

IN THE  
*Eastern  
Fluted Point*  
TRADITION



EDITED BY Joseph A. M. Gingerich

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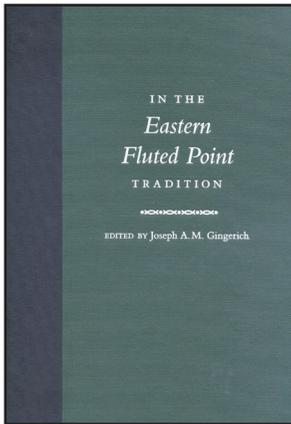
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## In the Eastern Fluted Point Tradition

Joseph A. M. Gingerich, Editor. 2013. University of Utah Press. 438 pages, 138 figures, 48 tables, bibliography, index. \$65.00 (hard cover), \$58.00 (eBook).

*Reviewed by Brad H. Koldehoff, Chief Archaeologist, Illinois Department of Transportation, Springfield, Illinois.*

The sixteen chapters in this edited volume provide the reader with a wealth of new information and ideas about Paleoindian technology, settlement, and subsistence in Eastern North America. While some chapters highlight recent investigations at old and well-known “classic” sites, like *Shoop* in Pennsylvania and *Bull Brook* in Massachusetts, other chapters highlight investigations at more recently discovered sites, like *Higgins* in Maryland and *Topper* in South Carolina. Although Midwestern sites are minimally represented in the volume, Paleoindian researchers in the Midcontinent should read this volume for its comparative data and interpretative frameworks.

The volume is divided into four parts. In Part I, three chapters explore the topics of Paleoindian chronology, subsistence, and environment. In Chapter 1, Shane Miller and Joseph Gingerich provide an overview of Paleoindian radiocarbon dates and chronological sequences by assembling and comparing dates from sites in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Midwest, and West. Their discussion is supported by a seven-page compendium of dates from across the entire Eastern United States. They aptly point out the problems inherent with trying to radiocarbon-date sites in and around the Younger Dryas episode, not to mention the paucity of Eastern sites with good associations of fluted points and charcoal. They advocate a program of reanalyzing old collections and reinvestigating classic sites, like *Shoop* and *Bull Brook*, rather than waiting around for “holy grail” sites to be found with sealed living floors littered with points and charcoal-rich fire hearths. One research avenue they advocate is working with existing collections to further refine systems of fluted-point typology. But, as we all know, typologies are only as good as their foundational dated specimens. In Chapter 2, Lucinda McWeeney explores the role plant foods may have played in Eastern Paleoindian subsistence practices by pulling together information from the meager assemblages of charred plant remains recovered from sites in the East. Jessi Halligan, in Chapter 3, takes a broader perspective on subsistence by utilizing fossil pollen and sediment sequences to reconstruct the shifting patchwork of plant and animal communities that Paleoindians likely exploited at the close of the last Ice Age.

In Part II, six chapters summarize recent reinvestigations of classic sites. In Chapter 4, Kurt Carr and colleagues provide an excellent overview of the *Shoop* site, which includes new lithic data derived from reanalyzing old collections, as well as from the analysis of lithic items gathered from recent field investigations. Unfortunately, this sprawling site is still best characterized a series of plowzone artifact clusters. As first identified by John Witthoft, the most fascinating aspect of the site’s massive lithic assemblage is the predominance of a

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single long-distance raw material, Onondaga chert from western New York. I disagree with the authors' interpretation of this and other patterns at *Shoop*. For example, on page 88 they state: "The fact that they did not use local cherts or jaspers [at *Shoop*] is probably related to their unfamiliarity of the region and their short occupation. This suggests that *Shoop* could represent a colonizing group." This colonization scenario assumes that periodic visits to *Shoop* were limited in frequency and duration and did not include exploration of the surrounding region. I find this interpretation unlikely, in part because of the hundreds of tools recovered from nearly a dozen concentrations spread across some 15 ha. While the authors believe that caribou were being targeted, they do not consider that site patterning could be the result of repeated long-distance seasonal moves to intercept caribou at the *Shoop* locale. This chapter, like others in this volume, furnishes new data and ideas to further explore this debate, as well as other important issues.

