
Megan C Kassabaum, University of Pennsylvania
and informative review of major archaeological finds ranging from stratified sites with diagnostic artifacts to sites containing well-preserved faunal and floral remains. Notable sites discussed in the chapter include Wakulla Springs, Devil’s Den, Warm Mineral Springs, Little Salt Spring, and Page-Ladson. Purdy elegantly details the disagreements between avocationalists and professionals in establishing the presence of an extinct Pleistocene fauna-human association at these sites and the role of these debates in current studies of Florida’s prehistory.

In Chapter 3 Purdy switches gears to a discussion of a possible pre-Clovis occupation of Florida. The majority of the chapter chronicles her own archaeological investigations involving chert quarries in Florida, especially the Container Corporation of America site, providing her opinions on the antiquity of Florida’s earliest peoples. At this site, Purdy reportedly recovered in situ artifacts dating from 26,000 to 28,000 years ago based on patination and thermoluminescence analyses. Work at the site halted in the 1970s, and while investigations were renewed in 2006 and 2007, no new research has been published concerning these questionable early dates.

Chapters 4 and 5 conclude the volume by restating the precarious situation of artifacts and documents ostensibly vanishing from museum and university collections. Purdy likens unpublished research to looting of archaeological sites, stating that the end result of each is virtually indistinguishable. She revisits the sometimes difficult relationship between collectors and archaeologists, arguing that education is essential to advancing the field. Purdy also calls for revolutionary advances in dating techniques that would allow for the precise dating of fossilized bones. She explains the problems with unquestionably associating extinct Rancholabrean fauna and artifacts because the often fossilized bones, which cannot be dated by conventional methods, range in age from 12,000 to 30,000 years ago. She closes her work by enticing the reader to further explore the possibilities that the earliest migrants to the New World may have arrived as early as 30,000 years ago on the basis of patina studies from quarry site lithic assemblages.

While this book epitomizes a historical and regional synthesis of archaeological research conducted in Florida, it is organized in a manner that at times greatly affects its readability. Purdy often begins chapters and subheadings with a paragraph or section that is irrelevant to the topic at hand. She also has a tendency to lengthy overviews and dialogues that detract from the overall scope of the book. Further, many of the paragraphs in the book lack coherent transitional themes, making for a difficult read at times. More substantively, Purdy freely shares her own interpretations of the archaeological data (notably in Chapter 3) while not always providing adequate explanations for how she arrived at her conclusions. For example, she suggests that one of the most promising methods of proving the existence of pre-Clovis sites dating as far back as 25,000–30,000 years ago will be through well-designed quarry studies, but she provides no information on how these investigations should be designed and carried out.

These critiques should not overshadow the importance of the volume or Purdy’s distinguished career. In writing this book, Purdy has successfully condensed well over a century of scientific research in Florida into a well-informed text that can be enjoyed by professionals and laypeople alike. The book includes excellent site and artifact photographs that greatly enhance its educational value. In some cases the photographs represent the only remaining pieces of information because the artifacts and their documentation are now missing. This book is one of a kind in terms of providing a historical overview of Paleoindian research in Florida; it contains a wealth of knowledge in the bibliography alone. Florida’s People During the Last Ice Age is recommended to anyone interested in the historical development of archaeology and paleontology in the United States. Furthermore, it is of interest to those who want to further their knowledge concerning the advances made in determining and steps needed to establish the antiquity of humans in Florida and the Western Hemisphere in general.


Reviewed by Megan C. Kassabaum, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599. email: meg.kassabaum@gmail.com

Much has changed in Louisiana archaeology since R. W. Neuman (1984) published An Introduction to Louisiana Archaeology nearly three decades ago. Archaeology of Louisiana provides an exceptional summary of these changes and addresses the status of archaeology within the state’s boundaries. This volume provides a much-needed chronological, methodological, and theoretical synthesis that will be useful beyond those boundaries, appealing to archaeologists who work not only in Louisiana, but throughout the American South. Moreover, Rees makes the volume publicly accessible with basic definitions, outlines of major theoretical approaches, and clear explanations of chronological divisions.
In his foreword, Brown cautions us to “mind the gaps” in our knowledge—to be aware when we are stepping from “stable platforms” of well-established understandings to “fast-moving trains” of current debates and unanswered questions. Byrd and Newman’s contribution (Chapter 2) on the history of archaeology in Louisiana gives credit to academics, cultural resource management professionals, and avocational archaeologists alike for getting us to where we are today. Each subsequent chapter provides the reader with a stable platform (in the form of a concise summary of what is known about a given place and time) while articulating the as-yet-unresolved debates over less understood aspects of Louisiana’s past. The authors also suggest directions for future research to fill the remaining gaps.

