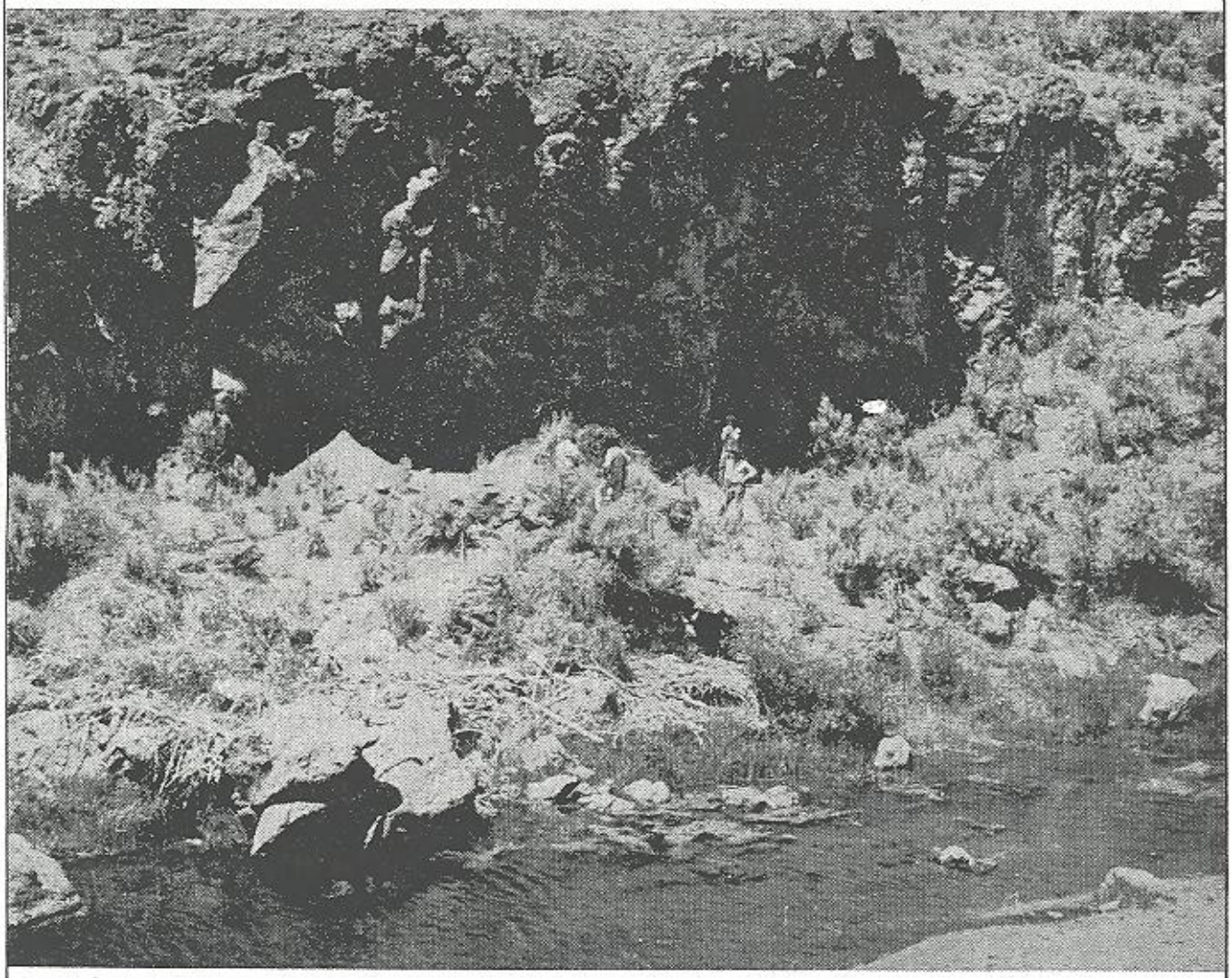
IDAHO ARCHAEOLOGIST



NAHAS CAVE SITE Photo by Mark Plew

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A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT NAHAS CAVE

by
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ABSTRACT

Archaeological survey in the Owyhee Uplands has provided the basis for a tentative chronology and settlement model. Recent excavations at Nahas Cave provide a radiocarbon dated sequence which supports the phase sequence (see Plew, 1980b) proposed for the Uplands.

INTRODUCTION

Nahas Cave is situated in the Owyhee Uplands sixty miles south of Grandview, Idaho. The site is on Pole Creek near its confluence with Deep Creek about 15 miles north of the Owyhee River and 20 miles west of Battle Creek. It is situated approximately three meters above the present stream course in a juniper-sagebrush-grass environment which supports a diverse animal community including deer, antelope and a variety of smaller mammals and avifauna. The site was originally brought to the attention of the State Historical Society in 1977 by state fish and game officials, who accompanied Dr. Thomas Green on an inspection of the site. The cave was subsequently recorded in 1978 during a survey of Pole Creek as part of the activities of the Southcentral Owyhee County Archaeological Project. Excavations were conducted at the site during May and June, 1979 with the assistance of members of the Idaho Archaeological Society and the cooperation of the land owner, Mr. R. T. Nahas. Further excavations were conducted in June, 1980.

CAVE DEPOSITS

Nahas Cave is a small collapsed lava tube. The approximate dimensions of the cave are 12 by 3 meters with a present interior height of about 3 meters. The depth of the cultural deposit varies from a maximum of 2 meters near the front of the cave to about 60 cm at the back of the cave where the deposits narrow and taper upward toward the ceiling.

The cave was previously occupied by a cougar whose debris littered the floor area. This was intermixed with cow and rodent dung. An additional disturbance consisted of two relatively small and shallow potholes. Lighting problems and excessive moisture necessitated excavation of arbitrary ten centimeter levels. The accumulation of deposits, owing to slope, rooffall and differential rates of deposition, has varied through time. Hence, levels from different areas of the cave are not precisely contemporaneous. Cultural associations with all strata are discernable. The density of cultural materials is fairly uniform throughout the first 140 centimeters of the deposit. The 150-160 cm level is nearly devoid of cultural remains.

Four cultural zones are recognized. The earliest is in a fine and tightly packed sand lying above disintegrating bedrock. It is designated Zone I and varies in size but averages 50-70 cm in thickness and is marked by extensive rooffall. The zone is found 110-160 cm below datum. A 20 cm level resting on bedrock contains very little cultural material. Zone II consists of a dark brown silty material averaging 25-35 cm in thickness and is found 75-110 cm below datum. The zone contains numerous medium sized pieces of rooffall and several large boulders. One of the greatest concentrations of cultural remains is found within Zone II and is characterized by the occurrence of Elko series points. Zone III consists of light brown silt intermixed with numerous pieces of small angular rooffall and laminations of sand. The zone, which is approximately 40-50 cm in thickness, contains isolated areas of loosely compacted soil, rooffall and calcium carbonate throughout. Zone III is marked by the presence of Eastgate-Rose Spring projectile points, though Elko materials occur in the lower levels. The zone occurs at from 30 to 75 cm below datum. Zone IV is a greyish wind deposited silt containing numerous pieces of small rooffall and extensive calcium carbonate concentrations. The zone extends from the surface to approximately 25 to 30 cm below datum. All strata are interspersed with areas of extensive organic staining (see Figure 3).

CULTURAL FEATURES

Cultural features included a total of thirteen hearths and a single fiber filled pit measuring 20 cm wide by 20 cm deep. Of the excavated hearths, two were rock lined with 7-8 stones spaced out in a circular arrangement. The hearth features ranged in size from 40 cm to over a meter in diameter and 10-30 cm in thickness. All hearths were located near the front of the cave and were commonly associated with mussel shells, bits of charred bone and fire cracked rock.

Several artifact concentrations were encountered and in four cases these were associated with fire hearths. Of particular interest is the occurrence of large basalt and cryptocrystalline flakes throughout the deposit. These were found in concentrations and frequently in association with hearths. During the 1980 field season a basalt tool manufacturing locus was discovered beyond the cave dripline. The locus is associated with Zone IV.

