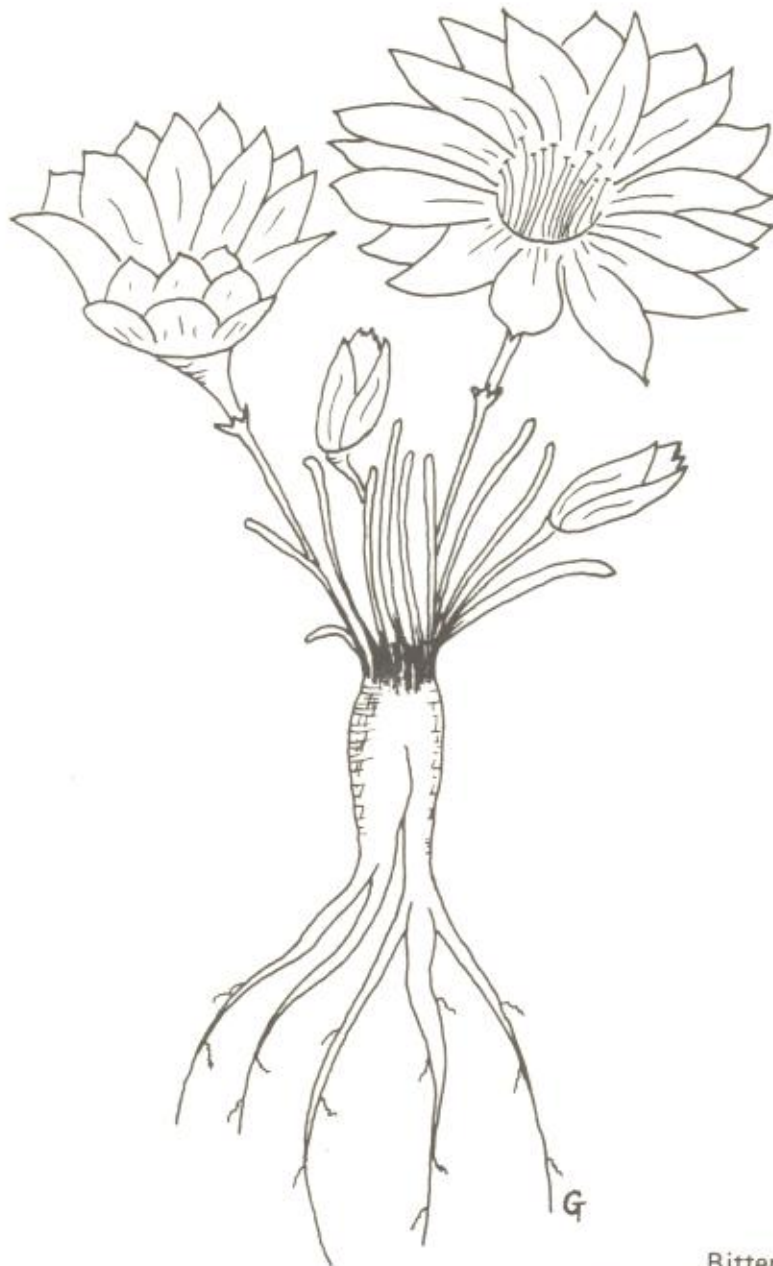


# IDAHO ARCHAEOLOGIST



Bitterroot  
Drawing by Glenda Torgeson

**Vol. III No. 3**

# IDAHO ARCHAEOLOGIST

## VOLUME III, No. 3

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## BITTERROOT: A NATIVE AMERICAN PLANT FOOD

By  
Glenda Torgeson

### ABSTRACT

The bitterroot was a staple food resource for most of the Indians of Idaho and the surrounding area. Its growth habits, distribution, uses and methods of preparation are discussed in this article.

Idaho State Historical Society  
February, 1980

The bitterroot plant was first collected for scientific purpose in 1806 by Captain Meriwether Lewis in western Montana. *Lewisia rediviva* was an important item in the diet of the aboriginal inhabitants of Idaho and surrounding areas. However, because of its apparent scarcity in Idaho, getting bitterroot required trade or long excursions to neighboring territories.

A member of the Purslane family, bitterroot, or rockrose, has a showy flower up to 4 cm across with 12 to 18 petals colored white to rose. The fleshy leaves appear as soon as the snow melts but tend to wither and disappear before the flower opens in late April through June, depending upon the altitude. The flowers, which close at night, can number four to six per plant. The bitterroot's habitat extends from the sagebrush plains to low mountains; it grows most commonly in the exposed sandy dry soils of slopes, hills, and ridges. Bitterroot is distributed from Montana to British Columbia, south to Colorado and California. This includes Idaho where it is apparently not abundant.

Collected on the Lewis and Clark expedition, *Lewisia* was examined and named by botanist Frederick Pursh. Its genus name, of course, refers to its collector. The species name, meaning "brought to life," notes that Pursh was able to restore to life the original dried specimens which are still alive today in the Philadelphia Academy of Sciences (Williams 1977).

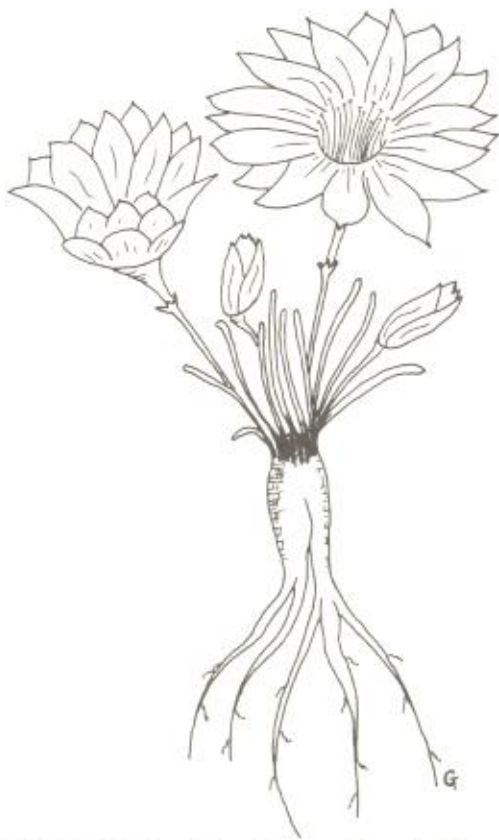
Bitterroot served as a major trade item in the southern Interior of British Columbia (Turner 1978, Steedman 1930). The Okanagan and Kootenay considered it the most important root food (Turner 1978). *L. rediviva* was used by the Paiute of Warm Springs, Oregon (Murphey 1959, Kelly 1932, Mahar 1953) and Surprise Valley, Nevada

(Kelly 1932), the Shoshone of Smoky Valley, Nevada (Murphey 1959), and the Blackfoot of Montana and Canada (Murphey 1959). Another species, *L. nevadensis*, was used by the Maidu of northern California (Mead 1972). Northwest and Plains groups also ate *L. columbiana* as well as *L. pygmaea*, which was important to the Blackfoot and Flathead (Steedman 1919, Johnston 1970). *L. pygmaea* is noted as the cause of some warfare between the Blackfoot and the Flathead, who controlled the rich bitterroot grounds of the Bitterroot Valley of Montana (Johnston 1970).

