

Frontier History of Coshocton

By Scott E. Butler, Ph. D.

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Coshocton for many years. He enjoyed painting animals.

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*Open Your Eyes and Ears and Clear Your Mind and
Listen to What I Have to Say*

- Adapted from customary opening words of northeast Native American conferences among tribes and nations and with white people in the 18th Century.

*Dedicated to the people of Coshocton, that present and
future generations may know the truth about the grand
history of their place in the world.*

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Frontier History of Coshocton focuses on the people living there, whether Indian, white or both. As much as possible, their own words will describe the events, their thinking and interpretations. Short biographical sketches are included to help readers appreciate the whole person, especially for Native Americans. *Frontier History of Coshocton* will place them in historical context with connections to larger themes running through the history of the world. Geographical, linguistic and socio-anthropological information which can be gleaned from the research will also be provided to give readers a richer context. The time period is from earliest human habitation to the end of the War of 1812. The place is Coshocton County, Ohio and adjacent areas as relevant to events. Those two dimensions define the Coshocton frontier.

Everyone living in the Northeast quadrant of the United States and particularly in Ohio lives in a sea of Native American place names which are usually given cursory treatment: Ohio, Lake Erie, Canada, Ontario, Cuyahoga, Scioto, Kentucky, Kanawha, Tuscarawas, Muskingum, and on and on. Almost no one knows their meaning, and if they accidentally do, they have no idea why the word means such. False meanings abound both in scholarly works of the past and on popular Internet sites of the present. To treat the aboriginal peoples of the area with respect, one should learn a bit of their languages to understand *why* the word has its meaning. The author has learned the basics of the primary Indian languages of the Coshocton frontier - Delaware, Mohawk, Wyandot, and Seneca - from printed and electronic works by top scholars of each language. Appendices explaining these languages and the meaning of key Native American names – persons and places – are an integral part of *Frontier History of Coshocton*.

Too much important source material for history and archaeology, and for the languages, is buried in university libraries, state historical collections and scholarly journals. Unless out of copyright, access is very limited and time-consuming. One purpose of this work is to be a bridge from these scholarly writings in history, languages and culture to the average Coshoctonian. This work extracts material relevant to the Coshocton frontier to present in logical and understandable descriptions for the purview of the people of Coshocton. The author is fortunate to have the funds to purchase long out-of-print books that could be studied at leisure. Sources are given for those who wish to do further work, which is wholeheartedly encouraged by the author. Books covering specific material in detail are suggested in the text.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Patti Malenke and Jennifer Bush, the past and current Executive Directors of the Johnson-Humrickhouse Museum, for providing a forum for talks about material in this work and distribution of several privately printed works from which portions of this book were developed. I also thank Prof. Nigel Brush for introducing me to the archaeology of Coshocton County and providing copies of scholarly articles on the subject; Ann Bonnette for her help through numerous discussions of the ideas, people, events and wording in this and prior works; and my wife, Sallie, for her encouragement and support that an audience beyond Coshocton County could have interest in this history.

Preface

Coshocton, the county seat of Coshocton County, Ohio, is the home town of the author, where he grew up and attended high school. The area is somewhat well-known to historians as the homeland of the Delaware Indian nation at the time of the Revolutionary War. After a scientific education and career in finance, the author commenced to study Native American languages beginning with Delaware in early 2014 after learning to read many Indo-European languages, initially simply as an intellectual exercise. Delaware intrigued him, since he had heard multiple meanings of the name, Coshocton, over the years and had been asked its meaning by acquaintances from as far as Poland and Malaysia. 'Coshocton' was commonly stated to be a Delaware language name, but different references gave either of two different meanings: *union of waters*¹ and *black bear town*². How could it be both? Upon acquiring some Delaware language reference material, the author quickly learned that 'Coshocton' meant *neither in Delaware*. How could this be? For over 100 years these meanings had been given out locally, yet simply checking available dictionaries of the Delaware language ruled both out.

