

YOUNG PEOPLE'S GUIDE TO SOUTH DAKOTA ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology is the study of ancient people. Archaeologists examine artifacts made and used by early people in order to discover how the people lived. The archaeologists very carefully excavate, or dig, materials from sites which have evidence of past human life. Some sites are whole cities and villages containing many types of artifacts. Other sites are small hunting camps which contain a few stone tools and bones.

Archaeologists have scientifically examined the artifacts from many sites in South Dakota. They have determined that several different groups of people with different ways of life or cultures have lived in the region.

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The first people who lived in North America probably moved here across an ancient land connection between present Siberia and Alaska. During the Ice Age, over 15,000 years ago, the oceans shrank and a bridge of land perhaps 1000 miles wide was exposed. Groups of

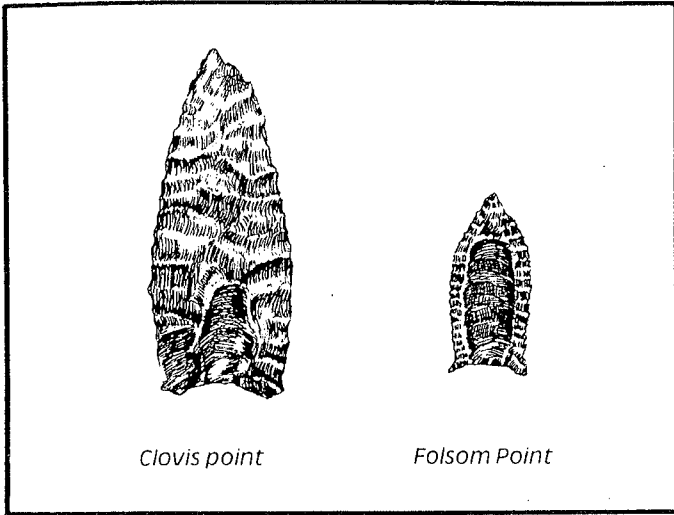
people followed game animals across this land and gradually entered the North American continent.

Little is known about the culture of these first Americans. Archaeological evidence shows that they knew how to use fire, had at least simple clothing and shelter, used stone scrapers to clean animal hides, and used wooden spears with stone points to hunt game. People first roamed the lands of South Dakota over 12,000 years ago.

The earliest American hunters are called Llano (yah'-no) people. Their sites are identified by the earliest known type of spear point, called the Clovis (klow'-vis) point. This point is a large spearhead and has been found with the bones of ancient mammoth, camel, horse, and bison. The Llano people probably chased these large game animals, one at a time, into lakes and swamps and used their Clovis spears to kill the trapped animal. A possible Llano mammoth kill and butchering site has been discovered in the Badlands of South Dakota.



Hunters of the Llano tradition probably drove mammoths into areas like swamps where they could not escape.



