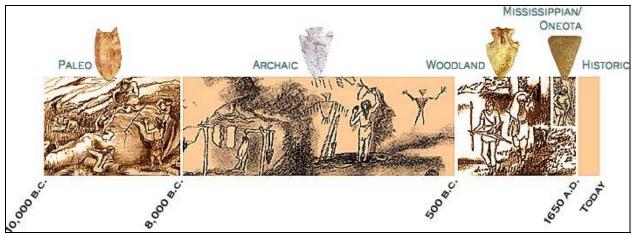


Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin

Introduction

The human story of Wisconsin spans 12,000 years, from the first Native Americans to today's diverse rural and urban populations. Over the past one hundred years, **archaeologists** have recorded and investigated thousands of sites left by western Wisconsin's earlier inhabitants. Through the study of these sites and their accompanying artifacts archaeologists are working to reconstruct the unique and changing lifeways of the region's early inhabitants. Explore this section of MVAC's web site (www.uwlax.edu/mvac) to learn what archaeologists have discovered about how these early inhabitants lived in the region we now call western Wisconsin.



This timeline shows the major traditions defined by archaeologists for Wisconsin.

Contents:

Paleo Tradition
Archaic Tradition
Woodland Tradition
Mississippian and Oneota Traditions
Archaeological Basics
Native Technology
Wisconsin Sites
Glossary
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[Words in **bold** in the text can be found in the glossary]



Big Game Hunters 10,000 to 8,000 B.C.

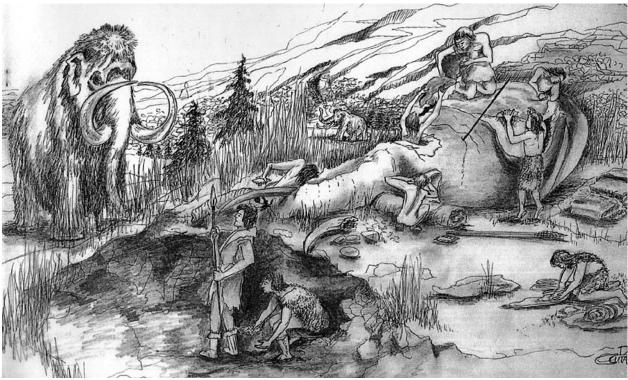
Introduction

To tell the story about the first people who lived in what we now call Wisconsin, we first need to look outside Wisconsin to understand what was happening in other parts of the world. About 12,000 to 20,000 years ago, the earth was nearing the end of a glacial era. A large quantity of the earth's water was locked up in glacial ice, which caused sea levels to be lower than they are today. This lowering of sea level exposed sections of land that were previously underwater. One piece of land that was more exposed during this time was a land "bridge" that extended from what we now call Siberia on the continent of Eurasia to what we know as Alaska on North America. One currently held theory suggests that this exposed land provided a way for both animals and people to walk from Siberia to Alaska.

As people wandered into Alaska through open passageways in the glaciers, they moved southward through what is now Canada and even more southward and eastward across what is now the United States. However, the presence of glaciers kept people from entering parts of Canada and also the far northern part of the United States. As the glaciers continued to retreat, people could then enter other parts of North America. Some people migrated as far south as Central and South America.

Currently archaeologists are investigating other possible ways that people could have arrived in North and South America. A second theory suggests that people came by boats and arrived much earlier than twelve thousand years ago. This is a perfect example of how knowledge of the past is constantly changing as new discoveries are made.

See also *Archaeological Basics* – *The changing story*



Paleo hunting scene.

Wisconsin at the End of the Ice Age

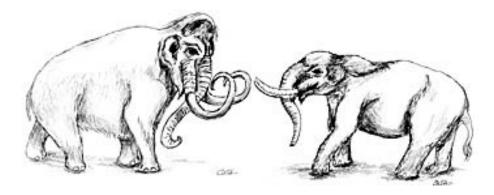
In Wisconsin about twelve thousand years ago, as the ice retreated northward, animals and people moved into these newly exposed areas. The temperature was colder than today. It was very similar to present day Alaska or northern Canada. Glaciers were still present in northern Wisconsin. Southwestern Wisconsin was without glaciers, and is known today as the "Driftless Area." These people, called by archaeologists Paleo people, encountered a variety of environments from forests with pines and spruces to swamps.

See also *Archaeological Basics-Naming Past Peoples*

Very little was left behind by those people who lived in this area 12,000 years ago. Most of the artifacts that have been recovered are made of stone or occasionally of bone. Although those early people left no written records for us to read, there are contemporary people whose lifeways are similar to these early people. Anthropologists study these people and make observations about their lives. Archaeologists have come up with a story about these first people using these observations along with the analysis of the few artifacts that were left behind.

Hunting and Gathering

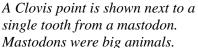
Instead of going to the grocery store like we do today these early people searched around their local environment for their food. Their meat wasn't in a plastic tray in a store, instead it was alive and moved around because, like the people, it was also looking for food. People needed to follow the animals as they moved around to ensure that they could get meat. As people and animals ate all the plants in one area, they needed to move around to find more. Early people didn't have cars or trucks to carry their things. They had to carry everything they owned with them. Because of this they had a lot fewer things than we do today. This way of life is called hunting and gathering. People probably used light weight objects made out of skins which were easy to carry and move with their mobile lifestyle.



Mammoth and Mastodon Mammoths stood 10-12 feet high and fed on grasses. Mastodons stood between 8 and 10 feet high at the shoulder and fed on herbs, shrubs, and trees.

Paleo people probably hunted for much of their food. Some of the animals that lived in these conditions were very different from animals living here today. Mammoths and mastodons, similar in size to today's elephants, roamed the area. These animals are extinct today, but they were around when the first people came to Wisconsin. Some of these animals were hunted by groups of hunters using spears. These hunters would probably look for old, young, sick or isolated animals. They might also look for animals that were stuck in the mud. These animals might be easier to kill than a healthy adult animal. They also scavenged, or used the meat of animals that were already dead.







Elk

Caribou and elk were also hunted by these early people. These animals are not extinct. They are no longer in Wisconsin but can still be found farther north. Caribou and elk were probably hunted in similar ways that deer are hunted today in Wisconsin, except these early people didn't have guns or bows and arrows. The early people most likely hunted these animals using spears as weapons. These early people probably also hunted smaller animals such as rabbits, ground squirrels, muskrats, and beaver.

For food, Paleo people also used the limited plants that they found such as berries, seeds and nuts. Plant material is very delicate and does not preserve well, therefore, it is difficult for archaeologists to find evidence of plant materials used by these first people. We do know that these early people were resourceful and that they would have used the plants that were around them as much as possible.

See also Archaeological Basics-Plant and Animal Remains

Tools and Toolkits

The Paleo people were extremely talented at making spear points and made some of the most beautiful points ever. Their points had unique **flutes** taken off the length of the point. Folsom and Clovis points are examples of points from this time. (The names Folsom and Clovis come

from the location in New Mexico where these styles of points were first found.) Paleo people also used flintknapping to make other useful tools like scrapers for cleaning hides, and drills for making holes in hides for clothing and shelter.

See also <u>Native Technology: Making</u>
<u>Stone Tools</u>

See also <u>Archaeological Basics:</u> <u>Point Styles</u>



Paleo tradition projectile points (oldest at left to youngest at right)



Typical stone tool kit. A core, flakes, and a hammerstone are at the top, rough to finished bifaces, projectile points, and a scraper in the middle, with a drill and modified flake at the bottom.

The toolkits of early hunters would have included a variety of tools made from stone such as spears for hunting, scrapers and modified flakes for dressing hides, knives for cutting, gravers for engraving or incising and hammerstones used for making stone tools. They probably also used some bone and wooden tools.

Paleo people traded or traveled long distances to obtain different kinds of stones for their tools. They got some materials from hundreds of miles away. One important place where they found the stones they needed was at Silver Mound, in Jackson County, Wisconsin.

See also <u>Wisconsin Sites: Silver</u> Mound

Nomadic Lifestyle & Settlement

Groups of hunters and gatherers needed to move every few days or weeks to continually find plants and animals to eat. Hunters would take their families to where large animals were killed, rather than try to move large animals such as mammoths to their existing campsite. Since these people moved around frequently, they didn't have permanent houses or dwellings like we do today. We don't know what their places of shelter looked like, but they were probably made from hides, sticks and/or brush.



Artist's reconstruction of a possible Paleo shelter.

We know that hunters and gatherers usually live in small family groups of 15-20 people. These groups would consist of extended families of related siblings and their children. If early hunters and gatherers lived in large groups they would have had to gather more plants and kill more animals to have enough food to feed everyone. Unlike a store that receives regular shipments of food, hunters and gatherers couldn't just place an order for more food, they would need to move to find more food. The larger the group was, the more food they would need and the more often they would have to move to find that food. This caused people to live in small groups for most of the year.

At certain times of the year, such as the summer, when food was more readily available, people may have gathered in larger groups. People probably would have socialized, traded and exchanged information.

Paleo people may have traveled for great distances each year and traded over even greater distances. Archaeologists can tell this by seeing how widely a particular point style is found or from how far away stone materials came. During Paleo times the Clovis point style is found from Alaska and the eastern United States to the southern tip of South America. This leads archaeologists to believe that Paleo people traveled and traded over long distances.

Lifestyle Changes

Although evidence about Paleo peoples is limited, archaeologists have some ideas about Paleo people's hunting practices, travel, and family groupings. However, archaeologists know very little about other aspects of Paleo peoples' life such as their religion or their political systems. We do know that Paleo peoples were the first ones to inhabit Wisconsin, and that their lifestyle changed greatly at the end of the Ice Age.

As the glaciers left Wisconsin the climate began to change. The temperature became warmer. The mammoths and mastodons became extinct. Some archaeologists think they became extinct because hunters killed too many. Other archaeologists think the warming climate caused the animals to die off. Right now we don't know which answer is correct; the answer might be a combination of both factors. Whatever the cause, the changing climate and the lack of large animals meant that people needed to adapt their ways of living.

