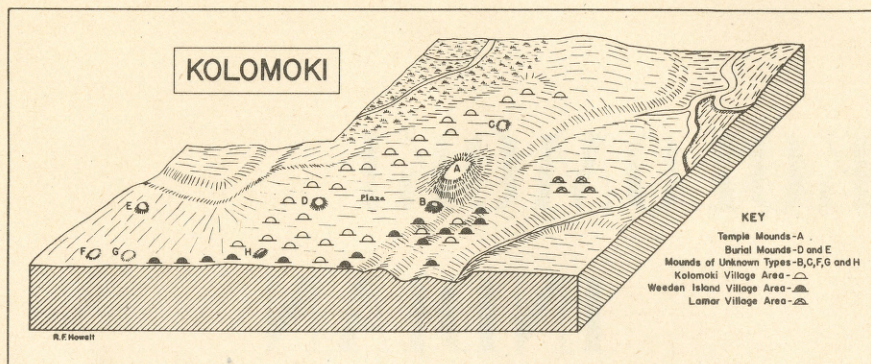


**KOLOMOKI
INDIAN
MOUNDS**



Mound "A"



The visitor to Kolomoki today is impressed, perhaps a little awed, by the great temple mound which looms up over the east end of the site. A bit later, some of the smaller mounds catch his eye, impressive too although small compared to the great mound. Later still, wandering around the fields north, west, and south of the great mound, he sees the pieces of pottery, flint chips, and perhaps arrowheads lying on the surface. All of this is interesting, but a little dead. With a bit of imagination though, and the information which this booklet will try to give you, the scene will come to life.

Hundreds of years ago, for a span of hundreds more years, the temple mound of Kolomoki, with its surrounding villages, burial mounds, and its ceremonial plaza, was a center of population and activity equaled in few other times and places in North America. Of this, and a bit more of the story, we are sure. After two seasons of excavation, one in the old village areas and one in one of the smaller mounds, we are able to piece together something of the story that the soil of Kolomoki holds for us. Not all, for much is left to do and future work may change some of our ideas.

Nevertheless, we believe that the following information is true, and will help you to understand better what you have seen.

The first Indian settlement of which we are sure at this site took place some time in the twelfth century, 1100-1200 A.D. This group was the northernmost outpost of a larger tribe, known to Archaeologists as the Weeden Island tribe. Most of the mounds and villages of this group were on the northwest coast of Florida, from Tampa Bay to Pensacola. Undoubtedly they come to Kolomoki up the Apalachicola and Chattahoochee Rivers, since their

mounds and village sites are known, and in some cases have been excavated, along the banks of these rivers. There is little evidence however to indicate that they ever got much north of Kolomoki.

The village of this tribe at Kolomoki was nearly a mile long, the thatched houses stretching out from just south of the great mound to just south of mound E, as the symbols on the map inside the front cover indicate. In width, this long stretched out village seems to have varied from fifty to one hundred and fifty yards. The occasional piece of pottery you may have noticed on the surface of the ground with traces of red paint on one side, or lines scratched into the clay to form a design, were made by this group.

Mound E, was a burial mound of this group. It has been excavated, the remains of the Indians and pottery buried under it cleaned and restored. All of the objects are lying where they were placed by the Indians. This mound, now a permanent exhibit, is open for your inspection.

Related to the Weeden Island tribe in some way, although certainly a totally distinct group during one period of time, was another tribe now known as the Kolomoki culture. Almost certainly this group lived there after the Weeden Island tribe, probably following them and staying on until the end of the thirteenth century.

The Kolomoki tribe was almost certainly the group which built and used the great Temple Mound and the plaza in front of it. As the name indicates, this mound and others of the type in southeastern United States were built as bases for temples, not for burial purposes, nor watchtowers, nor fortifications. When in use, we suppose that the red clay surface of this mound was kept clean and smooth. With the temple on top, it must have been a magnificent sight. Almost certainly, it was the religious center for a large area, and Indians came to special ceremonies from many miles away.

The village of this group was larger than that of the Weeden Island tribe. As the map inside the front cover will show you, it formed a large U, with the open side, Mound A in its center, facing Little Kolomoki Creek. The refuse deposits of this group, under the surface of the ground now, are very large and contain great amounts of pottery fragments, pieces of animal bone, charcoal, flint chips, and sometimes arrowheads. A trench five feet wide and thirty feet long, through one of these deposits which was two feet thick, produced over three thousand pieces of pottery. Pottery fragments you may have noticed on the ground, bearing elaborate, beautifully executed stamped designs were made by this group.

Considering the size of the great mound and the extent of Kolomoki village deposits, as well as other evidence, it appears probable that two or three thousand people lived in the Kolomoki village.

Apparently, the site of Kolomoki was abandoned toward the end of the thirteenth century, for reasons we do not know at all. Perhaps future work in this region will give us some of the answers.

The last group to live here, after several centuries of abandonment, was a band of the Lamar tribe. Almost certainly they were the ancestors of one of the groups later forming the Creek Confederacy. As with the Creek, they probably did not know who built the mounds, and regarded them with superstitious awe. A small band of this tribe lived on the slopes of Little Kolomoki Creek, overlooking the "boiling spring" now beneath the dam, sometime in the 16th century. This was a very small group, their refuse occurring over an area of only fifty yards or so.

Their pottery, as that of the Kolomoki tribe, was mostly decorated with Stamped designs. The stamps were poorly made however, and were not pressed into the clay with much care. The vessels were larger than either Kolomoki or Weeden Island vessels, and were of different shapes.

All of these groups lived in houses with grass thatched roofs and walls which were either thatched or plastered with mud. Some of these may have had beds built in against the walls. However, the houses of each of the three groups would have been slightly different from those of the other groups. The same may be said of their tools, weapons, and ornaments.

Because some of the white men, French, Spanish and English, who first visited this area have left us descriptions, we are sure that differences in pottery, houses, arrowheads, and so on also indicate differences in non-material things. For example, the political organization and religion of the Weeden Island and Kolomoki groups must have been different. Perhaps the Weeden Island tribe was ruled by a council of elders and the Kolomoki by hereditary chiefs or priests.

The Great Mound, as we have said, was a temple mound, built solely as the base for a temple. We are not so sure of the purposes of some of the smaller mounds. Mound E of course has been excavated and is, as was stated earlier, a Weeden Island Burial Mound. Mound D, which looks a good deal like it, may be another Weeden Island Burial Mound, a Kolomoki Burial Mound, or a smaller temple mound. The other mounds shown on the map, as well as still other equally small mounds in the neighborhood, are mysteries whose solution will be apparent only on proper and complete excavation.