

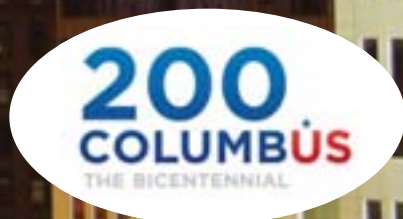
HISTORIC COLUMBUS

A Bicentennial History

by Ed Lentz



*A publication of the
Columbus Chamber of Commerce*



HISTORIC COLUMBUS

*A Bicentennial History
by Ed Lentz*

Commissioned by the Columbus Chamber of Commerce

Historical Publishing Network
A division of Lammert Incorporated
San Antonio, Texas

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is dedicated to the entrepreneurs and businesses who form the backbone of the Columbus Region—strengthening our community and economy from 1812 to 2012 and beyond.

Founded to be the State Capital in 1812, Columbus marks 200 years of growth and prosperity in 2012. The Columbus Chamber produced this book, *Historic Columbus*, to honor the rich history that makes the Columbus community what it is today and honor just a few of the businesses and organizations that share in Columbus' proud past.

Historic Columbus tells the story of where we have been. The Chamber is proud to have served as an economic catalyst of and advocate for this community since 1884, when it was established as the Columbus Board of Trade.

In 2012, the Columbus Region is at a pivotal point. As we celebrate the bicentennial, residents, neighborhoods, community and business leaders, pay tribute to the past. But we also look forward, to embrace the future with bold plans to for economic development. Together, we will ensure that we continue to grow, prosper and thrive.

Happy 200th Birthday, Columbus.

Michael Dalby
President and CEO
Columbus Chamber

Jack Partridge
Chairman 2010-2012
Columbus Chamber

Melissa P. Ingwersen
Chair Elect 2010-2012
Columbus Chamber

First Edition

Copyright © 2011 Historical Publishing Network

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, without permission in writing from the publisher. All inquiries should be addressed to Historical Publishing Network, 11535 Galm Road, Suite 101, San Antonio, Texas, 78254. Phone (800) 749-9790.

ISBN: 9781935377597

Library of Congress Card Catalog Number: 2011938334

Historic Columbus: A Bicentennial History

author: Ed Lentz

cover photography: Larry Hamill Photography

contributing writer for "Sharing the Heritage": Marie Beth Jones

Historical Publishing Network

president: Ron Lammert

project managers: Wynn Buck, Igor Patrushev, Bruce Barker

administration: Donna M. Mata, Melissa G. Quinn

book sales: Dee Steidle

production: Colin Hart, Evelyn Hart, Glenda Tarazon Krouse, Omar Wright

PRINTED IN CANADA

CONTENTS

4	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	
5	PREFACE	
6	CHAPTER I	<i>“A Most Delightful Country”</i>
15	CHAPTER II	<i>Frontier Conflict</i>
22	CHAPTER III	<i>Franklinton</i>
29	CHAPTER IV	<i>A Capital Beginning 1812-1816</i>
37	CHAPTER V	<i>The Hub of the Wheel 1816-1840</i>
48	CHAPTER VI	<i>The City Challenged 1840-1865</i>
59	CHAPTER VII	<i>Railroad Town 1865-1900</i>
68	CHAPTER VIII	<i>A City of Light 1900-1930</i>
80	CHAPTER IX	<i>Hometown 1930-1950</i>
88	CHAPTER X	<i>All-America City 1950-1970</i>
96	CHAPTER XI	<i>Test City to Best City 1970-1990</i>
105	CHAPTER XII	<i>The City Rising 1990-2012</i>
116	SHARING THE HERITAGE	
199	SPONSORS	
200	ABOUT THE AUTHOR	

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A history book—especially a pictorial history—is never the work of one person or even of a few. As is often the case, a lot of people helped in the preparation of this book.

For help with research, I am once again indebted to the reference librarians at the Main Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library, the Archives-Library of the Ohio Historical Society, the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library, and The Ohio State University Library.

As to the pictures, there are even more people to thank.

There are two major sources of the pictures used in this book.

The first is the *Columbus Dispatch*. I am especially grateful to Michael Curtin, Associate Publisher Emeritus for his help and to Linda Deitch and the staff of the Dispatch library for their extraordinary assistance in finding obscure images for a local historian.

Equally helpful was the staff of the Genealogy, History and Travel Division of the Columbus Metropolitan. I am especially indebted to Bonnie Chandler, Nick Taggart, Andy Miller, and Russ Pollit—all whom spent more than a little time on this project.

