

## THE FIRSTVIEW COMPLEX AS A CODY VARIANT

Dr. George A. Agogino, Ph.D.

and

Matthew J. Hillsman

Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences-

Anthropology Program

Eastern New Mexico University

Regardless of what criteria are selected to define a point type there remain subjective qualities that distinguish one point type from another similar in typological shape and technical style. As in most classifications, there are some points that refuse to fit firmly within any designated point style, leaving the point classification open to the individual's discretion. Thus, one can create a new type based on superficial differences from known and accepted projectile points.

In the early 1970's, a University of Colorado archaeologist, Joe Ben Wheat, discovered a bison kill site in east central Colorado near the town of Firstview. This site, the Olson-Chubbuck excavation, produced a large number of *Bison occidentalis* with a variety of projectile points and associated artifacts. The point, although all lanceolate, seemed a combination of Cody points mixed with Plainview, Milnesand and San Jon projectiles. At the same time, evidence seemed to suggest a single component kill site. The majority of these points exhibited a slightly indented base, either purposely done, or the result of heavy basal edge grinding. The site was radiocarbon dated using bison hoofs which produced a C14 date of 8,200 B.C. +/- 500 years. (Approx. 10,200)

From the onset there seemed to be controversy regarding this radiocarbon date. *Bison occidentalis* is generally found with late Plano type points younger than 10,000 B.P. in age, while the fluted Clovis and Folsom points, and occasionally Agate Basin and Hell Gap cultures, generally are associated with the older *Bison antiquus*. All of these culture complexes have dated older than 10,000 B.P. Under these circumstances it would be expected that the Firstview artifacts, associated with *Bison Occidentalis*, should date less than 10,000 B.P.

Shortly after completing the Olson-Chubbuck excavation, Joe Ben Wheat visited the Eastern New Mexico University campus and discussed the unusual point assembly with George Agogino. He was uncertain about assigning a new point type to the Olson-Chubbuck artifacts. George Agogino suggested in view of the unusually old radiocarbon date, that a new name be assigned, pointing out, if the assembly later seemed affiliated with an already established point type, the name could be dropped.

Prior to receiving the radiocarbon date, Joe Ben Wheat seemed inclined to accept the possibility that the "Firstview" artifacts might be associated with the Cody Complex (Wheat: 1961 and 1967). The same view was expressed by Chubbuck (1959). It is now generally believed that the radiocarbon date, being inconsistent with *Bison Occidentalis*, is somewhat too old. Was it possible that bison hoofs, having almost constant contact with the earth's surfaces, might be unsuitable for valid radiocarbon dating? The question remained, were the points associated with the Cody Complex?

In 1964, George Agogino had found a slightly indented point that was shaped like a Scottsbluff artifact. Since Firstview was unknown to him at the time, he classified it as a Scottsbluff variant. However, had the artifact been found at the Olson-Chubbuck site, it would instantly have been classified a Firstview point. The Blackwater Draw artifact was near the top of the carbonaceous silts, which at Blackwater Draw would place it in a time frame of 6,500 to 7,000 B.C.

Dominique Steven was in charge of the archaeological excavation at Blackwater Draw during the summer of 1972. She found three points within a level that normally produced Cody material, situated near the top of the carbonaceous silts. The first nearly complete point (DS12) was uncovered and tentatively identified as Milnesand. The edge grinding was heavy and short. This was followed by a projectile that was physically similar to an Eden point (DS13), but the indented base was minimal. The third was similar to the first, seemingly a Milnesand point with heavy edge grinding. After finding an unusual assembly in what was normally assigned to the Cody Complex, we looked up the previous season's excavation and found that at the same level and in the same area the excavators had uncovered a point, then assigned to the Plainview level. It also had heavy edge grinding that could be called a light indentation.

Normally, Plainview or Milnesand points are not found within the carbonaceous silts at the Blackwater Draw site. To find such a concentration at the same level and in a restricted area was most unusual. We looked for a logical reason when it was suggested that these artifacts are most similar to points found at the Olson-Chubbuck site. A closer observation of both the "Firstview" and our artifacts clearly indicated that we were well within the range of a single component assembly. What we were experiencing for the first time was a recognizable "Firstview" concentration at the top of the carbonaceous silts at the Blackwater Draw site. This level has been dated several times by the radiocarbon method. The contact between the Carbonaceous silts and the more recent jointed sands was dated 8,470 B.P.  $\pm$  350 years (A-512). The midpoint of this carbonaceous deposit has been radiocarbon dated at 9,890 B.P.  $\pm$  290 years (A-488). Clearly, the "Firstview" complex at

Blackwater Draw was dated between 8,500 years B.P. and 9,000 B.P. since it was close to the top of this geologic strata. This also agrees with most radiocarbon dates for the Cody Complex throughout the western High Plains. The date was clearly too old at the Olson-Chubbuck site, and from logic and reasoning the "Firstview" complex was of the same time period usually ascribed to the Cody Complex. It may well be part of the Cody Complex since we found Eden points at the same level and positioned just a few meters away from the described "Firstview" complex at Blackwater Draw.