In Idaho, bitterroot was used primarily by northern and central groups (Walker 1973) and was a favorite food of the Nez Perce and Coeur d'Alene who traveled great distances to procure it (Harbinger 1964, Liljeblad 1957). Spinden (1908) specifically mentions the Bitterroot mountains of Montana and the mountains near Imnaha, Oregon as gathering grounds for the Nez Perce. Scrimsher (1967) and Harbinger (1964) state that the Nez Perce secured bitterroot through trade with Montana, Spokane, or Oregon Indians. Folklore suggests that a bag of bitterroot was worth as much as a horse and its popularity also extended to the mountain men of the Northwest.

Bitterroot was gathered in early to late May, depending upon the altitude. At this time the roots were most nutritious because the stored starch had not been consumed by the still undeveloped flower. Early gathering also assured easier removal of the root covering, which contains much of the bitter taste. This covering could be scraped off or the root rubbed between the hands or on a rock until the covering was loosened. Another alternative was to soak or boil the roots to remove the bitter skin (Murphey 1959). Turner (1978) describes an





**BITTERROOT:** Drawing by Glenda Torgeson

additional process practiced by the Interior peoples of British Columbia. After prying up the roots with a digging stick and peeling them, the "heart" or embryo, another source of bitterness, was removed by splitting open the top of the root and pulling it out with the fingers. Turner also states that bitterroots vary in size and bitterness with those higher, over 760 m (2,500 ft), tending to be larger and less bitter. Because of the shallowness of the roots or corms, bitterroot was said by the Nez Perce to be easier to dig than cous or camas (Scrimsher 1967).

Some bitterroot can be palatable raw (Kirk 1970) but ethnographic accounts indicate that the root was always boiled or baked. According to Turner (1978), the Interior British Columbia groups almost always combined them with other foods, especially berries. For added flavor the Okanagan baked the corms in pits with rose leaves. The Interior B.C. peoples considered bitterroot, along with balsamroot, to be dessert food eaten after the main course as a special treat and today use it in pudding or fruitcake (Turner 1978). The Warm Springs Paiute (Mahar 1954) and the Yakimas (Scrimsher 1967) are reported to have eaten their bitterroot in combination with salmon. This was not the practice of the Nez Perce who boiled the roots 10-15 minutes

and seasoned them with fat or berries (Scrimsher 1967).

Bitterroot's flavor has been described as mild and pleasant, similar to rice, but leaving a bitter after-taste. Cooking changes the roots, also called macaroni root, to a jelly-like consistency and imparts a tobacco-like aroma (Angier 1974).

Bitterroot was dried by stringing the fresh roots on strings or sticks and spreading them out on mats for several days in the sun (Turner 1978). The Nez Perce stored the dried roots in water-tight bags or baskets for as long as two years (Scrimsher 1967). However, age may have caused increased bitterness (Turner 1978). Several general botanical books (Angier 1974, Williams 1977, Craighead, Craighead, and Davis 1963), mention the powdering of bitterroot to make meal. No specific aboriginal groups, however, are cited, nor is this practice described in the ethnographies.

High in starch, bitterroot has a nutritive value similar to brown rice (Walker 1973). Scrimsher (1967) provides a comparison to camas: bitterroot has less protein and caloric value, and more carbohydrates and calcium. Also, one of the Nez Perce informants said that bitterroot was excellent for lactating mothers.

The Okanagan at Penticton, B.C. consider the bitterroot the "king" of all the roots and honor it in their first roots ceremony. Along with four maidens who picked the first Saskatoon berries and four men who would hunt and fish, four of the "purest young maidens" would dig the first bitterroots in May. The resulting fare was consumed in a large feast to thank the foods for returning once more (Turner 1978).

Unfortunately, the sighting of a bitterroot flower in Idaho and elsewhere is becoming an increasingly rare experience. Humans and their animals are taking over the habitat. Consumption by modern man is advisable only in an emergency.

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COMMENTS ON BUTLER'S  
"NATIVE POTTERY OF THE UPPER SNAKE  
AND SALMON RIVER COUNTRY"

By  
Mark G. Plew

ABSTRACT

In a paper recently published in this journal, Butler (1979a) discusses the presence of Fremont-like ceramics in Southern Idaho. In addition to his consideration of Idaho pottery, he discusses the merits of the so-called Shoshonean expansion model as espoused by Madsen (1975) and Wright (1978). This paper clarifies certain problem areas of Butler's article.

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In a recent paper, Butler (1979a) has discussed the presence of a Fremont related or derived ceramic tradition in Southern Idaho. Because Butler's (1979a) paper is an important statement on Fremont in Southern Idaho, a few brief comments are needed to clarify what are viewed as problems with his discussion. Butler (1979a:1-10) failed to appreciate the significance of published data on Fremont-like ceramics and material culture similarities of Great Salt Lake Fremont and Sevier culture with aboriginal occupations in the southcentral Owyhee uplands (Plew 1979a:100-101). This paper refers to a relatively well-made ware distinguishable from typical Shoshonean or Intermountain ware, believed related to or derived from a Fremont-Sevier tradition. A more concise statement has been recently published (Plew 1979b). It is important that Butler and I have independently arrived at similar conclusions concerning Fremont influence in Southern Idaho. It is, however, unfortunate that Butler dismissed my work in view of its importance to the theme of his paper. The implications of Butler's (1979a) paper go beyond the presence of Fremont ceramics in Idaho. Questions raised by Butler's (1979a) thesis include the possible relationship of Fremont-like pottery in Idaho to the decline and disappearance of the Fremont pattern at c. AD 1300 and the so-called Shoshonean expansion. In this context the southwestern Idaho data are quite germane to Butler's (1979a) discussion.

