

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Grave Creek Mound

and or common Grave Creek Mound

2. Location

street & number Ninth Street and Tomlinson Avenue not for publication

city, town Moundsville vicinity of

state West Virginia code 54 county Marshall code 051

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name State of West Virginia, Department of Natural Resources

street & number Capitol Complex

city, town Charleston vicinity of state West Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Marshall County Courthouse Deed Book 406, Page 299

street & number Seventh Street

city, town Moundsville state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1966 federal state county local

depository for survey records West Virginia Department of Culture and History

city, town Charleston state West Virginia

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet Owner of Property

Item number 4

Page 1

Owner of Property

Mary Susan Burke
524 Ninth Street
Moundsville, West Virginia 26041

Chief Elected Municipal Officials

(1)

Dorothy Durig, Mayor
City Building
Sixth Street
Moundsville, West Virginia 26041

(2)

James Williams, City Manager
City Building
Sixth Street
Moundsville, West Virginia 26041

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Grave Creek Mound, located between Eighth and Tenth streets in Moundsville, West Virginia, appears today much as it did when first viewed by Euro-americans approximately two hundred years ago. In numerous early accounts, the structure was described as a truncated cone marked by a shallow, central concavity. The observed dimensions of the mound ranged from 60-100 feet in height and 180-300 feet in diameter. Some, like Captain Meriwether Lewis in 1803¹, mentioned the existence of a shallow ditch or moat around the base of the mound and a passageway or two across the ditch. Other observers of the period noted the absence of such a ditch.

Today, after minimal erosion, the mound stands approximately 62 feet high and 240 feet in diameter. A series of thirteen exploratory trenches excavated in 1975-76 by the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey (Figure 1) confirmed the existence of a roughly 40 foot wide x 4-5 foot deep moat probably circumscribing the base of the mound and the presence of at least one passageway across the moat on the south side.

Early historical accounts document that Grave Creek Mound was the focal point of an extensive network of mounds and interconnecting earthworks scattered across the 2000 acre Ohio River terrace known as Moundsville Bottom (or also Grave Creek Flats). Unfortunately, the few known references to the lesser features were vague and lacking in detail, and by the early 19th century many of the structures had already been razed.

The most authoritative, known records of the mound complex were published between 1845-51 by scholar and anthropologist Henry R. Schoolcraft who visited the site in 1843. His map of the Grave Creek Mound area (Figure 2)² depicts the relative proximity of the large mound to smaller mounds and remnants of linear earthworks. All traces of these earthworks immediately surrounding Grave Creek Mound have disappeared.

Despite the considerable attention focused upon the mound throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, physical impact on the mound has been minimal over the years. In 1838 amateur archaeologists opened two horizontal shafts and one vertical shaft to the core of the mound revealing two large timbered burial vaults (Figure 3). In addition to the discovery of three individual skeletons within these tombs, an assortment of grave items was also found including thousands of shell beads, five copper bracelets, assorted mica objects, and two gorgets. With the exception of a cranial cap from one of the skeletons, all of the finds from the 1838 excavation have disappeared.

After 1838 no archaeological work was conducted at the site until 1975 when the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey excavated the exploratory trenches at the base of the mound. At the same time thirteen core samples were extracted from the

¹In Hemmings, E. Thomas, "Investigations at Grave Creek Mound 1975-76: A Sequence for Mound and Moat Construction," West Virginia Archaeologist 36 (Fall 1984):10.

²Schoolcraft, Henry R. Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Conditions, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Company 1851.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description Item number 7 Page 1

mound-fill to obtain further information regarding the mound construction and the Adena culture, which is believed to be the culture of the mound builders. As a result of the core sampling, it was postulated that the mound, radiocarbon dated at 200 B.C., was not constructed in two distinct building phases as previously believed but rather was the product of continuous building over a century or more.

Aside from these archaeological incursions, the mound has sustained few other noticeable changes. Between 1838 and 1909 three structures were erected atop the mound: a three story "observatory" in ca. 1843 (Figure 4), a saloon in 1860, and later a dance platform. Each of these structures was subsequently removed. In 1909 the State of West Virginia purchased the mound. Soon after the state purchase, the depression in the mound apex was filled and leveled and grass and shrubbery were planted on the surface to minimize erosion. Later a retaining wall was constructed against the western edge of the mound to provide support where a small section was cut away during construction of Tomlinson Avenue.

