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Review of *Hell Gap: A Stratified Paleoindian Campsite  
at the Edge of the Rockies*. Edited by Mary Lou  
Larson, Marcel Kornfeld, and George C. Frison.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Hell Gap: A Stratified Paleoindian Campsite at the Edge of the Rockies.** Edited by Mary Lou Larson, Marcel Kornfeld, and George C. Frison. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009. xxiii + 444 pp. Maps, figures, appendices, references, index. \$60.00 cloth.

Every Plains archaeologist has heard of the Hell Gap site. But few could tell you much about it. All that changes with the publication of this needed, dense, thorough collection that chronicles the life and content of this singularly important archaeological site. With 20 papers and 13 appendices, this book takes a monumental step forward in furthering our knowledge of nearly the entire Paleoindian sequence of occupation on the western Plains. Hell Gap is the type site for three Paleoindian point styles: Goshen, Hell Gap, and Frederick, and contains at least six other cultural complexes: Folsom, Midland, Agate Basin, Alberta, Eden/Scottsbluff, and Lusk. All in a stratified and fairly well-dated sequence. There are hints of Clovis, but the jury is still out.

Located in eastern Wyoming, the Hell Gap site was discovered when amateur collector J. Duguid picked up a complete Agate Basin point in 1958 (the first appendix tells his story). Sharing that information led to years of excavation by a virtual “who’s who” in the history of Plains archaeology. Previously known by a few short articles and unpublished works, this volume is the first major synthesis of one of the most studied and significant sites in the Plains.

Space does not permit review of every chapter and appendix. The volume has extensive paleoenvironmental

information, with papers on geoarchaeology (Haynes), soil development and structure (Reider; Miller and Goldberg), phytoliths and vegetation (Fredlund), snails (Jass and Mead), and climate (Bryson and Bryson). What is pleasantly surprising is the general agreement in these studies as to the environmental trends that persisted at Hell Gap between about 11,000 and 7,000 BP. The papers are detailed, technical, and challenging—a reflection of the 50+ years that have passed since the early excavations, the ambiguity of deciphering other people's (some now deceased) field notes, the complexity of site stratigraphy, and the ravages of 10,000 years.

Papers devoted to human history include two that chronicle the history of site investigations (Kornfeld and Larson; Knudson), two on faunal analysis (Rapson and Niven; Byers), two papers on microwear (Muñiz; Bamforth and Becker), a review of the Eden component (Knell, Hill, and Izeta), Cody (Knell), Frederick (Byrnes), a discussion of site formation (Larson), a chipped stone analysis (Kornfeld), a technological analysis of the points (Bradley) and of point damage and resharpening (Hashizume), and an excellent book summary by Larson (if starting from scratch I'd read this chapter first).

Hell Gap emerges as a repeatedly used short-term camp where game (mostly bison) was processed, tools used and discarded, and local high-quality toolstone obtained. Features seem rare (a few hearths) for a site occupied so long. Though a site of high fidelity, there is some "mixing" of point styles between levels, a situation that engenders considerable explanatory gyrations—omitting, however, the possibility that a single group of people roamed around with slightly variable styles of points, a lesson we need to remember from the Olsen-Chubbuck site.

Hell Gap is an extraordinary site, but one thing about it was quite ordinary—it had been extensively studied but poorly reported. The editors and authors are to be commended for digging into dusty bags and field records of the 1960s and bringing to light critical information on some of the earliest inhabitants of the continent. **Jack W. Brink**, *Royal Alberta Museum*.