

The First Mobilians

- Native Americans were the first people to live in North America.
- They were also the first people to live in the Mobile Bay area.

Where is the Mobile Bay Area?



How do we know about the Native Americans?

- The Native Americans in North America did not have a written language.
- We know about the Native Americans from the science of **archaeology**.
- Archaeologists learn about people by studying the things that they leave behind.



What are Artifacts?

- The things that people leave behind are called **artifacts**.
- **Artifacts** are objects that are made or used by humans that can help us understand something about the people or cultures of the past.
- **Artifacts are also a type of primary source.**

What are Primary Sources?

- Primary sources are original records or artifacts made by people.
- They are first hand information from the past.
- These records or objects can be found anywhere. They can be in a home, a government building, etc.

Examples of Primary Sources:

There are many different kinds of primary sources. Here are some examples.

- **Audio:** audiotaped histories, memoirs, and interviews, music
- **Images:** photographs, videos, film, art
- **Objects:** all kinds of artifacts. Clothing, everyday objects, tools, pottery, gravestones, inventions, weapons
- **Statistics:** census data, population statistics, weather records
- **Text:** letters, diaries, original documents, legal agreements, treaties, maps, laws, advertisements, recipes, birth and death records, sermons/lectures



Native American artifacts are primary sources.

- Archaeologists have learned about Native Americans through the artifacts that they have left behind.
- The artifacts that Native Americans left behind show how their culture changed over time.

Culture

- “**Culture**” is a word that means the way of life of a group of people. It is the way that people get food, organize their families, make rules, practice religion, dress, and even the way that they talk.

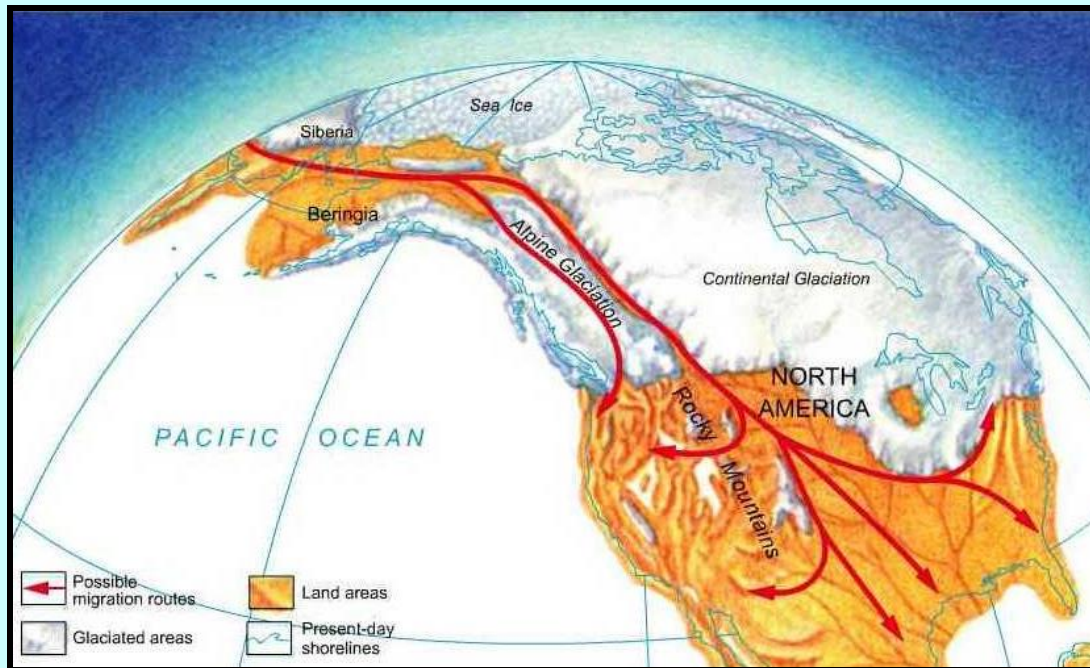
Native American culture in lower Alabama is divided into 5 time periods

- Paleo
- Archaic
- Gulf Formational
- Woodland
- Mississippian

Paleo

(in Alabama) 10,000 B.C. – 8,200 B.C.