Turning to the local legends and lore concerning Mary Harris, the earliest identifiable resident of European descent in the area circa 1750, research in the Coshocton Public Library's History Room uncovered authoritative published articles debunking the tales. Yet while those articles were deposited in the library and its paper files in 1924, a local historical society was placing stone monuments to the legend in 1925. The legend and related lore were widely accepted and related by locals as truth in conversations and social media postings in 2014. County histories of the 19th century including them were widely accepted as true and unchallenged.

These discoveries initiated a five year research and writing effort to determine the truth about the 18th century history of Coshocton and the etymology and meaning of its many Native American place names. Many books have been written about 18th century American history and even 18th century Ohio history, but few spend much space on the events and people of 18th century Coshocton. Yet those events had very great significance for the western frontier of America and for its aboriginal inhabitants. Connections exist to places as far away as Montreal and people such as George Washington. Coshocton was the epicenter of a huge battle for the west in the Revolutionary War.

Thucydides first showed how history could help one understand how societies and groups of people living under different political systems can act and the effects, good and bad, of their collective decisions and the actions of their leaders as people. The history of the Coshocton frontier provides much insight into the problems Native American nations faced seeking to survive. Key leaders such as Capt. White Eyes of the Delaware nation recognized their long term problems and developed a strategy of survival. The rich historical record of the Coshocton frontier captures this effort, in many instances in participants' own words. Further, its history provides much insight into the true nature of the pressures on the Native Americans in eastern North America. Examples of success and failure both can be seen.

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Terminology

A FOOLISH CONSISTENCY IS THE HOBGLOBIN OF LITTLE MINDS

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson³

References to Native Americans in this work will be quite varied, depending on context and the speaker or writer. First one should note the names proudly emblazoned on four websites: **DELAWARE TRIBE OF INDIANS** of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, **EELŪNAAPĒEWII LAHKĒEWIIT** for the Delaware Nation at Moraviantown in Ontario, **MUNSEE DELAWARE NATION** of Muncy, Ontario, and **DELAWARE NATION** of Anadarko, Oklahoma. Americans nowadays tend to use *Native Americans* but Canadians often use *aboriginal peoples*. Some use *Iroquois*, other use *Hodenosaunee*. Some use *Delawares*, others use *Lenape*. The standard term for most of the 19th and 20th century was *Indian*, which is still in common use, but no one uses the common historical reference used by Europeans prior thereto, *savages* or French *sauvages*. Rare references to Indian skin color are usually brown, but the Eastern Indians did like to paint their faces bright red. Europeans were called *white people*, *white men* or *white women* (*les femmes blanches* in French), *Asseroni* (axe-makers - Europeans) or *Schwannok* (derogatory, 'from the salt ocean') or by their national governmental appellation, *Onontio* (New France), *Assaraquoa* ('The Big Knife', Virginia, later the USA) or *Onas* or *Miquon* ('Quill pen', Pennsylvania), a play on William Penn's surname in Mohawk or Delaware, respectively.

This work will *not* be consistent. For quotes, whatever term was actually used will be retained; usually national or tribal names, such as *Delaware*, *Mohawk*, *Wyandot* or *Iroquois*, will be used when being specific, but *Indian* or *Native American* will be used in more general usages; and *aboriginal people* will be used in anthropological and archaeological contexts. The spelling of many words used by Native Americans will *not* be consistent. Their scribes wrote what they heard. This work will use whatever spelling was used by the applicable sources. The greatest variation is in Indian personal names. A few are standardized, such as *Welepachtschiechen* and *Gelelemend*, otherwise they might be unrecognizable.

Most words derived from Indian languages and names of Indian nations are *italicized* in the text to distinguish them. A word that is both used as an Indian word and an English word, such as *Tuscarawas*, which is both a modern river name and an Indian place name, will be italicized in uses related to Indians. "Iroquois" is not italicized, being the name of a league.

