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Clovis and Cumberland Sites in the Kentucky Lake Region

John B. Broster, Mark R. Norton, and Richard Anderson

The Kentucky Lake region, which forms the boundary between west and middle Tennessee, has been known to produce large numbers of fluted Paleoindian projectile points and uniface tools. Local collectors have kindly made their points available for study over the years. Additionally, the Nuckolls site (40Hs60) was extensively tested by archaeologists from the University of Tennessee in the late 1950s (Nuckolls 1958; Lewis and Kneberg 1958). The Nuckolls site has produced at least 13 Clovis, 6 Cumberlands, and 1 Redstone, as well as Beaver Lake, Quad, and Dalton projectile points.

We decided to concentrate our survey efforts in the lake district, due to this past history of investigations and the availability of collections for study. Prior to our research of the last season, only nine archaeological sites from the lake area were known to have produced significant Paleoindian assemblages. Our examinations have added 14 sites to the state survey files. Of these sites, 12 have fluted point components (Clovis, Cumberland, and Redstone). The number of fluted points is rather low as compared to the numbers for late Paleoindian and early Archaic from the same sites. Whether this represents an increase in population or some other cultural process remains an open question at this stage of research.

A total of 85 Clovis, 28 Cumberland, and 2 Redstone have been documented on 12 of the 23 Paleoindian sites from the region. Within these same sites, metric data has been obtained from 864 late Paleoindian projectile points (122 Beaver Lakes, 39 Quads, 244 Daltons, 72 Harpeth Rivers, 384 Greenbriers) and 27 late Paleoindian preforms. Two Clovis, four Cumberlands, and seven late Paleoindian projectile points were recorded as isolated finds (see Figure 1).

Three of the newly recorded sites have also produced large numbers (+100 per site) of uniface tools. Unfortunately, these sites are all highly deflated by wave action, making it nearly impossible to distinguish between fluted and later Paleoindian assemblages. A local variety of Dover chert constitutes some 85 to 95% of all lithic raw materials on these sites. Potential quarry pits (40Hs202) have been recorded on the eastern bank of the lake in proximity to the old Tennessee River channel. The material from these quarries is the same high quality Dover chert as is found on the Paleoindian sites.

Occupation during the Clovis and later Cumberland times appears to be represented by light to moderate scatters of lithic materials, with numerous fluted preforms being recognized on most of the sites. Tool manufacture and maintenance of hunting equipment are suggested as very important functions for the early occupations. The number of large uniface knives and sidescrapers probably denote some butchering activities taking place on the sites. The fluted point sites are located on the mouths of tributary streams on well drained terrace remnants adjacent to the old Tennessee River channel. These maintenance/manufacturing camps are possibly associated with kill and butchering sites located at lower elevations along the old channel. Unfortunately, such sites, if they exist, are covered by some 13 to 16 m of water.

Before the creation of the lake, these Paleoindian site locations were generally situated at relative short distances from low swampy areas. The locations on major river terraces would have provided Paleoindians with relatively dry elevated areas proximate to probable watering and fording localities for large herd animals. Aquatic resources may also have been important in these locations.

Several hundred artifacts are presently being measured and studied. Reports are being prepared on two of the more extensively occupied sites, 40Hs23 and 40Hs200. Both sites contain Clovis and Cumberland, late Paleoindian, and early Archaic components. A third site, 40Hs173, has been tested and a report will soon be published (Broster and Norton 1990).

It is hoped that this large body of information will be useful in understanding changes from early to later Paleoindian occupations, and as important to the study of the dramatic differences in projectile point styles between the Paleoindian and the early Archaic. Our objective has been to document metric and raw material data from the numerous collections from the region, and to generate accurate provenience determinations for the materials. We have been very fortunate to work with a supportive group of private citizens and amateur archaeologists, and any progress made has been due to their help and encouragement. We plan to continue the recording of collections and site locations for several more years, with the ultimate goal of providing a

solid data base for future researchers interested in the Clovis and later Paleoindian occupations of Tennessee.

Figure 1 was drawn by Gary Barker.

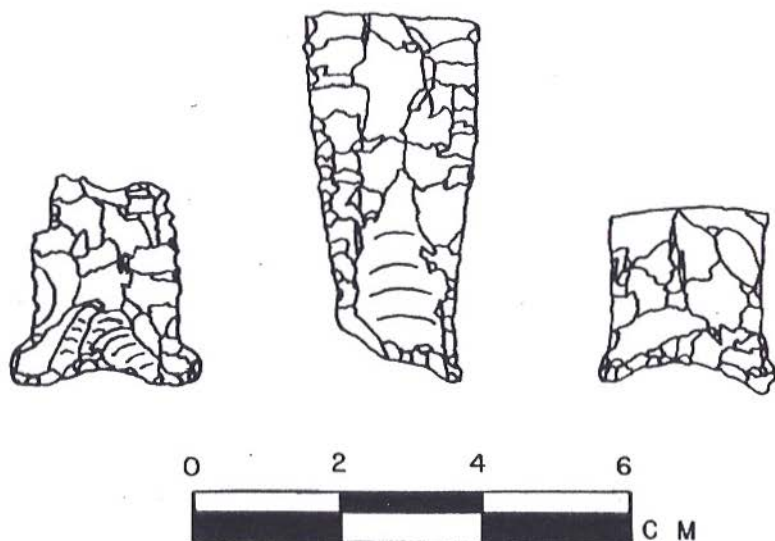


Figure 1. Site 40Hs173: Quad, Cumberland, and Beaver Lake projectile points.

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