See also Archaeological Basics: Naming Past Peoples











Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin OVERVIEW OF THE PALEO TRADITION

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Tradition Name	
Lifeways	
Time	
Climate	
Environment	
Settlement	
Food	
Tools	
Toolkit	
Household	
Religion/Rituals	
Social/Political	
How Different From Previous Group	
Major World Events	



Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin OVERVIEW OF THE PALEO TRADITION

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Tradition Name	Paleo			
Lifeways	Big Game Hunters			
Time	10,000 - 8,000 B.C.			
Climate	It was colder than today. Very similar to present day Alaska or northern Canada.			
Environment	Glaciers were present in northern Wisconsin. Southwestern Wisconsin was without glaciers, and is known today as "the Driftless Area." In this area there were many evergreens, such as pines and spruces.			
Settlement	Small roving bands of 15-25 people lived in temporary camps. They traveled great distances to follow herds of animals.			
Food	Big game such as mastodons, mammoths, elk, caribou, and deer formed the main part of their diet. They are limited quantities of plant foods, for few plants were available in the climate of Paleo times.			
Tools	Spear points were very important for hunting big game. They made endscrapers and modified flakes for dressing hides. They probably used some bone and wooden tools.			
Toolkit	Spear points, scrapers, knives, gravers, drills, modified flakes, hammerstones			
Household	Few artifacts are preserved from this period. They probably used light weight objects made out of skins that were easy to carry.			
Religion/Rituals	Unknown			
Social/Political	Their social organization was probably based on the family. They participated in co-operative ventures for hunting. They traded or traveled long distances to obtain different kinds of stones for their tools. Some materials came from hundreds of miles away.			
How Different From Previous Group	They were the first Wisconsin inhabitants.			
Major World Events	9,000 B.C Origins of agriculture in the Middle East			



Hunters and Gatherers 8,000 to 500 B.C.

Introduction

The Archaic tradition lasted for a very long time, the longest of any of the periods in Wisconsin. Even though it is the longest period, very little has been investigated by archaeologists because very few sites have been discovered. The picture we have of these people is based on limited excavations in Wisconsin and information obtained from similar sites outside the state.



Archaic scene.

The Archaic tradition follows the Paleo tradition. People were changing from being highly mobile hunters to groups that could settle in one area and concentrate on that area. They could become familiar with the resources in their area, and become experts on exploiting them. The Archaic people were very successful in doing this, and their lifestyle didn't change for a long time because it was so successful.

The Archaic tradition first appears in the southern part of the state and later in the northern part of Wisconsin. This difference is probably because the glaciers had left southern Wisconsin long before they had melted from northern Wisconsin. People in each area adapted to their environment as it changed.

Climatic and Environmental Change



Archaic setting



Prairie

During this period the climatic conditions changed greatly. At the beginning of the Archaic period, the glaciers were retreating northward. The climate was not as cold as during the Paleo times but was colder and moister than today. Oak, hickory, and maple forests replaced the evergreens. A large quantity and variety of plants and animals were present.

During the middle of this period the temperature became warmer and dryer than today. Prairies expanded into areas that are now covered with forests. Some areas had active sand dunes that were shifting across the land, just like those that are found in the deserts of the southwest today.

At the end of the period the temperature became similar to what we are familiar with today. Water levels on Lake Michigan also fluctuated greatly during this time. Sometimes the lake levels were higher than today, and at other times they were lower. Rising lake levels have left some Archaic sites under water.

Hunting and Gathering

Archaic peoples got their food by hunting wild animals and gathering wild plants. As the climate changed during the Archaic period, the type and availability of plants and animals also changed. People living during this time needed to adapt to these changes. People did not need to hunt in large groups, unlike the earlier Paleo peoples who had hunted big animals such as mammoths and mastodons. These large animals were now extinct. People began to do more individualized hunting of small game. Elk and deer could be found throughout the state. Moose and caribou were still in the northern part of the state. People also hunted smaller game like raccoons, rabbits, beaver, birds and **aquatic** resources like fish and shellfish.

Deer became the most important game animal hunted in Wisconsin, a title it has kept to the present day. The deer was the perfect size for a single hunter to kill, butcher, and return to the camp. The deer was the source of meat, fat, hides for clothing and shelter, and bone and antler for tools. Virtually every part of the animal was used. The tendons were used for sinew to bind spear points to their haft. The bones were cracked open to get the bone marrow.

Archaeologists find evidence of domesticated dogs at some Archaic sites. Dogs would have helped in hunting, guarded the camps, and might have served as a source of food in hard times.

Plant foods became important during this time. They used mainly nuts, but seeds, fruits and berries were also important. Archaeologists find the first nutting stones and date them to this time. These stones were used for the bulk processing of nuts and other plants. They may have collected wild gourds for use as containers.



Deer were one of the most important animal resources.



Nutting stone on left, with hammerstone on right.



Nuts, including hickory, walnut, and hazelnut.

Settlement

The smaller game hunted by the Archaic hunters roamed over smaller distances than the large animals of the earlier Paleo times. Because of this, people during this time could hunt and gather in smaller territories. They still needed to move around to take advantage of seasonal resources, but they didn't have to roam over as large a territory as the Paleo people did. During this time groups were beginning to develop their own territories for hunting and gathering. They still, however, traded over large distances for particularly good stones to make tools, or perhaps for other things that have not been preserved.

Archaeologists know little about the shelters in which Archaic people lived since evidence of structures has not been found. The shelters still needed to be movable, or quickly made from local material, since people were still moving frequently. They were still probably made with hides, sticks and/or brush. Moving to sheltered areas such as caves or rockshelters during the winter provided protection from the elements.



View from inside a small rockshelter.

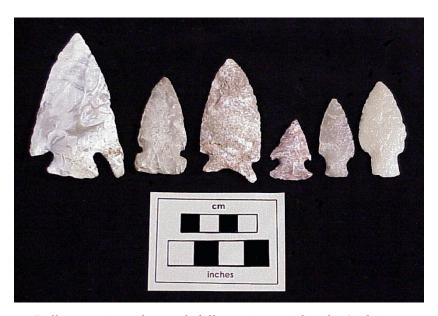
People continued to live in small family groups as they moved to take advantage of seasonal resources. Summer camps may have consisted of 25-30 people with groups breaking into smaller segments during the winter. Heavier household goods were now being used because they could be left at a campsite that people would return to the next year. Textiles and basketry originated during this time. Grinding stones were used to process food products.

See also Archaeological Basics-rockshelters.

Tools

Some tools, such as scrapers, knives, modified flakes, and hammerstones, are recovered by archaeologists from Archaic sites. These tools are very similar to those found at Paleo sites. Archaic and Paleo people both used spears but the beautiful fluted Folsom and Clovis **projectile points** are no longer used by the Archaic people. They still used projectile points but the style of the points changed. Also, Archaic spear points are different in different regions, unlike Paleo points which were similar across North and South America. For example, Archaic points from Wisconsin are different from those in Arizona. Some materials used to make Wisconsin projectile points came from as far away as Illinois. Silver Mound (near Hixton) was also a favorite place for Archaic people to get their material for points.

See also Wisconsin Sites-Silver Mound



Different point styles mark different times within the Archaic tradition. The Archaic points in the photo extend from the oldest at the left to youngest at the right.

See also *Archaeological* Basics-Point Styles

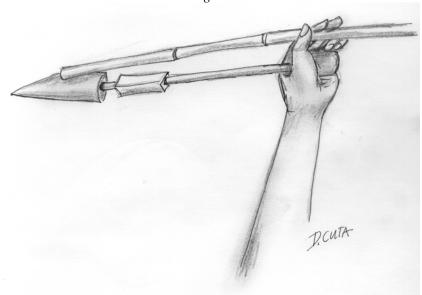
Archaeologists think that a new tool, called an atlatl, or spear -thrower, was first used during this period. The atlatl is used with a spear to make it travel farther and with more force. Archaeologists have not recovered any atlatls from Wisconsin but they have recovered **bannerstones** that were used

as a weight on an atlatl.





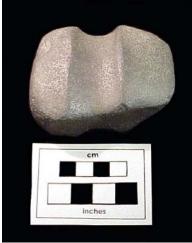
Throwing an atlatl.



The atlatl (at bottom) has a hook into which the base of the spear is fitted.

Another type of tool new to the Archaic period is the ground stone tool. Unlike projectile points that are made by striking two rocks together, ground stone tools are made by first pecking the surface with another stone to get the general shape, then grinding with a stone like sandstone, to polish the surface and edges. The sandstone acts like an abrasive, something like sandpaper. With lots of pecking and grinding a useful tool, such as an axe or adze, can be made. Archaic people used this technique to make axes, bannerstones and fishing gear.

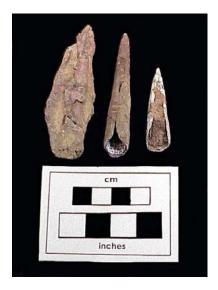




The groove on an axe can help archaeologists to tell how old it is. Middle Archaic axes usually have a groove extending the whole way around the axe, as on the left. Late Archaic axes may have a groove that extends only partially around the haft, as on the right.

Old Copper Culture

The first use of copper seems to take place during this time period. Items made from copper appear to be useful items rather than objects for adornment. Artifacts that have been recovered include: spear points, knives, drills, axes, hooks and harpoons. Some items discovered in limited quantities include things such as rings, beads and pendants which were probably made for personal adornment.







Copper artifacts, including a chunk of unfinished copper and two points on the left, a copper point on the top right, and a copper awl on the bottom right.

While Archaic people across Wisconsin were involved in similar lifeways, archaeologists find that copper artifacts are mainly found in the eastern and northern part of the state. Archaeologists call the people involved in the use of copper the Old Copper Culture. Archaeologists still don't know why there are only limited copper artifacts found in the western part of the state.

See also <u>Wisconsin Sites-Old Copper sites.</u>
See also <u>Archaeological Basics-Regional Differences</u>
Back to <u>Woodland Red Ocher Culture</u>

The copper that Wisconsin Archaic people used was mined on the shores of Lake Superior. To get an item from one place to another people had to carry it. People may have traveled themselves to the area and brought back the item. Another way would be if people, traders, went to the area and brought the item back with them. Old Copper Culture people probably used both of these techniques to get copper. Archaeologists do know that widespread trading must have taken place because items such as **marine** shells from the southern Gulf Coast are found at Archaic sites.

See also *Native Technologies-Copper*

Lifestyle Changes

Archaic people continued to hunt and gather just as they had during the earlier Paleo times, however, they hunted and gathered different types of animals and plants. They exploited the full range of wild plants and animals that could be found in their environment. Theirs was a very successful adaptation and it lasted for a long time.

Archaeologists know little about Archaic people's religion and political systems. Archaeologists find the first formal cemeteries at the end of the Archaic period. The use of cemeteries and the establishment of trade networks are further developed during the later Woodland tradition.











Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin OVERVIEW OF THE ARCHAIC TRADITION

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Tradition Name	
Lifeways	
Time	
Climate	
Environment	
Settlement	
Food	
Tools	
Toolkit	
Household	
Religion/Rituals	
Social/Political	
How Different From Previous Group	
Major World Events	



Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin OVERVIEW OF THE ARCHAIC TRADITION

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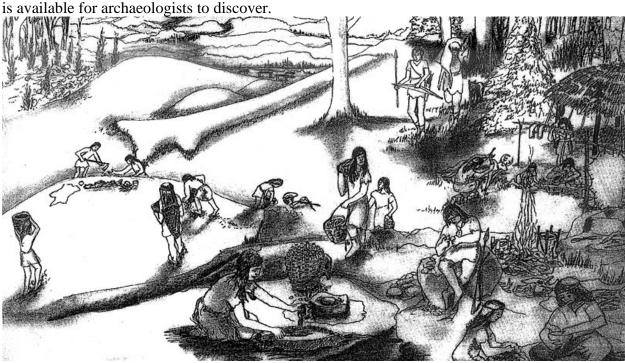
Tradition Name	Archaic		
Lifeways	Hunters and gatherers		
Time	8,000 - 500 B.C.		
Climate	It grew warmer as the glaciers retreated, then it became warmer than today, and finally changed to about today's conditions.		
Environment	Oak, hickory, and maple forests replaced the evergreens in the southern part of the state. A large quantity and variety of plants and animals were present.		
Settlement	Small bands continued in seasonal camps. Summer camps consisted of 25 to 30 people. During the winter the people may have lived in smaller groups in sheltered areas such as caves or rockshelters. They were roving less and territories were beginning to develop.		
Food	They used a wide variety of large and small game, mainly deer. Plant foods became more important. They used mainly nuts, but seeds, fruits and berries were also very important.		
Tools	Most of the tools used during Paleo times were also used during this time period. Axes were used to cut down trees. During the middle of this period the use of copper began. It was used for spear points and decorative and ceremonial objects.		
Toolkit	Spear points, atlatl, knives, modified flakes, hammerstones, ground stone axes, nutting stones		
Household	Heavier household goods were now being used, for they could be left at a campsite. Textiles and basketry originated during this time. Grinding stones were used to process food products. Containers may have been made from gourds and skins.		
Religion/Rituals	Decorative and ceremonial pieces were introduced. Cemeteries and special individual burials are known, particularly from the end of the period.		
Social/Political	Social organization was still based on the family. Hunting was no longer always in large groups. People were doing more individualized hunting.		
How Different From Previous Group	The glaciers had retreated to the north. The people during this period adapted to and fully exploited the environment in which they lived. They began to use different food types, developed localized territories, used copper and had some special burial practices.		
Major World Events	6,000 B.C Earliest writing in Mesopotamia 2,500 B.C Egyptian pyramids 1,200 B.C Stonehenge in England 1,000 B.C Beginning of Mayan civilization		



Hunters, Gatherers, Fishers and Gardeners Southern Wisconsin: 500 B.C. to 1200 A.D. Northern Wisconsin: 500 B.C. to 1700 A.D.

Introduction

The Woodland tradition begins about 500 B.C. You may think that since it is only about 2500 years old, not as old as some other traditions, that archaeologists would know more about these people and their lifeways than they do about the older traditions. It is true that archaeologists know much more about the Woodland tradition than about the older traditions, but archaeologists still have problems discovering all that they want to know about these people. Many of the items that were left behind have decomposed and therefore, little or no trace of them is available for embased spices to discover.



Woodland scene

The environment of the people in the Woodland tradition was very similar to today. The hunting and gathering lifeways of the Woodland people were not radically different from the previous lifestyle of the Archaic people. Archaeologists, however, have discovered some differences. Woodland people buried their dead in man-made mounds, made pottery and began to grow plants in small gardens. Archaeologists can see the beginnings of these activities at the end of the Archaic period but Woodland people really developed these activities much further. These changes suggest that people were creating new technologies and making social changes. They also indicate that people were moving around less and were starting to develop stronger territories.





Woodland potsherd

Mound

During this time the population increased, which put an increased demand on resources. This resulted in increased tension among people. These things make Woodland people unique from past people. Remember, groups of people didn't just leave and new people with new ways move into Wisconsin. Instead, new ideas and ways of doing things slowly evolved and consequently changed these people's lives. Archaeologists can speculate about these changes by studying the artifacts people left behind.

See also Archaeological Basics-Site destruction

Red Ocher Culture

A unique culture called the Red Ocher Culture existed in the time between the end of the Archaic and the beginning of Woodland. This culture showed more social complexity than earlier people. The people were involved in long distance trade of exotic materials and practiced elaborate burial practices. A characteristic of this culture was its unique burial practices of using red ocher to decorate or cover the corpses of their dead. Red Ocher is ground up iron ore that is red in color.

Objects made from exotic materials were placed with the burials to mark the individual's status. Copper ornaments, marine shell beads and ceremonial blades (knives or points that were thinner and larger than could be practically used) have been found buried with some individuals. The trade networks and use of copper by the Red Ocher people have their beginnings in the trade and copper use of the *Old Copper Culture*. Red Ocher people used copper more to make ornaments (beads, rings) than tools, like the Old Copper Culture people did. Not all Archaic or Woodland people were involved in the Red Ocher Culture. This is a unique set of lifeways that only involved some people.



"Turkey tail" projectile points are characteristic of the Red Ocher culture.

Back to Archaic-Old Copper Culture

Food [Hunting, Gathering, Gardening]

Woodland people were mainly hunters and gatherers. They continued a very successful adaptation to the rich environment and resources of Wisconsin. During this time, rivers and lakes became a particularly important source for plant and animal resources. Deer were an important food source as were small animals such as beaver, raccoon, muskrats, squirrels, fish, turtles, fresh water mussels, waterfowl and birds. Fruits, nuts, berries, wild rice and starchy seeds were gathered along with other plants for food and medicinal purposes. For thousands of years people had been collecting and probably encouraging plants to grow. Gourds were useful as containers, especially before pottery.



Throughout the Woodland period, archaeologists find that people were beginning to grow a few plants in gardens. This was not full scale farming, rather, people planted a few seeds in small gardens. First squash and then sunflowers were grown in small gardens. By the end of this period some corn was being grown.

See also <u>Archaeological Basics-Plant</u> remains



Pipe

Some plant materials were used for more that just food. Squash and gourds were used for vessels and food. Textiles and hides were dyed with natural dyes. Tobacco and pipes began to be used during Woodland times.

Tools

The toolkit for Woodland people contained many of the same items used by previous groups, such as spear points, knives, modified flakes and hammerstones. The **mano** and **metate** were used to process plant materials. Spears and nets were now used for fishing.

At the end of the Woodland period people begin to use a new tool, the bow and arrow. The bow and arrow was an effective tool for individual hunters. The projectile points, or arrowheads, that archaeologists find are smaller than those used for spears by previous groups. **Abraders**, sometimes used for straightening arrow shafts, are also found.



Bow and arrow



Toolkit. From left: top row-core, flakes, hammerstone. Middle row-2 bifaces, 2 points, scraper, retouched flake; Bottom row-drill, graver.

See also Archaeological Basics-Point styles

Pottery

Another new technology for Wisconsin's Woodland people was pottery. Woodland people made their pots from local clays. They learned that if they added **temper**, small ground up rocks or sand, to their clay it would help prevent shrinkage and cracking during drying and firing.

Coils or slabs were used to build the pots. After the clay pots dried in the air, they were baked in an open fire. Woodland pots have straight sides and cone shaped bottoms. Paddles covered with cords were used to shape the pots. Some pots were decorated with incised lines. Others were decorated with cord or fabric pressed into the wet clay.

The decoration on pottery changes through time just like the shape of projectile points. Archaeologists can use the type of temper and designs on pots to help tell their age. The oldest pottery has incised lines, made with a stick or a fingernail. Later pottery often has fine decoration made with a stick wrapped with a cord and pressed into the clay, or a stick carved with notches to make a dentate pattern. The latest Woodland pottery has elaborate sets of cords, perhaps woven, pressed into the clay.



Pot shapes and designs change through time. The oldest pots are on the left, the most recent Woodland pots are on the right.

See also *Native Technology-Pottery*

Settlement

Woodland people moved around less than previous groups as they continued to develop territories. They continued to move seasonally to take advantage of resources. The distance they traveled, however, was probably not as great as in the past and they probably didn't move as frequently. In the spring and summer, when resources were more available, several small groups (25 - 50 people) might meet to trade and socialize. These small groups would gather with other small groups to form larger groups of 100 to 500 people, close to lakes, rivers, streams or springs. This would be a good time for ceremonial activities including mound building. During the winter, when resources were scarce, the people would break up into smaller family groups and move to protected areas such as rockshelters. Camps developed along rivers and lakes in the summer, and inland or in more protected and sheltered places during the winter.







Mound

Archaeologists know that Woodland people were making some type of seasonal shelters. Archaeologists haven't, however, found any actual structures. What they have found are **postmolds**. Postmolds are stains in the ground where a post used to be but has now rotted away. The only thing left is the stain of where the post used to be. Archaeologists have found postmolds arranged in circular, rectangular, oval and keyhole shapes. It seems that people built their houses in different shapes in different locations and times in Wisconsin. The things that Woodland people left behind suggest to archaeologists that, regionally, there were many differences in lifeways. The varied landscape and environments of Wisconsin were part of the reason for the variety of lifeways.

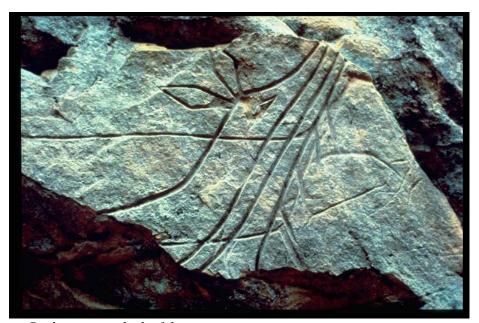


Artist's rendition of a Woodland house

Rock Art

Carvings or paintings on rock surfaces begin to appear during this time period. It is difficult to know if people first started using this means of expression at this time period or if examples of rock art from previous groups just have not been discovered or preserved. Archaeologists do see carvings (petroglyphs) and paintings (pictographs) on rock surfaces in Wisconsin.

Images include pictures of the different animals that were important in the lives of the people, particularly deer, elk, and bison. There are also pictures that may come from the myths and traditional stories that tell the history of the people. These images may include the thunderbirds. It is hard to know which images were made during this time or during later times, because rock art is difficult to date.



Rock art-petroglyph of deer.

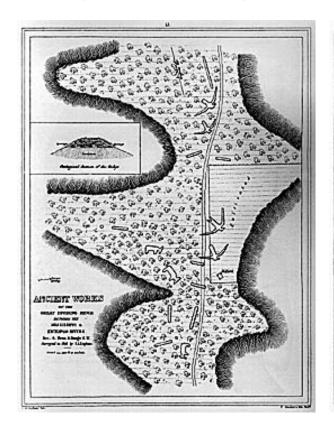
Most of the images have been found in the "Driftless Area" of southwestern Wisconsin. This area provides exposed rock and rockshelters that are ideal for carving or painting images.