Spelling of English in the 18th century was also very inconsistent. This work contains many direct quotations. The spelling and grammar in them is not corrected, and misspellings are mostly not noted, except for a few instances when the misspelling might be distracting or misleading, to which the designation "[sic]" is applied. One notable exception, due to its importance to the history of the area, is the name of the settlement at the Forks of the Ohio, which is consistently called "Pittsburgh", which is its modern and unique spelling.

Sources

The author is not a professional historian or writer, but has experience in scientific research. Where possible, *Frontier History of Coshocton* uses the earliest source available. Living far from Coshocton, his library time there was precious and used judiciously. The most useful tool was amazon.com, where copies of many sources could be purchased. Another useful tool was alibris.com, where original copies of old source books could be purchased. Original copies of texts long out of print, written over 100 years ago, permit one to make copies of maps and figures and to use them, being out of copyright. Correct citations are always given. Modern reprints of old books are often available, too. Some old journal articles are available online through the JSTOR database – see <http://www.jstor.org/stable/>.

Certainly the most cited sources are the five volume Draper Series edited by Ruben Gold Thwaites, LL. D., Louise Phelps Kellogg, Ph. D., or both, compiled from the Draper Manuscripts in the Library of the Wisconsin Historical Society and published at the charge of the Wisconsin Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, Madison, Wisconsin.

The writings of David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder, being first hand participants in much of the frontier period, are essential. Thankfully Zeisberger's German language diary for the critical period was recently translated and published: *The Moravian Mission Diaries of David Zeisberger 1772-1781*. His later diaries for post-1781 were published in English in the 19th century. John Heckewelder's main writings have been reprinted and are available on amazon.com.

Much first-hand information comes from numerous captive narratives by persons taken captive by the *Delaware* or *Seneca* who later wrote about their experiences.

The author did some original archive research himself. He acquired an electronic copy of the original *Journal de Joseph Gaspard Chaussegros de Léry Lt. des Troupes 1754 et 1755*, from Musée de la civilisation, collection du Séminaire de Québec, fonds Viger-Verreault, Call No. O94B, a 290 page .pdf file including cover and inside cover. From the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Archives he obtained copies of letters pertaining to Mary Harris, the first identifiable resident of the Coshocton area. None of this archive information was available prior thereto.

For critical language information concerning *Delaware* and *Wyandot*, the author corresponded with key scholars, Dr. Ives Goddard and Dr. Craig Kopris, to obtain their Ph. D. dissertations on the grammar of *Delaware* and *Wyandot*, respectively, and also obtained permission to deposit bound, printed copies in the Coshocton Public Library for use by all.

Readers of *Frontier History of Coshocton* will be surprised how much is known about key people and events and how much can be gleaned from their own words. Each chapter ends with **Suggested Reading** for further interest.

1. Introduction & the Pre-European Era

Coshocton County, Ohio is centered on the confluence of the Wallhonding and Tuscarawas rivers which forms the Muskingum River. The City of Coshocton is located at that junction. The modern bridge over the Muskingum River at that juncture is named Three Rivers Veterans Memorial Bridge. *Frontier History of Coshocton* describes peoples and events there from the earliest habitation until the end of the War of 1812, when the frontier moved further west.

COSHOCTONIA EST OMNIS DIVISA TRES PARTES.

Such words in Latin could have been written by Julius Caesar¹ had he visited the Coshocton area. *Coshocton is a whole divided into three parts.* Three river valleys dominate the geography of Coshocton – the Tuscarawas, the Wallhonding and the Muskingum. Such rivers were particularly important in frontier times when water transport so facilitated travel and trade for both aboriginal and European peoples. Names for Coshocton and surrounding counties did not exist in the 18th century. This work will use the Latinized term, *Coshoctonia*, to mean the area of Coshocton County and adjacent counties. That area encompasses most of the events and peoples of the *Frontier History of Coshocton*.