- The first Native Americans came to North America over the Beringia land bridge during the last ice age. This happened at least 12,000 years ago.



Paleo

(in Alabama) 10,000 B.C. – 8,200 B.C.

- They carried all their belongings with them and lived in temporary houses that they could take with them.
- They were **hunter-gatherers**.
 - They used spears to hunt and gathered wild nuts, fruits, berries, and seeds to eat.
 - They did not know how to grow food yet.



Artist's reconstruction by Martin Pate, courtesy of the Southeast Archaeological Center, National Park Service.

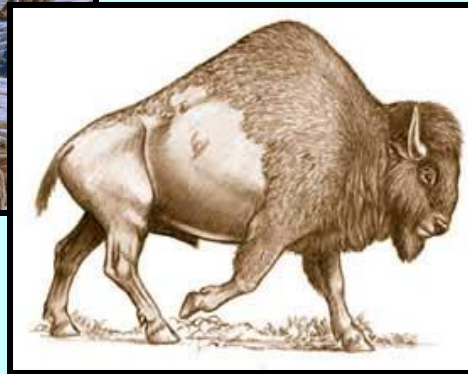
Paleo

(in Alabama) 10,000 B.C. – 8,200 B.C.



Woolly Mammoths

Prehistoric Bison



Mastodon

- In Alabama, the people hunted large animals such as bison, mammoth, and mastodon and smaller game such as deer and rabbit.



← Mammoth tooth on display at Museum

Paleo

(in Alabama) 10,000 B.C. – 8,200 B.C.



Tools



Clovis Point



Paleo scraper in
Museum collection



Quad Point on
display at Museum

- Their stone tools were usually made of a type of stone that chips easily called flint or chert.
- They made choppers, scrapers, knives, and spear points.

Paleo

(in Alabama) 10,000 B.C. – 8,200 B.C.

- They also very likely had tools made from wood, antler, and bone although these are not well preserved in the archaeological record due to Alabama's soil and climate.



Replica of bone
fish hook



Replica of bone
awl



Replica of bone
needle

Archaic

8,200 B.C. – 1,600 B.C.

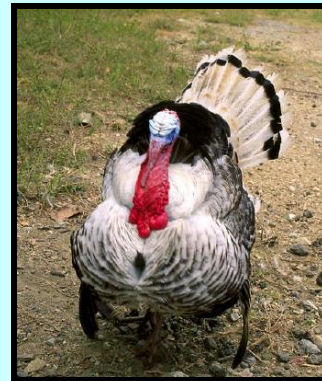
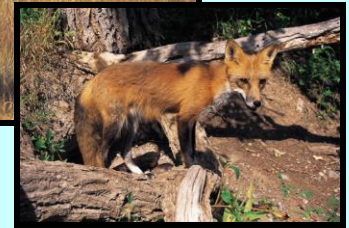
- The climate grew warmer.
- Native Americans started living around Mobile Bay.
- They built temporary houses but moved less frequently.



Archaic

8,200 B.C. – 1,600 B.C.

- After the Ice Age ended, many of the larger animals became extinct.
- People hunted smaller animals such as deer, turkey, rabbit, and even skunk, fox, and wildcat.



