

Archaeology of the American South Anthropology 550

Week 2: Paleoindian Arrival

The Clovis culture, traditionally dated 11,500-11,000 ¹⁴C years BP (ca. 13,000 cal BP) has long been recognized as the earliest well-documented occupation of North America. At the same time, the question of whether “pre-Clovis” cultures existed has for decades been one of the most hotly debated questions in American archaeology. Here we will discuss the questions of when North America and the South were first colonized.

Currently there are a handful of sites in the South (and nearby) for which claims of pre-Clovis antiquity have been made. These readings offer a sampling of what we know about these sites.

Here are some questions to keep in mind as you prepare for class:

- * How strong is the evidence for pre-Clovis occupation at each site considered?
- * What is the earliest good date for human occupation at this site?
- * Given the totality of the evidence from the sites covered in the readings, when do you think people first arrived in the American South and why?

General Background:

Meltzer, David (2009). *First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America*. [Read pp. 6-10, “On Dates and Dating” sidebar.]

Anderson, David G., and Kenneth E. Sassaman (2012). Pioneers and Colonists of the Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene. In *Recent Developments in Southeastern Archaeology: From Colonization to Complexity*, pp. 36-65. SAA Press, Washington, D.C.

Goodyear, Albert C. (2005). Evidence of Pre-Clovis Sites in the Eastern United States. In *Paleoamerican Origins: Beyond Clovis*, edited by R. Bonnicksen, B. Lepper, D. Stanford, M. Waters, pp. 103-112. Texas A&M University Press.

Individual Sites:

Waters, Michael R., et al. (2011). The Buttermilk Creek Complex and the Origins of Clovis at the Debra L. Friedkin Site, Texas. *Science* 331: 1599-1603.

Halligan, Jessi J., et al. (2016). Pre-Clovis occupation 14,550 years ago at the Page-Ladson site, Florida, and the peopling of the Americas. *Science Advances* 2: e1600375 (13 May 2016).

Davis, Loren G., et al. (2019). Late Upper Paleolithic occupation at Cooper’s Ferry, Idaho. *Science* 365: 891–897.

Bennett, Matthew R., et al. (2021). Evidence of Humans in North America During the Last Glacial Maximum. *Science* 373:1528–1531.

Pigati, Jeffrey S., et al. (2023). Independent age estimates resolve the controversy of ancient human footprints at White Sands. *Science* 382:73–75.

Additional Readings (Optional):

Adovasio, J. M., J. D. Gunn, J. Donahue, R. Stuckenrath (1978). Meadowcroft Rockshelter, 1977: An Overview. *American Antiquity* 43(4): 632-651. [Focus on the pre-Clovis assemblage and dates.]

McDonald, Jerry N. (2000). *An Outline of the Pre-Clovis Archeology of SV-2, Saltville, Virginia, with Special Attention to a Bone Tool Dated 14,510 yr BP*. *Jeffersoniana* 9: 1- 59. Virginia Museum of Natural History, Martinsville. [Focus on the earliest occupation.]

Michael R. Waters et al. (2009). Geoarchaeological investigations at the Topper and Big Pine Tree sites, Allendale County, South Carolina. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 36: 1300–1311 [Focus on sections 1-3, 8, and 12.]

Macphail, Richard I., and Joseph M. McAvoy (2008). A Micromorphological Analysis of Stratigraphic Integrity and Site Formation at Cactus Hill, an Early Paleoindian and Hypothesized Pre-Clovis Occupation in South-Central Virginia, USA. *Geoarchaeology* 23(5): 675–694. [Focus on pp. 675-679, 691-692.]