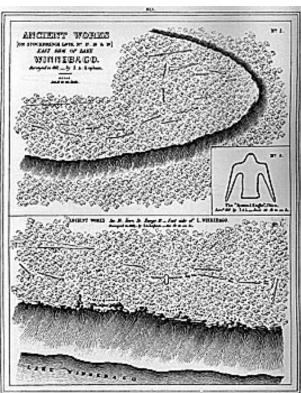
Mounds

As with past traditions, archaeologists know little about the religion or political systems of the Woodland people. Archaeologists have found man-made mounds around the state that have been dated to this time. Exactly why they were made is unknown. They may have been made as part of a ceremony or to mark territories or trails. Often they are located on prominent ridges that would have been visible from a distance, and may have marked the margins of territories.

Some of the mounds contain burials, others do not. Some of the burials were placed in the mounds during construction and some were placed in the mounds after their completion. Groups of people may have gathered annually or every few years to build mounds and bury those members of their community who had passed away since the last gathering.

Mounds were made in a variety of shapes. Early mounds were conical (circular). Later effigy mounds were made in the shapes of animals such as bears, panthers, birds and other animals. Effigy mounds are unique to a small area of the country. They are only found in southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, and northeastern Iowa.





Maps of Woodland mound groups

See also <u>Archaeological Basics-Studying burial mounds</u> See also Wisconsin Sites-Mound sites

Hopewell

During the middle of Woodland times, some Wisconsin residents interacted with groups in Ohio and Illinois. Most of the people in Wisconsin followed the Woodland tradition, however, some people adapted some of the ideas of the people in Ohio and Illinois. The resulting culture is called Hopewell. The Hopewell culture has its roots in the trade systems and social complexity of the Red Ocher people (see discussion under the Archaic Tradition). Hopewell was a specialized kind of Woodland lifeway, something like a "fancy" or high-status Woodland.

There are only a few sites in Wisconsin where people followed this unique lifeway. These sites are mainly in the southwestern part of the state along the Mississippi River. The Hopewell culture was more evident in Illinois and southern Ohio. Rivers provide an avenue for travel, trade and communication, a perfect means to bring Hopewell culture to Wisconsin. The people in Wisconsin who were involved in Hopewell culture only adopted a limited number of the Hopewell traits from all those used by the people in Illinois and Ohio. A characteristic of the Hopewell cultures is their large conical mounds. Some contained burial tombs.

Hopewell people were also involved in elaborate trade networks. Some objects placed with the burials were made from materials found outside Wisconsin. Some of these items were traded from great distances. A black shiny glass-like stone called obsidian, used to make projectile points, was traded from Wyoming. Marine shells, used for decorations, came from the Gulf Coast. Some of the items made from exotic materials that were used for rituals or placed in burials included large knives, pipes and copper axes, beads and **earspools**.

See also Wisconsin Sites-Nicholls Mound



A variety of stone and bone tools are found with Hopewell sites. On the left are drilled bear canines; in the center are projectile points of exotic stones; on the upper right are copper beads, and in the lower right are a limestone pipe and below is the base of a clay figurine.



Earspool

Lifestyle Changes

The climatic and environmental differences between northern (pine forest) and southern (deciduous forest) Wisconsin are responsible for people developing different lifeways in northern and southern Wisconsin. People in the northern part of the state continued to follow the Woodland hunting, gathering and gardening traditions until the arrival of Europeans. Cool temperatures and a shorter growing season prevented the adaptation of full scale farming in the northern part of the state. Northern people, however, began to harvest wild rice and it became one of the most important foods, even today.

Woodland people in the southern part of Wisconsin adapted their Woodland lifeways to two new lifeways called Mississippian and Oneota. Both of these traditions were still involved in hunting and gathering but both became full scale farming cultures. These traditions continued in the southern part of Wisconsin until the arrival of Europeans. Some Mississippian and Oneota artifacts have been found in the northern part of Wisconsin but not in quantities that would indicate that these cultures had a major impact on the northern Wisconsin Woodland lifeways.

See also Archaeological Basics-Dating the traditions











Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin OVERVIEW OF THE WOODLAND TRADITION

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Tradition Name		
Lifeways		
Time		
Climate		
Environment		
Settlement		
Food		
Tools		
Toolkit		
Household		
Religion/Rituals		
Social/Political		
How Different From Previous Group		
Major World Events		



Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin OVERVIEW OF THE WOODLAND TRADITION

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Tradition Name	Woodland
Lifeways	Hungers, gatherers, fishers and gardeners
Time	Southern Wisconsin 500 B.C. to 1200 A.D. Northern Wisconsin 500 B.C. to 1700 A.D.
Climate	It was very much like it is today.
Environment	It was very similar to today.
Settlement	Larger groups of 50 to 100 people, or more, would gather for short times during the summer. They separated into smaller groups of 25 to 50 during the winter when food was scarce. Camps developed along rivers and lakes in the summer and in more protected places during the winter.
Food	Squash and sunflower seeds, which were grown in small gardens, were added to the previously used wild food items. Towards the end, people started growing corn. Rivers and lakes provided fish, clams and turtles. Deer, small mammals and birds continued to be used.
Tools	The smaller and more efficient bow and arrow began to be used by the individual hunter. Spears and nets were now used for fishing.
Toolkit	Spear points, arrowheads, bow and arrow, knives, modified flakes, hammerstones, manos and metates, abraders and pottery
Household	Seasonal, housing structures began to be used during this period. Pottery was first introduced during this time. Gourds and squashes were used for vessels and food. Textiles and fabrics were decorated with shell beads and dyed with natural dyes. Tobacco and pipes began to be used.
Religion/Rituals	During this period large scale and elaborate burial rituals took place, particularly the Hopewell culture. Conical, linear, and animal shaped mounds began to be employed. Rock art also appeared during this time.
Social/Political	A large scale network of trade developed at this time, extending from the Gulf Coast to Canada, Wyoming to West Virginia and Ohio. Ritual goods and raw materials were exchanged. People were organized in large groups for social and ritual gatherings.
How Different From Previous Group	Burials of the dead were more elaborate. People were more politically structured and became more localized and territorial. Pottery and gardening had their beginnings at this time.
Major World Events	100 B.C Great Wall of China 0 - Birth of Christ 400 A.D Fall of Rome 1,000 A.D City of Timbuktu built in West Africa

Mississippian & Oneota Traditions

Hunters, Gatherers, Fishers and Farmers 1000 to 1650 A.D.

Introduction

The Oneota and Mississippian traditions are the first full scale farmers in Wisconsin, over 500 years before the arrival of the first Europeans in the state! What caused the southern Woodland people to adapt to this new lifeway? For the answer to that question we need to look outside Wisconsin to southern Illinois. The center of Mississippian tradition was a site called Cahokia across the Mississippi River from the current city of St. Louis, Missouri. Mississippian people in southern Illinois lived in large planned permanent towns with ceremonial centers. Large urban populations were supported by intensive farming of corn, beans and squash.

Mississippian people had a **hierarchical** society with political and religious structures. **Platform mounds** were used for ceremonies or possibly high ranking individuals lived there. These Mississippian ideas were dispersed from the center of Mississippian culture in Cahokia to other areas including Wisconsin. Two major Mississippian sites in Wisconsin are Aztalan, located in the center of the state, and a site near Trempealeau, but other Mississippian campsites or villages are also located in Grant and Vernon counties.

Another tradition in the southern part of Wisconsin was the Oneota. In some ways the Oneota culture was much like the Mississippian culture found in Illinois. Oneota is considered the local version of Mississippian. Both traditions had large villages involved in farming. Archaeologists do notice differences in some of the artifacts that people left behind. The pottery of the Oneota is different from that made by the Mississippians. Archaeologists also do not find as many of the exotic goods that are found at Mississippian sites. This causes archaeologists to think that the Oneota weren't involved as extensively in the long range trading that the Mississippian people were. These things tell archaeologists that the Oneota and Mississippian people did things a little differently.

Archaeologists have differing views on where the Oneota came from. Some archaeologists think that new people who came into Wisconsin brought the new Oneota ways. Other archaeologists think that the Oneota tradition was adapted from the Mississippian tradition. Archaeologists will have to continue working to find the answers to where the Oneota tradition came from or how it developed.



Artist's view of Mississippian and Oneota scene.

Wisconsin Mississippian

By the time Mississippian ideas reached Wisconsin they had been adapted into a uniquely Wisconsin form of Mississippian. People didn't want to give up some of their Woodland ways so they blended the Mississippian ways with their existing Woodland ways. Remember, everyone doesn't just leave the state and new people with new ideas move in. Instead the Woodland tradition was still in Wisconsin. Woodland people were in the state when Mississippian ideas were brought in, either by the migration of people bringing their unique Mississippian ways of doing things or Woodland people bringing back ideas from trade or travel to Mississippian territories. This meant that Woodland traditions were adapted to include aspects of the Mississippian traditions. It is not known whether this occurred as a peaceful transition or whether it may have been met with resistance and conflict. However the transition took place, the presence of the Mississippian Tradition in Wisconsin was short-lived, only about 200 years, and overlaps the end of the Late Woodland period.

What was Mississippian life like in Wisconsin? How was it different from the Woodland tradition? The climate and environment were similar to today. There were fewer trees and more prairies in southern Wisconsin. The big changes were that people began farming, they lived in large villages and there was now a ruling class. Some things that archaeologists encounter that indicate changes from Woodland ways include large platform mounds, changes in pottery construction and design, and the appearance of exotic trade goods such as marine shell beads from the Gulf coast, and **catlinite** or **pipestone** from western Minnesota.



Aztalan



Map of major Mississippian and Oneota sites in Wisconsin.

See also <u>Archaeological Basics-Ancient Prairies</u> See also <u>Native Technologies-Catlinite</u>

Mississippian Farmers

Mississippian people used tools similar to those used in the past to hunt and gather the many plant and animal resources around them. These included deer, elk, bison, fish, small mammals, and many wild plants such as fruits, berries, and nuts.

A big change for Mississippian people was beginning to farm crops of corn. The introduction of farming provided a more stable food source than just hunting and gathering. In good years, farming provided surplus food that could be stored for lean years. Woodland peoples had grown some corn but did not rely on it as did the Mississippians.



Beans.



Corn with a grinding stone.

Mississippian Settlement

A big change for this time was in how people settled. In the past, people mainly lived in small groups that would periodically gather in larger groups for seasonal ceremonies. The Mississippian lifeway was very different. This is the first time when people gathered in large village groups. The villages may have had 50-100 people who lived there year-round. Farming provided the abundant food source that allowed people to live in large groups.

Wisconsin's Mississippian people built large platform mounds with surrounding villages. The site at Aztalan was even surrounded by a **stockade**. This may suggest that there were conflicts between the people living within the stockade and those living outside it.