Archaic

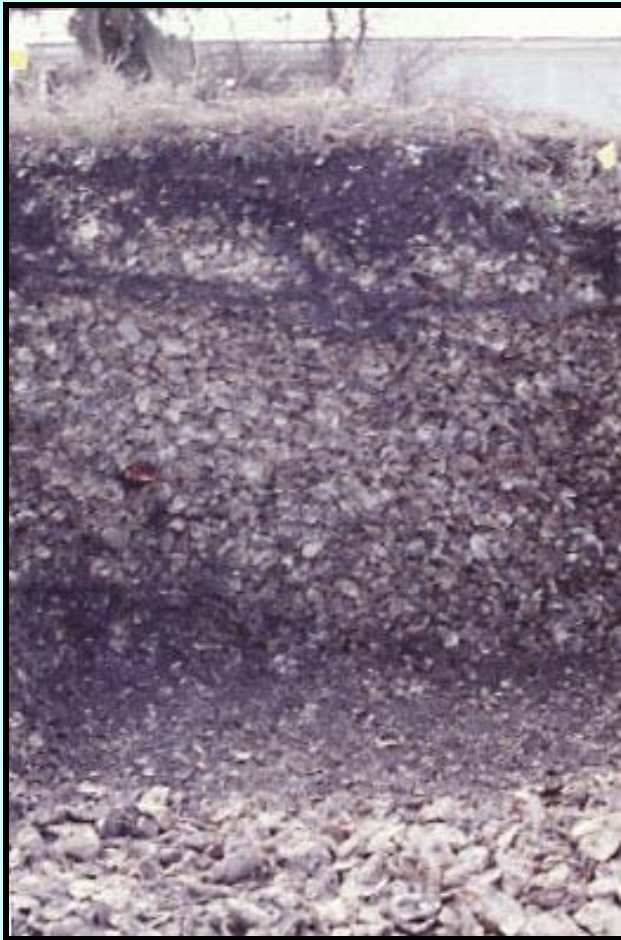
8,200 B.C. – 1,600 B.C.

- The people began to realize that they could help plants to grow by thinning out weeds.
- People continued to gather nuts, fruits, berries and seeds.



Archaic

8,200 B.C. – 1,600 B.C.



- People also started gathering shellfish.
- Archaeologists have found large piles of shells called **middens** around Mobile Bay.

Archaic

8,200 B.C. – 1,600 B.C.

- People were processing and cooking food during this time.