The map to the right (Map 1) in its center shows the Muskingum River watershed of today with Coshoctonia at its center. The map gives the modern names for the rivers. Most are Indian words – see **Appendix III** for meanings and derivations. Older names will be given as used in the course of the *Frontier History of Coshocton*. Knowledge of the major watersheds is vital to understanding frontier history since the principal mode of transportation was water, and villages needed plentiful fresh water to exist. The Muskingum watershed is the largest in Ohio and first west of the Ohio River. To the southwest is the Hocking watershed and further west and southwest is the Scioto watershed. To the northwest is the Sandusky watershed and to the direct north is the Cuyahoga watershed, then Lake Erie. To the east, south, southeast and northeast is the great Ohio River watershed, which includes Big Beaver Creek to the northeast.



Map 1: Muskingum Watershed

Coshoctonia is located in east central Ohio on the edge of the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Those remnant foothills stopped the glaciers of the Ice Age aka the Pleistocene epoch.

The Clovis period began about 11,000-11,500 years BP (radiocarbon), i. e., about 13,250

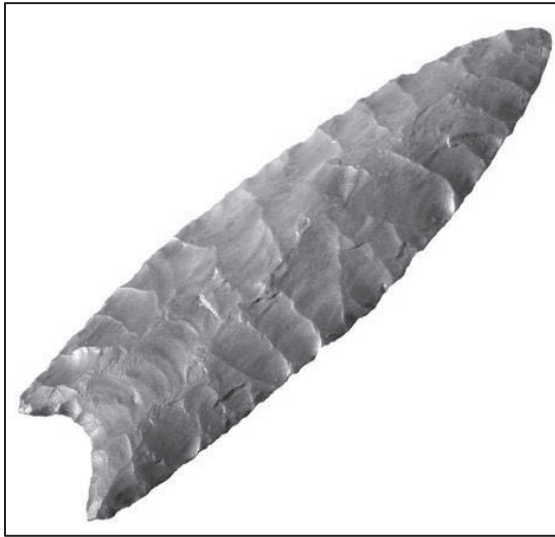


Figure 1: Clovis Point

years ago taking the midpoint. Clovis peoples had a distinctive tool kit including the well-known Clovis point (Figure 1 left), a spear head with flute on the base. Clovis “points” have been found all across North America dating to the same period. The term “point” is used by archaeologists to designate all sorts of what are commonly called “arrowheads”, whether used for a spear, arrow, dart or even a knife; the only necessary condition is a design permitting adding a haft. In this time period the Clovis points were used for spears to hunt large animals such as mammoth. Clovis peoples are considered the first Paleoindians.

Many Clovis points have been found in Ohio, but one site in Coshocton County was particularly active – the Welling site about 12 miles west of the Coshocton on the Walhonding river near Nellie, Ohio. This site is near an ancient quarry of Upper Mercer flint (technically, *chert*). This black flint was especially prized by Paleoindians.

Most of the fluted points found in Ohio are made of this high quality flint, and more fluted points have been found in Coshocton County than in any other Ohio county.⁶

Flint tools found at the Welling site had a wide variety of uses. The flint quarries were likely known meeting places where small groups could gather, make tools, and socialize. Young people could look for marriage partners. The site was very active and a regular destination for Paleoindians.

Archaeological work by Prof. Nigel Brush in Coshocton and Holmes counties has proven that Indian peoples lived in the area more or less continuously for about 13,000 years. For example, for the Eppley Rockshelter #1 in northern Coshocton County just off Killbuck Creek, excavations show activity in the Paleoindian, late Paleoindian, early, middle and late Archaic and early, middle and late Woodland periods.⁷ Numerous other Killbuck Valley rockshelter excavations provide tools and radiocarbon support for a wide span of occupation.⁸ The adjacent Hocking Valley has been well-studied due to the presence of Ohio University on the river at Athens, Ohio. The book, *The Emergence of the Moundbuilders: The Archaeology of Tribal Societies in Southeastern Ohio*, traces evidence of Indian settlements in the valley for 11,000 years from about 9,500 BC until about 1,500 AD. A pattern of increasing population, use intensity, technology (tools, plants) and culture exists up to and through the moundbuilder period. The Muskingum Valley and Coshocton area likely showed the same trends.

