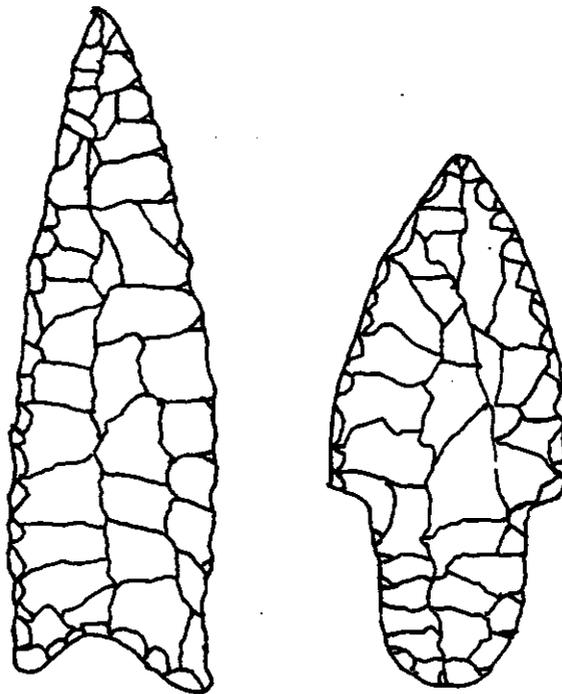


**THE WHITEHEAD COLLECTION,  
CHAMBERS COUNTY, TEXAS**

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**HOUSTON ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**  
Report No. 15, 1999

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## INTRODUCTION

This report describes an archeological collection made over a long time period by Dr. H. J. Whitehead in the Smith Point area of Chambers County, Texas. This is in the coastal margin part of Southeast Texas. Recording of this collection was done by the HAS on December 12, 1998. HAS members who participated in recording this collection include Dick Gregg, Sheldon Kindall, Richey Ebersole, Bev Mendenhall, Lee Patterson, and Gloria Marubio, who did drawings of incised bird bone whistle segments.

Smith Point is an area that looms as a potential source for early man in Texas. A few surveys were made at Smith Point in the early days of archeological investigations of the Texas coast (Duke 1960), but no systematic investigation has been done here in at least 30 years. What little data have been seen indicate that, early man or not, Smith Point has had a long sequence of occupation. This conclusion is greatly strengthened by the Whitehead collection. It is hoped that by bringing this collection into public view, we can stimulate a survey of the whole area.

The Whitehead collection includes projectile points, lithic tools, bone artifacts, marine shell artifacts, ceramics, and glass beads. Projectile point types indicate a long occupation sequence in the Smith Point area, from the Late Paleo-Indian (8000-5000 BC) through the Historic Indian (AD 1700-1800+) time periods. Glass trade beads are another indication of the presence of historic Indians.

There is evidence for the manufacture of marine shell artifacts at this location, in the form of chert drill bits, partially finished shell artifacts, and marine shell fragments.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Smith Point is at the western end of the land mass that separates Trinity Bay from East Bay. East Bay and Trinity Bay are estuaries of the Gulf of Mexico. The land mass was formed during the Late Pleistocene period (Beaumont) from fluvial silting around a barrier strandplain (Paine and Morton 1986:Figure 4).

A high proportion of Indian sites on the coastal margin of Southeast Texas are Rangia shell middens in a brackish water environment. In contrast, Smith Point is in a marine environment. The marine shell artifacts found here were made from locally available shell. Oyster shell midden sites have been found on the north shore of East Bay.

Most coastal margin sites with Paleo-Indian (before 5000 BC), Early Archaic (5000-3000 BC), and Middle Archaic (3000-1500 BC) components would have been inland sites during these time periods, in a freshwater environment, while the Gulf shoreline was farther out. Smith Point is an exception, with a marine environment during all periods of possible Indian occupation, after 12,000 years ago. Sea level stabilized in the Gulf of Mexico at about 1000 BC (Ricklis and Blum 1997:Figure 4). Smith Point was in a marine environment before this date, however. Smith Point is in an estuary of the Gulf of Mexico that existed in the Pleistocene period before 10,000 years ago (Paine and Morton 1986:Figure 4), when much of the Gulf shoreline was farther south due to a lower sea level.

## PROJECTILE POINTS

Projectile point types in the Whitehead collection represent a long occupation sequence at Smith Point. Projectile points are summarized in Table 1. The Late Paleo-Indian period (8000-5000 BC) is represented by three points. A Dalton point and a San Patrice point can be placed in a time period of about 8000-7000 BC. Dalton points are not common in Southeast Texas (Patterson 1996a:Table 7). An Early Corner-Notched point is from the latter part of the Late Paleo-Indian period. An Early Stemmed point is probably from the Early Archaic period (5000-3000 BC) when this was a major point type. This point type is found occasionally in the Late Paleo-Indian period (Patterson 1980; Patterson et al. 1987). Early projectile points are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

The Middle Archaic period (3000-1500 BC) is represented by three Bulverde or Bulverde-like points (Figure 3D,E,F). Gary and Kent points (Figure 4) start in the Middle Archaic period, but continue into later time periods. There is a range of sizes of Gary and Kent dart points in this collection, with a possible time range covering the Middle Archaic, Late Archaic (1500 BC-AD 100), and Early Ceramic (AD 100-600) time periods. Gary and Kent points tended to get smaller in later time. Gary and Kent dart points were used even later during the Late Prehistoric period in inland Southeast Texas. However, dart points were not used during the Late Prehistoric period on the coastal margin of Southeast Texas (Aten 1983:306). During the Late Prehistoric period, the spear and spearthrower and the bow and arrow were used concurrently in the inland part of Southeast Texas, but only the bow and arrow was used during this time period on the coastal margin of Southeast Texas (Aten 1983:306).

Ellis (Figure 3A) and Yarbrough (Figure 3B,C) dart point specimens are from the Late Archaic and Early Ceramic periods. A small triangular dart point might be from the Early Ceramic period. Four dart point preforms indicate that at least some dart points were being manufactured at this location. A summary of time periods for dart point types has been given by Patterson (1995:Table 3, 1996:Table 4).

Perdiz, Alba, and Catahoula arrow points (Figure 5) are from the Late Prehistoric period (AD 600-1500) and perhaps the Proto-Historic period (AD 1500-1700). These are common arrow point types in this region. Cuney, Fresno, and Bulbar Stemmed arrow points (Figure 6) probably represent the Historic Indian period (AD 1700-1800+)(Hudgins 1984; Patterson n.d.a.). There are two gar scale arrow points (Figure 7) that may be from the Late Prehistoric period or later. Gar scale arrow points have been found at a few other sites in Southeast Texas (Patterson 1994).

## LITHIC TOOLS

The Whitehead collection contains a few lithic tools, including a unifacial scraper and 10 drill bits. The drill bits (Figure 8) would have been used to drill holes in shell with a bow-drill (Patterson 1996b). The largest specimen in Figure 8 may be a reamer rather than a drill bit. These drill bits are evidence that marine shell ornaments were being manufactured at Smith Point. The manufacture of marine shell pendants and tubular shell beads is discussed further in the report section on shell artifacts.

Stone drill bits have been found at other sites in the Galveston Bay area, such as 41HR80 (Aten et al. 1976:33) and 41GV66 (Ricklis 1994:Figures 5.15,6.4,8.17,8.48). Drill bits at these sites have small diameters, which suggests use for drilling holes in tubular marine shell beads. The range of diameters of drill bits in the Whitehead collection suggests that these specimens were used to drill holes in shell beads and pendants.

