

OKLAHOMA ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY

HIGHLIGHTED SITES BY COUNTY



Content created 1998-2002 by Oklahoma Archeological Survey Staff

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Adair County

The Owl Cave Site



Woodward Engraved pottery sherds from Owl Cave (photo courtesy Oklahoma Anthropological Society)

Owl Cave, near Sallisaw Creek in Adair County, is a 70' x 20' cave which sheltered people for over a thousand years. The site came to the attention of archaeologists in 1963 when the cave's landowner discovered pothunters digging in the cave and disturbing human burials there. Current laws in the state of Oklahoma make this activity illegal, but at the time the only recourse was to run the diggers off the property.

Salvage excavations at the site by Oklahoma Anthropological Society volunteers revealed fairly extensive disturbance by pothunters. Signs of centuries of human habitation had been left in 18" - 22" of soil. Recovered artifacts included projectile points which may date as early as the Archaic period and pottery which may relate to the Mississippian period (for a Flash presentation of the time periods in Oklahoma's prehistory, [click here](#)). Pottery sherds like those shown above all appear to have come from one vessel and show design elements like the apparent bird claw in the sherd in the upper right hand part of the photograph.

Unfortunately, the pothunter's disturbance of the archaeological context resulted in the loss of most of the important information which could have been obtained from this intriguing site. A fuller

history of the Owl Cave site will never be written because of the actions of those few trespassers.



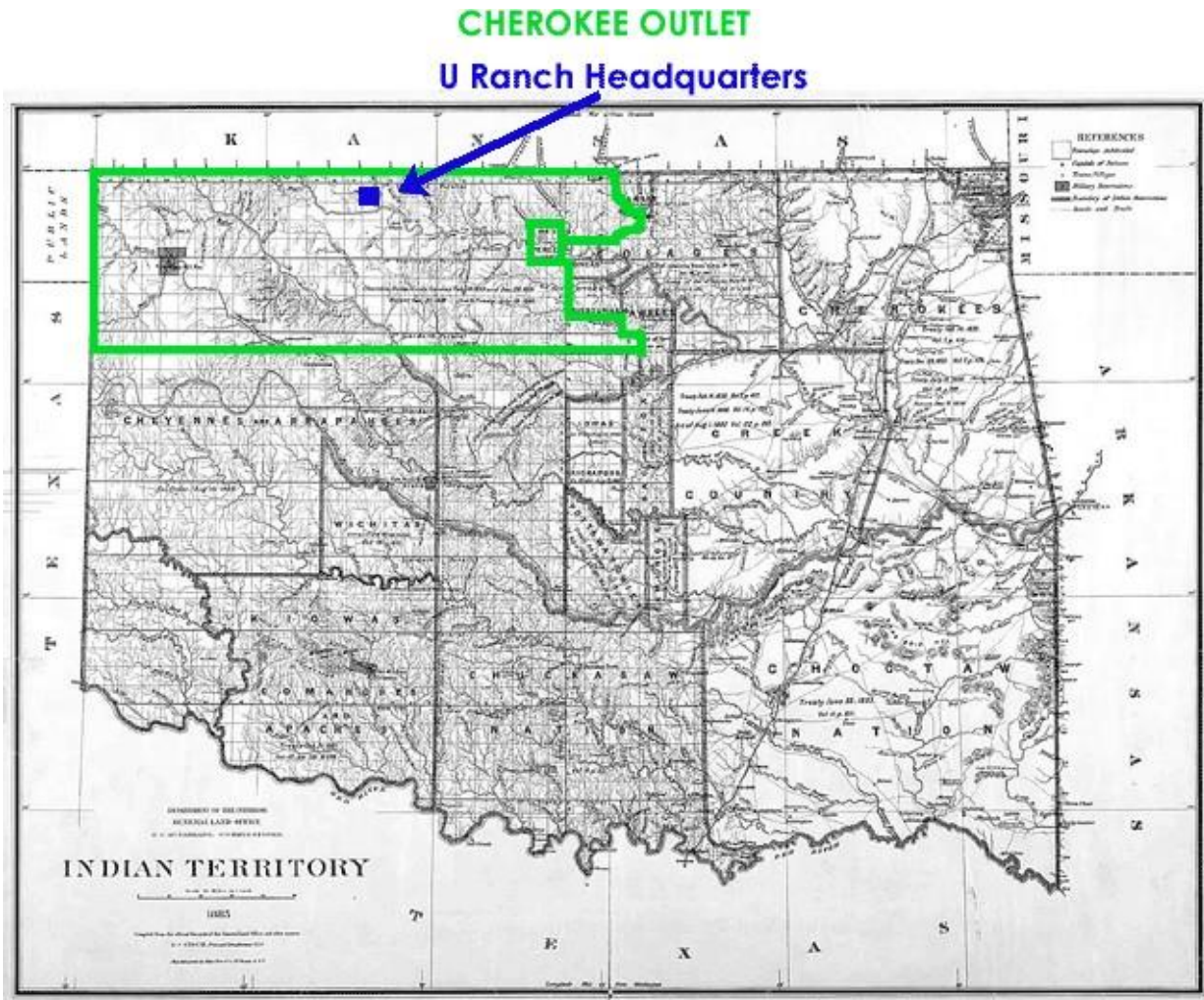
Projectile points from Owl Cave (photo courtesy Oklahoma Anthropological Society)

References:

"Test Excavation in Owl Cave" by Sherman P. Lawton in *Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society*, Vol. XII, 1963.

Alfalfa County

The U Ranch Site



At the 1835 signing of the Treaty of New Echota, Georgia, by a faction of the Cherokee, the US government promised the tribe, in addition to new lands in the northeast corner of Indian Territory, a perpetual outlet from their territory to hunting grounds in the west. The New Echota treaty led to the forceable eviction of most of the Cherokee from their ancestral lands in the infamous march known as "The Trail of Tears" which claimed a variously estimated 2,000 to 8,000 of the 17,000 people removed to Oklahoma.

The 60 by 200 mile strip below the southern border of Kansas promised as a hunting outlet became known as the Cherokee Outlet or the Cherokee Strip. At the end of the Civil War, in which the Cherokees had joined the Confederacy, they were forced to re-negotiate their treaties. The new treaty signed in 1866 gave the US government power to take Cherokee lands which they did to settle other tribes including the Osage, Ponca, Kaw and Tonkawa. These tribes in the eastern part

of the Outlet effectively closed off the land to the Cherokee. Meanwhile, Texas ranchers, using trails through the area to move cattle to Kansas markets, often allowed their cattle to linger along the trail to fatten on the good grasses.

The Cherokee who found themselves unable to use these lands began making an effort to collect grazing fees for all the cattle finding their way onto the Outlet. These collections were necessarily haphazard and cattlemen often moved their cattle for a short while up into Kansas to avoid paying fees.

One rancher who had moved into the Outlet instead chose to pay the fees and negotiate directly with the Cherokee. He was Major Andrew Drumm who had extensive experience in the cattle business and had become wealthy selling cattle to San Franciscans during the Gold Rush years. In 1874, Drumm selected as his ranch headquarters a location between the Salt Fork and Medicine Rivers, a location a few miles north of present day Cherokee, Oklahoma. This ranch covered 150,000 acres, and Drumm paid leasing fees to the Cherokee of 40 cents a head for cows, 25 cents for two-year old cattle and nothing for calves.

These arrangements between ranchers and the Cherokee came to the attention of the federal government when conflicts between ranchers forced the attention of the Department of Interior. Drumm and some other ranchers had begun using the recently invented barbed wire to fence off portions of the Outlet. The Cherokee approved of this development since it made it easier for them to collect the leasing fees they were owed and prevented non-paying cattlemen from using the rangeland. When a Kansas rancher complained to Interior that Drumm had fenced property for which the Kansas rancher had paid leasing fees, an investigation followed. Although Drumm prevailed, it was clear that pressures were building which threatened the large ranches of the area.

In 1883, Drumm and several other prominent ranchers met in Caldwell, Kansas to form an organization to protect the ranchers' interests. Called the Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association, Drumm was elected a director of the group. He helped negotiate a lease agreement with the Cherokee for a five year lease for Outlet lands for the sum of \$100,000 per year. Every six months, a lease payment of \$50,000 in silver dollars was transported in wagons from Caldwell to Tahlequah.

Meanwhile, political pressures were building in Washington to open the Outlet to the so-called "Boomers." The Boomers believed the government should open unoccupied "Indian Territories" for settlement by farmers and homesteaders.

At the end of the five year lease, the Department of the Interior notified the Cherokee tribe that no leasing arrangement of the Outlet by the Cherokee was valid. The government negotiated a purchase of the 5 million acres from the Cherokee, who had been left with no other options, for \$1.40 an acre. Eventually, the federal government ordered all permanent structures removed from the Outlet and in 1893 the Cherokee Strip Land Run took place.

Andrew Drumm, always an astute businessman, had already moved his cattle operation further south so that he did not have to dump his cattle on a depressed market as so many other ranchers had. His business interests were widespread and he eventually bought a house in Kansas City. At his death, his will founded the Drumm Institute in Independence, Missouri for the care of orphaned and indigent children. The Institute is still in operation today.

References:

"Major Andrew Drumm: Cowman, Businessman, and Visionary," by Bonnie Haas and Joyce J. Bender, **Chronicles of Oklahoma**, Volume 79, No. 1, 2001.

"Of Cattle and Corporations: The Rise, Progress, and Termination of the Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association," by William W. Savage, Jr., **Chronicles of Oklahoma**, Volume 71, No. 2, 1993.

"The Cherokee Strip Live Stock Association," by Edward Everett Dale, **Chronicles of Oklahoma**, Volume 5, No. 1, March, 1927.

"Range Riding in Oklahoma," by Ralph H. Records, **Chronicles of Oklahoma**, Volume 20, No. 2, June, 1942.

Atoka County

Ferndale Bog



Aerial photo of upper and lower sections of the Ferndale Bog

Studies of past environments help archeologists understand the factors influencing how people lived in the past. One method available to archaeologists to help them understand past environment is the science of palynology, the study of ancient pollens.

Pollen, the same stuff that causes us to sneeze in the spring and fall, is amazingly persistent in the environment. It has a hard outer shell that preserves well in a wet environment (like a lake bottom) or in an acidic environment (like a peat bog). Different species of plants produce uniquely-shaped pollens that scientists have learned to identify microscopically. As wind-borne pollen settles in a lake or peat bog, it becomes part of the sediment, and, undisturbed, leaves a record, sometimes thousands of years long, of the kinds of plants that have grown in the area. While peat bogs may seem an unlikely feature of the Oklahoma landscape, Atoka County is home to one known as Ferndale Bog.

The Ferndale Bog formed over thousands of years as sphagnum moss growing in the vicinity of a spring on a sandstone ridge of the Ouachita Mountains decayed and was replaced by new generations of peat. Archaeologists have done two studies on the pollens found in the Ferndale Bog sediments. These studies rely on microscopic examination of sediment cores taken from the bog. They reveal 12,000 years of climate change in southeastern Oklahoma. The deepest sample, taken over 10 1/2 feet below today's surface contains pine pollen and pollen from white spruce, a tree found today in Canada and the far northern United States. Twelve thousand years ago the world was coming to the end of the last glaciation and Oklahoma's climate, as revealed by the presence of spruce pollen, was probably cooler and moister. As the climate warmed and dried, the

environment around Ferndale Bog became dominated mostly by grasses until it likely became a tall-grass prairie area. However, during the period 9,000 to 5,400 year ago, the actual amount of pollen deposited in the bog falls to its lowest levels. This is interpreted as more evidence for a dramatic drought that lasted for thousands of years and probably turned parts of Oklahoma into a desert. Gradually, the climate seems to have changed so that more moisture became available to plants, and the oak-pine-hickory forests we see today developed, perhaps as late as 1,000 years ago.

Today the Ferndale bog is protected in the McGee Creek Natural Scenic Recreation Area.



Ancient pine pollen from Ferndale Bog



Flower photographed at Ferndale Bog

References:

Ferndale Bog and Natural Lake: Five Thousand Years of Environmental Change in Southeastern Oklahoma, L.E. Albert, Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Studies in Oklahoma's Past, Number 7, 1981.

Past Environments and Prehistory at McGee Creek Reservoir, Atoka County, Oklahoma, C. Reid Ferring, Vol. V, Part 4 of the McGee Creek Archaeological Project Reports, University of North Texas, Institute of Applied Sciences, 1994.

Beaver County

The Roy Smith Site

This Plains Village site lies in the breaks north of the Beaver River in the High Plains region of the Oklahoma Panhandle. Farmers of the Antelope Creek culture lived in the area from AD 1100 to 1450. These people were bison hunters in addition to being farmers who grew beans, corn and squash. They traded bison hides and meat to the Puebloans farther west for pottery, obsidian and turquoise.

The Antelope Creek people are the only recorded prehistoric culture in Oklahoma using stone slab foundations in the construction of their homes. Packed clay held the sandstone slabs upright. The walls were probably finished with grasses woven into upright limbs and covered with clay.



The house excavated at the Roy Smith Site in 1965 had a continuous west wall of 70 feet. Five 15 foot by 11 foot rooms were sectioned off the main E-W wall. The largest of these rooms on the south end of the structure had a long entryway stretching to the east.

The arrow points and other stone tools found at Roy Smith were chipped from Alibates flint from the famous Alibates quarry in the Texas Panhandle, about 100 miles from Roy Smith. Excavators also found bison bone farming tools and cordmarked pottery at Roy Smith.

The people who lived at Roy Smith apparently abandoned the site around AD 1450. The reasons for this abandonment are unclear. Perhaps a prolonged drought made farming less productive. Further research may someday answer this and other questions about the Antelope Creek people.

References:

The Roy Smith Site, Bv-14, Beaver County, Oklahoma by Fred Schneider (Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society 18 1969).

Beckham County

The Certain Site

In 1970, a Beckham County rancher noticed bone eroding from the wall of a canyon on his western Oklahoma ranch. He notified the Oklahoma Archeological Survey who confirmed the bone were bison. With the permission of the landowner, the site was monitored for 20 years. In 1992, new landowners, Bob and Jackie Fleshman became interested in the site where bison bone continued to show up after every heavy rain storm. They agreed to a University of Oklahoma Department of Anthropology/Oklahoma Archeological Survey field school in which college students learn field techniques of archeology under the supervision of trained archeologists. This first excavation at the Certain Site began in 1992.



In that excavation, archeologists and students uncovered the site of a 1700 year old bison-kill site. The Certain Site has been investigated throughout the 1990's and has become the best-investigated kill site on the Southern Plains.

Along with the original bone-bed, five more kill sites along the same canyon have been discovered. Archeologists have used information gathered to fill in our knowledge of the bison-hunting people who lived in western Oklahoma two millennia ago.

The famous bison kill sites excavated on the Northern Plains in the US have revealed a hunting technique where native American people drove bison herds over the edge of a steep cliff. The bison were killed in the plunge. And while there were plenty of bison in the Southern Plains, early hunters in our state didn't have many cliffs. What they probably had an abundance of in western Oklahoma were erosional gullies or arroyos. After stampeding a bison cow-calf herd of anywhere from a dozen to 50 or more animals up into a dead-end canyon, hunters standing on the edges of the canyon could throw spears down on the milling animals and kill them without danger to themselves.

Research on the Certain site has revealed that the kill episodes appear to occur in late summer or early fall. Because the vertebrae from the tails are missing in the excavation, archeologist can tell that the hides were removed during butchering. Apparently, the tongue was prized as the small hyoid bones from the back of the mouth are frequently missing.

References:

"Where's the Cliff? Late Archaic Bison Kills in the Southern Plains" by Kent Buehler (Plains Anthropologist Memoir 29, No. 159, 1997)

"Preliminary Results from the Certain Site: A Late Archaic Bison Kill in Western Oklahoma," by Lee Bement and Kent Buehler (Plains Anthropologist 39[148]).

Blaine County

34BL46

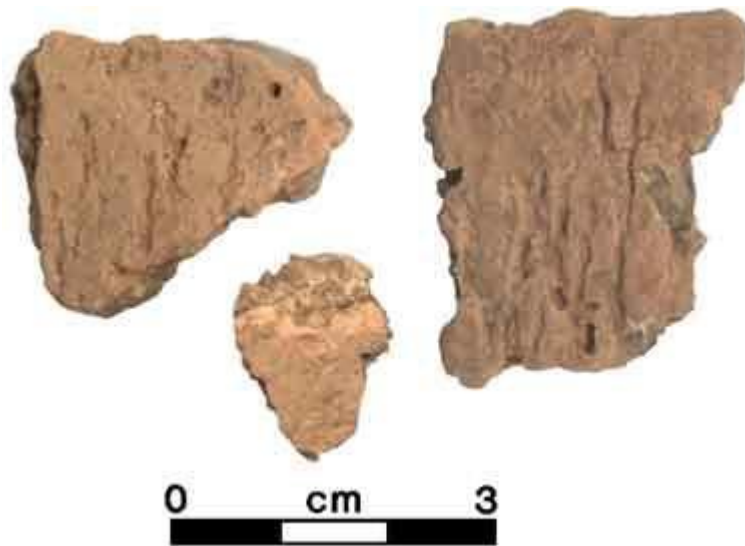
34BL46 is a camp or village site perched high above an unnamed spring-fed stream and canyon in Blaine County. A half-mile walk south along the canyon edge provides a spectacular overview of the Canadian River valley. First identified in 1977, the site was re-investigated during a 2001-2002 survey project funded by the State Historic Preservation Office, the National Park Service and the Oklahoma Archeological Survey. A total of 93 sites were recorded in Custer and Blaine counties during the survey. The site has never been given a name and is referred to by the archaeological numbering system used in the United States. 34 is Oklahoma's designation, BL is for Blaine County, and the 46 represents the 46th site recorded for Blaine County in the Oklahoma Archeological Survey site files.

Materials recovered from BL46 include two points which probably date to the late Archaic or Woodland periods (see the Oklahoma Timeline for an explanation of these periods). However, pottery sherds dating to the early Plains Village period indicate that the site might have been occupied several times over a thousand or more years. The early Plains Village period for the Canadian River drainage has not been well-studied but is probably similar to the same period for the Washita River south of the Canadian (for information on Washita River sites, see Garvin County and the Southern Plains Villagers). The Brewer Site is an early Late Prehistoric site on the Canadian River in McClain County.



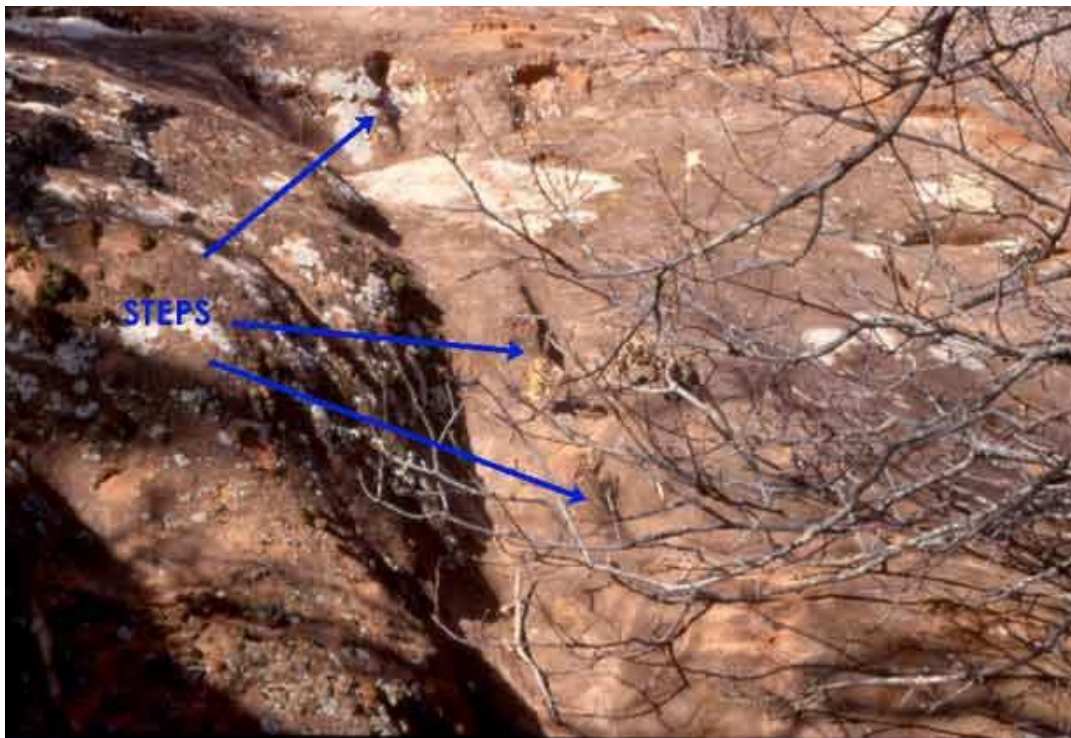
Dart points from BL46

The pottery sherds, shown below, are cordmarked, a technique of surface finish in which a wooden paddle was wrapped with cord and then impressed into the wet clay before the pot was fired. Cordmarked pottery is usually found on Woodland or early Plains Village sites.



