

DISCUSSION: THE HISCOCK SITE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

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What is remarkable about the Hiscock Site archaeological record, above and beyond the important new insights that it offers about the Paleoindian occupation of the Great Lakes area, are the extensive and diversified research approaches brought to bear in its interpretation. The well conceived and integrated multidisciplinary team effort that has cycled between fieldwork, analysis and publication, with continual refinement in approach and rethinking of ideas, is a model of collaborative research that all those interested in exploring the past and maximizing what we can learn from it should strive to emulate.

Hiscock shows how public involvement can be used to further scientific research, simultaneously educating and developing a constituency for the enterprise. Hundreds of volunteers worked at Hiscock down through the years, many for upward of ten field seasons. Their dedication and support has been crucial, and that the project was organized in such a way as to maximize public involvement stands as another remarkable accomplishment that should be widely adopted. Science advances as much from having good examples of how to proceed as through good ideas and accomplishments. This project succeeds admirably in both areas.

The work at Hiscock also highlights the importance of long-term, multi-year field programs. It often takes a long time to understand the information content and potential of complex sites, to get a sense of what is present, the research questions that can be asked, and the kind of specialized samples that need to be collected and analyses that should be undertaken. The first bone tool did not turn up until after almost a decade of fieldwork. As Storck and Holland (this volume) note, our archaeological interpretations of Hiscock would be far different had the work stopped after only one or two seasons.

Hiscock has been interpreted as a bone bed or "quarry" and possible salt lick where the carcasses of deceased mastodon and quite likely other species of animals were exploited by Paleoindian groups. Some of the smaller animals

found in the deposits may have been killed by these peoples, with caribou perhaps the largest prey species represented. Tomenchuk (this volume) convincingly demonstrates that at least some of the mastodon bone and ivory and caribou antler found at the site was humanly modified. The worked materials did not appear to be ancient, but given the evidence for some weathering, staining, and erosion, and an absence of butchering marks or cooking and processing surfaces, scavenging rather than hunting is indicated, at least for the mastodon remains. Whether Paleoindian peoples and these soon-to-be-extinct animals were contemporaneous cannot be determined, but given the direct dating of three mastodon bone tools to between ca. 10,700 and 11,000 radiocarbon years B.P. (Laub *et al.*, 1996; Laub 2000; Laub & Spiess, this volume), they could very well have been. Hiscock thus offers a somewhat nontraditional view of Paleoindian interaction with late Pleistocene fauna, one where scavenging carcasses for useful raw materials was as important as killing these animals outright.

An association between the fluted point users and mastodons, as well as other species of late Pleistocene fauna, appears indisputable, however, for a number of reasons. Even if the evidence for bone and ivory working was ambiguous or absent, the presence of four fluted points and four other presumably contemporaneous stone tools in the same Fibrous Gravelly Clay deposit as the mastodon remains, and a fifth fluted point nearby, is itself remarkable (Ellis, Tomenchuk & Holland, this volume). Only a few thousand fluted points have ever been found and recorded in all of eastern North America in over 75 years of intensive search for these artifacts. To find four in direct association with mastodon remains strains coincidence. The absence of later diagnostics, furthermore, indicates that the scavenging and working of the mastodon remains was by Paleoindian and not subsequent peoples.

Although not included in the volume, an extensive archaeological survey of the area around the Hiscock Site in the upper Spring Creek

drainage was conducted under the direction of Kevin Smith, whose data were presented in preliminary fashion at the 2001 symposium. The Hiscock Site does not appear to have seen extended visitation during the Paleoindian era, or indeed at any time afterwards, and there are no obvious Paleoindian base camps nearby. This is not, however, particularly unusual or unexpected. The technological organization and mobility of these early peoples was such that they could easily have lived many miles away, checked out the Hiscock locale once a month or so as part of normal foraging activity (perhaps as part of a routine round visiting many such locales), and then sent task groups to the area for short visits, possibly even day trips, when a harvestable animal or other resource was present. While extensive later prehistoric use of the surrounding area is indicated, particularly during the Middle and Late Archaic, there is little evidence that the Hiscock Site area itself was used, suggesting that the resources procured here during the Paleoindian period were no longer present or needed. The bone deposits that were a clear attraction were likely long eroded away or buried by natural deposition by these times. This was fortunate, since it meant that the late Pleistocene remains at Hiscock were minimally disturbed by later peoples.

Human beings typically do not live right on top of, or even overly close to, important water sources or salt licks. The presence of people would scare away game, for one thing, and they might even get eaten themselves. Richard Laub (this volume) observed that a large carnivore, possibly a grizzly, gnawed on some of the bones that were found at the site. It is likely that the fluted point peoples visiting the site would want to reduce their own possibility of being gnawed on.

As Ellis, Tomenchuk and Holland (this volume) superbly document, the fluted points found at Hiscock are extensively reworked. This is not the assemblage of a kill site, where intact, well-sharpened points are often found, nor is it large and diversified enough to be from a habitation site or base camp. It strikes me more as a collection of tools brought to the site for fairly limited and quite likely highly specialized processing tasks, perhaps to extract specific resources, like hide, hair, ivory or meat or possibly, as McAndrews (this volume) suggests, salt or other minerals. In later prehistory people went to a lot of trouble to obtain salt or gypsum; why not in Paleoindian times as well?

