

## PRE-PONCE FLORIDA, Big Ice, Crashing Plates and Dangerous Crossings.

### CONTEXT FOR CURRENT CONDITIONS.

The Earth has been around for a while. The current catastrophes of climate change, environmental degradation and the plasticization of the seas endanger mankind; however, the Earth will persist and regain its pristine essence once mankind has destroyed itself, migrated to new worlds or morphed into a species that thrives on filth. The Earth will survive.

### “CRASHING PLATES”.

#### Continental Formations.

Water today constitutes over 70% of the Earth’s surface. Today’s land mass has formed, split, re-consolidated and drifted. The science of plate techtonics, continental drift and seafloor spreading are fascinating topics, while beyond the current scope of inquiry, relevant to the idea that bigger forces have worked on our current environment; and they are still at work.

#### The World Settles In.

The shifting tectonic plate story is hard to fathom. Michael Grunwald [#13] tells the story as he describes the formation of the Everglades, “It began with a bang about 300 million years ago [MYA], after the fish but before the birds, with the cataclysmic shifts of tectonic plates that crunched the planet’s major landforms into a single supercontinent called Pangaea.”

“About 100 million years later, plates shifted again, Pangaea split up again, and North America dragged away a finger-shaped chunk of North Africa. That hijacked appendage became the foundation of the Florida peninsula, the Florida Platform...”.

### “Crashing Plates” The Formation of the Continents

The Earth coagulates as a solid sphere in the Solar System	4.5BYA
The SuperContinent of Ur forms	3.0BYA
Other continents form:	
• Artica forms separately	2.5BYA
• Baltica and Atlantica emerge	2.0BYA
Antartica forms and merges with Artica and Baltica to form Nena	1.5BYA
Nena, Atlantica and Ur	
• join together to form single supercontinent Rodina,	1.0BYA
• then split apart	0.7BYA
<i>The Cambrian Explosion</i>	543 – 490MYA
Pangea, the last supercontinent, Re-forms from Nena, Atlantica and Ur	
<i>The Age of Dinosaurs</i>	230 – 65 MYA
Pangea begins to break into the two multi-continent land masses we have today: Laurasia and Gondwanaland,	
Florida first surfaces as an Island submerges intermittently	50MYA
• Current platform emerges	12,000YA
• Sea level and climate stabilize	5,000YA
<b>Sources:</b> The Author’s compilations from the Readings.	

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### “BIG ICE”.

We struggle to fully appreciate the impact of the Ice Ages. They lasted a really long time and the “to and fro” of massive ice sheets over hundreds of millions of years, combined with tectonic plate shifts, was the original “rock and roll” era; the land was formed and reformed with dramatic fluctuations in sea levels.

The current focus on global warming is important, but the diary of the earth, measured in millions of years, has recorded periods when there was no ice to be found on our planet, and other recent periods when the glaciers advanced as far south as the Ohio River Valley. Sea levels fluctuated by 600 feet.

In retrospect, for hundreds of millions of years, the global land form has been a happening place with four major ice ages atop the Earth’s shifting tectonic plates. “Max Ice” was reached around 10,000 years ago when the ice formed the Missouri and Ohio River Valleys in North America. As the ice moved south, it drove a great mammalian migration southward to escape the ice.

Florida has been coming about for a long time. Grunwald [#13] goes on to tell us...“In the last ice age, low seas exposed the entire Florida Platform, as well as the land bridge across the Bering Strait that the Paleoindians crossed to North America 12,000 years ago [YA]”.

The Florida Plateau was an uninhabited place until some 6,000 years ago when the Asian ancestors arrived. The Archaics, hunter-gatherers, journeyed down and across the continent to discover a supersized Florida, twice as wide as it appears today.

It was cooler and dryer, with fewer lakes and rivers.” “It was only about 5,000 years ago – after prehistoric man was already writing, making pottery, smelting copper and brewing beer in the Tigres-Euphrates valleys – that seas approached current levels and modern climate conditions prevailed.”

