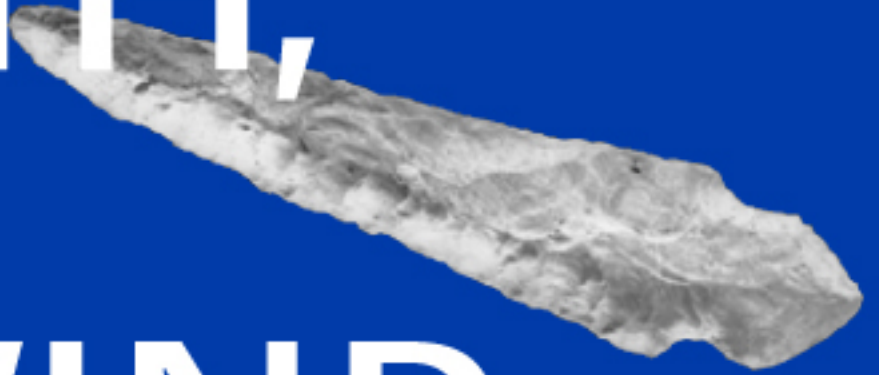


EARTH,



WIND

AND FIRE



Historical studies involve a certain type of investigative research—poring over newspapers, correspondence, records, journals, and all the other written documents and oral histories that attest to life

in an earlier time. But to examine people, cultures, or events from time periods for which no records have survived requires a different type of investigation—one of a more scientific nature. Archeologists accomplish this by finding sites of past human activity, systematically excavating them, and carefully studying the recovered materials using scientific techniques. In this way, parts of our state's history about which we have no formal knowledge can be reconstructed to give us information about life in an earlier time.

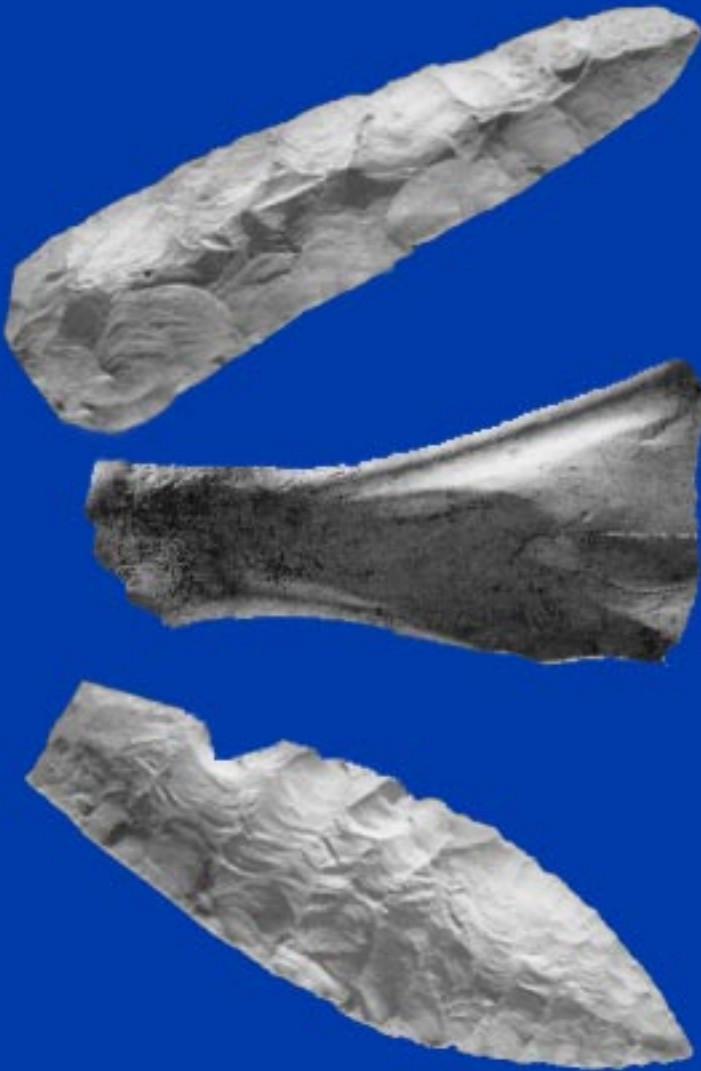
Archeology in the Central Plains has a long and sto-

ried past. Within the area that would eventually become the state of Kansas, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark may be considered the earliest recorders of information useful to archeologists. The information they recorded about Indian village ruins during their explorations along the Missouri River in 1804 provided enough references for modern-day archeologists and historians to once more locate and identify these sites. Lewis and Clark were followed more than a quarter century later by missionary and surveyor Reverend Isaac McCoy, who documented the presence of prehistoric burial mounds near Fort Leavenworth and noted the locations of contemporary villages.

