

An Unfinished Folsom Point Base from NE Arizona

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Few Paleoindian sites are reported for the Colorado Plateau of the North American Southwest (Davis 1985, 1989; Hesse et al. 1996, 1999; Mabry 1998). Aside from erosion and burial, part of the reason for this may be the heavy overlay of artifactual debris from intensive use of the region by subsequent farming populations that swamps the diffusely scattered remains from the earliest temporal intervals. A probable example of this problem came to light in June 2005 during an excavation project (James Madison University field school) on the Sitgreaves National Forest in Arizona. From the surface of a large (34,500 m²) site dating to the late-prehistoric period (ca. AD 850–1300), the second author recovered the basal section of a Folsom projectile point (Figure 1). No other Paleoamerican artifacts were located on the surface or in a shallow (10 cm) 1–m² test unit excavated in the immediate vicinity, but characteristics of the point fragment reveal that it is a production mistake and thus likely to have been deposited close to its find location, rather than an instance of inadvertent loss or a scavenged artifact.

The point is made from a fossiliferous grey chert perhaps derived from gravel deposits along the Little Colorado River 50 km north of the site. The

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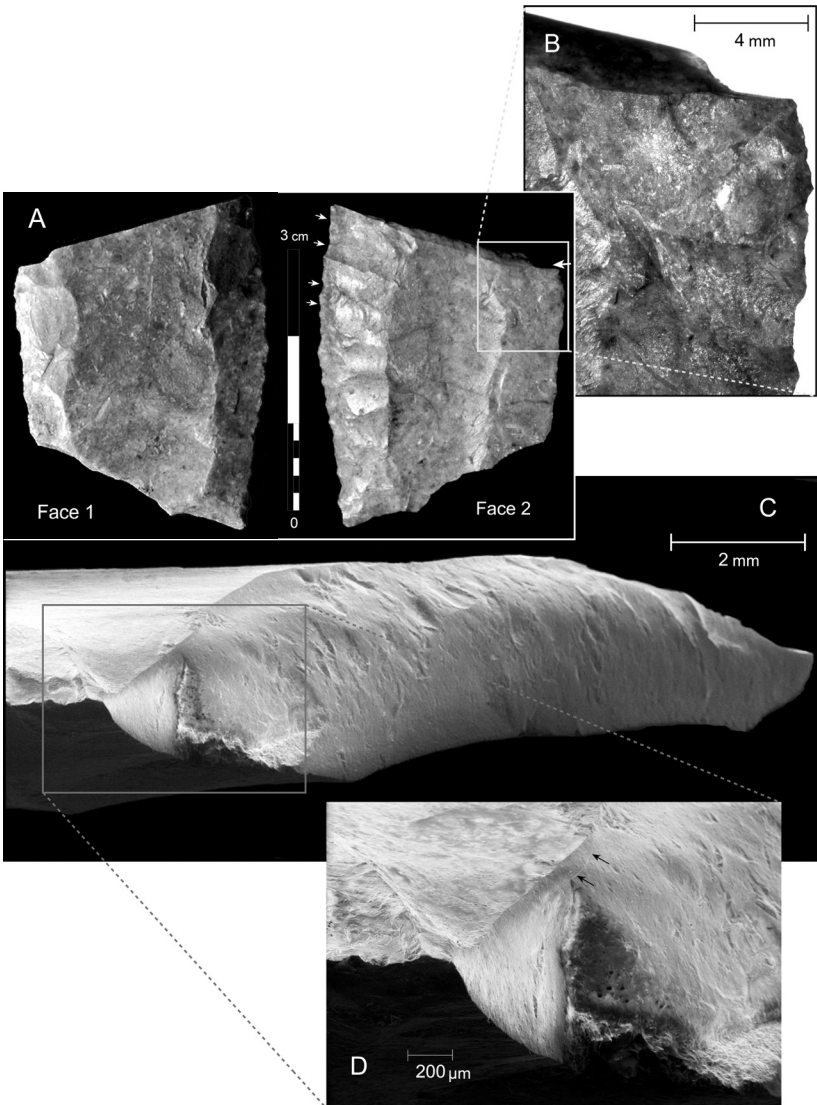


Figure 1. Images of the unfinished Folsom point base from site AR 03-01-02-0292 (USFS), Sitgreaves National Forest, Arizona. **A**, standard digital photographs of both faces with small white arrows showing the pressure flake scars that partially invade the flute scar of Face 2; **B**, digital microphotograph at 20x that shows the post-flute pressure flake on face 2 that truncated the biface; **C**, SEM image at 30x showing oblique edge-on view of the perverse fracture and the remnant scar of the initiating pressure flake; **D**, SEM image at 100x of the point of initiation; note the angled crack (small black arrows) that clearly reveals the direction of fracture away from the point of initiation.

point is fluted on both faces but unfinished; it lacks edge abrasion or preparation of the base for hafting. A corner of the base is missing on account of a

crenated fracture. Maximum dimensions of the recovered basal fragment are 33 mm long to the break, 28.5 mm wide, and 4.9 mm thick; within the flutes the point is 3.5 mm thick at the break and just 2 mm thick in the bulbar swelling. The first flute is 14–17 mm wide, averaging 15.5 mm, while the second flute is 11–13 mm wide averaging 12 mm. The second flute is well-centered but shallow (something of a “skimmer”), rising toward the distal end. This channel flake scar is invaded by lateral pressure flakes near the distal break, and one of these has a deep initiation that truncated the piece by perverse fracture, as is shown in Figure 1. The post-flute retouch on face 2 appears to be directed at reforming the surface topography on this face, perhaps simply to reduce the thickness from an inadequate channel flake removal, but perhaps with the intent of attempting to re flute this face.

In either case, the unfinished nature of the point, combined with a lack of evidence for later modification or use, suggests that this point was recovered from the approximate location of final production. If fluting itself was not actually attempted on site, at least the flaking directed at modifying face 2 surface topography of the distal end occurred there. This is one example on the Colorado Plateau where the abundant remains from Puebloan occupation might be obscuring a small Folsom assemblage. More detail about this find can be found at www.jmu.edu/archaeology.

References Cited

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