

# A Native History Of Kentucky



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## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

As currently understood, American Indian history in Kentucky is over eleven thousand years long. Events that took place before recorded history are lost to time. With the advent of recorded history, some events played out on an international stage, as in the mid-1700s during the war between the French and English for control of the Ohio Valley region. Others took place on a national stage, as during the Removal years of the early 1800s, or during the events surrounding the looting and grave desecration at Slack Farm in Union County in the late 1980s.

Over these millennia, a variety of American Indian groups have contributed their stories to Kentucky's historical narrative. Some names are familiar ones; others are not. Some groups have deep historical roots in the state; others are relative newcomers. All have contributed and are contributing to Kentucky's American Indian history.

The bulk of Kentucky's American Indian history is written within the Commonwealth's rich archaeological record: thousands of camps, villages, and town sites; caves and rockshelters; and earthen and stone mounds and geometric earthworks. After the mid-eighteenth century arrival of Europeans in the state, part of Kentucky's American Indian history can be found in the newcomers' journals, diaries, letters, and maps, although the native voices are more difficult to hear. Later history is recorded in newspapers, books, histories, and encyclopedias. It also is found in the oral traditions, spiritual beliefs, art, music, and cultural events native peoples have passed down through generations. From this complex mix of sources, an American Indian history emerges that reflects cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity; chronicles challenges, triumphs, and losses; and paints a picture of human endurance. It can be considered in five broad periods: First Peoples (9,500 BCE – CE 1539), Foreign Influences (1539-1730), Intersection of Two Worlds (1730-1825), Removal and Its Aftermath (1825-1980), and Greater Visibility and Action (1980-PRESENT).

### **First Peoples (9,500 BCE - CE 1539)**

Kentucky's ancient American Indian history belongs to the broad Eastern Woodlands Tradition of North American Indian heritage. It shares many characteristics with the indigenous histories of the states that surround it.

This period is the longest in Kentucky's American Indian history. It spans the time from the earliest migratory hunters late in the Ice Age, through the time of mound-building small-scale gardeners who traded with distant peoples for copper and marine shell, to the time just before European exploration of North America when farming groups lived in permanent villages inhabited by hundreds of people.

This history shows conclusively that the Myth of the "Dark and Bloody Ground," which states that American Indians never lived permanently within Kentucky's borders (see Cultural Contributions), is not valid with respect to either the entirety of the Commonwealth or to the complete expanse of its ancient past. Places across the state where thousands of chipped stone arrowheads and groundstone axes have been recovered were not the scenes of combat, as early historians, like John Filson, claimed.<sup>1</sup> These are the locations of Indian camps and villages built

in the same places for hundreds or even thousands of years.

A diversity of unique cultural expressions developed during this long time period. And despite the fact that names, languages, and particular histories are lost to us, in each case, these expressions reflect the specific natural and cultural environments and historical events of the areas within which they developed.

Rooted in a stable foundation of hunting and gathering subsistence practices, over the millennia, groups added the cultivation of plants to this mix. The first were squash and weedy plants like sunflower and goosefoot, the latter two were among several local plants domesticated by native gardening groups. Later, the plants native farming groups grew, like corn and beans, were mainly cultigens that had been domesticated in the tropics earlier. Throughout much of this period, native groups were organized tribally. But for a brief period in a few places in Kentucky, hunter-gatherer-farmers created chiefdom societies with more complex social and political institutions.

Archaeological research is the source of information for much of this initial period of Kentucky's American Indian history. Because of issues of preservation (larger sites that are easier to find and study), recent groups are better understood. Archaeologists divide this period into five subperiods, based largely on technological developments identified at sites documented in Kentucky: Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, Late Prehistoric, and Historic Indian. However, since lifeways served as the underlying organizing principle of this narrative, this "First Peoples" period is divided, instead, into three subperiods: Hunter-Gatherers, Hunter-Gatherer-Gardeners, and Hunter-Gatherer-Farmers. Years used for this period are approximate.

### **Hunter-Gatherers: 9,500 BCE - 1,000 BCE**

Archaeological research shows that the ancestors of Kentucky's indigenous American Indian peoples were living in what is now Kentucky by at least 9,500 BCE, although they may have arrived much earlier. Over this long time period, population growth was gradual, but changes in climate and culture were dramatic.

The first hunter-gatherers lived in small, mobile groups that ranged within large territories. With spears, they hunted now-extinct Ice Age animals, like woolly mammoths and mastodons, as well as other smaller mammals, and foraged for plant foods. Though never glaciated, the southern edge of the ice sheet extended near Kentucky's northern border, and so Kentucky's climate at this time resembled Canada's.

By 7,000 BCE, Kentucky's climate had warmed up. It rained and snowed less in the winter, and each year had long, dry spells. Animal, plant, and human communities adapted to these climatic changes.

People continued to hunt and gather in small bands as before, but beginning around 6,000 BCE, hunters started to use the atlatl (or spear thrower) to hunt animals like deer, elk, and bear (but not buffalo; these animals would not return to the Ohio Valley until the mid-CE 1600s). They also used snares, traps, and possibly hunting dogs for animals like raccoon, squirrel, and

rabbit. These peoples exploited aquatic resources (fish and freshwater mussels) using bone fishhooks or nets they made from plant or animal fibers. They also collected nuts (mainly hickory nuts) as well as many different kinds of wild fruits and plants, which they prepared and processed using stone pestles, grinding stones, and nutting stones. The appearance of plant food processing tools and woodworking tools in hunter-gatherer tool inventories implies that reliance on plants was increasing.

Through the centuries, as groups became more familiar with the resources of their area, hunter-gatherer lifeways became more complex and diversified across Kentucky's multiple environmental zones, as evidenced by, among other things, an increase in the diversity of spear point styles.

By about 1,000 BCE, rainfall became more evenly distributed throughout the year. Temperatures became slightly cooler and more like today's. People gradually developed new ways to live. Group size increased, as did Kentucky's overall population. Though they still moved with the seasons, these hunter-gatherers moved less often and their homelands were smaller. Distinct hunter-gatherer cultures began to emerge.

Some groups began to experiment with gardening. They encouraged squash and small-seeded plants like goosefoot to grow on the trash heaps near their base camps. Before long, they began to plant seeds from these plants in areas they cleared especially for that purpose.

Food was cooked using hot rocks and was likely served in baskets, gourds, or turtle shells and stored in baskets or skin or net bags. Bone and antler served as the raw material for tools (awls and needles) and ornaments (pins and beads). Beads and pendants also were made from shell. The diversity of stone tool types increased.

These hunter-gatherers lived in semi-permanent base camps and in seasonal hunting and fishing camps. These camps were scattered along rivers and creeks, on ridgetops, and in rockshelters. Houses likely were small, temporary structures built of a pole framework covered with hides, mats, or brush. Families might stay at a camp for as long as a month or two before moving on, and groups would return year after year to favored, resource-rich places. These larger campsites, often located near particularly rich natural resources, became the focal points for gatherings of several families. Here they held feasts and ceremonies, exchanged information, and met future spouses. Ceremonies and rituals helped maintain good relationships among families and between neighboring groups. But sometimes, peaceful relations broke down and interpersonal and intergroup conflicts resulted.

Life revolved around "family," which at that time was made up of between 15 and 20 people. It is likely that men were the hunters, while women collected plants and took care of children. Older men and women probably served as religious leaders. Political leaders likely were men who were the most successful hunters or whom others respected for their common sense or intelligence.

Lacking the benefits of modern medicine, infant mortality was high in hunter-gatherer communities. Those fortunate enough to reach the age of 15 could expect to live only into their

mid-30s. Broken bones were common, as were cavities and abscesses in teeth. Many people suffered from both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Kentucky's hunter-gathers believed in an afterlife, and certain campsites also served as burial grounds. They placed the dead in simple pits dug into the ground, or they laid the dead on the ground surface and then covered the body with soil. Sometimes the dead were buried with objects that held some personal, religious, or social meaning for the deceased, or for their family and kin. These included spears, atlatls, ornaments, turtle shell rattles, or lumps of red ochre pigment.

In the hunter-gatherer shell mound campsites along the Green River in western Kentucky, personal accomplishments set some people or families apart. These people were buried with their dogs or with rare and very valuable items made from marine shell, non-local stone, or copper, like pendants, necklaces, and hairpins. The value of these items stemmed from the important symbolic or ritual meanings they held and because they were made from non-local materials traded over hundreds of miles from their sources (the Great Lakes and the Appalachian Mountains).

### **Hunter-Gatherer-Gardeners: 1,000 BCE - CE 1,000**

By around 1,000 BCE, most indigenous peoples in Kentucky had grafted gardening onto their mobile hunting and gathering way of life. They came to depend on the plants they grew for food, and over time, this dependence increased.

They maintained their gardens using small, targeted and controlled fires to burn off weeds and brush and to enrich the soil. They grew domesticated varieties of gourds and squash. They also grew two different kinds of locally domesticated native plants that produced edible greens in the spring and, in late summer/early fall, nutritious seeds high in carbohydrates or starches (goosefoot, knotweed, and maygrass) or high in fat and protein (sumpweed and sunflower). These plants were reliable producers, were disease resistant, and their seeds could be easily stored. The earliest evidence for the domestication of sunflower and goosefoot anywhere in the world comes from Eastern Kentucky rockshelter sites, making this area a world hearth of plant domestication, comparable to Mexico, the Levant, and China.

Intensive gardening required different lifestyles from those of their immediate ancestors in several very important ways. The gardens they planted may have encouraged them to live in their camps for longer periods during certain times of the year, particularly in the late summer and early fall, when the seeds were ready to harvest.

With the increased importance of garden plants in their diet, Kentucky's hunter-gatherer-gardeners may have developed ways to prepare food that differed from those of their ancestors, requiring them to begin to make ceramic containers. Initially, these containers, made from locally available clays, were crude, deep, cauldron-like basins. But over time, the potters' ceramic-making skills improved. Eventually, they made a variety of vessels, some of which they decorated. Ceramic vessels also may have been better storage containers than ones made from gourds, wood, or skin.

During most of this period, hunters continued to use the atlatl. But after about CE 700, hunters quickly turned to a new weapon: the bow and arrow. This greatly improved hunting effectiveness and changed hunting methods.

Other aspects of their lives were firmly rooted in those of their immediate ancestors. They hunted the same modern animal species, and they collected the same kinds of wild plants. Houses were small temporary rectangular structures built of a pole framework likely covered with hides, mats, or brush. As in the past, life revolved around family, and kinship ties of birth and marriage knitted groups together. Leadership was based in personal achievement, religious leaders were likely older men and women, and elders served as tradition bearers. These hunter-gather-gardener groups likely were organized politically and socially as tribes.

The health of hunter-gatherer-gardeners was similar to that of their immediate ancestors. Like them, they did not live very long: infant mortality was high, 45 was as old as most people got, and few lived beyond 65. Most people had cavities in their teeth, which led to abscesses and tooth loss. Unlike our teeth today, the chewing surfaces of their teeth were heavily worn from the grit in their food. As children, hunter-gatherer-gardeners experienced times of malnutrition and infection. Because most broken bones healed, archaeologists infer that injured people were well-taken care of. These people suffered from arthritis, anemia, and infections.

Archaeological research has documented that distinct hunting-gathering-gardening cultures, broadly contrasted temporally as well as geographically, lived in Kentucky after 1,000 BCE. Some groups, for a time, built mounds and earthworks; others explored Kentucky's caves. Some groups continued to live mobile lives, while others lived in more permanent villages.

To best describe the cultural developments that occurred during these two thousand years, the Commonwealth can be divided roughly in half at the Falls of the Ohio (adjacent to Louisville, Kentucky). This is the only place along the entire length of the Ohio River where rapids interrupt river traffic. Developments that occurred downstream and west of the Falls are discussed separately from those that occurred upstream and east of the Falls. This distinction continues for much of the remainder of Kentucky's American Indian history.

### *Kentucky West of the Falls*

Around 1,000 BCE, and probably earlier, groups living near Mammoth and Salts caves were exploring them intensively, mining crystalline cave salts such as gypsum from the cave walls for ceremonial or medicinal use and for trade. They also used some caves at this time as specialized places of burial and ritual. The cool dry cave environment preserved the textiles these peoples made.

Hunter-gatherer-gardeners of what archaeologists refer to as the "Crab Orchard Complex" lived in this region from around 600 BCE to CE 250. These groups lived in intensively occupied sedentary villages and base camps. Their lives were oriented toward floodplain resources.

Groups living in this part of Kentucky did not begin to build burial mounds or earthworks around 500 BCE like their contemporaries who lived in central Kentucky. However, they may have been involved in some way with the later Hopewell Culture and Interaction Sphere: a ceremonial complex and exchange network that extended across the Midwestern and Southeastern United States from 200 BCE to CE 500. A few scattered burial mounds and geometric earthworks in this part of Kentucky may be linked to this cultural expression.

With the arrival of corn from outside Kentucky around CE 800/900, groups living in large, planned villages and base camps oriented to the region's wide floodplains turned to a hunting-gathering-farming lifestyle. Despite this development, socially stratified societies did not emerge until after CE 1,000.

At about this same time, groups like those referred to as the "Lewis Culture" by archaeologists, continued to live in small, dispersed communities in the uplands. They built specialized ceremonial sites, in the form of stone enclosures on hilltops and small stone burial mounds, and continued a hunting-gathering-gardening way of life.

### *Kentucky East of the Falls*

Native hunter-gatherer-gardener settlements after 1,000 BCE in this region remained small and dispersed. As regional population size increased, home territories may have become smaller. In the mountains, groups lived in rockshelters, possibly year-round, abandoning the substantial creek bottom settlements of their ancestors. Like the caves, the dry rockshelters preserved these people's textiles, the oldest recovered in the state.

In the Bluegrass region of central and northern Kentucky and along some of the major rivers in the mountains around 500 BCE, religious and mortuary customs became more elaborate. Hunter-gatherer-gardener groups became involved in the long-distance exchange of ritual items made from exotic materials for use in their ceremonies. Archaeologists refer to these groups as "Adena." Even though they built earthworks and mounds, Adena peoples remained hunter-gatherer-gardeners. For unknown reasons, they did not live near their ritual sites. In this they differed from their ancestors, who held mortuary rituals at their seasonal camps.

Adena ritual sites were diverse: circular, paired-post enclosures; burial mounds of various sizes; and geometric earthworks. Building large burial mounds and a variety of kinds of earthworks reflects a complex ceremonial life and a belief in an afterlife. Ritual pipe smoking likely was an important ceremonial activity.

Adena burial customs involved many steps before a person's remains were finally laid to rest. Some people were buried in log-lined tombs; others were cremated. The fact that Adena people buried some men and women in mounds, some with valuable burial offerings, indicates emerging differences in social standing. The exchange of ritual items made from non-local, exotic, raw materials (copper, marine shell, or mica), like beads, ornaments, and other paraphernalia, with groups outside the Ohio Valley points to these peoples' participation in extraregional religious movements and in long-distance trade networks.

