

To the Point

Clovis and Gainey

This is an expanded version of the discussion in Sandstrom and Ray 2004:36-37; drawings prepared by Del Thompson and Julie and Toby Morrow.

Until recently, virtually all large fluted points in Missouri were called Clovis, traditionally thought to represent points produced by the earliest colonists of the New World. Clovis points were first recorded in association with mammoth remains in Blackwater Draw near the town of Clovis in eastern New Mexico. Well-known sites in Missouri that have produced “classic” Clovis points include the Martens site (23SL222) and the Kimmswick site (23JE334) at Mastodon State Park.

There is some disagreement about just what is or is not a Clovis point. Some believe that there is sufficient technological and chronological variation among large fluted points to define separate types. However, others consider at least some of this variability insufficient to define separate types. One separately named type or variant is the Gainey point, named after a site in Michigan (Simons et al. 1984).

Technological Characteristics

The two fluted point types—Clovis and Gainey—are not easily distinguished. In general, both types exhibit channel flutes, often on both faces, that extend approximately one-quarter to one-half the length of the blade. Both point types are ground extensively along the sides of the stem. For those who view Gainey as a separate type, Clovis type points are defined as being relatively larger, wider, and thicker (Morrow 1995; Morrow and Morrow 1996). The blade and stem edges of Clovis points are typically excurvate, whereas the stem edges of Gainey points are generally straight.

Another difference pertains to the sequencing and methods of fluting. Apparently, Clovis bifaces were fluted near the middle of the production process by direct percussion, whereas Gainey points were fluted near the end of the process by indirect percussion (Morrow 1995:171; Morrow and Morrow 1996). The resulting flute scars on Gainey points are typically twice as long as those on Clovis points, and the basal concavities on Gainey points are also usually deeper.

Finally, Gainey points also often exhibit short guide flutes on either side of the main channel flute, an attribute lacking for Clovis points (note small guide flutes on Figure 2a, d, and f). However, it should be noted that the small guide flutes on Gainey points were often obliterated during removal of the main channel flakes.

Age

C. Vance Haynes (1993) indicates that most Clovis sites date between roughly 11,500 and 10,800 radiocarbon years before present (rcybp), or about 13,400 and 12,800 calendar years ago. Unfortunately, there are relatively few reliable dates for Gainey points from good contexts. Recent work at the deeply stratified Big Eddy site suggests that the Gainey point is slightly younger than Clovis. At the Big Eddy site, one radiocarbon sample from the Gainey horizon associated with the point shown in Figure 2b yielded an age of $10,710 \pm 85$ rcybp or about 12,700 calendar years ago (Ray et al. 1998:80). Thus, Clovis points date to Early Paleoindian times, and Gainey points are considered to date to Middle Paleoindian times. Some consider Gainey as the successor of Clovis and predecessor of Dalton.

Distribution

Although rare, points classified as Clovis have been found throughout most of North America. In contrast, Gainey points were originally defined as being restricted to the northeastern portion of North America, although in recent years the range has been extended west of the Mississippi River and throughout the Midwest. Gainey points are contemporaneous with Folsom points in the Plains area and Redstone and Cumberland points in the Southeast.

References

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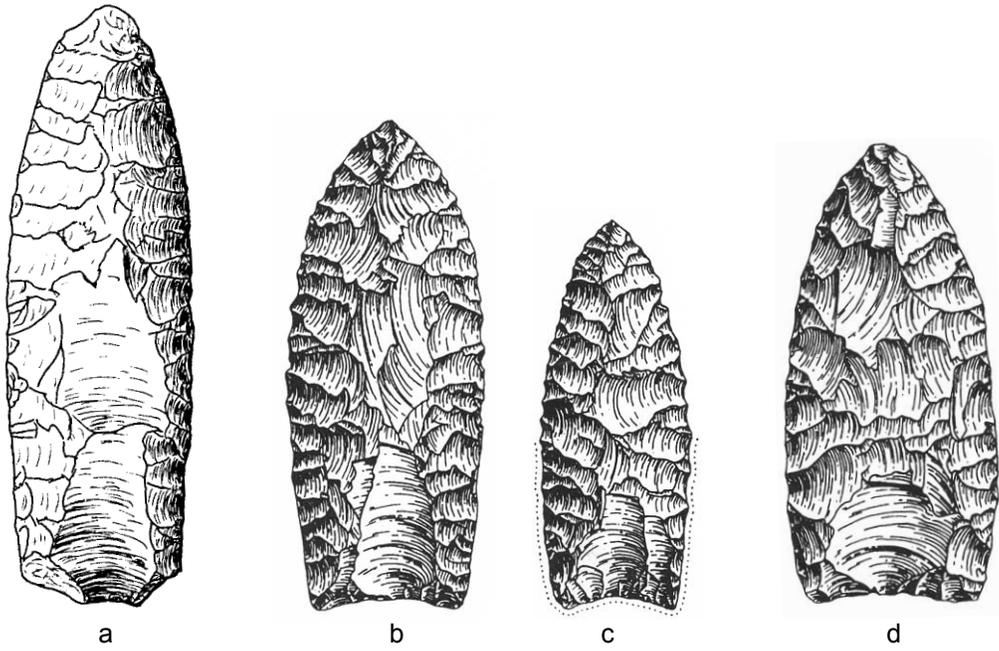