Clovis point

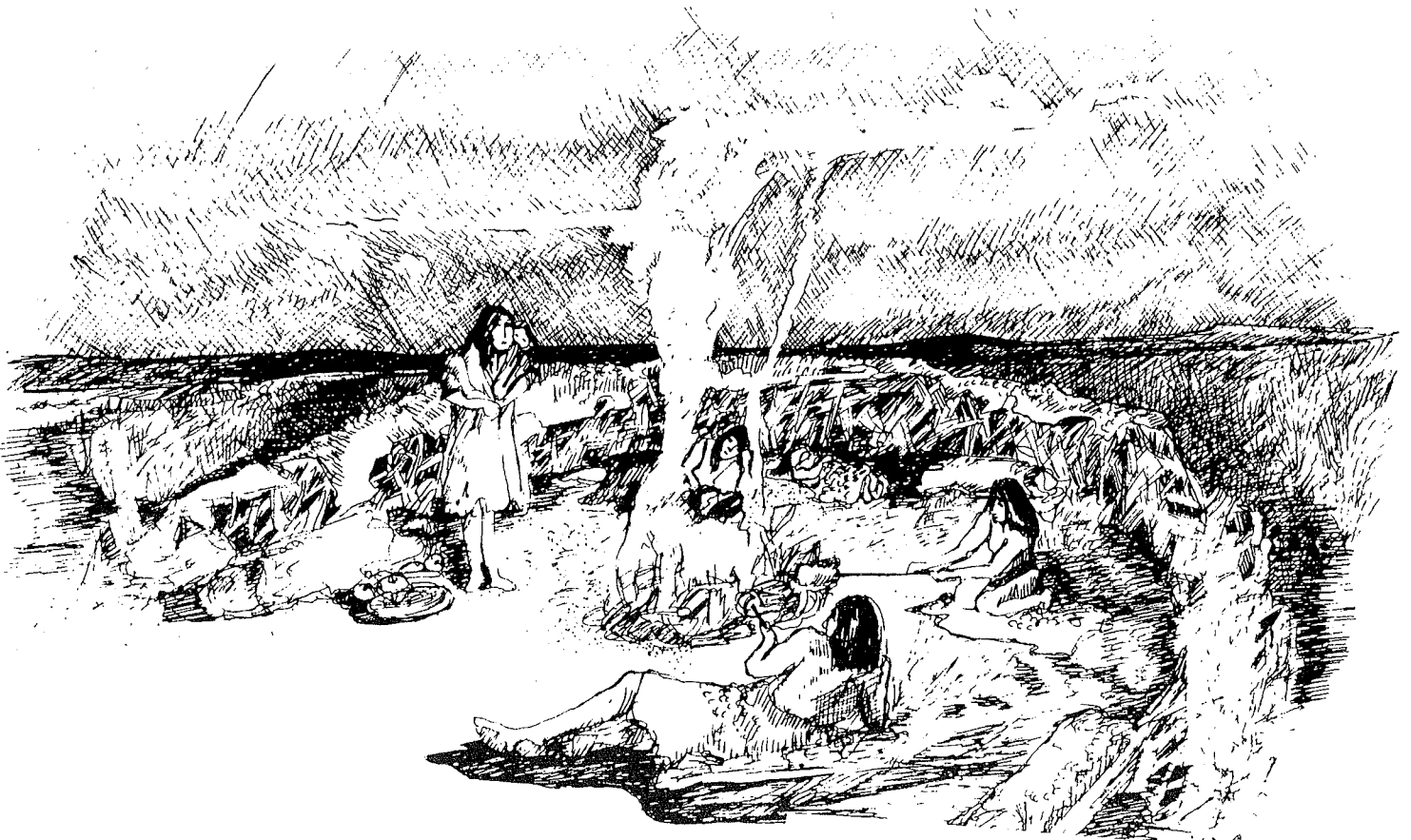
Folsom Point

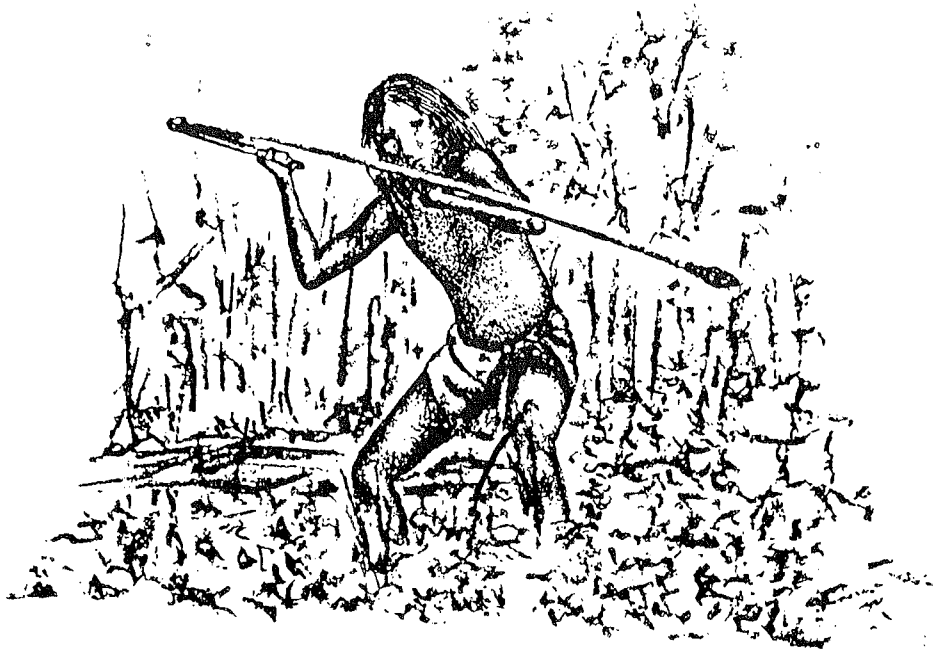
As the mammoth became scarce, giant bison were hunted by people of the Folsom (fole'-sum) tradition. The Folsom points were smaller and more delicately made than were Clovis spear points. Hunting patterns probably changed somewhat, for there is evidence at Folsom sites that herds of game animals were surrounded and then killed in large numbers rather than