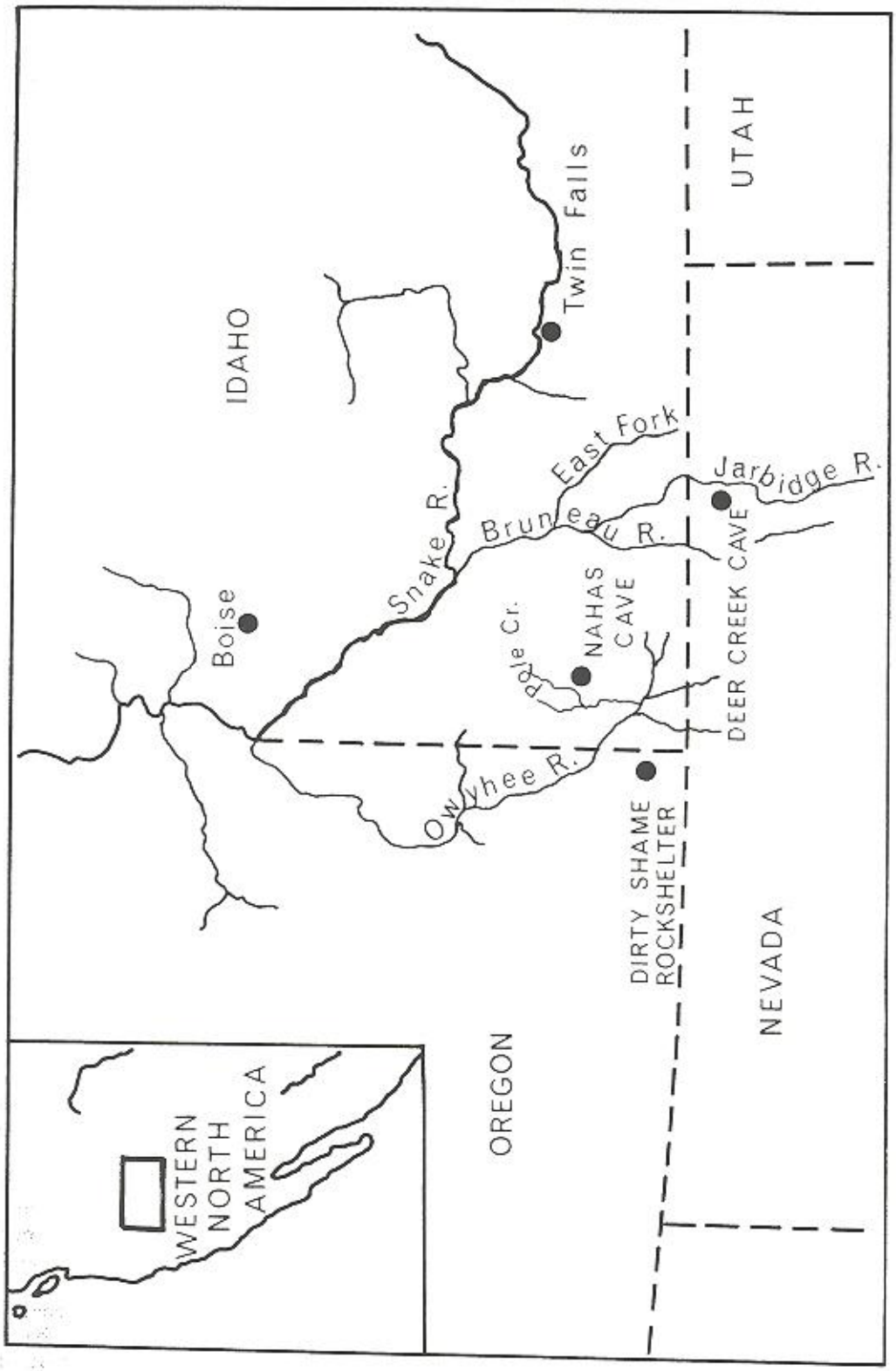

Figure 1. Map showing location of Nahas Cave in relation to Dry Creek and Dirty Shame Rockshelters and Deer Creek Cave.

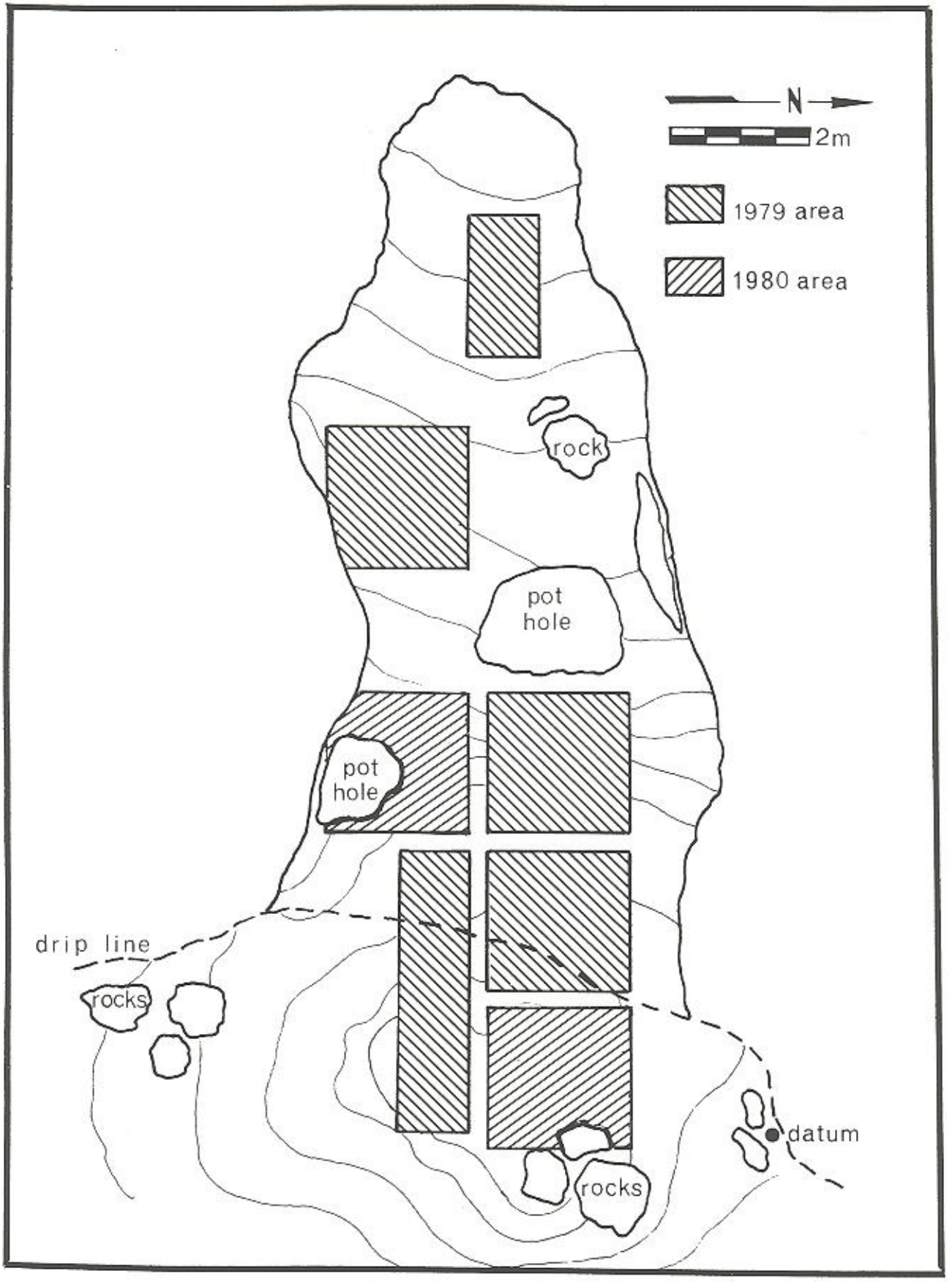

Figure 2. Plan view of Nahas Cave showing excavated units.

CULTURAL REMAINS

Chipped Stone

The Nahas Cave excavation produced a total of 350 artifacts. Chipped stone tools accounted for 74% of this total or 258 specimens. Included in the chipped stone inventory are projectile points, scrapers, drills, knives, bifaces and retouched flakes, hammerstones and cores. Projectile points account for 22% of the total. Retouched flakes (11%) and bifaces (11%) mark the next most frequent types (percentages based upon counts illustrated in Table 1). While approximately 50% of the projectile points are made of obsidian and ignimbrite, other tool categories are marked by a predominant use of cryptocrystalline material (see Table 1). This use is also evident in the 5,973 specimens of lithic debris recovered in the excavations. Fifty-six percent of this material is cryptocrystalline. Thirty-eight percent is basalt while obsidian accounts for only six percent of the total.

Groundstone Artifacts

Ten groundstone specimens were recovered. These included 5 mortars, 2 pestles and 4 manos. One mortar and pestle was encountered at the 2 meter level just above bedrock. The mortars found in the earlier levels of the deposit exhibit broad shallow basins, while those found in the upper levels of the cave have small and pronounced basins. This is interesting since such variation has been noted in surface contexts (Plew, 1979) in the upland area.