There are additional aspects of Butler's article deserving comment. One such problem involves his discussion of material culture similarities between Great Salt Lake Fremont and the Upper Snake and Salmon River country (1979a:7). Butler (1979a:7) implies that Promontory and Great Salt Lake Gray Wares are characteristic of Great Salt Lake Fremont. This is misleading. Madsen (1979) notes the manufacture of Promontory Ware during the Late Levee phase (AD 1000-1350) of the Great Salt Lake Fremont, but stops short of considering it characteristic (see also Table IV, p. 99). A more careful reading of Madsen (1979:98-99) indicates that Promontory Gray is not specifically characteristic of the Great Salt Lake Fremont variant. In fact, Uinta Gray Ware constitutes a greater frequency percentage of the total ceramics at most sites than does Promontory Ware, which most probably represents a locally made intrusive ware (Madsen 1979:98-99). This is significant since one Blackfoot Reservoir sherd was considered to be Promontory Ware (Neudorfer 1976:53) and implicitly underlies Butler's (1979a) suggestion of a Fremont presence in Southern Idaho. It is equally important to note that sherd No. 137 (the Promontory sherd) was not associated with the oven (Neudorfer 1976:52).

Two additional problems concern Butler's discussion of Idaho ceramics. First, the radiocarbon date of AD 1230  $\pm$  70 (WSU 1478) cited for the earth oven at the Poison Creek site (Neudorfer 1976) does



not correlate with that given by Neudorfer as AD 720  $\pm$  70: AD 1222 (see Neudorfer 1976:34,52). Secondly, the author's (Butler 1979a:8) discussion of Wilson Butte Plain Ware gives insufficient attention to the fact that the pottery type Deep Creek buff, to which Rudy compared certain of the Wilson Butte sherds (see Gruhn 1961:99-100), is by the description provided by Malouf (1946) a Fremont type pottery. It is presumably on the basis of this comparison that Aikens (1966:3) refers to Wilson Butte Plain Ware as Fremont pottery. This is significant since Butler rigidly considers Wilson Butte Plain to be Intermountain Ware. Failure to accept the possible improper identification of certain pottery types can only impede a better understanding of Idaho's ceramic traditions.

A final comment regards the author's discussion of the Shoshonean expansion hypothesis. Butler notes that the absence of ceramics in radiocarbon dated layers of late prehistoric age in the Upper Snake and Salmon River country has been used by some writers, specifically Wright (1978) to support the Shoshonean expansion or migration model (1979a:8). In this context, Butler states, "Wright ignored or failed to appreciate the significance of published data on the distribution of pottery finds in the Upper Snake and Salmon River Country." He suggests that the absence of pottery in certain areas is very possibly the result of types of food resources and division of labor (Butler 1970). An examination of Butler's cited reference provides little confirmatory evidence and is entirely contained in the following passage:

Fragments of the typical coarse grey-brown "Shoshoni" pottery were observed in all areas surveyed except Area C. The observed pottery in Area C is unexplainable at this moment. More interesting is the fact that while pottery occurs widely and abundantly in the Pioneer Basin locality (there are over 100 fragments from Area B alone) and is abundant in the late prehistoric layers at the Wasden site (unpublished data), it is virtually absent in Birch Creek Valley. This suggests to me the possibility that the resources of the valley were exploited by a somewhat different social unit than the resources of the Pioneer Basin locality. Perhaps extended family units were involved in the Pioneer Basin locality, but only men or a restricted group of relatives were involved in most of the activities in Birch Creek Valley (Butler 1970:65).

Wright's (1978) failure to account for this variable is directly related to the inconclusive nature of Butler's (1970:65) data. While I agree that this is an

important possible variable which should be considered, it does not logically negate the Shoshonean expansionist hypothesis. Furthermore, the dates cited by Butler (1979a:8) for Intermountain Ware in Southern Idaho tend to support the expansionist model (see e.g., Madsen 1975). In general, Butler's discussion of the expansionist hypothesis appears detached from the central focus of his paper which is a discussion of Fremont-like wares in Southern Idaho.

The purpose of these comments has not been to criticize Butler's thesis, with which I wholeheartedly concur, but to clarify certain minor problems in the text. I would like to make a final comment on what I view as one of the most important aspects of Butler's paper. This is his observation that broad similarities exist between the subsistence bases of the Great Salt Lake Fremont and the Middle and Late Archaic peoples of the Upper Snake and Salmon River country (Butler 1979a:7). This is important since it provides a basis for studying cultural relationships between these areas. At this writing, Butler (1979b) has recently published an interesting and concise statement of these possibilities.

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**A FLUTED POINT FROM THE JORDAN CREEK  
DRAINAGE IN NORTHWESTERN  
OWYHEE COUNTY**

By  
**James L. Huntley**

**ABSTRACT**

This article describes an as yet unnamed fluted point found in southwestern Idaho. There can be little doubt this is a true fluted point as all the required characteristics appear to be present.

Marsing, Idaho  
January, 1980

The small, lanceolate, fluted point discussed here was a surface find picked up by the author during a survey of the several small tributaries which flow southward into Jordan Creek. There are two extensive, and several smaller, open campsites situated near present-day springs and watercourses adjacent to and emptying into these tributaries (Figure 1). The sites have produced some other unusual and interesting artifacts, one of which is possibly a new point type in this area (Clark 1977).

The terrain here was well suited to induce aboriginal occupation, being on a south slope exposure and, in addition to a plentiful supply of water, had a variety of native food plants. Still growing in the area are wild onions, sego lily, wild carrot, balsam root, common sunflower, service berry, chokecherry, wild currant and elder berry, to name a few. Small game and many kinds of birds are also found: marmot, ground squirrel, sage grouse, mourning dove and others. Large game animals are mule deer, antelope, and, in the past, mountain or bighorn sheep.

Quoting from Van Buren:

Although most projectile points are not fluted, it is a most important characteristic to be noted when it is present. Because of wide variations in fluting techniques, it is not adequate to state that a point is fluted (Van Buren 1974:94).

Van Buren gives a list of types of flutes and describes how each is produced as well as providing a series of illustrations (Van Buren 1974:65, 94-95). Regarding pressure fluting, he goes on to say:

Pressure flutes are narrow, shallow flutes, usually 10 to 15 mm in length, removed by hand pressure. In width they vary from 3 to 5 mm, and in depth they seldom exceed 0.5 mm. A long pressure flute is over 20 mm. An average one is 15 to 20 mm, and a short one is 10 to 15 mm in length. If less than 10 mm in length, a pressure flute is considered to be a thinning flake (Van Buren 1974:95).

