

Wabash Brewing

Waapaahsiiki

Indianapolis, IN
wabashbrew.com



"*Waapaahsiiki*" was the Miami Indian name for what is now the Wabash River. Early French settlers who traded with the natives said the word something like "Ouabache" which later became anglicized to "Wabash". "*Waapaahsiiki*" roughly translates to "it shines white", "pure white" or "water over white stones". The Wabash River flows for over 500 miles and its catchment drains most of Indiana. The river's name has been used throughout Indiana and the surrounding area in the names of counties, townships, towns, schools, businesses and even four U.S. Navy warships. It is the largest northern tributary of the Ohio River.

The Miami weren't the only tribe to occupy present-day Indiana. In fact, there were once so many Native Americans in the region that in 1800 the U.S. Congress designated the region as the Indiana Territory. "Indiana" means "Land of the Indians".

Like much of the United States, the earliest known residents of present-day Indiana date back as far as 10,000 years ago to a time when now-extinct creatures like mammoths and mastodons were hunted for food. People from the mound building Mississippian culture also populated the area from approximately 1000 AD until just before the arrival of French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle in 1679. Europeans noted that many of the tribes in the area were in conflict as it seems a rift had grown between traditional hunter-gatherer societies and newer agriculturally-based settlements. The Shawnee, Miami and Illini peoples occupied most of the land at the time and had many similar characteristics as they all developed from the Algonquin culture. Other Native American tribes moved into the region as well after they were forced off their land to the east and, eventually, present-day Indiana became a hotbed of violence between Native Americans and the U.S. military.

The Shawnee occupied much of the Ohio River Valley and were spread from modern-day Indiana to Pennsylvania as well as south into Alabama. They are closely related to the Lenape (Delaware) Indians and may have occupied the region since as early as 1000 AD. The Shawnee Indians have become legendary for their dominance over the land as well as their strong resistance to American expansionism. Chief Tecumseh led a powerful Native American confederacy that fought many fierce battles against the U.S. military and Tecumseh's brother Tenskwatawa, also known as "the Prophet", was an important spiritual leader in the area as well. The Miami Indians lived in the region that makes up present-day Indiana, southwestern Michigan and western Ohio. They slowly moved to the south and took up residence along the "*Waapaahsiiki*" around the mid-1700s. The Illini were a confederation of many mostly Algonquian-speaking tribes who occupied the area from present-day Chicago to as far south as Arkansas.

Before the Indiana Territory was a part of the U.S., the land was claimed by both France and Great Britain. The French established early trade networks with the natives but were pushed out of the region after the British won the French and Indian War in 1763. The British then created their own trade networks, build forts and establish relationships with the Native Americans.

After the Revolutionary War, the United States designated the region that makes up present-day Indiana, Ohio, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin and parts of Minnesota as the Northwest Territory and then proceeded to forcibly remove Native Americans from the land. From the establishment of the Northwest Territory until the end of the War of 1812, the U.S. fought many battles against British-supported Indians which resulted in the eventual removal of all Native Americans from the area as well as the deaths of thousands of American and Native American soldiers. Two of the most significant battles to be fought in the area, both along the banks of the Wabash River, were the Battle of Tippecanoe, which saw American soldiers destroy a Native American stronghold called Prophetstown, and St. Clair's Defeat, during which



LITTLE TURTLE.

Chief Little Turtle

General Arthur St. Clair and his army of about 900 soldiers were attacked by a group of warriors led by Miami war chief Little Turtle and Shawnee war chief Blue Jacket. In the end, 632 American soldiers were killed, 264 were wounded and another 200 settlers who were following the army were also killed. Of the more-than 1,000 Americans who entered the battle, only 24 returned unscathed and one-fourth of the entire U.S. Army was destroyed.

The resistance put forth by the Native Americans during the Northwest Indian War was the strongest in American history but would eventually result in the signing of the Treaty of Greenville and the relocation of all Native Americans from the region. Today, the Native Americans of Indiana and the surrounding areas are mostly remembered through museums, parks and history books but they are also celebrated at places like Wabash Brewing who shares the name "*Waapaahsiiki*" in the hope that the memory of Indiana's earliest inhabitants will always remain in prominence.