Pottery was added to southeast Ohio Indian technology around 1500 BC, with steady improvements until true pottery was made ca. 800 BC. Using pots for boiling nuts and seeds

The Glacial Map of Ohio produced by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (see Bibliography for online reference to color map) shows that only a thin strip of western Coshocton County (west of the cliffs on the east bank of the Mohican River) was covered by the Illinoian glacier of 130,000-300,000 years ago. The later Wisconsinan glacier of 14,000-24,000 years ago stopped in the north midway through Holmes County and in the west midway through Knox County.² The Muskingum River watershed can be seen on the map as outwash areas, i. e., areas filled with material from the glacial front carried away by streams of meltwater.³

Archaeological date expressions commonly use the abbreviation BP meaning “Before Present” with the Present defined as 1950, instead of the common AD-BC or CE-BCE date systems. Sometimes archaeologists give radiocarbon dates and at other times calendar dates, aka calibrated or adjusted dates. Sometimes this is explicit, when the term RCYBP is used, meaning “Radiocarbon Years Before Present”. The conversion scale between calendar dates and radiocarbon dates expands in more distant times as the proportion of C¹⁴ to C¹² in the atmosphere itself changed over the millennia. As absolute radiocarbon dates are adjusted with new calibration data, the actual dates can be readily re-calculated. For *radiocarbon* dates in the 15,000-10,000 BP range, the actual calendar dates correspond to 17,000 - 12,000 years ago. One can simply mentally increase a radiocarbon BP date by 2,000 years in that period. For periods closer to the present – 2,000 to 3,000 years ago and more recent - the dates are nearly equivalent.⁴ When using archaeological “BP” dates for early periods, one must be sure to know in what form they are given, whether raw radiocarbon or calibrated. Usage of the term, “years ago”, always seems to mean adjusted dates, i. e., calendar years.

People lived in Coshoctonia thousands of years before any recorded history existed. The archaeological record shows that even as the last glacier (Wisconsinan) was receding from Ohio about 14,000 years ago, people lived in the area. About 100 miles east is the Meadowcroft Rockshelter where the deepest layers have dates between 13,000 and 16,000 years ago. Those dates correspond to approximately 11,000 - 14,000 BP (radiocarbon). Those deep layers also contain Pre-Clovis tools dating from 11,300 to 12,800 BP (radiocarbon), indicating the presence of Pre-Clovis peoples. These people visited the Coshocton area:

Many of the flint tools found in the deepest layers of Meadowcroft Rockshelter were shaped from stone quarried in Ohio, from Flint Ridge in Licking County and from the outcrops of Upper Mercer flint in Coshocton County.⁵

Neither source of flint was covered by the last Wisconsinan glacier, making that raw material available to those early people. This early period corresponds to Pre-Clovis peoples, that is, peoples in America before the Clovis peoples expanded across North America. Their existence has become much less controversial in recent decades. The recent book, *Strangers in a New Land: What Archaeology Reveals about the First Americans* by J. M. Adovasio and David Pedler describes the multi-decadal controversy and provides many reasoned examples of sites with strong evidence of Pre-Clovis habitation.

greatly increased their nutrition. Their introduction came during a period of diminished rainfall, possibly an adaptation generated by a need to conserve resources.⁹ In the Early Woodland Period (about 800 BC to 1 AD) increasingly sedentary communities began to supplement hunting and gathering with the cultivation of select indigenous plants – squashes, chenopods (gooseroot family including spinach & beets), erect knotwood, sunflower, sumpweed and maygrass - which constitute the Eastern Agricultural Complex. The introduction and expansion process took hundreds of years, beginning circa 1500 BC and extending to circa 400 BC.¹⁰ The new technology permitted population to increase and encouraged settlement in fixed areas, which in turn caused social change.

