

Recent Fluted-Point Finds in Eastern Oregon

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Two sites on the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Burns District, 35HA3220 and 35HA3667 (the Sheep Mountain site), were revisited in 2008 as part of a systematic effort to identify and monitor Paleoamerican sites on agency lands. Four fluted points recovered from the sites are the subject of this report. In the Alvord Desert, a pluvial lake basin on the east side of Steens Mountain, a number of fluted points have been found over the last 50 years. Site 35HA3220 is situated in an extensive area of eroded and coppice dunes, playettes, and abandoned stream channels near a present-day channel of Trout Creek. Two fluted points were surface collected at the site, one by Dugas in 1996 (Dugas et al. 1996) and the other by BLM personnel in 2008. Both were found in the north-central portion of the site.

Specimen 96-225 (Figure 1A) is a basal fragment that has a single flute scar on each side. It was surface collected on a low hummock adjacent to an abandoned stream channel. Edge grinding is present along the lateral edges but not on the base, and flute scratching was not observed. The point was broken by a bending fracture. It is 23.96 mm long, 24.96 mm maximum width, 5.00 mm thick, has a 4.66 mm basal depth, a basal width of 21.90 mm, and weighs 3.4 g (Rondeau 2007). The point was made of Beatys Butte obsidian (Skinner and Thatcher 2001) with a hydration-rind measurement of 7.9 μ (Skinner and Thatcher 2006). Beatys Butte is located approximately 48 km northwest of the site. For this obsidian source, a rind measurement of 7.9 μ suggests an early-Holocene age. Specimen 08-181 (Figure 1B) is a basal fragment that has two flute scars on one face and three on the other. Basal

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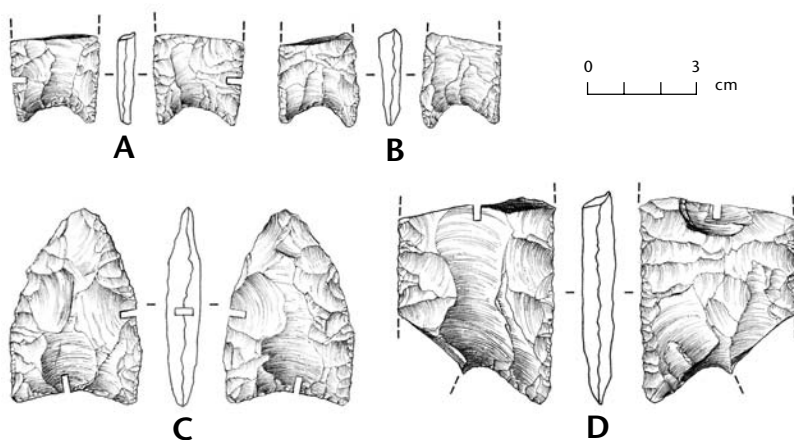


Figure 1. Fluted points. From 35HA3220: **A**, specimen 96-225; **B**, specimen 08-181. From 35HA3667, the Sheep Mountain site: **C**, specimen 3667-CL1; **D**, specimen 3667-CL2. Illustrations by Eric Carlson.

edge grinding is found on both lateral margins and primarily on the interior margins of the basal ears. Abrasion is noted on the edge of one flute scar but flute scratching is not present. The point was broken by a twisting fracture. It is 25.75 mm long, 22.06 mm wide, 5.33 mm thick, has a basal depth 7.16 mm, a basal width of 20.42 mm, and weighs 3.0 g (Rondeau 2008). Obsidian studies on this point are pending.

BLM personnel surface collected two fluted points at the Sheep Mountain site. A complete specimen was found during a 2005 fire rehabilitation survey and a second 75 m from the first during preliminary reconnaissance for 2008 University of Oregon field school excavations. The site occupies a small upland basin north of a large playa valley near Wagontire in southeastern Oregon. The locality has deep sediments (ca. 1.5–6.0 m), in part due to windborne sand and silt transport from the playa to the south. Two other fluted-point sites, Dietz (Willig 1989) and Sage Hen Gap (O'Grady et al. 2008), are both within 50 km of Sheep Mountain.

The 2005 point (3667-CL1) is missing an ear tip (Figure 1C). It is 53.95 mm long, 36.71 mm wide, 8.27 mm thick, has a basal depth of 3.72 mm, and weighs 15.7 g. The lateral margins and base are heavily edge-ground, and slight flute scratches are present on one face. The tip has been reflaked by percussion, and the maximum width of the point is well below the midline of the point length (Rondeau 2007). It is made of Buck Springs obsidian with a hydration measurement of 9.8 (Skinner and Thatcher 2008). The 2008 point (3667-CL2) is an unfinished base fragment missing one ear and the central basal margin (Figure 1D). The base has a maximum length of 55.93 mm, width of 43.0 mm, thickness of 8.28 mm, and weight of 21.1 g. It is made of obsidian from the Glass Buttes 1 source, with a hydration measurement of 8.0 μ (Skinner and Thatcher 2008). The transverse break probably resulted from end shock during the fluting process (Rondeau 2008). No edge grinding or flute scratches are present.

Over the past nine years, archaeologists from the Burns District BLM have been conducting systematic surveys and monitoring of agency holdings where Paleoamerican sites are known to be concentrated (e.g. Thomas and O'Grady 2006). This effort, in concert with test excavations by the University of Oregon, has resulted in the documentation of 46 fluted points and unfinished bifaces. The number of recorded sites and isolates is increasing annually; the sites here reported, 35HA3220 in the southeast portion of the district and 35HA3667 (Sheep Mountain) in northwestern portion, reflect the effort to target areas where old sites appear to be most abundant. One welcome byproduct is the identification of sites with deep sediments like Sheep Mountain, where Mazama O tephra (Foit 2008) covers high artifact concentrations, or those with good potential, as is the case with 35HA3220.

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