Around CE 200, people stopped building mounds and trading for non-local raw materials and ritual items. Rituals and ceremonies were no longer conducted in communal areas. A hunting-gathering-gardening way of life, however, continued and rituals were carried out within communities.

Between around CE 300 to 500, hunter-gatherer-gardeners in central and northern Kentucky lived in sedentary villages. Some were circular, with the houses arranged around a central plaza (hunter-gatherer-farmers in this region would reprise this village plan 700 years later). These people buried their dead in small stone mounds. In the mountains at this same time, people continued to live in rockshelters. After about CE 700, people throughout this region lived in small dispersed settlements. They continued to live in this manner even as a farming way of life began to appear around CE 1,000.

### **Hunter-Gatherer-Farmers: CE 1,000 - 1539**

Two different farming cultures lived in Kentucky after CE 1,000. Archaeologists call those groups who lived west of the Falls “Mississippians,” and those groups who lived east of the Falls “Fort Ancient. These people were the immediate ancestors of the Indian groups living in Kentucky when the first European explorers appeared in eastern Tennessee/western North Carolina in the early 1500s.

#### *Kentucky West of the Falls*

Mississippian farming cultures emerged along the floodplains and backwater sloughs of extreme western Kentucky around CE 900. A century later, Mississippians lived throughout south-central and southeastern Kentucky as well, and all the way up the Ohio River to the Falls. Their farming way of life flourished for 500 years.

Although they collected and ate wild plants, the crops they cultivated, corn and squash, goosefoot, maygrass, and marshelder, made up most of their diet. They used fire to clear their floodplain fields and maintained the fields using chipped stone hoes. They traded with western Tennessee and southern Illinois groups who lived near the stone sources for the stone or finished hoes. They hunted the same modern animal species that their immediate ancestors hunted.

Mississippian peoples used the bow and arrow, and variety of containers including baskets and pottery of many different sizes. Ornaments were made from shell and bone. They wore clothing made from animal skins (leather ) and from plant and animal fibers (cloth).

Town-and-mound centers formed the nucleus of Mississippian civic and ceremonial life. This was where important ceremonies and social events were held for all the people, including those who lived in nearby villages, hamlets, and farmsteads. The lives of the people who lived in these settlements were linked socially, economically, and politically to the centers.

Upwards of 600 people could live at the largest town-and-mound centers in Kentucky. Here, large, flat-topped platform mounds were arranged around an open space or plaza. A large rectangular structure on top of a platform mound served as a civic building, a temple/shrine, and

the chief's house. Houses were smaller, but still just as substantial. They were rectangular buildings often constructed in a shallow basin, with walls made from posts set in trenches and covered with a lattice of sticks plastered over with mud. Some houses had central hearths. That palisades enclosed some of these centers and that regularly spaced bastions were features of some testifies to the need for fortifications and the occurrence of some form of intergroup conflict.

Large, multiple-mound centers, however, were the exception in what is now Kentucky. Most town-and-mound centers consisted of one or at most two mounds, a plaza, and no palisade. Between 250 to 300 people might have lived at these centers. Fewer villages, hamlets, and farmsteads were linked to these centers.

The overall health of the Mississippian farmers (and the health of the Fort Ancient farmers, too) was similar to that of people anywhere in the world who depend on a diet of corn, which in the case of these Kentucky farmers, made up over 60 percent of their diet. They did not live very long. Infant mortality was high, particularly at weaning. Forty-five was as old as most people got, and few lived beyond 65. Health stress was life-long. Most people had cavities in their teeth, which led to abscesses and tooth loss, and gum disease among adults was common. Everyone had vitamin deficiencies, like anemia, and most experienced chronic infections and arthritis. Some people suffered from tuberculosis.

Mississippians buried their dead in cemeteries generally located at or near their communities, which indicates the importance of group ceremonialism and ritual. Most graves were stone boxes set into the ground. Burial offerings sometimes accompanied the dead.

Religious beliefs, as illustrated in Mississippian art and symbolism, focused on ancestors, a chief/warrior elite, and on fertility. Important symbols included the cross-in-circle, birdman, winged rattlesnakes, and chunky players (men holding in one hand a stone disk called a chunky stone. During the game of chunky, the stone was rolled on a flat section of ground and players threw spears or sticks at it).

The social, economic, and political influence of town-and-mound centers waxed and waned over time. This kind of cultural dynamic has been described worldwide for societies called "chiefdoms." Mississippian chiefdoms were socially stratified. Heredity defined a person's social importance and the political roles available to them. Some leaders lived in the villages, but a chiefdom's most important leaders lived at the town-and-mound centers.

There was no separation of religion and politics within Mississippian chiefdoms: the two institutions were combined in their chiefs. They were the ones who resolved conflicts, and they possessed the ritual knowledge needed to direct their people's important ceremonies.

Chiefdoms in what is now Kentucky were part of an extensive network of chiefdoms that extended throughout what is now the Midwestern and Southeastern United States, and thus, they were not politically or economically independent. Part of a chief's religious and political power came from interacting with other leaders, and by exchanging with them rare, ritually significant objects.

For reasons that are still not known, some Mississippian chiefdoms in extreme western Kentucky and surrounding states collapsed around 1400-1450. This region where farming groups abandoned most of their settlements is known as the “Vacant Quarter.” One explanation for this collapse is that changes in agricultural yields undermined Mississippian leaders’ power and influence. These changes in yields could have been brought about by changes in climate (prolonged drought or cold), changes in the local environment (degradation, drought, resource depletion, soil exhaustion), or by the appearance of new varieties of corn or beans (with more reliable yields) that put stress on the Mississippian political system and led to political instability. Another explanation is that the Mississippian prestige goods economy/interaction sphere was disrupted for some reason (conflict, earthquakes).

Mississippian groups did not abandon the Wabash-Ohio River confluence region, however. A somewhat different Mississippian way of life, referred to by archaeologists as “Caborn-Welborn,” emerged there and continued for another 250-300 years, until about 1700. Other groups may have lived in western Kentucky at this time, but their dispersed settlement pattern has made their discovery difficult. Mississippian groups did not abandon their centers in south-central and southeastern Kentucky.

The lifeways of Caborn-Welborn Mississippian groups were similar in many ways to those of their Mississippian predecessors and contemporaries, but there were some important differences. Along with corn and other grains, they grew beans. They lived in a variety of settlements (a large village in Union County, Kentucky now called Slack Farm, other large villages, small villages, hamlets, and farmsteads), but they built no platform mounds. Caborn-Welborn Mississippians continued the tradition of burying their dead in village cemeteries, but also placed some of their cemeteries on blufftops away from their villages. Although their society was stratified, their social, political, and economic system was not as complex as that of previous Mississippians.

### *Kentucky East of the Falls*

Fort Ancient farming cultures developed in the central Kentucky uplands and in eastern Kentucky’s mountain valleys around CE 1000. For over 650 years, Fort Ancient was a vital, vibrant cultural expression of several different tribal societies.

The crops Fort Ancient farmers grew, corn, beans, squash, and gourd, made up most of their diet. They retained only vestiges of their gardening heritage, with starchy goosefoot, oily sunflower, and nut resources serving only as supplements. They continued to collect wild plants for food and medicine, however. They hunted the same animals their ancestors had, only they used the bow and arrow.

Fort Ancient peoples used fire to clear the land, and mussel shell or deer/elk scapula hoes to work the soil. As slash-and-burn upland farmers, they moved their villages within their home regions every 10 to 50 years as crop production waned. Fort Ancient peoples made and used a variety of shell and bone tools and ornaments. Containers included baskets and ceramic vessels of different sizes.

The focus of Fort Ancient life was the village. Through time, village organization changed and village size increased. The earliest Fort Ancient peoples lived in small settlements of scattered houses. Houses were small rectangular structures set in shallow basins surrounded by single-set posts. The framework was likely covered with bark or mats. These communities may have ranged in size from 25 to 40-50 people.

By around 1150 or 1200, villages became larger, holding perhaps 90 to 180 people, and became a circular arrangement of houses around a central plaza. Houses became larger and posts were set in trenches, but the structures retained their rectangular shape and other earlier features. Cemeteries often encircled the plaza. For a short period, perhaps only between about 1250 and 1350, some Fort Ancient people also buried their dead in a low earthen mound situated on the plaza edge. This suggests strong links between the living and the dead, and the importance of group ceremonialism and ritual. Burial offerings sometimes accompanied the dead. In the mountains, burial occurred in stone boxes associated with stone mounds or within rockshelters.

A watershed moment in Fort Ancient history came around 1400-1450. After this time, there are fewer Fort Ancient villages and most are situated along major waterways. These villages are larger, perhaps representing an amalgamation of several smaller villages, and are made up of clusters of houses and associated cemeteries. Between 250 to 500 people may have lived in these villages. Houses are long, rectangular structures that resemble small longhouses. They were bark covered and were shared by multiple families, as indicated by the several central hearths and interior partitions. These changes may have occurred in response to climate change at the start of the "Little Ice Age" (ca.1450-1900), when the climate in the Ohio Valley became cooler or moister.

Throughout most of Fort Ancient history, burial customs involved many steps before the deceased was finally laid to rest. These steps included *insitu* defleshing and the manipulation, and possibly curation, of selected bones before final burial; cremation; bundle burial; and the reuse of graves. Fort Ancient pipes, ornaments, and vessels depict images of birds, reptiles and insects, and other animals. After 1400, graveside ritual feasting and the use of offerings (corn and beans) begins.

The Fort Ancient world also expanded after 1400. Communication between Fort Ancient villages increased all across the Ohio Valley. Long-distance trade and interaction with groups living outside the Ohio Valley also increased. Fort Ancient groups traded with Mississippian farming peoples living in eastern Tennessee and with northerly tribal societies for items like catlinite disk smoking pipes and marine shell beads, pendants, and gorgets.

Fort Ancient peoples became involved in the "broader" Mississippian religious system of the period, too. The use of ornaments and pipes with Mississippian hawk or thunderbird symbolism, reflecting a warfare theme, and rattlesnake symbols, linked to Mississippian supernatural beasts and otherworld guardians, suggests that Fort Ancient peoples either participated in new ceremonies or reinterpreted these new symbols in a uniquely Fort Ancient way. Individuals who knew how to perform rituals and ceremonies served as religious leaders or shamans.

Archaeologists have documented the presence of palisades at some Fort Ancient villages before 1400, and a few examples of an arrowhead imbedded in a human bone or of scalping after that date. These suggest that intervillage conflict may have been an aspect of Fort Ancient life.

Fort Ancient peoples were tribal peoples, and Fort Ancient society at-large was made up of many autonomous, loosely interlinked, tribes that lived in home territories. Tribal societies have a consensus-style of government and tribal leaders do not hold extensive political power. A Fort Ancient leader's authority was determined by character and achievement, not by heredity. Social standing in tribal societies is rooted in a person's age, gender, and personal achievements, although social differences in Fort Ancient society may have become more formalized over time.

All tribal societies have tendencies toward factionalism and fragmentation. As the size of Fort Ancient communities grew over time, those tendencies increased. Conflicts could be resolved by some community members breaking away and starting a new village, or through discussion, and thus the role village leaders played as conflict mediators became more important. As Fort Ancient involvement in non-local exchange increased, village leaders also became more responsible for maintaining good relations with groups outside their village.

On the eve of the appearance of Europeans in the Southeast, in 1539, archaeological research has documented American Indian farming villages scattered along the major drainages in the eastern half of Kentucky. In the western half of the state, this research shows that villages were clustered at the mouth of the Wabash River, but elsewhere in that region, native occupation was more dispersed, if it occurred at all.

### **Foreign Influences (1539 - 1730)**

This period marks the end of an exclusively native history for Kentucky and the beginning of one shared with Europeans. During the mid-1500s, Spaniards appear in the form of de Soto's Expedition, which traveled through the Southeast. Then, over a century later, during the mid- to late 1600s, the French and the English appeared sporadically along Kentucky's extreme western and eastern borders. But there is no record of Europeans visiting or exploring inside Kentucky's borders until after the 1730s. As time passed, however, the European exploration and settlement zone that encircled the state drew closer to native communities.

For about the first 150 years of this period, native peoples living in Kentucky were spared the effects of direct contact with Europeans that their northern, southern, and eastern contemporaries had already experienced. Nevertheless, Kentucky's native groups had to contend with the indirect impacts of the foreigners and the challenges those impacts posed to their native ways of life. These appear to have been experienced first within the realm of economics, then, in the later decades of this period, through disease and cultural disruption.

#### *Native Cultures on the Eve of Recorded History*

From the mid-1500s to the mid- to late 1600s, Kentucky's native groups continued to pursue their respective hunting-gathering-farming lifestyles very much like their immediate

ancestors had done. West of the Falls lived the Caborn-Welborn peoples, and east of the Falls, the Fort Ancient groups.

A summer village/winter hunting camp settlement pattern may have deep historical roots for Fort Ancient peoples. However, the clearest evidence for Fort Ancient winter hunting camps comes from archaeological research at campsites that date to this period. Families lived in the villages for most of the year, but from the late fall to early spring, family groups moved to small hunting camps located at the headwaters of small streams or in rockshelters. Probably fewer than thirty people, representing extended family or kin-related groups, lived in the winter camps. Subsistence activities focused mainly on hunting, meat and hide processing, and collecting and processing wild plants.

Changes did take place within the economic realm, however. Exchange with outside groups appears to have increased. This drew Kentucky's native inhabitants into the wider indigenous (and eventually European) world beyond their homelands. This increased exchange may reflect the initiation of Fort Ancient groups' participation in the European deerskin trade.

In the Caborn-Welborn region of western Kentucky, exchange with Oneota groups (archaeologically documented tribal peoples living to the north on the eastern Plains and western Great Lakes area) intensified, while in the Fort Ancient area of central and eastern Kentucky, exchange increased with east Tennessee Mississippian peoples for marine shell ornaments engraved with Mississippian religious symbols. Platform pipes, possibly related to Calumet ceremonialism, also appear in the region's farming villages and towns. Calumet ceremonialism involved ritualized pipe smoking, feasting, dancing, speechmaking, and the presentation or exchange of sacred pipe bowls that validated inter-group alliances and exchange. The appearance of these pipes may signify that Kentucky's native peoples grafted these ceremonial elements onto existing traditions at this time.

What the Kentucky groups exchanged in return is not known. They may have provided certain foods, medicinal plants, or feathers. Given central Kentucky's many weak saline springs, Fort Ancient groups could have exchanged salt. It would be difficult to identify the exchange of these materials from the archaeological record, however, since they are perishable. The large numbers of bone beamers recovered from Fort Ancient village sites of this period and the many thumbnail endscrapers from Caborn-Welbon village sites suggests that they may have traded animal hides, too.