Aztalan stockade.

See also *Wisconsin Sites-Aztalan*

Social structure also changed with the introduction of Mississippian ideas. People who lived during this time experienced social inequality as they lived under religious or political rulers. Elite individuals received special privileges and goods from far away places. They possibly lived on the platform mounds and received exotic goods.

Mississippian Tools and Pottery

Mississippian people continued to use the bow and arrow and made small triangular arrowheads. They also used the same kinds of other stone tools that earlier people have used-knives, scrapers, modified flakes, hammerstones, and so forth. These were basic tools and worked for each new generation as they had in the past.

A big change for this period is evident in pottery construction. Instead of using sand or ground up rock for temper they used ground clam shells. The shape of their pots also changed from the pointed bottom of the Woodland people to a pot shaped more like a pumpkin. The designs on pots changed and now showed a similarity to the designs that Mississippian people made in southern Illinois. At many sites the only way that archaeologists know that the Mississippians have influenced Wisconsin's Woodland people is by the presence of Mississippian style pottery sherds.



Mississippian and Oneota projectile points.



Mississippian pottery.

See also Archaeological Basics-Point styles

Mississippian Lifestyle Changes

Mississippian villages in Wisconsin such as Aztalan or the village in Trempealeau may have started out as trading outposts for the town of Cahokia in central Illinois. Stone from Silver Mound, near the city of Hixton has been found by archaeologists at Cahokia. This indicates that there were trading networks. Food may have also been sent to Cahokia in exchange for exotic items. Corn agriculture appears to have been successful for Mississippian peoples.



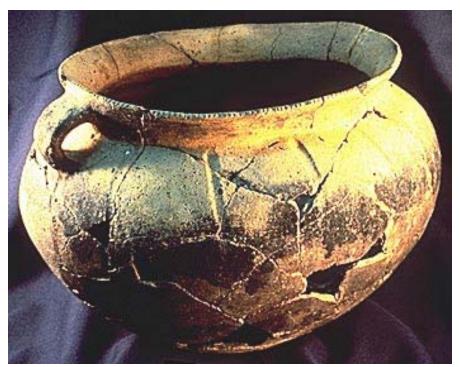
Corn

By about 1200 AD, however, it looks as if the Mississippian centers were more involved in regional trading and that there was little trade with Cahokia. There are no more platform mounds built in Wisconsin. Archaeologists aren't sure what happened to Cahokia. The complex society that marked Cahokia changes. There are no more platform mounds, the communities are much smaller than Cahokia, and trade networks are greatly reduced. One theory is that it evolved into the Oneota culture.

See also *Archaeological Basics-The changing story*.

Oneota: 1200 to 1650 A.D.

The Oneota were Wisconsin's first farmers. They lived in large villages on the broad sandy terraces along major rivers and lakes, grew crops of corn, beans, squash, tobacco, and other crops, and harvested wild foods from the rivers and lakes as well as from the woodlands. Oneota groups were also found in many adjoining states in the Midwest, including Iowa, Minnesota, and Illinois. The people traded with each other, exchanging raw materials such as stone for flintknapping, or copper for making tools and ornaments. However, they weren't as involved in extensive long-distance trade as were the Mississippians. They usually buried their dead in cemeteries or within the village, rather than constructing burial mounds. Their villages contain many storage pits that were later refilled with village refuse, including pottery, stone tools and flakes, animal and plant remains. Archaeologists have learned a lot about the Oneota from the refuse found in these pits.



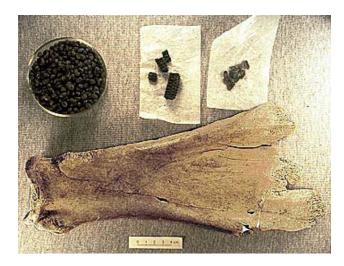
Oneota pot.

See also Wisconsin Sites-The Gundersen Site

Oneota Farmers

Oneota people grew crops of corn, beans, and squash, and hunted and gathered the abundant resources found in and adjacent to rivers and lakes. These areas provided a lot of resources such as turtles, muskrats, beaver, fish, waterfowl and mussels. The area between the villages was left empty. Oneota people probably hunted and gathered in these areas but did not live there. Hunting large animals like deer, elk or bison may have taken hunters far from their villages. Archaeologists aren't sure what Oneota people did during the winter. Groups in the western part of Wisconsin probably traveled further westward to hunt buffalo and meet with other groups.

Archaeologists have found acres of ridged fields where Oneota farmers grew corn, beans and squash. Ridged fields were created by piling the soil into long parallel ridges. These early farmers grew corn on the ridge, with beans growing up the corn stalk and the squash covering the ground around the base of the corn. The corn provided support for the beans to grow on and the squash provided ground cover that helped keep weeds down. Hoes made from the shoulder blades (**scapula**) of animals, such as bison and elk, were used to tend the fields. People went though the trouble to make the ridged fields because it helped to ensure a successful harvest. The ridge raised the corn just enough to protect it from flood and frost and it effectively extended the growing season a bit longer.



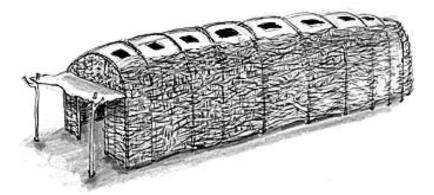
Corn, beans, and a bison scapula hoe.



Sand Lake site block excavations showing ridged fields.

Oneota Settlements

The Oneota people gathered in large groups of over 100 people in semi-permanent villages around large rivers and lakes. Archaeologists have found stains from the posts of the houses that give some idea of the size and shape of Oneota structures. It appears that Oneota people built houses in different sizes and shapes around the state. Some houses were small, being used for a single family, while others were large enough for several families. Some villages were small, only a few houses, while others covered acres and had many houses. Some villages had **palisades** while others didn't.



Artist's rendition of an Oneota long house.

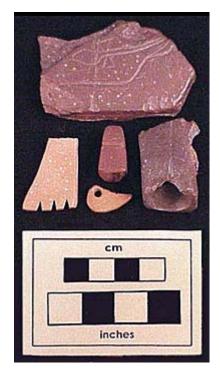
One thing that archaeologists do find at all villages are storage pits. These pits were used to store corn and other crops, and later some of these storage pits were reused as garbage pits. Archaeologists find bundled grasses that were used for a variety of purposes such as for the walls of houses or the lining of storage pits.



Profile through a storage pit.

Oneota Tools

Many of the tools that archaeologists find at Oneota sites are the same as those found at Woodland and Mississippian sites. The small triangular points used with bow and arrows are found at Oneota sites, along with scrapers, drills and bone **awls**. Grinding stones were still used, but now mainly for corn instead of nuts. Catlinite was used to make pipes and ornaments. Some artifacts, however, are unique to Oneota sites such as fish lures, disk pipes and bison or elk scapula hoes.





Oneota pottery sherd.

Catlinite.

Oneota pottery was different than that found at Woodland or Mississippian sites. Oneota pottery was tempered with clam shell and had the pumpkin shape similar to Mississippian pottery. The pots are also much larger than Woodland pots and suggest larger groups of people were cooking and eating together. The designs that the Oneota people put on their pots were, however, unique to the Oneota. Some of these designs were used in rock carvings and paintings. Archaeologists also find remains of bone rasps, whistles, shell spoons and turtle shell bowls.

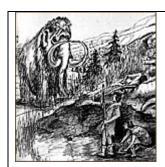


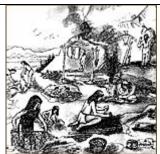
A variety of Oneota artifacts were made of bones. Top line-musical rasp made from a bison rib bone; Directly below that is a whistle made from the wing bone of a goose. A bone harpoon is below the whistle. Other artifacts and ornaments are also shown.

Oneota Lifestyle Changes

By the end of the Oneota period, there were many changes in Oneota society. Many sites and areas such as La Crosse are abandoned. Archaeologist aren't sure what happened to the Oneota. Some archaeologists think that their populations were decreased through the introduction of European disease. Others think warfare caused the decline of the Oneota. Still others think that the Oneota people moved westward and became involved in the bison hunting with plains tribes. Possibly all these reasons were involved.

We do know that the last village occupied in the La Crosse area was stockaded, suggesting a need for defense against someone. At the time of European contact, villages in the Upper Iowa river in northeastern Iowa had populations from the Ioway and Oto tribes living in villages and making artifacts similar to those made earlier in Oneota cultures. Archaeologists will need to continue to work to find the answer to the question of where the many different groups of Oneota peoples went. Wherever they went, some places, like the La Crosse area, were deserted when the Europeans arrived.











Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin OVERVIEW OF THE MISSISSIPPIAN & ONEOTA TRADITIONS

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Tradition Name		
Lifeways		
Time		
Climate		
Environment		
Settlement		
Food		
Tools		
Toolkit		
Household		
Religion/Rituals		
Social/Political		
How Different From Previous Group		
Major World Events		



Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin OVERVIEW OF THE MISSISSIPPIAN & ONEOTA TRADITIONS

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Tradition Name	Mississippian and Oneota
Lifeways	Hunters, gatherers, fishers and farmers
Time	1,000 - 1,650 A.D.
Climate	It was very much like it is today.
Environment	It was very similar to today.
Settlement	Mississippian people lived in permanent villages, sometimes with stockades. Oneota people began to gather in large semi-permanent villages along rivers and lakes and near farmland. Over 100 people would gather in summer camps.
Food	Previously adopted foods continued to be used in addition to large quantities of animal resources found by rivers and lakes. This was the beginning of agriculture and the introduction of corn and beans.
Tools	Earlier developed tools continued to be employed at this time. The bison scapula hoe first appears during this time.
Toolkit	Arrowheads, bow and arrow, knives, modified flakes, scrapers, hammerstones, manos and metates, abraders, drills, hoes and pottery
Household	Bundles of grasses were used for a variety of household purposes such as for the walls and roofs of houses or lining of storage pits. Large pots, shell spoons and turtle shell bowls were employed. Grinding stones were now mainly used for corn instead of nuts.
Religion/Rituals	Decorative and ceremonial pieces made out of exotic materials continued to be used although less than in Woodland times. Rock art as well as bone and stone engravings were created by these people.
Social/Political	Mississippian cultures arose in Illinois, and their unique artifacts and ideas spread into Wisconsin. Oneota cultures may have arisen from interactions between these Mississippian peoples and the local Wisconsin Woodland populations. Both cultures were agriculturalists, which required people to work co-operatively. Ranking within the social structure increased. Mississippian peoples traded widely, but the Oneota groups traveled less than the Mississippian.
How Different From Previous Group	The Mississippian and Oneota people were the first true farmers. They grew domesticated corn and beans. They created few mounds but possibly buried their dead in group cemeteries.
Major World Events	1,100 A.D Rise of Inca empire 1,300 A.D Aztecs settle Mexico city 1,492 A.D Columbus arrives in North America

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BASICS

Archaeologists

Archaeologists are scientists who study people who lived in the past. To learn more about the people who lived a long time ago, for example 10,000 years ago, archaeologists do not have any written records. Obviously, there are no people who are still alive that can tell us about what life was like that long ago.