Bone Artifacts

Seventy-one bone artifacts were excavated. These include awls, incised, cut and polished bone tubes, and a variety of chipped and flaked bone. One bone tube fragment exhibits an incised cross-hatched design.

Miscellaneous Artifacts

Four small potsherds were recovered from the upper levels of the cave in association with Eastgate points. While the sherds appear to be fairly well made, their size prohibits specific type classification. Other artifacts include a partially drilled conical object made of sandstone; a fragmentary slate pendant; a small painted sandstone fragment; two fragmentary stone pipes; a shell bead and four fired clay cylinder fragments (see Plew and Woods, 1980).

FAUNAL REMAINS

The single largest material inventory from Nahas Cave is the collection of 8,230 specimens of animal bone. Twenty percent of this material was charred bone. Much of the bone recovered was fractured and splintered. This is particularly true of long bones. Approximately 600 specimens or 13 percent of the excavated bone is identifiable. Species tentatively identified include antelope *(Antilocapra americana)*, deer *(Odocoileus heminous)*, ground squirrel *(Citellus sp.)*, muskrat *(Ondatra zibethicus)*, jack rabbit *(Lepus sp.)*, woodchuck *(Marmota sp.)*, cottontail *(Sylvilagus sp.)*, badger *(Taxidea taxus)* and porcupine *(Erethizon dorsatum)*. A variety of unidentified avifauna are present in the collection. Of special interest was the recovery of the remains of three individuals of *Salmo gairdnerii*, the steelhead trout (Plew, 1980a).

Table 1

Nahas Cave Chipped Stone Artifacts by Raw Material Use

ARTIFACTS	MATERIALS		
	Basalt	Cryptocrystalline	Obsidian
Cores	12	48	
Choppers	1		
Bifaces	9	28	3
Drills	1	6	2
Knives	1	13	
Projectile Points	1	37	39
Retouched Flakes	16	16	5
Scrapers	8	11	1
Totals	49	159	50

DISCUSSION

The cultural assemblage, including projectile points, scrapers, knives, and faunal remains, suggest that Nahas Cave was a hunting camp. The site was most probably utilized at different times of the year. It would appear that a variety of game were hunted and that fish were occasionally taken from Pole Creek. The recovery of remains of *Salmo gairdnerrii*, the steelhead trout, suggests a spring occupation. Only during spring would water levels have been sufficiently great to permit migration of salmonids into the Pole Creek area. A limited groundstone assemblage suggests that some edible seeds and berries were consumed during periods of availability.

Chronologically, the site has been occupied over a period of ca. 6000 years (see Table 2). Seven radiocarbon dates were obtained from Nahas Cave which span a period of 5990 - 260 B. P. The earliest date of 5990 ± 170 B.P. (TX 3644) is from level 16 and is associated with a fire hearth and mortar and pestle. This is the only date for Zone I. No diagnostic artifacts were recovered from the level. Dates are unavailable for Zone II. A hearth in level 6 was dated at 2920 ± 70 (TX 3637) and was associated with Elko series projectile points. This establishes a date for Zone III and the well defined Elko occupation recovered at Nahas. Levels 5 and 4 are dated at 1410 ± 200 B.P. (TX 3643) and 1100 ± 80 B.P. (TX 3642) respectively. These levels are predominantly associated with Rose Spring-Eastgate materials. The transition from Elko to Rose Spring-Eastgate materials occurs in Zone III. Two dates were obtained from level 3 which date the lower levels of Zone IV. These are dates of 400 ± 70 B.P. (TX 3638) and 350 ± 70 B.P. (TX 3635). The most recent

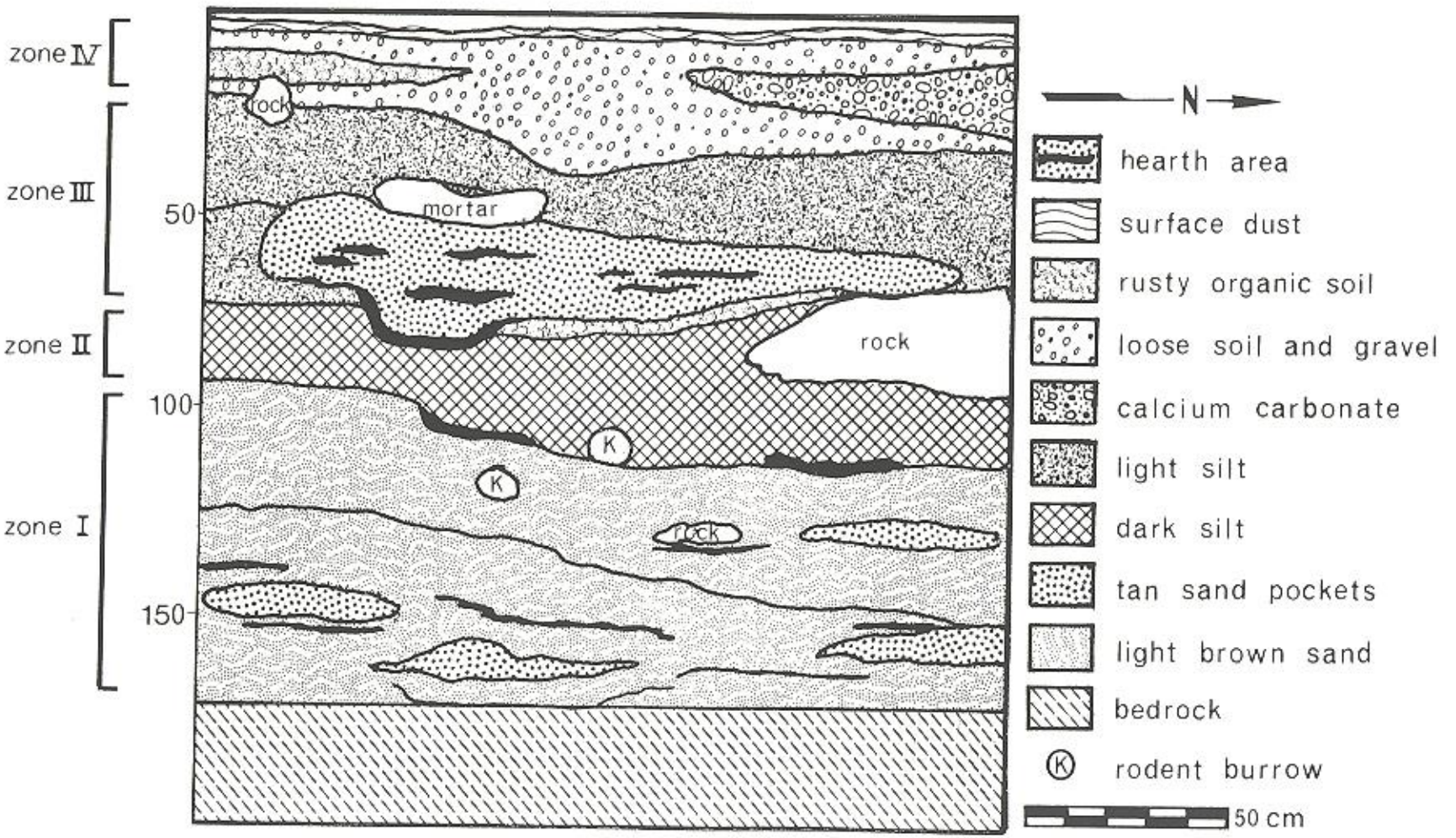

Figure 3. West Wall profile of Unit S2W2.

Table 2

Radiocarbon Dates from Nahas Cave

Strata	Radiocarbon Dates [1]
0 - 10 cm	
10 - 20 cm	260 ± 50 (TX 3636)
20 - 30 cm	350 ± 70 (TX 3635) 400 ± 70 (TX 3638)
30 - 40 cm	1100 ± 80 (TX 3642)
40 - 50 cm	1410 ± 200 (TX 3643)
50 - 60 cm	2920 ± 70 (TX 3637)
60 - 150 cm	No Samples
150 - 160 cm	5990 ± 170 (TX 3644)

1. Radiocarbon analyses by Radiocarbon Laboratory, University of Texas, Austin.

date from Nahas Cave is a date of 260 ± 50 B.P. (TX 3636) obtained from a hearth in level 2. A Desert Side-Notched, Cottonwood Triangular, Cottonwood Bipoint and Bliss point were associated with the period of 400 - 260 B. P.

