BONE AND SHELL TOOLS

In many areas of Louisiana, particularly in the south where stone is not readily available, bone and shell were important resources for tools. Unlike projectile points, which can be assigned to a general time frame based on shape and size, bone and shell tools are difficult to date because their forms do not change dramatically through time. Bone was used to create points, fishhooks, “flats” used in net and basket making, and fleshers and punches for leatherworking. On the coast, whelk shells were used as hoes, adzes, gouges, punches, and drinking cups. Gulf coast shells were traded inland as far north as St. Louis.

PROJECTILE POINTS

Projectile points changed through time as prey and hunting technologies changed. Paleoindian Clovis points were attached to long spears, and were used to hunt Pleistocene period megafauna like the mastodon. Spear points were often exquisitely crafted from non-native stone and were probably closely conserved. By 10,000 B.C., a more modern climate developed and modern fauna appeared. Long spears and spear points were replaced by smaller darts and dart points. The darts were propelled using an atlatl or throwing stick, which greatly increased the power of the throw. (For more information on the atlatl, visit www.worldatlatl.org.) Because darts were not easily retrieved, dart points were expendable—they were quickly and roughly made from readily available native stone. This technology lasted over 6,000 years in Louisiana, and was still in use by some Mexican Indians at Contact. However, between A.D. 500 and 700, the bow, arrow, and arrowhead replaced the atlatl, dart, and dart point in Louisiana.

A Clovis point. The “flutes” or channel up the middle of the point was for lifting onto a spear; deep flutes occur only on Paleoindian points.

Scallop arrow point. This is one of the earlier arrow points. It resembles a dart point in shape but is smaller.