



The Ancient Indians

The first Indians settled in Florida over twelve thousand years ago. At the end of the last Ice Age, the “ancient ones” followed the large animals; mammoths, horses, and bison into North Florida. Archaeologists call these early people Paleo-Indian as these nomadic hunters stalked their prey near watering holes, sinkholes and rivers. Water in Florida was in short supply back then and the watering holes used by the Indians also attracted animals as well. Over-hunting of these animals may have caused their disappearance – as in the case of the horse.

Scrapers, small adzes, stone knives, bone pins, bone needles, fossil shark tooth, antler points, and socketed bone handle, to name a few. These tools were used to skin, cut and generally prepare the hunters meal or used as needed. Florida has some of the earliest man-made artifacts in North America.

Archaeologist have found the bones of saber-toothed cats, panther, mastodon, and tortoise and wooden tools that are over 12,000 years old at Little Salt Springs, on the West coast of Florida, near Sarasota. Searching the water at Little Salt Springs, archaeologists found an underwater rock shelf with a well preserved skeleton of a Paleo-Indian male and the shell of a large tortoise.

The tortoise had been stabbed with a wooden spear and then baked in its shell. The Indian probably fell into the spring and became trapped under the rock overhang and slowly starved to death. The wooden spear was carbon dated to 12,080 years ago, making it one of the oldest relics in North America.

Florida is truly a treasure house of history and archaeology: spanning thousands of years. Besides prehistory, Florida has sites from the first European contact with the New World. Also we have a string of early Spanish missions that stretch across the State in North Florida.

And we have the battlefields for three Seminole Wars and the Civil War all in our State. In Jupiter there are two battlefields from the Second Seminole War and the Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse was built during the third Seminole War – all part of our history and heritage.