Christopher Ellis, John Tomenchuk and John Holland's paper (this volume) provides the kind

of thorough description, including raw material sourcing and microwear studies, that should be standard for all Paleoindian assemblages. Many classic Paleoindian sites are all too poorly reported. That is not the case with the artifacts from Hiscock, which are thoroughly described and interpreted from several author's perspectives, for which the overall project team should be commended. The box plots Ellis *et al.* (this volume) present are a particularly elegant way of expressing the variability within and between site assemblages and, as they have done here, serve to place the Hiscock fluted point assemblage in a morphological continuum that suggests they resemble early Paleoindian points found at sites like Shoop in Pennsylvania and Paleo Crossing in Ohio. Whether these points are more closely related to Gainey or subsequent Barnes forms, however, remains unclear (cf. Storck & Holland, and Ellis *et al.*, this volume). If related to Gainey, these artifacts may have been used by people who were contemporaneous with living mastodons, even if they perhaps didn't typically hunt them. If the Hiscock points are more closely related to Barnes forms, use of Hiscock probably occurred somewhat after these animals became extinct, which would fit more closely with the scavenging hypothesis. These kinds of questions highlight the importance of dating as precisely as possible the range of occurrence of fluted point forms.

Tomenchuk's detailed use-wear analyses convince me that at least some of the reported bone tools are indeed just that. But the assemblage is unusual. At several locations of a comparable age in Florida, fairly large numbers of unequivocal tools of bone and ivory have been found, including hafting foreshafts, scrapers, anvils and awls (Dunbar *et al.*, 1989; Dunbar & Webb, 1996). My own belief is that if the evidence for classifying something as an artifact is equivocal, we should be conservative and assume the negative, that it probably isn't. Some of the Hiscock items look like good tools to me, and some don't. As Richard Laub said, however, during the symposium question-and-answer period, while we may argue about individual pieces, it is impossible to dismiss everything. I'd like to see more discussion of what skeletal elements are missing from the assemblage, that might have been lost to taphonomic processes, or removed to other locations, as well as more evaluation of the possibility that bone manufacturing debris was present. One thing we have learned in recent years, however, is that we have a long way to go

to understand the kinds of artifacts early peoples in the New World were using, and that we need many more detailed studies like this one by Tomenchuk to provide the answers.

The textile or basketry impression found at Hiscock and superbly documented by James Adovasio *et al.* (this volume) is showing us something new and unexpected about the technology of these early peoples. As the authors conclude, we need to be far more open-minded in how we view and interpret the Paleoindian archaeological record, taking into account the possibility that perishable technology like basketry and textiles may have been far more common, and important to the survival and daily life of these peoples, than the stone tools we emphasize so prominently in our research. If the Paleoindian people visiting Hiscock made use of mastodon bone and ivory, if preservation was good enough, they may have also been collecting hair, sinew, tendons and hides from the carcasses to create textiles, rope and other perishable items. Finally, that this fragile textile impression was recovered and not lost or fragmented shows the care with which the Hiscock fieldwork was conducted.

Peter Storck and John Holland (this volume) have provided an excellent overview of Great Lakes Paleoindian archaeology. Reviewing it, Hiscock's place and importance are clear: The site is perhaps the most thoroughly investigated in the entire Great Lakes region, particularly in terms of the area examined and the arsenal of investigative procedures brought to bear in its interpretation. As Storck and Holland demonstrate, the Great Lakes Paleoindian projectile point and cultural sequence is one of the best documented in North America. Their paper highlights the critical role avocational scholars and volunteers have played in developing this sequence, through their assistance or direction of projects like the Hiscock or Gainey Site excavations. As the authors note, we need to be somewhat daring in our thinking, taking into account the importance of interaction between peoples over large areas during these early periods, and the extended mobility this would mandate. Hiscock was one location in a much larger settlement system and social landscape. We need careful and critical regional-scale evaluations like that of Storck and Holland to guide us in what we should be doing in the future.

In conclusion, there are two valuable lessons about modern science that the Hiscock project

highlights. First and foremost, it shows the value of primary data collection and subsequent analyses by multidisciplinary research teams. Second, the full and timely publication of the results of both field and laboratory studies is critical. The Hiscock research has been exemplary in both areas.

The project organizer and director, Richard Laub, deserves our thanks and praise for keeping such an impressive research program underway for so many years. The diversity of research approaches and the involvement of many scholars at Hiscock demonstrates an open-minded and flexible approach to project management. Complex multidisciplinary research projects, particularly large-scale excavation programs, require extensive planning and organization. When one of the volunteers at the symposium said Dr. Laub was well organized in the field, I was not at all surprised. The first Smith Symposium publication (Laub *et al.*, eds., 1988) is as fine a multidisciplinary report of investigations as I have ever seen. The open and positive collegial attitude of the Hiscock research team, their involvement of the public, and their prompt publication of scientific results serve as an example for scholars everywhere. It is an honor to comment on this research.

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