The famous Adena culture began in southern Ohio about 400 BC. Its eponymous mound is in Chillicothe, Ohio and its culture thrived in southern Ohio, but not northern Ohio. Adena cultures produced beautiful effigy pipes carved from stone; the art was remarkable.¹¹ For reference the Adena period occurred in southern Ohio when ancient Athens was flourishing in its golden age of Pericles, Socrates and Alcibiades. Adena culture peoples also built burial mounds and other earthworks.¹²

The Hopewell culture, which followed the Adena culture in southern Ohio, produced much more elaborate mounds and earthworks, and much more beautiful art objects often made from exotic materials imported from far away: copper, mica, silver, shark teeth, grizzly bear teeth, etc.¹³ Beautiful animal effigy pipes were buried with elaborate grave goods in some Hopewell burial complexes. Fired clay pottery with elaborate designs were created. Spectacular earthworks were built.¹⁴ More elaborate garden plots with the Eastern Agricultural Complex were adjacent to villages. Before the soil was depleted, the Hopewell farmers moved to a new site.¹⁵ Hopewell culture sites are dated as early as 1 AD and existed for several hundreds of years. The Hopewell period in central and southern Ohio occurred during the golden and silver ages of ancient Rome through the fall of the western empire.

Coshoctonia in its southwest corner includes the enormous Hopewell mound complex at Newark in Licking County. This complex encompassed more than four square miles. The largest features are a Great Circle more than a thousand feet in diameter and a 50 acre octagon connected to another huge circle. The structure is considered to be a Hopewell culture complex built over several hundred years in the Middle Woodland Period from about 100 BC until 400 AD. The Newark complex is considered second to only the later huge mound complex at Cahokia in Illinois.¹⁶

The Hopewell culture seems to have collapsed after 400 AD, possibly due to climate change. The collapse coincided with the Dark Ages Cold Period (400 AD to 700 AD). *[NB: All climate period names are based on Ohio Valley archaeological observations, not global information.]* During this Late Woodlands Period, examples of artistic artifacts mostly disappear and moundbuilding ceases. People and society adapted, improving gardening and hunting. Slash and burn farming increased its scope; fields were re-occupied sooner, before a mature forest could grow. Maygrass and squash were favored crops.¹⁷

NB: Archaeological periods such as Late Woodland and Late Prehistoric Periods occur at somewhat different times in different areas. Growing season and cultural development differs over a few hundred miles. The beginning and ending dates can vary by one or two hundred years.

Coshoctonia was on the periphery of the major Adena and Hopewell culture areas, but certainly had interchange with these cultures. The Marietta complex at the mouth of the Muskingum River has components of Adena, Hopewell cultures, and later cultures.¹⁸ A considerable number of mounds from both periods have been documented in central Coshoctonia, in particular in the Walhonding Valley, named as follows: Johnson and Workman Mounds at Walhonding; Martin, Miskimens and Speckman Mounds east of Warsaw; Maxwell Mound west of Coshocton; and Porteus Mounds south and east of Coshocton.¹⁹ The large number of mounds in the Walhonding Valley may be due to the proximity of its great natural resource, the Upper Mercer flint outcroppings.

The Upper Mercer flint quarries are located on the hillsides above the Walhonding River, and much activity by native peoples occurred there.²⁰ These flint quarries must have been quite spectacular before being mostly destroyed by farming activities. The author had the privilege of visiting the only remaining undisturbed site, which is on a hillside on private land. Here is a photo of the landowner standing in one of the many quarry pits, now mostly filled in from erosion, vegetation and water.



Figure 2: Old Upper Mercer flint pit near Nellie, Ohio with landowner standing adjacent. Photo by author.