individually as in Clovis times. Although no Folsom campsites have been found in South Dakota, a few scattered Folsom points have been found.

About 10,000 years ago, the Plano (plah'-no) tradition began. The Plano people used several kinds of projectile points. The large game animals of the earlier periods were disappearing, and small bison, more like the bison living today, were the main game animal. Plano hunters killed game by driving herds of bison over cliffs or into deep gullies. This hunting practice continued to be used by later groups as well. Archaeologists have excavated several Plano sites in South Dakota.

All three of these early groups, the Llano, the Folsom, and the Plano (all called Paleoindians) followed the migrating herds of animals and lived in temporary camps, perhaps even without shelters. The Paleoindians also gathered wild plants and berries to eat. They probably lived in small family units, but joined with other families to hunt. Over the several thousand years that the Paleoindians lived on the plains of North America, they learned to make better use of tools and the environment around them in order to survive.

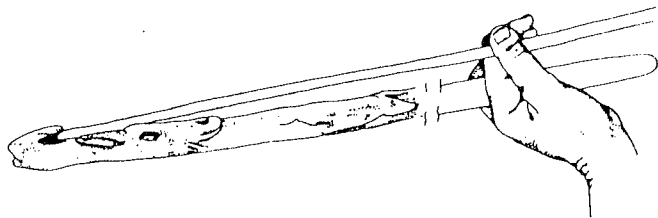




Hunter using spear thrower, with hook at end, to kill game.

About 8000 years ago, the climate of the plains began to change. The weather became hotter and drier, and many of the game animals became extinct. Other game animals moved away from the plains. The Paleoindian Big Game Hunters had to change their way of life and began fishing and gathering plants and shellfish along with their hunting in order to have enough food.

These people are called Archaic people. They invented a number of new tools to help them live in the plains. Archaic people used stone axes with wooden handles to cut trees and work wood. They made needles out of bone to help sew clothes. Archaic hunters used spears to hunt deer and other animals, and they used a spear thrower to help the spear move with more force.

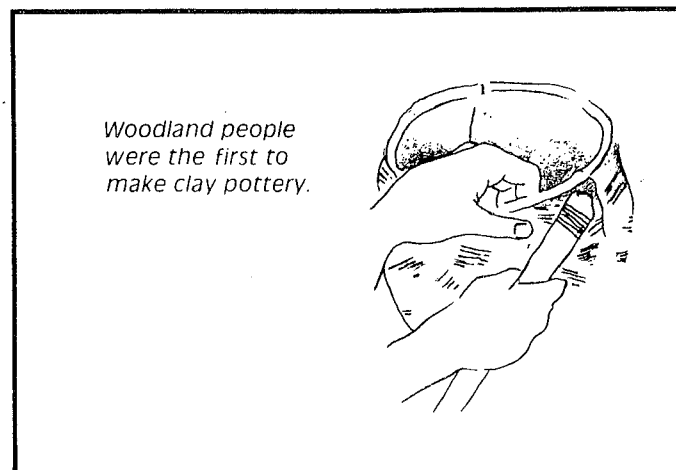


Close-up of spear thrower showing how it looked and how it was held.

