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A Historical Overview of Native American Inhabitants

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Native Americans

Native Americans inhabited what is now Illinois dating back to 8000 B.C. The early peoples of Illinois can be classified into various levels of the Archaic and Woodland cultures. Earliest inhabitants are known as the *Early Archaic Indians*. They survived by tracking and hunting large animals, such as the mammoth. They also fished and foraged for seeds, roots, berries and nuts. For shelter, these early inhabitants lived in caves and bluffs along the Illinois River valley. At about 1000 B.C. the *Early Archaic Indians* joined new inhabitants to form what is known as the *Late Archaic Indians*. This generation of Indians made weapons such as snares, spears, and stone axes, and created other tools such as woven baskets, hoes, and pottery. The *Late Archaic Indians* engaged in trade with tribes from areas known today as Michigan, Kentucky and Missouri.

Following the Archaic Period, a *Woodland Culture* would emerge at around 600 B.C. These people focused more on agriculture and less on the hunting of large animals. This group also engaged in trade with nearby tribes. Because this group of people planted gardens and cultivated their own food, they were able to develop a village life and expand their population. With a larger population, cultural advancements began to take shape including elaborate funeral ceremonies that included burial mounds. Around the time of Christ, the *Woodland Culture* evolved into the *Middle Woodland Culture*. This culture would last until 300 A.D. where it would evolve into the *Late Woodland Culture*. This culture of people began to cultivate and store their food, trading corn, beans, pumpkin and squash.

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At around 500 A.D., the *Mississippian Indians*, also a mound-building *Woodland culture*, migrated to Illinois from the southeast. Here they developed floodplain agriculture and used rivers to facilitate their trade. The Mississippians established villages near rivers and protected them with moats and other earthworks. They established close to 100 mounds around Cahokia. *Monks Mound* is an earthwork of this culture, and at 100 feet tall and covering fourteen acres, it is the largest pre-historic earthen structure in North America. This civilization began to decline around A.D. 1050, and by the 1500s, only small scattered settlements remained. The reason for the decline of this culture is not known, but some theories include environmental degradation, erosion, crop failures, or faulty leadership.

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The *Illinois Confederacy* inhabited Illinois by the early 1600s and occupied Cahokia by mid-century. The tribes that made up this confederacy included the Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Michigamea, Moingwene, Peoria, and Tamaroa. These people fished, hunted, and cultivated the land for food. This Confederacy would engage in occasional small-scale warfare. Large-scale warfare would not be known to the *Illinois Confederacy* until 1655 when they would be forced to defend themselves from continual attacks by the Sioux and the Iroquois.

Discovery and French Settlement

Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet were the first white men to see what would later be called Illinois Country. Marquette was a French-born Jesuit missionary and Jolliet an explorer and mapmaker from Canada. In 1673, they started out from Green Bay and traveled down the Fox River until they arrived at an Indian village at the headwaters of the Wisconsin River. They traveled down the Wisconsin until finding a footpath that led them to an Illinois Indian village where they would spend the night. From there, the pair traveled 300 miles down the river passing the mouths of the Illinois, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers and arriving at the mouth of the Arkansas River. Here they met with local tribes learning that the river would lead to the Gulf of Mexico not California, like they had hoped. They were also warned that if they continued down the Arkansas they would encounter hostile Indians and Spaniards. Turning back, they learned of a shortcut back to Lake Michigan via the Illinois River. On their way back Marquette and Jolliet made a stop at the village of the Illinois Indians, located between the present day cities of La Salle and Ottawa. Father Marquette so impressed the Indians that they insisted he return the following year. The Indians would also send an escort to guide the men back to Lake Michigan. With the passage of Jolliet and Marquette up the Illinois River and through the Chicago portage, the history of Illinois begins.