The fluted point illustrated here (Figure 2) is made of black obsidian. Pressure flaking is irregular and executed with only average skill. The finished point is a good design, however; thin, symmetrical, and has good strength characteristics for a small point. It is just under 4 cm in length, 2 cm in width and about 6 mm thick. The flute on the obverse side is 17 mm long, almost one-half the length of the point, and is 7 mm wide. This shallow flute shows the negative bulb of percussion at the lower or basal end. There is no evidence of a striking platform, which may be further proof that pressure was the probable method used to take off the flute. The reverse side of the point shows that possibly two attempts were made to achieve a flute. A partial flute was made which ended in a hinge fracture at about one-third of the length of the point. A second flute, 10 mm in length, 5 mm wide and very shallow was made directly in line with the first. Minute pressure flakes were used to touch up the basal indentation. A very slight evidence of edge grinding may be present (Figure 2).

This classification of pressure fluting and the dimensions would indicate that the point described is indeed a fluted point, not one which has been merely basally thinned.

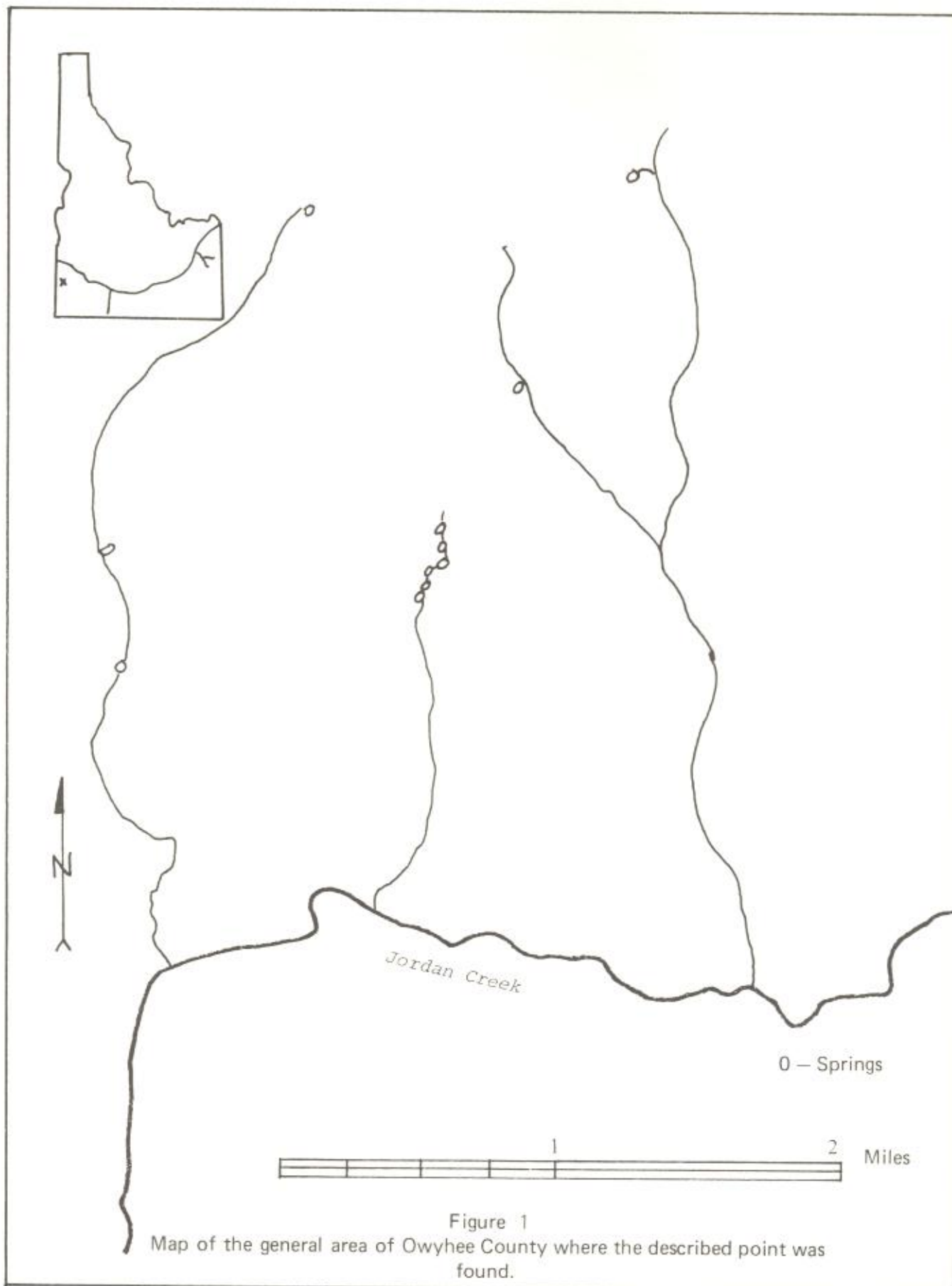


Figure 1  
Map of the general area of Owyhee County where the described point was found.



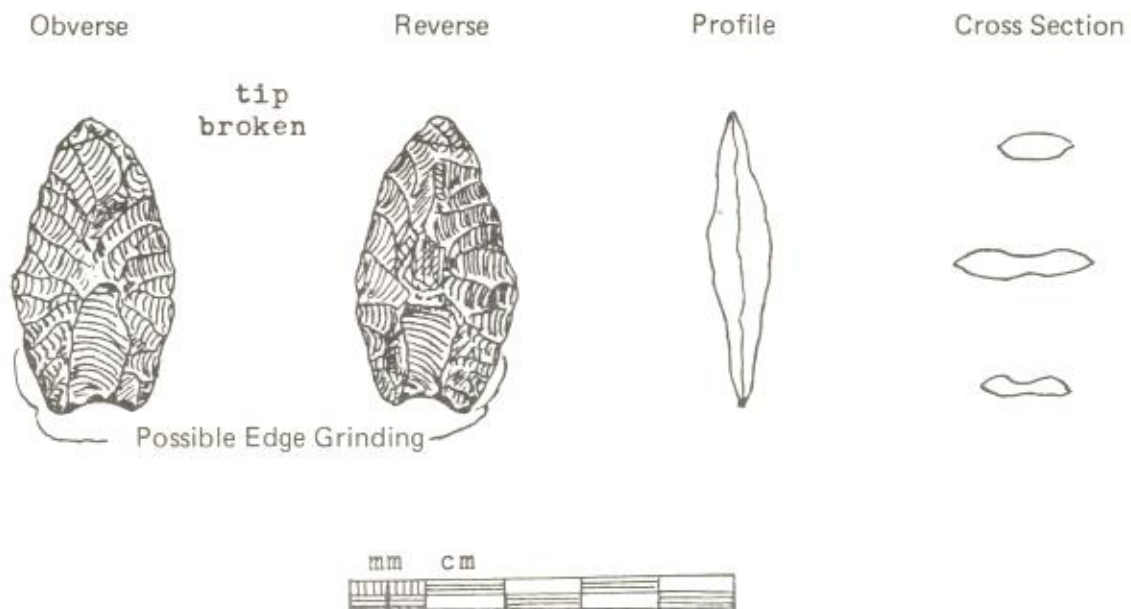


Figure 2

A Black Obsidian, fluted Point. Note the typical cross section and the possible edge ground area.