Pottery sherds from BL46

Not far from this prehistoric site, archaeologists found another interesting site which may be prehistoric or may date to the early 1900s. Along the same stream, a series of steps were notched in the sandstone along the west wall providing a means of crossing this deep canyon. Long-time Oklahoma residents of the area recall that such steps were often made with an old axe to provide a shorter route for school children or to access fields. The sandstone steps are shown in the image below.



Bryan County

The Novotny, Vaden, White and Opel Sites



WPA excavations at the Novotny Site

The history of the removal of the five Southeastern tribes, the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole, to Indian Territory in the first half of the 19th century on the "Trail of Tears" has been well-documented historically. The record of the lives of these people after their arrival in Oklahoma is less accessible to us. Very few of the sites from this period have been investigated archaeologically; however, four sites in Bryan County, dating to the post-removal period, were excavated in 1941 by Works Progress Administration (WPA) crews and have been linked to the historic Chickasaw.

WPA excavations were directed by Lynn Howard under the supervision of Dr. Forrest Clements of the Department of Anthropology, University of Oklahoma. The sites excavated were located on Rock Creek, a tributary of the Washita River, except for the Opel Site which was along the Washita itself. They were believed to be the locations of small Chickasaw homesites which once had log cabins on them. Material was usually recovered in the first eight inches of soil except in the few cases where features like hearths or burials were encountered. A child and an adult burial were excavated at the Opel site.

The Chickasaw originally lived in a large swath from western Kentucky and Tennessee to northern Mississippi and Alabama. They were farmers growing corn, peas, beans, pumpkins and sunflowers who also hunted wild game. At first contact with Europeans, the Chickasaw lived mostly along the Tombigbee River in Mississippi and Alabama.

The Chickasaw allied early with the British in the ongoing political intrigues of the competing European interests in North America. After the American Revolution, the Chickasaw forged new relationships with American traders. Eventually, under continuing pressure from the American government in the 1800s, the Chickasaw ceded their ancestral lands and agreed to removal. At Doaksville in 1837, Chickasaw representatives agreed to lease land from the Choctaw who had

already settled in southeastern Oklahoma. Removal to the new area was slowed, however, by the dangerous conditions existing in the western parts of their new territory. The native peoples of the area considered the newcomers interlopers, and Texas settlers conducted raids in Oklahoma, ostensibly in retaliation for horse stealing by Indian tribes. In reality, any Native American in Indian Territory was a target. In 1842, Fort Washita was constructed near the confluence of the Washita and Red Rivers and in 1851 Fort Arbuckle in Murray County to the north was completed. With these forts in place, the Chickasaw began to relocate in earnest, eventually occupying most of south-central Oklahoma.

The four sites excavated by the WPA appear to have been occupied in the period between 1840 and 1850. The recovered materials are interesting for their mix of European/American and native goods. The people living at the four sites were farming, raising livestock and probably hunting small game for their livelihoods. Although European or American china, as seen in the image below, was recovered during excavations, the majority of the pottery from the site was hand-made. It replicated the forms that the Chickasaw had grown accustomed to using in their European china, like cups, small bowls and mugs. These imported items were no longer available to them in their new frontier homes and so they made their own. Several tiny bowls were also recovered that might have been made by children or for children as playthings.



Metal and European/American-made China



Miniature bowls from the Novotny site

References:

"Reexamination of WPA Excavations at Novotny Site" by Robert L. Brooks, *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, Volume LXXIV, No. 3, Fall 1996. *An Analysis of Archaeological Material Attributed to the Chickasaws* by E. Marilyn Kassel, M.A. Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1949.

"Post-Removal Chickasaw Pottery: Four Sites in Southern Oklahoma" by Lydia L. Don Carlos and Robert E. Bell, *Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society* 29, 1980.

Caddo County

The Domebo Canyon Site

At the end of the Ice Age, when winters were warmer and summers cooler, a Columbian mammoth wandered into a swampy slough at the bottom of a deep ravine in Caddo County. Weighing in at 10 tons, he stood some 14 feet tall. While he grazed on the lush marsh grasses, a family of prehistoric hunters, hidden downwind from the giant, quietly watched his movements. Slowly, so that the mammoth did not spook, the hunters rose. Their spears, launched with a throwing tool called the atlatl, flew with fierce power and felled the creature. The flesh of the mammoth fed the family for many weeks.



Within 5 years of the mammoth's death, the slough had silted in so that the bones were covered. Eventually, the entire creek channel filled with sandy soil eroded from the nearby sandstone hills. Over the centuries there were several cycles of erosion and deposition. The massive bones lay in their silt and clay bed, largely undisturbed. The 20th century, though, brought an erosional cycle that eventually exposed the mammoth skeleton, buried for some 11,000 years.

In 1961, Mr. Buck Patterson contacted archeologists at the Museum of the Great Plains in Lawton about the bones he had discovered eroding from the bank of a branch of Tonkawa Creek. When archeologists excavated, they found the kill site from that long-distant date.



Artifacts from the Domebo Canyon Site

Mammoth skeletons are uncovered in land clearing and excavation fairly often in Oklahoma. Usually, these ancient elephants died from natural causes. At the Domebo Canyon site, though, archeologists discovered the stone tools left behind by the prehistoric hunters who killed and then butchered the mammoth. For this reason, the Domebo Canyon site is both rare and important. Clovis hunters like those at the Domebo Canyon site may have been among the first people on the American continents. Little is known about this period of Oklahoma's prehistory so future research will undoubtedly reveal more details about the big game hunters who once called Oklahoma home.

References:

Domebo: A Paleo-indian Mammoth Kill Site in the Prairie Plains by Frank C. Leonhardy (Contributions of the Museum of the Great Plains No. 1, Lawton.1966).

Canadian County

Cn-46, Canadian County Canyon Site



Inspecting walls of the canyon.

A canyon eroding near Buggy Creek in western Canadian County formed the basis for an archaeological study which added to our understanding of the use of plants by the prehistoric people of Oklahoma.

A collection of stone tools and pottery from the eroding banks of the canyon was catalogued and studied by a University of Oklahoma student, Mr. James Taylor. Taylor wrote a master's thesis on the soils revealed in the canyon walls and the collection of prehistoric tools he discovered in the canyon. His exploration of the canyon area uncovered an ashy, charcoal- filled lens of soil in a canyon wall buried at a depth of around seven feet. This material proved to be a hearth area where a thousand years ago, three small fires were built. In addition to a scraper and the flakes left over from toolmaking, charred seeds were recovered.

The seeds included sunflower, wild plum and a weed seed called marsh elder (also known as sumpweed). Marsh elder grows in damp, low-lying areas and produces an oily seed akin to the sunflower seed. Marsh elder is of interest to archaeologists because it is a crop that was domesticated in North America prehistorically. This domestication occurred long before the introduction of maize to North America. In fact, domesticated marsh elder dates back some 4,000 years ago to west-central Illinois. Domestication by prehistoric people increased the seed size 10 times the original weed seed size. This domesticated variety of marsh elder is now extinct although it was likely in use when Europeans entered North America. The charred marsh elder seeds recovered from the Canadian County hearth probably date to around 1,000 AD.



Salvage of hearths exposed by erosion in the canyon walls.

References:

A Canyon in Western Canadian County: Archaeological and Geomorphological Clues from Non-Destructive Testing, James Taylor, University of Oklahoma thesis, 1984.

Cherokee County

The Harlan Mound Site



Excavation at the largest of the Harlan mounds

The Harlan Site is the Oklahoma center and western edge of a development beginning at the end of the first millennium, the formation of an elite ruling class of priest/leaders who held sway over farming villagers occupying fertile river valleys in much of eastern North America. These leaders lived at mound centers where religious ceremonies were performed. The communities of farming people, growing corn, squash and beans, brought tribute to their leaders and provided the labor for the building of earthen mounds where temples and mortuary houses were built and in which elaborate burials of the honored dead were placed.

The first mound at Harlan was built around AD 700. However, the main mound-building began around AD 900 and continued for around 300 years. During that period, four more mounds were built up of dirt carried in from the local area. The largest mound is 130 by 160 feet in outline. Four different mound-building events over the period of Harlan's occupation brought the mound to its eventual height of 14 feet. The earliest mound covered a burned structure; the following building periods did not appear to cover structures but rather to provide a heightened stage where rituals were performed by the Harlan chiefs or priests.



Stones of structure buried under oldest mound at the Harlan site.

The other mounds were devoted to the care and treatment of the Harlan dead. Mortuary structures served as temporary houses for the dead. At four different periods of time, the mortuaries were completely cleaned out and the skeletal remains of the Harlan ancestors were reburied in a burial mound. Over time, the ceremonial offerings placed with these burials increased in number. They indicate the growing status of the leaders and increasing trade with other areas on the continent. Copper from the Great Lakes, conch shell from the Gulf Coast and galena, a mineral used to form grey pigment, from eastern Missouri show a vibrant community with extensive contacts with other chiefdoms throughout North America.

The people who actually lived at the site were few in number. Perhaps only the principal chief and a few retainers or perhaps only a caretaker lived at the site. Most of the structures excavated at Harlan were devoted to housing the dead.

Over the 300 years of its political power, the Harlan site chiefs extended their influence throughout the Arkansas River valley and perhaps even to the Ozark drainages in southwest Missouri and northwest Arkansas. However, by AD 1250 the Harlan site had been abandoned. The Norman site in Wagoner county became ascendant for a short-lived period and then the Spiro site on the Arkansas River about 50 miles away became the most powerful and prestigious community in the area.

References:

1972 Bell, Robert E. The Harlan Site, Ck-6, A Prehistoric Mound Center in Cherokee County, Eastern Oklahoma. Memoir 2. Oklahoma Anthropological Society, Norman.

Choctaw County

The Doaksville Site

Once the largest town in the Choctaw Nation, the community of Doaksville flourished within the Choctaw Nation from the 1830s until shortly after the Civil War. It served as the Choctaw National Capital from 1850 until 1863, and is where General Stand Watie became the last Confederate General to surrender, in June of 1865.

Hard hit by the abandonment of nearby Fort Towson in the 1850s, by movement of the Choctaw National Capital to Chahta Tamaha in 1863, and by the general devastation caused by the Civil War, Doaksville declined rapidly in the 1870s. The final blow to the town occurred in 1902 when a new railroad was constructed about a mile to the south and a new town- Fort Towson- was constructed that quickly took the place of what little remained at Doaksville. When the Oklahoma Historical Society acquired the site in 1960, little remained on the surface to betray its former importance.

In 1995, 1996, and 1997 the Oklahoma Historical Society, under the direction of William Lees, conducted a series of excavations to uncover remains of the town to prepare the site for public interpretation. The Oklahoma Anthropological Society was invited to be a part of this project and their annual spring dig kicked off each season's excavations, with work continuing through the end of July by a University of Oklahoma Field School.



Early photo of Doaksville, probably dating to the mid-19th century

1995 Excavations

In 1995, the OAS and OU field schools focused on Structure 5, and OU students also worked on structures 7, 33, and 57. Structure 5 is a well-constructed limestone foundation, and the only with a formal cellar. This building may have been a small dwelling or a detached kitchen. Structure 33 is the remains of a commercial building that appears to have burned about 1850 while in use. Excavations were begun on Structure 57 at a pile of brick rubble and a nearby feature that appears to have been an outdoor fire pit. Structure 7 was found to represent a pile of limestone rock of no consequence.

1996 Excavations

In 1996 the OAS excavated structure 13-15 (the jail), and the OU field school focused on structures 6-2, 33, and 57. The jail was completely exposed, and revealed stone walls two-feet in width enclosing three cells that were only 3 by 6 ft in size. Work at Structure 33 was limited to salvaging an area destroyed by pothunters shortly after the close of the 1995 field season. Limited exploratory work was conducted at structure 6-2, thought to be the hotel, and 57. At 57, this work identified a feature that was not excavated due to the end of the field season.

1997 Excavations

In 1997, the OAS excavated Structure 6-2 (the hotel) and 32 (the well) and OU students renewed work on Structure 57. At the hotel, two chimney bases and hearths were excavated that showed this building was once about 40 ft. in length. This building showed the longest span of use of any at Doaksville, with evidence covering a period beginning in the 1840s and continuing until the turn of the 20th century.

The well was one of three communal wells that are still visible at the site. Excavated were remains of a limestone pavement around the well and artifacts dating from the 1840s. At 57, excavation exposed a chimney/hearth foundation, and evidence that this building had burned. Also, the feature identified in 1996 was found to be a two- meter deep pit-feature, possibly a root cellar, filled with burned household debris buried under brick rubble. From the ceramics in this pit, it appears to have been filled in after a fire in the 1850s or 1860s.



Volunteers work to uncover one of the cells of the Doaksville jail

Excavations at Doaksville represent the most widespread for a town in the Indian Territory and provide a collection of unprecedented scope from the 1840s to 1860s period. Research is still underway on the collections, but to date a number of significant projects have benefited from the work by the OAS and OU field schools during 1995 to 1997.

ROADS AND RIVERS

19TH CENTURY TRANSPORTATION AND DOAKSVILLE

The famous old military road came in from Arkansas to Fort Tinson near Doaksville, thence in a westerly direction to Armstrong Academy to Wathita, Tishomingo, thence west to Fort Arbuckle.

(in 1879) We crossed Red River at the mouth of Kiamichi River at Captain Wright's ferry, and travelled up the old military trail to Doaksville.

Doakville was at the center of a major crossroads in the Choctaw Nation. Military roads running north-south and east-west passed through the center of the town. The Central National Road of Texas created by the Texas Congress in 1844, ran from Dallas northeast through Lamar County to the Red River. There it connected with the military road that ran to Fort Tinson and Doakville and then north to Fort Gibson and beyond to Fort Smith.

The Red River connected Doakville with New Orleans and was a major route for transportation and trade. Ferries and steamboats carrying travelers, supplies and other goods loaded their cargo in the public landing just a few miles to the south of Doakville to be transported up the military road to stores, hotels and homes. Fort Tinson was considered the headwater for steamboat navigation on the Red River.

Riverboats steamed up the Red River carrying cargo from New Orleans to Doakville.

It is thought that this side paddle wheelboat sank in about 1840, possibly just before reaching the public landing covering Fort Tinson and Doakville.

"A map of a contemplated Road through the Choctaw Country"
courtesy of the National Archives

"This early map of military roads through the Choctaw Nation shows the location of Doakville and Fort Tinson"
courtesy of the National Archives

"A map showing the route from Washington, Arkansas to Doakville, Choctaw Nation"
courtesy of the National Archives

"WASHINGTON AND DOAKSVILLE AR"

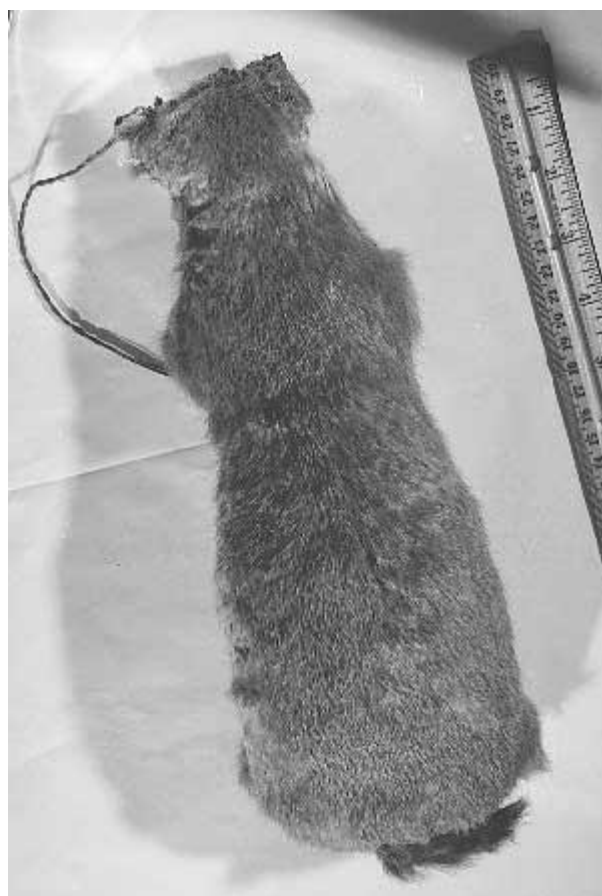
Thanks to Dr. William Lees of the Oklahoma Historical Society for providing this article about the Doaksville site and for the accompanying photographs.

Cimarron County

The Kenton Caves Sites

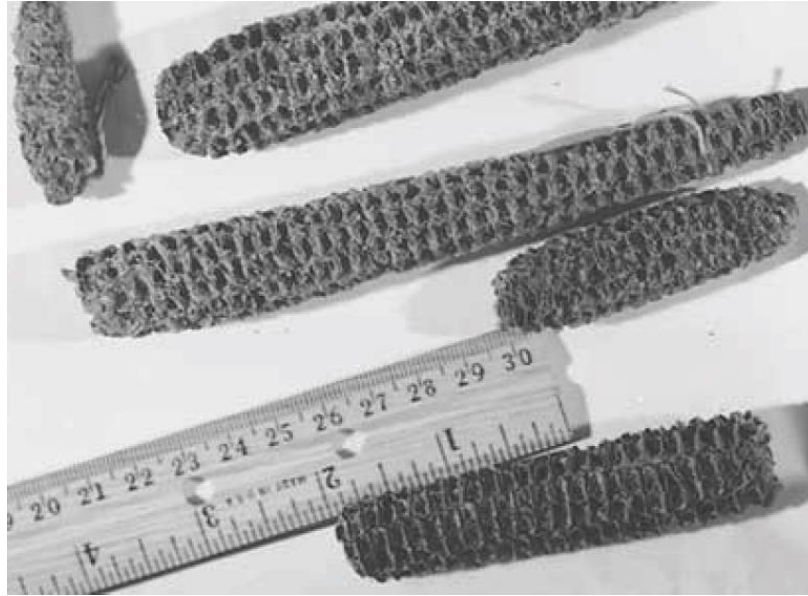
In 1928, a county farm agent and avid amateur archeologist named William "Uncle Billy" Baker discovered a cave in Cimarron County near the border with New Mexico with obvious signs of ancient human occupation. The very dry climate allowed for remarkable preservation of materials which have usually disappeared in the archeological record with the passage of time.

Fieldwork by the Colorado Museum of Natural History, the Oklahoma Historical Society and the University of Oklahoma continued throughout the 1930's. Seven cave and shelter sites were eventually identified near Kenton, all with archeological remains.



Prairie-dog skin bag stuffed with seed corn

Among artifacts recovered from the Kenton Caves are hide and yucca-fiber sandals, shell, bone and wooden beads, squash rinds, beans, baskets, stone arrow points and spear points, and a wooden atlatl (spear throwing tool).



Prehistoric corn cobs of different varieties

Unfortunately, in spite of the incredible preservation of rarely-found artifacts at this series of rock shelters, there is much more unknown than known about the people who lived there. Since most of the sites were excavated before rigorous scientific techniques, archeologists are unable to say with certainty who the Kenton cave inhabitants were, where they came from, or even when they lived here.

Because of the range of artifact styles, it is believed that occupation of the caves may have continued through several thousand years. People of the late Archaic, see chart below, who used the atlatl and spears for hunting, probably lived in the caves. The most recent Native American inhabitants were probably people from the Protohistoric time period some 500 years ago when European explorers had begun colonizing North America. The presence of European glass trade beads in one cave are indicators of this period.





Rock art from the Kenton Caves

The questions about the Kenton Cave people which remain unanswered are what different groups used the site, what seasons of the year were they used, when did agriculture (indicated by the presence of corn and squash) become important in the area, and what household activities were carried out in which parts of the caves. The excavations, as all excavations do, destroyed the context of the artifacts in relation to one another and to the site as a whole. Unfortunately, inadequate record-keeping by the original excavators will not allow modern archeologists to recreate these important clues to site activities.