Reports of Indian mounds observed and recorded during the early Euro-American settlement of the region were supplemented by reports of other kinds of sites as the population grew. Dr. T.A.H. Lowe observed petroglyphs

Kansas Archeology

By Randall M. Thies



(carvings in rocks) in Labette County in the mid-1860s, and in 1868 an employee of the Union Pacific Railway noted petroglyphs on stone outcrops along the Smoky Hill River in Ellsworth County. By 1873 geologist Benjamin F. Mudge reported to the Kansas Academy of Sciences about apparent aboriginal sites in Cloud, Rice, and Riley Counties. Together with paleontologist Samuel W. Williston, Mudge began conducting investigations of several Kansas sites. Although fossils were their main interest, they documented important sites of prior human activity in Logan and Scott Counties and along the Solomon River.

During the late 1870s and early 1880s, artifact collectors were reporting sites throughout the state. Although nonprofessionals made many of these reports, some of which were informal to the point of being mere mentions in local newspapers or brief statements to the Kansas State

PAGE 4, LEFT: *Reconstructed ceramic pot, Middle Ceramic period, discovered 1934, Minneapolis site, Ottawa County.* RIGHT: *Great Bend aspect beveled knife, Late Ceramic period, discovered 1995, Country Club site, Cowley County.* PAGE 5, LEFT TOP TO BOTTOM: *Munkers Creek knife, Archaic period, discovered ca. 1900 (recognized 1961), Flint Hills area;* *Great Bend aspect bison scapula hoe, Late Ceramic period, discovered 1995, Country Club site, Cowley County;* *Agate Basin spear point, Paleoindian period, discovered ca. 1900, northeast Kansas.* RIGHT: *Munkers Creek fired clay effigy head, Archaic period, discovered 1961, William Young site, Morris County.*

Historical Society, the nature of the reporters' observations suggests that differences in time and culture were being recognized from the various areas. Archeologists eventually determined that people first came to the territory that

would become Kansas about eleven- to twelve thousand years ago, during the last of the Ice Age. The state was not glaciated at that time, but the climate was cooler and less seasonal than it is today, and mammoth and mastodons roamed the area.

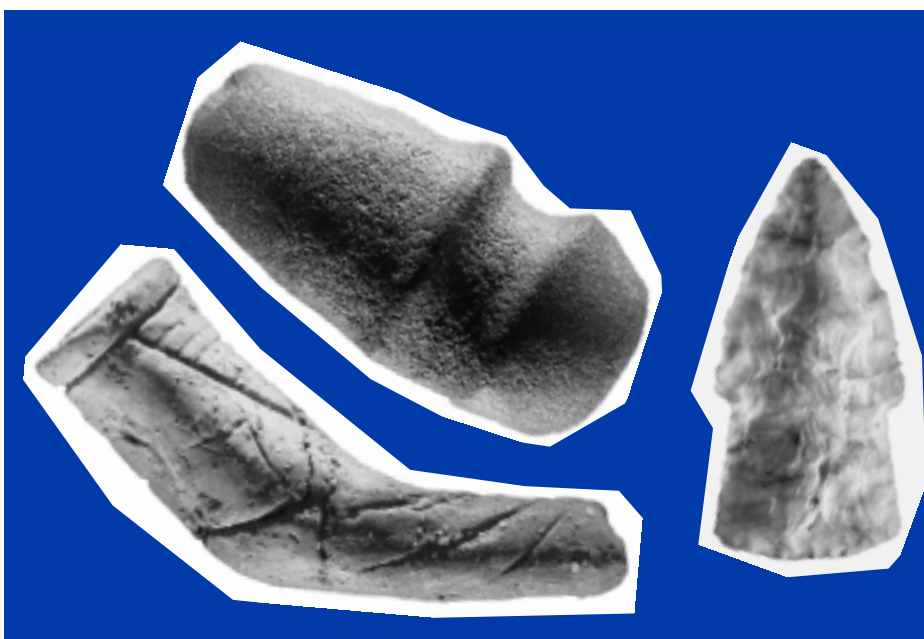
For the human inhabitants who survived these climatic changes and went on to develop new cultures that differed according to technology and social adaptations, archeologists have designated six major time periods. Researchers have found sites representative of all these time periods within the state, and many of the researchers have been recognized for their contributions to the field of archeology. While all sites are important for what they offer our historical record, some sites have proven more significant than others based on the quantity and quality of materials uncovered. These sites provide a good representation of what we have learned about the region's past.

