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THE WASHINGTON ARCHAEOLOGIST

NEXT MEETING: Seattle Chapter - Wednesday, May 11, 1960 - 8:00 P.M.

MEETING PLACE: City Light's North Service Center at North 97th St. and Stone Avenue--2 blocks east of Aurora on North 97th St.

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NORTHWEST ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONFERENCE - MAY 13 and 14, 1960

SESSIONS IN ARCHAEOLOGY

MAY 14, 10:30 - 12:00 A.M., Room 237 Savery Hall, Chairman: Robert Greengo

1. Dee C. Taylor (Montana State University)
   Excavations at the Elkhorn Ranch Site in North Dakota

2. Robert Kidd (University of Washington)
   Archaeological Investigations in Pacific County, Southwestern Washington

3. Don E. Drummond (University of Oregon)
   Polyhedral Cores and Prismatic Blades in Oregon

MAY 14, 2:30 - 4:30 P.M., Room 237, Savery Hall, Chairman: Herbert C. Taylor, Jr.

1. Roderick Sprague (Washington State University)
   Burial Patterns of the Lower Snake River

2. Robert Greengo (University of Washington)
   The Archaeology of the Priest Rapids Area

3. David R. Cole (University of Oregon)
   Archaeology of the John Day Dam Reservoir Area of Oregon

4. B. Robert Butler (University of Washington)
   Some Horizon Markers at the Columbia River Dalles and their Significance

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These meetings will be of interest to W-A-S members. Registration Fee 50¢.

A RUBBING STONE FROM THE SPOKANE RIVER VALLEY

C. G. Nelson

An unusual rubbing stone was recovered from the surface of an apparent site which is exposed between the low water and maximum flood of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake, the reservoir formed by the Grand Coulee Dam. While the precise location of this site has not been determined, the general location is that part of the reservoir in Sections 31 and 32 in T26N, R38E, very near the line separating Lincoln and Stevens Counties in Washington. The use of the names Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake and Spokane River implies that this is a portion of the reservoir which is moving water rather than slack water. W-A-S member Paul Flynn of Spokane arranged to have the artifact made available for examination and description. W-A-S member Gordon Lelander prepared the illustrations.

In size the rubbing stone measures 7-7/16" long, 4-5/8" wide and 2-9/32" thick. The artifact was formed from a river worn granite cobble. In more detail the granite can be described as a hornblende granite. The process of manufacturing was by pecking and similar to that described by Holmes (Holmes: 1919, pp. 330-336). In views 1 and 2 of Plate II, the darker shaded area is the original water-worn surface of the river cobble and the lighter shaded areas are the pecked surfaces. The weight of the piece is 4 lbs. 12 oz.

There are three distinguishing features of form developed in this artifact. The most unusual of these is that indentations have been made for each finger. Plate II illustrates this feature and the manner in which it was held in the hand. The location and orientation of the indentations for the thumb, second, third and fourth fingers require the use of the right hand. The position of the groove for the index (first) finger suggests that the useful stroke was toward the body. A hand span of 8-3/8" to 8-5/8" provides a fit which permits a full grip of the object and its use without exposure of the fingers to abrasion. This hand span dimension may possibly imply male rather than female use. As a As a parenthetical note to this line of thought, the hand shown in views 3 and 4 of Plate II has a hand span of 9-1/8" and the hazards in respect to finger abrasion are apparent. The second feature relates to the rubbing surface which is concave and has been worn to a maximum depth of 5/32". A microscopic examination of this surface shows both pecking and abrasion. Since the pecking is deeper than the abrasion, the concave surface was developed before the tool was used. The third feature is identified as the 'striking end' in Plate I. Another aspect of this feature is the camber which is shown in the longitudinal section in Plate III and results in a striking angle of 11° with respect to a line perpendicular to the projection the major longitudinal dimension of the rubbing surface.