In summary, certain preliminary conclusions can be drawn. First, an occupation of 6,000 years is documented. Though the occupation appears to have been continuous, it was marginal during the period 6000 - 4500 (?) years ago. This period of minimal use equates with Zone I. Though dates are unavailable for Zone II, it may date to ca. 4500 B.P. The cultural remains from Zone I are meager, consisting of non-diagnostic artifacts and debris. Zone II (see Figure 3), though undated, contains Elko and Humboldt projectile points, with extensive bone, shell and lithic debris. Zone III, dating ca. 3000 - 850 years ago, contains two distinct occupations separable on the basis of point typology. These include an Elko occupation in the lower levels of Zone III and a Rose Spring-Eastgate horizon in the middle and the upper levels of the zone. The most recent horizon dates to the period 550 - 850 years ago. A recent and possibly Shoshonean occupation is associated with Zone IV. The zone is dated between 400 - 260 years ago and is characterized by projectile points presumed to be recent.

The Nahas Cave sequence constitutes the first radiocarbon sequence for Owyhee County. It is important because it confirms the cross-dated phase sequence proposed for the south-central Owyhee Uplands (Plew, 1980:28-32). This sequence consists of four temporal phases, Camas Creek I-IV, based upon association of cultural remains with point styles. The chronology of projectile point styles was after Hester and Heizer's (1973) summary of Northern Great Basin dates. The Camas Creek I phase dating 4000 B.C. - 700 B.C., corresponds in age to Zone I at Nahas Cave. No diagnostics were recovered from the zone. Camas Creek II corresponds to the Elko levels of Zone II and the lower levels of Zone III. The Rose Spring-Eastgate horizon equated with the Camas Creek III phase corresponds with the middle and upper levels of Zone III. Camas Creek IV dated ca. 1200 - 1300 A.D. into the Historic Period equates with Zone IV and is characterized by Desert Side-Notched and Cottonwood Triangular point types. It is noteworthy that the density of materials described for the phase sequence (based upon surface data) reflect a comparable density at Nahas.

Of additional interest is the limited but early presence of Rose Spring-Eastgate and small side-notched points in predominantly Elko levels about 300 years ago (see Plew, 1980b, 1980c). This early occurrence is interesting in the context of similar finds at Dirty Shame Rockshelter (Aiken et al., 1977) and Dry Creek Rockshelter (Webster, 1978) in the Boise foothills.

Preliminary examination of the cultural remains from Nahas Cave suggest broad similarities with these and other sites such as Deer Creek Cave (Shutler, 1963). In general, Nahas Cave will provide important chronological and settlement data for an area within the Northern Great Basin which is little known.

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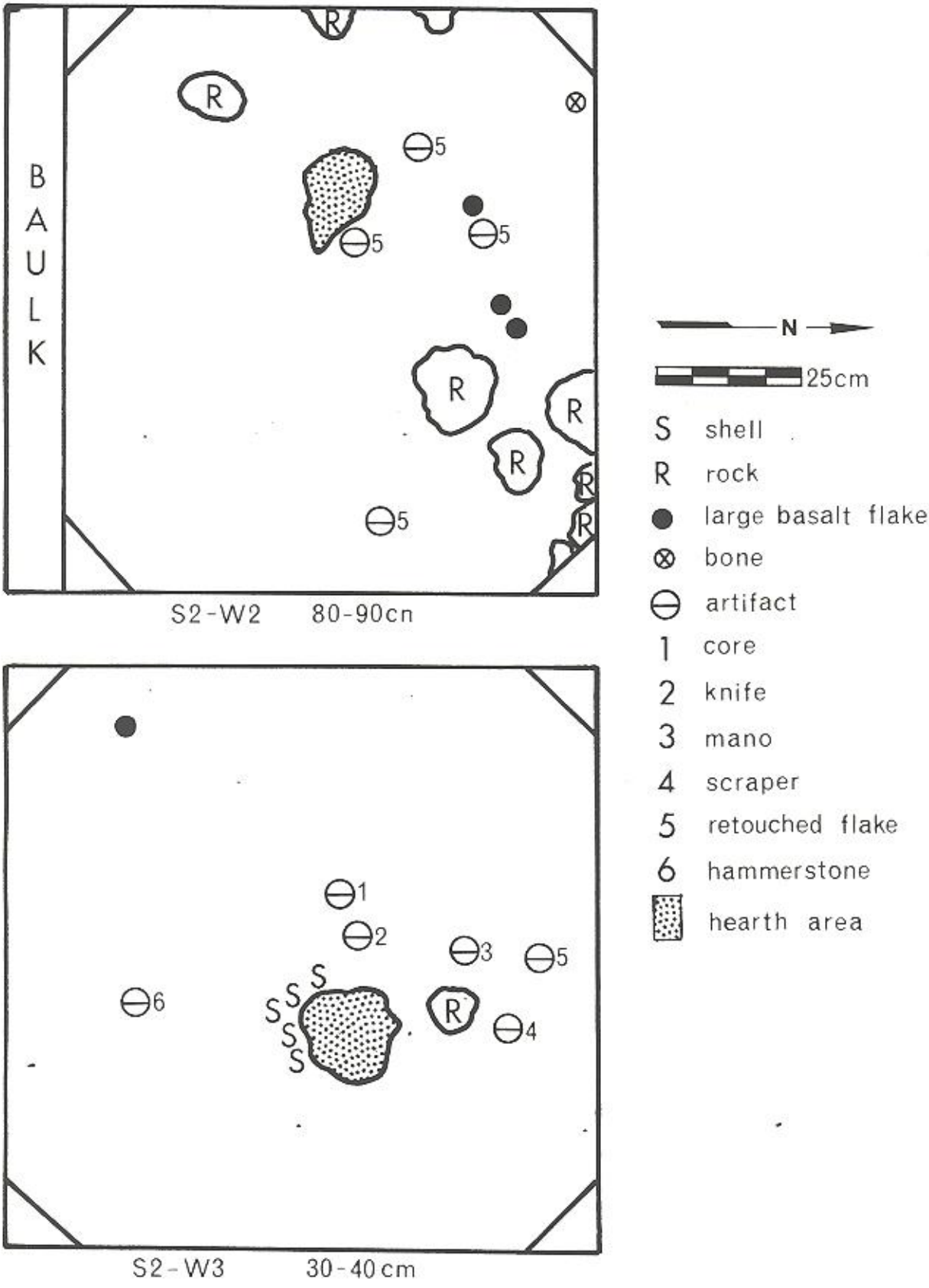

Figure 4. Plan views of Level 8, Unit S2W2 and Level 4, Unit S2W3.

AN INCISED STONE FROM GOODING COUNTY, IDAHO

by
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Recent investigations near Bliss, Idaho resulted in the recovery of a uniquely incised stone. This discovery is important in view of the increasing number of incised stones or cobbles which have been recently reported for Idaho (Green, 1972; Plew, 1977; Huntley and Nance, 1979). Additional examples, as yet unreported, have been found in the Pend O'reille area of northern Idaho (Sally Cupan, personal communication) and in southeastern Idaho near Bear Lake (Plew, n.d.a.). Amateur excavations at Franklin Cave, near Franklin, Idaho, have also recovered incised stone (Plew, n.d.b).

The specimen illustrated here (see Figure 1) was recovered during extensive test excavations at site 10-GG-1. This site, which is located on the north side of the Snake River near Bliss, Idaho, was originally recorded by Hulse and Tuohy (1958). It was tested during the fall of 1980 by Idaho Archaeological Consultants under contract to Idaho Power Company, as part of a cultural resource investigation of the proposed A. J. Wiley Dam Project (Plew and Ostrogorsky, 1980).

The specimen measures 8.5 cms. long by 4.1-2.0 cms. wide and is 1.2 cms. thick. It is incised on a single surface having two major design elements. The first consists of eight parallel lines placed approximately one millimeter apart and enclosed by a rectangular configuration having parallel lines on its lateral margins. The upper and lower margins of the rectangular configuration consist of single lines. All lines are connected. A zig-zag line occurs above the upper margin while four short parallel incisions occur at the bottom of the rectangle at right angles to the enclosure. Five diagonally placed lines are connected to the right lateral margin of the rectangle.

A second design element consists of a series of cross-hatched lines. This element is 1.0 cm below the rectangular design. It consists of nine vertical lines bisected by four horizontally placed lines. Eight diagonally placed lines are connected to the upper right hand margin of the design. A portion of this element has been obliterated.