Figure 1. Clovis points. (a) from site 23CE490; (b-d) from site 23SL222.

All points actual size

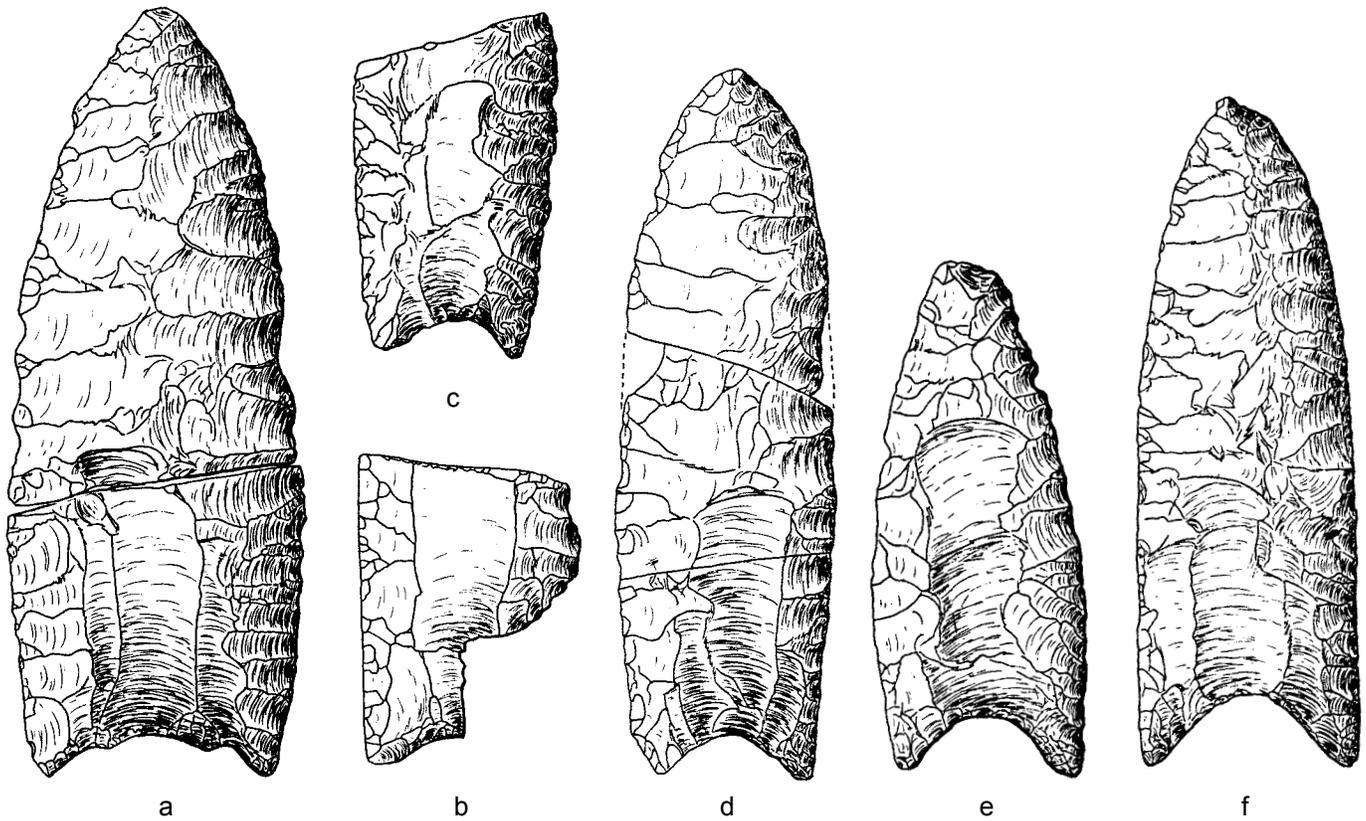


Figure 2. Gainey points. (a-e) from site 23CE426; (d) from site 23WR38; (e) from site 23CN7I; (f) from site 23CE514.