

# To the Point

## Breckenridge

Jack H. Ray

This point type was named for Dalton-like points found at Breckenridge Shelter in Carroll County, Arkansas (Wood 1963:80).

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### Description

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Breckenridge is a medium (resharpened) to large (unresharpened) side-notched point that ranges in length from 60 mm to 83 mm with a mean of 74.2 mm. The side notches are typically shallow and broad, unlike generally well-defined U-shaped side notches of Graham Cave. The notches on some, but not all Breckenridge points are beveled in the opposite direction of the bevel on the blade. The stem is relatively short (range: 13–17 mm) and expands to the base, which is generally slightly concave. The tangs or ears on the stem are typically rounded but may be slightly squared or auriculate, similar to those on Graham Cave points. The tangs or ears on some specimens may be slightly pointed and flare outward. The basal width (range: 24–28 mm; mean: 26 mm) of Breckenridge points generally exceeds the blade width on extensively resharpened specimens (Figure 1). The base is not fluted and is rarely thinned. However, multiple, short pressure flakes removed

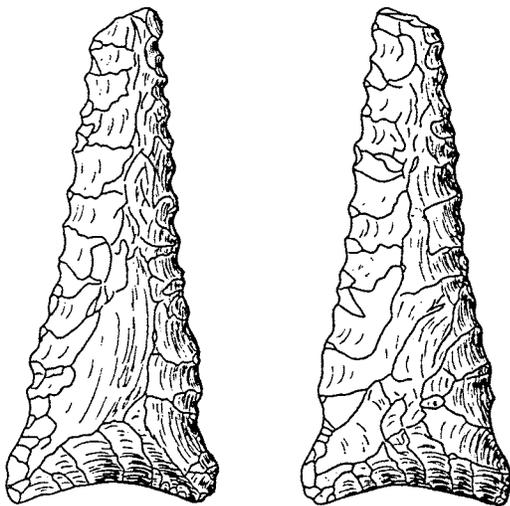


Figure 1. Extensively resharpened specimen from the Big Eddy site (23CE426). Illustration by Del Thompson.



Figure 2. Resharpened Breckenridge from a soon-to-be registered site in Taney County. Illustration by Linda Ellis.

from both faces formed the slightly concave shape of the base. The sides of the stem (notches and ears) are typically moderately ground, whereas the base is light to moderately ground.

Blade edges vary from slightly excurvate (unresharpened) to straight (resharpened) and occasionally incurvate (extensively resharpened). Maximum blade width presumably exceeds that of the base on unresharpened specimens, but the blades of all of the specimens in our small sample had been extensively resharpened (range: 21–24 mm; mean: 22.8 mm). The shoulders of Breckenridge points are slight and are demarcated by an angular juncture of the stem and blade edges. Cross section is biconvex or flattened with alternate bevels. Maximum thickness (range: 8–9.4 mm; mean: 8.7 mm) is generally at the blade-stem juncture or along the proximal portion of the blade. Resharpened Breckenridge points typically exhibit steep bevels that are generally located on the left side of the blade, although a minority may be beveled on the right side. The beveled blade edges also may be serrated. Remnants of middle-stage percussion flaking are usually present along the unbeveled sides of the blade. Resharpening pressure flakes were generally removed from the right edge of alternate sides of the blade in a systematic serial fashion from the proximal end to the distal end, which is the opposite direction that the blades of Dalton points were resharpened.

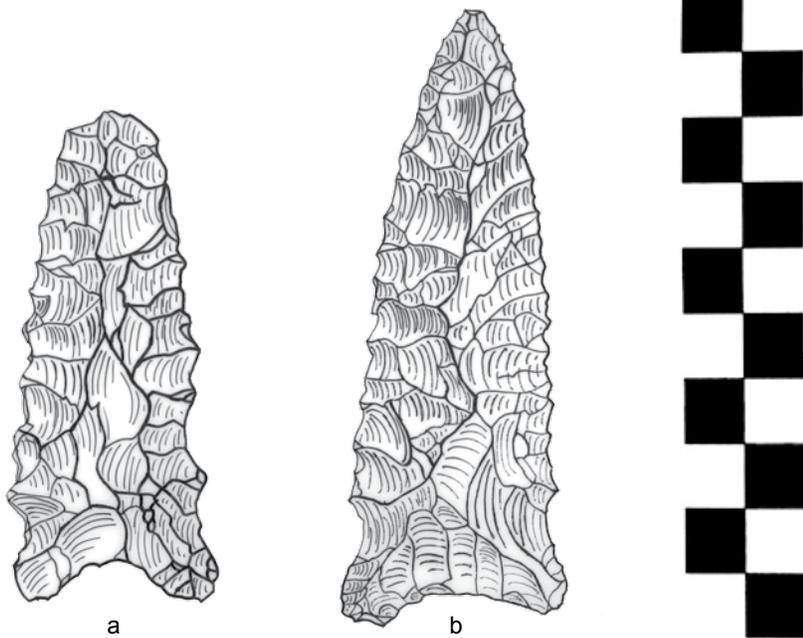


Figure 3. Breckenridge points from (a) the Loftin site (23SN42) and (b) 23CE444. Illustrations by Linda Ellis.

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## Heat Treatment

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Heat treatment was not part of the technology of manufacturing Breckenridge points.

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## Distribution

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The distribution of Breckenridge points is not well known. They minimally occur in the Ozarks region (southern Missouri, northern Arkansas, and northeast Oklahoma), but they also probably occur in southwest Illinois and the Mississippi Alluvial Lowland region of southeast Missouri and northeast Arkansas.