Between 1945-52, under the leadership of Delf Norona (founder of the West Virginia Archaeological Society), a small stone museum was constructed at the foot of the mound. Two other small buildings were similarly constructed near the base although one has recently been razed. The state has erected a stone parapet on the top of the mound as well as a stone spiral stairway from the base to the mound apex. Further, the mound has been enclosed by a metal picket fence to inhibit vandalism, and some trees surrounding the mound have been removed to enhance its visibility.

Since establishing the mound site as a state park in 1967, more of the surrounding lands have been acquired by the state and the existing dwellings removed to showcase the mound in a more natural setting. Within the park but immediately outside the proposed landmark boundaries is the recently constructed Delf Norona Museum which focuses on Grave Creek Mound and on the Adena presence in the Upper Ohio Valley.

At present, the non-contributing features associated with the mound and contained within the landmark boundaries are listed below (Refer to Map "A" and photographs). All represent 20th century alterations of minimal impact to the landmark.

1. Two small single story stone buildings are located at the toe of the mound on the south and southwest sides. The larger structure, measuring approximately 49' x 28' represents the previous museum and gift shop. The smaller building is approximately one-half the size of the old museum. Both buildings are erected atop the moat area and may extend several feet into the moat fill.
2. A spiral stairway constructed of stone slabs, ca. two feet wide, extends from the foot of the mound to the summit.
3. A concrete sidewalk, approximately three feet wide and extending over a minute portion of the buried moat, leads from the present museum to the base of the spiral staircase.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

Page 2

4. A low, stone parapet wall, approximately 2½' high x 1½' wide, circumscribes the flat area of the mound apex.
5. Bordering the eastern edge of Tomlinson Avenue is a section of metal picket fencing which traverses a small portion of the mound and moat. This protective fence encircles the entire mound but the majority of it is located outside the landmark boundary.
6. A stone retaining wall abuts the mound along the eastern edge of Tomlinson Avenue where a small section of the mound was exised during construction of the roadway.
7. Tomlinson Avenue and Ninth Street appear to cover a small eastern section of the moat which may exist undisturbed beneath the asphalt road surface. Archaeological testing to establish the presence of the moat was, however, prohibited in this area.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
X prehistoric	X archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

Specific dates ca. 300 B.C.-200 B.C. **Builder Architect** Prehistoric Adena Culture

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Grave Creek Mound ranks not only as the largest, most famous earthwork of the Adena culture in America but also as the largest conical earth mound in the New World and one of the largest mortuary mounds in the entire world.¹ Within the context of Adena culture, it also represents one of the few surviving earthworks of the imposing Grave Creek ceremonial complex of the Upper Ohio Valley. The partial excavation of the mound in 1838 was undoubtedly the most ambitious archaeological enterprise of its time in the United States. The notoriety of the excavation coupled with the immense size of the mound contributed heavily to the 19th century myth of a highly superior race of people which preceded the known Native American tribes. The excavation also reportedly yielded an inscribed stone which sparked national as well as international controversy although it was later regarded as one of America's great hoaxes.

The prehistoric Adena culture, which flourished from about 1000 B.C.-A.D. 1, occupied a widely diffused area of the Ohio Valley embracing parts of Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Peripherally, its influence spread as far as the Delmarva Peninsula and even to New Brunswick, Canada. Although credited with the development of agriculture in one section of the United States, the Adena people are most known for their elaborate "cult of the dead." Within their core area of occupation - the Middle and Upper Ohio Valley - they established a variety of mortuary complexes characterized by numerous clustered mounds and geometric earthworks. One such major ceremonial center sprang up in the Grave Creek area of West Virginia (within present day Moundsville).

With the commencement of Euroamerican settlement in the region during the late 18th and early 19th centuries came the first written accounts of the spectacular array of earthen structures. But in view of the awesome size of Grave Creek Mound, little attention was focused on the lesser structures. Soon the destructive forces of settlement eliminated all but a few of the hundreds of earthworks which were spread across the roughly 2000 acre terrace known as Grave Creek Flats. At present, Grave Creek Mound stands alone on the Flats as testimony to the once great ceremonial complex which marked the climax of Adena culture in the Upper Ohio Valley.

