

# To the Point: Smith

Jack H. Ray; illustrations by Del Thompson

The Smith point was named and described by Baerreis and Freeman (1960) from the Smith site in Delaware County, Oklahoma. Chapman (1975:256) referred to this type as Smith Basal Notched.

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## Description

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Smith is a medium (resharpened) to large (unresharpened) point that ranges in length from 54 mm to 106 mm with a mean of 79.5 mm. Smith points exhibit wide, U-shaped basal notches that isolate short to moderately long stems that range between 12 and 18 mm with a mean of 15.2 mm. The width of the basal notches ranges from 4.6 to 10.5 mm with an average of 7.2 mm. The sides of the stem and the base are straight, producing a square stem. Basal width ranges from 15 to 28 mm with a mean of 21.6 mm. Although grinding along the stem edges and base may be light on some specimens, the haft element of most Smith points exhibits no grinding.

The blades of Smith points are broad and excurvate on unresharpened specimens to straight on resharpened specimens. Maximum blade width (range: 36–55 mm; mean: 46.2 mm) is generally located near the lower portion of the barbs on unresharpened specimens and at or just above the end of the basal notch on resharpened specimens. The blades of Smith points are biconvex in cross section and thick. Maximum thickness (range: 7.9–13.4 mm; mean: 10.1 mm) is usually at or near the juncture of the stem and blade. Long squared barbs extend from the shoulders to the base of the stem on unresharpened Smith points. Moderately resharpened points exhibit shortened and narrower barbs that are rounded or pointed, whereas the barbs on extensively resharpened points are very short or missing entirely (Ray 2010:Figures 30–33). Blade edges are not serrated or beveled. The middle portions of the blades of Smith points exhibit broad, random, soft-hammer percussion scars, whereas small finishing pressure flake scars (rarely more than 15–20 mm long) occur along blade edges.

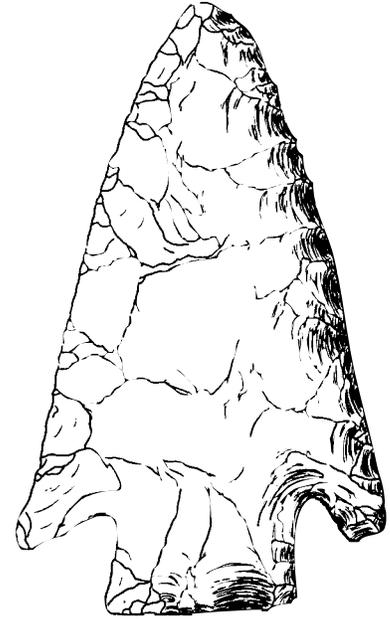
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## Heat Treatment

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Although there may be some regional variation, the vast majority of Smith points in southwest Missouri were not intentionally heat treated (Ray 2005:310, 2010:77; Roper 1993:662). This indicates that heat treatment was not an

important part of the reduction process for Smith knappers. The small amount of chert that appears to have been heat-treated in many assemblages may actually represent artifacts that were thermally altered incidentally as the result of other activities (Ray 2010:77).



*Smith point from 23GR210.*

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## Distribution

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Smith points are very common in southwest Missouri and adjacent portions of northwest Arkansas and northeast Oklahoma. In this area, they frequently comprise the most common Late Archaic point type. Smith points also occur in other portions of Missouri, but in relatively smaller quantities.

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## Age

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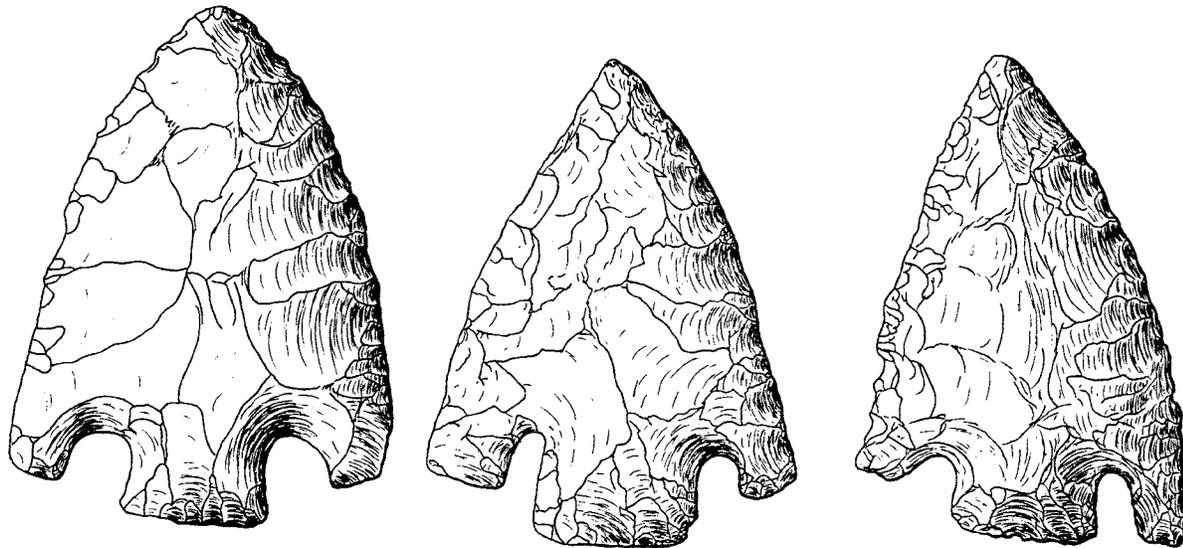
Radiocarbon ages associated with Smith points have been obtained from stratified deposits at the Big Eddy site, the Bear-Sac site, and other sites in southwest Missouri. They indicate that Smith points date between approximately 4400 and 3600 radiocarbon years before present (rcybp), although most dates are between 4250 and 3800 rcybp (Ray 2010:57–59; Ray and Lopinot 2005:197–199). Smith points and associated Etley points in the Sac and Pomme de Terre river valleys and adjacent areas in southwest Missouri are diagnostic chipped-stone artifacts of the Smetley phase (Ray and Lopinot 2005:194–201; Ray et al. 2009:181–184).

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## Comments

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Superficial changes in blade morphology produced by repeated resharpenings resulted in the creation of three point types (Smith Basal Notched, Barry Square Stemmed,



Smith points from (l to r) 23GR195, 23GR220, and 23WB297.

and Stone Square Stemmed) when projectile point/knife types were first proposed for southwest Missouri (Marshall 1958). Marshall (1958:102, Figure 6) did note a probable relationship between barbed, semibarbed, and barbless square-stemmed points and that the latter two categories probably represent reworked (resharpened) varieties of the barbed type. Nevertheless, two “types” (Smith Basal Notched and Stone Square Stemmed) became ingrained in the literature. Stone Square Stemmed has been dropped by some as a formal point type due to the superficial changes in blade morphology created by repeated resharpenings (Ray et al. 2009:180; Ray and Lopinot 2005:176–178; Sandstrom and Ray 2004:16). In addition to the superficial changes in blade morphology noted above, other attributes indicate that Smith Basal Notched, Barry Square Stemmed, and Stone Square Stemmed are one in the same type. Some of these attributes include square stems, basal width, notch width, blade width, blade length, blade manufacture (i.e., broad secondary percussion flaking), maximum blade thickness, and lack of heat treatment.

Some well made Smith points may superficially resemble Calf Creek points. However, the relatively short and wide notches and thicker blade distinguish Smith points from Calf Creek points. Etley points that have barbs and square stems bear a strong resemblance to Smith points (see Comments on Etley points in Ray [2013]).

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