### Four Memorable Ages of Ice

Huronian [theoretical]	2.7 – 2.3 BYA
Proterozoic period Ice Age Known as “Snowball” Earth	800 – 600 MYA
<i>The Cambrian Explosion</i>	543 – 490 MYA
Late Ordovician and Silurian period Ice Age	460 – 430 MYA
Pennsylvanian and Permian period Ice Age	350 – 250 MYA
<i>The Age of Dinosaurs</i>	230 – 65 MYA
Late Neocene to Quaternary period Ice Age began	40 MYA
The Bering “Bridge”	
• First Opened [controversial]	28 – 23,000 YA
• Ice reached maximum extent	20,000 YA
• “Bridge” Re-opened	14 – 10,000 YA
• Most Recent Glacial expansion period ends	10,000 YA
• “Ice” still in Canada	6,000 YA
The Florida Platform	
• Asian migrants find Florida	6,000 YA
• Florida sea level and climate stabilized to current conditions	5,000 YA

#### Sources:

The Author’s compilations from the Readings.

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### THE “CROSSING”: Asians Discover America

Well before the European’s found Florida, men and women from Asia made their way across the Bering strait land “bridge” to the western shore of North America. “The glaciological evidence”, reports J. Bronowski, points to two possible times when men might have wandered from the easternmost promontories of the Old World beyond Siberia to the rocky wastes of western Alaska in the New World.

One period was between 28,000 BC and 23,000 BC, and the other between 14,000 BC and 10,000 BC.” Even with the “bridge” opened, man may not have crossed since the earliest physical evidence in Alaska dates to 14,000 YA. [Note: But the evidence of earlier crossings may be underwater since sea level was 600 feet below current levels.] There is general agreement that the Bering Straits “bridge” flooded some 10,000 years ago with the receding ice and remains the waterway it is today.

The Paleoindian explorers, families and pets who crossed the “bridge” entered North America and became the first immigrants. The world was pretty cold back then; once across the “bridge”, the new settlers must have searched for warmer weather leading them south to the southern United States, Central and South America. The big mammals had the same idea; Florida became home to many species of large animals from about 15,000 years ago. The weather was wet and the vegetation flourished.

The name given the first migrants to reach the southern United States is The Archaics. They were hunter-gatherers with some rudiments of agriculture. Most of Florida’s inhabitants stayed in this mode of subsistence until European contact

### The Paleoindian “Crossing” to Florida’s Cultural Differentiation

#### Culturalization Periods of North America

Paleoindians crossed the Bering Strait “land bridge”

28,000 – 23,000 YA

14,000 - 10,000 YA

#### Culturalization Periods of North America from The National Parks Service

- Paleoindian 13,450 - 11,450 YA
- Archaic 11,450 - 3,200 YA
- Woodland 3,200 - 1,000 YA
- Mississippian 1,000 - present

#### Mammalian experience:

- Migration to Florida 15,000 YA
- General extinction 10,000 YA

#### Culturalization Periods of Florida

- Paleoindians appear 14,000 YA
- Archaics emerge in Florida and Georgia. 6,000 YA
- Florida sea level and climate stabilized 5,000 YA
- The Archaics began making pottery 4,000 YA
- People in southeast North America began cultivating corn and squash to supplement what they gathered 3,000 YA

**Source:** Author’s compilations from the Readings

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### CULTURAL DISTINCTIONS: Distinct Civilizations.

The peoples in northwest Florida ascended into an agrarian society; classified as the Woodlands culture. The Archaics in central and southern Florida became known by many names as archaeologists identified many distinct groups of peoples. From Mark Derr [#8], the main societies were:

- **The Deptford People** - “Over the next millennium, the Deptford people around Tampa Bay created a new style of village design, which featured permanent mounds, constructed not of trash but of soil hauled from the surrounding countryside”.
- **The Weeden Island Culture** – “So pronounced was this development of the Deptford People by around A.D. 500 that archaeologists have designated it as the Weeden Island culture...”. The Weedens “apparently for the first time, established large villages that functioned as independent political entities or capitals of a circumscribed territory.” They governed multi-village territories which soon necessitated their defense.
- **The Fort Walton Culture** - “Invading groups from the powerful Mississippi culture of the southeast repeatedly overran Georgia and north Florida between A.D. 800 and 1000. The Mississippians finally absorbed the indigenous Weeden Islanders as they settled down along the Apalachicola River.