## BONE ARTIFACTS

Bone tools and projectile points are common at sites on the coastal margin of Southeast Texas. They were used instead of stone tools and projectile points in this lithic-poor area. The Whitehead collection contains two large bone awls (Figure 9), one plain and one with an incised pattern. There is also a smaller diameter pointed bone specimen that may be a drill or an awl.

There are nine segments of bird bone whistles, perhaps made from whooping crane ulna (Ricklis 1994:448). These specimens were associated with a burial. They appear to have been purposefully broken, because the specimens are all of fairly uniform length (Figure 10), which would not be likely if breakage was accidental. Bird bone whistles from the Galveston Bay area are from the Late Prehistoric, Proto-Historic, and Historic Indian periods (Ricklis 1994:448).

Incised patterns on the bird bone whistles are shown in Figure 11. One specimen has a longitudinal band with cross-hatches, similar to a specimen from 41GV66 on Galveston Island (Ricklis 1994:Figure 8.18). Bird bone whistle segments in the Whitehead collection have an average length of 7.7 cm with a standard deviation of 1.178 cm. Complete bird bone whistles at sites 41HR80 (Aten et al. 1976:37) and 41GV66 (Ricklis 1994:Figures 8.12,8.18,8.41,8.45) have a length range of 20 to 32 cm. It is estimated that the nine bird bone whistle segments in the Whitehead collection represent three complete whistles. Three of the segments (Figure 10) have a stop hole for playing. Bird bone whistles at 41HR80 (Aten et al. 1976) and 41GV66 (Ricklis 1994) have single stop holes.

This collection has a bear tooth pendant (Figure 9) with a circular incision on the proximal end for attaching a cord. Bear remains are rare at prehistoric sites in Southeast Texas. Perhaps this bear tooth pendant is from the Historic Indian period, after firearms became available.

Duke (1960) has described a bone projectile point from Smith Point with asphaltum in the socket.

## CERAMICS

The Whitehead collection contains a large number of Indian potsherds. During the recording of this collection, time did not permit a thorough classification of pottery types. It was observed, however, that the sherd collection had a mixture of sandy paste and grog-tempered sherds. Sandy paste pottery is of the Goose Creek type, the most common ceramic type in Southeast Texas in both the Early Ceramic and Late Prehistoric periods (Aten 1983:Figure 14.1). Grog-tempered pottery is from the Late Prehistoric period in Southeast Texas, with San Jacinto and Baytown Plain, variety Phoenix Lake types (Aten 1983:Chapter 12). Some of the grog-tempered sherds in the Whitehead collection are Baytown Plain, variety Phoenix Lake, with much grog temper visible. The geographic distribution of Baytown Plain, variety Phoenix Lake pottery in Southeast Texas is confined to the coastal margin. Duke (1960) has noted that some previous collections of sherds from Smith Point were mainly Goose Creek Plain, with a few Goose Creek Incised specimens.

There is an unusual round ceramic artifact (Figures 14C,15C), about 94 mm diameter with two drilled holes, made from the flat bottom of a vessel. The two drilled holes might

indicate use as a pendant, or perhaps the holes were used for vessel repair. Duke (1960) has described a ceramic disk from Smith Point. This specimen was 19.1 mm in diameter and 9.5 mm thick, with the circumference shaped by abrading. There appears to be abrading on the circumference of the round ceramic artifact in the Whitehead collection (Figure 15C), which could make it more likely that this specimen was used as a pendant. Ceramic vessels with flat bottoms are not common in Southeast Texas, but are common on ceramic vessels from the Coles Creek period (AD 395-1250) in adjacent Louisiana (Neuman 1984:169, Plate 44). Ceramic vessels with flat bottoms at Smith point perhaps indicate women from southwestern Louisiana joining bands on the coastal margin of Southeast Texas. Most ceramic vessels in Southeast Texas have conical bottoms, as shown in Figures 14 and 15. There is also a sherd in this collection with a single drilled hole, which appears to be a lace hole for vessel repair.

Incised patterns on sherds in this collection are shown in Figures 12 and 13. Most patterns on sherds in this collection are linear designs made with one or more straight lines. These types of patterns are common in Southeast Texas (Aten 1983:Figure 12.2; Black 1989). Aten (1983:217) and Ricklis (1994:Figure 7.24) have noted the similarity of incised designs on pottery in Southeast Texas to incised designs on pottery from the Lower Mississippi Valley. Use of pottery was introduced into Southeast Texas from Louisiana (Aten 1983:297), and there appear to have been continuing cultural relationships between Indians of the coastal margins of Southeast Texas and southwestern Louisiana.

One sherd in the Whitehead collection has a bold incised design of curved lines (Figure 13, top left). Incised designs with curved lines are rare on pottery in Southeast Texas (Black 1989:4). The design on this specimen resembles the design on an illustrated ceramic vessel from the Coles Creek period in Louisiana (Neuman 1984:Plate 44c). Perhaps this specimen is another indication of women from southwestern Louisiana joining coastal margin bands in Southeast Texas.

## MARINE SHELL ARTIFACTS

This collection contains several marine shell artifacts, including both finished and unfinished specimens. There are two tubular shell beads made from lightning whelk (*Busycon perversum*) columella (Figure 16). One specimen has a completely drilled longitudinal hole, and the other has a partially drilled hole, which shows that beads were being manufactured at this location. As noted above, small diameter stone drill bits were probably being used here to drill holes in beads.

The collection has two oyster shell pendants, one with a single drilled hole, and another with two drilled holes (Figure 17A,B). Oyster shell pendants are not common on the coastal margin of Southeast Texas. Oyster shell was most commonly used for tools (Aten 1983:264; Patterson 1990:Figure 2).

There are two unworked lightning whelk columella and one columella with ground, pointed ends (Figure 17D). This specimen is similar to specimens with a Late Archaic burial at site 41FB3 in Fort Bend County (Patterson et al. 1998:Figure 17). Some cut lightning whelk shell was found. These specimens are additional evidence of manufacture of marine shell ornaments. Two specimens made of lightning whelk seem to be utilitarian items. One specimen is half of a lightning whelk whorl with columella partially removed, which might have been used as a spoon or ladle (Figure 18A). The other specimen is a complete lightning whelk shell that may have been used as a large scraper (Figure 18B). The outer lip is well worn, and there is a hole in the shell end (Figure 19B) that may have been made for easier holding.

## BEADS

The Whitehead collection has 9 European trade beads from the Historic Indian period (Figure 20). Glass beads have been found at sites in the Galveston Bay area in Chambers County (Ambler 1970; Aten 1983:268; May 1993), Liberty County (Aten 1983:268), and Galveston County (Ricklis 1994). Ricklis (1994:461) has concluded that glass beads at site 41GV66 on Galveston Island are probably from systematic French trade in a period of ca. AD 1720-1754, although there is a possibility of Spanish trade after this period, when French traders were excluded from Southeast Texas.

This collection has a stone bead (Figure 17C). Stone beads are not common in Southeast Texas, and represent exotic trade items. Some stone beads have been found with Late Archaic burials at sites 41FB42 (Patterson et al. 1993) in Fort Bend County and 41AU55 (Bill Dickens and Harry Shafer, personal communication 1992) in Austin County. There is a stone bead in a surface collection from Smithers Lake in Fort Bend County (Patterson et al. 1995:Figures 29,30).

