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## The Johnson Site: A Dated Clovis-Cumberland Occupation in Tennessee

John B. Broster, David P. Johnson, and Mark R. Norton

The Johnson site (40Dv400) was recorded as part of the Tennessee Division of Archaeology's continuing state-wide Paleoindian site survey (Broster 1989; Broster and Norton 1990). The site is a large multi-component habitation located on the Cumberland River in East Nashville. It was first observed as a dense scatter of lithic materials on the edge of the river (at low pool). Projectile points, bifaces, preforms, unifacial tools, and a high density of bifacial reduction flakes were noted. Diagnostic artifacts which were recovered included three Clovis preforms and the following projectile point/knife types (number of specimens): Cumberland (3), Dalton (1), Harpeth River (3), Greenbrier (2), LeCroy (2), Kirk Serrated (6), and Kirk Corner-Notched (51).

A series of dark, culturally derived lenses can be observed in the riverbank. There appears to be at least four major occupations represented. Ranging in depth from the surface to approximately 50 cm below surface are materials affiliated with the Mississippian period (500 to 950 yr B.P.). This occupation is represented by a very sparse scatter of lithic and ceramic artifacts (six sherds and one projectile point).

At 3 to 4 m below surface there is a thin stratum of burned sandy clay and charcoal which produced MacCorkle Stemmed and LeCroy projectile points. These types have been dated in the Little Tennessee River valley at between 8,000 and 9,000 yr B.P. (Chapman 1976; Broyles 1971).

Directly below this component at a depth of 5 to 6 m below surface is a dark, organically stained, silty clay level containing Kirk Corner-Notched projectile points and numerous fragmented bifaces. The level seems to have a downward slant toward the west and ranges from 10 to 40 cm in thickness. Kirk Corner-Notched points have been dated on the Little Tennessee River at between 8,900 and 9,600 yr B.P. (Chapman 1976; Chapman 1977).

A fourth cultural level is located at 20 to 30 cm below the Early Archaic occupation. The deposit varies from 50 to 96 cm in thickness, and the top of the stratum measures approximately 6.5 to 8.0 m below the ground surface. At this preliminary stage of investigation, no internal stratigraphy has been observed within the level.

A shallow basin feature, with a slightly rounded bottom, is evident in the upper level of this deposit. The basin is 33 cm deep and 62 cm wide, with the

upper 20 cm characterized by a light brown silty clay with sparse lithics. The bottom 13 cm consist of a dark gray ash mixed with charcoal, burned bone, and numerous bifacial reduction flakes. A carbon sample was taken from the feature, and profile drawings constructed. It was felt that the majority of the feature should be left intact for future study. The date produced from this feature was 12,660±970 yr B.P. (Tx-6999). It is believed that there is very little chance of sample contamination, however, future plans call for complete excavation of this possible hearth to obtain an additional sample(s) for dating.

Another carbon sample was taken from the lower portion of the same level about 20 m to the west of the feature. The sample was taken 30 cm from a Clovis preform which was cemented in the brown silty matrix. A date of 11,700±980 yr B.P. (Tx-7000) was obtained. Below the location where this sample was taken (near river's edge), a Cumberland projectile point, two Clovis preforms, and a unifacial scraper were recovered. Unfortunately, these specimens were located out of context, but probably had washed down from the dated deposit (Figure 1).

These cultural deposits are being constantly eroded by the river and it is feared that much of the site has already been washed away. Due to the infrequent location of intact Paleoindian components, it is felt that this site is extremely important to our understanding of Paleoindian occupation in the Central Basin of Tennessee. The Division of Archaeology proposes further fieldwork in 1991 in hope that a series of dates can be run from the levels containing Paleoindian and Early Archaic deposits. Two additional sites on the Cumberland River have been reported which may have the potential for yielding comparable dates. The Division of Archaeology will also be undertaking research on these sites during the next field season.

Figure 1 was drawn by Gary Barker.

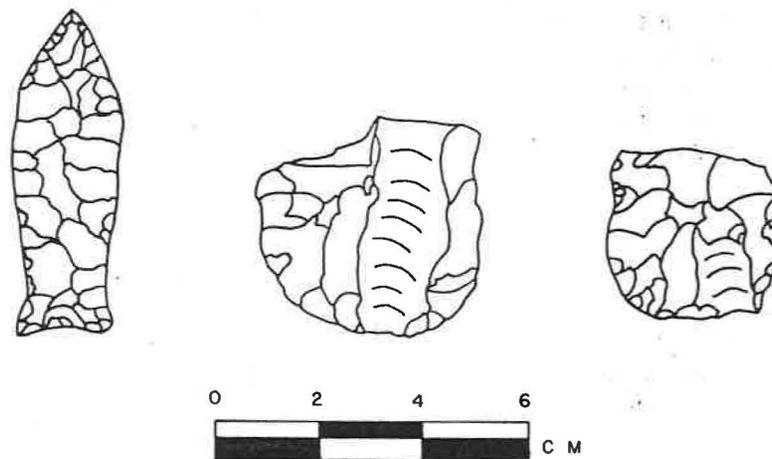


Figure 1. Site 40Dv400; Cumberland projectile point; Clovis preforms.

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## Clovis and Cumberland Sites in the Kentucky Lake Region

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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.