Other helpful assistance with photographs and their availability came from the Capitol South Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation, the Columbus Downtown Development Corporation, the City of Columbus Department of Development, the Columbus Museum of Art, the Library of Congress, the National Archives and Records Administration and the New York Public Library.

Also special mention should be made of pictorial help from Parrill Hertz, Esther Miller, and Donald Schlegel.

Thanks are in order to Jack Partridge and Susan Merryman of the Columbus Chamber and Ron Lammert of Historical Publishing Network for their advice and support as the book was in preparation.

Finally, as always, a special thanks to my wife Andrea, who makes my work both possible and worthwhile.



The Columbus skyline in 2005.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH
PHOTO ARCHIVES.

PREFACE

Like most cities, Columbus has been a place that has seen a lot of different people pass through over the course of the last couple of centuries. Some stayed awhile. Some did not. So at any given time there are a lot of people living in Columbus who do not know very much about the place where they are living.

And this lack of knowledge is not just about who we have been. It is about who we are. Columbus is the largest city in land area in the state of Ohio. Many people living in the suburbs of one side of the city may come downtown from time to time but they seldom travel to the other side of town. In short, many of us do not really know who we are—as well as who we have been.

I happen to think we should know who we are and who we have been. I came to Columbus in the late 1960s to study American history at The Ohio State University. While I was doing that I was surprised to find that no one had written a history of Columbus and Franklin County since 1930. And that history was something of a rehash of one written ten years before. And the 1920 history was a simplified retelling of a lengthy narrative published in 1892.

And since there were not all that many people teaching and writing local history in central Ohio, one might say the field was rather open to newcomers who might be inclined to tell the story of Columbus.

I was so inclined.

I have always believed that we cannot really know who we are if we do not know where we have been. And that is what history does. It gives us roots in a society of increasingly rapid political, economic, and social change. Some might wonder what there is new to tell about the history of Midwestern capital city. Writing a weekly newspaper article about local history for almost twenty years has taught me that there is always a new story to tell.

In the course of writing this book, I have learned a few things I did not know about Columbus and found a lot of new pictures that have not been published all that often and sometimes not at all. It is that discovery of new things about a familiar town that keeps me returning to the past of this place.

Columbus is not only geographically in the middle of the state. As the center of state power and authority for the past two hundred years it is also the symbolic heart of Ohio. This admixture of state history and local history makes the story of this city unique and unlike that of any other place in Ohio.

It is a story well-worth retelling.



200
COLUMBUS
THE BICENTENNIAL



The Riverfront in 2009. Columbus, Ohio, has been a place where people have been meeting one with another for more than two hundred years. It is the state capital—and much, much more.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH PHOTO ARCHIVES.



CHAPTER 1

“A MOST DELIGHTFUL COUNTRY”

THE LAY OF THE LAND



Created as Ohio's first state park in 1896, Fort Ancient in southwest Ohio has been a place of human habitation for at least two thousand years and possibly much longer. Its people were residents of central Ohio as well.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH PHOTO ARCHIVES.

In the fall of 1750, a trapper, trader and frontiersman named Christopher Gist was hired by the Virginia Land Company to cross the Appalachians and report on the land beyond in and around the valley of the Ohio River. People had been living in what is now central Ohio for quite a long time before Christopher Gist came calling. Some of those earlier residents were French “Courier du Bois” and English “Long Hunters.” But none of them could or would leave a record of what they found.

Passing very close to what would later be Columbus, Ohio, Christopher Gist would later record what he found. The well-known American author Washington Irving later wrote that Gist’s journal reported that the land was “clad with noble forests of hickory, walnut, ash, poplar, sugar-maple and wild cherry trees. Occasionally there were spacious plains covered with wild rye; natural meadows with blue grass and clover.”

“Nothing is wanted save cultivation,” said Christopher Gist, “to make this a most delightful country.”

Gist’s report was important because it convinced a number of people in the English colonies to the east that the Ohio Country was neither a wasteland nor an endless trackless forest. It was in fact a very pleasant and desirable place indeed.

This was a place of extraordinary natural richness and diversity. Over the long history of North America, different sorts of people would continue to find something to like about this land between the Great Lakes to the north and the Ohio River to the south.