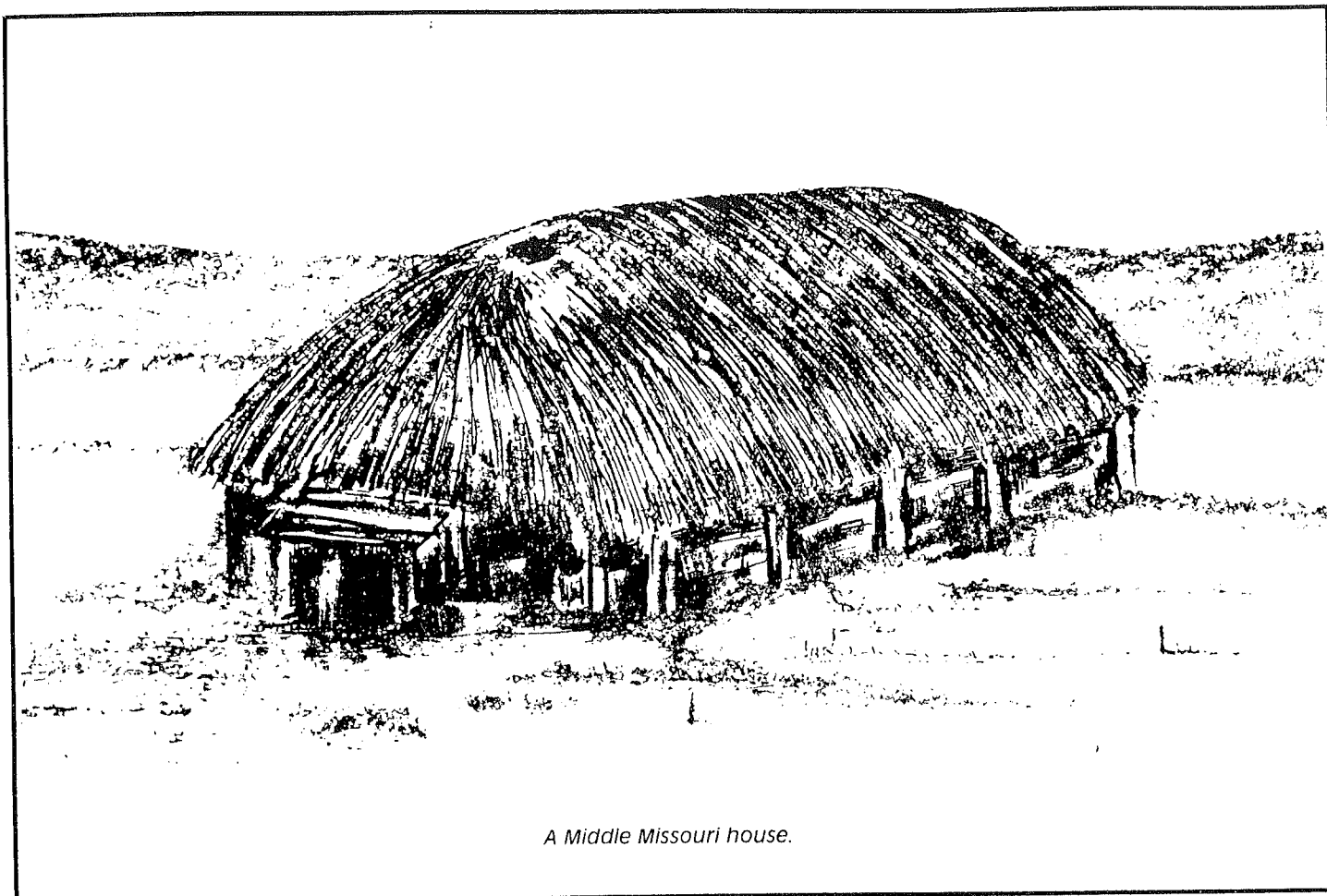
Archaic people used many plants for food and hunted many different kinds of game. The small bands of families roamed throughout the region, but often returned to favorite hunting, fishing, and gathering spots. Remains of Archaic people can be found throughout South Dakota.

About 3000 years ago, the Archaic people began to learn about new ideas and inventions. People in the great forests of eastern North America were inventing new ways to live. The Archaic people of South Dakota gradually accepted many of these new ideas.

Archaeologists call this new way of life the Woodland tradition. Woodland people in South Dakota hunted game with the bow and arrow. They made pots of clay for cooking food and for storing water and grain. Different designs and shapes of pottery tell archaeologists that there were several different groups of Woodland people in South Dakota. By about 1000 years ago, the Woodland people began some gardening along with their hunting. Woodland gardeners grew corn, beans, and squash. The Woodland people buried their dead in burial mounds. Burial mounds can still be seen in some places in South Dakota such as at Sherman Park in Sioux Falls.



