

A KANSAS FOLSOM SITE MAY HAVE PRECEDED  
THE FAMOUS TYPE SITE IN NEW MEXICO

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George McJunkin, a black cowboy, found the Folsom bison bed in 1908 following a disastrous flood that almost destroyed the town of Folsom, New Mexico. McJunkin and another cowboy Charles Wiley came upon the bones while checking fence points along the flood swollen Wild Horse Creek. This arroyo has apparently been misnamed in scientific literature as Dead Horse Arroyo. McJunkin, who was familiar with both bison and cattle remains in the general area, was impressed with the depth of a rich bison-bone level eroding from the bank at an average depth of ten feet.

In or about 1912 McJunkin built an antique chuck wagon which he entered in the Raton county fair, winning first prize, a fine hunting rifle. Before the competition began, he sought the services of blacksmith Carl Schwacheim for minor wagon repair. In the course of conversation, his discovery of the Folsom bone bed was mentioned to a most interested Schwacheim. However, it was not until 1922 that Schwacheim, and four other amateur naturalists: Father Aull, a Roman Catholic priest, James Campbell, a taxidermist, Howarth, a banker, and Charles Bonahoom, an immigrant Lebanese bricklayer, made the trip to McJunkin's Bone Bed. It is believed this was the year of the death of George McJunkin at the age of 66. His death prompted the group to examine his discovery.

The research investigators examined the site and informed the Denver Museum of Natural History of the site's potential.

On March 7th, 1926, Schwacheim and Howarth took museum director, J.D. Figgins and his paleontologist, H.N. Cook to Wild Horse Arroyo.

The Denver Museum staff decided that it's site was worthy of investigation. Work was done in 1925 and 1926. The excavation procedures included Carl Schwacheim sending the animal bones back to the Denver (then called the Colorado) Museum in unexcavated blocks of matrix, the bones being removed, cleaned and preserved at the laboratory. In following instructions, Carl Schwacheim dislodged several Folsom points, yet none were found with the bones sent to the laboratory, it was frustrating. Finally, in clearing off the surface before starting new matrix cuts, a broken Folsom point, lodged within the rib carriage of a fossil bison was discovered, "in situ". All work was halted and

telegrams were sent to invite the leading archaeologists in the country to see the point and associated bones in place. In addition, the missing section of the broken point was also located. The resulting display firmly proved that man was with fossil bison more than ten thousand years ago. The author of this paper and Dr. Vance Haynes were the first to radiocarbon date the Folsom culture at 10,780 BP at the Lindenmeier Site in northern Colorado. This dating was completed in 1961.

This resulted in the famous Folsom discovery, which resulted in the first accepted Paleo Indian site in the New World. However, recent information now indicates that a Kansas site preceded this discovery.

As early as 1895 a projectile was found in direct relationship with an extinct form of bison. This discovery was made by two professional archaeologists, H.T. Martin and T.R. Overton, working along Twelve Mile Creek, a short distance north of Smoky Hill River in Logan County, Kansas. The stratum that produced the bison bones, as well as the point, was in an exposure more than twenty feet below the top of the stream bank in a two foot, blue-gray, silty sand layer. The investigators discovered the bone bed and decided to undercut the bank to expose the partial remains of an extinct form of bison, a *Bison Occidentalis*.

Beneath the right scapula of the *Bison Occidentalis*, if the sketch of the artifact was at all accurate, was found a point that was either a Folsom or a Midland point. Dr. E.H. Sellards, decades later, sought the point in the collections of the University of Kansas, but apparently it was lost. However, a crude drawing of the point was still available and the artifact tentatively was identified by Dr. Sellards.

The bison bones, which were also missing, were the first identified as *Bison Antiquus*, then changed at a later date to be a *Bison Occidentalis*. If the point is correctly identified as either a Folsom or a Midland point, the initial identification as a *Bison Antiquus* would be more likely correct, since the vast majority of all bison found with the Folsom or Midland points are *Bison Antiquus*.

It is indeed unfortunate that the investigators had not taken the time to expose the section showing the point under the right scapula of the bison, and then stopped work and allowed other professional archaeologists to view the projectile "in situ". Had this procedure been followed, in all probability this site, not the Folsom Type Site, would have been the first accepted Paleo-Indian site in the New World. Of all the pre-Folsom Type Site finds, this excavation was the most convincing, especially since it was a nineteenth century discovery. Had the Paleo-Indian been widely accepted by this period, who knows what

progress the field would have made having thirty-five more years to seek and discover Paleo-Indian excavations. Apparently the investigators, or the museum personnel, did not consider the find that important, since both the point and the bison bones have been lost or discarded, so additional research cannot be conducted at this time.