Corn was introduced to southeast Ohio circa 700 AD²¹ and beans came along with corn.²² Corn provided an huge increase in agricultural productivity. With beans and the native squash, the famous “Three Sisters” complex was complete and could provide complete protein without animals or fish. Corn and beans came to dominate cultigens with a huge spike toward 100% circa 1000 AD.²³ With corn and beans as the fuel and a newly found ability to organize people and society, the great complex at Cahokia near St. Louis was built around 1050 AD according to radiocarbon dating.²⁴ The main city seems to have had 10,000-16,000 people living in it.²⁵ The Mississippi Valley had a number of extensive sites with high population densities, though less than Cahokia. Archaeologists interpret these sizeable settlements as indicating powerful chiefdoms, and call the culture *Mississippian*. They expanded during the Medieval Warm Period, which perhaps provided excellent growing conditions for corn to feed the population concentrations. Such cities did not appear in the Ohio valley, though.²⁶

In Ohio the Cahokia phenomenon is represented by the Fort Ancient culture²⁷ of the Late Historic period mostly located in Ohio in its southwestern and southern regions. Numerous Fort Ancient villages have been found across the river in Kentucky, too. Fort Ancient peoples in Ohio cultivated corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, and tobacco with emphasis somewhat different from the Cahokia regions. Principal animal resources were deer, elk, bear and turkey. Hide preparation became more important, likely due to clothing needs for greater population.²⁸

The bow and arrow entered the Ohio Valley circa 800 AD. This weapon revolutionized hunting and, unfortunately, warfare. The characteristic points are small and triangular, quite simple. Many hunting camps have been found associated with rockshelters. Socially, larger villages became more prevalent. Some think the bow and arrow made hunters more self-sufficient, needing less neighborliness. Deer populations also came under stress in the Late Woodland Period in Ohio, probably from intensive hunting. The hides were essential for clothing in these areas with severe winters. Evidence of violence and even raiding for mates has been found.²⁹

The principal modern archaeologists to study the Late Prehistoric Period in Coshocton County (1000 AD to 1700 AD) are James Morton and Nigel Brush. As of 2019 they have found fifteen Late Prehistoric sites in the Walhonding Valley and have conducted excavations at four of these sites.³⁰ Morton also conducted a number of excavations in Muskingum County. The period is divided into four subperiods: **Intrusive Mound** (700 AD to 1000 AD), **Cole** (1000 AD to 1300 AD), **Philo** (1300 AD to 1500 AD) and **Wellsburg** (1500 AD to 1700 AD). The first two subperiods subsume the **Medieval Warm Period** (700 AD to 1300 AD). The latter two subperiods are in the **Little Ice Age** (1300 AD to 1800 AD). “These time periods can readily be distinguished from each other on the basis of pottery and projectile point styles.”³¹

Coshoctonia was on the northeast periphery of the Fort Ancient culture zone. A number of Cole Period (1000 AD to 1300 AD) sites have been found. Large Fort Ancient style villages are unknown, but smaller villages came and went, seemingly due to migration driven by climate changes. Rockshelter usage in the Killbuck Valley declined as people reoriented their subsistence

lives to reliable agriculture in warmer times.³² The Upper Mercer quarries continued to be heavily exploited.³³ Some sites were occupied in the Cole Period, then seemingly abandoned and reoccupied in the Wellsburg Period (1500 AD to 1700 AD) later.³⁴

By the latter part of the Late Prehistoric period (c. 1450 AD), corn comprised 65% of the diet, replacing other indigenous plants, with hunting and gathering providing the rest of the diet.³⁵ The lengthy period of growth and stability seems, however, to have ended then.

Like other riverine systems on the Ohio Valley, the Hocking Valley seems to have been abandoned at this time, the population moving to the larger Ohio River. The most accepted explanation for this large scale process of abandonment is that people chose to leave the region as declining rainfall produced conditions unsuitable for the predictable growing of maize relative to the appeal of the larger river setting.³⁶

Another possible factor is the depletion of the soil. A reasonable assumption is that the adjacent Muskingum Valley suffered the same population loss as the Hocking Valley.

