



**Early Settlement: Opening America's New Frontier  
(1780-1802)**

Self-Guided Tour for Educators  
Cincinnati History Museum

This exhibit explores Cincinnati's early history, from its early Native American groups through the settlement of Cincinnati. Through artifacts, excerpts from historical manuscripts, interpretive vignettes, models, and costumed interpreters the visitor will get to explore early life in Cincinnati. The exhibit begins at the small statue of Cincinnati and continues through Dunlap Cabin. It has three sections, detailed below; *Pre-contact, Symmes Purchase, and Dunlap Station.*

**Themes :**

- Prior to settlement by Europeans, the United States had a diverse group of native inhabitants that worked the land and used its resources to build large mound building societies.
- The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was the basic framework for territorial government under which Cincinnati was founded. It shaped the terms of the Miami Purchase and the local government instituted in Cincinnati.
- Station settlements were fundamentally defensive communities. They were the primary mode of interior settlement in the Miami Country until after the Treaty of Greenville in 1795.
- The military's presence, especially as embodied in Fort Washington, was primarily responsible for the endurance of the Miami Purchase settlements and for the early prominence of Cincinnati.

**Ohio Social Studies Standards for this Exhibit:**

**Grades K-2**

History  
People in Societies  
Geography  
Economics

Economics

**Grades 3-5**

History  
People in Societies  
Geography

**Grades 6-8**

People in Societies  
Geography  
Economics  
Government

**Grades 9-10**

Geography  
Economics  
**Grades 11-12**

History  
Geography  
Economics

**Pre-Contact:**

By the time the first permanent white settlers landed in the Miami Country in the fall of 1788, the area had been the site of Indian habitation for thousands of years. The earliest identifiable prehistoric inhabitants were mound builders during what is now classified by archeologist as the Woodland Period. Examples of these mounds can be found in the photographs on the wall. From 1100/700 B.C. to 700A.D., burial **mound builders** called the **Adena** and **Hopewell** inhabited southwestern Ohio.

The **Woodland Period** marks an important change in the way of life of Ohio's prehistoric people. The changes included a shift to a more settled way of life and the use of more and more plant foods that are not simply gathered from Ohio's forests, but are **cultivated**—planted, tended, and harvested. Archaeologists recognize this new way of life by the appearance of more **permanent houses, ceramic vessels** (usually found broken into bits), and **burial mounds**. Ohio's earliest gardeners/farmers lived in small communities of two or three households. However, by Late Woodland times villages were larger, perhaps occupied by up to 100 people. Woodland people began to build mounds of earth to cover the graves of relatives. The Adena and particularly the Hopewell people also constructed elaborate geometric earthworks. Later, EuroAmerican settlers found ample evidence of the prehistoric cultures in the many earthworks and mounds that covered the sites of the settlers' towns and stations.

Between 700 and 1500 A.D. the area was inhabited by the fortification mound building **Ft. Ancient** culture. In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Ohio had been depopulated by a series of savage and devastating wars by the Iroquois. It wasn't until 1701, when the French mediated a peace, that the cultures or tribes, which had been displaced as far west as the Mississippi Valley, began to return to Ohio. Most of these tribes however, did not live in the area, but used southern Ohio as a **migratory hunting** and cultivating ground. By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, French, British and American explorers, traders and military men were becoming active in the Miami Country and coming into contact with these groups,

**Questions to encourage exploration (answers are located in the exhibit):**

Q What are some differences between the native warrior and the couple in front of the wigwam?

A: *The native warrior is traditionally dressed in unadorned buckskin. He is also using a traditional bow and arrows as his weapon. The couple near the wigwam is wearing factory-made fabric and glass beads, as well as using metal cookware. There is also a rifle in the scene.*

Q How are they the same?

A: *Both men are wearing a breechcloth and have the traditional ear adornment that denotes a warrior.*

Q Why do you think they are different?

A: *The single warrior represents a native that has NOT been in contact with European settlers. The couple in the wigwam have been in contact with European settlers, as evidence by their factory made goods and weaponry. The two scenes can be labeled as pre- and post- European contact.*

Q What do you think the Native American man is doing to the tree?

A: *The man is girdling the tree. Girdling is the process of stripping the bark from a section around the base of the tree.*

Q What will girdling do to the tree?