Since the late 1700s Grave Creek Mound has been one of America's most popular antiquities having found its way into scores of American and European antiquarian literary contributions. As scholar E. G. Squier wrote in 1847, ". . . no chapter in American

¹Hemmings, E. Thomas, "Investigations at Grave Creek Mound 1975-76: A Sequence for Mound and Moat Construction," West Virginia Archaeologist 36 (Fall 1984):3.

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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet Significance Item number 8 Page 1

antiquities was complete in which it (Grave Creek Mound) did not occupy a conspicuous place."²

The excavation of the mound in 1838, though employing questionable methods, was nonetheless a significant archaeological undertaking for it represented the first investigation of an earthwork which would later be ascribed to the Adena culture. It was likely the most extensive archaeological project in the history of the United States to that time.

The discovery of the two massive log tombs together with their contents was hailed as a remarkable discovery and had a profound impact on North American archaeology and anthropology. One of the skulls from the mound (the only extant item from the 1838 excavation and now housed in the Delf Norona Museum in Moundsville) was recreated by Samuel G. Morton in his Crania Americana in 1839.³ From his studies came the first serious attempt to write about the physical anthropology of Native Americans. The prevailing attitude at the time, however, was that the mound builders were too highly civilized (as evidenced by their great earthworks) to have been related to the Native Americans of the 19th century.

Such a myth was bolstered by the fact that an inscribed stone tablet depicting an alphabet-like script was supposedly recovered from the upper burial vault of the mound during the 1838 excavation. The discovery prompted many American and European scholars, as well as hundreds of other individuals, to provide an interpretation of the cryptic message which many believed was linked to ancient Old World civilizations. Ethnologist and scholar Henry R. Schoolcraft even classified the individual characters as corresponding with various ancient alphabets such as ancient Greek, Etruscan, Phoenician, Old British, etc.⁴ Over time the controversy subsided as archaeologists came to regard the stone as a hoax.

Undoubtedly, Grave Creek Mound played an integral role not only in shaping America's prehistoric past but also in stimulating a national awareness and appreciation of its antiquities.

²Squier, E.G. Observations on the Aboriginal Monuments of the Mississippi Valley. From the second volume of the transactions of the American Ethnological Society (New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1847), p. 75.

³In Norona, Delf. Moundsville's Mammoth Mound. Special Publication No. 6 of the West Virginia Archaeological Society. (Moundsville, West Virginia, 1962), p. 38.

⁴Ibid., p. 40.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approximately 2.1 acres

Quadrangle name Moundsville, West Virginia-Ohio

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	7	5	2	1	7	4	0	4	4	1	8	4	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

1	7	5	2	1	8	5	0	4	4	1	8	4	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

1	7	5	2	1	7	4	0	4	4	1	8	3	1	0
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D

1	7	5	2	1	8	5	0	4	4	1	8	3	1	0
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E

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Denise L. Grantz

organization NPW Consultants, Inc.

date October 15, 1985

street & number R.D. 6, Box 280

telephone (412) 438-0686

city or town Uniontown

state Pennsylvania 15401

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Major Bibliographical Ref. Item number 9 Page 1

Dragoo, Don W. "Mounds for the Dead." Annals of Carnegie Museum, Vol. 37, Pittsburgh, 1963.

Fowler, Daniel B. , Hemmings, E. Thomas, and Gary R. Wilkens. "Some Recent Additions to Adena Archaeology in West Virginia." Archaeology of Eastern North America, Vol. 4 (Winter 1976): 110-121.

Hemmings, E. Thomas. "Investigations at Grave Creek Mound 1975-76: A Sequence for Mound and Moat Construction." West Virginia Archaeologist 36 (Fall 1984).

Norona, Delf. "Dimensions of Moundsville's Mammoth Mound." The West Virginia Archaeologist 10 (1958): 13-19.

_____. Moundsville's Mammoth Mound. Special Publication No. 6 of the West Virginia Archaeological Society, Moundsville, West Virginia, 1962.

Schoolcraft, Henry R. "Observations Respecting the Grave Creek Mound in Western Virginia." Transactions of the American Ethnological Society, Vol.1. New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1845, 370-420.

_____. Historical and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Conditions, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, and Company, 1851.

