

Which Native Americans Really Lived in Lake County? **Tracking these Ancient Peoples**



This month's topic is one with which I have very little firsthand experience or extensive knowledge. But what piqued my interest in sharing this Lake County gem derives from multiple local experiences over many years. I have taken and led numerous hikes at **Indian Point** (upper) for Lake Metroparks since 2012, immersed in the natural landscape that surrounded the native peoples who once hunted here.



I've enjoyed tours of the **Indian Museum of Lake County**. In the 1980s, I saw the original collection at Lake Erie College in Painesville under the direction of founder Gwen King. My more recent visit was with current director Ann Dewald after the expanded collection moved to its Willoughby Union High School site (2006-2016). This remarkable museum, with a dedicated all-volunteer staff, just celebrated its 42nd anniversary, and is now located at **7519 Mentor Avenue, Suite A112, in Mentor**.

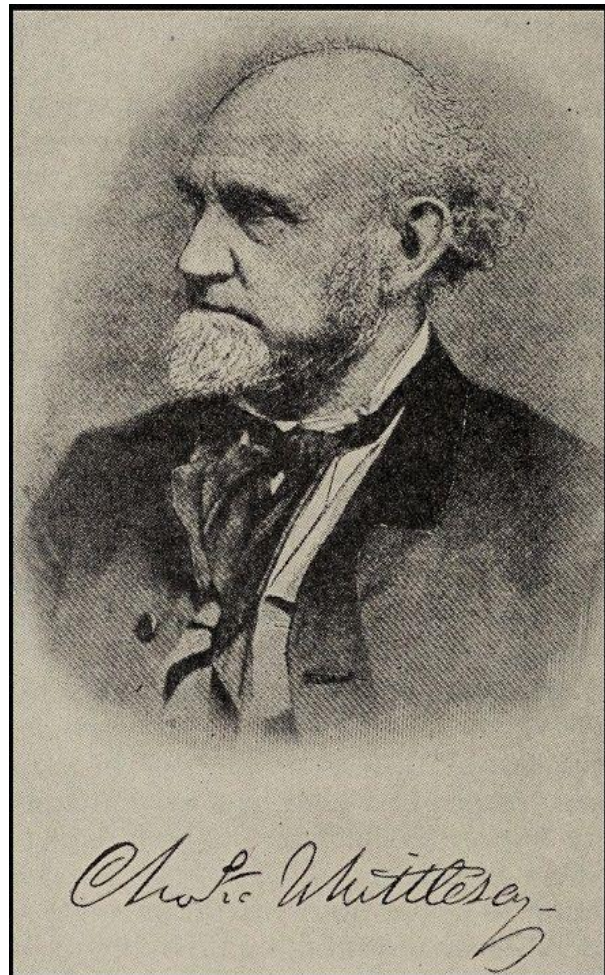
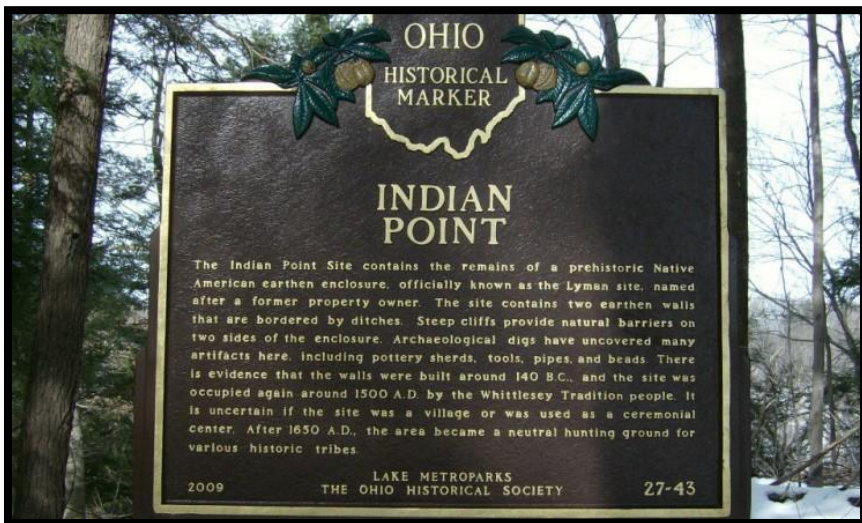


An August vacation to Ottawa and Quebec City and their reverence for First Nations culture, coupled with a Friends of Morley Library book sale purchase of Gwen King's 1991 work, **Indians of Ohio**, led me to this contribution. I hope I do our county and its earliest settlers justice.

Migrations of people came by foot into what is now Ohio after the Wisconsin Glacier retreated (c.12,000 B.C. - 6,000 B.C.). Archeologists gave them the name **Paleo Indians**, not a tribal name but instead a culture within a time period. The next group known as the **Archaic people** dates back from 6,000 B.C. to 1500 B.C. Next came the **Mound Builders** also known as the **Adena** around 1000 B.C. The **Hopewell**, also Mound Builders circa 600 A.D., followed. At their peak, the Hopewell peoples mysteriously disappeared. The last major culture to live along Lake Erie were known as the **Whittlesey** and their histories are found in Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, Cuyahoga, Lorain, Huron,