Archaic clay cooking balls on display at Museum



Archaic Grinding Stone and Metate on display at Museum

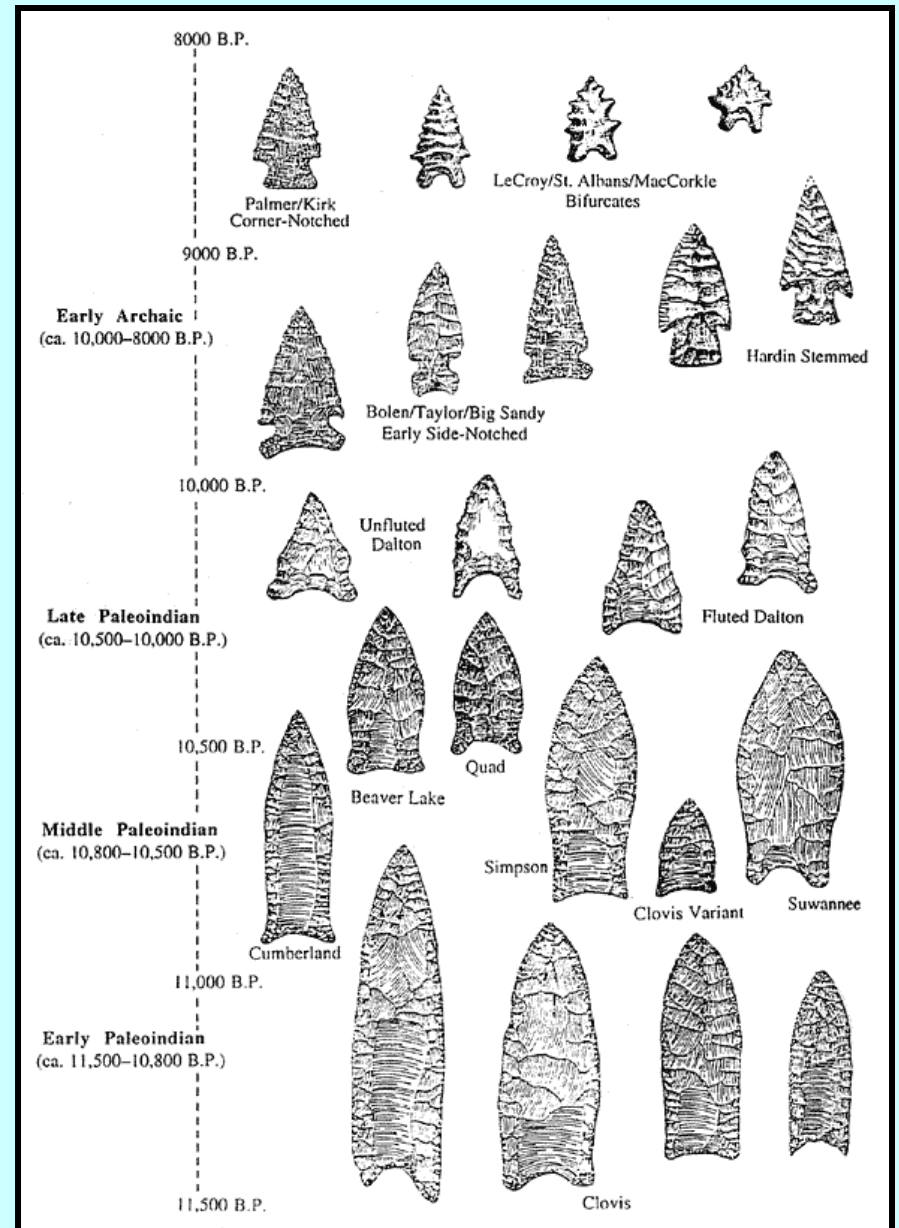
Archaic

8,200 B.C. – 1,600 B.C.

- There were changes in the way that people made spear points.



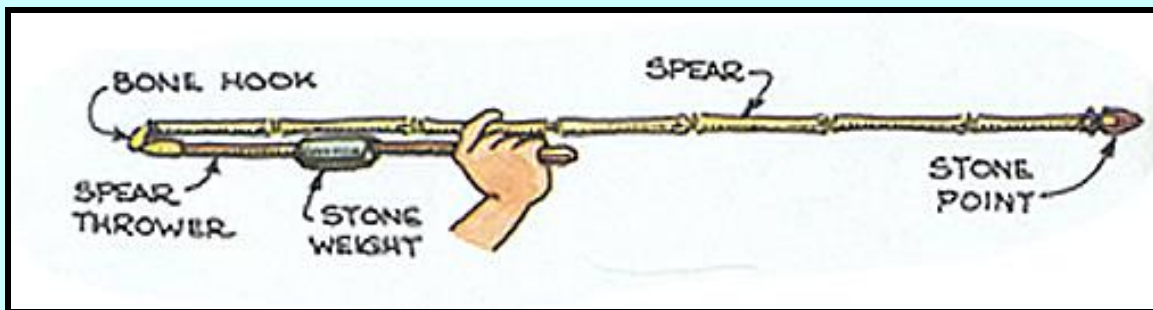
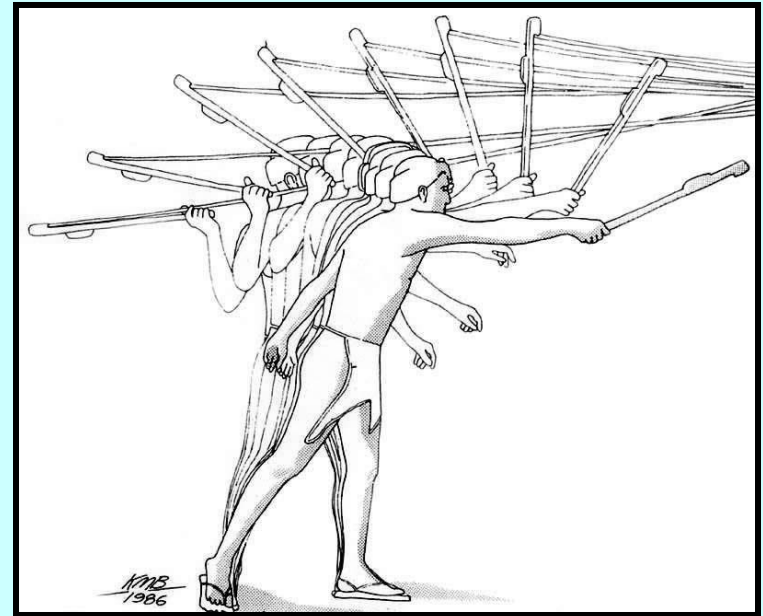
Which is the earlier point?



