

River Valley, although it was not until the early nineteenth century that a permanent post (Northwest Company) was established in the lower part of the valley.

In the later part of the eighteenth century, Russian traders were setting up posts along the coast of south-central Alaska and initiating contacts with Athapaskans (Tanaina, Ahtna) there. At first there was marked resistance to allowing these newcomers to access the interior. But as sea otters declined, more vigorous attempts by the Russian-American Company were made to penetrate the interior. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Europeans from the Alaskan or Mackenzie Valley trading centers were traveling inland and establishing commercial relationships with previously isolated groups throughout the western Subarctic. By the end of the century, the process was complete.

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North America: The Eastern Woodlands and the South

Human colonization of the Eastern Woodlands occurred in the Late Pleistocene, during the Paleo-Indian period prior to 10,000 years before the present or 11,450 calendar years (cal. yr.) BP. The timing of initial entry unknown, but are currently thought to have occurred no more than a few millennia prior to the widespread occurrence of Clovis assemblages roughly 13,000 BP (radiocarbon ages [BP] were calibrated using Calib 6.02, available at <http://calib.qub.ac.uk/calib/>, using a 100-year uncertainty factor and the average of the one-sigma ranges, since appreciable differences are evident between radiocarbon and calendar time). Pre-Clovis assemblages have been reported from several sites, such as Cactus Hill, Hebior, Meadowcroft Rockshelter, Page Ladson, Schaefer, and Topper, and while some of the associations are controversial, small populations are inferred.

The first widespread evidence for human presence are assemblages characterized by a range of well-made stone tools, including lanceolate Clovis and presumably descendant fluted-point forms, which occur in large numbers south of the ice sheets. Dense site concentrations occur along major rivers such as the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Ohio, and along portions of the Atlantic seaboard, typically near high-quality stone sources that were intensively used. These localities are thought to reflect areas of initial extended settlement in the interior. Portions of the now-submerged continental shelf were also occupied, although archaeological exploration of these since-submerged areas is in its infancy. Paleo-Indian groups near the ice sheets are

thought to have been more specialized hunters, targeting large game such as caribou, while groups in the woodlands to the south are thought to have been more generalized foragers, exploiting a wider range of animal and plant species. The extent to which Pleistocene megafauna were hunted is unknown at present, as is the role, if any, that humans played in their extinction. Kill sites of mastodon and bison have been found in Missouri and Florida, respectively, and tools worked from fresh bone and ivory of several extinct species have been found at many locations in Florida. Megafauna went extinct soon after the onset of the Younger Dryas cooling episode at around 12,850 cal. yr. BP, which would have necessitated some changes in human subsistence.

Although a possible population decline or settlement reorganization occurred in the early centuries of the Younger Dryas in some areas, the later Paleo-Indian period across the region is characterized by major population growth coupled with decreasing group movement. A diversity of post-Clovis fluted and unfluted point forms appears, marking the emergence of distinct subregional cultural traditions. In the central Mississippi Valley, the Dalton culture flourished and has yielded identifiable base camps, quarries, hunting stations, and cemetery sites in clusters interpreted as the ranges of individual band-level groups. Dalton artifacts occur widely across the Eastern Woodlands, although stylistic variants are evident in different areas. These cultures were adapted to an essentially modern fauna, with white-tailed deer the primary large game animal exploited. Near the retreating glacial margins, tundra caribou hunters continued to use fluted points with deeply indented bases until after 12,500 cal. yr. BP, and in some places, such as at Bull Brook in Massachusetts, they left behind dense hunting-station and base-camp remains, as well as evidence for multi-group aggregation and ceremonies.

By the onset of the Archaic period at circa 11,450 cal. yr. BP (by convention, 10,000 BP is the Pleistocene/Holocene boundary worldwide), a variety of side- and corner-notched projectile points are

recognized across the region. During the Early Archaic sub-period, from around 11,450 to 8900 cal. yr. BP, assemblages continued to be characterized by formal chipped stone tools sometimes made on high-quality stone, although over time these were replaced by more casually made tools from locally available materials. The presence of ground and pecked-stone plant-processing tools indicates that subsistence was becoming increasingly diversified. Over time, annual ranges grew progressively smaller, and at the end of the sub-period were likely to be restricted to within portions of river systems. Periodic meetings between people in differing bands occurred in favored settings, tying together people over large areas and in several river systems, and facilitating the spread of information, mates, and materials.

