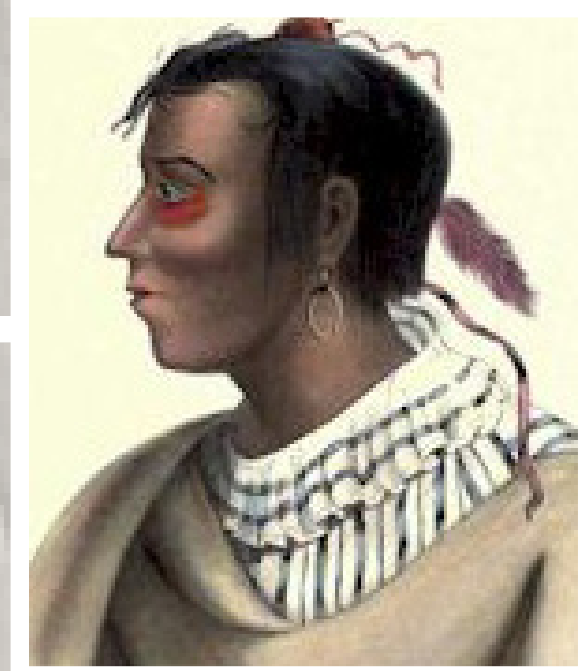


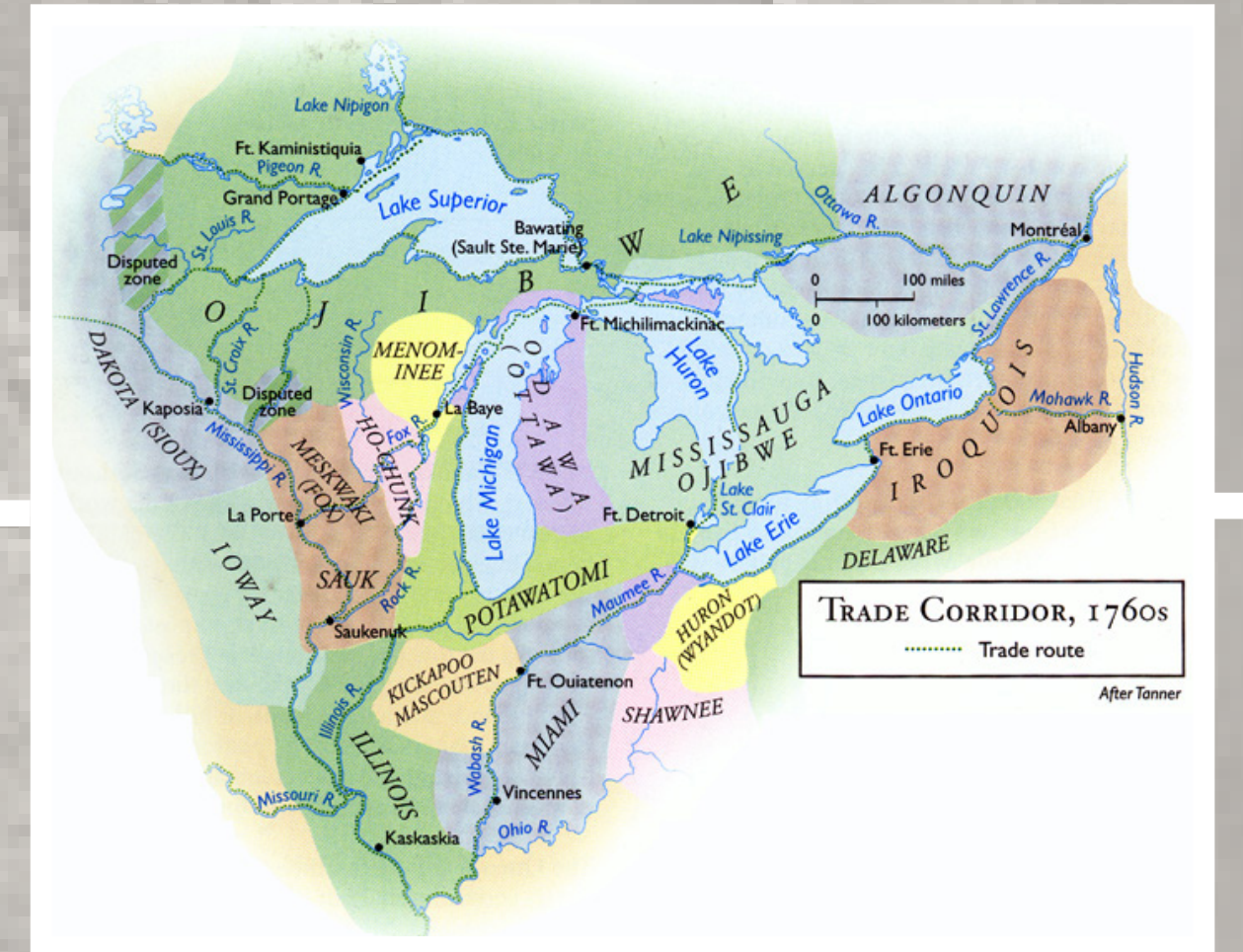
Native Americans and the Fur Trade



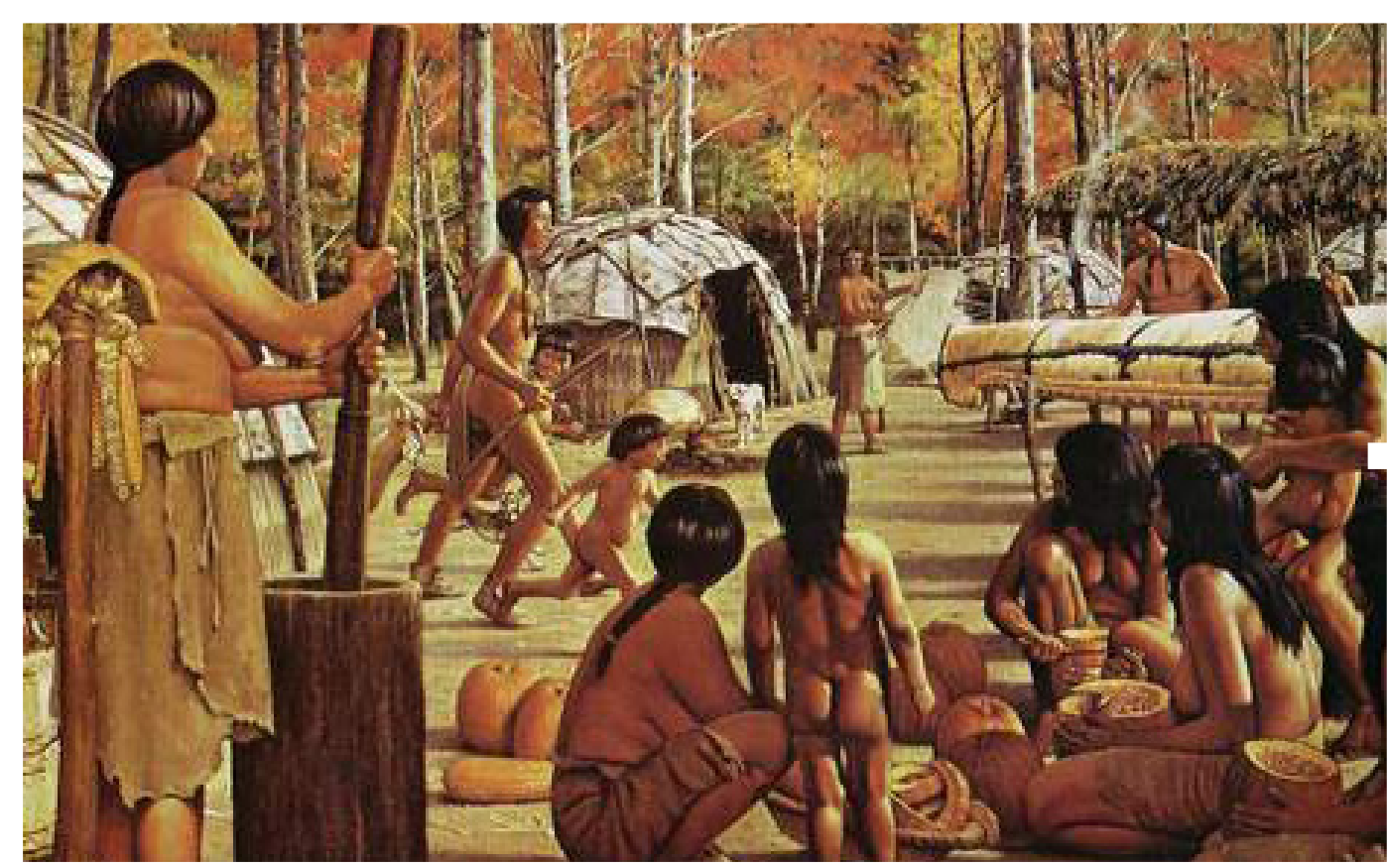
The area around what would become Wayne was originally heavily wooded with Oak and Maple trees. The land was low, swampy and difficult to travel.



The first native people in this area were the Potawatomi, a tribe closely related to the Chippewa and Ottawa. The three tribes spread across southern Michigan and generally got along, they even spoke similar languages.



The tribe was mobile, travelling between southern Michigan and Green Bay, Wisconsin. Their main camp was near Detroit's Fort Wayne.



