



O you who dwell
by many waters,
abundant in treasures . .

..

— *Jeremiah 51:13*

Photo courtesy Gilcrease Museum

constructed in the eastern part of Oklahoma and the remains of irrigation ditches and pueblos in the western Panhandle section.

Most of our knowledge of these earliest inhabitants comes from the evidence gathered by archaeologists, who have pieced together glimpses of early life, often from scattered bones and tool fragments left near sites where mammoth or camel were butchered.

The nomads roamed a land that had much to commend it.

From the oak, hickory, and pine forests of eastern Oklahoma, the region stretches west through the short- and tall-grass prairies to arid and semi-arid western lands. Several ecological zones meet and overlap throughout the district's region, producing a rich diversity of plants and animals, contrasting land forms, and varying rocks and minerals.

During that earliest period of habitation (10,000 to 6,000 B.C., the PaleoIndian Period), thick glacial ice sheets extended as far south as Ohio and Indiana. The lands that today make up Oklahoma were colder and wetter then, resembling present-day Minnesota.

HUNTING, GATHERING, FISHING & MOUNDING.

Warmer temperatures around 8000 B.C. brought about major changes, including the disappearance of the big game animals. The region's inhabitants during this Archaic Period adapted by diversifying their activities, wandering from place to place, and supplementing their diets with fish and gathered nuts, seeds, berries, fruits, and vegetables.

Sometime after 500 B.C., the early farmers began to cultivate crops, manufacture pottery, and use bows and arrows. They needed to stay near their crops and so began to build permanent villages where they developed complex Caddoan societies. Among their activities was the building of flat-topped temple mounds, such as those at Spiro and Harlan, for burial mounds or as platforms for important buildings and ceremonies.⁷

Rivers were channels for trade and communication. Sometime after 1450 A.D., for reasons not known, mound building stopped. People continued to live and hunt in the region, farming crops