Kentucky's native peoples undoubtedly would have heard about Europeans long before they ever saw them, but before the early 1700s, Europeans were mainly the stuff of rumor. At this time, Kentucky's native farming peoples were linked indirectly by long-distance native exchange networks to groups in the Northeast, Middle Atlantic, and Southeast. News and objects signaling the appearance of Europeans could have come from any one of these places. Until the first documented Europeans physically set foot in Kentucky, word of these foreigners, their trading posts, and their growing settlements would have become increasingly commonplace.

The European presence in native lives at this time was represented by the items Kentucky's native peoples obtained through established trade routes. Native groups incorporated European trade objects, like metal ornaments (beads, pendants) and very rarely, glass beads, apparently seamlessly into their lives, just as they did non-local objects of purely native manufacture. Direct contact with Europeans was not necessary to acquire these ornaments; they were passed along the same exchange routes as the native-made objects. These objects of European origin also functioned in much the same way as their native counterparts: worn or used by individuals to signify their social standing, either political or religious, then buried with the individual upon his or her death.

### *Kentucky West of the Falls*

In the mid-1600s to early 1700s, the French explored the Mississippi River Valley. They built missions and forts and, after 1710, established French farming communities.

In 1673, Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet were the first to travel down the Mississippi River to its confluence with the Arkansas River, exploring the valley for the French. They described a host of tribes in the area north of the Mississippi-Ohio river confluence, such as the Illinois, Kaskaskias, Peoria, and Wea. The Mississippi River (along the western Kentucky border) formed the southeastern edge of the Illinois Confederacy in the late 1600s.

Marquette and Joliet learned from the people they met about groups living up the Ohio River in the interior – “where dwell the people called the Chaouanons [Shawnee] in so great numbers that in one district there are as many as 23 villages and 15 in another, quite near one another,” noting that the Iroquois were at war with them at that time.<sup>2</sup> Henri Joutel's diary of his journey up the Mississippi River in 1687 mentions native peoples living in the Vacant Quarter area, though it does not specifically mention Kentucky.

In Montreal, Rene-Robert Cavelier de La Salle had been told in 1668 of the Ohio Valley inhabitants living upstream and downstream of the Falls – the Honniasontkeronons (?) and Chiouanons (Shawnee) upstream, and the Outagame (Fox) and the Iskoussogos (the general Iroquoian name for western Algonquians) downstream. Also living on the Ohio were the Touguenhas (?).<sup>3</sup> Whether any of these groups lived, hunted, or claimed western Kentucky lands at this time is not known, as historians have yet to examine native history in detail in this region. It is also not known which, if any, of these named tribes might be linked to the groups known archaeologically as Caborn-Welborn and Fort Ancient.

In the mid- to late 1600s, Caborn-Welborn groups may still have occupied a few villages in this region. Shawnee living along the Cumberland River in Tennessee, joined by their Chickasaw and Koasati neighbors, staged frequent raids against the Illinois and doubtless traveled through western Kentucky on their way to and from these raids.

French trading posts and forts, and later, French settlements of this period, were situated close to western Kentucky. The French traded with many Illinois and western Indiana tribes, but were unsuccessful in extending their trade into Kentucky. However, if Caborn-Welborn groups and others occupied this part of Kentucky, the potential for European impact on these native

groups likely would have been more sustained than any European impact that could have been experienced by contemporary groups living more deeply in the Kentucky interior to the east, for no trading posts or settlements were situated as close to that part of Kentucky.

### *Kentucky East of the Falls*

The closest and earliest face-to-face contact between native peoples and Europeans, relative to Kentucky, was Hernando de Soto's expedition of 1539-1543. The expedition reached as far north as eastern Tennessee/western North Carolina. A later foray by a member of the Juan Pardo Expedition in 1567 came closer, into extreme southwestern Virginia. But neither of these expeditions entered Kentucky.

A 1646 treaty that led to the creation of a series of forts and trading posts on the western edge of the Virginia coastal plain set off a "wave of people" who began to penetrate the interior in search of trade. Not long afterwards, the Virginia government began encouraging exploration even further afield. Thus in 1671, Thomas Batts and Robert Fallam, guided by Appomattox Indians, entered the area east of what is now Kentucky and traveled along the New River Valley Path with the intent to expand Virginia trade to the native inhabitants. Some historians believe they went no further than the gap where the New River breaks through the mountains. Others have suggested that they ended their journey further west in the Guyandotte River drainage or in the Big Sandy River drainage in extreme eastern Kentucky.

About three years later, in 1674, a Tomahittan war party captured Gabriel Arthur, an illiterate trader, somewhere in the upper New River Valley and took him to a Moneton town. Arthur later accompanied the Moneton on a raid to another village three-days' journey away. There appears to be no consensus about the exact location of Arthur's capture, detention, or where he went with his captors: the New River and Kanawha river valleys, and the Ohio River; or the upper reaches of the Big Sandy River valley and the Ohio River. Despite the lack of agreement, Arthur's account describes a well-populated region in 1674, suggesting that European diseases may not have yet reached the region.

In the mid- to late 1600s, Fort Ancient peoples occupied villages along the Ohio River. By the 1680s or 1690s, the Shawnee had one or more villages on the upper Cumberland River (known as the Chauouanon or Shawnee River until the late eighteenth century), although the exact locations are unknown. The Cherokee claimed the upper Cumberland River as their hunting grounds, and so viewed the Shawnee as trespassers. The Cherokee forced the Shawnee out of the area around 1714.

### **Native Disappearance and European Disease**

From the late 1680s to the 1730s, both documentary and archaeological information is meager. There are no eyewitness accounts, few second-hand descriptions, and no archaeological sites. Kentucky's American Indian population seemingly fades away.

Many different factors may have contributed to this phenomenon. Conventional wisdom holds that between 1669 and 1672, a series of attacks by the Five Nations Iroquois of New York,

similar to those that had previously decimated groups living around and west of the lower Great Lakes as part of the “Mourning War” complex, depopulated the Ohio Valley (including all of Kentucky).

The Iroquois were raiding westward into what is now Illinois in 1655 and by the late 1660s/early 1670s, they had turned their attentions southward toward Virginia. This raiding continued until 1735. It was spurred by the Iroquois’ participation in the fur trade; their need to avenge earlier intertribal hostilities; individuals’ desire for status; their search for captives they could adopt as replacements for relatives lost to European diseases in their own villages during the 1630s and 1640s (which historians refer to as the “Mourning War” complex); and encouragement from their Dutch (and later) British allies, the latter who would claim the Ohio Valley region because of their alliances with the Iroquois.

The devastation and forced expulsion of Kentucky’s native groups attributed to the actions of the Iroquois likely is overstated in the documents. It is true that a few references to Iroquois raids into the Ohio Valley and/or the country of the Chaouanons/Shawnee are recorded in French documents of this period. Similarly, captives from the general area of the Ohio Valley, including Shawnee, are known to have been brought back to Iroquoia during the 1670s. But the wholesale devastation and forcible expulsion of the region’s inhabitants claimed by the Iroquois’ English allies was never backed-up by eyewitness accounts. There are no reports of massacres or large numbers of captives taken from the Ohio Valley area, as are reported for Iroquois raids in the Illinois Country at this time. Escalated conflict is not confirmed by the archaeological record.

Nevertheless, fear of Iroquois raiding parties could have contributed to population movement. Groups could have moved away to join old native allies or new European ones due to the perceived threat of Iroquois attack. It is also possible that newly established European trading opportunities developing around the edges of the Kentucky region at this time, in Illinois, South Carolina, and eastern Pennsylvania, could have drawn people out of the region in the late 1600s-early 1700s.

Decimation by the first smallpox pandemic also could have played a part. Like all the native peoples of North America, groups living in Kentucky possessed no immunity to foreign diseases that had originated in European cities. Disease introduction depends on native population densities and communication routes, and the periods during which pathogens are communicable.

Native groups living along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts began to experience the devastating effects of introduced diseases in the 1500s and early 1600s. Researchers infer that smallpox arrived in the greater Southeast sometime around 1696-1700, generally agreeing that de Soto’s expedition probably was not the source.

Historians are not sure, however, exactly when and how smallpox first arrived in Kentucky. American Indian groups living farther inland, like those in Kentucky, might have experienced the effects of these diseases later than surrounding groups. The Appalachian Mountains could have served as a natural barrier to disease coming into Kentucky from the east,

and the orientation of the major river drainages and waterways directed Europeans, and perhaps their diseases, along the Mississippi River.

French documents mention groups living in the Ohio Valley, upstream from the Falls of the Ohio, in the late 1660s and early 1670s, and maps of the same period, though not based on any direct evidence, also locate indigenous groups like the Chaouanons (Shawnee) in the middle Ohio Valley at this time. So it seems likely that the disease arrived in Kentucky after this time. It is possible that smallpox appeared in western Kentucky first, given the main travel artery the Mississippi River represented and given the proximity of French settlements and trading posts of the period to that part of Kentucky.

Irrespective of how and when the pathogens arrived, Kentucky's inhabitants would have died in numbers similar to those recorded for groups to the east: between 50 and 90 percent of the native inhabitants. And the effect these diseases would have had on Kentucky groups would have been just as devastating, too. These sicknesses afflicted entire villages. The most vulnerable individuals were the young (the future) and the old (the collective memory of the people and tradition bearers). Lacking a system of writing, these people had passed down information by word of mouth about their ceremonies and traditions from generation to generation. With the deaths of so many people who possessed this knowledge, much of these peoples' culture, their shared beliefs and ideas, disappeared forever.

Native responses to these devastating diseases would have been as diverse as the groups who lived in Kentucky and would have depended on a host of factors: traditions, cultural practices, history, relationships with outside groups, opportunities, and geographic location. Some groups may have completely disappeared, absorbed into other bands before Europeans actually visited Kentucky. Remnants could have left the region completely, or stayed and worked to rebuild their lives and continue their traditions. In other cases, survivors from different ethnic groups may have joined together to build new traditions.

Because of the lack of first-hand knowledge of Kentucky at this time, and because of the devastating effects of European diseases on native cultures, it is difficult to identify the ethnic/linguistic affiliations of the village farming peoples who lived in Kentucky on the eve of the appearance of Europeans. These factors also make it difficult to push back these ethnic affiliations into prehistory.

The ethnic/linguistic affiliation of the Caborn-Welborn peoples who lived west of the Falls is unknown. Sources suggest that Dhegiha Siouan groups lived in southern Illinois at this time, but whether these groups are linked in any way to archaeological cultural expressions in western Kentucky is unknown.

East of the Falls, the Fort Ancient archaeological culture probably embraces several different ethnic groups. Algonquian-speaking peoples may have made up the greatest proportion, and may have been represented by the historically documented Shawnee (or affiliated groups). In extreme eastern Kentucky, the poorly-known Siouan language speaking groups, like the Tutelo, and Yuchi-language speakers may have been affiliated. Researchers generally agree that the archaeologically documented Fort Ancient cultures of the seventeenth century in Kentucky are

related in some way to the historically documented people who in the mid-1700s were called Chaouanon by the French or Shawanese by the English. Today they are referred to as the Shawnee.

Irrespective of which factors were involved, there can be no denying that as a result of the indirect effects of the European presence, native economies changed and significant numbers of American Indian people died all across Kentucky. The various groups responded in ways that made sense to them.

Then, around the late 1720s to early 1730s, new groups of native peoples began to move into the Ohio River valley to establish villages. Some groups were new to the region and were coming in order to put distance between themselves and the American colonists. Others were joining kinsmen that may have never left. The Miami and Wyandott moved in from the north. The Shawnee, Delaware, and Iroquois, primarily Seneca (called Mingo), moved in from the East.

### **Intersection of Two Worlds (1730 - 1825)**

This is the best known chapter in Kentucky's American Indian history. Events that take place in Kentucky intersect with historical events of national (the exploration and settling of the Trans-Alleghany West, American's first frontier; and the American Revolution) and international (known as the Seven Years War in Europe, it was referred to as the French and Indian War in North America) scope. The names of American Indian peoples (Shawnee, Iroquois, Delaware, Cherokee, and Chickasaw) and individuals (Misemeathaquatha or Big Hominy; Hokolesqua or Cornstalk; Cathahecassa or Black Hoof; and Tecumseh) begin to appear in the historical record.

This period opens with resident native groups and new native arrivals from the East living in Indian Country as autonomous peoples, and with Virginia's western lands still largely unexplored by Europeans (it is important to note that Kentucky became Virginia's westernmost county in 1776 and remained a Virginia county until it became a state in 1792). Imperial agents seeking to claim territory for European nations also arrive, followed closely by traders looking to exchange European goods for valuable skins and furs. Next the land speculators appear, taking a measure of the land's fitness for settlement, and finally come the Virginia colonists/Kentucky pioneers, intent on building new lives for themselves and agitating for the removal of native people. Thus, by the end of this period, barely a century later, native groups no longer live in Kentucky, the last Indian land cessions have been negotiated, and Kentucky has become a state and attained its current size.

The center of Indian history during this period is east of the Falls, in the Bluegrass Region of central Kentucky. Little is known about Indian history west of the Falls and elsewhere in the state.

### **Early European Explorers to the Battle of Fallen Timbers**

This period brought enormous change and overwhelming challenges to native peoples. Native children born at the beginning of this period arrived as their elders were struggling with

the social and emotional legacy of the smallpox pandemic, and their grandchildren arrived as native nations were ceding land to a newly created sovereign nation.

Socially, native groups worked to create viable native institutions from the remnants of the old ones, left after the deaths of so many tradition-bearers. The challenge was to preserve the traditions, customs, and beliefs that defined native identity. Economically, native peoples were drawn further into a world mercantile economy, as suppliers of the skins and furs that fed it. The challenge here was to negotiate fair exchange for the goods they received for the products of their labor.

Politically, native peoples had their own objectives and goals, different from those of France, Britain, Spain, and later, the United States, and native leaders actively worked to realize them in the interests of their people. Initially, native leaders negotiated from a position of autonomy, but as time passed, the events that took place and the concessions they made slowly eroded native political power. Encroaching white settlement on tribal lands required a response, and the challenge for native leaders was to determine what that response should be: accommodate and stay; resist by removing beyond the frontier; or resist and fight to drive the settlers out. Leaders were hobbled by the political factionalism that is a characteristic feature of tribal political organization anywhere in the world.

The end was the same, regardless of the response: land cession and removal. But at the time, the eventual resolution was not a forgone conclusion, and Kentucky native history during this period is a record of the multiple and varied responses to the challenges the European presence represented.

