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The Southeastem Paleoamerican Survey

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The Southeastern Paleoamerican Survey (SE Pas) was founded in January of 2005. The purpose of the Survey is to search for and discover evidence for the early human occupation of the southeastern United States. The program involves the interested public in field and laboratory studies and through conferences and other forums open to the public. The Survey is a research program within the SC Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA) at the University of South Carolina. It was formerly (1996-2004) known as the Allendale Paleoindian Expedition. The Expedition was renamed the Southeastern Paleoamerican Survey to communicate the geographic scope of the research as well as the time depth implied for pre-Clovis archaeological sites such as the Topper site in Allendale County, South Carolina.

Research Programs

The Survey conducts surveys and excavations in the Southeast on Paleoamerican sites 12,000 years and older. These studies concern what have been traditionally known as Paleoindian cultures including Clovis through Dalton age sites (13,500-12,000 yrs.). Evidence of an even earlier Ice Age human presence in North America is accumulating including the Topper site. The search for Pleistocene age sites is now warranted, which will likely shows that people were in the unglaciated southeastern United States thousands of years before Clovis (Goodyear 2005).

The Expedition

The Expedition is an annual survey and excavation program involving professional archaeologists and other scientists and the participating public. Fieldwork at present is focused on the chert quarry-related sites in Allendale County, South Carolina, located on the property of Clariant Corporation. Long-term excavations have been conducted there since 1994, focusing on traditional Paleoindian sites such as Big Pine Tree, Charles, and Topper. Clariant Corporation has not only allowed field studies on their land but has generously provided camping facilities for the Expedition staff and volunteers since 1996. In 2006, Clariant helped construct a pavilion over the deep Pleistocene terrace excavations at Topper providing protection from the sun and rain. Starting in 1998, field research has been concentrated on the pre-Clovis and Clovis occupations at the Topper site. Topper is widely regarded as an example of a pre-Clovis site in North America (Goodyear 2005) and has received international media attention including CNN, Science Magazine and National Geographic. Since 2004, fieldwork has been expanded to include excavation of a substantial Clovis occupation (Goodyear and Steffy 2003; Steffy and Goodyear 2006;

SC 371  SC 372  SC 489 A

Clovis points excavated at the Topper site (SC 38 AL 23). (SCIAA photo by Daryl P. Miller)
Clovis and post-Clovis Redstone point distributions showing collapse of Clovis culture. (Art work from t-shirts of Southeastern Paleoamerican Survey by James Legg and Darby End)

Chandler 2006). In 2005, a major conference was held in Columbia, Clovis in the Southeast, organized by the Southeastern Paleoamerican Survey and co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, Texas A&M University, and the University of Tennessee, which included a tour of the Topper site pre-Clovis and Clovis excavations (www.ClovisintheSoutheast.net). Members of the public can participate in the Expedition by registering for a week or more as a volunteer (www.allendale-expedition.net). Volunteers work along side of staff and students to help excavate these important sites.

Stone Tool Mapping

The Survey is also interested in studying the geographic distribution of Paleoamerican tools. Working with private artifact collections is the primary means of gathering this information. Studies of stone tool geographic patterns are critical for understanding ancient settlement patterns.

Southeastern US Quaternary Studies

Because of the presence of humans well back into the Ice Age, the Survey works with scientists such as geologists, soil morphologists, palynologists, and other geoscientists to reconstruct the ancient Pleistocene landscapes and climate. In addition to paleoecology, it is also important to recognize and date Pleistocene geological deposits in order to effectively prospect for ice age Paleoamerican sites (Goodyear 1999;
Research Library

The Survey maintains and collects books, reports, and articles pertaining to the study of ancient people. The Survey's library is part of the SCIAA Research Library, which has in excess of 30,000 titles. The personal library of Albert C. Goodyear forms a large section of the Paleoamerican holdings.

The Survey maintains artifact collections as part of SCIAA's State curation mandate. Important sites collections include Nipper Creek, Taylor, Big Pine Tree, Charles, Topper and Tampa Bay drowned sites. The Survey continues to acquire scientifically valuable private artifact collections such as the James L. Michie South Carolina fluted point collection and the Larry Strong collection from Allendale County.

Education

Educational opportunities are provided for University students and the public. Undergraduate and graduate students work as supervisors in excavation and laboratory studies and conduct thesis and dissertation research on site collections. Volunteers from the public can learn field and lab skills by participating in Survey programs. Nationally known experts in Paleoamerican archaeology such as Dennis Stanford, James Adovasio, and Jim Chatters, are on occasion sponsored by the Survey to give academic lectures that are open to the public. Scientific conferences are held on timely subjects such as Clovis in the Southeast (www.clovisinthesoutheast.net) that the public is encouraged to attend.

Funding

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Clovis micro-prismatic blades from the Topper site (38AL23). (SCIAA photo by Daryl P. Miller)
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