The use of this artifact is problematical. The opinion has been offered that its use was related to hide dressing. A reasonably thorough search of the literature does not record the use of a dressing stone with a concave working surface. Had the artifact been used in this manner there would have been evidence of animal fats imbedded in the surface. There were none. In contrast, the polish of a portion of the finger indentations indicates that it would be reasonable to expect a similar condition had the tool been used for hide dressing. The indistinct character of the abrasion reducing the high point of the

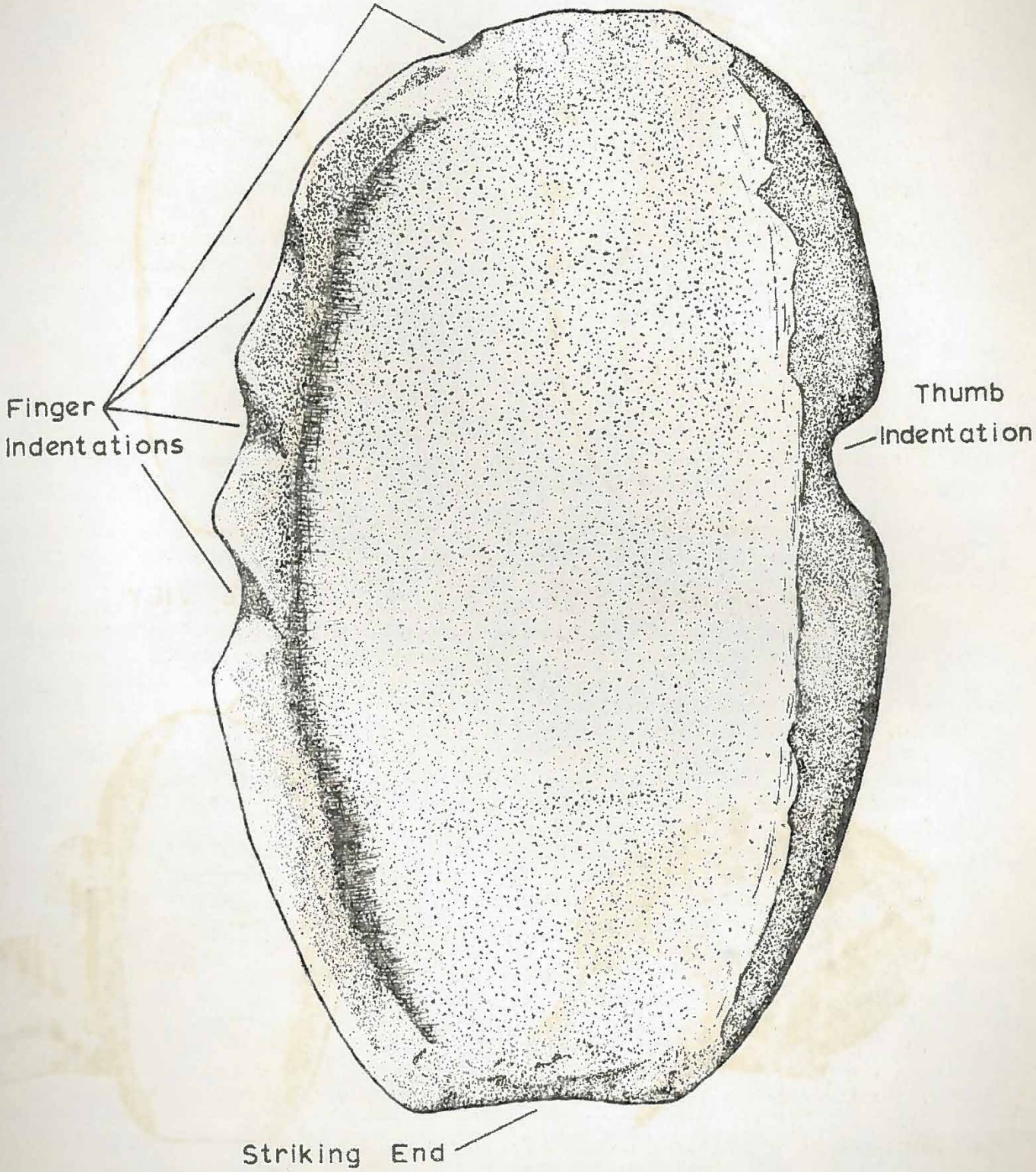
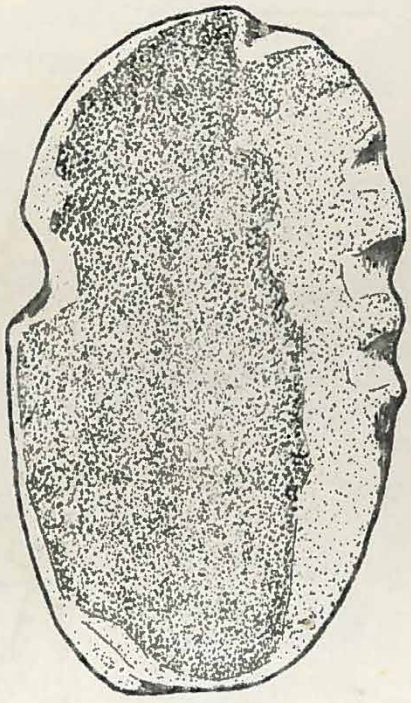
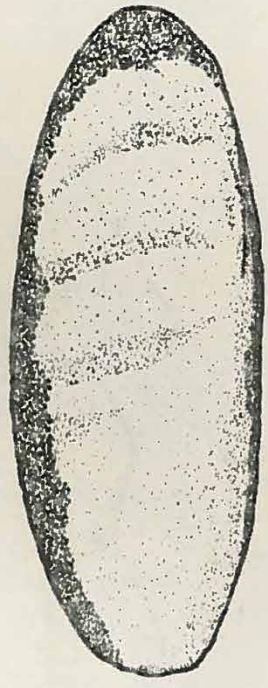


