

A Study of the Flowers Locality, Stranger Creek, Northeastern Kansas

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The purpose of this research project was to analyze a collection of 213 prehistoric archaeological artifacts from the Flowers Locality, a property near Easton, Kansas in the Stranger Creek watershed to determine the cultural association of the artifacts and the significance of the site because of its location. The collection is diagnostic of the Late Woodland (500-1000 AD) and Late Prehistoric (1000-1500 AD) culture periods of northeastern Kansas and represents two separate sites. Several of the artifacts have specific information regarding where they were found that could be mapped. This information helped to define the separate sites and the cultural periods associated with them.

In addition to analyzing the cultural associations of the artifacts, I also determined that the topographic setting of the sites from which they come contribute more evidence to previous research in the area with regard to the effects of severe annual flooding on prehistoric sites in the major valley. While relatively dense concentrations of prehistoric sites have been recorded along tributaries of Stranger Creek, fewer have been documented along the primary stream. The Flowers Locality includes multiple sites in Stranger Creek valley near its confluence with Dawson and Cramer Creeks. It was hypothesized that the scarcity of sites was due either to prehistoric populations avoiding the area because of frequent flooding or that flooding has buried archaeological evidence of other settlements. Research conducted throughout the semester utilized records from the United States Geological Survey to understand the flood patterns in the area for the past 82 years. These identified three major floods in 1958, 2001, and 2005. Aerial imagery from the flood of 2005 includes a photo of the Flowers Locality that I used to determine that even during one of the worst floods in recent history, the artifacts in this collection were on terrain that remained above the flood waters.

This project created additional research opportunities regarding the geomorphology of Stranger Creek watershed with regard to prehistoric settlement patterns. I also engaged the community of Easton, Kansas, working with local informants to identify additional sites along Stranger Creek. Further study of the watershed with this additional information could change the currently observed prehistoric settlement pattern for the area.

I presented a preliminary account of my research at the 2018 Flint Hills Archaeological Conference in Lawrence, Kansas and at the K-State Anthropology Department's Sapiens Symposium in April.