

Hunters and Gatherers

There's a lot to be said of the days prior to the time of railroading. Even before the era earlier than the American Indian – eons before then, the earth was beginning its work toward making itself as it is today. Geologists tell us as the last ice age was coming to a close and the giant glaciers were receding, the sandy loam left behind became ideal soil for the longleaf pine, part of Flomaton's past, and some of its present.

Thick pine forests, abundant throughout this region of South Alabama and Northwest Florida, provided plenty of game for the first inhabitants. The relatively mild weather made for long growing seasons so domesticated vegetables, berries, fruits, and grains fit well into the lifestyle of these "hunters and gatherers."

(<http://mcclungmuseum.utk.edu/pernex/archaeol/xra-text.htm>)

It's believed the trees were so tall that it was as if a canopy covered the ground. Though the forests were thick, underbrush such as we know in the woods today could not grow for lack of direct sunlight. There was no obstacle for seeing long distances while hunting in the pine flats.

Trails, such as the trading paths created by the Indians, crisscrossed at random intervals and provided the means of transportation as Native Americans made their way on foot from one village to another.

One such path ran very near what was to become Flomaton: the Wolf Trail (See note below). Named for a powerful chief, this trail made it possible for the Spanish and the English in Northwest Florida to barter for animal skins to send back to their homeland. The pelts brought wealth and status to the traders who soon learned that providing guns and ammunition in exchange for the Indians' goods was not only more profitable, but expedient.



A "Hunting and Gathering" family gathering berries in the background and in front, other members of the group making baskets in their camp.

It was a trading expedition that sparked many fatal encounters between settlers and Indians. A group of Indians were returning from Pensacola on the Wolf Trail with weapons and ammunition when militia ambushed them at Burnt Corn Creek, near what is now the Escambia-Conecuh county line. It is widely held that this was what precipitated the long Creek Indian War between the years 1812-1819.

The Indians were encouraged by the Spanish and the British to wreak havoc on the white settlers who were taking their land. They were unwittingly playing into the Europeans' strategy of making the region hostile for American settlers to come near the border with Spanish West Florida. This reduced the military threat to the security of Spanish Pensacola, the southern terminus of the Wolf Trail. §

NOTE: Also known as The "Old Wolf Path," it is one of many Indian trails and horse paths that passed through South Alabama and led to Pensacola, Florida. The "Old Wolf Path" was often used by the Creek Indians to travel to Pensacola to trade with the Spanish who controlled Florida during that period. An expedition of Creek Indians was returning from Pensacola and were surprised and attacked on the path by the U.S. military at Burnt Corn Spring on July 27, 1813. That unsuccessful attack became known as the "Battle of Burnt Corn" which led to the Creek Indians War of 1813 and 1814.)