THE PALEOINDIAN PERIOD (10,000–7,000 B.C.) saw the earliest human occupancy in Kansas. Descended from Asian immigrants who entered North America across the Bering Strait, the Paleoindians were hunter-gatherers, exploiting big and small game along with berries, seeds, and roots. They used spears tipped with large chipped stone projectile points, examples of which have been found across the state. One major site that exemplifies this culture is the Twelve-Mile Creek site on the High Plains along the Smoky Hill River in Logan County. Its significance lies in the fact that it provided the first discovery in North America by trained personnel of a human artifact in direct association with extinct mammals. In 1895 Handel T. Martin and T.R. Overton, of the University of Kansas paleontol-



ogy department, uncovered a projectile point beneath a shoulder blade of a fossil bison the men were excavating at the site. This bison later was reconstructed and today stands in the University of Kansas's Dyche Hall for public viewing. Radiocarbon testing shows that this site dated between 8,485 and 8,295 B.C. Unfortunately, over the years, the projectile point has been lost, and only one photograph and a line drawing of the artifact remain. The site has been considered a kill site, at which the animals were butchered. The data from this site are being reanalyzed, and more information may be forthcoming.

THE ARCHAIC PERIOD (7000 B.C. to A.D. 1) in Kansas brought a continued warming trend that ended the Ice Age, and brought about the extinction of mammoth and mastodons. As the availability of big game animals decreased, human populations adapted by relying more heav-



FAR LEFT TOP: *Three-quarter grooved ground stone axe, Early Ceramic period, discovered ca. 1900, northeast Kansas.*
 FAR LEFT BOTTOM: *Fired clay smoking pipe, Middle Ceramic period, discovered 1990, Albert Bell site, Sheridan County.*
 LEFT: *Scottsbluff dart point (resharpened) Paleoindian period, discovered ca. 1900, northeast Kansas.*





FAR LEFT: *Samuel W. Williston field camp, unknown location, ca. 1900.* LEFT: *Archeological excavation, Scott County, 1939.*



ily on hunting small game and increasing their use of plant foods. This caused the people to focus more intently on local resources, and they grew less nomadic. As settlements became more permanent, populations increased, and inhabitants grew increasingly resourceful in their technology. Grinding slabs, used to process seeds and grain into meal, became common in Archaic homes. Chipped stone tools became more specialized in both shape and size, and hunters developed atlatls—devices to aid them in throwing spears. As early as fifty-five hundred years ago, these people began experimenting with ceramics. Evidence of all these aspects of human adaptation were found at the William Young site in Morris County, excavated under the direction of Tom Witty Jr., who served for more than thirty years as state archeologist and head of the Kansas State Historical Society’s archeology department. Although no evidence was found of these Indians having used ceramic

vessels, Witty’s crew recovered two human effigy heads made of fired clay, which are among the earliest known ceramic objects found in North America.

THE WOODLAND OR EARLY CERAMIC PERIOD covered the years A.D. 1–1000 and was marked by great changes in social systems, subsistence practices, and technology. Chipped stone tools continued to be made in a variety of shapes and sizes, but projectile points were made smaller for use with the bow and arrow, which ultimately replaced the atlatl and dart. Now, however, the creation and use of

pottery vessels became widespread. Food still came from hunting and gathering, but by the latter part of the Woodland period, people began to practice true agriculture by cultivating local plants and introducing such new species as corn. From this period, too, came evidence of ceremonial burial and the creation of burial mounds, especially in the northern and eastern parts of the state. Remnants of camps or villages of some of these people have survived to the present day, showing that they resided in structures that generally were oval in shape. Situated either within or adjacent to these lodges were shallow, basin-shaped pits or hearths that contained burned limestone or sandstone. Settlements were characterized by large villages on major rivers or small, isolated households or hamlets along smaller stream courses. Sites from this time period at Big Hill Lake in southeastern Kansas have been excavated at various times by Kansas State Historical Society archeologists Tom Witty, Don Rowilson, and Randy Thies. From the data uncovered in this area researchers have determined that these people lived in groups comprised of extended families and hunted deer, turtle, bison, beaver, and turkey.