Silverberg, Robert. Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth. Greenwich, Connecticut, 1968.

Townsend, Thomas. "Grave Creek Mound Excavation." The West Virginia Archaeologist 14 (1962): 10-19.

Webb, William S. and Baby, Raymond S. The Adena People No. 2. Columbus: The Ohio Historical Society, 1957.

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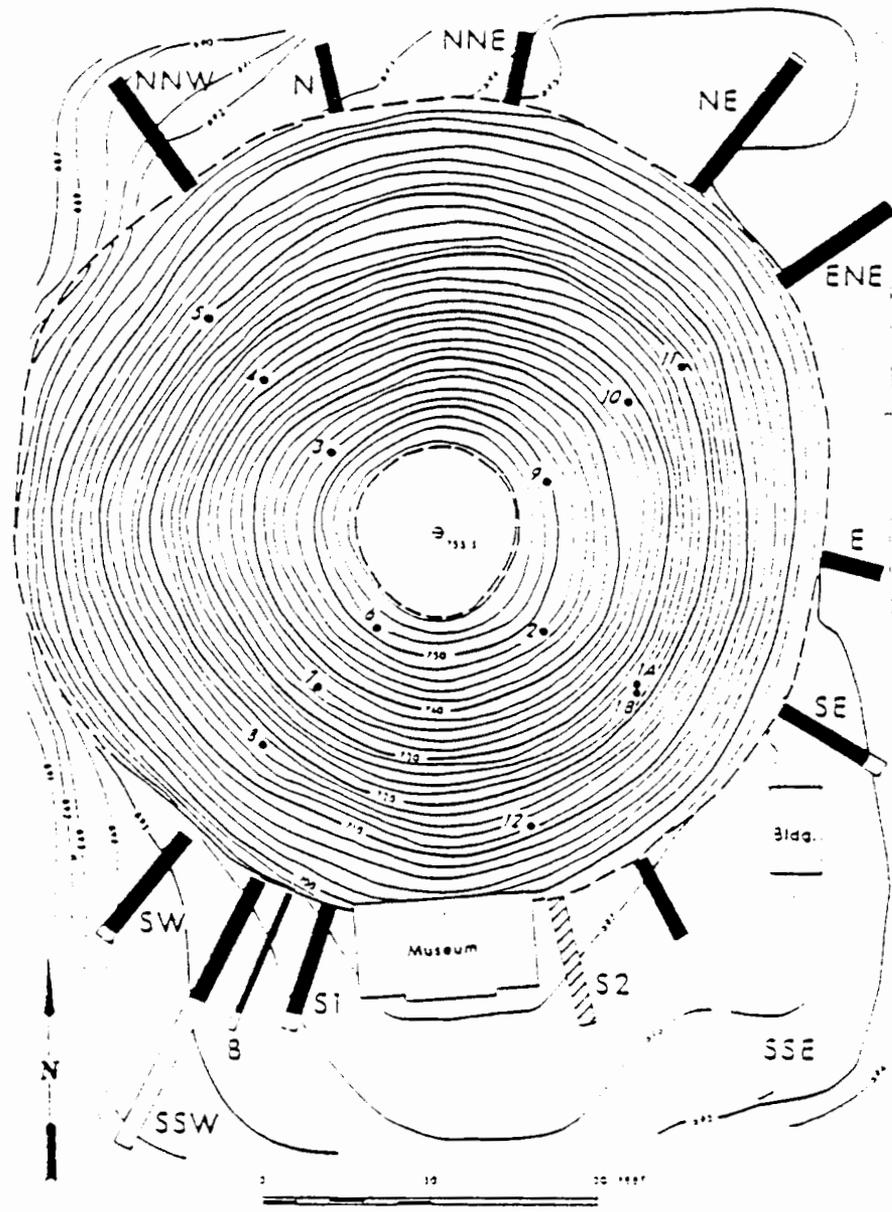
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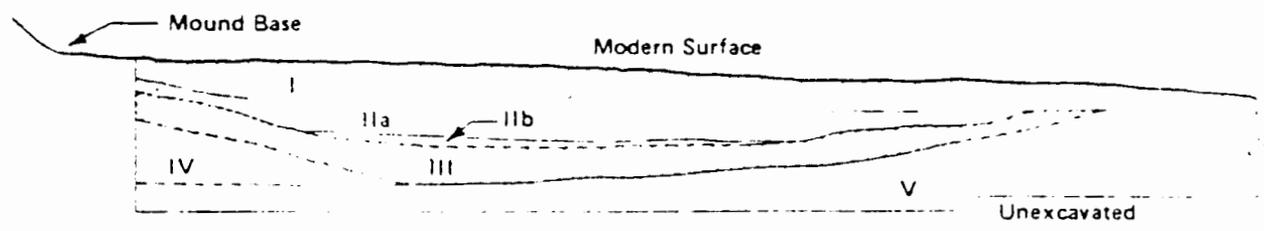
Continuation sheet Grave Creek Mound Item number 10 Page 1

