The Chittimacha Mounds and the famous Indian Rain-Tree are located in St. Martin Parish, about ten miles east of the city of St. Martinville. They are found in the land of Evangeline, along the old Bayou Portage and close to the Lake D'Auburive area.

The two largest mounds were the Chittimacha living quarters, where they lived in huts made of palmetto leaves placed over a framework of poles.

The third and smallest mound is called the Midden and it served as a burial place. The Chittimacha Indians gathered millions of clam shells to build this temple burial mound. The burial place remains as it was hundreds of years ago on the shady bank of the Bayou Portage, beneath old oak trees draped with Spanish moss.

In addition to the mounds, the Chittimacha Indians at Bayou Portage had a Holy Tree. The tree served as a chapel, and the Indians visited it on Sunday to pray.

The cypress tree derived its name from an Indian legend which claimed that one day, a group of Indians witnessed a tall, handsome man ascend to the heavenly skies. The man was named after the largest tree, the man ascended to the heavenly skies.

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The legends of the Indians were handed down from one generation to the other. The Indians were required to worship their gods and to obey the law of the Great Spirits. They were also required to be loyal to their chief.

The name of only a few of the Chittimacha chiefs are known to us. We know of the Fire Chief, Red Shoes, and Benjamin Paul of the Chittimacha Reservation near Charenton, Louisiana.

The Chittimacha men wore their hair in long plaits, with a piece of heavy material tied at the end of each braid to keep it straight. The women wore colored necklaces of beads, rings and earrings. Some of the necklaces were made of dyed shark bones of all colors. The women wore their hair in long plaits and they used feathers as hair ornaments. They painted their faces red and white.

For their food, the Indian women collected palmetto seeds, wild potatoes and wild berries. From the streams, they caught various kinds of turtles. The Chittimacha Indians used what they called rabbit vines strung around a strong frame for fishing nets. They used thin slats of wood to make fish traps. They preserved the fish they caught by drying it in the sun.

The Chittimacha mainly used walnut seeds to make their dyes. The walnut dye was black, but the Indians would let their dark colored materials stand outside in the sunshine in order to make them a lighter color.

The Indians had what they called a dance house, known as a "Maison de Valeur" in French, which they used for their great dance feasts. The dance ceremonies would sometimes last for days.

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The Chittimacha Indians who still live there work throughout the area. The men are employed as contractors, carpenters, oil field workers, and in many other ways. They do very little farming on the reservation.

The women still make beautiful baskets of all shapes and colors, using dyes made from maple leaves and green walnuts.

The ancestors of today's Chittimacha Indians had a practice of bringing clothing to their deceased relatives at the Midden Mound, their burial place. They would leave the clothing on the mound. Some slaves saw what they did, and they took the warm clothes for themselves. The Indians would return to the mound and find the clothing gone. They thought their deceased relatives had come to collect the clothing. The next time they would come, the Indians would again bring clothing. The belief of the Indians kept the slaves well provided with warm clothes.

Some of the old Chittimacha who lived in the Bayou Portage area were well known to some of the Acadian people who still live in the area. Two old women, named Papoone and Liseza, and one old man named Melleon, lived in the area. The old man was named after the largest mound.

These old Indians claimed that the Chittimacha lived on both sides of Bayou Portage and traded with the Acadian settlers of the area.

The Indians' major means of transportation was by canoe. To build a canoe, the Indians built a fire around a large cypress tree, which they had packed all around with wet clay up to a certain height. When the tree burst out up to the wet clay, it would fall down. Then they built another fire along the fallen tree and let it burn to the desired depth of a canoe. They would trim the canoe with a thick, sharp cockle shell.

The modern Chittimacha Indians living on the Charenton Reservation have another mound. The medicine woman saw a huge stone fall from heaven. It apparently was a meteor. The medicine woman claimed that the great spirits told her to bury all her belongings on top of that large stone.

She buried the stone, with all of her belongings, and the legend claims that she put a curse on the mound. It was believed that the man who cultivated that mound would die. It is claimed that one man tried to plow the mound and died. To this day, the mound remains uncultivated. The old woman, with all her relics, is buried there.

Another legend provides that one day a Chittimacha herb doctor, while hiding in his canoe, saw two poisonous snakes fighting in the forest. The old herb doctor watched the snakes after they stopped fighting and saw them eat certain kinds of herbs. This is how he learned to use those same herbs to make a tea to treat his people for snake bite.

Yet another legend of the Chittimacha Indians claim that at one time, the Indians knew that a great flood was coming soon. All the trees would fall down. Then they built another fire along the fallen tree and let it burn to the desired depth of a canoe. They would trim the canoe with a thick, sharp cockle shell.

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The latest of the Chittimacha chiefs, to our knowledge, lived at Charenton. He was Benjamin Paul and his wife was named Christine. He died October 15, 1934.

The descendants of the Chittimacha still live on the Charenton Reservation, a 265 acre tract of land.

We have learned that on September 14, 1777, Governor Galvez signed a treaty which granted all Chittimacha tribes full rights of ownership to the land which they had occupied all their lives. The treaty was signed in New Orleans.

Chittimacha Indian mounds have been found near Loreauville, at Butte La Rose near Cecilia and near Breaux Bridge.

The Chittimacha had a legend to explain the creation of Bayou Teche. According to the legend, there was a huge snake whose length was from Morgan City to Port Barre. All the Indian tribes declared war on the great monster and with their best warriors, they killed the snake with spears and arrows. When the snake died, it wiggled and sunk in the soft marshy soil to form the Bayou Teche.

In the neighborhood of the Chittimacha Indian mounds at Bayou Portage there is a large sign which says "Le Conton des Bon Boisin", which in English means "The Place of Good Neighbors."