The specimen was associated with pottery and Desert Side-Notched projectile points, suggesting a relatively late time frame for the artifact. The specimen illustrated here (see Figure 1) and the incised stones examined by the author from Franklin Cave are similar to the incised stones common at Great Salt Lake Fremont sites in northern Utah (see, e.g., Marwitt, 1970). The incised cobbles described by Green (1971), Plew (1977) and Huntley and Nance (1979) are dissimilar from the specimen illustrated here. These specimens consist of relatively simple cross-hatched and parallel line designs while the specimen reported in this note and three examples from the Pend O'reille River area (Sally Cupan, personal communication) constitute more highly stylized geometric patterns. Two specimens from the Hemmert site (10-BL-14) near Bear Lake (Plew, n.d.a) and an incised stone

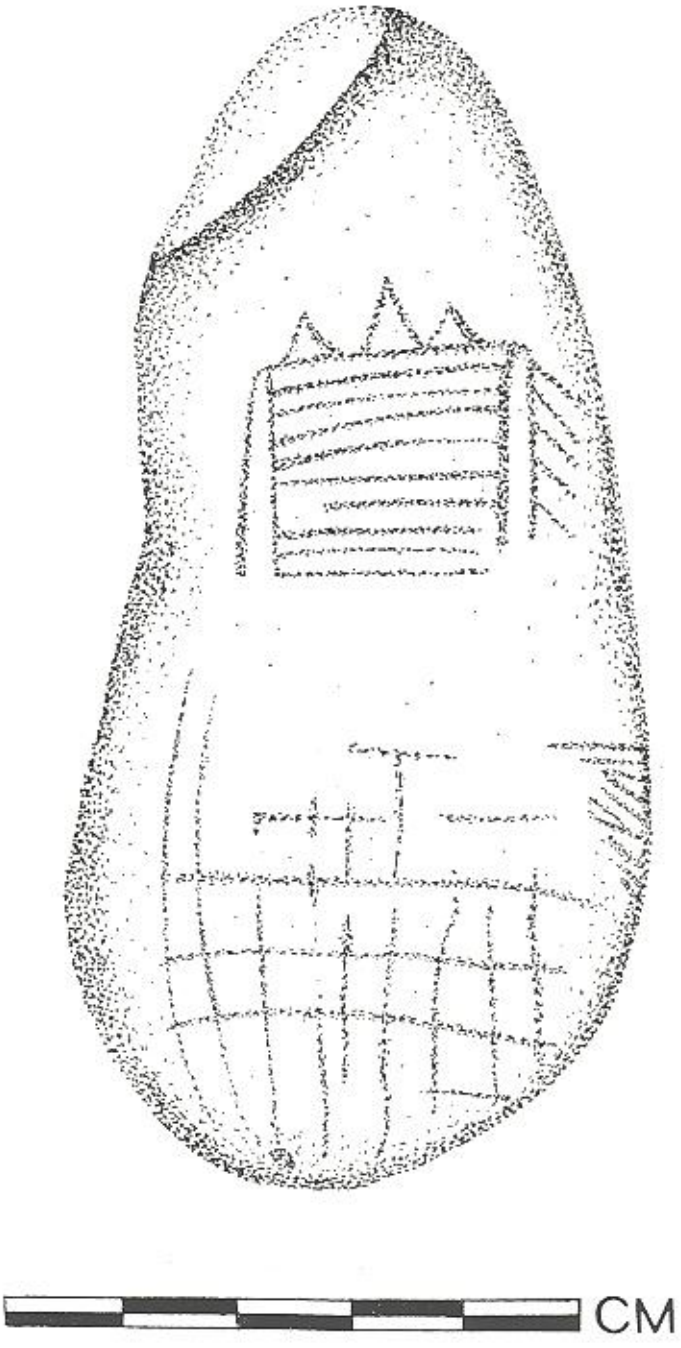

Figure 1.
Incised Stone from Gooding County, Idaho.

from east of Priest River (Sally Cupan, personal communication) exhibit randomly placed incised lines.

A determination of the significance and geographical distribution of incised stones in Idaho must await the accumulation of additional data. To this end, published descriptions of additional specimens will further our ability to interpret the regional importance of incised stones.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Margaret Pfoertner for the incised stone illustration.

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BEYOND THE INDEX CARD:

Results of a Computerization Survey in Idaho

by
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ABSTRACT

The results of a 1979 survey of Idaho archeologists concerning the current and future methods of handling archeological information after the completion of fieldwork are described.

Computerized data banking of archeological information has been in the offing since the first museum catalogs were transferred to computers during the mid 1960s. Although data banks proved useful for collections management early on, it was not until recently that technological advances resulted in programs which are useful not only in cultural resource management and collections management, but also in research at the same time.

During 1978 and 1979 a study was made of the utility of such programs for use in Idaho archeology (Hallock 1980). In the course of the study, a questionnaire was circulated to 31 Idaho archeologists to elicit information concerning the current state of information storage and accessibility in the state. Twenty-four archeologists responded, seventeen of those were management archeologists whose primary affiliation was a government agency. The remaining seven respondents were primarily affiliated with a museum or university in Idaho. Of the six who did not respond, five were university affiliates.

The comments and responses to the survey indicated the importance of a number of concerns about the utility of computers in the banking of archeological information. These concerns paralleled the general trends of thought suggested in the literature of the past decade such as hardware adequacy (Chenhall 1971), software adequacy (Scholtz and Chenhall 1976), the limits of typology (Whallon 1972), and the necessity for project-specific software programs (Cowgill 1973; Scholtz and Chenhall 1976). In addition, archeologists also noted the potential utility of computerized information banks in determining archeological significance on a regional basis (Thompson 1974), and the importance of computers in facilitating the use of previously collected

materials (Marquardt 1977).

Idaho archeologists expressed similar concerns in their responses to the survey. A discussion of these responses and comments follows:

Question 1

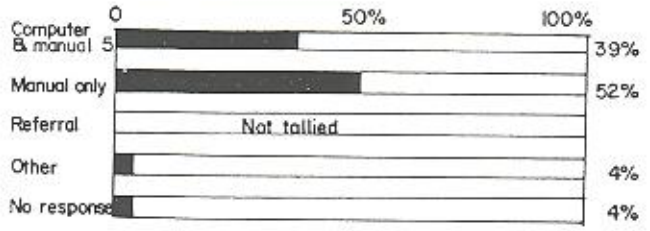
What type of system does your instituion use to process and manage archeological data after the completion of fieldwork?

a. Computer Type
Program
b. Manual indexing
c. Referral to another institution
d. Other Specify

The first question was designed to generate background information on systems currently in use. Fifty-two percent

The first question was designed to generate background information on systems currently in use. Fifty-two percent of the respondents indicated that their agency or institution uses only manual indexing to handle archeological information (Table 1). Thirty-nine percent indicated the use of a computer in conjunction with manual systems.

Table I. Information Systems in Use



Question 2

How effective is the system for the initial organizing and processing of data?

1 2 3 4 5
ineffective very effective

Question 2 was based on multi-purpose computer programs such as ORACLE (Limp 1978) whose design allows its use for a number of project types. Since no similar programs are found in Idaho, some academic archeologists found the question to be confusing research and management computer use which they felt require separate project-specific programs. Nonetheless, 55% of those archeologists who are using computers rated the effectiveness of their systems at 5, very effective (Table 2). Of those with access to manual systems alone, 50% rated their system effectiveness at 3 on the scale of one to five (Table 3).

Table 2. Initial Effectiveness of Computer Systems

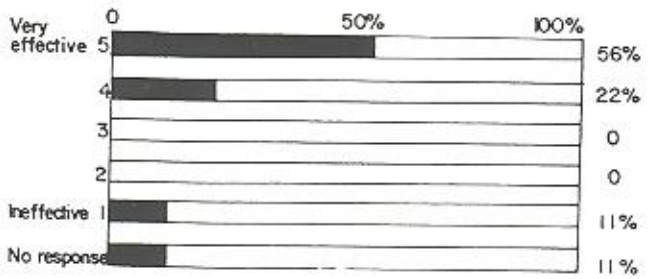
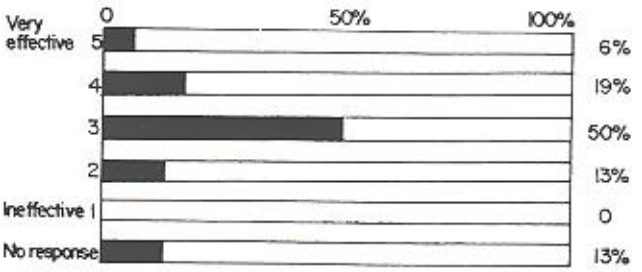


Table 3. Initial Effectiveness of Manual Systems



Question 3

How effective is the system for the later retrieval and use of archeological information?