Archaic

8,200 B.C. – 1,600 B.C.

- The **atlatl**, a spear thrower, was a new tool invented during this time.



Atlatl weight or
bannerstone

Gulf Formational

1,600 B.C. — 400 B.C.



- The first pottery in lower Alabama, was developed during the Gulf Formational Period. People mixed clay with plant fiber, shaped it into pots, and then heated it until it dried and held its shape.
- Eventually, they learned to mix sand instead plant fiber with the clay to make a stronger, more durable pot.

Woodland

400 B.C. – 1,200 A.D.

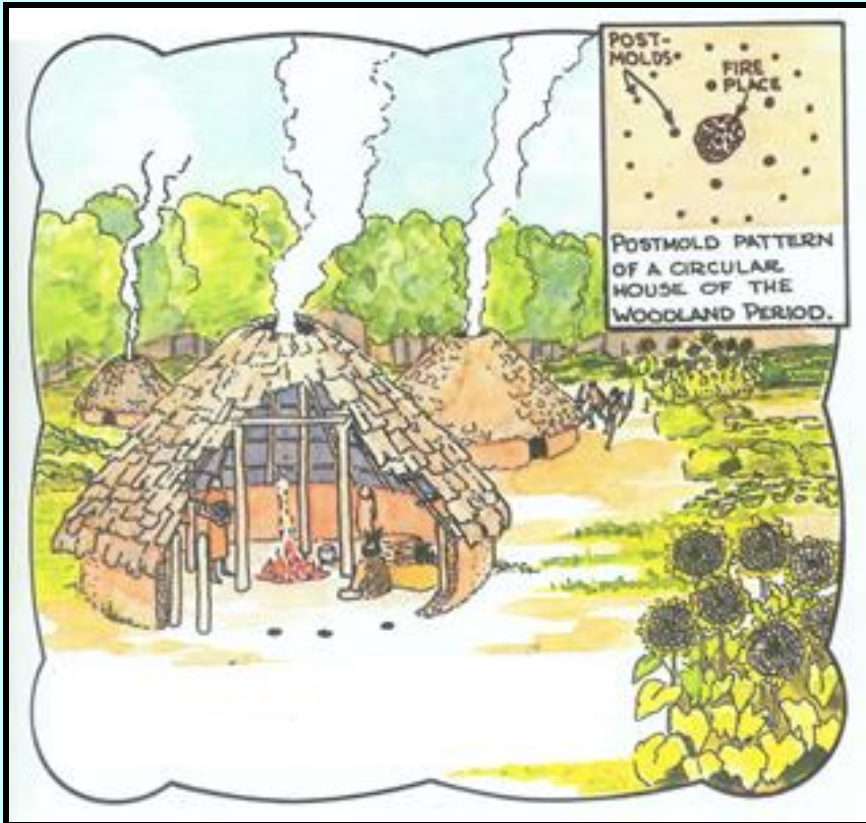


"Woodland Site, Fort Bragg, NC" oil painting by Martin Pate
Painting depicting pottery making in North Carolina (Southeast Archeological Center - National Park Service).

- During the Woodland Era, people lived together on in more permanent towns and villages instead of moving from place to place.
- As getting food became easier, they had more time to do other things.