The Kenton Caves, as important archeologically as they are, could have answered all these questions had the archeological excavations been carried out in a scientific manner. The Kenton Caves and other sites around the world like them have taught archeologists a valuable lesson in the importance of preserving sites for future generations when scientific advances will allow even more information to be gleaned from the archeological record.

References:

Leland C. Bement and Casey R. Carmichael: From Top to Bottom: Pedestrian Survey of the Black Mesa Region Cimarron County, Oklahoma

Cleveland County

The Thunderbird Dam Site



Late Archaic and Woodland projectile points from the Thunderbird Dam Site

The Little River in central Oklahoma flows in a southeasterly direction from its headwaters in northern Cleveland County to its confluence with the South Canadian River in Hughes County. In Cleveland County the Little River flows through the Cross Timbers, that dense stand of forest dominated by post oaks and blackjack oaks that Washington Irving called "forests of cast iron." The river carries a heavy load of iron-rich sediment and is muddy red in color. In the 1960s, the US Bureau of Reclamation dammed the river to form a water reservoir for Norman, Del City and Midwest City known as Lake Thunderbird. The impoundment flooded around 6,000 acres of Cross Timbers.

Construction of the earthen dam disturbed a high terrace about 275 yards south of the river. Later, as the lake filled, the terrace west of the dam was flooded; a portion of the terrace was exposed during dry periods until wave action eroded enough of the terrace to completely submerge it. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, evidence of a prehistoric occupation of the terrace was uncovered as waves battered the terrace remnant. A salvage excavation at the site was undertaken by the Oklahoma Anthropological Society in 1970 and a 1985 excavation east of the dam confirmed that the dam construction destroyed most of the site.

From the information gathered during excavations at this site and others along the Little River, it appears that people lived in this area for many thousands of years including during the four-thousand year drought of the Altithermal which started around 8,500 years ago and turned most of Oklahoma into a vast desert.

The Thunderbird Dam site itself appears to have been used during the Late Archaic and Woodland periods, likely from around 500 BC to 1,000 AD. Hunters found the ridge a good camping spot near water and plentiful game animals including deer and turkey. The period of occupation marked several important transitions in Oklahoma prehistory. Around 1 AD, people began using a bow and arrow rather than earlier darts and spears. The arrows required smaller points and this transition is evident at the Thunderbird Dam site where both dart and arrow points were found. Also around the same time, the technological innovation of fired-clay vessels for cooking and storage occurred in this part of Oklahoma. Cordmarked pottery, characteristic of the Woodland period, was recovered from the site. Cordmarking was accomplished on the surface of the pottery by wrapping a wooden paddle in twine and patting the paddle into the surface of the still damp clay.

Archeologists believe that for around 1,500 years ago, hunting groups frequently camped for brief stays on this ridge overlooking the Little River. While the impoundment of Lake Thunderbird effectively destroyed the site, excavations and analysis of the materials collected from the site give us a glimpse into the lives of these hunter-gatherers of central Oklahoma.



Chipped stone knife blades from the Thunderbird Dam Site

References:

Archeological Investigations within the Central Little River Drainage Basin, Cleveland and Pottawatomie Counties Oklahoma by Michael C. Moore, Archeological Survey Report No. 31, Oklahoma Archeological Survey, University of Oklahoma, 1988.

Coal County

Log Cabin Sites, 34CO131, 132



Remains of ca. 1860-1889 log cabin in Coal County (photograph by TRC Environmental)

The locations and information about archaeological sites in Oklahoma are kept on file at the offices of the Oklahoma Archeological Survey at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Of the some 19,000 recorded sites in the state, many have been added to the inventory through the Section 106 review process which resulted from the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. This act ensures that projects which are federally-funded, take place on publicly-owned lands, or require a federal permit will be evaluated for their potential impact on the cultural resources of the nation. In Oklahoma, when such projects are undertaken, the planners consult the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Oklahoma Archeological Survey.

In 2004, when a natural gas pipeline was proposed through parts of Coal, Pittsburg and Atoka counties, the pipeline company engaged an archaeological consulting firm to consult with SHPO and the Survey to fulfill their responsibilities under Section 106. The state archaeologist advised that a pedestrian survey of the proposed pipeline route would be required to check for cultural resources that would be impacted by the pipeline's route. This survey revealed six historic sites which were recorded and information for them is now on file at the Archeological Survey. None of the six sites will be directly affected by the pipeline.

34CO131 and 34CO132 (the 131st and 132nd sites recorded for Coal County) are both decaying log cabin sites. There were two structures at 34CO131 and one structure at 34CO132. The single structure had sandstone slabs at the base of the walls, perhaps foundation stones. Based on

construction techniques, both are believed to have been occupied for a short time in the 1800s.

The identities of the people who built and lived in these log cabins are lost; however, we can make some guesses based on the known history of Coal County in the 1800s. The Choctaws were removed from their homelands in Mississippi to the Indian Territories from 1831-1833. In 1831 alone, one-third of the Choctaws in the removal died from disease and starvation before they reached their new homes. A large part of modern-day Coal County was part of the Choctaw's territory in Oklahoma.

In the second half of the 19th century, coal mining came to southeastern Oklahoma. Most of the coal mining operations were run by the big railroad companies and labor for the mines came from miners from the northeastern coal mines. Later, the mining companies began bringing people directly from Europe to man the mines. These miners worked in extremely hazardous conditions for very little pay. Mines in southeastern Oklahoma had a reputation for being among the most dangerous in the nation.

Recording the locations of sites such as the log cabin sites from Coal County may allow archaeologists and historians of the future to more fully write the story of Oklahoma in the years leading up to statehood.

For more information on Coal County history, search the Chronicles of Oklahoma online.

Comanche County

The Gore Pit Site



Layers of sediment exposed at Gore Pit

Many Oklahomans have found arrowheads and pottery sherds from prehistoric sites as they walked over plowed fields or along creek banks. Wind and water erosion, farming, and construction activities all can expose sites and the artifacts left there by the people of the past. Over the thousands of years of Oklahoma's human prehistory, the oldest sites often have been buried under many feet of wind and waterborne sediments. This is one factor in later sites, like those of the Plains Village period shown in the chart below, being more commonly found than earlier sites.

Road construction in the 1960's near Lawton on East Cache Creek led the Highway Department to bulldoze a borrow pit, some 15 to 20 feet deep, exposing a prehistoric campsite buried under 6,000 years of sediments. Charcoal-stained, fire-cracked rock in circular patterns, Ogallala quartzite tools, and mussel shell concentrations caught the attention of archaeologists at the Museum of the Great Plains in Lawton. The Southwest Chapter of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society was called upon to help in the excavation of several of the over 30 burned rock features. These features were six to eight feet in diameter and were full of powdery charcoal, burned mussel shells and charred bone. Charcoal from the site returned a radiocarbon date of 6,000 years before present, a period of prehistory known as the Middle Archaic. Deer seems to have been the favored game animal. However, the amount of mussel shell recovered from the site leads archaeologists to

believe that mussels from the creek were an important part of the diet of the Gore Pit people as well.

The circular, burned rock features have been interpreted by archaeologists as rock ovens. In this method of cooking, a shallow ditch was piled high with logs and branches which were set ablaze. Rocks were laid on the smoldering wood after the fire had burned for awhile and then the food was placed on top of the rocks. The whole mound was covered with more rocks and earth to hold in the heat. The food was cooked for many hours in this manner.

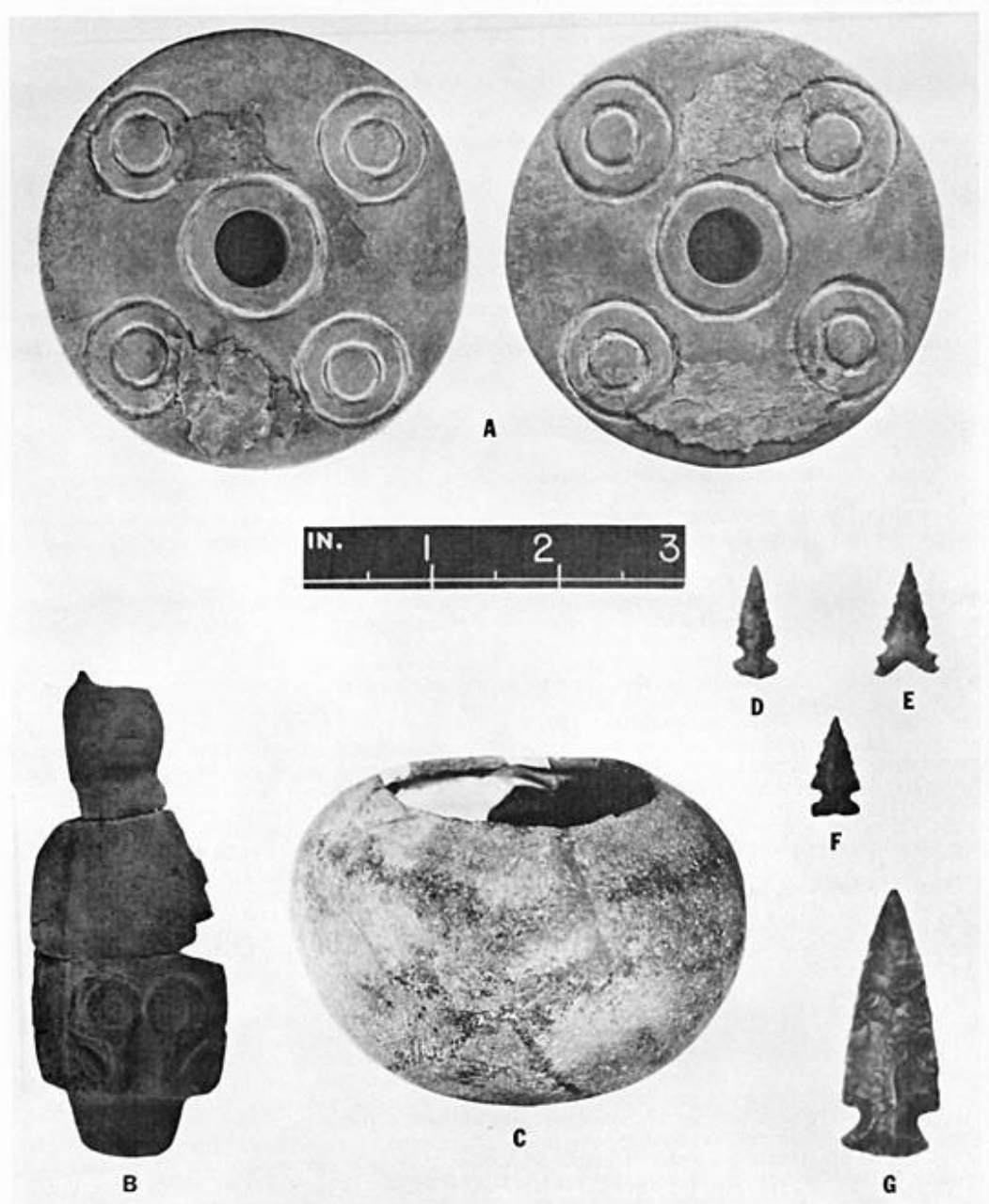
While the burned bone and mussel shells offer direct evidence of the diet of these Middle Archaic people, other foods were surely eaten and there is some indirect evidence for this as well. Metates (pronounced *muh-ta-tay*) or grinding basins and grinding stones were recovered from Gore Pit and seem to indicate that these people had begun to process plant foods (such as seeds) by grinding them into a meal. An interesting change from the earlier Paleo-Indian people to the people of the Archaic period is illustrated at the Gore Pit site. All the chipped stone tools recovered at Gore Pit are made from locally available Ogallala quartzite. This material is very tough and fractures unpredictably. It would seemingly be a less desirable material than the Edwards chert of central Texas or the Alibates dolomite from the Texas Panhandle which were preferred materials for Paleo hunters. Whether the use of Ogallala was a matter of choice because its durability made it preferable or whether the Archaic people no longer had access to the finer materials used by Paleo people is a question that continuing research may someday answer.

References:

The Gore Pit Site: An Archaic Occupation in Southwestern Oklahoma and a Review of the Archaic Stage in the Southern Plains by Hallett H. Hammatt in **Plains Anthropologist**, Vol. 21, No. 74, November 1976.

Craig County

The Lundy Site, 34CG15



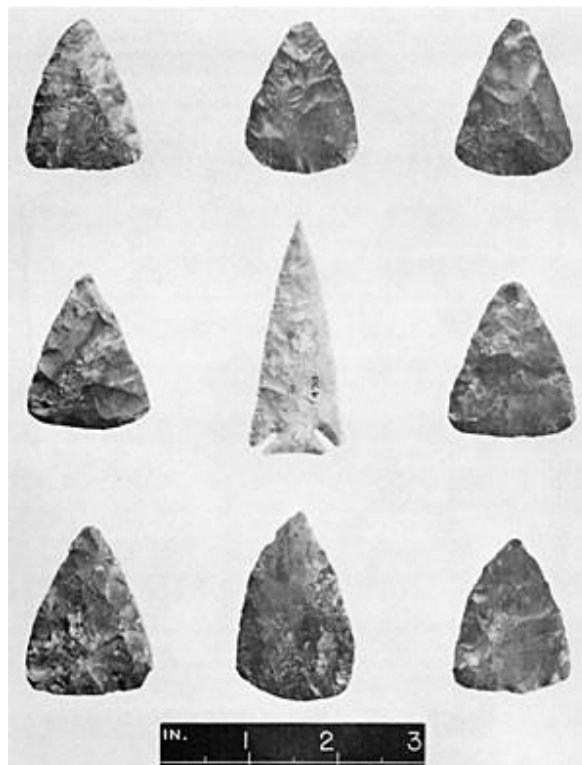
Ear spools, pottery and owl effigy pipe from the Lundy site (photo courtesy Oklahoma Anthropological Society).

The Lundy site, 34CG15, lies on a ridge between two creeks in Craig County. The site was brought to the attention of Gilcrease Museum archaeologist, Gregory Perino, in 1969 by a collector who found pottery and human skeletal remains after a bulldozer was used to clear timber at the foot of the ridge.

During two excavations in 1960 and 1970, a cemetery with at least 19 burials was excavated. The artifacts from the graves and the materials collected from the surface indicate the Lundy site is likely a Spiro phase occupation. The Spiro phase lasted some 200 years in eastern Oklahoma between AD 1200 and 1400 and is related to the greater Mississippian tradition throughout southeastern North America in which mound centers inhabited by a ruling elite held sway over smaller farming villages. The Harlan site, the Spiro Mounds site and the Norman site in Oklahoma are all related to this Mississippian tradition.

An analysis of the skeletal material showed that the people buried at the Lundy site were likely related to one another. An extra tooth on the left side of the lower jaw of one-third of the examined dental remains were all similarly shaped. Also a third of the adults showed signs of spondylosis of the spine which may be an inherited condition. The skeletal analysis showed that the men were from 5'4" to 5'6" while the measurable female was probably around 5'2".

The Lundy site is unusual in some respects. It is among the farthest northerly Spiro phase sites known to us today. Also, although the site had an associated cemetery which would normally indicate a village site, no house patterns were uncovered in the excavations. The site had been plowed for many years so perhaps the traces of houses had been destroyed. However, no pottery was found except that found with the burials. Villagers from this time period used pottery extensively for cooking and storing food. The presence of many hide scrapers and knives led the archaeologist who excavated at the site to conclude that the Lundy site was occupied only seasonally by people who were hunting deer and processing their meat and hides. He assumed their village to be at another location.



Cache of shaped preforms and one spear point from the Lundy site (photo courtesy Oklahoma Anthropological Society).

References:

Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, "The Lundy Site, Craig County, Northeast Oklahoma" by Gregory Perino, Vol. XX, 1971.

Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, "The Lundy Site, Human Osteology" by Jane Buikstra, Michael Vadeboncouer, and Gary Behrend, Vol. XXII, 1973.

Custer County

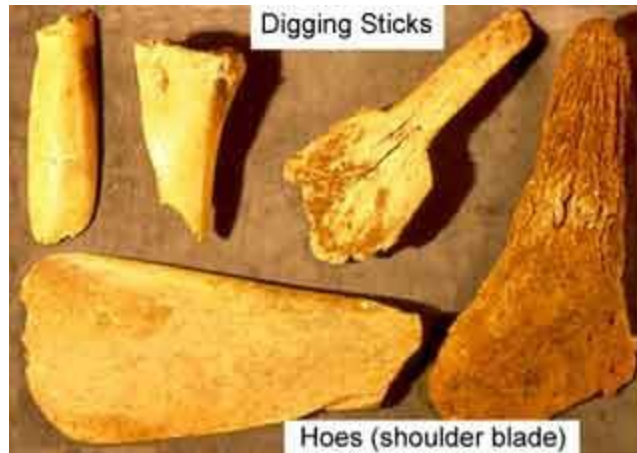
The Heerwald Site

The period AD 1250-1400 marked a time of growth for the Wichita people in central and western Oklahoma along the Washita River and its tributaries. Large villages grew up near the fertile farming soils of the Washita River tributaries in western Oklahoma and along the river itself in the southcentral part of the state.



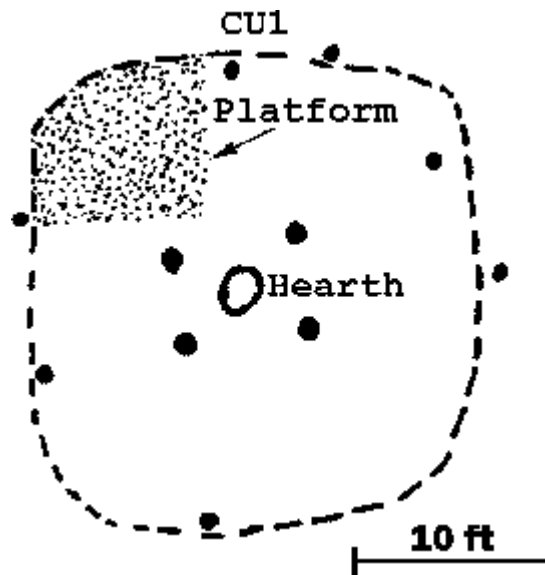
Excavations at the Heerwald Site revealed house patterns and storage pits.

The Heerwald site in Custer county is one of the larger excavated Wichita sites known for this time period. On the bank of Turkey Creek, the site is bisected by I-40 west of Clinton. Covering more than 40 acres, the site had at least 10-15 houses and more than 100 people living there at any one time. This is just an estimate since only about 5% of the site has been investigated. The actual number of houses may have been much higher.



Bison bone farming tools.

The Heerwald site people farmed corn, beans and squash and hunted bison. Bison provided meat, hides, grease and farming tools made from the bone. The corn fields stretching along Turkey Creek provided rich harvests in good years when ample rain fell at the right season. Big, bottom-flared pits held the harvested corn for winter and next year's seed.



House pattern from Heerwald site time period.

The Wichita people lived in similar villages all along Turkey Creek and other Washita River tributaries in the area. Their houses at this time were square or rectangular with 4 central posts supporting a grass-thatch roof. The walls were plastered with clay over post walls laced with branches and twigs. A hearth in the center of the house provided heat in the winter.

Although there were many people living in this area during the early 1400's, by the time of Spanish incursions into western Oklahoma, only widely scattered villages were reported. Some archeologists have speculated that the farming people of the area moved north and east into Kansas in the late 1400's and early 1500's because of prolonged drought.