1 2 3 4 5
ineffective very effective

Question 3 refers to the later accessibility of information whether for resource management, research, or museum use. In this question, as in question 2, the largest percentage of respondents using computer systems rated their effectiveness at 5 (Table 4). Of those with access to manual systems alone, 37% rated their systems at 3 (Table 5).

Table 4. Later Effectiveness of Computer Systems

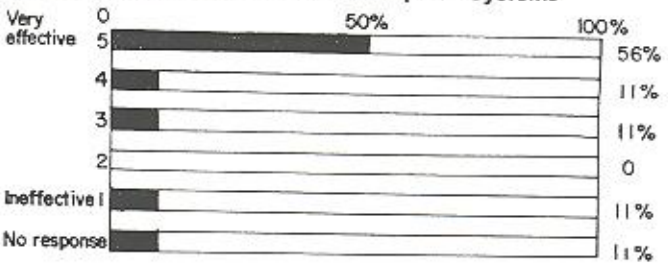
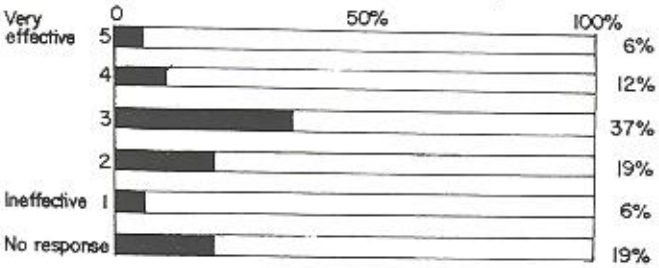


Table 5. Later Effectiveness of Manual Systems



Question 4

Do you anticipate a change to a new system which will involve the introduction or expansion of computer use within the next five years?

yes no

Of those archeologists currently using only manual systems, 68% expected to convert to computer systems within the next five years. Thirty-one percent of those currently using computer systems expected further expansion or change to another system within five years.

Question 5

How accessible to you are archeological data at other institutions in the state?

1 2 3 4 5

Most are inaccessible — Most are accessible

If data are inaccessible, to what do you attribute this?

a. Flaws in the systems themselves
b. Poor management of the systems
c. Availability of funds
d. Inaccessibility because of distance
e. Other (specify)

This question was designed to learn whether archeologists in Idaho are having problems accessing information from agencies and institutions throughout the state. Most of the respondents to this question rated data accessibility at four on a scale of one to five (Table 6). The responses indicate that archeologists generally find data to be accessible. When inaccessibility is a problem, 32% of the respondents related it to flaws in the data systems (Table 7). A number of responses to choice "e. Other" indicated the importance of an additional category: "Personality of the administrator or director." For tally purposes, this response was collapsed into the poor management category (Table 7).

Choice "e" also included a comment concerning excess amounts of time needed to get information from some institutions. This comment was tallied as a system flaw, leaving one response to choice "e" —poor quality of early data collection. Over half of the respondents did not reply to this part of question 5. Presumably this is a further indication that they consider data at most institutions in Idaho to be fairly accessible.

Table 6. Accessibility of Archeological Data

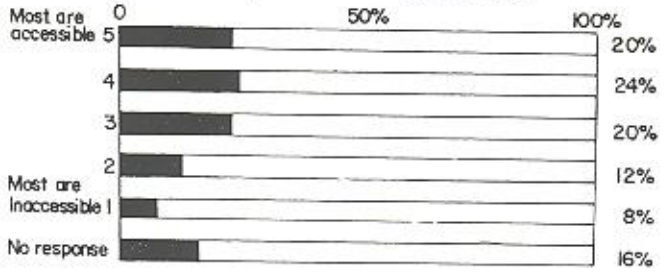
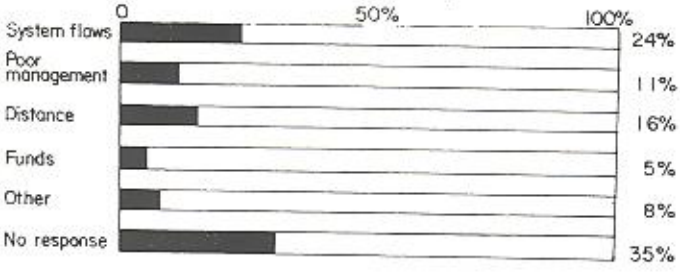


Table 7. Reasons for Data Inaccessibility

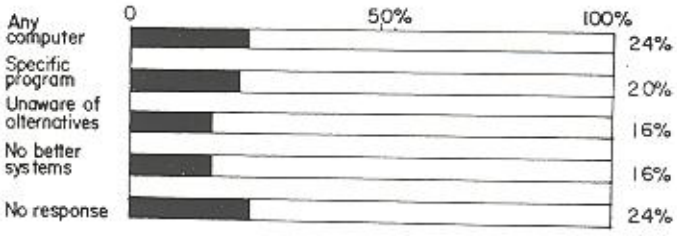


Question 6

Are there other data management systems in the United States which would better serve your institution? Specify. Why?

Responses to this question expressed satisfaction or the lack of it with methods in use and indicated alternative improved systems. Twenty-four percent responded positively that a computer system of some sort would be better than manual, although they were unaware of the alternatives. Sixteen percent wrote that they were unaware of other systems, and 24% did not respond to the question (Table 8). Twenty percent were able to list specific software programs of which they approved.

Table 8. Suggested System Improvements



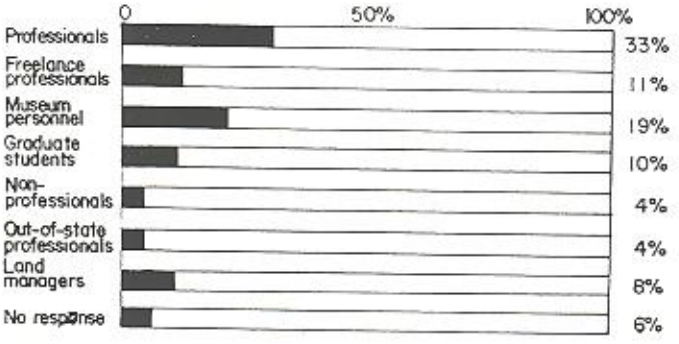
Question 7

Who would you expect to be the greatest users of such a system?

a. Professional archeologists associated with an agency or institution
b. Freelance professional archeologists
c. Museum research personnel
d. Graduate students
e. Non-professionals
f. Research and professional archeologists from out of state
g. Other (specify)

Question 7 was designed to elicit information on potential users of a statewide computerized data banking system. The greatest use was expected to come from professionals associated with an agency or institution. Several responses in the "Other" category indicated the importance of an additional category, "Land managers" (Table 9).

Table 9. Expected Users of a Statewide System



Question 8

What do you see as the greatest deterrent to a statewide or regional computer data banking system in Idaho?

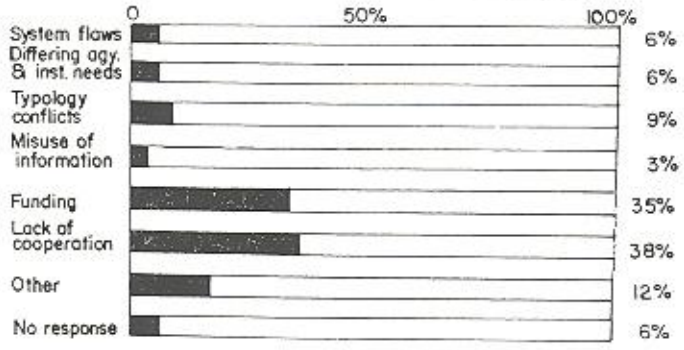
a. Flaws in the system itself
b. Misuse of information gathered on the system
c. Funding
d. Lack of cooperation among management personnel
e. Other (specify)

Responses to this question expressed the objections and concerns of archeologists regarding the effects of local data banking. The largest percentage of respondents indicated lack of cooperation among management personnel to be the

greatest deterrent. This was followed by funding as a close second (Table 10).

The few academic archeologists who responded to this question indicated concern about the differing needs of agencies and institutions, and the inability of archeologists to quantify data or agree on typologies. These two concerns were expressed as additional categories on the tally since the sample of academic archeologists was too small to justify separate analysis. Had more responses been received from this sector of the profession, it is expected that the percentages in these two categories would rise somewhat reflecting the theoretical concerns of academic archeologists.

