



Prehistoric Jewel Site Complex. In 2009 added to the National Register of historic places. In the research of the area that was impounded by the US Army Corp of Engineers in the making of Barren River Reservoir, I got into the study of Prehistoric Barren county as well. I was aware in my childhood that there were many areas around Barren County and neighboring counties where Native American artifacts have been found. Artifacts found in Barren and surrounding counties have been known to originate in the Paleo period 9,000 to 10,000 years ago. They could have been left here by prehistoric hunters or by temporary summer settlements along the streams.

Artifacts found in Mammoth Cave date from 4,000 to 6,000 years ago. These artifacts are many and varied, and include numerous human remains as well. But the permanent settlements, like the village that was on the Jewell farm at the juncture of Peters Creek and Barren River, dated from the Woodland or Mississippian era,

about 800 AD. From research on historical literature, and discussions I've had with numerous and various Indian collectors, such as the late Dr. Russell Starr, the late GHS history teacher and local Boy Scout leader Jimmy Simmons, and Hascal "Hack" Bertram, I discovered that there were camps on most of the heights along every stream and waterway in this area. Artifacts found at these sites are estimated to be from 2,000 to 6,000 years old. Thousands of artifacts have been found in Barren County alone. Some of the most interesting sites, such as villages and mounds, were swallowed up by Barren River Lake. The Jewell village and mound site is now completely covered by the Lake. William "Bill" Tinsley told that one of the mounds is now Goose Island, one of several islands out in the lake, just west of the Jewell site. Goose Island can be seen from the Marina at the State Park. The archeological survey of Kentucky conducted in 1932 identified a fortification on Peters Creek close to Dry Fork, two mounds between Peters Creek and Skaggs Creek, ancient fort earthworks on Dry Fork near the mouth of Indian Camp Branch, several other mounds and 8 caves showing Indian occupation. The adjacent counties also showed prehistoric Indian sites among these are 3 village sites near Edmonton in Metcalfe County.

The Jewell site was closely surveyed and catalogued before the impoundment of Barren River because of foreknowledge that the lake would cover it on completion of the dam. The village site was proclaimed a Mississippian period site dating from about 800 AD to 1400-1600 AD. In addition to the village there were 3 mounds, the largest indicated as a possible ceremonial center.

The houses of the village were rectangular held up by rows of poles covered with branches or grass. The descriptions of these habitations are similar to ones found in the Mayan territory of Yucatan. Many of the floors were baked clay, and the houses had fire basins for heating and cooking. Graves found in the mounds and other places were stone crypts made of flat stones on bottom, sides, and top. Prehistoric people made use of Mammoth Cave some 4,000 to 6,000 years ago. For some unknown reason these people left the caves about the time of the birth of Christ. The cave lay undisturbed for about 2,000 years, at which time they were discovered by early settlers in the region. The prehistoric people lived seasonally in the caves' entrances. They stored staple foods like hickory nuts, and ate wild game, including deer, raccoons and fish. They

cultivated a few plants for food and clothing as well. In a 1500s map, all of Kentucky except the Jackson Purchase was shown as Shawnee territory. The Shawnee settled in Eastern Kentucky on the upper waters of the Kentucky and Big Sandy Rivers. In the 1700s the Shawnee were situated on the Cumberland River. A 1755 map shows this part of Kentucky as “deserted Cherokee settlements.” After conquering the Shawnee, Kentucky became hunting grounds for the Cherokee.

The Shawnee went north – many settled in Ohio and the Cherokee went southeast to eastern Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia. Both used Kentucky as their prized hunting grounds. Why did they leave such a beautiful and productive place as Kentucky? One theory is that they were vanquished in brutal warfare. Another possibility is their superstition over the first two cataclysms overcame them and they shunned the idea of living in an area that they had suffered such pain and sorrow in. We may never know why so many settlements were deserted, particularly before the arrival of “civilized” man. But the Indians long ago gave Kentucky the name “the dark and bloody ground” for a reason. It just seems they took that knowledge with them, and we may never receive that knowledge.

<http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/KY/Barren/state.html>