The Archaeological Conservancy
Newsletter
A quarterly publication for the members of The Archaeological Conservancy. Special 100th Site Issue - Winter 1994-95

100TH SITE!

Lamb Spring Site, Colorado, is Conservancy's 100th Site!

The Archaeological Conservancy announces its 100th preservation project: the Lamb Spring Site near Littleton, Colorado, in the Denver metropolitan area. The Colorado State Historical Fund has awarded the Conservancy a $100,000 matching grant toward the acquisition of the 35-acre site. The Conservancy holds an option to purchase the site for less than market value. Lamb Spring not only represents a milestone in the Conservancy's effort to preserve the most significant archaeological sites in the United States, but also an unprecedented partnership with the Denver Museum of Natural History. The Conservancy and the Museum will cooperate on fundraising for the $125,000 needed to complete the matching grant as well as on site management. The aim of the joint effort is to make the Lamb Spring site a permanent archaeological and educational preserve designed to be available for public enjoyment, education and research.

A mammoth tusk at the Lamb Spring Site is covered in protective plaster by a field worker. The remains of about 24 mammoths along with those of camel, horse, bison and many other animals have been found at the site.

Rancher Found Mammoth Tusks

Lamb Spring appears to be a prehistoric hunting and game-processing location associated with a natural spring. A local rancher, Charles Lamb, discovered the site in 1960 while excavating the spring in order to develop a stock pond. Even before excavations began, a mammoth tusk and several bone fragments were visible on the banks of the spring and just below the water's edge. Mr. Lamb wisely contacted Dr. G. Edward Lewis of the U.S. Geological Survey in Denver. Dr. Lewis visited the site and identified the remains of mammoth, horse, camel, bison, antilocaprid and several small mammals. Soon joined by Glenn Scott, a geologist for the U.S. Geological Survey, Dr.

Continued on Page 4

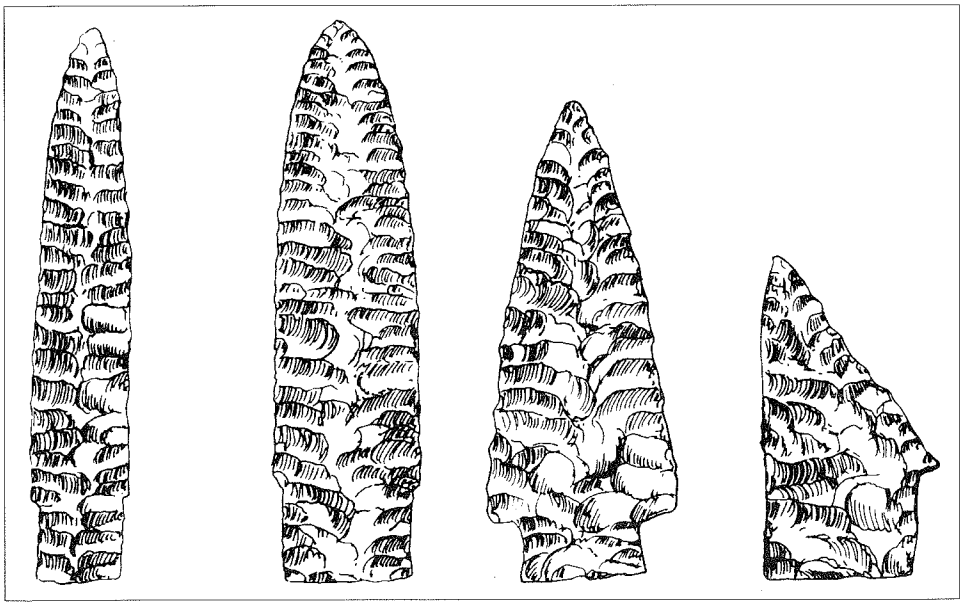
Lamb Spring is 100th Site

Continued from Page 1

Lewis attempted to determine the extent of the bone fragments around the spring. While doing hand auger tests, they uncovered several worked flint chips from the same soil type and same relative depth as the bone fragments.

As the significance of the Lamb Spring site became apparent, Dr. Waldo Wedel, Curator of Archaeology from the Smithsonian Institute arrived to carry out investigations during 1961 and 1962. His radiocarbon date of bones from the earliest deposits of 13,140 ± 1,000 Before Present (1950) suggests that the Pleistocene bone deposit may predate the Clovis complex which is the earliest well accepted archaeological evidence for humans in the Americas.

The 1961-62 excavations identified eight geological levels at the site with bones and artifacts discovered in various levels but most abundantly in the lowest level (Level 1) about 5-6 feet below the surface. Scott and Wedel hypothesized that Pleistocene people may have been responsible for the disposition and apparent modification of the bone remains found in Level 1. Unfortunately, without techniques for differentiating between human reworking of bone and natural breakage patterns, Scott and Wedel were unable to prove their hypothesis.



Typical Cody complex artifacts include (l-r) the Eden point, the Scottsbluff Type 1 point, the Scottsbluff Type 2 point, and the Cody "knife" with angled blade.