## CONCLUSIONS

The Whitehead collection from Smith Point has components from the Late Paleo-Indian through the Historic Indian periods. It is unusual for sites on the present coastal margin of Southeast Texas to have occupation components both before and after the temporal boundary of the Middle and Late Archaic periods. Due to the gently sloping nature of most of the coastal margin of Southeast Texas, most sites earlier than the Late Archaic period are now under water, due to the sea level rising until the end of the Middle Archaic period. Only a few sites are known on the present coastal margin of Southeast Texas that have both early and late occupation components, such as some sites in the upper San Jacinto Bay area (Duke 1971; Patterson and Marshall 1989) and the Eagle's Ridge site at Lake Charlotte (Ensor 1998). Sites of this type are at a high enough elevation to have escaped inundation with rising sea level.

This collection has evidence of manufacture of ornamental marine shell artifacts at Smith Point. This shell manufacturing workshop could have been a source for ornamental shell artifacts at cemetery sites in the Galveston Bay area (Aten et al. 1976; Ricklis 1994).

It has been noted above that bird bone whistles in the Whitehead collection are associated with a burial. Bird bone whistles have been found with burials in the Galveston Bay area (Aten et al. 1976; Gadus and Howard 1990; Ricklis 1994). Engraved whooping crane ulna whistles have been found with a burial in adjacent southwestern Louisiana (Cameron Parish). This suggests a shared mortuary tradition along the coastal margin from southwestern Louisiana into the Galveston Bay area (Ricklis 1994:448). The introduction of pottery to the coastal margin of Southeast Texas from Louisiana (Aten 1983:297) may have been accompanied by the westward movement of people. This might have formed an ethnic group with shared cultural traditions, along the coastal margin from southwestern Louisiana into the Galveston Bay area. The only bird bone whistles that have been found in inland Southeast Texas are at two sites with Late Prehistoric burials on the lower Angelina River (Aten et al. 1976:37; Ricklis 1994:448), about 160 km from the Gulf shoreline. Late Prehistoric burials in inland Southeast Texas usually do not have grave goods.

The coastal margin of Southeast Texas is a zone about 30 km wide along the Gulf shoreline. This zone corresponds to the most inland occurrence of brackish water from tidal flow, and the resulting occurrence of *Rangia* clams. The use of ceramics started at about 70 BC in the Sabine River area, and then at about AD 100 in the Galveston Bay area (Aten 1983:297) or perhaps a few hundred years earlier (Ensor 1998). After the introduction of ceramics to the coastal margin of Southeast Texas, there are significant differences between artifact assemblages at coastal margin and inland sites in Southeast Texas (Patterson 1993). This suggests that the ethnic group postulated here, after the introduction of pottery, was confined to the coastal margin, with inland Indians having other social organizations and adaptive technologies.

Soffer (1985:265) has observed that change in social complexity was sporadic for hunter-gatherers of the Eurasian Upper Paleolithic period. This is also true for prehistoric hunter-gatherers of the New World. Southeast Texas is a good example of the sporadic nature of increase in social complexity of hunter-gatherers, shown by use of cemeteries and organized burial practices. There was a Late Archaic Mortuary Tradition in the inland part of western Southeast Texas, which ended in the Early Ceramic period (Patterson 1996:65, n.d.b.). A Late Prehistoric mortuary tradition, discussed here, then started on the eastern coastal margin of Southeast Texas and the western coastal margin of Louisiana.

Artifact types show that Smith Point was both a campsite and a cemetery area. Both arrow point types and glass beads indicate that the Smith Point area has an Historic Indian component.

Recording of surface collections, such as the one described here, is an important part of obtaining a comprehensive regional archeological data base. Data from surface collections are especially important for studies of geographic distributions of artifact types, settlement patterns, and population dynamics.

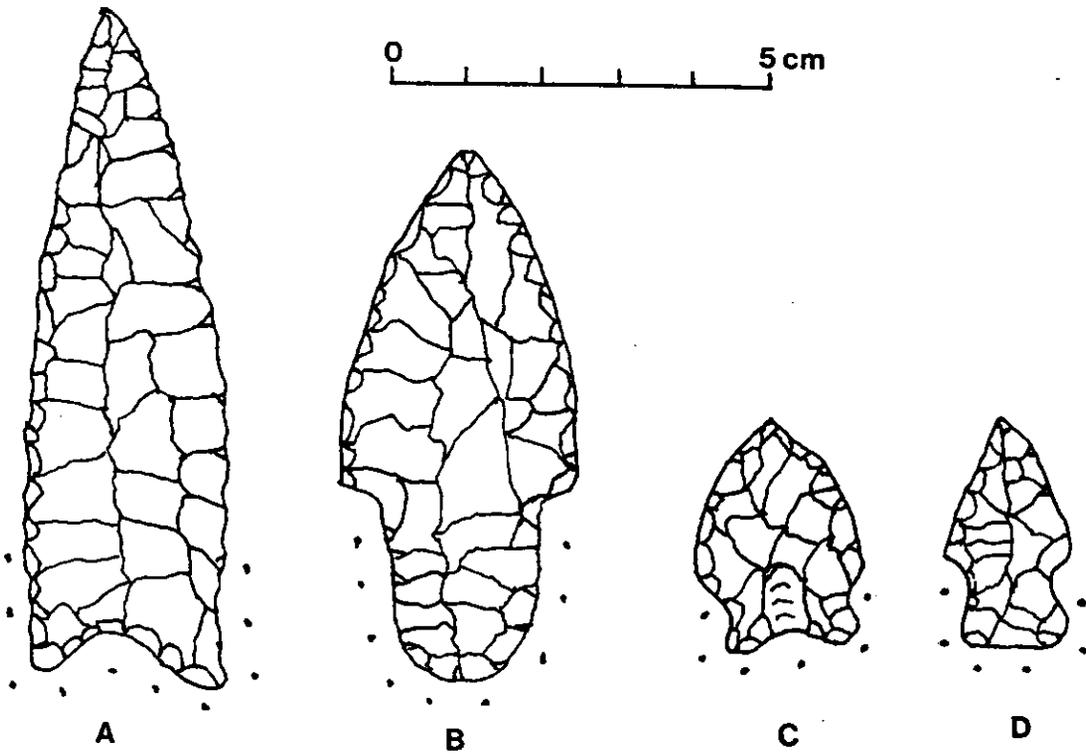
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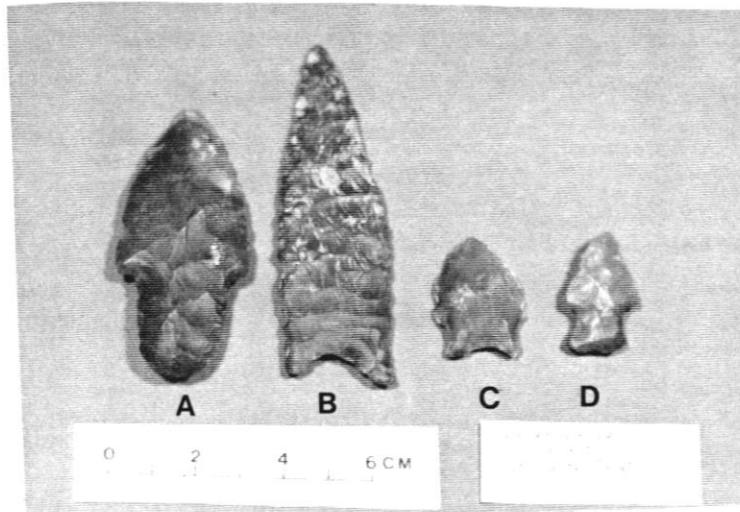
Table 1  
Projectile Points

