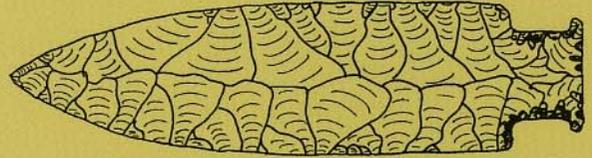


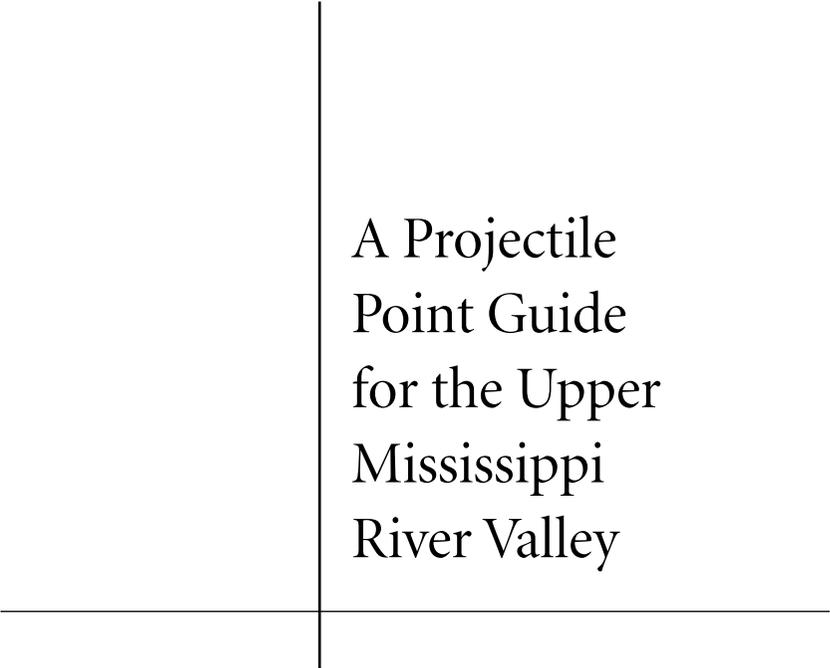


**A PROJECTILE
POINT GUIDE
FOR THE UPPER
MISSISSIPPI
RIVER VALLEY**



ROBERT F. BOSZHARDT

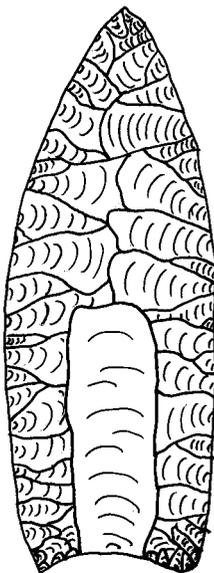




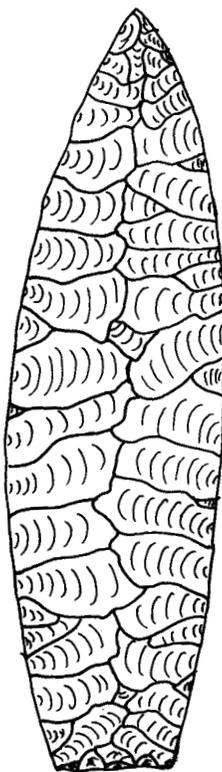
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A BUR OAK GUIDE



A Projectile Point Guide for the Upper Mississippi River Valley



Robert F. Boszhardt

University of Iowa Press | Iowa City



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For Andreas and Alianna,
my collecting buddies

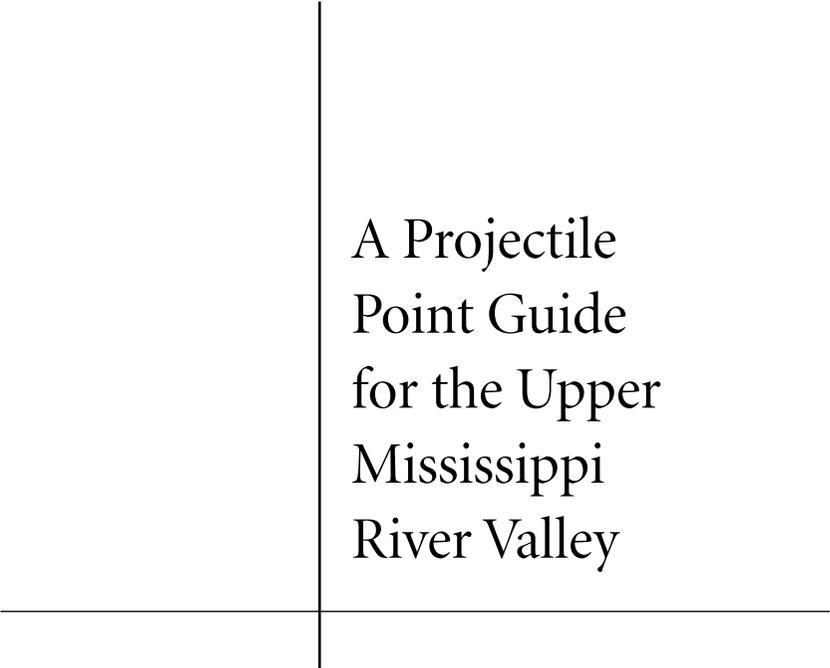
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Introduction