The boundary follows the circumference of the mound and is calculated on a radius of 170 feet from the mound center. The Landmark within the boundary includes the ca. 240 foot diameter of the mound in addition to the 50 foot wide area along the periphery to accommodate the irregularly sized burial moat.

At present, the majority of the Landmark is confined to the State of West Virginia Park property. However, the western section of the burial moat extends the entire width of Tomlinson Avenue onto adjacent State-owned property as well as a small corner of private property and several feet into Ninth Street. (See Maps A and B.)



RECEIVED
 FEB 07 1986



- | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unit I Recent Fill | Unit III Prehistoric Moat Fill | 0 ————— 10
FEET |
| Unit IIa Historic Moat Fill | Unit IV Pre-Moat Construction Fill | |
| Unit IIb Historic Moat Fill | Unit V Subsoil | |

Figure 1. Top - contour map of Grave Creek Mound showing the locations of exploratory trenches and core sample. The moat is represented by the blackened areas; the hashed lines depict historically disturbed area. Bottom - profile view of trench SSW illustrating the moat.

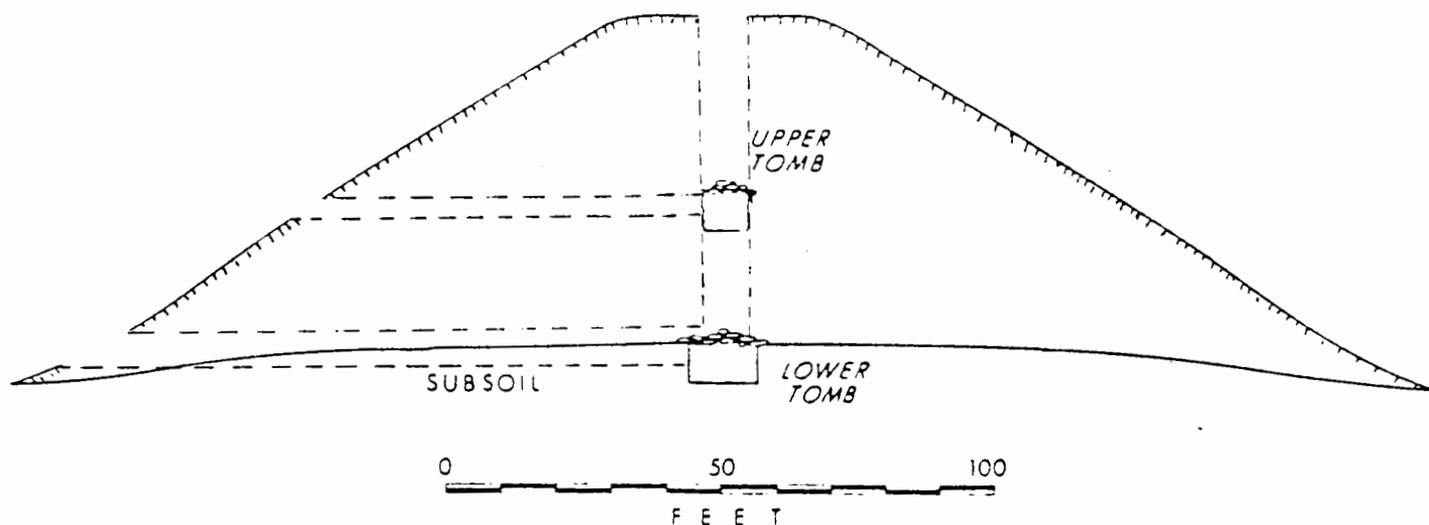
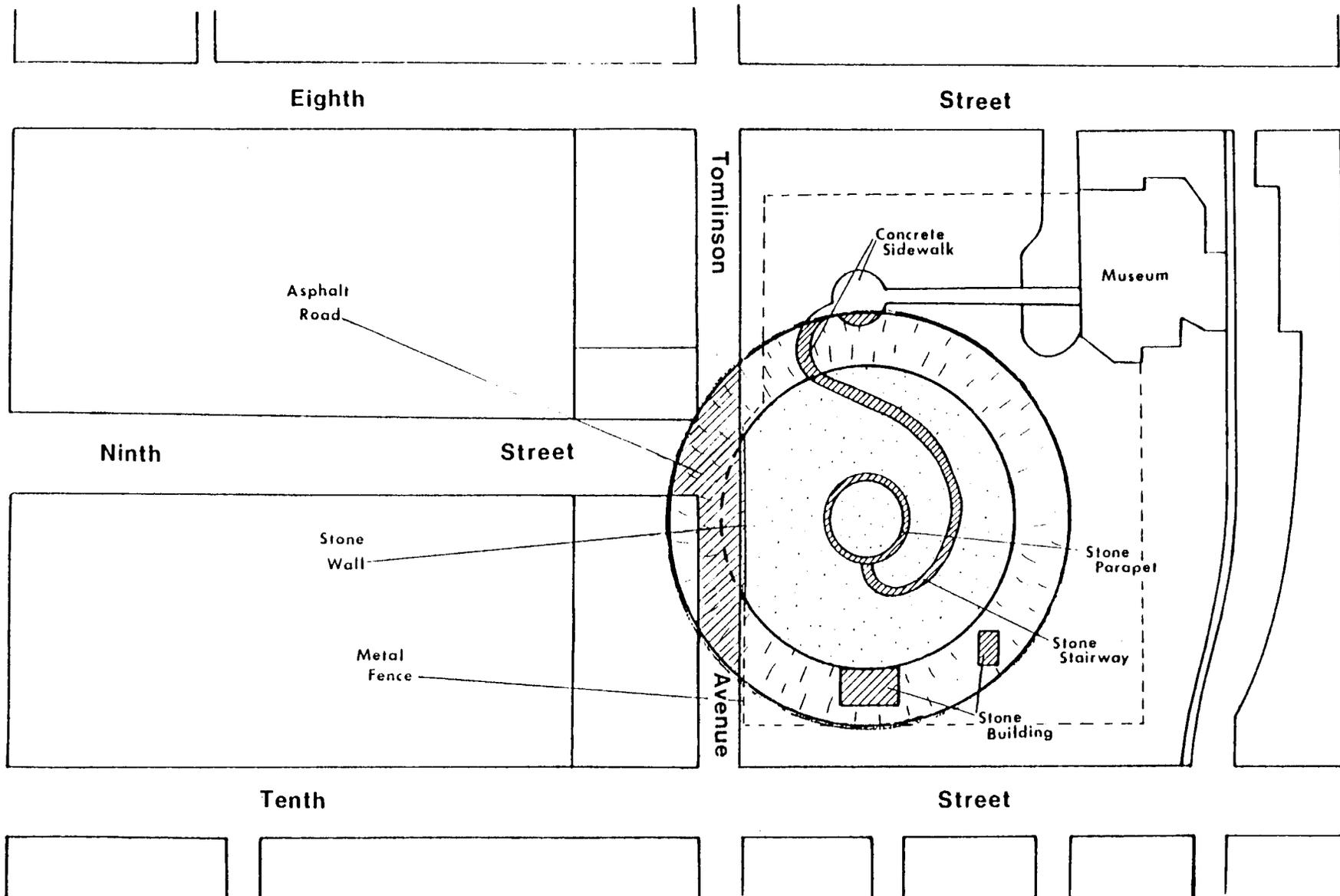


Figure 3 View of Grave Creek Mound adapted from early historical accounts showing the 1838 excavation tunnels and the two identified burial vaults. Adapted from Hemmings, 1984, pg. 28; and Narona, 1962, pg. 20.



Figure 4. Artist's reconstruction of Grave Creek Mound, looking north, with surrounding moat and passageway. Adapted from Fowler et al, 1976, pg. 114.