_____ type _____	No.
<b>Dart Points</b>	
Dalton	1
San Patrice	1
Early Corner-Notched	1
Early Stemmed	1
Bulverde	3
Kent	14
Gary	9
small triangular	1
Ellis	1
Yarbrough	2
unclassified	8
dart point preforms	4
<b>Arrow Points</b>	
Perdiz	16
Alba	8
Catahoula	1
Cuney	1
Fresno	1
Bulbar Stemmed	1
gar scale	2
fragments	4



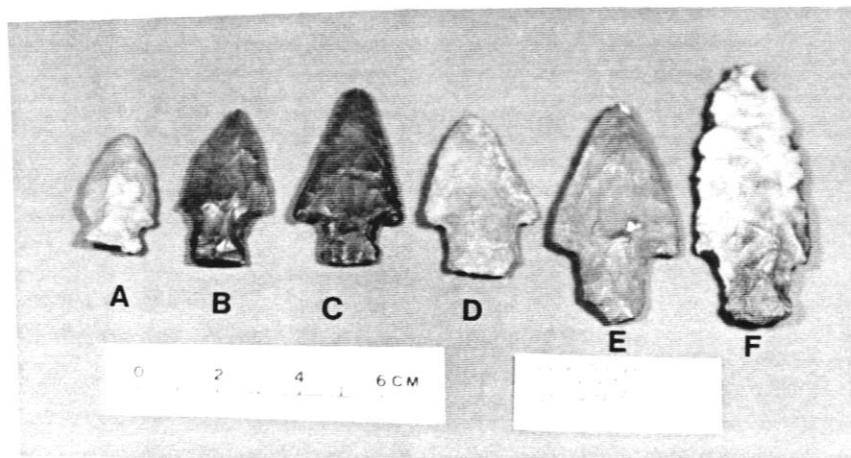
**Figure 1: Early Projectile Points**

**A- Dalton, B- Early Stemmed, C- San Patrice,  
D- Early Corner-Notched**



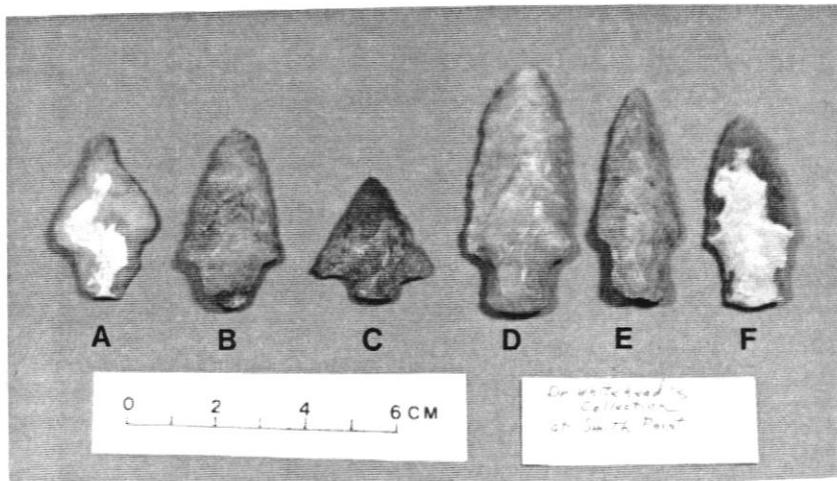
**Figure 2: Early Points**

**A- Early Stemmed, B- Dalton, C- San Patrice,  
D- Early Corner-Notched**

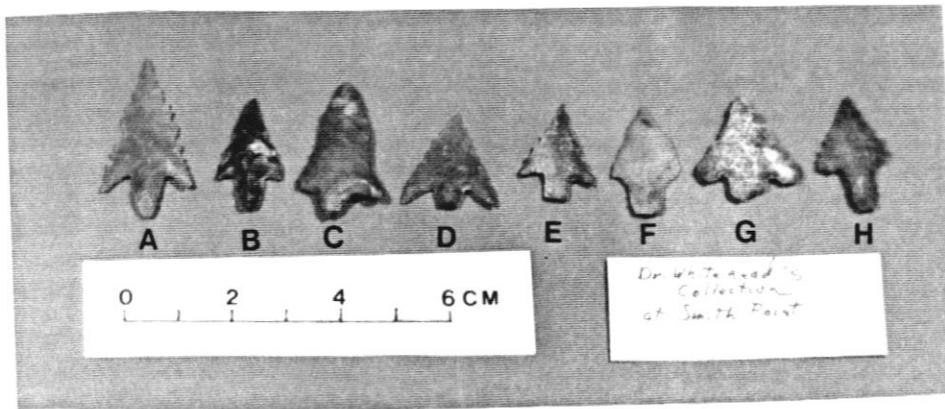


**Figure 3: Later Points**

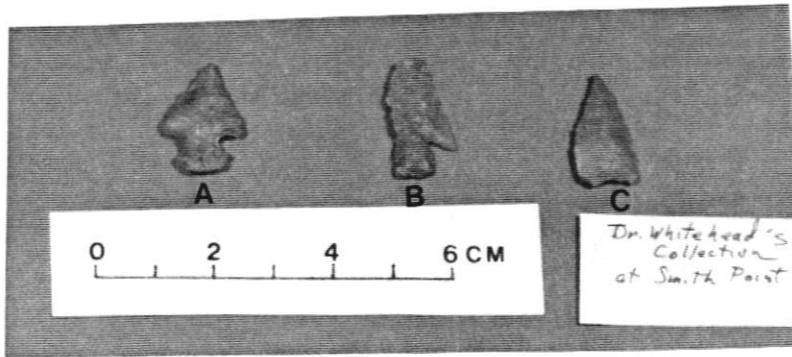
**A- Ellis; B,C- Yarbrough; D,E,F- Bulverde**