The broad arc of the various ranges composing the Appalachian Mountains begins in the American South and moves to the north-east eventually ending in the mountains of New England and maritime Canada. People traveling east from the Great Plains would inevitably be drawn inexorably north and east into the Ohio Country. And they would like what they found. Unlike the subtropical heat of the South or the numbing cold of the land north of the Great Lakes, Ohio is a place of relatively temperate climate—occasionally very hot or cold but generally more moderate.

This temperate climate produced plains with grasses more than six feet tall and mighty old growth forests whose trees soared to heights of more than one hundred feet both of which served as the home to a wide variety of wildlife. The natural cycle of death and rebirth of the plant life of the forests produced a thick rich soil, especially along the clear clean rivers running through the land.

From time to time, we still find evidence of the extraordinary wildlife which wandered across the land in that long ago time—fossilized bones of the mastodon, the tree sloth, and other large animals.

For at least 14,000 years, this rich land has served as the home of a wide variety of people. While people might have been here even longer than that, we will be hard put to find evidence of their presence. Prior to that time, 14,000 years ago, most of central Ohio was buried under a great glacier that covered most of the Midwest for hundreds of years. It was not the first glacier to cover Ohio. And it is not likely to be the last. But since the next one is not due for another 50,000 to 75,000 years from now, it is not a matter of current and pressing concern.

The great Wisconsinan Glacier completely transformed the landscape of most of Ohio. It rerouted some rivers, eliminated whole mountains and carved out the Great Lakes

as it ground its way across the Midwest. The traveler interested to know what Ohio looked like before the glacier does not have to travel very far. Leaving Columbus and driving south and east one will soon see hills in the distance beyond Lancaster, Ohio. It is here—where the flatland ends and the hills begin that the glacier stopped and began eventually to withdraw.

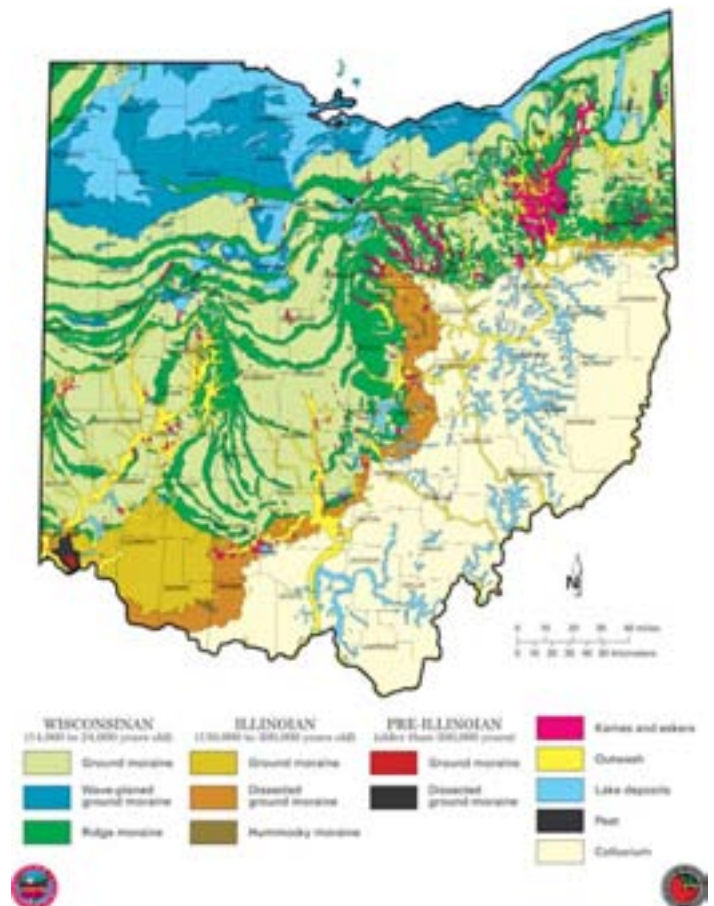
The land the glacier left behind was a new country. To some extent we tend to be biased by our conventions in map making. Looking at a map of Ohio with roads and rivers noted, it is tempting to think of the state as a uniform kind of place. It really is not that way at all.



Until about 14,000 years ago, most of central Ohio was under a very large layer of glacial ice. This map shows just how far south the great glaciers came—and what they left behind.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

GLACIAL MAP OF OHIO





To the south and west of what is now Columbus lay the great Pickaway and Darby Plains. The prairies of central Ohio have largely vanished under the progress of the plow. A few remain such as the Bigelow Cemetery Nature Preserve near Plain City.
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES.

