



IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

Time Line

Original Peoples and Early Settlers

Native Americans have lived in this region for at least eight thousand years. Originally, these first inhabitants made their homes along the northern borders of Indiana and in the south along the Ohio River. Between 1000 BC and 1500 AD, Woodland Natives farmed the rich bottomland along the Ohio River, growing corn, beans, and squash.

Around 1100 AD, a large community of Mississippian people settled along the northern bank of the Ohio River. One thriving settlement (near Evansville, Indiana), known by historians and archaeologists as Angel Mounds, became a major religious, political, and economic center. At least three thousand people lived there by 1300 AD. This community included substantial houses, stockades, a plaza, and satellite villages. The Mississippians built very large earthen mounds, probably as homes for community leaders and as sites for worship and burial. One flat-topped mound in this ancient city is about forth-four feet high and at least 650 feet wide. Mounds from other precontact cities are found in Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin (especially along the Mississippi River.)

Archaeological evidence suggests that residents began leaving Angel Mounds around 1400 AD. The settlement seems to have been completely abandoned within fifty years, long before the

arrival of European explorers. We do not know why Mississippians left this city. Perhaps there was a natural disaster or successive crop failures. Perhaps they joined with other native groups. Angel Mounds, however, continues to be an important spiritual site for many Native Americans in Indiana.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, other native groups arrived in this region. These included the Miami from Wisconsin and Illinois, the Delaware from the east, the Shawnee from the southern United States, and the Potawatomi from the northern states. They had all been significantly affected by the arrival of Europeans in the United States, especially by wars among British and French settlers and later between British forces and the American colonists.

The Treaty of Greenville, signed August 3, 1795, established a boundary between native and non-native settlements. Although it was designed in part to protect "Indian territory" against incursions by white settlers, the treaty opened up nearly two-thirds of the Ohio region and a sliver of southeastern Indiana to white settlement, confining the Native Americans to northern and western Indiana. Through conflict and successive treaties, ownership of almost all the Native American lands in Indiana was transferred to the federal government by the mid-nineteenth century.

Copyright 2010
Indiana Historical Society
All rights reserved

This is a publication of the Indiana Historical Society, Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center, 450 West Ohio Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269 USA. Except for copying portions of the teacher resources by educators for classroom use, or for quoting of brief passages for reviews, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without written permission of the copyright owner. All inquiries should be addressed to the Public Programs Division, Indiana Historical Society. Teacher Resource available online: www.indianahistory.org.

The Treaty of Fort Wayne (1803), arranged by Indiana Territory governor William Henry Harrison and President Thomas Jefferson, established new settlement guidelines for the region, and prepared for a complete cession of Indian lands. By this agreement, the Potawatomi and other nations transferred title to the lands in question to the federal government. The Treaty of Vincennes (1804) with the Delaware and Piankeshaw ceded their homelands in the extreme southern portion of the Indiana region along the Ohio River. By 1846 most of the Miami had left Indiana for Kansas Territory because of the loss of their homelands. Of course, Native American history in Indiana does not end in the nineteenth century. Native Americans have a rich and continuing heritage in this state.