To learn about people from long ago, archaeologists analyze and study the things that those people left behind, hoping to find clues that will tell us about how those people lived. Sometimes those early people left clues about their lives scratched or painted on rock. Sometimes they left behind the black soot of their campfires on the ceiling of a rock overhang or in a cave. Sometimes those people left behind things that they used or made from natural materials to make their lives easier. These articles are called **artifacts** and much of the science of archaeology centers around finding, collecting, analyzing and preserving these artifacts that early people left behind.

See also Archaeological Basics-Different Voices

Challenges

What makes the work of archaeologists very difficult is that many of the artifacts that people used and left behind are never found for one reason or another. Some of those artifacts, because of their age or because of the natural materials from which they were made, have just disintegrated and disappeared over the hundreds or thousands of years. Sometimes the artifacts end up in different places from where they were originally left. For example, artifacts left along the bank of a stream may be picked up and moved when the stream floods. Sometimes artifacts just remain buried beneath layers of soil in someone's backyard in a city, under acres of corn in a farmer's field, or beneath leaves and debris on the forest floor.

Being an archaeologist is a challenging job, to be certain. An archaeologist's job is very much like putting together a jigsaw puzzle without having a picture to use as a reference. On top of that, some of the pieces undoubtedly will always remain missing. Even more confusing is that some pieces might seem to fit in more than one place at the same time!

Historians, Anthropologists and Archaeologists

Archaeologists use everything available to them to try to create a picture of what life was like for the people who lived long ago. Like **historians** and **anthropologists** who also study people and how they live, sometimes archaeologists talk to living people, or observe them to find out about what life was like in the past. Archaeologists might even ask living people if they know stories or legends about specific locations where people might have lived centuries ago.

IMMENSE MOLAR OF PREHISTORIC ANIMAL IS LOCATED IN CHIPMUNK COULEE BY FARMER OUT FISHING

Fossilized Tooth Weighing Five Pounds With Grinding Surface Six Inches Long and Over Two Inches Wide Is Remarkable Discovery of Elmer Herold



Sometimes artifacts are found by local farmers eroding from the bank, as happened with this mastodon tooth. (From La Crosse Tribune, June 10, 1923)

Archaeologists can look at old newspapers, books, journals, and official documents to learn more about what happened in the past. But many times there are no written records. The early people in North America did not have a writing system and lived here long before others made written records to document their existence. This time period is sometimes called "prehistoric" which means a time before written records. The term prehistoric does not mean that there was no history; it means that the history was not documented in written form.

Some archaeologists specialize in the study of people who lived here after European settlement began, when there are written records. These archaeologists are known as "Historic Archaeologists."

Different Voices

Archaeology is not the only way to learn about the past. For the more recent past historians can use written records. Some people use other ways to construct their views about the lives of those who lived a long time ago. Many Native Americans have oral traditions that tell them about what life was like in the past. Many people have religious beliefs that encompass views or ideas about people who lived in the past.

Back to Archaeological Basics- Archaeologists

Context

Archaeologists are not just interested in the artifacts recovered from a site. Archaeologists are like detectives working at a crime site. In a murder investigation the location of the gun in relationship to the murder victim can give a detective lots of information. The geographic or spatial relationship between the gun and the murder victim, along with other clues, is called **context**.

For archaeologists, just as important as the artifacts themselves is the relationship between the artifacts, or their context. For archaeologists knowing what artifacts were found together, where they were found geographically, even what the soil color and texture were like in that area can give archaeologists valuable information which helps them interpret what happened at the site.

Naming Past Peoples

The names used in this book about Wisconsin's past people are names that archaeologists use to identify these people. They are not tribal names. No early boy or girl called themselves a Paleo person. Early people might have had their own name or identification for themselves and other groups that they knew about or came across. The names or "traditions" that archaeologists use are a means of identifying people who lived within a particular time frame and who used similar tools. Living within the same time frame and using similar tools implies similar ways of living. Those people with a similar way of living are said to have a common **lifeway** or **culture**.

The changing names that archaeologists give to the different cultural traditions do not mean that the previous group left the area and new people moved in. Rather, people over generations changed the way they did things. Archaeologists give new names to people who did things in a new way.

Back to <u>Paleo Tradition-Wisconsin at the end of the Ice Age</u> Back to <u>Paleo-Lifestyle changes</u>

Dating the Traditions

Archaeologists give dates for the beginning and ending of each cultural tradition. However, changes in lifeways rarely happened at the same time all across a broad region. Rather, the change occurred at different times and in different areas in the region. The dates that archaeologists give are general dates.

Back to Woodland-Lifestyle changes

Site Destruction

Many sites have been destroyed by natural and/or human forces. People today have often chosen to live in the same places that people chose in the past. Many archaeological sites have been destroyed by modern communities built over them. Other sites have been disturbed by farming, where the plow has dug up the upper layers of soil, often including all of the archaeological materials.

Back to Woodland-Introduction

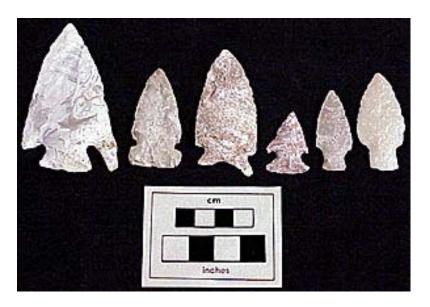
The Changing Story

The story that archaeologists have created about past people is always changing. Archaeologists are always gathering new information that may change the picture that they have of the past. Technology is also continually changing, and new techniques may help archaeologists to better interpret what they have recovered. It is a good thing that all the artifacts that archaeologists recover are kept. Future archaeologists may wish to look back at these artifacts using newer technology and will be able to gain additional information about the past people. Each bit of new information that is gathered may help us to better understand the lives of past people.

Back to <u>Paleo Tradition-Introduction</u>
Back to <u>Mississippian & Oneota-Mississippian Lifestyle Changes</u>

Point Styles

Archaeologists use the shape of projectile points to help give clues to when a particular site might have been occupied. Archaeologists have found that through time point styles changed and that certain styles were used only at certain times. If an archaeologist finds a certain style point at a site he/she can use it to tell the age of a site.



Back to <u>Paleo-Tools and Toolkits</u>. Back to <u>Archaic-Tools</u>. Back to <u>Woodland Tools</u>. Back to <u>Mississippian & Oneota-Mississippian Tools and Pottery</u>.

Regional Differences

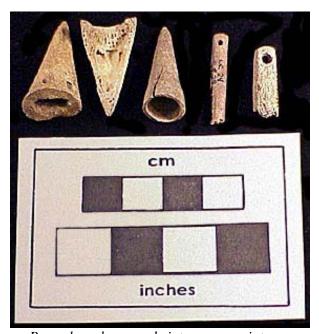
Keep in mind that not everyone does things in the same way. Even though many people live in Wisconsin, most people have differing ideas regarding how things should be done. If we think about the things that people in Wisconsin today do on a Saturday, for instance, we would find lots of different ways to fill the day. If we compared the people in two different cities we might observe similarities, but there would also be differences. An example would be if we were to compare people in Green Bay with those in La Crosse. People in both cities might enjoy boating on a summer Saturday. Some of the boats would be similar in shape and size. La Crosse boaters who enjoy the waters of the Mississippi River often prefer large houseboats with shallow draft hulls with large deck spaces for relaxation. Boaters from Green Bay, on Lake Michigan, use many more sail boats or large power-boats with more seaworthy hulls. Houseboats work better on a large river and sail boats work better on a lake. If archaeologists in the future looked at the boats that were left behind in these two cities they would notice that there are some similarities but there are also definite differences, even though people in both cities live very similar lifeways.

Back to Archaic-Old Copper Culture

Plants and Animals

Archaeologists mostly find pieces of stones and pottery-materials that do not decay over the centuries. But bones, wood, and other organic material are not as likely to be preserved. Bones can survive if the soil is not too acidic. The bones that archaeologists find in Wisconsin are not fossils like dinosaur bones. They are the real bones, and are often very fragile, or have completely decayed away. But if the bones are preserved, archaeologists can tell the kinds of animals that were hunted, how bones were used for tools, and can even see the cutmarks on the bones to see how the animals were butchered.

Plants are much more fragile than bones. You might wonder how archaeologists could find evidence of squash or corn at a site. It doesn't take long for a pumpkin that's left outside to become a pile of mush. How could pumpkin remains survive for thousands of years for archaeologists to find? Archaeologists don't find whole pumpkins. What they do find are seeds or parts of rind (outside) that have been burnt. When burnt, the seeds are turned into charcoal which preserves better than just the unburnt seed. Archaeologists are very careful when they excavate to recover as much as possible, even the very small things like seeds.



Bones have been made into arrow points, needles, and other tools.



Photograph of a blackberry seed found charred in an archaeological site.

Return to *Paleo- Hunting and Gathering*Return to *Woodland-Food*

Rockshelters

Rockshelters are shallow caves or shelters formed in hillsides. People often used such places as winter camping areas, because they provided shelter and protection from the wind and cold. Sites such as Raddatz Rockshelter or Preston Rockshelter in southwestern Wisconsin were popular places to spend the winter. Within the rockshelter small groups of people built fires, cooked, slept, made tools, and probably prepared hides for clothing. Garbage from these activities was left behind. Over the years, sand or rocks from the bedrock above would fall to the ground and bury this garbage. Later inhabitants would live on the new surface, leave their garbage, and it would again be buried. This happened many times, creating a layered record of occupations. These layers were excavated by archaeologists to learn about the different people and how they changed through time. They have found many projectile points, scrapers, and also many deer bone and nutshell fragments that tell us something about the dinners of the ancient people.



