Dramatic change accompanied the end of the Texas Pleistocene: seasonal swings in temperature, thunderstorms that pounded the earth, climate that grew steadily warmer and drier. Large mammals became harder to find, then a number of species disappeared entirely—the horse, camel, cave bear, saber-tooth cat, giant buffalo, giant armadillo, giant ground sloth. Humans may have played a role in some extinctions.

People adapted to a changing environment: They continued to hunt with atlatl and spear, but their stone points no longer had delicate fluting. Groups traveled and traded less often. Most people settled close to their place of origin. They experimented with using heated rocks for cooking. They buried their dead with simple grave goods.

The Leander Burial

The Wilson-Leonard site near the town of Leander, Texas, yielded the rarest of Paleoindian finds: a human burial. When this woman died some 9200 years ago, her companions carefully flexed her body and laid it in a shallow grave. They added a few items of special meaning to her life: a worn grindstone, a shark's tooth pendant. The rock at the left may have held down a hide covering.

Richard Beene Site

At the Beene site near San Antonio, groups of 10 to 25 people set up temporary camps by the banks of the Medina River. They lived in wikiup houses and built fires. Food sources dwindled during the winter months, compelling the campers to seek deer, wild roots and river mussels. When food supplies were exhausted, the people moved.

Late Paleo-Indians failed at finding giant mammals as in the past. Instead they turned to smaller game like turtles, fish and rabbits. This scene depicts a campsite along the Pedernales River in Central Texas.