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A FOLSOM POINT MULTIPURPOSE TOOL  
FROM THE LITTLE BLACKFOOT RIVER  
SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO

By  
B. Robert Butler

ABSTRACT

The discovery and attributes of a reworked Folsom point found near Henry, Idaho, in the summer of 1979 are described.

Idaho Museum of Natural History  
Idaho State University  
Pocatello, Idaho

Many finds of Folsom points have been made in eastern Idaho over the past 20 years or so. The known (i.e., published) finds extend from the Idaho-Utah border north to the Salmon River near its confluence with the Pahsimeroi (see map, Figure 1 and References Cited). The great majority are from the Eastern Snake River Plain. Only a few, those from the lowest levels of the Wasden site 18 miles west of Idaho Falls (Dort and Miller 1977), have been found in place. The Wasden site specimens, all fragmentary, were associated with the remains of extinct forms of elephant, camel and bison, and probably date between 10,600 and 11,600 years ago (see discussion of relevant radiocarbon dates, Butler 1978:59-61). Despite a recent paper to the contrary (Watters 1979), there no longer appears to be any serious basis for doubting the presence of this classic Early Big-Game Hunting tradition within the Northern Great Basin culture area. However, information is needed on other potentially excavatable Folsom sites, which is why I was much interested in learning the details of a Folsom find made this past summer on the Little Blackfoot River near Henry, Idaho.

The find was brought to our attention by Mr. Rod Drewien, U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Grays Lake Refuge, in late September, 1979. He wasn't certain, but thought that he had recognized a chipped stone artifact, picked up on a bridge construction project over the Little Blackfoot River near Henry, Idaho in July by Mr. Randy Somsen of Wayan, Idaho, as a Folsom fluted point. Through Mr. Drewien, arrangements were made for me to examine the artifact in question and to visit the actual site of the find, together with Mr. Somsen, in early October.

From previous archaeological survey and excavation around the Blackfoot Reservoir, I was familiar with the immediate locality of the find. Test excavations were carried out under my direction at a site only a few hundred yards upslope from and due north of the bridge over the Little Blackfoot River (reported in Miss 1974). Plowing in the general vicinity of the site had revealed numerous artifacts including a wide range of projectile points embracing Early, Middle and Late Archaic types. However, no projectile points were found in the course of the test excavations. Flakes were found to a depth of 45 cm; the deepest pit was 220 cm (Miss 1974:46).

Apparently in the summer of 1979 a new bridge was constructed over the Little Blackfoot River at the same location as the previous bridge, with new culvert trenches excavated on each side of and parallel to the road at each end of this bridge. Mr. Somsen was employed in the excavation and filling in of the culvert trenches; excavation was accomplished by means of a backhoe. On the northwest corner of the bridge, where the Folsom point was found, the excavation was made into previously undisturbed deposits to a depth of approximately one meter below the natural ground level. Mr. Somsen noticed the Folsom point, which he did not recognize as such, lying on top of the last pile of rocky fill removed from the bottom of the culvert trench. He searched for other artifacts both in the backdirt and along the bottom of the trench, but found none. He also thought it might have been possible for the point to have come from the surface soil removed from farther up on the opposite side of the road for purposes of filling in and around the culvert to protect it from the subangular



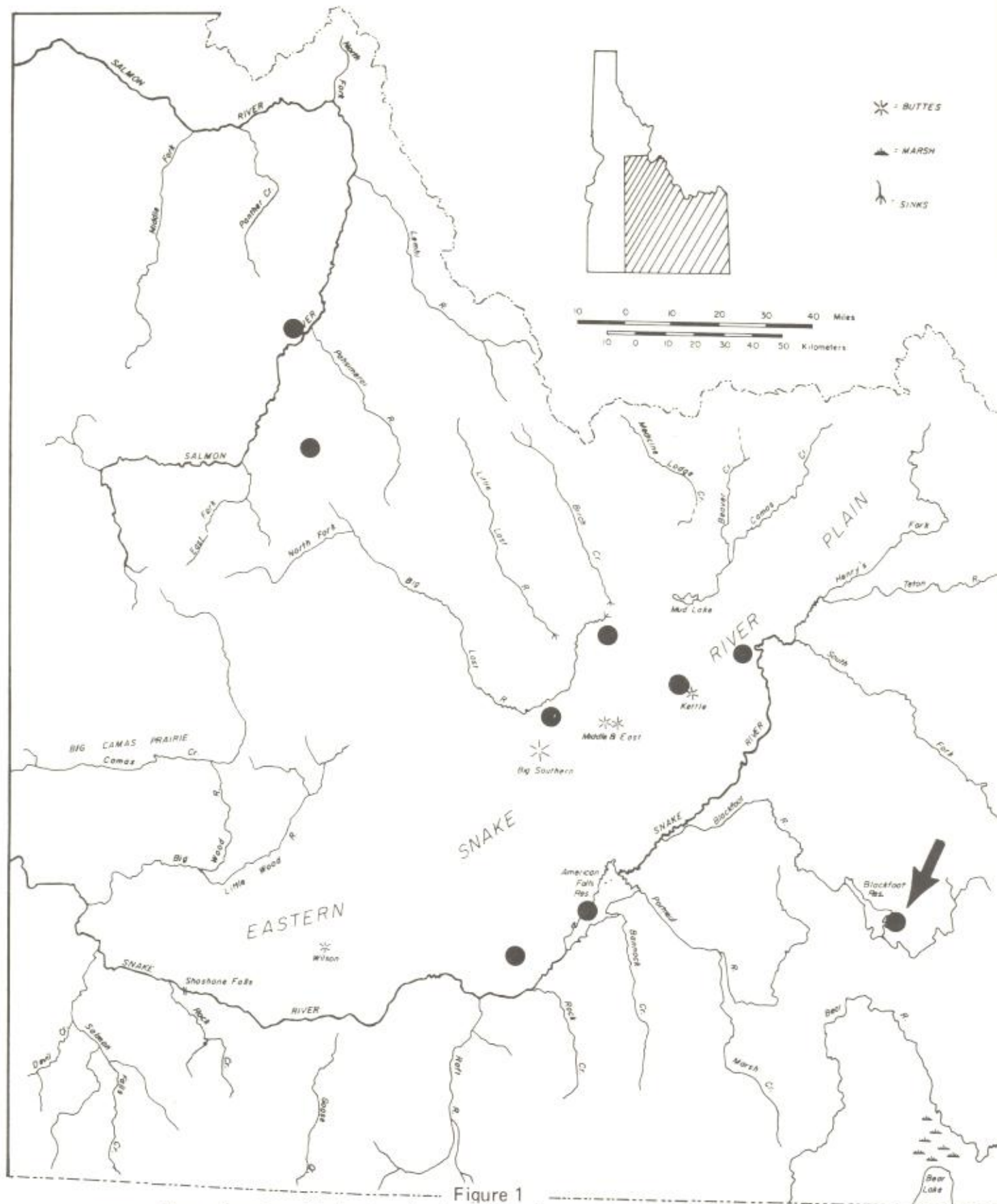


Figure 1  
 Map of eastern Idaho showing localities (heavy black dots) where one or more Folsom points have been found (see References Cited). Arrow points to location of the Folsom find on the Little Blackfoot River near Henry, Idaho.