Delaware County

Cooper Sites I and V, DI-33 and DI-49



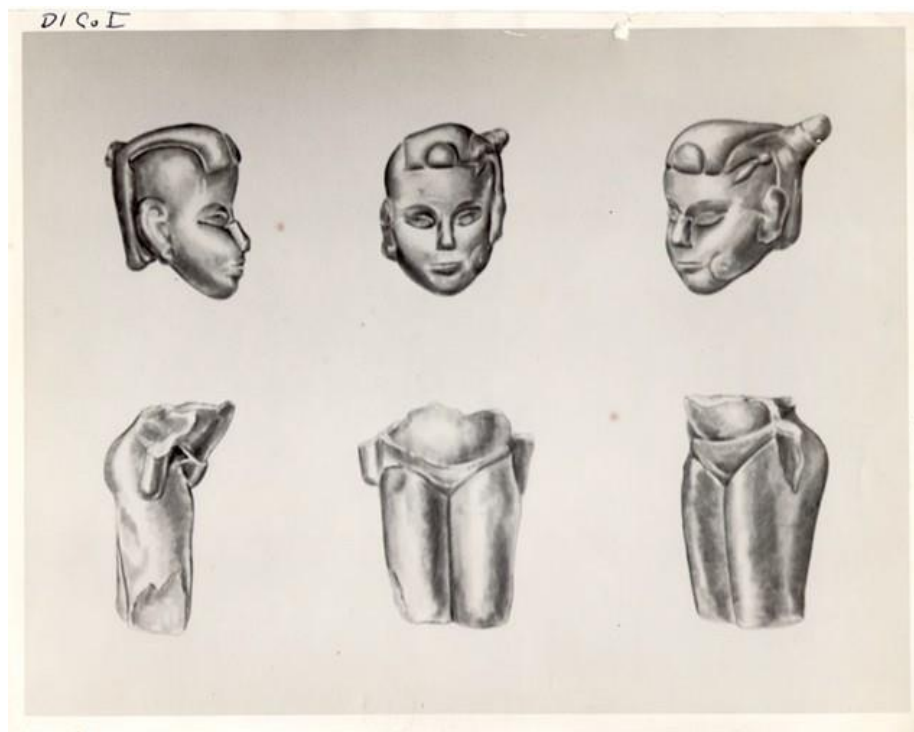
Part of a Hopewell-like pot from DI-33

The Hopewell culture dating from around 2,000 to around 1,400 years ago produced some of the most impressive mounds found in North America. These people of the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys formed extensive trade networks with groups throughout most of North America. Obsidian from the Rocky Mountains, shells from the Florida coasts, and copper from the Great Lakes have all been found at Hopewell sites. Log-lined tombs with elaborate grave goods contained the burials of important people in the community. Mounds covered the tombs and sometimes elaborate earthworks surrounded the mounds. The Hopewell people cultivated crops, mostly crops domesticated from North American wild plants like sunflower. At the very end of the Hopewell period, corn from Mexico may have begun to replace the native domesticates. Archaeologists recognize Hopewell sites based on the types of materials found at the sites including a distinctive pottery with decorations in bands surrounding the vessels. The westernmost extension of the Hopewell culture is found near Kansas City and is known to archaeologists as Kansas City Hopewell.

Two sites in Delaware County near the Neosho River and Honey Creek show remarkable similarities to the Kansas City Hopewell sites. The pottery found at D1-33 and D1-49 looks very much like Hopewell pottery found at the Kansas City sites. Additionally, the spearpoints found at the site are very similar to the points of those same sites. A clay figurine, similar to others from the Kansas City area, was also found.



Rim sherds recovered from D1-49



WPA drawing of figurine recovered from Delaware County site. Photograph courtesy of Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, University of Oklahoma.

Archaeologists believe these two sites were occupied by people migrating from the Kansas City area and bringing with them their traditional pottery and point styles. Unfortunately, the sites are now under the waters of the Grand Lake o' the Cherokees and are not available for further excavation. Any further knowledge we learn about these Oklahoma Hopewellians will have to come from research on the small collections left from 1930's excavations or, perhaps, the discovery of other similar sites.

Occasionally, pottery sherds like those seen above are found on other archaeological sites in northern Oklahoma. They may be traded from sites like Cooper I and V or they may also represent the migration of Hopewell people to other parts of Oklahoma. We know that Hopewell culture spread across eastern North American; only future research will answer questions about the influence of Hopewell culture in Oklahoma.

References:

Prehistory of Oklahoma, edited by Robert E. Bell, Academic Press, 1984

On the web:

www.nps.gov/hocu/

Dewey County

The Hanjy Mammoth Site



Aerial photo of Hajny Mammoth site

Some of the most exciting archaeological research being done today concerns the arrival of people into the New World. Through most of the 20th century, archaeologists believed the earliest arrivals occurred some 12,000 years ago. However, recent research has pushed that date back several thousand years, at least.

Mammoths, the prehistoric and now-extinct cousin of the elephant, are the animal most often associated with these early humans. And, in Oklahoma, mammoth bones are not uncommonly found during the building of roads, erosion from creek banks or quarrying operations. When archaeologists inspect these finds, they are always aware of the potential for humans being involved in the death of the mammoths and leaving behind the evidence in the form of spearpoints or other stone tools. In 1983, farmer-rancher Gary Hajny reported the uncovering of mammoth bones during gravel quarrying on his father's property. The site sits on a terrace of the Canadian River which is about a mile to the west. An archaeologist from the Oklahoma Archeological Survey inspected the bones and noted that they were surrounded by a blue clay which appeared similar to the clay surrounding the Domebo mammoth skeleton, where Clovis hunters butchered the animal some 11,000 years ago.

To better assess whether the Hajny mammoth might have been killed by people, some of the bone and snails collected from the area were sent off for radiocarbon dating. The bone dated to 9,000 years ago while the snails dated to 20,000 years ago. In spite of the 11,000 year difference, the possibility of an early man site could not be ruled out. As a result, the decision to excavate the site was made and excavations began in 1985.



Mammoth tusk exposed during excavation

Toward the end of the 1985 excavations, a second mammoth was uncovered and so fieldwork was planned for 1986. No evidence of humans was uncovered in the careful excavations. Teeth from the two mammoths were dated to 143,000 years ago and 166,000 years ago. Despite the early age of this site, the research has been useful for scientists who study the past. Each excavation of these ancient environments helps us better understand the conditions in those times and also can be useful in helping future archaeologists understand the processes which affect bones. Detecting the differences between bones broken up by natural weathering or animal scavengers versus bones disturbed by human butchering will be critical in the study of very old sites when the first humans arrived in North America.

The two Hajny mammoths are also interesting in and of themselves. They were both mature adults although the sex of neither individual could be determined. There were several different species of mammoth in North America and these two were either the Imperial or Columbian mammoth or possibly even a species intermediate between the two. The two mammoths died at the site of a natural spring, probably not too far apart in time. Their bones did not lie exposed to the air or to

scavengers for very long before they were covered up. However, other mammoths visiting the spring disturbed their bones, crushing some of them and rearranging others. This same behavior has been observed in modern times among African elephants around watering holes.

Although the two Hajny mammoths died over a 100,000 years before the first humans visited Oklahoma, it is likely that their recovery and study will one day help us understand our state's first people as well as its Ice Age elephants!



Ancient spring revealed in profile

References:

Interdisciplinary Studies of the Hajny Mammoth Site, Dewey County, Oklahoma, by Don G. Wyckoff, Brian J. Carter, Peggy Flynn, Larry D. Martin, Branley A. Branson, and James L. Theler. University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Archeological Survey, SOP 17. 1992

Garfield County

Upper Red Rock Creek Sites



Testing of Red Rock Creek archaeological site to determine National Register eligibility

Red Rock Creek arises in the middle of Garfield County and drains portions of Garfield and Noble counties on its 50-mile journey to the Arkansas River on the Noble-Pawnee county line. Portions of the creek have been surveyed for archaeological sites as part of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service or SCS) flood control work on the creek. These surveys, which were conducted by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC), are required when federal agencies are involved in projects that may impact National Register-eligible archaeological sites (read more about Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act at the State Historic Preservation Office website).

In the mid-1970s, OCC personnel surveyed an area in which two flood control structures were planned northwest of Garber, Oklahoma. Eight sites of potential interest were investigated during this work and limited excavations were conducted on two of them. The testing revealed that the areas within the sites to be affected by the impoundments contained little cultural material and were probably short-term hunting camps. Six pottery sherds from a single pot were found at one

of the sites and since people began making pottery in Oklahoma sometime after 1 A.D., this site dates to either the Woodland or Late Prehistoric periods (2,000 to 500 years ago). An arrowhead, termed a Harrell point by archaeologists, was found at a nearby site and was made from Alibates chert, a fine material from the Texas panhandle. Other materials used by the migratory occupants of these camps to manufacture dart and arrowpoints were from northwestern Oklahoma (Day Creek), central and eastern Oklahoma (Florence-A and Neva cherts) and even as far away as northwest Kansas or Nebraska (Niobrara chert).



Harrell point like the one found in Garfield County.

The OCC report on these impoundments recorded a total of 55 archaeological sites along Red Rock Creek. Most of them were considered to be small hunting camps and most were of uncertain time period. From the chart below, it is clear that the archaeology of Garfield County is still largely unexplored. Part of this can be attributed to the lack of archaeological work undertaken in the area and probably part of it can be attributed to the geology and terrain as well. Red Rock Creek is considered to be an aggrading stream which simply means that it is depositing more material than it is eroding away. For the archaeology of the area, this may well mean that very old sites, for example from the Paleo time period, are deeply buried in millennia of sediment. Through this date in July 2007, 42 impoundments have been built in the Upper Red Rock Creek watershed with help from the Natural Resources Conservation Commission (formerly SCS).

Thank you to Charles Wallis, State Historic Preservation Office, and K.C. Kraft, Natural Resources Conservation Service, for help on this county page.

Reference:

Cultural Resource Survey, Proposed Impoundments 38A and 38B, Upper Red Rock Creek Watershed, Garfield County. Oklahoma Conservation Commission General Survey Report 1979:9, Charles S. Wallis, Jr.

Garvin County

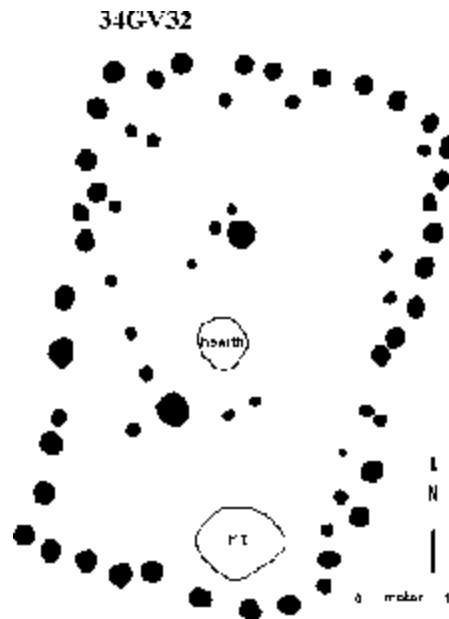
The Arthur Site

In central Oklahoma from around AD 1250-1450, the Wichita people lived on terraces of the Washita and Canadian rivers in villages of 200 or more people. They farmed corn, beans, squash and other crops in the fertile river valleys. Hunting and fishing provided food, as well, for their growing populations. Archeologists call this time period the Washita River phase and the people are known as Southern Plains Villagers.



The Arthur site, north of Pauls Valley, is an important Washita River phase village. Excavated in 1981 as a salvage operation because of land leveling, the Arthur site revealed much about life in a Wichita village some 700 years ago. These villagers constructed their small, rectangular houses from upright logs woven with a branch, grass and clay mixture known as wattle and daub. Houses had interior storage pits like the one shown in the photograph to the right. The doorways faced east and a fireplace was built in the center of the house. There were probably 20 houses at the Arthur site. One of them is believed to have been a shaman's house; the house had been burned and a burial was found under the floor (most burials in Washita River phase sites occurred in cemeteries near the village). Additionally, in the burned house, a charred seed from an hallucinogenic plant was found leading archeologists to believe the house was associated with the rituals of a shaman.

Wichita villages were spaced every couple of miles along the Washita River during this period. The people of the area traded with other groups to the west and east. However, by the time the Spanish came through Oklahoma in the early 1500's, many of these villages had been abandoned. It is believed that some of these groups moved north and east although some people continued to live in the area. The reasons for this change are not known although climate changes and increased bison herds in the west may have caused migrations of Washita River populations.



Washita River Phase House Pattern

References:

"The Arthur Site: Settlement and Subsistence Structure at a Washita River Phase Village" by Robert L. Brooks (University of Oklahoma Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Studies in Oklahoma's Past, No. 15, 1987).

Grady County

The Jewett Site, 34Gd81



Salvaging archeological features at the Jewett site as oil pad is cleared.

The Jewett site first came to the attention of the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in 1977 when property owners Robert and Helen Jewett reported that an irrigation pipeline excavation had uncovered human bone and some evidently prehistoric artifacts. Survey archeologists examined the site and determined that, based on surface indications, it appeared to be quite extensive. Though the site had been disturbed by both the pipeline and an earlier railroad bed and road surface, the Jewett site represented the remains of an important Plains Village site of the Washita River phase. Since the site still appeared to be largely intact, archeologists decided to nominate the Jewett site to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register was created by the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act and is the nation's list of places meriting special treatment due to their historic and cultural significance.



Arrow points (top) and dart point from the Jewett site.

In 1992, the Jewett family notified the Archeological Survey that an oil well pad was going to be constructed on a portion of the site. The oil company agreed to allow archeologists to monitor the bulldozing of the northeast corner of the site. This disturbance revealed (and largely destroyed) features including burials, pits and two midden (trash or refuse) deposits. Salvage excavations were undertaken and the materials recovered have helped expand our understanding of the lives of the people who lived along the Washita River in the period from A.D. 1250-1400.

The Washita River phase of the Plains Village period in Oklahoma describes a time when Native American people who were the ancestors of today's Wichita farmed the fertile terraces of the Washita River growing corn, beans, squash, tobacco and probably other crops as well. The river itself, home to ducks, catfish, gar and bass provided food while the lands around the Washita were home to deer, turkey, small game like rabbits and squirrels, and, of course, the large herds of bison that provided the bulk of the meat in the villagers' diet. There were villages like this one at the Jewett site all along the river during this time -- perhaps as many as a village every mile or so with perhaps ten or more houses in each village.

There were four human burials recovered from the site at this time. These burials were subject to Oklahoma's laws regarding unmarked graves known as the Burial Desecration Act. The Wichita and Affiliated Tribes allowed archeologists to study the recovered bones to learn as much as possible about the lives of the people who lived at the Jewett site. The skeletal material was poorly preserved both because of the age of the burials and the destruction at the site by the bulldozer. The human remains were returned to the Wichita for re-burial.

Reference:

Oklahoma Archeology, "The Jewett Site: A Washita River Phase Village in South-Central Oklahoma," by David F. Morgan and Richard R. Drass with a contribution by Vickie L. Wedel, Vol. 52, No. 2, 2004.

Grant County

The Hunter Site, 34Gt6



Calf Creek point fragments from 34Gt6.

That period in the prehistory of the southern Plains that led to a four-thousand year drought began around 7,500 years ago and effectively turned much of Oklahoma into a desert. It is known to archeologists as the Altithermal and caused massive changes in the way people lived. One group of people who adapted and thrived are known today as the Calf Creek culture and are thought to have been migratory groups who followed bison herds. They crafted a distinctive, possibly multi-use tool, known as the Calf Creek point.

The places where the Calf Creek people lived are often located on high ridges and terraces, presumably providing a good vantage point for spotting bison herds. One such high terrace occurs in Grant County and in the 1960s an area school teacher, Roy Patterson, began collecting artifacts from this site as they were exposed by plowing, wind and rain. Mr. Patterson was avidly interested in the people who lived in Oklahoma before us and became a member of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society to learn more about Oklahoma's prehistoric heritage. He kept careful records on his artifact collections, and in 1975 and 1992 visited the site with Oklahoma Archeological Survey archeologists so that the site's location could be recorded. The site became known as the Hunter site and its official designation, 34Gt6.

Among the artifacts collected at the Hunter site by Mr. Patterson are 53 artifacts recognized by archeologists as scrapers. Because of climatic conditions during the Altithermal, the artifacts from sites which can be confidently assigned to the period are often mixed with artifacts from other periods because of the severe wind erosion of the time. As a consequence, determining which artifacts, other than the very distinctive Calf Creek points, were used by the Calf Creek people has been difficult. However, with the collection of Mr. Patterson, in part due to his careful record-keeping, an analysis of the Gt6 scrapers was undertaken which gave new insights into the use of these hide-working tools by the Calf Creek people.

Scrapers may have been used in a variety of ways but were probably mainly used to process animal hides. For the Calf Creek people, the hides would mostly have been those of bison. A scraper can be recognized by the very steep angle of its edge. This angled edge is the working surface of the scraper. All of the Calf Creek period scrapers from Gt6 are made from Florence A chert which can be quarried from an area about 50 miles east in Kay and Osage counties. Careful analysis of the 53 scrapers showed that about 17% of them had been hafted to a bone or wooden handle. The rest were hand tools. Many of these scraping tools showed evidence of very heavy usage, resulting in crushing, rounding and polish on the scraper edge. The suggestion has been made that the arid conditions of the Altithermal probably resulted in dirt or sand in the bison hides being worked which may have contributed to the condition of these scrapers.



Scrapers from the Hunter Site.

References:

Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, "Trying to Scrape Up Some Answers: An Analysis of Scraping Tools from a Calf Creek Assemblage at the Hunter Site, 34GT6" by Robert L. Brooks, Vol. XLII, 1993.

Harper County

The Cooper Site

Some time between 10,000 and 11,000 years ago, a group of Paleoindian hunters gathered in the late summer or early fall in the Beaver River floodplain in Harper County. They were armed with spears, and their quarry was a now-extinct species of bison known as *Bison antiquus*. These hunters ranged over a large territory where they could find the giant bison. The lives of their families were intimately dependent on the success of their hunts.

This time, they planned to kill not just one or a few animals as they often did in winter and spring. This time they planned a hunt where many bison would be killed. The success of such a hunt required careful planning and good fortune. The plan was one that had been executed successfully just a few years past. Finding a cow/calf herd in the floodplain, they had driven the panicked animals up into a dead-end gully where hunters up on the arroyo banks threw spears down on the milling herd and killed many bison in relative safety. They knew the plan was good and to insure good fortune, the hunters took part in a hunting ritual. They retrieved a bleached skull from the previous gully kill. They prepared a red ochre paint from local stone rich in the blood-red mineral, iron. They then painted a powerful symbol on the bison skull and placed it at the head of the gully where it could draw another herd of bison up to the waiting hunters. The plan and the ritual succeeded. As many as 30-35 bison were killed. A few years later, a third kill took place in the same gully.



Bison antiquus skeletons uncovered at the Cooper site.

In 1992, Dick James, a game warden in the Cooper Wildlife Management Area, showed Oklahoma Archeological Survey archeologist Lee Bement where large bones were caving off a sandy bluff near the Beaver River. During that first trip, there were no signs that people had a hand in the deaths of the bison whose bones were eroding from the cliff. However, another trip to the site brought the find of a spearpoint, left by those hunters more than 10,000 years ago. Since that discovery, a meticulous excavation of the site has uncovered all three bison kill episodes. Because of the care taken during the excavation, even the painted bison skull was recovered although the bison herd from the second hunt had trampled parts of it. That skull, the oldest painted object ever found in North America, is now on exhibit at the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History.



Trampled bison skull with ritual zigzag design

Research continues on the fascinating Cooper site and the early hunters known to archeologists as the Folsom culture. The Folsom point is a distinctive, finely crafted spearpoint used by big game hunters who lived on the Great Plains from 10,900 to 10,200 years ago. Study of the Cooper site is answering many questions about the Folsom people, their tools and their culture.



Folsom points from the Cooper site.

References:

Bison Hunting at Cooper Site, Where Lightning Bolts Drew Thundering Herds by Leland C. Bement, University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.

Haskell County

The Tyler Site

The Tyler site represents a two acre area now inundated by waters of the Robert S. Kerr Reservoir. It was excavated in the 1960's during salvage operations before the dam for the lake was completed.

Thirteen storage and trash pits, one burial and several postholes were uncovered during the excavation. Radiocarbon dating of charcoal from the pits has determined that the site was occupied in the early 1500's, probably just before extensive contacts by native Americans of the Southeast and Southwest with Spanish explorers like DeSoto and Coronado. Archaeologists have named this period which follows the collapse of the great Spiro Mounds center as the Fort Coffee phase.



Artifacts recovered from the Tyler site. The deer rib bone rasp (upper part of the image) may have been used as a musical instrument.

In the Fort Coffee phase, the centralized leadership of the mound centers no longer holds sway over the outlying farming villages. The close ties to other chiefdoms throughout the Southeast has given way to more localized, independent communities.