Ohio is really several different places—from the flat lands in Northwest Ohio that were once part of the Great Black Swamp to the hills of Southeast Ohio, the terrain of the state varies quite a bit. More importantly the northern third of Ohio sees its rivers drain into Lake Erie while the southern two thirds of the state looks south to where its rivers empty into the Ohio River. It was near the places where rivers come together that people coming into Ohio as the glaciers retreated often spent some time.



One of those places where two great rivers meet is in central Ohio.

THE FIRST PEOPLE

People have been living in North America for at least 15,000 years and possibly much longer. For many years, it was believed that people crossed over to the Americas from Asia on an ice bridge between Siberia and Alaska. It is likely that some people did arrive by that route. But in recent years, theories have also been put forth suggesting early arrival by boat.

In any case it is clear, that at least some people were present in North America long before the glaciers began to withdraw.

We do not know all that much about the earliest residents of central Ohio. There were not all that many people anywhere 15,000 years ago. And the people who came to North America were even fewer in number.

These people were “hunter-gatherers.” They lived in small bands of closely related people and did not stay very long in one place. They followed the animal herds in their migrations across the land and relied on the animals they hunted for food, clothing, shelter and even the weapons they carried. Because the remains of animals do not survive all that well, the only real evidence we have that early people were here at all is in the stone arrow points that turn up from time to time in central Ohio.

The forests were different in those days. It is important to remember that the forests and woodlots we see today in central Ohio are relatively recent. A close look will show that most of the trees are simply not all that big. The reason for this is that most of the forests of Ohio have been cut down at least once, and sometimes several times.

The forests that will cover Ohio will later come to be called “old growth” forests. Some of the trees will grow to truly astonishing sizes. Some sycamore trees would be twenty to thirty feet in diameter and rise more than one hundred feet above the forest floor. Sycamore trees decay and die from the inside out. More than one frontier narrative describes sheltering from a storm or camping for the night inside the trunk of a fallen sycamore tree.

Certain of the hardwood trees come to be identified with the forests of Ohio and central Ohio in particular. Some like the Maple will be prized for the syrup made from their sap. Others like the Walnut and Hickory are favored for food. And some like the Horse Chestnut are simply admired for their immense size and the value of their wood. The massive groves of Horse Chestnut trees are generally gone today from Ohio but the characteristic seed of the tree—said to resemble the eye of a deer—gave Ohio its nickname—the Buckeye State.

Over the course of several thousand years, the land grew warmer, the forests and prairies flourished and in time the size of the roving bands of “hunter-gatherers” grew larger and larger. In some parts of the world, the lives of hunter-gatherers continue today much as they have for the past several thousand years. But in Ohio, a different path would be followed. What had been a culture and a way of life for generations was about to become a civilization.

CITIES OF EARTHEN WONDER

A number of American towns and villages have a Mound Street. But few major cities have a Mound Street only a few blocks from the center of town in the middle of the central business district. But Mound Street in Columbus, Ohio, is just such a street.

When early American settlers of the Ohio valley reached the junction of the Scioto and Olentangy Rivers in the late 1700s they were surprised to see what appeared to be a large tree-covered hill standing along the flat crest of the high ridge on the eastern bank of the Scioto river. They were even more surprised when they determined that the hill was apparently manmade. Rising more than fifty feet above the forest floor, the large trees growing on the sides of the mound indicated that it had been there for quite a long time.



Undeterred by this feat of prehistoric engineering, the surveyors of Columbus laid out their new town and placed the mound in the intersection of High Street and the appropriately named Mound Street. They then proceeded to use clay from the mound to make bricks for the original two story statehouse.

For more than twenty years, traffic moving along High Street came to the intersection of Mound and High Street and carefully skirted around the edge of the mound blocking the intersection. An enterprising local physician named Young went to the trouble of hacking a path to the top of the mound and then proceeded to build a two story white frame house on the summit. Mound notwithstanding, it is not fully clear how Dr. Young acquired the right to build a house in the middle of a public intersection. But it is fair to note that squatters and other practitioners of less than legal occupancy were rather common on the frontier.

It is also not clear why the good doctor constructed his office at the top of a rather steep hill. Presumably if one was really sick, they would make it to the top of the hill. Or it is also possible that the doctor liked his privacy and was in the habit of making a lot



Most of what is now Columbus was once part of an immense old growth forest of huge hardwood trees. The forests that once covered Ohio have mostly been removed—more than once. One of the places that was missed is the Davey Nature Preserve in Champaign County.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES.