**Figure 4: Gary and Kent Points**  
 A,B,C- Gary; D,E,F- Kent

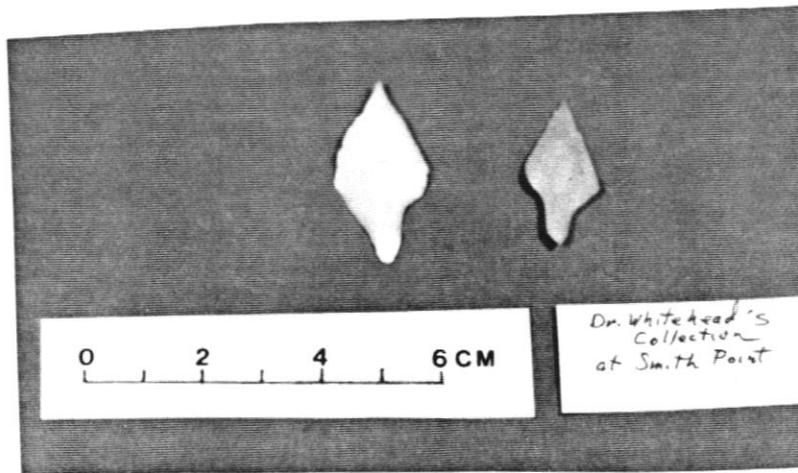


**Figure 5: Arrow Points**  
 A to D- Perdiz; E,F,H- Alba; G- Catahoula

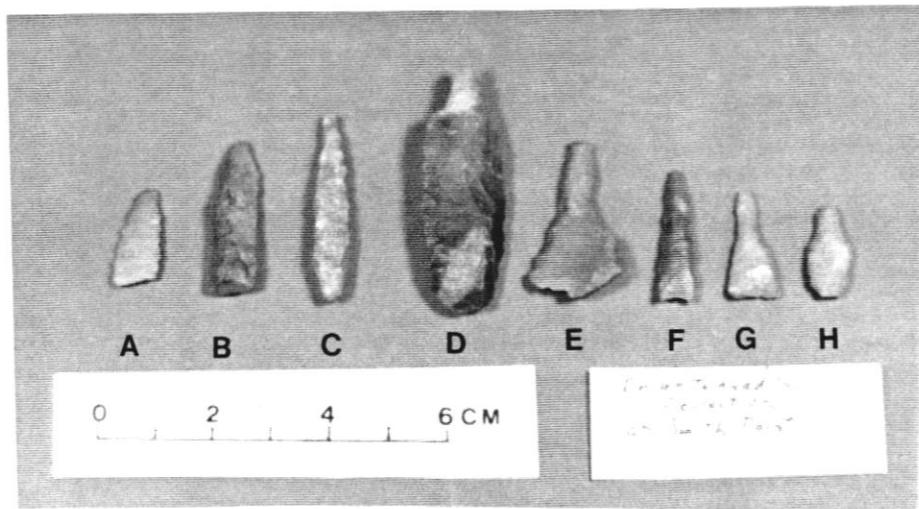


**Figure 6: Historic Arrow Points**

**A- Bulbar Stemmed, B- Cuney, C- Fresno**

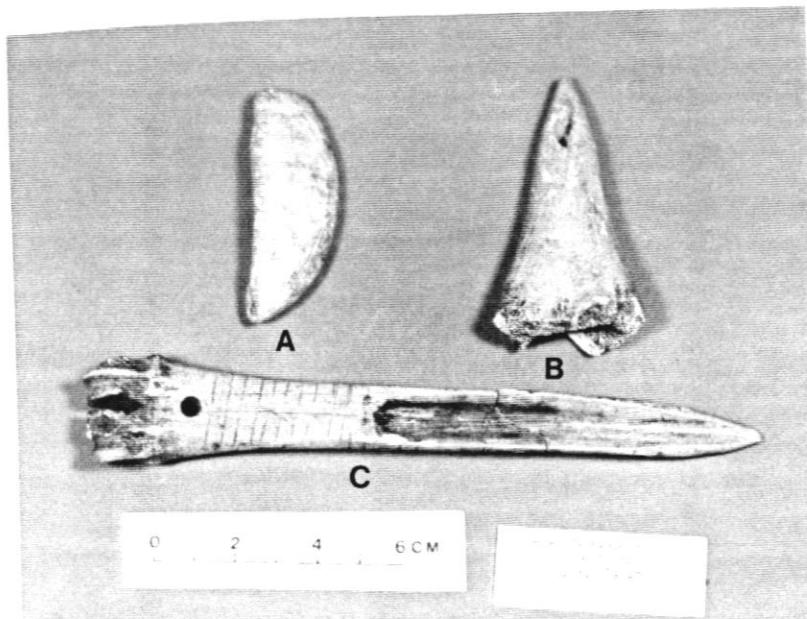


