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ERWIN H. BARBOUR, *Director*

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ASSOCIATION OF AN ARROW POINT WITH BISON
OCCIDENTALS IN NEBRASKA

PERIODICAL
ROOM

By F. G. MESERVE AND ERWIN H. BARBOUR

Of late, anthropological literature relative to the association of man and extinct mammals, especially bison and mammoth, has received many contributions from various and widely separated sources. Naturally the question has arisen whether man's advent in America is somewhat earlier than has been generally admitted, or whether certain extinct animals have persisted longer than has been realized. The issue is one of such importance and interest that even minor contributions seem desirable. It is well understood by all that the evidence, when submitted, will be properly weighed, and that conservative judges may rule out much or all of the testimony. Happily the aim of science is to learn the simple facts in any case. Man, the supreme creature, in his own conceit at least, seems worthy of all that research can contribute to a better understanding of him, his ancestry, progressive changes, culture stages, and relationship to his surroundings.

Man alone is possessed of a master mind, rational speech, philosophy, and recorded history. He seems to have met and overcome all exigencies in a better way, to have dominated more completely and successfully, and to have more effectually altered the flora, fauna, and topography of the earth than any other creature. All of these far reaching achievements have been recorded within the short geologic span called the Pleistocene. Pre-Pleistocene man is unknown. In Pleistocene time, man inhabited Europe, but was wanting in America according to the general concensus of anthropologists.

The cradle of the human race is supposed to have been southern Asia, whence man migrated into North America by way of Alaska, at the close of the Glacial epoch. Possibly his migration might have been earlier than this date, even though positive evidence of Palaeolithic man in American seems to be lacking. The early history and the ancestry of our race

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can be worked out with the humble shovel as truly as the prostrate oak, buried in the alluvium of a valley, can be dug out from root to stump, trunk, branch, and twig.

The following brief report deals with a well authenticated association of an arrow point with the bones of *Bison occidentalis* in Central Nebraska.

Some six or eight years ago, the Platte River swung to the right and began to cut its south bank heavily. In a short time a bed of the bones of *Bison occidentalis* was exposed four or five feet below the surface. The spot was visited May 4, 1923 by Earl Foster and Charles Foster, students in the Grand Island High School. The following week these two students re-visited the spot and returned with a portion of a skull, an atlas, and skeletal parts. The junior writer, Professor Meserve of Grand Island College, went immediately to the bison quarry, and, after extensive digging, secured another skull along with many parts of two skeletons. The bank containing these bones rises vertically, some 12 feet above the level of the river. The formation is thought to be Peorian, resting on Kansan gravels. Its location is about six miles south of Grand Island, Hall County, Nebraska.

While excavating these bones, an arrow point of gray flint was found under the left scapula of bison No. 1, two inches back of the glenoid cavity. This is numbered 10-12-31. This seems to be a genuine association of man with a fossil mammal, *Bison occidentalis*.

Even though these bison are close relatives, rather than remote ancestors of the living bison, they are, nevertheless, extinct, and their relics evidence a certain antiquity, which heightens interest in the artifact. All of the Meserve Bison bones were procured from Grand Island College for the Nebraska State Museum, November 19, 1931. The associated arrow head was donated by Professor Meserve.

The Meserve bison bones are being carefully cleaned, hardened, and articulated. The progress already made shows that two skulls and two skeletons, one essentially complete, are at hand. One or both of these will be prepared with care, and will be mounted along with other fossil bison in proximity to the case where the modern bison are to be installed. Plans have been carefully laid for an extensive and rather

Editorial Note. Professor Meserve, now assistant professor of Zoology in Northwestern University, was then professor of Biology in Grand Island College, Grand Island, Nebraska. Being well trained, he was considered a close and reliable observer.

elaborate display of native bison in the Nebraska State Museum. No other creature in the faunal list of the State was so far famed, and qualified for this recognition. Nebraska was the center of the great bison population, and no other state is entitled to a more pretentious display of these animals.

In workmanship this arrow point shows average skill. It is of gray flint about 19 mm. wide, 53 mm. long, and 5 mm. thick, and is without notches for hafting.

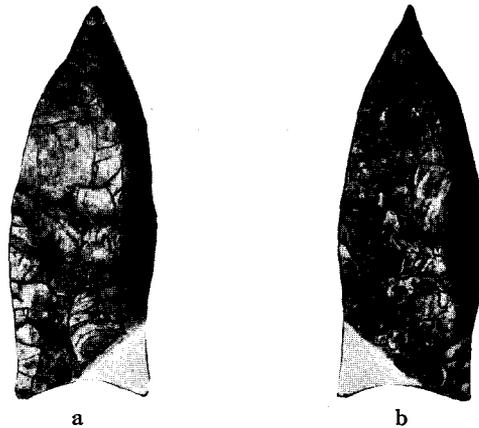


Fig. 151.—The Meserve artifact, found under the scapula of a fossil bison, *Bison occidentalis*, near Grand Island, Hall County, Nebraska. Specimen 10-21-31. The Nebraska State Museum.
a. Obverse, natural size.
b. Reverse.

It should be noted here that in the field season of 1931, collecting parties, consisting of C. Bertrand Schultz, and assistant Frank Crabill, with Emery L. Blue, and Eugene Vanderpool were sent by the University to re-open the Meserve quarry. While digging out additional bison material, they came upon another arrow point, identical with the Meserve artifact in color, material, workmanship, and size. This arrow point, No. 1-25-7-31, was found amongst a bunch of ribs. It was photographed in place, and a block containing the mold of the arrow point was cut out and brought in. Both artifacts will be exhibited along side of the bones with which they were found.

Mr. Schultz, a graduate student in the University of Nebraska, has had a number of years of experience in anthropological work, as well as palaeontological field work, and made critical observations. A bulletin by him concerning this occurrence is in the hands of the printer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The limitations of this bulletin are such that a bibliography is inadmissible. Citizens of the State, students, amateurs, and collectors interested in anthropological research will find a full bibliography in a succeeding bulletin entitled "Association of Arrow Heads and Extinct Mammals in Nebraska," by C. Bertrand Schultz.

The University of Nebraska,
Lincoln, Nebraska, February, 1932