A: *Girdling dries out the tree since it does not allow moisture to be carried up the tree trunk. It also leaves the tree susceptible to disease. The tree will dry out and die, making the tree easier to cut down. This also allows sunlight to reach the forest floor where the native woman is planting.*

**Symmes Purchase:**

Benjamin Stites passed through the Miami Country in pursuit of an Indian raiding party. He was so impressed by the country and its possibilities that he returned East with the intention of engaging land speculators in the settlement of the Ohio country. In New York, Stites met with **John Cleves Symmes** (pronounced Simms), a New Jersey congressman, state Supreme Court judge and fellow Revolutionary War veteran. Symmes was so intrigued by Stites' glowing descriptions of the lands in the Ohio Country that in the summer of 1787 he journeyed west with five companions to see the country for himself. Upon his return, Symmes formed the **Miami Land Company** with 24

associates and in October 1787 petitioned Congress for the right to purchase "all the land lying between the Miami rivers, south of a line drawn due east from the western termination of the northern boundary of the grant", an area of roughly one million acres, called the **Miami Purchase**. The final contract set the price at 66 2/3 cents per acre. The purchase was to be surveyed and divided in accordance with the Northwest Ordinance.

The **Northwest Ordinance of 1787** provided the basic framework of territorial government under which the Miami Purchase and Cincinnati were settled. It defined the structure of government, the process of attaining statehood, and the relationship between the territory and the national government. Even before his contract negotiations with Congress were completed, Symmes began advertising and selling lands in the Miami Country. In the spring of 1788 groups of settlers began to head west. The first permanent settlements were Columbia, Losantiville, and North Bend. From these population centers, settlement spread throughout the Purchase. **Losantiville**, the most centrally and strategically located of the three, became the site of Fort Washington and the seat of territorial government.

Losantiville was later named **Cincinnati** by Arthur St. Claire, after the Society of Cincinnati, a club for Revolutionary War officers who respected the example of Lucius Cincinnatus, a Roman General who was offered dictatorial powers but turned them down to return to his land as a farmer.

Further interior settlement was slowed by Indian raids. The defeat of the Indians in August 1794 by General "Mad" Anthony Wayne at the Battle of Fallen Timbers and the signing of the **Treaty of Greenville in 1795**, which put an end to the conflicts between the Native Americans and the settlers in the Southern 2/3rds of Ohio, clearing the way for advancement of the frontier to the limits of the Miami Purchase and beyond.

**Questions to encourage exploration (answers are located in the exhibit):**

Q What does a surveyor do?

A: *A surveyor measures and lays out the boundaries that were divided into forts, farms, towns, etc.*

Q What tools does a surveyor use?

A: A surveyor used a chain to measure distance, a compass to orient their measurements, a notebook to record and draft the measurements, and survival tools for the long periods of time spent in the woods surveying.

Q Why was the surveyor's job important to early Ohio?

A: The land the surveyor mapped out would eventually become the modern cities and towns in existence today.

Q What was the purpose of the Northwest Ordinance?

A: The Northwest Ordinance laid the legal and cultural groundwork for Midwestern, and later Western, development. The United States government wanted its first attempt at westward expansion to be done in an organized and legal way.

Q Why is it included in this gallery?

A: The Northwest Ordinance was important in the settling of Cincinnati because it outlined how the territory was to be settled and governed, as well as the steps needed to reach statehood.

### Dunlap Station:

Outlying stations, like **Dunlap station**, located North West of Losantiville, were small, fortified settlements that consisted of a number of men and their families living in a single blockhouse or in cabins around a central blockhouse. Living together in this way offered settlers support and protection from a dangerous frontier. Although no regular troops accompanied the first groups of settlers to Columbia or Losantiville in late 1788, many of the settlers were Revolutionary War veterans and experienced military men. Initially, settlers defended themselves by erecting **stockades**, walls of strong timbers fixed upright in the ground and enclosing a station, and forming defensive expeditions against Indian raiding parties when necessary.

The defense of the Miami Purchase entered a new phase when a company of 70 men arrived in 1789 with orders to construct a fort "intended to protect the settlers on the Symmes Purchase." Losantiville was chosen as the most desirable location and construction began in September of 1789. The fort was named **Fort Washington**. The presence of the Army during Cincinnati's early years had a profound influence on the city's development. Initially, and most importantly, Fort Washington and its **garrison** ensured the town's safety. The army's presence also had a notable effect on the city's economy. As the primary outfitting

depot for expeditions against the Indians between 1790 and 1795, Cincinnati profited from federal spending. In addition, the garrison provided a ready market for food, clothing and other goods and services.

