

Lithic Studies

A North American Paleoindian Projectile Point Database

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Fluted and other diagnostic Paleoindian projectile point surveys are being conducted across North America, and are enthusiastically maintained by avocational and professional archaeologists alike. Unfortunately, while many state and province surveys have reported high point totals, published attribute and provenience data for individual artifacts in many cases is either nonexistent or accessible only with great difficulty. This kind of information needs to be more accessible, and in a format facilitating analysis.

The author has been compiling data about Paleoindian projectile point occurrence in North America, specifically information about the number and type of points that have been found in each county, parish, or similar political unit. The database is maintained on personal computer diskettes, and is available to researchers upon request. The occurrence file give the numbers of Paleoindian points, by type (where such data is available), for each county or parish, in each state or province in North America. Bibliographic references accompany each entry, documenting the sources of data. To date the compilation has focused on Eastern North America. Information from the western part of the continent is slowly being added to this database.

The distribution of early and middle Paleoindian projectile points in Eastern North America illustrated in Figure 1 was produced from county/parish-level totals of fluted points from each state or province, where such data was available to the author. At present the data set from Eastern North America encompasses over 9,000 fluted and nonfluted early and middle Paleoindian projectile points. An extended discussion of this research effort, and how such data can be used to examine questions of Paleoindian colonization, settlement

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patterns, and mobility strategies has been published elsewhere (Anderson 1990).

The author is also compiling measurements on individual Paleoindian artifacts. Specific information recorded includes: artifact catalog number (or referenced Paleoindian projectile point survey number); maximum length, estimated complete length, maximum width, basal width, maximum thickness, depth of basal concavity, length of fluting (obverse/reverse), number of flutes (obverse/reverse), length of lateral grinding (each side), raw material, color presence/absence of basal grinding, point type, recorder, site number, county or parish, state or province, published references (including page number, with references to published photographs specifically indicated), and owner or curation repository. Other attribute data is added to the files on a case by case basis. All measurements should be to the nearest mm. Obviously only some of these attributes can be recorded for many artifacts (i.e., those that are broken, or those for which provenience data has been lost). Published projectile point attribute data from several state surveys and site assemblages have been compiled (e.g., Anderson et al. 1990; Loring 1980; McCary 1984; Perkinson 1971, 1973), and the database presently contains information on some 1,500 points, most from the southeastern United States.

Researchers wishing to contribute data to this effort for incorporation into the database can do so by sending listings or references of primary data to the author. Either compatible text files or hard copies that can be transcribed can be used. All files are maintained on Apple Macintosh 3.5" 800K diskettes in Microsoft Excel (version 2.2) and standard text files. Copies of the database files will be sent to researchers upon request. Contact the author prior to sending blank diskettes or computerized files, to ensure compatibility.

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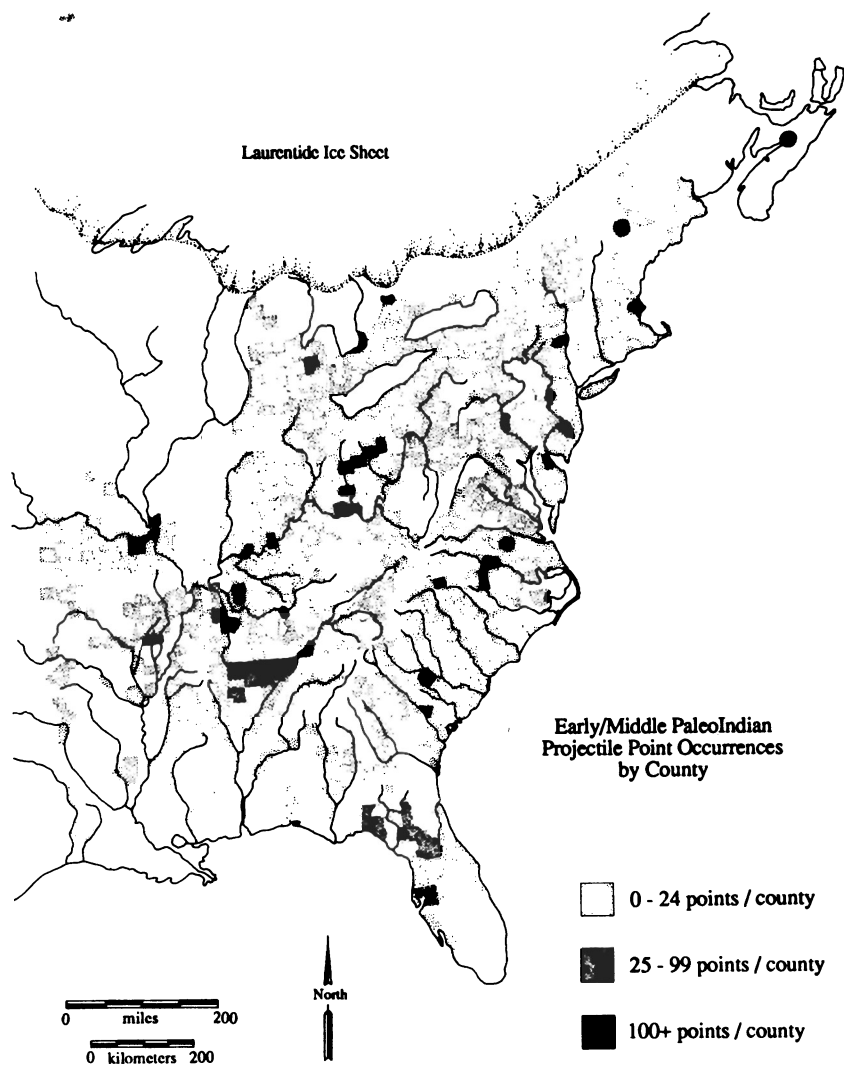


Figure 1. Early and middle Paleoindian projectile points in Eastern North America: summary data (from Anderson 1990).