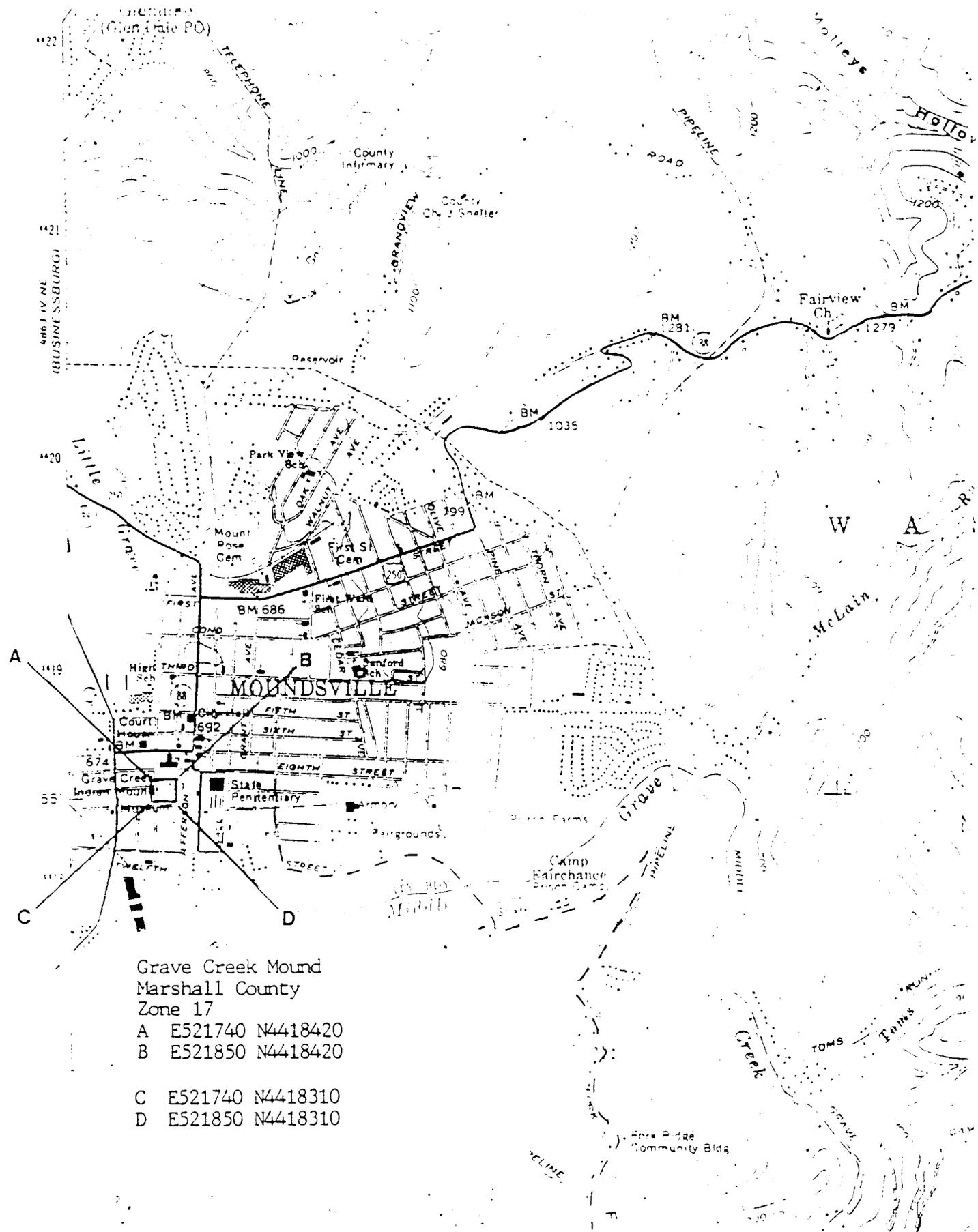
MAP "A"

GRAVE CREEK MOUND

LEGEND:

- LANDMARK BOUNDARY
- ▤ Mound
- ▧ Site of Buried Moat
- ▨ Noncontributing Feature





Map B. 7.5 minute Moundsville topographic map showing the Grave Creek Mound and UTM coordinates for the National Historic Landmark boundary of the mound.