Brian Robinson and Jennifer Ort, in Chapter 5, present an overview of investigations at the *Bull Brook* site. Analyzing field records and collections, they focus on the spatial organization of the site. In Chapter 6, Joseph Gingerich, provides new and important details about the enigmatic *Plenge* site, situated in the Delaware Valley of northwest New Jersey. His reexamination of the site and reanalysis of its collections provide of a clearer picture of this large site and its diverse collection of fluted points. *Plenge* appears to have been a preferred location for encampments throughout the Paleoindian and Early Archaic periods because of its close proximity to key resources, including quality cherts. According to Gingerich, the majority of the nearly 200 fluted points and preforms from the site are Middle Paleoindian types. In Chapter 7, Jesse Tune, reinterprets the *Wells Creek* site, located along Wells Creek Crater in Tennessee. Based on the original published analysis of the site and its materials, *Wells Creek* is often cited as an example of a sizable Clovis workshop. But Jesse Tune's reanalysis of the collection corrects this erroneous interpretation. In reality, the Clovis component is minor and mixed with materials from later, more sizable components. This chapter, like the *Plenge* site chapter, underscores the importance of reanalyzing old collection and the importance of properly curating them.

In Chapter 8, Kurt Carr and colleagues provide a detailed overview of the *Flint Run Complex* located in northern Virginia and made famous by the late Bill Gardner and his students. However, I was disappointed in that the chapter provides no new data or insights; rather, it appears to recount some of the same old data and interpretations. Nonetheless, the chapter is an excellent overview, and it provides nice, clear photos of diagnostic points and bifaces. In Chapter 9, Joseph Gingerich summarizes previous investigations at the *Shawnee-Minisink* site, located on the Delaware River in eastern Pennsylvania, and more importantly, he presents data from his recent excavations at the site. The results of his investigations duplicate those of Charles McNett and his team, confirming that this site is a "holy grail" site. It has a Clovis living floor capped with sterile sediments separating it from an overlying Early Archaic component with corner-notched Kline points that resemble Thebes points. Gingerich cogently reevaluates the role of plant foods at the site, represented by charred fragments of seeds and

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nuts, which have been cited by others as evidence of generalized foraging. He rightly notes that “an approach that strictly classifies sites as having been occupied by either generalized foragers *or* specialized hunters is perhaps inappropriate” (p. 250). Clearly, this site warrants further excavation, if only to increase sample sizes to build a better picture of subsistence activities.

In Part III, four chapters offer new perspectives drawn from new sites. John Blong, in Chapter 10, reanalyzes the lithic assemblage from the *Higgins* site in Maryland. Excavated and analyzed by Carol Ebright in the late 1980s, the *Higgins* site assemblage affords Blong an opportunity to reexamine Paleoindian lithic-procurement/settlement models in the Mid-Atlantic. These models, developed decades ago by Gardner and his students, have largely gone unchallenged. In Chapter 11, Ashley Smallwood and colleagues present an overview of the Clovis component at the *Topper* site in North Carolina. Highlighting the quarry-workshop nature of the component, they nicely document the biface and blade-core technologies represented in their sample. In Chapter 12, the rich Paleoindian record in Tennessee is briefly reviewed by John Broster and colleagues. In Chapter 13, Thomas Loebel provides new insights into early Paleoindian technology, subsistence, and seasonal mobility by analyzing microwear on endscrapers from four sites: *Hawk's Nest* in northeastern Illinois, *Gainey* in eastern Michigan, *Nobles Pond* in eastern Ohio, and *Shawnee-Minisink* in eastern Pennsylvania. His results indicate that wood and bone were infrequently worked, while both wet (fresh) and dry hides were routinely worked, but often at different sites with different settlement contexts.

In Part IV, three chapters by senior Paleoindian researchers place the aforementioned chapters into a broader perspective. Stuart Fiedel, in Chapter 14, evaluates the current evidence of pre-Clovis manifestations; Gary Haynes, in Chapter 15, furnishes a Western perspective on Eastern sites and patterns; and finally, David Anderson, in Chapter 16, provides a detailed review of key sites and patterns, as well as directions for future research.

This volume is an important contribution to the archaeology of North America, and it should be in every Paleoindian researcher's library. Joseph Gingerich is commended not only for pulling together this important volume but also for revisiting and reanalyzing the *Plenge* and *Shawnee-Minisink* sites in the Delaware Valley.