It appears that native people had abandoned most, if not all, of the villages they occupied east of the Falls by the end of the French and Indian War (1763). Unlike the movements during the previous century, the reasons for this abandonment are known – numerous attacks on Shawnee villages by the Catawba and other southern Indian tribes, and the threat of an attack by the English and their Indian allies. Historical developments in western Kentucky at this time are unknown.

It is ironic, then, that for most of this period (i.e., after around 1760), native peoples apparently did not occupy any villages in the state. Kentucky served as the stage on which events in American Indian history played out, but the native villages, for the most part, were located beyond Kentucky's borders: to the north in what would become Ohio (Shawnee, Delaware, and Miami), to the south in what would become Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama (Cherokee and Chickasaw), or even in New York and around the Great Lakes. It is also during this period (i.e., after 1775) that the Myth of the "Dark and Bloody Ground" begins (see Cultural Contributions).

However, the lack of villages should not be interpreted to mean that Indian peoples did not consider the land and resources south of the Ohio River, between the mouth of the Big Sandy River and the mouth of the Ohio River, theirs. Kentucky was still the economic base from which they took the furs and deerskins they needed to trade. From an Indian perspective, the moves they made at this time were like the moves they had made for centuries: they were simply

relocating their domestic centers to another part of their homeland, and were not relinquishing claim or control over the land.

The native perspective regarding land ownership and use contrasted sharply with that of the English. The former considered English settlement in their hunting grounds/their homelands a violation of their territorial rights. The latter viewed Kentucky as empty land that was ripe for settlement. This difference was at the heart of the conflict that developed between native peoples and the colonial pioneers during this period.

As colonial settlement exploded in central Kentucky in the 1770s, the Indian “presence” consisted of multi-tribal raiding parties of native men. Native settlements, however, were located outside Kentucky’s borders. These parties were joined or led by foreign nationals representing foreign powers hoping to capitalize on native successes that those powers could then parlay into territorial control.

By the end of the Revolutionary War in the early 1780s, defining historical events had shifted north of the Ohio River, and to the south. However, multi-tribal raids into Kentucky continued, lasting until nearly 1800.

The Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 and the signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795 brought to an end decades of more or less continual warfare with the French, the English, and the Americans. Indian leaders of the nations who now lived north of Kentucky, but who claimed the Ohio Valley lands including Kentucky, ceded the lands and gave up any Indian claim to Kentucky.

Permanent colonial settlement moved westward through Kentucky during this period, although the details of American Indian history are not as clear for western Kentucky as they are for the Bluegrass Region in central Kentucky. Aside from the short-lived (1780-1781) Fort Jefferson and adjacent town of Clarksville in extreme western Kentucky, European settlement west of the Falls during this period lagged behind that of the Bluegrass, occurring two decades later. Settlement was not as swift and the initial numbers of new arrivals were not as large. It is unclear whether native villages were present in this area at this time. Most reports are of hunting parties and groups passing through, like the Shawnee and the Chickasaw. Indians did not cede lands in what is now extreme western Kentucky until the early 1800s.

### *Kentucky East of the Falls*

Much of recorded Indian history of this period focuses on people, events, and places in this part of Kentucky, particularly in the Bluegrass Region of central Kentucky. The first European settlements were founded here, along the rivers and trails that served as arteries for the settlers’ arrival. This is because documents produced by the Europeans who first physically entered Kentucky and through which indigenous history is chronicled, describe the people living in the places they traveled through and to: the Ohio River corridor, the Cumberland Gap/Wilderness Road area, and the central Kentucky Bluegrass Region.

In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the French and Indian War (the late 1730s to 1754), when European imperial powers wanted to control the Ohio Valley, both French and English traders, land speculators, and governmental emissaries (identities oftentimes fused together in a single individual) came to Kentucky and encountered native groups along the Ohio River. The first available eyewitness account is that of the French explorer Charles le Moyne, Second Baron de Longueuil, who, in 1739, was looking to secure France's claim to the Ohio Valley, as was Pierre Joseph Celeron de Blainville ten years later.

In 1744, the Iroquois and the British negotiated the Treaty of Lancaster. Many British and American land speculators interpreted the treaty to mean that the Iroquois had ceded their claim to the land south of the Ohio River. Two land speculation companies, the Loyal Land Company and the Ohio Land Company, received grants to conduct land surveys soon afterwards, and both sent agents to explore Kentucky. The Loyal Land Company explorations were led by Thomas Walker in 1749, who traveled through the Cumberland Gap and took a route known as the Warrior's Path into Kentucky. He encountered few native groups. The Ohio Land Company sent Christopher Gist in 1750-51 to explore the Ohio Valley, and he visited Indian villages along the Ohio River. Other contemporary English visitors of note included William Trent and George Croghan, who were involved, among other ventures, in the Pennsylvania deerskin trade.

When the French and Indian War began in 1754, Kentucky was still Indian Country and the names of some of the groups that lived east of the Falls are known: the Shawnee, the Mingo (Seneca-Iroquois), the Cherokee, and the Tutelo. Interaction with Europeans was direct and face-to-face, but was mainly within the sphere of the deerskin trade. Land speculators were sizing up Indian lands, but settlers had not yet crossed the mountains.

Archaeological evidence for native villages and camps dating sometime between 1730 and 1795 is meager. Written sources mention a few villages; a handful of isolated cabins, winter hunting camps and other temporary camps; salt processing locales; and a couple of places where native people had stripped off sections of bark from trees and painted red and black symbols on the exposed trunks.

Native lifeways, customs, and beliefs in the mid-1700s continued as they had before, with some important changes. Groups were still hunter-gatherer-farmers. This reflects the persistence of seventeenth-century native subsistence practices. In this regard, a native way of life was similar in many ways to the European hunting and subsistence farming way of life. One significant difference, however, and one that figured prominently in later attempts to "civilize" the Indians, was that native women were the farmers, not the men. Dispersal into winter camps in the mid-eighteenth century is described in the documents, but sources mention that game was scarce and that hunters had to range considerable distances for wild foods.

Native groups in the mid-1700s, like those of the 1600s, lived in large, permanently occupied villages made up of house clusters arranged along large rivers or streams. Some houses resembled those of the 1600s, but others, described by European observers as huts, cabins, or houses, were built of squared logs, and were covered in bark or clapboard. Some even had chimneys.

Unlike seventeenth-century villages, mid-eighteenth century Indian villages were multiracial, created by the amalgamation of the survivors of the epidemics and the new Indian groups moving into the area. Nevertheless, villages were still referred to as Shawnee, Miami, or Delaware towns because one group predominated. It is unclear how society was organized in these villages. Leaders undoubtedly fulfilled roles in mid-eighteenth-century Indian society similar to those of their seventeenth-century counterparts, with one important difference: they had to contend face-to-face with the European newcomers.

Native peoples continued the practice of burying their dead in shallow pits in the ground near their houses. They erected burial structures over some of the deceased. The rich religious symbolism reflected by the engraved marine shell gorgets of the 1600s was no longer important or was expressed in other ways. However, mourners continued to place ceramic vessels and other items of native manufacture in the graves of their loved ones. They also included a few items of European manufacture, like silver earrings and broaches or glass beads, but these were different from the metal ornaments placed with the dead in the 1600s. This difference is undoubtedly a reflection of the common presence of Europeans in native lives at this time. However, since no wholesale replacement of aboriginal burial goods by European counterparts had occurred in the mid-1700s, it appears that native peoples at this time still held to their indigenous religious beliefs and burial practices.

A very important difference between seventeenth- and mid-eighteenth-century Indian life lies within the realm of economics. Trade with the Europeans drew the Indians into a dependency on foreign goods. By the mid-1700s, native peoples had incorporated items of European manufacture into most aspects of their daily lives, and some of these items had replaced their indigenous counterparts. Once native peoples became dependent on firearms and other functional items, they were bound even more tightly into close economic relationships with Europeans, a dependency that undermined their self-sufficiency.

But the very nature of trade had changed as well. Exchange was no longer carried out between aboriginal groups over long distances, nor was it integrated into the social fabric of the culture and managed by village leaders. English or French traders brought goods directly to the native inhabitants and built trading houses in their midst. Each person could trade individually. And the goods exchanged - deerskins for metal pots, cloth, firearms and accoutrements, powder, and silver jewelry - were mainly functional items. One commodity, alcohol, had a seriously disruptive influence on Indian life.

Many more changes within Indian culture would occur after the mid-eighteenth century, but this is where the story of permanent Indian occupancy of Kentucky, the Bluegrass Region, and the lands along the Ohio River ends. A consideration of the major Shawnee settlement known as "the lower Shawnee Town," situated on both sides (Ohio and Kentucky) of the Ohio River at the mouth of the Scioto River, and of Eskippikithiki, in the central Kentucky interior, provides a perspective on Kentucky's American Indian history on the eve of the French and Indian War.

Shawnee and Six Nations Iroquois established an Indian "republic" at the lower Shawnee Town in the late 1730s and abandoned it in 1758. For about 20 years, it was the primary village

for the Shawnee. It also served as an international native diplomatic center, a regional diplomatic center with Europeans, and a trading center at the western end of the Pennsylvania traders' southern trade route.

The lower Shawnee Town was at least twice as big as its predecessors and larger than most contemporary Indian settlements "on Ohio." An array of nations, divisions, factions, and bands lived there, its inhabitants a mixture of indigenous peoples, Europeans, Africans, and the offspring of their unions. By January 1751, this multi-ethnic population is estimated to have been somewhere between twelve hundred and fifteen hundred people. Given this diversity, it is not surprising that the French characterized it as a "republic."

The Shawnee were the settlement's largest ethnic contingent. Undoubtedly at its height, members of most, if not all, of the nation's five separate and autonomous political units, or divisions lived there. Six Nations Iroquois, mostly Seneca (or "Mingo" as they became known in the Ohio Valley at this time) also lived there, as did men from other towns who traded at the lower Shawnee Town and may have lived there temporarily during regional crises or diplomatic meetings: Delaware from their towns upstream on the Scioto River; missionized Indians from communities near Montreal including Iroquois from Lake of the Two Mountains, and Oneida or Mohawk from Sault St. Louis; and others from nearly all the Indian nations of upper Canada.

In the realm of purely Indian affairs, the diversity of the settlement's ethnic groups created a truly "international" atmosphere in town councils. As the main Shawnee settlement, representatives of the Cherokee, Miami, and Delaware traveled there to meet and negotiate diplomatic issues. Because the town was located deep in Indian Country, too far from English and French political centers, relative to the Europeans, the lower Shawnee Town functioned as a second-level or regional diplomatic center.

The people living at the lower Shawnee Town were important participants in the Pennsylvania deerskin trade, and the town served as an English trading post. A number of factors combined to make it an international trading hub. Five trading routes in the Ohio Country extended from bases near the Forks of the Ohio like "sticks of a fan." The trading house at the lower Shawnee Town sat all alone at the southern route's western end. From the town, traders could penetrate into Indian Country north of the lower Shawnee Town or south of it into the Kentucky interior. By 1749, English traders had built a store house in the town, and a small contingent of colonials may have become year-round residents.

How much impact European imperial concerns had on the day-to-day lives of inhabitants at the lower Shawnee Town is hard to measure. Certainly native concerns about controlling the liquor trade, negotiating fair prices for their deerskins, and keeping good diplomatic relationships with the English suggest that their daily lives were affected to a certain degree. Many statements in period documents, however, make it clear that European imperial concerns were just some of the issues confronting the town's residents. Parties raided the Cherokee and Catawba to the south, and harassed the Piankashaws, Wea, and other tribes to the west.

A contemporary Indian village to the lower Shawnee Town, called Eskippakithiki, was reportedly occupied at Indian Old Fields in southeastern Clark County in the mid-eighteenth-

century, but its identity is one of the most pervasive legends in Kentucky American Indian history. Actual historical documents referring to a village in the area are rare, and when a village is mentioned at all, its location is noted only in general terms. Purported residents of the town included Peter Chartier (not true), John Finley (maybe), and Catahecassa (Black Hoof) (probably).

Detailed and critical historical documents research has determined that an Indian village called Eskippakithiki probably was located in or within nine miles of Indian Old Fields in 1753. It is likely that Eskippikithiki and another possible town, Little Pict Town, are two different places. Also referred to as Blue Lick Town by English traders, Eskippikithiki is mentioned in passing in an account of the capture of six English traders near the village: a group of Ottawas, Iroquois, and Conawagoes robbed them of goods, skins, and furs while they were returning from trading among the Cherokee in the Carolina territory. The town also is depicted on Lewis Evans' 1755 map, which places it 25 miles north of the Kentucky River on the Warriors Path. A band of Shawnee may have established the village in 1750 or 1751 and it may have been abandoned in 1754 due to attacks by the Catawbas, a North Carolina tribe that had been a major enemy of the Shawnee for a long time. This group established another village in the Big Sandy River drainage in 1754.

A trader, John Finley, likely came to Indian Old Fields to trade with Shawnee who lived in the vicinity, but this probably occurred in 1767, not in 1752-1753 as has been suggested. The native occupation at that time may have been a winter encampment and not a major village. An elderly Shawnee chief, Catahecassa (Black Hoof), who visited Indian Old Fields in 1815 or 1816, claimed that a Shawnee village was located there until 1754. Archaeological survey in the early 1980s for an Indian village of this age in one section of Indian Old Fields failed to identify one.

With the beginning of the French and Indian War, the Ohio Valley Indians became allies of the French, but they fought for their own reasons: to defeat the British who wanted Indian land, to end Iroquois control over native political affairs "on Ohio," and to stem the flow of liquor into Indian Country. No battles or skirmishes during the war took place on Kentucky soil, but if the actions of the inhabitants of the lower Shawnee Town can be used to gauge the actions of other groups, it would be safe to say that near the end of it, many moved north for fear of reprisals, abandoning large villages south of the Ohio River and moving their domestic centers to another part of their homeland, though they may have held onto smaller communities and winter camps in the region.

The British negotiated peace with the Indians "on Ohio" in 1762. The Indians wanted a dual British-French withdrawal from the region, but the British stayed. Native peoples expected a restoration of abundant trade, but a scarcity of goods, high prices, and an abundance of liquor made trade with the British a disappointment.

With the war over, land speculators moved into the Trans-Appalachian West. In response to violence in the Great Lakes region in the spring and summer of 1763, the British unilaterally established the Proclamation Line of 1763 along the crest of the Appalachians separating Indian

lands (to the west) from British colonial lands (to the east). Encroaching colonial settlement ignored the line.

Between 1763, when the peace treaty was signed that formally brought an end to the war, and 1775, when the American Revolution started, a series of treaties drew various boundary lines beyond which colonial settlement could not go. Encroaching colonial settlement ignored these lines, too, which provided the impetus for Indian raiding parties and larger native expeditions that targeted the central Kentucky settlements during the American Revolution.