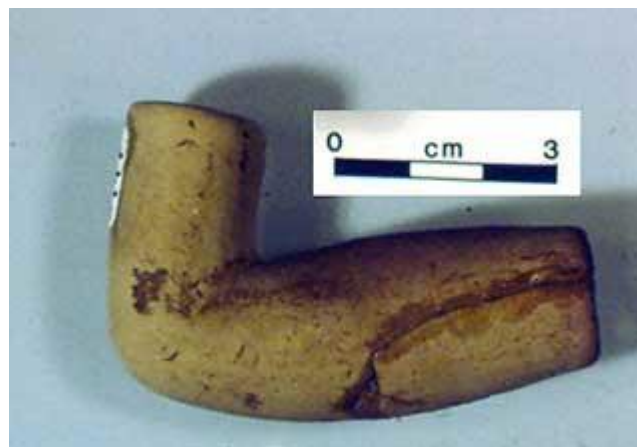
The climate has changed so that less rainfall may make agriculture riskier. Some traits common to the Plains areas to the west have become more common at Fort Coffee phase sites including storage pits like those found at Tyler and increasing use of bison. While archaeologists do not understand all the changes occurring during this period of Oklahoma's prehistory, research is continuing and some interesting trends have been noticed.

In the earlier period, when the elite rulers of the area, first at the Harlan site, next at the Norman site and then later at the Spiro site, controlled a centralized society, rituals performed at the mound center are believed to have helped maintain the aura of the ruling class's power. Important among these ceremonies were smoking rituals. Tobacco was a sacred plant and the pipes used during its smoking were elaborate. Effigy pipes and T-shaped pipes were found almost exclusively at the mound centers.



A double-bowl T-shape pipe from the Spiro site

During the Fort Coffee phase, the T-shaped pipes and effigy pipes are no longer in use. They have been replaced by a simpler, smaller elbow-shaped pipe. Dr. Robert Brooks, Oklahoma's state archaeologist, has proposed that this change in pipe form reflects greater changes in society between the two periods. The elbow pipes of the Fort Coffee phase were passed from person to person in a smoking ceremony (this kind of ceremony was documented during historic times for various native American groups). Imagine, though, the difference in a ritual involving one of the large effigy pipes. These pipes were certainly not passed from person to person; rather, the individual approached the pipe and partook of the tobacco. Or, with the T-shaped pipes, perhaps a visiting dignitary from an outlying village was allowed to smoke with a paramount ruler at the mound center thus symbolically conferring power on that person.



A typical elbow pipe from LeFlore county

Two pipes of the simpler form were recovered at the Tyler site. Although the site no longer exists since the excavations and later inundation by the reservoir have destroyed it, the careful archaeology completed in 1966 has left a legacy from which archaeologists will be answering questions about Oklahoma prehistory for many years into the future.

References:

Burton, Robert J., Tyler Bastian, and Terry J. Prewitt, "The Tyler Site" in Archaeological Site Report No. 13, Oklahoma River Basin Survey, University of Oklahoma Research Institute, Norman, OK 1969

Hughes County

The Red Stick Man Site



Pictograph at the Red Stick Man Site

Pictographs (painted) are not as common in Oklahoma as are petroglyphs (pecked). Perhaps this is simply a matter of preservation since the pigmented art is more fragile. The Red Stick Man site in Hughes County is of interest, not just for its representation of a human figure, but also because of its location.

The Red Stick Man site is in a sandstone rock shelter about 15' in diameter. The entrance is partially blocked by two large sandstone slabs which detached from the outcrop and came to rest in front of the shelter. Interestingly, sandstone blocks have been stacked in front of two of the three openings around the slabs allowing entrance from only one side. It is believed that these walls may have been built prehistorically. Similar walls are reported from Arkansas, and studies there have concluded that they were made prehistorically. The identification of the items being held by the figure is open to interpretation. Some have concluded that the curved object in the figure's left hand is a fish while others believe it is an atlatl (a curved dart-throwing tool) or a bow. Although

it appears that the right hand is holding a roundish object, in fact all the curved elements are simply old mud-daubers nests. The pigmented area is a rather thick, straight line.

The pictograph above is about 6" tall and was probably made by the artist drawing with a chunk of hematite (an iron-rich mineral with a red tint) rather than by a liquid paint being applied with a brush. This drawing was done in a bowl-like depression on the ceiling of the rock shelter. A large chunk of rock which fell from the ceiling creating the depression still lies on the floor of the shelter, probably in the same spot where the artist found it. A wall of the rock shelter has a smaller, faint figure similar to this one and a rectangle with 11 vertical lines and 1 horizontal line inside it.

For further reading:

Prehistoric Rock Art of the Cross Timbers Management Unit, East Central Oklahoma: An Introductory Study, by Charles D. Neel. The University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Archeological Survey, ARSR 27. 1986.

Jackson County

The Perry Ranch Site

The Perry Ranch site in Jackson County dates to a time in Oklahoma's prehistory when most of the big game from the end of the Ice Age in Oklahoma, like mammoths, had already become extinct. One of the giant animals hunted by early Native American hunters made the transitions, though. Bison evolved through time and have been hunted as long as humans have occupied the continent.

There were several species of bison which preceded modern-day bison. They were generally larger with longer horns. One of these, *Bison antiquus*, stood nearly seven feet and weighed as much as 3,000 pounds.



*Excavation of *Bison antiquus* at Perry Ranch*

A pair of amateur archeologists discovered the Perry Ranch site. They reported the find of an ancient spearpoint and eroding bison bone to the Oklahoma Archeological Survey. Salvage excavations at the site took place in 1974 before the site was completely eroded away by flooding in Turkey Creek.

Unfortunately, the bison bone was very fragile and so only the robust leg bones could be taken up in one piece. All the bone was returned to the laboratory for study, however. Additionally, one complete spearpoint was recovered underneath the right foreleg of one of the animals.

Further study of the excavated bone convinced archeologists that the bison belonged to the now-extinct species, *Bison antiquus*. Because so much of the bone was badly damaged, it was difficult to tell how old or even how many animals were butchered at the site.

However, even with the fragmentary evidence, archeologists deduced there were at least two bison killed at Perry Ranch.

The spearpoints found on the site were made of a special kind of chert known as Alibates. It flakes in a uniform and predictable manner which made it highly desirable for prehistoric tool-makers.

This Alibates may have been collected at a quarry in the Texas panhandle about 150 miles away.

A small sample of the bone was radiocarbon-dated and returned a date of about 7,000 years ago. Recent advances in dating techniques, however, allowed archeologists at the University of Oklahoma to re-submit another small sample and this date, which is believed to be more accurate, shows the bison at the Perry Ranch site were hunted and killed 9,600 years ago.

The spearpoints, shown below, are similar in style to points found from the same time period throughout the Southern Plains. They are called Plainview points.



Plainview Points from the Perry Ranch Site

Jefferson County

The Longest Site

In the first part of the 18th century, some Wichita groups lived in thriving villages along the Arkansas River in north-central Oklahoma and carried on a lively trade with French trappers. However, by the mid-1700's, it is thought that those people had migrated south to the Red River. Wichita trade with the French continued with the French traveling along the Red River from Louisiana. To the southwest, Spanish missionaries had established a mission near modern-day Menard, Texas. A fort under the direction of Diego Ortiz Parrilla was charged with protection of the mission.

Responding to sporadic attacks on the Spanish fort and mission by allied tribes from the North believed to be Wichita, Comanche, and Tonkawa, Diego Ortiz Parrilla with a force of 500 marched from San Antonio to a Taovayas village on the Red River in 1759. The Wichita warriors attacked and forced the Spanish and their Apache allies to flee. The Spanish left behind two cannons they had brought along but which proved to be ineffectual in the deep sands of the south bank of the Red River.

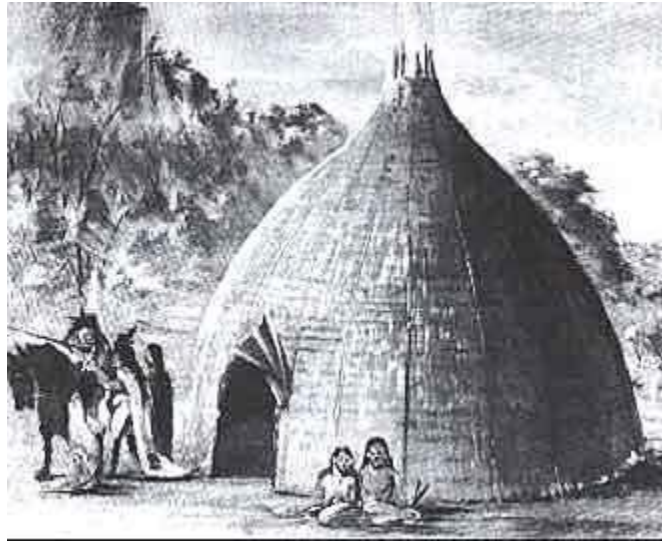
Accounts of the battle and impressions of the Taovayas village have been translated from the original Spanish documents. In a location along the north side of the Red River, the Taovayas had built a circular stockade protected by an earthen rampart and moat. According to the Spanish, the stockade had underground tunnels in which people sheltered during an attack. Round, grass-thatch houses made up the Taovayas village outside the stockade. A Comanche camp of tall tipis along with the village of another band of Wichita were reported in the immediate area. The Wichita and their allies had many horses and were well-armed. The Spanish reported extensive corn fields near the villages.



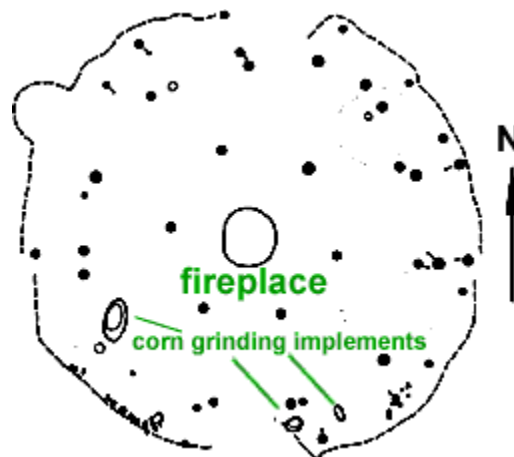
Brass gun ornament from the Longest site

In 1965-1966, excavations at a site about 15 miles south of Ringling, Oklahoma revealed the Taovayas village detailed in the Spanish records of the Parrilla expedition. The site, named after the Longest family who had farmed in the area for many years, covered an area of 35-40 acres. Situated above the Red River on a broad terrace, the site is protected from flooding by its elevation. Circular depressions with posthole patterns, trash mounds, storage pits and many European

(mostly French) trade items along with traditional Wichita artifacts were recovered in the excavations. The discovery in aerial photos of a large circular stain in the soil similar to those known for other archeological sites in Oklahoma (at the Duncan and Deer Creek site) led to further excavations at the Longest site. Archeologists concluded the circular stain represented evidence of the log stockade constructed by the Wichita to protect their village.



1834 painting by George Catlin of Wichita house



Posthole pattern of excavated house (about 30 feet in diameter) from the Longest site.

References:

Visit the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes website: <http://www.wichitatribe.com>

A Pilot Study of Wichita Indian Archeology and Ethnohistory edited by Robert E. Bell, Edward B. Jelks and W.W. Newcomb, Final Report for National Science Foundation Grant GS-964, August 1967.

Johnston County

The Converse Site, 34JN28



Oklahoma Anthropological Society volunteers excavating at 34JN28

On the edge of the ancient Arbuckle uplift in Johnston County, some of the oldest rock in the central United States is exposed. The mountain-building episodes of the Pennsylvanian which occurred some 500 to 300 million years ago and formed the Arbuckles happened just a moment ago in geological time compared to the antiquity of the granites of Johnston County. They are believed to have formed around 1.4 billion years ago. At the base of one such granite bluff near a clear spring, people have been living for a very brief time, indeed -- somewhere around 6,000 years or so.

During that 6,000 years, the debris of periodic occupations has built up into a mound (known to archeologists as a midden mound) some two to three feet deep. This midden mound is known as the Converse site. Parts of the site were excavated during Oklahoma Anthropological Society digs in 1978, 1979 and 1980.

The first people known to have lived at the site were the Calf Creek people from the Middle Archaic. Their distinctive points were found at the lowest levels of the mound. Later peoples used different projectile points and when the bow and arrow replaced darts and spears, the evidence was

left behind in higher levels. When hunting and gathering gave way to the more settled lifestyle of the farmer, this site in Johnston County also was an attractive place to live. Pottery and grinding stones were left behind by the farming peoples. There were likely houses on the site as well although they were not identified during excavations. If they were similar to others in the area, they were probably square with four center posts supporting the roof. A hearth was placed in the center of these houses and a long entryway was oriented to the west or the east.

The material recovered from this excavation has not yet been analyzed by archeologists so there is much more to be learned about the Converse site. The repeated use of this site over a long period of time could offer valuable clues to the ways in which people have adjusted their lives to changing conditions over thousands of years.



Rock feature from 34JN28

References:

Oklahoma Anthropological Society Newsletter 27(7), "The OAS Spring Dig" by David T. Hughes.

Kay County

The Deer Creek/Bryson Paddock Sites

Sometime in the mid-1700's Wichita villagers set up a cooperative agreement with French hunters from Louisiana at the Deer Creek site, northeast of Newkirk along the banks of the Arkansas River. Another Wichita site, now known as the Bryson-Paddock site, was occupied at the same time and is only 1 3/4 miles upstream. The French were interested in horses and hunting partners which the Wichita could supply. In exchange, the Wichita wanted European trade goods like guns and metal tools.



Flintlock gun parts from the Bryson-Paddock site

Bands of Wichita Indians lived throughout southern Kansas and most of Oklahoma far back into prehistory. The first European contact with the Wichita came in the mid 1500's and early 1600's when the Spanish adventurers Coronado and Onate led expeditions from New Mexico up through Oklahoma to Kansas where they encountered the Wichita in a village known as Quivira. The Spanish recorded extensive villages of farming/hunting people who lived in circular, grass-thatch houses.

The French came much later in the early 1700's and they knew the Wichita as the Panipiquees (pricked Pawnee from the tattooing which was characteristic of the Wichita). Near mid-century, small groups of French *voyageurs* hunted and trapped all along the Arkansas River and apparently lived with and traded with the Wichita at the Deer Creek and Bryson-Paddock sites.

It is believed that the Deer Creek site consisted of a village of many houses and possibly a log stockade structure. This has not yet been tested in excavations but surface indications may show the outline of such a structure. A Spanish visitor to the site said that it was fortified with logs and earth. These fortified sites are well-known in Oklahoma and Texas (see the Duncan site in Washita County for another example). The fortification at Deer Creek may have been necessary to protect against enemies from the west (Apaches) and the east (Osage).

By 1758, the arrangement between the Wichita and French at Deer Creek/Bryson Paddock had ended. The Wichita migrated south to another fortified site along the Red River. Whether pressure from the Osage, a lack of trade goods from the French because of the French and Indian War, or other factors caused this migration is not yet known. Research on this period in Oklahoma history continues.

References:

Visit the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes website: <http://www.wichitatribe.com>

The Deer Creek Site, Oklahoma: A Wichita Village Sometimes Called Ferdinandina, An Ethnohistorian's View by Mildred

Mott Wedel (Oklahoma Historical Society, Series in Anthropology, Number 5, 1981). Archaeological Investigations at the Bryson-Paddock Site, An Early Contact Period Site on the Southern Plains by John D. Hartley and A.F. Miller (Oklahoma River Basin Survey, Archaeological Site Report No. 32, 1977).

"Ka-3, The Deer Creek Site - An Eighteenth Century French Contact Site in Kay County, Oklahoma" by Byron Sudbury (in Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, Volume XXIV, ed. Don G. Wyckoff, 1975).

Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795 by Elizabeth A. H. John (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1975).

Kiowa County

The Cooperton Site



Mammoth ribs at the Cooperton site

The Cooperton mammoth site contains the remnants of a young male Columbian mammoth which died sometime from 17,000 to 21,000 years ago. This site was excavated by the Museum of Great Plains at Lawton in 1961. Intriguingly, while excavating the mammoth, three hand-sized stones and a 15 pound boulder were uncovered near the skeleton.. Additionally, some of the bones bear break marks that occurred while the bones were still relatively fresh.

The investigators concluded that the mammoth had died from natural causes and had been discovered by a small band of hunters. They believe the three stones (which are much larger than other cobbles found in the area) were used to crush the bones on the boulder (which appears to have been brought into the site) to extract marrow from them. The stones themselves do not show clear evidence of human manufacture and so the conclusions of the investigators may never be proved or disproved. The oldest accepted human habitation site in the Americas is the Monte Verde site in Chile which is generally accepted at an age of 12,500 years ago.



Mammoth bone showing "fresh" fracture



Possible hammerstone from Cooperton site

References:

from Mounds to Mammoths by Claudette Marie Gilbert and Robert L. Brooks, University of Oklahoma Press, 2000

Latimer County

The McCutchan-McLaughlin Site

People have occupied this site on the banks of Fourche Maline Creek for at least 3500 years. The first major occupation was during a period in prehistory known to archeologists as the Wister phase, lasting from 1500 - 300 BC. It was a time when people hunted deer with spears, fished and collected mussels and a variety of wild plants including nuts. The second main occupation occurred during a period known as the Fourche Maline phase, a period from 300 BC to AD 800. The most heavily occupied time at the McCutchan-McLaughlin site during the Fourche Maline phase was probably from AD 400 - 800. Although the Fourche Maline phase people lived very much in the way of their Wister phase ancestors, there were two important technological changes that distinguish their time. They began to use pottery for storage and cooking and they hunted with bow and arrow.

Archeologists excavated at McCutchan-McLaughlin in 1976 and 1977 at the request of the landowner. Bank erosion was endangering the site. Artifacts and charred animal bone, seeds and nutshells revealed much about the people who lived at the site. Analysis of burials also revealed many interesting details about their lives and deaths. The nuts, seeds, tubers, fish and game available in the Fourche Maline valley provided a healthy life for the inhabitants of the area. Later groups who depended heavily on a high-starch, maize diet were subject to diseases that did not afflict the McCutchan-McLaughlin people. Likewise, the degenerative diseases like arthritis were not found as frequently here as they were among the later farming groups.



Archeologist carefully excavating ash-filled feature.

Although the McCutchan- McLaughlin people were healthy, the most common identifiable cause of death among the burials was the result of warfare. Mass burials are observed for these groups where projectile points are found in the bodies. Projectile points which caused the deaths of a single group of nine individuals, mainly women and children, were made of chert found in the Boone formation from north and east of the Arkansas River. The McCutchan McLaughlin people did not use Boone chert for the manufacture of their tools. Thus it is believed that a raiding party from the north surprised the site occupants while most of the younger adult men were away and unable to defend them, and those killed were buried together in a single grave.



Bone fish hook manufacturing stages.

McCutchan-McLaughlin has been recognized as a significant site with its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Research continues today on this fascinating site in Latimer County.

Resources:

Bioarchaeology of the McCutchan-McLaughlin Site by Mary Lucas Powell and Dan Rogers, Oklahoma Archeological Survey Studies in Oklahoma's Past, No. 5, 1980.

"Bone Tool Manufacture and Use by Prepottery Occupants of the McCutchan- McLaughlin Site" by Cherie Clark, Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, Vol. XXIX, 1980.

"Arkansas Valley Caddoan Formative: The Wister and Fourche Maline Phases," by Jerry R. Galm in Prehistory of Oklahoma, Robert E. Bell, ed., Academic Press, 1984.

LeFlore County

The Spiro Mounds Site

The Spiro Mounds Site is one of the most important archeological discoveries in North America and Oklahoma's only state archeological park. Spiro is the westernmost site of a complex cultural tradition in the Southeast called the Southern Cult or Southeastern Ceremonial Complex. The site, occupied from AD 850 to 1450, was home to powerful leaders who directed the building of the nine platform and burial mounds on the 80 acre site. These leaders governed farmers in outlying villages who probably provided labor for mound-building.

"OLD INDIAN BURIAL MOUNDS DESPOILED TO SUPPLY DEMANDS OF CURIO SEEKERS"

This headline brought the Spiro Mounds to national attention in the 1930's when a group of treasure hunters set off a charge of black powder in the largest mound after losing their "mining" lease. The men sold artifacts from the mounds to collectors all over the world. Fragile items like cotton cloth and feather robes were tossed aside and crushed underfoot.



After the treasure hunters lost their lease, archeologists from the University of Oklahoma led WPA workers on a controlled excavation of the site in 1936 to salvage as much knowledge as possible about this unique site.

Six mounds form a circular grouping around an oval plaza on the western side of the site. The largest of these is known as Brown mound. Steeply sloping on three sides, the mound had a walkway on the fourth, southern side which led to a building on top of the mound. This may have been a mortuary house where the dead were prepared for burial.

