

Topper Newsletter - Mississippi State University

Spring 2016



Hello Topperites!

2015 was a very busy and productive year for Topper – both in terms of excavations at the site, as well as research in the lab. This newsletter provides brief descriptions of the work that Mississippi State University has been involved with, as well as updates on upcoming fieldwork, publications, presentations, and other Topper-related items.

This includes:

- Three trips to Topper in 2015 for excavations and sampling (including two field schools)
- Five conference papers and posters on Topper and Topper-related research
- Submission of two peer-reviewed publications (one article and one book chapter)
- Proposal of two Master's theses by MSU graduate students
- Continued research on lithic refitting, dating, and geoarchaeology of the site
- Fund raising for employment of student workers and for lab fees associated with research projects

Plans are also underway for fieldwork at the site in May and June – we will have three concurrent field schools this summer (along with the University of Tennessee and the University of West Georgia), which should result in more exciting discoveries and provide additional material for research projects! As always, if you have any questions, or want more information about our work, please feel free to contact me (dta49@msstate.edu). And please follow the Cobb Institute on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/CobbInstituteofArchaeology/>) and Instagram (<http://www.instagram.com/cobbinstitute/>) for regular updates on our work at Topper as well as all of the other interesting projects that we're involved with at Mississippi State.

Thank you for your continued support and interest, and I hope to see you this summer!

Derek Anderson



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2015 Topper conference papers and posters

Anderson, Derek T., David G. Anderson, Andrea N. Wu, David Echeverry, Alexander Craib, Martin P. Walker, Stephen Yerka, and Albert C. Goodyear. Preliminary results from the 2015 excavations at the Topper Site, South Carolina. Paper presented at the 72nd annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Nashville, TN.

Craib, Alex, Martin Walker, Amelia Jansen, Amy Pham, Derek T. Anderson, Stephen Yerka, David Echeverry, and David G. Anderson. Uncovering Features: Highlighting Late Woodland to Historic Activity at the Topper Site (38AL23). Poster presented at the 72nd annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Nashville, TN.

Goodyear, Albert. C, Douglas A. Sain, Megan Hoak King, Derek T. Anderson, and M. Scott Harris. *Topper, an Early Paleoamerican Site in South Carolina*. Invited paper presented at the First Floridians 2015 Conference, Monticello, Florida.

Meer Kelsey J., D. Shane Miller, Albert C. Goodyear III, and J. Ryan Young. Preliminary Results of the Allendale Chert Quarry Survey in Allendale County, South Carolina. Paper presented at the 72nd annual meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Nashville, TN.

Miller, D. Shane, Ashley M. Smallwood, Derek T. Anderson, and Albert C. Goodyear. A Spatial Analysis of Clovis Biface Production at the Topper Site, South Carolina. Invited paper presented at the First Floridians 2015 Conference, Monticello, Florida.



2015 Field Schools

Mississippi State University and the University of Tennessee both hosted field schools on the Archroma property in May and June of 2015 and were assisted by many volunteers. The MSU course, led by Dr. D. Shane Miller, employed a systematic survey of shovel tests and test units between the Topper hilltop and Smith Lake Creek. A total of 459 shovel tests and 10 test units were excavated by the MSU crew, which Kelsey Meer will be analyzing and writing up for her Master's thesis. One of the previously recorded sites (38AL137, the Swag Site) will be the focus of MSU's excavation field school this summer, as a large number of tools and flakes were recovered there.

The UTK field school was directed by Dr. David Anderson, and focused largely on the Woodland period component of the Topper hilltop. Previous excavations had uncovered large quantities of ceramics and triangular points, so the goal of the Tennessee field school was to collect a sample of these materials while also documenting all potential features at the base of the plow zone that may be related to a long-term habitation at the site. Led by graduate students Martin Walker and Alex Craib, over 100 features were documented and sampled in one 2x4 meter block. Samples from each feature were saved for flotation, and analysis is currently underway in Knoxville. UT will return to the hilltop this summer, where Martin will be collecting data for his Ph.D. dissertation.

