

METAL PROJECTILE POINTS FROM MEDINA COUNTY, TEXAS*C. K. Chandler***ABSTRACT**

Four metal projectile points from Medina County in south-central Texas are illustrated and discussed. All four are made of iron and three are arrow points but the fourth one is a spear or lance point.

THE ARTIFACTS

Specimen 1, Figure 1, A-A', is made of thin iron and has been cut out with a chisel. It is heavily rusted over all surfaces but is in unusually good condition. The rust buildup has increased its original thickness and has obliterated any evidence that would determine whether the blade edges were sharpened with a file or by grinding with a stone. The blade edges are sharpened from both faces but mostly from one side. The chisel-cut stem has not been ground or filed but does have seven tiny notches on each side that are almost obliterated by the heavy rust buildup. These notches can best be identified by feeling with a fingernail.

Dimensions are: Overall length 51 mm; Width at the shoulders 19 mm; Thickness 2.3 mm; Stem length 11 mm with a 10.2 mm width at the base. Stem edges are relatively straight and the shoulders taper at about 45° to the maximum width of the blade.

This point was found on the surface of Site 41ME74 by Eric Haby south of Highway 90 along Hondo Creek. A number of lithic artifacts have been collected from this site. They include several Edwards and Scallorn arrow points, some large flake scrapers and Archaic dart points dating from the Early to Late Archaic time periods, and four Leon Plain potsherds. These sherds are tan to buff in color with some fire mottling and they all appear to be from the same pot. Two of the sherds fit together. While a direct association between the metal point and the potsherds reported here cannot be established, metal (brass) arrow points are previously reported as found on

sites yielding Leon Plain sherds (Chandler 1986).

Specimen 2, Figure 1, B-B', is made of thin iron and appears to have been cut out with metal shears. It is heavily rust coated and has several rust pits, but is in reasonably good condition. The heavy rust coating has increased its thickness and made detailed examination for evidence of method of manufacture difficult. However, under microscopic examination the stem edges show no evidence of notching, which is common with many metal arrow points. The blade edges appear to have been ground or filed more from one face. The irregular thickness is caused by the rust buildup. The stem expands in a long gentle curve to the shoulders. Dimensions are: Length 46 mm; Width 18 mm; Thickness 2.4 to 3 mm; Stem Length 21 mm; Blade Length 25 mm; Base Width 8.5 mm; Weight 5.8 grams.

This point was found by Tom Fillingner in an automobile tire track on a high bank along Seco Creek south of Highway 90. It is an isolated surface find.

Specimen 3, Figure 1, C-C', is made of thin iron and has been cut out with a chisel. It has heavy rust encrustation on one side only. The reverse has had a similar rust buildup that has flaked off. This heavy rust obscures the details of manufacture, but it appears to have been cut out of thin sheet metal with a chisel. The stem lightly contracts to a straight base and expands in a slope to the shoulders. The existing condition of the blade edges indicate it was alternately sharpened to opposite faces. The distal tip is broken and missing and this appears to have shortened the blade length by approximately three to four millimeters. There is no evidence of notching of the stem edges.

Maximum dimensions: Length 40.7 mm; Width 18.0 mm; Thickness 2.5 mm; Stem is 13 mm long and lightly contracts