In 1768, as part of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the Iroquois ceded all the lands they claimed south of the Ohio River through prior purported “conquest.” This treaty set the Ohio River as the new boundary between Indian lands to the north and English lands to the south. The result was that resident Indian peoples were blocked from lawfully hunting in their home territory and it effectively opened up Indian Country in Kentucky for settlement.

The late 1760s also were the years of the “Long Hunters.” Men from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina entered Kentucky through Cumberland Gap or from the Ohio River and explored, hunted, and trail blazed for fairly long periods of time. During their stays, they examined land conditions for themselves and others in anticipation of future settlement. Native and white hunting parties, both made of small groups of men, occasionally crossed paths.

In 1772, the Cherokee surrendered to Virginia their claim to land east of the Kentucky River. In 1773, colonial surveyors moved beyond the boundary between Indian-colonial settlements to survey Virginia land grants (this included Kentucky, since it was still part of Virginia at this time). Skirmishes took place between Shawnee and colonial surveyors around Louisville in the Spring of 1774. Outrages committed by colonial frontiersmen at this same time, particularly the murder of Chief Logan’s relatives, brought on the a short war between Virginia and the Ohio Indians, known as Lord Dunmore’s War. It was the prelude to the Indian-settler fighting on the Kentucky frontier that coincided with the start of the American Revolution.

Lord Dunmore’s War came to a close after the Battle of Point Pleasant in October 1774. It was a defeat for the Shawnee. As part of the Treaty of Camp Charlotte, which negotiated the war’s end, Indian leaders ceded their prime hunting lands south of the Ohio River and agreed to remain north of the Ohio River. However, not all the native factions recognized the treaty as binding. Some native groups left the Ohio Valley afterwards, settling on lands west of the Mississippi River, well away from the conflict. With their withdrawal, Indian westward removal had begun.

The Treaty of Camp Charlotte opened up central Kentucky for settlement, and colonial settlers wasted no time. They established Harrodsburg in 1774 and Boonesborough in 1775 within months of each other in the Bluegrass Region as the Revolutionary War broke out in the East.

That same year, through the Treaty of Sycamore Shoals, the Cherokee sold their land within central and western Kentucky to the Transylvania Land Company (except for land in what is now six counties in extreme south-central Kentucky). This treaty (as well as the treaties of Fort

Stanwix, Hard Labor, and Camp Charlotte) violated the Proclamation of 1763. Because the transaction was not sanctioned by a Crown official, it was denounced by both Cherokee and imperial officials alike and voided in 1778 by Virginia and North Carolina. Dragging Canoe led the Cherokee opposition to the treaty, and would later move with his followers to Chickamauga Creek in southern Tennessee/northwest Georgia and lead what became known as the Chickamauga Cherokee resistance during the Revolutionary War.

Over the next few years, what began as a trickle of settlers into central Kentucky quickly turned to a flood. Europeans were no longer deerskin traders, explorers, and diplomats: families came with children and slaves, carrying their belongings, and bringing livestock and seeds to transplant their colonial way of life west of the mountains. These people also were hunter-farmers, but their notion of a farming way of life was very different from the Indians' way – land was owned, fields were fenced, livestock was kept, homes were built to stay put. Men planted the fields and women tended only the kitchen gardens. Most settlers were Christians, a monotheistic religion that contrasted sharply with the animistic beliefs of native peoples. The settlers valued missionaries and sought to convert those who did not believe. The situation was ripe for conflict to develop between settler/pioneers and native peoples.

As the first wave of settlers reached the Bluegrass and the middle Ohio Valley, the new arrivals encountered small groups of Shawnee, Mingo, Delaware, Miami, and Wyandot (Huron) men who were hunting in the region. The Indians' primary summer villages were located north of the Ohio River.

Soon the hunting parties transformed into raiding parties that harassed the settlers. This conflict increased in 1776 after Kentucky became a Virginia county. In 1777, the “Year of the Terrible Sevens,” Indian raiding parties and expeditions became so much more intense, frequent, and larger, that the colonists nearly abandoned Kentucky.

Between 1777 and the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783, many incidents of Indian-colonist conflict took place in central Kentucky. Among the most famous and noteworthy are the siege of Boonesborough in 1778; attacks on Martin's and Ruddle's stations in 1780; and the attack on Bryan's Station and the Battle of Blue Licks in 1782. The latter was one of the worst military disasters for the settlers on the Kentucky frontier. The Kentucky force's defeat was so complete, most settlers left Kentucky.

The Indian raiding parties and expeditions were multitribal – they included men from a variety of groups living north of the Ohio River. Shawnee, Mingo, Delaware, Wyandot, and Miami were the groups most often represented. Others mentioned less frequently include Ottawa, Ojibwa, Potawatomi, and Cherokee. Though allied with the British, the Indians who fought the Kentucky settlers or “Big Knives” did so to deny Kentucky to the Americans rather than out of any particular loyalty to the British.

They also used their own methods of warfare – for the Indians were warriors, not soldiers. They did not remain long on campaigns, nor did they submit to discipline unless involved in a major engagement. They fought to defeat the Americans, defend their homes, and to prove their courage and fighting ability, but not to take and hold territory. And while they

committed murders and atrocities, they also integrated some prisoners into Indian society, a tradition that set them apart from the settlers, who lumped all Indians together – of any nation, male or female, young or old, converted or not, scouts and those who warned of raids – and sought to kill them.

In response to the Indian raids, George Rogers Clark led expeditions north of the Ohio River to retaliate – to the Shawnee at Chillicothe on the Scioto River in 1778 and 1779; and to the Shawnee town of Piqua in 1780. In 1782, Clark led another attack on Chillicothe, destroying homes and crops.

But by the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783, there were too many settlers, an estimated 12,000, and too many settlements, 72 in the Lexington area alone, for native raiding parties to drive the colonists from Kentucky. In the treaty negotiations that ended the conflict, Indian states were discussed, but were left out of the final document.

And still the conflict between Indians and the Kentucky settlers continued. Kentuckians encroached on Indian lands and attack Indians, and Indians retaliated – chronic murders, horse thefts, and raids resumed. It was within this context of continuing conflict that, in 1784, John Filson published his book, *The Discovery, Settlement, and present state of Kentucke*. Widely read, and credited with encouraging settlers to come to Kentucky, in it he refers to Kentucky as the “Dark and Bloody Ground” and an “object of contention, a theatre of war, from which it was properly denominated the Bloody-Grounds.”<sup>4</sup> In 1785, about 100 travelers on the Wilderness Road, which more or less followed the Warriors Path through Cumberland Gap to central Kentucky, were killed as a result of the continuing conflict. In 1789, a Shawnee raiding party attacks Richard Chenoweth’s fort near what is now Louisville. Even as late as 1792, the year Kentucky was admitted as the 15th state in the Union, ambushes, captures, and killing continued.

The Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, and the Treaty of Greenville that spelled out the terms of peace in 1795, brought to a close the long period of conflict between native peoples and Colonial/American settlers on central Kentucky soil, although the hatred and resentment remained long afterwards, flaring up as sporadic hostilities (e.g., the 1796 murder in eastern Kentucky of a Cherokee by the name of Red Bird). At the treaty conference, more than 1000 Indians attended from the many tribes whose men had participated in the Kentucky conflict and whose families had experienced the Kentucky militia’s impacts. They now lived mainly in villages in northern Ohio, northern Indiana, and southern Michigan, west and south of Lake Erie. Many of the Indians believed that the treaty gave them the land where they lived for as long as they wished to stay, but for the U.S. government, the treaty was just a step in the process of acquiring all the lands east of the Mississippi River.

For the first time, an annuity system (yearly payments made to the tribes, in cash and/or livestock and equipment, by the federal government) was put into place. It institutionalized U.S. federal influence within tribal governments. The annuities were given to Indian leaders to distribute among their people. The treaty also declared that the American government was committed to “civilizing” the Indians. This was a presage of things to come.

### *Kentucky West of the Falls*

Unlike the section of Kentucky located east of the Falls, American Indian history of this period for this part of Kentucky is poorly documented. There are vague references to scattered groups of various tribes, but it is not clear if they lived in this region for long periods of time.

Shawnee groups are mentioned traveling between the Great Lakes and the Southeast or living for a time in the lower Ohio/Cumberland River Valley region. These date to the late 1740s and again to around 1760. It is possible that these Shawnee groups established villages in western Kentucky, but the exact locations are unknown.

The former date refers to a Shawnee band led by Peter Chartier, a trader of European and Shawnee heritage who settled for a time on a “large river” in the Cumberland River area in 1746. The Chickasaw planned to attack his band in 1747, but hearing of their plans, the group moved south to join the Cherokee.

The latter date refers to a band of Shawnee (that had settled in Tennessee around 1752) who were reportedly driven from Tennessee by the Chickasaw and who moved to the lower Ohio Valley. This group remained in the lower Ohio Valley until a few years after the fall of Fort Duquesne in 1758, after which they joined the main body of the Shawnee living on the Scioto River in southern Ohio.

During the American Revolution, Chickasaw villages were situated south of what is now Kentucky and far from colonial settlements, so unlike native groups living in what is now Ohio, they experienced few attacks in the war. But they supported the British, and that support threatened American and Spanish traffic on the Mississippi River.

In 1780, the same year Indian groups from north of the Ohio River attacked settlers at Martin’s and Ruddle’s stations in central Kentucky, Americans under George Rogers Clark established Fort Jefferson/Clarksville in western Kentucky on the Kentucky side of the Mississippi River below its junction with the Ohio. Fort Jefferson was established to serve as a base of operations to launch a campaign in the British Southwest and as an Indian depot for arming northern Indians. Forty families and their slaves settled around the fort, and over 60 American Indians, acting as hunters for the garrison, also were residents of Fort Jefferson. Tribal groups represented included the Kaskaskia, Peoria, Kickapoo, Sauk, Ottawa and Piankashaw.

Not long after the fort’s construction was completed, however, the Chickasaw attacked Fort Jefferson. They ran the settlers inside the fort, burned their homes and corn crop, and killed much of the livestock. They set up a siege, cutting off the fort’s supplies and killing and capturing stragglers. The Chickasaw’s July offensive was led by James Colbert, a mixed-blood son of James Logan Colbert, and the August battle was led by James Whitehead from the British Southern Indian Department. In 1781, after only a year, the Americans withdrew and closed the fort. The actions of the Chickasaw checked the American plans to invade the British Southwest and stabilized the American conquest line on the Ohio River for the rest of the war.

By the mid-1790s, the Kentucky frontier had moved west. It now extended roughly from Smithland, Kentucky on the Ohio River in Livingston County south to Canton, Kentucky in Trigg County. A few roving bands of Chickasaw were active in the region at-large at this time, raiding, harassing, and killing the small numbers of American settlers who had moved there.

In 1803, Lewis and Clark mention a Shawnee presence along the Mississippi River. These Indians may have ranged into what is now western Kentucky at this time.

### **After Fallen Timbers**

The last Indian land cessions in Kentucky occurred after the confederated tribes were defeated at Fallen Timbers in 1794. Also at this time, the U.S. government embarked on a policy of assimilating native peoples into American society, affected through the Civilization Fund Act of 1819.

The Indian response to the Treaty of Greenville reflected the factionalism of their tribal societies and the tribes' and factions' contrasting responses to Europeans – accommodate or resist. For some tribal factions, accommodation, rather than confrontation, now offered the best chance for remaining native.

The Shawnee provide a good case in point. The Shawnee group led by Catahecassa (Black Hoof), once a resister, decided to follow an accommodationist strategy in order to hold onto native lands in what is now Ohio. Though this group made adjustments to American culture, they retained their traditions and beliefs. Others Shawnee factions, like those who followed Tecumseh, chose resistance.

For a short time before and during the War of 1812, Tecumseh led an intertribal alliance composed of members of both northern and southern tribes who opposed American expansion, while his brother, Tenskwatawa, led a nativistic religious movement that required followers to return to the old ways. The alliance collapsed upon Tecumseh's death at the Battle of the Thames, marking the end of Indian resistance between the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers.

As an outcome of the Third Treaty of Tellico, the Cherokee in 1805 ceded the last of their northern "hunting" lands in Kentucky (what is now six counties in the extreme south-central portion of the state) to the U.S. government. Controversial provisions in this treaty gave Doublehead and other influential Cherokee chiefs individual reserves of land, and Doublehead received a cash bonus for helping with the negotiations.

After the War of 1812, the demand for Indian removal to lands west of the Mississippi River intensified, as the pressure from white settlement increased. The U.S. government forced native groups into ceding their land to the government.

Forced land cessions relative to the Southeastern tribes began in 1814 with the Creek. One by one, throughout the early 1800s, Indian nations split into factions over the issue of removal, and one by one, they moved west.

Under Presidents Monroe and Adams, U.S. Indian removal policy was voluntary, and Indian peoples in the Ohio Valley emigrated without the direct application of force. It seems likely that native people living in Kentucky who had decided to move out of the state of their own accord had done so by this time. Remnants of these groups (individuals or families who had social connections by virtue of marriage, or who simply chose to stay behind) doubtless remained. In instances of intermarriage, especially between native women and Euro-American men, some chose to blend-in with local American populations rather than remove west, and lived much like their non-native neighbors.

Prior to 1818, the land between the Tennessee and Mississippi rivers was still considered Indian Country. Although most Chickasaw lived in northern Mississippi and northwestern Alabama, the Chickasaw claimed and controlled this area, which they used as hunting grounds. This claim was based on the fact that in the 1700s, detached bands of Chickasaw occupied these areas, and towns were said to have been located on the Ohio River and/or on the lower course of the Tennessee River in either Tennessee or Kentucky. In 1805, the Chickasaw ceded to the U.S. government a thin strip of land adjacent to the eastern bank of the Tennessee River to its mouth.

The lands the Chickasaw controlled in this area served as a strategic land bridge during the War of 1812, connecting the Cumberland River and Ohio River settlements with the lower Mississippi Valley and Gulf of Mexico. After the war, the U.S. government wanted to open it to white settlement.

The Chickasaw's main, and last, federal land cession occurred in 1818. In it, the tribe sold their land to the United States for \$20,000 a year for 15 years and extinguished their claim to all land north of the southern boundary of Tennessee. Levi and George Colbert, Chinnubby, and Tishomingo were among the Chickasaw chiefs, headmen, and warriors who signed; Andrew Jackson and Isaac Shelby signed for the United States. This land cession was the last of an extended series of actions by the federal government to open lands east of the Mississippi River to white settlement. It extended the borders of the Commonwealth of Kentucky west to the Mississippi River and encompassed approximately 2,000 square miles. Today, Kentuckians refer to this area as the Jackson Purchase Region.