The Potawatomi were a woodland people, preferring to live in lodges in the forest. To survive, the tribe was an agricultural hunter-gatherer society, and lived off of game, fish, wild berries, nuts and vegetables. The group had a strict clan mentality, with strong rules of conduct, manners and ideas. They invented and enjoyed playing the game we call "Lacrosse".



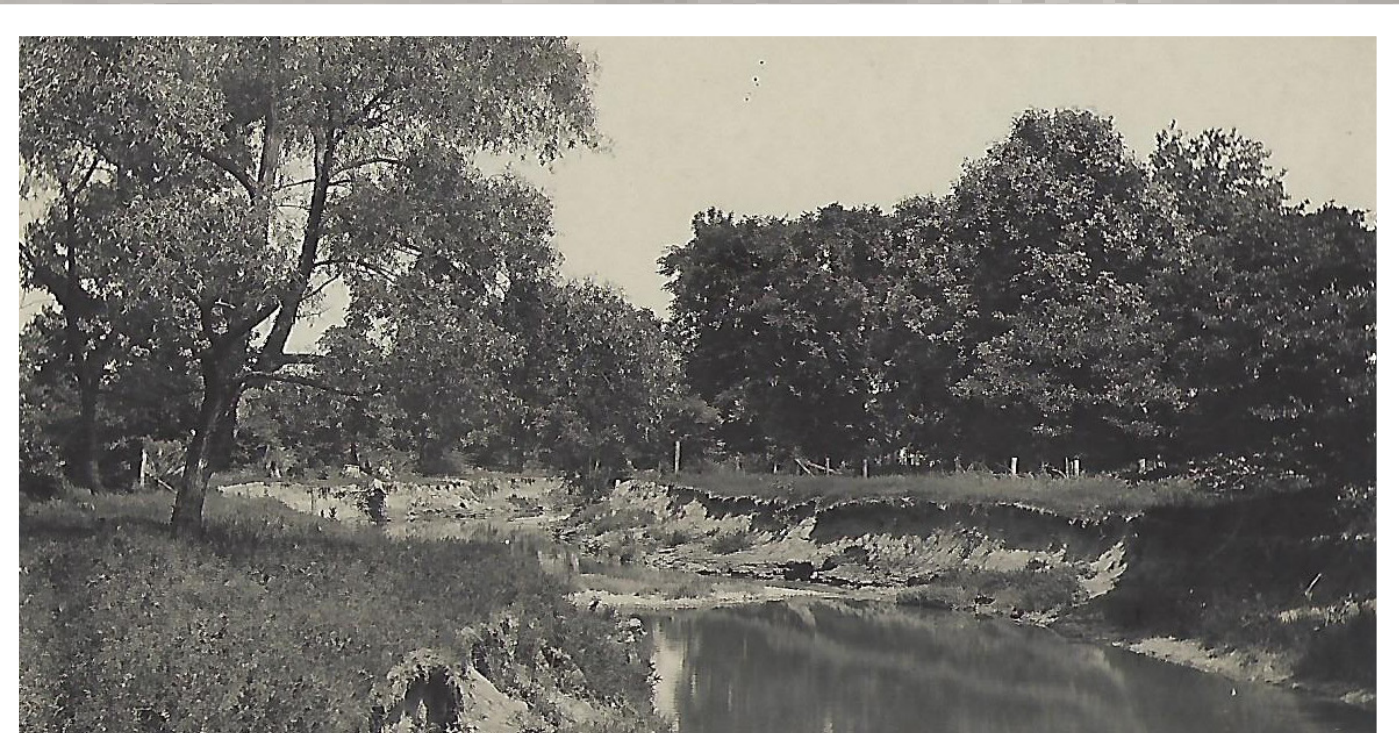
By the early 1800s Native Americans in Michigan came into contact with settlers and people who were intolerant of them. The government forced many of the Potawatomi to move to Kansas, then to Oklahoma in the 1840's. A few moved to Canada, and some integrated into society with the settlers. There were a few stray bands of Indians that roved this area of Michigan into the 1850s. The Potawatomi still exist today in a few scattered sites across the US.



The French were the first explorers from the new world to explore this area of Michigan. They arrived as early as 1610, but major exploration and the fur trade didn't begin until the 1630's.



The demand for furs was high in Europe, especially for beaver fur. The French worked out a system where they would trade items like knives, pots, hatchets, fabric and beads to Native Americans in exchange for furs.



The French voyagers would travel along waterways hunting and collecting furs from tribes they encountered along the way. At the peak, 100,000 beaver pelts were being shipped to Europe every year. They also sought deer, marten, raccoon, muskrat, otter and fox pelts. By the early 1800s the fur industry declined in Europe due to changing fashion tastes, and the industry all but dried up. Luckily this saved the beaver and other animals from over-hunting and extinction.