◆
When European explorers first came to Ohio they found thousands of Native American enclosures, mounds and ceremonial sites. As late as 1914, William Corless Mills could still show dozens of sites in Franklin County in his Archeological Atlas of Ohio. Few of them remain.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ED LENTZ.

of house calls. In any case the mound and the doctor's house lasted until the early 1830s. By that time, Columbus was large enough and local traffic was bad enough to warrant the removal of the mound. Over the next several years the mound was removed. Since all of this took place before the invention of photography, there is no known surviving image of the Mound Street mound. But it is believed to have closely resembled the Grave Creek Mound in West Virginia—a mound which also once had a house at its crest.

When some local residents were not driving around the mound or plundering it for clay and artifacts, they undoubtedly sometimes wondered who had built it. And wonder is perhaps the correct word since the Mound Street mound—while larger than most—was by no means the only mound in the valley. When settlers arrived in Ohio they found literally thousands of mounds—big and little conical mounds, enclosures of all shapes and sizes, and even an occasional effigy of an animal of one sort or another. Over the next century, many if not most of these mounds were removed by farming, road construction or the rapid expansion of towns and cities.

Several mounds were located in what is now downtown Columbus. Late in the 1800s, longtime local resident Joseph Sullivan remembered that, when he was young, there were still two small mounds near the place where COSI and Veterans Memorial Auditorium is today on the west side of the Scioto. And there was a mound where the Arena District is today. All were removed by the 1830s.

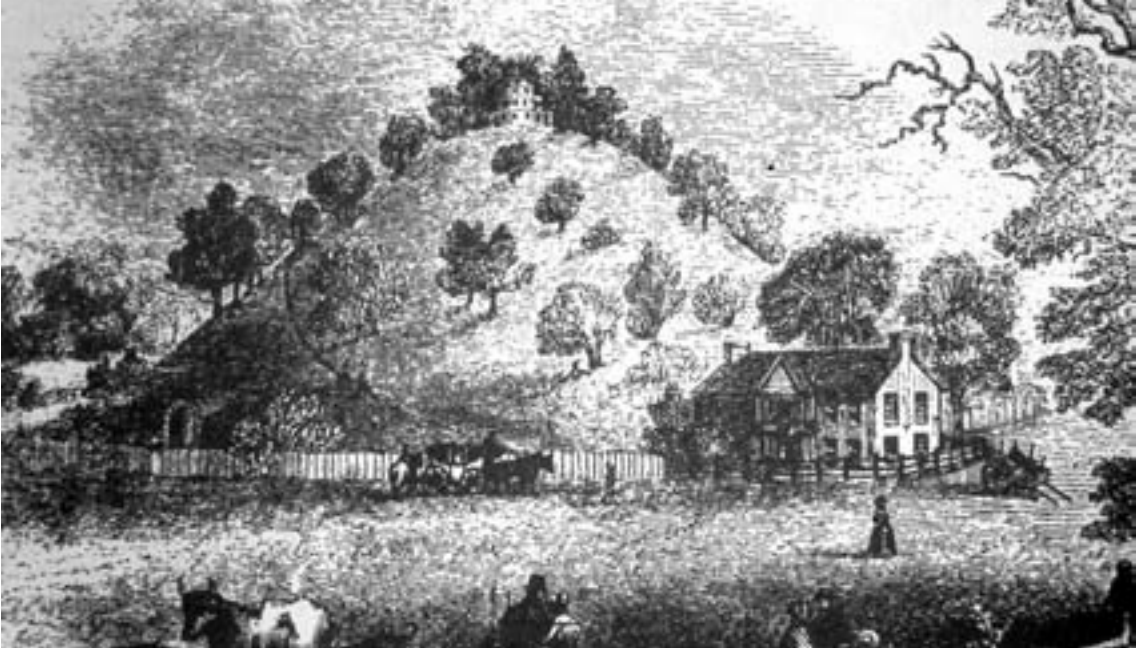
In the years before the emergence of archeology as a profession, there were all sorts of speculative ideas about who these mound builders might be. Perhaps the Aztecs or Mayans had made it to Ohio and lacking stone built their large mounds with dirt. Perhaps Viking explorers had built them or Egyptian sailors blown off course and looking to remind themselves of the pyramids they would never see again. It was even seriously proposed that the ten lost tribes of Israel might be responsible.

Perhaps the only people not proposed as mound builders were the Native Americans whom the new American settlers were slowly but surely removing and sending away from their longtime homes in Ohio. What we know today is that the Mound Builders were a diverse and interesting group of people. We also know that all of them were Native Americans and we know how they built their mounds.