**Figure 7: Gar Scale Arrow Points**



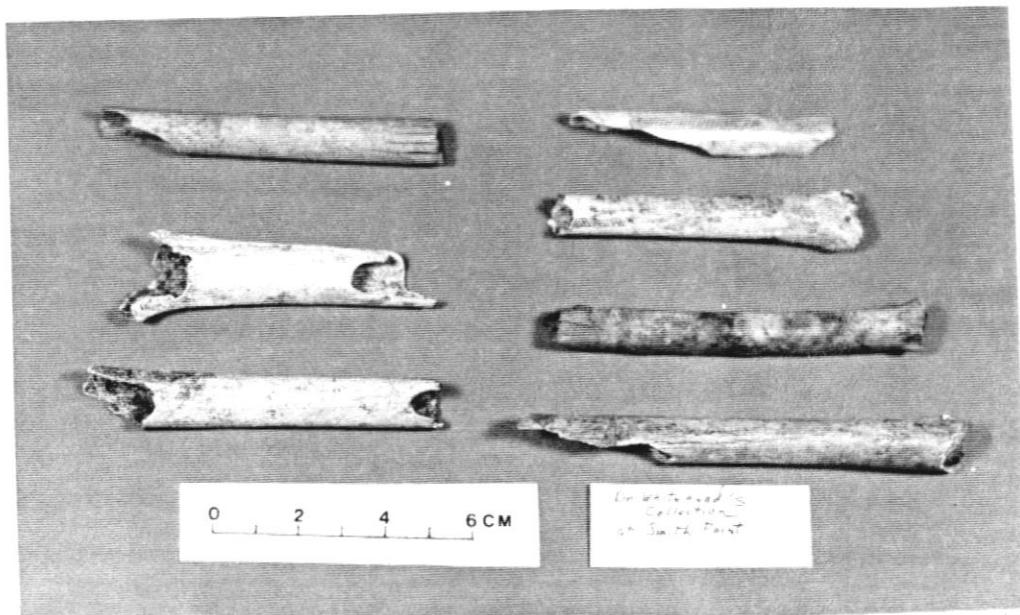
**Figure 8: Stone Drilling Tools**

A to C and E to H- drill bits, D- possible reamer

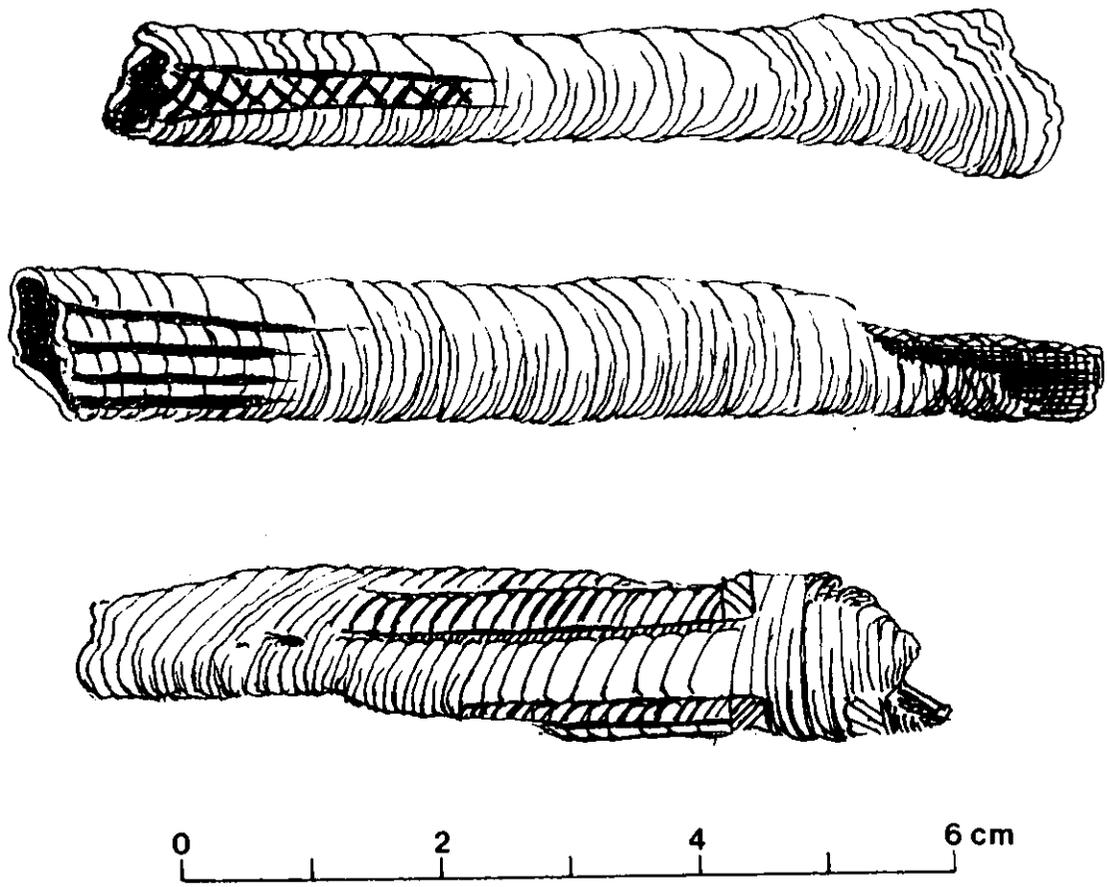


**Figure 9: Bone Artifacts**

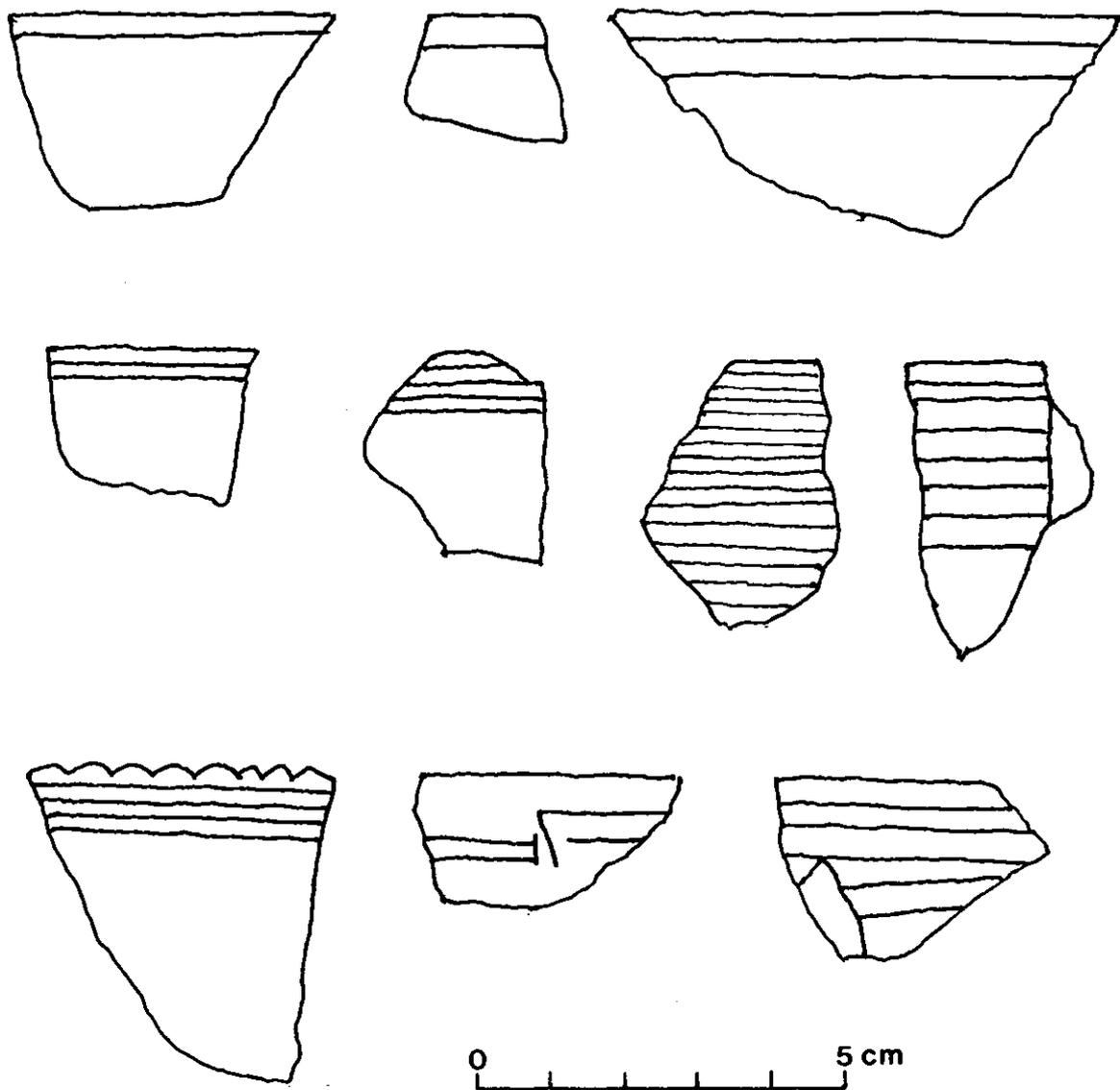
A- bear tooth Pendant; B,C- awls



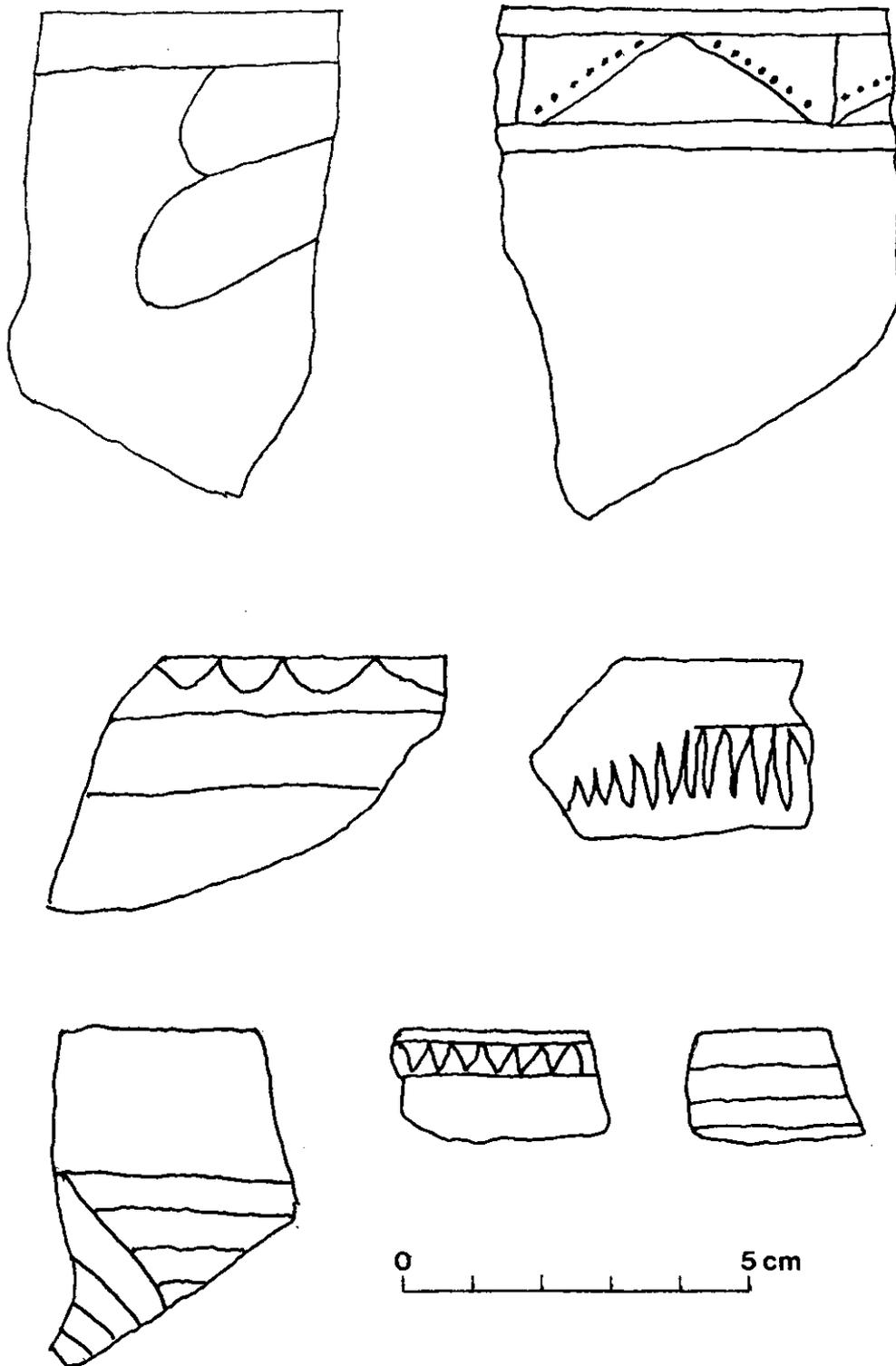
**Figure 10: Bird Bone Whistle Segments**