In March 1819, only a few months after the Chickasaw ceded their land, Congress created the Civilization Fund, which provided an annual appropriation of \$10,000 to "civilize" native peoples living in the United States under its auspices. Richard M. Johnson, a U.S. Congressman from Kentucky (who was rumored to be the man who killed Tecumseh and who later would become U.S. Vice President under Martin Van Buren), used his political connections to secure funding for an Indian school on his Scott County farm in central Kentucky. Known simply as "Johnson's Indian School," it was operated by the Kentucky Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen, of which Johnson was a member. Eight Indians from Missouri, both adults and children, were its first students. The school closed in 1821 due to a lack of funding.

Events outside Kentucky impacted people of native descent who resided in the new, larger, Commonwealth of Kentucky. Given the violent encounters between Indians and Europeans during the preceding decades and the resentment that remained, it is unlikely that they

would have shared the truth of their Indian heritage widely. This set the stage for developments in Kentucky's American Indian history in following periods.

### **Removal and Its Aftermath (1825 - 1980)**

With passage, in 1830, of the "Indian Removal Act," American Indians living east of the Mississippi River were required to move west, to Indian Territory. In truth, Kentucky's Indian removal had taken place much earlier, first in response to the events of the French and Indian War, then the American Revolution, and finally, the War of 1812.

Two important national developments in American Indian history have expressions in Kentucky: the movement to transform Indian people into "civilized" American citizens and the forced physical removal of people from native homelands to Indian Territory. The former is represented by Choctaw Indian Academy, an American Indian school that operated in central Kentucky during the early decades of this period. The latter is represented by the Cherokee "Trail of Tears," which crossed western Kentucky in 1838-39.

Then the public thread of Kentucky Indian history unravels. Although individuals and families claiming an Indian heritage and culture likely remained in the commonwealth during this period, no specific direct historical events have been recorded with respect to Indians. A new and separate thread of history begins at this time, however: a growing public interest in ancient native places and legislation passed to protect them.

### **Indian "Transformation"**

Financial support for Indian schools in the early 1800s was drawn from Indian land cessions, and for this reason, Richard M. Johnson considered Indian education a lucrative business opportunity. Determined to pursue this entrepreneurial path, four years after the closure of his first Indian school, Johnson succeeded in convincing the federal government to direct funds to him to set up an Indian school outside the Choctaw Nation. He did this by capitalizing on his federal political connections, the U.S. government's Indian policy, missionary attitudes, and factionalism within the Choctaw Nation. The funds were a portion of the monies that had been set aside for a 20-year education fund from the sale of Choctaw lands in the 1825 treaty. Called Choctaw Indian Academy, the school was located, as the previous school had been, on Johnson's farm in central Kentucky. The War Department assumed management of the school and turned over control of it to Johnson and his superintendent, Thomas Henderson.

In the early 1800s, the Choctaw lived mainly in central and southern Mississippi and southwestern Alabama. Some were dissatisfied with how several mission schools in their nation were being run. They wanted their best youth educated at a different kind of school, an elite academic institution outside the nation where future tribal leaders would pursue advanced studies. It was expected that Academy graduates would assume civic duties and tribal leadership, and advance native positions in the face of white pressure, since, theoretically, they would have been schooled in the laws, language, and customs of white culture.

Once Choctaw Indian Academy opened in 1825, five years before Removal, Johnson used his influence and position to convince other tribes, like the Chickasaw, to establish annuities for the education of their children, and then assign the funds to be spent at his school. After 1834, the Chickasaw sent 12-18 boys each year to the Academy for the duration of the school's existence.

Twenty-one Choctaw boys were the school's first students. Although Choctaw students were always the most numerous, several other Southeastern and Midwestern tribes sent their sons to the school, including Creek, Chickasaw, Seminole, Cherokee, Appalachicola, Potawatomis, Miami, Quapaw, Sac and Fox, Towa, Osage, Omaha, and boys from the United Band of Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomis. The average number of students in attendance was 120, but between 1834 and 1838, it was well above 150. The ages of the students at the school were between 6 or 8 to past 20, and this diversity extended to their prior education as well. Some spoke English and could read and write; others spoke only their native language and were completely illiterate. Because Johnson and his faculty felt academic skills were dangerous for Indians to acquire unless paired with American habits, customs, morals and values, the school also sought to improve the students' moral and physical character.

Living conditions at the school were not always good. Accommodations were spartan. Accusations of mistreatment and of sexual liaisons between Academy students and Johnson's slaves swirled around the school. In 1833, Johnson added teaching of a trade (e.g., blacksmith, wheelwright, and shoemaker) to the academy's curriculum. Mechanical workshops were set up and students made items for sale, the proceeds of which went to the school.

After the election of 1840, Johnson's political fortunes fell. By 1842, the last Choctaw students left, taking with them much of the school's financial support. Boys from Midwestern tribes then dominated the student body, especially Potawatomis. The last students to leave were thirteen Chickasaw. The school closed in 1848.

Native leaders spent considerable sums of money at Choctaw Indian Academy and expected marked academic and social improvement on the part of its graduates. Although some graduates did succeed in fulfilling the promise of the school, it was never really the institution the Choctaw envisioned. Many tribes were very dissatisfied with the Academy. Many students graduated lacking a common education in reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and the other academic subjects of the day. Students returned to their homes schooled instead in gambling and drinking, unable to cope with the detachment and estrangement from their native customs and relatives.

None of the tribes that sent their sons to Choctaw Indian Academy were resident groups in Kentucky, and save for the Cherokee and Chickasaw, and perhaps the Miami, none had historical roots in the Commonwealth. Thus, the presence of an Indian school in central Kentucky was idiosyncratic, an isolated historical development due purely to Johnson's wheelings and dealings, and political influence and intrigue. However, the history of Choctaw Indian Academy reflects the nineteenth-century American Indian experience in "microcosm"<sup>5</sup> of those groups that still retained a measure of Indian identity and community.

## Removal

During the years of Choctaw Indian Academy's highest attendance, other well-known events in American Indian history were happening outside Kentucky's borders, setting in motion what the Cherokee called Nunna-Da-Ol-Tsum-Y and what has become known as the "Trail of Tears."

Andrew Jackson had campaigned for president on a position of active removal, and after he was elected in 1828, Congress passed legislation in 1830 that called for American Indians to remove to lands west of the Mississippi River, to a place designated "Indian Territory" in what is now Oklahoma. The legislation authorized Jackson to negotiate the Indians' surrender of their eastern lands in exchange for lands in the west. They would be paid for the land, assisted in the move, and helped to settle. The message was clear that the groups remaining east of the Mississippi River, most of whom lived in the Southeast, must leave.

The Cherokee in 1831 sought justice in the courts, and successfully challenged the laws passed by the state of Georgia that gave Cherokee land to whites and made it unlawful to, among other things, conduct tribal business. Nevertheless, the decisions in these two cases were not enforced. In the 1835 Treaty of New Echota, signed by a few Cherokee led by Major Ridge, the Cherokee agreed to leave within two years. Some did leave by this deadline, but the majority did not. The group, led by John Ross, refused to acknowledge the treaty. Thus the stage was set for the Cherokee's forced removal.

In the summer of 1838, the U.S. Army and state militia rounded up the Cherokee living in Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama and crowded them into eleven internment camps. Three groups were sent by rail, flat boat, and wagon under armed guard down the Tennessee River to its confluence with the Ohio at Smithland, Kentucky, then down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers and up the Arkansas River. Weather conditions made their journey very difficult and many died. About 2,800 people removed on this "Water Route," a portion of which extended through Kentucky.

After hearing of the removal ordeal of the first three groups, Ross contracted with the U.S. government for the Cherokee themselves to oversee the movement of the remainder of the tribe. They organized into thirteen groups of about 1,000 each; twelve went overland and one went by water. They left in the fall of 1838, their staggered departures spread out over a period of months. People walked, rode in wagons or carriages, or went by boat. By March 1839, the last detachments had arrived in Indian Territory. Over 4,000 Cherokee are estimated to have died en route.

Of the three major overland routes, small sections of two traversed portions of western Kentucky. John Benge's detachment traveled overland through Hickman County in extreme western Kentucky, passing through Clinton and crossing the Mississippi River into Missouri at Columbus.

Several detachments followed the "Northern Overland Route," passing through southwestern Kentucky through or near Hopkinsville and Princeton. Two elderly Cherokee

chiefs, Fly Smith and White Path, who served as detachment leaders of successive groups passing through the Hopkinsville area, became ill and died there. Their funerals were noted in the local newspapers and they were buried in Hopkinsville.

These “Northern Overland Route” detachments camped in the winter of 1838-1839 near Mantle Rock, a large sandstone arch in Livingston County, Kentucky, as they waited to cross the Ohio River at Berry’s Ferry and continue on into Illinois at Golconda. Oral tradition maintains that a few Cherokee remained behind in Kentucky, but this has not been confirmed. Local tradition maintains that the many rock mounds scattered near Mantle Rock are Cherokee graves, but archaeological research indicates they were built by Lewis Culture hunter-gatherer-gardeners sometime between CE 600 to 800.

With the last Cherokee refugees crossing into Illinois, Kentucky’s American Indian historical narrative thread unwinds. It becomes, for a time, the myriad stories of families and individuals, not the stories of tribes. This history is written as family histories and personal narratives shared in diaries and spoken about during family reunions and around dinner tables. Historians have not begun to research these sources.

### **After Removal to the 1960s**

Indian people did not physically disappear from the Commonwealth after the forced removal of groups west of the Mississippi River. While historical scholarship is mute on this point, individual families undoubtedly remained in Kentucky, forming the roots of the late twentieth century American Indian presence in Kentucky.

Beginning by at least the early 1700s, Indian people had intermarried with people of European and African descent, creating blended families, and blended cultural, ethnic, and spiritual traditions. Anti-Indian attitudes, born of the Indian struggles with settler-pioneers during the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, and War of 1812, led native people to withdraw. In this situation, the challenge was to maintain native ways in the face of pressure to assimilate and discrimination from the dominant culture.

As tribal identity dimmed (or at least insofar as American society was concerned), and in some cases, disappeared, the general population often forgot they had Indian neighbors. Some individuals may no longer have outwardly resembled Indians in either appearance or culture. While these native people remained in their ancestral homelands and retained a slight Indian identity because of that long-time residence and their cultural survival, they themselves may not have been entirely certain who was and who was not a tribal member.

No Indian reservations were located in Kentucky (this remains true today). Nor did any unequivocally or outwardly tribal communities exist within its borders (this also remains so today). Instead, Kentucky’s native population was small, dispersed, and mixed, hailing from a host of tribes and cultures. Thus, the particulars of the Indian reservation experience and other aspects of the federal Indian assimilation and Americanization policy of this period, such as allotment, are not a direct part of American Indian history in Kentucky.

In 1924, for example, the Indian Citizenship Act extended voting rights and citizenship to all native peoples, but nearly two-thirds of American Indians in the United States already were citizens. It is not known how this act and other federal Indian policies may have affected Kentucky's native population.

Likewise, any discrimination Indian people may have faced in Kentucky due to their native heritage is unknown. Kentucky's native peoples at this time did not face many of the visible and obvious challenges faced by their contemporaries who lived on reservations or in communities where indigenous people made up the majority, such as overt discrimination and religious persecution.

They faced a different set of challenges. Individuals or extended families worked hard to maintain their cultural identities, customs, and values surrounded by a wider community indifferent to their perspectives and concerns. Many families downplayed or did not share the fact of their Indian heritage with others. In the early 1950s, the Relocation Act of 1952 moved Indians from reservations to cities, but this federal action likely did not affect Indian peoples in Kentucky.

It is ironic that, as the thread of direct Indian history unravels, a new, and for a time, a separate but related historical thread, commences: the scientific study of Kentucky's ancient Indian history. It begins with Constantine Rafinesque's 1824 publication on the topic, a year before Johnson opens Choctaw Indian Academy. Other publications followed, like Webb and Funkhouser's *Ancient Life in Kentucky* in 1928.

During the Depression, one federal make-work program, called Works Progress Administration (WPA), employed Kentucky's citizens all across the state in excavating prehistoric native sites. Around this same time, a few private citizens in western Kentucky opened up prehistoric mound sites on their property as tourist destinations.

### **The 1960s to 1980**

In the 1960s, religious persecution, a lack of civil rights, discrimination, and a sense of frustration and powerlessness led to the Red Power movement, and in 1968, urban Indians founded the American Indian Movement (AIM). During this ethnic and cultural awakening of the 1960s and 1970s, long "forgotten" people appeared, claiming to be Indians. Also in the 1960s, state and federal governments passed legislation to address the preservation and protection of state and national heritage, which also included the ancient Indian past, and to address issues of ethnic inequality.

In Kentucky, the state legislature passed the Kentucky Antiquities Act in 1962. This act made it public policy to preserve archaeological sites and objects of antiquity, and to limit archaeological work (exploration, excavation, and collection) on lands owned or leased by the state, state agencies, counties, or municipalities, to qualified people and institutions. It prohibits the willful damage or destruction of archaeological sites on lands owned or leased by the state, state agencies, counties, or municipalities. It requires anyone who discovers a site anywhere in Kentucky to report it to the University of Kentucky's Department of Anthropology.

Following close on the heels of the Kentucky Antiquities Act, the federal government passed the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, which created the National Register of Historic Places, the National Landmarks Program, and State Historic Preservation Offices (in Kentucky, it is the Kentucky Heritage Council). Section 106 of the act requires documentation of all cultural resources before federally funded or permitted projects, or projects on federal lands, can be conducted. And if sites are significant (due to their association with an important person or event, or because they contained important scientific information), and stand to be impacted or destroyed, some way has to be found to preserve the site, or the site has to be investigated and the information retrieved before the project can move forward.

Responding to a growing awareness of ethnic inequality, the federal government also passed a series of laws in the 1970s to address these issues. As before, many of these laws targeted abuses on Indian reservations in the West, but native families living in the East not on reservations (and in the case of Kentucky, not even in Indian settlements), may have experienced some benefits. For example, the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act protected Indian peoples from persecution for religious and cultural actions.

One federal action, undertaken in 1978, impacted and continues to impact the lives of all American Indians. The Federal Acknowledgment Project began that year, and later it became a branch of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), labeled the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research. It deals with the ongoing process of evaluation of claims for tribal status and official Federal recognition. Federal recognition formally establishes a government-to-government relationship between a tribe and the U.S. government, making tribes eligible to receive federal contracts and participate in federal assistance programs.

Ironically, the actions many Indian people had taken to ensure their physical survival (e.g., downplay their native heritage, decline to sign the rolls), now made it difficult for them to provide the documentary evidence that proved and validated their Indian identity. Even today, many groups lack strong local organizations or the funds to gather together the requisite documents; lack the research skills to present the case for their continuous existence; and rarely have a land base that readily identifies them as a physical Indian community.