Chapters 3 through 5 focus on Paleoindian and Archaic cultures. Admitting that much of the information for his chapter on Paleoindian and Early Archaic came from outside the state’s borders, Rees acknowledges Louisiana’s untapped potential, calling for exploration of deeply buried and submerged sites. Conversely, Saunders’s and Gibson’s chapters on Middle and Late Archaic emphasize the importance of Louisiana archaeologists’ work to broader understandings of mound building, hunter-gatherer societies, and trajectories of social evolution in general. Saunders focuses on Watson Break and underscores advances made in interpretations of the South’s earliest earthworks. The picture of life at Poverty Point painted by Gibson is doubly compelling in that it is beautifully written and solidly grounded in archaeology.

Chapters 6 through 9 focus on Woodland cultures. Hays and Weinstein call for efforts to explain the dramatic changes that occur between Poverty Point and Tchefuncte (i.e., the disappearances of long-distance exchange, mound building and lapidary industry, and the appearance of pottery). On the other hand, McGimsey emphasizes temporal continuity and geographic relationships by searching for the origins of Marksville in earlier periods and as far afield as Ohio. In discussing Marksville, McGimsey heroically takes on the widespread problem of a single term being used to represent a site, period, phase, culture, mortuary tradition, and/or ceramic style (see also Chapter 11). Lee’s chapter traces the transformation of Troyville and Baytown from “good, gray cultures” (Williams, The Eastern United States, in The National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, Themes II and III: Early Indian Farmers and Village Communities, edited by Haag, pp. 397–325) to interesting and important moments of growth and change. Finally, Roe and Schilling discuss how the recent flurry of research on Coles Creek has dramatically changed our perception of the culture and its relationships to temporally and spatially proximate cultures. Like the authors of the other Woodland chapters, they emphasize the need to refine chronologies and investigate nonmound sites.

Chapters 10 and 11 finish the discussion of Louisiana prehistory. Rees focuses on the relationship between Plaquemine and Mississippian and, in so doing, discusses the importance of moving away from culture-historical approaches toward a focus on the “actions and interactions of individuals and groups” (p. 193). Girard focuses on the Caddo communities of northwestern Louisiana, admirably covering a period of nearly 1,000 years and succinctly expressing the importance of the Trans-Mississippi South to Louisiana archaeology. Cast, Gonzalez, and Perttula (Chapter 12) continue the discussion of the Caddo Nation by discussing how NAGPRA has affected the relationship between Indian peoples and archaeologists within (and outside of) Louisiana. Their discussion offers an important perspective often absent from volumes like this and poignantly demonstrates the value of including descendant communities in archaeological endeavors to understand Louisiana’s past.

Chapters 13 through 18 focus on the historic period. Avery’s and Mann’s chapters on Spanish and French colonial endeavors in Louisiana emphasize that written records do not immediately produce a clear picture. Both authors call for increased documentary and archaeological research to answer more theoretically sophisticated questions. Wilkie, Farnsworth, and Palm convincingly argue that archaeological research has the potential to bring about important social change, especially when it draws attention to often-ignored parts of the human experience. Focusing on Louisiana’s African American heritage, they argue that we must expand our research agendas beyond plantations to include community centers, neighborhoods, businesses, universities, and so on. Dawdy and Matthews support this point, including many underrepresented groups in their discussion of colonization and Creolization in New Orleans. Further demonstrating archaeology’s broader impacts, Gray and Yakubik focus on how studies of immigration and urbanization in New Orleans can offer a critique of contemporary social inequality and build community. Together, these chapters highlight the distinctive history of New Orleans and underscore its potential to fulfill the public responsibility of archaeology. Finally, Saltus and Pearson end this volume with an important discussion of underwater archaeology. They remind us that evidence of nearly every period in Louisiana history lies submerged in rivers, streams, lakes, and gulf waters. People throughout Louisiana’s past have inhabited a landscape dominated by water. To ignore the state’s unique setting by overlooking wet and waterlogged sites would paint an incomplete and biased representation of this dwelling.
While its title suggests this volume's importance may be restricted by state borders, I argue that it takes important steps toward integrating Southeastern archaeology by transcending many of the boundaries that define its practice today. Exploring the past of other states when appropriate and recognizing important cultural boundaries within the state of Louisiana, these authors acknowledge the artificiality of modern geographic divisions. They further recognize the constructed nature of our chronological divisions with explorations of both continuity and change throughout the archaeologically defined periods.