For thousands of years, these Floridians worked the land, fished the waters and fought their neighbors and firmly established a new society in the valley of the Apalachicola River, which archaeologists refer to as the Fort Walton culture.”

Florida Residents when Ponce Landed A.D. 1513	
<b>Cultural distinctions emerge amongst the Florida Archaics</b>	<b>2,500 YA</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northwest Florida cultures [Appalachians] connect with trading Cultures, enter Woodland Period</li> <li>• Central and South Florida cultures [Timucuan, Calusa, Tekesta] remained isolated with subsistence economies until European contact.</li> </ul>	<b>A.D. 100</b>  <b>A.D. 1513</b>
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Cultures in Florida	Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Timucua Confederation,</b> fifteen separate and sometimes warring groups occupied the northern third of the peninsula:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Western Branch: Potano, Yustaga, Ocale, Utina, Osochi.</li> <li>○ Eastern Branch: Saturiwa, Acuera, Freshwater.</li> <li>○ Tocabaga, alternatively under the Timucua and Calusa</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Calusa,</b> occupied southwest Florida to Cape Sable, inland to Lake Okeechobee.</li> <li>• <b>Tekesta,</b> with the Jeaga, Ais and others, occupied southeast Florida from Florida Bay to Biscayne Bay.</li> <li>• <b>Apalachee,</b> the Panhandle heirs of the Fort Walton people, controlled the trade routes from the upper Gulf coast and Mississippi valley.</li> </ul>	<b>48,000</b>  <b>20,000</b>  <b>7,000</b>  <b>25,000</b>
<b>Total Florida Population, Year 1513</b>	<b>100,000</b>
<b>Source:</b> Author’s compilations from the Readings	

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### THE AFTER-PARTY: European Contact

The Asians, who became The Archaics and their ancestors, occupied the Americas for 14,000 years without knowing the rest of the world existed. By the time Ponce de Leon set foot on the Florida beach that Spring morning in 1513, there were 100,000 residents in four distinct cultures on hand to greet him.

The end of the beginning was that Spring day in 1513 when the madman from Leon walked ashore on a Florida beach. While the Europeans discovered the new world in 1492; it took another decade for them to stumble upon Florida. Ponce walked the shores of Florida's east coast that April morning, undoubtedly thinking of treasure. He discovered a place and a people that did not exist in the European mind; and the Floridians were confronted with a new world they had never imagined.

### READING about Florida's past.

James Michener did not write *Florida*, but he could have. The material for a good story is there as Mark Derr understands and presents in his *Some Kind of Paradise*...a great read.

Michael Grunwald extends the historic literature with *The Swamp*, an equally entertaining vehicle for learning about our patrimony.

The novelists have contributed; Patrick Smith's classic novel, *A Land Remembered* and the contemporary Florida mystery writers all seem to cherish the paradise that was Florida. They each, in their own way, present their recollections and visions in an evocative form.

### The Readings

The following citations are the main sources of ideas and information in this essay. From these sources, an annotated chronology has been constructed to give a holistic view of Florida's pre-history and to give a general sense of the subject; and, if successful, to engender a curiosity for readers to explore further.

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5. *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Jared Diamond, W.W. Norton, 1997.
6. *Ice Ages, When have Ice Ages occurred?*, Illinois State Museum, [www.museum.state.il.us](http://www.museum.state.il.us), April 30, 2007.
7. "In the Beginning, there was Ur", Elizabeth Zubritsky, <http://research.unc.edu/endeavors/spr07/ur>.
8. *Some Kind of Paradise, A Chronicle of Man and the Land in Florida*; Mark Derr, University Press of Florida, 1998.
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11. *The Last Two Million Years*, Reader's Digest History of Man, The Reader's Digest Association, 1974.
12. *The National Park Service* at [www.nps.gov/history/seac](http://www.nps.gov/history/seac)
13. *The Swamp*, Michael Grunwald, Simon & Schuster, 2006.