Woodland

400 B.C. – 1,200 A.D.

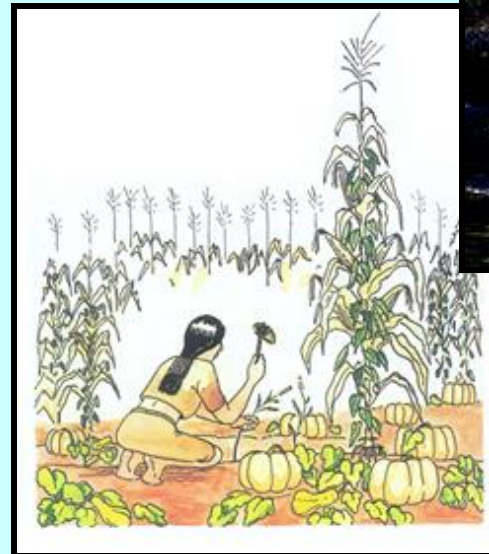
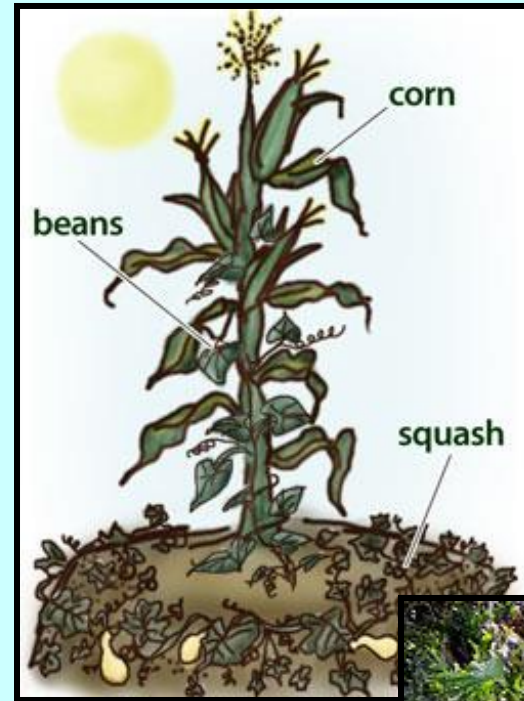


- Woodland Era houses were circular and held up by a framework of round wooden posts.
- A fire pit was located in the middle, and there was a circular hole in the roof to let smoke out.

Woodland

400 B.C. – 1,200 A.D.

- Woodland people still hunted small animals and looked for food in the forests.
- They also started farming.
- They tended plants and grew maize (corn), sunflowers, beans, and squash.



Woodland

400 B.C. – 1,200 A.D.



- By drying meat, storing their crops and gathering nuts, people did not have to move to look for food during the winter months.

Woodland

400 B.C. – 1,200 A.D.

- There were improvements in pottery and tools.
- Ceremonies and religious rituals were important.



Late Woodland
pottery on display at
Museum



Woodland ax head on
display at Museum



Woodland
ceremonial
spear head
on display at
Museum

Woodland

400 B.C. – 1,200 A.D.

- They also started to hunt with the bow and arrow. This is an improvement over the spear and spear thrower.



Woodland Adena point on display at the Museum



Woodland point on display at the Museum

Woodland point on display at the Museum

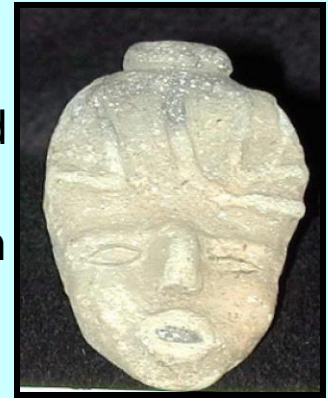


Mississippian

1,200 A.D. – 1,550 A.D.

- The people during this time sometimes built villages or ceremonial centers with flat topped mounds.
- Religious rituals and ceremonies were important to Mississippian peoples.

Effigy head
on display
at Museum



Mississippian

1,200 A.D. – 1,550 A.D.