Woodland people were the first to make clay pottery.



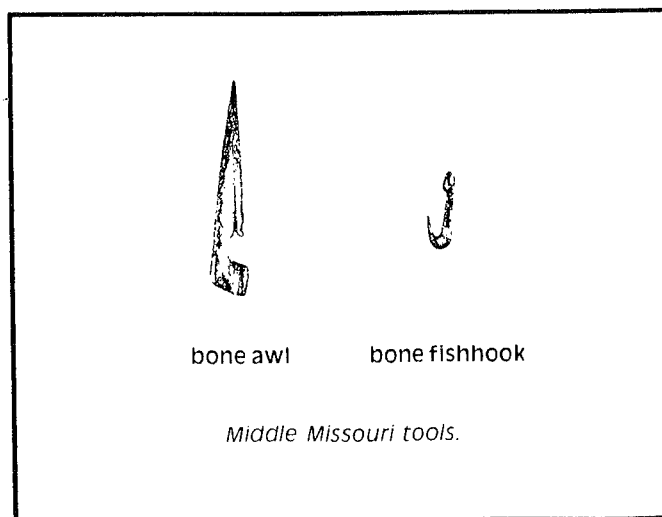
A Middle Missouri house.

When people began to garden, their lives changed. Men and women could stay in one place and no longer had to follow the herds of bison. They began to settle in villages. These village people have been named Plains Village people by archaeologists. The first Plains Village culture is called Middle Missouri. Families lived in rectangular houses partly dug into the ground. Walls were made of poles interwoven with sticks and were covered with mud. Roofs were covered with grass. Each house had a fireplace in the center, and storage pits called cache pits were dug into the floor. Food and other supplies were stored in these pits. When the pits became empty, they were used as garbage pits. Archaeologists learn many things about life in these villages by carefully excavating the remains in the cache pits.

Many different kinds of tools and pottery have been excavated from Middle Missouri sites. Middle Missouri hunters used the bow and arrow. Many different kinds of stone knives and scrapers were used to prepare hides. They also used stone tools for smoothing arrow shafts and grinding small points on bone awls. Many types of bone awls, used to punch holes in hides, have been found. A few fishhooks made of bone have

also been found. Sickles for harvesting crops were made from deer jawbones and garden hoes were made from bison shoulder blades. Middle Missouri people also used pottery, more rounded in shape than earlier Woodland styles.

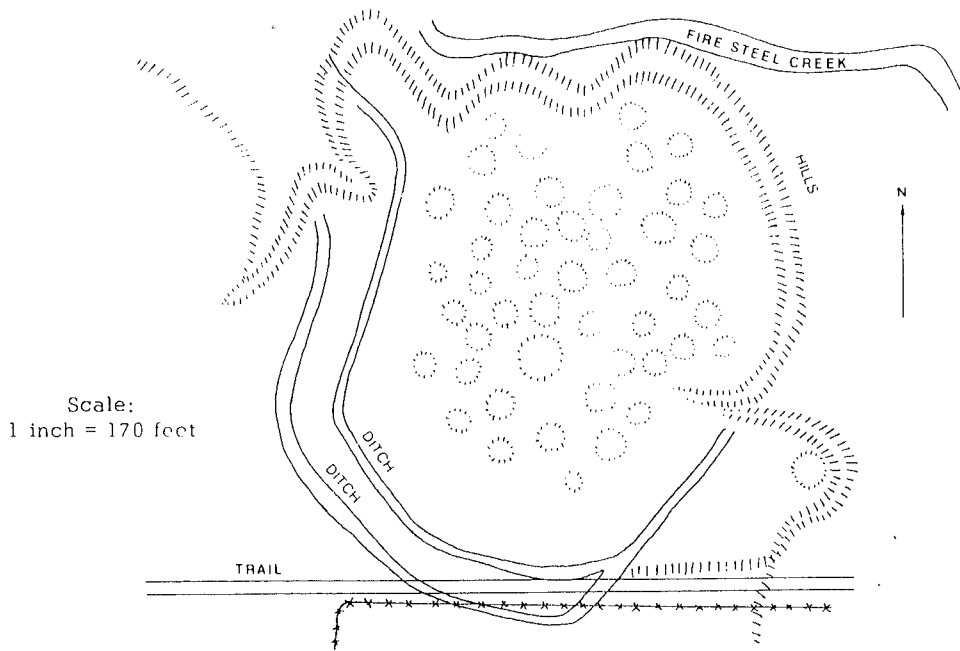
Most of the villages were built to be protected from enemies by having a river or hills on one or two sides. Villages were also protected by ditches, and sometimes had tall, fort-like fences.