Cobb Institute archaeologist Derek Anderson helped to supervise the UT field school, opening six new 1x1 meter units in the main excavation block on the Topper hilltop where he has been working for the past few years. Although the field school ended before the units could be completed, he and UT graduate student David Echeverry supervised the recovery of a few hundred pieces of chipped stone that will contribute to ongoing refitting studies at MSU, including a fragment of a late-stage Paleoindian point and a large retouched blade tool. Charred organic remains were also recovered throughout all units and have been set aside for identification and eventual radiocarbon dating. Derek will return to the hilltop block in 2016 to complete the open units.

Topper Research Updates

In addition to the work that took place during the 2015 field schools, there are a handful of other projects currently underway at Topper. Derek Anderson has continued work on his lithic refitting, with a focus on the Paleoindian and Early Archaic components in the main hilltop block. Currently, about 15% of the mapped assemblage refits, and with the additional pieces uncovered in 2015, that number is expected to increase. Derek has two publications currently under review, both of which should be published in 2016.

Shane Miller and Derek have also been working on a geoarchaeological project to investigate the formation processes that deposited material on the hillside and hilltop areas of the site. Sediment columns from three excavation blocks, as well as auger tests in a few unexcavated areas of the site, have been collected and are in the process of being analyzed for particle size information. Percentages of sand, silt, and clay in each should help to clarify how artifacts are being buried in the upland areas.

MSU graduate student J. Ryan Young excavated two 1x1 meter units in October and January for his MA thesis, which aims to better understand the Clovis component on the terrace. He is in the process of analyzing the tools and debitage, and has also removed a sediment column in his block for particle size analysis, which he processed over spring break in Knoxville. Ryan expects to defend his thesis within the next year - stay tuned for updates!

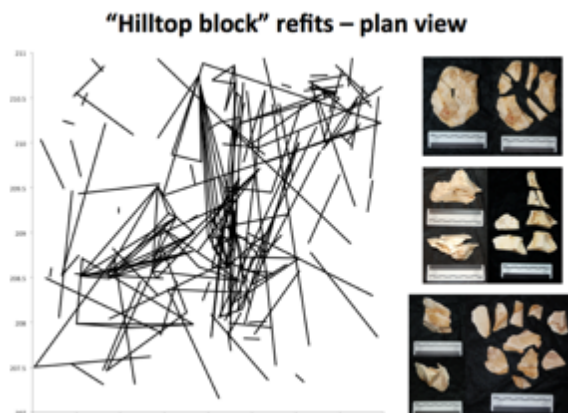


Diagram showing refits between artifacts, with examples of refit sequences from the main hilltop block.



Sediment samples from an auger test on the Topper hilltop.

2016 Fieldwork

From approximately May 8th through June 9th, three summer field schools will be taught at Topper or other sites on the Archroma property. Shane Miller and Derek Anderson will be bringing students from Mississippi State University, and will be joined by David Anderson (with students from the University of Tennessee), Ashley Smallwood and Thomas Jennings (with students from the University of West Georgia), and Jesse Tune, who will be directing the field laboratory. Some volunteer crew positions are still available – if you would like to sign up, please contact Joan Plummer for details.



MSU graduate student Ryan Young supervising a crew of volunteers in October 2015.

Fund-raising for Topper

Thanks to the very generous contributions made by donors to the Topper Fund at the Cobb Institute last year, we were able to accomplish many of our fieldwork and research goals. These included:

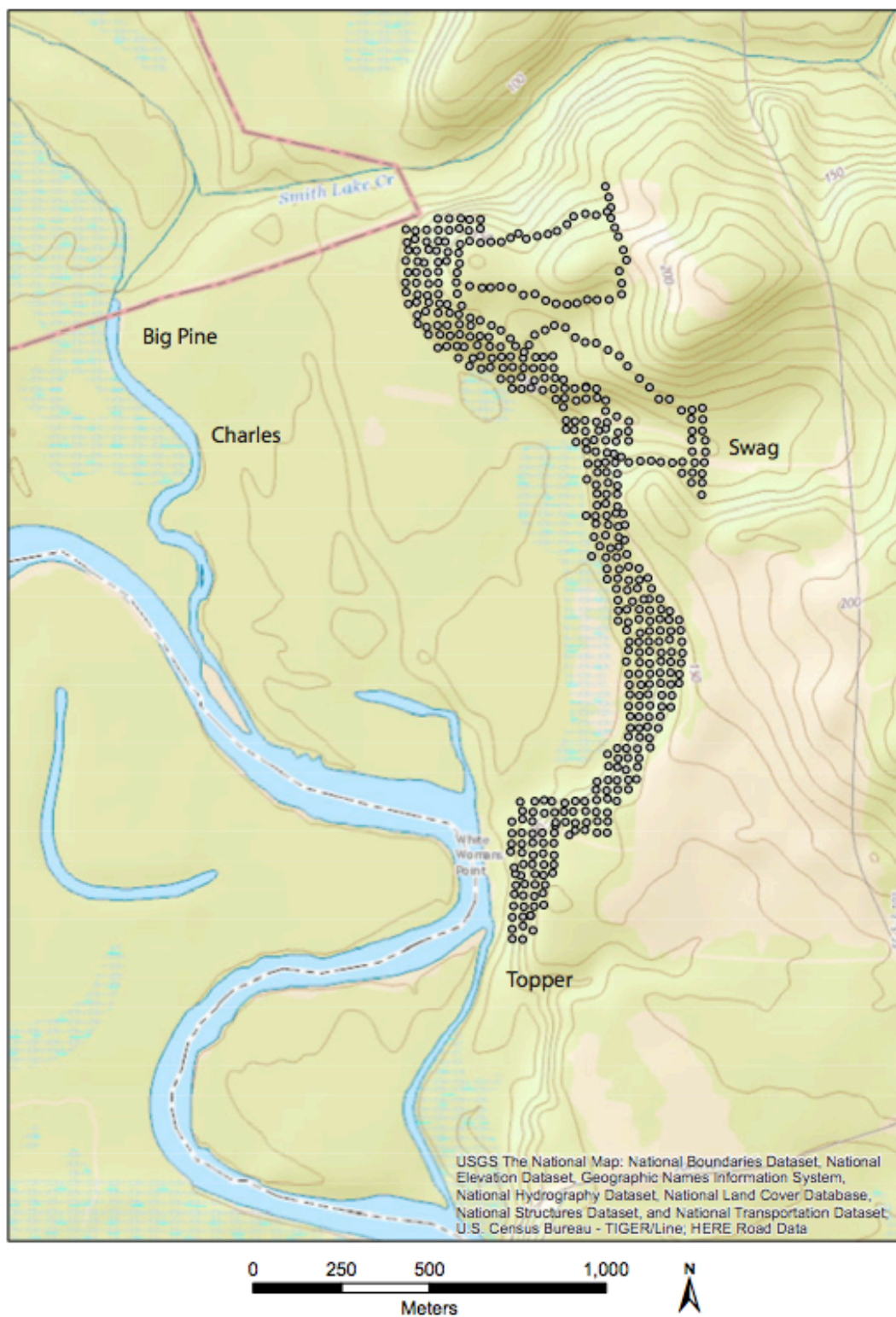
- funding three weeks of Derek's salary for time spent at the site in March and May
- hourly wages for two work-study students at MSU who have cleaned and cataloged all 2015 Topper artifacts (and are in the process of working through all 2015 survey artifacts as well) in spring, summer, and fall semesters
- purchasing fuel, food, supplies, and equipment while at the site
- purchasing supplies and equipment for ongoing labwork at MSU
- shipment and processing of sediment samples to the University of Arizona for particle size analysis
- shipment and processing (flotation and identification) of botanical samples to the University of Tennessee
- shipment of ceramic pipe fragments to Sewanee for residue analysis
- partial reimbursement of travel costs for Derek & Shane's travel to the First Floridians and SEAC conferences to present Topper papers

With the 2016 field season only a month away, we are again soliciting donations to cover salaries for Derek and his work-study students, to purchase supplies and equipment, and to continue paying for specialized analyses of Topper artifacts. Donations are 100% tax-deductible, and Mississippi State University will issue letters acknowledging your contributions. If you would like to donate, please make your check out to "Cobb Institute of Archaeology", and be sure to specify "Topper Fund" on the MEMO line. Checks can be mailed to Derek Anderson, PO Box AR, Cobb Institute of Archaeology, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

Thank you!



From L-R: Work-study student Nikki Wu, Dr. Shane Miller, and graduate student Kelsey Meer sorting, cleaning, and processing 2015 Topper and survey artifacts in Dr. Miller's lab at MSU.



Distribution map of all 459 shovel tests excavated during the 2015 MSU survey field school on the Archroma property.