

Who are the Hopewell?

Michigan People in Prehistoric Times

An Introduction to a Timeline of Michigan's People

Long before European settlers built their houses and planted crops in Michigan, the state was occupied by many groups of people.

People started living in Michigan while glaciers still covered parts of the state more than 14,000 years ago.

Our state looked very different 14,000 years ago than it does today. Instead of cities, farms, and forests, Michigan was **tundra** with few plants.

The summers were very short and cool, and winters in Michigan were very long and very cold.

At that time people lived in small groups of 20 to 40 people and were led by a headman. A group lived mainly by hunting animals. They usually chose a headman because he was the best hunter. A good headman also needed to know how to lead a group.

Barren-ground caribou, artic-hare, mastodon, mammoth, **peccary**, musk oxen, giant moose, and giant beaver were the animals present in Michigan at this time.

To hunt these animals for food and clothing, early people needed tools. They used strong sticks with points made from a sharp rock called **flint**.



tundra: a treeless area having a permanently frozen subsoil and supporting low-growing vegetation such as lichens, mosses, and stunted shrubs

peccary: a pig-like hoofed mammal

flint: a very hard, fine-grained quartz rock that could be made into a point

Today, **archaeologists** call this type of point- a *fluted flint*. Early people had a special way of attaching a flint to a stick. Because all flint points made during this time in history were made in the same way, it is easy for us to recognize them today.

Archaeologists put them into a category called **flints made by paleo-Indian people**.

Over the next several thousand years the **climate** of Michigan changed. Slowly, **the state's climate became what it is today**. The first animals of Michigan moved north to find a cooler climate. New animals came to the state from areas south of Michigan.

After new animals from the south came to Michigan, early people had to change their ways of hunting. The whitetail deer now was the most important animal in Michigan.

Much, much later, during the period of time that archaeologists have named **the middle woodland period**, some people in Michigan began to follow the ideas of the Hopewell. These ideas came mainly from people living in Illinois. The Michigan Hopewell also learned ideas from the Hopewell people in Ohio.

Groups of Hopewell people lived all over the eastern part of North America. The Hopewell people did not speak the same language or have just one leader. They all had two things in common.

The Hopewell buried their dead in mounds, and they traded with others for **exotic things** to bury with

archaeologist: a person who studies prehistoric people and their culture

paleo Indian: (paleo meaning prehistoric) people living from 12,000 B.C.E. to 8,000 B.C.E.

climate: weather and temperature over time

Michigan is now classified as having a *humid continental climate*: Warm summers and cold winters.

middle woodland period: 300 B.C.E to 500 C.E

exotic things are made from materials that cannot be found locally (for Michigan Hopewell ocean shells and alligator teeth for Hopewell in Florida Michigan copper)

important men, women and children. The Hopewell groups in Michigan often buried dead people *with amulets and medicine bags*.

The Michigan Hopewell created ideas about death and rebirth at this time. They recognized the ideas of other Hopewell groups. They helped each other understand the connection between the living and the dead.

An important addition to the food of the people living during the middle woodlands period is the *addition of corn*. Before corn came from Central America, people in Michigan grew pumpkins, gourds, squash, and sunflowers. These plants added to their diet of wild plants, like berries, and the meat they got from hunting.

An object worn, especially around the neck, as a charm against evil or injury

It took several hundred years before varieties were bred that could mature in Michigan's shorter growing season