bone awl

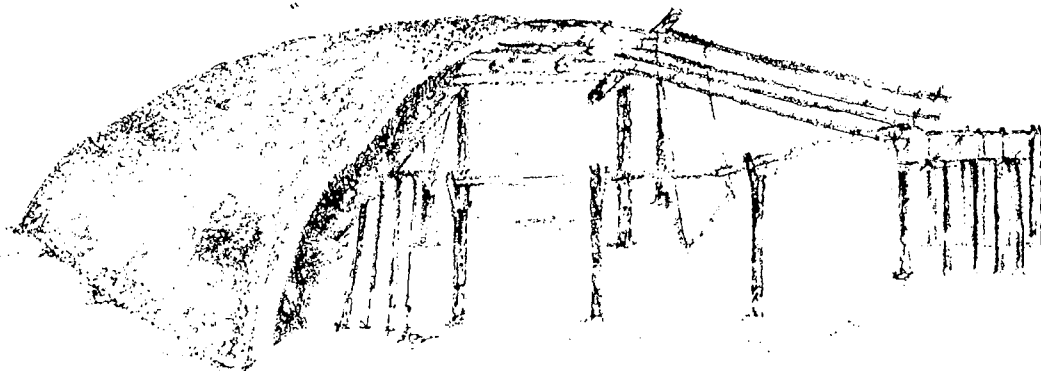
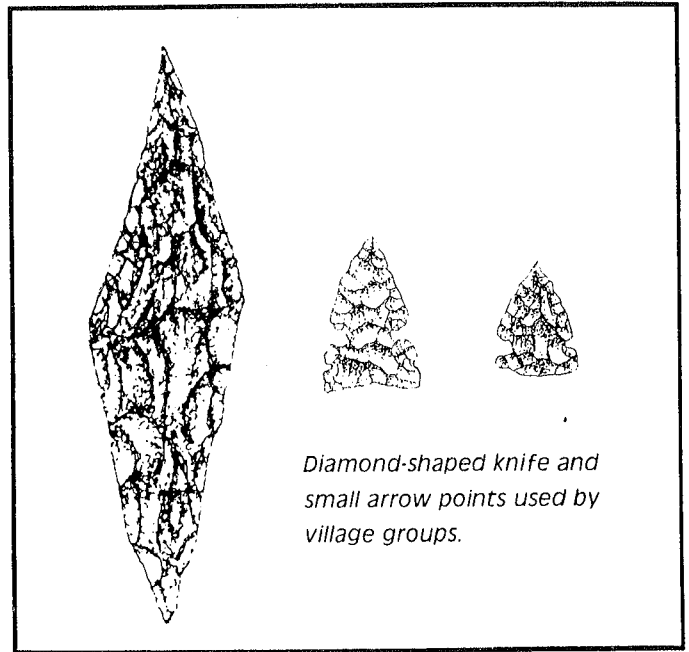
bone fishhook

Middle Missouri tools.



Map of the Mitchell village site showing the ditches, hills, and creek which protected it. The circles show where houses used to be.

Around 1150 to 1220 A.D. the climate of the Plains region to the south became drier, and some of the village gardeners from the Kansas-Nebraska region (called Central Plains people) moved north to the Missouri River. These new villagers brought a slightly different culture with them. As they gradually moved into South Dakota, they mixed their customs with the lifeways of the villagers already there. Houses of the new culture were round instead of rectangular but were also earth covered. As the two groups joined together, their styles of pottery blended. The southern people also brought pottery tobacco pipes and diamond-shaped knives to add to the tools used in the north.



A house of the new culture, cut away to show the poles inside.