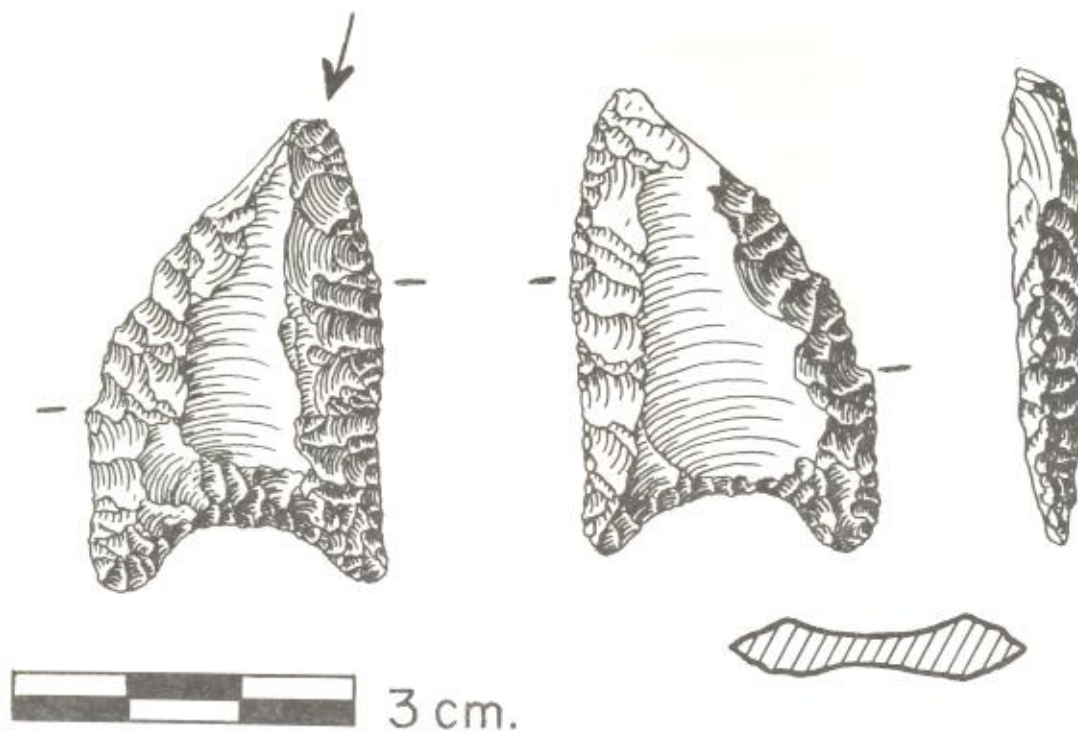


Figure 2

Drawing of reworked Folsom point found near Henry, Idaho. Horizontal marks show limit of edge-grinding and arrow points to engraving or scoring bit.

to angular rocks in the wells and at the bottom of the trench. However, I gathered from the conversation between Mr. Drewien and Mr. Somsen while we were examining the locus of the find that the protective fill had not yet been introduced into the trench, nor was there any spillage of this fill in the vicinity of the find. My own examination of the road and culvert cuts, most of which were now covered by a layer of angular gravel, failed to yield any evidence bearing on the problem. I think that additional exploratory work here in the form of a stratigraphic cut leading away from the Little Black-foot River might prove worthwhile.

The Folsom point itself (Figure 2) is of interest on several accounts. It is made of a dark gray, almost black ignimbrite with large, clear crystals in it and measures 4.2x2.6x0.55 cm. The basal concavity has been extensively retouched and heavily ground, as have also the adjacent edges. The upper part of one side of the point was broken off, apparently during manufacture, and the break partly bifacially retouched. The opposite edge has also been resharpened and the most distal end (arrow in

Figure 2) retouched, possibly through use of a graver or narrow scraping bit. Microscopic examination of the retouched broken edge reveals wear suggestive of scraping; the leading edge of the retouch scars on the distal end (arrow in Figure 2) is also finely polished, as if from a scraping or scoring action. None of the other Folsom points from eastern Idaho that I have examined gave evidence of similar modification and use. Thus, the Henry find is unique in the annals of Idaho archaeology. However, since this was an isolated find out of context, it is possible that the modification and wear observed on the distal end of the specimen occurred at a later time than I believe to have been the case, i.e., post-manufacture and also post-Early Big-Game Hunting. In that event, the Henry Folsom point would not indicate a potential Early Big-Game Hunting site, but merely reuse of an object made at an earlier time by later inhabitants of the locality.

Whatever may have been the case, the Folsom find at Henry, Idaho is a fine example of the role that interested citizens can play in bringing significant prehistoric materials to light.



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# FREMONT-SHOSHONI RELATIONSHIPS IN SOUTHWESTERN IDAHO: COMMENTS ON THE USE AND MISUSE OF PUBLISHED DATA

By

Richard R. Harrison and John Hanson

In a recent paper entitled, "Southern Idaho Plain: Implications for Fremont-Shoshoni Relationships in Southeastern Idaho," Mark Plew (1979) suggests that "a Fremont-Sevier tradition may have extended into southern Idaho prior to the Shoshonean expansion," and that "a Fremont-Sevier technology may have been first introduced into some areas in Southern Idaho by Shoshoneans familiar with the technology but who continued to produce . . . 'Shoshoni' ware (1979:333-4). The primary evidence used to support this intuitive, conjectural proposal is a new, loosely defined pottery type that Plew has labeled Southern Idaho Plain ware:

. . . Southern Idaho Plain ware sherds resemble Fremont forms with respect to descriptive attributes. In fact, the technical description provided in this paper for Southern Idaho Plain is very similar to that of Great Salt Lake and Snake Valley Gray wares (*ibid.*: 332).