Perhaps most important, this volume overcomes important boundaries among communities of practice. Due in large part to attendance patterns at the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, communication has often been impeded between archaeologists who work to the east of Louisiana and those who work farther west. The incorporation of two Caddo-focused chapters brings a perspective not often included in summaries of Southeastern archaeology. Similarly, conference attendance often artificially separates archaeologists that work before and after the point of contact. Through the inclusion of six topically diverse historic chapters, this book admirably represents the range of work that historical archaeologists are doing within the state. Finally, the range of topics and authors represented in this volume cross communication barriers that develop out of practical differences in excavation method, the range of questions asked, and the forums in which different archaeologists publish.

Rees has succeeded in bringing together the work of archaeologists employed by CRM firms, government agencies, universities and tribal governments, terrestrial and aquatic archaeologists, and student, professional, and avocational archaeologists. In so doing, his volume succeeds in finding important common ground; it commendably combines the knowledge of many archaeological stakeholders, creating a resource that will be invaluable to all people who care about Louisiana's past and, more broadly, the archaeology of the American South.


*Reviewed by* Irene Goddard, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN 38152. email: jgoddard@memphis.edu

Whitney Battle-Baptiste, in *Black Feminist Archaeology*, examines the development of her own identity, framework, and development as an archaeologist. She writes to open a dialogue about stories of different women and ways to discuss the past with the intersecting of race, class, and gender. Battle-Baptiste claims that she has an agenda in writing this book, and by discussing her framework and sites she has worked on, she opens a new dialogue to discuss the black feminist framework. She describes her work as an archaeologist, how she came to be an archaeologist, and her background and personal experiences, including the aspects of her life that created in her an interest in studying the African experience and the role of women. Battle-Baptiste argues that, in general, the lives, stories, and accomplishments of African women in the United States have been either left out of or not properly recognized in other accounts. Throughout her book, she hopes to give power back to those women by recounting their stories and their work through archaeology and black feminism.

Battle-Baptiste first explains how she constructs a black feminist framework. This first chapter is helpful in setting the tone for the book and for understanding Battle-Baptiste's framework. She wrote this book in hopes of reaching a new audience and in order to tell people about feminism and archaeology—and how these issues can intersect.

Battle-Baptiste goes on to present her work at the Hermitage, the home of Andrew Jackson in Tennessee. More specifically, she examines the First Hermitage site, which had had some previous excavations done between 1975 and 1980. Her goal was to explore these structures again and to provide new interpretations for the site. The First Hermitage site also included structures that housed slaves on the property and other residential areas. In 1996 Battle-Baptiste began to work on the site and investigated the kitchen quarter, the Jackson Farmhouse, and the surrounding yard, areas and structures that gave rise to interpretations about how people on the property lived and used the land, and what items they were using. Battle-Baptiste looks at this part of the property because the land and how it was used were especially important to the occupants of the site.

She also examines the Lucy Foster's Homestead site, the home of a freedwoman in eastern Massachusetts. The site was first excavated in the 1940s by Adelaide Bullen, but her contributions to archaeology have since been forgotten. Lucy Foster, who inherited property from her former owner after being freed by her owner's last will and testament, had a quaint home on this land and was known in the community as being poor, but she lived free in the early 1800s. Adelaide Bullen and her husband excavated the property at a time when the field of archaeology was very male dominated. Her work in physical and cultural anthropology pertaining to women's issues was especially important and