After the Marquette-Jolliet expedition, five years passed before colonization of the Illinois area would be attempted. Rene-Robert Cavalier, sieur de La Salle, with the backing of the Governor of New France, planned to build trading posts in the Illinois and Mississippi Valleys to win the allegiance of local Indians and secure the territory for Louis XIV. In January of 1680, La Salle erected Fort Crevecoeur. La Salle left his associate, Henry de Tonty, in charge of Crevecoeur and went on to erect more forts. Upon returning to Fort Crevecoeur in the fall, La Salle found nothing but ruins, the result of a mutiny. A year later, La Salle and Tonty erected Fort Saint Louis at present-day Starved Rock. La Salle continued his explorations traveling down the Mississippi to its mouth. He named the entire area Louisiana and claimed it for France. In 1684, La Salle attempted to return to the area by way of the Gulf of Mexico in hopes of creating a colony, but overshot the mouth of the Mississippi and spent three years wandering through Texas before being murdered by his frustrated men.

In 1696, Father Francois Pinet established the Jesuit Mission of the Guardian Angel on the site of what later became Chicago. The mission eventually closed and Chicago's history would all but end until after the Revolutionary War. Colonization slovenly continued in the area. The 1723 census showed the population of Cahokia to be twelve, and Kaskaskia to be 196. These villages became too populous to survive without protection so in 1720 Fort de Chartres was built and garrisoned for their protection.

Life in the French settlements was highly agricultural, modeled in the French medieval style. Homes were built of logs placed upright and filled with a mud plaster. There was a common for pasturing stock in the villages and individual farms were organized in strips a few hundred feet wide and two miles in length. The equipment used at the time was primitive, mostly consisting of wooden plows and two-wheeled carts. Settlers didn't use fertilizers during this period.

War: The French and Indian War, the American Revolution and the War of 1812

As anticipated (because of concurrent wars in Europe), the French and Indian War between the French and the British broke out in 1754. In North America the war lasted until 1760, but carried on in Europe for an additional three years. At the Treaty of Paris in 1763, France ceded Canada and all of her territory east of the Mississippi to Britain. The British did not immediately begin occupation of this territory though, Indian attacks and Pontiac's Rebellion delayed their occupation until 1765.

The British ruled Louisiana (which included Illinois) for thirteen years prior to the American Revolution. Many of the men who commanded the garrisons in Illinois were corrupt, exploiting the colony without making any attempts to understand its French inhabitants. This behavior proved to hinder the British when later, the mistreated French decided to side with the Americans during the Revolution.

The bulk of the Revolution was fought outside of the Louisiana Territory, and George Rogers Clark and other Virginians succeeded in preventing the British from taking the area. After the Revolution, Illinois Territory was included as part of Virginia. In 1784, Virginia ceded the territory to Congress and three years later it became part of the Northwest Territory. Arthur St. Clair was appointed Governor of the territory and a slow trickle of settlers would begin to arrive.

The War of 1812 had a lasting effect on the settlers in Illinois. Many of the settlers grew wary of Indian attacks, with a serious engagement waged outside of Dearborn in August of 1812, where Indians massacred soldiers and civilians who were on their way to Fort Wayne.

Moving Toward Statehood

Many steps were taken before Illinois became a state. After the Revolution, the territory had to be ceded by Virginia to Congress to begin the progress of statehood. These steps continued with the creation of Indiana Territory in 1800, which included Illinois. On February 3, 1809 Illinois became its own territory, and included what is now Wisconsin. As more settlers moved into the territory, agitation for statehood increased. On April 18, 1818, Congress passed an Enabling Act allowing Illinois to become a state, although there being fewer inhabitants than prescribed by the Ordinance of 1787. A constitution was adopted in August of that year, and on December 3, 1818, Illinois came into the union as the twenty-first state. The town of Kaskaskia was designated the capital of the new state, lasting only until 1820 when the capital would be moved to uninhabited Vandalia for real estate moneymaking purposes.

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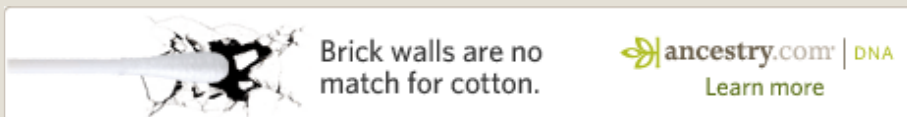
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