But there is much we still do not know.

About one thousand years before the current era, the long generations of hunter-gatherer peoples decided to settle down. Why they did and precisely when they did is still a subject of considerable and often acrimonious debate.

For whatever sets of reasons—and there may have been differing reasons for different groups—the Native American peoples of Ohio began to build villages of greater or lesser size and stay in one place for lengthy periods of time. Archeologists have found remnants of enough of these villages to form some opinions as to how these people lived. Unlike our common image of Native Americans living in large groups in wigwam like tents, the Native Americans of Ohio built sturdy structures anchored on wooden poles



planted in the ground and then covered with layers of bark for walls and roofing. Many of these structures were built and rebuilt and stayed on the same site for decades. And at least at first, these people did not live in large villages but rather in small groups of houses probably occupied by people linked by kinship and acquaintance.

But most of what we have learned of these people has come not from their village sites but from their monuments, ceremonial sites and cemeteries—cemeteries in the form of mounds. We have come to call these people the Mound Builders mostly because we do not know what they called themselves.

Around five hundred years before the current era a group of residents of central Ohio began the funerary practice of constructing burial mounds for their dead. As more people were buried in a mound, new layers of earth were added and the mounds became larger. Because one of the first of these mounds to be carefully excavated was located at Adena, the Chillicothe home of Governor Thomas Worthington, the builders of the mound came to be called the Adena people.

The Adena were not the first people in the Midwest to build mounds. But the Adena people took up the practice and built more elaborate mounds and mounds with more extensive ceremonial sites associated with them.

By one hundred years before the current era the Adena people had been superseded by a new culture that came to be called the Hopewell. The Hopewell people were named for the farmer in Chillicothe on whose land their remains were found. There are still differing opinions as to whether the Adena and Hopewell were two separate peoples or simply one people passing through a period of cultural change.

In any case, the Hopewell had a much more elaborate sense of the ceremonial. Their towns were larger, their ceremonial centers like Newark and Chillicothe were extensive, and their use of a variety of items from distant locations—obsidian from Oregon, shells from the Gulf of Mexico—is evidence of a well-developed trade network.

In time, the Hopewell yielded to yet other cultures. One of the most important of these was the Fort Ancient people who occupied the hilltop enclosure now called by that name in southwest Ohio. It appears that these later peoples were involved in lengthy conflicts as the people buried at their sites show evidence of disease and violence. Who exactly they were fighting and why is not completely clear.

What is clear is that by 1500 the age of the great Mound Builder societies had ended. Of the thousands of mounds that once dotted the landscape of Ohio, only several hundred remain. Some of the best known like



Above: Mound Street is named for a large mound that once stood in the intersection of that street with High Street in downtown Columbus. Removed in the 1830s, it was said to have resembled the Grave Creek Mound in West Virginia—shown here in 1848.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Below: The Native American cultures of Central Ohio produced exquisite pieces of ceremonial art. A notable example is the Adena Pipe at the Ohio Historical Society.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH PHOTO ARCHIVES.





Fort Ancient in Warren County and Serpent Mound in Adams County are preserved as historic sites. In fact Fort Ancient was the first park acquired by the State of Ohio in 1896. In central Ohio, two of the best preserved sites are the Jeffers Mound near Worthington and the Shrum Mound on McKinley Avenue. And hidden in the woods in the southbound interchange of Route 315 and Bethel road is a small mound. At the time of construction the entire freeway was shifted a bit to accommodate the mound. One of the men who insured the survival of the mound later said that it seemed like the right thing to do.

THE NEW PEOPLE

The story of central Ohio in the years between 1500 and 1650 is lost in historical darkness. The Mound Builder cultures of the Adena, Hopewell and Fort Ancient had faded away and it is not fully clear what happened next. Probably some of the groups living in the state were the ancestors of tribes who would also be around later. But European explorers—especially literate ones—would not come into the Ohio valley until well into



the 1600s. It is the people encountered by those explorers, traders, trappers, frontiersmen and priests who would be remembered as the historic Indian tribes of Ohio.

What we do know is that by 1600, a confederation of Native Americans called the Erie had come to occupy much of the southern shore of the lake that bears their name. The Erie's neighbors to the east were a recently established confederacy of five previously warring tribes along the Mohawk River valley in New York. Calling themselves Haudenosaunee or People of the Long House, these people were often called Iroquois by both friend and foe alike.

