

# Polka Dot Agate Arrowhead

~ Notched With An Un-Planned Overshot Pressure Flake ~



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# Polka Dot Overshot

~ How An Arrowhead Notch Went Way Too Far ~



Actual Size:  
1-3/16" long by  
7/8" wide.

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# Perhaps This Is How So Many Rogue River Arrowheads From Oregon Were First Knapped Into Such Extreme Design Configurations?

When I was working on this small arrowhead of heat-treated Polka Dot Agate, the point was shaping up quite well. It had a nicely balanced triangular form, and was ready for the base notching and the final trimming and sharpening of the needle tip.

I made several preliminary base notch flake removals and was almost done with that part of the arrowhead making process. I had one of the notches completed on both faces of the point.

The second notch was done on one face. I prepared the edge of that notch for the last one or two pressure flakes to be removed from the other face.

Holding the arrowhead face down on the leather pad in the palm of my hand, I placed the tip of my notching tool against the roughened edge of the stone, inside the notch, and applied pressure with the tool to build up the energy load required to drive off the flake which I wanted to remove to finish the notch.

I could feel the energy build up as I squeezed the tool against the stone.

Then, snap! The stone fractured with a sharp, cracking sound and I felt the movement of the flake ... against my finger on the far side of the arrowhead.

Before I turned over the stone to examine the notching flake, I glanced at the arrowhead in my hand. The outline of the hunting weapon had changed dramatically. Instead of a balanced triangle, now it

looked as though someone had bitten a curved piece out of the edge opposite the notch where I was working. A bit peeved now, I turned over the point to see what had happened. The notching flake, instead of terminating in the middle of the base of the arrowhead, had travelled completely across the face of the arrowhead and then cut away the far edge, leaving the curved bite.

This type of flake or chip removal is called an "overshot flake", since it removes stone material all the way across the face of the stone, and then even breaks away the far edge. There are times in the "flint knapping" process where an event like this is desirable, but it is not when you are almost finished with a very small arrowhead made out of an unusual material.

In this instance, it destroyed the finished shape which I had in mind. However, when I am trying to think like the ancient ones who used this technology to make their hunting weapons all the time, I do not just toss away the damaged point. No. I look at it with an eye towards finishing the arrowhead, just with a different configuration. Accidents such as this can lead to finding other useful shapes and forms for hunting tools. This same accommodation takes place when fractures occur in other ways to change an intended point design into something different, but still potentially useful and practical. This time, I have refrained from finishing the point in order to photograph it and use it as a teaching tool about arrowhead design and pressure flaking.



Jasper Rogue River point, actual size, 7/8" x 1/2". Shown enlarged below, to see detail. Lines indicate possible shape of original tip.



Jasper Rogue River point, actual size, 1" x 3/4". Shown enlarged below, to see detail. Lines indicate possible barb and base shape.



Jasper Rogue River point, actual size, 1" x 11/16". Shown enlarged below, to see detail. Lines indicate possible original barb shape.

Jasper Rogue River point, actual size, 7/8" x 1/2". Shown enlarged below, to see detail, perhaps configured for use as a harpoon.



Jasper Rogue River point, actual size, 15/16" x 9/16". Shown enlarged below, to see detail, perhaps configured for use as a harpoon.



Jasper Rogue River point, actual size, 15/16" x 9/16". Shown enlarged below, to see detail. Lines indicate form of fractured tip.



These six jasper Rogue River arrowheads were obtained from Dean Thompson, who found them in southern Oregon.

A variant of the Gunther style arrowheads of the Pacific Northwest, Rogue River points date to from 1000 to 200 B.P.