Congress began implementing the Ordinance of 1787 by appointing territorial officers, with **General Arthur St. Clair** as the territorial governor. It was St. Clair who changed the name from Losantiville to Cincinnati. The first formal government in the Miami Purchase was instituted on January 4, 1790, when St. Clair publicly proclaimed the establishment of Hamilton County and appointed the necessary county officials. After Cincinnati was incorporated as a village in November 1801, its citizens became active in pushing for statehood. The **process for statehood** went quickly: Congress authorized a call for a state constitutional convention on April 30, 1802 and by November 20 of the same year a constitution had been written and ratified. With its ratification, Cincinnati passed out from under territorial government into the new realm of state administration.

**Questions to encourage exploration (answers are located in the exhibit):**

Q What do you think life was like for a family living in a station?

A: *This is an open question. Looking at the cabin it is easy to see that it is devoid of luxury. Settlers brought items needed for survival, and had little room for anything else. The cabin itself was hastily built, and only built for protection, not comfort. Looking around the cabin you can see several items that were handmade, like the broom, benches, wooden shoes, and doll on the mantle. Also the majority of food in the cabin appears to be homegrown. All of this indicates that settlers had to be self-sufficient and willing to work hard to survive.*

Q What would they spend their days doing?

A: *Early settlers would spend their days doing a variety of things. The type of work can depend on the gender and age of the settler, as well as the weather. During the summer the men and boys (10 years and older) would be working outside the home clearing the land, planting crops, and hunting. Women and children were in charge of tending the livestock, caring for the garden, and doing most of the household chores. During the winter months, the*

*settlers focused on activities that could be done inside or immediately around their station.*

Q What were some dangers they faced?

*A: Illness, Native American attack, accidental death, starvation, disease, and childbirth.*

Q How many families lived in Dunlap's station?

*A: Eleven.*

Q Was Dunlap's ever attacked?

*A: Yes, it was attacked in January of 1791.*

Q If so, what happened?

*A: Reports say that around 200 Native Americans attacked Dunlap station in January of 1791. The station was under siege for three days until the situation became unfavorable for the Native Americans, forcing them to leave.*

Q Did the soldiers at Fort Washington find that the Native Americans were easy to defeat?

*A: No, the soldiers at Fort Washington had trouble defeating the Native Americans. Two generals from Fort Washington were defeated in major battles. The soldiers only succeeded in winning in the Battle of Fallen Timbers after spending one year training under the leadership of "Mad" Anthony Wayne. This victory finalized the American conquest of the majority of Ohio.*

Q What did the soldiers typically eat?

*A: Salt pork, hardtack (hard bread), cornmeal, beans, whiskey, as well as coffee, tea, and vegetables when available.*

Q What artifact do we have from Fort Washington?

*A: A piece of wood from the powder magazine at Fort Washington.*

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## Classroom Resources

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### Pre-visit Activities:

- Discuss with your students what their lives look like. What they eat, where they sleep, what they do for fun, etc. Once they have analyzed life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, have them guess/answer the exact same questions for someone their age in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They can create a chart or list comparing life now and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Once they visit the Cincinnati History Museum, it is their job to see if they answered correctly, and to fill in any additional information about life on the frontier.

### Post-visit Activities:

- If you completed the first pre-visit activity, after your visit have your class look at the comparison they created between life now and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Discuss what answers they would change and if they need to add additional information to their list. Have your students draw a picture or write a story detailing life on the frontier for a child their age.

### Additional Teacher Resources:

- **Mound Builders and Ohio Valley Native Americans**
  - Ohio History Central at <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/>
- **John Cleves Symmes**
  - Ohio History Central at <http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/>

- Cincinnati Historical Society Library  
<http://library.cincymuseum.org/>
- **Northwest Ordinance of 1887**
  - Ohio History Central at  
<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/>
- **Early Settlement Life**
  - Ohio History Central at  
<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/>
  - Cincinnati Historical Society Library  
<http://library.cincymuseum.org/>
- **Fort Washington**
  - Ohio History Central at  
<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/>
  - Cincinnati Historical Society Library  
<http://library.cincymuseum.org/>
- **Arthur St. Clair**
  - Ohio History Central at  
<http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/>