

The First Kansas Citian Was an Elephant Hunter

By Alvin McCoy
(The Star's Science Editor)

ABOUT 12,000 years ago, a hunter lay motionless in the tall, wet grass of the Missouri river bottoms in an area that is known, these 120 centuries later, as North Kansas City. Spear beside him, the bronzed man was as still as a statue as he kept watch on a nearby herd of mammoth.

In the pre-dawn twilight, he had stalked the herd to this vantage point during a torrential downpour. He was wet, he was cold—and he was hungry.

The great woolly elephants of the Ice Age were feeding on lush, waist-high grass. Part of the herd waded in the pool of a stream bed, squirting water, or simply covering themselves with mud. Occasionally, a bull screamed, lifting his upcurving tusks.

THEN A CALF, tall as a man, wandered from the pool toward the hunter, curiosity leading him to explore. He edged nearer and nearer, stopping occasionally to collect wisps of grass.

When the animal was 10 feet distant, and broadside, the hunter quickly rose, braced his feet, and drew back his stone-tipped lance.

His right fist grasped the handle of a paddle-like throwing stick, on which the spear's



THIS CLOVIS POINT was found in 1938 on a hilltop in Kansas City, North.

shaft rested, its butt against a stone in a groove. Then, body tensed, he threw the weapon. The throwing stick performed an overhead arc to launch the projectile as if from a catapult.

There was a muffled thud. The weapon struck the young elephant with incredible force and penetrated deeply, just behind the front shoulder. The animal shuddered and fell, while the rest of the herd

moved slowly away. The kill had been almost in silence.

A LOW CALL summoned several other spear-bearing hunters. They quickly began cutting strips off the prize with stone knives.

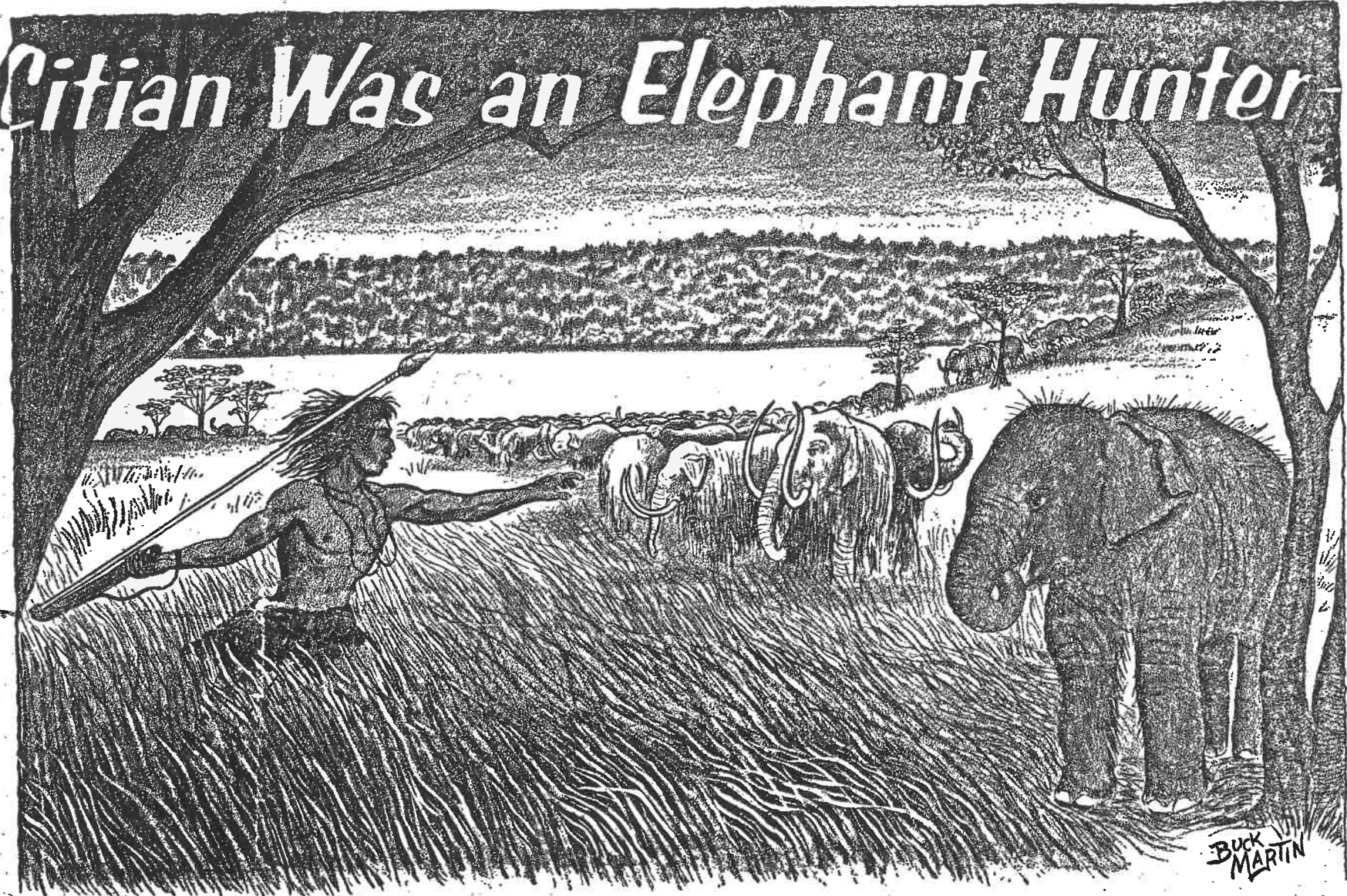
Soon they had carried great chunks of mammoth meat to the top of a bluff in what is now Clay County, overlooking the Missouri river and the site of the future downtown district.