Projectile points are tips fastened to the ends of spears, darts, and arrow shafts. In prehistoric North America, they were made from a variety of materials, including antler, bone, and copper but most, at least most that have been preserved, were made from stone. The vast majority of these were made by chipping various types of “flint” to shape the projectile point for penetration, cutting, and hafting. Projectile point styles changed through time, much like automobiles from the 1920s look different than those from the 1940s, 1960s, or 1990s. Sometimes these changes reflect technological shifts, while other times they appear to be simply fads. In either case, it is somewhat astounding how widespread the use of certain projectile point styles was during particular periods of midwestern prehistory. For example, Paleoindian fluted spear tips, dating between 11,300 and 10,200 years ago (uncalibrated), have been found in every state between the Rocky Mountains and the Atlantic Ocean. Several thousand years later, side-notched forms were being used by Archaic cultures throughout much of eastern North America. At the transition from Archaic to Woodland traditions there was a widespread shift to contracting-stem point types, and toward the end of prehistory virtually every culture adopted unnotched triangular arrow tips.

Although many basic point styles were widespread, they often have a variety of regional names. For example, contracting-stem points are called Waubesa in Wisconsin and the Upper Mississippi Valley, and nearly identical points are called Belknap or Dickson in Illinois and Gary points to the south and east. While

there are often modest regional variations in the style with which certain point types were made, there is rarely evidence of individual expression. Point makers in general were conformists and manufactured tips according to prevailing culturally accepted styles. For this reason archaeologists work diligently to develop regional projectile point chronologies for each type that recognize patterns of changing shape through time. These are based on the premise that once a distinct style is directly dated by carbon 14 association, then similar points can be confidently attributed to the same age. All ages included in this guide are uncalibrated. This cross-dating can be applied to points found in excavations, plowed fields, or in private collections.

A number of projectile point guides cover various styles found in the Upper Mississippi Valley. This version is adapted and expanded from a 1995 point guide for western Wisconsin that Jeremy Nienow and I compiled. The drawings in this guide are my own and represent composite styles based on having documented thousands of chipped stone points from this region since 1982. These illustrations do not represent type specimens; however, color photos of selected type examples from the Upper Mississippi Valley may be viewed on the Internet at www.uwlax.edu/mvac. The Internet version also contains links to related sites. Two other recommended print guides that overlap with this area are N. D. Justice's *Stone Age Spear and Arrow Points of the Midcontinental and Eastern United States* and T. A. Morrow's *Iowa Projectile Points*. Several price guides are also available, but most are based on undocumented collections, and all contribute to the destruction of the archaeological record by inevitably disconnecting the locational context from artifacts in their emphasis on selling.

Point typology is a tricky business. We know that basic stylistic patterns changed through time, and we have a fairly good regional chronology of shapes, but many points do not readily conform to "type" examples. Some characteristics, such as corner notching, seem to have been popular during more than one period, so we may need to look for more subtle ways to determine the ages of specific points. Dating points is always a problem with surface finds, yet with avocational and professional archaeologists sharing knowledge, we can detect more precise patterns and associations. Some corner-notched points are found at sites with pottery, others at sites without pottery. Some may be made of heat-treated chert, others of silicified sandstone. Some may have basal grinding, others not. These kinds of attributes can help segregate similar looking points that are from different periods. Sooner or later, each variety will be found in datable contexts, and we will then be able to determine their ages directly. Thus, this point guide will need to be refined and updated, a process made easier through the Internet. You can help with this continual process by recording your finds and letting archaeologists document them through photography and measurements.

Identifying the source of the stone used to manufacture specific points can

also be difficult. Some materials such as Knife River flint and jasper taconite are fairly distinctive, and it is generally not difficult to separate Prairie du Chien chert from Galena or Moline cherts. However, nearly all flint sources exhibit stone of considerable variation in color and quality, and there are many look-alikes. For example, until the 1990s nearly every silicified sandstone artifact found in the Upper Mississippi Valley was classified as having been made of material from the well-known Silver Mound source in western Wisconsin. But subsequent identification of numerous other silicified sandstone source areas, including several extensive prehistoric workshops that have produced flakes of color and texture that rival that of Silver Mound, make definitive identifications problematic. Because specific sources are usually from discrete geological formations, fossil inclusions, structural properties, and mineralogical content are useful keys for identification. For example, a distinctive attribute of Burlington chert is the inclusion of fossil crinoids, but these are sometime microscopic. Mineral and structural analyses often require specialized technologies that are generally done at geological laboratories and usually involve partial destruction of a specimen, such as thin sectioning or neutron activation analysis. Fortunately, new and less-destructive analyses are continually being developed. Because of the importance of material identification to understanding past cultural ranges and interaction networks, many professional archaeological institutes have established comparative lithic collections with examples from source areas.