By this time, there were a large number of people living along the rivers in South Dakota, and they had to work hard to hunt and grow enough food to keep from starving. There is evidence that sometimes one village fought another in order to get more valuable land and food. Archaeologists discovered a site in South Dakota, called the Crow Creek site, which contained the skeletons of almost 500 people, all buried in one large pile. Most of the skeletons had marks of warfare such as scalping and arrow wounds. Some archaeologists think that another group of village people killed the Crow Creek villagers to gain access to more land and food.

By the time European people began settling in North America, there had been a great number of cultural groups living in South Dakota. By the 1700's, when the United States of America was just being formed by settlers from Europe, the major group of people in the South Dakota region were Arikara, descendants of the earlier villagers. The Arikara were farmers and hunters living in villages similar to the earlier villages. Many of the Arikara people died of smallpox, and others moved to the north to live with other tribes.

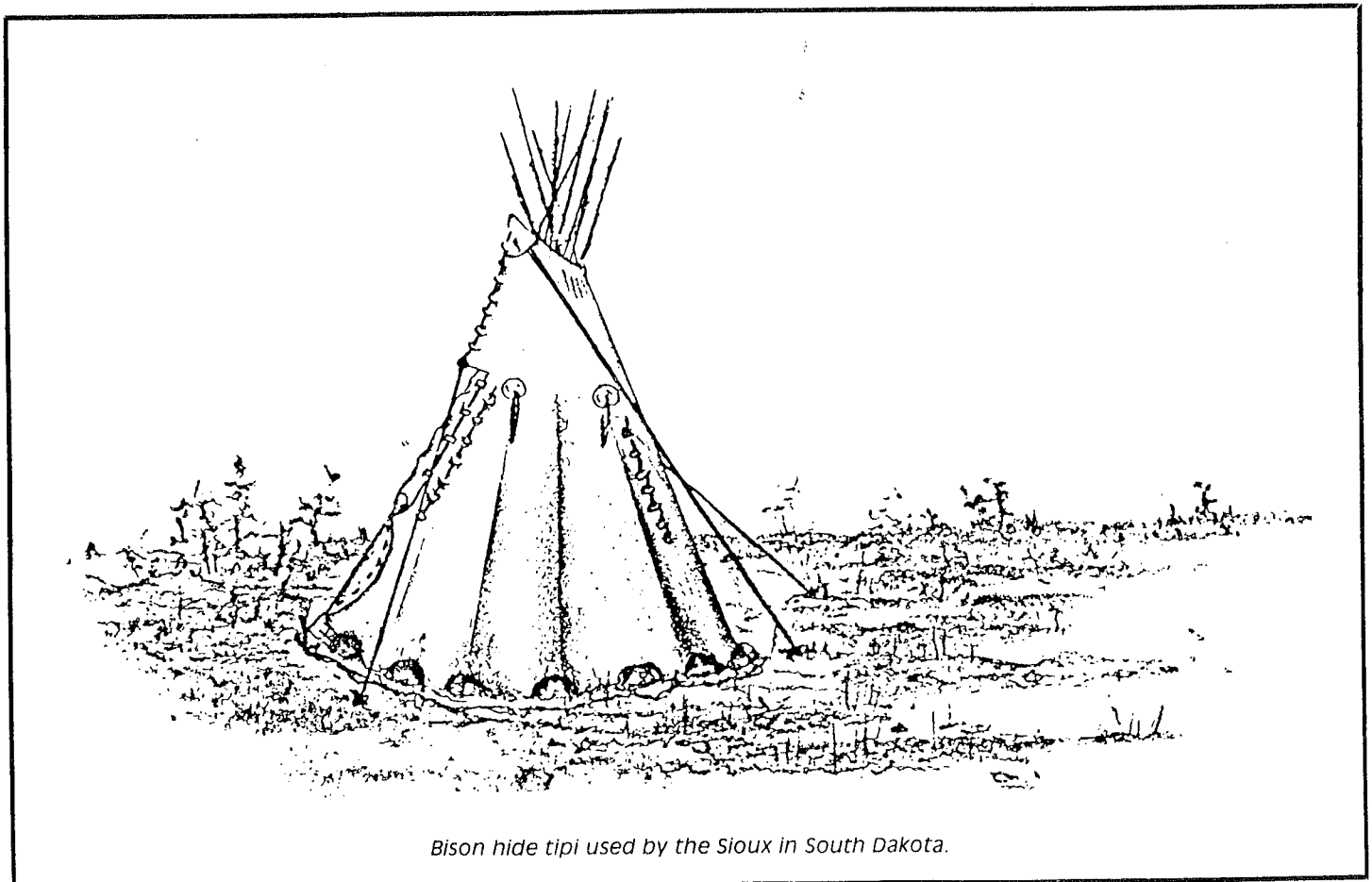
As Europeans formed their thirteen colonies into states and expanded their settlements, Indian groups from the east moved west. One of the groups to move into the South Dakota

