

SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS

Following is a current age chart for the various cultures along the Taunton River and Eastern Massachusetts (Hoffman, 1994):

- **Paleo Indian 12,000-10,000 B.P.**
- **Late Paleo Indian 10,000-9,000 B.P.**
- **Early Archaic 9,000-8,000 B.P.**
- **Middle Archaic 8,000-6,000 B.P.**
- **Late Archaic 6,000-3,700 B.P.**
- **Transitional Archaic 3,700-2,700 B.P.**
- **Early Woodland 2,700-2,000 B.P.**
- **Middle Woodland 2,000-1,000 B.P.**
- **Late Woodland 1,000-400 B.P.**
- **Contact (Historic) 400 - 150 B.P.**



Clovis points such as this one from the Center for American Archaeology in Kampsville, IL were used to hunt mastodons and other large game during the Paleo Indian Period.

PALEO INDIAN AND LATE PALEO INDIAN PERIODS

The last great Ice Age began 60,000 to 70,000 years ago and grew to cover most of Canada and the upper areas of the United States. Included in this great sheet of ice was the Great Lakes area, New York, northern parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey and all of New England. This freezing period reached a peak around 18,000 B.P. and by 16,000 B.P. a warming trend had started. So much water was frozen that the ocean was 400 feet lower than it is today and much of the continental shelf from New York to Nova Scotia was exposed land. By 14,000 B.P. all of southern New England and the lower parts of New York, New Hampshire and Vermont lay

exposed as the glaciers melted (Braun and Braun, 1994).

As the climate warmed and the glaciers retreated, much of the exposed land became tundra. Mammoths, mastodons, muskoxen, large beaver, and caribou followed the retreating glaciers northward. By 11,000 B.P. the tundra and grasslands began to be replaced with shrubs, trees and vegetation.

By 12,000 B.P. early hunters followed the large Pleistocene animals into New England and out onto the continental shelf. They led a nomadic existence, constantly following migrating herds. Gradually the larger animals either moved north with the retreating glaciers or died out. By 10,000 B.P. most had become extinct. Different animals such as caribou, moose, bear, elk and white tail deer came into the changing landscape and became the favorite hunting prey. Melting glaciers began to fill the ocean and slowly cover the continental shelf. The rising sea level caused the shoreline to slowly recede toward its present coastline (Braun and Braun, 1994). In recent years trawlers have caught mammoth and mastodon teeth, while fishing (dredging) near Georges Bank (Braun and Braun, 1994). Bones from Pleistocene animals are occasionally found in bogs or pond bottoms that have dried up. Peat is a good preservative for bones and tusks.

Few Paleo sites have been found in Massachusetts. Hunters often stayed only a few days in one place as the animals were constantly moving and man followed his food source. Many sites out on the continental shelf are now under several hundred feet of water. The historic site Wapanucket, No. 8 on the northern shore of Lake Assawompsett in Middleboro, had a small Paleo site that was left by a small band of hunters who stopped there for a short time around 9000 B.P. (Robbins, 1980).

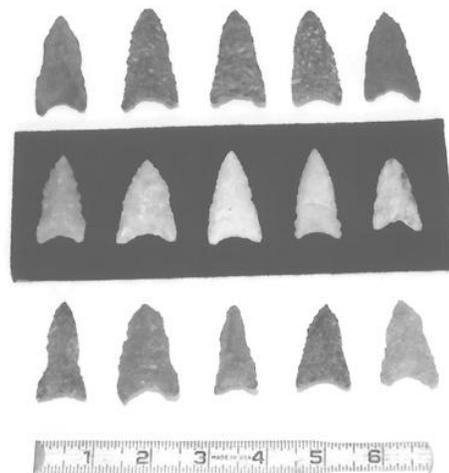
At the Wamsutta Site in Canton, MA, along the Neponset River, many Paleo tools, caribou bone, and fragments of a mammoth/mastodon tusk have been found. (Chandler, 2001) The Sugarloaf Clovis Site in Deerfield, MA (also called Dedic Site) is another Paleo site not fully explored. (Gramly, 1994 and Fogelman, 1998)

By far, the largest Paleo site in Massachusetts is the Bull Brook Site in Ipswich, MA (10000 +/- B.P.) where over 8,000 artifacts have been found. It appears that seasonal visits to this site went on for

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many years. The site must have been located along caribou migration routes, as caribou bones have been found there as well (Dincause, 1996).

Locally, stray Paleo points have been reported through the years from Carver, Plymouth, Middleboro, Bridgewater, Raynham, East Taunton and Mansfield. These finds may represent stray spear points lost during a hunt thousands of years ago. Further west along the Connecticut River Valley stray finds from Deerfield and Montague have been reported (Fowler, 1973). Our local settlement by early man at Titicut along the Taunton River becomes quite strong during the Early Archaic Period (9,000 to 8,000 B.P.). This presence expanded during the Middle Archaic and Late Archaic Periods (8,000-3,700 B.P.),



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Above are 15 Dalton-like spear points from the Early Archaic Period (9,000 B.P. to 8,000 B.P.). These were found on Taunton River sites in the Titicut area of Middleboro. All points show some basal thinning and many exhibit serrations, and the longest measures 2.25 inches. Material is felsite (8), quartz (5), argillite (1), and jasper (1).

EARLY ARCHAIC PERIOD - TAUNTON RIVER BIFURCATES

The Taunton River Bifurcate is the most diagnostic point of the Early Archaic period. It is essentially a medium size equilateral triangular blade, with a thick body and featuring prominent long rounded shoulder barbs and often having serrations and deep basal notching. It is predominately made of local felsites and rhyolite material, with small percentages of chert, hornfels, quartzite, jasper and, rarely, quartz. They are thought to have been used to spear large animals, such as deer, bear, and moose. Some examples have sharp shoulder barbs and were probably used to harpoon aquatic mammals such as seal and blackfish (pilot whales). Large fish such as sturgeon, salmon and shad could have been speared too.

There is a large concentration of these points in the Titicut area of North Middleboro and Bridgewater, MA. The Plymouth Street Site at the confluence of the Town and Matfield Rivers in Bridgewater was also a "base camp" during the Early Archaic period for small groups of people as they pursued hunting-gathering excursions up and down the river system.

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The best reports of radiocarbon ages along the Taunton River place the site at 8,600 B.P.

Other blades from this period (occasional finds) include Early Archaic Dalton-Like, Parallel Lanceolate, Parallel Stem and Eden-Like.

Early Archaic Dalton-Like blades have short thinning flakes struck from the concave base, with some examples having grinding. Many have edge serrations. It is a narrow medium size isosceles triangle with a fishtail base. Felsite, quartz, argillite and jasper are common materials used.

Parallel lanceolate blades are medium to large triangular projectile points, with a slight concave base. Some have thinning flakes from the base. Felsite, quartz and hornfels are common materials used.

Parallel stem blades are small to medium narrow points with weak shoulders. The base is slightly concave with some examples having basal thinning. Felsite and argillite are commonly used materials.

Eden-like points are long, narrow projectiles with some having basal thinning. Felsite is the most commonly used material.

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