A more recent occupation level, Level 2 is a kill site with bison bones and Cody complex projectile points embedded in a boggy channel near the spring. It contains the skeletal remains of bison, eight Cody complex projectile points, a Cody complex knife, a scraper, a flake cutting implement, and several resharpening flakes. Two radiocarbon dates on bone from Level 2 range from 8,870 to 7,870 B.P. The Cody complex dates to between 9,000 and 7,000 years ago. It is indicated by the presence of either typical projectile points or Cody knives, which are distinctive hafted knives with an angled blade. Only eight Cody sites exist in the Colorado plains.

New Technology Furthers Research

In 1980 through 1981, excavations were resumed at the site by Glenn Scott and Dr. Dennis Stanford, currently Chairman of the Anthropology Department at the Smithsonian Institution and a Research Associate with the Denver Museum. One area of the excavation within Level 1 produced significant and controversial archaeological remains. These included mammoth, camel, bison, horse, sloth, llama, and wolf-sized canid remains as well as two stone artifacts: a rounded river cobble weighing 15 kg and a quartzite biface. The stone artifacts may have intruded from the layer above.

The excellent and abundant preservation of late Pleistocene faunal remains recovered from Level 1 suggest to many scholars that they were modified by humans. However, a variety of scenarios could have created the distribution and breakage patterns found. Without undisputed man-made artifacts, the presence of humans at Lamb Spring prior to 11,500 years ago remains questionable.

Today, thanks to advances in our understanding of bone modification, bone recovered from the Lamb Spring site can be analyzed for cut marks, tooth marks, and abrasion patterns using a scanning electron microscope. Bone fracture and flaking, patterns of bone breakage, as well as the types of bones present in the accumulation are being studied to determine the likelihood of human activity at the site.

In addition to the approximately 24 individual mammoths and many other animal remains at the site, excavations also revealed a 33-pound boulder in association with the mammoth bones. One end of the boulder exhibits heavy scarring in a manner similar to the damage that results from use as an anvil. In 1979 studies to replicate mammoth processing, similar sized and shaped boulders were required

Continued on Page 6

Lamb Spring 100th Site

Continued from Page 4

to fracture elephant long bones. Boulders such as the one found do not occur naturally in the site, so it must have been brought from the Platte River, where nearly identical stones may be found, over a mile away. This, together with the breakage patterns of the mammoth bones, is one of the strongest indicators of early human activity at Lamb Spring.

The site is important to the prehistory of both Colorado and North America. Its potential to further understanding of pre-Clovis occupation of the continent together with its ability to provide new and valuable scientific evidence about the late Paleo-Indian occupation of the Colorado Plains make the Lamb Spring archaeological site one of the most exciting of Conservancy preserves.

Gravel Pit Possible Threat

For many years, Lamb Spring has been part of a 240-acre tract used for farming and ranching, neither of which activities have impacted the site to any great extent. The site remains in very good, undisturbed condition. However, this year, the large tract was subdivided into 35-acre lots and sold to the public. A gravel pit has developed on the tract adjacent to the site. Since the site also contains good gravel deposits, the threat of mining, together with the fact that many Paleo-Indian sites in the country have been destroyed by gravel pits, motivated the Conservancy to take quick action.

The Conservancy and the Denver Museum of Natural History have formed a cooperative agreement to jointly plan and manage a permanent archaeological research and public education preserve at Lamb Spring. The Conservancy will acquire the preserve and make it available to the Museum for educational purposes. The Museum will serve as the permanent repository of all artifacts recovered from the site, assist the Conservancy in fundraising efforts to match the Colorado State Historical Fund Grant, and integrate the site into its research and public education programs. An interpretive kiosk will be placed at the site.

$125,000 Needed to Complete

We have until **August 1995** to raise the $125,000 needed to complete the matching grant and finalize the purchase. To help, mark your contributions "Lamb Spring."

Exeter Rocky Hill Work Day

Volunteers are needed to help with site maintenance at the Exeter Rocky Hill rock art site near Exeter, California. On **Saturday, January 14, 1995**, volunteers will help repair fences, plant needed native vegetation, develop trails and map the site under the direction of a professional archaeologist. Persons interested in helping with this project should contact the Western Regional Director, Lynn Dunbar, at 1217 23rd St., Sacramento, CA 95816-4917, or call her at 916-448-1892.

Also, if you are interested in a tour of Rocky Hill at a later date, contact Lynn to set up a date and time.

New Shirt Company Donates Portion of Sales

Glyphgear, a new shirt company in Wyoming featuring petroglyph designs on 100% cotton t-shirts, has agreed to donate a portion of every sale to The Archaeological Conservancy. Printed on both sides, the shirts are available in 5 designer colors and 3 designs. They sell for $24 retail. The premier shirt features the lizard design from Chaco Canyon. Other designs are available. Contact Harvey Deselms at 215 West 17th St., Cheyenne, WY 82001; or call him at (307) 632-0607 to order your Glyphgear t-shirt.

Planned giving

offers you the opportunity to strengthen the Conservancy for its race to preserve America's endangered sites, while providing you with various benefits such as:

** Secure income for life*
** Substantial tax deductions*
** No capital gains tax on the donation of an appreciated asset*
** A variety of beneficiary possibilities*

For more information about how planned giving can benefit you, contact Mark Michel, President, at (505) 266-1540.

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