

Early Native American Householders of the Western Reserve
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by

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The prehistoric occupation northeastern Ohio is generally divided into three major periods of cultural development: PaleoIndian, the Archaic and the Woodland. From 10,250 B.C. to 7500 B.C., Paleo-Indian groups traversed the Western Reserve as part of their large hunting and gathering ranges. The Archaic populations, from 7500 to 1000 B.C. grew more dense as they improved their exploitation of seasonally available local resources. By the end of this Archaic Period intensive fishing and selective harvesting of native nuts and seeds had made even more limited ecotones economically important. Regional family groups appear to have operated within more constrained territories, but some individuals maintained inter-group relationships by trade and marriage. As populations grew and new plants, such as squash and tobacco, were added to the list of semi-domesticates during the following Woodland Period, the growing social status accorded to such group leaders was reflected by the elaborate trade goods and ceremonial earthwork constructions which marked their graves. By A.D. 800 the introduction of the bow and arrow to the hunt and of maize to the agricultural diet created more cohesive, self-sufficient villages, most showing stylistic differences from their neighbors in the adjacent river valleys of the Western Reserve region. About A.D. 1250 the introduction of common beans and new, short-season varieties of maize, promoted intensive agriculture, allowing larger groups of rather egalitarian multi-family villagers to occupy most of the region's best farmland. Climatic changes after A.D. 1400 forced these frequently hostile tribal populations to retreat into a limited number of fortified villages. Self-sufficiency became difficult and inter-group cooperation questionable. By A.D. 1650 the autochthonous Native American populations had abandoned the Western Reserve.