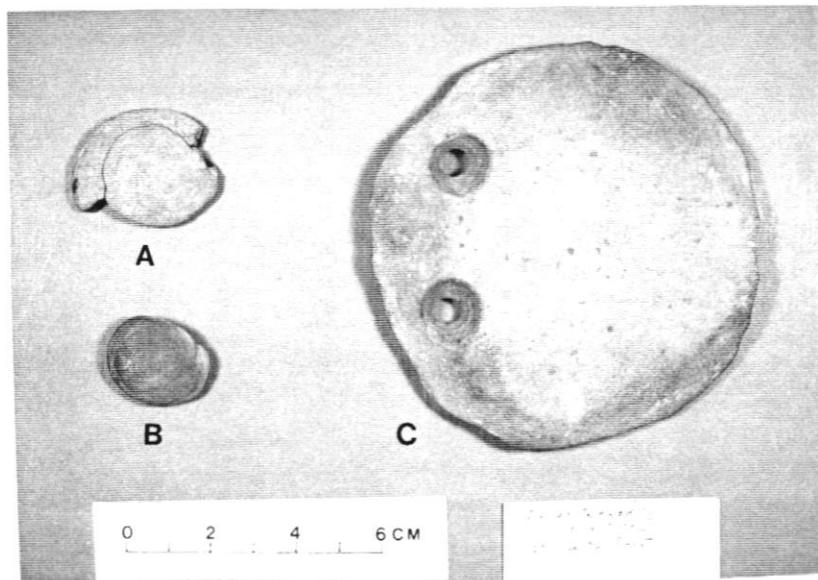
**Figure 11: Incised Patterns on Bird Bone Whistles**



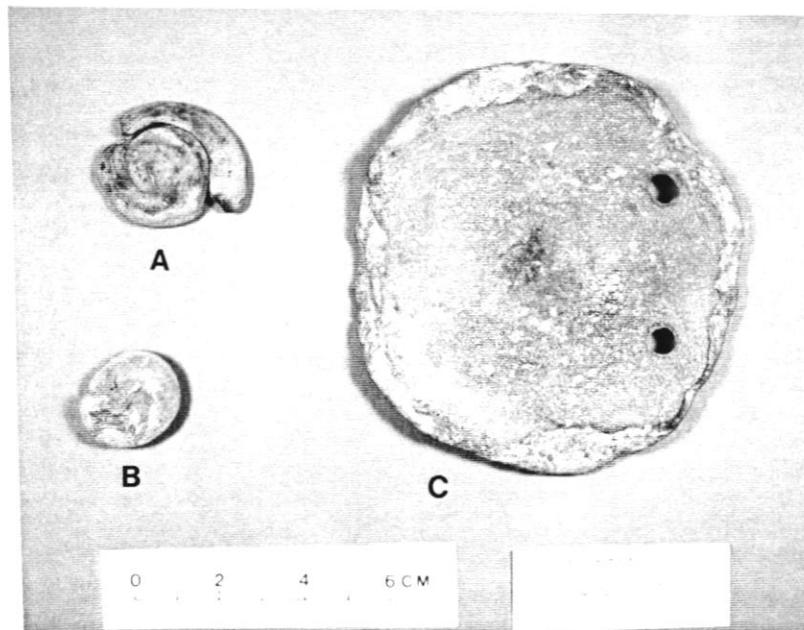
**Figure 12: Incised Patterns on Sherds**



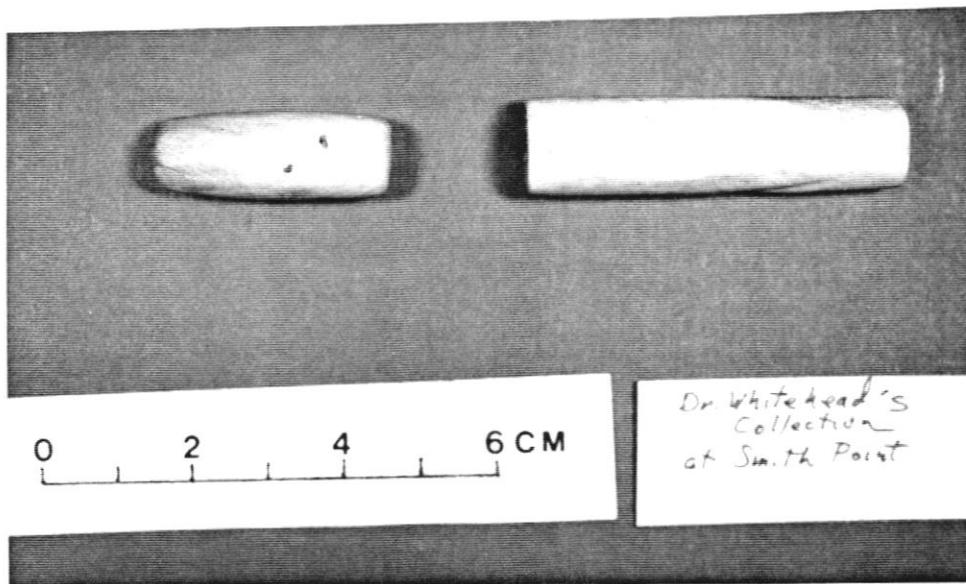
**Figure 13: Additional Incised Patterns on Sherds**



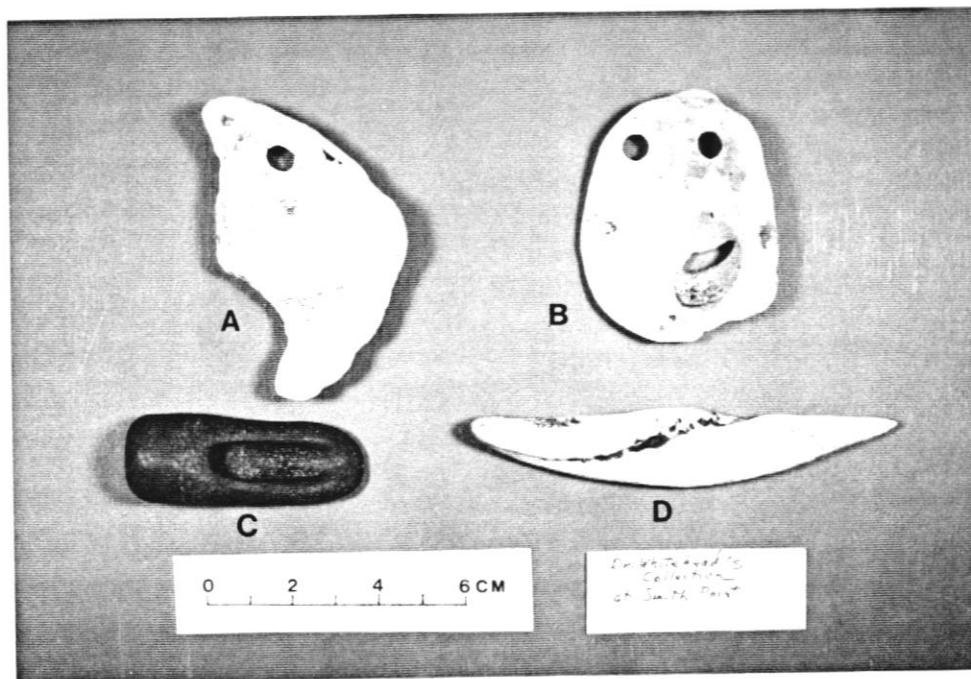
**Figure 14: Ceramic Vessel Bottoms, Exterior**  
A,B- conical; C- flat



