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Artifacts found near Wilsall may be 12,000 years old

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NEWS

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ARTIFACTS FOUND
NEAR WILSALL MAY BE
12,000 YEARS OLD

By Dennis Sale
UM Information Services

MISSOULA, Mont.--

Amateur archeologists digging in the Wilsall area north of Livingston have uncovered a half-dozen stone projectile points which may date to about 10,000 B.C., according to Dr. Dee C. Taylor, an anthropology professor at the University of Montana.

The discovery site, about a mile from Wilsall, is one of two areas investigated recently by Dr. Taylor and a crew of University students.

Dr. Taylor said that two workmen, Calvin Sarver and Bennie Hargis, both of Wilsall, found six ancient Clovis Projectile Points and 80 to 90 scrapers and assorted stone blades while they were digging at the base of a limestone ledge. Dr. Taylor said scrapers and blades found by the two men also may be about 12,000 years old.

The artifacts uncovered by the workmen now belong to them and the property owner, Dr. Melvin Anzick, a Livingston veterinarian. Dr. Taylor and his students returned to Missoula with two blades, several antler tips and blade pieces they found at the site during a two-week investigation.

"Clovis Points," said Dr. Taylor, "first were discovered at Black Water Draw near Clovis, New Mexico, between 1933-37. The same type of projectile points found at other archeological sites have proven to be 12,000 or more years old."

He said the Clovis Points are distinguishable from other projectile points by their fluted or grooved sides. All the projectile points found at the Wilsall site are fluted.

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Dr. Taylor said the Clovis Points usually are associated with the killing of mammoths or gigantic elephants existing thousands of years ago.

"But the archeological site near Wilsall contained no real signs of mammoths," Dr. Taylor added. "This suggests that the site may have been a place where types of burial offerings were made by early inhabitants of the area. A number of buffalo bones were found at the site, too, so the limestone ledge probably was used as a buffalo jump by early Indians."

Other items discovered at the Wilsall site include parts of a skull and fragments of small bones from a human skeleton, suggesting that a child may have been buried there, Dr. Taylor indicated.

The human bone fragments found at the site will be sent to Washington State University, Pullman, for radiocarbon dating to determine their age.

The other site investigated by Dr. Taylor and his crew of students was the Madison Buffalo Jump located at the east edge of the Madison Valley, eight miles south of Logan near Three Forks. That excavation was sponsored by the Montana Fish and Game Commission under a \$1,000 grant for eventual development of the jump as a tourist attraction.

"We dug four test pits in the slope at the base of the cliff," Dr. Taylor said, "and we found dozens of Indian tepee rings. Artifacts found at the site included a piece of Shoshone Indian smoking pipe broken in manufacture and 20 to 30 arrowheads, many of which were made of obsidian or volcanic glass. The glass probably originated in Yellowstone Park."

Dr. Taylor said the site probably dates to 1500-1700 A.D. Dr. Carling I. Malouf, another UM professor of anthropology, previously investigated the Madison Valley site in 1958.

University students assisting Dr. Taylor in the investigations included his son Mark, David B. Gnose and Donald A. Dodge, Missoula; Dale E. Fredlund, Missoula, formerly of Eureka; Dean H. Wilson, Great Falls, and William A. Dicus, Dunedin, Fla.

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