

## Reply to Comments on “Geology of the Sheguiandah Early Man Site: Key Concepts and Issues”

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# REPLY TO COMMENTS ON “GEOLOGY OF THE SHEGUIANDAH EARLY MAN SITE: KEY CONCEPTS AND ISSUES”

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If I have succeeded in sparking renewed interest in what has been called “Canada’s most neglected major site of the past 30 years” (JACKSON and McKILLOP, 1987, p. 14), then I have accomplished a large part of my purpose. P.F. Karrow’s intriguing thoughts on the leaf tentatively identified as maple in buried lake sediments gives an indication of what fresh eyes may see.

It is significant that Karrow gives prominence to the context of the Sheguiandah Site with respect to controversy. He recalls a rift between the amateurs of the Ontario Archaeological Society, who tended to side with T.E. Lee, and the professionals. Readers may wish to reflect on the behaviour of the latter, whose careers were at stake, in light of Karrow’s statement that T.E. Lee himself was forced “to leave the field of professional archaeology” for a period running into years.

If, however, it is necessary to emphasize that Antevs participated in the investigations at a distance, it is surely also pertinent to credit him more fully for his contribution. Before he would accept the stratigraphic sequence as presented he insisted that the nature of each deposit be demonstrated to him. Those who were on the site had to overcome his every objection, and this took 14 months. The extensive correspondence devoted to these issues show that he did far more than offer mere chronological interpretation.

Similarly, we should not gloss over Sanford’s other Quaternary work. His 1935 report on the Richmond mastadon, for instance, dealt with the paleontological and stratigraphic evidence associating prehistoric man with that of extinct mammal. It illustrates his manner of putting forward alternatives hypotheses and then showing why we should select from among them. If we must still belabour the point that Sanford did not specialize in Pleistocene studies, we must also acknowledge his competence as a stratigrapher. Antevs’ rigorous criticism demanded much extra fieldwork and argument, but the results of this process show in Sanford’s ultimately compelling logic. If the many subsequent changes in the reconstruction of Quaternary history are indeed relevant, perhaps these should be put forward for discussion.

To Karrow it now seems obvious that stone artifacts can survive glacial action, and reasonable to think that Early Man may have been here that early. But it would be a mistake to underestimate how great a stumbling block this association of artifacts with till once was, depriving the site of the support it deserved. By way of example, even geologist B. Liberty, who, in the words of T.E. Lee, “came to the site every day, and sometimes twice a day, with his crew, all summer long, checking the trenches, every one of them, and having other trenches dug — Liberty, who examined everything that there was to be seen ... and discussed every

detail of it with me” — even Liberty was stymied, and the reason he gave was revealing. In a letter to Antevs (28 February 1955) he wrote : “I would only say that if their were no artifacts present, I would have no hesitation in calling it glacial till.” For all we know this same conceptual obstacle may be the basis for the “strong reservations” held by Karrow’s unnamed “visitors ... who were experienced in glacial geology.”

“It is already late” writes Karrow, and indeed, it is a hard thing that the observers of 30 years ago have passed from among us with decades of effort to engage their peers in

scientific discussion unmet. But they did not pass without a trace. As JACKSON and McKILLOP (1987) argue for the site itself, their work is deserving of careful consideration, rather than neglect.

#### REFERENCES

- JACKSON, L.J. and McKILLOP, H. (1987) : *Patterns in Ontario pre-history : the Sheguiandah Site, 1952-56*, *Arch Notes*, Vol. 87, No. 1, p. 9-15.
- SANFORD, J.T. (1935) : The Richmond mastadon, *Proceedings of the Rochester Academy of Science*, Vol. 7, No. 5, p. 137-156.

N.D.L.R. Veuillez noter que la figure 4 de l'article de R.E. Lee parue dans la revue (vol. XL, n° 3, p. 328) a été imprimée à l'envers.

*Please note that Figure 4 in R.E. Lee's original paper (Vol. XL, No. 3, p. 328) inadvertently appeared upside-down.*