

The First Settlers

This is a history and if one uses the word “**first**” we have to go back to the first and it wasn’t who many people think. Actually we don’t even know the names of the first settlers. We know that the last ice age was over and they were humans like us and things had warmed up enough for these Paleo-Indian People to follow the Barren Ground Caribou to Michigan which still had the tundra climate. This was around 12,000 years before present. They were camping in Macomb County near 16 Mile Road and Maple Lane 11,000 years before present. What a harsh existence they had



with frigid temperatures year around. No Houses or electricity. No modern conveniences as we have. And all around barren moss-lichen covered ground with no trees. Where billions of mosquitoes bred in the endless melt areas that form in the cold summer that melt the surface water but the year around perma-frost keeps that water at the surface. Animals were very few Caribou (reindeer), birds, fox, mice, musk ox, Arctic hare, Arctic fox, snowy owl, lemmings. They had to make shelters of animal pelts and bones. Any cooking that was done was done outside. But how would one start a fire and what would they burn. Answer is that there was lots of dead moss around. Flint and steel would be my boy scout answer but there was no steel which leaves fire bow. So these first ones had it extremely tough.

But the climate gradually warmed and the Taiga gradually formed. It is the world's largest land biome. You can still see it in the Northern Michigan and Canada above 45th parallel. It is much like our present forests which have many more broad leaf trees and warmer weather plants. Caribou were replaced by moose, elk, deer, black bear buffalo, beaver, racoons, opossums, wolves, squirrels, chipmunks and warmer climate birds. These Indians built houses out of bark and smaller shelters from animal hides. They hunted all of the above animals gathered berries, wild rice, nuts and other natural foods and they fished in the many streams which were no longer frozen all year. In the last few hundred years since (The Middle Woodland Period) they also learned how to grow their own crops of corn, squash, beans. They usually lived in peace amongst themselves but were always part of a tribe and the tribes were often at war with one another. Indians were very superstitious and always lived in fear of being attacked by warriors from other tribes. They often built walls of poles around their villages to keep attackers out. They had to be constantly vigilant against attacks.



Although the vast majority of Indians are now gone we still had in the 1950s a few Indians selling medicines and goodies. And we have 2,646 Indians in Several Indian tribes in Michigan with their own governments. They also run casinos and hold Pow Wows yearly.

Virtually all of them live, look and dress like the rest of us. Usually the only time you see them in feathers is at pow wows. The picture at the right may be the last Indian house in the area. It is the structure to the left of the tepee. This was in St Clair Shores around 1900. By the way most Michigan Indians used huts made of animal skins or bark not tepees. Tepees were mainly used by plains Indians. But after 1860 other Indians found out about Tepees and started using them as they could control the heat and ventilation with the flaps and were easy to transport.



The DVD has more on Indians on pages 15, 16 and a big section starting on page 315 and you will find many good books on Indians in Libraries.

The second group of settlers were here in the time of French and British who settled in the area mostly in Detroit and along the Lake St Clair. Among these were our famous Grosbecks of which Charles was the first registered settler in Warren on section 33 in 1830. The Grosbecks actually owned a lot of the farms along Lake St Clair and later a lot of acreage in Warren. He was followed by Charles Rivard a relative, on section 35 in 1831 at the NW corner of 12 and Mound. Why did they pick those spots. The answer was that those areas had good soil, were near streams, probably had ground cover suitable for their needs and was on the main road (at time more of a trail)..