Although in the 14th century Fort Ancient communities had been established 60 miles or more from the Ohio River (north and south), by the end of the 15th century many north of the river had been abandoned. The remaining north of the river were located no more than about 10 miles from the Ohio River. Some of those remaining villages were relatively larger, but many seem to have had no more than 300 people. Upland areas such as Coshoctonia were largely abandoned except when used for hunting.³⁷

Archaeological studies show the Indian communities of the Ohio Valley in the Late Prehistoric Period suffering new, intractable problems. Excessive concentration of corn in the diet increased population but led to chronic malnutrition, dental problems and poor resistance to diseases compared to their ancestors. Life expectancy fell. Arthritis became common. Warfare and violence increased. Villages became fortified. Villages had populations from 100 to 500 persons. Some families would disperse in hunting season. After 20-30 years the soil around the village would become depleted and firewood distant, necessitating a move.³⁸

Climate became less favorable after 1300 AD. According to archaeologists, the Medieval Warm Period had ended circa 1300 AD and the Little Ice Age cold period had begun. The climate was colder and wetter. Communities in Coshoctonia may not have had enough experience in farming or diversity of cultigens to survive. Little evidence of significant populations in Coshoctonia or even the central Muskingum Valley exists for the period 1300 AD to 1500 AD. The aboriginal people seem to have moved south to the Ohio River.³⁹

How many aboriginal people could the Coshocton area support in good weather? Can they simply plant more and more cornfields to supply their needs? No. Other limits exist.

In a location with cold rain and cold winters, clothing was necessary at least six months of the year to avoid exposure. Before Europeans, Indians in the northeast had to make their own

clothing from large animal skins, such as deer and bear. Deer hides would be the primary raw material. There was no substantial source of vegetable-based clothing or even wool from sheep. Indian women made most of their clothes from deer hides. "A family of five needed about seventeen hides every year just to clothe itself. The meat was a bonus."⁴⁰ Not being able to make clothing from plant sources put real limits on the population density, and hence population. Biologists have computed that for a sustainable deer population with those needs for hides, an average population density limit was approximately *two people per square mile*, counting the villages and hunting grounds, for the *Mohawk* in upstate New York.⁴¹ Modern Coshocton County has 567 square miles and is very good deer hunting country. It was good deer hunting country in 1750, too, as the *Delaware* Indians named area *Muskingum*, meaning Elk's Eyes.⁴² At two people per square mile maximum density without European clothmaking skills, the county could support only about 1,100 Indians. If supplemented with bear and small animal skins, perhaps 20% more could live in the county. Pre-European technology simply would not permit large average population densities.

This limit could have been a cause for the increased violence noted after the introduction of corn to the Indian technology. Increased population in a village would increase the hunting grounds needed for survival. Eventually hunters from villages would bump into each other in the woods, competing for the same deer. Already armed and stealthy, killing could easily occur when driven by need.

Archaeology can tell us the level of Indian technology in Ohio pre-European, circa 1450. Aboriginal peoples had bow & arrow, spears, clubs, stone axes, flint knives and scrapers; and pottery of many types. Tools are stone, bone and wood. Food storage used pottery or lined pits. Huts were made of small trees and bark, village palisades were made from small trees as poles and branches woven for walls. Clothing and moccasins were made from hides and sewn with fibers and sinew. Food sources were the Three Sisters (corn, beans, squash), sunflowers, gathered nuts, roots, fruit; meat from animals (deer, elk, bear), ground birds (turkeys); fish and mollusks. Without metal tools, cutting down a large tree was difficult. There was little or no plant-based clothing. Without flint and steel, fire-starting would be difficult in damp conditions or wet weather. No domesticated animals existed except the dog. No draft animals existed. Life was hard, but they had millennia to learn how to cope.

Columbus discovered the western hemisphere for Europe in 1492. John Cabot found North America in 1497. Ponce de Leon found Florida in 1513. Cartier discovered the St. Lawrence River in 1534. De Soto explored the southeast of North America in 1539-1541. Coronado explored the southwest in 1540-1542. The Basque established a whaling/trading station at Tadoussac in the lower St. Lawrence River⁴³ circa 1560. St. Augustine was settled in 1565. Jamestown was founded in 1607. Champlain founded Quebec in 1608. And Plymouth was founded in 1620. Ohio is about 500 miles from the closest early European contact and Coshoctonia is approximately in the center of Ohio. What was happening there from 1450-1600?