Finally exasperated by continued conflict with the Erie, the Iroquois swept out of New York and virtually annihilated the Erie in a series of pitched battles. Having defeated their enemies, the Iroquois took most of the rest of what is now Ohio and part of Indiana and held it as their own private preserve for most of the next century.

But by the early 1700s, the Iroquois were feeling some pressure of their own. Beginning with the travels of Jacques Cartier in 1534, French explorers were traveling up the

St Lawrence River to the Great Lakes. At the same time English colonization was proceeding apace along the Atlantic coast. Responding to the growing proximity of both the English and the French, the Iroquois increasingly withdrew from Ohio to protect their homeland.

Into the empty Ohio Country left by the Iroquois came a number of people from many different places. Into western Ohio from Indiana came the Miami or Twightee people.

From the east came the Delaware or Leni Lenape people. These were the people who had met William Penn when he founded Pennsylvania in 1681. Their villages would extend all the way west to the county immediately north of Columbus.

From the north came the archenemies of the Iroquois, another Algonquin people called the Hurons by their French friends. They called themselves "wendat" and that name would become the Wyandot or Wyandotte that they came to be called in Ohio. Their villages occupied most of northwest Ohio and extended as far south as northern Franklin County and even to what is now Columbus.



Opposite, top: Fort Ancient, Ohio's first state park.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH PHOTO ARCHIVES.

Opposite, bottom: Located along McKinley Avenue in Columbus, the Shrum Mound is maintained by the Ohio Historical Society. It is believed to be a burial mound of the Adena people.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH PHOTO ARCHIVES.

Above: The Jeffers Mound near Worthington, Ohio, is a Hopewell mound from 100 BC to 400 AD. It originally stood within a rectangular enclosure with two adjacent circular enclosures. Quite well preserved, it now is in the midst of a residential area.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ED LENTZ.



Any place where two major rivers come together will eventually attract people as well. Yet the confluence of the Olentangy and Scioto Rivers was remarkably free of people as late as 1908 when this picture was made.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN LIBRARY.

The Iroquois were not completely gone from Ohio. Much of the northeastern part of the state was still controlled by the Senecas, one of the five tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy. And scattered across the state were random bands of Iroquois who chose not to formally associate with the Confederacy. These people came to be called Mingo and they also had villages in various parts of central Ohio.

And then there were the Shawnee. They came to occupy most of the Scioto River valley from what is now Columbus to the Ohio River.

These were the people who had come to occupy Ohio by 1750. It is important to remember that there were not all that many of them. Although no one was taking a census at the time, it has been estimated that there were approximately 20,000 people living in Ohio at the time. And of those people, about 10,000 were Shawnee.

Interestingly, these relatively recent arrivals were also the people who gave many of the places in the state the names we still use today. “Ohio” is a variation of an Iroquois word meaning “great river.” “Scioto” is a word a little more difficult to define. Its root is a Wyandot

word meaning “deer.” And the word Olentangy is probably the most elusive of all. It was originally called “Keenhongsheconsepung” or “Knife Stone Creek” by the Delawares because sharpening stones could be found within it. In fact the river is still called Whetstone Creek in the counties north of Columbus.

In 1833, possibly as a gesture to the Indian tribes it had spent a generation evicting from the state, the Ohio General Assembly decided to return a number of rivers to their original Native American names. Perhaps despairing of calling it by its former name, the Assembly settled the more easily pronounceable “Olentangy”—the original name of Big Darby Creek—on the river to the north. Olentangy is a word of varied origins. It has been variously translated as “river of red face paint” and “river at rest” depending on the language one consults. Certainly red ochre face paint sources can be found along the upper reaches of the Big Darby. And compared to other nearby streams, it is today a comparatively restful waterway.

But in the mid 1700s, none of the waterways were all that restful and soon many of them would run red and not with face paint. After a generation of peace, the Ohio frontier was about to become a very dangerous place indeed.



CHAPTER II

FRONTIER CONFLICT

A CONTINENTAL CONTEST

In the years after 1700, the powerful Iroquois Confederacy had withdrawn slowly from the Ohio Country to meet the challenges of French and English incursions into their New York homeland. What had followed was a generation of peace as a number of tribes had moved into the rich and bountiful lands north of the Ohio River and had generally avoided conflict among themselves or with outsiders.