Table 10. Expected Deterrents to a Statewide System



Responses in the "Other" category included lack of motivation, hardware incompatibility, and poor quality of past information as further impediments to data banking in Idaho.

Remarks

The remarks section was used by most respondents to further explain the specific computer systems in which they were interested, or to discuss expected deterrents to data banking in the state.

In general, questions raised by the respondents regarding the handling of archeological information in Idaho indicate the importance of several issues:

1. flexibility of computer programs to allow for utility in all sectors of the profession;
2. the necessity of standardization of information gathered;
3. the lack of funding to carry out a computerized system of information banking.

In fact, progress has been made in handling these problems in other parts of the country through the development of software programs such as ORACLE (Indiana University), REX (Bureau of Land Management), and ARIS (University of Utah). Programs such as these incorporate a flexibility in formatting and interface with statistical packages, encouraging their use not only in resource management, but also in research. The initial small-scale implementation of the most utile of these in Idaho would not only provide a testing and proving ground for a later information bank in the state, but also a foundation for dealing with the problems of information standardization and, most elusive of all, funding.

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A BISON METAPODIAL FLESHER FROM THE EASTERN SNAKE RIVER PLAIN

by B. Robert Butler,
Associate Professor of Anthropology,
Curator of Archaeology
Idaho Museum of Natural History

Bone fleshers of any kind are scarce items in the archaeology of southern Idaho. The specimen illustrated here (Fig. 1) was found by Mr. Ken Cunnigton of Idaho Falls in 1979 eroding out of a bank of Camas Creek near Idman, Idaho, just south of the mountains lying along the Continental Divide in this locality (Fig. 1). There were two sheep-size rib bones also eroding from the bank of the creek at the same location, but no other cultural materials or features were in evidence. Thus, the cultural context and age of the specimen are unknown. I would guess that it is late prehistoric/early historic; identical examples have been found among ethnographic Plains Indians (e.g., Lowie 1954:Fig. 46,b).

The Camas Creek flesher is made from the proximal end of a *Bison* (cf bison) metatarsus, probably with the adjacent articulars left attached. When found by Mr. Cunnington, an entocuneiform was lying in direct contact with the proximal end of the metatarsus. The complete flesher measures 18.3 x 4.9 x 4.9cm. The fine-toothed end is quite sharp, but the margins of the beveled face are well rounded and smooth.

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Figure 1. Bison metapodial flesher from the Eastern Snake River Plain, drawn by Frankie Forrest; bone identified by Dr. John White, Idaho Museum of Natural History. Map shows location of find.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article, *Why Owyhee?* was written for and published in Issue No. 10 of the *Owyhee Outpost*, a 1979 publication of the Owyhee County Historical Society. Issue No. 10 with bibliography can be found in the Idaho State Library in Boise.

James L. Huntley
Marsing Idaho
Associate Editor

WHY OWYHEE?
NOTES ON THE ORIGIN OF A NAME

by Paul F. Hooper

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Paul F. Hooper grew up on a ranch near Dixie, Washington. He attended Dixie Grade School and Walla Walla High School and is graduated from what is now Eastern Washington University. After graduation, Mr. Hooper moved to Hawaii where he received his MA and PhD degrees at the University of Hawaii.

Academically, his time has been divided between local history studies and international relations.

Mr. Hooper has had articles published (mainly on Hawaiian history) in a number of journals. He has prepared a major book on Hawaiian history that is in the final stages of publication.

At the present time, Mr. Hooper is an Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Despite years of concentration on Hawaiian and Pacific Basin history, he has maintained an interest in Northwest history. The present article, written with research assistance of his parents, Charlotte and Dallas Hooper of Walla Walla, brings his interest in both regions together.

Travelers crossing southern Idaho on their way west sometimes depart from the main highway in order to follow the more scenic course of the Snake River as it winds its way through the region. Those who do so eventually traverse the northern reaches of Owyhee County and, if they select a particular route, cross the Owyhee River as it flows out of the Owyhee Mountains, the site of the famed 19th Century Owyhee Mines. Should they take a brief detour into eastern Oregon, they would come to the Owyhee Reclamation project which uses water stored behind Owyhee Dam—the world's tallest earth-filled structure when it was completed in 1932—to irrigate thousands of formerly barren acres. On the other hand, should they tire of the slower drive along the Snake and attempt to return across country to the main highway, they might, if thoroughly lost, come to Owyhee Station on the Union Pacific railway. If they used sufficiently old maps in attempting to find their way out of the dilemma, they would notice still other places throughout the region utilizing some form of the name Owyhee.

Encountering the name Owyhee so frequently, these travelers would surely come to wonder about its origins. In all probability, they would arrive at the entirely logical conclusion that it is somehow related to the several nations of American Indians native to the region. That, as scholars and residents of the area have long known, would be a mistake. The word is actually an early spelling of Hawaii, and its common usage recalls a once important linkage between early-day Hawaii and the Northwest which grew up around the single contributions of people from Hawaii to the development of the fur trade, lumber industry, and printing craft in the Northwest. Scholarship on this linkage has been sporadic at best and to date has overlooked what, in a sense, is the most basic of all the related topics. How did the name Owyhee—at once the symbol and the last vestige of the linkage—actually come into usage?

Most of the writers who do touch upon this question simply state that a number of Hawaiian fur trappers were killed by Indians while trapping along what is now the Owyhee River sometime around 1820, and that the river was thereafter named in their memory.

This, in turn, led to the later use of the name throughout the region. A few of these writers also mention in passing that the Hawaiians were part of the 1818–1820 Donald McKenzie expedition sent out by the North West Company—one of the principal fur trading companies of the area—to explore and trap along the middle and upper reaches of the Snake River. Unfortunately, these brief accounts fail to adequately address either of the broader questions revolving about the seemingly remarkable fact that Hawaiians were even present in the Northwest at this early date, or the more specific questions pertaining to the presence of a particular group of Hawaiians working deep in the mountains of the middle Snake River country at this specific moment in time.

In fact, any sense of incongruity here is more apparent than real. While it may come as a surprise to those unfamiliar with the period, Hawaiians were among the more important of the various national groups involved in the initial development of the Northwest. Introduced to foreign travel in the years immediately following Captain James Cook's rediscovery of the Islands in 1778, they quickly developed a wanderlust which resulted in innumerable journeys to all parts of the world, usually as seamen on British or American vessels. Even the monarchs were subject to this urge. In 1823–1824, Kamehameha II and Queen Kamamalu traveled to England (where, unfortunately, both succumbed to measles), and in 1881 Kalakaua became the first reigning monarch to circumnavigate the globe.

As might be expected, the Northwest, relatively close and frequently on the route of ships stopping over in Hawaii, was among the earliest destinations of Hawaiian travelers. As near as can be determined, the first such visitor was Kaiana (earlier spelled Tianna), a prominent chieftain from the island of Hawaii, who was aboard the Iphigenia with Captain James Douglas in 1788 when she called at Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island, then the region's principal anchorage as Puget Sound and the Columbia River were still unknown. Appropriately enough, this was Kaiana's second voyage abroad. He had earlier been to China with Captain John Meares. In 1789, Meares, who had previously visited the Northwest as well as China, took a group of seventy Chinese men and an equal number of Hawaiian women to Nootka in an ill-fated attempt to establish a colony which would in turn support the harbor's growing community of traders and explorers. The effort failed when Spain, in what would be a last and futile effort to maintain control over her Northwest claims, offered resistance. Despite the failure of this venture and the unknown fate of the 140 participants, similar ventures involving people from Hawaii were attempted

in subsequent years. Most of them, like the Winship colony established near the mouth of the Columbia River in 1810, failed, although others, such as the Iosepa colony formed much later in Utah, were successful.

Most of the Hawaiians in the Northwest, however, did not come as visitors, seamen, or colonists. Rather, they came as laborers under contract to the various fur trapping companies active in the region after the turn of the Century, principally John Jacob Astor's short-lived Pacific Fur Company, the previously-noted North West Company, and the famed Hudson's Bay Company. The recruitment of Hawaiians to work in the fur trade was facilitated by the fact that these companies used Honolulu as an outfitting and resupply depot, and their ships were frequently in port. Indeed, Hawaii's role in this respect was important enough that Astor is said to have considered purchasing an island in the Hawaiian chain to assure a permanent depot site.

