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

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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


N.D.L.R. Veuillez noter que l’article de R.E. Lee paru 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.