

CAS PROJECTILE POINT PROJECT

The goal of this project is to better understand Colorado's past and ancient people through better documentation of Colorado projectile points found in private collections as a potential resource for several types of studies. Professional archaeologists are becoming more aware that projectile points in private collections can make a significant contribution to the understanding of the area's prehistory.

The private collectors have many more projectile points in their possession than the combined collections in museums and academic organizations, and represent decades of collection over areas that have not been investigated or have had limited survey in professional research. Thus there is growing interest to try and document these collections and record as much information as is available. Unfortunately, many of these collections have already been lost to time. Early collectors have passed, and with them information associated with the artifacts. Also collections have been disposed of by family members that had no interest or dispersed throughout family members

This past year CAS Chipeta Chapter (Montrose) with Neil Hauser as principal investigator started a project to document diagnostic points (including fragments with diagnostic bases intact) that are in private collections from surface finds. There is an agreement with History Colorado that the documentation created by the project will be archived by the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) in a database that can be used by researchers in future investigations. The images may also be available on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Artifact Roadshow website in the future. Several chapters of the Colorado Archaeology Society are undertaking this documentation project as well as other groups throughout Colorado.

The documentation consists of a photograph or flatbed scan of each point (or base) with a scale and color card. It is preferable to get these on each side when possible, identification of the material, color, presence of serration, presence of basal grinding, flaking pattern on each side, style (corner notch, side notch, expanding stem, etc.), thickness, ultraviolet fluorescence, a set of 16 measurements that characterize the artifact, and general location. More precise locations can be recorded if available.

Some collections are framed and the individual points are not available to take all the measurements. In that case one or more pictures (segments of a frame) of the artifacts in the frame (with scale and color card) are taken. The points can be individually extracted using software and most of the measurements can be done from the photo as well. This minimizes the amount of time that a team of volunteers needs to be in the private home or borrows the collection.

This project does require training of the volunteers that includes learning point styles, material types, ultraviolet fluorescence, point morphology, and then documenting points, i.e., going through the whole process.

The figures below are examples of an original photograph and the finished photo (both will be in the final archive). The identity of the collector will be kept anonymous by assigning each collection a reference number only.