The Middle Archaic, from about 8000 BP to 5000 BP, or 8900 BP to 5800 cal. yr. BP, corresponds to the mid-Holocene warm period, or Hypsithermal. The expansion of pine forests and cypress swamps across the southeastern coastal plain led to a consolidation of peoples in areas where hardwood forests were maintained, like the river valleys of the mid-South and lower Midwest. Regional populations appear to have stabilized or possibly even decreased somewhat. Beginning early in the period, large shell midden sites with dense occupational debris and numerous burials appeared along some of the major drainages of the midcontinent. These sites, occupied at least part of the year, appear to have served as aggregation loci and in some cases special ceremonial areas. Burials with embedded projectile points are common, indicating conflict was occurring. The construction of earthen mounds also began in several areas, first in the maritime provinces of the Northeast. Toward the end of the period, much more elaborate earthen mound complexes appeared in the Lower Mississippi Valley, and of earth and shell in coastal Florida. While widely ranging foragers were still present, these most typically were in geographically marginal areas. Long-distance exchange networks spanning appreciable portions of the East emerged during the Middle Archaic, with goods in circulation including shells

from the southern coasts and copper from the Great Lakes. Some materials, like bone pins, bannerstones, or elaborate bifaces, were circulating over lesser areas, indicating that more localized exchange networks were also operating. Interaction and exchange helped create group identity, enhanced the status of network participants, and probably helped reduce conflict and overcome subsistence uncertainty by creating ties between neighboring and more distant groups.

Mound construction, long-distance prestige-goods exchange, and warfare continued in the ensuing Late Archaic period (5000 BP–3000 BP/5800 to 3200 cal. yr. BP), culminating in dramatic cultural expressions like Poverty Point, Stallings Island, Green River/Indian Knoll, Old Copper, and Orange. The mounds and earthworks at the terminal Archaic Poverty Point site, the focus of a regional exchange network centered on the lower Mississippi valley and Gulf coast, are among the largest ever built in the East. During this period, essentially modern climate conditions, sea level, and vegetational communities existed, albeit with minor fluctuations over time in each. A major increase in regional population levels is indicated, with sites found in almost all parts of the landscape. Wild plant foods were collected in increasing quantities throughout the Archaic period, and by its period, between circa 4500 and 3200 cal. yr. BP, morphological changes indicative of domestication are evident in a number of local species, such as goose-foot, sumpweed, sunflower, and gourds (*Cucurbita*). Domestication may have occurred in disturbed floodplain habitats near major earth and shell midden sites, and in adjoining upland areas where populations ranged to collect various plant foods. Shellfish use both along the coast and in the interior continued. Pottery appears in the Stallings culture in the Georgia and South Carolina coastal plain early in the period, about 5000 cal. yr. BP, and about the same time or soon thereafter in the Orange culture of Florida.

During the Early Woodland (ca. 3200 to 2200 cal. yr. BP) pottery became widespread, although a marked decline in long-distance exchange and

interaction occurred in the early centuries of the period that appears tied, at least in part, to changes in global climate. People were living in more-or-less egalitarian groups loosely tied together by collective burial rituals. Most communities were small, on the order of a half-dozen structures and about fifty to sixty people. Intensive cultivation of local domesticates is thought to have occurred in parts of the Midwest and mid-South, although in areas rich in natural food resources, evidence for agriculture remains minimal. Charnel house and burial mound mortuary facilities located away from settlements near territorial margins occur in many areas, suggesting that they served to bring differing groups together for collective ceremonies. Over time, mound burial came to be reserved for smaller segments of the population, a trend exemplified in the Adena cultures of the mid-South, where circular ditches, mortuary structures, and low accretional burial mounds appear around 2600 cal. yr. BP.

During the Middle Woodland period (ca. 2200–1600 cal. yr. BP), societies across much of the East were tied together in exchange and religious activity, behavior that has come to be called “Hopewellian interaction,” after the type site and culture in southern Ohio, where spectacular earthworks and burial assemblages were found. Many diverse cultures were actually present, onto which a thin veneer of Hopewellian exchange, iconography, and ritual was overlain in some, but not all, parts of the region. While most people were buried simply, in some societies high-status individuals were buried in elaborately constructed and furnished log-lined tombs, sometimes under massive mound deposits. While hereditary leadership positions are not apparent, there is clear evidence that some individuals or lineages were wealthier and more powerful than others, exercising considerable control over long-distance trade, public ceremony, and monumental construction. Some ceremonial complexes were enormous in scope, covering dozens of acres, with elaborate mound, earthwork, and burial precincts, although most people continued to live in small communities. Platform mounds were built in several parts of the Southeast and saw use in mortuary

ritual and public feasting. Native domesticates are thought to have been an important source of food in parts of the region, although maize, which was present by at least 1700 cal. yr. BP in the mid-South, and a few centuries later in the upper Midwest, did not become a major constituent of the diet until much later, after around 1200 cal. yr. BP.

During the Late Woodland period (1600–1000 cal. yr. BP), panregional exchange and religious ceremony declined markedly, and mound construction and elaborate mortuary behavior ceased in many areas. Major population growth is evident, and the bow and arrow appeared and spread rapidly, both factors that may help explain an increase in warfare that happened at this time. Organizational decline did not, however, occur throughout the region. Formal civic-ceremonial complexes, arrangements of residential and temple mounds around plazas and occupied by hereditary elites, occurred in the Coles Creek, late Swift Creek, and Weeden Island cultures in the lower Mississippi valley and along the Gulf coast after about 1200 cal. yr. BP. By the end of the period, intensive maize agriculture was present in many areas, largely replacing indigenous domesticates.