During the 1970s, Federal land management personnel had noted with alarm the steady increase in looting on public lands. For some reason, the sale of prehistoric artifacts had become more lucrative at this time. In response to increased looting of archaeological sites, most of which were prehistoric Indian sites on federal property, Congress enacted the Archaeological Resource Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA) in 1979. ARPA provides tools for archaeologists, private citizens, and federal employees to prosecute individuals who loot archaeological sites on federal property and desecrate human graves of any group.

An event in Kentucky in the early 1970s reflects the ethnic and cultural awakening taking place within some native communities at that time. In the Summer of 1972, construction of facilities on Kentucky Air National Guard property in Louisville revealed the presence of a prehistoric site and cemetery, and in 1973, professional archaeologists excavated a portion of the

site, called the KYANG site. Near the close of the 1973 excavations, Indian protesters caused all work on the site to cease while they ritualistically consecrated it as a "holy place."

### **Greater Visibility and Action (1980 - PRESENT)**

The public thread of Indian history picks up again in the late 1980s, and the parallel thread of interest in prehistoric Indian history joins it. Ironically, this chapter takes up where the previous one ended, with the Trail of Tears. Through the actions of native and non-native people alike during this period, organizations were founded to address native concerns and bring together native residents in the state. Events and exhibits were held, and books and articles were written highlighting Kentucky's American Indian history and American Indian contributions to the Commonwealth. New laws and changes to existing ones, at both the state and federal level, targeted the protection of ancient sites, both domestic and sacred; provided for the return of the remains of ancestors and important cultural property and opened avenues of discourse about them; and ensured the integrity of American Indian artwork. The issue of federal and state tribal recognition remains to be resolved.

#### **1987: An Important Year**

The year 1987 was an important one in Kentucky's American Indian history, for both positive and negative reasons.

The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail was created in 1987, due, in part, to efforts of interested Kentucky citizens. The bill, introduced by Kentucky's U.S. Senator Wendell Ford, was signed by President Ronald Reagan in December of that year. It was the culmination of efforts that had begun in 1985. The Trail of Tears Commission, Inc. of Hopkinsville received a donation of land for a Trail of Tears Commemorative Park that same year, land near the town on which, in 1838 and 1839, the Cherokee had camped and where Chief White Path and Chief Fly Smith were buried.

In 1996, the National Park Service designated the Trail of Tears Commemorative Park in Hopkinsville a certified site on the National Historic Trail of Tears. It was the first non-federal property to receive such a designation. Other certified Trail of Tears sites in Kentucky include places where groups stopped on their way west (Gray's Inn at Guthrie in Todd County, Big Spring in Princeton in Caldwell County, Radford Farm near Pembroke in Christian County, and Mantle Rock in Livingston County); remaining sections of the road the detachments walked in Livingston County and Todd County; and Berry's Ferry in Livingston County, where groups crossed the Ohio River.

This park and Wickliffe Mounds State Historic Site, which, in 2004, became a State Historic Site administered by Kentucky Department of Parks, are the only parks in Kentucky for which American Indian cultural resources or history are the primary focus of interpretation. Exhibits opened in 1998 at the Salato Wildlife Education Center and in 1999 at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History, both in Frankfort. While their exhibits interpret Kentucky's ancient American Indian history, these subjects are not these centers' primary focus.

A watershed moment in Kentucky American Indian history came in December 1987. At the same time the Trail of Tears Historic Trail was being designated, a concerned Kentucky citizen reported men looting antiquities and desecrating prehistoric native graves at the Slack Farm site, a large village and burial ground of the Caborn-Welborn culture in Union County. The men had paid the site owner \$10,000 for six-months digging rights. Although as much as 85 percent of the site was unharmed, by the time the Kentucky State Police served a cease-and-desist order to stop the digging, the men had dug over 450 holes and desecrated at least 600 graves in several large Caborn-Welborn cemeteries. For four months in early 1988, professional archaeologists, assisted by over 500 volunteers, systematically examined each looter hole, since the Kentucky Coroners' Act required that the Kentucky Medical Examiner make a full investigation of the disturbed graves. The men were charged with 35 counts of "desecration of a venerated object" based on the State Forensic Anthropologist's initial assessment.

The looting at Slack Farm generated several remarkable outcomes. The situation became an example for how archaeologists, native peoples, law enforcement officials, and citizens could work together to combat the selling of antiquities and the looting of human graves. Given the sheer amount of wanton mining activity, publicity of the looting was widespread in local and national press outlets, including *Time* magazine, *National Geographic* magazine, and *Archaeology* magazine. This incident turned the spotlight on the national problem of American Indian site looting and grave desecration.

The impact of this publicity was similarly widespread. When news of the looting hit the national press, private citizens across the country became involved, as did elected officials in several states. The looting heightened sensitivity to site preservation among the public-at-large, illustrated on the ground by the involvement of local citizens in the evidence recovery. State governments across the country upgraded or rewrote their burial and archaeological site protection laws. In Kentucky, the legislature strengthened the penalty for disturbing a grave. Before Slack Farm, breaking this law was a Class A Misdemeanor. After Slack Farm, the penalty was upgraded to a felony. Adjacent Indiana adopted one of the strictest laws in the nation, requiring state permits for any type of excavation and upgrading the unlawful disturbance of burials to a felony.

Analysis and research of the materials from work at the site generated much information on the Slack Farm inhabitants and their culture. This significant event in American Indian history is explored through the views and voices of the major participants in a 1995 program, *A Native Presence*, produced by Kentucky Educational Television, and its accompanying lesson guide for educators, as well as in an educational booklet for the public.

The looting at Slack Farm also caught the attention of American Indians. Members of many North American tribes and national Indian organizations visited the site and condemned the desecration of their ancestors' graves. They held tobacco and sage burning purification ceremonies at the site, and permitted the public to witness these ceremonies. Notable members of the national community who were actively involved included members of AIM (Dennis Banks, the Thomas brothers, Michael Haney, Tom Montezuma, and Chico Dulak); and Leon Shenandoah, chief of the Onondaga Nation. Slack Farm provided an opportunity for American Indians, archaeologists, and local citizens to initiate a dialogue about important issues – reburial,

responsibility for and ownership of the past, and stewardship – that resonates today. In the spring and summer of 1988, native peoples reburied the disturbed human remains at the site. On the twentieth anniversary of the looting, groups met at the site to remember and commemorate.

Also in 1988, Kentucky saw its first successful conviction of looters (at the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area in south-central Kentucky) under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA). Although perhaps not as visible an event as Slack Farm, the conviction illustrates the growing enforcement of laws and the successful prosecution of looters. In 2004, as a result of an archaeological site monitoring program, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area officials videotaped looters digging for prehistoric artifacts in a rockshelter, and thus were able to arrest, charge, and successfully prosecute the offenders.

### **The 1990s and Beyond**

Kentucky intertribal powwows, similar to those held by Indian groups in the Western U.S., began to be held during this period. These events include storytelling and competitive dancing, and provide opportunities for native peoples to socialize and celebrate their shared heritage. They also educate and expose non-Indian people to elements of native heritage. Through the years, Kentucky powwows have heightened visibility for native peoples, underscored a native presence, and served as important catalysts for building native community cohesion and emerging identity.

The first Kentucky intertribal powwow was held in 1988 at the Trail of Tears Commemorative Park in Hopkinsville. Others soon followed, including the Annie Trampler Fall Indian Festival in London in Laurel County (1990), the Richmond Powwow in Richmond in Madison County (1994), and the Red Crow Indian Council Powwow in Shepherdsville in Bullitt County (1996). Since these first powwows were held, others have begun elsewhere in the state and many continue to be held today.

Regional and statewide Indian civic organizations and cultural centers were founded in the late 1980s and early 1990s, around the same time as Kentucky's intertribal powwows were first held. These groups and organizations work to educate Kentucky's citizens about the Commonwealth's native heritage, and also work to address the economic and social concerns of all native peoples living in Kentucky today.

Other events during this period also brought the American Indian presence in Kentucky to the attention of Kentucky citizens. American Indian culture and heritage, including Kentucky's, was highlighted at the Kentucky State Fair in 1994. These exhibitions included demonstrations, replica prehistoric houses, and exhibits about important native leaders, ancient and modern Indian arts and crafts, and native history.

In the wake of increased public consciousness of the threats to American Indian grave sites, to which the looting of Slack Farm may have played some part, the federal government passed the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990. This law provides a process for the return of human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony to indigenous lineal descendants and culturally affiliated tribes.

Consultation between museums holding these materials and American Indians who can document cultural affiliation with the remains and materials determines their disposition. Consultation involves only federally recognized tribes.

Due to the federal government's nineteenth-century Indian removal policy, tribal entities historically linked to Kentucky generally reside west of the Mississippi River today, with one exception, the Eastern Band of Cherokee, who did not remove. Their reservation, known as the Qualla Boundary, is located in western North Carolina in the Great Smoky Mountains. No federally recognized tribes have reservation lands in the Commonwealth. The main groups involved in federal consultation in Kentucky are the Chickasaw with respect to the Jackson Purchase area of western Kentucky; and the Cherokee and the Shawnee, statewide.

While members of some of these tribes, or persons who maintain cultural and ethnic ties with these tribes, reside in Kentucky, for many American Indians living in Kentucky, these tribal governments do not speak for them. Thus, much like in the eighteenth century when native groups living outside the Ohio Valley attempted to speak for peoples "on Ohio," today, native peoples with ethnic and cultural roots in Kentucky's past who live outside of Kentucky speak for many of Kentucky's resident American Indian people.

In 1990, Congress passed the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, which protects the integrity of Indian artwork, and among other things, prohibits representing art as Native American unless it is produced by an enrolled Native American artist. This is a contentious issue, for it means that many Indian artists in Kentucky who are not tribally enrolled cannot sell their art as Indian made.

In 1996, Governor Paul Patton established the Kentucky Native American Heritage Commission (KNAHC) through Executive Order, and in 2004, the Kentucky Legislature formalized it in law. Administratively attached to the Kentucky Heritage Council, the Commission meets quarterly to discuss matters of concern to Kentucky's native peoples: grave desecration, combating Indian stereotypes, and state recognition. KNAHC's mission is to ensure that all Kentuckians recognize, appreciate, and understand the contributions American Indians have made to the Commonwealth's cultural heritage, and as such, it is not a strictly Indian commission.

Since its creation, KNAHC has been instrumental in having November designated Native American Heritage month in Kentucky (1998), developing or supporting the development of diverse educational materials and public events, and developing legislation to strengthen the protection of Indian graves and deter grave desecration and looting in the state. In partnership with other groups, it is working to create a Native American Arts and Cultural Center for Kentucky at General Butler State Park in Carrollton, Kentucky. Among its most recent initiatives is an oral history project designed to collect information that will help address some of the missing chapters in Kentucky's American Indian historical narrative.

By 1996, amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act encouraged communication, cooperation, and coordination between American Indians and the State Historic Preservation Offices. Among other things, they allow for the protection of cultural items and properties of traditional and cultural importance to American Indians and makes them eligible

for listing on the National Register. They also require that preservation-related activities, including planning, be carried out in consultation with indigenous people.

In 2000, the Kentucky legislature outlined the state definition of “Indian Tribe,” and provided additional description of “tribe” in 2004. These regulations mark the first time Indians appear in Kentucky statutes.

The most up-to-date profile of American Indian people living in Kentucky today can be found in the 2000 Census. It shows that an ethnically and culturally diverse, racially mixed group of native peoples resides in the state. In 2000, a total of 24,552 Kentuckians reported they are American Indian or Alaskan Native (“any combination of races or tribes”<sup>6</sup>). This represents 0.6 percent of Kentucky’s population. Of these people, 35 percent are American Indian/Alaskan Native (“one, two, or more tribes”<sup>6</sup>) and 65 percent are of mixed heritage (“one tribe with one or more races, or two or more tribes with one or more races”<sup>6</sup>). In the lower 48 states, Kentucky ranks third, behind Ohio (with 68 percent) and West Virginia (66 percent), and equals Pennsylvania (65 percent) in the proportion of its indigenous peoples who are of mixed heritage. Not surprisingly, these are the states that made up much of America’s earliest western frontier.

Of those people who reported only American Indian/Alaskan Native heritage in 2000, over 140 different tribes are represented. Cherokee (n=3,267) and “tribe not specified”<sup>6</sup> (n=2,886) are by far the most numerous. In decreasing order of frequency, the next groups (with over 200 persons) are Sioux, Canadian and Latin American, Blackfeet, and Choctaw. Apache, Chippewa, Iroquois, and Navajo round out the top ten tribes. People who reported ancestry of tribal groups historically linked to Kentucky (Cherokee, Shawnee, Chickasaw, and Cherokee Shawnee [in that order of frequency]) make up 40 percent (n=3,407) of the people reporting exclusively indigenous heritage. In the 1990 Census, about 120 people residing in Kentucky reported they spoke an Indian language in their household. Navajo and Iroquois were listed most often.

Despite the diversity of Kentucky’s American Indian population; the impacts of European diseases and the federal government’s removal and assimilation policies; the lack of reservation lands and resident federally recognized tribal entities; the pervasive myth that American Indian history is not part of Kentucky’s story; and the challenges of preserving cultural and religious identity as a minority in American culture, Kentucky’s American Indian community shares common concerns. These include educating people about their history and contribution to American life; combating stereotypes that place them always in an “ethnographic present,” locked into a time of tepees and buffalos; pursuing their religious and spiritual beliefs and ceremonies without harassment; selling their handiwork as native-made and securing economic stability; and deterring and prosecuting individuals who loot ancestral sites and desecrate Indian graves and spiritual sites.

The issue of state recognition, wrapped up in the definition of Indian identity that has been a problem since the United States was founded, will continue to be a contentious one, pitting native people against each other. It has colored much recent American Indian group dynamics and history in Kentucky and stands to continue for the foreseeable future. Some states have developed procedures for recognizing tribes, with the rights and benefits of state

recognition varying from state to state. Kentucky is currently in the process of developing criteria for state recognition. American Indians are in a more favorable situation now than they have been for centuries, and in time, they will resolve this and other long-standing issues. American Indians are part of Kentucky history and its future.

## CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS

When compared to native peoples in other eastern states like North Carolina or New York, American Indian groups have generally lacked a significant presence and had little impact on Kentucky's popular culture. This is doubtless due, in part, to the lack of resident federally recognized tribal communities or Indian reservations within the state. But an historical myth that began very early in Kentucky's development (and is only now being routinely debunked) may also be a contributing factor. This is the Myth of the "Dark and Bloody Ground."

The Myth of the "Dark and Bloody Ground" would have us believe that before people of European and African descent arrived in Kentucky, native peoples hunted and fought over the land and resources located south of the Ohio River, between the Big Sandy and Mississippi rivers, but *never* lived permanently *anywhere* within its borders. The most likely source of the Myth is a statement made in March 1775 by Dragging Canoe, who later would become a leader of the Chickamauga Cherokee. He made this statement during treaty negotiations between the Cherokee Nation and Richard Henderson's Transylvania Company at Sycamore Shoals. These negotiations transferred a large part of what is now Kentucky to the Company. Dragging Canoe did not support the terms of the treaty and as the transaction was being completed, he reportedly said that a dark cloud hung over the land, known as the Bloody Ground.