The eastern group of mounds, about a quarter mile from Brown mound, consisted of mounds where important leaders were buried with elaborate ceremony and grave goods. The preservation of delicate basketry, feather capes, and cloth was remarkable. Unfortunately, many of these fragile artifacts were destroyed in the plundering of the mounds by treasure hunters.

Trade goods found at the Spiro site include copper from the Great Lakes, shell beads from the Gulf of California, and conch shell from the Gulf of Mexico. They show the extensive trade networks connecting different cultures across the continent at the time.



Fragment of Spiro shell engraving



The "Smoker", an effigy pipe from the Spiro Mounds. The pipe measures more than a foot in length and was made at the Cahokia site near St. Louis in the 1100's and brought to Spiro as part of the exchange between chiefdoms.

References:

The Spiro Ceremonial Center : the Archaeology of Arkansas Valley Caddoan culture in Eastern Oklahoma by James A. Brown (University of Michigan, Memoirs of the Museum of Anthropology, Number 29, 1996).

To visit the Spiro Mounds State Park, turn south off I-40 at the Sallisaw exit. Drive 16 miles on Highway 59 to Highway 9 and then 8 miles east. The site is located on the Arkansas River near the WD Mayo Lock and Dam.

Love County

The Pumpkin Creek Site

The Pumpkin Creek site in Love County dates to a period known to archeologists as the Archaic period. During the early Archaic, hunter/gathering groups were sparsely populated across the continent. The mammoths and most other large animals of the Ice Age were extinct, and the climate was probably moderate with more rain than we have presently. Hunters could still find the giant bison, *Bison antiquus*, which they killed with spears tipped with stone points.

The hunters who camped at the Pumpkin Creek site were probably moving around following their game. Since they needed a specific kind of material to make their stone tools, a stone that flaked predictably and could be worked into the shape they required, this ridge overlooking a creek became a regular stopover. It had high quality stone and a good vantage near water. Fathers brought their sons here and showed them how to produce the tools needed for their hunting.



Artifacts found at the Pumpkin Creek site.

For some 2,000 years, the Pumpkin Creek site served as a workshop for the production of tools. It is believed that small groups of men came to the site, stayed long enough to make some spearpoints and knives, and then moved on.

Dramatic changes occurred during the period from 9,000 to 7,500 years ago -- the time when the Pumpkin Creek site was used. The climate was growing dryer. The giant *Bison antiquus* slowly evolved into a smaller bison called *Bison occidentalis*. This evolution would finally lead to the bison we know today and was probably related to the warming, drying conditions on the continent.

The prairies moved eastward into formerly forested areas. By 7,000 BP (Before Present), western Oklahoma was virtually a desert. The people who used the ridge near Pumpkin Creek no longer

visited the site.



Modern day flint-knapper, Bobby Nickey, Guymon, Oklahoma, demonstrates the craft.

The Pumpkin Creek site has been studied from time to time by several archeologists over a period of 30 years. The site was rediscovered in the 1970's by an artifact collector who showed it to his brother. The two of them collected the site and contacted the State Archeologist at the Oklahoma Archeological Survey. The State Archeologist and one of the collectors, who was also a member of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, eventually wrote a scientific paper about the site. His collection has been donated to the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History. Another collector has also allowed archeologists to examine his recent collections from the Pumpkin Creek site and eventually another report will be issued by the museum.

Collaboration between professional archeologists and interested amateurs has contributed significantly to our understanding of the people who were here before us. This sharing of information continues to add insights into the prehistory of our state.

Marshall County

The Haley's Point Site



Haley's Point, beginning excavations of Main House area in summer, 1988. Photo courtesy of Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology, Wichita State University

Thirty miles from the confluence of the Washita River with the Red River, a bluff is eroding into Lake Texoma. This tall bluff is the site of many thousands of years of human habitation. It is known as the Haley's Point site.

Near the base of the bluff, spearpoints of hunters from the Pleistocene, when mammoths and other now-extinct animals roamed the North American continent, have been found. Mammoth bones were excavated from the gravels at the base of the bluff. Above this layer is some 15 feet of sandy loam which accumulated during the long period known to archaeologists as the Archaic (8,000 to 2,000 years ago). Halfway through this sandy loam is a thin layer of calcium carbonate which probably accumulated during the long, harsh drought of the Altithermal. The top of the bluff contains 1 ½ to 2 foot of soil which was plowed at sometime during the 20th century.

For seven seasons during the late 1980s and early 1990s, Wichita State University, under a contract from the Corps of Engineers, conducted excavations at Haley's Point. Those excavations pertain to the relatively short time period of the last 1,000 years when Haley's Point was apparently

intensively occupied by farming villagers. During excavations, archaeologists uncovered the postmolds of several houses. One style of house is believed to date to around 1,000 years ago and is a square house with four centerposts supporting a grass thatch roof. The walls were also grass-covered smeared over with a layer of wet earth. This house was about 700 square feet and had a central hearth with a smoke hole in the roof above the hearth. This house probably burned after it had been abandoned.

Another house dates to a slightly earlier period, possibly when prehistoric people were moving from a mobile hunting and gathering lifestyle to a more sedentary village life with gardening supplementing their wild game and plant foods. This house is oval, again with four center posts.

The people of Haley's Point had a varied diet consisting of deer and fish (bone fishhooks were recovered in the excavations) along with corn, squash and domesticated sunflower -- charred remains of which were all found in the excavations. They tended their gardens with hoes made from mussel shell hoes hafted to handles. They used bow and arrow to hunt and made pottery from clay gathered locally.

The significance of the Haley's Point site to our understanding of the long prehistory of the Red River area was marked by the addition of the site to the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

References:

Haley's Point (34MA15) on the Red River Marshall County, Oklahoma (Area F) by Arthur H. Rohn, Wichita State University Publications in Anthropology No 4, 1998.

Mayes County

The Packard Site

In 1962, with the impending construction of the Robert S. Kerr Dam, the National Park Service funded excavations at the Packard site to recover as much information as possible about the people who had lived along Saline Creek over the millennia before the area was flooded by Lake Hudson. The excavations over two seasons revealed some 9,500 years of human occupation.

Though it's common to recount history from most ancient to most recent times, the Packard site history was revealed to archeologists from youngest to oldest. This is because a site occupied for thousands of years, as the Packard site was, undergoes many changes over time including the accumulation of soils and sediment on the surface on which people live. The first artifacts archeologists excavated at the Packard site related to the relatively recent farming peoples who lived in the valley some time within the last 1,000 years. The deepest artifacts, more than 12 feet down, were left there by hunters some 9,500 years into the past.



Although this may seem obvious, in fact the concept of the more recent living surfaces at a site overlying the older living surfaces, known as the law of superposition to archeologists, revolutionized the understanding of human history. Thomas Jefferson, in excavations on his Virginia farm, was one of the first scientists to apply this principle.

In the first 30 inches of deposit, archeologists found evidence of the pottery-making farmers and earlier hunter-gatherers who used bow and arrows to bring down deer on this western edge of the Ozark forests. The Packard site probably functioned as a camp for hunters sent out from farming villages where corn, beans and squash were grown to bring back game from the salt springs found a half mile from the site. That 30 inches represents about 2,000 years of history.

The nine feet of deposit below this held the 7,500 year record of the hunting- gathering people who used spears and darts rather than bows and arrows and who gathered wild plants rather than tending crops. The first hunters came to visit the Packard site nearly 5,000 years before the first Egyptian pyramid was built.

They made the spearpoints at the right from flint gathered from the bed of Saline Creek or nearby outcrops. Archeologists excavated a firepit built by these people.

Flakes of their flintworking were left around the fireplace, probably just as they fell from the hand of the toolmaker. The charcoal in the fire was carefully collected, mailed to a laboratory and radiocarbon-dated to 9,500 BP (before present).



Today, the location of the Packard site is covered by the waters of Lake Hudson. Thanks to the efforts of many people, the story of this remarkable Oklahoma site has not been lost forever.

References:

"The Packard Complex: Early Archaic, Pre-Dalton Occupations on the Prairie-Woodlands Border" by Don G. Wyckoff in *Southeastern Archaeology*, 4(1) Summer 1985.

McClain County

The Brewer Site

The period from 2000 years BP (before present) to 1000 years BP is known to archaeologists as the Woodland period. The people of the time were hunter/gatherers who made pottery, gathered wild plants and nuts, and used bow and arrow to hunt deer. Late in the period they began using domesticated plants to supplement their diets. They may have planted a crop near one of their regular camps and then come back later in the year to harvest it.

After 1000 BP, agriculture among Southern Plains groups came into its own with large, established villages along the fertile floodplains of the Washita and Canadian rivers. Corn, beans and squash as well as other crops provided a significant portion of the diet of these Plains Villagers.

Archaeologists have discovered a few sites where the people were just beginning the transition from the Woodland to the Plains Village lifestyle. The Brewer site, located on a sandy ridge south of the Canadian River near Rosedale, Oklahoma, is one such site.



Stone pipe from the Brewer site.

The Brewer site is believed to have been one of the earlier villages (with semi-permanent inhabitants) in the area. Numerous pits were uncovered at the site. They were used by the Brewer site occupants as storage pits for grain and crop seed.



Dart and arrow points from the Brewer site.



Reconstructed cordmarked pot from the Brewer site

The pottery sherds (pieces of broken pottery) found at the Brewer site reveal much about this time period in Oklahoma's prehistory known to archeologists as the Paoli Phase. Earlier, Woodland pottery was thick and rugged, suitable for a mobile lifestyle. Large pots, like the one at the right, were cooking vessels; their cone-shaped bases resisted cracking in the heat of a campfire. Other pots from the Brewer site, though, have different shapes and show that the people who lived

there were becoming more settled. This pottery was thinner with flat bases and small, constricted necks and was probably used for storing grain.

The descendants of the Brewer site people established large farming villages all along the Canadian and Washita rivers with extensive fields. The Brewer site is interesting because the people who lived there were among the earliest farmers in the area.

McCurtain County

The A.W. Davis Site



Pot of the style found at the A.W. Davis Site

Ancestors of the modern-day Caddo Nation lived in southeastern Oklahoma probably for several thousand years. The Caddo settled in parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas and developed a complex culture based on the cultivation of corn and other crops.

Caddoan groups in Oklahoma lived along major streams and tributaries in the oak-pine forests of southeastern Oklahoma. In their gardens grew corn, beans, squash, sunflowers and tobacco. They exploited local game animals like deer and turkey and they may have organized seasonal hunting parties to the western prairies in search of bison. The people traced their ancestry through their mother's family. They traded pottery and other materials with groups through the area.

The A.W. Davis site, on the west bank of the Glover River, dates to the period just shortly before the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. Excavations at the site in 1955 uncovered a circular house pattern about 18' in diameter. Circular houses developed rather late in time among the Caddo. Earlier houses were oval or rectangular with rounded corners. These houses were grass-covered and usually had a fire pit within although no such pit was found in the A.W. Davis house.

Artifacts recovered during the excavation at the site included dart and arrow points, elaborately-

decorated pottery, stone hoes and ground stone earspools (read more and see photos of these artifact types in the Oklahoma Artifacts web book).

A rectangular mound, 40' X 80' and 12' high, is within 100 yards of the A.W. Davis site, but it is unclear at this time if the mound is directly related to the village occupation. Mounds built by the Caddoan people of the area were often used as bases for civic/religious structures.

References:

"The A.W. Davis Site, Mc-6, of McCurtain County, Oklahoma," Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, X, 1962.

For further information about the Caddo on the web: <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/tejas/>

McIntosh County

The Handprint Site



Petroglyphs at the Handprint Site

Rock art produced by Native Americans both before and after European contact is found throughout the state of Oklahoma. These representations of animals, people, and geometric designs pecked (petroglyphs) or painted (pictographs) onto rock outcrops provide an immediate sense of connection to the people who lived here before us. While we can only speculate about the meaning of these artistic expressions to the people who made them, we can readily feel our connection to them. When any particular rock art was produced is difficult to determine. Pictographs have been successfully dated by chemically analyzing the pigments used to paint the figures, but this technique is very expensive and rarely used. The subject matter of some rock art can reveal the relative time period of its manufacture; for example, figures of horses and guns have been found which clearly were made after the first Europeans entered Oklahoma in the 16th century. However, there is very little way to determine when most of the Oklahoma rock art was done.



Handprints and "shield" figure

Handprints, like six of the 15 petroglyphs found at the Handprint Site in McIntosh County, are among the most common motifs in rock art. The petroglyphs at the Handprint Site were pecked into the dark patina of the sandstone to reveal the lighter, unweathered surface. The figures have been somewhat protected from weathering by a small overhang. In addition to the handprints, there are also "shield" figures, a footprint (see below) and a zigzag figure.



Footprint petroglyph

Another petroglyph site in McIntosh County, only 5 miles to the north, is believed to have some relationship to the Handprint Site since identical "shield" figures have been identified there.

References:

Prehistoric Rock Art of the Cross Timbers Management Unit, East Central Oklahoma: An Introductory Study, by Charles D. Neel. The University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma Archeological Survey, ARSR 27. 1986.

Murray County

The Primrose and Stillman Pit Sites

Along the north side of a sandy terrace of the Washita River, sand quarrying exposed two important archeological sites just north of the Arbuckle Mountains. In these two sites lay evidence of a group of hunter/gatherers known to archeologists as the Calf Creek culture. Calf Creek is a style of chipped stone tool, probably used as both a spear point and a knife, which is beautifully crafted and very distinctive. The hunters who lived at the Primrose and Stillman Pit sites moved from camp to camp following the migratory movements of the bison they hunted some 5,000 - 6,000 years ago. This was a period when Oklahoma's climate was much drier. Areas that are now wooded were grasslands.



Calf Creek point manufacturing stages.

Among the most interesting finds at the Primrose and Stillman Pit sites were stockpiled groups of triangular-shaped chert pieces. The chert is from a rocky outcrop 30 miles to the east near Ada. It is called Frisco chert and is a white, very durable rock that fractures in clean, sharp breaks when struck. This chert makes a very fine stone tool in the hands of a craftsman skilled in the demanding work of knapping (the chipping of stone to make tools).

A question of interest to archeologists is why the Calf Creek people went to all the trouble of carrying a lot of heavy rock back to these terraces along the Washita. Why not make their Calf Creek points at the Frisco outcrops? They believe that there are several possible reasons.

First of these is that manufacture of the Calf Creek points requires careful and time-consuming preparation of the chert itself by firing it in a hearth for a long period at very high heat. The white chert takes on a pinkish or bluish cast and becomes very lustrous. Additionally, the heat treatment seems to change the structure of the rock so that it requires less pressure to flake and shape.

The second factor in the caching of the Frisco chert is related to the first. Heating of the Frisco chert required lots of wood which could only be found in sufficient quantities in stream bottoms like the Washita because of the arid climate. So, rather than carry lots of bulky wood to the Frisco chert outcrops, the Calf Creek people carried the heavier, but more portable, chert to the wood source.

The archeological work at the Primrose and Stillman Pit sites depended heavily on the help of

interested collectors. People who lived nearby the site and monitored the sand quarrying operation loaned their collections for study by archeologists. Without the help of such people, the historic and prehistoric heritage of all Oklahomans might be lost forever without being recorded. So, while the sand quarrying destroyed the original context of the artifacts left behind by the Calf Creek people, some information about their culture was preserved.



Calf Creek points from the Primrose site.

References:

"The Primrose Site, 34MR65, Murray County, Oklahoma" by D.G. Wyckoff, W.L. Neal, and M. Duncan in *Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society*, Vol. XL, 1994.

"The Calf Creek Component at the Stillman Pit Site (34MR71) and Its Relation to Calf Creek Caching Strategy" by R. Bartlett in *Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society*, Vol. XL, 1994.

Nowata County

The Lawrence Site



This site, located on the Verdigris River, was home to a group of hunter/gatherers in the period known by archeologists as the Archaic period. The site was first occupied over 3500 years ago and visited regularly as a camp in the seasonal rounds of this nomadic group. The river valley and upland areas provided game and a variety of plant foods for the people at the Lawrence site. The big game animal, deer, was hunted with spears thrown with the help of a throwing stick called an atlatl. The spears were tipped with stone points chipped from chert gathered in Kay County to the west and from the Ozark Mountains to the east.

Some time around 2700 years ago, though, the camp became a more permanent home with small houses. The hunters from this time began using a new technology, the bow and arrow. The wild game and gathered plants were baked in rock ovens and hearths.

In the winter time, the people of the Lawrence site left the river terrace and moved up into rock shelters which could more easily be kept warm. The Lawrence people also used rock shelters to bury the dead.



Clay lined hearth from Lawrence Site

By 2500 years ago, the Lawrence site was abandoned. People had lived repeatedly at the site for over a thousand years. The descendants of the Lawrence site people did not disappear, however. They continued living in the area, but their culture had changed over time as they began to take up the beginnings of farming, learned to make pottery and began to use the bow and arrow almost exclusively.

References:

Middle Holocene Archeology in Northeastern Oklahoma by William L. Neal and Richard R. Drass (Oklahoma Anthropological Society Bulletin 47, 1998).

The Lawrence Site, Nw-6: A Non-ceramic Site in Nowata County by Jane Baldwin (Bulletin of the Oklahoma. Oklahoma Anthropological Society Bulletin 18 1969).

Oklahoma County

The Manwell Site

"I shall not easily forget the mortal toil, and the vexations of flesh and spirit, that we underwent occasionally, in our wanderings through the Cross Timber. It was like struggling through forests of cast iron." from *A Tour on the Prairies* by Washington Irving describing his 1832 journey through that borderland between western prairies and eastern forests called the Cross Timbers



The diversity of animal and plant life in this narrow strip of scrub oak and cedar through the center of Oklahoma has attracted and repelled human travelers for thousands of years. Washington Irving commented on the diversity of wildlife as he crossed the area, and we can imagine that prehistoric hunters found the terrain rich in game. Over 50% of the prehistoric sites reported for Oklahoma County are considered hunting camps. One site, though, the Manwell Site is a hunting camp with a difference.



A member of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society brought the Manwell site to the attention of archeologists in 1981 when he believed oil well drilling might disturb the area. It was determined the oil well posed no danger, but archeologists were interested to learn about the site and document collections from it. For many years, the landowner, for whom the site was named, had collected stone tools including projectile points, pottery and grinding stones. Mr. Manwell allowed archeologists to photograph his collection and test the site with a limited excavation. Based on the results, it was believed that the site had been briefly occupied many times through the Woodland (AD 1-1000) and Plains Village (AD 1000-1500) periods as a temporary hunting camp.

Two years later, archeologists received a phone call from Mr. Manwell. Deep plowing of the area had revealed many dark, circular stains on the soil surface. Archeologists again visited the site and discovered that the plowing had revealed 65 pits filled with burned sandstone, charcoal flecks, some burned animal bone, a few stone tools and some broken pottery.

Archeologists were able to excavate about a third of these pits. All but one of them appear to have been shallow firepits which were later filled with trash. One was a deeper pit probably used for storage. A radiocarbon date from one of the pits showed the pits dated to around the mid-1300s. During this time in other parts of Oklahoma, people were farming corn, beans and squash and living in permanent villages. However, the people at the Manwell site do not appear to fit that pattern. Instead they seem to be a group of people still following the older ways of hunting and gathering and moving from place to place. Their pottery seems like pottery of a group of people from southeastern Kansas and that may have been their place of origin. How did they interact with their more settled, farming neighbors? They may have been traders and messengers moving between farming villages, trading meat for farming crops and serving as a communication link between the different groups of people living on the Southern Plains in this period. Hopefully, future research will find more sites like the Manwell site to answer these intriguing questions.

Osage County

Beaver Creek Sites



Looking across Beaver Creek valley.

Beaver Creek is a southward-flowing tributary of the Arkansas River in western Osage County. People have been living near it probably since the first people came to Oklahoma over 12,000 years ago. An archaeological survey of the area in 1979 helped expand our understanding of how people have lived along the creek for the last 2,000 years of that time.

An archaeological survey consists of walking through pastures, plowed fields, stream bottomlands and terraces. When the artifacts from an occupation are found, a systematic walk over the area determines the extent of the site. Concentrations of artifacts are noted, and testing with controlled excavations may be done if the site seems important or if construction, erosion or other activities might threaten it.

A survey of parts of the Beaver Creek drainage located 46 sites. The earliest of the sites are camps from the beginning of the Woodland period, around AD 100. Even earlier sites are probably buried deep beneath thousands of years of wind and water-borne sediments. The most important game animals of the time were deer. They were hunted with corner- notched dart points placed in a foreshaft and fitted into a spear. The points were made of Florence-A chert which outcrops in nearby areas. This is a period of time when people began making pottery. There is no evidence that people had begun tending gardens and growing domesticated crops yet.

