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Title: A Note on OCR Dates from the Carson-Conn-Short Site (40BN190), Benton County Tennessee

Year: 1999

Name(s): John B. Broster and Mark R. Norton

Source: *Current Research in the Pleistocene* 16:15-16.

Publisher Link: http://csfa.tamu.edu/?page_id=834

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A Note on OCR Dates from the Carson-Conn-Short Site (40Bn190), Benton County, Tennessee

John B. Broster and Mark R. Norton

Since the discovery of the Carson-Conn-Short site in 1991, the Tennessee Division of Archaeology has conducted test excavations and surface mapping in the hopes of defining spatial concentrations of Clovis artifacts and features and to obtain charcoal samples for dating (Broster and Norton 1993, 1996). The first part of this goal has been met with great success; we have piece plotted over 500 formal tools and fluted preforms and excavated 24 m² of deposit to an average depth of 40 cm. However, collecting suitable carbon samples has so far eluded our efforts.

To address this lack of conventional ¹⁴C dates, a column of OCR (Oxidizable Carbon Ratio) samples was excavated from the south wall of square 998N/991E. For a discussion of OCR dating the reader is referred to the published work of Douglas Frink (1992, 1994, and 1995). The first 35 cm of fill appears to be a mixed level of redeposited alluvium containing Clovis, late Paleoindian, and Archaic artifacts. An intact Clovis level recorded some 40-45 cm below present ground surface was dated by OCR to 11,747 yr B.P. (ACT-3188). The level below this also contained fluted preforms and uniface blade tools. It produced an OCR date of 12,469 yr B.P. (ACT-3189). Unfortu-

John B. Broster, Tennessee Division of Archaeology, 5103 Edmondson Pike, Nashville, TN 37211.

Mark R. Norton, Tennessee Division of Archaeology, Pinson Mounds Archaeological Park, 460 Ozier Road, Pinson, TN 38366.

nately, excavations could not be continued below this level due to the rising waters of Kentucky Lake brought on by unseasonable heavy rains.

An additional column of samples was taken from 20 m to the north of square of 998N/991E. A Clovis level 50 cm below the surface was OCR dated to 12,796 yr B.P. (ACT-3142). This date is consistent with the one from the same depth in the test square to the south. An additional lower level at 60 cm was dated to 15,344 yr B.P. (ACT-3143). This level contained prismatic blades, blade tools, and numerous resharpening flakes struck from bifaces.

Given these initial dates, the fluted point (Clovis) occupation of this site would appear to date between 11,000 and 12,500 yr B.P. This certainly places the Clovis utilization of the area within or slightly older than the known dates for Clovis in the New World. It is possible that the date older than 15,000 yr B.P. represented a pre-Clovis or proto-Clovis presence in the Western Valley of Tennessee. Further research is planned for the next field season. In order to test the OCR dates, bulk soil samples will be collected for conventional carbon dating. It will be of great interest to see how these samples compare with what we know from the OCR method.

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Evidence of Mountain Paleoindian Use of the Colorado Piedmont and Plains Territories

Robert H. Brunswig, Jr.

In recent years, two broadly similar models of late-Paleoindian/early-Archaic lowland (plains)-highland (mountain) adaptive life-styles have been proposed. Black (1991:20) suggests that a distinctive Mountain Tradition involving year-round human adaptive strategies and systematic utilization of south-