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The Sinclair Site (40Wy111): A Clovis Quarry along the Buffalo River in Wayne County, Tennessee

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Avocational archaeologist and flintknapper Rex Moore discovered the Sinclair site while searching along a series of hillsides for high-quality Buffalo River chert. Throughout the area where eroded outcrops of chert occur, Mr. Moore found two complete Clovis projectile points and several broken fluted bifaces along with large blades, bifaces, and uniface tools (Figure 1). Mr. Moore recognized the importance of this discovery and brought some of these artifacts to the 2008 Old Stone Fort Knap-In in Manchester, Tennessee, to share this information with a professional archaeologist.

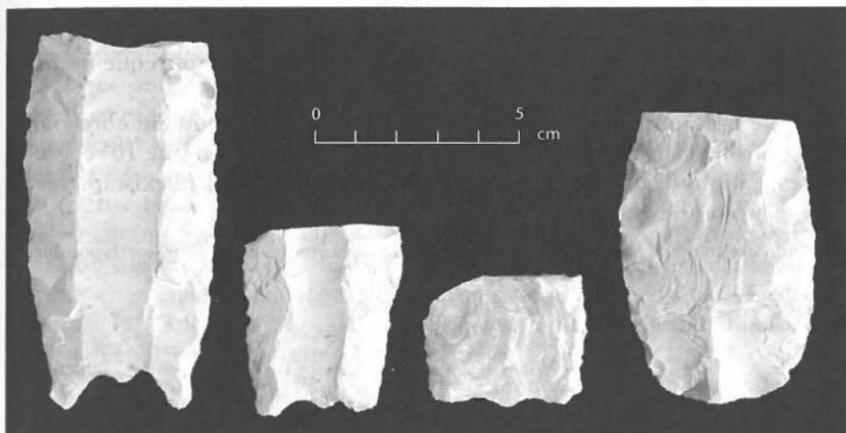


Figure 1. Late-Clovis preforms from the Sinclair site (40Wy111).

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In 2008, Mr. Moore showed us the site. He has collected over 4,000 Clovis artifacts from the surface of the site. We were allowed to take an additional surface collection of several hundred Clovis artifacts including preforms, blades, blade cores, blade tools, and debitage. The landowner, Mr. Ross Sinclair, had greatly altered the site with bulldozing and plowing to prepare it for conversion to pastureland. Nearly all the pine trees on the ridge top had been cut and the stumps removed with the bulldozer. Much of the site had been pushed over the edge of the ridge, and we made surface collections from these highly altered areas. The site contains primarily Clovis-age artifacts. However, a small concentration of Beaver Lake projectile point bases was located by Mr. Moore within one area of the site. These bases were associated with numerous biface reduction flakes.

This site is located within the Western Highland Rim physiographic region of middle Tennessee (Miller 1974). High-quality cherts are found embedded in weathered Mississippian-period limestones throughout this region. Chert-bearing Silurian and Devonian limestones also occur along portions of the western boundary of this region.

The main activity at Sinclair appears to be quarrying of large nodules of chert and reducing them into early-stage bifaces and prismatic blades. The concentrations along the ridge have produced a number of final-stage preforms and complete Clovis projectiles, but relatively few unifacial blade tools. The low frequencies of formal unifaces and multipurpose tools at Sinclair is significantly different from what we have seen at the Carson-Conn-Short site (40BN190), which we consider to be a true base camp locale (Norton and Broster 2008). We believe the lower frequencies of unifaces at Sinclair suggest that this site represents a series of short-term visits for chert procurement by only a portion of the social group. A base camp associated with this site has not yet been found, and it is possible that more than one group frequented this high-quality chert source during the same time period.

We are now in the process of obtaining permission to conduct more extensive controlled surface collections and test excavations from the 10 recorded concentrations of the site. It is hoped that intact deposits still exist in at least one or two of these areas.

We would like to thank Mr. Rex Moore and Mr. Ross Sinclair for making this research possible.

References Cited

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