11,500 years ago the first people entered Kentucky. Archaeologists call these people the Paleoindians. The Clovis people were the very first Paleoindians. They made fluted chipped stone spear points. These flutes likely made it easier to attach the point to the shaft.

Clovis people settled first in Western Kentucky in areas that bordered major rivers. Over time, as population increased, bands moved eastward into new territories. Clovis people settled last in the Eastern Kentucky mountains. By 8,000 years ago, at the start of the Archaic Period, people were living all across Kentucky, their permanent home.

Clovis People were nomadic hunter-gatherers. They moved across the landscape in small extended family groups of roughly 15 to 20 people. They hunted large Ice Age megafauna, like mastodons and mammoths, as well as smaller game. In addition to serving as sources of food, these animals provided the raw material for clothing and tools. The people also gathered edible plants. They made full use of their environment.

Each small family group had a leader, likely a skilled hunter; and a tradition keeper, who was responsible for remembering the group’s history. Family groups formed loose social and economic ties with other family groups, creating a band. Family groups in the same band helped each other hunt and offered support and protection. It is also within the band that one might find a spouse.

The descendants of the Clovis people, the Middle Paleoindians, did not make Clovis-style spear points. Reflecting new tool-making strategies, their points were smaller and did not have flutes.