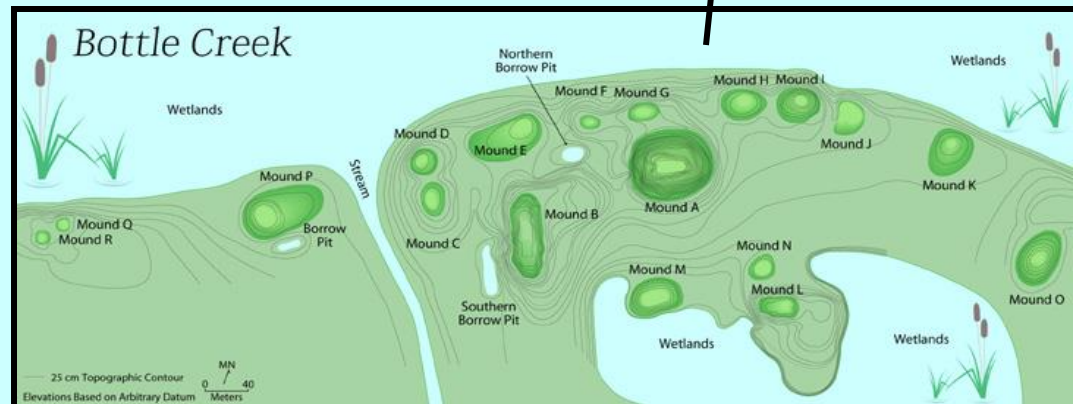
- Mississippians lived in houses built of timber, clay or mud, and thatch.
- Mississippian structures were square or rectangular in shape.



Mississippian

1,200 A.D. – 1,550 A.D.

- There was a large Mississippian town in the river delta north of Mobile at a place called Bottle Creek.
- Bottle Creek has eighteen earthen mounds that served as platforms for houses and temples.



Mississippian

1,200 A.D. – 1,550 A.D.

- Growing corn and farming was the main way Mississippians got their food.
- They still used the bow and arrow to hunt.



Mississippian hoe on display at the Museum



Smaller arrowheads called “bird points” on display at the Museum

Mississippian

1,200 A.D. – 1,550 A.D.

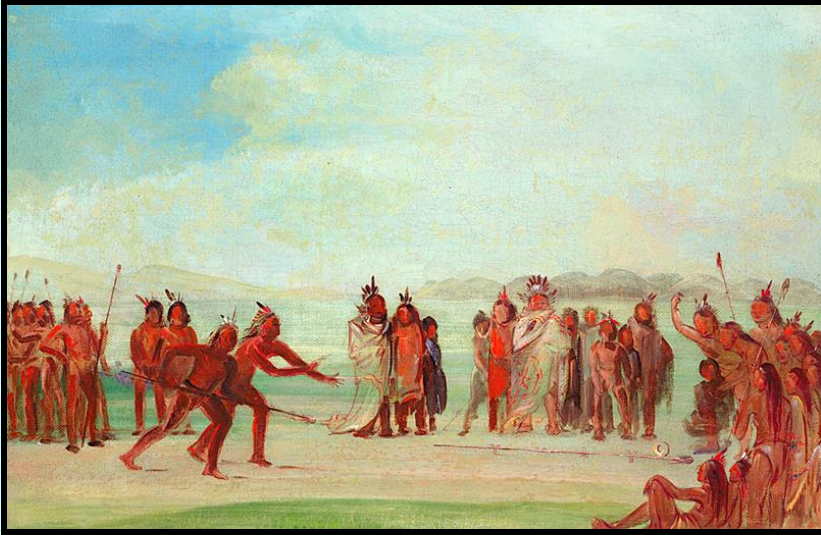


Dauphin Island Shell Midden

- People continued to harvest shellfish along the rivers and the bay.

Mississippian

1,200 A.D. – 1,550 A.D.



Chunkey stones on display at the Museum

- Games were an important part of Mississippian life.
- Chunkey was a game where a stone disk was rolled or thrown, and as it rolled a player tried to toss a spear closest to where he thought the disk would stop rolling.

Mississippian

1,200 A.D. – 1,550 A.D.

- The primary mode of transportation was a canoe. Canoes were made by hollowing out large trees with fire and stone tools.
- Rivers were like highways for the Native Americans during the Mississippian period.



Mississippian

1,200 A.D. – 1,550 A.D.

- During this time, people often used crushed up shell to temper pottery.
- They used shells, sticks and their fingernails to make different designs on the pottery



Mississippian pottery on display at the Museum



Mississippian pottery on display at the Museum

Mississippian Pottery Examples



Duck tail



Duck head



Human head



Pottery Examples



Made with pointed stick, reed or bone



Made with pointed stick, reed or bone



Made with fingernails



Made with pointed stick, reed or bone