

## Pre-Columbian Native Americans

The first residents of what is now the United States emigrated from Asia over 30,000 years ago by crossing from present-day Russia into what is now present-day Alaska then headed south. A migration of humans from Eurasia to the Americas took place via Beringia, a land bridge which formerly connected the two continents across what is now the Bering Strait. Falling sea levels created the Bering land bridge that joined Siberia to Alaska, which began about 60,000 – 25,000 years ago. The most recent date by which this migration had taken place is about 12,000 years ago. These early Paleoamericans soon spread throughout the Americas, diversifying into many hundreds of culturally distinct nations and tribes. The North American climate finally stabilized about 10,000 years ago and had climatic conditions that were very similar to today. This led to widespread migration, cultivation of crops and a dramatic rise in population all over the Americas. Between about 8000 BC and 1492 AD, there were numerous and complex events that shaped the North American tribes, culture, language, range and more.



## **Pre-Columbian Indian Cultures Timeline**

**13,000 BC (near the end of the Ice Age):** First migration of Paleo-Indians in North America by people of Beringian subcontinent.

**9,200 BC (Clovis Culture):** Known for invention of superbly crafted grooved or fluted stone projectiles (Clovis points) first found near Clovis, New Mexico, in 1932. Clovis points have been found throughout the Americas. Hunted big game, notably mammoths.

**8,900 BC (Folsom Culture):** Named for site found near Folsom, New Mexico, 1926. Developed a smaller, thinner, fluted spear point than Clovis type. Hunted big game, notably the huge bison ancestor of the modern buffalo. First used a spear-throwing device called an atlatl (an Aztec word for "spear-thrower").

**8,500 BC (Plano or Plainview Culture):** Named after the site in Plainview, Texas. They are associated primarily with the Great Plains area. Were bison hunters. Developed a delicately flaked spear point that lacked fluting. Adopted mass-hunting technique (jump-kill) to drive animal herds off a cliff. Preserved meat in the form of pemmican (from the Cree word pimîhkân, it is a concentrated mixture of fat and protein used as a nutritious food). First to use grinding stones to grind seeds and meat.

**6,500 BC (Northwest Coast Indians):** Some modern descendants are the Tlingit, Haida, Kwakiutl, Nootka, and Makah tribes. Settled along the shores, rivers, and creeks of southeastern Alaska to northern California. A maritime culture, were expert canoe builders. Salmon fishing was important. Some tribes hunted whales and other sea mammals. Developed a high culture without the benefit of agriculture, pottery, or influence of ancient Mexican civilizations. Tribes lived in large, complex communities, constructed multifamily cedar plank houses. Evolved a caste system of chiefs, commoners, and slaves. Were highly skilled in crafts and woodworking that reached their height after European contact, which provided them steel tools. Placed an inordinate value on accumulated wealth and property. Held lavish feasts (called potlatches) to display their wealth and social status. Important site: Ozette, Washington (a Makah village).

**500 BC – 200 AD (Adena Culture):** Named for the estate called Adena near Chillicothe, Ohio, where their earthwork mounds were first found. Culture was centered in present southern Ohio, but also lived in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Were the pioneer mound builders in the U.S. and constructed spectacular burial and effigy mounds. Settled in villages of circular post-and-wattle houses. Primarily hunter-gatherers, they farmed corn, tobacco, squash, pumpkins, and sunflowers at an early date. Important sites: The Adena Mound, Ohio; Grave Creek Mound, West Virginia; Monks Mound, Illinois, is the largest mound. May have built the Great Serpent Mound in Ohio.

**300–1300 AD (Hohokam people):** Believed to be ancestors of the modern Papago (Tohono O'odham) and Pima (Akimel O'odham) Indian groups. Settled in present-day Arizona. Were desert farmers. Cultivated corn. Were first to grow cotton in the Southwest. Wove cotton fabrics. Built pit houses and later multi-storied buildings (pueblos). Constructed vast network of irrigation systems. Major canals were over 30 miles long. Built

ball courts and truncated pyramids similar to those found in Middle America. First in world known to master etching (etched shells with fermented Saguaro juice). Traded with Mesoamerican Toltecs. Important sites: Pueblo Grande, Arizona; Snaketown, Arizona; Casa Grande, Arizona.

**300 BC – 1100 AD (Mogollon Culture):** Were highland farmers but also hunters in what is now eastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico. Named after cluster of mountain peaks along Arizona-New Mexico border. They developed pit houses, later dwelt in pueblos. Were accomplished stoneworkers. Famous for magnificent black on white painted pottery (Minbres Valley pottery), the finest North American native ceramics. Important settlements: Casa Malpais, Arizona (first ancient catacombs in U.S., discovered there 1990); Gila Cliff, New Mexico; Galaz, New Mexico, Casa Grandes in Mexico was largest settlement.

**300 BC – 1300 AD (Anasazi):** Their descendants are the Hopi and other Pueblo Indians. Inhabited Colorado Plateau "four corners," where Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado meet. An agricultural society that cultivated cotton, wove cotton fabrics. The early Anasazi are known as the Basketmaker People for their extraordinary basketwork. Were skilled workers in stone. Carved stone Kachina dolls. Built pit houses, later apartment-like pueblos. Constructed road networks. Were avid astronomers. Used a solar calendar. Traded with Mesoamerican Toltecs. Important sites: Chaco Canyon, New Mexico; Mesa Verde, Colorado; Canyon de Chelly, Arizona; Bandelier, New Mexico; Betatkin, New Mexico, The Acoma Pueblo, New Mexico, built circa A.D. 1300 and still occupied, may be the oldest continuously inhabited village in the U.S.

**100 BC – 500 AD (Hopewell Culture):** May be ancestors of present-day Zuni Indians. Named after site in southern Ohio. Lived in Ohio valley, central Mississippi, and Illinois River Valleys. Were both hunter-gatherers and farmers. Villages were built along rivers, characterized by large conical or dome-shaped burial mounds and elaborate earthen walls enclosing large oval or rectangular areas. Were highly skilled craftsmen in pottery, stone, sculpture, and metalworking, especially copper. Engaged in widespread trade all over northern America extending west to the Rocky Mountains. Important sites: Newark Mound, Ohio; Great Serpent Mound, Ohio; Crooks Mound, Louisiana.

**700 AD – European contact (Mississippi Culture):** Major tribes of the Southeast are their modern descendants. Extended from Mississippi Valley into Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. Constructed large flat-topped earthen mounds on which were built wooden temples and meeting houses and residences of chiefs and priests. (They were also known as Temple Mound Builders.) Built huge cedar pole circles ("woodhenges") for astronomical observations. Were highly skilled hunters with bow and arrow. Practiced large-scale farming of corn, beans, and squash. Were skilled craftsmen. Falcon and Jaguar were common symbols in their art. Had clear ties with Mexico. The largest Mississippian center and largest of all mounds (Monks Mound) was at Cahokia, Illinois. Other great temple centers were at Spiro, Oklahoma; Moundville, Alabama; and Etowah, Georgia.