

A PALAEO POINT ASSEMBLAGE FROM THE SWAN RIVER VALLEY OF MANITOBA

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This paper describes a small collection of six Palaeo-Indian points from the McVey Creek-Woody River area just east of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border (Fig. 1). Three of them can be regarded as essentially complete, although two show clear evidence of reworking. Two are basal portions, and one is a mid-section – that is, it lacks both its tip and its base. All six display lateral grinding, a trait common to Palaeo-Indian points of all types.

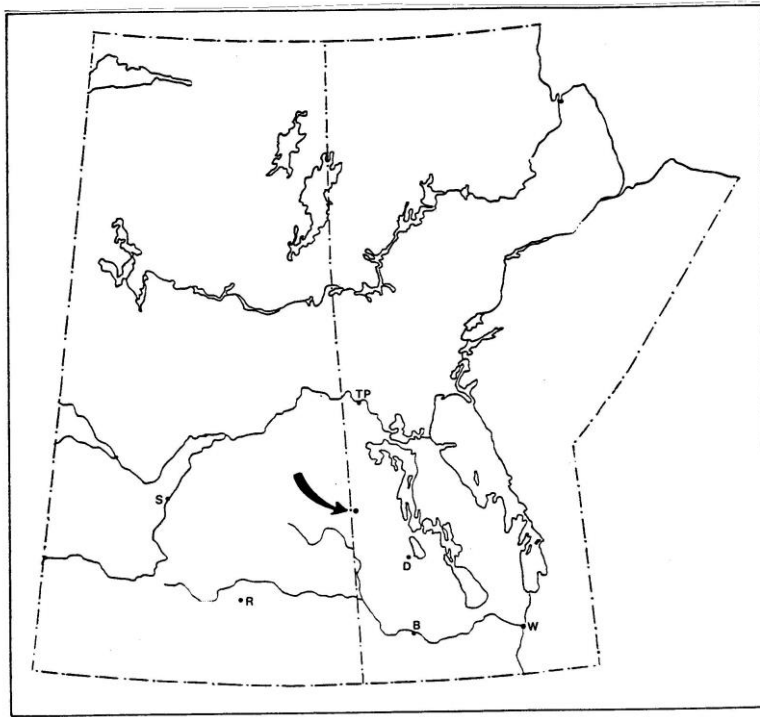


Fig. 1. Source locale (arrow) of artifacts herein described. For orientation, W=Winnipeg, B=Brandon; D=Dauphin, TP=The Pas, R=Regina, S=Saskatoon.

Four of the points (Fig. 2, 3) fall into the general category of what I call “late Plano lanceolate,” and more specifically “Nipawin.” One of these (Fig. 3A) had its tip re-sharpened or restored following loss of the original. Another (Fig. 3B) appears to have been reworked into a drill, although the bit was subsequently snapped off. As a piercing instrument, the portion of it that would have been hafted when still a projectile point would have become the hand-grip in its reworked configuration. One could almost say that it was pre-adapted to becoming a hand-held

tool, because the edge-grinding that was already present when it was a projectile point would have protected the hand when used as a drill.

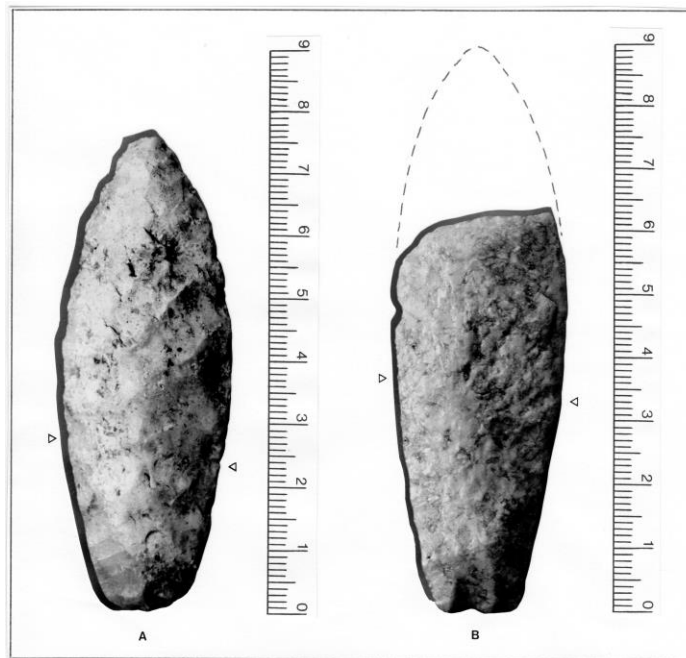


Fig. 2. Whole and fragmentary Nipawin points. Triangles indicate extent of lateral grinding upwards from the base. Photos by S. Saylor.