The next set of sites, still in the Woodland period from AD 300 to 800, are small, temporary camps, possibly indicating a shift to a more mobile lifestyle or a trend toward more permanent settlements

nearer the Arkansas River. During this period, the bow and arrow began to replace the spear; the arrowpoints were smaller than the earlier dart points but still have corner notches.

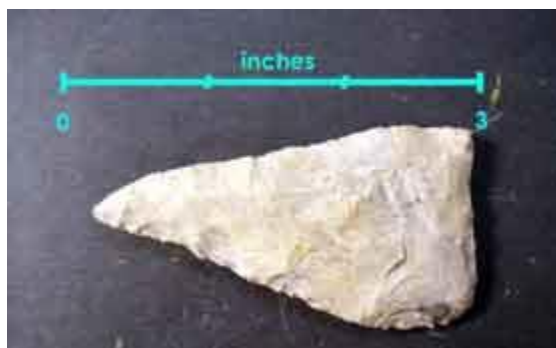
For the late Woodland period (AD 800 to 1250), only one site was found. It is believed that the trend toward less permanent settlements in the Beaver Creek area continued through this period. A large site just north of where Beaver Creek flows into the Arkansas, dating to this time period, contained grinding stones, pottery and many arrowpoints. Perhaps small hunting parties left this large site to visit hunting camps on Beaver Creek.



Artifacts typical of Late Prehistoric sites on Beaver Creek.

The period after AD 1250 saw a very intensive occupation of the area. Hunters of this period used small, unnotched arrowpoints. Diamond-beveled knives and snub-nosed hide scrapers were common tools. These farming/hunting peoples placed their settlements on the higher terraces of Beaver Creek and the Arkansas River, probably to avoid periodic flooding. Bison and crops like corn, squash and beans formed the basis of their diet.

At about the same time, the people of this area began quarrying Florence-A (see below) chert to work into finished tools which could be traded to other groups farther west.



Examples of Florence-A chert. When heated, Florence-A chert turns pink or red.

Ottawa County

The Afton Springs Site



Mastodon teeth uncovered at Sulphur Spring.

William Henry Holmes (1846-1933), curator of Anthropology at the Smithsonian National Museum in the early 1900's, traveled to Oklahoma in 1901 to investigate a report of prehistoric mammoth and mastodon bones being found in association with spear points. Holmes believed that humans had been in the Americas no longer than 4,000 years and thus humans and Ice Age (or Pleistocene) animals could not have co-existed on the continent at the same time.

Holmes discovered near the town of Afton a marsh where settlers had boxed in a flowing spring which produced drinkable water with a slight sulphur taste. The spring was known locally as Sulphur Springs. Using the labor of a hired crew, Holmes diverted the water flow from the spring and cleared about two feet of accumulated "muck" from the area. Below, he found a layer of compacted, fine sand. Further digging revealed mammoth and mastodon teeth and bones jumbled together with modern horse bone, prehistoric spear and arrowpoints, deer antler billets used to shape stone tools, bone awls and stone knives.



DISCOVERY OF A FLINT IMPLEMENT IN THE SUPERFICIAL SANDS.

Photo from Holmes' excavation of the spring in 1901.

The association of the modern horse bone with the Ice Age elephant bones demonstrated that the stone tools were not necessarily Pleistocene in age. Since most of the materials were confined to an area about three feet in diameter, Holmes concluded that the bones and tools were either washed or were thrown into the spring basin and settled together in a heap at the base of the formation.

This work at Sulphur Springs in Ottawa County represents the first excavations in Oklahoma undertaken by a professional archaeologist. Over the 20th century the springs filled and were cultivated. Now the area can only be distinguished by being slightly wetter than the surrounding land.

The stone spearpoints recovered during the Holmes excavation have been compared to points from other sites and now are believed to date to the Woodland period (2,000 to 1,200 years ago). A deer antler from the springs has been radiocarbon dated to around 3,000 years before present times. While the Holmes expedition to northeast Oklahoma could not substantiate the association of Pleistocene animals and human hunters, further work in Oklahoma has helped push the arrival date

of people to the continent back to at least the end of the Ice Age and perhaps much earlier.

References:

"Flint Implements and Fossil Remains from a Sulphur Spring at Afton, Indian Territory" by William Henry Holmes, *Report of the US National Museum for 1901*, Paper #2, 1903.

Payne County

The Ingalls Townsite



Ash Street in Ingalls, site of the 1893 Doolin Gang gun battle with federal marshalls, photographed in the 1970's.

A few deserted buildings and stone foundations in eastern Payne County today mark the spot where Ingalls, Oklahoma, used to stand. Settled after the land rush of 1889 into the "Unassigned Lands" between the Chickasaw Nation to the south and the Cherokee Outlet to the north, Ingalls was a thriving community of 150 in the 1890's; however, by 1907 the Post Office was closed.

Like many small towns of the time, Ingalls might have faded into obscurity if not for an event on September 1, 1893 which marked the town with notoriety. Several small-time gangs of outlaws plagued the Oklahoma territory during the late 1800's. U.S. Marshall E.D. Nix was charged with bringing the criminals to justice. Nix received word that a gang, known as the Wild Bunch, were making frequent visits to the small town of Ingalls. Their leader, Bill Doolin, was a cowboy turned outlaw who rode with the Dalton gang before most of the Daltons were killed at a Coffeyville, Kansas bank robbery. The gang stayed at a local hotel when in town and, according to several reports by townspeople, were quiet and well-mannered. The gang also apparently camped in a bend of the Cimarron River for most of the summer of 1893.

Two deputy marshalls were sent, in disguise, to Ingalls to investigate the rumors about the Doolin gang. According to the story of a local physician, Dr. Pickering, the two deputies played cards and drank with the Doolin gang at a local saloon. Apparently, they reported back to Nix that the Doolin gang could, indeed, be found at Ingalls.

Nix then sent a dozen deputies headed by John Hixson to Ingalls to surprise the Wild Bunch. The deputies were loaded into two covered wagons. They approached Ingalls from the north at 10 a.m. on September 1. Doolin and gang members "Dynamite Dick" Clifton, "Tulsa Jack" Blake, "Bitter Creek" Newcomb and Bill Dalton were drinking in the local saloon. Another gang member "Arkansas Tom" Jones was in a second-floor hotel room.

In the gunbattle that followed, while most of the citizens of Ingalls hid in storm cellars, three deputies and two citizens of Ingalls were killed; all but one of the Wild Bunch escaped. "Arkansas Tom" was captured and sentenced to 50 years in prison. He was paroled for good behavior but later died in a shootout in Missouri in the 1920's. The Doolin gang were all eventually captured or killed. Bill Doolin, leader of the gang, was killed by a posse in 1896 while visiting his wife and son in Pawnee County, Oklahoma.



Storm cellar in old Ingalls

Pontotoc County

The Frisco Chert Quarries

Oklahoma is rich in the stone used by Native Americans to make arrowheads, hoes, knives, scrapers and many other tools. This stone is known as chert (pronounced churt) and outcroppings occur in many areas of the state. One of the most important types of chert to the prehistoric people of eastern Oklahoma is found in Pontotoc County near Fittstown. It is named for the Frisco formation of limestone in which it is found.

All cherts are composed of two of the most common elements on our planet, silicon and oxygen, the same materials that make up glass. Geologists believe the Frisco cherts were formed about 400 million years ago when Oklahoma was covered in a warm, shallow sea. Many simple marine animals, including sponges, extract silicon compounds from seawater to form their skeletons. As these animals died in the ancient oceans, their glassy skeletons settled to the bottom where they accumulated and were eventually transformed into rocks like chert. Parts of ancient sponges, known as spicules, can be seen in the Frisco cherts.

Cherts are extremely hard rocks that tend to fracture in a conchoidal (shell-like) pattern. This quality allows it to be worked into tools with sharp, durable edges. Prehistoric people quarried cherts and traded some highly-prized ones over hundreds of miles. Some cherts, like Frisco, also became even easier to work with when fired at high temperatures in prehistoric rock ovens. Heat-treated Frisco chert is shinier and often has a pink or blue coloration.

The Frisco chert outcroppings were visited for thousands of years by prehistoric toolmakers like those from the Raulston- Rogers site and the Primrose and Stillman Pit sites. The chips and debris from their work as they fashioned tools can still be seen in the Frisco quarry areas.



Examples of Frisco chert

Pottawatomie County

The Rose-Fast Site



Burned rock feature from the Rose-Fast site

The Rose-Fast site is a Woodland period base camp on a terrace in a bend of the Little River. Excavations at the site in 1985 uncovered several burned rock features which probably represent rock ovens and a trash pit. One radiocarbon date from the site returned a date of AD 400; however, the number of artifacts found from the site probably indicates the site was occupied over hundreds of years.

The site was reported to the Oklahoma Archeological Survey by the landowner who had an extensive collection of artifacts from the site. He allowed archaeologists to photograph his collection (see the arrowpoints in the figure below) and also allowed them to conduct the 1985 excavation as part of a study of the archaeology of the Cross Timbers area of the Little River valley.

The Woodland period (AD 1 to 1000) is marked by the beginning of the use of pottery and the appearance of the bow and arrow which gradually supplanted the spear as the weapon of choice of prehistoric hunters. The few pottery sherds recovered in the excavations at Rose-Fast were a thick, cordmarked ware common to the period. Both arrowpoints and dart points are found in abundance at the site, probably another indication of the site's long occupation.

No evidence of horticulture was found at the site. While Woodland period people east of Oklahoma were tending gardens of sunflowers and other native domesticated plants, it seems likely that horticulture did not become common in Oklahoma until around AD 1000. However, the Rose-Fast site occupants did gather wild plants as evidenced by the charred hickory nut shells found in the excavated trash pit. Unfortunately, preservation of organic remains at the site is very poor due to the sandy, slightly acidic soil so some burned deer and bison bone and the nutshells are the only evidence of the Rose- Fast diet which have survived.



Scalloped arrowheads from the Rose-Fast site.



Shaped mussel shell ornaments

Pushmataha County

The Kiamichi Fish Weir Site



In 1994, a landowner reported a "weird rock wall" eroding from the base of a 22 ft. tall terrace of the Kiamichi River. The landowners had found artifacts related to the very late Late Archaic or very early Woodland period from the upper 6 ft. of the terrace above the river as it eroded the bank, but the rock wall was at the base of the terrace directly on a gravel bar of the river channel. Though it resembled a foundation for an old cabin, it was clearly too old to relate to a historic occupation and would have been rather damp in any case. They called the Oklahoma Archeological Survey for help in understanding what was coming out of their river bank.

The setting of the site is not unique in the Ouachita Mountains. An outcrop of shale and a trapped gravel bed constrains the flow of the river during normal periods and forms a nice pool of water upstream. This geological feature prevents downcutting by the river and forces a broadening of the stream during flood episodes, thus cutting back the terrace. There were two severe rises along the Kiamichi River between 1989 and 1994, and each of these cut back the terrace edge.

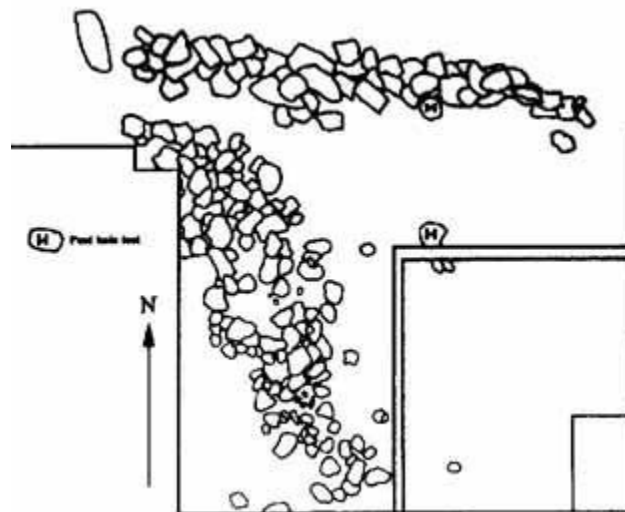
After one flood, the stumps of cypress trees were found preserved where they had grown into the gravel bed and underlying shale outcrop, in the same circumstances as the rock wall, and about 25 ft. north of the wall. Cypress do not grow in this part of the river valley under modern conditions.

The rock wall was composed of large, roughly rectangular rocks, probably from a ridge outcrop about one-quarter of a mile to the south. The rocks were stacked in a linear fashion without mortar. The nearly 6 ft. tall terrace remnant overlaying the rocks was straightened and revealed a thick layer of blue (organic stained) sand over the rocks. As archeologists removed the sand at the west end of the alignment, they exposed what seemed to be the end of another rock wall extending to the south and forming a wide V with the exposed wall. At the apparent apex, two large and several smaller rocks lay parallel to one another and seemed to form an opening or chute between the ends of the walls. Further excavation over the next week revealed the second wall bearing off to the south, but unlike the first wall, this one was more disturbed rather than being stacked. After studying the stream and the gravel bar, archeologists concluded the south wall extended across the stream flow to divert water, and fish, through the chute or funnel.

Water flowing against this wall dispersed it over time, while the first wall was parallel to the stream flow and was therefore not disturbed. Archeologists realized they had identified an archeological feature unique in Oklahoma prehistory, a fish weir (trap), before it was destroyed by natural processes.



Archeologists wanted to learn if the weir was associated with the archeological materials found in the upper part of the terrace. In the process of excavation, they recovered several samples of wood, one from beneath one of the largest undisturbed rocks of the feature, and one from within the arms of the weir. Charred hickory and pecan hulls were recovered from the culture bearing deposits in the terrace. All these materials were radiocarbon dated. The wood from beneath the large rock was identified as oak and dated to 3150+60 B.P. (about 1200 B.C.). The wood from inside the arms of the weir dated to 2990+80 B.P. (about 1100 B.C.), but the charred nut hulls dated much later, 2380+80 B.P. (about 400 B.C.) showing the use of the weir was far earlier than the better known occupation of the site. Interestingly, the cypress trees found after the 1992 floods dated to 2990+60 B.P., or virtually contemporary with the dates from the weir.



Drawing of rock fish weir feature.

What have we learned about Oklahoma prehistory by finding this one feature? 1) Fishing was more

important to food gathering than we might have known. We knew about bone fish hooks from sites such as 34LT11 and net weights from sites along the Mountain Fork and Glover Rivers located above natural fish traps, and we suspected that some of the crush black walnut and hickory husks may have been used as a fish poison, but the weir required an investment of labor to construct and maintain. 2) The age of the weir relates it firmly to the Late Archaic Period. 3) The radiocarbon dates from the cypress and the pine informs us about the vegetation and the climate. Cypress does not grow in the area under modern conditions and likes wetter and warmer conditions with warmer winters. Pine was previously thought to have become common about 2,000 years ago, but the date from the pine shows its presence over 1,000 years earlier. Again, we learned of the climate and vegetation from this piece of burned wood. 4) We now know that the age of the component in the upper part of the terrace is just before and at the beginning of pottery manufacture and use in eastern Oklahoma, and we suspect that use of the site by native Americans continued over a long time span on a seasonal basis.

Roger Mills County

The Zimms Site

Five sites in Roger Mills County represent the only known remains of an enigmatic group of people who lived in western Oklahoma from around A.D. 1250 to perhaps as late as A.D. 1450. This group of sites is known to archeologists as the Zimms complex after the best-known of the sites, the Zimms site.

When archeologists and volunteers from the Oklahoma Anthropological Society excavated at the Zimms site, they uncovered the remains of a structure, probably a house, which differed in many ways from the houses of other Oklahoma villagers of the same period. The house was roughly square in outline and about 20 feet by 20 feet with two large interior posts supporting a thatch roof. Forty-eight smaller posts set in the ground and covered with clay and thatch formed the walls. The most striking difference, though, was a central channel, 6 inches deep and 9 feet wide, running right through the middle of the house. A raised clay platform lay at one end of the channel, opposite the entryway into the house.



House pattern excavated at the Zimms site.

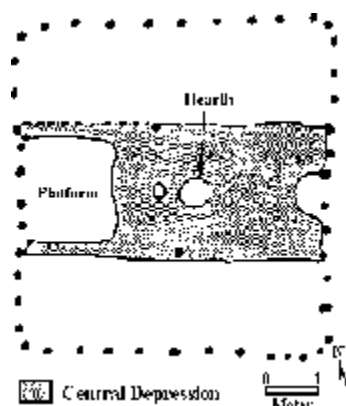
Only a limited number of the kind of farming tools used by Native American villagers in Oklahoma were found although groups to both the east and west (in the Texas panhandle) were farming extensively at the time. The pottery used by Zimms people was usually undecorated with rounded bases and flared rims. It is known as Quartermaster Plain after nearby Quartermaster Creek. It, too, is different from the pottery found to the east and to the west at the same time period.



Quartermaster Plain pottery sherds from the Zimms site.

Because of the differences in the pottery and house styles, archaeologists believe the people of the Zimms complex were independent of the farming groups to the east and the west. Some archaeologists believe they lived an older lifestyle of hunting and gathering while other archaeologists believe they were farmers as were other Plains Villagers of the time.

There are many intriguing questions about the Zimms complex that remain unanswered. One such question regards the architecture of the structure excavated at the Zimms site.



A stylized diagram of the floor pattern excavated at Zimms is shown above. Archaeologists are uncertain why the central channel was placed in the Zimms' house or what the purpose of the platform at the west edge of the channel was. With further research and educated guesses, we hope to eventually better understand the Roger Mills county people of the Zimms complex.

Rogers County

The Will Rogers State Park Site, 34RO10



Fragments and metal points from the point manufacturing workshop at 34RO10 (photo courtesy Oklahoma Anthropological Society).

Archaeological investigations at 34RO10 were conducted in 1970 as wave action along the Oologah Lake shoreline exposed the remains of an historic Osage village dating to the first half of the 19th century. A part of the Osage moved into this area around 1802 when the Chouteau family lost its monopoly on the fur trade farther east, and Jean Pierre Chouteau persuaded about half the tribe to settle along the Verdigris and Neosho rivers in the west to pursue the fur trade there.



Trade goods (gun barrels, axes, scissors, and knife blades) from 34RO10 (photo courtesy Oklahoma Anthropological Society).

The materials recovered from the Will Rogers State Park site lead archeologists to conclude that this site, on the west bank of the Verdigris, was occupied many thousands of years. The investigation in 1970 concentrated on the historic occupation, and it was determined that the location was a small satellite village of the larger Osage village established by Clermont, a chief of the Osage, located near Claremore Mound, about five miles south and on the east bank of the Verdigris. Much of the site had been washed away before salvage work began. Many of the recovered artifacts relate to the Osage trading partnership with the French, including pieces of brass and copper kettles which had been re-worked into metal arrowpoints, gun flints, glass beads, mirror glass, scissors and gun parts. Four sandstone abraders were recovered which may have been used for sharpening metal knives or metal points. About 85 pieces of flattened metal found in a small 225 square foot area are believed to relate to a point manufacturing workshop where brass kettles and other French trade goods were re-worked into arrowpoints. The site is believed to have been occupied from around 1802 until nearly 1840.

Conflicts between the Osage and the Western Cherokee, who lived between the White and Arkansas rivers, escalated during the early 1800s, and these conflicts culminated in a Cherokee raid on Clermont's village at Claremore Mound. Although historical accounts of the battle are

sketchy, a two or three day battle during the spring of 1817 or 1818 led to great loss of life among the Osage. Several smaller skirmishes followed, but eventually the lands of both the Osage and the Cherokee were further reduced by treaties with the US government.

References:

Bulletin of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, "The Will Rogers State Park: 34-RO-10" by Gregory Perino with a contribution by Mary Elizabeth Goode, Vol.XX, 1971.

Seminole County

The Roulston-Rogers Site



Excavators at the Roulston-Rogers (SM-20) Site

In May, 1972, the Oklahoma Anthropological Society held its annual Spring Dig at the Roulston-Rogers site in Seminole County. An amateur archeologist and Society member first reported the site to the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in 1971. At the site, he found stone dart points and other evidence of a camp occupied by pre-pottery, pre-bow and arrow people from the late Archaic period (probably sometime 2,000-4,000 years ago). Not much was known from this period in central Oklahoma and so the site was chosen for excavation.