THE VILLAGE GARDENER OR MIDDLE CERAMIC PERIOD occurred from A.D. 1000 to 1500. Inhabitants during this time shifted to a dual economy based on bison hunting and cultivating corn, squash, and beans. In addition, small-scale hunting was still practiced, as was gathering wild food. The use of the bow and arrow was now widespread, although the atlatl was still employed on occasion. Ceramics were much improved at this point, with noticeable changes in clay and vessel form. In the northern part of Kansas rectangular earth lodges were common, while in the south the homes were covered with thatched grass and often plastered with clay. Villages developed, and settlements became larger and more permanent. By the end of

LEFT: *Spanish chain mail, Late Ceramic period, discovered 1880s, Paint Creek site, McPherson County.* BELOW: *General service military button, Historic period, discovered 1996, Fort Harker site, Ellsworth County.*



the period, trade with the Puebloan Indians of the Southwest increased greatly. The Minneapolis site, along the Solomon River in Ottawa County, is a good example of this time period. First excavated in the early 1930s by Waldo R. Wedel, a well-known archeologist from the Nebraska State Historical Society, the site contained more than twenty houses constructed on or slightly below the ground surface. The lodges generally faced east and were supported by four central posts in a square or rectangular configuration. In 1973 Kansas State Historical Society archeologists revisited this site with members of the Kansas Anthropological Association (KAA) for their annual summer field project. Globular ceramic pots, plain and notched projectile points, knives, bone tools, and bone and shell beads were found, attesting to the development of increasingly complex cultural adaptations.



LEFT: *Glass medicine bottle, Historic period, discovered 1996, Fort Harker site, Ellsworth County.* RIGHT: *Kansas Archeology Training Program field school, Sharps Creek site, McPherson County, 1993.*



THE PROTOHISTORIC OR LATE CERAMIC PERIOD (A.D. 1500–1800) consists of the time shortly before and after the arrival of Europeans in the New World. Sites from this period often contain evidence of trade with the Southwest and occasionally show some European artifacts as well, providing evidence of contact with people from the Old World. Many Kansas Protohistoric sites can be identified with historically known tribes such as Apache, Kansa, Pawnee, and Wichita. These groups lived by a combination of bison hunting and agriculture. The Tobias site in Rice County is a particularly rich Wichita village site. First excavated by Waldo Wedel in 1940, it is situated on a long broad ridge extending back from the Little Arkansas River valley. Researchers uncovered various artifacts of European origin there. Wedel returned to the site in 1965 and 1970, and in 1977 and 1978 the Kansas State Historical Society conducted a series of excavations with the KAA as part of the Kansas Archeology Training Program (KATP) summer field school. This time researchers uncovered postmolds (indicating the former presence of lodges), shallow basins, ash deposits, and storage pits. European artifacts include chain mail, glass beads, and tools of copper-based metal.

THE HISTORIC PERIOD, which continues through to the modern day, began in 1541 with the arrival of Coronado and his Spanish explorers. The French followed in the 1700s, developing a fur trade with the Kansa Indians.

Americans began arriving in the territory in the early 1800s and continued through 1861. Following statehood in 1861 and especially after the Civil War, Euro-American settlement increased dramatically. The Historic period produced one of the most interesting Indian sites in Kansas—El Cuartelejo. This site in Scott County has been studied by Kansas archeologists Williston and Martin, Wedel, Witty, and others, and is unique because it contains the ruins of a small one-story stone and adobe building, apparently built by Puebloan refugees from New Mexico. It thus delineates the northeasternmost extent of Puebloan culture. Roasting pits, square stone hearths, and the first irrigation ditches in Kansas also mark the area. The people here relied primarily on hunting and secondarily on agriculture, cultivating maize and squash. They also made pottery vessels and chipped stone tools, and possessed trade items such as glass and turquoise beads and obsidian.

Researchers continue to conduct archeological investigations across the state of Kansas to uncover information about the past. The Kansas State Historical Society continues to be a leader in this research, with recent explorations in Arkansas City, at the Mine Creek Battlefield in Linn County, and at the former sites of Forts Harker, Wallace, and Dodge. The Society, in cooperation with the KAA, still sponsors the annual KATP, designed to educate amateur archeologists on proper surveying, collecting, and excavating techniques that will help prevent unproductive destruction of valuable sites—and hence of irreplaceable information—that can further enlighten us about the colorful Kansas past.

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