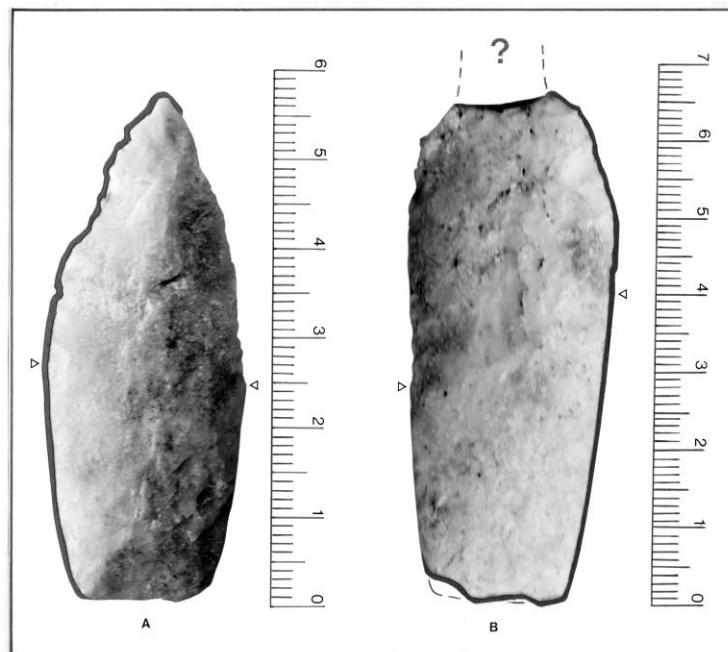


Fig. 3. A -- Re-tipped point; B -- proximal end of point that had possibly been reworked into a drill. Photos by S. Saylor.

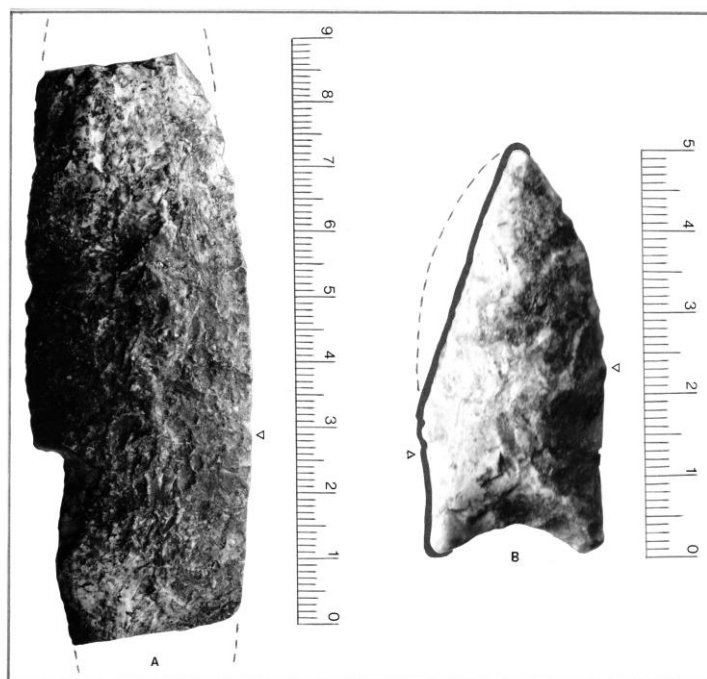


Fig. 4. A -- Mid-section with secondary unifacially-flaked asymmetrical notch); B -- Goshen or Frederick point, initially re-tipped and subsequently reworked into a bevelled-edge side-scraper. Photos by S. Saylor.

The mid-section (Fig. 4A) is unclassifiable as to type because it lacks its base. It too shows reworking to the extent that one side had a unifacial asymmetrical notch carved into it, presumably to create a scraping edge of some sort. Most intriguing (Fig. 4B) is what is either a “Goshen” or a “Frederick point” (but not both!) that was not only re-tipped at least once during its lifetime, but also, following that, bevelled along one side of the blade to create an apparent straight-edge side-scraper. The opposite bifacially, symmetrically-thinned edge could then have served as a knife.

As was intimated above, the taxa “Goshen” and “Frederick” are not synonyms. They denote two different point types that overlap in space but not in time. Goshen and Frederick points do exhibit similar basal configurations and in my opinion belong to the same technological tradition on that account. However, Frederick points display parallel-oblique flaking on the blade, whereas Goshen points do not; and the youngest date for the Goshen type is 10,160 RCYBP, while the oldest for Frederick is 9,100 BP – about 1000 years apart.

Interestingly, all of the items in the subject assemblage were made of the locally-abundant Swan River Chert. This leaves the impression that the people who made the Nipawin group were well ensconced in and familiar with the local area and its natural resources and didn’t rely on foreign

materials like Knife River Flint. The same thinking can be applied to the Goshen point type; although only one example may be present in this assemblage, several more specimens of the Goshen type are known from the Swan River valley and they too are all made of Swan River Chert (Gary Wowchuk, personal communication).

This collection of artifacts is of interest in that the constituent items add to the record of Palaeo-Indian horizon markers from the Swan River valley. The information they provide complements rather well the published inventory of late Plano lanceolate and Goshen, Frederick points found elsewhere in the district. The modes of reworking that they display contribute further to our understanding of this custom as manifested on other Palaeo point finds made in the Swan River valley and elsewhere in Manitoba.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Eugene Gryba for originally bringing to my attention the artifacts herein described.