**Figure 15: Ceramic Vessel Bottoms, Exterior**  
A,B- conical; C- flat

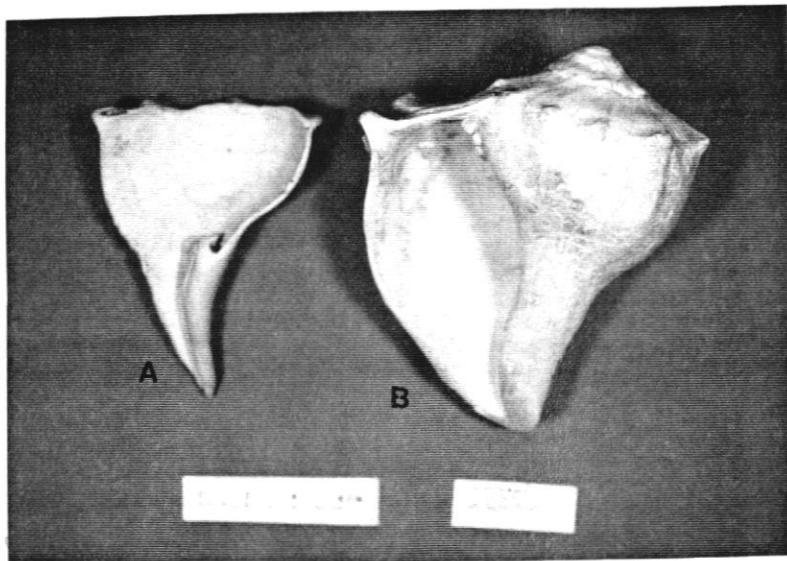


**Figure 16: Tubular Shell Beads**

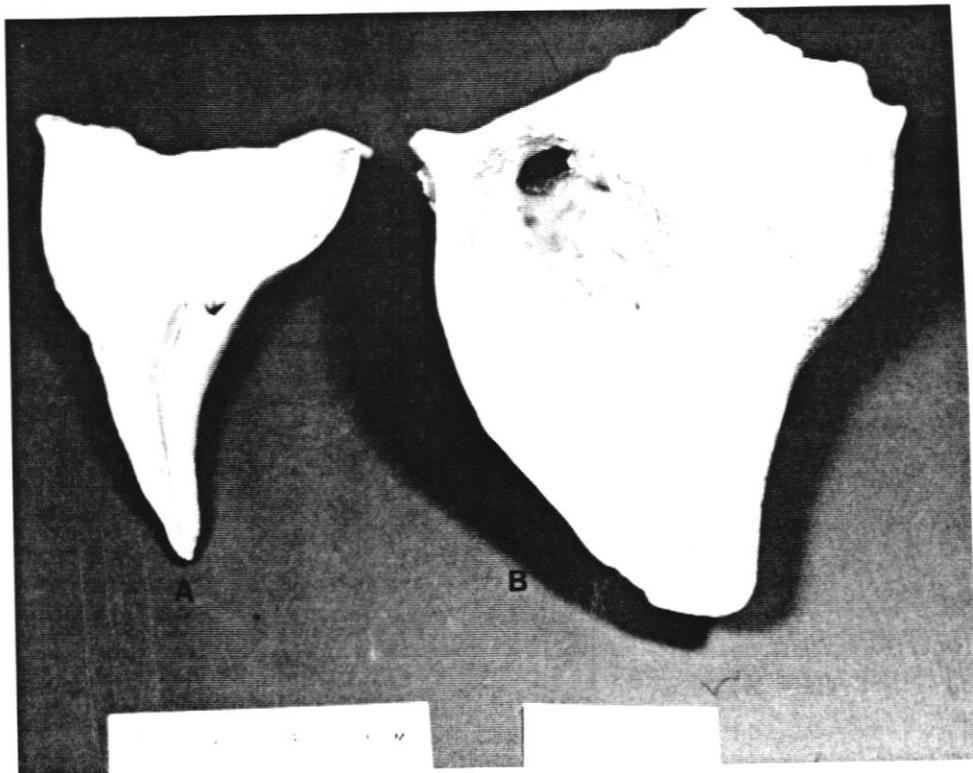


**Figure 17: Marine Shell and Stone Artifacts**

A,B- oyster shell pendants; C- stone bead,  
D- columella artifact



**Figure 18: Lightning Whelk Artifacts**  
A- possible ladle, B- possible scraper



**Figure 19: Whelk Artifacts, Oblique View**  
A- possible ladle, B- possible scraper

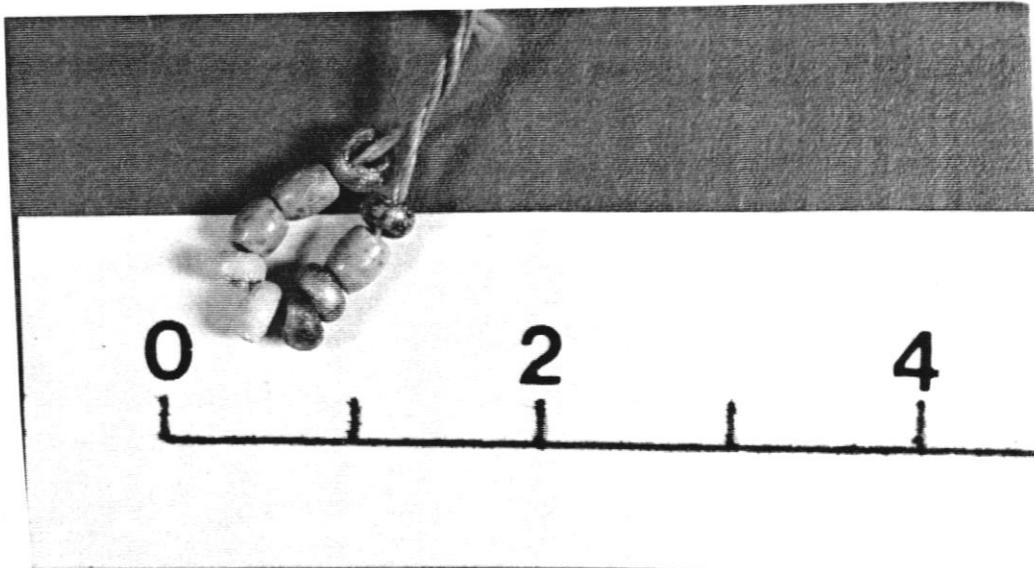


Figure 20: Glass Beads