

Clovis Peoples

In pursuit of food and homes
13,000 to 11,000 years ago

Beginning about 13,000 years ago, a cultural phenomenon known as Clovis appeared in a variety of environments throughout North America. The phenomenon known as Clovis appeared in a variety of environments throughout North America. Clovis artifacts have been found in all U.S. states except Alaska and Hawaii, as well as in parts of Canada and Mexico. We do not know where this culture

originated or how its ideas spread so quickly. Clovis bands are often pictured as nomadic big-game hunters who followed herds of mammoths. Recent excavations reveal that these people stayed in one place for long periods of time. Most of their diet was the local, easier-to-obtain variety: turtles, rabbits, birds. Perhaps they even gathered and processed wild grasses.



Clovis stone tools occasionally turn up among bones of extinct mammoths. At other sites, bones have slash marks or fractures of the kind made by butchering. A mammoth hunt was a rare, risky undertaking that required cooperation of the group.



Base of spear point from Kincaid Shelter, of volcanic obsidian originating in Queretero, Mexico some 600 miles away. Its presence at Kincaid indicates that people were traveling or trading long distance.



Determined to keep themselves comfortable and dry, the Clovis band at Kincaid hauled boulders from the riverbank and laid them across the muddy floor of their shelter. The Kincaid stone pavement is the earliest known architectural feature in the Americas.

The Gault Site

No site holds greater significance for Clovis archaeology than the Gault site in Central Texas. Spanning the size of six football fields, Gault has yielded more than 300,000 Clovis artifacts and some tantalizing hints of even earlier activity. People apparently gathered in this spot over a time-span of centuries, making sturdy stone tools from local chert and re-shaping broken points.



Clovis knives and scraping tools from Gault. The edges of some blades show patterns of wear suggesting use as a scythe to harvest grasses.

Kincaid Rock Shelter

Some 12,000 years ago, a Clovis group found a promising place to settle: a rock overhang that shielded a huge cave-like interior, complete with a freshwater springs inside the shelter and flowing stream nearby. They stayed a long while in this protected place, chipping chert rock into tools and feasting intermittently on mammoth, turtle, alligator, camel, bison and raccoon.



Daily life at Kincaid Rock Shelter in the Sabinal River Valley.