Predictably, then, the records of the fur companies and the journals of their chief officials (in so far as they exist) contain numerous references to Hawaiians during the boom years of the fur trade in the first half of the Century. For the most part complimentary, they speak of the Islanders not only as fur trappers and seamen but also as carpenters, miners, shipwrights, farmers, loggers, porters, herdsmen, and even preachers. Some of these records further indicate that Hawaiians were regarded as particularly fierce and effective Indian fighters. Although it is difficult to be precise about the number of Hawaiians actually residing in the Northwest at any given time during these years—estimates at the time range from Hawaiian Foreign Minister R. C. Wyllie's guess of "about 300" in 1844 to Hudson's Bay Company figures showing that some 1,000 people were leaving Hawaii annually during this period and were destined, at least in part, for the Northwest—it is clear that they constituted a sizeable and important group. Hence, it is hardly surprising that some of them should have been involved in the fracas which stamped the name Owyhee upon so much of the Northwest.

Information on the fracas itself is much more difficult to find. As suggested, few general accounts mention it at all and those that do seldom contain any degree of detail. Further, most of these accounts are largely undocumented. Even Hubert Howe Bancroft's pioneering study of the Northwest (two solid volumes in his massive thirty-nine volume study of the Pacific slope) is deficient in this respect. Although documented, it includes only a brief summary of events. This does not mean, however, that the information is not available. On the contrary, Alexander Ross, McKenzie's second in command during the previously-mentioned 1818–1820 expedition, wrote a book based upon his original notes and journals which deals in part with the expedition and has been available for over a century. While McKenzie himself apparently kept no journals and his recollections are thus unavailable, Ross' book amounts to an original account of much of the expedition and an entirely acceptable account of the remainder, including the circumstances surrounding the death of the Hawaiian trappers. It might be noted that Bancroft himself used Ross extensively and could, therefore, have expanded his treatment of this particular incident had he chosen to do so.

Ross reports in detail where others have merely summarized. As a consequence, it is possible to construct a rather clear picture of the expedition and how the several unfortunate Hawaiian participants met their end. The chain of events leading to their deaths began during the summer of 1818 when McKenzie led the expedition into the lower Snake country with orders to construct a new trading post to replace the peripherally located Spokane House as the center of the company's interior operations in the Northwest, and to explore along the length of the Snake in an effort to find new sources of furs. Composed of twenty-five Canadians, thirty-two Hawáiians, and thirty-eight Iroquois Indians, the expedition traveled up the Columbia River from Fort George (formerly Astoria), reaching the area where the Snake and Walla Walla River flow into the Columbia on July 11. On a site near the junction of the Walla Walla and the Columbia, work was started immediately upon a fortress and trading post which was first called Fort Nez Perce and subsequently renamed Fort Walla Walla.

When the structure was completed in September, McKenzie selected fifty-five men "of all denominations" for a smaller exploring and trapping expedition along the Snake in compliance with his original orders. Ross and the remaining forty members of the expedition were left behind to man the new fort.

Equipped with abundant supplies and transport, McKenzie's group crossed the Blue Mountains and descended onto the middle Snake to begin nearly two years of exploring and trapping along the middle and upper reaches of the river. During the second winter (1819–1820), three Hawaiians in the group were detailed to trap along the river later named in their memory where they were, of course, murdered. As Ross tells it:

> There (along the middle Snake) our friends (McKenzie's group) passed a winter of five months (1819–1820), before the fine weather broke in upon them. Then removing to some distance (they) commenced their spring hunt in a part of the country rich in beaver. While here they were visited by several bands of the Snakes, chiefly Sherrydikas, and among others by Pee-eye-em and Amquiem with a large squad of followers. The astonishment of these people was great on the day of their arrival at seeing two-hundred and forty beaver caught by the hunters and brought into camp all at once.
>
> These two great men were very anxious to know from McKenzie whether any of his people had been killed by the Indians during the winter, and being answered in the negative, they appeared much pleased. They were however told that one had been lost but was found. Little did our friends then think what had really happened, or what had invited the Indians to be so inquisitive. It will be remembered that three of the "Owyhees" (his spelling), as well as others had been fitted out on a little river to hunt beaver, and our people had not heard any tidings of them. The three unfortunate men had all been murdered; this is what the chiefs had heard and were so anxious to know.
>
> As our people were about to start on their homeward journey, the two friendly chiefs expressed an

ardent wish to accompany them. 'We wish,' they said, 'to see the Shy-to-gas,' exclusive of seeing the Nez Perces, they thought by accompanying our people it would ensure their return to their lands again. Our people however did not discourage them from so tedious and hazardous a journey, and so embarassing to our people. McKenzie, however, assured them of his speedy return. After spending about ten days with our people, they set out to return homeward. Both parties therefore took leave of each other with feelings of regret. As soon as the chiefs went off our people prepared to start and in the meantime, a party with an Indian guide was sent off to pick up and bring into camp the three Owyhees already mentioned. They found the place where they had been hunting, and where they had been murdered! The skeleton of one of them was found but nothing else. The fact that one of their horses had been seen in the possession of the banditti left no doubt in the minds of our people that they were the murderers.

While this account obviously was composed after the expedition's return to Fort Walla Walla the following spring, it is, as suggested earlier, a near approximation of an original report on the incident. Hence, it can be taken as the basic source on the event which caused early trappers to name the river, and more generally, the region after the unfortunate Hawaiians. It might be further noted that the name rather quickly gained acceptance. The journals of still another early explorer—Peter Skene Ogden—illustrate. Coming upon the river early in 1826 during an expedition through the area, he referred to it first as the "Sandwich Island River" (after Cook's name for Hawaii) and subsequently as the Owyhee River. So it is that the name Owyhee was introduced to the geographical vocabulary of the Northwest.

Like most historical events, the significance of the incident extends well beyond what is immediately apparent. In the first instance, it is a reminder that the name is as much a memorial as a description. It commemorates both the regrettable fate of three men from Hawaii and the noteworthy contributions that many more Hawaiians made toward the development of the Northwest. This is as it should be. More important, it is an early example of an urge toward overseas involvement that would in time become a major characteristic of modern Hawaiian society, leading, among other things, to an imperialist venture into the South Pacific, near war with Germany, formation of the world-famous Institute of Pacific Relations, and creation of a distinctly internationalist university. Hence, akin to so many seemingly isolated and irrelevant episodes in history, this incident is in fact part of a much broader issue and is thus a factor of some consequence rather than simply an interesting curiosity.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Idaho Archaeologist
Bill Norquist
423 7th Avenue South
Nampa, ID 83651

Dear Bill:

Would it be possible to include in the next issue of Idaho Archaeology the following notice by one of our graduate students, Karl Gurcke? Karl is one of the more serious students and I am inclined to try and support his research. I am also interested in the fact that much of it is based on the work we did in the San Juan Islands.

Also I need a correction to my last article which I am happy to say was neither your nor my fault, but was a result of one of the companies changing hands. Could you have an item that reads:

> Correction to R. Sprague, Metal Cleaning for Whom, *Idaho Archaeologist,* Vol. 4, No. 2:
>
> The address for the Idaho Garnet Abrasive Co. has changed and is now Route 4, Box 4, Fernwood, ID 83830.

I hope to have some suggestions for reprints of ancient articles sometime in the next couple of weeks.

Sincerely,

Roderick Sprague
University of Idaho

NOTICE:

Karl Gurcke, Department of Sociology/Anthropology, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83843, is conducting research into the brick industry of the Pacific Northwest. He would appreciate sharing information with anyone who has bricks in their collection either from archaeological sites or otherwise, or who has made a study of the industry both here and abroad. He would also be interested in hearing about the location of lime kilns, smelters, or other abandoned industrial operations that involve the use of high heat and fire bricks. Since a number of fire bricks are coming in from foreign countries, he would be grateful for information on the brick industries of Belgium, China, England, Japan, Russia, Scotland, and Wales.

COMING EVENTS

NORTHWEST ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

The 1981 Northwest Anthropological Conference will be held March 25 through 28 at Portland State University.

IACPA MEETING

The semi-annual Spring meeting of the Idaho Advisory Council of Professional Archaeologists will be held at Idaho State University, Pocatello, on April 10, 1981.

IAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Ninth Annual Conference of the Idaho Archaeological Society will see a change in locale this year. It will be held at the University of Idaho, Moscow, on October 3. Dr. Roderick Sprague, U of I, has agreed to handle the coordination with the assistance of Bob Nelson, President, and the members of the Panhandle Chapter of the IAS.

Interested amateurs or non-professionals are welcome at all of the above meetings. See your professional advisor or friendly neighborhood archaeologist for details of the first two. We will keep our readers advised concerning the IAS October Conference at Moscow.

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