Now, in the 1740s all of that was about to end. Wars had come and gone before among America's Native American peoples. But they were brief conflicts following rather strict rules of how warriors behaved one to another. Total destruction of communities as the Iroquois had done to the Erie was rare and usually was the climax of decades of conflict.

Now a new kind of warfare was coming to Ohio. It pitted Europeans against each other and it also would lead to attacks by Native Americans of differing loyalties against other tribes. And finally it would lead to the destruction of entire communities of both Europeans and Native Americans. In short it was war with little mercy for both Native America and colonial settlers. And it would not end for more than sixty years.

It began for the seemingly most trivial of reasons. By the 1740s, Europeans of one sort or another—English, French, Spanish and several other nationalities—had been settling on the various edges of the Americas for more than 200 years. And generally they had left each other alone. They were able to ignore the presence of people they might not have liked very much because the country was vast and generally the newcomers were few in number.



English and French North America clashed violently at Pickawillany near what is now Piqua, Ohio, in 1752. Recent archeological research at the site is beginning to reveal the layout of a frontier village and trading post. A local marker reads:

PICKAWILLANY
 LOCATED ONE MILE NORTH OF THIS MEMORIAL
 HEADQUARTERS OF THE MIAMI TRIBES
 FIRST ENGLISH SETTLEMENT
 AND THE MOST IMPORTANT
 TRADING POST IN THE WEST
 1748
 DESTROYED BY THE FRENCH
 1752
 MARKED BY THE PIQUA CHAPTER
 DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ED LENTZ.

For more than a generation, English “long hunters” had been threading their way through the passes in the mountains and making a modest living by laboriously bringing the furs and skins of the animals they had killed back over the mountains to sell in the East. But their numbers were few. When caught by the French or their Native American friends, their furs were confiscated and the men sent away.

But now, in the 1740s, French traders began to notice that the numbers of Englishmen in Ohio were increasing and they were not simply hunting for a while and leaving. Some of the newcomers were traders and they were building trading posts as if they had right to do so—as if they had come to stay.

To the Comte de Galissoniere, the Governor General of French Canada, such English effrontery was simply unacceptable. In 1748, he ordered Captain Celoron de Blainville to take a force of French and Indians and secure the Ohio valley for France. With more than 200 French and Canadian irregulars and fifty of their Native American allies, Captain de Blainville proceeded to his task in the summer of 1749.

Following the Allegheny River south to its junction with the Monongahela to form the Ohio, Blainville forcefully exhorted every Englishman he met—and he met several—to leave what he considered French territory at once. To reinforce the point, his party also buried a series of lead plates at the places where a number of major rivers emptied into the Ohio. The buried plate and a similar sign nailed to a nearby tree said that the place belonged to France. Reaching the Great Miami River, the party turned north and

stopped briefly at a settlement of Miami Indians near what is now Piqua, Ohio. Among the residents of Pickawillany town were several English traders. Captain de Blainville ordered them to leave but he had little reason to believe that they would.

Over the next few years, the English continued to come down the Ohio River and the French continued to try to get them to leave. Finally, in 1752, the French decided that enough was enough. A party of 300 French and Indians led by Pierre de Langlede swept into Ohio and burned Pickawillany to the ground. Several of the attackers seized the leader of the village—a man unfortunately nicknamed “Old Britain” by his English friends. To emphasize the point that aiding the English was unwise, the Indian allies of the French killed Old Britain and ate him.

Pickawillany was not rebuilt.

But the English continued to arrive in the Ohio valley. The French responded with the construction of a series of new forts from the Great Lakes to the Ohio River. The most important of these was built where the Ohio River began. It was called Fort Duquesne and occupied land claimed variously by Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the King of England.

In 1754, the Royal Governor of Virginia sent a young officer named George Washington with several hundred men to order the French to leave English territory. Washington’s mission resulted in a pitched battle between Washington’s small army and a much larger French force. Washington surrendered and in short order a major struggle between France and England was underway. It came to be called the French and Indian War. When it was over in 1763, Great Britain had won control of North America—or so it seemed.

A number of the Native American residents of the Ohio valley did not like the idea that the French were leaving and the British were taking their place. Many of them, at least loosely affiliated with a charismatic Ottawa leader named Pontiac, rose in revolt in 1763 and began to attack every recently occupied British fort they could find. Soon only Fort Detroit and Fort Pitt (formerly fort Duquesne) were still under British control.



Many of the people living in North America—as well as their European friends—had little idea what eastern North America looked like when John Mitchell published his large map of the area in 1755. It would remain the standard map of the region for many years.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