Rockshelter

Back to Archaic-Settlement

Studying Burial Mounds

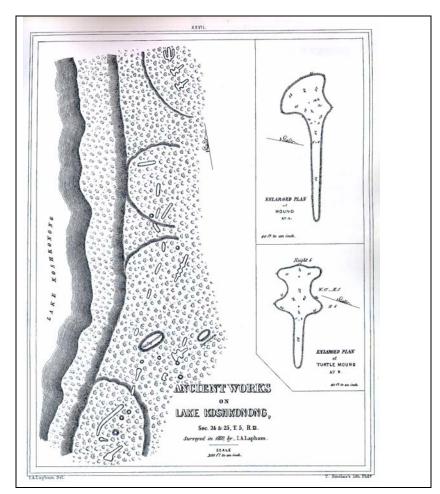
Early Euro-Americans were aware of the highly visible mounds on the landscape. Some people did not believe that the Native Americans in the area were capable of building the mounds. Some people thought there was a great Moundbuilder Race or even that Egyptians built the mounds. Actual study of the mounds began in the middle of the 1800's. Early archaeologists and antiquarians mapped, recorded and even excavated some of the mounds. They discovered that the Native Americans were the makers of these mounds. Early excavation techniques, however, were more primitive than today. Some people who excavated the mounds were interested in finding the items in the burials, not in learning about the people who made the mounds. In some cases, little regard was given to the feelings of the Native Americans.

Over eighty percent of the mounds that once were known to exist in Wisconsin have now been destroyed. Some have been plowed down, others destroyed during urban expansion. Today, all mounds and burials in Wisconsin are protected by law. Now archaeologists try to learn about the Woodland people by excavating their camps and villages rather than their burials.

Back to Woodland-Mounds

Ancient Prairies

Compared to now, there were fewer trees during Woodland times. Before the arrival of Europeans fires were common each spring. The fires limited tree growth to the stream and river valleys. The broad flat uplands of Wisconsin were



prairies when European settlers arrived. The settlers fought these fires and trees spread into larger areas

Back to Woodland-Mounds

Back to Mississippian & Oneota-Wisconsin Mississippian

Native Technology

Stone Tools

Making Stone Tools

Stone tools such as spear points were made through a process called **flintknapping**. Striking a rock in a particular way causes flakes/chips to come off. Learning to strike the rocks in the best way takes lots of practice and involves many mistakes. Even today, with patience and learned skill, people can make spear points out of stone.

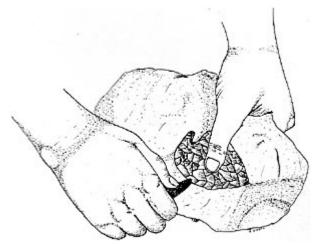


Knocking a flake from a core using a hammerstone.

Pressure flaking is the last step in making the stone tool. Very small, thin flakes are carefully removed from around the margins of the tool by applying pressure with an antler tine. This type of flaking strengthens, straightens and sharpens the cutting edges of the tool and shapes the piece into its final form.

The first step in making a tool from a piece of raw material is to remove the weathered surface called cortex. The piece of raw material is struck with a hammerstone which causes large flakes to be driven off. Some of these flakes may be used later to make smaller tools such as scrapers or triangular points.

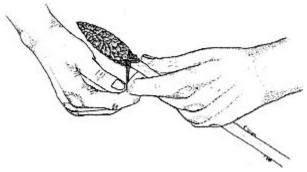
Shaping the piece into the desired tool form is the second step in the tool making process. Early stages of this process are done using a hammerstone. For the later and finer work a baton of wood or antler is used to thin the edges and to establish the form.



Pressure flaking a point.

Hafting Spears

Early spears were different than spears people use today. Today we might find spears with points made of steel and shafts made of aluminum. Early hunters had to use the raw materials that were available around them. Instead of processed metals, they used wood and stone. Hafting is the process of tying a tool to a bone or wood shaft. The end of the shaft was notched or split and the tool was wedged into the notch. Animal sinew or plant fibers were probably used to tie the tool to the shaft.



Hafting a spear point.

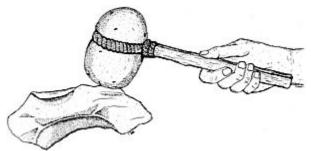
The shaft of the spear was made from wood. Long, straight pieces of wood make the best spears. The bark is stripped and then the piece is straightened if necessary. This took a lot of work and wood was not always available so early people came up with a way to cut down on the number of lost or broken spear shafts. Instead of having one long shaft with the spear point attached to the end, these early people made the shaft in two pieces. The spear point was attached to a short piece of wood, the foreshaft, which then fit into a longer shaft. This two piece construction allowed the main shaft to fall off after the point was stuck in the animal. In this way the shaft didn't get lost or broken if the animal was still able to run from the hunter.

Back to Paleo-Tools and tool kits

Native Copper

Copper tools and ornaments were made from pure copper nuggets that were mined in the Lake Superior region. The copper that was used by Wisconsin's Native peoples came from the northern shores of Lake Superior. Bedrock in the Lake Superior region contains some of the purest copper in the world. During prehistoric times, implements and ornaments made from copper were traded all over the continent.

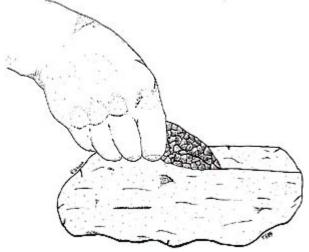
Copper was found on the surface in this area. Prehistoric "mines" were actually pits that were dug into the earth. Hammerstones or mauls were used to extract nuggets from encasing bedrock. Copper was also collected from stream beds flowing through the copper district.



Cold-hammering copper with a maul.

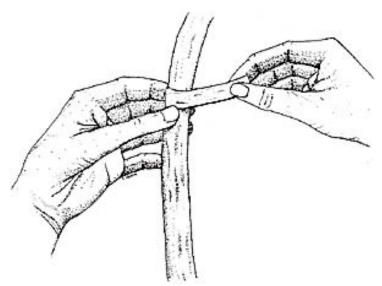
Copper nuggets were transformed into usable form through the technique of cold hammering. Groundstone mauls or hammerstones were used to pound the nuggets into thin sheets. Extensive hammering causes the copper to become brittle. Heating the copper and cooling it in water during hammering prevents the copper from becoming brittle.

Once the copper was out of the surrounding rock it was hammered into the final desired tool or shape. Copper is very soft and can easily be hammered into useful shapes. A sharp stone knife was used to cut pounded sheets of copper into strips. These strips were then used to make rings, tube beads and other ornaments.



Cutting copper sheets into strips with a stone knife.

Pure copper is considered a soft metal and is easily worked, similar to pure gold and silver. For ornaments, such as rings and tubular beads, strips of copper were shaped by wrapping them around a toolmaker's finger, wrist or around different sized sticks.



Wrapping a strip of copper around a stick to form a tube.

Back to Archaic-Old Copper Culture

Pottery

Pottery is an extremely useful tool for archaeologists to aid in determining the age of a site. This is because each ceramic vessel began as a soft pliable medium on which prehistoric artists were able to crate simple or complex designs. These impressions become "fossilized" when the pots were fired, and thus preserved to be collected in our time. It has been demonstrated through years of research that patterns of design were used over regional areas such as the Upper Midwest, and that these styles changed through time. This has enabled archaeologists to establish a ceramic chronology. By comparing a discovered vessel fragment to this chronology, one can gain a fairly accurate estimate of the age of the site from which the sherd was found.

People used materials around them as tools to decorate their pots. Fingernails, sticks, cords and shells were all used to decorate pots. How these tools were used and the designs that were made change from location to location and through time. As coils or slabs were added, early Woodland potters used a paddle wrapped with cord to shape the pot. This technique left a distinctive surface that showed the texture of the cord wrapped paddle. The potters then used their fingernail or sticks to make designs on the wet pots. Late Woodland people pressed cord or fabric into the clay near the rim of the pot. Clam shells were also rocked back and forth along the sides of the pot to create a unique zig zag decoration. Later Oneota peoples used their finger or sticks to decorate their pots.

Making Ceramics

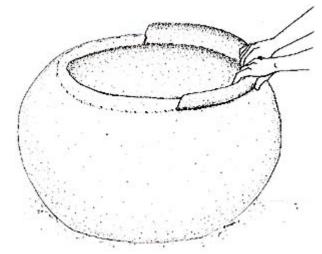
Step 1- The first step in the pottery making process was to add temper to the raw clay. Temper is a non-plastic material which is added to the clay before it is worked. Molecules of clay adhere to the temper material and improve the quality of the clay. Temper is added to counteract shrinkage of the clay, it facilitates uniform drying and lessens the risk of the vessel cracking when fired.



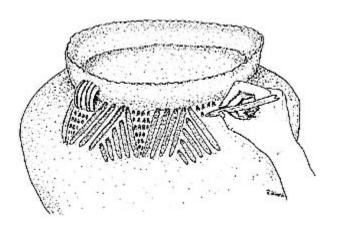
Making a pot-here the coiling technique is being used.

Archaeologists are studying prehistoric pots to try to understand how they were constructed. At present no one method of construction has been proven. One technique that has been suggested is called coiling. In this method, clay is rolled into a thick "rope" shape. These "ropes" or "coils" were placed one on top of the other and smoothed by hand or tool to make an even surface.

Step 2 - The final shaping of the vessel was done by hand while the clay was still wet. The rim was straightened and sometimes pulled slightly outward. Handles were attached after the rim had been shaped to the desired angle.



Rim being added to a vessel.



Decorating a pot by making lines and dots on the leather-hard clay with a stick.

Step 3 - Decoration was applied to the vessel when it was leather-hard. The pot was then allowed to thoroughly dry.

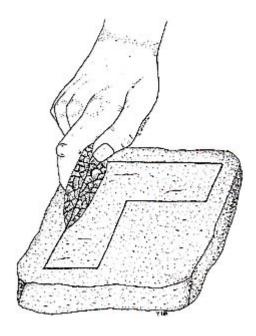
Step 4 - Firing was the final step in the pottery making process. As clay is heated its chemical structure is changed, the actual method used to fire the vessels is unknown, although it is know that kilns were not used. It is likely that the vessels were fired in an open-air situation.

The different colors seen on the pottery vessel are a result of the firing conditions. During the firing process areas that are exposed to oxygen turn reddish in color while areas that are covered and deprived in oxygen turn black or gray. Many pots have gray black spots on their exterior surfaces that suggest contact by a log during firing. Some pots still have black charred cooking remains on their inside or outside. Archaeologists hope that in the future it will be possible to analyze these remains to determine what was in the vessel and how the pot was used.

Back to *Woodland-Pottery*

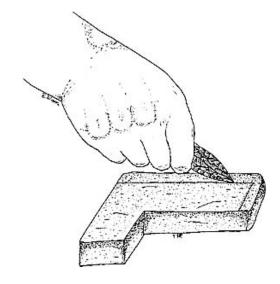
Catlinite

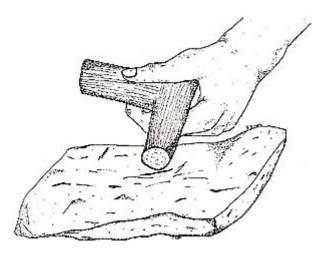
Catlinite, a type of pipestone, is a soft red siltstone named after the 19th century American artist, George Catlin. Catlinite outcrops occur in southwestern Minnesota, where traditional Native American quarries are preserved at the Pipestone National Monument.



