

Early Scioto County Native American History

The first noted Native Americans in the Scioto County area were the Mound Builders. Not the name of a tribe, but the term Mound Builder is used generally as referring to prehistoric inhabitants of North America who constructed various styles of earthen mounds for burial, residential and ceremonial purposes. It is believed that the mounds were built between 500 B.C. to 1200 A.D.

Although there is evidence of many Indian mounds in the area, the most well known is the horseshoe mound at Mound Park. Once known as the Citadel, this is the only one of the four horseshoe mounds still in existence.

In 1876, the Scioto County Children's Home was built on the present day mound at Mound Park, but it is again visible and preserved. The other horseshoe mound on Grant Street was plowed over in 1888 for Highland School. These horseshoe mounds are attributed to the Hopewell Indians.

The Hopewell culture is not the name of an American Indian tribe, but is the archaeological term that encompasses similarities in artifact style, architecture, and other cultural practices that distinguish the Hopewell culture from earlier and later cultures in the region.

The Waller / Heinsich Mound is said to have been located across from the library. The Lawson Mound was located near Mound Park, as the old Lawson farm was in that area. With the exception of Mound Park, the mounds within the city are no longer visible. The Portsmouth Earthworks were constructed by the Hopewell culture (100 B.C to 500 A.D.) of prehistoric Native American people. It is a large ceremonial center located at the confluence of the Scioto and Ohio rivers.

Tremper Mound, which is located on U.S. Route 73 on the west side of Portsmouth, was excavated in July and August of 1915. Collections of sixty of the effigy pipes created by the prehistoric Hopewell people were unearthed and are now housed at the Ohio Historical Society.

The Feurt Hill Mounds were located north of the city off U.S. Route 23. The Native Americans who constructed the Feurt Mounds, and lived in the village site, belonged to the Fort Ancient Culture. The three mounds were excavated in 1916 by archaeologists who found 345 burials. The artifacts of flint, stone, bone, shell and pottery were typical of the culture.

Fort Ancient is a name for a Native American culture that thrived from 1000-1600 A.D. and predominantly inhabited land in the region of Southwestern Ohio and Northern Kentucky.

Many Indian tribes passed through the Ohio Valley, including the Delaware, Mingo, Miami and Wyandot, but the Shawnee claimed this area as their own, thus making pioneer settlements very difficult.

After the Wyandots moved onward, the Shawnee Indians came to the area around 1745. The Shawnee word "Scioto" was given to the river flowing west of Portsmouth.

They called the Ohio River, "Kiskepila Sepe", because of the eagles that nested along the banks, and the Wyandots called it, "O-he-uh". However, the river instead took an Iroquoian word, "O-hee-yuh" meaning "good" or "beautiful" river.

About 1738 the Shawnee Indians built a town at the (original) mouth of the Scioto River which they called Lower Shawnee Town, one of the earliest Shawnee settlements in Ohio. The site became a center of trade with first the French and then the British colonists of the Ohio Country during the eighteenth

century. At one time there were 100 dwellings and 300 braves. The village was abandoned during the struggles of the Revolutionary War. (1775-1783).

First White Woman in Scioto County

Mary Ingles and her two very young sons were captured in Virginia, and a Shawnee tribe brought them to Lower Shawnee Town in August 1755. On the trip, they were forced to stop so Mrs. Ingles could give birth.

After arriving at the village, all prisoners, except Mrs. Ingles were forced to “run the gauntlet” and those that survived were separated from the group. One of Mrs. Ingle’s sons was taken to Detroit, and the other to somewhere unknown. The baby was left with her.

She lived there for about two months until they made a trip to Boone County, Kentucky taking her along. It was then she escaped, but had to leave her baby in Shawnee Town. It is said she never saw her children again.

Raven Rock

Raven Rock, located approximately two miles west of Portsmouth on U.S. Rte 52, is said to have been a lookout used by the Shawnee to watch for flatboats along the Ohio. It is said that Raven Rock was named for an Indian chief that was killed along the area. However, the Indians used the term as a description of the rock cliff because the form of the hill looks like a giant bird. Folklore tells us that Daniel Boone escaped the Shawnee by taking a daring jump from the cliff onto a tree and climbed down to safety.