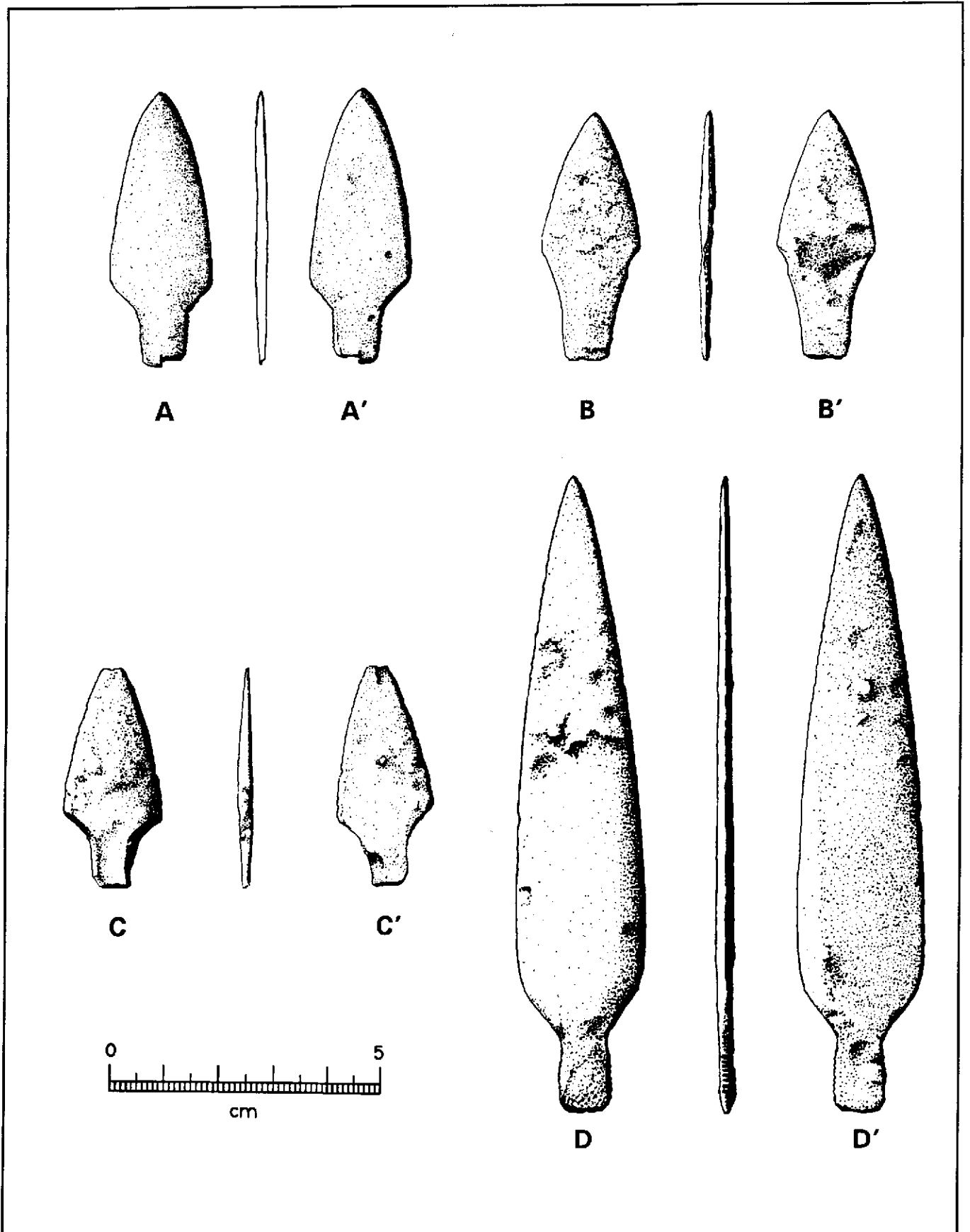


Figure 1. Metal projectile points from Medina County.

to 7 mm wide at the base. Weight, 5.1 grams.

This point was found on the surface in southwestern Medina County by Ray Harbison.

Specimen 4, Figure 1, D-D', is made of thin iron and all edges have been filed or ground to the extent of obliterating evidence of whether it was cut out with a chisel or shears. Its tapering thickness from stem to distal tip may indicate it was made by a hammer and forge process. It is heavily coated with rust with some large rust pits. However, it is in very good condition. There are numerous longitudinal striations on one face and many similar diagonal striations on the opposite face that are scratched into the heavy rust coating and, in some instances, have removed a thick rust flake and exposed a tiny spot of parent metal. This condition is best identified with low power magnification. It appears these striations were caused by the artifact being dragged by cultivation equipments. There are eight very small, closely spaced notches in one edge of the stem. The opposite edge appears to have had a similar number, but rust corrosion and buildup have almost totally obliterated these. Blade edges from the shoulders to the distal tip have been sharpened from both faces.

Dimensions are: Length 118 mm; Width 24 mm just below the shoulders; Thickness 2.6 mm on the stem; 1.7 mm near the distal tip; Stem Length 14.5 mm and Stem Width 10.5 mm. Weight 25.3 grams.

This point was found on the surface in a cultivated field east of Hondo Creek in southeast Medina County by Malcolm Watson in early 1992.

DISCUSSION

Metal projectile points have been occasionally reported from many areas of south and central Texas, but always in small numbers (Chandler

1984, 1986; McReynolds 1982; Mitchell 1980; Mitchell and Highley 1982; Schuetz 1969; Smith 1984).

The possible association of these projectile points with specific historic Indian groups remains speculative. However, the Apache, and later the Comanche, were very active raiders throughout much of central and southwest Texas and their use of metal weapons is well documented.

In plotting the locations of these four metal points found in Medina County, they appear to set a pattern that closely follows the route of one of the earliest roads from Mexico to San Antonio.

Many of the early routes from Mexico crossed the Rio Grande near present-day Guerrero, Coahuila. There are many route variations of the Old San Antonio Road but all followed a narrow corridor of waterholes and campsites. Current evidence suggests some of these roads were established as early as 1689 and 1690. Many of these early roads followed ancient Indian trails. Various trails of this route were known as "The Upper Presidio Road," "The Camino Pita," and "The Camino de los Tejas" (McGraw 1991).

The Camino de los Tejas crossed the Frio River in the immediate vicinity of Old Frio Town in northwestern Frio County, a few miles from where the Harbison metal point was found in extreme southwest Medina County. This road then crossed Seco Creek near a permanent waterhole where the Fillingier metal point was found, then crossed the steep Hondo Creek just south of site 41ME74 where the Haby metal point was recovered. This route then proceeds northeast to cross San Francisco Perez Creek near Devine. The Watson metal point was found along this route between the Hondo and San Francisco Perez Creek crossings.

It appears that stream crossings may have been preferred locations for raiding parties to attack these early travelers.

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