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## Age

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No radiocarbon dates were obtained from the deepest deposits at Breckenridge Shelter that contained Breckenridge points. The best age estimate comes from the deeply stratified Big Eddy site where one Breckenridge point was found overlying a Dalton and San Patrice horizon and underlying a Scottsbluff horizon (Ray and Lopinot 2005:274–277). A radiocarbon age of  $9835 \pm 70$  rcybp ( $7835 \pm 70$  B.C.) was obtained from the upper portion of the Dalton and San Patrice horizon (18 cm below the Breckenridge point), whereas a radiocarbon age of  $9525 \pm 65$  rcybp ( $7525 \pm 65$  B.C.) was obtained from the overlying Scottsbluff horizon (15 cm above the Breckenridge point). These

ages suggest an approximate age of 9680 rcybp (7680 B.C.) for the Breckenridge specimen at Big Eddy.

Breckenridge may represent a technological shift from fluted and basally thinned lanceolate Late Paleoindian Dalton points with bevels on the right side of the blade to nonfluted and non-basally thinned Early Archaic side-notched points with bevels on the left side of the blade (Ray et al. 2009:164–165). In the Southeast, this transition appears to be represented by side-notched Big Sandy/Bolen/Taylor points (Walthall 1980:49). In the Ozarks, the apparent successor to Breckenridge is Graham Cave, which shares attributes such as relative size, thickness, cross-section form, notching, percussion flaking, and blade resharpening. However, stratigraphic and temporal differences between Breckenridge and Graham Cave components at Big Eddy do not appear to support a direct Breckenridge-to-Graham Cave evolutionary relationship, unless an unidentified component called “Indeterminate Early Archaic” represents

the missing link (Ray and Lopinot 2005:255–277). This component did not contain any temporally diagnostic artifacts, but it did yield large lanceolate preforms with straight bases, and the component was estimated to date between 9500 rcybp and 9000 rcybp (Ray and Lopinot 2005:268–270, Figures 11.1 and 11.22). If so, this may represent a terminal Breckenridge component or an emergent Graham Cave component that might link Breckenridge with Graham Cave. In any event, a larger assemblage of Breckenridge points from well-defined datable contexts should help clarify the age of this point type. For now, an age range of approximately 9800–9500 rcybp (7800–7500 B.C.) is suggested for Breckenridge.

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## Comments

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Breckenridge is a poorly defined point type that was originally based on a grouping of points that have some Dalton-like attributes from the lower levels in Breckenridge Shelter. Wood (1963:80, Figure 5g–m) classified nine specimens as “Breckenridge points and variants.” Some of the attributes that he identified with Breckenridge included (1) long shallow gently concave side notches, (2) beveled blades, (3) notches in the stem that are beveled in the opposite direction of the bevels on the blade, and (4) shallow to deep concave bases that may be thinned by a short flute or by steep retouch flakes. Apparently, the primary attribute that was used to tentatively identify the Breckenridge point at the 1962 *Workshop on Ozark Projectile Points* was

the stem beveled in the opposite direction of the blade. However, that attribute is occasionally present on Dalton points from southwest Missouri and northwest Arkansas, and one of the three points identified as Breckenridge (Wood 1963:Figure 5i) is clearly a Dalton point. The other two Breckenridge specimens (Wood 1963:Figure 5g, m) also now might be classified as Dalton. Two points noted to resemble Breckenridge but without the beveled stem (Wood 1963:Figure 5h, j) might be classified as Graham Cave points.

Based on a larger sample of points from additional excavations at the shelter after Wood's work, Thomas (1969:49–50, Figure 6h–o) classified 15 specimens as Category CB-1 (inclusive of “Meserve-Dalton” and “Breckenridge”), most of which appear to be Dalton points. Confounding the issue is the fact that the deposits at Breckenridge appear to have been mixed to some extent (Thomas 1969:23–26; Wood 1963:88). Thomas (1969:Table 2) divided point types from the lowest stratum (C) into three substrata (C1, C2, and C3). Based on this division, several Late Paleoindian and Early Archaic point types that span a period of more than 3,000 years were found in the lowest level (C3) (Thomas 1969:126). These point types include L-1 (Packard?), CB-1 (Dalton/Breckenridge), CB-2 (Graham Cave and/or White River), RS-1 (Rice Contracting Stem/Taney), and RS-2 (Rice Contracting Stem/Taney and Jakie).

Despite the wide range in variation of the original grouping of Breckenridge points (Wood 1963:80, Figure 5g–m), the type Breckenridge has typically been used as a variant (and presumably descendant) of Dalton (Dickson 1991:46; Morrow 1984:29; Perino 1971:12; Ray and Lopinot 2005:274–277). Being very similar in design to Greenbrier (Bell 1960:50–51; Cambron and Hulse 1975:58), Breckenridge may represent slight variations of the same point type located on the east and west sides of the Mississippi River, respectively. The primary attributes that appear to distinguish Breckenridge points from classic Dalton points include (1) faint shallow side notches, (2) a wider stem with tangs or ears that are more rounded or squared, (3) a base that is only slightly concave, (4) an absence of flutes and limited basal thinning, and (5) blades that are beveled on the left side. Breckenridge appears to be the first large Early Archaic point type with left bevels that was consistently resharpened on alternate right sides of the blade from the proximal end to the distal end.

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