Continuing, Plew writes:

Because of the similarities between Southern Idaho Plain, Great Salt Lake, and variants such as Knolls Gray (Marwitt, 72), I am inclined to consider some of this pottery to be of Fremont origin (*ibid.*).

Our purpose here is not to challenge the idea that a Fremont-Sevier tradition may have appeared in southern Idaho during the period when the Great Salt Lake Fremont flourished (i.e., about A.D. 400 to about A.D. 1350 (Jennings 1974; Marwitt 1970) nor Plew's implicit acceptance of the validity of the Numic migration hypothesis. Both the Numic migration hypothesis and the proposed appearance of a Fremont-Sevier tradition in southern Idaho are of continuing scientific interest, particularly the latter (see Butler 1979a, 1979b). Nor is it our intention to criticize Plew's casual approach to the complexities of archaeological systematics (Dunell 1971), because a separate paper would be required to deal adequately with his informal analysis of Idaho pottery and the scientific value of his "tentative proposal" (1979:330). Rather, it is our singular intention to show that because Plew has significantly misrepresented and/or omitted certain published data, and that if not corrected, his paper must be

regarded as of dubious value at best and at worst detrimental to the course of future research.

For Plew's arguments to have any credibility beyond mere speculation, it is crucial for him to show that his Southern Idaho Plain ware is derived from a particular temporal context, namely, about A.D. 400 to approximately A.D. 1350. The reasons are twofold: first, this is the period of time that marks the temporal span of Great Salt Lake, the oldest and northernmost regional variant of some five Fremont cultural entities (Marwitt 1970). Second, the Numic migration hypothesis posits that northward moving Numic speakers would have reached Southern Idaho about A.D. 1300 (Madsen 1975; Wright 1978). With these in mind, let us examine Plew's use and misuse of data that appear in some of the published reports he cites in his paper.

1. **Wilson Butte Cave (Gruhn 1961).** Plew relies on Gruhn's (1961) study of Wilson Butte Cave to suggest a linkage between her Wilson Butte Plain ware and the hypothesized appearance of a Fremont-Sevier tradition in southern Idaho. However, in presenting the salient chronological data from Gruhn's report, Plew addresses *only* the early end of Gruhn's estimated age for Stratum A, the layer which yielded the Wilson Butte Plain ware. Plew writes: "This [date] corresponds to Gruhn's dating . . . of Wilson Butte Plain ware ca. 1300" (1979:333). In fact, Gruhn estimated Stratum A "to date from A.D. 1300 to about A.D. 1700-1750 (Gruhn 1961:49, emphasis added). This apparent oversight is compounded by an even more serious omission. Plew is seemingly unaware that Stratum A yielded a C-14 date of A.D. 1525  $\pm$  150 (Butler 1968:80).

2. **Saylor Creek (Bucy 1971).** Plew also cites an archaeological survey report by Bucy (1971) to further support his arguments. Plew tells us that "Bucy (1971:24) noted Southern Idaho Plain pottery in a surface context with Eastgate series projectile points near Twin Falls, Idaho" (1979:331). Plew then references Hester and Heizer (1973:7-8) who have suggested that Rose Spring-Eastgate series points flourished primarily between A.D. 600 and 1100 in the Great Basin. Once again, however, Plew fails to



provide complete information. Actually, Bucy recovered a single type of pottery that "corresponds closely to the description of Wilson Butte Plain ware (Gruhn 1961:98-100) . . ." (Bucy 1971:24). In addition, the pottery recovered by Bucy was *not* associated exclusively with Eastgate series points as Plew would lead us to believe. On the contrary, Bucy's pottery was associated with lanceolate, stemmed-indentated based, triangular, Northern-Side-notched, Elko series and Desert Sidenotched projectile points (Bucy 1971:18-19) as well as the Eastgate series points Plew discusses. At site 10-TF-134, the most productive surface site recorded by Bucy in terms of diagnostic artifacts (including pottery), virtually the entire time-span of the Western Archaic is represented by a wide range of projectile point types, and yet Plew clearly implies that *only* Eastgate point types were associated with the pottery. At site 10-TF-141 (Plew 1979:333, Table 1), two Desert Sidenotched points and only one Eastgate point type were recovered (Bucy 1971:19). In Idaho, Desert Sidenotched points are one of the hallmarks of the Late Archaic (post A.D. 1200) (Butler 1978).

Another and perhaps even more curious omission, given the nature of his arguments, occurs with Plew's handling of Bucy's site descriptions. Actually, Bucy identifies three sites that yielded the same type of pottery: 10-TF-134, 10-TF-135 and 10-TF-141 (Bucy 1971:12-14). Plew, for reasons unstated, lists only two of Bucy's sites (10-TF-134 and 10-TF-141) in his Table 1 on page 333.

3. Rattlesnake Canyon Cremation Site (Bonnichsen 1964). Plew states that Bonnichsen (1964) recovered . . . "Fremont-like *figurines* from a cremation site near the Snake River in southwestern Idaho" (1979:332, emphasis added). He then suggests that: "These figurines and the zoomorphic representation from Columbet Creek Rockshelter are associated with Rose Spring-Eastgate series points (Bonnichsen 1964:28)" (ibid.).

However, Plew has once again misrepresented and/or omitted certain critical data that do not support his arguments. In fact, Bonnichsen (1964:33) did not identify a single projectile point from the Rattlesnake Canyon Cremation site belonging to the Rose Spring-Eastgate series. The following projectile point types were the most numerous of the types described by Bonnichsen: Columbia Basal-Notched (29); Wallula Rectangular-Stemmed (9); and Bliss points (31) (Bonnichsen 1964: 28,

29). Both of the Columbia Basal-Notched and Wallula Rectangular Stemmed are well known, typical late prehistoric projectile types from the Southern Columbia Plateau (Osborne, Bryan, and Crabtree 1961). Bliss points are best known from South-Central Idaho along the Snake River. Their temporal span is presently problematical.

A further misrepresentation of Bonnichsen's data concerns the so-called "Fremont-like figurines" that Plew indicates came from the Rattlesnake Canyon cremation site (Plew 1979:332). Bonnichsen's description is as follows:

Three fragments of a light tan unbaked clay *figurine* have an outside surface covered by a dark brown stain. These fragments have a circular cross section and measure from 2.0 cm. to 1.8 cm. All three fragments probably belong to one figurine, but the fractured end sections are badly eroded, preventing reconstruction (1964:33, emphasis added).

Clearly, these three small, poorly preserved fragments have no discernible physical attributes that even hint they may be Fremont-like, even by the most liberal interpretation.

