

HISTORICAL INDIANS OF INDIANA FOR YOUNG READERS

Information about the historical Native Americans living in the area now called Indiana begins with 17th century records and documents kept by such groups as the Jesuits, missionaries, French explorers, traders, soldiers, and administrators. It is not until 1679, when René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle entered the state in the vicinity of the St. Joseph-Kankakee portage, that more definite accounts of history in Indiana occur. The major tribes historically present from this time to the mid-19th century in the area to become Indiana are described below.



MIAMIS

In early history, the Miamis were composed of six bands or sub-groups, three of which survived into history, becoming autonomous tribes: the Atchatchakangouen (Crane band or Miamis), Wea, and Piankashaw. In general, the Miamis lived in the northern part of the state, particularly along the upper Wabash River to the Fort Wayne area, although they ranged throughout much of the area that was to become Indiana. The Wea lived on the central and upper central Wabash, and the Piankashaw lived on the central to lower Wabash. Opposite the main, upper Wea village, Fort Ouiatenon was established. Fort Miamis was established in the Fort Wayne area near the Miamis towns, and the Piankashaw lived in the vicinity of Post Vincennes. In 1818, the Wea began to leave the state. By 1846, the Miamis were removed from the state, although a portion managed to remain in Indiana. A sizeable population of Miamis live in Indiana today, particularly in northern Indiana.

POTAWATOMIS

Potawatomi groups moved around a lot in early historic times. In the early 18th century, some groups of Potawatomis lived along the southern shore of Lake Michigan and along the Michigan-Indiana border. Thus, they occupied areas in extreme northern Indiana such as in the St. Joseph and Elkhart River drainages. In the 1770s, Potawatomi groups began moving as far south as the Wabash River, ranging over the northern part of the state. They also lived along the Kankakee and Calumet rivers. In 1838, the Potawatomis were removed from the state. Today, some Potawatomis continue to live in northern Indiana and southern Michigan.

KICKAPOOS AND MASCOUTENS

The Kickapoos and Mascoutens were closely associated in historical times, often living in the same village and mentioned together in historical records and documents. In the 1730s

and 1740s, Kickapoo and Mascouten groups moved from Illinois into the northwestern and west central parts of the state, where prairies were present. They too lived along the Wabash River and its tributaries. Over time, the name Mascouten disappears from historical accounts, as they merged with their friends the Kickapoos. In 1809, the Kickapoos ceded most of their land and began moving from Indiana.

DELAWARES

The Delawares were originally from the north-eastern parts of North America, and began moving into and settling in Indiana in the late 1700s. They moved in along both forks of the White River, settling in the central portion of the state. They lived in the state until the early 1800s, and in 1818, they ceded their land and began leaving the state.

SHAWNEES

Shawnees were present along the Ohio River in the extreme southeastern and southwestern corners of the Indiana area in early historic times. The Shawnees may be related to the Mississippian Fort Ancient culture which lived in Ohio and extended into southeastern Indiana. Like the Delawares, other Shawnee groups moved into the state in the late 1700s, particularly in the southeastern part of Indiana. Most of these groups kept moving west and south, leaving the Indiana area in the early decades of the 1800s, although some remained into the late 19th century, and some Shawnees live in the area today.

As noted above, in the early 18th century French posts were established in the Fort Wayne, Lafayette, and Vincennes areas, in the vicinity of established Native American villages. A nationally known village called Prophetstown was established in 1808 in Indiana to resist Euroamerican settlement in the area, and members of this settlement participated in the nearby Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. The majority of Native Americans from Indiana moved or were removed from the state in the 19th century.

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