

**SHAWNEE HISTORY: VERY EARLY HISTORY**

The origin and early movements of the Shawnee are unsettled questions in history. Many students take their name, "southerners," at face value and give them a home in the Southeast. However recently it is beginning to look like their homeland is the upper Ohio Valley.

When the Shawnees were first contacted by white people--about 1670 or 1674--they were in two main groups. One group, the western group, was located in the Cumberland Valley in the state of Tennessee. The other group was located on the middle Savannah River in South Carolina. One of the names by which the Shawnees have been known is "savana" or "savanah". Thus the Shawnees have given their name to the Savannah River and to the city of Savannah, Georgia.

However before the Shawnees were first encountered in person by white people, there are reports of them from beyond the frontier, and sometimes the more eastern tribes obtained prisoners from the tribes farther west. Some of these captives were supposed to be Shawnees. The Hurons and Senecas got their Shawnee captives from the southwest. The Indians of Virginia obtained their Shawnee captives from the west. The Indians of the Southeast got their Shawnee captives from the northwest. Thus, by the method of triangulation, it would seem that their homeland during the earliest years of the white settlements was in the region of the Ohio River.

It is very likely that the prehistoric ancestors of the Shawnees (the ancestors of before the first white men who came to North America) originated in the Fort Ancient culture of Ohio. The Fort Ancient people are known by a large number of archaeological sites in Ohio, many of them around the city of Cincinnati. These people seemed to have practiced a mixed economy of farming, hunting, and fishing. They made earthen pots to cook in, and also they made their tools and weapons of bone and stone. Their houses may have resembled the bark covered wigwams of the historic Shawnee.

It is not known for sure why these early Shawnees left their homeland in the Ohio Valley and scattered about along the Cumberland River and into the Southeast and eventually into the eastern seaboard region. One theory is that the combined Iroquois tribes constituting the Five Nations (the Cayugas, Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, and the Senecas) united to fight the Shawnees and other Algonkian tribes of the Ohio Valley region and drive them from their homes. We do know that in historic times there was some bad feeling between the Shawnees and the Five Nations, though later the Senecas and Shawnees became quite friendly.

At any rate, the Shawnees were located on the Savannah River in South Carolina in about 1670 and some authorities think they had not been there very long. Possibly they moved down along the Savannah to be closer to the Spanish traders who were located at St. Augustine, Florida. This was a time in which all the Indian tribes competed for the goods of French, English and Spanish traders. They particularly like steel knives, iron kettles, red paint, glass beads, guns, and cloth.

At this time the Shawnees were friendly with the Cherokees. The Shawnees of Carolina were enemies of the Catawba, a Siouan-speaking tribe. They fought each other on a number of occasions. The Shawnees who were in South Carolina included members of both the Pictwitha and Hathawekela divisions. They were sometimes referred to as Savannahs, and sometimes as Shawanoes. About ten years after they got to South