Many people collect spear tips, arrowheads, and other artifacts from plowed fields in the Upper Mississippi Valley. Besides being a pleasant hobby, collecting these artifacts can tell us which culture lived at each site, how old the site is, how people survived, and which trade networks they may have used. Archaeology has a long history of private collectors making significant contributions by sharing their knowledge. Unfortunately, a few untrained people dig into sites or actively buy and sell artifacts, forever destroying critical information needed to interpret the past.

Archaeological sites are nonrenewable resources of our collective heritage. Once destroyed they are gone forever, and with them goes all potential understanding of the past cultures that occupied those sites. In the 130 years from 1850 to 1980 farming, town development, and road construction obliterated nearly 80 percent of the thousands of mounds that once dotted the Upper Mississippi Valley before legislation finally protected those that remained. Now urban sprawl has accelerated the destruction of the irreplaceable archaeological record. It is imperative that we all contribute to preserving as much as possible. Collecting artifacts gives you two options: you can do it ethically and contribute to an understanding of the past, or you can do it selfishly and destroy the record. Note that ethical collecting begins with landowner permission, and it is illegal to col-

lect from any public land, including nearly all of the Upper Mississippi River floodplain. Once permission is obtained from private landowners, you can contribute to archaeological research by following these few simple practices.

Record your find. When you find artifacts, note where you found them as precisely as possible. In the long run, these will be much more valuable to you than a set of artifacts from places long since forgotten. Keep items found at individual sites separate from those found elsewhere. Simple recording systems such as numbering sites works very well. For example, keep all artifacts found on Site 1 together, or label them as such when mixing with others for display. Keeping a notebook with sketch maps of sites is extremely important. An example of a site recording form follows. You could also mark sites on a county map or even a highway map. The best maps are U.S. Geological Survey topographical quadrangles, which are becoming more easily available in digital form through commercial vendors or via the Internet.

For storing, wrap special artifacts separately to prevent them from getting nicked by knocking against other artifacts. Too often, well-intentioned people have dumped coffee cans or old cigar boxes full of artifacts onto our lab tables revealing not only new information but also new breaks and a small pile of fresh chips. Take care of your artifacts; they are a priceless record of the past and are irreplaceable!

Contact an archaeologist. Each state has a state archaeologist, and many colleges and museums have archaeologists who would be happy to photograph your finds and record the information. Rest assured that archaeologists will not confiscate your artifacts, steal your site, or broadcast its location. You will be helping to piece together essential knowledge of the past. In return, you will learn how old your artifacts are, what they are made of, and what they were used for.

Do not buy, sell, or trade artifacts. Buying and selling artifacts not only encourages looting, but once sold, the most important information—site location—is gone forever. It also encourages the manufacture of fraudulent artifacts, and all buyers eventually get taken because fakes can be impossible to distinguish from authentic artifacts. Flintknappers have been producing replicas and fakes for well over a century, and a 1994 survey of modern flintknappers revealed that as many as *1.5 million* replica-fakes are being made *every year*. If you don't know who found it and where it was from, there's a good chance you are buying a fake. As for selling: if you need money that badly, perhaps you should reconsider spending so much time hunting arrowheads.

If you have a collection and you can no longer keep it, either donate it to a state historical society or university with a curation facility, or pass the collection on to the next generation or to someone else who you know will cherish

and maintain the collection. This ensures that collection information will follow the actual artifacts. The key is to make sure that information about the material and where it was collected remains with the collection. Donations to non-profit organizations are usually tax-deductible.

Never dig or excavate a site without proper supervision. Archaeological sites cannot be replaced. Once a site is dug improperly, it is destroyed and cannot be reconstructed. There are ample opportunities to participate in professional excavations throughout the Midwest.

Site Recording Form

State Site Code (e.g., 47Lc1) _____ Collector Code (e.g., JD #1) _____

Name: (Landowner) _____ (Contact information:) _____

(Collector) _____ (Contact information:) _____

Site Name: (If the site is not already named, assign one using family name, farm name, landscape feature, etc.) _____

Location and Landscape Description: (Use roads, rivers, buildings, driveways, and any other landmarks. Be as detailed as possible. Use township, range, and section, or even global positioning [GPS] data when possible.) _____

Site Condition: (Type of soil: sandy, clay, silt, etc. Is the area plowed, wooded, pasture, bulldozed, etc.?) _____

Artifact Description: (Points) (If you have a point guide, what do you think it is? What materials are the artifacts made of [i.e., gray chert, white silicified sandstone, etc.]? Trace the outline or draw pictures.) _____

(Ceramics) (Same as above. If you are making a picture, show decorations and note whether the clay is mixed with sand, rock, or shell, and what part of a vessel you think it is from [e.g., rim].) _____

(Other tools) (Drills, knives, pipes, etc.) _____

Additional comments: (This area is available for any other comments that you think would help either in recording the location of or identifying your artifacts. Just make a note of anything that you find interesting or peculiar about your site and/or artifacts.) _____

(Sketch map and artifact likenesses on reverse)