

The Hopewell Culture

Who were the Hopewell?

The Hopewell were a group of Native American that lived in Ohio from around 150 B.C. - A.D. 500. This time period follows the time when the Adena culture lived and precedes the Fort Ancient culture. They were given the name Hopewell after a man by the name of M.C. Hopewell who owned a farm that contained many mounds that were excavated to yield many artifacts.

How did they live?

The Hopewell people were hunters and gatherers, getting food from the natural environment, but they also farmed to raise corn, squash and sunflowers. Archeological studies of artifacts reveal that the Hopewell culture traded extensively to get copper, mica, pearls and obsidian from different parts of the country. They used these materials with local materials to make ornaments, jewelry and tools. They also used clay to make pottery. They showed an advancement over earlier cultures by their craftsmanship, making copper beads, headdresses and breastplates, pearl necklaces, carved soapstone pipes, and mica and slate ornaments. It appears that they created their culture by adapting to the surroundings and incorporating influences from the earlier Adena culture and Mexican cultures.

Mound Building

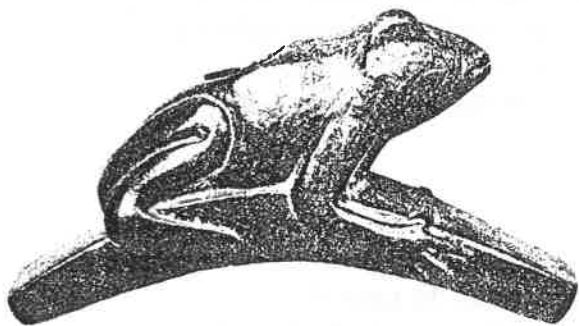
The Hopewell built mounds to bury some of their dead. Each mound may have included several bodies along with ornaments and tools. Some of the mounds contained quite elaborate graves with many artifacts suggesting the importance of the people buried. The earlier Adena culture also formed mounds, but they included many more individuals added over time with few artifacts in each mound. Evidence suggests that the Hopewell might not have lived near the mounds they created, but that they traveled to the burial sites and buried their dead together at once. Most of the dead were cremated, though perhaps the most important people were buried in the flesh. The Hopewell created many kinds of mounds, from simple flat-topped mounds to great moundworks shaped like serpents and geometric shapes.

The End of the Hopewell

We don't know for certain what caused the Hopewell culture to be lost after the 6th century, but it could have been caused by invasion of other cultures, disease or famine. Certainly though, their culture influenced others that succeeded them until the present period.



31 Gooseneck effigy pipe from Hopewell Mound Group. Courtesy Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

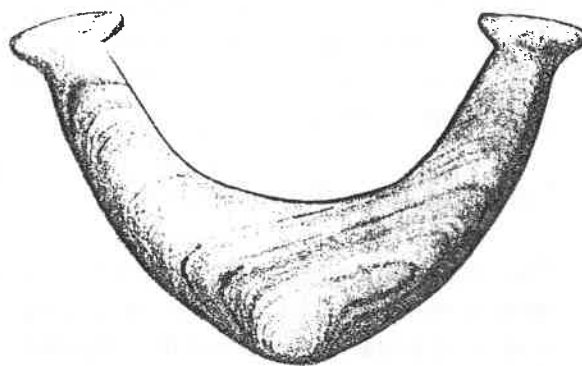
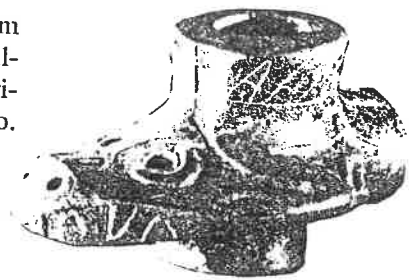


32 Frog effigy pipe, Hopewell culture. Courtesy Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York.

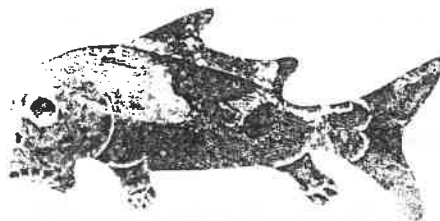
33 Owl effigy pipe, Hopewell culture. Courtesy Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York.



34 Alligator effigy pipe from Esch Mound. Hopewell culture. Courtesy Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.



35 Bannerstone, Hopewell culture. Courtesy Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York.



36 Copper fish, Hopewell culture. Courtesy Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.



Figure 13. Hopewell craftsmen produced artistic cut-outs from thin sheets of mica. The mica was probably obtained from the middle Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina. These silhouettes — likenesses of a human hand, a projectile point, and the talon of a bird of prey — are from mounds in the Hopewell Group. (Ohio Historical Society photograph.)