People Arrive in the Americas
During the Ice Age much of the world’s water was frozen in glaciers. The ocean floor between Alaska and Asia was a grassy land bridge. Many scientists think people followed migrating animal herds across it. Migration stopped about 10,000 years ago when the glaciers melted and the seas rose. People who had crossed from Asia, called Paleo-Indians, spread out over North and South America. They are the ancestors of modern American Indians.

Civilizations Develop
Early Paleo-Indians hunted animals. About 11,000 years ago the big animals began to die out. People learned new ways to get food. They hunted smaller animals, fished, and gathered wild plants.

About 9,000 years ago some Paleo-Indians began to use agriculture. Scientists think people in present-day Mexico grew the first crops of corn, beans, and squash. People’s lives changed as they stopped migrating to grow crops. More people survived because of the supply of food.

Paleo-Indians farmed and built villages and cities. The Adena, Hopewell, and Mississippians were Mound Builders. They built giant earth mounds and large villages in North America. Their civilization lasted for about 2,500 years.

The Ancient Pueblo civilization lived in the Southwest region for about 800 years. Some of the Ancient Pueblo built homes made of mud and stone in the sides of cliffs. These people became known as Cliff Dwellers. The Ancient Pueblo also built underground rooms, called kivas, used for religious ceremonies. Around 1300, the Ancient Pueblo left their villages. No one knows why they left.

The Aztec civilization controlled Central Mexico around 1300 and was strong for 200 years. American Indian groups developed civilizations in almost every region of North America.