Perhaps the most glaring omission of Bonnichsen's published data centers on the historic European copper pieces found in each of the two layers of the cremation site. Bonnichsen writes:

Associated with each layer was a small piece of copper. Spectrographic analysis revealed that both pieces of copper contained .02% Ag, .005% Mg, and .003% Ca, indicating that these were probably of European origin. Therefore, the two layers of the cremation site can hardly date earlier than either the protohistoric or early historic period (1964:28).

The fact that the presence of probably European copper, with its obvious importance for establishing temporal context, is totally ignored by Plew is, in our view, astonishing. Archaeologists familiar with the data from the Rattlesnake Canyon Cremation site recognize the significance of the historic copper found in association with the burials. Plew, however, apparently does not think the presence of copper artifacts is even worth mentioning.

The foregoing, we feel, illustrates the most serious flaws with Plew's paper insofar as his handling of the published data is concerned. There are other omissions of a somewhat lesser magnitude than those cited above, although still serious. These include:

1. There is no mention of William Mulloy's (1958) study that first defined Intermountain ware as a pottery tradition possibly indigenous to the



entire intermountain region. Certainly any study that addresses "Shoshoni" ware should at least reference this important contribution by Mulloy.

2. Robson Bonnichsen's (1964) report, a key study in Plew's argument, is not listed in the references section. Admittedly, this may have been an editorial omission, and therefore beyond Plew's control.

3. There is no mention of James Adovasio's (1970, 1975) very important studies of Fremont basketry that include analyses of numerous specimens from southern Idaho archaeological sites. Plew's failure to make use of Adovasio's data is curious because the very data he has ignored would tend to support his basic premise regarding the appearance of a Fremont-Sevier tradition in southern Idaho.

Lest the foregoing criticisms be construed as unduly harsh, we wish to re-emphasize that we have no quarrel with Plew's proposal regarding the arrival of a Fremont-Sevier tradition or variant in southern Idaho prior to the Shoshonean migration. We feel that this is an hypothesis with considerable merit. However, we do not feel that Plew's presentation does justice to the subject matter. We would encourage Plew to re-examine the pertinent available data through an analysis that recognizes and considers the notable omissions and misrepresentations in his present paper. Such a re-evaluation would allow for a mutually beneficial dialogue between and among Idaho archaeologists concerning this potentially revolutionary development in Idaho prehistory.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Published below is our first "Letter to the Editor" since the *Archaeologist* began publication three years ago. We have received other letters during that time; this is the first having to do with other than how to join the Society or how to subscribe to the *Archaeologist*. We encourage letters from our readers, whether reporting on an interesting find, as in this letter, or making comments or suggestions on our publication or the articles therein.

We ask that letters be held to 300 words or less and that they include the signature and address of the writer, which will, in all cases, be included. Since one of the primary objectives of the *Archaeologist* is to expand knowledge and awareness of archaeological matters in Idaho, we must publish names and addresses of correspondents in order to permit the exchange of information between the public and the professionals in the field.

January 11, 1980

Dear Sirs:

In Re: *Idaho Archaeologist*, Vol. III, No. 2  
"More Incised Cobbles"

From 1970 through 1979 my husband and I have found more than a dozen incised stones along the Pend Oreille River in the Sandpoint area. These examples are considerably more detailed and elaborate than those pictured in the above-referred-to article. One may be a spindlewhorl.

In 1972, B. Robert Butler examined six of the stones we had found at that time and dubbed them "most interesting." Before returning them to us, he said he intended to have a graduate student examine them further and take photographs. I have made arrangements to have the collection photographed, but I don't know how soon prints will be available; however, Butler may have prints of the first six. As soon as I do have pictures, I will be pleased to send copies.

Very sincerely,  
Mrs. Sally L. Cupan  
515 South Boyer Avenue  
Sandpoint, Idaho 83864

COMMENT: Mark Plew, archaeologist with the State Historical Society, has agreed to serve as coordinator on the subject of incised cobbles, since he was the first to raise the subject in our pages. Mrs. Cupan, or others having further offerings on the subject may address Mr. Plew at 610 North Julia Davis Drive, Boise, ID 83706. They may, of course, also be sent to Editor of the *Archaeologist*.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

The past eight months have witnessed a substantial and important growth of membership in the Idaho Archaeological Society. Herewith a letter on the subject from the current President of the Society, Florence Schaertl of Boise.

TO: READERS OF THE *ARCHAEOLOGIST*

I am taking this opportunity to report, on my own behalf and that of the Executive Committee, to the membership of the Archaeological Society on one of our activities this past year and our achievement in this area.

As you know, one of the objectives of the Society is to educate the public to the importance of archaeology in attempting to understand and appreciate our cultural heritage and the necessity of preserving all of our archaeological sites. *Project Outreach* was undertaken this past September as a means to attain this goal. The work was made possible by a grant awarded to the Society by the Association for the Humanities in Idaho. This grant permitted Dr. Max Pavesic, professional adviser for the Society, and I to journey to Sandpoint, Coeur d'Alene, and Idaho Falls where we presented programs on archaeology and informed the public on the Society and its aims.

As a result of this endeavor, the Society now has many new members throughout the state. I might add that these members come, not only from the cities we visited, but from many neighboring communities as well. That really pleases us. We want to welcome all of these new members to the Society and hope that all of you who are now members-at-large will soon have a Chapter near you that you can call home. Talk to your friends about forming a Chapter in your area. Coeur d'Alene has already achieved that goal and formed the Panhandle Chapter in October. Although they have not as yet received their Charter, we know they are working on it. Congratulations to our new Panhandle Chapter and welcome to the Society. We are happy and proud to have all of you as our associates.

Our Society needs members who are interested, eager, and willing to work. There are numerous archaeological projects scheduled for this next summer's field season, and the professionals who are heading these projects are asking for our help. This is a chance for some of our new members to get into the field and see for themselves how rewarding the experience can be. If you are interested and would like more information, write to me at P.O. Box 7532, Boise, Idaho 83707, and I will get the



material to you as soon as possible.

May I again say to our new members "Welcome" and may we make Idaho the most archaeologically conscious state in the Union.

Florence Schaertl  
President  
Idaho Archaeological Society, Inc.

### REPRINT AVAILABILITY

It has been suggested by B. Robert Butler of ISU and others that we make reprints of articles or reports available to authors or readers. After discussing the costs of printing and handling, we have determined that reprints can be provided at a cost of 10 cents per printed page or fraction thereof, mailing included. Please address requests to the editor.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

We printed a Society membership application in several earlier issues of the Archaeologist but discontinued the practice when very little response resulted. As interest seems to be growing throughout the state, we will again carry an application form as one of the final items in our paper. We will endeavor to arrange our contents so that material which may be of longer-range interest need not be destroyed when cutting out the form.

#### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION – IDAHO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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