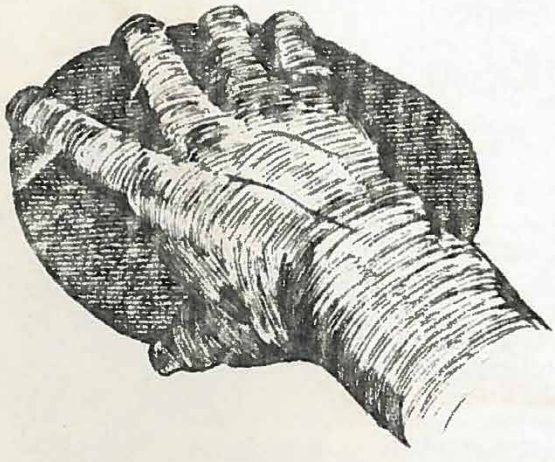
PLATE 1 — RUBBING STONE — View showing Rubbing Surface and Striking End
Full Scale



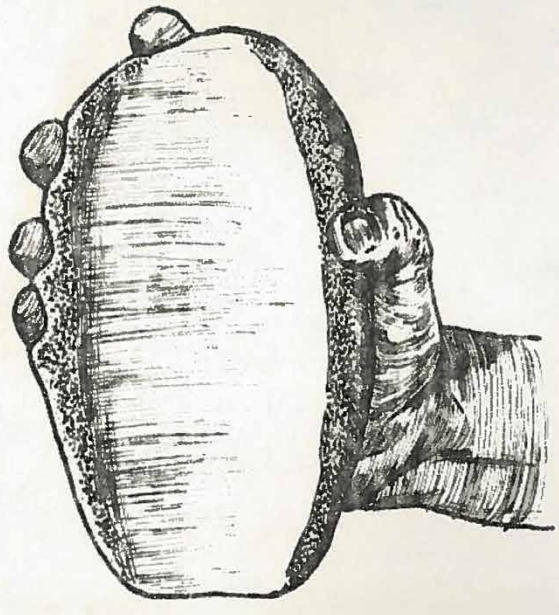
1. VIEW OF HAND SIDE



2. SIDE VIEW

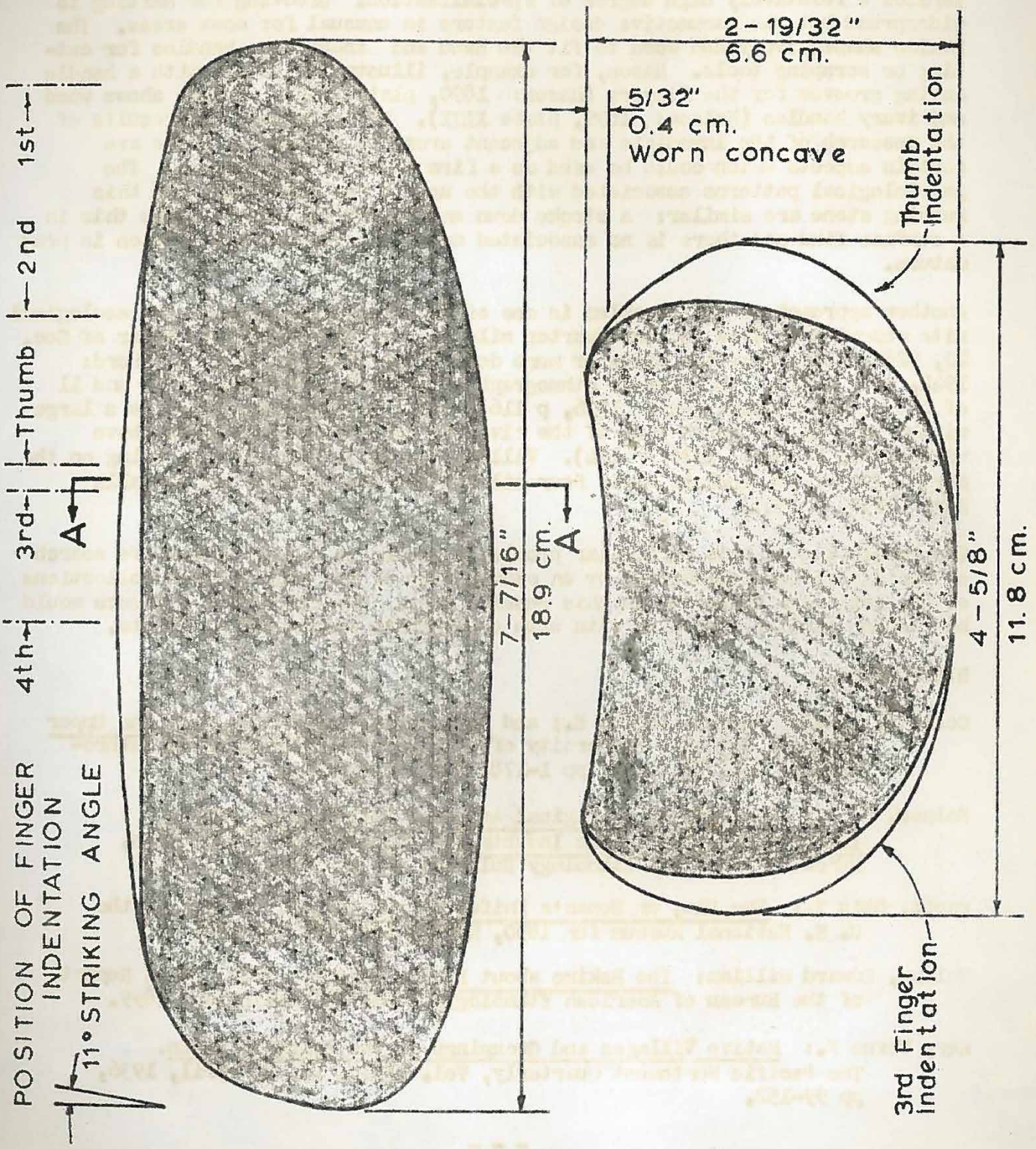


3. VIEW SHOWING HAND POSITION



4. VIEW OF RUBBING SURFACE

PLATE II



LONGITUDINAL SECTION SECTION A-A

FULL SCALE

PLATE III

pecking was inconclusive. There is little evidence here pointing to either a stone working tool or a wood working tool. The indentations for the fingers implies a relatively high degree of specialization. Grooving for hafting is widespread but the manumotive design feature is unusual for most areas. The Eskimo shaped ivory and wood to fit the hand and these were handles for cutting or scraping tools. Mason, for example, illustrates an ulu with a handle having grooves for the fingers (Mason: 1890, plate LXIV). Nelson shows wood and ivory handles (Nelson: 1899, plate XLIX). Unfortunately the results of the research of the immediate and adjacent areas is negative. There are certain aspects which could be used as a firm basis of speculation. The physiological patterns associated with the use of the elbow adze and this rubbing stone are similar: a stroke down and toward the body. Since this is a surface find and there is no associated material, further speculation is premature.

Another approach to this problem is one of location. The nearest archaeological site reported is Site 48, one-quarter mile west of the southeast corner of Sec. 20, T28N, R37E, some ten miles or more down river (Collier, Hudson & Ford: 1942, PP 8 & 35). The nearest ethnographic locations are villages 10 and 11 of the Middle Spokane (Ray: 1936, p 116). Village 10 is described as a large winter camp on the north side of the river at the rapids four miles above village No. 9 (Ray: 1936, p 134). Village No. 11 is described as being on the north side of the Spokane River four miles below the present Little Falls Ray: 1936, p 134).

The resolution of this particular problem would be in a more exhaustive search of the literature followed up by an examination of the many private collections of the artifacts collected in this general area. The conclusive evidence would be finding similar pieces in situ with appropriate associated artifacts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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