During the Mississippian Period (1000–450 cal. yr. BP), societies ruled by hereditary elites living in densely populated civic-ceremonial centers were present in many parts of the Southeast and lower Midwest. More egalitarian, yet organizationally still fairly complex, mixed agricultural and hunting-gathering societies were present on the margins, in the middle Atlantic, upper Midwest, and the Northeast during this period. Many of these societies, particularly the Southeastern and Midwestern chiefdoms, were heavily dependent on intensive agriculture, with crop surpluses used to fuel elite agendas: typically the accumulation of power and status, at the expense of commoners and other elites alike. Warfare was endemic and celebrated in a rich iconography, which appears to have emerged, along with many other aspects of Mississippian culture, at Cahokia after about 950 cal. yr. BP. Ceremonial centers were typically occupied year-round and were the geographic as well as

religious centers of society. Long-distance prestige-goods exchange and interaction became widespread early in the period and peaked about 800 cal. yr. BP. During the latter half of the Mississippian period, and with the onset of the global cooling event known as the Little Ice Age, warfare increased, mound building declined, and long-distance exchange dropped off markedly. Following sustained European contact, many native societies in the Eastern Woodlands collapsed or coalesced into new forms under the impacts of disease, the Indian slave trade, and European/American conquest. Powerful confederacies as well as smaller groups survived in some areas for centuries, however, and the descendants of Native peoples remain in many parts of the region.

[See also Adena Culture; Cahokia; Dalton Culture; Hopewell Culture; Iroquoian and Algonquian Cultures; Mississippian Culture; Mounds of Eastern North America; Moundville; North America, Origins of Food Production in; Poverty Point; Serpent Mound; Shell Middens; Spiro Mounds.]

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North America: The North American Plains

The Great Plains extend from the Canadian boreal forest in the north to central Texas in the south, and from the Rocky Mountains in the west to the Missouri River and the eastern boundaries of the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma in the east. This region comprises open grassland, interrupted by tree-lined stream valleys and forested "islands" such as the Black Hills of eastern Wyoming and western South Dakota and the Cross Timbers of central Oklahoma and Texas. The semiarid western half is shortgrass and sage steppe, while the wetter eastern half supports tallgrass prairie. The climate is highly changeable, with cold, snowy winters and hot, dry summers. Most precipitation arrives as spring blizzards and summer thundershowers. Bison dominated the region's fauna, but pronghorn antelope, wapiti, deer, mountain sheep, black and grizzly bear, and smaller species also thrived in the Plains. Today, cattle ranching dominates the western half and wheat and corn farming the eastern half.

Human occupation of the Great Plains began at least 13,500 years ago, which corresponds to a radiocarbon date of 11,500 before present. The earliest securely dated Paleoindian sites are part of the Clovis archaeological complex. As elsewhere in the

Americas, the region contains a few sites that may be somewhat more ancient; however, questionable stratigraphic context or a lack of definite artifacts casts doubt on those discovered so far. The current best evidence for earlier cultures in the Plains are the Gault and Buttermilk Creek sites in central Texas, which contain several strata underlying Clovis-age levels. Although archaeologists have developed slightly different temporal schemes for different areas of the Great Plains, the general sequence is: Paleoindian, 13,500 to 9,000 calendar years before present (11,500 to 8,000 radiocarbon years before present); Archaic 9,000 to 1,400 (8000–1500 RCYBP); Woodland, 2,500 to 950 (2,700 to 1,000 RCYBP); Late Prehistoric, 1,400 to 150 (1,500–150 RCYBP); Plains Village after 1,000 years ago; and Postcontact after 150 years ago. The post-Archaic periods overlap with one another, with a Woodland-to-Plains Village sequence along the Missouri and other rivers in the eastern half of the region and a Late Prehistoric-to-Postcontact sequence in the western zone.

Paleoindian. The few possible pre-Clovis sites in the Great Plains contain fractured bone from late Pleistocene animals, such as mammoth, camel, and long-horned bison, sometimes alongside a few simple possible chipped-stone artifacts. If these are indeed the product of human activity, they indicate use of rock shelters and open meadows for campsites by small groups hunting or scavenging single animals.

The Paleoindian period encompasses three segments: Clovis (13,500 to 10,200 calendar years before the present), Folsom (10,200 to 9,200), and Late Paleoindian (9,200 to 7,000). All Plains Indians during these periods were hunter-gatherers. The visibility, preservation, and sensational nature of animal-kill and butchery sites, combined with archaeologists' interest in projectile point technology, initially led to a view that these first Americans focused entirely on hunting. Clovis hunters killed, or perhaps merely scavenged, a range of now-extinct species (including mammoth, camels, and horses), while Folsom and later groups specialized in hunting