Dragging Canoe's statement implies that the region Henderson was purchasing was linked to conflict. But it is difficult to tell if Dragging Canoe was reciting historical fact or if his statement was meant as a warning for the future.

In 1775, the region was, indeed, contested. The Cherokee, along with other native groups, like the Shawnee and Chickasaw, used the lands south of the Ohio River, between the Big Sandy and Mississippi rivers. But the Iroquois wanted to control it, encouraged by their English allies, and the colonies of Virginia and North Carolina also laid claims to part of the region. Henderson's new claim could only complicate matters. Dragging Canoe's words also could have been a warning of things to come. Certainly the struggle for land that was beginning to erupt between native peoples and the settlers pouring into the Kentucky frontier gives support to his words.

However, the colonial land speculators, and the settlers who followed them, interpreted Dragging Canoe's statement to mean that a conflict existed *between Indian groups* over Kentucky lands and that, therefore, the land was not claimed by any of them. Thus, if Kentucky was not the property of any particular Indian group, land speculators could justify selling this "free" land to settlers; and the settlers had every right to move in and establish farms.

It is possible that during the years immediately following 1775, the conception of Kentucky as a contested land was applied to the present and immediate past history of just the Bluegrass Region in central Kentucky. For at that time, most native peoples had moved their farming villages north of the Ohio River and returned in small groups to hunt and camp during the winter.

But it is one thing to imply that the control of a particular region had been disputed in the past or would be in the future. And it is a completely different matter to interpret Dragging Canoe's statement to mean that native peoples had always fought over and had never lived in the area that is now Kentucky.

Yet, even before Kentucky became a state in 1792, the idea had taken on an all-encompassing meaning: *all* of Kentucky was *never* the permanent home for any indigenous groups. It had been merely a "happy hunting ground" or the scene of prehistoric battles. Several reasons can be offered to explain why the Myth developed.

One attends to the differences between the colonists' and the native peoples' conception of land ownership. To the former, land was property, like jewelry or clothing. And like any property, it could be bought and sold. To the latter, however, land could be used, controlled or considered the territory of a particular kin-group, lineage, or village, and others could negotiate for its use, but no group and certainly no individual could own it. Thus, when the settlers "bought" land, they were buying it for their personal exclusive use. When the Indians "sold" land, however, it was access to the land or use-rights they were selling and not the land itself. Land was available for all to use because from the Indians' perspective, the land could not be owned. The settlers considered this to mean that "no one" owned the land and therefore had no claim to it, which meant it was free for the taking.

The distinctions the settlers noticed between historic American Indian cultures and the remains left by prehistoric groups they encountered (burial mounds and the stone tools they unearthed as they plowed their fields) also contributed to the Myth's establishment. The settlers recognized that the Indians they encountered did not build mounds. Because the pioneers believed the Indians they knew lacked the technology and cultural sophistication to build mounds, they concluded that other people, a "vanished race" called the Moundbuilders, had to have built the mounds and earthworks. Thus the settlers did not consider the Indians they knew to be related to these prehistoric people (indeed, in John Filson's 1784 publication, *The Discovery, Settlement, and present state of Kentucke*, he argues that Kentucky was "formerly inhabited by a people different from the present Indians."<sup>7</sup> The native peoples they met face-to-face were newcomers, too, and so the Europeans considered their own claims as newcomers to the land as valid as the Indians'.

Other reasons for the Myth's development include the benefit colonial land speculators got from encouraging and perpetuating it (it is much easier to sell land if there are no considerations due to any previous landowners); the violent conflicts that took place from the 1770s through the 1790s between Indian peoples and the colonists (at the height of these conflicts, settlers undoubtedly considered that a dark and bloody cloud had indeed passed over the land to which they had moved); and to the 1784 publication and widely circulated book by Filson in which he referred to Kentucky as the "Middle Ground" throughout, except in two instances, where he called it "Dark and Bloody Ground" or "Bloody-Grounds."

The Myth persists today, despite the fact that "Kentucky" is simply the name of a political entity created in 1792; despite the fact that place names in the Commonwealth refer to Indians; and despite the fact that no similar myth applies to the indigenous heritage of most of

the states that surround Kentucky (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, or Tennessee). Reasons for this persistence include the lack of any tribal lands set aside as reservations in Kentucky; the Myth's repeated mention in children's books, scholarly books and journals, textbooks, history books, magazines, songs, and board games, and its reference in art, plays, pagents, theater/outdoor dramas, and tourism information and brochures; the reticence of Kentucky residents to openly acknowledge their native ancestry for fear of discrimination; and the lack of access to information about Kentucky's rich prehistoric cultural heritage.

The truth is that, as elsewhere in the Eastern Woodlands, native peoples arrived in Kentucky at least by about 9,500 BCE, and have never really left. Research at archaeological sites in every county in the Commonwealth has documented evidence of Kentucky's permanent indigenous inhabitants: from the earliest migratory hunter-gatherers; to the moundbuilding small-time gardeners who traded with distant peoples for copper and marine shell; to the farmers whose permanent towns held upwards of one-thousand people. And people who trace their native ancestry back to groups historically documented in this region, like the Shawnee, Cherokee, Miami, Tutelo, and others, still call Kentucky "home."

There are very few places or landscape features (mountains, rivers, and creeks) in Kentucky that retain their Indian names or carry Indian language-derived place names (contrast this, for example, with the names of the major rivers in Ohio [Scioto, Hocking, Muskingum, and Miami]). There are a few places in Kentucky that carry generic references to "Indians" - Indian Bottom, Indian Camp Creek, Indian Old Fields, Indian Grave Gap, Indian Hollow, Indian Lick Creek, and Mound Slough; ones that refer to particular tribes - Shawnee Run, Shawnee Spring, and Cherokee Gap; and ones that reference a particular Indian - Red Bird Creek and Red Bird River. Paintsville and Paint Creek in eastern Kentucky, and Paint Lick in central Kentucky were named with reference to the large number of painted trees the earliest settlers encountered. Native peoples had stripped-off sections of tree bark and had painted dendrograms, animal and bird figures in black or red, on the smooth sections of the trees. Mt. Sterling takes its name from the Indian mounds in the area.

The only authentic Indian language-derived place in the state, besides "Ohio," which is Iroquois for "beautiful river," is Eskippakithiki, a Shawnee village likely located at Indian Old Fields in Clark County in the 1750s. The Shawnee word "skippakithiki" could mean "blue lick," "blue spring," or perhaps "blue river." The name "Kentucky" also may be an Indian word, but its meaning is unknown. Various authors have offered a number of opinions concerning the word's meaning: an Iroquois word (Kentake) meaning "meadow land;" a Wyandot (or perhaps Cherokee or Iroquois) word (Ken-tah-the) meaning "land of tomorrow;" an Algonquian term (kin-athiki) referring to a river bottom; a Shawnee word meaning "at the head of a river;" or an Indian word meaning land of "cane and turkeys." However, the name does not mean "dark and bloody ground" in any language.

One of the first recorded uses of the name "Kentucky" was in an April 10, 1753 letter written by William Trent about a January 26 attack and capture of a group of traders by Indians allied to the French at a place they called "Kentucky." The traders described the place as being south of the Allegheny River about 150 miles from the lower Shawnee Town, the main village of the Shawnee in the mid-1700s that sat at the confluence of the Scioto and Ohio rivers.

Despite the fact that the overwhelming number of references to American Indians on Kentucky Highway Historical Markers reference Indians within the context of late eighteenth-century conflicts with European settlers who were involved in them, some markers do highlight places (such as camp sites, village sites, or mounds), trails, individuals, and events in Kentucky's American Indian history. In the Kentucky State Capitol Building, murals depicting historical scenes include native peoples, albeit scenes in which they are depicted ceding their homelands.

Several major roads in Kentucky follow in the general footprint of American Indian trails. US Highway 27 was known as the Great Tellico Road, and US Highway 25 was known as the Warriors Path, as were portions of US Highway 421. Much of Daniel Boone's Wilderness Road was an American Indian trail. The Saline, Eddy, and Varmint traces, now part of modern highways, followed historic Indian trails that met at what is now Princeton in Caldwell County in western Kentucky.

Despite a history of relative invisibility in Kentucky, however, the profile of the state's indigenous people has been steadily increasing over the past two decades. Interpreting places relevant to Kentucky American Indian history has been one way. In the 1940s and 1950s, a few prehistoric American Indian mound and village sites on private property in western Kentucky, like "Lost City" at Lewisburg in Logan County, and "Ancient Buried City" at Wickliffe in Ballard County, were turned into tourist destinations.

Today, a handful of ancient Indian sites in Kentucky are interpreted for the public and provide citizens opportunities to learn about Kentucky's Indian heritage. Historical interpretations at Mammoth Cave and the Red River Gorge, the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service, respectively, mention aspects of Kentucky's American Indian history. Unlike surrounding states, Kentucky has only one state historic site that has as its main purpose to showcase Kentucky's Indian heritage: Wickliffe Mounds State Historic Site, which entered the state parks system in 2004. Other places in Kentucky where visitors can visit American Indian sites include the City of Ashland's Mound Park in Ashland in Boyd County, the University of Kentucky's Mt. Horeb Earthworks at Adena Park outside Lexington in Fayette County, and the Kentucky Chapter of The Nature Conservancy's Mantle Rock Preserve near Marion in Livingston County. A small Heritage Center interprets the Cherokees' removal experience in Kentucky at the Trail of Tears Commemorative Park in Hopkinsville in Christian County.

Kentucky American Indians' contributions to current foodways lie primarily within the plant realm. Kentucky's prehistoric native peoples domesticated a host of local weedy annuals. While many of these nutritious foods are not elements of our diet today, we still eat sunflower seeds, a plant Kentucky's native inhabitants were the first to domesticate anywhere in the world.

In Cave City, Kentucky in Barren County, a motel with rooms shaped like Plains Indian teepees, called Wigwam Village, provides an authentic c. 1920s travel experience, and in its own way impacts Kentucky's popular culture insofar as American Indians are concerned. However, the motel may be contributing to the common stereotype, too, since teepees are not an accurate representation of Kentucky Indian dwellings. Similarly, large public parks in Louisville are

named after important native groups linked historically to Kentucky (e.g., Iroquois Park, Cherokee Park, etc.) and streets across Kentucky bear American Indian tribal names, but this is just a naming convention and there is no on-the-ground relevance or link to Kentucky's American Indian history.

Over the past twenty years, a variety of activities and events highlighting American Indian culture and heritage have been held and materials produced that have begun to heighten American Indian visibility and underscore a native presence in the state. Activities and events include, since 1988, intertribal powwows organized and hosted by Kentucky native organizations; since 1988, Living Archaeology Weekend demonstrations of prehistoric American Indian technology; in 1994 at the Kentucky State Fair, and in the early 2000s at the Salato Wildlife Education Center, events that highlighted elements of American Indian history and culture, including Kentucky's, through demonstrations, replica prehistoric houses, and exhibits about important native leaders, ancient and modern Indian arts and crafts and native history. Permanent exhibits that interpret Kentucky's ancient American Indian history opened in 1998 at the Salato Wildlife Education Center and in 1999 at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History, both in Frankfort. The 1995 program, *A Native Presence*, produced by Kentucky Educational Television, explored the impact of the looting at Slack Farm through the views and voices of the major participants, native and non-native. Other educational materials produced during this period that have helped enhance awareness of Kentucky's American Indian heritage include the Kentucky Heritage Council's *Kentucky Before Boone* poster, which has been reprinted many times, and the Kentucky Humanities Council's *Kentuckians Before Boone*, a volume in the New Books for New Readers series, which targets adults learning to read. This book is used in elementary schools across the Commonwealth since its publication in 1992.

Also during this period, there has been a concerted effort on the part of several organizations to combat, through education, the "Dark and Bloody Ground" Myth and Indian stereotypes, and to raise awareness of American Indian concerns in the Commonwealth. In partnership with other groups, the Kentucky Native American Heritage Commission (KNAHC) is working to create a Native American Arts and Cultural Center for Kentucky. In 2003, the KNAHC developed a series of educational materials to help teachers effectively use the *A Native Presence* video in the classroom as an educational tool. New Kentucky history textbooks, particularly those prepared since the late 1990s, now devote a chapter or sometimes two to Kentucky's ancient American Indian history. The development over the last 20 years of a variety of educational support materials, including lessons, booklets, posters, exhibits, workshops, events, and presentations, has increased awareness on the part of Kentucky citizens and heightened the visibility of Kentucky's American Indian heritage.

Given the current steadily increasing trajectory of Kentucky's American Indian peoples' visibility in Kentucky society, it seems likely that the future impact of native peoples on Kentucky's popular culture will only increase.

## NOTES

1. John Filson 1784, *The Discovery, Settlement, and present state of Kentucke*. Originally published Wilmington Delaware p. 8, 10.
2. Reuben Gold Thwaites, editor. *Jesuit Relations of 1647-1648*, 59:145.
3. Translated from Pierre Margry, editor. *Decouverts et etablissements des Francais dans l'ouest et dans le sud de l'Amerique septentrionale, 1614-1754*. *Memoires et documents originaux*, 1876-1886, 1:116 and 1:30, 134.
4. John Filson 1784, *The Discovery, Settlement, and present state of Kentucke*. Originally published Wilmington Delaware p. 8, 10.
5. Ella Wells Drake 1993, *Choctaw Academy: Richard M. Johnson and the Business of Indian Education*. *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 91(3):297.
6. Stella V. Ogunwole 2006, *We the People: American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States*. *Census 2000 Special Reports*. U.S. Department of Commerce. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, p. 1-4. {Accessed August 2010 <http://www.census.gov/prod/2006pubs/censr-28.pdf>}.
7. John Filson 1784, *The Discovery, Settlement, and present state of Kentucke*. Originally published Wilmington Delaware p. 74.

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Kentucky Historical Society â€” 100 W Broadway St, Frankfort, Kentucky 40601 â€” rated 4.6 based on 79 reviews "Visited for the first time as a child and...â” See more of Kentucky Historical Society on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Kentucky Historical Society on Facebook. Log In. Forgotten account? The prehistory and history of Kentucky spans thousands of years, and has been influenced by the state's diverse geography and central location. It is not known exactly when the first humans arrived in what is now Kentucky. Around 1800 BCE, a gradual transition began from a hunter-gatherer economy to agriculturalism. Around 900 CE, a Mississippian culture took root in western and central Kentucky; by contrast, a Fort Ancient culture appeared in eastern Kentucky. While the two had many similarities, the