Step 1 Pipes and ornaments were first outlined into the piece of raw catlinite, using a stone tool, such as a chipped stone knife.

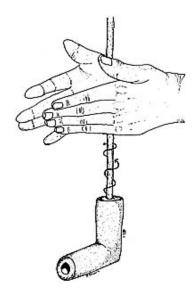
Step 2 Once the pipe was outlined, a sharp flake or stone knife was used to cut the rough shape from the raw block. A groove was cut around the desired shape, then pressure was applied to snap the excess material off.





Step 3
The corners of the block were shaved off and the desired shape and size was achieved by rubbing the pipe on an abrasive block of quartzite or sandstone.

Step 4 Finishing touches such as fine shaping and design carving, were done with a sharp stone knife or engraving tool.



Step 5

The hole in the pipe bowl was formed using a chipped stone drill hafted to a thin shaft. By holding the pipe between the feet or knees, and rotating the shaft of the hafted drill between the palms of the hands, a hole was slowly formed.

In the final step, the pipe maker polished the pipe. A wooden pipe stem, possibly decorated with beads, hair, porcupine quills and leather was then inserted into the bowl

Back to <u>Mississippian & Oneota-Wisconsin-Mississippian</u>
Back to <u>Catlinite/Pipestone</u>

Wisconsin Sites

Silver Mound-A Quarry Site

Silver Mound in Jackson County is a good example of a "quarry site" where people gathered the stones to make their tools. Although the name implies that it contains silver, Silver Mound has no silver. It is a large natural hill made up of a very hard kind of cemented sandstone called quartzite that was excellent for making stone tools. This stone was highly desired by ancient

peoples. From the earliest days, people traveled to Silver Mound to collect the stone, and it has been used throughout Wisconsin's prehistory. People traded or traveled for hundreds of miles to collect this stone. Points of this material have been found as far away as Kentucky. There are quarry pits that were used for thousands of years that had to be dug several feet into the bedrock to obtain the best materials.



Stone tool debris and unworked rocks are scattered on the surface of Silver Mound.

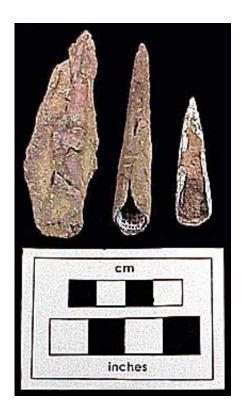


A rockshelter at Silver Mound.

Back to <u>Paleo-Tools and toolkits</u> Back to <u>Archaic Tools</u> At Silver Mound, a rockshelter, or shallow cave, in the hillside was occupied for short periods of time over the last 10,000 years, probably by the people quarrying the stone. Native Americans who came to the site also set up temporary villages in the fields around Silver Mound. The fields are covered with thousands of flakes from people making stone tools. You can visit the site today, and walk through the woods to see the rockshelter and the ancient quarry pits.

Old Copper Sites

The Reigh site in Winnebago County and the Oconto site in Oconto county are two cemeteries of the Old Copper Culture. They date to between 3000 to 1500 BC. They were excavated in the 1940-1960's by archaeologists. Many human burials with stone, copper and bone artifacts were found here. Many of the artifacts were used for daily activities, such as points, fishing hooks, and woodworking **adzes** and wedges. But many others were special kinds of artifacts that may have been related to ritual or status. For instance, one whistle was made from the wing bone of a swan. Other copper artifacts include bracelets, rings, pendants, and beads.



From left-chunk of hammered copper, and two projectile points.

Return to Archaic Old Copper Culture

Mound Sites To Visit

There are several mound sites in Wisconsin. Perrot, Wyalusing and High Cliff State Parks all have some mounds as well as Lizard Mound County Park and the Kletzien Mound Group in Sheybogan. Just across the river from Prairie du Chien, Effigy Mounds National Monument has a series of effigy mounds and interpretive exhibits. All of these sites allow people today to appreciate the mounds while protecting them as cemeteries.



A mound at Perrot State Park.

Back to Woodland-mounds

Nicholls Mound-A Burial Mound In Trempealeau

An example of a Hopewell site in Wisconsin is Nicholls Mound near the city of Trempealeau on the Mississippi River. When archaeologists from the Milwaukee Public Museum excavated the mound in the late 1920 - 1930's they discovered a burial tomb dug into the ground and covered with logs. A 12 foot high mound was built over the tomb. The tomb contained several individuals who were buried with ceremonial items made from exotic materials. Some of the items included large stone knives over 6 inches long made of obsidian from the Rocky Mountains, copper earspools, 6 copper axes, marine shell beads, and 20 freshwater pearl beads. You can still visit Nicholls mound from the bike trail just outside Trempealeau.



Nicholls mound prior to excavation.



Some artifacts from Nicholls mound.

Back to Woodland-Hopewell

Wisconsin Sites Page 65

Aztalan-Mississippian In Wisconsin

Aztalan is probably Wisconsin's best known archaeological site. The name implies that the site was occupied by the Aztecs. That, however, is not the case. The site was first occupied by the Woodland people and then people from the Mississippian tradition. A surround may have been for fortification or to control who entered and left the village. Stockades inside the village may have divided different use areas and helped to control who entered these areas. Inside the stockade were three large platform mounds and a natural knoll that was used as a mound. The mounds were used for different activities. One mound contained burials, another had a structure on top. These mounds may have been used for ceremonial activities or as a place for the elite religious or political leaders to live. There appears to have been a plaza area within the stockade surrounded by houses. Some efforts have been made to reconstruct parts of the site. The site of Aztalan is now Aztalan State Park.



Visitors to Aztalan.

Back to Mississippian & Oneota-Mississippian Settlement

Wisconsin Sites Page 66

The Gundersen Site

The Gundersen site is right beneath the modern city of La Crosse. On the edge of a terrace over a backwater channel of the Mississippi River, the site today extends over an area encompassing approximately 20 blocks. The modern city has been built on top of the ancient one. Between 1300 and 1600 AD, people lived in villages, probably farming the Mississippi river bottom lands and living on the drier terrace. Excavations were conducted in a portion of the site in 1991 prior to construction of a parking lot. Here, over 700 storage or garbage pits were found in the area of one city block, as well as several cemetery areas within the village. Lines of postholes were found where posts for structures had been placed in the ground. These may have been houses or other kinds of shelters. Many thousands of fish bones were found, indicating that people fished in the Mississippi River. Evidence also suggests that they were growing a lot of corn, beans and squash for their daily food.



Excavations in 1991 at the Gundersen site.

Back to Mississippian & Oneota Tradition-Oneota

GLOSSARY

Abrader: a tool made of a coarse material such a sandstone that is used to smooth materials such as bone, antler or wood

Adze a woodworking tool



Adze



Abrader

Anthropologist: a person who studies people and how they live (both past and present people)

Aquatic: growing or living in or around water

Archaeologist: a person who studies past people and how they lived

Artifact: any object made, modified or used by humans



Tossing an atlatl

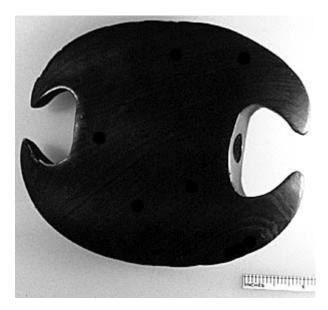
Atlatl: spear-thrower, used with a spear to make the spear travel farther and with more force

Awl: a tool with a sharp tip used for making holes



Copper awl

Bannerstone: a weight placed on an atlatl



Bannerstone



Catlinite objects.

Catlinite /Pipestone: fine-grained red rock that can be carved See also *Native Technologies-Catlinite*

Context: the relationship between artifacts and/or where they are found

Culture: a common way of life of a group of people

Earspool: object placed in a hole in a person's earlobes



Earspool

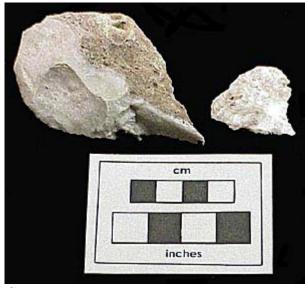
Flintknapping: the process of making stone tools through percussion, one rock hit against another in a specific and controlled way

Flute: long thin flake removed from the base of a projectile point



Folsom point with flute removed.

Graver: a triangular shaped tool used for engraving or incising



Gravers



Hammerstone: a stone used for battering or pecking or for making stone tools

Hammerstone on left, core on right.

Hierarchical Society: a culture whose people are organized into ranks

Historian: a person who studies the past through researching and creating written documents

Lifeway: a way of living shared by a group of people

Marine: from the ocean, not freshwater lakes or rivers

Mano: a hand sized rock used with a metate for grinding food

Metate: a large flat rock used as a grinding surface with a mano



Metate (on bottom) and mano, shown used to grind corn.



Modified flakes. The right edges of both flakes have been used to scrape or cut.

Modified Flake: flake of stone that has been modified to be used as a tool

Palisade: a high post fence or stockade



Stockade reconstructed at Aztalan.



Platform Mound: a large mound of earth with a flat top

Platform mound at Aztalan.

Postmold: stain left in the soil where posts from a structure have decomposed



Postmolds shown in cross-section.

Projectile Point: a man made pointed stone tool used as a tip on spears or arrows



Projectile Points

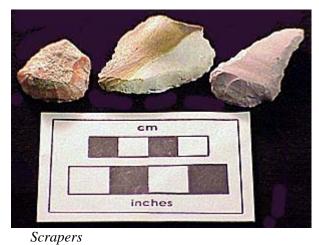
Page 74 Glossary



Two bison scapulas made into hoes.

Scapula: a triangular shaped bone in the shoulder of an animal

Scraper: a tool used for scraping items such as hides



Stockade: enclosure of posts used for fortification or to control entry



Stockade or palisade at Aztalan.

Temper: material (sand, small stones or ground up clamshell) which is added to clay to help prevent shrinkage and cracking when the clay is dried or fired

Site Credits Page 76



Early Cultures: Pre-European Peoples of Wisconsin

Site Credits

This project was funded in part by:

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management



Opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the funding agency.

For more DOI BLM information:

- -Heritage Resources at http://blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/CRM.htm
- -Project Archaeology at http://projectarchaeology.org

Images from the 1920's excavations at Trempealeau, Wisconsin have been provided with permission from the Milwaukee Public Museum.

The maps of Woodland mound groups are taken from I.A. Lapham, The Antiquities of Wisconsin as Surveyed and Described. This volume was originally published in 1855 by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. A facsimile edition was published by the University of Wisconsin Press in 2001.

Some drawings courtesy of Donna Cuta.

Woodland pottery drawings courtesy of Madelyn Sarduy.

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