region was the Sioux. The Sioux became nomadic hunters of bison. Indian groups, including the Sioux, gradually acquired guns and horses from the European settlers. With the guns and horses, the Sioux followed the bison herds, living in bison-skin tipis. The arrival of Europeans ended the time period called "prehistoric" by archaeologists.

Now South Dakota is the home of 600,000 people who are the descendants of many cultural groups. These cultures continue to live together and to adapt to the environment, forming new cultures for future archaeologists to study.

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You can help archaeologists save information about early people in South Dakota. If you find artifacts such as arrowheads, tell your teacher what you found and where you found it. Your teacher can then tell an archaeologist. Ask your teacher to teach about Indian groups, including the very early people of South Dakota. Tell your parents what you have learned about archaeology and the past cultures of South Dakota. You can visit an archaeological excavation in the summer at the Mitchell site in Mitchell, South Dakota, where you can watch the ongoing excavation of a village site.



Bison hide tipi used by the Sioux in South Dakota.

GLOSSARY

- ARCHAEOLOGY** (ar-key-all'-oh-jee): *The study of ancient people and the way they lived.*
- ARCHAIC** (ar-kay'-ick): *The culture which came after the Paleoindians.*
- ARTIFACT** (ar'-ti-fact): *Any tool or object made and used by people.*
- AWL** (aul): *A small pointed tool used to punch holes in animal hides so a needle could be used to sew the hides. Prehistoric needles were not sharp enough or sturdy enough to pierce hides.*
- CACHE PIT** (cash pit): *A hole dug in the ground to store food and other supplies.*
- CULTURE** (kul'-cher): *The tools, customs and ways of living of a people.*
- DESCENDANTS** (di-send'-ents): *Groups of people whose culture grows out of an earlier culture.*
- ENVIRONMENT** (en-viy'-ron-ment): *The land, climate, plants, animals and other cultures around a small group of people.*
- EXCAVATE** (eks'-ka-vate): *To carefully remove artifacts from the ground, writing down their exact location.*
- EXTINCT** (eks-tinkt'): *The animal species no longer exists.*
- NOMADIC** (no-mad'-ick): *Moving from place to place to get food instead of living in one place.*
- PALEOINDIANS** (pay'-lee-oh-in'-dee-ans): *Paleo means old; Paleoindians were the first group of people to live in North America.*
- PREHISTORIC** (pree-his-tor'-ick): *Before the coming of the Europeans.*
- PROJECTILE POINT** (pro-jec'-tel): *A pointed stone tip used on arrows or spears.*
- SITE**: *Any place where people worked or lived.*
- TRADITION** (tra-dish'-un): *Similar cultures living together for a long period of time.*
- WOODLAND**: *The first people to make pottery and to bury their dead in mounds. They lived after the Archaic groups.*

By Karen P. Zimmerman, Research Historian

Based on the South Dakota Archaeology Educational Series by Larry J. Zimmerman, Archaeologist

Edited by Lucille C. Stewart

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CHECK YOUR SKILLS

Circle the word that best completes each sentence.

1. The earliest groups of people who lived in South Dakota are called _____

Villagers Paleoindians Woodland

2. _____ hunters used a spear-thrower to give the spear more force.

Archaic Llano Sioux Plano

3. Woodland people were the first to make and use _____

projectile points awls pottery

4. The _____ became nomadic hunters of bison in South Dakota.

Central Plains Sioux Woodland

Fill in the blank with the word from the list which is described by the clues.

nomadic extinct site
culture prehistoric

1. A people's way of life

2. Moving from place to place to find food

3. A place where people worked or lived

4. Animal species no longer living

5. Before the coming of the Europeans



Archaeology Laboratory
The University of South Dakota
Vermillion, SD 57069