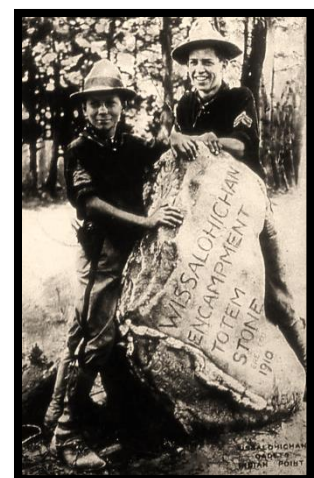
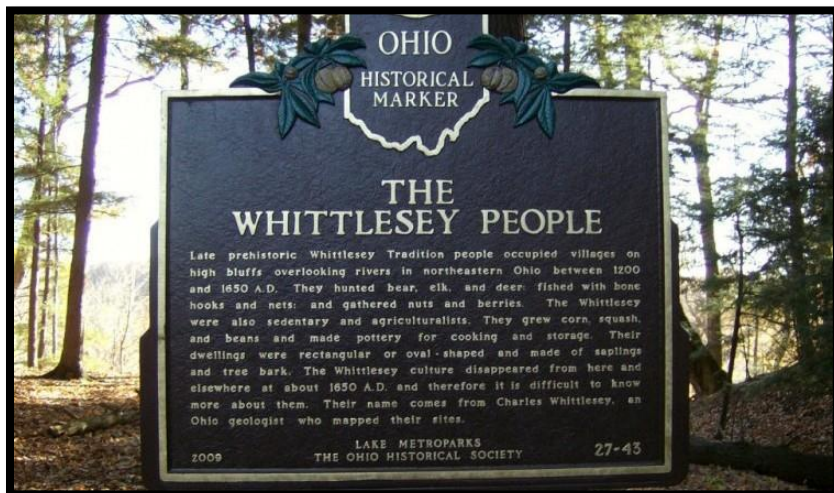
Sandusky, Ottawa and Lucas counties. Other cultures are thought to have been present, but that can be left for another installment. Also, I leave detailed histories of these hunters, gatherers, agriculturists, and builders for others more knowledgeable to highlight.

**Archeological Sites in Northeastern Ohio:
Indian Point Site / Ohio Historic Marker 27-43**



Located east of Painesville where Paine Creek joins the Grand River, were found traces of the Whittlesey people. They were named after Charles Whittlesey, an Ohio geologist who mapped their sites. They inhabited this area on the east end of a 100-foot

ridge sometime circa 1200-1600 A.D. These Mound Builders erected a fortification there. Two parallel earthworks, 3' x 5' high, 8' deep and 150' long, still remain. These peoples mainly cultivated crops; but archeological digs have uncovered artifacts that include sherds (bits of pottery), tools, pipes and beads. This spot may be found on the former Charles A. Lyman site, now a Lake Metropark, 13165 Seeley Road in Leroy Township. Here is the picturesque landscape:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwv5h7je-lc>

The Reeve Village Site – Along Reeve’s Road in Willoughby & Eastlake, Ohio

In 1877, Charles Whittlesey, while on his quest for earthworks, found two walls of soil on a river bluff along Willoughby’s Reeve’s Road. Fast forward to 1929, when the area owned by Dr. George N. Reeve, saw local residents recall that such a walled site did exist and portions had fallen into the lake. This led to a 1929 Ohio



Archeological Society effort, under the auspices of Richard Morgan, Warren Stevens and William Rygg, to uncover implements similar to those found in nearby Fairport Harbor. 56 celts (long, thin Stone Age axes), antler flints, scrapers (27), net sinkers (27), knives (25), awls (107) and other types of artifacts such as musical instruments, sherds and pipes were recorded. The **Cleveland Natural History Museum** sent James L. Murphy to carbon date the site, much as he had done earlier at Indian Point.

<https://www.lakemetroparks.com/parks-trails/chagrin-river-park/>

Fairport Harbor Village Site

Found on the Grand River, on the east side of East Street, about 3/4 mile from the railroad crossing, it occupies just over an acre. The site was excavated in 1937 by the **Department of Archeology of Ohio State University**, with

local assistance provided by **Fairport Harding High School** staff and students. Richard G. Morgan and H. Holmes Ellis were principal fact-finders. Flint knives, scrapers, pestles, awls, diorite celts (stone axes), pipes, canine teeth necklaces, pendants and stone ornaments were carefully unearthed. Some of the artifacts remain in Fairport Harbor in the collections found at the lighthouse museum.

Experience It Firsthand!

These three Lake County sites indicate that Native Americans, First Nations or simply the first inhabitants of Lake County were settlers, builders, creators and part of an indelible footprint that is our county.

As the fall colors reach their zenith, take a hike at the Metroparks Indian Point location in Leroy Township to imagine the world they occupied. And while a small portion of the Fairport dig is on display in the Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum, it is a visit to the Indian Museum of Lake County that will totally immerse you in this period of our history. The heart of Ann Dewald's collection centers around three distinct experiences: The Whittlesey Culture; the 1973 Reeve Village site dig; and hands-on experiences from the museum's collections that total 1000 books, periodicals, and more than 60,000 artifacts of all shapes and sizes. There are also regular visits by Native American speakers and additional special programming. Lake County's evolving history is there to witness or experience. Enjoy another hidden treasure in Ohio's smallest county with the most history.



Sources: *What Indians Lived in Ohio*, Gwen King, 1991, News-Herald articles, 2006, 2016; Fairport Harbor Historical Society archives; **Indian Museum of Lake County – 7519 Mentor Ave. Suite A112 (Colonial Plaza) – Mentor, Ohio. Hours: 10-4 M-F; 1-4 pm Sat.-Sun.**





Formation of the Great Lakes - <https://lakeheadca.com/events-education/geology/glacial-lakes-history-1>

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