

THE ARRIVAL OF MAN

Giant ice caps covered both the Arctic and Antarctic regions of the earth over 50,000 years ago. The levels of the oceans lowered because much of the earth's water was trapped in the polar ice caps. The lower water level exposed a piece of land that connected Siberia to Alaska. Today this area is once again under water and is called the Bering Strait.

Many scientists believe that early men crossed over this land bridge and began to spread out and settle in what is now North America. These people then moved into Central and South America. The Bering Strait land bridge disappeared under the water when the ice caps thawed. This happened at the end of the Ice Age around 8,000 B.C. Today, we refer to the people who first settled in the Western Hemisphere as prehistoric Indians.

The early Indians were hunters and gatherers. All of their food came from plants, animals, and fish located near where they lived. When the food supplies ran out, the people moved on to another area to find a fresh supply. These people had to move constantly to find enough food.

No one knows who made the discovery of agriculture. This was one of the most important discoveries ever made by humans. Their way of living changed forever when they learned to plant and harvest crops. This allowed them to remain in one area for longer periods of time. Since they no longer had to move to find food, they built permanent villages. Huts made of mud and branches provided housing for these early tribes.

Early Indians also discovered how to form clay and bake it to make pottery, which helped them store grain from the harvests. At first, craftsmen made pottery only to store food. The Indians later decorated their vessels to look attractive as well as to be useful.

Scientists called archeologists must solve many puzzles to find out how the early Indians lived. Ancient garbage dumps can give important information about foods that were eaten. Remains of stone spearheads, arrowheads, and tools can also give clues to solving the puzzles. Stones used to grind grain and bits of broken pottery tell us about early agriculture. Scientists make new discoveries each year. Each new discovery helps us to better understand how the early Indians lived.



As tribes migrated throughout North, Central, and South America, they discovered agriculture and learned how to make stone tools and clay pottery.

Name _____ Date _____

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Why did the water level of the oceans fall during the Ice Age?

2. How do many scientists believe the earliest men arrived in the Western Hemisphere?

3. How did early man first get his food?

4. What is agriculture?

5. How did the discovery of agriculture change the way ancient man lived?

6. What did early man use to make the buildings in the first villages?

7. Why did early man first make pottery?

8. What was the main difference between early and later pottery?

9. In what unusual place do archaeologists look to find clues of how ancient man lived?

10. What things do archaeologists find in these locations?