The Roulston-Rogers site is located on a sandy ridge overlooking Little River about 12 miles upstream from its confluence with the South Canadian. This is the Cross Timbers area, a transition zone from eastern forests to western grasslands. Eight burned sandstone concentrations were excavated, in some areas to a depth of almost four feet.



Rock hearth at SM-20

Several of the rock concentrations were small circular hearths. The larger rock concentrations could not be positively identified although they may have been used as large stone ovens. Although the sandy soil does not preserve organic material very well, charred pecan and walnut hulls were recovered.

Analysis of the excavated material revealed that people had lived at Roulston-Rogers for many thousand years. The earliest inhabitants hunted with spears and darts and gathered wild grains and nuts. Later people used pottery to store and cook food and hunted with bow and arrow. This Woodland adaptation with the use of pottery and bow and arrow was actually little changed from the preceding Late Archaic period.



Dart (lower row) and arrow (top row) points from SM-20.

Most stone tools recovered from the Roulston-Rogers site were chipped from Frisco chert quarried from near Fittstown in Pontotoc County southeast of the site. It is likely that the Roulston-Rogers campsite and the Frisco quarries were part of regular seasonal stops for the people who called this area home.

Sequoyah County

The Horton Site



Pottery exposed in excavations at the Horton site.

The Horton site consists of some 20 acres in the Arkansas River valley bottomlands in southern Sequoyah County. Excavations at the site were undertaken in the 1950's when farming exposed burials and again in the 1960's as part of the salvage of archaeological sites in the impoundment area of the Robert S. Kerr Lock and Dam.

Eastern Oklahoma was home to people as far back as 9,500 years ago (see the Packard site in Mayes County). However, about 1,300 years ago, a change from small, independent bands of hunters and gatherers to more organized, affiliated groups with a centralized government occurred. The adoption of farming as a way of life doubtless contributed to this change. The earliest governing center probably occurred at the Harlan Mound site in Cherokee County. Over time, the great Spiro Mounds site supplanted the Harlan site's influence over the area. Farming villages surrounding the mound centers provided labor for the building of the great mounds and food to support the priest-chiefs who lived at the mounds.

The Horton site represents one of the farming villages under the domain of the Spiro Mounds leaders; its location is about 20 miles upstream from Spiro. The site is believed to have been occupied between about A.D. 1300 - 1450 at the end of the Spiro era. The remains of two houses were uncovered during the excavations; one was a rectangular house, the other a circular house. It is possible that these two different house patterns represent a change over time in the kind of house favored by the site's occupants with the rectangular house favored by earlier people and the circular house of a later design.

Careful analysis of the surface collections and excavations at the site also revealed the probable location of some farming plots of the Horton site people. 300 yards west of the circular house pattern, archaeologists noticed the presence of many flakes of a particular stone known as siltstone. This material was favored by the Horton people for use as hoes and the small siltstone flakes probably occurred as gardeners stopped their labors to resharpen their hoes..



Celts from the Horton site



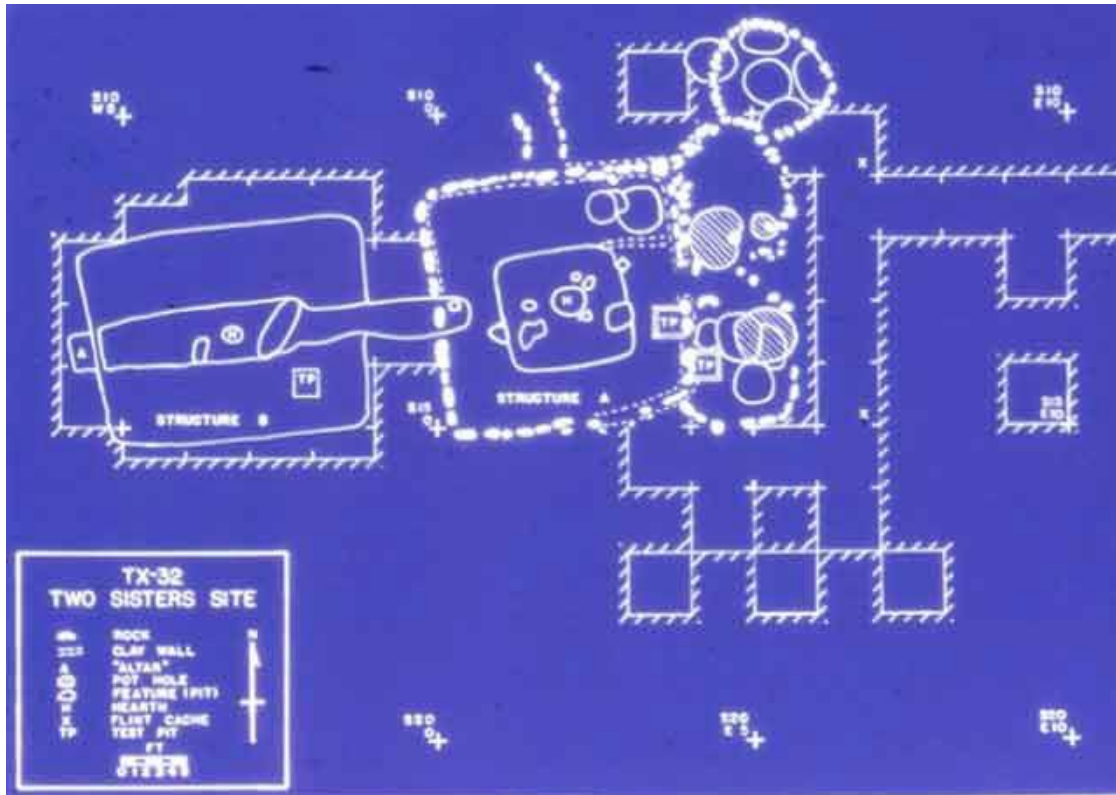
Horton Site arrowpoints

References:

The Horton Site Revisited, 1967 Excavations at Sq-11, Sequoyah County, Oklahoma, Studies in Oklahoma's Past, No. 1, Don G. Wyckoff, Oklahoma Archeological Survey, Norman, 1970.

Texas County

The Two Sisters Site



Plan View of Two Sisters Site Structures (image courtesy Christopher Lintz)

Texas County, like Beaver County, was home from about AD 1200 to 1450 to a group of people known to archaeologists as the Antelope Creek culture. In the earlier part of this period, Antelope Creek people constructed their stone slab foundation houses in villages with connecting smaller rooms. After about 1350, the architecture changed to larger, single room structures.

These Antelope Creek houses are the only stone masonry houses known for prehistoric Oklahoma. Rectangular, chipped sandstone, caliche or dolomite slabs were set vertically in single or double rows on bedrock and held upright with packed mud along the base. Occasionally, holes for roof support posts were chipped into the bedrock, as well.

The most common house is a large, rectangular structure with a low extended passageway to the east, a floor channel with two to six posts along the channel edges, a central hearth, and a raised platform on the west wall. Circular rooms, which were probably storage or food preparation areas, were often added along the extended entryway.

These people were bison hunters who also grew several varieties of corn, beans, pumpkins and squash. They also traded with people to the southwest for turquoise, obsidian, mica and marine shell jewelry.

One such site along the Beaver River dates to the later part of the Antelope Creek period, probably around 1400. The site is known as the Two Sisters Site. Two structures were excavated at this site and are shown in the image above as Structure A (right side) and Structure B (left side). Structure A was built after Structure B (the west wall of A was built over a part of the entryway of B). It consists of four connecting rooms outlined by foot thick slabs of caliche covered by adobe mud. The main residential room is about 18' x 18' . In the center of the room is a depression about 8' x 8' in the middle of which is a hearth. The outer rooms have storage pits dug into their floors.

Structure B did not have a stone slab foundation. It did have the characteristic central channel -- this one was defined by a 2" to 6" clay ridge along its edges. Structure B had a thick layer of burned clay and charcoal on its floor which may have been a collapsed roof. Evidence from the structure seemed to indicate that it had been cleaned out and then burned.



Two Sisters tools manufactured from stone from the Alibates quarry in the Texas panhandle (right) and Sandstone abraders from two Sisters (left) (photo courtesy Christopher Lintz)

Research about the late prehistoric period is ongoing in this fascinating part of the Southern Plains. A 2000 field school in Beaver County investigated a site apparently occupied by another group of people at around the same time the Antelope Creek people lived here. To the south, in the Texas panhandle investigations along Wolf Creek have defined the Buried City complex with similarities and differences to the Antelope Creek people.

References:

Adaptation During the Antelope Creek Phase: A Diet Breadth and Site Catchment Analysis of the Subsistence Strategy at the Two Sisters Site by Marjorie A. Duncan, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 2002.

Tulsa County

The Lasley Vore Site



View of the Arkansas River from the Lasley-Vore Site (photos on this page courtesy Dr. George Odell, University of Tulsa)

In 1988, the Kimberly-Clark Corporation initiated an archaeological survey of land along the Arkansas River in Tulsa County where they intended to build a tissue factory. University of Tulsa archaeologist George Odell, while surveying this area, found a site from the early historic period with both Native American artifacts and European trade goods from the 18th century. Since this site seemed likely to be important to our understanding of a little-known period, archaeologists began a two-month salvage excavation at the site.

Dr. Odell used a Ditch-Witch, a pipe-trenching tool, to determine the extent of the site, the types of artifacts and their distribution and concentrations on the site. Because of time constraints, the upper, plowed portion of the site was removed with a belly loader. This work revealed soil stains or smears where storage and trash pits and hearths had been dug into the subsoil. Eventually 81 such features were excavated.



Screening soil from the Ditch-Witch trench



The site after the plowzone had been removed by a bellyloader.

Hide scrapers, projectile points, bison scapulae hoes, and pottery -- all the typical artifacts of Wichita occupations in the late prehistoric in Oklahoma -- showed up in the excavations. Additionally, the materials associated with French traders of the 18th century also were found. Trade beads, axe heads, metal knives and gun parts all were found at the site. Dr. Odell identified five areas of the site which were used for different activities including two central concentrations devoted to domestic chores like cooking and hide scraping and three peripheral areas where projectile points were reworked and wood working occurred. Analysis of pottery sherds from these peripheral areas shows that the clay used in the pottery's manufacture was from areas different from the pottery in the central areas. He concludes that the people living in the peripheral areas may have been from groups different from the central area peoples. This is significant in his consideration of just when the Lasley Vore site was occupied and who the people, native and European, were who met on this terrace overlooking the Arkansas River.



Reconstructed pot from the Lasley-Vore site

The first European to contact the native people of eastern Oklahoma was a Frenchman by the name of Jean-Baptiste, Sieur de la Harpe in 1719. LaHarpe traveled north from a Caddo village along the Red River with a handful of men to a stream he called the Alcansas. There he met a young Tawakoni chief in an encampment of 6,000 people. Over the course of LaHarpe's ten day visit, another 1,000 native people from other groups came to meet the trader (perhaps they camped at those "peripheral areas" discovered during the Lasley Vore excavation?).

The course he took to reach this village has been debated for decades, but many scholars put his destination close to the area where the Lasley-Vore site is located. While excavation of the Lasley Vore site may not have settled the issue conclusively, Dr. Odell notes that the site has all the attributes that would be expected at the site where the Tawakoni welcomed LaHarpe in 1719.

References:

LaHarpe's Post A Tale of French-Wichita Contact on the Eastern Plains by George H. Odell, University of Alabama Press, 2002.

Wagoner County

The Norman Mound Site



Mound at the Norman Site

The Norman site is a ceremonial mound complex, along with the Harlan site and Spiro site, in eastern Oklahoma linked to a broad group of sites across the Southeast with apparent similarities in rituals, ceremonial artifacts and lifestyle. These were ranked societies with outlying farming villages supporting the priest/chief classes based at the mound center. Trading between these centers and other parts of the continent was widespread.

The Norman site is largely under the Ft. Gibson reservoir today. It consisted of three large, and several smaller, mounds on a terrace of the Neosho River less than four miles west of the Harlan mound center. Archaeological work at the Norman site consisted of WPA excavations in the 1930s and salvage excavations during the late 1940s as the reservoir was being completed.

Limited analysis of the materials recovered from these excavations seems to show that the Norman site became a center of power as the Harlan site was being abandoned. Burials placed in the Norman mounds contained grave goods of later styles than those found at the Harlan site.

The chiefs at the Norman site relied on villagers in outlying communities to build the mounds. The mounds were built in stages and often had structures on them which were burned and buried under

baskets of earth. The structures may have been mortuary houses where the honored dead were kept until they were reburied under another stage of the mound.

Grave goods found with the burials marked the status of the dead. Stone earspools, covered in copper, finely-worked chert blades and points, pots, baskets of corn, and elaborate pipes were buried along with the bodies of the chiefs.



Crumpled copper plate from the Norman site

The Norman site may have been ascendant in the area for a century from around AD 1250-1350. It is believed that the Spiro site supplanted the Norman site after this period.

References:

Caddoan Archeology, Vol. 11, No. 1-2. Series of articles on the Norman site.

Washington County

Delaware Big Houses

At the time of European contact, the Delaware (Lenape) lived in the Delaware River basin in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. Their Algonquian language shared a common ancestry with groups like the Mohicans and Micmacs. Each village was self-governing, and they farmed and hunted in their eastern woodland homelands. As with many other Native American groups, European-introduced diseases like smallpox were deadly to the Delaware.

Increasing pressure from first British and later American settlers forced most of the Delaware from their ancestral lands west to Ohio, Indiana and later Missouri. In the early 1800s, the Delaware relocated to Kansas land given them by the federal government; however, within 30 years they were forced by whites in Kansas to leave once again. They purchased land from the Cherokee Nation and settled in several enclaves in northeastern Oklahoma. One group settled in northern Washington County.

Many of these Delaware practiced traditional religious observances which were held in a log structure known as a Big House. Two Big House sites are known for the area; both were built on ridges overlooking the Little Caney River valley. One was used in the early 1900s. The second was built around 1910 and was used until 1925.

The Big Houses of Washington County were supported by ten large posts -- two on each end and three along each side of the structure. They were oriented on an east-west axis. To help support the roof, an interior post was placed in the center of the structure. During the twelve days of ceremonies held in October, two fires burned between this centerpost and the doors on each end of the building. On the east and west sides of the centerpost hung a carved wooden image of the *mesingw* or "spirit of the game animals." Half the carving was painted red and the other half was black. A *mesingw* impersonator danced in the Big House ceremonies.

The Big House ceremonies were directed to the Lenape Creator or "He Who Created Everything with His Thoughts." Since the Creator dwells in the twelfth level of Heaven, the ceremonies were conducted over twelve days and each day the prayers of the people rose to another level. The ceremonies included a recitation by an elder of his experiences during a vision quest when he had been promised guidance by spirit forces. Dances and singing were also performed. During the middle of the observance, a hunt was conducted and the meat brought back to be shared in the group.

The location of the Big House structures, although they date to the 20th century, is an important part of the archaeological record in Oklahoma. The structures are now gone, but the documentation of their locations and study of the ceremonies associated with them will help keep them from disappearing entirely with the passage of time.

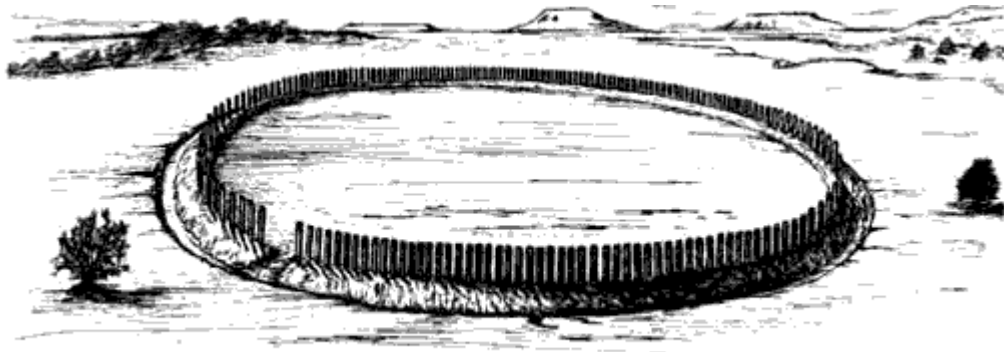
References:

Traditions and Culture Change in the Oklahoma Delaware Big House Community: 1867-1924 by Terry J. Prewitt, Contributions in Archaeology, No. 9, Laboratory of Archaeology, University of Tulsa, 1981.

For further information about the Delaware: <http://delawaretribe.org/>

Washita County

The Duncan Site



Artist's conception of the fortified Duncan village in west central Oklahoma

When archeologists excavated this site in the 1980's, they found lots of crushed and broken bison bone and many stone tools used for butchering. Surprisingly, they found very few farming tools although farming was well-established in the Southern Plains by this time. Apparently, farming wasn't a major activity at the Duncan site.

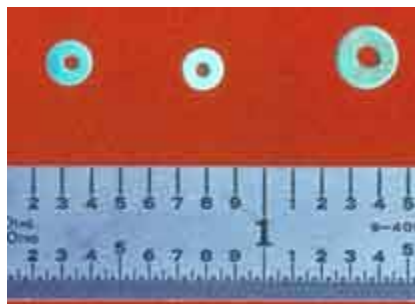
The fine-grained stone used to make their knives, scrapers and arrowheads came from chert quarries 175 miles to the northeast in Kay County, Oklahoma. The Spanish in their trek through Oklahoma and Kansas in a futile search for gold in the 1500's met prosperous farming Wichita groups in the area of the quarries. The Duncan site people may have been Wichita people living out on the short-grass prairies or they may have traded extensively with the Wichita people. Archeologists now believe that trading networks stretched throughout the area. Obsidian and turquoise from the Pueblos of the southwest were also recovered at the Duncan site. Some tools were also made from other exotic cherts from central Texas and elsewhere.

The condition of the bison bones uncovered at Duncan indicate the people there were processing the bison bone heavily to render them for grease. This could be done by crushing and boiling the bones in large pots. Analysis of these bones has also revealed that the bison were probably killed in late summer and early fall.



Crushed bison bone in a feature at the Duncan Site

Archeologists speculate that the Duncan site may have been a trade center where bison, chert and other products were traded among many groups. The traders who were processing bison probably lived in farming villages and only came to Duncan at the end of summer and early fall to conduct business with other groups. It is not yet known why the Duncan people constructed the fortification. Further research on this period in Oklahoma prehistory may some day furnish answers to these intriguing questions.



Turquoise beads from New Mexico

References:

"The Wheeler Phase and Cultural Continuity in the Southern Plains" by Richard R. Drass and Timothy G. Baugh (Plains Anthropologist No. 42, 1997).

Woods County

The Burnham Site



Burnham site. Bones of extinct animals from the Ice Ages were eroding from grey clay on banks

The Burnham site came to the attention of archaeologists at the Oklahoma Archeological Survey in 1986. Dr. Don Wyckoff, now with the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, visited the site at the request of the landowner, Mr. Vic Burnham. Mr. Burnham had noticed unusual bones which he uncovered while bulldozing a stock pond.

The first bones examined proved to be from a now-extinct bison from the period called the Pleistocene. During the Pleistocene, glacial ice covered half of North America a mile deep in places. Sea levels dropped as the ocean's waters were tied up in ice, opening a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska. Archaeologists believe the first humans came to North America over this land bridge.

The timing of the arrival of the first people is a matter of interest and debate among archaeologists. Some believe that people came to the continent toward the end of the Pleistocene, perhaps 12,500 years ago. However, others, based on evidence gathered from a few sites throughout the Americas, believe the arrivals occurred in a series of migrations, perhaps beginning as far back as 30,000 years ago.

At the Burnham site, Pleistocene animals including camels, mammoths, extinct forms of bison and horses, and even alligators died and their bones were preserved in the marshy clays. While interesting, what really excited Wyckoff and other archaeologists were the chert flakes found among the bones, flakes which result from human tool-making.

Excavations at the Burnham site continued for five years. Snail shells and bone recovered from the site have been dated to 33,000 years ago. The stratigraphy, or layers of soil deposited over time, at the Burnham site has proven to be very complex -- so complex that it may not be possible to prove or disprove that the flakes found near the animal bones are of the same age as the dated bones. However, the careful study of the Burnham excavations has revealed much interesting information about this ancient time and will be useful to others looking for evidence of the earliest people who called Oklahoma home.



*Skull of 30,000 year old bison, *Bison alleni*.*

References:

The Burnham Site in Northwestern Oklahoma: Glimpses Beyond Clovis? compiled and edited by Don G. Wyckoff, James L. Theler and Brian J. Carter. Joint publication of the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, Memoir 9, 2004.