

Pre-Columbian Trade

Cahokian Interaction in Wisconsin

Beginning around the year AD 1050, a city rapidly developed in southwest Illinois near modern day St. Louis. Though no one knows its ancient name, archaeologists today call it Cahokia. Thousands of people, who archaeologists call Mississippians, lived in the city and surrounding area. They had an elaborate central area with ceremonial structures and public gathering spaces. The most dominant feature of Cahokia was Monk's Mound, a massive earthen structure that supported the chief's residence. The city was fairly short lived — after the year 1200, people began to leave. It is unclear where they went.

Merchants from Cahokia traded corn, stone material, tools, pottery, and other goods widely across the Midwestern US, via the Mississippi River and its tributaries. The pottery styles made and used by Cahokians were unique, so when they are found elsewhere it suggests trade. Cahokian pottery styles were also used for fairly short periods of time, which is helpful for understanding when trade occurred.

This map shows where three types of Cahokian pottery have been found in Wisconsin. Red Slipped pottery, which was used for the first 50 years of Cahokia's history, is primarily found at a few sites in western Wisconsin. The two later pottery types, Ramey Incised and Powell Plain, are much more abundant especially in southern Wisconsin. This suggests that trade with northern societies became more common in the latter half of Cahokia's history.



Red Slipped Pottery
AD 1050-1100

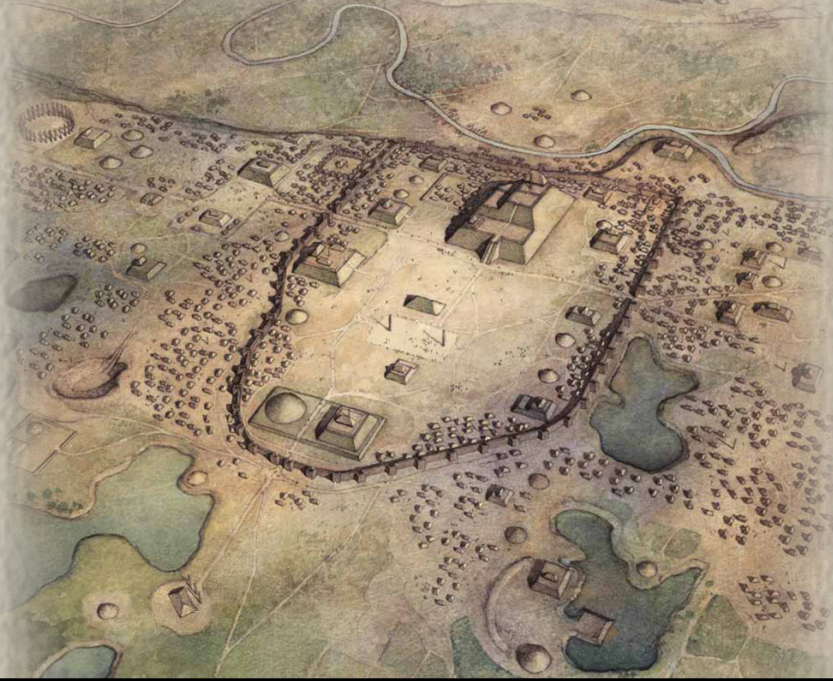
Red Slipped Pottery comes in many different forms, but the unifying trait is that they are colored with a red film. This style lasted a short time, only about 50 years.



Ramey Incised & Powell Plain Pottery
AD 1100-1200

These pottery styles are characterized by angular shoulders, wide openings, and polished brown or black surfaces. Ramey Incised have curvilinear scroll designs; Powell Plain are undecorated.

Cahokia Timeline



AD 1050:
"Founding"
of Cahokia

AD 1200:
Cahokia
begins to
decline



AD 1050 1100 1150 1200

Cahokia



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Site data: Wisconsin State Site Files
Rivers, lakes, and state boundaries: www.natureearthdata.org
Pottery Photos: Jake Pfaffenroth
Cahokia image: National Geographic
[\[http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/01/cahokia/cahokia-map-illustration/\]](http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/01/cahokia/cahokia-map-illustration/)

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 HARN Wisconsin TM
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False Northing: -4,480,000.0000
Central Meridian: -90.0000
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Latitude Of Origin: 0.0000
Units: Meter