Women, with jet-black hair, swarthy skin and oriental eyes, jabbered gleefully while they lighted a fire with flint and began heating rocks. The hot rocks were shoved onto a stone hearth and the meat was placed on them to sizzle in its juices.

The little band of primitive people had a great feast on the hilltop, where they were safe, for the moment, from predatory animals and rival groups of hunters.

JUDGING FROM all the available evidence, archaeologists believe those Paleo-Indian hunters could well have been the first residents of Kansas City, even though they were temporary.

So the first Kansas Citian certainly was not Etienne Veniard de Bourgmont, Fran-



Prehistoric man, who resembled a Mongolian, used a spear with a throwing stick to kill mammoth on what is now the site of Kansas City.

cois Chouteau, Daniel Boone, or an Osage Indian.

He was Clovis man, who bore a strong resemblance to a Mongolian. Moreover, he is the first human being of whom we have any evidence in the Americas. In some previous era, his ancestors had walked across the Bering Strait land bridge from present-day Siberia, and from there had fanned out across the continents. When did Clovis man do this? We do not know exactly. Some archaeologists suspect it was 25,000 to 35,000 years ago, or earlier.

The majority, however, agree on 12,000 to 15,000 years ago, because there is scientific evidence of human habi-

with a spear, which he threw with the aid of a throwing stick archaeologists call an atlatl. He had not yet learned to make a bow and arrow, nor had he mastered pottery. But he did have fire and presumably cooked his meat, or part of it. He may have worn skins for protection from the cold.

He hunted big game. Some, such as mammoth, mastodons and certain bison, now are extinct. Some scientists speculate that because certain huge mammals were slow or stupid, hunters finally caused their extinction.

Los Angeles. His findings were announced in the early 1950s.

One of the first publicized carbon-dating tests was on wood from tree stumps sheared off by the Wisconsin glacier. Most geologists had thought that the Ice Age ended 25,000 to 30,000 years ago. Libby showed that the trees had been sheared off about 11,000 years ago.

The carbon method was used to date the earliest Indians (the Paleo-Indians, of which Clovis man was a representative) at about 10,000 B. C. The first unmistakable association of his spear points with mammoth was found in 1932 near Blackwater Draw, Portales, N. M. — the same

Emil Haury, who reported elephant butcherings there. Even more exciting to the archaeologists was a report on a site in Mexico in which mastodons had been killed by Clovis man, but no date has been obtained there.

Clovis man, who preceded the next culture, Folsom man, by 1,000 or 2,000 years, left easily-recognized lance points. The typical Clovis point has a shallow channel flaking, or fluting, at the base, for attachment to the spear shaft.

The Clovis points found in Kansas City are few and far between, but easily recognizable.

THE RECOGNIZED authority on this and other early In-

embankment about five miles south of Liberty, Mo. Shippee had a third one that was found near Excelsior Springs.

From the dim mists of the past, the only traces of these early prehistoric hunters possessed by present-day man are the points of his weapons, his knives, the bones of the animals he killed and ate, and the charcoal from his campfires.

No one has found a skeleton or a burial ground on this continent, nor signs of a village. Nor has anyone found a Clovis point in Siberia or Mongolia. But no archaeologist now doubts that he once ranged the entire United States.

NEAR MIDLAND TEX.

