

People of Cahokia: North America's Forgotten Past

In the heart of modern-day Illinois, nestled along the Mississippi River, lies a testament to the ingenuity and architectural prowess of an ancient Native American civilization that has long been forgotten: Cahokia. This enigmatic metropolis, which flourished from around 1050 to 1400 CE, was once the largest and most complex urban center in pre-Columbian North America.

The origins of Cahokia are shrouded in mystery, but archaeological evidence suggests that the site was initially inhabited by hunter-gatherer groups around 1000 BCE. By the 7th century CE, a large village had emerged, and over the next few centuries, Cahokia rapidly grew in size and complexity.

The rise of Cahokia is attributed to a number of factors, including its strategic location at the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois rivers, which facilitated trade and transportation. The Mississippi River also provided a bountiful source of food, and the fertile soil of the Illinois River Valley made agriculture possible.



People of the Morning Star: People of Cahokia (North America's Forgotten Past Book 21) by W. Michael Gear

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At its peak, Cahokia covered an area of approximately 6 square miles and boasted a population of up to 20,000 people. The city was meticulously planned and laid out in a grid pattern, with wide streets and earthen platforms that served as the foundations for monumental structures.

The most iconic landmark of Cahokia is Monks Mound, a massive earthen pyramid that rises to a height of 100 feet and covers an area of 14 acres. Monks Mound was the largest pre-Columbian structure in North America and served as a platform for religious ceremonies and other important events.

In addition to Monks Mound, Cahokia featured a number of other impressive structures, including:

- **Woodhenge:** A circle of wooden posts that aligned with the solstices and equinoxes.
- **Grand Plaza:** A vast open space that was used for gatherings and ceremonies.
- **Mound 72:** A smaller pyramid that was used for burials.

Around 1400 CE, Cahokia began to decline. The reasons for this decline are not fully understood, but they may have included environmental factors, such as climate change and soil exhaustion, as well as political and social unrest.

By 1500 CE, Cahokia was abandoned, and the once-thriving metropolis was left to crumble into ruins. The site was eventually rediscovered by European explorers in the 17th century, but it was not until the 19th century that archaeologists began to uncover the true extent of Cahokia's significance.

Today, Cahokia is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a popular tourist destination. The site offers visitors a glimpse into the rich history and cultural heritage of North America's forgotten past.

The legacy of Cahokia extends far beyond its physical remains. The city's innovative architecture and complex social organization demonstrate the remarkable achievements of Native American civilizations in pre-Columbian North America.

The people of Cahokia left behind a rich cultural heritage that continues to inspire and fascinate us today. Their story is a reminder of the resilience and ingenuity of the human spirit, and it serves as a testament to the enduring power of our past.

Cahokia is a testament to the forgotten past of North America. This ancient metropolis, which flourished for centuries before being abandoned, is a reminder of the ingenuity and cultural achievements of the Native Americans who once inhabited this land. The legacy of Cahokia continues to inspire us today, and it serves as a reminder of the rich cultural heritage that is often overlooked in the annals of history.

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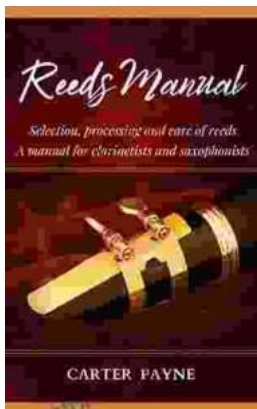


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