



[Archaeology Home](#)

[Cultural Overview of Wisconsin](#)

[Sites and Artifacts](#)

[Learn About Archaeology](#)

[Shipwrecks](#)

[Preservation](#)

[Get Involved!](#)

[Research and Collections](#)

[Archaeology Programs](#)

## Cultural Overview of Wisconsin

### An Overview of Cultural Periods in Wisconsin Archaeology

Evidence of the past can be visible to the eye such as pictographs on rock surfaces, or mounds in the shape of animals. But often discoveries are only made through careful study by archaeologists.



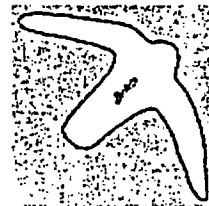
About 10,000 years ago, Paleoindians entered Wisconsin as they hunted woolly mammoth, mastodon, and bison. These large mammals lived on the abundant vegetation beginning to grow as the glaciers retreated northward.

Around 8,000 years ago, during the Archaic Period, the climate became warmer and dryer. The large Ice Age mammals were replaced by animals found in the state today. People lived in smaller family groups in caves, rockshelters, along rivers, and around lakes and wetlands. They harvested wild plants, nuts and acorns. They hunted smaller animals such as deer and elk.



About 3,000 years ago, during the Woodland Period, people lived in large villages and began to use bows and arrows to hunt. It was during this period that many mounds, including effigies or mounds built in the shape of turtles, birds, bears and other animals, were built throughout Wisconsin. These people were Wisconsin's first potters and gardeners.

The Mississippian Period began about 1,000 years ago. In Wisconsin these people are called Oneota. They lived in villages and planted gardens to grow crops such as corn, beans and squash. They had a complex trade network which extended to both the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.



Jean Nicolet, a French explorer, arrived in Wisconsin in 1634. At that time, the Indian tribes present in the state included the Ho Chunk